

A KINGDOM LIFESTYLE RELEASE



Selah: Growing Up to Be a Child

*A Call to the Body of Christ to stop
performing and start belonging.*

TIMILEHIN IDOWU

Youth Mentor · Pastor · Transformational Writer

Selah: Growing Up to Be a Child

THE BECOMING GREAT SERIES

Timilehin Idowu

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SELAH: GROWING UP TO BE A CHILD

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Selah!



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A Call to the Body of Christ to Stop Performing and Start

Belonging

by Timilehin Idowu

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To every believer who has grown so tall in religious accomplishment
that they have forgotten how small they must first become.



To those who are tired of performing for a Father who never asked for
a performance.



And to the Father — who calls us not servants, but sons and
daughters.

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5 Before We Begin

(Or: Why This Book May Embarrass You In Public)

Let me warn you about something before you turn another page.

If you read this book on public transport, in a coffee shop, or anywhere that sane adults congregate, you may find yourself laughing out loud at something that is simultaneously absolutely serious. You may find yourself pausing mid -chapter with that expression on your face — the one where your eyebrows go up and your jaw comes slightly forward and you stare into the middle distance as if God just said something directly into your frontal lobe. You may even cry. Possibly all three in the same paragraph.

You have been warned.

Now. A word about the title.

Selah is a Hebrew word that appears seventy -one times in the book of Psalms — and three further times in the book of Habakkuk, for a total of seventy -four occurrences across Scripture. Most scholars believe it is a musical instruction — a pause, a rest, a moment to stop and let what was just sung actually sink in. Like a full stop that means serious business. Like a traffic light that the psalmist insists you cannot run.

But here is what strikes me about Selah: it appears in the middle of worship. Not at the end. Not when everything is resolved and everyone is comfortable. Right in the middle of the raw, honest, searching prayers of David — right when the melody is climbing toward something important — God interrupts and says: Stop. Think. Breathe. Let this land.

This book is a Selah.

It is an interruption in the middle of our very busy, very productive, very accomplished Christian lives, asking us one question that Jesus

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6 Himself made the entry requirement for the Kingdom of God — a question that most of us, frankly, have been too grown-up to ask:

Have I actually become like a child?

Now, before you put this book down and go look for something more theological, hear me out.

This is not a book about being simple, naive, or — God forbid — childish. The Church already has more than enough of that, and it is not pretty. We have all met the person who has been a 'baby in Christ' for twenty-three years and seems quite proud of it. That is not what Jesus had in mind when He pointed to a small child and said 'of such is the kingdom of God.'

What Jesus had in mind was far more radical, far more challenging, and — I dare say — far more hilarious in its implications than we have ever taken the time to sit with. He was pointing at something that most adults — including most Christians — have quietly and efficiently trained themselves out of: absolute trust, unashamed dependence, the courage to be small in the presence of Someone great.

(If you are already feeling slightly defensive about this, that is actually

Twelve chapters. Ten exploring what it means to be born and to be a child in God's house. Two that take us into our full inheritance as firstborn sons and daughters — joint heirs with Christ, carriers of His very mind. And woven through every chapter: the conviction that the Church does not need more sophisticated adults. It needs more genuine children.

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Selah. Read slowly. Keep your Bible close. And try not to read this alone — because some of what is on these pages is so alive it needs a second person in the room.

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◆ ◆ ◆

In which God tells a very important man to start over, and the man is absolutely baffled



"Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly I say to you, unless

someone is born from above, he is not able to see the kingdom of God."

— *John 3:3, TPT*

Nicodemus came at night. Which tells you everything you need to know about his problem.

Here is a man who, in every measurable way, had his life together.

He was a Pharisee — the religious elite of his day, the kind of person who had memorised the entire Torah before most children had learned to tie their sandals. He was a ruler of the Jews, a member of the Sanhedrin — the ancient equivalent of sitting on the board of the most prestigious institution in the nation. He was respected, learned, revered. By every standard available to his culture, he was spiritually successful.

And he came to Jesus at night.

