

THE FOOL IN ME

Book 3B

THE FOOL IN ME

WHAT PATTERNS COST ONCE YOU SEE THEM

When Knowing Turns Personal

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Verses are presented in sequence for study and reflection.

Emphasis is added where noted.

VERSION

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A Note Between These Pages

If you've made it this far,
you're not just reading.
You're noticing.

Patterns don't ask us to agree with them.
They don't argue.
They don't explain themselves.
They simply show up...
and wait to be seen.

This first book was written to slow you down just long enough
to notice how God moves—
through beginnings,
through order,
through timing that is rarely rushed
and never random.

But noticing something
and following it
are not the same thing.

The pages that follow in the next volume
are quieter...
and harder.

They are not about calendars,
or history,
or structure.

They are about cost.

Because once you see a pattern,
you eventually face a question—
whether you meant to or not:

What will you do with it?

This is where the story stops being about
Scripture on a page
and starts being about
Scripture lived.

If you choose to continue,
do it slowly.

No one is counting
how fast you turn the page.

And no one is asking you
to be brave
yet.

— **Miss Bess**

An Opening Prayer

Now, Lord...

before we read another word,
we need to tell the truth.

Some of us came here curious.

Some came unsettled.

Some came hoping You wouldn't ask too much.

And some of us already know
this book might cost us something
we're not sure we're ready to give.

So we're not here to perform.

We're not here to defend ourselves.

And we're not here to bargain.

We're just here —

with what we know,
and what we've been avoiding.

You already see it.

The places where we've been obedient in theory
and hesitant in practice.

The truths we admire
but haven't carried yet.

So if there is something here we've been skirting around,
don't let us rush past it.

Slow us down enough to notice
when conviction shows up quietly —
without drama,

without accusation,
but without escape.

We are not asking You to make this easy.
We are asking You to stay with us
while it gets honest.

Give us courage where clarity arrives.
Give us humility where resistance rises.
And give us grace for the cost
we didn't anticipate.

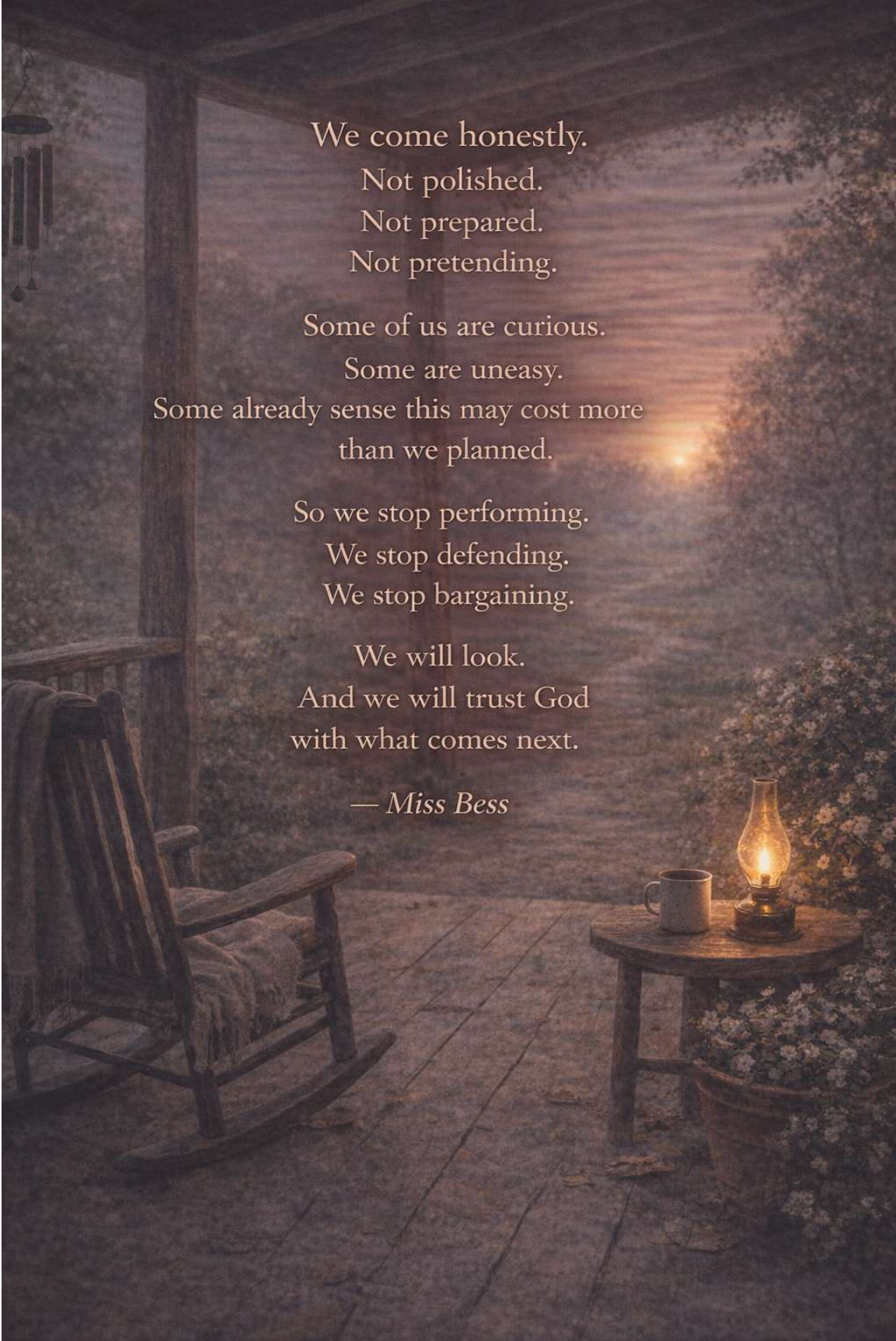
We don't promise You bravery.
We don't promise You agreement.

We only promise this:
we will look.

And we trust You
with what comes next.

Amen.

— **Miss Bess**



We come honestly.

Not polished.

Not prepared.

Not pretending.

Some of us are curious.

Some are uneasy.

Some already sense this may cost more
than we planned.

So we stop performing.

We stop defending.

We stop bargaining.

We will look.

And we will trust God
with what comes next.

— *Miss Bess*

The Story Behind the Story

What Led to *The Fool in Me*

Before I tell you what I came to believe,
I need to tell you how I got here.

Because this book didn't begin as a study.
It began as discomfort.

For a long time, I lived with a quiet unease about Scripture —
not because I didn't respect it,
but because some of the stories I was taught didn't sit right once I slowed
down enough to really look at them.

I believed in God.

I trusted Jesus.

But there were places in the story where I felt like I was being asked not to
notice too closely.

So I didn't.

For years.

Not out of rebellion —

but out of fear that asking honest questions might cost me more than I could
afford to lose.

And then life happened.

Not the kind that comes with neat answers,

but the kind that strips things down until what's left has to be real.

I lost things I thought were permanent.

I watched certainty unravel.

And I found myself sitting with Scripture again —

not to prove anything,
but because it was the only place left that still felt true.

This time, I read slowly.
Without an agenda.
Without trying to defend God, or myself.

And something unexpected happened.

Patterns began to surface —
not loudly,
not dramatically,
but consistently.

The same themes.
The same timing.
The same kind of order showing up in places I had been taught were random.

At first, I tried to ignore it.

Then I tried to explain it away.

But Scripture has a way of staying put when it's telling the truth.

So I followed it —
not because I wanted to be right,
but because I couldn't unsee what had already come into view.

Book 3A was written from that place.
The place of noticing.

The Fool in Me exists because noticing was not the end of the story.

Because seeing something clearly does not leave you neutral.

Sooner or later, awareness begins to ask something of you —
not as a threat,
but as an invitation you can't keep stepping around forever.

These reflections are not conclusions.

They are the path I walked after the study ended.

They are the questions I had to answer privately
before I ever put a word on the page.

I am not offering them as doctrine.

I am offering them as testimony.

Written carefully.

Anchored in Scripture.

And shaped by one conviction I can no longer shake:

If God begins a work,

He finishes it.

Even when the middle gets uncomfortable.

Even when clarity costs more than confusion ever did.

Especially then.

— **Miss Bess**

OPENING SCRIPTURE

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”

— **James 1:22**

“To whom much is given, from him much will be required.”

— **Luke 12:48**

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”

— **Proverbs 9:10**

Now...

let's be honest for a minute.

These verses don't argue.

They don't explain themselves.

They don't need defending.

They simply sit there —

waiting to see what we'll do with them.

Scripture does not demand agreement.

It assumes responsibility.

Once something is seen clearly,

it no longer stays theoretical.

Knowing is not the same as obeying.

Understanding is not the same as carrying.

And wisdom, according to Scripture,

does not begin with confidence —

it begins with reverence.

That's where this book stands.

Not at the place of proving.
But at the place of being asked.

Because truth doesn't chase us.
But once it comes into view,
it does ask something in return.

— **Miss Bess**

INTRODUCTION

Why This Book Exists

Book 3A was written because I needed to know whether God truly works with pattern, order, and appointed time — or whether we had simply learned to explain randomness well.

Book 3B exists because seeing a pattern does not leave a person unchanged.

Noticing something
and living with it
are two very different things.

This book is not about calendars.
It is not about dates.
And it is not about defending a position.

It is about what happens *after* clarity arrives.

Throughout Scripture, awareness always comes first.
Responsibility follows — quietly, but faithfully.

Once something is seen,
it begins to rearrange a life.

It reshapes how a person listens.
How they choose.
How long they're willing to wait.
What they repent of.
What they release.
What they endure.
And what they finally obey.

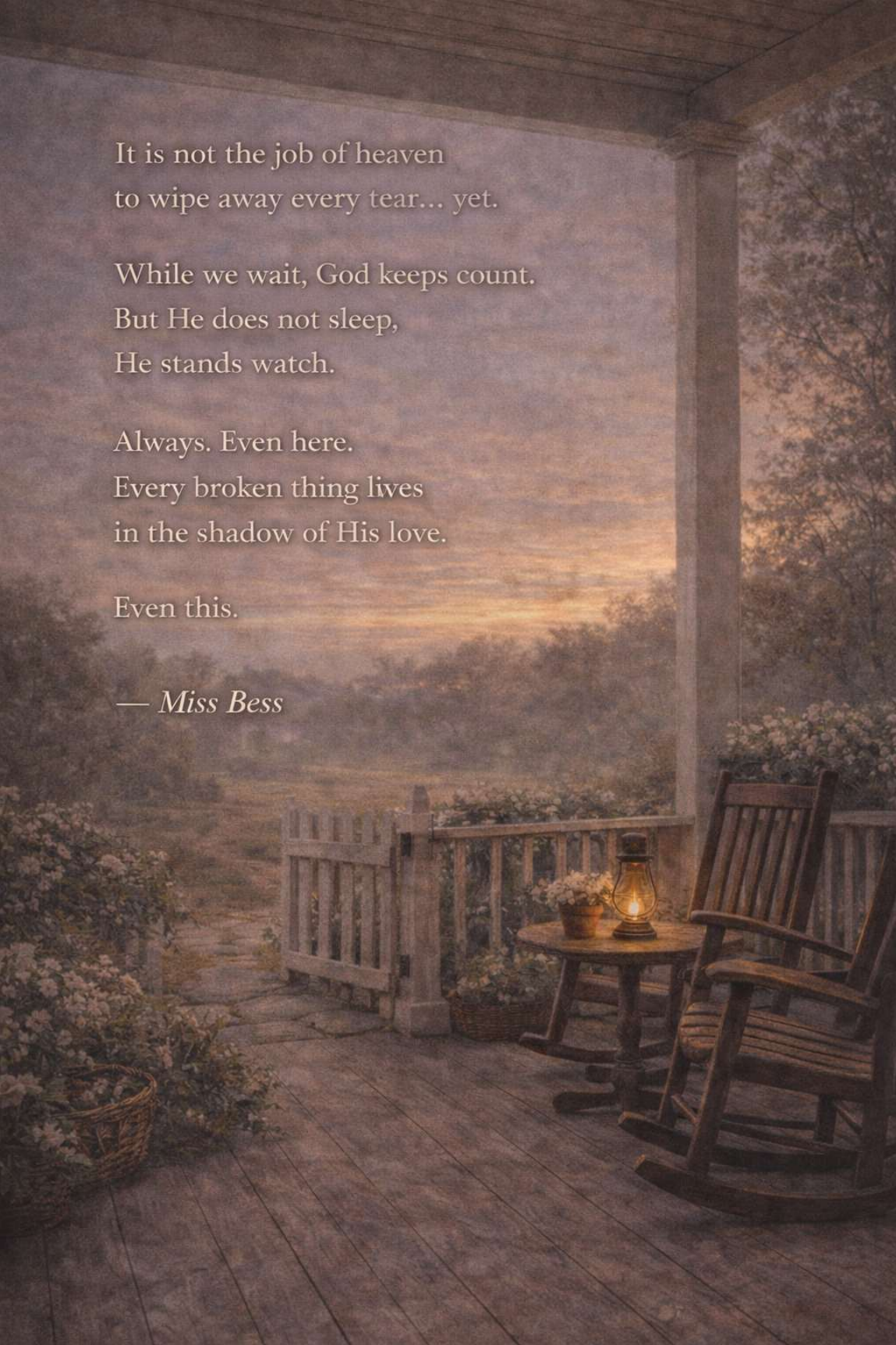
This book does not explore that shift through doctrine.
It does not instruct.
It does not hurry.
It sits in the tension.

If Book 3A asked,
“What if God’s timing was never random?”

Book 3B asks the harder question:

*“What does it cost to live
as if that’s true?”*

— **Miss Bess**

A painting of a porch at sunset. The porch has a wooden railing and a rocking chair. A small table with a lantern and a basket of flowers is on the porch. The background shows a landscape with trees and a sunset sky.

It is not the job of heaven
to wipe away every tear... yet.

While we wait, God keeps count.
But He does not sleep,
He stands watch.

Always. Even here.
Every broken thing lives
in the shadow of His love.

Even this.

— *Miss Bess*

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

This book is not written as an argument.

It's written as a progression.

It doesn't move in straight lines.

It moves the way real conviction does —
slowly, unevenly, and sometimes uncomfortably.

Some sections will feel reflective.

Some may feel confrontational.

Some will be quiet enough to unsettle you
without ever raising their voice.

That's intentional.

Unlike Book 3A, this volume includes visual frameworks, diagrams, and
symbolic illustrations.

They are not here to simplify truth —
they're here to slow you down.

Truth doesn't usually need more explanation.

It needs more *space*.

The visuals serve three purposes:

- to surface internal tension
- to show movement instead of conclusion
- to help you notice what words alone are easy to rush past

You are not meant to analyze every page.

You are meant to notice *yourself* as you move through it.

WHAT THIS BOOK IS

This book is:

- a reflection on consequence, not conclusion
- a companion to Scripture, not a substitute
- an invitation to honesty, not performance
- a place where questions are allowed to remain open

It assumes you already know Scripture.

It assumes you already believe.

It explores what happens
when belief stops being theoretical
and starts costing something.

WHAT THIS BOOK IS NOT

This book is not:

- a checklist for spiritual growth
- a manual for obedience
- a call to urgency or pressure
- an attempt to measure or rank faith

Nothing in these pages requires agreement to be useful.

Truth has a way of working
even when we're not ready to name it yet.

A NOTE ABOUT THE VISUALS

The visual elements in this book are not illustrations of doctrine.
They are mirrors.

Some clarify structure.

Some reveal imbalance.

Some make avoidance visible.

You may skip them.

You may linger.

You may come back later.

They are not answers.

They are pauses.

A GENTLE WARNING (AND PERMISSION)

This book may feel quieter —
and heavier —
than the one before it.

That doesn't mean it's more important.
It means it's more personal.

You do not need to finish it.

You do not need to understand it all at once.

You do not need to explain it to anyone.

If something in these pages presses on you,
you are allowed to stop reading and pray instead.

That counts.

MISS BESS WOULD SAY

“Patterns don’t rush you.
They wait.
And when you’re ready,
they ask you to live a little slower —
and a little truer —
than before.”

Book 3A was about seeing.
Book 3B is about carrying what you’ve seen
without turning it into noise.

— **Miss Bess**



People say God was surprised in the Garden.
I never could believe that.
Seeds don't shock the one who planted them.

— Miss Bess

Reflection #1: The Garden and the Sovereignty of God

Was God ever surprised?

“Known to God from eternity are all His works.”

— **Acts 15:18**

For a long time, there was something about the story of the Garden that unsettled me.

Not because I didn’t believe Scripture.

And not because I doubted God.

But because the way the story was often explained made God seem... caught off guard.

As if He created everything good, turned His back for a moment, and suddenly found Himself reacting to a snake.

That never sat right with me.

The God I met in the rest of Scripture didn’t feel reactionary.

He wasn’t surprised by enemies.

He wasn’t scrambling to regain control.

This is the God who parted the Red Sea.

Who raised the dead.

Who called fearful men “mighty” before they ever believed in themselves.

So I kept wondering — quietly, and for a long time:

Was this same God really undone by a serpent?

That question stayed with me for years.

Not loudly.

Not rebelliously.

Just there.

Then I remembered Job.

In Job, the adversary appears — and God is not startled.

He does not panic.

He does not lose authority.

Instead, Scripture is clear: God allows —
within limits He Himself establishes.

That detail changed the way I looked back at Eden.

Throughout Scripture, patterns repeat.

Themes echo.

What looks like loss often becomes the setting for redemption.

Joseph is betrayed — and later says,

“What you meant for evil, God used for good.”

So I began to ask a different question.

Not, *“How did God lose to a serpent?”*

But, *“What if He never did?”*

Scripture repeatedly affirms that God declares the end from the beginning.

That all His works are known to Him from eternity.

That nothing unfolds outside His knowledge or sovereignty.

So if God was not surprised in Job...

and not surprised at the Cross...

why would we assume He was surprised in the Garden?

That assumption began to feel less like humility

and more like habit.

I also began to notice something else.

Hebrew is a language layered with depth and intention.
English, by necessity, simplifies.

Sometimes meaning narrows — not because Scripture is wrong,
but because translation can only carry so much weight.

So I wondered whether some of our tension with Genesis
comes not from the text itself,
but from how we've learned to summarize it.

What if the Garden was never about God losing control —
but about God allowing choice?

Not because sin was harmless.
Not because deception was good.

But because love without choice is not love at all.

Seen through that lens, the Garden story shifts.

It no longer reads like divine failure.
It reads like divine patience.

A God who allows choice.
Foresees consequence.
And still moves history toward redemption.
That possibility changed everything for me.

A Closing Thought

If God was never surprised in Eden,
then the story of the Garden is not about God failing.

It is about God waiting.

Waiting while humanity chooses.

Waiting while consequence unfolds.

Waiting while redemption moves closer than it appears.

That is not weakness.

That is sovereignty.

— **Miss Bess**



God wasn't surprised, honey.
He knew what He planted.

—Miss Bess

Adam wasn't rushed.

God didn't hide the truth from him.

He was told what could happen—
and he was still allowed to choose.

That's the part people don't like.

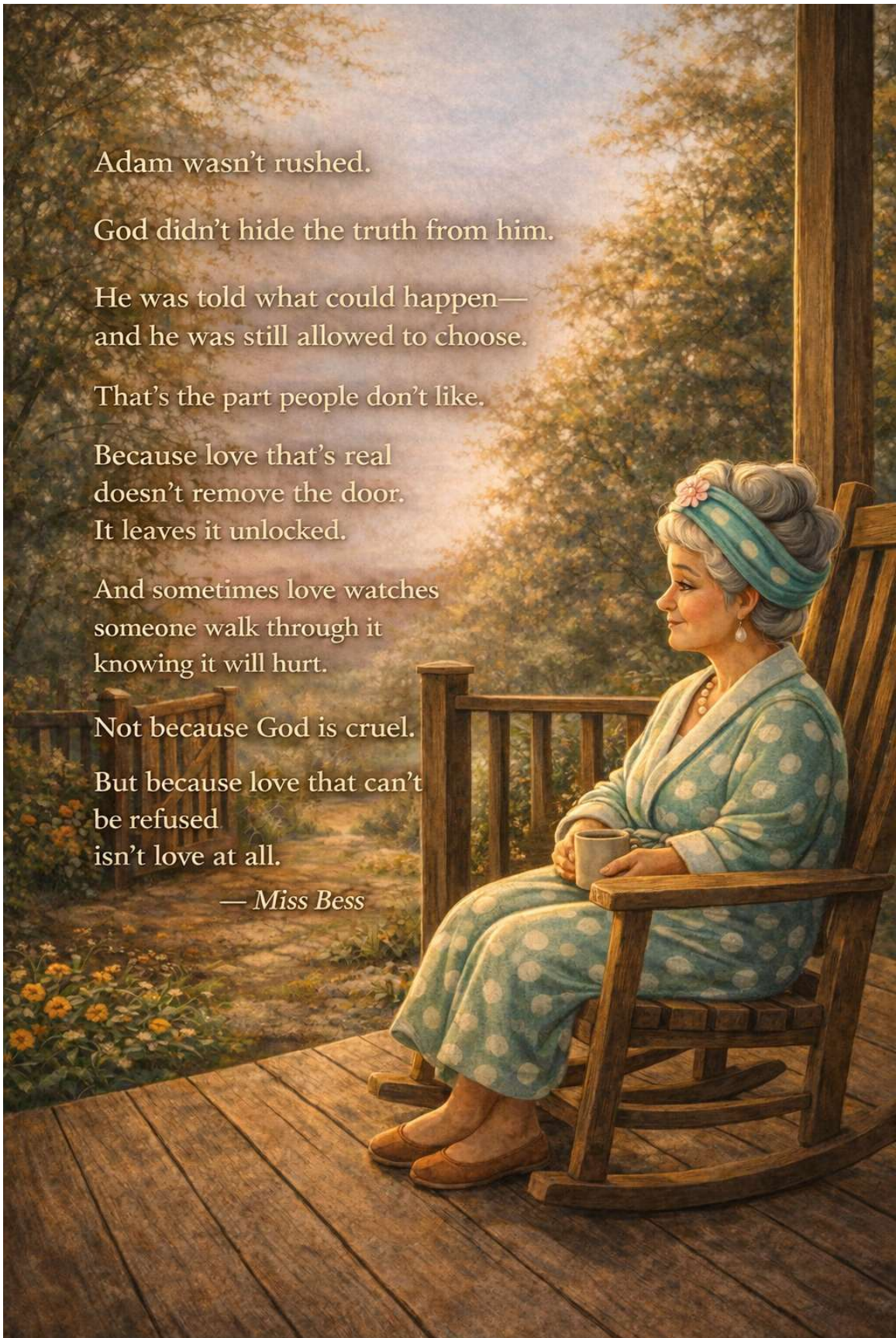
Because love that's real
doesn't remove the door.
It leaves it unlocked.

