

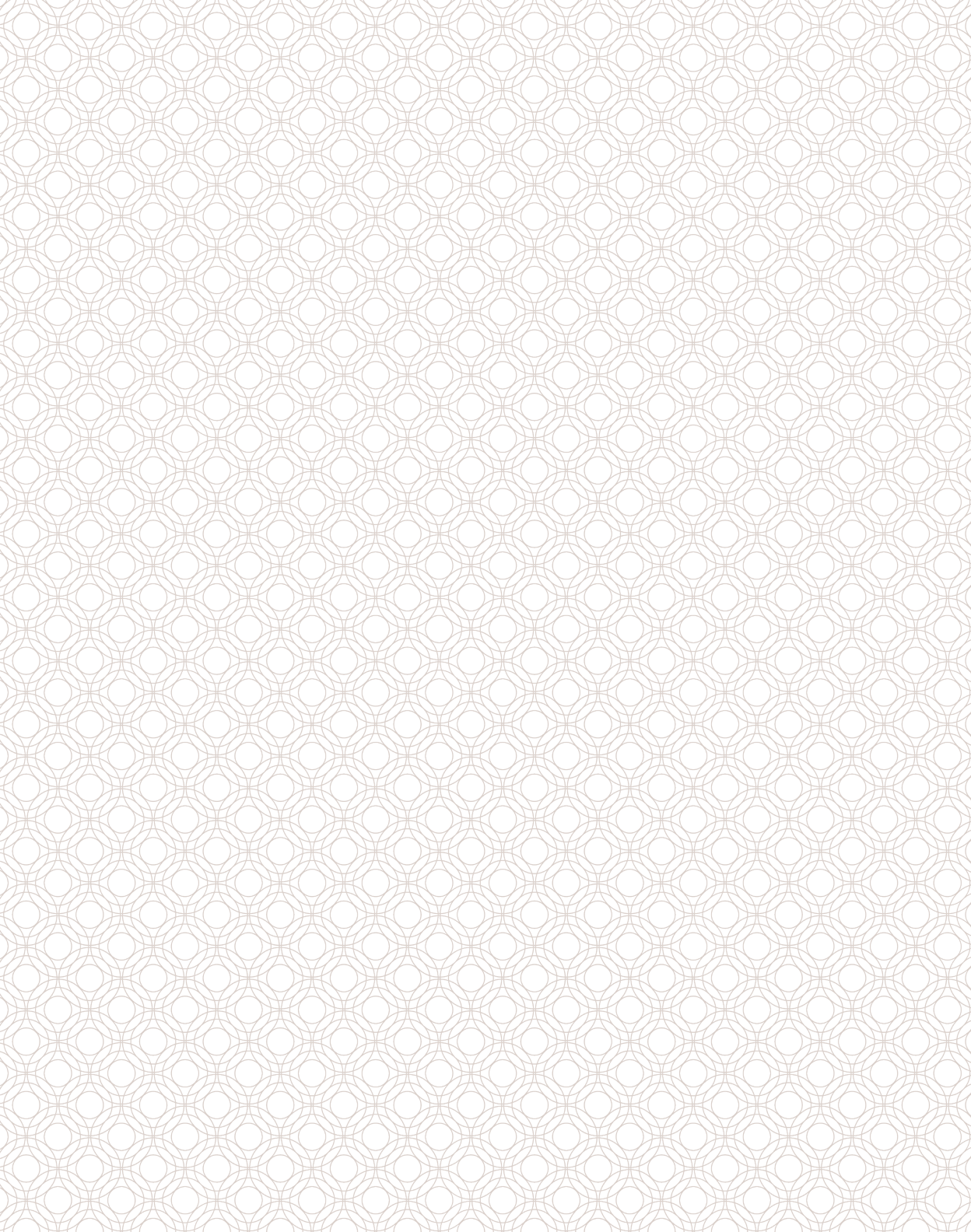


A CREATIVE  
JOURNEY OF  
TRANSFORMATION

# CULTIVATING PEARLS

CHRISTINA DIMARI

## CULTIVATING PEARLS





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**CHRISTINA DIMARI**



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Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.*