Not because the days were too hot. Not because he had a scheduling conflict. He came at night because he did not want to be seen. A man of his standing could not afford to be publicly associated with a Galilean carpenter-turned-rabbi who was overturning tables and befriending fishermen. His reputation was too important. His position too valuable. He would come — but quietly, please, after dark, and could we keep this between us?

(We should not be too hard on Nicodemus. Many of us have had our own 'Nicodemus moments' — sneaking into a prayer meeting, being

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9 conspicuously vague about what we were doing on Sunday morning when colleagues asked. Spiritual stealth is older than we think.)

But here is the thing about God: He will meet you in the dark.

He just will not let you stay there.

Jesus receives this complicated, prestigious, genuinely curious man with complete grace. He does not expose him publicly. He does not say 'Finally! I was wondering when the Sanhedrin would send a representative.' He simply engages him. And then He says something that demolishes every wall of self-sufficiency Nicodemus has carefully constructed over a lifetime of religious achievement:

"'You must be born again.'"

— John 3:7, TPT

Four words. And in those four words, God essentially looked at everything Nicodemus had built — every scroll memorised, every fast observed, every sacrifice brought, every year of faithful theological precision — and said: Start over. Not a better version of what you have. Start. Over.

The Most Offensive and Liberating Thing Jesus Ever Said

Nobody likes being told to start over. Ask anyone who has ever installed a software update at eleven o'clock at night.

The instruction to be born again is, on first hearing, the most flattening thing Jesus could say to a religious person. It is not 'well done, now let us refine your theology.' It is a total reset. A brand new beginning. God saying, with all the tenderness and all the ruthlessness of a loving Father: the version of you that arrived here through effort, reputation, and religious performance cannot enter what I am offering. A new you must come.

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10 And right here is where the most offensive thing becomes the most liberating thing.

Because if the entrance requirement were theological mastery, Nicodemus would qualify and most of us would not. If the requirement were years of faithful observance, the elderly saint would qualify and the new convert would wait outside. If it were moral purity, we are all going home.

But if the requirement is a birth — something that happens to you, not something you achieve — then everyone stands on the same ground. The scholar and the street dweller. The bishop and the beginner. The one who has followed God for forty years and the one who just heard His name for the first time today. All must be born again. And all can be.

(This is the beautiful democracy of grace. Your theological degree, your twenty-year church attendance record, and your shelf of Christian books do not get you in. The same thing that gets the thief on the cross gets you in. His name is Jesus, and He is the door.)

What Exactly Is This Birth?

Nicodemus asked the question we all want to ask but are too sophisticated to voice: 'How can a man be born when he is old?'

The Greek word Jesus uses is *anōthen*. It carries two meanings simultaneously: 'again' and 'from above.' The new birth is not a second attempt at the same kind of life. It is a birth of an entirely different origin. It comes from above. Initiated by Heaven, not engineered by human effort.

Think about what happens when a child is born. The child contributes absolutely nothing to its own birth. The mother labours — but the child simply arrives. It brings no résumé, no prior achievements, no evidence of good character. It comes naked, needy, entirely dependent. And yet from the moment of its arrival,

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11 it carries the family nature. The father's features are written into its face before it has done a single thing to deserve them.

This is the portrait of the new birth. When we come to God — not to improve ourselves but to be born — we receive a new nature. The Spirit of the living God takes up residence within us and begins writing the family resemblance into our lives.

''But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave

the right to become children of God. They are reborn — not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.''

— John 1:12–13, TPT

Do you see what that says? The right to become. It is a gift, not a reward. Extended to the believing, not earned by the righteous.

Many people in our churches have been through a 'Christian experience' without ever being born. They know the language, the songs, the moral framework, the community — without ever crossing the threshold of a genuine new birth. They know about the Father without knowing the Father. They speak the language of sonship without having been adopted into the family.

(There is a difference between attending a family's dinner every Sunday for twenty years and actually being born into that family. One makes you a very familiar guest. The other makes you an heir. The Father is not interested in familiar guests. He wants children at the table.)

— SELAH —

Before we turn the page, let this question land where it is

actually asking to land.

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12 Not: 'Have I prayed a prayer at some point?' The real question is: Is

there a living, active, daily reality of being a child of God within me? Does something in me respond when the Father speaks? Is there a hunger in me that religion alone cannot satisfy?

