

# *crafted* **NOTES**

5-Year Blogiversary Special: a collection of selected blogposts



Alexandra Zion

...where the pen, the soul, and the lips connect.

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## Welcome!

*Thank you for downloading this eBook in honor of my 5th blogiversary. This is a milestone for me, and I'm glad to have you share in my joy. However this book finds its way to you, I hope the words speak to you in amazing ways. I hope you find value in them and that you share this new-found value with others.*

*Thank you for your time! Keep scrolling. I bet you're in for a treat!*



## Table Of Contents

The Difference Between the Called and the Chosen	4
I Kissed Porn Goodbye: Roo's Salvation Story	8
Forgiveness is not Amnesia	16
identity crisis	25
15 Poems for Adults Who Want to be Children Again	28
This Will Assure You of God's Protection	38
BE BOLD: Celebrating International Women's Day 2017	43
Seven Years A Believer: It Only Gets Better!	51
Cutting Corners: Lessons from Steven Furtick	55
How I Learned Six Gems of Success from My First Hourglass	59
On My Natural Hair Journey + All The Tips	65
2 Things I Just Discovered In the Bible	73
Why I Haven't Stopped Journaling in 9 Years	77
The Tiring Thing About Do's and Don'ts	83



O Jewa Ke Eng?	88
Delete the "Offender's" Screenshots TOO	93
8 lbs. OFF in 16 Days (No Exercise!)	97
Get Up & Go: Must-See Scenes from Acts 9	104
Waiting is A Type of Movement Too	109
My Forbes Under 30 Summit Experience	114
What Do I Do When I Feel Defeated?	121
How I Launched My 8-Month-Old Poetry Podcast with \$20	127
The ABCs of Building A Relationship with God	139
notes on helplessness, empathy, writer's block, #endsars, war rooms, and hope	145
The Death Conversation	153

# The Difference Between the Called and the Chosen

2019/01/12

8:47am

*Category: Faith*

## Hello Royalty.

Today's post is inspired by something I discovered on Monday, the 7th, during Bible Study. As I said in our [first post this year](#), I am currently following a 365-day Bible plan. However, I started another Bible Plan called "Less of Me, More of Him: A Fasting Devotional by Jentezen Franklin". He encouraged us to read Matthew 22 and focus on verse 37. Somehow, I found myself reading verses 1-14 over and over again.

It is about the parable of the Great Feast as spoken by Jesus. Jesus "illustrated the Kingdom of Heaven by the story of a king who prepared a great wedding feast for his son" (verse 2 NLT). This king invited particular people, but they refused to come. Then he instructed another set of servants to tell them, "The feast has been prepared. The bulls and fattened cattle have been killed, and everything is ready. Come to the banquet" (I mean, who does not want some of that smoked jollof rice and peppered beef!). But alas, they ignored the servants again. Some of the invited even insulted and killed the servants.



Now what? The king was furious. Long story short, he told the servants to go out to the street corners and invite everyone they find. The servants did as they were told and the banquet hall was filled! This is where I am going: The king came in to meet his guests, and the Bible says, "he noticed a man who wasn't wearing the proper clothes for a wedding" (verse 11 NLT). Do you know what the king did? First, he asked his guest why, and the guest had no reply. Then, he said to his servants, " 'Bind his hands and feet and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth...For many are

called and few are chosen.' "

Then I saw it!

For the first time, I questioned: "What/Who determines the chosen?" "Is it the one who chooses?" "Or the one who is chosen?" I had all of these questions in my head and in my study journal. If you are like me, you were first made to understand this verse as a way to show that God chooses us based on preference. I mean, people say "Many are called, but few are chosen" in that pity, sorry-if-you-are-not-chosen tone. But if you read and re-read the context of this verse in Matthew 22 with the help of the Holy Spirit, you will realize that the one who is chosen is the one who determines his status.

The king called everyone. The Bible says, “the good and bad alike” and that is a clear example of our God of mercy and our God who shows no favoritism (Acts 10:34-35). However, the king stepped into the banquet hall, and there is someone who stands out to him – **the man who was not prepared**. As I type this, I remember the one time my parents left me at home because I was not ready in time to go to church. I mean, church is for everybody yeah? But I was not “prepared” and they would not allow me delay them, so *bye girl!*



Royalty, we are all called, but are we all ready? This post is speaking to me as much as it is to you. In fact, I have not stopped thinking about it since Monday. Are all of our hearts available? It is the availability and preparedness of our hearts that determines whether we will be chosen or not. In essence, our choice determines His choice. For better understanding, try to see this through the perspective of job interviews and the one who is eventually employed. The employer sees “something” in the applicant that makes him/her say, “You got the job!”

What does God see in you? A heart that is available? Even if you think you do not have it altogether...if he has called you, it means you are a candidate for His choice. Matthew 22:14 in the TPT version says, "For everyone is invited to enter in, but few respond in excellence." I am still lost for words by this discovery (even if I have typed so much lol), but you get what I mean.

This is my resolve in 2019 – to respond in excellence to God's plans for my life. I prayed, "Lord, help me to respond in excellence to your plans for my life in Jesus' name." He knows we do not have it altogether, and sometimes, we do not even feel half-ready for the things He has called us to do. But without an available, ready-to-be-ready heart, we run the risk of losing it all. As I typed this post, I heard Him say, "There is no difference between the ones who ignored the invitation and the ones who were not prepared for the feast."

Okay Royalty, my two cents delivered. I want to see you break barriers in 2019, so we can all write a testimony at the end of the year! Leave a comment...at least, try. I know you like to be a ghost reader, but it's all I am asking for on this post. I really want to know your thoughts. Use an undercover name if you will e.g Prepared Wedding Guest, but leave a comment.

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.



# I Kissed Porn Goodbye: Roo's Salvation Story

2017/02/23

5:44am

*Category: Faith - Salvation Stories*

## Hello Royalty!

My....! It feels so good to be back here right now. I haven't blogged in a week and I feel so bad about it. I apologize for my silence also and I hope you forgive me.

I remember telling you that Friday posts for February would be centered on Salvation stories. This particular one ought to have come last week but stuff happened; I needed some bodily rest and check up. But yes, I'm very fine now.

I hope you enjoy this post and learn from it as much as I have.

### ROO'S SALVATION STORY

*It all started when I was 5. It was break time in school and for the first time, I played football with a group of boys, even though I injured my knee almost immediately because I fell.*

*From that day, it became a daily thing for me, which was on one hand, molding me to act like a boy but as a child, I didn't see it that way. I thought I was growing like every other child. I led march pasts and kept acting like a boy. In all of this, I used to steal and my parents beat heaven and hell out of me. Funny enough, it really didn't change anything. I still stole from them. Well, as at Primary 5 I was already acting totally like a boy. It became part of me and I embraced it.*

*After my Primary 5, I travelled and was so happy that I was finally going to get into Secondary School when I get back from my trip. During the break, I had 2 encounters that made my life take a bad turn and trust me, I didn't like the turn my life took but I could do nothing about it.*

*One of the encounters goes thus: before I begin, bear in mind that I loved video games and was very addicted to it. So during the break, I was playing football in front of my grandma's house and my cousin called me to one of my aunt's house to play some games. When we got there, he told me that his friend was bringing the game and we should watch a movie. My cousin's friend joined us and soon, the movie took a sudden turn but I didn't understand what was going on. I was just 10 years old. I wasn't sharp enough to know that it was porn; I began enjoying it but wasn't aroused at all. Then, my cousin decided to excuse himself.*

*I was left with the friend and we were both sitting in different chairs then all of a sudden I realized that he was sitting on the hand of my chair. Before I knew what was happening, he started touching me. I warned him that I wasn't comfortable with what he was doing but he never spoke a word. We started struggling and I was really using everything I had to fight him until I shouted his name then he let me go. It was then I realized that I was about to be raped. I immediately left the house and went back to my grandma's house; I didn't talk to anyone. I just walked straight back.*

\*\*\*

*Still recovering from my first encounter, I was sent on an errand to that same aunt's house. I got to my aunt's house and the person I was sent to wasn't around, so I started my journey back to my grandma's house to relay the message that I didn't see who I was sent to. On my way, a man called me. He sent me to buy him some groundnut. I did that, but when I got back to his house, he wasn't outside anymore. I then knocked and he told me to come in; he offered me a seat and some drink but I refused. He then walked towards me and tried touching me but I resisted his touch. I told him I had to go and he let me after asking me where I live, but he gave a time limit to come back and shockingly, he came looking for me in front of my grandma's house. I didn't go out again, at least not till I got back to my house in Lagos.*



*On getting back to Lagos, I was a different person without knowing. I was already looking for ways to watch porn but wasn't able to because I had no device. I got into Secondary School when I got back and while in school, I was totally acting like a boy and I started getting attracted to girls. It was catching up on me in the sense that I even summoned the courage to ask a girl that if I were a boy, would she go out with me. She laughed and told me no. I never knew I was becoming bisexual, in the sense that I still had feelings for guys. I went through Secondary School liking her unknowingly but also having different male crushes. About 3 years after, I was already watching porn through different mediums. I was watching porn but I was very careful in how and when I watched porn. I was able to know certain people that had it and where they hid it in their devices. I literally searched every device I could just hunting for porn*

*In the midst of this, I was still stealing, not just from my parents but also people around me. I stopped when one of my step-brothers flogged me with a wire so fat. I couldn't believe my eyes. He folded the very thick wire into four and flogged stealing out of it. Around that time, I gave my life to Christ and couldn't believe how such an experience led me into giving my life to Christ. But I was still watching porn even after this experience.*

*I went to a new Secondary School. Somehow, I had forgotten about my little male and female crushes. Well, moving on, I started craving for sex due to my addiction for porn. I didn't know what I was doing but I was just doing it (looking for love in weird, wrong places). I cut my hair in JSS3 and met this guy at the barbing salon; he seemed so sweet about everything. I don't know how he did it. He told me a lot of things about himself and I started 'falling' for him. I joined 2go and that was the beginning of the end. I started sex-chatting with various people. Some of them taught me how to masturbate and taught me a lot of things about sex. I was 13 or 14 (I really can't remember). Well, I met some guy at that point in time when I had the other guy from the salon and 2go was confusing my brain. This new guy was quite old and I didn't mind because he was meeting my needs, which at that point in time was airtime that he used to send me: N100 daily, 7 days a week. Well, in the process, this guy was really serious about marrying me but I refused. He then begged me that he wants to come and visit me. Luckily for him, I let him in and he took my cherry. After that experience, I hated him so much and I couldn't fathom why. I told him that I never wanted to talk to him and till today I haven't heard from him.*

★★

*The guy from the salon started inviting me to see him in various places but at that point in time, I didn't go to see him no matter how much he begged me. Then later on, I succumbed to his stupid begs and I went to see him in a compound so weird and I didn't understand what he wanted to do. I was naïve. I went there and he literally raped me and told me that if I got pregnant, it wasn't his and then I wasn't happy with him and myself but he gave me some money I think it was to console me, I collected it and left. He told me again that he wanted to see me and I actually went again this time; I gave him permission to go on. This went on for almost 2 years and every time we were done having sex, he gave a very little amount of money.*

*Sometime in July, my cousin told another of my cousin about what he heard about me and from then, I noticed that my cousin was watching me too closely. I didn't ask her why. If I were to buy something, she would time me and all. I didn't suspect because I believed that what I had done was in secret and that nobody knew about it. My cousin out of anger told my mum what I had done and my mum confronted me, called me names asked me why I did it and I couldn't answer that question (I really still don't why I did it).*

*After all the confrontations, I resumed in Covenant University and met Pastor Ada Sonia and she spoke to me. Everything she preached about was as if she was talking to me directly. I gave my life to Christ so many times. Still, while I was in CU, my attraction to girls started again but it ended in my 2<sup>nd</sup> year. I was able to overcome it. During my 3<sup>rd</sup> year in school, I struggled with pornography and masturbation. I felt like I needed to talk to someone and I did. I told her and she told me that it's only God that can tell me what to do and how to do it. I rededicated my life to God but I still went back.*

*In my 4<sup>th</sup> year, I resumed again with the same struggle and I talked to my friend again and she told me the same thing but this time she prayed with me and told me she would get back to me. I wasn't able to get over it. I got back the next semester and it got to the height, I was ready to kill myself to let go of all these stress, strategizing how the fall would look like an accident. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of January, 2017, I was so sure that that was the end of me. I went around looking for people to talk to but all my confidants were not in the hall but for one reason or the other, I came back to my room and wrote a suicide note and slept off. Something happened on that day that made me kind of scared. I went to chapel that morning for Tuesday Chapel Service and then the Chaplain said something that hit me but I reluctantly left it, the dean spoke and related to the same thing, I went for my first class and the lecturer said the same thing, and at the beginning of the last class, the lecturer amazed me by saying the same thing. I don't remember what they said but they were all in sync. I gave the note I wrote earlier on to my friend that has been helping me and she told me that she almost cried because the Holy Spirit had already sent her to me but she had been postponing and on the spot, she talked to me about a lot of things and asked me if I was ready to give my life to Christ for the last time and I said yes. I did give my life to Christ. I contemplated it for a minute or 2 knowing that if I step out of that place, I wouldn't have thought about it again, I would have just been postponing it. By the time, she asked me to give my life to Christ, it was already past 12 on the 18<sup>th</sup>, January 2017.*

\*

*Since that day, she told me to read my Bible more often and she also told me I already had a relationship with God, I just had to build it. God has been so faithful that since that day, I have been a very different person. Some people noticed and many didn't. I met someone that has changed my mentality and also my way of thinking towards so many things. Love and all. I'm not saying I'm in love but I think I understand what it means to be a girl. I have been trying to change since that day. I've been making serious efforts towards it.*

*Today, I stand boldly to say that I'm the chaplain on my floor and also the captain of the female football team and I cannot readily say that I have been encouraged with the people that come for devotion but God is awesome and he cannot fail me. The 18<sup>th</sup> of February made it ONE month of me being in Christ and I haven't had any iota of regret. Not even for a second.*

### **GOD IS GREAT!**

Well done! And yes, thank you so so much for reading.

Remember to share and comment and oh yes, respond to that pop up and subscribe if you haven't. February Newsletter is just on it's way (for subscribers only!)

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.

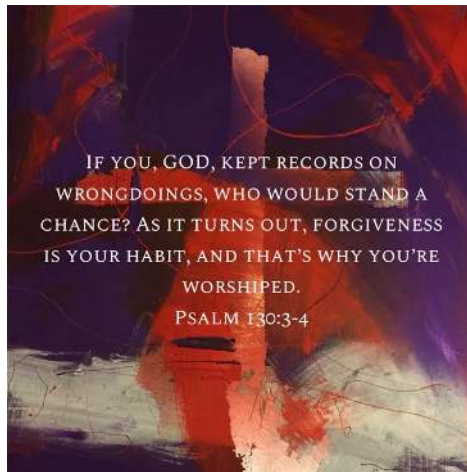
## Forgiveness is not Amnesia

2018/10/03

12:03pm

Category: Faith

### Hello Royalty.



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Writing this post is like lifting a particular burden off of my chest. This title has been in my drafts for as long as I can remember. I remember coming up with the title after almost drowning in the dilemma of what “forgive and forget” actually means for us as human beings, and especially as Christians. Then, I am hit with verses like Hebrews 8:12 where God says, “I will remember your sins no more”, and this is me wondering *wait. so my sins are just wiped out like that? No traces. Nothing. God doesn't remember I did this or that. But then God isn't a God who is forgetful. Isn't He the one who knows the end from the beginning and the beginning from the end?*

All of these thoughts led to my quest for answers about what forgiveness TRULY means. Some people have tried to describe this act of God not remembering our sins anymore as God putting those sins “behind his back”, and that we also should put people’s “sins” behind our backs. But please, isn’t that only a figurative thingy? What if I look back...or say God looks back in reflection? Guess what? The sin is right there, reminding us of itself.



Then, some ridiculously described it as God having selective memory. Nahhhh. That’s not it either. Selective what? So let’s even play that out – maybe God says *I choose not to remember you committed adultery* but does it occur to you that in the process of choosing not to remember, there is still a remembrance, so do you reallyyy forget?





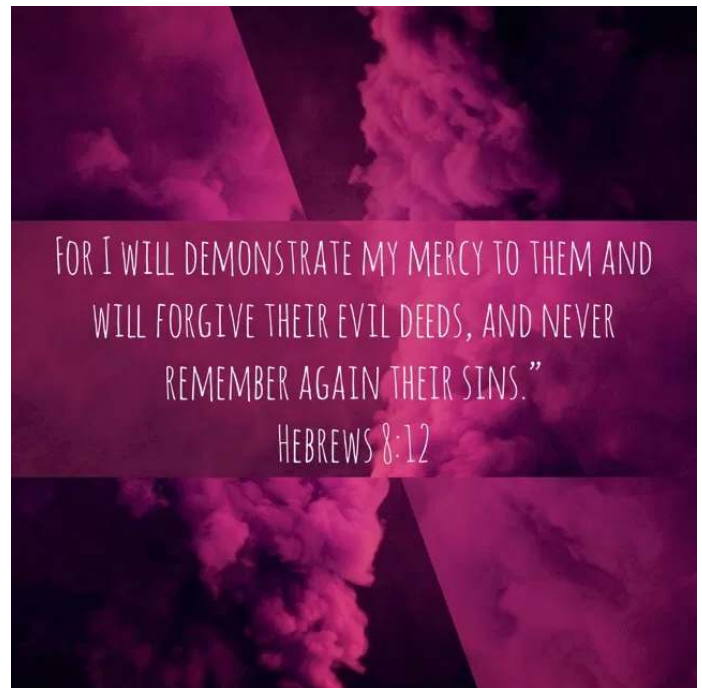
So, in this post, my goal is to help us look at God as the standard. What is the model of forgiveness that we see in Scriptures? Because guess what? If you are made in the image of God, the connotation is that you have God's nature in you, and that you have every capacity to fully forgive because the One who created you is a forgiving father. How does he do it? How does he forgive sins, then remembers them no more? What's the secret?

**The secret is: God sees you as new.**

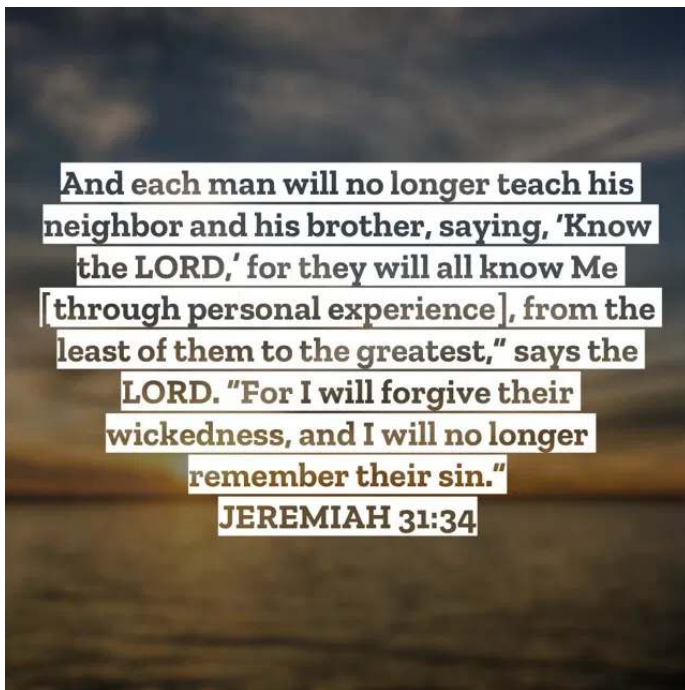




Now you're probably like *duh of course I knew that*. Well, please read on so you know if you really know and understand that. Let's use a scenario: you are a murderer and I mean a hard-core hired assassin, who has killed, say, forty (40) people, but then one day, you come to the realization of what Christ has done for you on the cross and you become born again. When this happens, forgiveness happens. God does this and He says, "Son, Daughter, you are as good as new." Then, you come across Isaiah 43:25 or Jeremiah 31:34 or Hebrews 10:12-14, and you are elated that God "forgets" your sin. You think God has amnesia, sis? NO. He doesn't.



