



# HIDDEN SEASONS

HOLY FORMATIONS:  
Where God Quietly Shapes the Heart

E. EVORA-GOCELA

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This book is a work of personal reflection and spiritual testimony. Names, details, and identifying characteristics may have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

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# DEDICATION

To the One who was present  
in every hidden season—

in the waiting,  
in the silence,  
and in the unseen work of grace.

To the younger woman I once was,  
who longed to honor God  
yet did not fully understand  
the depth of His grace.

In loving memory of my mother,  
now in the presence of the Lord,  
whose quiet faith first taught me  
to trust God and treasure His promises.

Looking back, I now see  
that it was God who faithfully guided  
every step even in moments of confusion,  
fear, and solitude.

This book is written in gratitude  
for those hidden seasons  
where He quietly formed my heart.

And to every woman walking through a hidden season—  
waiting, trusting, learning, and becoming—  
may you be reminded that God is near,  
and He is faithfully at work.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Every story of faith is ultimately a story of God's grace.

This book exists because, in His kindness, God allowed me to walk through seasons that shaped my understanding of His faithfulness. Through waiting, covenant, motherhood, responsibility, and surrender, He patiently formed the lessons I now share with other women.

I give all glory and gratitude to the Lord for His constant presence in every season of my life. Without His guidance, comfort, and loving correction, these reflections would not have been possible.

I am deeply grateful to my husband, whose journey of growth and faithfulness has been intertwined with mine. Together, we have learned that marriage is not built on perfection, but on grace, patience, and a shared dependence on God.

To my daughters, whose lives are living reminders of God's miracles and faithfulness—thank you for the joy and the lessons that motherhood has brought into my life. You are gifts entrusted by God, and a constant reflection of His goodness.

To my parents, especially my mother, whose life quietly modeled faith, endurance, and devotion to God—your example has shaped more in me than words can express.

To the spiritual community and discipleship groups who have walked with me through different seasons, thank

you for your prayers, encouragement, and accountability.

And to the women who continue to seek God in the quiet seasons of their lives—this book is written with you in mind.

May the Lord guide your path as you walk with Him. May these reflections encourage you to recognize His faithful work, even in the quiet and hidden seasons of your life

# PREFACE

What if the seasons of life that feel most hidden are actually the places where God is doing His deepest work?

Many of us imagine that spiritual growth happens in dramatic and visible moments when we clearly see God moving in powerful ways. Yet more often, His most important work unfolds quietly, in seasons that feel ordinary, uncertain, or even confusing.

These are the hidden seasons.

They are the moments when we are waiting, questioning, learning, and slowly discovering what it means to trust God in the real circumstances of life.

At the time, these seasons may not seem significant. We may even wonder why certain experiences unfold the way they do. Yet with time and reflection, we begin to see that God was never absent.

He was quietly present, guiding, protecting, correcting, and shaping our hearts in ways we could not yet understand.

Looking back, I now see that many of the moments that shaped me most did not seem remarkable at the time. They were simply seasons when I was trying

to sincerely honor God while navigating the complexities of life.

As a young woman, I carried strong convictions about purity, obedience, and honoring God in every decision I made. I believed that if I followed Him faithfully, my life would unfold according to the standards I had set before Him.

But as life continued, I began to understand that faith is not only about holding convictions, it is also about allowing God to form our hearts through circumstances that challenge our expectations and deepen our understanding of His grace.

Some seasons brought joy and clarity. Others brought questions, fears, and lessons I never anticipated.

But through every moment, God remained faithful.

What once seemed like separate experiences were, in truth, part of a greater story. God had been forming something within me all along.

This book is a reflection of that journey.

It is not the story of a perfect life, but the story of a faithful God who patiently guides us through seasons of waiting, commitment, growth, and surrender.

Many women sincerely desire to honor God with their lives. Yet along the way, they encounter moments they never expected where their convictions are tested, their understanding is stretched, and their hearts are quietly reshaped.

In those moments, it is easy to wonder if something has gone wrong.

We may question where we misunderstood God's will or feel that we have fallen short of what we hoped our lives would be.

But the hidden seasons of life often become the very places where God gently reveals who He truly is and who we are becoming in His hands.

Every woman walks through hidden seasons.

Some are marked by waiting.

Some by new beginnings.

Some by unexpected responsibilities.

And others by quiet questions we carry before God.

Yet within each of these moments, God is forming something deeper in our hearts.

Perhaps as you read these pages, you will recognize parts of your own story. You may see moments where you, too, were trying to honor God while navigating confusing or unexpected circumstances.

If that is where you find yourself, this journey may not feel unfamiliar.

Because the truth is, God's work in our lives is rarely loud or immediate.

More often, it unfolds quietly through the ordinary seasons of life, through waiting, learning, and trusting Him step by step.

