



Before I Formed You

*What God Says to the Woman
Holding This Book*

Paul & Pam Hainline

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First Edition

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You Are Not Alone

Preface

We wrote this book for you.

Not for a crowd. Not for a debate. Not to make an argument or prove a point. For you — the woman holding this right now, wherever you are, whatever you're facing.

We don't know your name or your story. But we know that God does. And we believe that what He has said in His Word is the truest thing you will hear today.

This is a small book. You can read it in one sitting. We hope you will. And if you set it down and come back to it later — at two in the morning when the house is quiet and the questions are loud — it will still be here.

Everything in these pages comes from Scripture. We didn't add to it. We just told the stories and let God's Word speak for itself.

He has something to say to you.

— Paul and Pam Hainline

CHAPTER ONE

El Roi: The God Who Sees You

Before we talk about anyone else, I want to talk about you.

I don't know your name. I don't know how you got here or what brought you to this moment. I don't know if someone is standing beside you or if you are completely alone. I don't know if you're angry or afraid or numb or all three at once.

But God does.

He knows when you sit down and when you rise up. He understands your thoughts from afar. He is intimately acquainted with all your ways. Before there is a word on your tongue, He already knows it (Psalm 139:1-4).

You are not invisible. You have never been invisible. Even right now — in this moment that feels like no one sees you and no one understands — you are fully known by the One who made you.

I want to tell you about a woman who felt exactly the way you might be feeling right now.

Her name was Hagar.

She was a slave. She belonged to a wealthy couple named Abraham and Sarah, and she had no say in her own life. When

Sarah couldn't have children, she gave Hagar to Abraham to produce a child for them. Hagar wasn't asked. She wasn't consulted. She was used for someone else's purpose, and when she became pregnant, Sarah treated her so harshly that Hagar did the only thing she could think to do.

She ran.

The Scripture says the angel of the Lord found her in the wilderness, by a spring of water (Genesis 16:7). A pregnant woman, alone, in the desert. No home to go back to. No plan. No one looking for her — at least, no one she knew about.

But God was looking for her.

He didn't send someone to bring her back so she could be useful again. He came to her. And the first thing He did was speak her name. "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from and where are you going?" (Genesis 16:8).

Sometimes you need to hear the question out loud before you can face it honestly.

Then He told her something about the child she was carrying. He told her the boy would be called Ishmael — a name that means *God hears*. He told her the child's descendants would be too many to count (Genesis 16:10-11). She was sitting in the desert with nothing, and God was describing a future she had no reason to believe in.

But here is what Hagar did next.

She did something that no one else in all of Scripture ever did. She gave God a name.

“Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, ‘You are a God who sees’; for she said, ‘Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?’” (Genesis 16:13).

El Roi. The God who sees.

Not Abraham. Not Sarah. Not a prophet or a priest or a king. A slave woman, pregnant and alone in the wilderness, is the one who looked at God and said, “You are the One who sees me.”

And the story doesn’t end there. Years later, after the child was born and grew, Sarah demanded that Abraham send Hagar and the boy away — permanently. Abraham gave her bread and a skin of water and sent her into the wilderness of Beersheba (Genesis 21:14). When the water was gone, Hagar put her son under a bush and sat down a bowshot away because she said, “Do not let me see the boy die” (Genesis 21:16).

She sat there and wept.

And God heard. The Scripture says, “God heard the lad crying; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, ‘What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is’” (Genesis 21:17).

He came back.

The God who saw her the first time saw her again. He didn’t see her once and walk away. He didn’t save her and then forget her. When she was out of water and out of hope, sitting in the dirt waiting for her child to die, God opened her eyes

and she saw a well of water that had been there the whole time (Genesis 21:19).

What she needed was already there. She just couldn't see it yet.

I tell you Hagar's story because I want you to hear one thing before anything else in this little book:

You are seen.

Not the situation. Not the circumstances. Not the questions or the pressure or the opinions of everyone around you. *You*. The woman sitting here right now. God sees you the same way He saw Hagar — not from a distance, not as a problem to be solved, but as a woman He formed with His own hands, whose name He knows, whose thoughts He already understands.

Whatever brought you to this moment, you are not alone in it. The God who found a pregnant slave in the desert and spoke her name is the same God who is present with you right now.

El Roi. The God who sees.

He sees you.