Created with the YouVersion Bible App



And each man will no longer teach his neighbor and his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me [through personal experience], from the least of them to the greatest," says the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness, and I will no longer remember their sin."  
JEREMIAH 31:34

BUT WHEN THIS PRIEST HAD OFFERED THE ONE SUPREME SACRIFICE FOR SIN FOR ALL TIME HE SAT DOWN ON A THRONE AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, WAITING UNTIL ALL HIS WHISPERING ENEMIES ARE SUBDUED AND TURN INTO HIS FOOTSTOOL. AND BY HIS ONE PERFECT SACRIFICE HE MADE US PERFECTLY HOLY AND COMPLETE FOR ALL TIME!

HEBREWS 10:12-14

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So what exactly does this mean? It means God now sees you in a new light! He no longer sees you as that hired assassin or murderer; he sees you as changed. You have a clean slate – you have literally just come out of the womb again (born again) and your life is like a *tabula rasa* (those compulsory uni courses are paying off yoh). But then, yes! He no longer sees you as a sinner, but as a son. But aren't these easy descriptions? How do you even know this is true? This is where the true test of forgiveness comes in.

So, you have a new vision to begin a church or a Bible Study class, and God does not say, "Oh I know you're forgiven, but because you killed the mother of that girl who would be in your Bible Study class, I won't let you lead that class. You've gotta shoo." NO. The all-forgiving, all-loving, ever-merciful Father says, "You are no longer who you used to be, child, and your past does not define you. Take the stage." That is what "I will remember your sins no more" means!

## THE MODEL OF FORGIVENESS

Before you say *Alex this is just a story*, let's go to the Bible. In Acts 9, we see the conversion of Saul to Paul (please read it). After visiting Saul, God appeared to Ananias in verses 10-12 saying, **“Go at once to the street called Abundance and look for a man from Tarsus named Saul. You will find him at Judah’s house. While he was praying, he saw in a supernatural vision a man named Ananias coming to lay hands upon him to restore his sight.”**and like most of us would have responded, Ananias goes, “But Lord” in the sense of *What? Saul? Saul?? The same Saul?* and he says, “many have told me about his terrible persecution of those in Jerusalem who are devoted to you.”<sup>14</sup> In fact, the high priest has authorized him to seize and imprison all those in Damascus who call on your name.” Guess what? God exclaims, “Arise and go!”

You see that? This is the ultimate of forgiveness for us as humans and this is our model. This is why we came up with things like “forgive and forget” in an attempt to define God’s nature of remembering our sins no more. God’s standard is that after you claim to have forgiven the one who has hurt you, who do you see? Do you still see a heart-breaker or do you see a great guy? Do you see that backbiter or do you see a special girl?



When God says, "I remember your sins no more", He is not telling us He has amnesia or a selective memory; He means I don't see you in the light of what you have done. I don't use your past as a determinant for your future. I don't say *oh because your body count was 20 before you became born again, you are not entitled to a good marriage*. NO. Not the God that I serve.

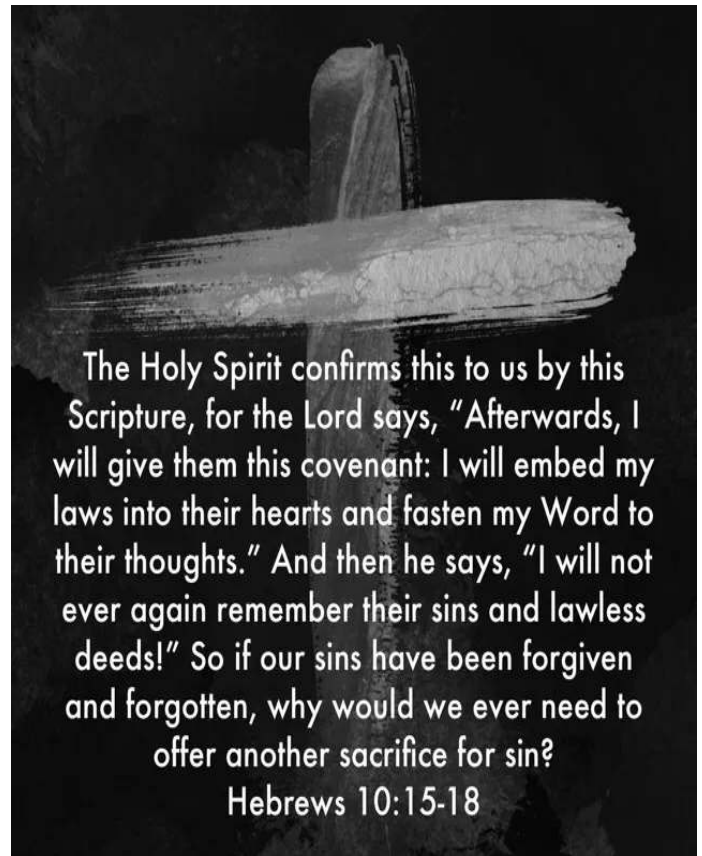
So next time you claim to have forgiven a person, ask yourself, "When his/her name pops up, what do I think of first? If I have the opportunity to move this person up the ladder of life, will I do it or will I drag the person down altogether?" Forgiveness is not staying 10,000 miles away and hoping that you never cross paths.

No, forgiveness is letting go of the hurt and the pain; it is seeing the person in new light and knowing that whether you cross paths or not, it's all good. And this applies to you too when it comes to forgiving yourself. When you make mistakes and you come to forgive yourself, do not see an adulterer in the mirror. When you have a flashback of what life used to be, let it be that you can laugh it off because you know that old person exists no more.

**Let me break the ice here: IT IS HARD. IT TAKES TIME. Again, IT IS HARD, but IT IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE.**



Sigh this is the longest post I have typed in my history of blogging. This post is speaking to me as much as it is to you. You might be in the process of forgiving; you might just be starting out. But any time you find it hard, ask yourself, *if God were to judge me by all the lies I have told, would I even be here today, smiling and getting it?* So yeah, while we acknowledge that total forgiveness, the type that Christ modeled, is almost an unattainable, utopian life for the Christian, because the flesh tempts us to judge people by what they have done in the past, whether we still hold grudges or not, it is not an impossible task.



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In case you are hurting right now from your own mistakes or someone else's, I pray that the Holy Spirit grants you the strength and grace to let go of the hurt and pain. I pray you are granted peace that passes all understanding and that you are given grace to see the offender in new light, in Jesus' name. AMEN.

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.

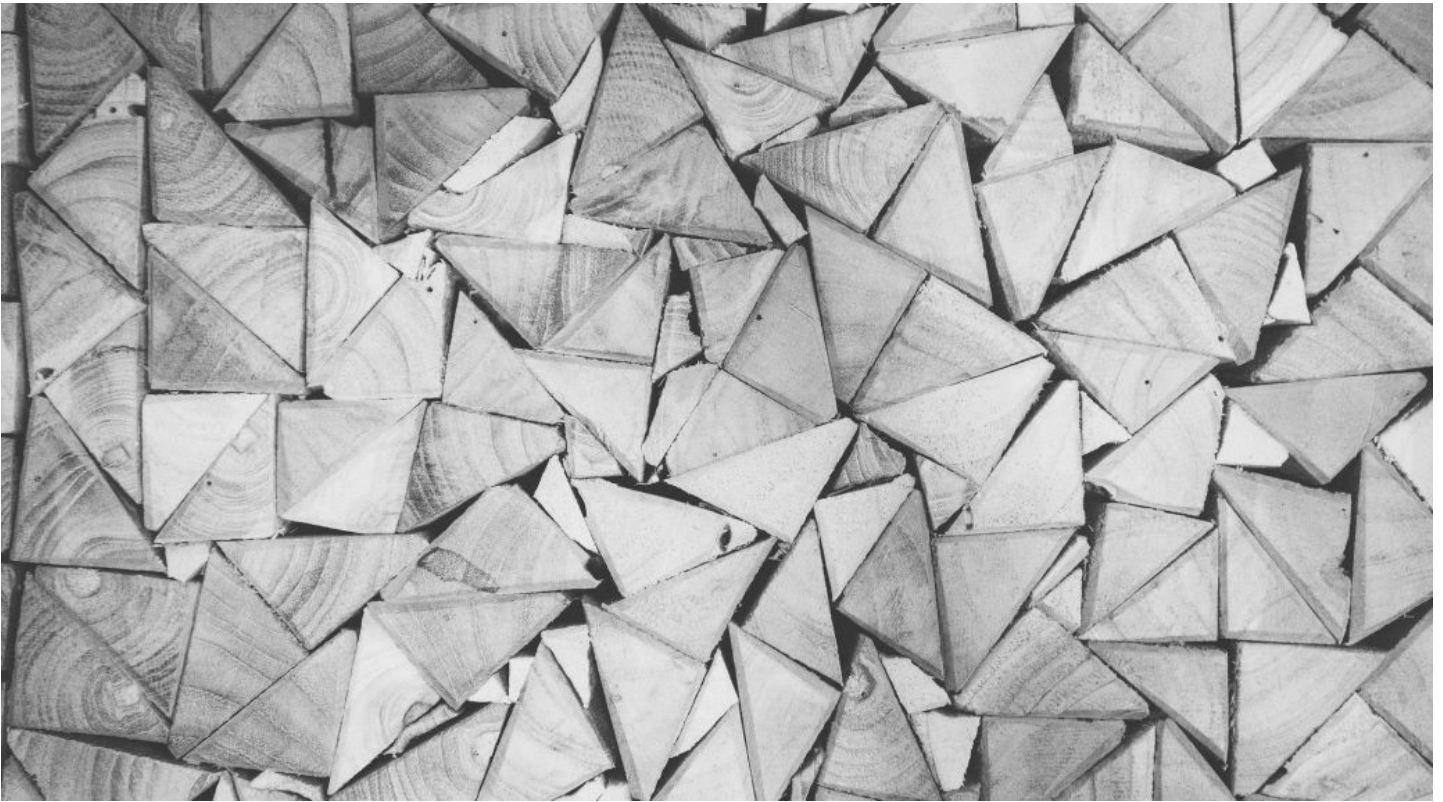
## identity crisis

2017/09/15

11:34am

*Category: Poems & Stories*

### Hello Royalty.



Today's story is for you when trying to be someone else, or believing Old Nick's lie of "Not Enough"

\_\_\_\_\_

It was midday on Tuesday in JSS3B. Her name was Shanika, or so we knew her to be before her grandmother showed up at school. I remember the young woman at quite an old age. She had her wrapper firmly tied around her waist. Her black eyes still glistened and her legs moved briskly as she combed the campus for the principal's office. I remember how all the girls including myself, and except Shanika, twisted our necks and turned our chairs, each of us dreaming to be that beautiful when we were old.

"Shanika?" Tunde called, "Isn't that your grandmother?"

We all knew her. We had seen her face many times as she peeped out of the rickety Mazda that came by 4pm to pick Shanika up. She had a huge grin on her face every time; the kind of grin which told you she was proud to have an educated granddaughter. Before Shanika could reply Tunde, our new principal showed up, with 'grandma'.

"I'm sure she's not in this class" the principal said.

"Asake temi! This is her class..." the woman retorted, in a roof-tearing voice.

*Asake?* Perplexity came over everyone.

The woman pointed to Shanika, whose head was now buried in her palms.

"That's Esther" the principal claimed.



Yes we knew her as Esther too, but she preferred her other name: Shanika. But it soon dawned on us all that she had not been given the name by her other grandmother – her American grandmother. She had probably also lied about being born in America.

*Asake?* But that's a beautiful name. She was 'born to be pampered'. Why was Shanika ever embarrassed by such an amazing meaning?

It's been twenty years now and I wonder where Shanika is. I wonder if she joins the fake accent folk on Instagram, if she has a closet full of silicone butt pads or if she loves the unabridged reflection in the mirror.

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.

## 15 Poems for Adults Who Want to be Children Again

2018/10/17

12:13pm

*Category: Poems & Stories*

### Hello Royalty.

The process of getting your life together can be such a big deal, so much that you begin to feel like a mess. They call it “adulting” right? Yes, I can relate with all those inadequacies, so here are a few notes for you when you feel nothing like the shining star, but everything like the diapers, empty tins of milk and twisted straws tied up in that black bag.

For you...

I.

Today, I woke up

And I hit my left foot on the ground first.

Mama would have called it a bad omen.

So, I quickly got on my knees.

Jesus. I am tired.

Take all of my weaknesses and inadequacies,

Take all of my frailties and weariness

And exchange them.

Exchange them for your peace.

Exchange them for your strength.

II.

They said "Be yourself."

Why not start with "Know yourself"

For how possible is it

To be who I don't know.

III.

Adulthood is the synonym

for uncertainty.

#### IV.

They have come

Ehen? monitoring spirits...

What have we on the morning news?

They have come to probe me

"Do you have a job now?"

"What next?"

"When will you get married too?"

"Ah long time. Our iyawo"

Then they smirk

"How are the children?"

Knowing very well

That there's none yet.

V.

Instagram is a part of life.

Having an account may be important.

But living,

Living without filters:

That one is important.

VI.

In between taking the risks and staying careful,

You will find insanity.

Insanity which sees possibility.

Insanity like the nature of

your dreams and imaginations.

Insanity like the goals which haunt you

at the break of dawn.

Insanity that is really sane,

if you think again.

**VII.**

A graduate.

What? 24?

You are now a big girl oh.

Congratulations!

And so the journey begins

with phone calls of ecstasy,

and testimonies of

“Pinch me and tell me it’s actually real”

But the journey continues,

the journey continues with determination.



VIII.

Yesterday,

away from the bustle and yellow of Lagos,

I had a naming ceremony

for my goals.

Perfection is not it.

Progress is the baby's name.

IX.

Wayo Wayo no be comeback option.

Its hammer will drive no nails in.

*\*Wayo Wayo is a Nigerian slang term for fraudulent behavior.*

X.

Ugly.

Worthless.

Full of shit.

And you?

You permit the words to slip

Into the bowls of your head.

Broken yolk and albumen,

Waiting to be whisked

By insecurity and depression.

But don't you see?

Don't you see cataract in their eyes?

XI.

Impact or Fame pact?



Which do you strive for?

It will always be influence over popularity.

Don't listen to the lies.

XII.

Ore,

Come closer.

The next time their Adam's apples

dance in their throats,

Or their hips take up all your space,

Only to tell you "You know you can't make it"

Ore,

Say nothing,

but remember to pack your bags.

**XIII.**

I know "dream" is the first word

in your dictionary,

"goals" is the second, and

"influence" is the third.

But I'm looking for another,

I'm looking for "consistency."

**XIV.**

Don't say no one told you

adulting will be hard.

These are not things to tell.

No one tells a caterpillar it will

become a butterfly,

But it is consumed

By a compulsion to transmogrify

And you too,

with all your yearnings to make it,

must fly.

**XV.**

Evolving?

Adulting?

I call it

Seriously dependent on Jesus.

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.

## This Will Assure You of God's Protection

2020/04/18

10:00am

*Category: Faith*

### Hello Royalty!

I hope you're staying safe and hope-filled in this period. What I'm about to share today is a never-before-experienced understanding that I gained from Bible Study time this week, precisely on Wednesday. This is a chapter of the Bible that I have read countless times in the past, but I just never saw it in this light until now.

I am talking bout **Psalm 46**. If you will, please open Psalm 46 with me as you read this post. You can do that with a physical copy of the Bible, on your Bible app, or just by googling it. From verses 1-3, we are assured that God is our refuge and strength, and that's so comforting especially in times like this. However, I'm going to dwell on verses 4-5.

In verse 4, it says, *“a river brings joy to the city of our God, the sacred home of the Most High”* and in verse 5, it says, *“God dwells in that city; it cannot be destroyed. From the very break of day, God will protect it”* (NLT). In the past, I think I usually held on to verse 5, without paying much attention to verse 4. On Wednesday, I stopped and asked myself, “What river?” Considering the different situations in today’s society, I really wanted to know what kind of river brings joy to God’s city. Was it prayer? Was it praise? What exactly is the river?



Source: Unsplash

Follow me closely. I started to search scriptures and read commentaries, and here's what I found: In Jeremiah 2:13, we see God speaking through Jeremiah. He says, ***"For my people have done two evil things: they have abandoned me – the fountain of living water. And they have dug for themselves cracked cisterns that can hold no water at all"*** (NLT). So, God refers to himself as the fountain of living water. Hold that thought and let's look at another part of the Bible.

In Zechariah 13:1, the Bible foreshadows the coming of Christ by saying, ***"on that day, a fountain will be opened for the dynasty of David and for the people of Jerusalem, a fountain to cleanse them from all their sins and impurity"*** (NLT). So, we see Jesus being referred to as a fountain. Again, hold that thought while we look at three more verses.

In John 7:38 – 39, Jesus makes a promise about the Holy Spirit for all who believe in Him. He says, ***"37 Then on the most important day of the feast, the last day, Jesus stood and shouted out to the crowds — All you thirsty ones, come to me! Come to me and drink! 38 Believe in me so that rivers of living water will burst out from within you, flowing from your innermost being, just like the Scripture says!" 39 Jesus was prophesying about the Holy Spirit that believers were being prepared to receive. But the Holy Spirit had not yet been poured out upon them, because Jesus had not yet been unveiled in his full splendor."*** (TPT) This verses tell us that the Holy Spirit, whose dispensation we are in right now, is called rivers of living water.

So, back to our question: what is this river? The answer is: God is the river. God the Father is the river, God the Son is the river, and God the Spirit is the river! Let's look closely at Psalm 46:4 now *"a river brings joy to the city of our God, the sacred home of the Most High"* The city being referred to here is Zion, and as believers, we already know that we are the city of God – individually and as a body (See 1 Corinthians 6:19). So, you can say based on your understanding now, *"God the Father, Son, and Spirit brings joy to me, the sacred home of the Most High"* and for verse 5, you can say, *"God dwells in me; I cannot be destroyed. From the very break of day, God will protect me."*



Source: Unsplash



Remember Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well? Jesus said to her in verses 13-14, *"13 'If you drink from Jacob's well you'll be thirsty again and again, 14 but if anyone drinks the living water I give them, they will never thirst again and will be forever satisfied! For when you drink the water I give you it becomes a gushing fountain of the Holy Spirit, springing up and flooding you with endless life!"*

I was jumping for joy when I saw all of this. Even now as I type this, I am elated. Here's what I wrote in my Bible Study journal: "This peace, joy, security etc. are not outside of me; they are inside me!!!" So, as believers, we have the river of joy on our inside – God himself has made us his habitation, the only one who is our refuge and strength dwells inside everyone of us. Of course, we cannot be destroyed!