If there is uncertainty — good. Uncertainty at this level is not weakness. It is honesty. And honesty is always the first step toward the birth that changes everything.

If the answer is yes — do not rush past it. Pause. Because the miracle of being born again is so normalised in our church culture that we have stopped marvelling at it. You were dead and became alive. You were outside and became a child of the house. You were unknown and became known by name. That is not background information. That is the most important thing that has ever happened to you.

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13 Chapter 2



Born of Water and the Spirit

The double miracle that theologians argue about and children have always understood



"I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God

unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."

— *John 3:5–6, NIV*

Nicodemus had barely recovered from the first bombshell when Jesus dropped the second one.

He had just been told that he — a lifelong expert in the things of God — needed to start over from birth. Now Jesus explains what this birth actually involves: water and Spirit. Two dimensions. Two realities. One entrance.

I am going to be honest: theologians have been arguing about what 'born of water' means since approximately the second century, and they show absolutely no signs of stopping. Is it water baptism? Is it the Word of God? Is it the natural birth? Each view has brilliant defenders with excellent reasons.

(There is something endearingly human about the fact that Christians have taken a statement Jesus made about how to get into the Kingdom and turned it into a reason to divide the Kingdom. The Lord must look down at some of our denominational debates and feel something between amusement and deep, deep sighing.)

But let us step off the map of theological debate and onto the actual territory Jesus is describing.

Whatever the precise referent of 'water,' Jesus is communicating something unmistakably layered: entering the Kingdom is not a

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14 single event. It is a complete transformation. There is a visible, declared, embodied dimension — and there is a hidden, sovereign, Spirit-breathed miracle. An outward reality and an inward revolution. And you need both.

The Water Story

Water in the Bible is never just water. It is always doing

something.

Noah passes through water into a new world. Israel walks through the Red Sea out of slavery into freedom. Naaman dips seven times in the Jordan and comes up clean where he had been diseased. John stands in the river calling people to publicly identify with repentance. And Jesus — who needs no cleansing whatsoever — submits Himself to baptism, consecrating the act for everyone who will come after Him.

Water baptism is the moment when a believer stands up in front of heaven, earth, and every principality watching from the gallery of the unseen, and declares: I have changed families. I died to the old self. I belong to Him now.

''We were therefore buried with him through baptism into

death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.''

— Romans 6:4, NIV

Baptism is not a graduation ceremony. It is not a church membership requirement. It is a death announcement and a birth announcement on the same day. The old me? Gone. The new me? Watch this. (Some of us got baptised at nine years old because our Sunday school teacher said it was time, and we were more concerned about whether our hair would be ruined than what we were declaring to the principalities. And that is okay — God receives even the wobbly,

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15 unsophisticated acts of sincere faith. He has always done His best work with slightly confused people who are genuinely willing.)

The water says: I belong to another family now. My Father's name is on me.

Children understand belonging. A child who knows who their father is walks differently. They have a security that has nothing to do with their own strength — they can afford to be small and vulnerable because the one standing behind them is neither small nor vulnerable. Baptism seals this identity before the watching world and the watching darkness.

The Spirit Story

Now here is where it gets gloriously out of control.

If the water is the declaration, the Spirit is the revolution. And the Spirit, as Jesus points out, is not subject to our scheduling or our careful programme management. 'The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going.' (John 3:8, NIV). Jesus is essentially saying: the Spirit is not tame. Do not try to domesticate this.

When the Holy Spirit moves into a human life, the result is not a politely improved version of the previous resident. Paul calls it a new creation — not renovation, not reformation, not a fresh coat of spiritual paint. New creation. The same material, an entirely different creature.

"'Now, if anyone is enfolded into Christ, he has become

an entirely new creation. All that is related to the old order has vanished. Behold, everything is fresh and new.'"

— 2 Corinthians 5:17, TPT

But the most tender thing Paul says about the Spirit is not that He is the Spirit of power — though He is. Not the Spirit of

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16 holiness — though He is that too. He calls Him the Spirit of adoption.

"So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful

slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, Abba, Father. For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children."

