

“If the only thing we have in common between us is the gospel, that is enough. If the word of God is the only heritage we share, that is sufficient. How liberating is that truth! This is what this book is about. I loved the way these precious women, from different nations and backgrounds, are faithfully and beautifully lifting up what will last and unite us forever: the word of God.”

BETSY GOMEZ, Speaker; Blogger; Media Manager, Aviva
Nuestros Corazones (Revive Our Hearts Hispanic Outreach)

“This collection of voices could not have come too soon. I need to hear the exhortation and exposition of the word of God from my sisters of color. Thank you, Kristie Anyabwile, for curating a beautiful and needful meditation on Psalm 119.”

LAUREN CHANDLER, Songwriter; Worship Leader; Author,
Steadfast Love and Goodbye to Goodbyes

“*His Testimonies My Heritage* is an edifying book. What the essayists in this collection have in common are two things: they are all women of color, and they all write out of deep and moving experience of joyfully coming under the authority of holy Scripture.”

D.A. CARSON, President, The Gospel Coalition

“With meticulous attention to detail, God created a diverse human race. He took into account a vast array of variables to include race, gender, and culture. These differences are not to be ignored or dismissed when reading Scripture; they are to be acknowledged and celebrated. This book provides a lens through which we can view the experiences of Christian women of color as they engage with God. It beautifully captures and elevates narratives that are desperately needed for women of color and the entire body of Christ.”

KIA STEPHENS, Founder, The Father Swap Blog

“Wow, this cast! Amazing women whom I respect deeply and voices which I long to hear and be edified by. In our sector of the vineyard, it’s rare to hear and accept edification from women because of the way our theological preferences have marginalized their voices! However, this book is a key place for the body of Christ (particularly men) to be bombarded by an entourage of women who love Jesus, are biblically sound, and are offering a vast reservoir of gospel gold! The great ethnic and experiential landscape within this book adds to the wealth that will come by engaging in this great work!”

ERIC M. MASON, Lead Pastor, Epiphany Fellowship Church,
Philadelphia, PA; Author, *Woke Church*

“This is a celebration of the good news of the gospel and the word of God that reveals it to us. Each beautiful devotional reading is written by a sister of color who gives a unique voice to the story that God has written in and through her for the building up of the church. I’m grateful for this special and timely collection.”

RUTH CHOU SIMONS, Artist; Author, *GraceLaced and Beholding and Becoming*; Founder, GraceLaced.com

“A beautiful, encouraging look at Psalm 119. Through a chorus of unique voices and styles, the pages of this book will spur you on to a deeper understanding of this passage and a greater love for God and his word.”

LAURA WIFLER, Co-Founder, Risen Motherhood; Co-author, *Risen Motherhood: Gospel Hope for Everyday Moments*

“Reading this psalm through the eyes of these sisters is a beautiful thing and will help you see things in the holy word that you likely will never have seen before. *His Testimonies, My Heritage* is like no other devotional on the Psalms!”

J.D. GREEAR, President, The Southern Baptist Convention

“These wise and honest authors will draw you into their own journeys, instruct you on the Scriptures, and ground you in Christ’s transforming gospel. This book will leave you loving the word of God with fresh joy and dependence, and lead you to a renewed desire to trust and obey. I’ll be giving it to any woman who needs to meditate on God’s word—and that would be all of us.”

TAYLOR TURKINGTON, Director of Women’s Training Network for The Gospel Coalition

“A rich collection of wise, talented voices. My soul has been refreshed by this timely reminder of God’s kind and gracious provision for his people through his word. It’s been a while since I’ve read a book that so emphasized the sufficiency and relevancy of Scripture for today’s problems.”

KATE MOTAUNG, Author, *A Place to Land: A Story of Longing and Belonging*; Co-Author, *Influence*

“Exhilarating poems, sonnets, and songs have been written about the wonders of God’s creation. How much more exhilarating are these reflections on God’s matchless word! This book will help you to see what new eyes see, and feel what new hearts feel, when they meditate on the unique and life-giving word of God.”

GLORIA FURMAN, Author, *Missional Motherhood and Labor with Hope*

“God knows your name. God wrote your story. God invites you to walk your heritage journey by seeking hard after him. That’s the empowering focus of the beautiful devotional reflections in *His Testimonies, My Heritage*. Written by some of the world’s most exciting women of faith, this collection welcomes you to be more of yourself by knowing all of God. For such a time as this, that’s a worthy journey—discovering your life by rediscovering the glory of his.”