Have a wonderful weekend and amazing weeks ahead. I pray that the peace of God stays with you and that all things work together for your good! You are already an overcomer. Stay prayed up and keep hope alive.

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.

## BE BOLD: Celebrating International Women's Day 2017

2017/03/08

1:50pm

*Category: Lifestyle*

### Hello Royalty.

I am not usually the type to write public commentaries on social matters, but you know what this is more than a social matter, this is Women's Day!



So just as you may have guessed, today is #museday but today, the women will be our inspiration. While you read, please take time out to think about that one, two or three (even more) wonderful women in your life and think about the ways that they have inspired you.

This morning, I woke up to a poem written by @oluwafunmilayo\_n.p on Instagram in celebration of International Women's Day and she tagged me. I mean it was a great thing to wake up to, and you know, I felt so honoured!



As if that wasn't enough already, one of my favourite blog writers [@iamyeychii](#) also made me her WCW for today. I was elated and I still am. This is her!



Back to our celebration, on the International Women's Day website, it says that IWD celebrates the social, economic, cultural and political achievement of women. Last two weekends, I did a Spoken Word for the Proverbs 31 Woman Conference that held in Covenant University and you can watch it [here](#), it starts from the 42<sup>nd</sup> minute.

## About Gender Equality

If you were to ask me at any time, I do not see why there should be such a thing as 'gender equality; I would rather call it **gender uniqueness**. If we claim that no person is equal to another, why then do we try to make one gender equal to the other? That's an even more herculean task. Innit? I strongly believe that if there is a fight for the freedom of women to work, to vote, to be a part of the society, then it should not be a fight for equality. Only when the world sees that the woman is unique and that she has something amazing to offer, only then can the woman achieve this goal. Aung San Suu Kyi wrote, ***"In societies where men are truly confident of their own worth, women are not merely tolerated but valued."*** We need the male counterpart to realise their worth as much as we need the female counterpart to. This is because a sense of worth, of value, of importance is what build one's self esteem which in turn urges one to succeed, not a sense of competition or comparison that equality brings. God has made each one of us unique in our own ways!

Today I join in the #BeBoldForChange theme campaign of the IWD 2017 and I have written a poem for the woman, the one who is BOLD FOR CHANGE...the one who believes in her uniqueness.





*Hey woman,*

*Let us take a walk*

*On the street called miracle*

*And believe me*

*When I tell you*

*It was named after you.*

*You whose steps and strides connote the shine of every soul.*

*You whose glow and gait grows into entire earth's glory*

*You who tried to stand to speak but was told to stay on seat*

*You who dared to dream and to destroy the boundaries*

*You who roar like a lion but also listen like a lamb*

*You whose absence allows the unresolved abyss of anarchy*

*You whose presence promotes peace*

*Woman,*

*You think I don't know?*

*You think I haven't heard?*

*That when you are quiet*

*They say you are a loner*

*You think I am not aware?*

*That when you speak*

*They say you are too loud*

*You think I wasn't informed?*

*That when you are kind*



*They say you are begging for favours*

*Of course I heard the gist*

*That when you decide to be rigid*

*They say your heart is made of stone*

*Did they forget to remember*

*That the woman is like an antechamber*

*Like an onion*

*She has different layers*

*Like a car*

*Yes she has different parts*

*All of these differences is what makes you unique*

*Woman*

*You are needed*

*Needed to fill the chasm of confusion with your care*



*Needed to bridge the gap of greed with your generosity*

*Needed to uphold the importance of integrity with your induction*

*But woman I plead*

*That you thirst not for equality with men*

*Yes maybe equity*

*For fair is not always foul*

*But woman I stand*

*To fight with you*

*Not for equality*

*But for recognized uniqueness*

*I stand*

*To fight with you*

*That we are not to be tolerated*

*Only to be valued*

*Nor to be seen as equals*

*Because we never will be*

*But as woman and man*

*Each unique in every way*

*Forever that will be.*

Today, please remember to tell a lady close to your heart just how much she means to you.

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.

## Seven Years A Believer: It Only Gets Better!

2019/02/03

8:00am

*Category: Faith*

### Hello Royalty.

Lately, I have been thinking about a forthcoming autobiography at some point later (but soon enough) in my life. While I do not think I am ready to announce the potential title yet, it will come to unfold as a story of my life through the lens of a life with a God who covers secrets. That's how best I can explain it. To be more detailed, it's me looking into my life for the past few years and realizing that I don't deserve this life I'm living.

When I say I am undeserving, I mean I am wowed by the goodness of God, so much that it looks too good to be true – from the littlest of things to the biggest of things, and of course, to the seemingly insignificant. Last year, and the year before, I shared my [five-year salvation journey](#) and my [six-year journey](#) on the blog and now it's the seventh year.

It's funny, actually, that it has been seven years! Seven years of amazingness – of being picked up, pampered, reprimanded, and warned.

What's my story today? **Keep on keeping on.**



This world we live in? Crayyy...CRAYYY...CRAZY. Crazy how there are a whole bunch of things and people out for your attention, and the devil seems to be even more determined to mislead as many people as he can. There are too many options to choose from if we were to outline every topic. But I know you know...it's why I am putting up this post.

Recently, in one of my classes, there was a question to Black people by a writer called Lewis Gordon. He asked, **“Why do they go on?”** This question stemmed from the conversation about how Black people are silenced in certain situations over and over again. However, we pick up ourselves again and decide to move forward. What’s the motivation? Why do we do it? This had me checking up on the “upward social mobility narrative” and “the myth of mobility.” When you Google those terms, you find a stream of articles on how the rags-to-riches story is a façade, and only a few people or the same set of people ever make it up the ladder. So, **“Why go on?”**

In that class, we linked the answer to that question to the autobiography. Take Michelle Obama’s *Becoming* for example – when someone reads that book and sees parts of the former FLOTUS that is inspiring and very much similar to his/her story, and how she overcame, then the person in question sees a reason to go on.

Where am I going with all of this?

The Christian Life is challenged by the many anti-Christian values that exist in today’s society, and guess what? Why should you go on? Because Jesus went on, many matriarchs and patriarchs of faith went on, and the Bible is a clear biography. Do you also know – you are **IN** this world but not **OF** this world. So what? You and I are supposed to live in these anti-faith values, live through them, and *“Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people”* (Philippians 2:15). So, as I mark this 7th year of my walk with Christ, the word to you and I is to **keep the faith!** Do not let anyone, any situation, any circumstance, or what not, talk you out of it. You have come this far – you should keep on keeping on.

However, if you are just saying the big “YES” to Jesus, giving Him the green light to be Lord and Personal Savior in your life, then I need you to know that it might occur to you at some point to question who you are serving and why. Don’t hold back – do it. Ask God to reveal himself to you, and to help you know Him for you. The reason most people “backslide”, most of the time, is because they have had a hand-me-down representation of God all of their lives. Now is the time to seek Him for you – so you can stand firm in the faith at all times. Yes, it is great to learn from others. But have you sat down to work out this salvation? When you settle in His presence, then there is no mistake of who He is.

God is counting on you and I to represent Him in all that we do and own – words, actions, lifestyles. Let us go ahead. Shine. Keep the faith!

In addition, I will be sharing salvation stories on the blog this month, every Sunday from the next. So, three salvations stories!!! Subscribe if you have not, so you do not miss any updates.

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.

## Cutting Corners: Lessons from Steven Furtick

2017/11/24

1:58pm

Category: Faith

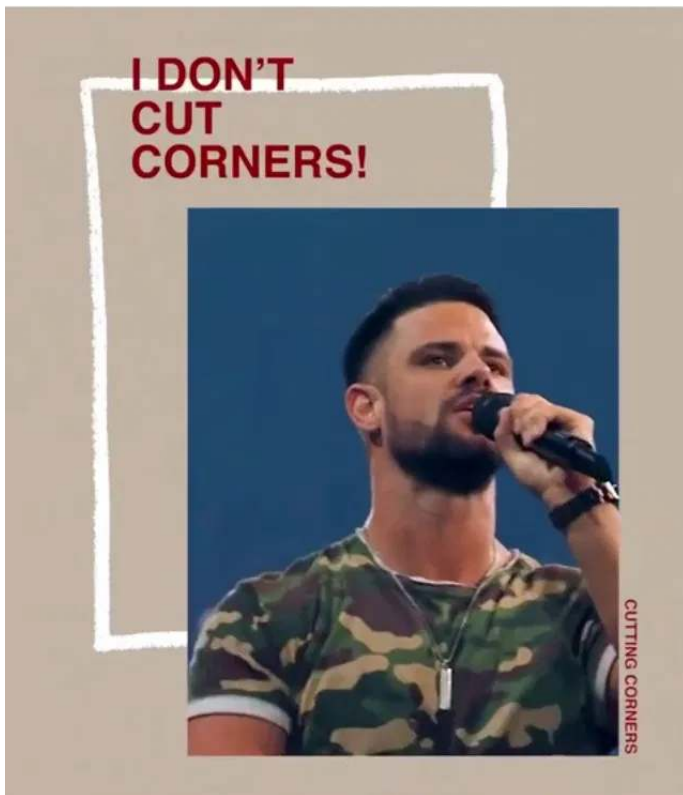
### Hello Royalty.

How has the week been? Welcome to the weekend! I remember saying on Monday that we would be opening our Bibles today. Leggo!

“I cry out to God Most High, to God who will fulfil his purpose for me “. Psalm 57:2

David had written Psalm 57 at the time when he fled from Saul and went into the cave in the wilderness of En-Gedi. So Saul was after David's life and David, anointed to be king, was fleeing like a mere servant. I spent a good deal of the week listening to the excerpts and the full message of Steven Furtick's *Cutting Corners*. It's a 40-something minute sermon and you can find it [here](#). It is life-changing!





Source: Instagram Screenshot

Pastor Furtick focused on the decision of David in 1 Samuel 24 (Check it out). David and his men had run from the traps of Saul and his army and had run into the cave. Somehow, Saul had run into that same cave to relieve himself. David's men saw Saul and said, *"Now's your opportunity!"*. David, like you and I, reasoned with his men and he went ahead to cut off a corner of Saul's robe. Now, this might not seem like a big deal, but it was. God had promised to give David the victory over

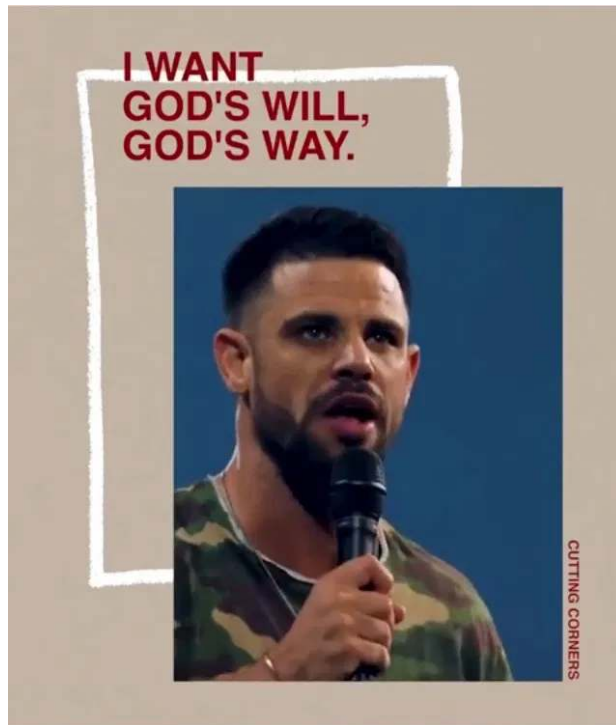
Saul, but God had not promised to do it by cutting corners and allowing David to jump ahead of His timing. Immediately David took that step, his conscience began to bother him and I want you to look at your Bible if you can. The Bible tells us what David said, *"The Lord knows I shouldn't have done that to my lord the king. The Lord forbid that I should do this to my lord the king and attack the Lord's anointed one, for the Lord himself has chosen him"*. (Verse 6). Even though David was the next anointed one, he restrained himself from killing Saul, the "currently " anointed one. He knew it was wrong to get into God's Will for his life on his own terms and conditions.

When God gives us a promise or tells us something about our future, it is not in our power to make it happen. Yes, we might go ahead to master certain skills, to prepare, to become disciplined, but none of it will eventually evolve until God says it will. This is why David says, “I cry out to God Most High, **to God who will fulfil His purpose for me**”. We are not to fulfil our purpose for ourselves; on the contrary, it is God who fulfils His purpose for us.

So, Pastor Furtick tells you and I that:

1. If we honour the process, God will honour us. Yes He will. He will honour the promise and “give us a run for our dependence on him”.
2. You and I should want God’s Will, God’s Way.

Repeat after me: **I want God’s Will, God’s Way**. (Say it over and again till it sinks into the fibre of every corner of your being and till it swallows up every temptation to cut corners on your way to your Promised Land).



Source: Instagram Screenshot

So, promise yourself and be determined not to ever cut a corner, because God is actually planning to give you the entire robe!

Side Text: Proverbs 13:11

“Wealth from get-rich-quick schemes quickly disappears; wealth from hard work grows over time”.

N.B: Watch the full sermon in just one [CLICK](#).

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.

# How I Learned Six Gems of Success from My First Hourglass

2019/05/25

4:57am

*Category: Inspiration*

## Hello Royalty

I have always wanted an hourglass as a piece of decoration. The first clear memory I have of one was from watching the movie *The Mummy and The Mummy Returns* in the early 2000s, and I liked how it represented time. Also, it contained the sands of the deserts, so that made it a bit unique. While I cannot essentially capture why I liked the hourglass at that time, I grew up wanting to have a really nice one. So, just recently, I found one while shopping, and I picked it up without hesitation.



For the first few days, I would look at it, observe it, flip it from one side to the other, watch the time when the material starts to pour, and watch the time when it stops pouring. In all of my observations, I must say that I had a rare type of inspiration on how life and success works based on that hourglass. It is why this blogpost exists today, so let's get to it.

Our microwave-generation has sold the fast and furious gospel to each one of us. We think everything must come the way we want it at the time we want it. While God might have life happen that way for us sometimes, in most cases, we come to understand that life operates on a whole different level. This different level is not privy to most of us, so we go on and on searching for what's not lost. Here's where the hourglass comes in:

### 1. A Foundation

From days of observing my new piece of decoration, I learned that one must lay a foundation in order to succeed in anything. (PS: as you read, do not limit your definition of success to material success.

These keys apply to EVERYTHING that one can succeed in – your walk with God, your career, relationships – name it!). Moving on, when you flip the glass, **it begins to pour into the other side**

**until there becomes a type of even distribution.** This is done before all of the contained material pours into the other side.



This explains foundation. Before building your faith in God, a career, a family, etc. what are you “laying at the bottom?” Are you aiming for a million-dollar business empire by cheating your hundred-dollar business partners now? The foundation matters. A faulty foundation may not be obvious when you begin to build, but if you continue to build on it, it only takes a period of time to collapse all on its own.

## 2. Time is of the essence

The hourglass has always represented time. With the advent of clocks and what not however, it is no longer used so much to determine the time, or to time a particular task. But here’s what it teaches about time: **the hourglass is on time, yet it takes its own time.** Again, when you flip it, you realize you can’t rush it. It pours at its own pace, but if you are patient, you also realize that its own pace is just fine. If it pours too fast or at a go, it loses its identity as an hourglass.

Talmbout the microwave generation! Do not overburden yourself with the false stories that “time is running out on you.” If at all anyone should determine that, let it be you. When I say that, I mean, be your own competition. Ask yourself over and again, “what should I be doing now?” Pray to God for direction. Expand on your knowledge by reading and remember to always take life one step at a time. The classic American soap opera *Days of Our Lives* says, “Like sands through the hourglass, so are the days of our lives.” Be conscious of time in your actions and decisions, but don’t be pressured by it.

## 3. Find A Niche

When you flip the hourglass, the contained material begins by pouring into the other side from the center. That is, it pours first to a centered position, then it spreads to other parts of the glass. In essence, **it finds focus, then it expands.**

When you apply this to life, it explains that we should always have a niche. Our questions should be: What is that thing I can do? What is that thing I want to achieve? What is my strong point? Where is my focus? What is my “why?” For example, I can blog. In a world of many things, blogging is a niche, but it is not specific enough for an individual. So, you have the Fashion Blog, Lifestyle Blog, Inspirational Blog, Parenting Blog etc. Now, while that explains a “center”, how about expanding? While the niche is Inspirational Blogging for example, the next question becomes: what are ways in which I will inspire? So, it creates a pie chart of Posts on Life as a Christian, Poems that inspire etc. With the goal in mind, even different genres can speak the same message. But most importantly, there needs to be a “why.”



#### 4. A Means to an End

The two sides of an hourglass are connected by a narrow neck. I call it a “channel.” **The hourglass understands that it cannot move from Point A to Point B without a channel.** As narrow as the neck is, it is probably the most important feature of this piece. It makes it possible for time to count,

for foundations to be laid, and for a niche to be carved.



Channels come in different labels and boxes: destiny helpers, life partners, sponsors, mentors, teachers, friends, family, etc. What this tells you and me is that there is always a means to an end. You will always need the right people. However, just like the two sides of the glass, are you ready for the channel? Those who said success happens when preparation meets opportunity are right. While you gear yourself up, identify your channels and “make use” of them.

#### 5. Do not ignore the frame

When I observed the material pour from one side to the other, I saw how the “stones” would bounce off on the glass from the inside. As they poured in their numbers from the narrow neck, **they expressed themselves on the other side by trying to find a place, but also understood that they needed to be contained to an extent.** Some stones fell right in the center, and as I just said, some bounced off on the glass.

I understood that as “boundaries.” To achieve success in anything, there are places where we need to draw the line. As a believer for example, there are things which should no longer *catch your fancy*, simply because you want to succeed as a believing believer. While you are allowed to think outside the box and demolish the box if you will, you need to do that within your frame. These could be your values, principles for living, or your shan’t and won’t. Never ignore them.

#### 6. It is okay to start over

When one of my nephews shows up in my room, he enjoys flipping the hourglass over and again. It's nerve racking sometimes, because his hands keep going "whoosh" and "whoosh" (quite some exercise for those wrists). Sometimes, he waits till all of the stones are on the other side, then he flips it again. Other times, he flips it right when the stones are halfway through. But I realized that no matter how much he flips the hourglass, the piece just kinda brushes it off to start again (yes it's non-living, I know lol).

Anyway, I saved this for last because nobody likes to hear it. We seem to encounter life like that sometimes. You may not have a major setback where you have to press the reset button on your whole life. It may just be having to start something afresh (maybe an MS Word document that got wiped off your screen after 10,000 words...eek!), or it may actually be the reset button. Whatever it is, the time to start over is not the time to sulk. It may not come off as easy, but with tenacity, your desired result will eventually come through.

Okay, if you read up to this point, THANK YOU, ESÉ, DALU, NA GODE, GRACIAS, MERCI BEAUCOUP...give my polyglot self a round of applause!!! But in all sincerity, thank you! You should expect this switch with posts from now on. They will be longer, but they will be once a week. Sometimes, I might take a break and you'll probably have two in a month, but there will be at least one every month.