— *Romans 8:15–16, NLT*

When the Holy Spirit comes to live in you, one of the first things He does is whisper your new name in your ear. Not slave. Not orphan. Not religious employee. Child. Son. Daughter. And He teaches your heart to cry Abba — the Aramaic word that a small child uses for their daddy. Not the formal address of religious duty — the word you use when you run to someone who has always caught you. (The God who set galaxies spinning has given His own Spirit the job of teaching you to call Him Daddy. If that does not short-circuit your religious circuits, nothing will.)

When the Two Work Together

Here is something the Body of Christ needs to recover: you need both. Water and Spirit. Declaration and reality.

A faith that is all Spirit with no water can become untethered and mystical in the unhealthy sense — all inner experience, no accountability, no embodied commitment to a community of believers. Some Christians have been 'Spirit-filled' for thirty years and have never told a single person about it. That is not the Spirit; that is shyness wearing a spiritual costume.

A faith that is all water with no Spirit — all ritual, all form, all

outward observance, all church attendance and Bible knowledge and clean living, but no inner fire — is religion. And religion, as the

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17 history of the Pharisees demonstrates with painful precision, can leave you knowing everything about God and missing Him entirely. (If you only have the water story and it is thirty years old and nothing has happened since — it may be time for a conversation with the Father about the Spirit. And if you only have the Spirit experience but you have been avoiding the water because of what your hair will look like — also a conversation worth having.)

— SELAH —

You have a water story? Good. Write it down. Do not let it fade into the background of a busy life. It is the day you died and the day you were raised, and it deserves to be remembered with the reverence of a memorial and the joy of a birthday.

And you have a Spirit story? Even better. The Spirit that raised Christ from the dead lives in you. Not visits you. Lives in you. That is not background information. That is the most important thing about you.

Born of water. Born of the Spirit. Declared and alive. This is how the adventure begins.

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18 Chapter 3



Absolute Trust

The child's most powerful weapon — and the adult's most carefully guarded loss



""He called a little child to him, and placed the child

among them. And he said: Truly I tell you, unless you
change and become like little children, you will never
enter the kingdom of heaven.""

— Matthew 18:2 –3, NIV

The disciples were having a very human conversation about a
very human problem.

Who is the greatest? It is the ancient question. The one that has built
empires and destroyed friendships. The one that drives office
politics and church politics with identical energy. The one we dress
up in spiritual language — 'I just feel called to greater responsibility'
— but which, if we are honest, is the same competition that drove it
when we were children arguing over who got the biggest piece of
cake.

Jesus did not answer with a sermon. He called a small child over and
placed that child in the middle of the grown men's argument. These
serious disciples, debating the hierarchy of the Kingdom — and then
there is a small child standing among them, looking up with the
unself-conscious curiosity that only children have. And Jesus says:
you want to know what greatness looks like in My Kingdom? Look
down.

(The disciples must have had spectacular reactions to this. Peter
probably nodded too quickly and too enthusiastically, already thinking
of how he would apply this to himself. Thomas looked confused —
which was his default expression. And at least one of them had the
good grace to look genuinely humbled.)

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19 What Makes a Child So Powerful?

Of everything that a child is — curious, imaginative, wonderfully unselfconscious — the quality Jesus is pointing to is trust.

Not the uninformed trust of someone who has never been hurt. But the spontaneous, instinctive, total trust of a child who has known a good father and has no reason to doubt him. A child who trusts does not make it a decision each morning. They simply trust. It is their default setting. It is who they are.

Watch a young child with a loving parent. The child does not wake up wondering if the parent has thought through the day's provision strategy. The child wakes up, runs downstairs, and expects breakfast. Because breakfast has always been there. Because the parent has always been there.

When the child falls, they reach up. Not sideways, not backward, not down. Up. Toward the one who has always caught them.

“He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps

you will not slumber.”

— Psalm 121:3, NKJV

The tragedy of growing up spiritually is that we quietly replace this primal trust with a sophisticated self-management system. We learn the principles. We understand the laws of sowing and reaping. We develop our spiritual disciplines, our prayer strategies, our warfare frameworks. And then, without ever making a conscious decision about it, we begin to rely on our understanding of how God works rather than on God Himself.