CHAPTER TWO

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Now I want to tell you something about yourself that you may have never heard — or maybe you’ve heard it so many times it stopped meaning anything. I want you to hear it again, right now, as if for the first time.

You were made on purpose.

Not by accident. Not by chance. Not as the result of circumstances that spun out of control. You — the woman reading this — were deliberately, carefully, intentionally formed by the hands of God.

David wrote these words three thousand years ago, and they are as true today as the moment he set them down:

“For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.” (Psalm 139:13-16)

Read that again slowly if you need to.

He *formed* your inward parts. He *wove* you. Those aren't words of accident. Those are words of craft — the careful, deliberate work of Someone who knew exactly what He was making. Your days were written in His book before you lived a single one of them.

Before your mother knew she was carrying you, God was already at work. Before anyone had an opinion about whether you should exist, God had already decided. Before your life became complicated, before anything happened to you that you wish hadn't happened, before every mistake and every wound and every moment that brought you to where you are sitting right now — God had already written your name.

You were not an afterthought. You were a first thought.

And here is where I need you to be very still and very honest with yourself.

The same God who wove you together is weaving right now.

The same hands that formed your inward parts are forming another set of inward parts at this very moment. The same eyes that saw your unformed substance see another unformed substance — right now, inside of you. And the same book that held your days before you lived them holds another set of days that have not yet been lived.

God spoke through the prophet Jeremiah and said, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you” (Jeremiah 1:5).

Before I formed you. Not after. Not once you were viable. Not once you were wanted. Not once the circumstances were right. *Before.*

God’s knowledge of this child did not begin when you found out you were pregnant. It did not begin at conception. It began before — in the mind of God, in the purposes of God, in the book where He writes the days of those He is forming.

I am not telling you this to make you feel guilty. Guilt is not what you need right now, and it is not what God is offering you. I am telling you this because you deserve to know the truth about what is happening inside of you. Not what the world says is happening. Not what fear says is happening. What *God* says is happening.

He is making someone. He knows her. He knew her before you did. He is weaving her together the same way He wove you together — carefully, deliberately, fearfully and wonderfully. Her days are already written. Her story has already begun.

You may not have planned this. But God did.

That does not make your situation easy. It does not answer every question you have. It does not solve the problems that feel so overwhelming right now that you can barely breathe.

But carry this with you into the next chapter: the life inside you is not an accident any more than you are an accident. The same God who saw you — El Roi, the God who sees — sees this child too. He is not distant from what is happening. He is in the middle of it, doing what He has always done.

He is making someone.

And He has done this before.

CHAPTER THREE

A Basket in the River

I want to tell you about a mother whose name you may have never heard.

Her name was Jochebed.

You probably know her son. The whole world knows her son. But almost no one talks about her — the woman who carried him, delivered him, and then did the hardest thing a mother can imagine doing.

She let him go.

Jochebed was a Hebrew woman living in Egypt at a time when her people were slaves. Pharaoh — the king of Egypt — had grown afraid of the Hebrews because there were so many of them. He was afraid they would rise up against him. So he gave an order that is difficult to even read:

“Every son who is born you are to cast into the Nile” (Exodus 1:22).

Every son. Not some. Not the ones who caused trouble. Every single one.

Jochebed was pregnant. She was a slave. And the most powerful man in the world had just ordered that if her baby was a boy, he was to be thrown into the river to drown.

There was no one to appeal to. No court. No protest. No rights. She was a slave under the absolute authority of a king who had decided her child should die.

And the baby was a boy.

The Scripture says, “The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months” (Exodus 2:2).

Three months of hiding a newborn baby — keeping him quiet, keeping him out of sight, knowing that every cry could bring soldiers to her door. Three months of nursing a child she had been told had no right to live. Three months of loving someone she might not be able to keep.

And then she couldn’t hide him any longer.

“She got him a wicker basket and covered it over with tar and pitch. Then she put the child into it and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile” (Exodus 2:3).

She waterproofed a basket, placed her baby inside, and set him in the river.

This was not a woman who didn’t want her child. This was a woman who wanted him so desperately that she did the only thing she could think of to save his life — even though it meant she might never see him again. She couldn’t protect him anymore. She couldn’t hide him anymore. So she built the only

thing she could build — a tiny vessel just big enough to hold him — and she placed him in God’s hands.