What if the very seasons you once questioned are the places where God has been faithfully forming you all along?

It is my prayer that as you read this story, you will begin to see your life through the lens of God's faithfulness, that you will recognize moments when He was quietly present, even when you did not see it at the time.

And perhaps you will discover that the hidden seasons of life are never empty.

They are the places where God is quietly forming something holy.

And sometimes that journey begins in the most unexpected way—

with a simple conviction in the heart of a young woman who only wanted to honor God... and believed she would never break.

**In His grace.**

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## CHAPTER 1

# WHEN CONVICTION MEETS GRACE

### Hidden Seasons of Surrender and Awakening

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Sometimes the convictions we hold most tightly become the very places where God gently loosens our grip so we can finally understand the depth of His grace.

At the time, I did not know that one seemingly ordinary moment would become the beginning of a deeper journey with God.

Looking back now, I can see that it was one of the hidden seasons of my life.

Nothing dramatic happened on the outside. No life-altering event took place. No one around me would have considered it significant.

Yet beneath the surface, God was quietly at work.

He was revealing something about my heart that I could not yet see for myself.

He was teaching me about grace.

*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

—1 John 1:9 (NASB)

When I think back to my younger years, I remember carrying a deep desire to honor God.

My understanding of faith was still developing, but my love for Him was sincere.

I grew up attending Sunday School while also participating in activities within the Catholic Church. Looking back, I am grateful for how both experiences shaped my spiritual journey.

Sunday School introduced me to the Scriptures. It was there that I learned Bible stories, memorized verses, and began to understand who God is. I learned that His Word could guide my life, and I developed a growing desire to know Him more.

At church, I experienced the joy of serving alongside others. I witnessed acts of kindness, devotion, and sacrifice. I learned that faith was not merely something we believed, it was something we lived.

Without realizing it, those experiences planted seeds that would continue to grow throughout my life.

Church became more than a weekly activity.

It became part of who I was.

I wanted to please God.

I wanted my life to reflect Him.

And like many young believers, I believed that honoring Him meant carefully guarding every area of my life.

As I grew older and began thinking about relationships and the future, a particular conviction settled quietly into my heart.

I hoped that the man I would one day marry would be a God-fearing man.

But alongside that desire was another conviction.

I believed that the man I would marry would be the only man I would ever kiss.

No one told me I had to make such a commitment.

No one imposed it upon me.

It was simply something I brought before the Lord as an expression of my love for Him.

At the time, it felt right.

I believed it would help me guard my heart and honor the future God might have for me.

Looking back now, I can see that my desire was sincere.

Yet I can also see that my understanding of God's grace was still immature.

I knew about God's holiness.

I knew about obedience.

I knew about conviction.

But I was only beginning to understand grace.

Scripture says:

*"Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life."*

—**Proverbs 4:23 (NASB)**

When I eventually entered a relationship with the man who would later become my husband, I carried these convictions with me.

Then one evening, I found myself in a moment I was not emotionally prepared for.

We were spending time together in what seemed like an ordinary moment.

Nothing about the setting suggested that it would become a defining memory.

There were no grand gestures.

No special occasion.

Just two people who cared deeply for one another.

Yet something in the atmosphere felt different.

I remember the stillness.

The nearness.

The quiet awareness that I was no longer simply thinking about my convictions, I was standing in a moment where they would be tested.

Then, during our courtship, he leaned in and kissed me.

It was gentle.

Brief.

Unforced.

To many people, it would have seemed entirely natural.

And part of me understood that.

But another part of me felt something very different.

The moment ended almost as quickly as it began.

Yet what lasted only seconds externally lingered within me for much longer.

Almost immediately, my thoughts began to race.

*Had I crossed a line?*

*Had I failed to keep the promise I made before God?*

*Had I disappointed Him?*

I did not know how to process the emotions that followed.

Instead of feeling joy, I felt troubled.

Instead of feeling peace, I felt conflicted.

Instead of moving closer to God, I found myself quietly withdrawing.

I remember replaying the moment repeatedly in my mind.

What had seemed so simple outwardly felt unexpectedly heavy within me.

The questions would not leave.

The uncertainty lingered.

For weeks, I carried a burden that no one else could see.

I avoided him.

I kept my thoughts mostly to myself.

And deep inside, I carried a growing sense that I had somehow disappointed God.

That thought troubled me more than anything else.

The kiss itself was not the source of my deepest struggle.

The deeper struggle was what I believed it revealed about me.

I feared that I had failed God.

And because I feared I had failed Him, I began to fear that I had lost something precious in His eyes.

Today, looking back, I realize that what I experienced was not merely conviction.

It was also fear.

Fear of disappointing God.

Fear of losing the purity I valued.

Fear that one moment might somehow change the way God saw me.