This is not maturity. This is religious adulthood wearing the costume

of faith. And Jesus — who has no interest in our costumes — says the door to the Kingdom is not opened by theological sophistication.

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20 It is opened by the child's posture: hands open, face up, completely

dependent.

(There is a reason 'let go and let God' became a cliché so quickly: because it is exactly right, and also because nothing is harder for a responsible adult to actually do. The phrase is simple. The practice is a daily act of warfare against every instinct the modern world has trained into us.)

Trust in the Dark

Here is where the child's trust becomes most radical and most counter-cultural.

Children trust even when they do not understand. A parent makes a decision the child cannot comprehend — an early bedtime, a cancelled outing, a move to a new city — and the child may protest with considerable volume. But underneath the protest, if the relationship is good, the trust remains. The parent knows something the child does not. The parent sees further. The parent loves enough to make difficult calls.

How frequently do we withhold our trust from God until He explains Himself? 'Lord, I will trust You — as soon as I understand what You are doing.' Which is not trust. That is conditional cooperation. And children do not negotiate those terms.

""Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your

own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.""

— *Proverbs 3:5 –6, NIV*

The order matters enormously. The instruction is not 'understand God and then trust Him.' It is 'trust Him and stop leaning on your own understanding.' Our reasoning, however impressive, is a very small container for a very large God.

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21 (Our theology is the map. God is the territory. The map is useful — vital, even. But at some point you have to fold up the map and walk into the territory. In the territory, the most important thing is not whether you understand every feature of the landscape but whether you trust the Guide.)

The Vulnerability of Trust

Here is something nobody likes to talk about: genuine trust is vulnerability.

A child who trusts is exposed. If the parent is unworthy, the child will be hurt. We understand why adults build walls. But God is not an unreliable parent who is distracted by His own needs or limited by His own capacity. His faithfulness is not a mood. It is a nature. He does not have bad days. He does not tire. He does not forget. He is safe. Completely, utterly, without exception, safe. And the invitation to trust Him like a child is not a romantic ideal dreamed up by people who have not suffered. It is the testimony of every saint who has walked through the furnace. The report from the field: He is faithful.

""So here's what I've learned through it all: Leave all your

cares and anxieties at the feet of the Lord, and measureless grace will strengthen you.""

— *Psalm 55:22, TPT*

— SELAH —

What are you currently managing that you were never asked to carry? What circumstance have you been trying to control, explain, or negotiate with God about, that a child would simply hand over to their Father?

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22 Children make terrible project managers. They are absolutely brilliant at receiving.

Perhaps it is time to stop managing and start receiving. The Father's arms are not a last resort. They have always been the first option.

They were the first option before you had a problem, and they will be the first option on the other side of the one you are carrying right now.

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23 Chapter 4



The Kingdom of the Small

Why God consistently, deliberately, and almost comically chooses the least likely candidates



"For this is the secret of the kingdom of heaven — it

belongs to those who become like these little ones."

— *Matthew 19:14, TPT*

God has a very long and very entertaining history of choosing people nobody else would choose.

He chose Abraham — old enough to know better than to start a new nation — and told him to leave everything he knew and walk toward a country He would show him later. The instruction was essentially: go. The destination is on a need -to-know basis. Abraham went. He was seventy -five.

He chose Moses — who had a speech impediment — to be the mouthpiece of Heaven to the most powerful ruler on earth. Moses immediately compiled a comprehensive list of reasons why God had obviously made an administrative error. God's response was to give him Aaron as a public speaking partner — a concession to the objection, but not a withdrawal of the call.

He chose David — the youngest, left minding sheep while his brothers presented themselves for prophetic inspection — and anointed him king while Saul was still on the throne. He chose Gideon, who was hiding in a winepress from the Midianites when the angel called him 'mighty warrior.' Possibly the most ironic opening line in the entire Bible.

(There is a divine pattern here that should be either tremendously encouraging or deeply unsettling, depending on your current life

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24 circumstances. If you feel overlooked, underqualified, and slightly hidden from the world — congratulations. You may be exactly where God does His best recruiting.)

The Kingdom Belongs to the Small

Children are small. Not because they lack potential, but because they have not yet insisted on being anything else.