And sometimes love watches
someone walk through it
knowing it will hurt.

Not because God is cruel.

But because love that can't
be refused
isn't love at all.

— *Miss Bess*



Reflection #2: Adam, Choice, and the Cost of Love

Mistake or sacrifice?

“Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.”

— 1 Timothy 2:14

Adam is often remembered as the one who failed.

The man who stayed silent.

The one whose choice opened the door to sin.

The weak link at the beginning of the story.

That’s the version most of us were given.

But Scripture asks us to slow down here —
because it tells us something important we tend to rush past.

Adam was not deceived.

Eve was deceived.

Adam was not.

That distinction matters.

It means Adam’s choice was not made in ignorance.
It was made with awareness.

And once awareness enters the picture,
the question shifts.

Not “*How could he be so foolish?*”

But “*What did it cost him to choose otherwise?*”

Adam stood at a crossroads no one envies.

On one side was obedience.

On the other was the woman he loved —
bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh.

To obey God would mean separation.

To eat would mean consequence.

Either way, something would be lost.

Scripture does not tell us Adam's internal dialogue.

It doesn't dramatize the moment.

It simply records the choice — and the cost that followed.

So I want to be careful here.

This is not an attempt to excuse sin.

Sin is still sin.

Disobedience still fractures what God calls good.

But Scripture also invites us to notice *why* choices are made —
especially costly ones.

What if Adam's act was not rooted in carelessness,
but in heartbreak?

What if he chose knowingly —
not because he believed God was wrong,
but because he would not abandon his bride?

That does not make the choice righteous.

But it does make it human.

And it sets the stage for something Scripture later makes unmistakably clear.

Jesus is called the "last Adam."

Where the first Adam chose to enter death *with* his bride,
the last Adam chose to enter death *for* His bride.

Adam's choice could not redeem.
Christ's did.

But the parallel matters.

Because Scripture does not present Christ as correcting Adam's mistake —
it presents Him as fulfilling what Adam could not complete.

A Reflection on the Serpent and the Sovereignty of God

The serpent is often treated as the moment God “lost control.”

But Scripture never supports that conclusion.

In Job, the adversary appears — and God sets boundaries.

At the Cross, evil converges — and Scripture declares it unfolded according to
God's foreknowledge.

So we have to ask the uncomfortable question again:

What if God did not lose to the serpent in the Garden —
but allowed choice,
knowing redemption would follow?

Not because deception was harmless.

Not because sin was necessary.

But because love, by definition, must be chosen.

The serpent did not force God's hand.

God did not react in panic.

What the enemy meant for destruction,
God used to move the story forward.

The fall was not the end.

It was the turning point.

From Flesh to Spirit — Not God's Defeat, but God's Design

Before the fall, humanity walked *with* God.

After redemption, humanity would dwell *in* God.

That was always the greater promise.

Through Christ, what began as proximity became union.

What was bound to flesh was reborn through Spirit.

What looked like loss became transformation.

What appeared to be weakness became the pathway to life.

God did not miscalculate in Eden.

He did not abandon His creation.

He did not underestimate the serpent.

He allowed choice —

because love without choice is not love at all.

And from that choice,

He wrote a story that ends not in separation,
but in communion.

A Closing Thought

These reflections do not deny sin.

They do not excuse disobedience.

They do not replace Scripture.

They simply ask whether the story of Adam
might reveal not God's weakness —
but His patience.

A God who allows choice.

Foresees consequence.

And redeems without retreating.

That is not compromise.

That is sovereignty.

— **Miss Bess**

MISS BESS WOULD SAY

“I understand why this hurts to look at.

And we still have to look.

Not because God is cruel.

But because you were never meant to carry this alone.

One of the enemy’s quietest lies
is convincing faithful people
that their suffering is what will save someone else.

I believed that once.

I believed that if I stayed,
if I endured,
if I loved harder and held on longer,
God would rescue the one I loved
through me.

What I didn’t see at first
was that my holding on
was costing everyone.

It wasn’t saving them.
It was keeping both of us stuck.

There came a point when the most loving thing I could do
was let go —
not in bitterness,

not in abandonment,
but in surrender.

I had to give them back to God
so He could do what only He can do.

That doesn't mean leaving is always the answer.
It isn't.

But when you know...
you know.

And most of the time,
you know long before you leave.

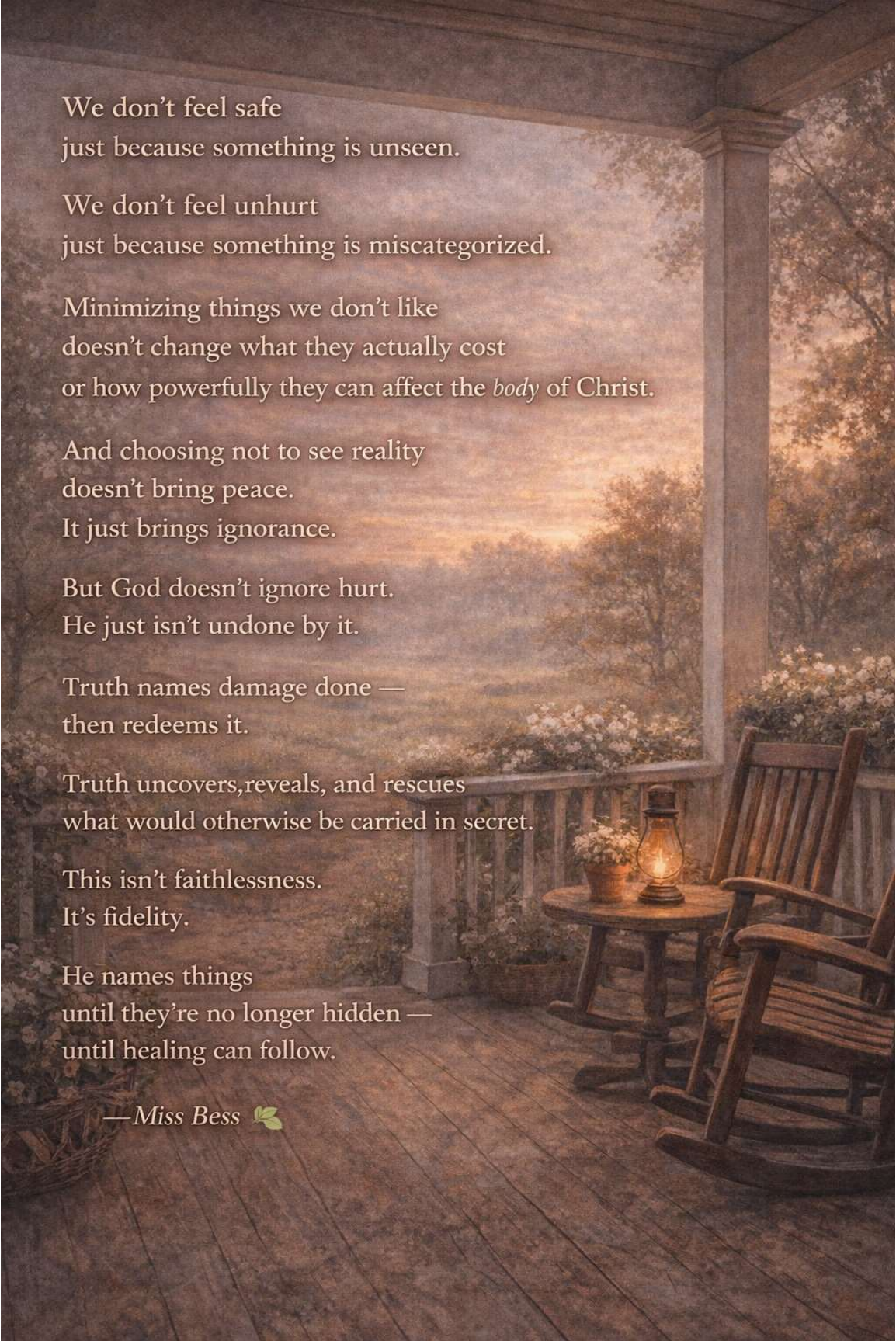
Staying past that knowing
doesn't deepen love.
It only prolongs damage.

Beating a dead horse doesn't bring it back to life.
It just keeps the wound open —
and gives the enemy more room to work.

God does not ask us to replace Him.
He asks us to trust Him.

And sometimes,
trust looks like stepping back
so God can step in.”

— **Miss Bess**

A painting of a porch at sunset. The porch has a wooden floor and a white railing. A wooden rocking chair is on the right, and a small round table with a lantern and a potted plant is next to it. The background shows a sunset over a landscape with trees and a body of water.

We don't feel safe
just because something is unseen.

We don't feel unhurt
just because something is miscategorized.

Minimizing things we don't like
doesn't change what they actually cost
or how powerfully they can affect the *body* of Christ.

And choosing not to see reality
doesn't bring peace.
It just brings ignorance.

But God doesn't ignore hurt.
He just isn't undone by it.

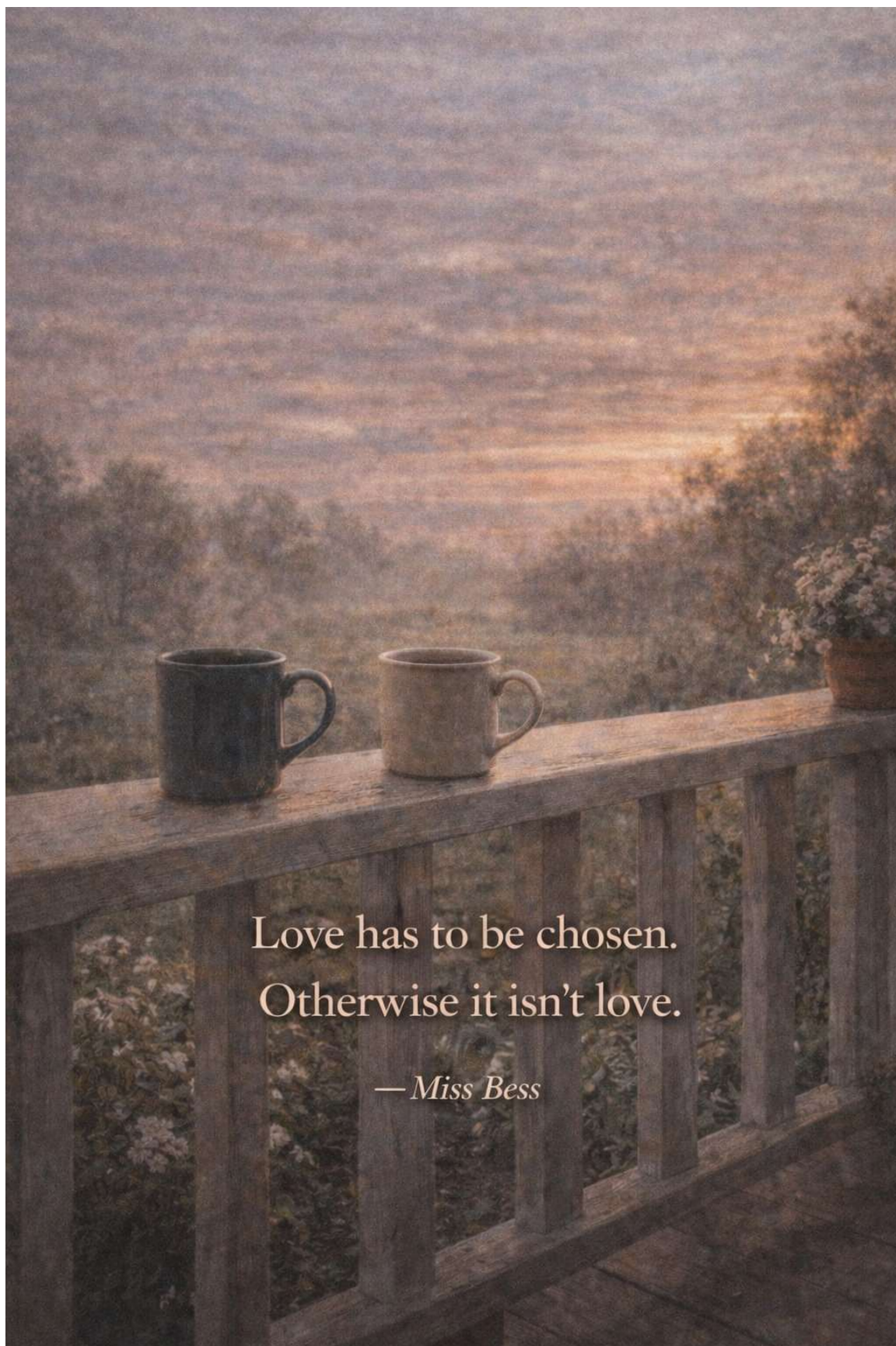
Truth names damage done —
then redeems it.

Truth uncovers, reveals, and rescues
what would otherwise be carried in secret.

This isn't faithlessness.
It's fidelity.

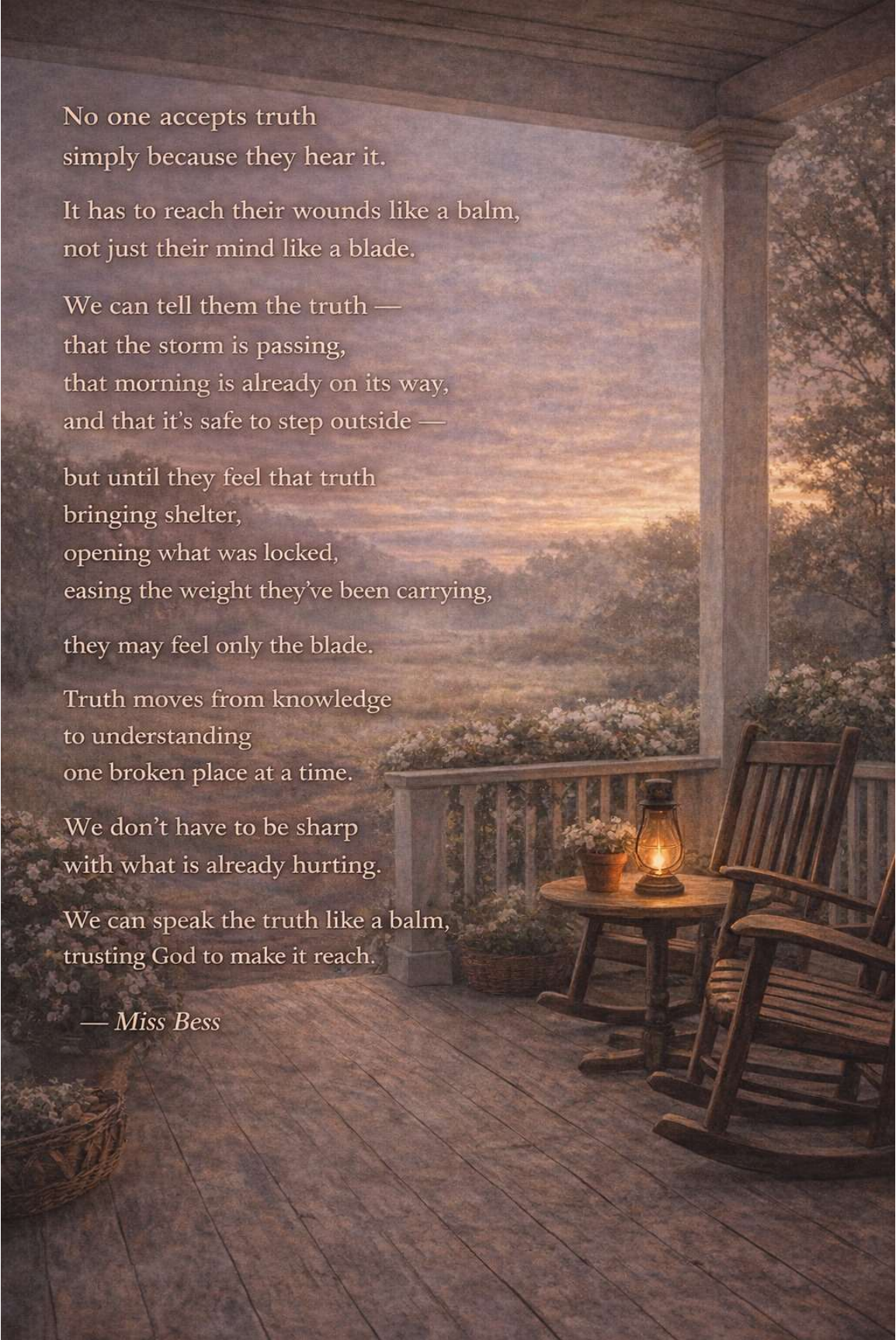
He names things
until they're no longer hidden —
until healing can follow.

—Miss Bess 🌿



Love has to be chosen.
Otherwise it isn't love.

— *Miss Bess*

A painting of a porch at sunset. The porch has a wooden floor and a railing. A rocking chair is on the right, and a small table with a lantern and a potted plant is next to it. The background shows a landscape with trees and a sunset sky.

No one accepts truth
simply because they hear it.

It has to reach their wounds like a balm,
not just their mind like a blade.

We can tell them the truth —
that the storm is passing,
that morning is already on its way,
and that it's safe to step outside —

but until they feel that truth
bringing shelter,
opening what was locked,
easing the weight they've been carrying,
they may feel only the blade.

Truth moves from knowledge
to understanding
one broken place at a time.

We don't have to be sharp
with what is already hurting.

We can speak the truth like a balm,
trusting God to make it reach.

— *Miss Bess*

The story didn't stop where it hurt.

Morning still came.

The door didn't stay closed.

What looked like an ending
was only a pause between chapters.

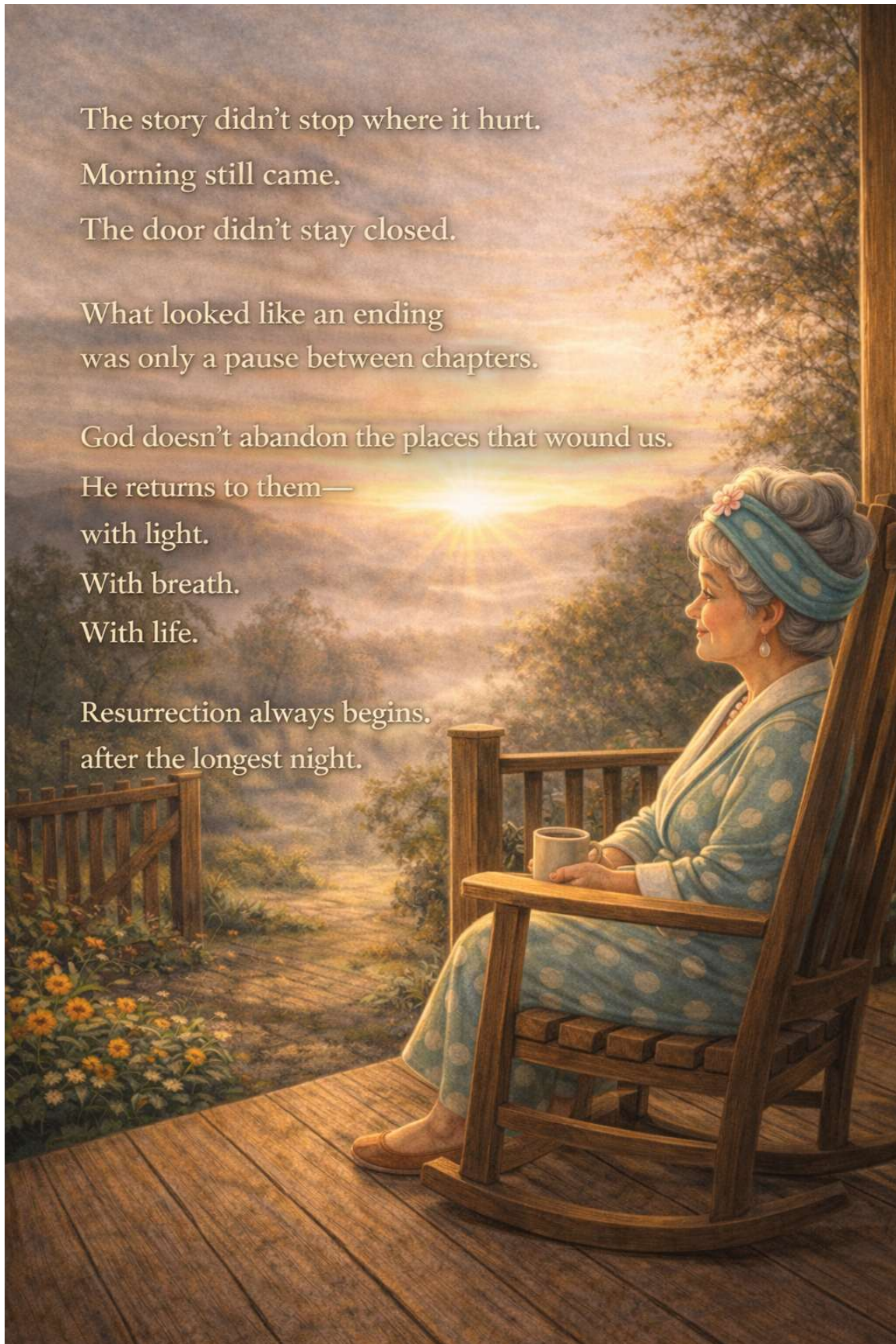
God doesn't abandon the places that wound us.