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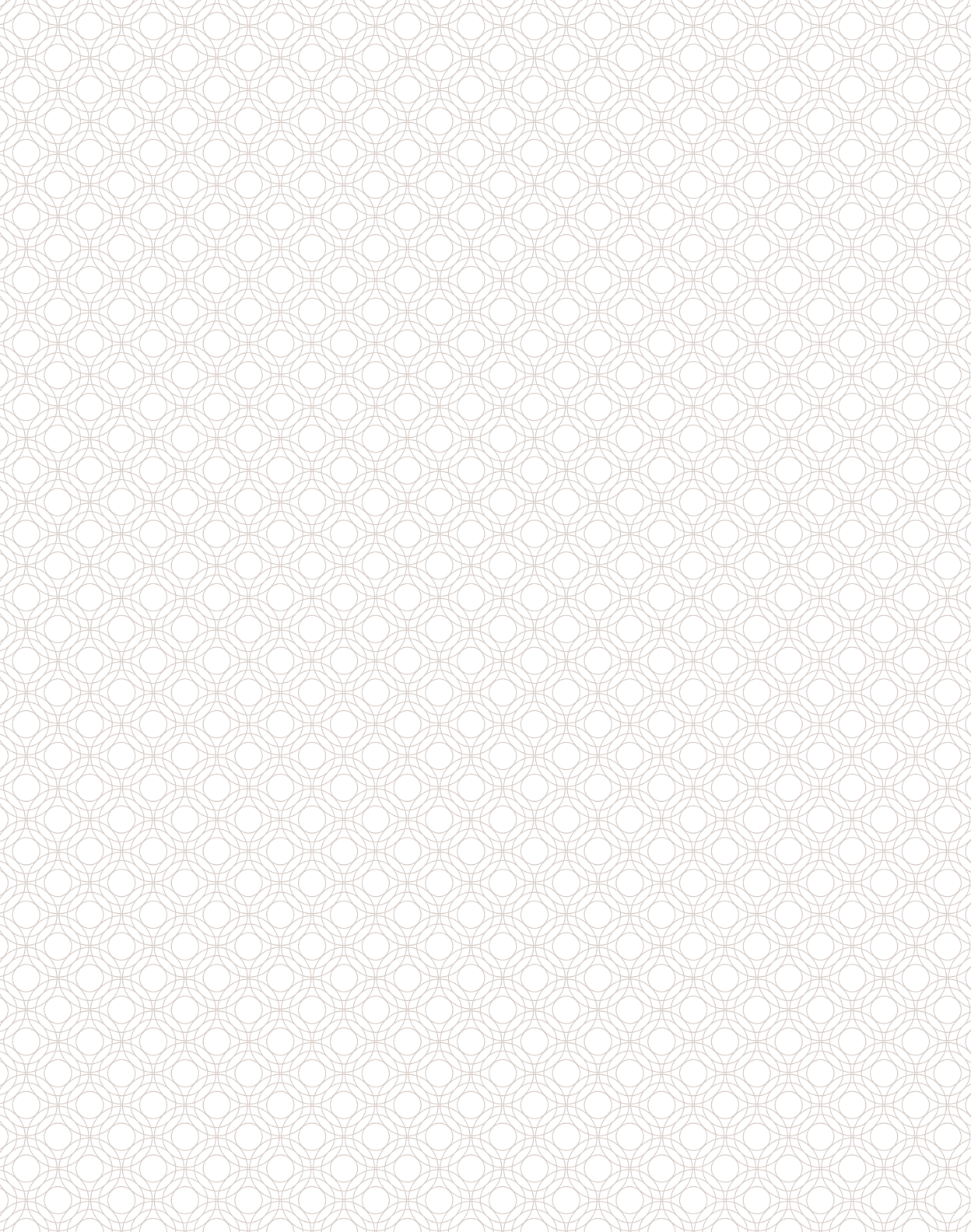
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## THE MEANING OF A PEARL

**WHEN A SINGLE GRAIN OF SAND** enters the living membrane of an oyster, the oyster becomes irritated by the foreign object. The oyster's reaction is to continually coat it with a substance called *nacre*, eventually transforming the grain of sand into a beautiful pearl.

The Latin word for pearl literally means “unique,” attesting to the fact that no two pearls are identical.

You and I are like that grain of sand when we come to God. He receives us as we are, then covers us with his grace and refines us by the truth of his Word.

Through that process, he creates something beautiful in us that, each in our own unique and creative way, reflects who he is to the world around us.

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Tools for Your Journey

**P**URIFIED IN THE RIVER OF THE WATER OF LIFE  
*Called, Loved, Accepted, Forgiven, Whole*

**E**MPowered IN THE LIGHT OF CHRIST  
*Evaluate, Freedom, Forgiveness, Friendships, New*

**A**NOINTED WITH GOD'S BLESSING  
*Grace, Blessing, Peace, Identity, Value*

**R**OOTED IN GOD'S PERFECT LOVE  
*Truth, Nourished, Healthy, Strong, Confident*

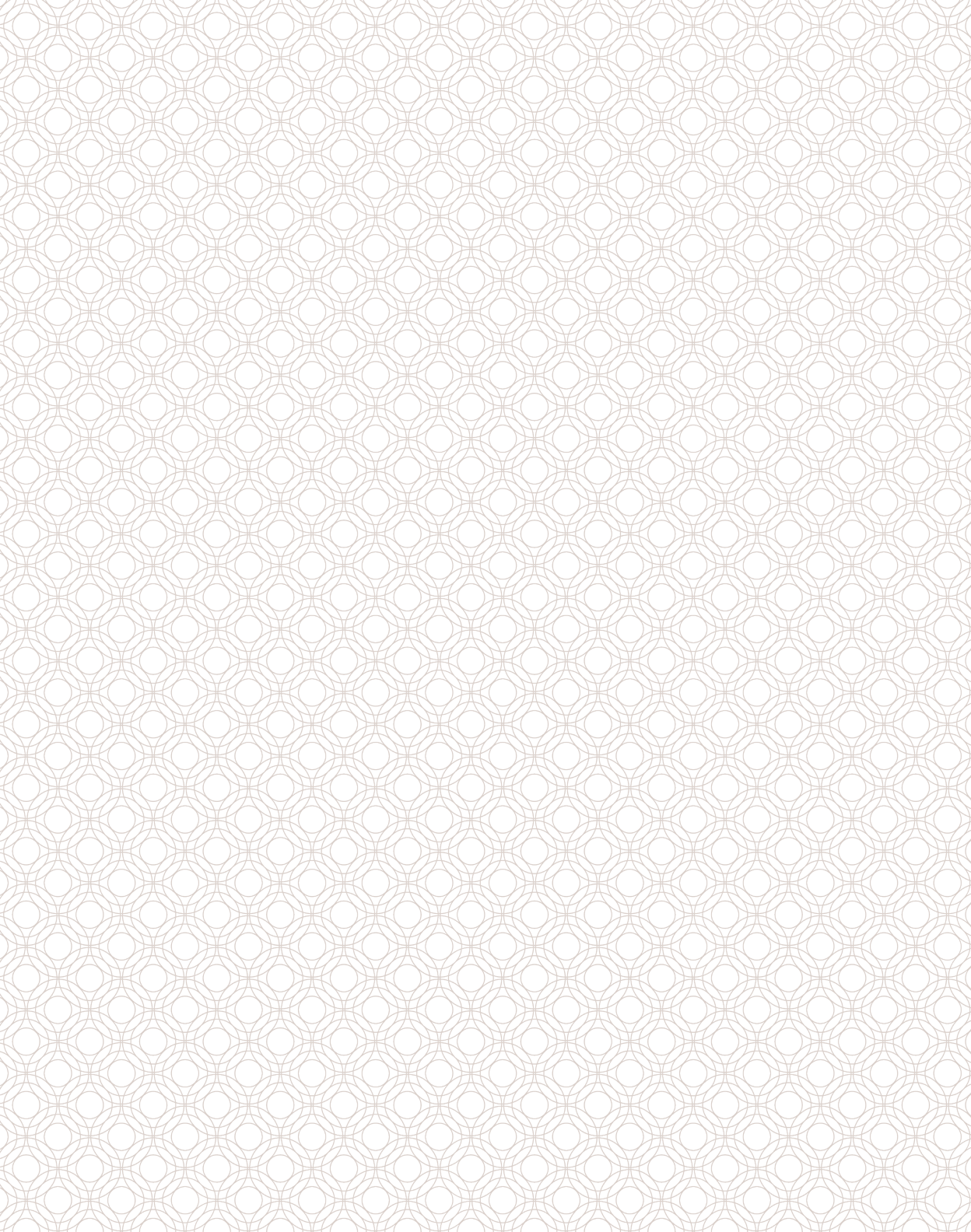
**L**IVING TO REFLECT GOD'S LOVE IN YOUR OWN UNIQUE WAY  
*Dream, Explore, Discover, Purpose, Create*