She didn’t know what would happen next. She had no guarantee anyone would find him, let alone someone who would care for him. She set her baby in the water and she let go.

His sister Miriam stood at a distance to watch (Exodus 2:4). But Jochebed — the text doesn’t say she watched. The text says she put him in the reeds and that was it. The next voice we hear is Pharaoh’s daughter, coming down to bathe, seeing the basket, opening it, and finding a baby crying.

“She had pity on him and said, ‘This is one of the Hebrews’ children’” (Exodus 2:6).

She knew exactly who this baby was — a child her own father had condemned to death. And she had pity on him.

Miriam stepped forward and asked if she should find a Hebrew woman to nurse the child. Pharaoh’s daughter said yes. And Miriam went and brought the baby’s own mother (Exodus 2:7-8).

“Then Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, ‘Take this child away and nurse him for me and I will give you your wages.’ So the woman took the child and nursed him” (Exodus 2:9).

Jochebed placed her son in a basket because she had no other option. She let go of the only thing she loved because she couldn’t save him herself. And God put that baby directly into the arms of the one person in all of Egypt who had the power

to protect him — and then God gave him back to his own mother to nurse, and paid her to do it.

She couldn't see any of that when she set the basket in the water. She couldn't see Pharaoh's daughter coming to bathe. She couldn't see Miriam's quick thinking. She couldn't see any of the threads God was weaving together at that very moment.

All she could see was a river and a basket and a baby she couldn't keep.

The baby's name was Moses.

He grew up in Pharaoh's own household. He was educated, trained, and prepared in ways that no Hebrew slave could have been. And when the time came, God sent him back to Egypt to deliver the entire nation of Israel out of slavery (Exodus 3-14). Millions of people — set free — because one mother trusted God with what she could not see.

Jochebed could not have imagined any of it. Not the deliverance. Not the parting of the Red Sea. Not the Ten Commandments. Not the nation that Moses would lead to the edge of the Promised Land. She couldn't see forty years into the future. She could barely see past the reeds at the edge of the Nile.

But God could.

You cannot see what God sees. You cannot know what this child will become, who this child will touch, what purpose God is already writing into the days that have not yet been lived. You don't have to see it. Jochebed didn't see it either.

She just built a basket. And she trusted the God who sees.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Prayer Through Tears

Not every woman who faces an impossible moment is a slave or a fugitive. Some of them are simply broken.

Hannah was a married woman. She had a husband who loved her. She had a home. By every outward measure, her life should have been enough. But there was one thing missing, and it consumed her.

She couldn't have children.

In Hannah's world, barrenness was more than a personal sorrow. It was a public shame. A woman's value was measured in large part by the children she bore, and Hannah had none. To make matters worse, her husband Elkanah had a second wife — Peninnah — who had children and never let Hannah forget it.

“Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her, because the Lord had closed her womb” (1 Samuel 1:6).

Year after year. Not once. Not occasionally. Year after year, Peninnah twisted the knife, and Hannah had no answer for it because the thing Peninnah was mocking her for was true. Her

womb was empty. And the Scripture says plainly that it was the Lord who had closed it.

That is a hard thing to sit with. Hannah's barrenness was not a medical condition the text blames on nature or chance. The Scripture says God closed her womb. Whatever His reasons — and the text does not explain them — Hannah was living in a pain that God Himself had allowed.

You may know something about that. You may be sitting in a place right now where the pain you're carrying feels like something God allowed to happen.

But here is what Hannah did with her pain. She didn't swallow it. She didn't pretend it wasn't there. She didn't put on a brave face and tell everyone she was fine.

She went to the tabernacle — the place where God's presence dwelt — and she poured it all out.

“She, greatly distressed, prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly” (1 Samuel 1:10).

She wept bitterly. The text doesn't soften it. She was not composed. She was not dignified. She was a woman in agony, standing before God with nothing to offer except her honesty. And she made a vow:

“O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life” (1 Samuel 1:11).

She is asking God for a son — and promising to give him back.

That is a woman who understands that the child does not belong to her. The child belongs to God. She is asking to be the vessel — to carry him, to nurse him, to love him for as long as God allows — and then to release him into God's purposes.

The priest Eli saw her praying and thought she was drunk because her lips were moving but no sound was coming out (1 Samuel 1:13). Even in her most desperate moment, the people around her misread her completely. They saw a woman who looked out of control. God saw a woman who was more honest than anyone else in the room.