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.

## On My Natural Hair Journey + All The Tips

2019/03/06

10:36pm

*Category: Lifestyle*

### Hello Royalty

How are you?! As always, it feels amazing to write to you again. Did you get my last newsletter in your inbox? You should check – it's the reason for my energy all week long. If you didn't, you are probably not subscribed to the blog. So, please subscribe so you do not miss the next one. Thank you!

Today's post is a mix of a requested post and an experience. Over time, I have gotten a number of requests to share my hair routine, but I have never done a post on hair because you know, it's not particularly how we roll here. However, in honor of Black History Month, I participated in a readathon in which I was to read for ten minutes from either a personal work or another writer's work. I chose the latter, so I read from bell hooks's "Black Is a Woman's Color." I picked this piece because for me, it adequately captures my natural hair experience, and I am going to post it below before sharing my story and my routine.

**From *Black is A Woman's Color***

*Good hair – that's the expression. We all know it, begin to hear it when we are small children. When we are sitting between the legs of mothers and sisters getting our hair combed. Good hair is hair that is not kinky, hair that does not feel like balls of steel wool, hair that does not take hours to comb, hair that does not need tons of grease to untangle, hair that is long. Real good hair is straight hair, hair like white folk's hair. Yet no one says so. No one says Your hair is so nice, so beautiful because it is like white folk's hair. We pretend that the standards we measure our beauty by are own invention – that it is questions of time and money that lead us to make distinctions between good hair and bad hair. I know from birth that I am lucky, lucky to have hair at all for I was bald for two years, then lucky finally to have thin almost straight hair, hair that does not need to be combed.*

*We are six girls who live in a house together. We have different textures of hair, short, long, thin, thick. We do not appreciate these differences. We do not celebrate the variety that is ourselves. We do not run our fingers through each other's dry hair after it is washed. We sit in the kitchen and wait our turn for the hot comb, wait to sit in the chair by the stove smelling grease, feeling the heat warm our scalp like a sticky hot summer sun.*

*For each of us, getting our hair pressed is an important ritual. It is not a sign of our longing to be white. It is not a sign of our quest to be beautiful. We are girls. It is a sign of our desire to be women. It is a gesture that says we are approaching womanhood. It is a rite of passage. Before we reach the appropriate age, we wear braids and plaits that we are symbols of our innocence, our youth, our childhood. Then we are comforted by the parting hands that comb and braid, comforted by the intimacy and bliss. There is a deeper intimacy in the kitchen on Saturday when hair is pressed, when fish is fried, when sodas are passed around, when soul music drifts over the talk. We are women together. This is our ritual and our time. It is a time without men. It is a time when we work to meet each other's needs, to make each other beautiful in whatever way we can. It is a time of laughter and mellow talk. Sometimes it is an occasion for tears and sorrow. Mama is angry, sick of it all, pulling the hair too tight, using too much grease, burning one ear and then the next.*

*At first, I cannot participate in the ritual. I have good hair that does not need pressing. Without the hot comb I remain a child, one of the uninitiated. I plead, I beg, I cry for my turn. They tell me once you start you will be sorry. You will wish you had never straightened your hair. They do not understand that it is not the straightening I seek but the chance to belong, to be the one in this world of women. It is finally my turn. I am happy. Happy even though my thin hair straightened looks like black thread, has no body, stands in the air like ends of barbed wire; happy even though the sweet smell of unpressed hair is gone forever. Secretly I had hoped that the hot comb would transform me, turn the thin good hair into thick nappy hair, the kind of hair I like and long for, the kind you can do anything with, wear in all kinds of styles. I am bitterly disappointed in the new look.*

*A senior in high school, I want to wear a natural, an afro, I want never to get my hair pressed again. It is no longer a rite of passage, a chance to be intimate in the world of women. The intimacy masks betrayal. Together we change ourselves. The closeness, an embrace before parting, a gesture of farewell to love and one another.*



### My Natural Hair Story

hooks's story, as I said earlier, reminds me of mine.

**This is my story:** My mum would not let me relax my hair till I was done with secondary school. This was annoying. I went to school with my hair either plaited (and curled up after the plait), so you could not even tell the length, or with my hair in rubber thread (I 'hated' this one). I always admired my classmates who had relaxed hair, who had hair that straightened to their nape whenever they made styles *all back* or *Evelyn King*. I eagerly waited for my turn. Long story short, graduation week came, and I could finally relax my hair. My mum tried to convince me to stay natural – I had thick, long, full hair (better than it is now), but I was determined. So yes, I did it! It was exactly what hooks called it – “a rite of passage” into the status of womanhood. After the deed was done, I looked in the mirror and the length was all I could see. It was longer than usual, but all the thickness had gone down the bathroom tub. Who was I to admit that I didn't particularly like it? I smiled and took many pictures.

I got into the university, and in my first and second year, having hair that could billow in the breeze came with a great feeling. I was happy, until I began to notice the light feather that my hair became as the days went by. It was falling out. My hairdresser asked what was wrong. My friends said, “Alex, did you do something to your hair”, “You used to have full hair in 100level oh”, and for a long time, I kept it under wigs, weaves, and braids, away from analysts and spectators.



For my bachelor's thesis, I read *Americanah* by Chimamanda N. Adichie, and I could see through the symbol of hair as a major part of the identity theme. I began to reflect on my choices, and after much thought, I knew I wanted my natural hair back. I started the transitioning process, filled my laptop screen with wallpapers of naturalistas. What I once had for free became a goal. I transitioned for nine months – no hot irons, no relaxer, nothing. Just wash, leave to dry, cream, plait, and wear a wig. Nine months after, my program was over. I got home and did the BIG CHOP when no one was home (May 2017).

My mother was the first to laugh at me. It was an experience all on its own. By and by, my hair grew. I was frustrated at first – it was dry, I could hardly style it, and I couldn't keep it low because I really wanted it to grow. I had a love-hate relationship with hair products. I spent hours on YouTube and did all I could till I finally found a routine that worked for me.

### **My Natural Hair Routine**

#### *MASTER/KEY TIP:*

Don't use too many products.

#### *MY ROUTINE AND HAIR CARE PRODUCTS:*



- Cantu Shampoo
- Cantu Argan Oil leave in conditioner (Shea Butter Leave-in is also good)
- Virgin hair fertilizer (This is a Nigerian product, but if you're outside Nigeria, the beauty supply stores have it)
- Water
- Coconut oil or Tea Tree/ Jojoba oil
- Aphogee leave in conditioner (I hardly use this though because it causes too much heat for my hair)

So, when I wash, I use the Cantu Sulfate-Free Shampoo, and I wash twice or more depending on product build-up. Then, I section into four while the hair is still damp, and I apply the argan oil leave-in conditioner to each section. Then I comb through, because the conditioner softens your hair, and it is less of a pain to comb the hair when it's damp.

After combing, I apply the virgin hair fertilizer to all the edges of my hair, and to the lines between the four sections. Then, I apply the tea tree and jojoba oil or the cream or coconut oil (or a mixture of two) to the hair itself. (When I had my big chop, I used a lot of jojoba oil before getting into products, and that's another thing, when you're just starting out, be easy on the products). Then, I plait each section.

If I'm going to have it on for a while, I spray some water on it daily (sometimes I don't, but daily is advisable), and I put some oil – tea tree, coconut, castor – whichever you choose, and I style. If you find it too tough, get that leave-in conditioner in, and it will help the texture. To prevent frizz during the day, the leave-in conditioning mist will work great, just in case you have hair that is tough, or you're in winter season.

**Nights:** plait it every night by sectioning into four, except of course, if it's still in the TWA stage. If it is, make it a bit damp before bed. DO NOT leave your hair to itself. If you have to, probably thrice or four times in four to six weeks, nothing more.

**Extras:** I wash every two weeks if I have it on for a while. If it's under a weave or braids, then every three to four weeks is fine.

That's basically it!

**DISCLAIMER:** I am not against relaxed hair or wearing wigs or weaves. I do so myself. But the point is, when we choose what type of "hair" we want to wear, we should always know and understand why we do so. If it is to fit in with a particular race, clan, or whatnot, that might not be the best. Love and appreciate your person...and hey, this applies to everything! I hope you enjoyed reading this as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Don't forget to subscribe!

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.

## 2 Things I Just Discovered In the Bible

2018/04/09

10:43am

*Category: Faith*

### Hello Royalty.

Yessss! It is so good to be back writing to you at this time. Today's post will be as straightforward as possible. Over the past few weeks, I have had different types of revelation from Scriptures – some directly in Word Study and some from my current book read – things which I never saw before, but things which I see now. Today, I am sharing all of this with you, because it will be unfair to keep so much goodness away from you!



## First Discovery:

What I am about to share is something I learnt from Jentezen Franklin's book *The Spirit of Python: Exposing Satan's Plan to Squeeze the Life Out of You*. This book is the dealbreaker for a shallow Christian walk. It is my new recommendation to every believer around me. You get to know and see things which you thought were of no significance. Speaking of significance, did you know that doubt could be a very deadly thing? On page 65 of this book, the writer talks about "The Snake Egg of Doubt", with an already explained conception of the devil as a snake, precisely a python. Doubt is not paid so much attention to in our world today. In fact, people think you are smart when you doubt. However, as a believer, the devil uses this device to keep you off God's plan for your life.



Pastor Jentezen brings to our notice that the first question mark in the Bible did not come from God. Check Genesis 3:1. It reads, "**Did God really say** you must not eat of any of the fruit trees in the garden?" That's how the devil creeps up to our minds – e.g. "Does God really answer your prayers?" "Does He really care?" When he succeeds in filling your minds with such questions, you begin to steer away from God's plan for you and before you know it, you are far from God,

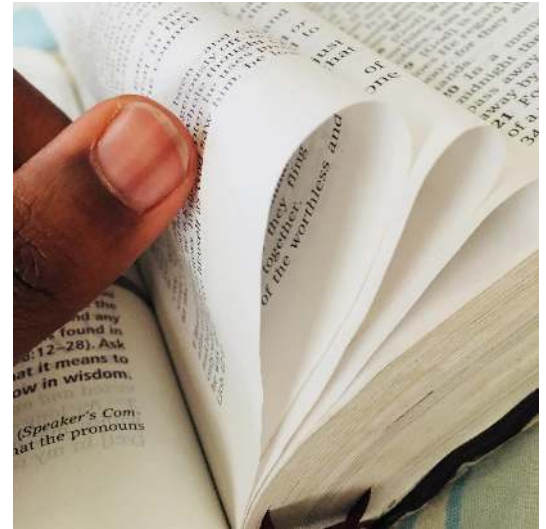
confused, miserable and filled with questions of doubt and answers of depression.

However, we are taught what to do by Jesus, because when Satan comes up to Jesus in Matthew 4, he says, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread." This can also be read as, "Are you really the Son of God?" Jesus does not say, "Yes, I'll prove to you I am the Son of God by turning all the stones of the world into bread." He says, "It is written!" As Pastor Jentezen says, Jesus took Satan's question of "Has God said?" and turned it into a declaration of "God has said!" – decree over doubt!

## Second Discovery:

One of those days, while having my Word Study sessions, I stumbled upon 2 Corinthians 5:7 in the Amplified Version. It says, *"For we walk by faith [we regulate our lives and conduct ourselves by our conviction or belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, with trust and holy fervor, thus we walk] not by sight or appearance."* Now, I have read this verse many times and I have quite an understanding of what it means. However, the word "regulate" struck me this time around. When a machine is regulated, we mean it is controlled, normalized, balanced etc. In essence, what the Bible connotes is that we become normal when we walk by faith and not by sight. So, even though it is possible that we are very much likely to be moved by the things we see or the things which happen around us, we gain our balance and normalcy when we choose the path of faith. We are NORMAL when we follow the God of the Bible and not the god of our feelings!

I wanted to make this “3 Things I discovered in the Bible”, but I do not want it to be too long, so we would talk about the rest some other time. For now, I hope these discoveries have become discoveries for you too! And what have you recently discovered? Do not keep it to yourself! Please type in the comment section. Let us learn and grow together.



Thank you for reading up till this point. Next blogpost will be this Friday.

In other news, I had a great weekend. Do you follow me on Instagram? That is a platform to keep up with me on a daily regular basis (especially via InstaStories).

DO have a splendid week!

★★

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.

# Why I Haven't Stopped Journaling in 9 Years

2020/07/04

3:33pm

*Category: Inspiration*

## Hello Royalty!

Thank you so much for being here! Thank you for the love on [my last post](#) too. Today, I am sharing my "journaling" story, not just because I think it's important to share, but also to encourage you to keep journaling if you already do, or start journaling if you don't do it already.

I started journaling in 2011. It started as an outlet of curiosity. I was in secondary school, and I had just began to ask myself questions about the Christian Faith. I was particularly curious about the reality of the Holy Spirit. People had talked about it, yes, but here I was wanting to experience God for myself. Based on the fact that I always loved writing and I wasn't always willing to share my curiosity with others, I started journaling. My journals started as "Dear Holy Spirit," and I would write about my school day, my friends, my teachers, my crushes, my fears, and my wishes. Every now and then, I would go back to read some of those journal entries, and it was comforting to see how some of my wishes and prayers were already answered. So, I kept at it. I kept writing "Dear Holy Spirit" for about 3 more years until I had no doubt that He existed.



...where the pen, the soul, and the lips connect.





Fast forward to 2020, my journals have taken different shapes and sizes (literally) – big notebooks, small notebooks, books with journal prompts, curiosity journals, ideas journals, Bible Study journals, prayer journals, and gratitude journals, and I am grateful for this practice.

### Pros and Cons of Journaling

Now that you know my story in summary, it's also important to know that journaling isn't exactly a bed of roses. Here are a few **cons**:

1. If you are just starting out, journaling may feel like showing up at a job you do not like. True journaling shouldn't feel overwhelming, so when you feel this way, my advice is to take a break. Instead of viewing journaling from a perspective of a project to be completed, see it as sharing your thoughts, dreams, ideas, and questions with yourself for future reflections – something which can be done at anytime.
2. It asks for vulnerability. True journaling doesn't ask for perfection – it's a transparent relationship between you, yourself, and the page. If you don't feel comfortable with letting things flow, this may pose a problem.
3. Garbage in, Garbage out. Journaling is like a mirror. If you keep a journal of "bitter" moments, the bitter moments don't leave you. You literally get what you give. Personally, I advise against journaling about a fight or a situation of unforgiveness. If you must write about it, do so. However, remember to tear it apart and trash it after letting it out. Your journal is a mirror.

**Pros:** When you journal, you recount, relearn, and retain.

Both the mind and brain do a lot of thinking and wandering, hence there is only so much that can be retained.

However, when you put pen to paper or record with a journaling app, you help yourself to recount memories, dreams, ideas, and recounting gives form to thoughts. Memories are like clay. Journaling is the potter which smoothens them out. Journaling helps you reflect on your own perspectives and biases about certain things. In turn, it puts you in a place of introspection and control about who you are and what you stand for.

For instance, when I feel tempted to worry or complain about something that's not working, I pull out my gratitude and prayer journals. Just by flipping a couple pages, I realize how far I have come in life, and it encourages me to hope for the best. The best thing about that? It always works! Things may hurt in the present, but that single action moves me away from the complaint path.

You relearn and unlearn. Things may sound good as thoughts, but putting them on paper causes you to think even more deeply about them. Journaling gives you room to express your thoughts, but in the long run, it helps you see what was wrong and what was right.

When you write something down, you retain information because you are absorbing the so-called information again, and you can always go back to it in the future. Journaling is great for retaining information. Every time I study the Bible or read a book, I keep my journals close by. When a certain understanding strikes me, I write it down fast. Two hours later, I may remember that I found out something great, but to remember in details, I go back to my journal.

### So, how can you journal?

Decide on the type of journal you wish to have.

I don't write in my gratitude journal everyday. Sometimes, once in three days or once a week, I pick it up and write in the following format: *"Today I am grateful for:"* I stick to writing at least 5 things. After outlining the first thing I'm grateful for, my brain sometimes feel clogged. By the time I'm on the fourth thing, I realize I have 10 more things to write.

Ask yourself these questions: *"What do I want to write?" "How often do I want to write it?"*

I write in my Bible Study journal almost everyday – about 5 times a week. I probably write in my idea journal every week or every two weeks. For the idea journal, if I have only one idea, when I think of an improvement on the idea, when I execute the idea, or think of an execution strategy, I go back to it, so I can keep track and fix my eyes on the goal. It's really all up to you and how vulnerable you are willing to be with your thoughts.

Remember, you don't have to dot your i's or cross your t's. It's not the time to be perfect. It's the time to just be.

If all else fails, get a journal with writing prompts. I once got a notebook titled, "The Thoughtful Journal." It helped me achieve my weekly goals because I was overwhelmed with school work and to-do lists, so it helped me put my thoughts in perspective, one step at a time. This journal (pictured below) had prompts like, "This week I want to do More \_\_\_\_\_, Less \_\_\_\_\_" "Weekly High:" "Weekly Low:" "Something I did or want to for someone else..." so it really eased things out for me.

### Don't have any *journal prompts*?

Get started with these. You can use them repeatedly:



1. What are you grateful for right now? Why?
2. Things you love to do
3. Do you have a goal? What is it? Why this goal? How will you achieve it?
4. Read the Bible. Pick a verse. What strikes you about this verse? What does it mean? Now that you found out its meaning, can you back it up with other Bible verses?
5. What's something nice you would do for someone? Why?
6. Pick a random topic e.g. Freedom. What does this really mean to you? Is your interpretation an echo of someone else's thoughts? What's your conviction?
7. If you could go back in time and change one thing from your past, what would it be? Why?
8. If you could find out one thing in the future, what would it be? Why?
9. If you could do only one thing now, what would it be? Why?
10. Just write.

ps: On another note, 2020 has hurt a couple people in different ways, so I'm dedicating this post to every hurting person. You are seen and loved by Love himself.

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.

# The Tiring Thing About Do's and Don'ts

2020/06/13

9:00am

*Category: Faith, Lifestyle*

## Hello Royalty!

I cannot count 5 people on my fingers who just love rules and regulations. Everyone seems to get tired of them. For the most part, I think people hate to be told what to do, especially when they feel forced to do it. At a younger age, when I was “old enough” to wash the dishes, I would find myself thinking of washing the dishes, and just as soon as I was done making that decision or in the process of doing so, my mum would tell me to do the dishes. Suddenly, I wouldn't feel like doing it anymore. It was nothing special – just me not wanting to be told what to do.

But, you see, the interesting thing is that we really can't get on with life successfully or get to a desired destination if we do not want to be told what to do. A few years down the line, I've learned that it's okay to be told to wash the dishes even if I was thinking about it. Nobody knows my thoughts after all, so what's the fuss? Okay, why am I saying all of this?

