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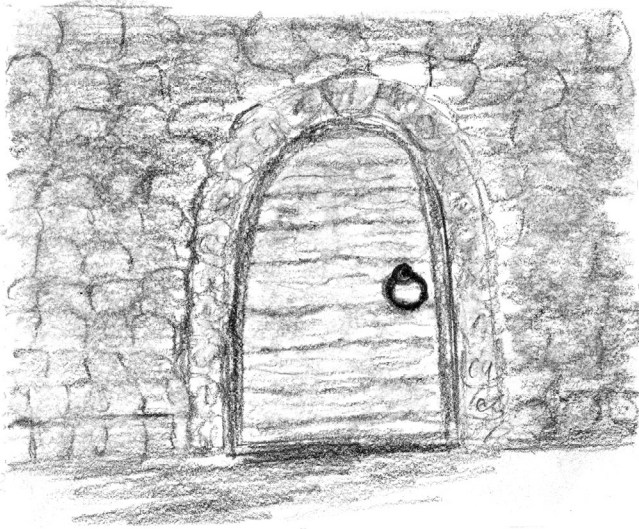
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Preface

Our choices create the path that determines our journey, and my journey began like all good adventures: with the unexpected. In this story, a series of unexpected events opened a door I had not known was there. The door was one I had longed to discover but feared to find. It was, for me, the “next step” of unquestioned obedience that would test how genuine my loyalty was to my God, Father, and King.



I never imagined this doorway being a total wardrobe change. Perhaps I imagined a greater and more dramatic challenge like a choice between denying my Saviour Jesus

Christ or dying as a martyr. However, I have learned that being notable in the kingdom of God is far more than being willing to physically die for God. It begins with spiritually dying to our flesh and being obedient in all things.

This account is about a small but very important part of my journey. When God showed me this door, this “next step” He was asking me to walk through, I was a high-achieving honors student at a major university. Consumed with my studies as an English major and a Middle East Studies minor, the burden God put in my heart grew slowly like an unbeknown flower sprouting through a crack in the pavement. The issue of this challenge was, of all things, modesty. I hadn’t thought of modesty as being so important, but God seemed to think otherwise.

Through influential friends, an unforeseen series of events, and my own study of Scripture, I began reassessing the essence and purpose of modesty. In this quest, I laid aside my modern American wardrobe and donned an Amish cape dress for a three-month school semester. I hoped to better understand what modesty is and how it applied to my life.

I hope my adventure challenges you (in whatever area that may be) to press deeper, to question more, to study the Scriptures and seek the truth with all your heart and soul.

This book is about choices. Again, every choice we make, no matter how insignificant, determines the path our lives ultimately take. May we carefully cling to the straight and narrow way.



I

Confrontation

Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth
the countenance of his friend.

Proverbs 27:17

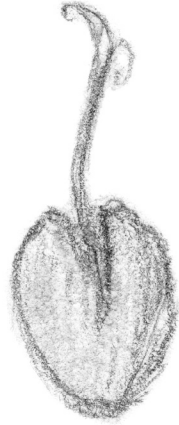
Friendships

MOST OF US would like to believe we alone decide who we become. There is truth in this; we are a product of the choices we make every day. Our past choices determined who we are now, and the decisions we make now will significantly affect who we will become. However, how we think and choose is strongly affected and influenced by the people around us. We may wish to deny this and claim control over who we are, but the truth is that the friends we keep have a powerful impact upon our choices and character.

If it were not for my parents, my family, my friends, and the church families I grew up with, I would not be the person I am today. I thank God for all these precious people He put in my life—who raised, sharpened, pushed, and supported me.

You know who you are! May God bless you all and guide you in this great journey of life.

God especially used five friends to plant seeds in my heart that would alter the course of my life. I will introduce them to you and explain how God used their lives to impact mine.





KATYA WAS MY dear Russian friend. As a child, she was adopted from a village orphanage. Cars, planes, technology, and the world outside her village were all entirely new to her. In a short time, she passed from a realm of fairies, superstition, and darkness to the bizarre world of America. In essence she traded one dark world for another. This young woman has certainly climbed mountains in her lifetime.

I met Katya a few years after she became a Christian. She was a girl with light in her eyes and a heart full of dreams. Those dreams included finishing her degree, becoming a published author, and using the proceeds to return to Russia and find her family. She wanted to share her faith with them and build orphanages that bring hope, love, and truth to the destitute children of Russia.

We first met in front of the library on “the bricks,” a little brick corner of the quad, the major intersection of all paths leading to the rest of campus. This was also an unofficial meeting place for some of the seeking Christians on campus.

Katya and I bonded over a mutual love for God and writing. However, she was no more than a sweet acquaintance until one day her car was totaled in an accident. That semester was her final stretch before graduating. She had no extra money to buy a car and lived too far from campus to use public transportation, so I began giving her rides to school. Consequently, we spent a lot of time together.