“Go in peace,” Eli told her, “and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of Him” (1 Samuel 1:17).

And God did. Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she named him Samuel — a name that sounds like the Hebrew for “heard by God.”

Because that is what happened. God heard her.

And Hannah kept her promise. When Samuel was weaned, she brought him to the tabernacle and left him there to serve the Lord for the rest of his life (1 Samuel 1:24-28). She let him go — not because she didn't love him, but because she loved God more than she loved her own grip on the thing she had wanted most.

Then Hannah prayed again. And this time, her prayer was not tears. It was a song.

“My heart exults in the Lord; my horn is exalted in the Lord... there is no one holy like the Lord, indeed, there is no one besides You, nor is there any rock like our God” (1 Samuel 2:1-2).

And then she said this:

“He raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with nobles, and inherit a seat of honor; for the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s, and He set the world on them” (1 Samuel 2:8).

He raises the poor from the dust. He lifts the needy from the ash heap.

Hannah knew what it felt like to be in the dust. She knew what it felt like to be mocked, to feel empty, to wonder if God had forgotten her. And she stood up after all of it and declared that God lifts the lowly.

The boy she gave back to God became the prophet Samuel — the man who anointed both Saul and David as kings over Israel. He was the voice of God to an entire nation during one of the most critical periods in its history. None of that happens without Hannah. None of that happens without her tears, her honesty, her willingness to give back what God had given her.

Hannah’s prayer was silent and messy and desperate, and God heard every word of it. Your prayers don’t have to be polished. They don’t have to be eloquent. They don’t even

have to be out loud. God heard Hannah when no one else could.

And the child you are carrying — like Samuel — has a purpose that you may never fully see. Hannah didn't get to watch Samuel anoint kings. She didn't get to see the full reach of what her son would become. She simply trusted that the God who heard her prayer would also keep His purposes for the child she carried.

You don't have to see the whole plan. You just have to know that there is One who does.

He heard Hannah. He hears you.

CHAPTER FIVE

Gleaning at the Edges

I want to tell you about a woman who had every reason to walk away — and didn't.

Her name was Ruth.

She was not a Hebrew. She was a Moabite — a foreigner from a nation that had no part in God's covenant with Israel. She married a young Hebrew man whose family had left Bethlehem during a famine and settled in Moab. For a time, she had a husband and a home.

Then her husband died. So did his brother. So did his father. Three men, all gone — leaving Ruth, her sister-in-law Orpah, and her mother-in-law Naomi with nothing.

Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem. She had heard that God had visited His people and given them food. She told both daughters-in-law to go home — back to their own mothers, back to Moab, back to whatever life they could rebuild among their own people.

Orpah wept and went.

Ruth refused.

“Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the Lord do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me” (Ruth 1:16-17).

She had nothing to gain by staying. Naomi was old and empty-handed. There was no inheritance waiting in Bethlehem. There was no husband lined up, no home prepared, no plan. Ruth was choosing to leave her own country, her own family, and her own gods to follow a bitter old woman back to a land where Ruth would be an outsider.

She went anyway.

When they arrived in Bethlehem, Naomi told the women of the town not to call her Naomi — a name that means “pleasant” — but to call her Mara, meaning “bitter,” because the Almighty had dealt very bitterly with her (Ruth 1:20).

That was the situation. A bitter widow and a foreign daughter-in-law, alone, with nothing.

And Ruth went to work.

There was a law in Israel that God had given long before Ruth ever arrived. When His people harvested their fields, they were not to reap all the way to the edges. They were not to go back for what they dropped. The corners and the scraps were to be left for the poor, the widow, and the foreigner (Leviticus 19:9-10).

Ruth was all three.

“Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor,” she said to Naomi (Ruth 2:2). She was asking permission to go pick up what other people left behind. That was her life. That was her plan. Scraps from the edges of someone else’s field.

She came to the field belonging to a man named Boaz — a relative of Naomi’s dead husband. The text says she “happened” to come there (Ruth 2:3). But by now you may be starting to notice how God works.

Boaz noticed her. He asked his servants who she was. And then he told her to stay in his field, to drink from his workers’ water, and not to be afraid. When Ruth fell on her face and asked why he would show kindness to a foreigner, Boaz answered:

“All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know. May the Lord reward your work, and your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge” (Ruth 2:11-12).

