

Book Excerpt: Hannah and the Armor of God pt. 1



April 2, 2019

Lord, what a joy it is to be given Your gifts--and then have You walk alongside of us while we learn, listen, and advance in them. May Your gifts continue to rise in us all as You encourage and work with us in them. Amen.

Well. Speaking of Gifts. Since I was a child, I have always wanted to be a writer. I have been a voracious reader since the age of 8. I would rather sit and read a book than practically anything else there is. In fact, I have to leave the book I am currently reading in a place I only visit twice a day--so I DON'T sit around and spend my whole day reading!

I can't begin to tell you all the ways the Lord has touched me through books in my life. Even--and frankly, especially--fiction books written by Lovers of Jesus. I'll put it that way, because some Christian authors throw the Gospel in here and there. And some write Jesus into every character. This is what I have always wanted to do...

I've taken a couple of writing courses over the years. I have several stories sitting in a folder the professors said were 'submission worthy'. But I never got around to going any further. Life with 5 children and caring for my elderly mother and aunt until they went Home tended to put a kink in things for many, many years.

I've found that when He has given you a desire to do something, though, that can be an aid to the Kingdom, He trains you in this over time. Sometimes, a very LONG time!

A little over two and a half years ago, when the Lord started putting ideas in my mind to write a story, I was eager. But I never thought much would come from it. In fact, to my mind, it would only be a story or two. Something to enjoy creating, and then put back in my folder again.

But I've also found that, when it is Time; the right Time. And He has a particular thing He wants you to release to the Kingdom--it all starts to flow and blend and move together. You can FEEL when He is helping you--or when you are working under your own steam, so to speak!

So, what began as some thoughts about writing a few stories about the Fruits of the Spirit--ended up becoming a 15-chapter book. We (and I say that literally) wrote this book in a space of less than 2 months, He and I. For someone who had never before written more than a 10-page story...this, I've heard, is a phenomenal rate.

But I knew He was sitting just next to me. In fact, literally, He would give me an idea--and I would work to flesh it out. And when I got stuck--He would tell me more. There was no outline to this book, no 'plan', none of the proper ways of writing that I'd been taught. In fact, most of the time when we sat down, I would ask Him, "So...what's going to happen in THIS chapter?" Because I couldn't 'see' the end of the

story...yet!

This was just a matter of sensing when it was His time to sit and write. Asking Him, 'Where do we go next?' And listening to Him.

Sometimes His actual words. Sometimes He would simple play out a scene in my mind or bring up a memory of my life--and off we'd go. At the end of every chapter, I would sit back and be amazed at how He had just brought out Kingdom concepts so clearly, in thoughts I would never had come up with on my own.

The point I'm trying to make is--I needed to be willing and ready. And then follow with my heart and spirit His leading. Whenever I 'tried too hard'--the words would fall apart, and it all felt wrong and read wrong. If I relaxed and let the thoughts and words just flow--I was amazed at the end of that session what He had pulled out of my hand! I think this is the way He most delights in creating through us. Just take His hand, let go of our own opinions... and let it flow.

Now...some of you may not be terribly impressed with the finished product. And that's okay. There are definitely parts where I still see my own striving to 'write it my way.' This is a co-operative work of fiction. Not His literal Words, by any means!

But that's okay, too. He likes it. And there are many parts I still laugh, when I read them again. Special touches that He wrote into the story. I feel His love in these pages. For me. You see, ALL of the characters are in some way various parts of me. Both male and female. There are basic elements in every character that mirror my own life. Many of the events actually did happen to me. Some are still happening.

But I feel His love here. And I'm praying you will find His love for YOU there, too. That's the whole point, as far as I'm concerned.

To give you a really brief synopsis of the story (this is chapter is quite near the end). The character Hannah is a young girl who has seen her once happy family so attacked and fractured by life, that none of them are whole people anymore. They are all fractured in some way.

She has found Jesus as her savior, and He has introduced her to the Garden of her Heart. We all have one--in reality. A special place to go meet Him in the spirit. In this Garden, throughout the book, He teaches her various lessons. And is working to first rejoin her heart to her mother's heart. There has been a lot of damage between them.

The characters you'll meet here are: Hannah: the main character. Nana: her grandmother, who is a solid Believer and a prayer warrior. She had made it a weekly habit to read to Hannah and her little brother from the Narnia books by C.S. Lewis. Kamali: Hannah's guardian angel.

She's already had several instructional visits to the Garden, while she was dreaming, before we get to this point. The book she speaks of in the beginning was a rather hard lesson. And the gown she wears changes to reflect her growth in these lessons.