One day the topic of clothing choices and modesty came up. We were walking from the parking lot to the school on a breezy spring day when I asked her why she dressed the way she did. Katya always wore her long black hair in a single braid and was dressed in a long flowing red skirt and a thin blue jacket with sleeves that reached her wrists. Among the milling thousands of students at our university, my friend’s wardrobe choices were quite unusual.



Katya's standards of modesty were as follows: arms covered to her wrists, chest covered to her throat, and full, floor-length skirts. She made a conscious effort not to draw attention to her body. She believed her modesty honored God.

I listened as my friend explained her point of view, agreeing and disagreeing on varying points. The conversation was uncomfortable to me as I walked beside her, dressed in half the amount of fabric she wore and struggling against the wind pulling at my short skirt. Though I didn't understand her "extreme" perspective on modesty, I respected her passion. It was this earnestness that planted doubts about my own standard and, for the first time, challenged my perspective.

"Do I not dress modestly?" I began asking myself. But then followed the more important question: "What *IS* modesty?"

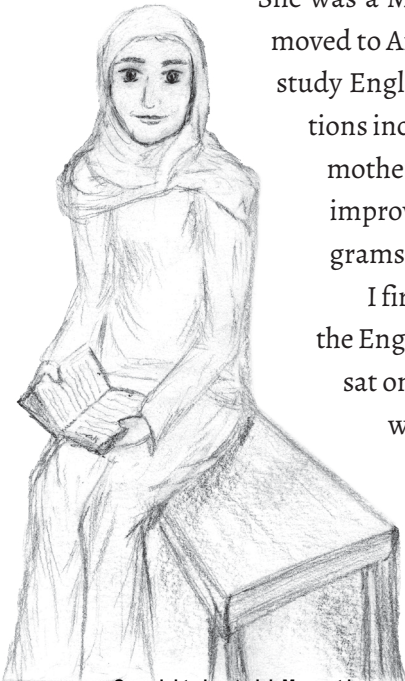
In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

1 Timothy 2:9, 10

Rima

RIMA WAS MY sweet Jordanian friend. She was a Muslim immigrant who had moved to America a few years before to study English at my school. Her ambitions included being a good wife and mother and returning to Jordan to improve the English language programs in her home universities.

I first saw Rima in the hallway of the English Literature department. I sat on a narrow bench beside her, waiting for my next class. I figured she was waiting for the same reason.



With her distinct covering, she was obviously Muslim, perhaps foreign. I felt a little nervous. Was this the first time I ever sat beside a veiled lady?

Aside from her head covering, the young lady wore a long-sleeved shirt and baggy dress pants. She had a quiet countenance and was studying an eighteenth-century novel titled *Roxana*. Suddenly it dawned on me that I was holding a book with the same title. *We must be in the same class!* I thought.

The young woman seemed as shy as I was, and I suddenly felt morally obligated to reach out to her. Everyone needs a friend, after all. I wondered if she had many friends, being “different” and foreign.

“Hi!” I squeaked. “You’re reading the same book I am! Are you in my class?” I asked, pointing to my classroom door.

The young woman seemed quite surprised and happy to be spoken to.

“Oh, yes, yes; I am in that class,” she replied. We were indeed enrolled in the same literature course. That is when I learned where she was from, and that Arabic was her first language.

“Well, it’s nice to meet you,” I started. “My name is Amber Knight! What’s your name?” I shook her olive-colored hand—not knowing that this simple handshake would begin a beautiful and unlikely friendship.

Who would have imagined a country girl from Tennessee and a city girl from the Kingdom of Jordan ever meeting—let alone becoming dear college friends? Truly, God is good and works in mysterious ways! I am thankful God allowed me to be a part of Rima’s life and to be an example to her of my Christian faith.

Rima and I initially bonded over language. She was studying English and English Literature; and while I was an English major as well, ironically, I was also studying Arabic and the Middle East.

Rima inspired me in many ways. I greatly admired her passionate determination in her language studies. She worked diligently and never gave up in pursuit of her dreams—a master’s degree in English while being a devoted wife and mother.

I especially respected her modesty. She always dressed nicely, yet she consistently wore sleeves to her wrists, baggy dress pants or a long skirt, and a headscarf that covered her hair and neck.

One day I asked Rima why she wore the veil. She said she covered her hair because she believed it was her glory, and other than family, the only man she would allow to see it was her husband. This honor was for him alone. She also felt that wearing a hijab and modest clothing was pleasing and honoring to Allah, which was important to her. She was quick to inform me that, despite popular opinion, how she dressed was her own choice and not because of anti-women “oppression.”

What a romantic concept, I thought, for a woman to cover her hair to keep it as a special treasure for her husband. But what really challenged my heart was the deeper reason she was passionate about dressing modestly: to please Allah.

The passion of one Muslim woman to please Allah was reflected in her outward appearance. I could identify with a passionate desire to please God. Yet as I passed other students in the hallways, no one could tell whether I loved

God or not. When they passed Rima, they knew she was Muslim. When they passed me... well, I looked just like everyone else. No one could gather by looking at me whether I was a Christian or not.



Rima means white antelope.

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil... She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness... Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.

Proverbs 31:10, 11, 27, 30