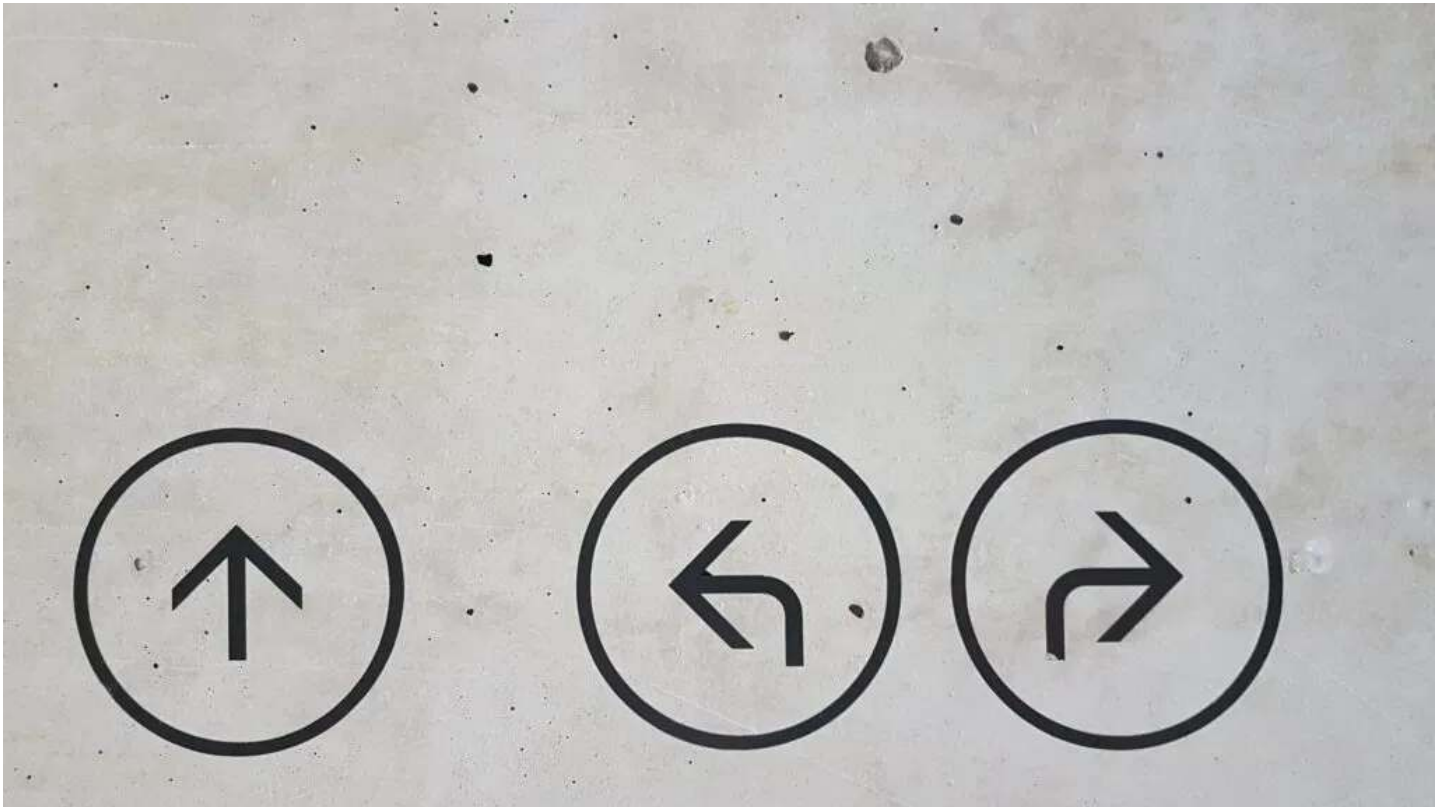


Photo by marianne bos on Unsplash

In the month of May, precisely on the 11<sup>th</sup>, the Holy Spirit said to me, “the don’ts dissolve in love.” In Romans 13:8-10, the KJV says,

**“8 Owe no man anything but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.**

**9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, *it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.***

**10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.”**

TPT says,

**"8 Don't owe anything to anyone, except your outstanding debt to continually love one another, [a] for the one who learns to love has fulfilled every requirement of the law. 9 For the commandments, "Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not covet," [b] and *every other commandment can be summed up in these words:***

**"Love and value others the same way you love and value yourself." [c]**

**10 Love makes it impossible to harm another, so love fulfills all that the law requires.**

Now, I'm not a scientist, but here's a perspective I want you to see it from. In chemistry, there's something called dissolution. Then, there are terms like "solute" and "solvent" which come together to make a solution. In every solution, the solute is the thing that gets dissolved, and the solvent does the dissolving. For this post, our solute is "dos and don'ts" and our solvent is "love." Then, we are going to take solution for what it really means i.e. a solution to a problem.



Photo by Tyler Nix on Unsplash

These two claims have been proven when it comes to dissolution:

Like dissolves like, that is, a polar substance will dissolve in another polar substance e.g. water and ammonia

In Matthew 5:17, the Bible says, "Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose." (NLT). Jesus made it clear that the laws – the dos and don'ts had a purpose, and we can take that purpose to mean becoming one with other people and with God. Jesus, however, came to accomplish that purpose by summing up all those rules in LOVE. So, we have a new reality which says, "You don't have to worry about following some rules. You only need to love God, love yourself, and love your neighbor as yourself." And you know why this is enough? Because racism, rape, bigotry, tribalism, colorism and all the negative -isms could never ever be a product of love!

"LIKE DISSOLVES LIKE" Love simply takes up the duties of "dos and don'ts," So, instead of thinking about how much we can get away with and "still be saved," we realize that we are called to a life of love.

The higher the temperature, the faster the dissolubility.



Now, I love this fact so much because it shows us that we play a part in determining what happens. We see what transpires when people speak up and show up either on the front lines or in their own homes. It gets somewhere! It aids the solution. It makes the solute dissolve faster in the solvent. When the Bible says, "Love covers the multitude of sins," it doesn't mean sin is absent. It means the presence of love is stronger. It means there is a bigger drive for things to be made right. A life lived in love overshadows a life lived in constant fear of rules and regulations. Yes, Love is the fulfillment of the law, and if we are going to put an end to all the dos and don'ts in the world, then our actions must stem from a place of love!

As I wrap up this post, I'll like you to know that you have a part to play and so do I. If that part is not rooted in love, then we are simply throwing everything to the wall with hope that something sticks. Love loves their culture, but because love will also love their neighbor as themselves, then love loves other people's cultures. Love makes an effort to educate themselves about fighting racism. Love travails in the place of prayer for healing in the land. Love chooses to do things with excellence so others can benefit. Love forgets the dos and don'ts, because love is the solvent and the dos and don'ts are already embedded in love, dissolved to become a solution! Love speaks up for the loved. God's law is LOVE. And above all, love will always win.

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.

## O Jewa Ke Eng?

2019/02/09

12:56pm

*Category: Poems & Stories*

### Hello Royalty

If you have been on Twitter for two months or more, then the title of this post is pretty familiar. A big shout out to my friend, Dominion, who suggested this as a blogpost title. Why?

Last week Friday, I put up an Instagram poll, asking, "How has your week been?" The answers to choose from were "AMAZING" and "I NEED TO TALK." 23 people voted the latter, and although this was not my initial intention, after seeing 23 people pick that option, I knew I had to do something. So, I messaged each of the 23 separately, asking what they wanted to talk about. About 18 of them were willing to talk in the long run, and I must say I had the best conversations that weekend/this week. It made me realize over and over again that sometimes, people are going through a lot and they just want to talk. Back to the title of this post, I was sharing this whole experience with Dominion and how I was going to blog the few things I wrote after that experience, and he said, "oh so you did your own *o jewa ke eng*" and I suddenly saw it from that perspective. I also shared my previous title with him: "Poetry for the Going who Gets Tough when the Tough Gets Going" and we both agreed it was too long.

Hence, “O Jawa Ke Eng” – a term from one of the Southern African languages which translates loosely in English as “What’s eating you up?” or “What’s bothering you?”



So, I put this these writings up (some freshly written and some from my archives) for all of the 23 who wanted to talk, and for you, Royalty, in those times that are all a part of our lives' clocks.

## 1. "Sweep"

It's in how we step into the room. How we have it all planned out. How we become architects, painters, and authors of our own destinies, or at least, our own weeks. Then, it's in how the math no longer works. How one plus one never equals two. How the letters in the alphabet are no longer 26, because we now have a new language called gibberish. But I say, "sweep." With all the energy you have, pick up the broom. Sweep every thought of perfection. Sweep every notion of it has to work this way. Don't overthink it. Don't be paralyzed by plan A. Pick up the broom and make room for plan B.

## 2. "Ariyike"

This was the name I would have given to you before you became a pool of blood. What was I to think? I know many people have called me cursed, an unlucky woman whose joy will never come. I thought you would come to put a smile on my face, and to wipe the pain of mockery from my eyes. But wasn't it in that seventh month you left? I woke up to a river of stained sheets, crimson to remind me of my past sins. If only he let you stay; if only I hadn't been so unlucky to say yes to him; if only I listened to Amaka when she said he would be the death of me. When I told Auntie Risi my story, she said, "You too shouldn't have raised your voice at your husband." "Yes *omo mi*. He wouldn't have put a finger on you" Auntie Tola added. You see? Now I am the victim of my own victimization. The one time I finally decided to raise a voice for my rights as a wife, I lose my unborn child, and not only that, I am blamed for the loss. They say life begins at forty. I am almost there, but I think it is about to end. But I choose to live. I am determined to.

Source: Instagram

3. "Dons"

Again, victim of her victimization

There's rain coming

And it's not pleasant showers

4. Ugly.

Worthless.

Full of shit.

And you?

You permit the words to slip

Into the bowls of your head.

Broken yolk and albumen,

Waiting to be whisked

By insecurity and depression.

But don't you see?

Don't you see cataract in their eyes?



5. Yesterday,

away from the bustle and yellow of Lagos,

I had a naming ceremony

for my goals.

Perfection is not it.

Progress is the baby's name.

**And a few nuggets to everyone who's somewhere here:**

- Just breathe.
- It's okay to leave an unknown future to a known God.
- No one has it altogether – not strangers on the internet, not familiars in real life, no one has it 100.
- Don't compare.
- Love your journey.
- Work hard

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.

## Delete the "Offender's" Screenshots TOO

2019/06/01

4:32am

*Category: Faith*

### Hello Royalty.

Welcome to a new week and a new month too! Before we get into today's post, I would like to thank you for reading [last week's post](#), for the messages, comments, shares...whew! I was grinning!!! So, yes, thank you!

Now, today's post goes straight to the point, and I bet you can already tell from the title that I am talking about forgiveness. Yes, we need to talk about the screenshots and chats that you saved from the one who hurt you. \*insert GIF that nods head and looks at you shyly\* For more context, however, do you remember the post from last October which said, "[Forgiveness is not amnesia](#)?" Yes! See this post as a continuation of that one, and if you have not read it, [CLICK HERE](#).

Now that we are on the same page, I am one for the opinion that the more advanced the world is, the more it impacts on our lives and our decisions. Did I hear you say *duh of course*? Well...yeah! But here's what I really mean. We have the internet, and because we have the internet, we have a new village, so while certain people see each other as competition offline and in their physical communities, the Internet also gives room for online competition. Another example is the impact of the internet on your faith and Christian walk. While it may have made your Christian journey "easier" because you can worship along with your YouTube playlist in solitude with God or read an entry from the Deep Roots Devotional site as a part of your day, it might have also created an illusion which tells you you are doing enough just to get by. On the contrary however, it takes more than that to sustain your walk with God – all other things are tools in your journey.

That said, when it comes to forgiving other people, do you also realize that keeping screenshots and evidences of your chat with them is also related to your attitude of forgiveness? Now, I had a different idea for today's post until I got Adaora Lumina's ebook in my mailbox yesterday, and that inspired this post. You can find the exact words here on Instagram. Just click this link: [https://www.instagram.com/p/BufferSH4Q4/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/BufferSH4Q4/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)



After I read that, I told myself, I need to blog about this, because many people are guilty/have been guilty (myself inclusive). A while ago, I was quite hurt by the things a friend said in an unexpected feud, and I kept “proof” of our chat. But come to think of it. Why? For the first few days after that happened, I would go back to read what was said, being the type of person who would always want to see reason in situations. But, I never went back to it after a month or so. Sometimes, I would scroll through my phone and stumble on it again, then just shave it off. But. I. never. deleted. it.

So, when I read Lumina’s post, it occurred to me that even though I had genuinely let go of what happened and sincerely now see the person in new light, why on earth did I have “proof?” I think it stemmed from the fact that the “proof” would come up as useful if at all anything was to happen...but now, as I think about it again and as I type this post, I’m talking to myself like “Nah..nah...you were stupid to have done so...Like...seriously, girl?! You were made for more than this.” So, today, I am calling all the people who hold screenshots and chat proofs even though they claim to have forgiven someone. That “proof” too needs to go. Ask yourself why you have it and be honest with your answer, you would realize that they hold no water, and sometimes, the seemingly insignificant things consume the best of us.

That's really all for today – that's all I had to say – go on now and delete the screenshots. Who knows? Your phone probably needs space for a new selfie.

Remember all the links in this post?  
Please check out:

1. [FORGIVENESS IS NOT AMNESIA](#)  
for more context about forgiveness
2. [The Instagram Post](#) that inspired this post (+ the hashtags will leave you smiling!)
3. And [last week's post](#) if you missed it + the blog's new schedule!

Thank you!

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.



## 8 lbs. OFF in 16 Days (No Exercise!)

2020/06/27

9:22am

Category: Lifestyle

### Hello Royalty!

I hope this title doesn't take you by surprise because it kinda felt different for me when I typed. We haven't been big on inspirational and lifestyle blogs since the year began, so I figured it's about that time! I believe and commit to a life that develops the spirit, soul, and body. Now that we have that out of the way, let's get started.

#### THE BACKSTORY

Somewhere between the end of May and the beginning of June, I saw a post by [@mytailoredhealth on Instagram](#). It was an ad for a 3-week cleanse with a certified health coach (who happens to be my sister), but family matters aside. In June 2019, I joined a 3-day juice cleanse hosted by a friend from college. We had healthy juices for breakfast, lunch, and spinach for dinner. By the beginning of the 3rd day, my insides were going to burst open. I was puking everywhere. Now, fast forward to a year after, here comes another cleanse. At first, I thought *what is it about me and cleanses and June?* I was not having it.

Source: My Tailored Health

Then, I took a look at myself, and thought of all my failed attempts at an exercise routine or healthy eating during the lockdown. I figured that if I couldn't be a self-starter with this healthy lifestyle, someone else should be able to help. So, I signed up!

## THE JOURNEY

The cleanse held from June 8-28, which means I'm 20 days in right now, and it ends tomorrow! Exciteddd!



On the first few days, we were asked to write our goals and statements of inspiration for the reset cleanse. This was mine:

Goal #1: Lose abdominal weight

Why this goal? I want abs & I want my clothes to fit nicely lol.

Goal #2: Become a healthier version of myself

Why this goal? I think a healthier version will make me more fit & less tired.

Goal #3: Improve digestive health

Why this goal? I feel bloated every now & then.

**Your Goals For the Reset Cleanse**  
What are your top goals for our time together? Printing this page and writing them here will create neural changes in the brain that will make you more likely to be successful!

**Goal #1:** Lose abdominal weight  
Why This Goal?: I want abs & I want my clothes to fit nicely lol.  
Top Challenge: \_\_\_\_\_  
Key to Success: \_\_\_\_\_

**Goal #2:** Become a healthier version of myself  
Why This Goal?: I think a healthier version will make me more fit & less tired  
Top Challenge: \_\_\_\_\_  
Key to Success: \_\_\_\_\_

**Goal #3:** Improve digestive health.  
Why This Goal?: I feel bloated every now & then  
Top Challenge: \_\_\_\_\_  
Key to Success: \_\_\_\_\_

**"Statement of Inspiration"**  
Write below your answer to the question: "Why Create High-Level Health, Vitality + Fitness?" It can be as short or long as you would like or accompanied by inspirational pictures or other sensory stimuli that connects you to your WHY! **Bonus: Share your statement in the MTH Reset Cleanse Facebook group.**

My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and the house of my mind which contains all ideas, goals, and talents. If I take care of my body, I'm honoring God and giving myself better chances to succeed in all I do.

5

STATEMENT OF INSPIRATION: My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and the house of my mind which contains all ideas, goals, and talents. If I take care of my body, I'm honoring God and giving myself better chances to succeed in all I do.

## How did it go?

Being a 3-week program, it was divided into 3 sections, where each week's goal was to kinda focus on something new. The first 7 days were withdrawal days. The week wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. I went from eating bread everyday (don't judge me, okay?) to eating a few servings, same with dairy, processed foods and all of that stuff. The second week was a gluten-free, dairy-free week. This was the intense week. I had withdrawal symptoms such as losing appetite (especially towards the end of the week), but I wasn't exactly weak. On the contrary, I felt really light and clear-headed.

Now, the great thing about this cleanse program was that we were provided recipes, so I didn't have to do much thinking about what to eat. Even though it kept me in the kitchen every now and then (when I could have just microwaved some jollof rice and chicken), I put it upon myself to have fun with the new meals: various shakes, lentil soup, brown-rice and stir-fry, fish tacos, rice bread toast, you name it...cooking and eating away like nobody's business! And that, royalty, is how I lost 8 pounds. I got a scale at the beginning of the cleanse. On June 8, I was 165 lbs. (74.8 kg), and on June 24, I was 157.2 lbs. (71.3 kg). For the third week, we did some reintroductions of dairy and gluten on different days to see how the body reacts. I did not react so much to gluten – it was a slight ache in my belly for about 10 minutes, and that was it. However, I reacted to dairy a bit differently – it was a pounding headache that almost lasted a night.





- Oven-Roasted Plantain and Potatoes w/ Chickpeas and Spinach
- Brown-Rice Stir Fry w/ Herb-Roasted Turkey
- Raw Lentils

This journey taught me one of my favorite lessons again: ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE! This post is not an ad or anything, but I believe in spreading the good news about anything, so If you would like to speak to my coach, you can do so [through this link: CLICK HERE](#). Here's a link to her Instagram and Facebook pages. Instagram [@mytailoredhealth](#) and Facebook page: [My Tailored Health](#).

**So, WHAT'S NEXT?**

**MOVING ON**

Playing on the concept of 21: 21-day fasts, a 21-day cleanse, and seeing that when a meal is planned for, it saves you the trap of overeating, I have committed to drawing up my meal time-table. I do not just want to go back to eating bread everyday. However, I'll stick to a few servings a week and that goes for dairy too. I'll also stick to one major thing I learned from this cleanse: EATING DINNER EARLY. We were told not to eat anything after 7pm. I missed that a couple times, but it never went beyond 8pm. So, the aim is 7pm from now on.



I have also committed to an ab-challenge for the next 21 days after the cleanse: just 21 days to see how I perform. Who knows? I may finally commit to a physical exercise routine after that. I'll let you know how that goes!



Taking a look at my mission statements and goals again, I realized I did great in June, and I literally feel my body thanking me for it. Haha! a girl's waistline is nice (and the abs aren't even in yet!).

Okay, thank you so much for reading, Royalty! Cheers to being better versions of ourselves.

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.

## Get Up & Go: Must-See Scenes from Acts 9

2020/07/18

5:19pm

*Category: Faith*

### Hello Royalty!

I hope this finds you well (sounds like a familiar email line during this pandemic season?). Well yes, but I really hope this finds you well. It's been a lot of back and forth in the world today, but I hope you're doing just fine. In fact, I hope you're thriving.