PATRICIA RAYBON, Author, *My First White Friend* and
the *One Year God’s Great Blessings Devotional*

“There’s something indescribably beautiful about Bible study done together in community. This book is an example of that. These women, some of the brightest Christian women of today, bless us with a book filled with insight, reflection, and conversation. This book will help you read your Bible better, and love our God more wholeheartedly.”

RUSSELL MOORE, President, The Ethics & Religious Liberty
Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

“The truth of Scripture transcends culture, time, gender, and place, but too often we hear these truths expounded by primarily one type of majority voice. This volume introduces us to diverse women of color who honor both eternal, enduring truth and the beauty of their own stories, cultures, and ethnicities. This book amplifies needed voices of wisdom, warmth, courage, and conviction. The church deeply needs these voices and we’d do well to listen.”

TISH HARRISON WARREN, Anglican Priest;
Author, *Liturgy of the Ordinary*

“A wonderful, Spirit-filled meditation on Psalm 119 for women from all walks of life. All the different voices blend together harmoniously to make a sweet song of encouragement to the believer and praise to our God.”

JOANNA MATHEW, Covenant Hope Church, UAE; Fellowship of
Christian UAE Students (FOCUS)

“Many of the authors of these expositional devotions on Psalm 119 are esteemed friends and colleagues, so I looked forward with anticipation when I opened it up the first time. I was not disappointed. Hearing the voices of these women gave me a fresh perspective that will help me as I pastor and preach. It gave me a window into the word and a window into the hearts, lives, and worlds of these godly, wise sisters in Christ.”

LIGON DUNCAN, Chancellor, Reformed Theological Seminary

“If your soul is weary and your heart in need of refreshment, take a drink from the wisdom found in *His Testimonies My Heritage*. These women write with insight, beauty, and a deep love of the word of God.”

MELISSA KRUGER, Director of Women’s Content for The Gospel Coalition; Author, *Five Things to Pray for Your Kids*

“This book is like entering a type of class reunion, where the various shades of skin are beautifully enveloped in the exact same grace blanket. I feel comfortable and in very good company. Our Father doesn’t ignore our context or race-linked struggles when speaking to us about his testimonies, and he soothes us through each other. I invite you to join my sisters and be encouraged and uplifted by looking at his eternal truth through these eyes.”

AIXA DE LOPEZ, Author; Speaker; Board Member,
Christian Alliance for Orphans

“At certain times and in certain places, the book you’re holding would have been illegal—illegal to read because it would have been illegal for its authors to write. But today, between these pages, they triumph, using those once contraband letters and words to testify to the Truth that sets all of us free. I invite you to listen to them as they praise a God whose goodness knows no bounds and tell of our common inheritance in the Scripture.”

HANNAH ANDERSON, Author, *Made for More: An Invitation to Live in God’s Image*

“Lean in and learn from these wise women of the word as they dive deep into Psalm 119. Verse by verse, you’ll sing with the psalmist the same truth-song that flows from the heart of each contributor: ‘God’s word reveals God’s glory.’”

ANN KROEKER, Writing Coach; Author, *On Being a Writer and The Contemplative Mom*

“What a privilege to sit at the feet of these sisters and learn from their meditations on God’s word! These sisters show the difference that God’s word makes in a world full of pain and injustice. Like expert guides, they take the hand of weak and weary pilgrims like me, and lead us on Psalm 119’s path. I was humbled and refreshed by the journey, and profoundly grateful for the singular hope of the gospel!”

MARY WILLSON, Director of Women in Ministry, Second Presbyterian Church, Memphis, TN

*To the generations of women of color in my life whom
God has used to affect my love for the word of God:*

Nicie, Inez, Joyce, Afiya, Eden

And in loving memory of Josetta (1969-2015)

*“For colored girls who considered giving up when being
made in the image of God didn’t seem to be enough.”*

Michelle Higgins

EDITED BY
KRISTIE ANYABWILE

HIS TESTIMONIES
MY HERITAGE

WOMEN OF COLOR
ON THE WORD OF GOD

The logo features a stylized, curved line above the text "the good book".
the good book
COMPANY

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FOREWORD

KIM CASH TATE

I couldn't sleep.

And as one well acquainted with sleep deprivation—from baby boot camp to parenting teens, when worries bounce back as quickly as they're cast, to the sleep issues of perimenopause—I can tell you that this particular sleepless night was unlike any other. My heart raced with a palpable urgency.