Under whose wings you have come to seek refuge.

Ruth hadn’t come to Bethlehem with a plan. She had come with nothing but loyalty to Naomi and a willingness to

trust a God she barely knew. And God saw her — not the circumstances, but the woman.

What happened next unfolded in ways Ruth could not have predicted. Boaz was a kinsman-redeemer — a relative who had the right under Israelite law to marry a widow and carry on her dead husband’s name. Naomi saw what God was doing before Ruth did. She sent Ruth to Boaz, and Boaz accepted the responsibility willingly.

“So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife... And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son” (Ruth 4:13).

And when the child was born, the women of Bethlehem gathered around Naomi — the woman who had called herself bitter, who had said that God had dealt harshly with her — and they said:

“Blessed is the Lord who has not left you without a redeemer today... May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him” (Ruth 4:14-15).

Better to you than seven sons.

Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap. The neighbor women named him Obed (Ruth 4:16-17).

Obed became the father of Jesse. Jesse became the father of David — the greatest king Israel ever had.

And a thousand years later, when Matthew sat down to record the genealogy of Jesus Christ, he wrote this:

“Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse” (Matthew 1:5).

Ruth. A Moabite widow with no status, no security, and no claim on any of God’s promises to Israel. A woman who spent her days picking up scraps at the edges of someone else’s field.

She is in the lineage of Jesus Christ.

God did not need Ruth’s circumstances to be right. He needed her.

And He had already made provision for her before she ever set foot in Bethlehem. The law that left grain at the edges of the field was written centuries before Ruth arrived. The kinsman-redeemer who would marry her was already living in Bethlehem. The child she would carry was already written in God’s book.

What she needed was already there. She just couldn’t see it yet.

CHAPTER SIX

The Least Likely

Jericho was a condemned city.

God had given the land of Canaan to Israel, and Jericho stood in the way. The entire city — every man, woman, and child — was under God’s judgment. No one inside those walls had any reason to expect mercy.

And inside those walls lived a prostitute named Rahab.

The Scripture does not soften what she was. Every time it mentions her — in Joshua, in Hebrews, in James — it calls her “Rahab the harlot.” The text does not clean her up. It does not explain how she got there. It simply tells you who she was and then shows you what God did with her.

Joshua sent two spies into Jericho, and they came to Rahab’s house (Joshua 2:1). When the king of Jericho heard that Israelite spies had entered the city, he sent men to her door demanding she hand them over. She had already hidden them on her roof under stalks of flax. She told the king’s men that the spies had left, and sent them chasing in the wrong direction (Joshua 2:4-7).

Then she went up to the roof and told the spies something no one in Jericho would have expected to hear — least of all from her.

“I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt... When we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath” (Joshua 2:9-11).

The Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.

Everyone in Jericho had heard the same stories. Everyone knew what God had done at the Red Sea. Everyone’s heart had melted. But Rahab was the only one who acted on it. She was the only one who looked at the evidence and reached the right conclusion — and then risked everything on it.

She asked the spies to spare her life and the lives of her family when Israel came. They agreed. They told her to tie a scarlet cord in her window so that when the city fell, her household would be saved (Joshua 2:18).

And Israel came.

The walls of Jericho fell. The city was destroyed. Every living thing in it was put under the ban — devoted to destruction.

Except Rahab.

“However, Rahab the harlot and her father’s household and all she had, Joshua spared; and she has lived in the midst of Israel to this day, for she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho” (Joshua 6:25).

She lived in the midst of Israel from that day forward. A Canaanite prostitute from a destroyed city, taken in among God’s people.

She married a man named Salmon. She bore a son named Boaz.

Boaz. The same Boaz who would one day see a Moabite widow gleaning at the edges of his field and show her kindness. The same Boaz who told Ruth, “May the Lord reward your work, and your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge.” The man who showed mercy to a foreigner was raised by a woman who had been shown mercy herself.

Rahab’s son married Ruth. Ruth bore Obed. Obed fathered Jesse. Jesse fathered David.

And when Matthew recorded the genealogy of Jesus Christ, he placed them side by side:

“Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth” (Matthew 1:5).

A prostitute and a foreigner. Side by side. In the lineage of the Son of God.

God's purposes are not limited by your past. They never have been. The woman in all of Scripture with the most reason to believe God could never use her — that she was too far gone, too stained by the life she had lived — is the one He placed in the family line of Jesus Christ.