They have not yet learned the posture of self -promotion, of

credential -management, of positioning themselves strategically in the sight of important people. They simply are what they are. And what they are is small, curious, dependent, and utterly present in the moment they are in.

In every human system, greatness is earned upward. You begin at the bottom. You accumulate credentials, achievements, influence, territory. The more you have, the more important you are. The higher you climb, the closer to the top.

Jesus spent three years building a community of followers and then told them: the greatest among you is the servant of all. He took a towel and washed feet. He blessed children that the disciples were shooing away as unimportant. He engaged a Samaritan woman — someone who checked every wrong box in the social hierarchy of His day — and offered her living water He had not yet fully offered the Pharisees.

"'But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be

a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave."

— Matthew 20:26 –27, NLT

Notice Jesus does not say 'among you it should be different' as a moral aspiration. He says 'it will be different' — as a statement of Kingdom design.

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25 The children of God live by a different physics. The laws of spiritual gravity in the Kingdom run in reverse. The one who humbles themselves is exalted. The one who exalts themselves is humbled. The merciful receive mercy. The pure in heart see God. The child

who trusts inherits the Kingdom.

(This is why attempts to build Kingdom -style influence using world -style methods are so consistently and spectacularly unsuccessful. You cannot use the world's ladder to climb to Heaven's destination. The world's ladder goes up. The Kingdom's first rung is in the other direction entirely, and it is called: I need help.)

Becoming Small on Purpose

The interesting thing about what Jesus is asking is that it requires a choice. He does not say 'be born small.' He says 'change and become like little children.'

Becoming. Present continuous. An active, ongoing, deliberate orientation toward the posture of a child before a Father. It is not the absence of maturity — it is the presence of a specific kind of maturity: the maturity to know that before God, you are always the child.

The elder statesman of faith who has walked with God for fifty years and still approaches the throne room with the wide-eyed wonder of someone who cannot quite believe they are allowed to be there — that person has understood this.

— SELAH —

Sit quietly for five minutes and simply let yourself be a child. Not a child performing spirituality. Not a child with a prayer list. Just a child. Present with a Father who is present with you. No agenda. No pressure to produce a spiritual experience.

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26 Just the radical act of being small in the presence of Someone great, and finding — as every child who has truly known a good father will tell you — that being small in the right arms is the safest place in

You simply have to be what you already are: His child. That is, on its own, more than enough.

27 Chapter 5

[illegible]

knock and the door will be opened to you."

There are very few things a child is shy about asking for.

(At some point between childhood and adulthood, most of us

contracted a peculiar spiritual condition that might be called 'performative self-sufficiency' — the conviction that we should not

bother God with the small things, and should generally present ourselves to Heaven as people who have their spiritual house reasonably in order. This condition is responsible for more unanswered prayer than any lack of faith you have ever been taught about.)

Jesus' instructions about prayer are remarkable for how much they sound like parenting advice in reverse.

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28 'Ask and keep asking.' Not 'ask once, if you feel you absolutely must, and then accept that God is sovereign and probably has reasons.'

Ask. Keep asking. Persistently. With the unsophisticated confidence of someone who believes that the one they are asking actually wants to give.

He then tells the story of a man who goes to his friend's house at midnight — midnight — and bangs on the door asking for bread. The friend eventually gets up — not because of friendship, but because of the man's persistent, unashamed audacity. Then comes the punchline that changes everything: 'And so it is with your heavenly Father.' If a grumpy sleepy friend will eventually answer persistent knocking — how much more will the Father, who is never asleep, never grumpy, and never reluctant, answer the persistent asking of His children?

What Stops Us From Asking

"'You do not have because you do not ask God.'"

— James 4:2, NIV

James does not soften this. He does not contextualise it or qualify it. You do not have because you do not ask.

It is one of the most startling sentences in the New Testament. God, who knows our needs before we ask, still connects the receiving to the asking. He could simply give. He often does, unsolicited, out of the overflow of His goodness. But He has also, deliberately, set up a system in which the child's asking is part of the relationship, not just a transaction.

Children ask because they are in relationship. The asking is not the price of provision — it is the ongoing conversation of a family.