Earlier that day I'd attended a new members' orientation at my church in Dallas. Our family had recently moved from Madison, Wisconsin—a “wilderness” sojourn for this DMV-born-and-raised black woman. The lack of diversity and black culture in Madison had made me perpetually discontent, and the Lord had used it to draw me to himself and save me. I'd spent five years at my Madison church, learning and growing in the faith. Yet in a few short hours on a Saturday afternoon at that new members' orientation, key teachings of my former church had either been challenged or wholly dismantled.

Afterwards, I'd bombarded the assistant pastors with follow-up questions, and they spent hours graciously responding. But in the middle of the night it was clear that their answers weren't enough. I needed to know truth for myself.

I needed a deeper understanding of the Bible—and a deeper understanding of my God.

I was now bombarding heaven.

Lord, help me to truly learn your word. Help me to understand. The words sailed from my heart to the throne every few seconds, it seemed.

I wasn't aware at the time, but my prayers echoed the simple refrain of the psalmist in Psalm 119: "Teach me." At least ten times, he implores God to teach him his ordinances, his decrees—his word. And knowing that that wouldn't be enough, he sprinkles another refrain throughout: "Give me understanding." More than once these two petitions are linked, as in verses 33-34:

*Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes;
And I will keep it to the end.
Give me understanding, that I may keep your law
and observe it with my whole heart.*

God is faithful. Nineteen years later, he's answered the prayers of that sleepless night many times over. Am I saying I understand all I need to know about his word? Not hardly. I'm still asking the Lord to teach me and give me understanding. But it's a beautiful continuum. Our God delights in answering such prayers, giving us grace to grow, then grow some more—and grow some more.

He answers by giving us a passion to mine the depths of his word continually. He teaches us to go beyond reading to studying, yet not for the sake of knowledge alone. It is in order for us to know him and his ways. To love him more deeply. To learn to stand and trust and cling through heartaches, disappointments, and trials. In all of this, he impresses this unshakable truth on our hearts—we can't survive apart from his word.

Psalm 119 beats with the same desperation of my sleepless night. The psalmist wants more than to learn and understand the word. He pleads to be established in it and kept by it. He asks God to incline his heart toward it and point his feet in its path. In this, the longest psalm—indeed, the longest chapter in the Bible—verse after verse stresses the need for the word of God to reign in every corner of life.

Psalm 119 is a must-read for the people of God. And I praise him for giving us *His Testimonies, My Heritage*, which richly and excellently expounds on that psalm. There is no resource like this. In keeping with the psalm itself, this devotional exalts the centrality of the word of God and extols its benefits. Yet it does so through voices seldom heard—voices of women of color.

If you're a woman of color, you know the typical experience when we open a devotional or Bible study. We're eager to learn and to be encouraged by the exposition of the word. And as the author interweaves personal stories, we try our best to find commonalities. But often it's hard to see ourselves. It's a reality to which we've grown accustomed—yet it's an absurd reality. The American Bible Society has found that African-Americans in particular have higher levels of Bible engagement than the general US population. Yet we see such dismal representation in the Bible resources that are disseminated.

That's why I'm so excited about this devotional. In one book we get to sit with more than two dozen women whose perspectives and stories are rarely heard in tandem with biblical exposition. My heart scooted a little closer as Kristie Anyabwile spoke of her fears as the mom of a black son in the wake of the shootings of Eric Garner, Mike Brown, and John Crawford. How many of us, myself included, have felt those same fears as moms of black sons? Seeing the word

skillfully applied to such a timely and relevant subject was beyond encouraging.

But there's so much more! Like Elicia Horton grappling with the injustices rooted in her Mexican, Spanish, and Native American heritage, yet rejoicing in her forever heritage as God's beloved. Or Miltinnie Yih searching for meaning in her Chinese roots, feeling alienated because she wasn't Chinese enough, and finding eternal hope in the word of God. Or Jamika Munn sharing those familiar black-momma rules—"Now when we get in this store, don't touch nothing and don't ask for nothing." And never before have I spied in any Bible-related resource a comparison with and contrast to a Marvin Gaye hit. Come on! I get to bob my head a little, even as Jamie R. Love instructs us that Marvin's "mercy" was a far cry from the psalmist's!

I could go on and on about this treasure. But I need you to dive in for yourself. No matter what your background or ethnicity is, you will be enriched by the window you gain into the lives of these amazing sisters in Christ. And you will be immensely blessed as they lead you, verse by verse, to a deeper understanding of this majestic psalm.

