

The Princess Within

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Has anyone ever told you that as a child of God, you are royalty? Being the female child of the King of Kings makes us princesses. I don't know about you, the princesses that I am familiar with come from fairytales. And all fairytales involve a, "Once upon a time," some adversity, and a, "happily ever after." It's no different for us.

Once upon a time, we were lost in the muck and mire of sin. We faced obstacles and stumbling blocks each and every day. Until one day, Jesus came into our lives and we knew that no matter what happened on this Earth, there is a happily ever after waiting for us someday. We all follow the basic pattern, but what type of royalty are you? Where does your adversity come from? Is it your family? Is it your personality? Is it society?

This series of articles examines some familiar fairytale princesses and makes connections to the everyday issues today's Christian women face. We may see ourselves in one or more of these princesses, and the lessons that they teach us can help us deal with adversity and show us God's goodness in our lives as women of royalty.

RAGS TO RICHES ROYALTY

Cinderella

Once upon a time, Cinderella was alone in the world. Her mother had long been gone and her father died, leaving custody of the princess to his queen, her evil stepmother. Cinderella, though a princess, lived as a servant in her father's house. She had no one to talk to, but the little animals that lived in the servant's quarters. Cinderella was constantly talked about and treated like a second-class citizen by those who were supposed to love and nurture her. Then, one day, she saw an opportunity to get out. For her, the opportunity was going to a ball for the possibility that the prince would fall in love with her and marry her. In order to get what she wanted, Cinderella had to work twice as hard. She had to wait on her family by day and prepare for the ball at night by making a dress from scraps. But she found a way. Then, just before the ball, Cinderella's stepmother and stepsisters found out that she was planning to go to the ball. They were outraged. What made this slave think she was good enough to become royalty? Cinderella's dress was destroyed and the family refused to let her go to the ball.

Just when all seemed lost and Cinderella was about to give up hope, her fairy godmother appeared. Cinderella was outfitted with a new dress, a new ride, a new attitude and enough time to make an impression. She had to leave the ball by midnight, so that her identity would not be revealed. So, Cinderella went to the ball. She met the prince and she wowed him. He was awestruck by her beauty and charmed by her personality. Of all of the most eligible women in the country, he wanted to marry Cinderella. However, just as Cinderella and the prince began to get to know one another, it was time for her to leave. Cinderella was obedient and she left, but she left behind a glass slipper. The prince didn't understand why this perfect woman would run away, but he knew that he'd found his soulmate. The prince spent the next day searching all over town for the girl that fit the slipper. His search led him to Cinderella's castle. Cinderella's stepmother tried to deny that Cinderella existed, but the prince wasn't buying it. Then, the stepmother told the prince that Cinderella was just a servant girl who couldn't have been at the ball, but the prince didn't give up until he tried the shoe on Cinderella. The shoe fit Cinderella perfectly. The prince married her and they lived happily ever after.

Now, you may be thinking, "I know the story," but listen carefully to the retelling of this story as it applies to the Christian princess. You may feel abandoned by your family or your friends. Or maybe people, sometimes family and friends, try to pull you down because of your background or because they are just negative people. Like Cinderella, you have to press on and make your own way. You are responsible for getting to your goals and with God's help no adversity can stop you. Cinderella wanted to get to the ball and meet a prince. Maybe you want to meet your prince, or maybe you want to go to school or get a different job. Whatever your goal is, you may have to do things that you feel are beneath you, but you have to do what is necessary to press on.

At times, it may seem overwhelming. Those are usually the times when we are trying to do things on our own. But what happens when we let God handle it?

Notice how things changed when the fairy godmother stepped into the picture. She gave Cinderella everything she needed to get that prince. When you allow to God step in and handle your circumstances, he will give you everything you need to get through His perfect plan for you. Sometimes, His instructions may seem strange. For example, Cinderella was told to leave by midnight. Maybe he's told you to give up something you really love or to move away from the people you love. No matter how weird the instructions are, be obedient like Cinderella and God will work it out. When you do all that you can, God will do the rest and you will reach your goals. There are a couple of things to note in this story. First, if it's a soulmate you want, recall that the prince searched for Cinderella, not vice versa. He went all over town trying that shoe on every single girl he could find until he found the perfect one. And, when Cinderella did reach her goal, she didn't throw her stepmother and stepsisters in a dungeon, she forgave them. As hard as it is, we must forgive, if we want the full benefits of our blessings. Being unforgiving only hurts you. If you can't forgive someone else, why should God forgive you?