This time, Jesus is instructing her on how seeds from the enemy can get planted in the Garden. What our

Armor of God is and why we put it on. And how to fight what the seeds from the enemy do to our Garden, and how to remove them.

Clare and I thought this would be an interesting introduction to the coming teachings on the Armor of God.

This is chapter Thirteen, called Positively Negative

Hanna sat on Nana's bed, smoothing the quilted squares of the bedspread with her hand. Each one was so different; the colors, the fabrics, the patterns. It seemed like they didn't belong together, that they couldn't possibly work together to make a pleasing sight--yet they did.

Odd. She'd never thought of something like that before. She wondered where the thought came from now.

"Maybe I'm just avoiding the issue, here." She sighed, and tucked into the oversized pillow laying across her lap, curling up into a ball.

"Well, I'm here, Lord." She began. "Just like Majesty said You wanted. I'm not mad anymore--about the book and all. But I'm confused. Will you meet me now? Do I have to do something special, 'cause I'm not asleep?"

Instantly, Kamali stood next to her. With a smile, he reached out and laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Close your eyes, Little One, and relax. I will take you to the Garden."

Shaking her head in amazement, Hannah did as she was asked--and in moments she stood outside the Gate. Yes! She had on the same gown, but to her delight, this time it reached all the way down to the ground, and there was a very fine, scarlet thread running around the ruffle at the bottom. Something must have happened; she must have done something right, somewhere!

"He's expecting you, Hannah." Kamali prompted her. "Go ahead in and you'll find Him soon enough."

She nodded her head, pressed the key to the heart on her gown and walked through the opened Gate.

Something was different today. She couldn't quite put her finger on just what... but there was a ... taste? in the air. Or was it a smell? It was rancid though--that was what drew her attention to it. Sour. Fermented. No--bitter. It made her nose wrinkle and her taste buds stand on edge.

"Lord?" she called quietly. "Lord, what is this? What's happened?"

Jesus neither replied nor could be seen anywhere. And after walking all the way around to the end of the entrance path, Hannah was beginning to worry.

"I thought the dress ... I thought everything was okay again.

"Where is He? And what's making this awful smell here?"

"Lord...? Where are You? I'm getting scared now... "

She stood on the end stone, searching all the various flower beds and trees for a sign of Him. But now she noticed, off to the right just beyond the Chameleon Tree, some sort of strange-looking, brambly bush growing.

"I don't remember this plant," she said. "It doesn't look like anything I've ever seen growing here, either." Like everything else in the Garden--tree, plant, animal or even water--it seemed to be alive. But even that was somehow frightening.

As she stood looking at it, it began to grow--swiftly. Without warning, dozens of tendrils from the plant raced out along the ground, traveled around both sides of her--encircling her in their midst--and then grew higher than her head. Like a mouse lured into a trap, it soon surrounded and enclosed her in its midst like a net--with no way out.

"Jesus!" she panicked. "JESUS! Where are You??"

Instantly, He stood beside her. She turned to Him and threw herself at Him, burying her face in His chest, arms flung around His waist.

"Oh, Jesus! I'm so frightened! Where were You? What took You so long? What IS this!?"

He didn't respond right away, but just held her, looking off into the distance. The steady beat of His heart, and His hand smoothing the back of her head began to calm her a little, but she was puzzled at this quiet behavior. She lifted her head up to look in His face again. Why wasn't He answering? Where were the soothing words she expected?

The episodes with Kamali, the tree leaves, and even her behavior in the Office drifted through her mind... She was beginning to have a suspicion this plant wasn't just an accident. Or--as she first hoped--someone else's fault.

Finally, He looked down at her, with great compassion, and smiled. But His voice was firm.

"You allowed it to be planted here, Dear Hanna. You allowed this in."

Sadness. Pain. Love. Forgiveness--all tumbled around in His eyes together. And she couldn't hold His gaze.

"But how, Lord?" She let go of His waist and dropped her arms. "What do You mean? I don't understand... " her voice broke and she stepped back away from Him. "You keep telling me nothing here will hurt me. That everything here is Love." She raised her eyes to His again. "What? I don't understand, Lord. What is this?"

Jesus leaned forward and took both of her hands in His, searching her face, waiting for her to set aside her protests and really hear Him. "I am here, Dear one. And I am not leaving you alone. But you need to listen now and learn.

"No--nothing here will harm you--I will not allow it. But that doesn't mean you, yourself, can't let things come in to this place that are not of My Kingdom."

He smiled at her then, raised His hand--and immediately the layers and growth of the plant ceased. "What our Enemy meant for evil, I will always turn to Good."

He gathered her back into His arms again, His sweet breath flowing down over the top of her head.

"I will be asking you a serious question, very soon.

"Are you ready, Dear one?"