He returns to them—
with light.

With breath.

With life.

Resurrection always begins.
after the longest night.



Reflection #3: From Eden to the Cross to the Resurrection

Not defeat, but fulfillment.

“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.”

— **1 Corinthians 15:22**

The story of Scripture does not begin with failure.

And it does not end with death.

It begins in a garden.

In Eden, humanity walked with God —

but only beside Him.

There was intimacy,

but not yet union.

Innocence,

but not yet redemption.

Something more was always coming.

When Adam chose to eat, Scripture tells us he was not deceived.

That matters.

His choice carried consequence, yes —

but it also revealed something deeper:

Humanity’s story would now be shaped by choice,

by sacrifice,

and by love that costs something real.

Eden was not erased from God’s plan.

It was the opening act.

What was lost in the garden
would be answered somewhere else.

The Cross — Love That Chooses Death

Where the first Adam chose to enter death *with* his bride,
Christ chose to enter death *for* His bride.

Scripture calls Jesus the “last Adam” —
not to erase the first,
but to fulfill what the first could not complete.

Adam’s choice brought death into the world.
Christ’s choice absorbed death
and broke its power.

The Cross was not an interruption.
It was not a backup plan.

It was the center.

Jesus did not stumble into sacrifice.
He chose it.

What appeared to be humanity’s darkest moment
was unfolding exactly where God had always been working.

The serpent did not win at the Cross.
He was undone there.

The Resurrection — God’s Final Word

If the Cross was the sacrifice,
the Resurrection was the declaration.

Death was not the end.
It was the threshold.

When Jesus rose,
He did not return to life as it was before.
He inaugurated something new.

What began in Eden as walking *with* God
became, through Christ, dwelling *in* God.

Not proximity.
Union.

Not fragile flesh.
Resurrected life.

The Resurrection reveals what God was moving toward all along:

- not temporary innocence
- but eternal communion
- not untouched humanity
- but redeemed humanity

The garden was not forgotten.
It was fulfilled.

A Closing Thought

Seen together —
Eden, the Cross, and the Resurrection
tell one continuous story.

Not of God losing control.
Not of a plan derailed by a serpent.

But of a sovereign God
who allows choice,

redeems failure,
and transforms death into life.

What looked like weakness
was wisdom.

What seemed like defeat
was design.

What appeared to be the end
was only the beginning.

God did not lose in the Garden.
God won at the Cross.
And God sealed it in the Resurrection.

MISS BESS WOULD SAY

“I understand why this hurts to look at.
And we still have to look.

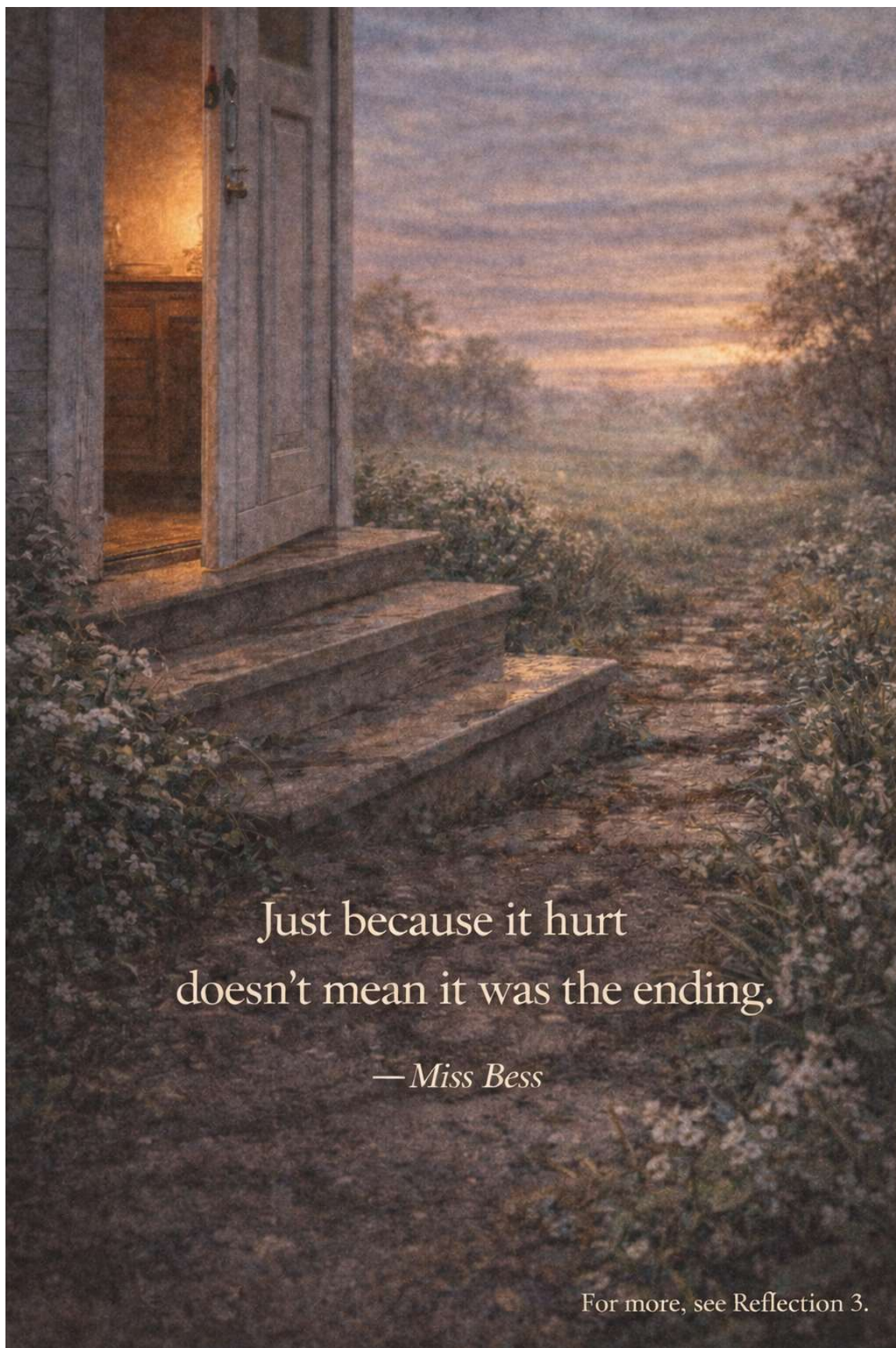
Because the Cross only makes sense
once we admit
something really was lost.

And the Resurrection only matters
once we accept
that we couldn’t fix it ourselves.

You were never meant to carry this alone.
And you were never asked to save anyone.

That part belongs to God.”

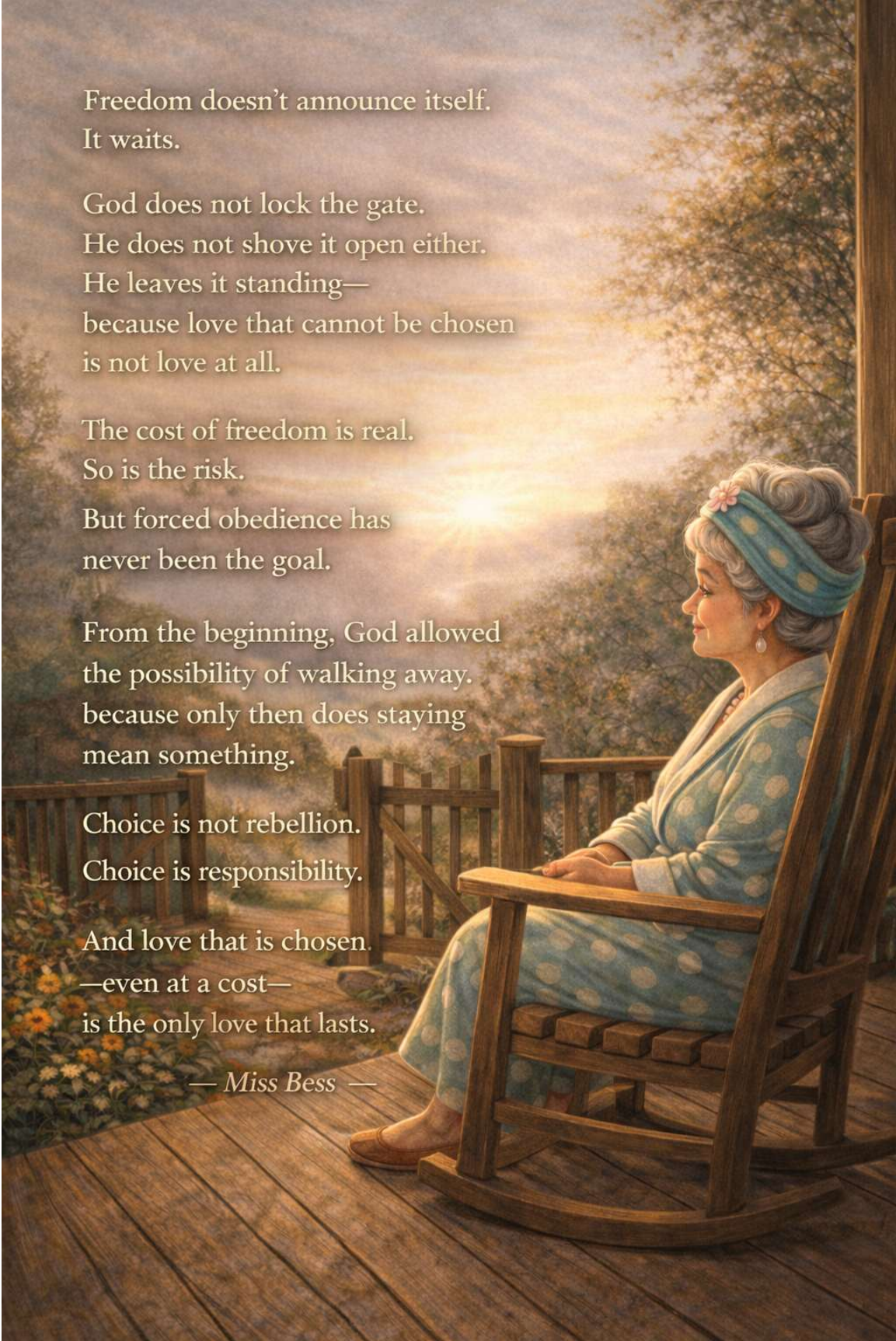
— **Miss Bess**



Just because it hurt
doesn't mean it was the ending.

—*Miss Bess*

For more, see Reflection 3.



Freedom doesn't announce itself.
It waits.

God does not lock the gate.
He does not shove it open either.
He leaves it standing—
because love that cannot be chosen
is not love at all.

The cost of freedom is real.
So is the risk.

But forced obedience has
never been the goal.

From the beginning, God allowed
the possibility of walking away.
because only then does staying
mean something.

Choice is not rebellion.
Choice is responsibility.

And love that is chosen.
—even at a cost—
is the only love that lasts.

— Miss Bess —

Reflection #4: Choice, Love, and the Cost of Freedom

Why love requires risk.

“I have set before you life and death... therefore choose life.”
— Deuteronomy 30:19

Love without choice is not love at all.

From the beginning, Scripture presents a God who desires relationship —
not obedience born of force,
but devotion born of freedom.

And freedom always carries risk.

In the Garden, God placed a tree.

Not because He wanted humanity to fail.
But because He wanted humanity to choose.

The tree was not a trap.
It was an invitation.

Without it, obedience would have been automatic.
And automatic obedience is not love.

So God allowed choice —
not because He underestimated the cost,
but because He honored the dignity of relationship.

Scripture never portrays God as surprised by what freedom produces.
It portrays Him as faithful *through* it.

Love That Risks Rejection

Throughout Scripture, God allows choices that grieve Him.

Israel chose idols — and God pursued.

David chose sin — and God restored.

Peter chose denial — and Jesus redeemed.

At no point did God revoke freedom.

He absorbed its cost.

The Cross is not the removal of choice.

It is the price of honoring it.

Jesus was not forced into sacrifice.

He chose it.

Love always does.

When Freedom Becomes Uncomfortable

Freedom sounds beautiful —
until it collides with consequence.

Choice does not only make love possible.
It makes loss possible, too.

And that is where many of us struggle.

We want relationship without risk.
Redemption without responsibility.
Grace without participation.

But Scripture never offers that version of faith.

Again and again, God places life and death side by side —
not to threaten,
but to dignify.

Choose life.

Not because the other option isn't real —
but because love must be chosen freely to be love at all.

Freedom Fulfilled, Not Removed

The Resurrection does not erase choice.
It redeems it.

Through Christ, freedom is not taken away —
it is transformed.

No longer bound to fear of death.
No longer driven by self-protection.
But anchored in life through the Spirit.

God does not coerce obedience.
He changes hearts.

The same God who placed a tree in the Garden
now places a cross before us —
not as punishment,
but as the clearest picture of love freely given.

The invitation remains.

Choose.

A Closing Thought

Freedom was never humanity's curse.

It was the cost of love.

God did not miscalculate when He gave it.
He paid for it.

From Eden to the Cross to the Resurrection,
the story has never changed:

A God who risks rejection
to gain relationship.

A God who allows choice
so love can be real.

A God who redeems failure
without ever revoking freedom.

That is not weakness.

That is greatness.

MISS BESS WOULD SAY

“God doesn’t take away your freedom
once you believe.

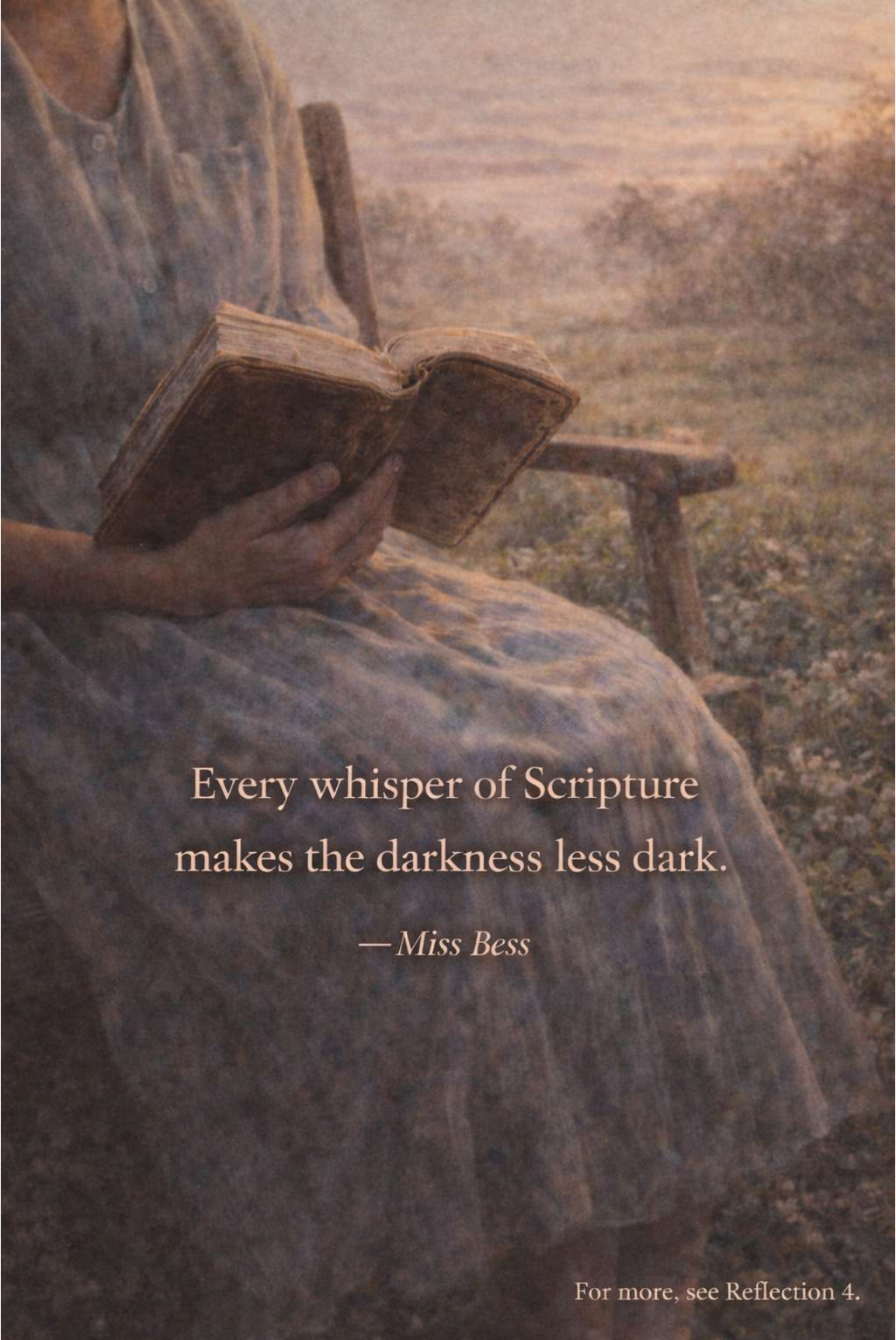
He trusts you with it.

And when freedom feels heavy,
that doesn’t mean you’re doing faith wrong.

It means love is involved.

And love, real love,
always costs something.”

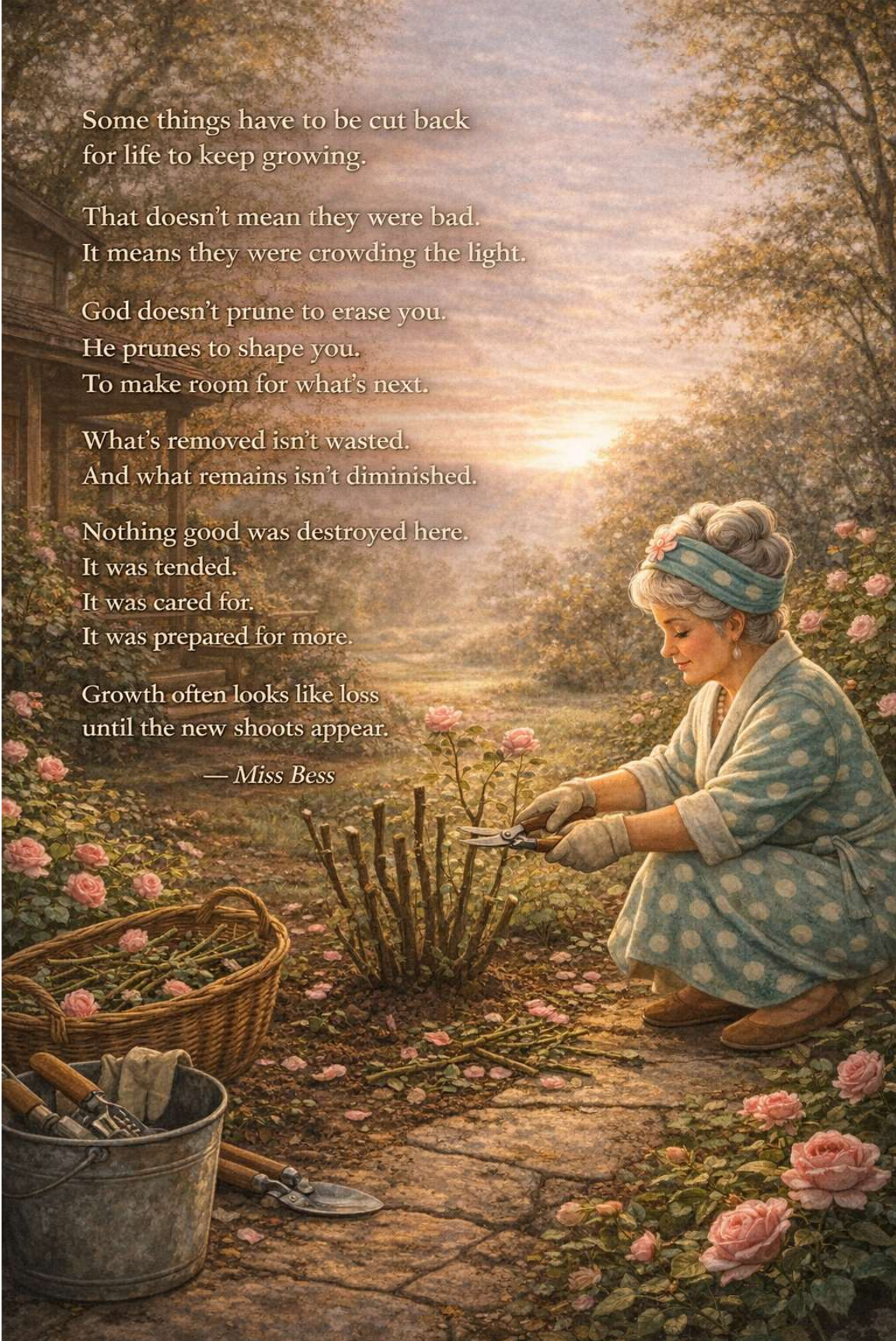
— **Miss Bess**



Every whisper of Scripture
makes the darkness less dark.