My favorite lesson from this story goes like this. The prince had one shoe that didn't fit anyone, but Cinderella. I'll say it again. The prince had one shoe that didn't fit anyone, but Cinderella. Now you know that if you took a shoe from the store and tried it on a town full of women, several women would fit the shoe no matter what size it is. Nevertheless, when God puts His hand on your blessing, it won't fit anyone, but you. What He has for you is for you and if you trust and believe in Him to deliver you, He will. Are you Cinderella?

IMPATIENT IMPERIALS *Ariel, the Little Mermaid*

Ariel, the mermaid princess, lived for adventure. She was extremely talented and very capable of doing things on her own. Everyday, she would sneak behind her father Triton's back to venture outside the boundaries of her castle to see humans and collect human things. Ariel's adventures were generally harmless, but nonetheless, forbidden. One day, a particular human caught her eye. His name was Prince Eric. He was a strapping young fellow that she saw navigating a ship one day. That same night, there was a storm and Eric was thrown from his ship. Ariel saved his life, but to Eric she was just a dream with a beautiful voice. When Triton found out what Ariel had done, he was furious. Though saving a life was a good thing, Triton knew that Ariel put herself in grave danger. In a fit of rage, he destroyed Ariel's keepsakes from the human world and forbade her to go above the surface again.

Ariel, thinking that her father was being unreasonable, decided to take matters into her own hands. She went to Ursula, the sea witch, for a quick solution. Ursula, being extremely evil and seeing this as a chance to get to Triton's power, made a deal with Ariel that Ariel could become human. Ariel had to make Eric fall in love with her in three days, but the catch was that she had to do it without a voice. Equipped with her newly acquired legs and her animal friends, Ariel set out on her mission to make Eric fall for her. But, of course, Ursula was not going to play fair. Every time Eric and Ariel got close, Ursula interfered. When, Ariel figured out Ursula's plot, Ariel tried to stop her, but she couldn't do it on her own. Her animal friends tried to help, but they only had a temporary solution. As the sun went down on the third day, Ariel hadn't held up her end of the bargain to make Eric fall in love with her, so she was about to be turned into a sea slave for Ursula. Just in time, Triton stepped in and sacrificed himself to save Ariel and Eric's lives. Then, they saved Triton. Once everyone was safe, Triton allowed Ariel to become human and stay with Eric and they lived happily ever after.

Does any of this sound remotely familiar? I know it does for me. On more than one occasion, I ventured outside the boundaries of what God said that I could do. I found something in the world that I wanted so bad that I was willing to disobey God. It comes naturally to us from the beginning of time, from our mother Eve. God gave her one boundary and she crossed it and changed the course of human life forever. But God

doesn't give arbitrary boundaries. He gives us boundaries to keep us from harming ourselves, just like Triton was trying to do for Ariel. Instead of trusting Him to protect us from dangers seen and unseen, we let the world seduce us into trying things our way. Even when God gives us a definite sign, like destroying our worldly idols, we still think that we know best. Like Ariel, I have found myself thinking that I could find another way to get what I want. If God could just see the way I handle things, then He will know that I was right the whole time. It's the most backwards way of thinking, but I don't know one person who can honestly say that they have not had that thought. Again, Ariel wanted to be with Eric and see a new world. Our goals may be different, but the story goes the same way. We head out on our own and make deals with the enemy that we will never win. Ursula was never going to let Ariel fall in love with Eric. It's the same way when we make a deal with the devil. Satan takes away any possibility that we have of coming out on top. Or maybe you don't go so far as to make a deal with the devil. Anytime that you disobey God, the devil has won a battle. Maybe some of you have decided that you know better than God, and venture out on your own. Like Ariel, you have ended up endangering yourself, your family or your dreams. But like Triton, God is a gracious and merciful father. When Triton saw Ariel in trouble, he sacrificed himself. When God saw that the world was in trouble, he sacrificed His Son.

God will forgive you for your disobedience, but you still have to deal with the consequences. If Ariel had waited for her father to realize that Eric was harmless, she would not have gone through the obstacles she faced. She still would have had to make a transition from her world to the human world, but it would not have been as difficult with her father on her side. Like Triton, God will catch us before we fall, but we won't be able to get our time, our talents, our relationships, or our money back that we lost along the way. If God means for us to have something, He will direct a path for us to get to that which He has promised us. Sometimes we think that God is depriving us for no reason, but there is always a reason. As a princess, we must yield to the will of our King and follow His guidance in order to get our blessings.