Kim Cash Tate

INTRODUCTION

KRISTIE ANYABWILE

“So much of my survival depends on seeing our sisters survive; seeing them take risks; and on often checking in on each other, and saying ‘Hey! You know what? I need you to survive.’”

On the Truth’s Table podcast is an episode entitled “Black Christian Women’s Survival Guide.” In it, Michelle Higgins, the Director of Faith for Justice and leader with Action Saint Louis, speaks to women of color who find it difficult to persevere against opposition of various sorts, particularly in the church. It’s her words that began this chapter, pointing out the importance of community—of each other—in sustaining hope in the midst of injustice and conflict. Michelle continues:

“When you’re in this space where ... your survival [is] critical to help and to sustain my hope, I actually need you to make it, so that we’re all in this long marathon moving toward justice together ... For all the women of color ... who walk in these spaces, and they look around and say ‘I am not safe, I am not

free, but I know, I know that I have to make it in order for my children or my little nieces or whomever is coming behind me—my baby sisters—to be safe and to be free’—we survive for one another. The survival of one another is how we make it.”

Michelle goes on to point out the source of our survival: “Our survival ... is one hundred percent based in the power of the Holy Spirit ... We have to lean together on the truth of God.”

It’s true: we have to lean together on the truth of God. Whatever difficulties we face as Christians—whatever our background, family, skin color, or gender, and whatever our hopes and dreams and fears and challenges—God imbues his children with power by his Spirit, through his word, to walk alongside each other with words of wisdom and hope and love. It is God’s word that sustains us in every circumstance. His testimonies are our delight (Psalm 119 v 14). His word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119 v 105). His precepts are trustworthy (Psalm 111 v 7). His law is within our hearts (Psalm 40 v 8). His commandments are right (Psalm 119 v 172). His statutes are the theme of our songs (Psalm 119 v 54). His rules are good (Psalm 119 v 39).

So this book is two things.

It is a devotional focusing upon the most important topic in any age, the word of God. And so it is a celebration of Psalm 119, whose primary theme is the multifaceted word of God.

Psalm 119 is the longest and arguably the most uniquely-styled chapter of the Bible. Many scholars believe that David, Israel’s greatest king before Jesus, wrote this psalm. It is an acrostic poem consisting of 22 sections that follow the Hebrew alphabet from *aleph* to *tav*—from A to Z. Each

section contains eight verses, and each verse begins with the corresponding Hebrew letter. It is the most elaborate of the various acrostic poems in the Bible. It offers blessings to those who walk according to the word, it comforts those who suffer, it serves as our refuge in times of trial and affliction, and it gives us cause to praise our great God for his enduring promises.

Second, this book is a celebration of God's word through the voices of women of color—of women of African-American, Latin American, Native American, Asian, and Caribbean heritage. Here is why. Thankfully, though also concerningly, there is an ongoing conversation around the silencing of women's voices, and this is even more pronounced among women of color. In addition to this silencing, many women of color feel that they are not seen—not seen as divine image-bearers, not seen as valued members of the body of Christ, not seen as potential marriage partners, not seen as capable teachers of God's word. This book gives those women their voices. And I am grateful to you for being ready to listen to them, and to learn from them. I trust that whatever your own gender and ethnicity, and however similar or different your experiences are to those of these contributors, you will grow in your own longing for God's word.

His Testimonies, My Heritage will enable you to hear from these women as they faithfully expound God's word, and to see their unique experiences sprinkled throughout the devotions as they give us glimpses into their lives and cultures. In addition to the devotions that take us stanza by stanza through this psalm, interspersed throughout the book are several thematic pieces, helping us to apply God's word to current social issues; as well as poems that capture aspects of the way God calls his people to love his word.

My prayer is that this book will speak to you regardless of background, denomination, and stage of life, because

it is primarily taking you to the living and active word of God—that eternal word that is not bound by era or culture. I pray that as you read, you will find your hunger for the word enlivened; find your delight in Christ, the Word made flesh, overflowing; see how the Scriptures speak to us as we navigate difficult issues in our day; be enriched by biblical and contemporary poetry; and be encouraged by the opportunity to learn from women outside the dominant culture.