—*Miss Bess*

For more, see Reflection 4.

An elderly woman with short, styled grey hair and a blue headband with a pink flower is kneeling in a garden. She is wearing a blue robe with white polka dots and white gardening gloves. She is using pruning shears to trim a rose bush. To her left is a large wicker basket filled with cut rose stems and a metal bucket containing gardening tools. The garden is filled with pink roses, and the scene is bathed in the warm, golden light of a sunrise or sunset, with trees and a path visible in the background.

Some things have to be cut back
for life to keep growing.

That doesn't mean they were bad.
It means they were crowding the light.

God doesn't prune to erase you.
He prunes to shape you.
To make room for what's next.

What's removed isn't wasted.
And what remains isn't diminished.

Nothing good was destroyed here.
It was tended.
It was cared for.
It was prepared for more.

Growth often looks like loss
until the new shoots appear.

— Miss Bess

Reflection #5: Dying to Self Without Losing Yourself

What surrender really means.

“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”

— **Luke 9:23**

For many people, the phrase “*die to self*” sounds frightening.

Not holy.

Not freeing.

Just... disappearing.

Like shrinking down until nothing recognizable remains.

Like losing your voice, your boundaries, your identity —
all in the name of obedience.

That is not what Scripture means.

And it's not what God does.

Jesus did not come to erase who we are.

He came to redeem us.

When Scripture calls us to deny ourselves,

it is not asking us to deny our humanity.

It is asking us to release our grip on control.

There's a difference.

Surrender Is Not Self-Rejection

To surrender is not to say,
“I am nothing.”

It is to say,
“I am not my own.”

Those are not the same thing.

God does not despise the person He created.
He seeks to free that person from the burden of self-rule —
the exhausting belief that everything depends on us holding it together.

Adam reached for control
and lost intimacy.

Jesus released control
and restored it.

That alone should tell us something.

What Actually Dies

When Scripture speaks of dying to self,
it is not talking about personality.

It is not talking about passion.
It is not talking about calling.

What dies is pride.

What dies is self-sufficiency.

What dies is the illusion that we know better than God
how our lives should unfold.

And that illusion is heavier than we like to admit.

Letting it go can feel like loss —
especially if we’ve mistaken it for strength.

The Fear Beneath Resistance

Most resistance to surrender
isn't rebellion.

It's fear.

Fear that if we let go,
we'll be forgotten.

Overlooked.

Unprotected.

Fear that God will take something precious
and not give anything back.

But Scripture tells a different story.

Jesus promised that whoever loses their life for His sake
will find it.

Not a smaller life.

A fuller one.

God does not hollow people out.

He fills them.

Life on the Other Side of Surrender

The paradox of faith is this:

Control feels safe — but enslaves.

Surrender feels risky — but frees.

Dying to self is not disappearing into God.

It is learning to live *through* Him.

The self that dies
is the one that had to manage everything alone.

The self that rises
is the one finally able to trust.

A Closing Thought

Dying to self is not the loss of identity.

It is the recovery of it —
no longer built on fear,
but on trust.

MISS BESS WOULD SAY

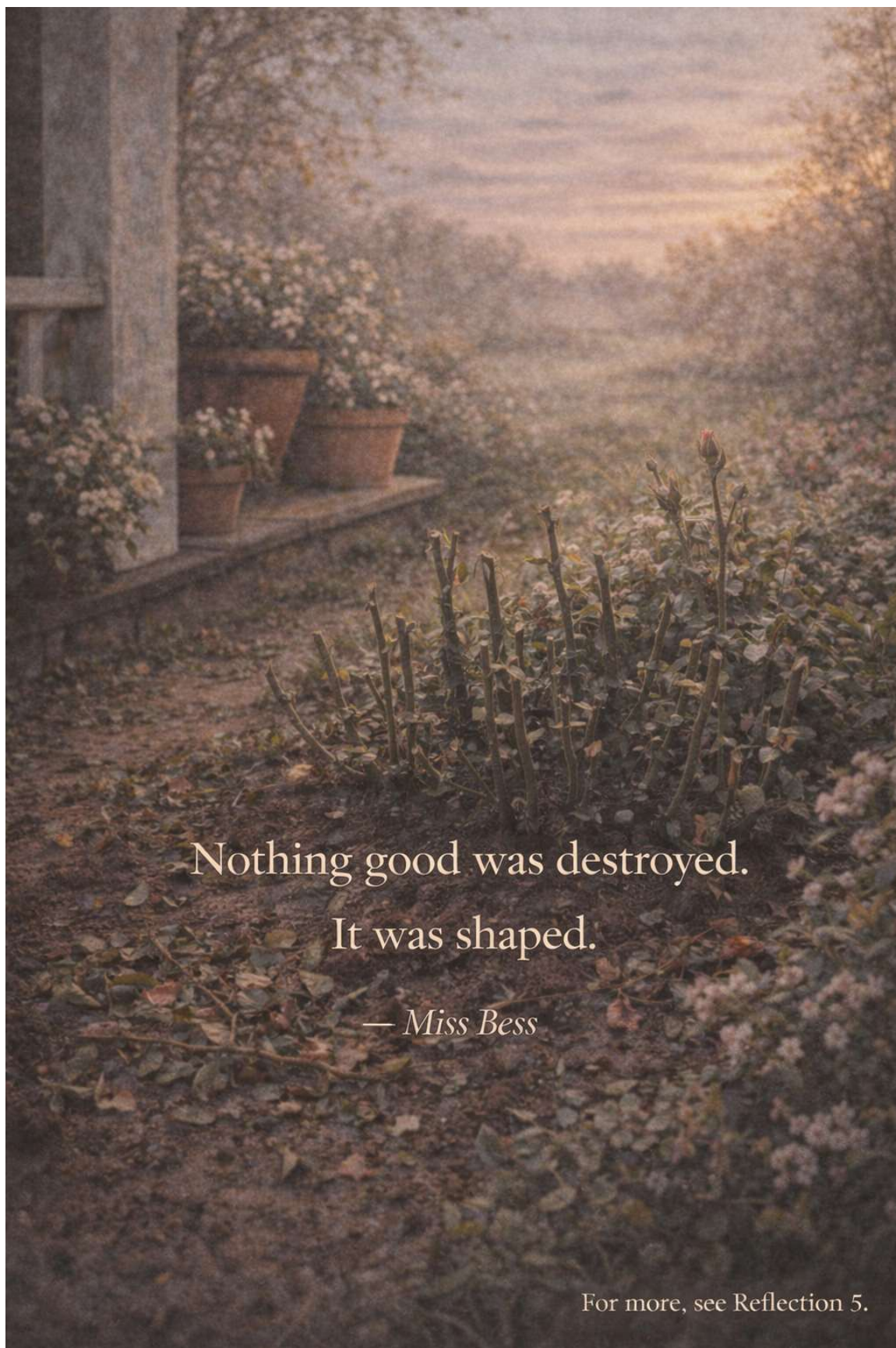
“God never asked you to disappear
to prove you love Him.

He asked you to trust Him
with who you already are.

And if surrender feels scary,
that doesn’t mean you’re failing.

It usually means
you’re finally letting go
of something you were never meant
to carry alone.”

— **Miss Bess**



Nothing good was destroyed.
It was shaped.

— *Miss Bess*

For more, see Reflection 5.



Faith doesn't always raise its voice.
Sometimes it just keeps working.

It shows up with dirt under its fingernails.
With seeds instead of flowers.

With effort no one applauds.

Most of the faithful work
happens where no one is watching
and nothing looks impressive yet.

But God sees it.
Every small act.
Every quiet obedience.

Faith doesn't need to be loud.
to be real.

It only needs to be faithful.

— *Miss Bess*

Reflection #6: Faith That Is Seen, Not Just Spoken

When belief becomes visible.

“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”

— **James 2:17**

Faith is not meant to stay hidden.

That doesn't mean it has to be loud.

And it doesn't mean it has to be impressive.

But it does mean it eventually shows up.

For many believers, faith lives safely in the private places —
in thought,

in agreement,

in quiet conviction that never quite makes it into action.

Not because they don't care.

But because they're afraid.

Afraid of saying the wrong thing.

Afraid of being misunderstood.

Afraid of standing out when staying quiet feels safer.

Scripture understands that fear.

But it does not treat it as the final word.

When Belief Stays Silent

There is a difference between humility
and hiding.

There is a difference between wisdom
and avoidance.

Silence can sometimes be patient.
But silence can also become permission —
permission for harm,
permission for false peace,
permission for fear to keep the upper hand.

James is not accusing believers of hypocrisy.
He is warning them about stagnation.

Faith that never moves
eventually withers.

Faith Steps Into the Light

Jesus never told His followers to win arguments.
He told them to be witnesses.

A witness does not control outcomes.
A witness tells the truth about what they have seen.

Faith becomes visible
not when it demands attention,
but when it refuses to stay hidden.

Sometimes that looks like speaking up.
Sometimes it looks like stepping back.
Sometimes it looks like choosing obedience
when approval disappears.

But it always looks like movement.

The Cost of Being Seen

There is a cost to visibility.

Light exposes.

Truth unsettles.

Obedience invites scrutiny.

That is why silence can feel so appealing.

But silence has a cost, too.

Love that never acts
eventually becomes indistinguishable
from indifference.

Faith that never risks
never learns to trust.

And belief that stays private forever
never gets the chance to grow.

A Closing Thought

Faith does not need to be aggressive to be bold.
It does not need to be polished to be powerful.

It needs only to be honest,
lived,
and willing.

The same God who calls us to believe
walks with us
as we learn how to live what we believe.

MISS BESS WOULD SAY

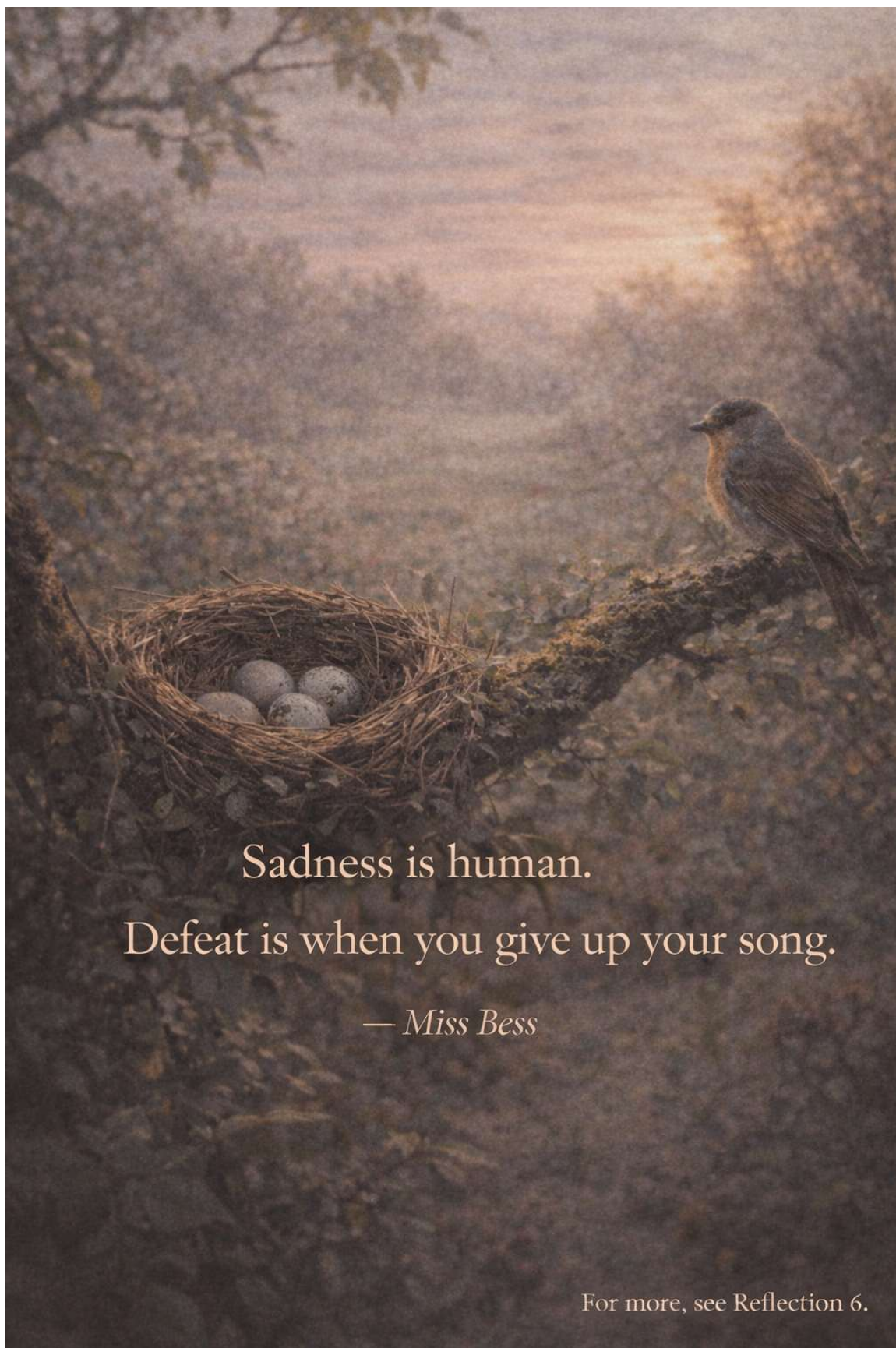
“Faith doesn’t need a microphone
to be real.

But it does need legs.

And if stepping forward feels scary,
that doesn’t mean you’re doing it wrong.

It usually means
your faith is leaving theory
and becoming something that can be seen.”

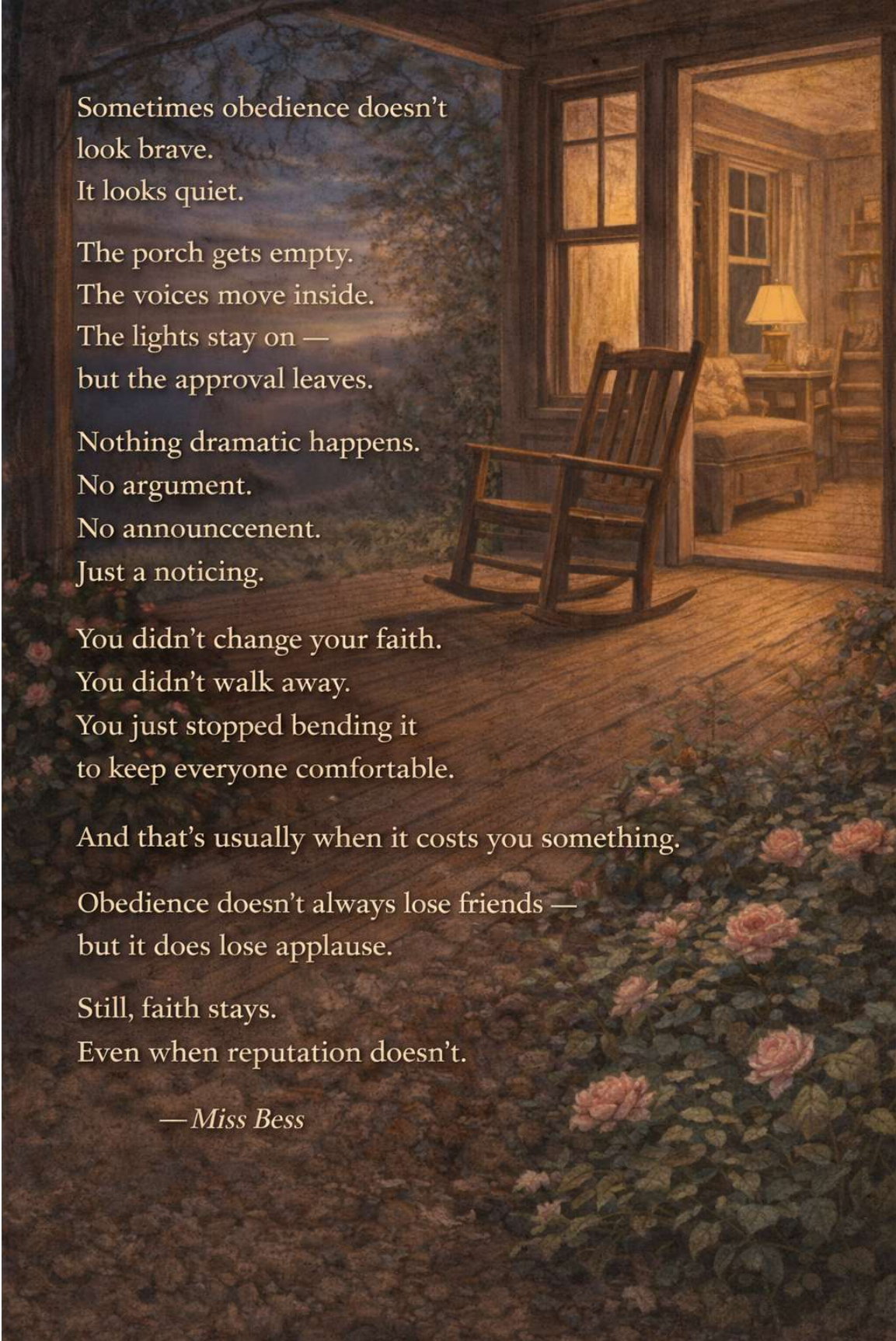
— **Miss Bess**



Sadness is human.
Defeat is when you give up your song.

— *Miss Bess*

For more, see Reflection 6.

A painting of a porch with a rocking chair and a view into a room. The porch is made of wood and has a large window. A wooden rocking chair is on the porch. The room inside has a lamp and a bed. The scene is set at night with a dark sky and some flowers in the foreground.

Sometimes obedience doesn't
look brave.
It looks quiet.

The porch gets empty.
The voices move inside.
The lights stay on —
but the approval leaves.

Nothing dramatic happens.
No argument.
No announcenent.
Just a noticing.

You didn't change your faith.
You didn't walk away.
You just stopped bending it
to keep everyone comfortable.

And that's usually when it costs you something.

Obedience doesn't always lose friends —
but it does lose applause.

Still, faith stays.
Even when reputation doesn't.

—*Miss Bess*

Reflection #7: When Obedience Costs Reputation

When Obedience Costs Reputation

Choosing faith when approval is lost.

“If I were still trying to please people,
I would not be a servant of Christ.”

— Galatians 1:10

Obedience rarely announces itself loudly.

Most of the time, it starts quietly —
with a conviction you don’t talk about yet.
A knowing you carry around
long before anyone else notices.

At first, nothing changes on the outside.
You still sound the same.
Still look the same.
Still belong.

And then, slowly, something shifts.

Not because you became difficult.
Not because you wanted attention.

But because obedience has a way
of rearranging priorities —
and people notice when you stop bending
in the places you used to.

When Approval Was Never as Stable as It Felt

Reputation feels solid —
until it isn't.

It's built on perception,
maintained by agreement,
and easily unsettled
when obedience stops fitting the room.

Scripture never promises
that obedience will be understood.

In fact, Jesus warns us otherwise.

He was misrepresented.
Misunderstood.
Rejected.

Not because He lacked love —
but because truth disrupts expectations.

Obedience doesn't make us harsh.
But it does make us harder to control.

The Quiet Loss That Comes With Faithfulness

Losing approval can feel like grief.

Friends grow distant.
Conversations change.
Invitations thin out.

And if we're honest,
that loss can sting more than we expected.

Not because approval was our god —
but because belonging matters to human beings.

Scripture doesn't shame that pain.
But it does clarify the choice.

Whose voice will we listen to
when the crowd grows uncomfortable?

What Reputation Can't Give — and Can't Take

God does not measure obedience
by public agreement.

He measures it by faithfulness
in the unseen places.

Reputation can open doors —
but it cannot anchor a soul.