**S**ACRED COVENANT  
*Make It Beautiful!*

Connect with Us

Inspiring Story

Leaders Guide



## A NOTE FROM CHRISTINA

**THE VISION FOR THIS BOOK** started after I was invited to speak at a chapel service at my alma mater, Simpson University in Northern California, during its homecoming celebration. I spent some time with Dr. Wallmark, my theology and Bible professor. During my college years, his style of teaching had greatly impacted my life and taught me not only how to know about God, but how to walk in a personal relationship with him.

Dr. Wallmark knew I had been speaking at youth and college events for several years, and that I had written books to help girls on their journeys with God. Dr. Wallmark wanted to know how this next generation of girls was doing. I shared how in my work with high school and college-age girls I could see a desire to want to know God. To grow. To learn. To love. But I could also see a disconnection between knowing the truth of God's Word and knowing how it flowed into all the parts of their lives. Even though many of them believed in God, they still felt he was very far away. I explained to my former professor that I wanted to help girls discover how to walk with God in a way that felt personal and part of their everyday lives.

Dr. Wallmark sat back in his chair and said, "I see another book coming! There is a prayer chapel down the road; it may be a good time to have a talk with God about it."

I left our time together feeling stirred inside my spirit that something was about to happen.

I entered the prayer chapel and started reading Revelation 21 and 22, which had been part of my Bible reading that month.

I would read a few verses, and then I would stop and close my eyes, imagining what the words looked like and what they were communicating to me.

The Scripture paints a picture of this beautiful river that flows from the throne of God, and I imagined Jesus in this river calling us to come to him.

As I stayed with this picture in my mind, I found myself imagining Jesus reaching for something deep down in the water. I could see golden light and beautiful blue water slightly moving as he brought his hand up to the surface.

I was curious and found myself asking him in prayer, “Jesus, what are you doing?”

His eyes were fixed on me and his light and glory flowed all over me as his simple answer found its way deep into my spirit.

“I’m cultivating pearls,” he said, as his hand broke the surface of the water, revealing one of his treasures.

He held a solitary pearl before me and said, “This is Saylor. This is her story and how she is letting me transform her life, just like you did.” He reached for another pearl. “This is Courtney.” And another one. “This is Morgan.”

Over and over, he showed me girls from all over the world. Each one trusted Jesus with her life and placed herself in his Living Water.

It was the most beautiful scene. Jesus told me each girl’s name, her story, and what she had been through. He showed me how he was covering her with his grace and shaping her by the truth of his Word. The girls were like trees—firmly rooted and growing in faith and love. As each one flourished, I saw her leaves blowing off her tree and bringing hope and healing to others.

Then the picture in my mind shifted. It was as if I was looking at the whole world from a distance. I could see Jesus in the river calling the girls to come to him.

Some of the girls were close so they could hear his voice, and they were making their way to the river.

Other girls were farther away. It was as if they could hear this faint voice and were looking up, wondering where it came from, but they didn't know what to do or where to go.

Other girls were so far away that as the call went out, they could barely even hear it.

Then I imagined girls who had heard the call and come to the river going back out to help those who didn't know how to get there. Girls all over the world going out and taking other girls by the hand, until thousands upon thousands of girls are at the river and learning to experience God's love and understand his purpose for their lives.

The picture in my mind shifted again, and I felt like it was back to just me and Jesus. I asked him why he was showing me this beautiful picture and what he wanted me to do.

That's when I felt him speak to my heart about writing this book, *Cultivating Pearls*, and guiding you on this beautiful creative journey of transformation that is filled with many lessons that have shaped my own life over the years.