At the time, I could not have articulated those fears so clearly.

I only knew that my heart felt heavy.

During those weeks, I often brought my confusion before the Lord.

My prayers were simple.

Sometimes they were little more than questions.

I told Him about my fears.

I told Him about my disappointment.

I told Him how much I wanted to honor Him.

Although I could not yet explain it, a quiet assurance slowly began replacing the anxiety I carried.

Not all at once.

Not through a dramatic revelation.

But gradually.

Through prayer.

Through Scripture.

Through the gentle work of the Holy Spirit.

God was teaching me something I had never fully understood before.

His love for me had not changed.

His acceptance of me had not suddenly disappeared.

He was not waiting for me to earn my way back into His favor.

He was inviting me to rest in the grace He had already provided through Christ.

Perhaps you have experienced something similar.

Not necessarily the same circumstance, but a moment when a sincere desire to honor God became entangled with fear.

A moment when one decision, one mistake, or one perceived failure seemed larger than it really was.

A moment when the question quietly rose within your heart:

*Have I failed God?*

It was within that hidden struggle that God began teaching me something I had not yet fully understood.

The gospel was not merely a message for people who had never known Him.

It was a message I needed every day.

*"For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard."*

**—Romans 3:23 (NLT)**

*"Yet God, in His grace, freely makes us right in His sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when He freed us from the penalty for our sins."*

**—Romans 3:24 (NLT)**

These were verses I had heard before.

But hearing truth and applying truth are not always the same thing.

I believed God's grace was real.

I simply had not yet learned how deeply I needed it.

My heart was sincere, but my understanding was still growing.

I had quietly assumed that my standing before God depended largely on how well I maintained the standards I had set for myself.

What I did not yet understand was that my worth before God had never been built upon my ability to keep every boundary perfectly.

It was rooted in His grace.

Looking back now, I realize that the kiss was never the deepest issue.

The deeper issue was what it exposed within my heart.

God was gently uncovering a subtle belief I did not know I carried that His approval depended on my performance.

And through that hidden season, He began teaching me a better truth.

When fear told me to hide, grace invited me to come closer.

When fear magnified my shortcomings, grace pointed me to Christ.

When fear convinced me that I had disappointed God beyond repair, grace reminded me that His love had never depended upon my perfection in the first place.

The very place where I feared I had failed became the place where God began teaching me the depth of His mercy.

That ordinary moment became one of my hidden seasons.

A season of surrender.

A season of awakening.

A season where God quietly reshaped how I understood purity, conviction, and grace.

He was teaching me that conviction is meant to lead us toward Him, not away from Him.

He was teaching me that grace does not diminish holiness; rather, it makes a life of genuine holiness possible.

At the time, I could not yet see what He was doing.

But He could.

And He was already writing a story far more beautiful than the one I imagined for myself.

Sometimes the very moments that trouble our hearts the most become the very places where God begins to reveal the depth of His grace.



## CHAPTER 2

# GUARDRAILS: PROTECTION, NOT RESTRICTIONS

Hidden Seasons of Divine Boundaries

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The boundaries that once seemed limiting often become the very places where God quietly protects our hearts.

*"And you must always obey the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good."*

—Deuteronomy 10:13 (NLT)

When I look back on my younger years, I can see that God placed guardrails in my life long before I understood why they were there.

At the time, they simply felt like part of everyday life.

Nothing unusual.

Nothing profound.

Just ordinary moments woven into the rhythm of our home.

Only years later would I realize that what felt ordinary was actually one of God's quiet ways of protecting me.

My father was a military man who later entered politics. Discipline, vigilance, and responsibility were natural parts of his life, and those qualities inevitably shaped our home as well.

Growing up, I was accustomed to his protective nature.

It was not unusual to see signs of his profession around the house. His firearm, for example, was simply part of the responsibility he carried.

As intimidating as that may sound, it was normal for us.

It was simply Dad being Dad.

When I began a relationship with the man who would later become my husband, I carried a conviction that my father should know about it.

I did not want our relationship hidden.

I did not want secrecy.

Something within me believed that if our relationship was honorable, it should be able to exist in the light.

So rather than meeting privately, I invited my boyfriend to visit me at our home.

Every Tuesday, he came.

Week after week.

Faithfully.

Looking back now, I smile when I remember those evenings.

My father would often sit in the same room with us.

He did not interrupt our conversations.

He did not interrogate my boyfriend.

He rarely inserted himself into what we were discussing.

He was simply there.

Quiet.

Observant.

Present.

Sometimes he sat nearby reading or attending to something else.

Other times he simply remained in the room while we talked.

On occasion, his firearm rested on a nearby chair, silently reminding everyone that my father took his responsibilities seriously.

As a young woman, I accepted this arrangement without much thought.

As a young couple, we simply adapted to it.