And sometimes, losing reputation
is not punishment.

It's preparation.

Preparation to hear God more clearly
without the static of applause.

Preparation to stand
when consensus collapses.

A Closing Thought

Obedience may cost
how others see us.

But it sharpens
how we see God.

And clarity, once gained,
is worth far more
than approval ever was.

MISS BESS WOULD SAY

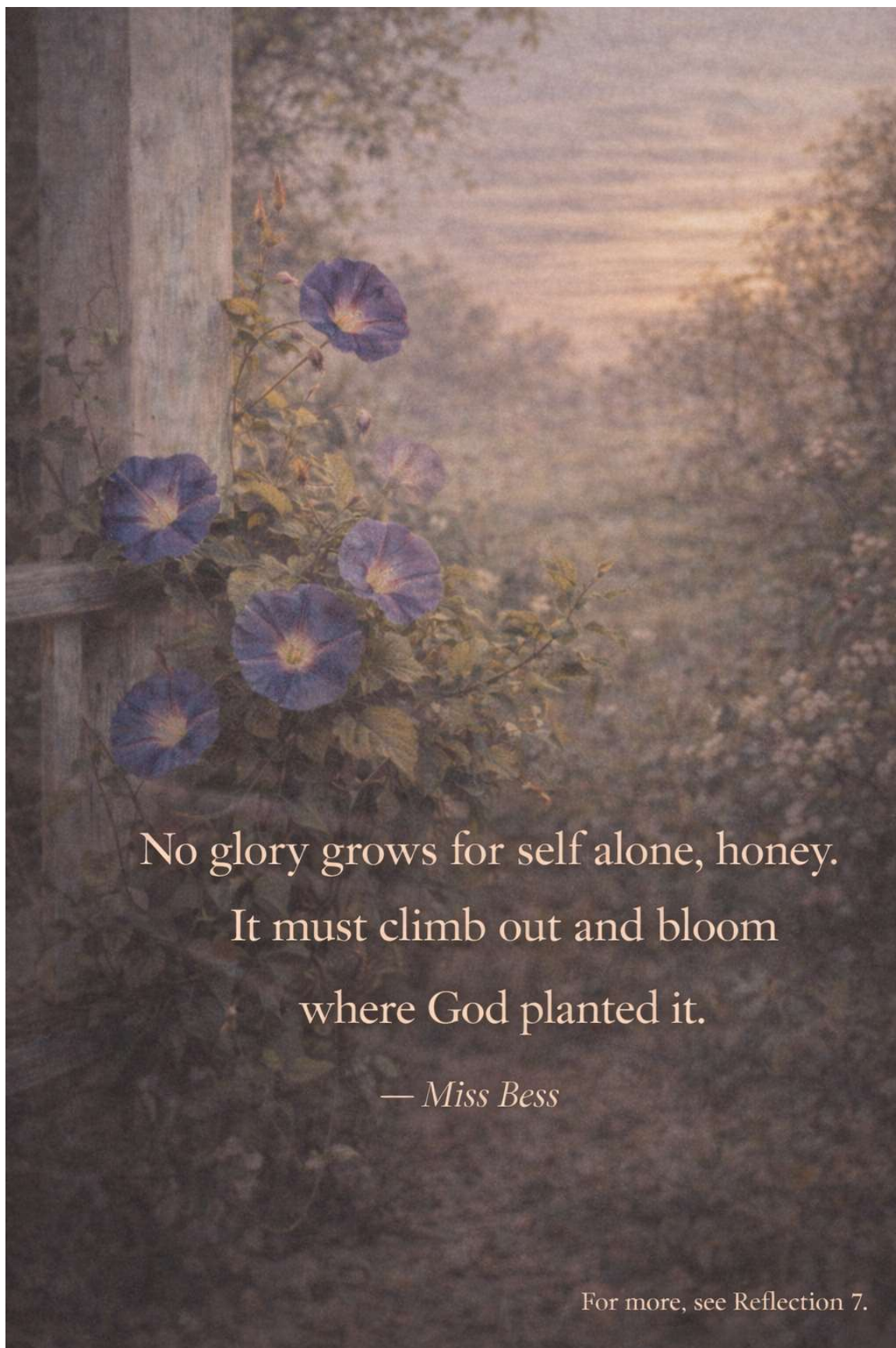
“Losing approval doesn’t mean
you lost your way.

Sometimes it means
you finally stopped letting other people
hold the map.

If obedience costs your reputation,
let it.

God knows where you are —
and He’s not confused about you.”

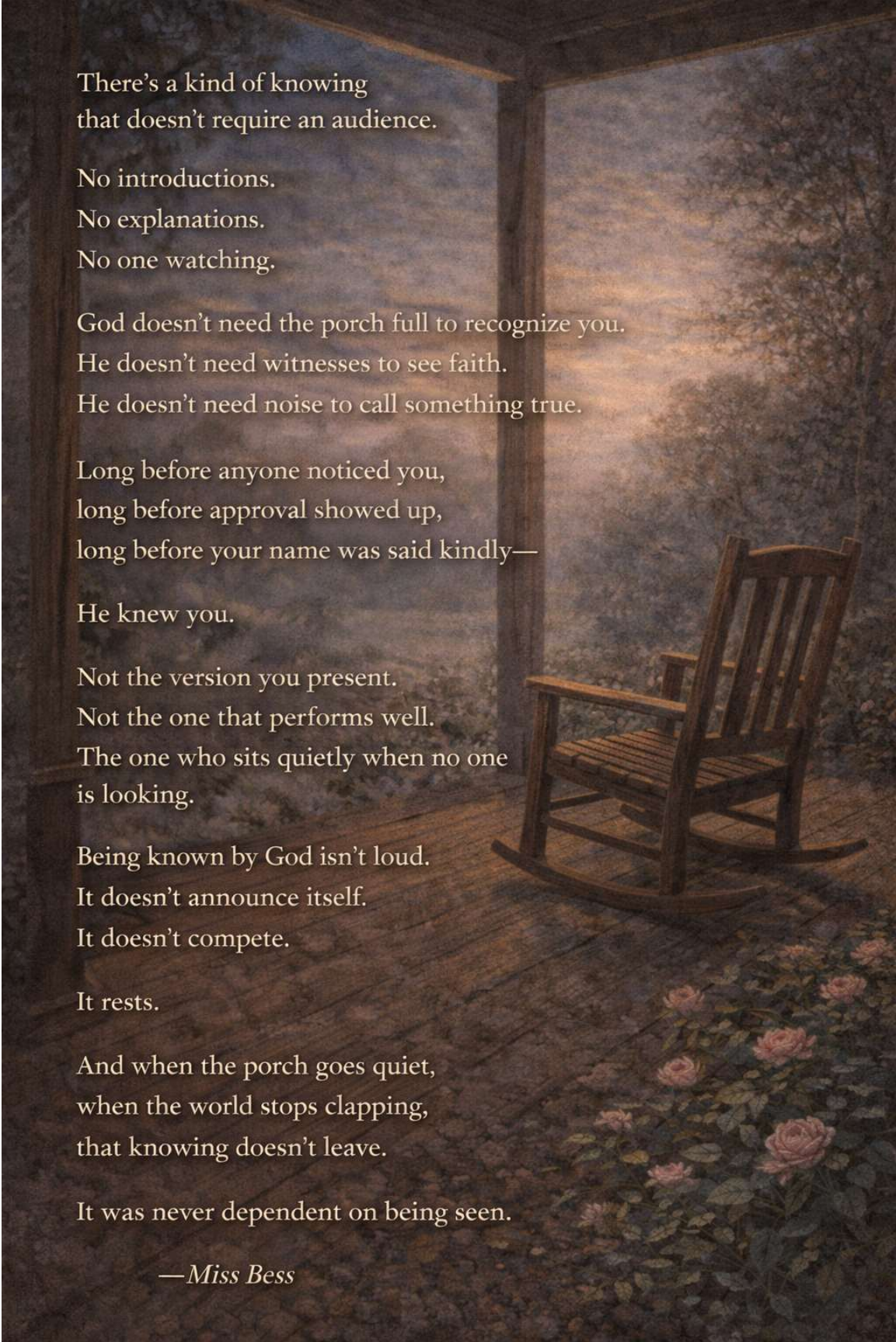
— **Miss Bess**



No glory grows for self alone, honey.
It must climb out and bloom
where God planted it.

— *Miss Bess*

For more, see Reflection 7.



There's a kind of knowing
that doesn't require an audience.

No introductions.

No explanations.

No one watching.

God doesn't need the porch full to recognize you.

He doesn't need witnesses to see faith.

He doesn't need noise to call something true.

Long before anyone noticed you,
long before approval showed up,
long before your name was said kindly—

He knew you.

Not the version you present.

Not the one that performs well.

The one who sits quietly when no one
is looking.

Being known by God isn't loud.

It doesn't announce itself.

It doesn't compete.

It rests.

And when the porch goes quiet,
when the world stops clapping,
that knowing doesn't leave.

It was never dependent on being seen.

—Miss Bess

Reflection #8: Being Known by God Before Being Known by Man

Identity that doesn't require validation.

“If I were still trying to please people,
I would not be a servant of Christ.”

— Galatians 1:10

There is a quiet temptation
that follows obedience.

The desire not just to be faithful —
but to be *recognized* for it.

Recognition feels reassuring.
It tells us we're not invisible.
Not mistaken.
Not alone.

But Scripture consistently points us
somewhere deeper.

Before usefulness.
Before obedience.
Before understanding.

God knows us.

The Difference Between Being Known and Being Seen

Being seen can be affirming.

But it is also fragile.

It depends on agreement.

On visibility.

On staying palatable.

Being known is different.

To be known by God

is to be fully seen

without needing to perform.

No explanation required.

No defense necessary.

No image to maintain.

God's knowledge of us

does not begin

when we get it right.

It precedes everything.

When Obedience Quietly Removes the Spotlight

Sometimes faith draws attention.

Other times, it removes it.

Obedience does not promise a platform.

It promises presence.

And when attention fades,

a deeper question surfaces:

Who am I

when no one is watching?

Scripture answers that gently.

You are already known.

Identity That Holds When Validation Falls Away

Approval fluctuates.

Recognition fades.

But identity rooted in God
does not shift with the room.

To be known by God
is enough —
even when it's unseen by others.

Even when obedience costs visibility.

Even when faith grows quieter.

Especially then.

A Closing Thought

God's knowing of you
came first.

Before calling.

Before obedience.

Before approval.

Nothing obedience costs you
can undo that.

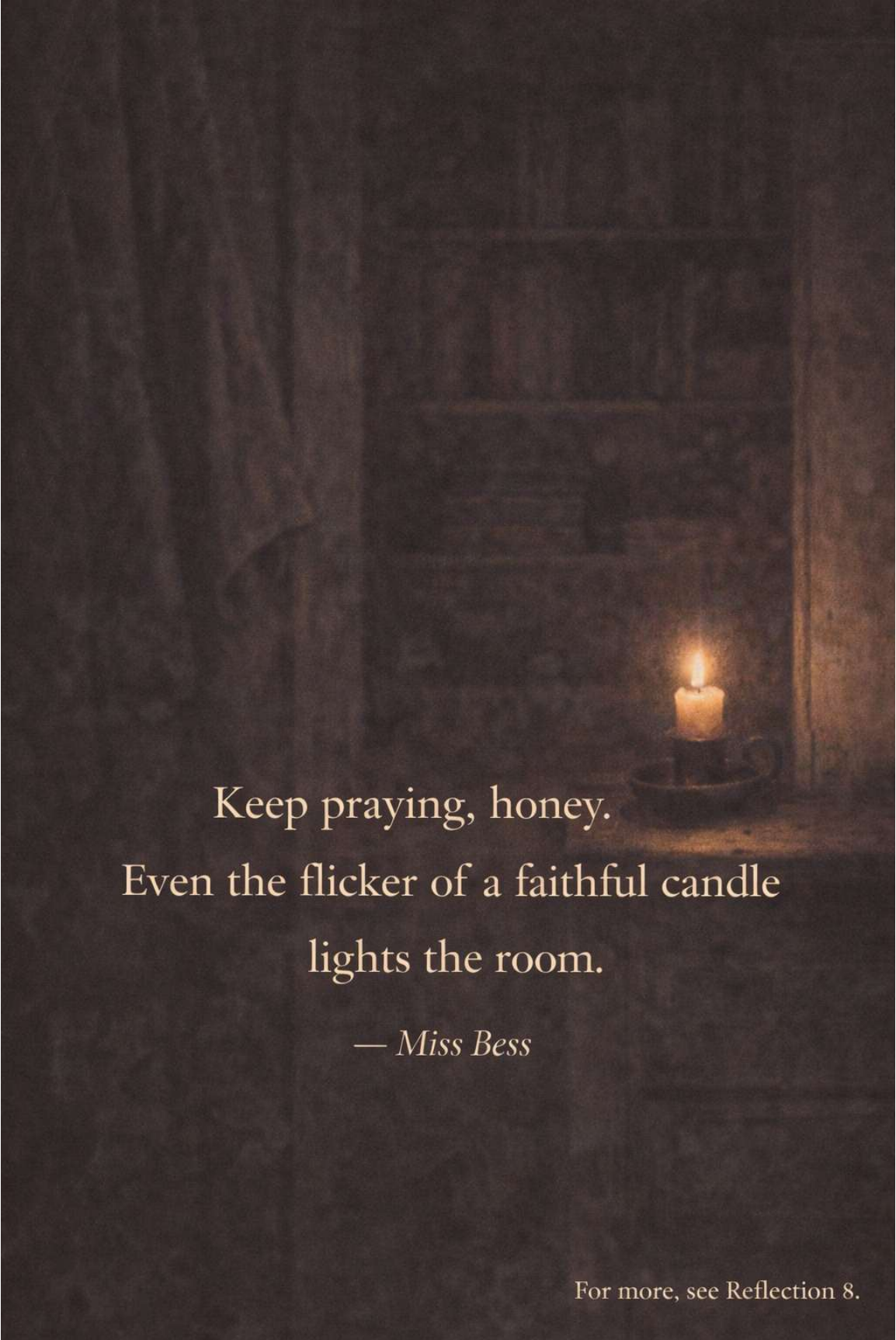
MISS BESS WOULD SAY

“You don’t need to be noticed
to be held.

God knew you
long before anyone had an opinion.

And when being seen by others fades,
being known by Him
is still enough.”

— **Miss Bess**



Keep praying, honey.
Even the flicker of a faithful candle
lights the room.

— *Miss Bess*

For more, see Reflection 8.

I've noticed something about fear.
It always wants a microphone.

It wants to be heard.
It wants agreement.
It wants you looking over your shoulder.

But the fear of the Lord is different.
It doesn't shout.
It doesn't rush.
It doesn't need a crowd to feel real.

It sounds more like a steady knowing
that settles in your chest
and doesn't leave when opinions change.

Fear of people asks,
"What will they think?"

Fear of the Lord asks,
"What is true?"

One makes you adjust your steps
based on who's watching.
The other steadies your feet,
even when no one is.

I've learned this the hard way:
The loudest voices aren't always the ones worth listening to.
And silence doesn't mean God isn't speaking.

Sometimes it means He finally has your attention.

—Miss Bess

Reflection #9: The Fear of the Lord vs. the Fear of People

Who we listen to when it matters most.

“The fear of man bringeth a snare:
but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.”

— **Proverbs 29:25**

Fear shapes behavior.

It always has.

The fear of people is rarely loud.

It whispers.

Don't disrupt.

Don't confront.

Don't make this harder than it needs to be.

Just keep the peace.

Most of us don't recognize it as fear.

We call it wisdom.

Courtesy.

Discernment.

But Scripture gives it another name.

A snare.

How the Fear of People Works

The fear of people doesn't usually ask us to deny God outright.
It asks us to delay obedience.

To soften truth.
To stay quiet a little longer.
To wait for a “better moment” that never quite comes.

Over time, conviction dulls.
Clarity blurs.
And what once felt like caution
slowly becomes compromise.

Not because we stopped loving God —
but because we started needing approval more than truth.

What the Fear of the Lord Is — and Is Not

The fear of the Lord is not terror.
It is reverence.

A settled recognition
that God’s authority outweighs every other voice.

It does not make us reckless.
It makes us clear.

When the fear of the Lord is present,
we stop asking,
“What will they think?”

And start asking,
“What is faithful here?”

That question changes everything.

When the Two Fears Collide

Eventually, these fears meet.

There comes a moment
when pleasing people
and obeying God
point in different directions.

Scripture never pretends that choice is painless.

But it is clear about which fear leads to life.

The fear of people promises safety —
but delivers entanglement.

The fear of the Lord costs approval —
but gives freedom.

A Closing Thought

The fear you listen to
will shape the life you live.

One tightens slowly,
almost unnoticed.

The other frees —
even when it costs.

MISS BESS WOULD SAY

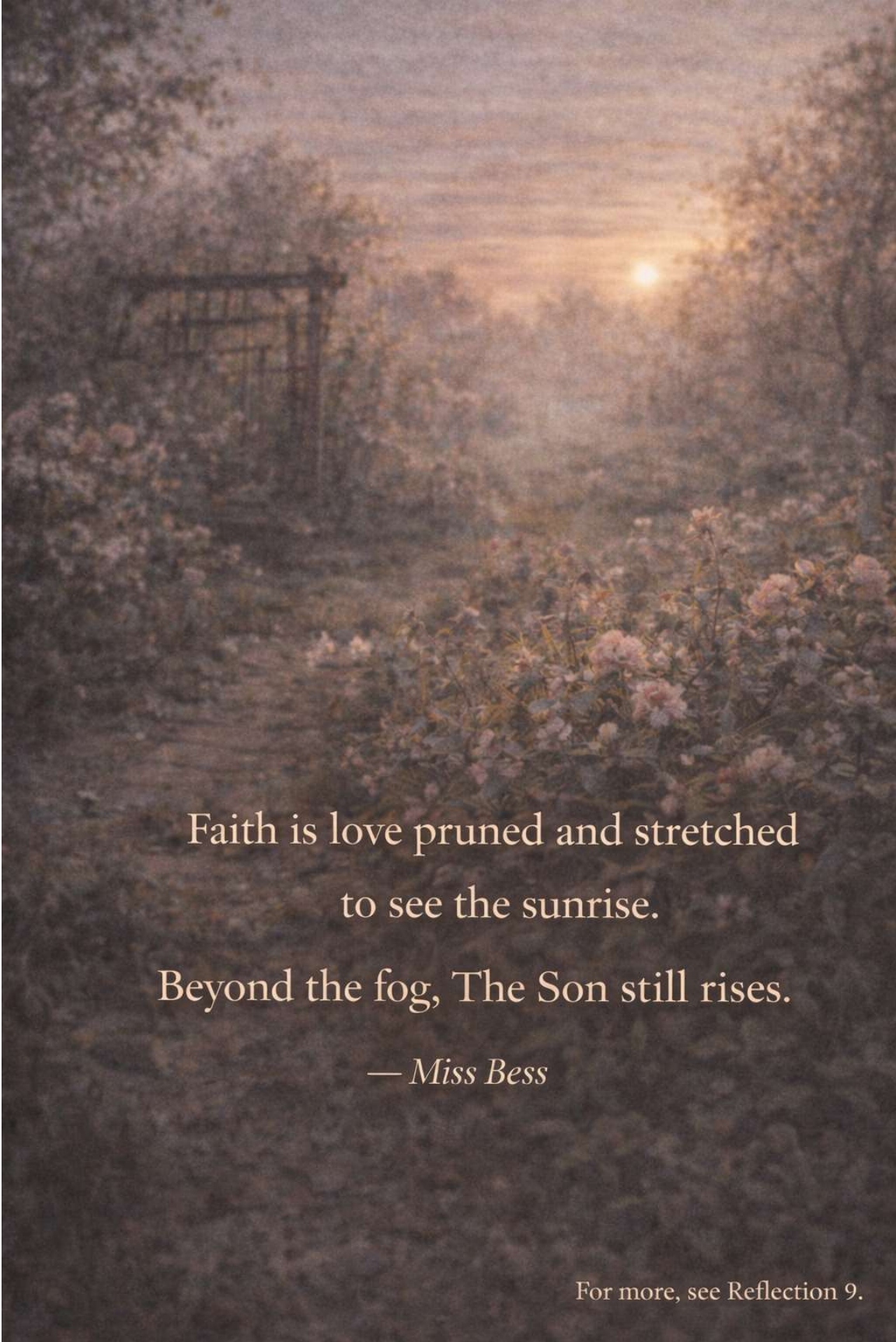
“Fear always tells you
to protect yourself.

The fear of the Lord tells you
to trust God instead.

And when those two voices disagree,
pay close attention.

One of them will keep you safe for a moment.
The other will keep you faithful for a lifetime.”

— **Miss Bess**

A misty garden scene with a wooden trellis and flowering bushes. The sun is rising through the fog, creating a warm, golden glow. The scene is filled with soft, out-of-focus flowers and foliage, creating a dreamy atmosphere.

Faith is love pruned and stretched
to see the sunrise.

Beyond the fog, The Son still rises.

— *Miss Bess*

For more, see Reflection 9.