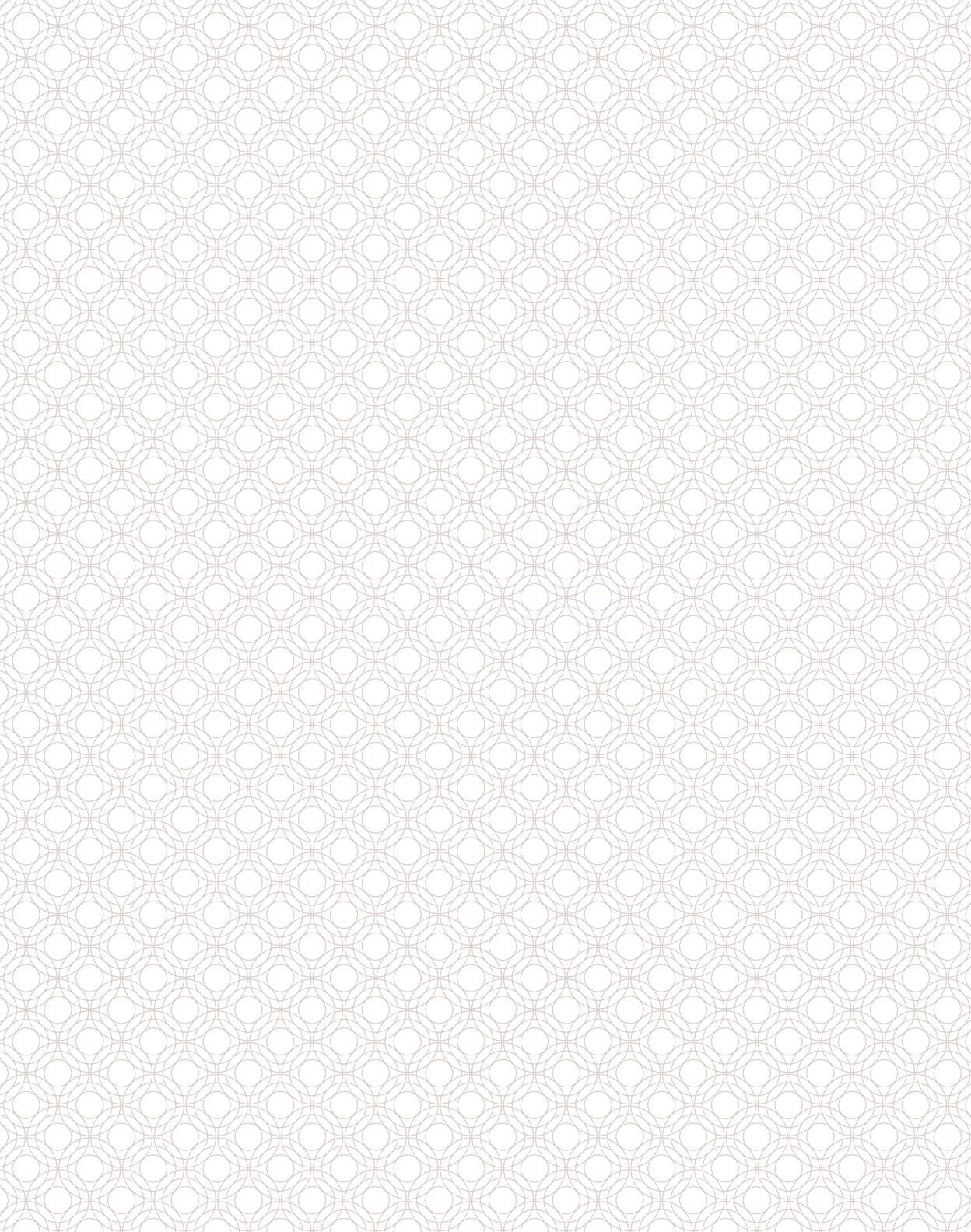
I humbly knelt before the River of the Water of Life and slipped my hands into the water as a symbol of my dedication to fulfill the assignment Jesus was asking me to do.

"What is the most important thing?" I asked him.

"Make It Beautiful!" he said.

I felt as if everything I was reading in Revelation 21 and 22 was painting a picture of how beautiful the Kingdom of God is, and that Jesus wanted girls to know that although the process of transformation is not always easy, it will be the most beautiful journey they can ever embark upon.

Wherever you are, I invite you now to take my hand and let me lead you to the river where your beautiful journey of transformation will begin!





## A NOTE FROM MADISON

**FIVE YEARS AGO**, when I was a junior in high school, I was taken on a journey through the lessons in *Cultivating Pearls* where I discovered what it meant to accept Christ's invitation to come. To come to the River of the Water of Life that flows from the throne of God to be purified, empowered in the light of Christ, anointed by God as his daughter, rooted in his perfect love, and given life to shine for others.

Through this process I learned how to not only believe in God, but to make a personal connection with him. I discovered that God asks us to join him, and he gives us a purpose to be part of his Kingdom work on earth. I ended my yearlong journey by making a sacred covenant with God and dedicated my life to live within the beautiful boundaries of his Kingdom and continue to allow the truth of his Word to shape and guide my life. I dedicated my life to sharing his love with other girls so they, too, can discover how to respond to his call and come.

As I entered college, I realized so many girls were searching. They were searching for something that would fill a hole in their hearts, mend broken relationships, or bring light into something difficult they were experiencing. They were searching for meaningful friendships—who they were and who they could become. They wanted something real. Something authentic. Something lasting. Sadly, I mostly saw girls looking for what their souls longed for in places and people who left them disappointed and unfulfilled.

I knew someone who can totally and completely satisfy what their souls longed for. He did it for me. His name is Jesus. I wanted to help the girls get to know him and understand how to have a personal relationship with him.

Even though I was only a freshman in college, I asked some of the girls I met if they wanted to grow spiritually. Before I knew it, I was guiding a group of girls through the same lessons in *Cultivating Pearls* that had shaped my own life.

They listened to the call of Jesus inviting them to come. Each girl, with her own unique story, came week after week to learn and grow. Some of the girls had never read a Bible or the teachings of Jesus, while others grew up going to church but didn't know how to make their faith personal. It was the most rewarding experience to come alongside the girls and share these lessons and watch Jesus bring hope to their lives.