Looking back, the scene almost feels humorous.

There we were, trying to get to know one another while my father quietly occupied the same room with the calm watchfulness of a sentry.

Yet beneath the humor, something important was taking place.

Something none of us fully discussed.

Guardrails were being built.

Because my father was present, our conversations remained respectful.

Our relationship developed gradually.

There was no pressure to rush.

No opportunity for secrecy.

No situations that easily invited temptation.

The environment itself encouraged patience.

At the time, I did not view it as protection.

I viewed it simply as reality.

It was the way things were.

Only years later did I realize that God was using those ordinary circumstances to protect something valuable.

My future.

My heart.

Our relationship.

One day, my father made a comment that stayed with me through the years.

He said, "No boyfriend would willingly keep visiting a home where the father sits between the couple unless his intentions are serious."

At the time, I laughed and brushed off his comment. I was young and more focused on enjoying our conversations than analyzing my father's wisdom.

Yet years later, after marriage and many seasons of life, those words returned to me with surprising clarity.

What I once dismissed as an amusing remark became one of the lessons I treasured most.

My father was not merely evaluating behavior.

He was observing character.

Anyone can appear committed when things are easy.

But consistency reveals sincerity.

Week after week, my boyfriend kept coming.

Not because it was convenient.

Not because it was private.

Not because it was romantic.

He came because his intentions were genuine.

Looking back now, I realize that what I once interpreted as strictness was actually covering.

It was not control.

It was care.

It was not suspicion.

It was protection.

What felt restrictive in the moment eventually revealed itself as one of God's gifts.

Looking back now, I realize those Tuesday evenings were also part of a hidden season.

Nothing extraordinary seemed to be happening.

We were simply talking, laughing, and getting to know one another.

Yet beneath those ordinary moments, God was quietly building foundations that would support the years ahead.

He was shaping character.

Teaching patience.

Establishing trust.

Protecting a relationship that was still growing.

At the time, I could not see it.

But God was already at work.

Years later, I began noticing how guardrails function in other areas of life.

When driving along a mountain road, we often see barriers placed along steep cliffs and dangerous curves.

Most drivers never stop to appreciate them.

In fact, we rarely think about them at all.

Yet their purpose is profound.

They are not there to limit our freedom.

They are there to preserve it.

Without guardrails, one careless moment can lead to devastating consequences.

The guardrail does not imprison the driver.

It protects the journey.

As I reflected on my own life, I began to see that God often works in much the same way.

His protection does not always arrive through dramatic interventions.

More often, it comes through ordinary people and ordinary circumstances.

Sometimes it comes through parents who establish healthy boundaries.

Sometimes through mentors who ask difficult questions.

Sometimes through trusted friends who lovingly hold us accountable.

Sometimes through a discipleship group that encourages spiritual growth and wise decisions.

Looking back, I can see how God used each of these influences as guardrails in my life.

At the time, some of those boundaries felt inconvenient.

Some felt unnecessary.

Others felt frustrating.

Yet what once appeared to be limitations eventually revealed themselves as gifts.

Scripture says:

*"Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life."*

—Proverbs 4:23 (NLT)

I have come to realize that guardrails are one of God's ways of guarding the heart.

Perhaps some women reading this have experienced seasons when boundaries felt restrictive.

Why is accountability necessary?

Why are safeguards needed?

Why can't sincerity alone be enough?

Yet sincerity does not eliminate vulnerability.

Even sincere people need wisdom.

Even strong people need protection.

Even healthy relationships benefit from boundaries.

Guardrails are not signs of distrust.

They are signs of wisdom.

Healthy guardrails do not remove freedom.

They preserve it.

They create space for relationships to grow with patience, respect, and clarity.

Most importantly, they help keep our hearts aligned with God's best.

As I continued walking with the Lord, I slowly learned that His protection rarely looks the way we expect.

Sometimes it looks like a father sitting quietly in a room.

Sometimes it looks like a mentor asking uncomfortable questions.

Sometimes it looks like a community encouraging accountability.

Sometimes it looks like boundaries we do not fully appreciate until years later.

At the time, these guardrails may feel inconvenient.

But looking back, they often become some of the clearest expressions of God's love.

Today, when I remember those Tuesday evenings, I no longer see an overprotective father.

I see one of God's quiet provisions.

I see guardrails placed along my path long before I understood why I needed them.

I see a father who loved me enough to watch over my journey.

I see a young man whose consistent presence revealed the sincerity of his intentions.

And most of all, I see a God who was protecting me in ways I could not yet recognize.

What once seemed ordinary now shines with deeper meaning.

And what I once viewed as restriction, I now recognize as love in one of its gentlest forms.

The guardrails God places in our lives are rarely meant to restrain us.

More often, they are His gentle way of protecting the journey ahead.