A painting of a wooden porch at dusk. A hanging lantern with a warm glow is suspended by a chain. A wooden swing bench is visible on the right. The background shows a dark, moody sky with some light clouds. The foreground is filled with a dense field of pink and red roses.

I've learned something about faith lived out loud.

It doesn't announce itself.

It doesn't hurry to be seen.

And it doesn't need an audience to be real.

Most of the time, it looks ordinary.

Like showing up when no one notices.

Like doing the right thing when it would be easier not to.

Like choosing honesty even when silence would cost less.

Public faith isn't about being impressive.

It's about being consistent.

When faith is real, it settles into daily life —
into work, into conversations, into how we treat
people who can't repay us.

There's no performance here.

No platform.

Just obedience that doesn't need applause.

And somehow, that kind of faith
speaks the loudest of all.

—*Miss Bess*

Reflection #10: Living Faith in Public Without Losing Humility

Boldness without spectacle.

“What doth the LORD require of thee,
but to do justly, and to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with thy God?”

— **Micah 6:8**

There is a tension many believers feel
but rarely name.

We’re told not to hide our faith —
and we’re warned not to perform it either.

Somewhere between silence and spectacle,
many people get stuck.

They don’t want to be ashamed of what they believe.
But they don’t want to become something
that feels loud, brittle, or unrecognizable.

Scripture doesn’t ask us to choose between humility and visibility.
It shows us how to carry both.

Jesus Was Visible — and Unimpressed With Applause

Jesus never hid His faith.
And He never chased attention.

He spoke plainly.
He lived honestly.
And He let outcomes rest with God.

Crowds followed Him —
not because He demanded attention,
but because truth has a way of drawing it.

When applause came, He withdrew.
When opposition came, He stayed steady.

That balance matters.

The Difference Between Witness and Performance

Witness says,
“This is what I’ve seen.”

Performance says,
“Look at me.”

One invites reflection.
The other demands reaction.

Living faith in public
does not require volume.
It requires alignment.

When words and actions agree,
faith becomes visible without effort.

Humility Is Not Silence

Humility does not mean retreating from truth.
It means carrying truth without arrogance.

Some people stay silent in the name of humility
when what they really fear is disapproval.

Others speak loudly in the name of boldness
when what they really crave is attention.

Scripture offers a better way.

Speak when love requires it.

Stay quiet when silence protects what is holy.

And let God sort out who listens.

A Closing Thought

God does not ask us to be impressive.

He asks us to be faithful.

Faith lived honestly
will be seen —
not because it demands attention,
but because it cannot stay hidden forever.

MISS BESS WOULD SAY

“You don’t have to announce your faith
for it to be real.

If it’s alive,
it will show up on its own.

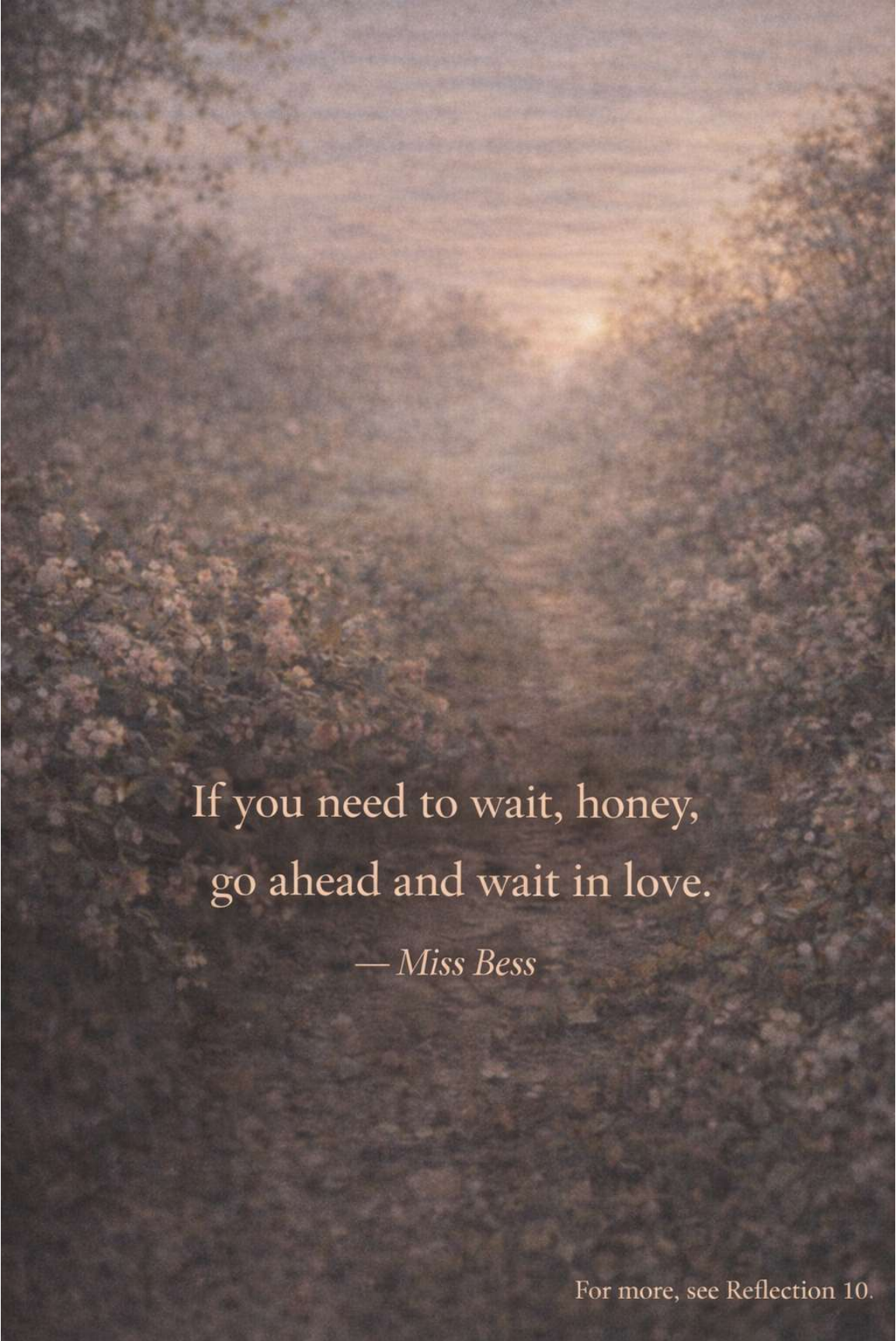
Walk steady.

Speak plain.

Love well.

God doesn’t need you to put on a show.

He just needs you to be faithful



If you need to wait, honey,
go ahead and wait in love.

— *Miss Bess*

For more, see Reflection 10.

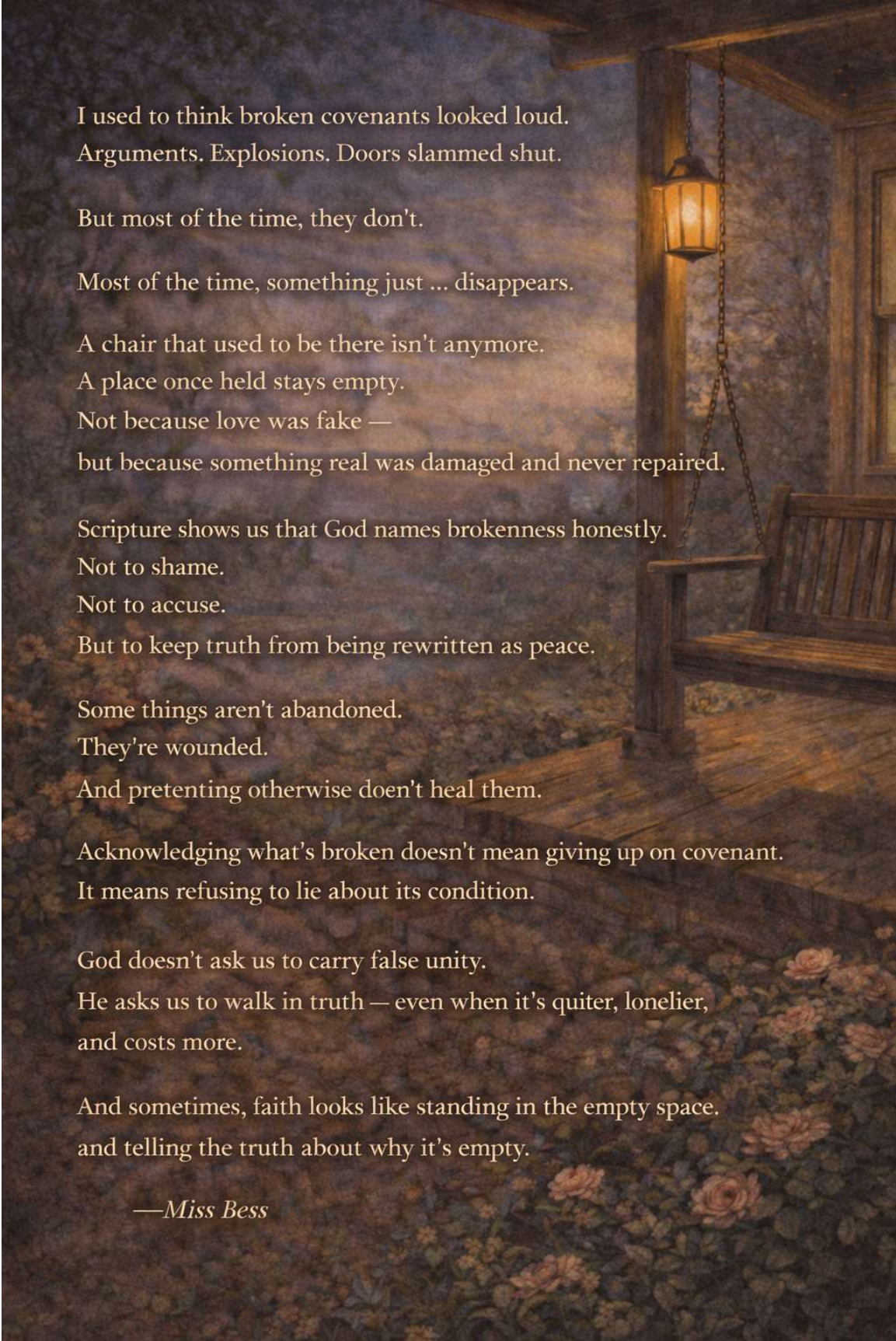
The background of the page is a soft-focus photograph of a garden path at night. The path is covered in small, light-colored flowers and leads into the distance. On the right side, a wooden post holds a glowing lantern, casting a warm light. The sky is dark with a hint of moonlight, and the overall atmosphere is quiet and contemplative.

Humility Is Not Silence

Humility does not mean retreating from truth.
It means carrying truth without arrogance.
Some people stay silent in the name of humility
when what they really fear is *disapproval*.
Others speak loudly in the name of boldness
when what they really crave is *attention*.

Scripture offers a better way.
Speak when love requires it.
Stay quiet when silence protects what is holy.
And let God *sort out who listens*.

— Miss Bess



I used to think broken covenants looked loud.
Arguments. Explosions. Doors slammed shut.

But most of the time, they don't.

Most of the time, something just ... disappears.

A chair that used to be there isn't anymore.
A place once held stays empty.
Not because love was fake —
but because something real was damaged and never repaired.

Scripture shows us that God names brokenness honestly.
Not to shame.
Not to accuse.
But to keep truth from being rewritten as peace.

Some things aren't abandoned.
They're wounded.
And pretending otherwise doesn't heal them.

Acknowledging what's broken doesn't mean giving up on covenant.
It means refusing to lie about its condition.

God doesn't ask us to carry false unity.
He asks us to walk in truth — even when it's quieter, lonelier,
and costs more.

And sometimes, faith looks like standing in the empty space.
and telling the truth about why it's empty.

—Miss Bess

Reflection #11: When Covenant Is Broken, Not Abandoned

Why staying is not always faithfulness.

“God has called us to live in peace.”

— 1 Corinthians 7:15

This is one of the hardest places to tell the truth.

Because covenant matters.

And because too many people have treated it lightly.

So let me say this plainly, before anything else:

Scripture does not treat covenant casually.

And neither do I.

But Scripture also does not confuse endurance with faithfulness
or suffering with holiness.

Sometimes we do.

When Covenant Is Claimed but Not Kept

Covenant is not a promise spoken once.

It is a responsibility lived daily.

Throughout Scripture, God rebukes those
who claim covenant
while violating its heart.

Words were not enough.
Appearance was not enough.
Endurance alone was not enough.

Faithfulness, in Scripture, is not measured by how long someone stays —
but by whether truth, love, and obedience are still present.

When those are gone,
what remains may look like covenant
but function like captivity.

Why Staying Is Not Always Faithfulness

Scripture never commands a person
to remain bound to harm
in the name of holiness.

Abuse is not sanctified by vows.
Abandonment is not redeemed by silence.
Refusal to walk in truth is not made holy by patience.

God consistently places truth before appearance
and peace before pretense.

When Ezra returned to rebuild Jerusalem,
the people were commanded to dissolve relationships
that were actively pulling them away from God.

That command was not cruelty.

It was clarity.

God first.
Always.

The Cost of Misplaced Responsibility

Many faithful people have been taught
that if they just stay long enough,
pray hard enough,
love sacrificially enough,
God will save the other person *through them*.

That belief sounds holy.

It is not.

It places a burden on human shoulders
that Scripture never assigns.

You were never meant to replace God.
You were never asked to absorb another person's refusal to repent.

There comes a moment — quiet, terrifying, unmistakable —
when the most loving thing left
is to step back
and give someone fully into God's hands.

Not in anger.

Not in abandonment.

But in surrender.

When Leaving Is Not Quitting

Leaving is not always rebellion.
Sometimes it is obedience.

Sometimes it is the last truthful thing
a faithful person can do.

That does not make it easy.
And it does not make it universal.

Discernment matters here.

But staying past what you *know*
does not deepen love.

It prolongs damage.

And damage left unaddressed
does not redeem itself with time.

A Closing Thought

Faithfulness to God
has never meant remaining
where covenant no longer exists.

Choosing God first
is not abandonment.

It is alignment.

And sometimes,
the most obedient step forward
is the one that finally tells the truth.

MISS BESS WOULD SAY

“I understand why this hurts to look at.
And we still have to look.

Because love doesn’t require you
to replace God.

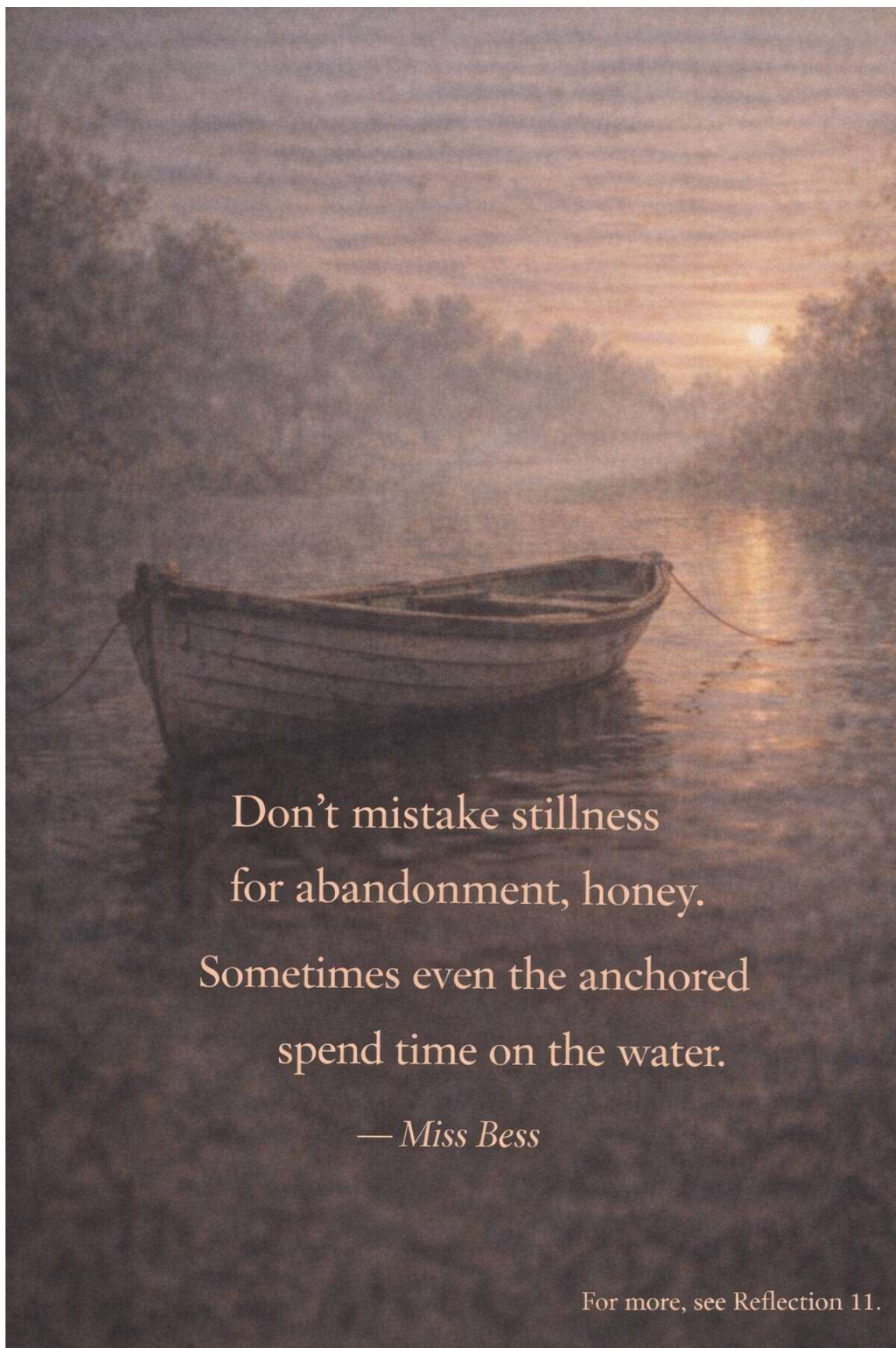
And obedience doesn’t ask you
to stay where truth has already left.

If you knew long before you left,
you weren't wrong.

You were listening.

And God is still with you —
right here,
and right now.”

— **Miss Bess**



Don't mistake stillness
for abandonment, honey.
Sometimes even the anchored
spend time on the water.

— *Miss Bess*

For more, see Reflection 11.

A misty, flower-lined path leads into the distance. On the right, a stone pillar supports a glowing lantern. The scene is bathed in a soft, golden light, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The path is flanked by dense, low-lying flowering bushes. In the background, trees are visible through the mist.

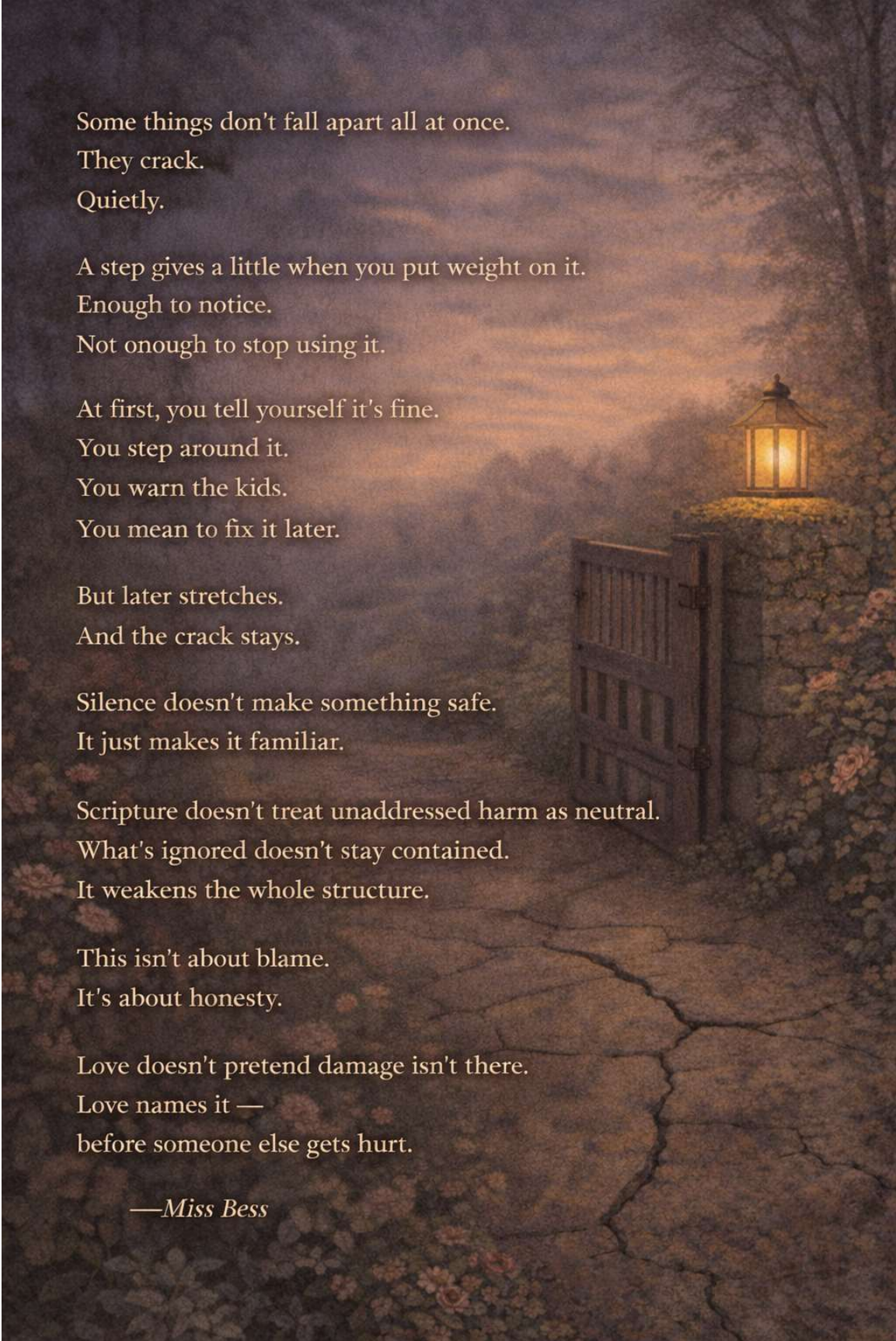
Faithfulness to God

has never meant remaining
where covenant no longer exists.