Most of all, I pray that we would all celebrate and live out, together as God's people, what the psalmist cries out in Psalm 119 v 111:

*Your testimonies are my heritage forever,
for they are the joy of my heart.*

1. HIS TESTIMONIES ARE MY HERITAGE

ELICIA HORTON

I have grown up for the majority of my life not really knowing or understanding much about my Mexican, Spanish and Native American heritage. I just know I have a deep love for Mexican food, and my Native American roots quickly come to the surface when the sun hits my skin and leaves it a golden shade of brown. In the summer I get lots of questions about my ethnicity because the more time I spend in the sun, the more confusing it gets for people to identify what people group I belong to. Additionally, my last (married) name is Horton, which adds another shade of ambiguity.

I kind of like it that way. It's good to keep people on their toes. Still, when everyone started referencing Ancestry.com, I felt the urge to jump on the bandwagon. Both my husband and I turned in samples of our DNA in hopes of finding some answers. My particular DNA was 55 percent Native American. But that includes both the US and Mexico, and the result didn't break down exactly how much of me is North American and what percentage is Mexican. I was hoping the pie chart would produce a slice of clarity—but even after all of this, I still felt the sense of disconnect in terms of knowing who I really am and where I am really from.

AMERICA: THE DREAM, THE NIGHTMARE

I appreciate and love how the Lord has always made diversity a part of my narrative. I was blessed to grow up in diversity. My public school and church experience placed me head first into an ocean of many beautiful colors. Diversity is second nature to me and not just a new buzz word I added to beef up my vocabulary or a concept I have to pray that God would warm my heart up to. Rather, diversity is a reality I have been blessed to know my entire life. But now, in this season of my nation's life, I have a deeper longing in my heart not only to champion diversity but also to celebrate the beautiful ethnicities of God's creation. And yet it still feels a challenge for me to not know a lot about my own heritage.

While I grew up enjoying diversity, I did not grow up knowing much about my heritage—and therefore I didn't celebrate it. On one side of my family, the older generations encouraged us to become "Americanized," in hopes of better opportunities. To them, americanization equaled opportunity. For them, dreams were things that often went unrealized, for opportunities were not afforded to those from a country where poverty was as common as brown eyes and brown skin. Opportunities are precious treasures to those who choose to steal rides from rail cars in hopes of finding work so that they can send money back home to their families. Opportunities would finally become a reality for their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, but hopes of opportunity were first carried, unrealized, on the strong backs of both women and men who were uneducated, mistreated and marginalized. When given the chance, they used their two hands to work the strawberry fields and railroad tracks to provide for their families. If sweat equity could be converted into money, then I am most certain my inheritance is great.

The reality of my ancestors experiencing a new land brings me to think about how Moses and the grumbling generation of Israelites must have felt when they heard and saw the bountiful promised land but were not able to enter it or enjoy it. It is a fact that tons of my ancestors never made it across the border. They never got to experience a life worth telling their grandchildren about.

The few stories that I do know are ones that I hold onto like a precious heirloom, but it would be a disservice to my Native American heritage to ignore those that I don't know, but can guess at: the countless testimonies filled with pain, suffering and hopelessness as this precious land of this indigenous people—my people—was stolen by others, rather than simply discovered by them. I think God must be protecting my heart from the specific horrific details of what my ancestors experienced, because the intense pain I already feel is enough for me, and it is something that can no longer be ignored or suppressed.

For some of my ancestors, coming to America was a dream. For the indigenous part of my heritage, “America” was a nightmare that came upon them through the idea of someone else’s “manifest destiny.” When talking to other Latinas and indigenous people—both Christian and non-Christian—I have discovered we are alike in many ways. Outwardly, we display very different and beautiful shades of brown. Inwardly, the fight and fate of our ancestors still brings a force of reckoning that is undeniable. And even though we may be separated by faith and last names, we share a commonality that unites our hearts—to make the dreams of our ancestors a reality for future generations. A dream to escape decades of poverty and to have an actual house instead of a make-shift shed. A dream to enjoy land, freedoms and rights that are equal to those who have migrated here. A dream of a life worth telling your great-grandchildren about.

I am that great-grandchild. Would my life be different if I knew more about my ancestors and their hopes?

I should be bitter, right? Shouldn't righteous indignation be worn like a badge of honor? Shouldn't I be more vocal? The hurt that my ancestors experienced should be deeply rooted in the very core of my soul, right? Injustice should cause me to see everything as broken and hopeless, right? The type of hopelessness that has become like a thread woven into the tapestry of my heritage should also be sewn into the fabric of my being too, right?