Today's post came through a Bible Study moment, as most of our faith-based posts do. I was reading Acts 9 alongside a devotional, and I realized that the following words were repeated: **"get up and go."** There are four must-see scenes in Acts 9 which call for attention. Grab some popcorn and let's watch this movie!

#### SCENE ONE:

In Acts 9:1-9, we witness the beginning of Saul's Conversion where Jesus appeared to him. Verse 1 says, "Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the LORD's followers" and almost suddenly, God appears to Saul in verses 4-5. Then in verse 6, Jesus says, "Now **get up and go into the city**, and you will be told what you must do." We're going to hold that thought for a moment while we look at the other scenarios.

## SCENE TWO:

We see Ananias's boldness displayed after God spoke to him. From verses 10-19, we see the events between God speaking to Ananias in a vision and Saul regaining his strength. Specifically in verse 11, God says, "**Go over to Straight Street**" and because God gave Ananias some details, Ananias was a bit reluctant. He really did not want to face the one who has persecuted Christians like him simply because they were Christians. Then God repeats himself in verse 15, "**Go**, for Saul is my chosen instrument..."

## SCENE THREE:

After giving a few more details to Saul becoming Paul and preaching God's Word to the amazement of others, we see Peter in verse 32 in the town of Lydda. He met a man called Aeneas who had been paralyzed and bedridden for 8 years. In verse 34, the Bible says, "Peter said to him, 'Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you! **Get up, and roll your sleeping mat!**'"

## SCENE FOUR:

Tabitha, also known as Dorcas, who helped the poor and did kind things for others had become ill and died. In verse 39, Peter told everyone weeping to go out of the room. Then in verse 40, he knelt, prayed, and said, "**Get up, Tabitha!**"

I hope you can already see some similarities among these four outlined scenes. There was something about “getting up” that impregnated it with endless possibilities. Saul got up and became Paul in a short time. Ananias had to get up, face his fears, and be instrumental in what God was about to do among His people. Aeneas could have been on that sleeping mat until his death if he disobeyed Peter’s call to get up. And of course, Tabitha could have become a memory earlier than wished if she did not get up.

As I read these verses, it occurred to me that there is tremendous power in getting up. More so, getting up may not necessarily be what we think it to be – it could be anything. It could be repentance like Saul or faith like Aeneas. Sometimes, it could be dead situations in which we are totally powerless, and all that’s needed is our response and obedience.



Photo by [Brian Mann on Unsplash](#)

It’s also important to note that every scene resulted in turning many to the Lord. There’s something about my actions and your actions that convinces people about the reality of our God. My reason for this post right now is to tell you God wants you to get up. You best understand

your situation and you know what getting up may look like to you. As you read this, is there a move you know God is gearing you towards? Now is not the time to delay. Get up and go! What move are you making today? Getting up could be prayer, obedience, solitude, calling a friend, sending in a job application, kickstarting a dream, you name it. Whatever getting up looks like, I pray that the grace to act accordingly becomes your reality in Jesus name.

**Let us decree and declare this together:**

Right now, I get up and go. I arise and shine. I arise from the circle of bad news into the sphere of good reports. I arise from disappointments. I arise from false notions about myself and my future. I refuse to accept the bare minimum of God's plan for me. I embrace all of it in Jesus name. Today, like Paul, I get up from every space contrary to God's will for my life. I step into the center of the Father's will. I become blind to the old life, and my eyes are opened to light. Like Ananias, I get up in obedience to the instructions of my Creator. I yield myself to trust in the One who goes before me. I commit myself and my life to the One who sees ahead. Like Aeneas, I am no more paralyzed or bedridden. Everyone and everything connected to me are instantly set free from all forms of paralysis. I get up from every sleeping mat that may have held me down for too long – mats of identity confusion, comparison, greed, envy, or selfishness. I walk in the knowledge of who the I AM THAT I AM says I am. Like Tabitha, I come out of every grave, seen and unseen. There shall be no loss – no loss of property and no loss of life in the name of Jesus. Death is defeated, and I am satisfied with long life. All my friends and loved ones are satisfied with long life in Jesus name. On all days and in every season, all things will work together for my good. My steps are ordered; my strides are preserved; my generation is blessed. Today and beyond, I am a tree replanted in Eden, bearing fresh fruit every month, never dropping a leaf, always in blossom in Jesus name. Everything and everyone connected to me are always in blossom. My life will forever be an aroma of Christ and I shall be instrumental in turning many to God. Victory is mine. Victory is ours. Thank you Jesus!

...where the pen, the soul, and the lips connect.



All verses are cited from the New Living Translation (NLT)

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.

## Waiting is A Type of Movement Too

2018/03/05

8:31am

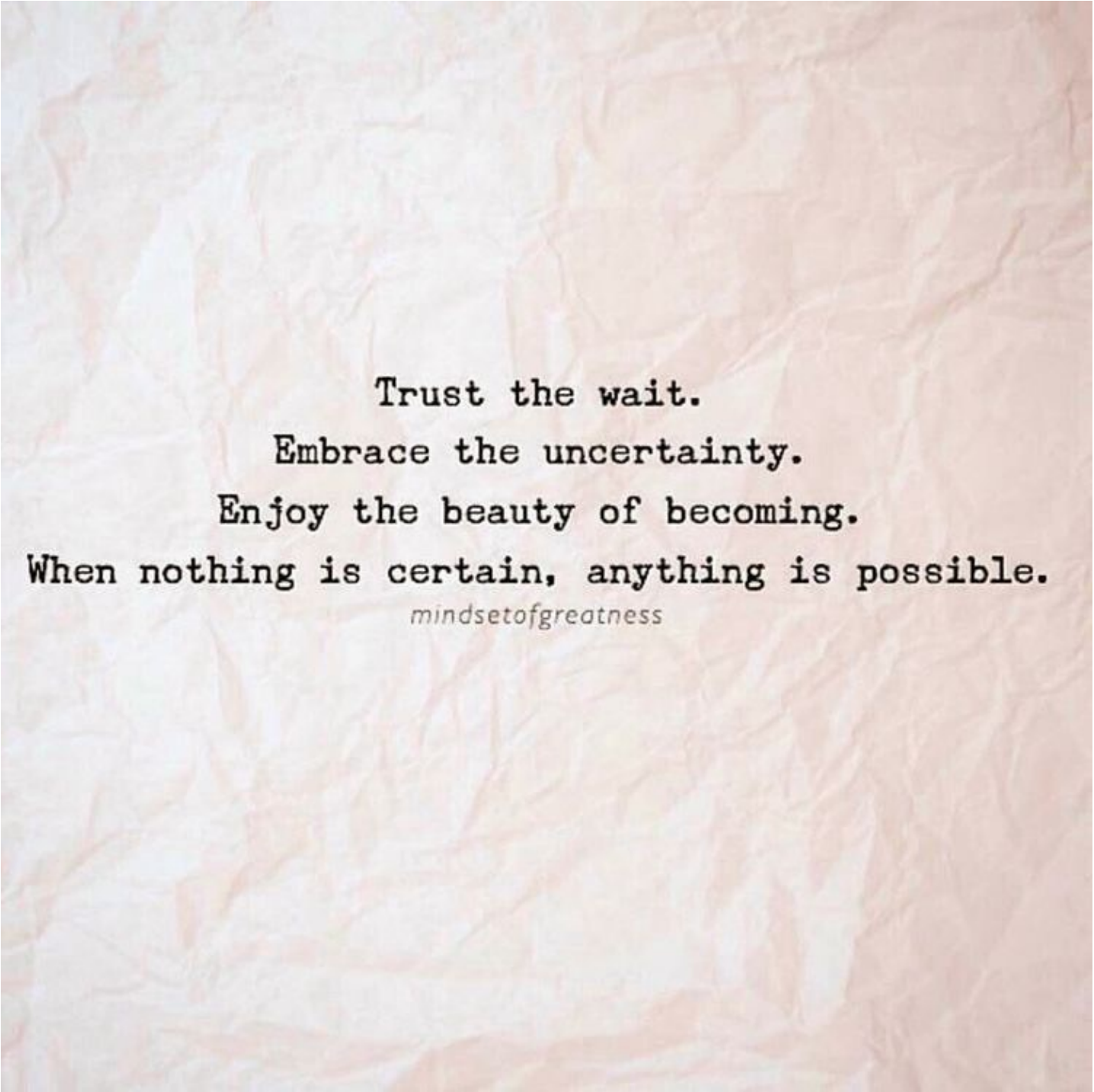
*Category: Faith*

### Hello Royalty.

I am happy, as always, to be writing to you again. By the way, I haven't got a chance to say a "Happy New Month" right here on the blog; so Happy New Month! I do hope that your March is starting off well.

Today's post is inspired by a personal experience – a not-so-long-ago experience, to be exact. We live in a fast-paced world and because of this, we are expected to constantly be on the move. This is not wrong in all of itself, but is it really the reality at all times?

We are expected to move whether by flying, running, jumping, walking or crawling, but no one remembers to tell us to also wait. When traveling by air, we have stopovers or a time where we wait to board. When running, we have starting points, where we wait before we begin the race. When walking, we stop to check directions or take a breath. When driving, we are either forced to stop because of traffic or to willingly wait at a particular juncture. While thinking about all of this, I did a kind of stock-taking on my life and I realized that "waiting" is also a type of movement.



Trust the wait.  
Embrace the uncertainty.  
Enjoy the beauty of becoming.  
When nothing is certain, anything is possible.  
*mindsetofgreatness*

Source: [Pinterest](#)

We hate to admit this kind of movement, but we cannot even avoid it. What do we wait for or wait on, therefore?



### **God's Promises:**

I decided to put this first, because this has kept me going. For instance, God promises you, "I will never leave you nor forsake you", but you seem to currently wallow in the seas of abandon. My advice? Wait on God's promises. Relax. My few months after leaving the university have made me realize that we are actually all running different races, and my "wait" season isn't your "wait" season. We are different and so are our journeys. So, what do you do? Wait. God has promised you an international job? Or you even saw it in a vision? But your current life does not even look like it? My advice? Wait. The fact that you have seen it does not necessarily today mean it's coming to pass today. so, wait and believe. Remember Father Abraham? Read Romans 4:18-21

### **You may ask, "So what do I do while I'm waiting?"**

Keep doing what you're doing.

Keep at the little things that seem insignificant.

Keep following that passion, that dream, that goal.

Keep staying on, staying up and showing up.

Keep putting in all of the efforts into that dream of yours.

**While waiting, you should also do something important: Learn.**

The illusion that you are learning when you're sitting and doing nothing is very possible. Learning, most times, is a conscious activity. So, pick up a book, get trained in a class, study and learn from those in your industry (the internet has made accessing information one of the cheapest things to afford). Get rid of distractions and learn.

Contrary to popular opinion, your "wait" season does not have to be a season of depression or being downcast, thinking you'd remain in the valley forever. Your wait season is actually your opportunity to grow and get your house in order.

I had shared the story of the Chinese bamboo on the blog sometime ago, and it applies to what the wait season means. The Chinese bamboo seed is planted, watered and nurtured, but for five whole years, nothing is seen above the ground. Then, in the fifth year, it suddenly begins to grow and sprout up and it becomes very tall, taller than most of the trees in the forest. How amusing, right? That is exactly what the wait season looks like. It seems like you're not moving, but you are gathering momentum. It seems like everything is moving slowly for you and all your so called "mates" are ahead of you, but indeed you are only preparing for prosperity.



*Maybe this might not sit well with you. But I am not in a haste to get to the peak. I am willing to prepare, so much that when the peak comes knocking, I can open without anxiety;*

*Without having the house in disorder, such as having the curtains on the floor or the tiles on the windows. Yes, I really do not want my sofas in the kitchen.*

RA

ALEXANDRA ZION

One more thing: there would be many wait seasons in all of our lives (so you better get used to it). Always remember in those times to embrace it and to walk tall in those seasons, with the promises of God in your heart and the spirit to learn in your heart alike.

Take this with you: the waiting which leads to nothing is the waiting in which you do nothing.

You'd get past this.

You'd bloom.

You'd get past this.

You'd rise.

★★

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.

## My Forbes Under 30 Summit Experience

2019/11/02

4:00am

*Category: Lifestyle*

### Hello Royalty!

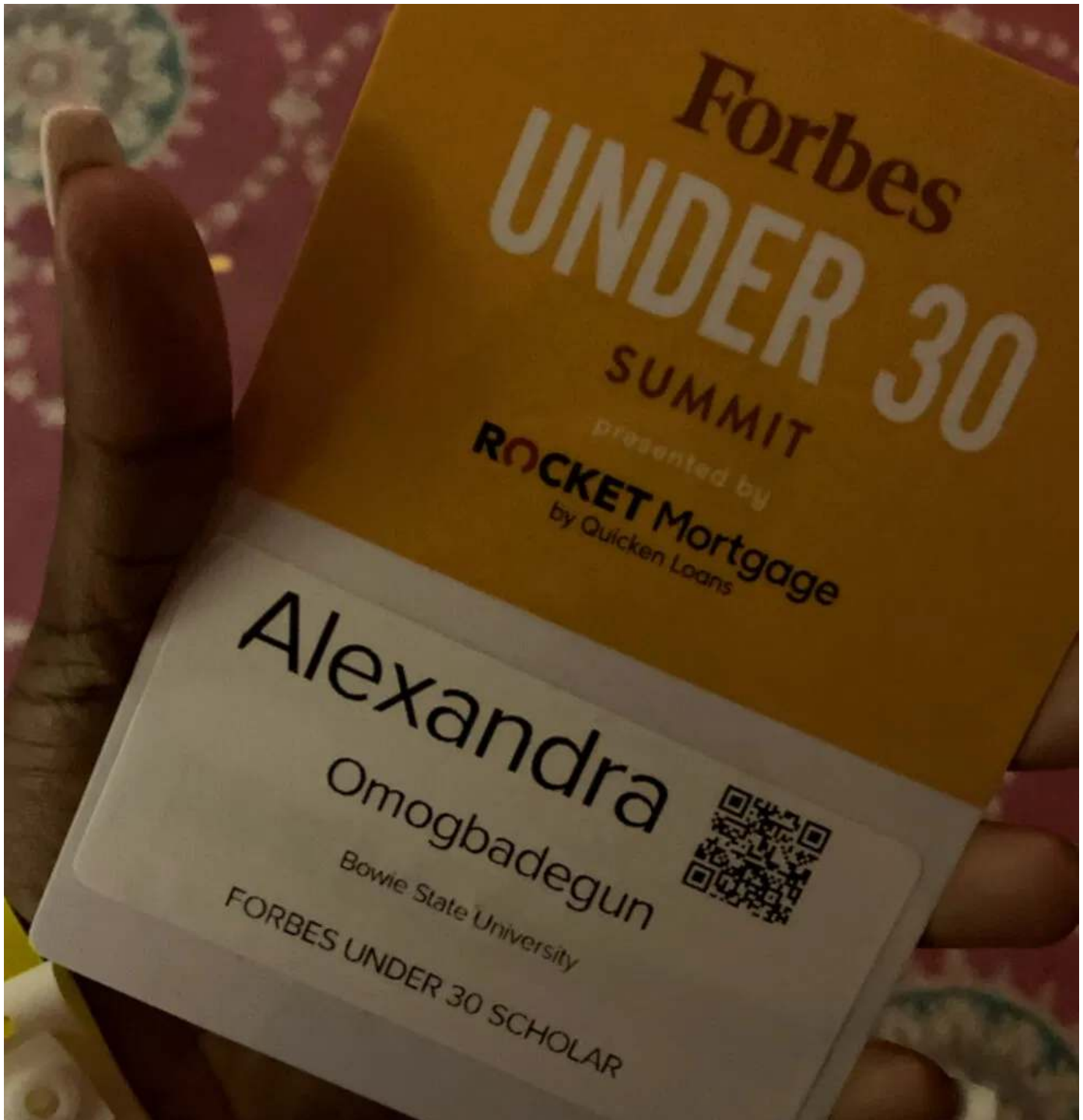
Today, I have some scoop for you on life in the past week , so, let's get to it!

In September, precisely the 19th, I got an email stating that I had been granted "access to the Forbes Under 30 Summit as an Under 30 Scholar." Prior to that, a friend had sent me an application link for undergraduates and graduates to be a part of the summit which led to the selection process, and it was a selection of 1,000 students from across the United States to be a part of the yearly conference. As a scholar, I got a conference registration waiver of over \$500, and it was so worth it.

So, as I packed for Detroit on Friday, the 25th, I had two things in mind: **connect and serve**. I had a plan to speak to as many people as possible, not just on surface level, but to know something about what makes people "tick." I wanted to find the common factor among the people I spoke with, and even among the speakers. In addition, service was the next thing on my list, so, for me, that included offering my time, ears, and hands to someone who needed them, and for the most part, this plan worked.

...where the pen, the soul, and the lips connect.

#### The Summit: Days 1-4





The first three days, which were October 27-29, had a similar schedule of workshop sessions where leading entrepreneurs, actresses, athletes, finance gurus, etc. answered questions in relation to topics such as Financial Wellness, Investing, Doing Well by Doing Good, Building Companies outside of Silicon Valley, Building Generational Wealth, and so many others. I could not attend all of the sessions, but I attended most, and as I said earlier, I was seeking the common factors. For the most part, most of the sessions referred to knowing yourself and investing in yourself. It was funny

but also insightful how they all kept going back to this same point. I also realized how each speaker had a “master key” of their career. What that means is that they were all wearing many hats right there on that stage, but they also had one thing where their profiles stemmed from. Remember [this article on the hour glass and how it pours from the center?](#) Those sessions reminded me of that.

For instance, Serena Williams, who was one of the speakers, is known as an athlete, but at the same time, we saw her speak about life as a mother, as Serena the investor, and as the founder of a fashion company. For me, all of this spoke to the point that we first need introspection to find ourselves, then we can go ahead to live in a world of no limits.

The last day was a give-back-to-the-community kind of day. Drumroll! I served pizzas. While I was in that “kitchen” working with a group of people I had just met, many things occurred to me, including the importance of teamwork and the beauty of service. As said by Abbey Wemimo, cofounder of Esusu and one of the speakers during the conference, there’s an African proverb that goes, “If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together.” I feel like I have spent a huge chunk of 2019 learning about delegations, but I saw it for myself on Wednesday. Everyone in the kitchen at the time could not believe that we served over 100 plates of pizza in 15-20 minutes. Now, the irony of that proverb is that going together takes you far and faster.

In between drawing on how each speaker had a “master key” of their career and how teamwork makes life a whole lot easier therefore, I left with new strategies for my life and career.



On the other hand, connecting with people happened everywhere: on registration queues, food truck queues, photo booth queues, identifying name tags, eye contact, bumping into a person, etc. For one, this conference made me realize (even more than I always thought) that I am not a socially awkward person, so “amen” to that! The conversations flowed seamlessly. I had promised myself not to meet anyone for what I thought I could get from them, but for the sake of knowing them and expanding my network, so I guess that’s why.