Choosing God first
is not abandonment.
It is *alignment*.

And sometimes,
the most obedient step forward
is the one
that finally tells the truth.

— *Miss Bess*

The background of the text is a dark, atmospheric illustration of a garden at night or dusk. A stone wall runs across the middle ground, with a wooden gate slightly ajar. A glowing lantern sits atop the wall, casting a warm light. The ground is covered in dark, patterned stones, and the background is filled with mist and the silhouettes of trees.

Some things don't fall apart all at once.
They crack.
Quietly.

A step gives a little when you put weight on it.
Enough to notice.
Not enough to stop using it.

At first, you tell yourself it's fine.
You step around it.
You warn the kids.
You mean to fix it later.

But later stretches.
And the crack stays.

Silence doesn't make something safe.
It just makes it familiar.

Scripture doesn't treat unaddressed harm as neutral.
What's ignored doesn't stay contained.
It weakens the whole structure.

This isn't about blame.
It's about honesty.

Love doesn't pretend damage isn't there.
Love names it —
before someone else gets hurt.

—Miss Bess

Reflection #12: When Silence Enables Sin

The danger of peace without truth.

“They have healed the wound of My people lightly,
saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace.”

— Jeremiah 6:14

Not every wound comes from cruelty.

Some come from quiet.

From minimized harm.

From truth delayed.

From peace kept at the expense of honesty.

Scripture warns us about this — not once, but repeatedly.

There is a kind of silence that is patient.

And there is a kind of silence that is complicit.

Love requires us to know the difference.

When Silence Feels Like the Kinder Option

Many people stay silent because they believe it is loving.

They don’t want to make things worse.

They don’t want to stir conflict.

They don’t want to be responsible for fallout.

So they soften words.

They excuse patterns.

They wait for change that never quite comes.

At first, it feels merciful.

But mercy without truth does not heal.
It only postpones the reckoning.

Peace That Avoids Truth Is Not Biblical Peace

Scripture does not define peace as the absence of tension.
It defines peace as alignment with truth.

When leaders call peace where there is no peace,
they are not protecting people —
they are leaving them exposed.

Correction is not condemnation.
And confrontation, when done in humility, is not cruelty.

What wounds people most deeply
is not truth spoken carefully —
it is truth withheld indefinitely.

The Quiet Cost of Unchallenged Sin

Sin that is ignored does not remain contained.

It spreads.

It deepens.

It hardens.

When harmful behavior is minimized,
it is not neutral — it is empowered.

And when accountability is absent,
growth stalls.

People do not heal in environments
where truth is avoided to keep the room calm.

They heal where truth is spoken
with courage
and care.

Why Silence Often Protects the Wrong Thing

Silence often protects comfort —
not people.

It protects reputation.

It protects image.

It protects the illusion that things are “mostly fine.”

But Scripture consistently places truth
above appearance.

And love that refuses to confront
is not gentle.

It is incomplete.

A Closing Thought

Silence is never neutral.

When truth is withheld,
sin is given room to grow.

God’s truth may wound —
but it wounds in order to heal.

Correction spoken with humility
remains one of His greatest mercies.

MISS BESS WOULD SAY

“Silence feels safer
until you see what it costs.

Peace that avoids truth
doesn’t protect anyone.

Love doesn’t rush to confront —
but it also doesn’t look away.

If something has been hurting for a long time,
quiet hasn’t fixed it yet.

And that tells you something.”

— **Miss Bess**



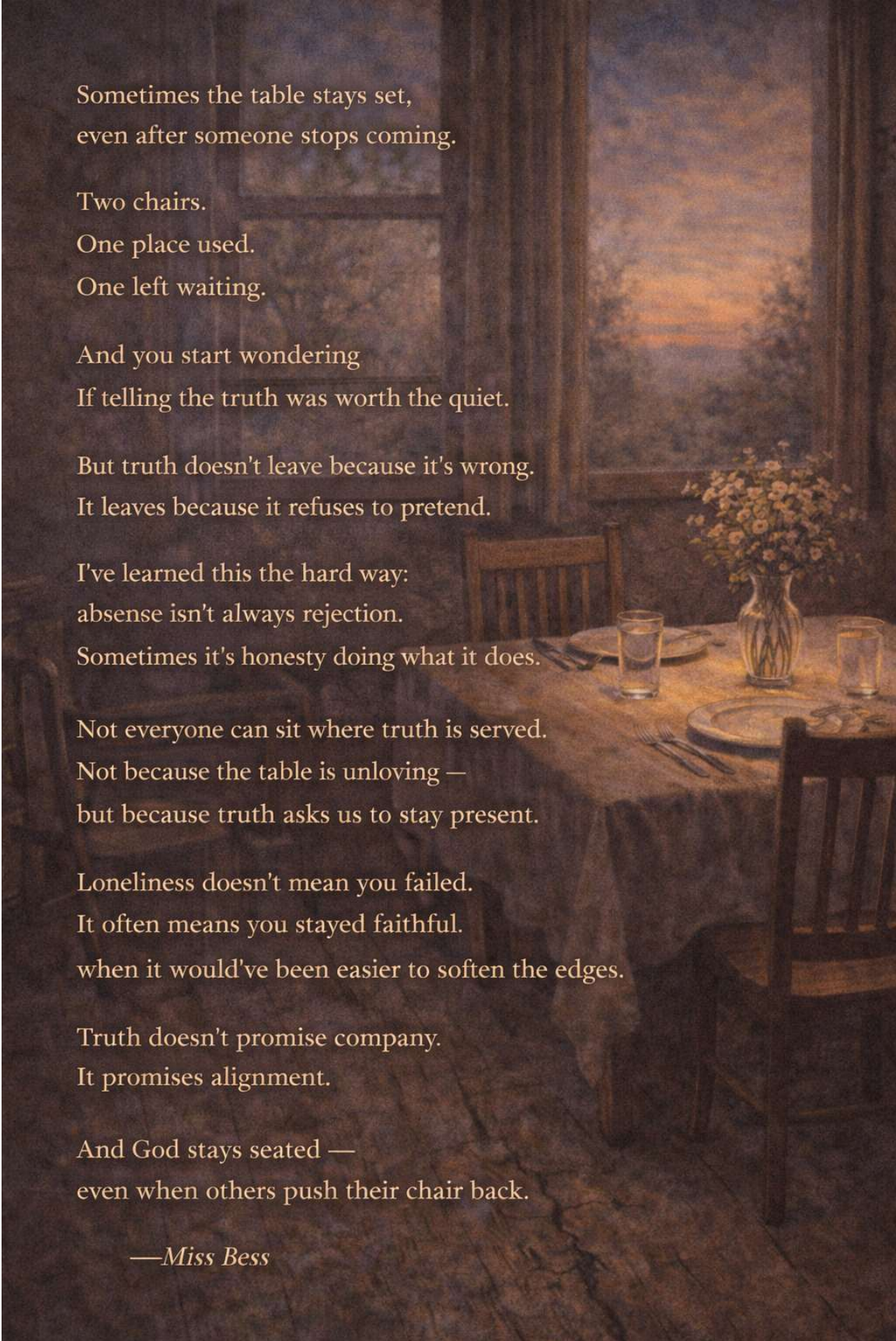
Don't leave grace standing, honey.

Walk in it.

You'll see more than the dew.

—*Miss Bess*

For more, see Reflection 12.



Sometimes the table stays set,
even after someone stops coming.

Two chairs.
One place used.
One left waiting.

And you start wondering
If telling the truth was worth the quiet.

But truth doesn't leave because it's wrong.
It leaves because it refuses to pretend.

I've learned this the hard way:
absence isn't always rejection.
Sometimes it's honesty doing what it does.

Not everyone can sit where truth is served.
Not because the table is unloving —
but because truth asks us to stay present.

Loneliness doesn't mean you failed.
It often means you stayed faithful.
when it would've been easier to soften the edges.

Truth doesn't promise company.
It promises alignment.

And God stays seated —
even when others push their chair back.

—Miss Bess

Reflection #13: When Truth Costs Relationships

Why obedience is rarely convenient.

“For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God?
Or am I trying to please man?”

— **Galatians 1:10**

Truth has a way of rearranging relationships.

Not all at once.

Not dramatically.

Just... quietly.

A conversation doesn't land the same.

An invitation stops coming.

A shared understanding you thought was solid
suddenly isn't.

And if we're honest,

this is often the point where people start asking themselves
whether the truth was worth it.

Because obedience rarely costs us *nothing*.

It usually costs us people.

Why Truth Feels Like Betrayal to Others

Truth doesn't just challenge ideas.

It challenges agreements people didn't know they were making.

Unspoken rules.

Shared silences.

Ways of “getting along” that depended on everyone
not saying certain things out loud.

When one person stops participating in that silence,
it can feel like betrayal —
even when no harm was intended.

But truth doesn’t destroy relationships.
It reveals what they were built on.

The Loneliness of Obedience

There is a particular kind of loneliness
that comes from doing the right thing.

Not the loneliness of rejection —
but the loneliness of clarity.

You see things you didn’t see before.
You can’t un-know what you now know.
And pretending otherwise feels dishonest.

So you stand —
sometimes quietly,
sometimes awkwardly —
while the room shifts around you.

That doesn’t mean you chose isolation.

It means obedience took you somewhere
others weren’t ready to go.

When Silence Would Have Kept the Peace

Many relationships survive
not because they're healthy,
but because no one tells the truth.

Truth threatens fragile peace.

But peace built on avoidance
doesn't hold when pressure comes.

And obedience isn't measured
by how many relationships we keep intact —
but by whether we remained faithful
when keeping them required compromise.

A Closing Thought

Truth will sometimes cost you relationships.

Not because you were unloving.
Not because you were reckless.

But because honesty changes the terms of connection.

And connections that can't survive truth
were never as secure as they felt.

MISS BESS WOULD SAY


"Well... this is usually the part
where you look around and realize
you've got a little more quiet than you planned.

If telling the truth left you standing alone,
you didn't fail.

You just stopped pretending.

And while it may feel lonely for a season,
God has a way of filling quiet spaces
with the right kind of company —
the kind that doesn't require you
to shrink, soften, or stay silent
to belong.”

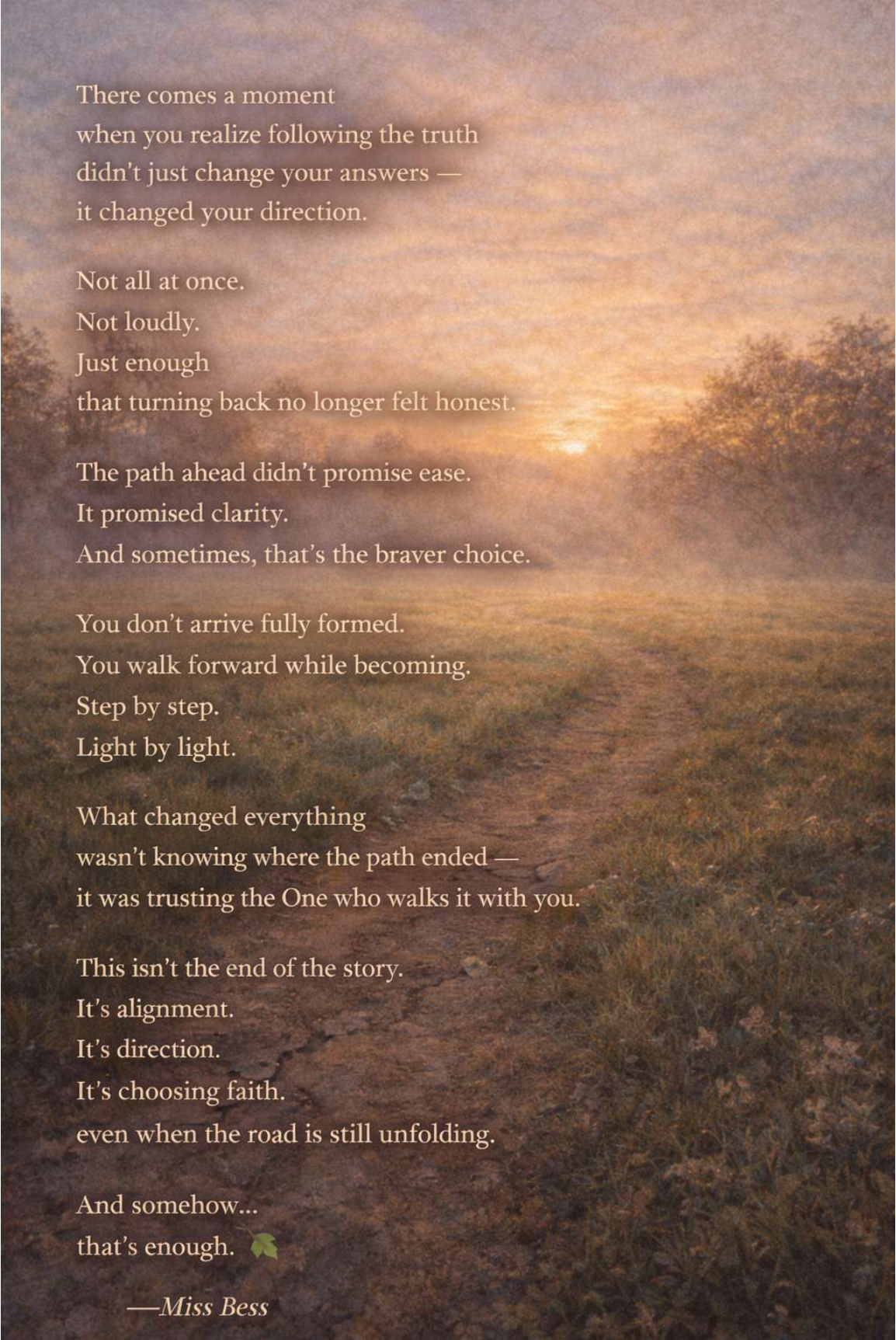
— **Miss Bess**

A misty, sunlit path leads towards a wooden gate, flanked by flowering bushes. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow that filters through the mist. The path is slightly overgrown, and the gate is made of dark wood with a diagonal brace. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and hopeful.

Grace can meet you even here.
Just because you're weary
doesn't mean you're lost.

— *Miss Bess*

For more, see Reflection 13.



There comes a moment
when you realize following the truth
didn't just change your answers —
it changed your direction.

Not all at once.
Not loudly.
Just enough
that turning back no longer felt honest.

The path ahead didn't promise ease.
It promised clarity.
And sometimes, that's the braver choice.

You don't arrive fully formed.
You walk forward while becoming.
Step by step.
Light by light.

What changed everything
wasn't knowing where the path ended —
it was trusting the One who walks it with you.

This isn't the end of the story.
It's alignment.
It's direction.
It's choosing faith.
even when the road is still unfolding.

And somehow...
that's enough. 🌿

—Miss Bess

Reflection #14: When Following the Truth Changes Everything

Why obedience is worth the cost.

Why obedience is worth the cost.

“Then you will know the truth,
and the truth will set you free.”

— **John 8:32**

Following truth does not add one more task to a life.

It rearranges the whole thing.

Not all at once.

And not without loss.

Truth clarifies priorities.

It exposes false peace.

It separates what was held together by fear
from what was held together by faith.

Once truth takes hold,
certain things can no longer remain the same.

And that can feel terrifying —
especially if the old life was familiar,
even when it wasn't healthy.

What Changes First

Truth doesn't usually change circumstances first.

It changes *vision*.

You begin to see patterns where you once saw coincidence.

Responsibility where you once saw obligation.

Choice where you once believed you were trapped.

And once you see those things,
you move differently.

Not louder.

Not faster.

But steadier.

When Obedience Rebuilds a Life

Jesus never promised comfort.

He promised life.

And life, real life, often begins
after something collapses.

Sometimes obedience looks like rebuilding —

not houses,

but boundaries.

Not marriages,

but identity.

Not reputation,

but courage.

God does not call us to live forever
inside our past decisions.

He calls us forward.

And while obedience may cost us deeply in the moment,
it restores clarity, peace, and purpose
that fear never could.

The Freedom on the Other Side

Freedom does not mean nothing was lost.

It means what was lost
was no longer allowed to define you.

Truth does not leave people empty.

It clears space.

And God is faithful
to fill what truth makes room for.

A Closing Thought

Truth rearranges a life —
not to diminish it,
but to free it.

What obedience costs in the moment,
it restores in clarity, courage, and peace.

God does not call us backward into regret.

He calls us forward into purpose.

And when truth changes everything,
it is because everything that needed changing
finally had permission to go.

MISS BESS WOULD SAY

“If telling the truth changed your whole life,
that doesn’t mean you ruined it.

It means you finally stopped building it
around fear.

The cost was real.


The loss was real.

But so is the freedom.

And if you’re standing here now —
a little lighter,
a little lonelier,
and a lot more honest —
you didn’t lose your way.

You found it.”

— **Miss Bess**



Not the end.
Just a new direction.

— *Miss Bess*

Reflection 14

A Note to the Reader

These reflections were written for those
who have wrestled with Scripture,
with faith,
with obedience,
and with loss —
and who are still standing.

They were not written to persuade by force,
nor to dismiss the weight of lived experience.

They are offered in humility,
with the understanding that faith is often formed
not through certainty,
but through honest seeking.

Some of what you've read here
may feel familiar.
You may recognize parts of your own story.

Other parts may unsettle you,
challenge assumptions,
or send you back to Scripture
with new questions.

That is intentional.

If you are walking through disappointment,
divorce,
unanswered prayers,
or a season where life did not unfold
the way you believed it would,
know this:

God is not absent from those places.

Scripture does not promise a painless life.
It promises a faithful God.

These pages do not ask you
to ignore wisdom,
safety,
or discernment.

They ask only that you seek God first,
test all things by His Word,
and trust that He is able to redeem
even what feels irredeemable.

If this section leads you back to Scripture,
back to prayer,
or back to truth spoken
with greater clarity and care,
then it has accomplished its purpose.

— **Miss Bess**

A Personal Reflection: Love Found

*Resurrection didn't come by force.
It came when I finally set some things down.*

— **Miss Bess**

For most of my life,
I felt overlooked.

The world did not choose me.
Or it chose me briefly —
and then let me go.

I grew up with only two dreams
that I can remember.

One was to be a librarian.
I loved words, learning, and truth.
What I wanted was never a profession.
It was understanding.

This year, I have studied nonstop —
not surrounded by shelves of books,
but immersed in Scripture.

It turns out,
that longing was answered after all.

The other dream was to be a pastor's wife.
I wanted a Christian marriage.
A Christian family.
A shared life of faith, lived out together.

That dream did not unfold
the way I imagined.

I am divorced twice.
I am permanently disabled.
And for a long time,
I believed the life I hoped for
had passed me by.

I believed I had missed it.

But here —
at what feels like the end —
I found something far greater
than I ever knew how to ask for.

I found love in Jesus.

Not conditional love.
Not love that depends on performance.
Not love that leaves when things get hard.

The world did not leave me empty.

It made room.

My dreams were not destroyed.
They were transformed.

Instead of becoming a keeper of books,
I became a student of the Word.

Instead of becoming a pastor's wife,
I became something eternal.

The Bride of Christ.

Both dreams fulfilled.