He didn't wait for her to become someone else. He saw a woman who believed.

And that was enough.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Be It Done to Me

She was young. She was not married yet. She had a plan for how her life was supposed to go.

Her name was Mary.

She lived in Nazareth, a small town in Galilee that no one thought much of. She was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. In her world, a betrothal was as binding as marriage — the wedding simply hadn't taken place yet. Her life was ordinary. Her future was settled.

And then an angel appeared.

“Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you” (Luke 1:28).

The text says she was very perplexed at this statement and kept pondering what kind of greeting this was (Luke 1:29). She didn't fall down in worship. She didn't cry out. She pondered. She was trying to make sense of something that didn't fit inside anything she had ever known.

The angel told her not to be afraid. And then he told her something that would change everything — not just for her, but for every human being who would ever live.

“You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end” (Luke 1:31-33).

She was not yet married. She was not yet with Joseph. And an angel was telling her she would bear a son — the Son of the Most High — whose kingdom would have no end.

Mary asked the only question that mattered: “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” (Luke 1:34).

It was not a refusal. It was not doubt. It was the honest question of a woman trying to understand something that had no human explanation. The angel answered:

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

And then:

“For nothing will be impossible with God” (Luke 1:37).

Nothing will be impossible with God.

That was all she was given. No plan for how to explain this to Joseph. No guarantee that anyone would believe her. No protection from what her community would think — or do — when an unmarried girl turned up pregnant. In her culture, a betrothed woman found to be with child by someone other than her husband could be put to death. Mary knew that. She

knew what this would look like. She knew what it could cost her.

And she said yes.

“Behold, the bonds slave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38).

May it be done to me. Not “let me think about it.” Not “let me talk to Joseph first.” Not “can you give me a sign so I can prove this to people.” May it be done to me according to your word.

The most consequential yes in human history came from a frightened young woman in a small town who trusted God with what she could not understand.

She could not see how this would work. She could not see Joseph’s dream, where an angel would tell him the truth and he would stay (Matthew 1:20-21). She could not see the manger in Bethlehem, or the shepherds, or the wise men, or the years in between. She could not see the cross. She could not see the resurrection. She could not see the billions of lives that would be transformed because she carried this child to term.

All she could see was an impossible situation and a God who asked her to trust Him.

And she said yes.

Every woman in this booklet faced a moment where the future was invisible. Hagar couldn’t see the well. Jochebed couldn’t see past the reeds. Hannah couldn’t see the prophet her son would become. Ruth couldn’t see the lineage she was

stepping into. Rahab couldn't see past the walls of a condemned city.

Mary couldn't see any of it either. But she said yes anyway.

And the child she carried saved the world.

CHAPTER EIGHT

For Such a Time as This

Every woman you have met in this booklet faced a moment she did not choose.

Hagar did not choose to be sent into the desert. Jochebed did not choose the death sentence on her son. Hannah did not choose her barrenness. Ruth did not choose to be widowed and left with nothing. Rahab did not choose to be born inside the walls of a condemned city. Mary did not choose the timing or the circumstances of what God asked her to carry.

None of them could see what was coming. All of them carried something that mattered more than they knew.

I want to tell you one more story. This one is different from the others. It is not about a woman who was pregnant. It is about a woman who was born — and what she became because her mother carried her.

Her name was Esther.

She was a Jewish orphan, raised by her cousin Mordecai in the capital of the Persian Empire. She had no parents. She had no position. She had nothing that would have made anyone in that empire look at her twice.

And then the king of Persia dismissed his queen and began searching for a replacement. Esther was taken into the palace along with many other young women. The king chose her. She became queen of Persia — though no one in the court knew she was Jewish. Mordecai had told her not to reveal it (Esther 2:10).

For a time, that was the whole story. A Jewish girl in a foreign palace, keeping her identity hidden, living a life no one could have predicted for her.

Then a man named Haman rose to power.

Haman was second only to the king. He demanded that everyone bow to him, and everyone did — except Mordecai. Mordecai refused. And Haman's response was not simply to punish one man. He decided to destroy every Jew in the entire empire.

He went to the king and obtained a decree — signed, sealed, and distributed to every province — that on a specific day, all Jews, young and old, women and children, were to be killed and their possessions plundered (Esther 3:13).