THE ACCIDENTAL PRINCESS

Belle: Beauty and the Beast

Belle (Beauty) didn't start out as a princess. She was just an inventor's daughter. She was a curious girl who believed in her father's genius when no one else did. When Belle's father disappeared, she set off to search for him. No one could have ever guessed the enchanted world he had discovered. Belle's father was lost and stumbled upon the castle of the Beast. Once her father was discovered, he was held captive. The Beast was feared and hated by everyone in Belle's village. What no one knew is that he had fallen under a curse that turned him from a handsome, but unloving prince into a beast when he refused to give shelter to a beggar. When Belle discovered her father's plight, she sacrificed herself to save the life of her father. The Beast was glad to have Belle in his presence, she was his only hope. If he could get Belle to fall in love with him, then the curse would be broken and he would once again be a handsome prince. Personally, I think he's more handsome as the beast, but that's just me.

Things didn't start out very smoothly for Belle and the Beast. The Beast was self-conscious about his looks and because he saw himself as ugly, he didn't think that anyone else could ever see him any other way. Belle was brave, but scared of the Beast's temper and yet, she knew that there was a loving being underneath it all. The Beast worked very hard to change his image. He started with his outward appearance, but it wasn't until he realized that he was lovable that he was able to win Belle's heart. Unfortunately, Belle's father, unaware of the changes the Beast had made, had sent the townspeople to rescue Belle from the Beast. A battle ensued and it almost caused the Beast to be cursed forever, but at the last possible moment, he was freed from his curse and he and Belle lived happily ever after.

The basic moral of this story is the taming of a beast. But the reality that has to be faced is that we cannot tame a beast. There are a lot of men in the world who have had some trauma in their life. They have lost a parent, never known a parent, been abused or been torn down. There are women in the same situation. For some of these people, the circumstances will never change. They will always be haunted by their past; by that one decision that was made that changed everything forever. A lot of times, in cases of abandonment or abuse, people will encounter endless self-esteem issues. Then, someone comes into their life. In this story it happened to be a future princess, Belle. But in our world today, unless and until God enters someone's life, they cannot change. If we look at the story in this way, it takes on a whole new meaning.

When Belle's father was lost in a dark and scary castle, she sacrificed herself to set him free. When we were lost in a dark and scary world, our Father sacrificed His Son to set us free. The Beast tried to make all kinds of outward changes to make himself more attractive to Belle. Some men do the same thing: get new jobs, buy new cars, dress better, go places they cannot afford, and all for the sake of impressing another. But superficial changes don't mean anything. One has to get to the core of the problem. What is his relationship like with God? How much does he care about himself? If a man doesn't know God and doesn't care about himself, then he can't love you the way that you deserve to be loved and esteemed.

Once the Beast looked within and began to like himself, then he truly changed into a lovable person. He saw what Belle saw in him and he was able to change. The same thing happens with us, when we see what God sees in us, there is no way we can't have a better self-esteem. When we know that He's always there no matter what happened in our past, we can start loving ourselves. A woman does not change a man, but she can make him look at himself in a different light and when you add God to the mix, then God can make the changes that need to be made in that person. Not everyone can change because not everyone is chosen by God to be a better person. Nevertheless, when you meet someone who is clearly working to become a better person through God, then you should stick by him. Of course, there is always a time limit to how long you wait for a change, but if you are prayerful in the relationship, God will let you know when to stay and when to let go.

But Belle and the Beast weren't quite happily ever after. We can't finish analyzing the story without talking about the people. The Beast had a past. He had a reputation. Then one day, a beautiful girl came into his life and she believed in him. It took some time, but he turned his life around. BUT the townspeople couldn't forget. They knew the Beast in one way and they didn't believe that he could ever change. The same thing can happen to anyone of us. When we get saved and people know what we used to be like, it is hard for them to believe that we've changed, especially when we mess up occasionally, but it doesn't matter what they think. All that matter is what God knows is in our hearts. The people of this world can come against you and your prince with all they've got. They can tell you every bad thing that he's ever done in his life; however, if he has changed, and you know he has changed through God, you need to stick by him.

CAVEAT: Some people will claim to change, but the changes are temporary. I cannot express how important it is to stay prayerful and make sure that your relationship with God is sincere. God will show you what is real and what is not. Additionally, if a person is abusive towards you, whether emotional, verbal, or physical, it doesn't matter how much he changes, get out of the relationship. You can still support that person as he changes, but keep your distance. Abusiveness is a disease and it often leads to prison or death. Don't take chances with an abusive man or any other abusive person in your life. That is not the life God wants for you.

MISCHIEVOUS MONARCHS

Jasmine from Aladdin

Princess Jasmine is a story within a story, but, even though she is not the focus, we can learn a thing or two from Jasmine about being superficial. Jasmine is the love interest of the pauper, Aladdin. In the story, Jasmine is under pressure to marry a prince by her father and his evil advisor, Jafar. In an effort to see what she'd been missing as a princess, Jasmine went slumming in the world of her subjects. While out in the world, she meets the attractive, fun, and outgoing Aladdin. Jasmine and Aladdin have fun until they disrupt some of the townspeople and are arrested, at which point Jasmine exercises her powers to let Aladdin go free.