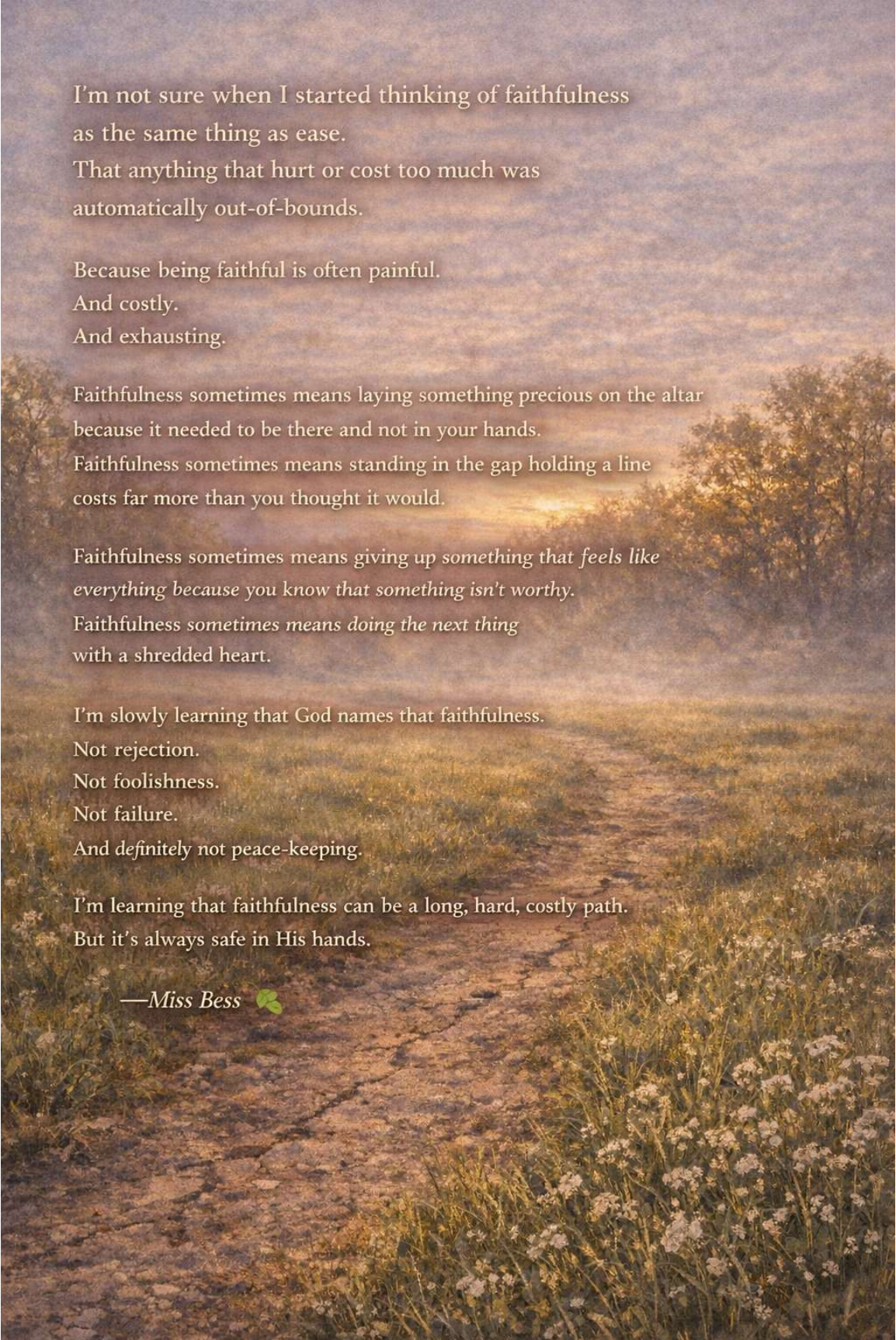
Just not the way I expected.

(That's God for ya!)

Anchoring Scripture

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and His bride has made herself ready.”

— **Revelation 19:7**



I'm not sure when I started thinking of faithfulness
as the same thing as ease.
That anything that hurt or cost too much was
automatically out-of-bounds.

Because being faithful is often painful.
And costly.
And exhausting.

Faithfulness sometimes means laying something precious on the altar
because it needed to be there and not in your hands.
Faithfulness sometimes means standing in the gap holding a line
costs far more than you thought it would.

Faithfulness sometimes means giving up *something that feels like*
everything because you know that *something* isn't worthy.
Faithfulness sometimes means *doing the next thing*
with a shredded heart.

I'm slowly learning that God names that faithfulness.
Not rejection.
Not foolishness.
Not failure.
And definitely not peace-keeping.

I'm learning that faithfulness can be a long, hard, costly path.
But it's always safe in His hands.

—Miss Bess 🍀

SCRIPTURE INDEX BY REFLECTION

(For Prayerful Study and Discernment)

The following Scriptures are referenced, alluded to, or thematically anchored in each reflection. They are provided to encourage careful study, context, and discernment, following the example of the Bereans (Acts 17:11).

Reflection #1 — The Garden and the Sovereignty of God

Was God ever surprised?

- Genesis 3 — The Garden narrative
 - Isaiah 46:9–10 — Declaring the end from the beginning
 - Acts 15:18 — Known to God from eternity are all His works
 - Job 1:12; 2:6 — God allows within boundaries
 - Genesis 50:20 — What was meant for evil, God used for good
 - Romans 8:28 — God working all things for good
-

Reflection #2 — Adam, Choice, and the Cost of Love

Mistake or sacrifice?

- Genesis 2:23–24 — Adam's union with his bride
- Genesis 3 — The fall narrative
- 1 Timothy 2:14 — Adam was not deceived
- Romans 5:12–19 — Adam and Christ contrasted
- 1 Corinthians 15:45 — The first Adam and the last Adam
- Ephesians 5:25 — Christ's sacrificial love for His bride

Reflection #3 — From Eden to the Cross to the Resurrection

Not defeat, but fulfillment.

- 1 Corinthians 15:22 — In Adam all die; in Christ all live
- John 10:17–18 — Christ lays down His life willingly
- Acts 2:23 — The Cross according to God’s foreknowledge
- Colossians 2:15 — Powers disarmed at the Cross
- Matthew 28:5–6 — He is risen
- 1 Corinthians 15:42–44 — From natural body to spiritual body

Reflection #4 — Choice, Love, and the Cost of Freedom

Why love requires risk.

- Deuteronomy 30:19 — Choose life
- Joshua 24:15 — Choose whom you will serve
- John 10:17–18 — Love that chooses the cost
- Romans 8:1–2 — Freedom in Christ
- Galatians 5:1 — Freedom not to return to bondage

Reflection #5 — Dying to Self Without Losing Yourself

Surrender that leads to life.

- Luke 9:23 — Deny self and follow
- 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 — You are not your own
- Philippians 2:6–8 — Christ’s surrender

- Matthew 16:25 — Losing life to find it
 - 2 Corinthians 5:17 — New creation in Christ
-

Reflection #6 — Faith That Is Seen, Not Just Spoken

When belief becomes visible.

- James 2:17 — Faith without works is dead
 - Acts 1:8 — Witnesses of Christ
 - Matthew 5:14–16 — Light that cannot be hidden
 - Romans 10:14 — The necessity of speaking
-

Reflection #7 — When Obedience Costs Reputation

Choosing faith when approval is lost.

- John 15:18–19 — The world's rejection
 - Galatians 1:10 — Pleasing God, not people
 - 1 Samuel 16:7 — God looks at the heart
 - Matthew 5:11–12 — Blessed when reviled
-

Reflection #8 — Being Known by God Before Being Known by Man

Identity without validation.

- Galatians 1:10 — Servant of Christ
- Psalm 139:1–4 — Fully known by God
- Jeremiah 1:5 — Known before being seen
- Matthew 6:1–6 — Faith practiced unseen

Reflection #9 — The Fear of the Lord vs. the Fear of People

Who we listen to when it matters most.

- Proverbs 29:25 — Fear of man is a snare
- Psalm 118:6 — The Lord is with me; I will not fear
- Isaiah 51:12 — Why fear mortal man?
- Acts 5:29 — Obey God rather than men

Reflection #10 — Living Faith in Public Without Losing Humility

Boldness without spectacle.

- Matthew 23:12 — Humility before God
- Micah 6:8 — Walk humbly with your God
- Colossians 3:17 — Do all in the name of the Lord
- 1 Peter 3:15 — Speak truth with gentleness

Reflection #11 — When Covenant Is Broken, Not Abandoned

Why staying is not always faithfulness.

- Ezra 9–10 — Covenant priority restored
 - 1 Corinthians 7:15 — God has called us to peace
 - Isaiah 58:6 — Loosing bonds of oppression
 - Psalm 34:18 — The Lord is near the brokenhearted
-

Reflection #12 — When Silence Enables Sin

The danger of peace without truth.

- Jeremiah 6:14 — Peace where there is no peace
 - Ezekiel 33:6 — The watchman's responsibility
 - Proverbs 27:5 — Better open rebuke than hidden love
 - Galatians 6:1 — Restoring with gentleness
-

Reflection #13 — When Truth Costs Relationships

Why obedience is rarely convenient.

- Matthew 10:34–39 — The cost of following Christ
 - Luke 14:26–33 — Counting the cost
 - John 6:66–68 — Many turned away
 - Hebrews 11:24–26 — Choosing reproach over comfort
-

Reflection #14 — When Following the Truth Changes Everything

Why freedom comes after loss.

- John 8:31–32 — Truth that sets free
 - John 10:10 — Life to the full
 - Philippians 3:7–8 — Loss counted as gain
 - Isaiah 43:18–19 — God doing a new thing
-

A Personal Reflection — Love Found

- Revelation 19:7 — The marriage of the Lamb
 - Ephesians 5:25–32 — Christ and His bride
 - Psalm 27:10 — When others forsake, the Lord receives
 - Philippians 1:6 — He who began a good work will complete it
-

Closing Note

Scripture remains the final authority.

These references are offered to guide reflection, study, and prayer—never to replace the Word of God, but to return the reader to it.

A Prayer of Surrender and Gratitude

Lord,

You saw me
when I felt unseen.

You stayed
when others left.

You knew what I was longing for
even when I didn't know how to name it.

You fulfilled my deepest hopes
in ways I never would have chosen —
and could not have imagined.

If any part of my story brings glory to You,
let it remain.

If any part distracts from Your truth,
let it quietly fade.

I release what I thought my life would be
for what You have made it.

I choose truth over comfort.

Faith over fear.

And You
over every former dream.

Thank You
for loving me completely.

Amen.

— **Miss Bess**

Footnotes & Study References

(For Prayerful Study and Discernment)

The following passages are offered as scriptural anchors for readers who wish to study, test, and reflect more deeply on the themes presented in these reflections. They are not exhaustive, but representative.

God's Sovereignty & Foreknowledge

- Isaiah 46:9–10 — God declares the end from the beginning
- Acts 15:18 — Known unto God are all His works from eternity
- Daniel 4:35 — None can thwart His hand

The Garden & Adam's Choice

- Genesis 2:23–24 — Adam's union with his bride
- Genesis 3 — The fall narrative
- 1 Timothy 2:14 — Adam was not deceived
- Romans 5:12–19 — Adam and Christ contrasted
- 1 Corinthians 15:45–49 — The first Adam and the last Adam

God Allowing Without Losing Control

- Job 1:12; 2:6 — God allows within limits
- Genesis 50:20 — What was meant for evil, God used for good
- Acts 2:23 — The Cross as foreknown and appointed

From Flesh to Spirit

- John 3:6–7 — Born of the Spirit
- Romans 8:10–11 — Life through the Spirit
- 1 Corinthians 15:42–44 — From natural body to spiritual body

Christ the Bridegroom

- Ephesians 5:25–32 — Christ and His bride
- Revelation 19:7–9 — The marriage supper of the Lamb

Redemption & Resurrection

- Matthew 28:5–6 — He is not here; He is risen
- Romans 6:4–5 — Raised to newness of life
- 1 Corinthians 15:20–26 — Christ the firstfruits

Identity, Calling, and the Bride of Christ

- Revelation 19:7–9 — The marriage of the Lamb
- Ephesians 5:25–32 — Christ and His bride
- Isaiah 54:5 — The Lord as husband and redeemer
- Hosea 2:19–20 — Covenant restored in faithfulness
- Psalm 27:10 — When others forsake, the Lord receives
- Philippians 3:8 — Loss counted as gain for Christ
- Romans 8:18 — Present suffering and future glory

God's Faithfulness & Completion

- Philippians 1:6 — God completes what He begins
- Psalm 138:8 — The Lord will fulfill His purpose
- Romans 11:29 — God's gifts and calling are irrevocable
- Ecclesiastes 3:11 — God makes all things beautiful in His time

Readers are encouraged to examine these passages prayerfully, in context, and with discernment, holding fast to what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Final Benediction

May the God
who sees the end from the beginning
grant you wisdom
where questions still remain.

May He give you peace
where truth has cost you dearly,
and courage to follow Him
wherever He leads.

May what is true
take root.

May what is human
quietly fall away.

And may what is from God
endure.

May you walk forward —
not burdened by what you did not know then,
but strengthened
by what you know now.

And may the One
who calls you His own
complete the work
He began in you.

Amen.

— **Miss Bess**

An elderly woman with short, styled grey hair and a blue headband is seated in a wooden rocking chair on a porch. She is wearing a blue robe with white polka dots and is holding a white mug. The porch is made of dark wood, and next to her is a small round wooden table with a lit lantern and another white mug. A potted plant with yellow flowers sits on the ground near the table. The background shows a sunset over a valley with trees and hills, with the sun low on the horizon, casting a warm glow. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and purple.

Final Benediction

May the God
who sees the end from the beginning
grant you wisdom
where questions still remain.

May He give you peace
where truth has cost you dearly,
and courage to follow Him
wherever He leads.

May what is true
take root.

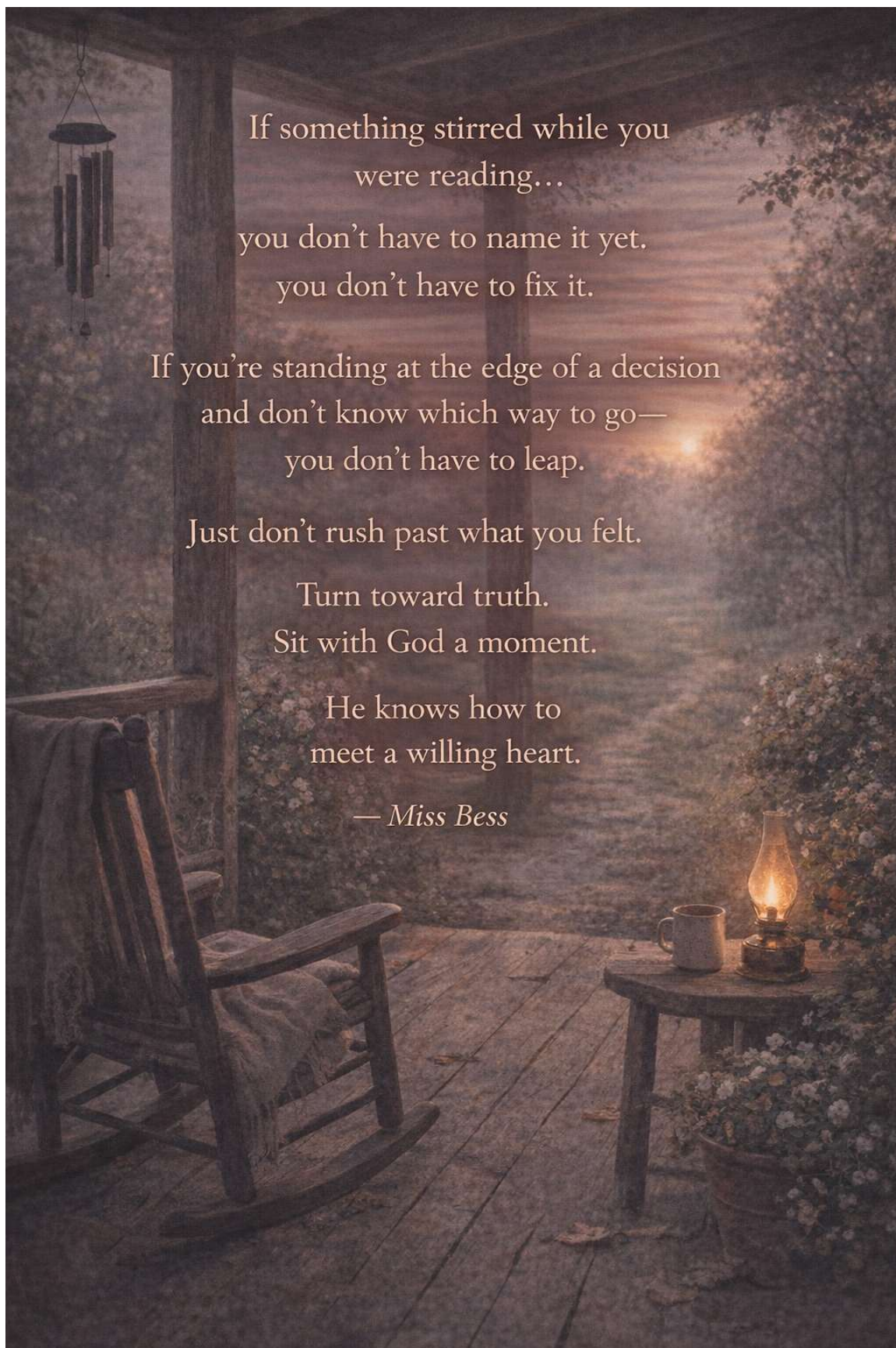
May what is human
quietly fall away.

And may what is from God
endure.

May you walk forward —
not burdened by what you did not know then,
but strengthened
by what you know now.

And may the One
who calls you His own
complete the work
He began in you.

Amen.



If something stirred while you
were reading...

you don't have to name it yet.
you don't have to fix it.

If you're standing at the edge of a decision
and don't know which way to go—
you don't have to leap.

Just don't rush past what you felt.

Turn toward truth.
Sit with God a moment.

He knows how to
meet a willing heart.

— *Miss Bess*

ABOUT MISS BESS

Miss Bess is not a theologian,
a pastor,
or a scholar by title.

She is a woman who stayed with Scripture
long enough for it to ask her hard questions —
and loved it enough not to look away.

Her writing grows out of lived faith,
earned discernment,
and a belief that God is not offended by honesty
or threatened by careful thought.

Miss Bess writes for people who believe,
but have discovered that belief eventually costs something.

She does not offer conclusions to follow,
only questions worth sitting with.

When she is not writing,
she is likely on the porch,
thinking, praying,
and reminding people that they are not late,
not forgotten,
and not alone.

The *No Not One* Series

A Reader's Note

This series did not begin as a ministry plan,
a publishing goal,
or a theological argument.

It began quietly —
with objects.

I was collecting.
Preserving.
Cataloging.
Holding onto things that carried history and meaning.

And then, unexpectedly,
I felt a clear conviction to stop collecting
what could be held...
and to begin paying attention
to what could not.

That turning point became the beginning of this work.

What followed was not a straight line,
but a progression —
each book emerging only after the one before it
had done its work.

Book One

Things I Wish I Could Say

This book exists to give voice
to what is often swallowed.

It is honest, unfinished,
and unresolved by design.

It does not explain God.
It simply tells the truth
about being human.

This book opens the door.

Book Two

When Life Breaks Without Asking Permission

Seven Seasons in Life

After truth is spoken,
pain must be acknowledged.

This book names the seasons people walk through
when life fractures —
loss, endurance, confusion, waiting —
without rushing them toward answers.

It does not promise quick healing.

It offers companionship.

Book Three

Twelve Mirrors — The People Jesus Chooses

Then and Now

Once pain is named,
identity becomes the question.

This book invites readers
to see themselves reflected
in the people Jesus chose —
not the polished or powerful,
but the overlooked,
the doubting,
the grieving,
the broken.

It asks gently:

What if Jesus is still choosing people like this?
What if He is still choosing people like you?

Book Four

What Happened When the Seasons Changed

At some point, many readers sense
something deeper.

That faith feels heavier than it should.
That time feels rushed.
That spiritual rhythm feels lost.

This book explores Scripture's understanding
of time, seasons, and appointed rhythms —
and how replacing them
changed more than calendars.

It does not accuse tradition.

It offers context.

It says:

You are not broken.

Something shifted.

Book Five

Heaven's Crowns & Glory — The Promises of God

After pain, identity, and understanding
comes hope.

This book looks forward —
not as escape,
but as orientation.

It explores what Scripture says
about Heaven, reward, restoration,
and the faithfulness of God.

It exists to remind the weary:

Nothing endured in obedience is wasted.
Nothing faithful is unseen.

A Final Word

Every book in this series is offered freely.

Not because it lacks value —
but because grace always is.

This work is not about outcomes,
numbers,
or recognition.

It is about obedience.

If these pages help someone
feel less alone,
see Scripture more clearly,
or trust God more deeply —

then they have done
what they were written to do.

— **Miss Bess**



Seeing a pattern isn't the same as following it.
Once something comes into view, it rarely stays neutral.
What you notice begins to press on you.
It lingers.
It asks questions.
Not all at once —
but sooner or later.

This book isn't really about calendars, timelines, or historical coherence.
It's about what happens after you see something you can't unsee.
It's about cost.

What happens when Scripture stops being theoretical
and starts brushing up against real choices?
What changes when obedience becomes personal —
a little inconvenient, sometimes misunderstood?
What do you do when faith moves from quiet agreement
to rolling up your sleeves and actually living it?

The Fool in Me follows the slower, heavier questions that come after awareness —
questions about trust, hesitation, courage, sacrifice,
and the places where belief collides with everyday life.

It isn't written to instruct.
It isn't written to straighten anyone out.
It's written to walk with you.
No conclusions are demanded. No performance is expected.
Only honesty.

Because once you see a pattern,
the real question is no longer whether it exists —
but what you're going to do with it.
And if we're being honest, seeing clearly has a
way of costing us more.
than not looking ever did.

— *Miss Bess*