For the most part, it felt like I had known these folks for a long time. We talked about jobs, careers, goals, and in some cases, a picture of an ideal career. For some people I could not meet in person, I was quick to send a message on Instagram and just chat in the DMs. This event made me realize, more than ever, that communication is so much easier when you just want to know people for the sake of knowing them. In the past, I have found myself at events like this when I was at the point of needing something, and whether I liked it or not, trying to cater to those needs hindered my conversations from being genuine. This time however, I was in a state of mind where a few days off from classes and work was the best thing that could happen. Now, top that with speaking with amazing minds – it was the best!





### Let's talk about GEMS

I didn't take a lot of notes, but I put a few things down on my phone which I wanted to go back to over and over again. Here you go:

"Be a subject matter expert": remember what I called the "master key" of your career? That's your subject matter expertise. This doesn't mean you can't wear many hats; it just means that you are good at what you're good at, and what you're good at will open doors for you.

"Ask yourself, 'What money belongs in this space and how does it behave?'" In one of the sessions, someone mentioned that it is wrong to keep chasing after money that does not belong in your field. For instance, seeking an investor or VC in a field in which s/he has no particular interest is a waste of time. He emphasized that there are certain funds allocated to the fields you find yourself in and that's what your target should be. I understand this because even as a graduate student, there are certain opportunities that you can only have access to at a particular level of your scholarship. Failing to maximize those opportunities is failing to enjoy the embedded benefits at that time. So again, what is the money that belongs in your space and how does it behave?

“Regardless that there is recession, you are in the driver’s seat of your career.” I think this also goes back to being a subject matter expert and knowing your stuff. The truth is when we know what we know, we can come up with different ways to work around it. Careers are like languages. The more you know and use a language, the easier it is to create neologisms and slangs without being at fault. So, let’s take charge of what belongs to us.

“Try not to be a person of success, but a person of value.” This one makes so much sense because more than we know it, we see it all the time. When people do certain things in order to benefit others or improve humanity, they become ten times better than their competition.

That’s it! I hope you loved my two cents. For more pictures, see [HERE](#). Thank you so much for reading!

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.



## What Do I Do When I Feel Defeated?

2018/09/18

3:04pm

*Category: Faith*

### Hello Royalty.



I am putting procrastination in the backseat this week, so unlike last week when there was no post, even after much planning, this week is going to be different.

## Question of the Day: “When you feel defeated, do you stay feeling defeated or do you defeat the feeling of defeat?”

Defeat can present itself in many ways – talk about comparison, competition, failure, depression, ill-health, near-success moments, losses and what not. Then we begin to doubt our invincibility and we wonder where we have missed it. We also wonder if something has gone wrong with us. Permit me to chip this in: Darling, nothing is wrong with you.

One of the things I have come to learn is that the feeling of overwhelm, sometimes, is a good feeling. It kind of communicates that you are willing to do more and be more, but you just don't know how to. Without the feeling of being able to do more and be more, you just might do nothing at all. Defeat is like that feeling of overwhelm. Defeat might just be a greater feeling, where all hope seems lost and you have no idea what to do.

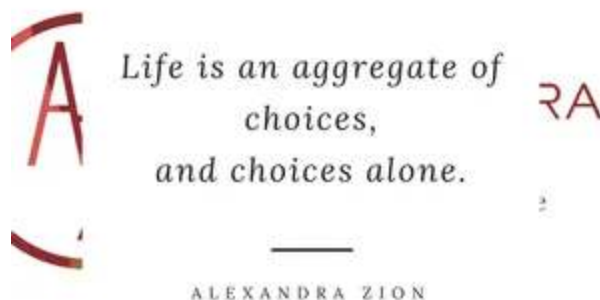
### **The Story of Gideon**

Gideon, in the book of Judges, is a great example. Their enemies had gotten the better of them and the Israelites were starving. Then, there's Gideon who was the least in his family, and whose family was the least in the tribe of Manasseh. The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said, “Mighty hero, the LORD is with you.” At this point, I am pretty sure Gideon hissed. In the midst of starvation and an ultimately low status, Gideon blurted, “If the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us?”

There! Many of us make statements just like Gideon – *If God is with me, why did I lose that job? If God really loves me, why did this have to happen? Why didn't I get that business deal? Why am I sick?* In the midst of all our questions, God says, "I am with you." As they say, the purpose of faith is not just to prevent you from trouble, sometimes the purpose of faith is to carry you through trouble and unto triumph.

### What do I do?

As a Christian, the feeling of defeat does not equal the status of defeat, because thanks be to God who always causes us to triumph! In Christ, there is no defeat. How do I mean? Remember Jesus on the cross, being crucified for you and I? That must have been an absolute feeling of defeat. Although He was mocked, bruised, and sneered at, he took it all in. It took three days. Three days after, they knew who the Messiah was! Victory had come! My point to you today is that feelings of defeat will always show up – in minute ways and in major ways, but you do not have to give in to those feelings. You have the choice to rise above whatever makes you feel defeated and to choose the path of victory.



In the past month, I completed a Bible Plan on the YouVersion Bible App, called **“15 Days in the Word with John Piper.”** John Piper talked about the secret of invincible joy – the joy which cannot be defeated or frustrated. He explained how Jesus revealed the secret of this invincible joy to us. In Matthew 5:11-12, the Bible says, *“God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven...”* and then in Luke 10:17-20, the Bible says, *“When the seventy-two disciples returned, they joyfully reported to him, ‘Lord, even the demons obey us when we use your name!’”*<sup>18</sup> “Yes,” he told them, *“I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning!”*<sup>19</sup> Look, I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy, and you can walk among snakes and scorpions and crush them. Nothing will injure you.<sup>20</sup> But don’t rejoice because evil spirits obey you; rejoice because your names are registered in heaven.”

### **The Solution**

Do you see any similarities between the two chapters? Your situation of defeat might not be a form of hate speech, as it is in Matthew 5. Nevertheless, Jesus encourages us to rejoice because our names are written in heaven. Piper says Jesus anchored the happiness of suffering saints in the reward of heaven and he anchored the happiness of successful saints in the same. When your joy is rooted in Jesus, it becomes invincible.

Looking again at the sixth chapter of Judges, it says the LORD turned to Gideon after he had complained, and said “Go with the strength you have...” You see that? There is still strength inside of you in the presence of defeat. Do not give up. Keep on keeping on. You are going to get through this and you are going to testify!

**“Being defeated is often a temporary condition. Giving up is what makes it permanent” –**

Anon

It is all in your hands! Keep the faith!

### **Bible Verses to Remember**

Psalms 55:22 (TPT) – “So here’s what I’ve learned through it all: Leave all your cares and anxieties at the feet of the LORD, and **measureless grace will strengthen you**”

2 Corinthians 4: 8-10 (MSG) – “We’ve been surrounded and battered by troubles, but we’re not demoralized; **we’re not sure what to do, but we know that God knows what to do**; we’ve been spiritually terrorized, but God hasn’t left our side; we’ve been thrown down, but we haven’t broken. What they did to Jesus, they do to us—trial and torture, mockery and murder; what Jesus did among them, he does in us—he lives!”



Psalms 34:19-20 (AMP) – “Many hardships *and* perplexing circumstances confront the righteous, But the Lord rescues him from them all. <sup>20</sup> **He keeps all his bones; Not one of them is broken.**”



Philippians 4:6-7 (AMP) – “Do not be anxious *or* worried about anything, but in everything [every circumstance and situation] by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, continue to make your [specific] requests known to God. <sup>7</sup> And **the peace of God [that peace which reassures the heart, that peace] which transcends all understanding, [that peace which] stands guard over your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus [is yours].**”

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.



# How I Launched My 8-Month-Old Poetry Podcast with \$20

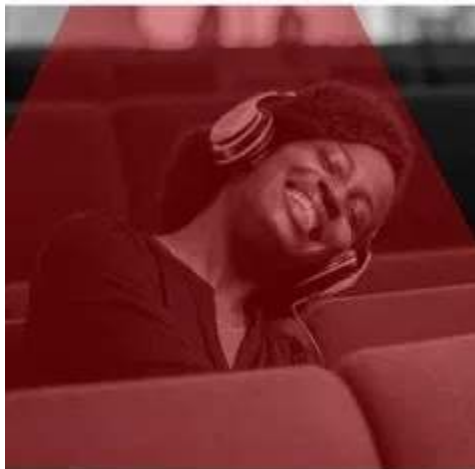
2020/08/10

9:50am

*Category: Lifestyle*

## Hello Royalty!

Since I launched my poetry podcast in January, 2020, I have received about 3 messages and a couple more random asks about how I started my podcast, usually from people who are willing to do the same thing. Recently, I posted a poll on Instagram, and it turned out more people are interested in knowing what steps to take to starting their own podcasts. So, consider this post an amateur, honest, but detailed one. I will let you in on everything I know, and I trust it will be a great starting point.



### FIRST OFF, *what's your why?*

I like the common saying, “when the purpose of a thing is not known, abuse is inevitable.” For anything to be successful, there has to be a genuine why. **Why do you want to start a podcast?** I decided I wanted to share my poems outside of live performances and Instagram posts. My first option was a YouTube channel, but my content creation joys do not exactly extend to creating videos consistently. I wanted something I could do right off the bat, something I could do without being forced, and something that could put me in the moment, the same way a live performance would. Yes, I like being in front of the lens to take pictures and what not, but recording and editing videos are things I’m not big on (for now). So, podcasting was a better outlet. I could “hide” my face, stay behind the mic, and just flow.

Now, I could not find any spoken word podcasts. There were a couple poetry podcasts, but it was hard to find something which looked like what I had in mind. I like samples, so I was not excited about this. However, because I had a why, it was easy to find podcasts with similar styles – storytelling, poetry, literature etc. and things were pretty much defined from the beginning.

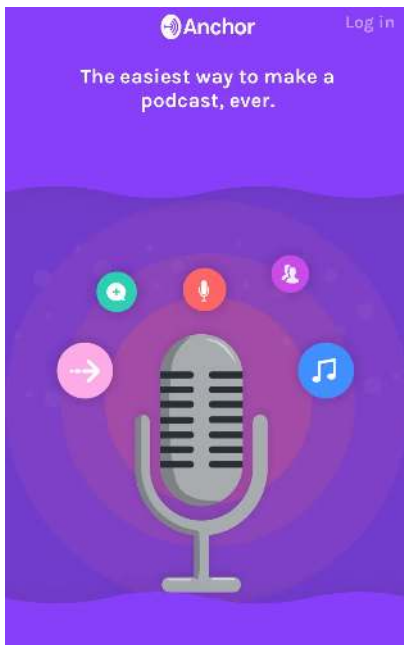
You get the gist now...you need to have a reason for starting a podcast. It will also help you on days when you don’t feel like recording anything (more about that later).

## Decide on Your Style

Every podcast is different. There are similar podcasts, but they are not the same. Why? The hosts are different. A podcast can be fiction, live storytelling, narrative, chat cast, solo hosted, interview etc. Some will include more than one format. You want to decide on your style as early as possible. Mine is currently a blend of narrative, solo host, and interview. In the same vein, it's important to decide on the frequency. I started as a biweekly podcast and then moved to daily episodes. This may change over time, but for now, that's the working schedule, and it helps me plan my episodes.

## Choosing a Hosting Service

Once you know why you're starting a podcast and how you want this podcast to function, the next important thing is to make those ideas come to life. This is why a hosting service exists. Podcasts do not just make it to platforms like Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Sticher, or Google Podcasts randomly. They go through a process. The beginning of that process is a hosting service. This is where you manage your audience and podcast files. Some of the popular names include [Anchor](#), [Buzzsprout \(which I currently use\)](#), [Libsyn](#), [PodBean](#) etc.



I tested the waters with Anchor for a few weeks before I decided to use Buzzsprout. Anchor is easy to use, and it is free. A great perk is that you can record from your phone; it's designed to make recording convenient from your phone. If you choose to do this, I'll advice against the in-built phone microphone – you do not want to rely on the quality of such sounds. With Anchor, you can also record with people in different locations (considering the lockdown, this is a great perk added since it became owned by Spotify). You can create an artwork for your podcast from the library of free images (note

that anyone else can use the same image you have used too), and listeners can leave you a voice message as feedback. You also get access to some audio files in terms of background music and transitions which you can use for your show. On the contrary, this was the dealbreaker for me. Because I had a spoken word podcast in mind, I wanted to have as much control over my music choices as possible. Anchor did not give me that control. Also, without much of your consent, Anchor can play ads on your show. I did not want any of that. I also wanted an original artwork, so I used my AdobeSpark app to create something I liked.

## Plan

You can change your plan at any time. When upgrading, you will charge the difference between the plan prices immediately. If you downgrade to a plan with too few hours, you will be charged for overage on your next invoice. You can only downgrade to the free plan if you have less than 2-hours of content in your current cycle.

Free	\$12 /month	\$18 /month	\$24 /month
Upload <b>2</b> hrs Each Month	Upload <b>3</b> hrs Each Month	Upload <b>6</b> hrs Each Month	Upload <b>12</b> hrs Each Month
Episodes Hosted for 90 days Limited to 2 hours each month	Episodes Hosted Indefinitely Upload more content for (\$4 per hour)	Episodes Hosted Indefinitely Upload more content for (\$3 per hour)	Episodes Hosted Indefinitely Upload more content for (\$2 per hour)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ads on Podcast Website</li><li>✓ Advanced Stats</li><li>✓ Unlimited Team Members</li><li>✓ Upgrade to Remove Ads</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Advanced Stats</li><li>✓ Unlimited Storage</li><li>✓ Unlimited Team Members</li><li>✓ Import Podcast for Free</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Advanced Stats</li><li>✓ Unlimited Storage</li><li>✓ Unlimited Team Members</li><li>✓ Import Podcast for Free</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Advanced Stats</li><li>✓ Unlimited Storage</li><li>✓ Unlimited Team Members</li><li>✓ Import Podcast for Free</li></ul>
Magic Mastering not available on free plans	Add Magic Mastering for \$6/month	Add Magic Mastering for \$9/month	Add Magic Mastering for \$12/month

## Subscription Plans on Buzzsprout

Buzzsprout was my second option. I explored Libsyn a bit, but I eventually settled with Buzzsprout. Unlike Anchor, you do not get a lot of features for free on Buzzsprout. However, I felt in control of my content, and that was necessary for me. For the first 90 days, you have access to their free plan. If you choose to continue, then there are paid plans where you get 3 hours of upload time for \$12/month. If the total minutes for your episodes will exceed 3 hours, then this may be a dealbreaker for you. When I kicked off with monthly payments for Buzzsprout, I got a \$20 Amazon gift card because I was referred by someone else, and I immediately invested that in [a small but functional mic](#) which is what I still use for recording my episodes. If you choose to use my [Buzzsprout referral link](#), you also get a \$20 Amazon gift card, and it is totally up to you to decide how to use it.

Some other perks include easy listings on major podcast directories. Once I uploaded my first audio files into Buzzsprout, I was allowed to submit to Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, Castbox...you name it! I just had to wait to be approved by these platforms and then I shared the word with everyone. Buzzsprout also offers a website where listeners can find all of your episodes and choose to either listen on the website ([find mine here](#)) or be redirected to their favorite podcast platform. You also get an audio player embed code to help you publicize on other websites, [like I have it here](#). This is not an ad or sponsored post, but I genuinely appreciate the flexibility and easiness that comes with Buzzsprout.

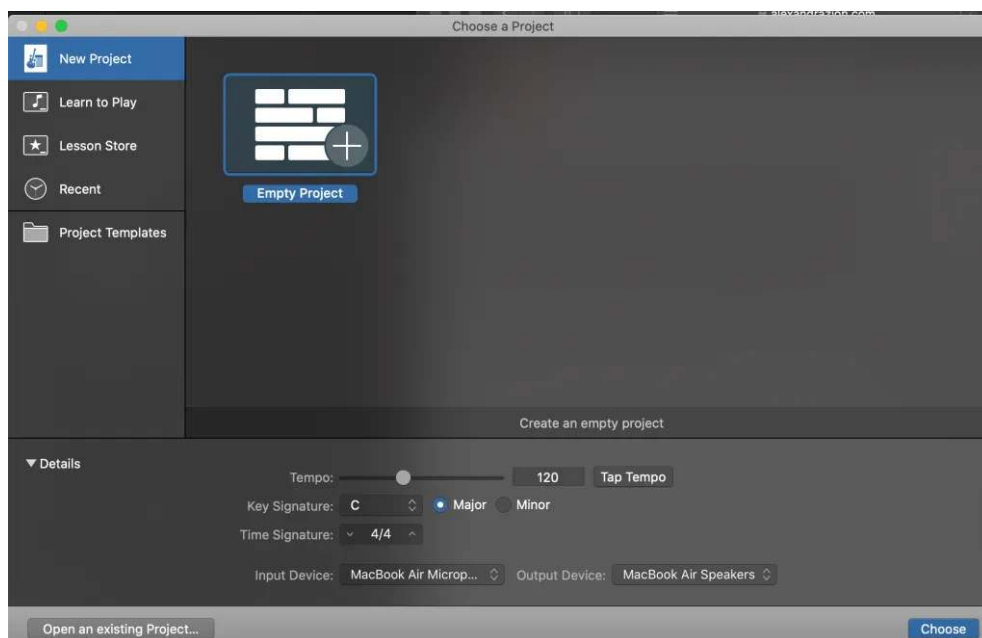
I do not have so much of a first-hand experience with the other hosting services, but you can find out more about them [here](#).

### **Choosing a Recording Software**

Most podcasters choose one of these three: Audacity, GarageBand, or ProTools. If you already own a Mac or an iPhone, GarageBand is right up your alley. I also have the Audacity app, but I happened to pick up pace with GarageBand. Both options are free but Audacity is limited in terms of audio formats such as AAC or M4A. Do your research, and as much as you can, always test the waters until you find what works for you.

## Recording and Editing on GarageBand

The first thing I do when I open the app is to change Input device to “External Microphone” and Output to “MacBook Air Speakers.” This allows me record by using my mic and also hear a playback of my recording through my laptop’s speakers. If you have connected a different speaker or output device such as headphones or AirPods, you can use that too. Make sure you place the volume of your laptop/phone at a desired level. You cannot increase the volume while the mic is plugged.



Next Step is to select “Audio” and then “Create.” It will usually highlight “1234” and the button next to it in purple (as seen in the second screenshot). Deactivate those buttons (as I have – the color becomes grey). For podcasting, you will hardly need any beats going off while you record, so I choose “Time” (as seen in the third screenshot). This also helps you keep track of the time while you record.

...where the pen, the soul, and the lips connect.