Thinking that he will never see the princess again, Aladdin gets his chance when he finds a lamp with a Genie in it. Aladdin wishes that he can become a prince, so that he can be worthy of Jasmine. Jasmine meets Aladdin as Prince Ali, he shows her a whole new world and she falls for him under false pretenses. Before any of this, it was destined that Aladdin would be king, but neither Aladdin nor Jasmine knew of his destiny. In the end, after some adventures, Jasmine discovers Aladdin's true identity, forgives him for lying and they live happily ever after.

As I said, there are a couple of lessons in Jasmine's story. First, we may not be earthly royalty and know the exact pressure that there is to marry as a member of a monarchy, but if you are one of God's single princesses, then you know a little about that pressure. Many of us today are pressured by those around us to find a husband. But the Bible says, "HE who finds a wife, finds a good thing." Further, we are expected not just to marry anyone. We have to marry a Christian brother, with money who's good looking and smart. Sometimes while we search for the person everyone else wants us to find, we miss the one who is trying to find us. While Jasmine was being courted by Ali, she forgot about Aladdin.

Now you may say, "They were one in the same," but they were not. Aladdin and Ali were physically the same person, but their mentalities were totally different. As Aladdin, Jasmine's suitor was just being himself, using what he had, though not much, to impress. As Ali, he used material things to impress. Sometimes, we are so in awe of the "perfect" man that we lose sight of someone who is good for us just as he is. Sometimes, the one who seems perfect by societal standards has many flaws, but is putting on a front because he is afraid to lose us. Aladdin became what he thought Jasmine wanted when he was Prince Ali. Although, in the story, Jasmine didn't make Aladdin change, he felt that he had to be someone he was not to impress her. If Jasmine and Aladdin had trusted in what they knew in their hearts they could have avoided some of the drama they had to go through.

In our lives, there is nothing wrong with waiting for the man with what I call the four S's: spiritual, smart, stable and sexy. As a matter of fact if he finds you and you don't want him, send him my way. Those men are rare. But we sometimes get so caught up in superficial things like looks and wealth that we look past the real kings. The ones who reverence God, respect women and are romantic. They might be diamonds in the rough like Aladdin, but may have a blessing on their life that we can't see at the moment. The best thing to do is pray. When he finds you and he's not exactly what you expected, but he has a beautiful spirit, pray. You never know; he may be the one.

Remember that nerd in high school or college that the girls wouldn't give the time of day. Remember how you went to the reunion or read in the paper that now he's a saved, successful business man with a personal trainer that turned that birdcage into a finely chiseled chest and those braces that you used to make fun of have yielded a smile that makes your heart melt, and he had Lasik surgery, so no more glasses. Don't let it happen to you. I'm not saying lower your standards because you should never accept less than you deserve, but ask God to reveal the potential in your suitor. Maybe he's still in school, or starting his own business. Maybe he's not as cute or as tall as the men you usually date. See beyond the outside; see the diamond in the rough.

BUT, Watch out for the POSERS, the fakes and the phonies. They are out there. They have all the qualities that you want in appearance only. Then, when you let your guard down, you find out he is not really saved, he just goes to church on occasion. He's not really respectful, he's abusive. Or maybe he was only romantic until he got you, but *now it seems his dancing feet are always on your couch*. (Think about it, the song will come back to you). Oh yeah, and all those nice things it seemed he had, well he does have them and a whole bunch of debt to go along with them. This is why I said pray and ask God to reveal things to you.

Also, beware of the LOSERS. They are not diamonds in the rough with potential to have all of the qualities you want, as they may appear to be at first glance; the losers are coal and always will be. At times the distinction is too hard for the naked eye, so we need spiritual guidance. The point is that even though Aladdin lied to Jasmine about who he really was, she recognized what he felt he had to do to win her and she forgave him. She didn't want him to be someone he wasn't; she recognized his charm and potential the day she met him. She followed her heart the way we should follow the direction of the Holy Spirit. And this applies to more than men, it applies to careers and goals as well. We may be chasing a job or a dream that appear to be something they are not.

Sometimes we don't see that an unpaid internship might get us further in our field better than the high-paying dream job. Or proper nutrition and exercise will help us have the body type we want better than the fad diet. In everything seek God's guidance, so that when that man, job or dream appears, you can see it for what it really is and not for what the world wants you to see.