When a child asks their father for something, they are saying: I know you care. I know you can. I am bringing you my need because you are the person I bring my needs to. That is what prayer is.

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29 (Some of us have a prayer life that functions essentially as formal diplomatic correspondence between two parties who are slightly uncertain of the relationship terms. Whereas what God is actually after is the child who kicks the door open at breakfast time with a completely unreasonable level of cheerfulness and has three requests before they have sat down. Less correspondence, more conversation.)

Asking With Expectation

Here is a quality in the child's asking that is different from adult petitioning: the child expects an answer.

The child does not ask as a religious exercise. The child asks believing that something will happen. They come back. They check. They remind you. They have a completely impractical and entirely correct conviction that the one they asked will come through.

This is the faith that moves mountains. Not the sophisticated, carefully managed faith that has learned to protect itself from disappointment by never expecting too much. The raw, unmanaged, slightly dangerous faith of a child who takes the Father at His word.

"'But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God

alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is
as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed
by the wind.'"

— James 1:6, TPT

— SELAH —

When did you last ask God for something specific, with the
expectation that He would answer? Not a vague 'Lord, have Your
way' — which is beautiful but can also be a sophisticated way of not
actually asking for anything.

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30 Ask specifically. A name. A need. A situation. A door. Children are
embarrassingly specific. 'I want the red one. On the third shelf. The
one that makes the noise.' Ask God specifically. Expect specifically.
The Father is not irritated by the asking. He is moved by it. Because
every specific request is an act of trust — a declaration that you
believe He is real, He is present, He is able, and He is good. Ask.
And keep asking. The door is already inclined toward you.

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31 Chapter 6



Wonder Without Apology

When did we stop being amazed? And more urgently — how do we find our
way back?



"'I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because

you have hidden these things from the wise and learned,
and revealed them to little children.'"

— Matthew 11:25, NIV

There is a thing that happens to most of us, quietly, somewhere
between our first encounter with God and our five hundredth
Sunday service. We stop being amazed.

Not intentionally. Not in a single dramatic moment. It happens
gradually, through accumulated familiarity. The worship songs that
once made us weep become comfortable. The Scriptures we have
read a hundred times stop surprising us. The testimonies of healing
and breakthrough become pleasant background confirmation of
things we already believe.

We call this maturity. We treat the absence of emotional response as
evidence of theological depth. 'I am past the stage of needing
goosebumps,' we say, as if goosebumps were a beginner's
consolation prize that serious believers graduate from.

(We have developed a strange theology of spiritual coolness — where
the person who seems most unaffected by the presence of God is
somehow the most sophisticated. As if the appropriate response to
standing before the living God is to nod thoughtfully and update your
notes. Whereas the actual appropriate response is something more
along the lines of: fall on your face and try to remember to breathe.)
Children have not yet learned spiritual coolness. And God,
apparently, has a strong preference for that.

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32 Jesus looked at all the wise men and learned scholars of His day and said: the revelation of the Kingdom is being hidden from you and given to children. This is not a criticism of intelligence. It is an observation about receptivity. The scholar's mind, full of existing frameworks, can struggle to receive something that does not fit the categories it already has. The child's mind, empty of prior conclusions, receives what the scholar overlooks.

Wonder is the organ of revelation. When we stop being amazed, we stop receiving. And when we stop receiving, we start recycling — endlessly re-presenting what we already have, calling it new, wondering why the room feels stale.

What Children Are Amazed By

Children are amazed by things adults have learned to explain.

The child who has just seen a butterfly will tell you about it with an energy that is entirely disproportionate — by adult standards — to the objective significance of a butterfly. Because the child has not yet learned to rate experiences. Everything is rated maximum. The world is simply — astonishing.

The creation of a single cell is more complex than the most advanced computer system human beings have ever constructed. The fact that you are reading these words — that the light hitting your retina is being converted into electrochemical signals that your brain is interpreting as language and meaning — is a miracle happening simultaneously at approximately one hundred billion points in your neural network, right now, as a routine background process of a Tuesday morning.

And that is just your brain. We have not even started on God.

"The heavens keep telling the wonders of God, and the

skies declare what he has done."