They learned how to walk with God in an intimate way. To take time to evaluate where they are, open their hearts and allow the truth of God's words to bring light and guidance. The creative and journaling elements of the lessons create a safe way for the girls to explore and express what they are feeling in a way that brings clarity. They love how it is a journey with God, not a program. It's not something they do and—*ta-da!*—they are done and know it all and have it all figured out. They are learning how to process, how to communicate, how to connect. They are learning how the Kingdom of God is not far away, but through their faith in Jesus, it is in their hearts.

As the girls came together each week, they were vulnerable with each other, sharing their stories and struggles, being real. They allowed each lesson to bring guidance into their lives, and I watched the beauty of God's Word bring about transformation in each of the girls over the year we met together.

I am now a senior in college, and each year I have continued to lead a group of girls through the life-changing lessons in *Cultivating Pearls*.

I receive deep satisfaction and joy by helping the girls connect with God in a personal way, break down walls they've built up, and discover truth in the midst of so many lies our society tells them. I love watching the girls

experience the presence of God in the middle of chaos, discover their identity in a lost generation, and allow the love and power of Christ to transform their lives.

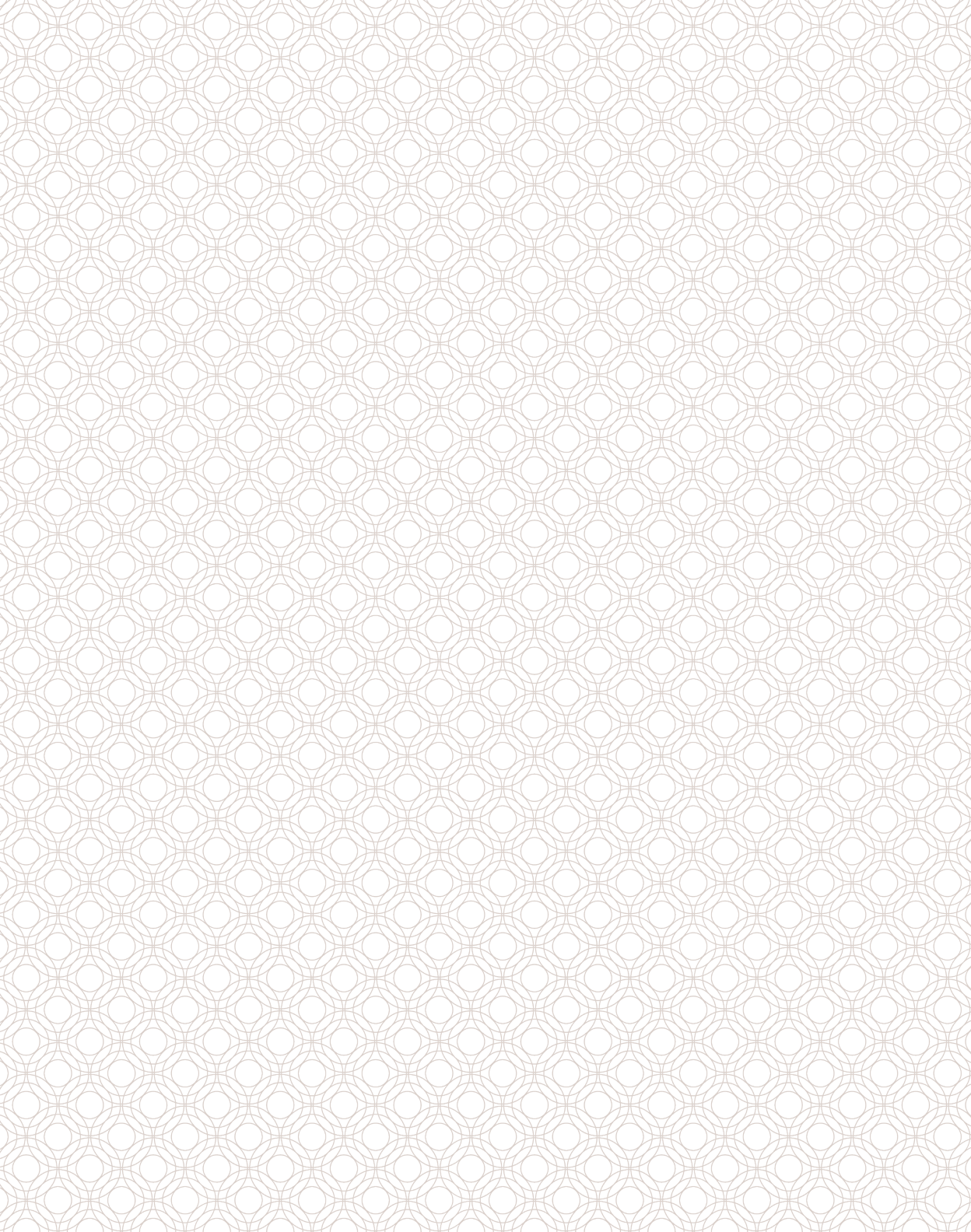
As I am getting ready to graduate from college, I have been praying about how I can continue to be a light for more girls.

Christina reached out to me and asked if I would come alongside her as she created this newly revised version of *Cultivating Pearls* you now hold in your hands. She asked if I would create the illustrations for each lesson that will help you process and explore. I immediately said YES, knowing it would be an opportunity to come alongside more girls as this book finds its way into your hands.