Hanna didn't know what He meant by that, but His very presence was giving her a courage she didn't know she had. She sniffed, and nodded her head, 'yes.'

"When I first brought you here," He continued, wiping a stray tear that had escaped and was tracing down her cheek. "I told you that nothing dies here. Nothing gets destroyed or harmed or broken. Not if you are doing your job. This is the part of My instruction you have forgotten. Do you remember now? My job is to Teach and show you the way to Love. Your job is to tend to the attitudes of your heart, and not allow those that are not motivated by Love.

"Do you remember?"

She looked up into His face. Even though this was a "scolding" of sorts, Love still poured out through His eyes on her. This wasn't going to be pleasant--she knew it. But all of a sudden, it didn't matter anymore.

"Yes, Lord. I remember."

"And have you not been taught that all things negative are not of My Kingdom?"

This was a more indirect question, but as she looked into His eyes, she began to understand. Looking around now at the living cage they were surrounded by, concentration drew her brows together.

Positive in the Narnian books was what she would call Good. Kind. Pleasant. Caring. Loving. Positive in the Bible was the same way--Good King David. The Good Samaritan. The Fruits of the Spirit--Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Goodness, Kindness. Positive things.

Negative would then equal Bad. Wicked. Evil. Dark. The kingdom of her Enemy. Again, the comparisons came through her mind. The wicked White Witch. The horrible creatures who surrounded her and attacked Narnia. Uncle Digory, from a different book in the series. In the Bible--Cain. King Ahab and Jezebel. Goliath. Pontius Pilate, who allowed Jesus to be taken to the Cross, even though he knew the Lord was innocent of the crimes He was being condemned for.

It was clear as day now.

"Yes, Lord. I see. I do." Her eyebrows drew even tighter. "But what does that have to do with me and this awful plant?"

He squatted down now and plucked a small pink flower. Holding it to His nose, He asked, "When you entered the Garden, what did you smell?"

The smell was still all around them, even worse now that the plant surrounded them.

"Yuck! Rank ... Sour!"

"Bitter?" He cocked His head with the question.

"Yes! Bitter--I can taste it, it's all over my tongue!"

Back in teaching mode, He stood up again and tucked the flower behind her left ear.

"Then let's look at the past few days of your life and let's see if you can figure this out."

He waved His hand and the atmosphere seemed to part a little, just over her head. She could see colors forming, then a clear image of herself came into focus. She saw the morning, two days ago, where Dad was reaming out Evan for wearing his dirty shoes in the house. As she watched, she saw in the spirit what she hadn't felt in the flesh--a small, hunched creature jumped up on her shoulder, reading her ugly thoughts towards her father. It whispered into her ear even more nasty thoughts and they mingled together in her mind. She could see an opaque copy of herself--within herself--agreeing with the thoughts, both her own and the creature's.

A small "door," an opening, appeared in the copy body, near where a fleshly heart would be found--and the creature reached out, planted a small, dark seed inside and then followed it in.

Hanna drew in a sharp breath. "What IS that thing? And what did it just do??" Her nose wrinkled up as she turned to ask Him. "What's that thing that looks like me inside of me, too?"

His eyes twinkled down at her, even as His face stayed serious.

"That thing that looks like you is your soul. You are really a Soul walking around in a body. It is your soul that feels and remembers, that makes your mind and body do the things you do. It will be your soul that comes to Me at the end of your life, to Heaven. Or before. But that's a question for another time.

"That thing on your shoulder is a minion of the Enemy, more commonly called a demon. They are like My ... policemen in the world. Totally under MY control--although

both they and Satan have fooled themselves to believe that they act under their own authority. NONE of them do anything that I do not allow, control, and stop when My purpose is completed."

Hannah looked at Him incredulously. "Then You KNEW it was there? And You LET it crawl ..." She shuddered. "... inside of my soul?"

"Is it still there?!" Panic began to rise in her.

"Be calmed, Little One. Did I not just tell you that they are under My total control? And have I not told

you that NOTHING will harm you--but instead, I will turn all things to Good?"

"Yeeees ... " her eyes still mirrored her panic. "But I don't want that thing around me even! Where is it now?"

"It resides in the spirit dimension, not your physical one. But it surely has been allowed to affect you in the realm of the spirit--your soul. Left there long enough, it would begin to affect your physical body, as well."

He held her face in His hands for a moment, then tenderly said, "Hanna, dear one. These things that I say are to inform you--not to frighten you. I am in total control.

"Let's continue watching," And He waved His hand again.

And that's where I'm going to finish this part of the chapter, and we'll call this part one. And then I'll read the rest of this story and we'll post it as part two.

God bless you, Heartdwellers.

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