Cause and effect would demand that my response to the harsh realities of my ancestors (and contemporaries) would be bitterness and anger and a demand for a great accounting. But my faith is one of grace. My God is the God in whom justice is present but grace is never absent. What is unjust (from an earthly point of view) is that a holy and perfect God chose to send his Son to die for unholy and unrighteous sinners such as us. How could I hold anyone in contempt and withhold grace from them when I have been forgiven for all of my sins?

MY HERITAGE FOREVER

God, who is rich in mercy and grace, has given me a new life and a new identity. He has provided for me a heritage that will outlast all generations. When I read Psalm 119, it is verse 111 that inspires me and pierces my heart at the same time:

Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart.

God's "testimonies" are the countless and innumerable ways that the Creator has loved and cared for his creation and his people. From general revelation in his creation to specific revelation in his word, God has displayed his goodness,

love, and justice to all. Maybe you're reading this today, and, like me, you feel a disconnect with who you are because of your past. Maybe you were adopted, or maybe you grew up not knowing one or both of your parents. Maybe you were taken away from your family, or maybe you had to make the tough decision to leave your family behind. Maybe you don't know where you're from. I want you to know that your feelings surrounding that disconnect are valid. Your pain and scars are real, and your story is not done being written. Because of his great love for me and for you, God wants us to experience that overwhelming sense of assurance that no earthquake can shake. By grace we have been saved to be alive as God's chosen people during this specific corridor of time. Even though we may have few stories of our ethnic heritage, we have a faith that is full of testimonies of God's goodness and faithfulness.

GRACE FILLS OUR STORIES

I bet you're wondering, how in the world does any of this fit in with Psalm 119? Hang tight!

The book of Psalms is like a guidepost in showing believers the importance of clinging to God's word. The psalmist emphatically cries out in Psalm 119 v 4-5:

You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently. Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!

God desires for us to know his word. It is not about head knowledge but rather heart transformation. What we know to be true about God should radically alter how we view the world, how we view ourselves, and how we make decisions. Psalm 119 consistently reminds us that God's ways are much higher than ours—far more than our finite minds

can handle—and that his ways are always better. When we desire to find understanding, verse 105 says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” Verse 130 complements verse 105: “The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.” Keeping in step with his truths provides a pathway to wisdom. In his exposition of Psalm 119, Charles Spurgeon reminds us that God’s word bears witness to who God is, what God desires, and how we can know God more. What our homie Charles is essentially trying to say is that to know God is to know his word and to know his word is to know God more. One of the greatest balancing acts in our walk with God is both taking the time to study his word *and* then living it out as if we truly believe it.

All of our narratives are unique and complex, yet purposeful. It is easy to read our experiences and presuppositions into God’s word, but it is most fruitful when we read God’s word and see how he uses our testimonies to be a part of HIStory. Holding to a biblical worldview does not mean we have to check our ethnic identity and heritage at the door. Rather, we commit to submitting our lives to the authority of God’s word while also allowing our ethnic identity to bleed through every nook and cranny and nuance that uniquely makes up who we are. If God wanted us to view everything in black and white, he would have never created a rainbow. He uses every part of who we are. God’s word teaches us to embrace our own ethnicity and our own heritage, and all that that brings us—the joy and the pain. And it teaches us to then enjoy all of what he has done for us—our identity in him, our security in him, and all that that brings us, forever.

Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart.

Let that sink in. I did, and guess what? It brought me to my knees. His insurmountable love and grace fills the pages of my story and fills my eyes with tears of gratitude. God doesn't need me to fulfill his plan. He doesn't need you either. But God chose to take our brokenness and create a masterpiece. He chose to make his testimonies part of our heritage, so that his story of redemption became ours.

My dear sisters, read his word. Study his word. Delight in his word. Cling to his testimonies. Your stories—good and hard and painful and unresolved—matter. They matter for who you are, and they matter to God. But in terms of defining us, they pale in comparison to the rich heritage we have been given. If God can lead thousands of stubborn Israelites out of slavery and into a promised land, why wouldn't he be concerned with guiding you? His creation. His miracles. His law. His birth. His death. His resurrection. His return. All of these are snippets of the endless accounts and testimonies of our rich heritage as children of God. They show us, as they showed our spiritual ancestors, that God is faithful in the midst of our struggles, no matter what our stories suggest.

So instead of shutting up or shutting down, we can be reminded of and revel in the faithfulness of God through his word. We can remember our heritage, including his testimonies. These are the stories that I can pass down to my children, my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren. The incomplete stories of my ancestral heritage are a part of who I am, but they do not ultimately define who I am. I am a daughter of the risen King, and his testimonies are, indeed, my heritage.