As you begin your own creative journey of transformation, I pray that the words on each page would not only speak truth to your mind, but they would soak into your heart. I pray that the Word of God would become like precious jewels that continually show you new things about the Kingdom of God. I pray that the drawings and word pictures in this book would be seen as something beautiful and will inspire you with fresh ideas to create a beautiful reflection of what is happening in your heart. I pray that your relationship with Jesus grows deep and wide, and that you will experience his love in a radical way and desire to make him the center of your life. I pray your spirit will hear Jesus calling you to come to him, and you will respond and make your way to the River of the Water of Life where you will be Purified, Empowered, Anointed, Rooted, and filled with Life to shine for others.

You are seen. You are known. You are worth it. You are loved.

Open up your heart as you begin your own creative journey of transformation, because it is going to be a beautiful one!



# TOOLS FOR YOUR JOURNEY

## 1. Come as You Are

Wherever you find yourself in your mind or heart or life as you hold this book in your hands, the best place to begin your journey is right where you are. The pages of this book are filled with lessons that will become tools to encourage, empower, and equip you on your journey of learning how to connect with God, grow in your faith, and discover your unique purpose in this world.

## 2. What You Need

Your Bible, a *Cultivating Pearls* book, a bunch of colored pencils, and a writing pen. In addition to practical items, you will need consistency, an open heart, and a desire to grow.

## 3. Do I Need to Be Creative?

When I use the word *creative*, I am not referring to being an artist. I use the word *creative* to define a unique way of processing your thoughts, ideas, and feelings through words, drawings, and color. I believe we all have a creative outlet, but how that flows out of each of us is in a very unique way. So the answer is, you already are creative. This book will inspire you to discover how.

## 4. Discover

Every lesson is created to flow into the next, bringing the whole journey together in a beautiful way at the end. Everything you do on the way will

become your own reflection of discovering how to listen and respond to the truth of God's Word as it transforms your life.

## 5. Express Yourself

After I share a lesson I will ask a variety of questions. This is not the kind of book where you just read something and fill in the blank. This is a book of lessons shared and questions asked, and you go on your own personal creative journey to answer them. Some of you may be more inclined to write or journal. I encourage you to also try to sketch something to get a visual to go with your words. Some of you may be more inclined to draw. I encourage you to also add words that describe what you are drawing.

## 6. Thoughts and Emotions

When we write, we are primarily using our minds to express our thoughts. When we take time to consider what drawing or visual may represent what we are thinking, we tap into our hearts.

## 7. Transformation in Mind and Heart

When we read a verse of Scripture, it is important to understand what we are reading so it has the power to transform our minds. When we think about a verse of Scripture and try to come up with a visual way to illustrate this verse and then find ourselves in that picture, it helps the transformation flow into the depths of our hearts as well. My hope for you is that you will not only know about the Kingdom of God, but that the beauty of the Kingdom of God will become the very center of your heart and flow into all the pieces of your life.

## 8. Revelation 21 and 22

Throughout your journey there will be several times I ask you to reflect on a passage in Revelation 21 and 22. These chapters are included on the following pages in case you don't happen to have your Bible with you.

## REVELATION 21

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.”

And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!” And then he said to me, “Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.” And he also said, “It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.

“But cowards, unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars—their fate is in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

Then one of the seven angels who held the seven bowls containing the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come with me! I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”

So he took me in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and he showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God and sparkled like a precious stone—like jasper as clear as crystal. The city wall was broad and high, with twelve gates guarded by twelve angels. And the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written on the gates. There were three gates on each side—east, north, south, and west. The wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The angel who talked to me held in his hand a gold measuring stick to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. When he measured it, he found it was a square, as wide as it was long. In fact, its length and width and height were each 1,400 miles. Then he measured the walls and found them to be 216 feet thick (according to the human standard used by the angel).

The wall was made of jasper, and the city was pure gold, as clear as glass. The wall of the city was built on foundation stones inlaid with twelve precious stones: the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoptase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst.

The twelve gates were made of pearls—each gate from a single pearl! And the main street was pure gold, as clear as glass.

I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light. The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the world will enter the city in all their glory. Its gates will never be closed at the end of day because there is no night there. And all the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city. Nothing evil will be allowed to enter, nor anyone who practices shameful idolatry and dishonesty—but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.



## REVELATION 22

Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations.

No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him. And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. And there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever.

Then the angel said to me, “Everything you have heard and seen is trustworthy and true. The Lord God, who inspires his prophets, has sent his angel to tell his servants what will happen soon.”

“Look, I am coming soon! Blessed are those who obey the words of prophecy written in this book.”

I, John, am the one who heard and saw all these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me. But he said, “No, don’t worship me. I am a servant of God, just like you and your brothers the prophets, as well as all who obey what is written in this book. Worship only God!”

Then he instructed me, “Do not seal up the prophetic words in this book, for the time is near. Let the one who is doing harm continue to do harm; let the one who is vile continue to be vile; let the one who is righteous continue to live righteously; let the one who is holy continue to be holy.”

“Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”

Blessed are those who wash their robes. They will be permitted to enter through the gates of the city and eat the fruit from the tree of life. Outside

the city are the dogs—the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idol worshipers, and all who love to live a lie.

“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this message for the churches. I am both the source of David and the heir to his throne. I am the bright morning star.”

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” Let anyone who hears this say, “Come.” Let anyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who desires drink freely from the water of life. And I solemnly declare to everyone who hears the words of prophecy written in this book: If anyone adds anything to what is written here, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book. And if anyone removes any of the words from this book of prophecy, God will remove that person’s share in the tree of life and in the holy city that are described in this book.

He who is the faithful witness to all these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon!”

Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!

May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s holy people.



LET'S BEGIN

YOUR

*Journey*



# Purified

## **P**URIFIED IN THE RIVER OF THE WATER OF LIFE *Called, Loved, Accepted, Forgiven, Whole*

### THE RIVER OF LIFE

Then the angel showed me THE RIVER of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, THE TREE OF LIFE with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The LEAVES of the tree were for the HEALING of the nations.