Every single one. An entire people marked for slaughter by the law of the land.

Mordecai sent word to Esther. He told her what was coming. He told her she had to go to the king and plead for her people. But there was a problem. Anyone who approached the king without being summoned could be put to death — unless

the king extended his golden scepter. Esther had not been summoned in thirty days (Esther 4:11).

Going to the king meant risking her life. Staying silent meant watching her people die.

And Mordecai said this:

“For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14).

For such a time as this.

Not for comfort. Not for position. Not for safety. For *this* — the moment when everything depended on her being exactly where she was.

Esther sent her answer back to Mordecai:

“Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. And so I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:16).

If I perish, I perish.

She went. The king extended his scepter. And through a series of events that only God could have orchestrated — a sleepless night, a forgotten record of Mordecai’s loyalty, a banquet that exposed Haman’s plot — the decree was reversed. Haman was executed on the very gallows he had built for Mordecai. And the Jewish people were saved (Esther 5-9).

An entire nation — preserved — because one woman was in the right place at the right time and had the courage to act.

But here is what I want you to see.

Esther did not place herself in the palace. She did not engineer her own rise to queen. She did not arrange the circumstances that put her in the one position where she could save her people. God did all of that. And He did it long before the crisis came — before Haman’s hatred, before the decree, before the gallows were built.

He did it when Esther was born.

Every woman in this booklet carried a child whose purpose she could not see. Moses delivered a nation. Samuel anointed kings. Obed became the grandfather of David. Boaz showed mercy because his mother had been shown mercy. Jesus saved the world.

Esther saved her people. And none of it happens if her mother does not carry her.

You do not know who the child inside you will become. You cannot see it. No one is asking you to see it. Hagar couldn’t. Jochebed couldn’t. Hannah couldn’t. Ruth couldn’t. Rahab couldn’t. Mary couldn’t.

But God can.

And who knows whether this child has come for such a time as this.

You Are Not Alone

You have walked through these pages with women who lived thousands of years ago. Their world was not your world. Their circumstances were not your circumstances. But the God who met them is the same God who is present with you right now.

He saw Hagar in the desert and spoke her name. He wove you together in your mother's womb and wrote your days in His book before you lived one of them. He placed Moses in the arms of the one person who could protect him. He heard Hannah when no one else could. He provided for Ruth before she ever arrived. He saw a woman who believed inside the walls of a condemned city. He asked a frightened young woman to carry the Son of God, and she said yes. He placed Esther exactly where she needed to be for such a time as hers.

El Roi. The God who sees.

He sees you. He has always seen you. And He sees the child you are carrying.

You do not have to have all the answers right now. You do not have to understand the whole plan. Not one of the women in

this book could see what God was doing in her moment. Every one of them carried something whose purpose was larger than anything they could imagine.

If you want to talk to Him, you can. Right now. Your prayer does not have to be polished or eloquent. Hannah's wasn't. Just honest.

You might say something like this:

God, I don't know what to do. I'm afraid, and I don't know how this works out. But You see me. You know this child. I'm asking You to help me trust You with what I can't see. Show me what I need — even if it's already there and I just can't see it yet.

That's enough. He hears you.

• • •

You don't have to do this alone.

If you need someone to talk to — someone who will sit with you, not pressure you — there are people near you who want to help. They can walk with you through the questions about housing, medical care, financial support, and the road ahead.

National Resources

The National Pregnancy Helpline — 1-800-712-HELP (4357)
Care-Net — care-net.org — 1-800-395-HELP (4357) Heart-

beat International — heartbeatinternational.org —
1-800-550-4900

Your local pregnancy resource center is listed online at: option-line.org

These are real people. They are not there to judge you. They are there to help.

Listing these resources is not an endorsement of their teachings or materials. We believe Scripture alone is the authority in matters of faith. But these organizations can help you with the practical needs in front of you right now — and that matters.

• • •

One more thing.

This book was about you and the child you are carrying. It was about God's love for you both and the stories of women who came before you.

But there is a larger story — one that stretches from the first page of Genesis to the last page of Revelation. It is the story of why God made you, what went wrong, and what He did to bring you back to Himself. If you want to hear that story, we wrote it down.

It's called *From the Beginning: The Gospel from the Ground Up*,
and it is available free at noblemind.study.

When you're ready, it will be there.