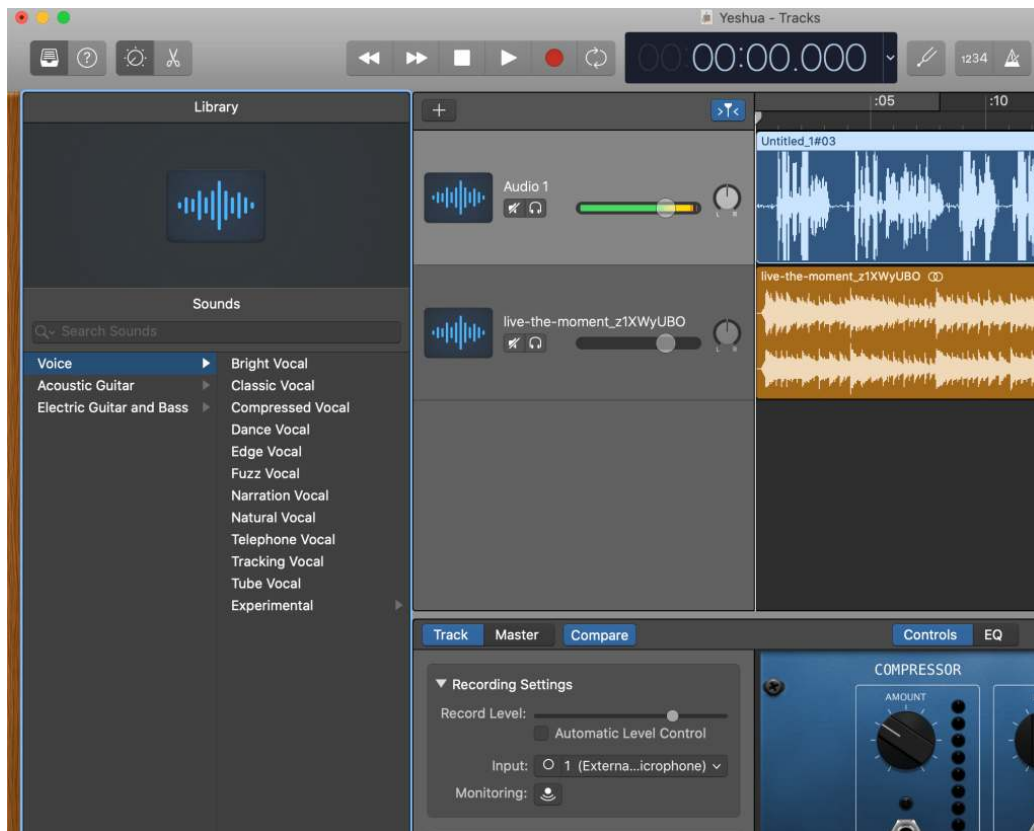




...where the pen, the soul, and the lips connect.



If you choose to fine-tune your sound a bit, GarageBand offers some voice options. I usually go for “Natural Vocal” – it adds a better effect to the poem, and I like the overall output. Remember, test the waters and experiment away! Learn to play with your work.



If you already have a downloaded song, you add it by clicking the music icon on the top right corner. You can then go ahead to place it where you want. I use [AudioBlocks](#) for background music. With a subscription, you get licensed to use and keep downloaded music without having to worry about copyright infringement. If you are not creating a spoken word podcast, you may choose not to include music throughout the show. It's all preference.



Above all, be sure to create an intro and outro for your podcast. As I type this, I am certain my outro and intro are not where I want them to be, but they work for now. You can't skip this step. What do you want people to know about your podcast as soon as they tune in? Make it count and make it consistent.

## **Creating Content for Your Podcast**

\*Let's insert a love-hate reaction here\*

This is the crème de la crème of your podcast. Nothing works if there are no episodes to publish. After three months of podcasting, content creation became a different ball game. There were days I totally did not feel like creating, writing, or recording. Top that with the struggle to find a quiet space especially during a lockdown. It is usually noisy, except at midnights. On some days, I gave in to the pressure of not creating. On most days, I picked myself up again. But in all honestly, automation is your ticket to producing episodes consistently.

Since I started recording multiple episodes ahead of time and scheduling them on Buzzsprout, it has been easier to produce content. My best advice? Plan, record and schedule ahead of time! There has to be a method to the madness. It's not easy, but it's worth it.

## **Any Other Business**

Get in on the publicity. Spread the word. It's your work. Be proud of it. It doesn't have to be perfect; it just has to be done. In the process, feel free to make changes and embrace improvements. Your listeners will understand and appreciate your on-the-job upgrades, and everything will be just fine! Also, it's important to connect with like minds as you go on, and put your ears to the ground for the latest happenings in your industry and in the podcast industry at large. Own it!

You might think, “Where does \$20 come in?” If you have a phone or laptop, get that \$20 mic for a start and forget about the rest. You’ll need to do more work if you are on a budget and cannot outsource, but it’s what it is. It’s always better to start and grow rather than wait and waste.

Ready to get started with podcasting? Following [this link lets Buzzsprout know I sent you](#), and like I stated earlier, it gets you a \$20 Amazon gift card if you sign up for a paid plan.

Do you think I missed out on anything? Leave a question in the comment section here, and I’ll reply quickly. Thank you so much for reading. Take some time to [listen to my podcast HERE](#) if you will! I’ll appreciate it.

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.

# The ABCs of Building A Relationship with God

2020/04/04

3:11pm

*Category: Faith*

## Hello Royalty!

I realized most of us are talking about building a great relationship with God during this time of social distancing, and I observed that there are people who really, really want to do this: to pray, study their Bibles, experience intimacy, and finally see God become real in their lives BUT they just do not know where to begin.

It's like everything is suspended in the air, and they have no way to reach those dreams. If you are in that category, I wrote this blogpost for you. Just so you know, I wasn't thinking about it at all. It came to me by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit a week earlier to this day, last Saturday while I spending some personal time with God, and here's what God made me understand, **"Until you help people understand that I can meet them where they are, you can't help them see why they should go out of their ways to meet me."**

So, that's the idea for this. It's really not about you thinking up a thousand and one ways to spend time in fellowship with God, at least not yet, it's about you just going to God as you are. A relationship with God never kicks off with how much you can do; it kicks off with the little things like conversations and quality time in each other's presence as it is in every type of relationship.

So, what are these ABCs?



Source: Unsplash

### **A. A genuine desire for intimacy**

Think about your relationships at all levels. Everyone can attest to a time when s/he wanted a close-knit relationship with another person. It could be a parent or friend. It works the same way with God. In order to build your relationship with Him, it starts with a desire on your part. Now, we understand that efforts are two sided in a healthy relationship. God plays His part by being there not because you want to build something with him but because He has always wanted this friendship with you. Recently, I read Myles Munroe's *The Purpose and Power of Love and Marriage*. In this book. Munroe writes, "God is love, and love needs to give, so God created...a spiritual being like Himself – so He would have someone to love and give to" (131). In essence, we can say that God created you to love you. In James 4:6, the Bible says, "Move your heart closer and closer to God, and he will come even closer to you..." (TPT).

Every relationship begins with a desire. How bad do you want God to be real with you? Are you willing to do whatever it takes? If you answered "yes" to the last question, then let's move on.

### **B. Bask in His Presence**

If I told someone how much I wanted to be intimate with them, but I seem to have time for everything else but them, then I shouldn't expect that person to take me seriously. After expressing a genuine desire to know God, the next thing to do is to take time out in His Presence. How? The list is endless, really, but here are a few ways:

- **Talk to Him:** Yes, wake up in the morning and ditch the cell phone. Lie on your bed for a few minutes and just talk about how real you want Him to be to you. Talk about something you heard from church yesterday but you need clarity on. Talk about the things that hurt. Talk about your struggles. Talk about the things that make you happy. Talk about dreams. Talk about a verse you read in Scripture. Consciously carve out time to say something to Him. Take a minute off a long work schedule to say, “Jesus, I just want you to know that you mean so much to me. Help my actions align with my intentions.” My point? Don’t miss out on conversations with God throughout your day.
- **Read the Bible:** A lot has been written ahead of time so you can learn. They are in the Bible. Start with a verse, a chapter, a Bible plan on YouVersion maybe, and learn not to rush anything. Take it one step at a time. Don’t read for the sake of reading. ([I have a post here about different ways to study the Bible.](#)) Prioritize Bible Study time and at the beginning of that carved out time, pray for your eyes to be opened and for understanding to be your portion.
- **Worship with music:** Sometimes, we don’t have the right words. Music always helps. Create a playlist, if you can, of different worship songs. Lock yourself in for as long as you can and just sing along with full concentration on God.

### C. Come to a place of conviction not condemnation



Guilt is one of the top reasons people find it difficult to connect with God. Notice I didn't say "sin." Jesus says, "the world's sin is that it doesn't believe me." So, you believe God, you try to spend time with Him but there seems to be a constant barrier. What's that? Guilt. Guilt of past or present sins, failures, inadequacies, mistakes, and the list goes on. Guess what? GOD NEVER CONDEMNNS YOU! And that's the truth. The Bible is filled with imperfect people. But here's the striking truth: all of these imperfect people are positively changed from time to time to be people they never thought they could be – vessels of gold!

Do not be the person who spends time trying to be "perfect" before coming to God. No, no, and no. A relationship with God is not a candlelit date night; it's a marriage. And in a healthy marriage, I don't think you can hide most of your flaws even if you tried. The signs are always all over the place. Here's something the Holy Spirit dictated to me recently, and I hope it helps you put things in perspective:

*It's never about you; it's all about me – and that's not me being selfish; it's me helping you see that I do not love you because of what you do or don't do. Yes, the things you do prove your love for me, but the things you do do not equate your love for me. Love starts and ends in the heart. I seek intentions before actions. I examine hearts before acts. I judge words spoken in the heart, not works done without heart. Never, and I say, never let the devil beat you up about something I don't even care about. Remember, what the enemy meant for evil, I'll always turn around for good.*

So, now that you have seen this, are you ready to build the best relationship you could ever ask for? Take these practical steps and watch God move. He is waiting.

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.

# notes on helplessness, empathy, writer's block, #endsars, war rooms, and hope

2020/11/01

8:07am

*Category: Lifestyle*

## Hello Royalty!

To recount the #EndSars experiences in a single blogpost is an impossible feat. Life was an oxymoron during the protests – a tale of bitter-sweet experiences where Nigerian youths, myself included, either took to the streets, their bank accounts, or prayer rooms to take a stance against cruel leadership. Some did all three. That was the sweet. But can you imagine young, vibrant, and talented souls killed for expressing their pain and asking for their rights? Take talent or uniqueness out of the picture; can you imagine humans like you and me killing other humans like themselves? Can you imagine the vileness embedded in a country so much that it denies the death of its own citizens? I could go on and on, and if you have no idea what I'm talking about, take a pause from reading and google "end sars."

...where the pen, the soul, and the lips connect.



## helplessness

as a Nigerian in the diaspora, this was my headspace for almost 14 consecutive days. I said to the people around me, "I didn't know I cared for Nigeria so much." Now, leadership ineptitude is not a surprise. For the most part, every Nigerian can point to incompetence in leadership, or so we thought. On the flip side, the events of these past weeks made me rethink what we have always referred to as incompetent leadership: is it incompetence or wickedness? People murdered in broad daylight for no just cause? COVID-19 Palliatives stacked up in warehouses since April only to be discovered by citizens in October? Lack of accountability? Threats to citizens in and outside the country? An official address that dampened the spirit of almost the entire nation? These don't sound like incompetence to me. So, for the most part, as I followed the trends online and realized I really couldn't do anything but pray and lend my voice, a big part of myself felt helpless, and helplessness is not pretty.

## empathy

I used to think empathy was easy for everyone until the protests happened. And in a mostly debilitating society, the least asset I think anyone should have is empathy. The case for one Nigerian is not the case for every Nigerian, but the case for one Nigerian is the case for most Nigerians. That calls for empathy. To think that we had and still have an outpour of posts upon posts and speech upon speech from various well-known personalities describing the events during and after the protests as nothing but child's play is alarming. The people's pain has been ridiculed on national tv; the quest to take the power of social media away from the users has been more important than addressing the victimization of citizens; previously non-existent families are now being created as elected representatives refer to youths as children and demand respect...and the list goes on.

now is a good time to chip in a recent conversation I had with one of my friends. He had put up an Instagram Story about the untrustworthiness of those in governance and how newly elected officials play the same game as soon as they're in power. That post took me back to a quote from a book I partly read in 2018 titled *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire. In it, Freire says,

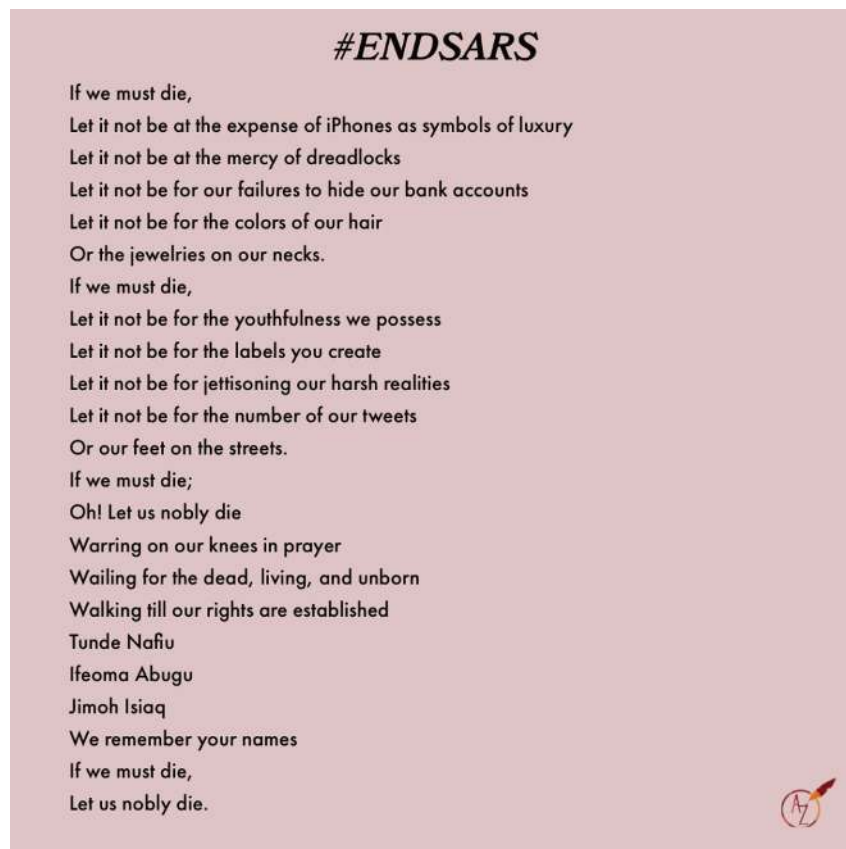
**“But almost always, during the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or “sub-oppressors.” The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped. Their ideal is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be oppressors. This is their model of humanity.”**

*Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970)*

And I followed this up with these thoughts: It takes a radically different type of orientation, lifestyle, and values for the oppressed to not become the oppressor. That's why the rot is deep...deeper than we think.

## writer's block

I partially agree with the school of thought that writer's block is not a thing. People have churned out articles, books, and podcasts on how to kick this block where it hurts. Nevertheless, sometimes, kicking is not the first thing on your mind. You really just want things to flow without kicking anything. Coupled with other responsibilities that had stolen writing time from me, writing wasn't the first thing on my mind, so I think I had a fair dose of writer's block. On October 11, I wrote and shared a poem on Instagram and Twitter in wake of the #endsars protests. The next thing I wrote after that was another poem two days ago, and I knew I was ready. So, here I am...writing again...it feels good!!



This poem was also featured on the Wadi Ben-Hirki Foundation website, and you can [find it here](#).

war rooms and hope

But God.

*1 If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say;*

*2 If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us:*

*3 Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us:*

*4 Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul:*

*5 Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.*

*6 Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth.*



*7 Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped.*

*8 Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*

*Psalms 124 KJV*

The protests included prayer walks. People labored in the place of prayer, souls were saved on protest grounds, and healings were wrought too. I almost couldn't believe my eyes! It was all so beautiful. Personally, I prayed too. I joined a prayer group online and prayed in my own space too. Every iota of hope I carry is rooted in the place of prayer, and I have to thank God for that.

Following the curfew in Lagos, a few reports have been released about new encounters with SARS on the streets. It's quite disheartening, but at the same time, people have not just moved on. Following the protests and some of the events, there has been an interesting turn of events. Warehouses were discovered, investigations and interviews are underway in some locations, and if you ask me what the next step is, I really do not know. However, I know prayers don't go unanswered, and this time, something amazing has been birthed. Years of rot will not be overturned within two weeks of protests. More people are paying attention to the constitution, to history, to governance, and it does look like there's a way forward, even if that way is yet to be clear.

Whatever you do, keep hope alive.

Also, Welcome to November! God is winning unseen battles, charting unpaved roads, and working behind the scenes for your joy this month in Jesus name.

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.

NB: To avoid copyright infringement, I have not used any images from the protests in this post.

## The Death Conversation

2019/04/17

10:26am

*Category: Poems & Stories*

### Hello Royalty.

Adebimpe was who you called the power woman. Her strides were fearful, and when her lips parted in speech, an aura of fearlessness and wisdom eased through them. She was the type to command attention when she walked into a room. Women whispered and men whistled at the clanking of her stilettos and the gliding of her sneakers, but life, however, had not been the best for Bimpe. She smiled when she hurt, and the worst was that she did not know where the hurt stemmed from.



"Today, I watched the news" she told her friend.

Nonso shifted his hat. He placed his left hand on them for a little longer than expected. Then he put the hat on Bimpe's center table. "I don't watch the news", he smirked.

"Yes, but today I watched the news and everyone's dying."

“What do you mean everyone is *dy-ing*?” Nonso stressed the gerund at the end of his sentence, to project his thoughts that Bimpe was definitely uttering nonsense.

“I am serious, Nonso. A plane crash here, a murder there...everyone is really dying.”

“What’s your plan?”

Adebimpe was quiet, but her eyes held infinite words. She rose and paced the room – two steps, three, four, and an abrupt stop. Her hands went up in frustration and came crashing down to her thighs almost immediately. They went up again, this time to her chest. She stole a look at Nonso who seemed engrossed in a theatrical performance just by looking at her.

“What’s the point of all this? Why are we striving and fighting to make it if we are all gonna die someday?” Before her friend could answer, she screamed, “I don’t have a plan, Nonso, I have questions...*questions*! DO YOU HAVE A PLAN?”

Nonso rose, and you could not tell if he was reenacting Bimpe’s performance or if it was mere coincidence. He paced the living room too – two steps, three, four, and an abrupt stop. Instead of throwing his hands up in frustration, he almost knocked over the ottoman at the end of the room.

“The plan is to die empty.”

She gave him a quizzical look. He ignored her and continued, “What would be the point of dying with all of my potentials?”

"But we will not all be popular"

"Yes, but we can all be impactful. We can all fulfill purpose. We can all be kind, and popularity is not a stakeholder in the purpose business. It's a byproduct – usually dispensable"

Bimpe took a seat. She gave her posture free rein, so her legs slid off the couch and her hands rested on her knees. "So, that's your plan?"

"Yes. *Carpe Diem.*"

Goodbye Royalty,

With Overflowing Love,

Alexandra Zion.





#TransformingWorldsWithWords

*Dear reader/sharer/well-wisher/subscriber:*

*Thank you. Thank you for being a part of this incredible journey. Thank you for all the intentional and unintentional ways you have supported me. For those who have shared with me the ways in which the blog has made a difference in their lives at some point in time, thank you. It*

*encourages me to know that this blog is fulfilling its mission of transforming worlds with words. I haven't been the best blogger or content creator. Sometimes, I fall short of my schedule. I pick other things over blogging like work and school when they call for attention.*

*But every time I find myself here, it's like reuniting with a long-time friend or discovering a favorite song over and over again. I could go on and on, but as beautiful as words may be, they're never enough to express gratitude.*

*HAPPY 5TH BLOGIVERSARY!*

*With Overflowing Love,*

*Alexandra Zion.*