REVELATION 22:1-2, ESV (EMPHASIS ADDED)

### AN INVITATION TO COME

The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

REVELATION 22:17, ESV

The beginning to your beautiful creative journey of transformation starts with an invitation from Jesus!

## PREPARING YOUR HEART

### *Worship*

To worship God is to celebrate God's perfection. Much of the time we spend our time in prayer and gratitude for things pertaining to ourselves. Worship helps us shift our focus upward, to God alone. Focus your attention upon God your Father and celebrate the wonder of who he is.

Worship is to feel in your heart and express in some appropriate manner a humbling but delightful sense of admiring awe and astonished wonder and overpowering love in the presence of the most ancient Mystery, that majesty which philosophers call the First Cause but which we call Our Father Which Art in Heaven.

A.W. TOZER

Worship prepares my heart to listen and learn from the truth of God's Word and feel his presence by my side. Worship is declaring the goodness and glory of God. Sometimes it helps me to put on worship music<sup>1</sup> and I speak the truth of the words, and other times I worship God with words that flow from my heart. This establishes an environment where I am in a quiet place with Jesus and he does the inner work of transforming my life like a pearl.

HANNAH HART, A COLLEGE STUDENT LEADER

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<sup>1</sup>You can find a list of recommended worship songs on our website, River + Pearls | [RiverandPearls.org](http://RiverandPearls.org)

## *Prayer*

The process of creating your pearl starts with a single grain of sand entering the living membrane of an oyster. In spiritual terms, this is an invitation for you to come to God in prayer. Prayer is communication between you and God. This will become the foundation from which new growth in your life will be cultivated. Prayer forms a partnership between you and God where you can be honest about all that is in your heart and mind. This opens up an invitation for the Spirit of God to flow into the deeper places of who you are. Through prayer you get to know each other. You talk. He listens. He talks. You listen. You ask him questions. He asks you questions. You surrender. He shapes. You reevaluate. He molds.

Jesus is inviting you to come to this beautiful River of Life that flows from God's throne to receive what you need for your journey. Whether you feel close or far away, the lessons in this Purified section will help you hear the Spirit of God calling you to come to him and be touched by his love. No matter what your background or your past or current situation is like, I encourage you to stop and listen.

Read and meditate on Revelation 21 and 22 on pages xxiii–xxvi.

When I think of where God is, based on Revelation 22:1, I think of the mountains, where pure, clean water flows from the purest source.

## THE RIVER OF LIFE

Reflect on these verses again:

### THE RIVER OF LIFE

Then the angel showed me THE RIVER of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, THE TREE OF LIFE with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The LEAVES of the tree were for the HEALING of the nations.

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### AN INVITATION TO COME

The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

REVELATION 22:17, ESV

Look at the picture to your right. Imagine Jesus is at the river calling you to come to him. Where do you imagine you are?

Place yourself in the picture either with a drawing or with a symbol of a pearl representing your life. Add anything else that comes to mind.

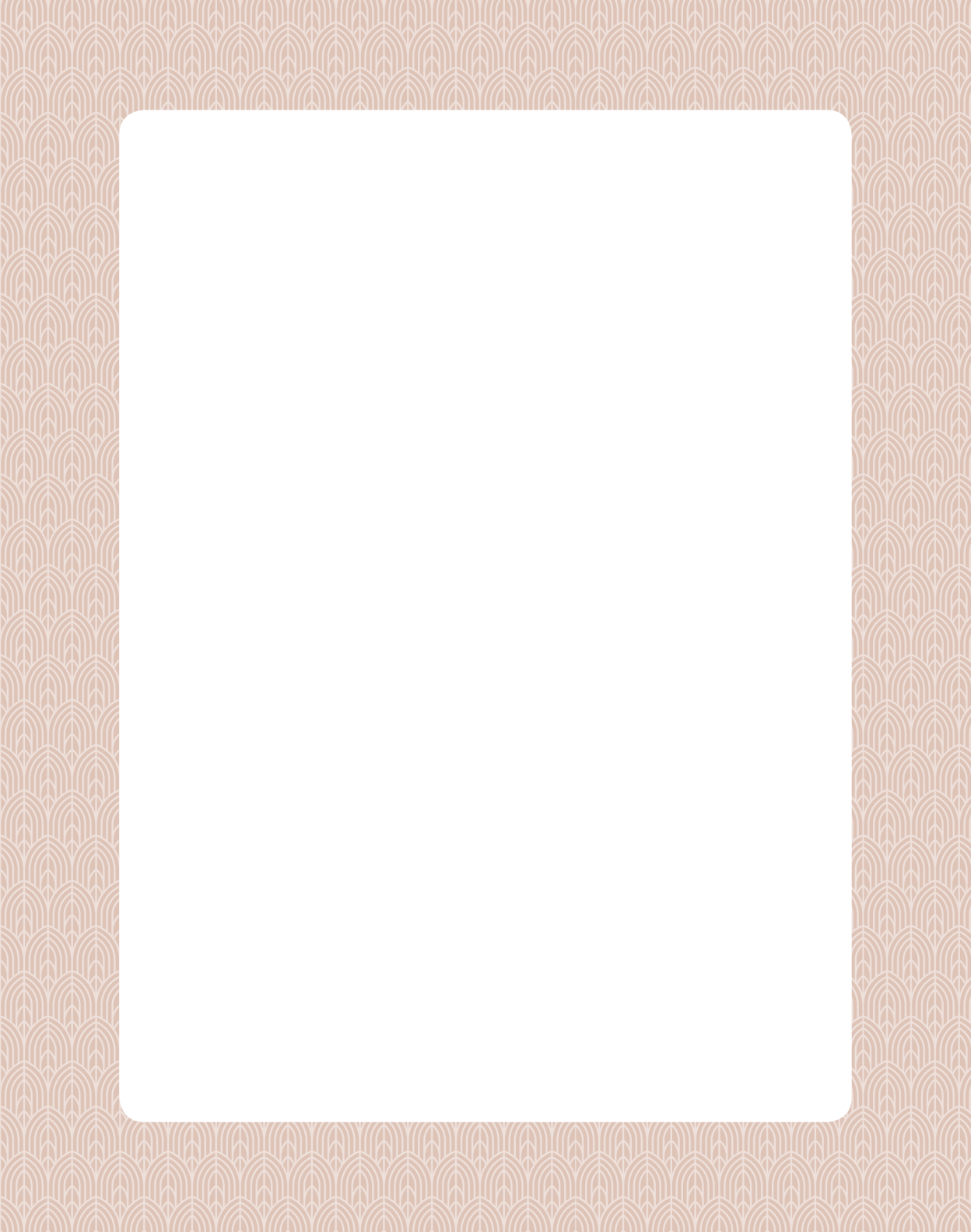
Color in the drawing, choosing colors that reflect how you feel.

Write the five key words for this lesson somewhere in the picture: *Called, Loved, Accepted, Forgiven, Whole.*









## MAKING A PERSONAL CONNECTION

The previous lesson was focused on introducing you to the beauty of the Kingdom of God. As you meditated on the verses in Revelation 21 and 22, it was my hope that you could imagine the beautiful river that flows from the throne of God. That you would stop and listen and hear Jesus calling you in your heart to come to him.

Over the years, I have noticed many girls feeling far from God. It was not always because they were choosing to live apart from God's ways but somewhere, deep in their spirit, they felt as if he was so far away and it was up to them to somehow reach him. It seemed impossible. They wanted to know him. They just didn't know how.

The good news of the gospel is that we do not need to be the ones to reach out to God and try to find a way to get to him. He has come to us through his Son, Jesus Christ.

FOR *God loved the world* SO MUCH

THAT HE GAVE HIS ONE AND ONLY SON,

SO THAT EVERYONE WHO

BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT PERISH

*but have eternal life.*

John 3:16

**It is through your faith and belief in Jesus that the beauty of the Kingdom of God begins to transform your life.**

Wherever you are in your life right now, take a moment to close your eyes and imagine what you learned about the Kingdom of God in this session. When you believe in Jesus, he brings the beauty of his Kingdom into your heart.

On the following spread, use the left side to write a prayer and/or journal your thoughts.

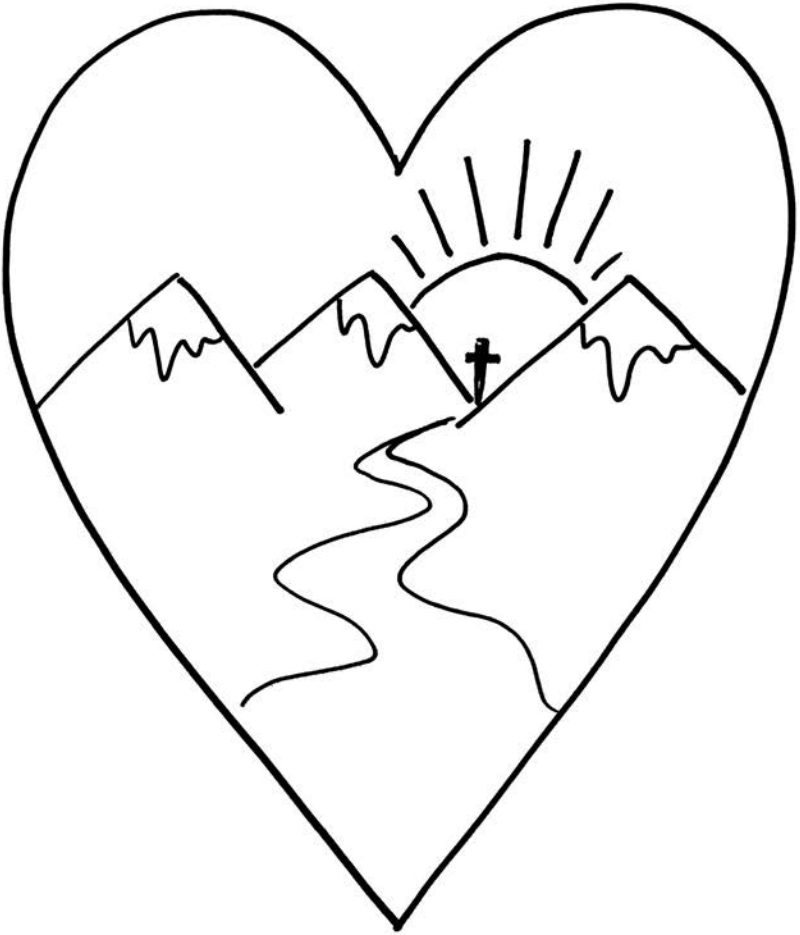
Color the picture on the right side, thinking about the words in this lesson.

The beautiful blue river is like a symbol of the Holy Spirit flowing like water into the cracks and crevices of your heart to bring comfort, healing, and peace.

The mountains represent God our Father. There is a mystery to God and still many things to search for and discover about him. God is always calling out to us, inviting us to explore more about him and give us new perspectives.

The sunrise casting light over the mountain peaks represents Jesus, the Light of the World. He asks us to follow him, and he provides a path for us to know where to go and how to live according to his Kingdom.





FOR THE LORD GOD IS A

*sun and shield:*

THE LORD WILL GIVE

*grace and glory:*

NO GOOD THING WILL HE

WITHHOLD FROM THOSE THAT

*walk uprightly.*

Psalm 84:11, KJV