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33 — *Psalm 19:1, CEV*

(The Psalmist was operating without a telescope, without images of galaxies fourteen billion light years away, without any knowledge of the scale of the universe as we now understand it — and he was already overwhelmed. We have more information and less wonder. This is a choice we can unmake.)

Recovering the Wonder

You do not recover wonder by trying to be more emotional. You recover it by paying attention.

Children are not more emotional than adults in the abstract — they are more present. When a child is in a moment, they are entirely in the moment. And because they are entirely present, they actually see what is there.

Pay attention to your Bible. Not to what you already know is there, but to what is actually there. Come to it as a child comes to a story — with the openness that something surprising might happen before the end.

Pay attention to prayer. Introduce silence. Sit in it without immediately filling it. The Father speaks — gently, often quietly, in registers that only become audible when we stop producing noise. (If our prayer times are entirely monologue — entirely us talking and producing and offering, without a single moment of quiet expectation that the Father might say something back — we have accidentally turned a relationship into a broadcast. The Father is not a news ticker. He is a Person who speaks. And He speaks most clearly to children who are quiet enough to hear.)

Pay attention to your daily life. The cup of tea on a morning that was

not guaranteed to come. The conversation with the person who arrived at exactly the right moment. Wonder is not reserved for the

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34 dramatic. It lives in the attentive noticing of grace everywhere grace has always been.

— SELAH —

What was the last thing about God that genuinely amazed you? Not the last thing you were supposed to be amazed by — the last thing that actually surprised you?

If it has been a while — that is not a confession of spiritual failure. It is an invitation to recovery. Ask the Father to restore the wonder of first love. Ask Him to make the familiar strange again.

He will. Because He has been watching you settle for information when He has been holding revelation. And He would rather give you the second than watch you manage forever with only the first.

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35 Chapter 7



Running to the Father

Not away, not sideways — toward. The child's instinct that sin broke and grace restores



"'But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him

and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.'"

— *Luke 15:20, NKJV*

The Prodigal Son did not walk home. He came to himself in the pigpen and he went — quickly — away from the mess, toward the Father.

This is the story of every person who has ever walked away from grace. The younger son who decides, at the peak of his confidence and the depth of his foolishness, that what the Father has is less interesting than what the world might offer. Who takes his inheritance — which is essentially asking his father to be dead in advance — and spends it on the spectacular wreckage we call 'wild living.'

Then the money runs out. As money spent on that basis always does. The famine comes. The pigpen comes. And in the pigpen, something extraordinary happens: he comes to himself.

(The phrase 'came to himself' is worth pausing on. It implies that the version of him living in rebellion was not actually him — it was a departure from self. The return to the Father is simultaneously a return to identity. You were made for this relationship. When you are not in it, you are not fully yourself. The pigpen is always a case of mistaken identity.)

He runs toward the Father. Not sideways toward a friend who might have resources. Not backward into denial. Not away into

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36 another misadventure. Toward. Despite the shame. Despite the rehearsed speech about being made a servant. Despite everything the enemy has been whispering in the pigpen about the door being closed.

And the Father — who has been watching the road, who has not

moved on — sees him 'when he was still a great way off' and runs toward him. Not walks. Runs. With the unseemly, undignified, reputation -ignoring speed of someone whose love for their child is more important than their social standing.

The Instinct Sin Breaks

One of the first things sin does to a child of God is reverse their instinct about where to go when things go wrong.

Before the fall, when Adam and Eve heard the sound of the Lord walking in the garden, what was the response? They hid. The first consequence of sin was not shame itself — it was the reversal of the child's instinct. Instead of running toward the Father's voice, they ran away from it. Instead of bringing the mess into the Presence, they took the mess out of the Presence and covered it with fig leaves.

We have been hiding ever since. We hide behind busyness. Behind spiritual performance. We hide behind shame, which whispers: after what you have done, the Father's arms are no longer open for you. (Shame says: you are too dirty to go to God. Grace says: that is literally what He specialises in. Shame says: after this, you have used up your welcome. Grace says: there is a robe and a ring and a feast with your name on it, and the only requirement is that you come home. The enemy knows that if he can keep you from running to the Father, he keeps you from the only remedy. This is a lie with a very long history and absolutely zero supporting evidence.)

The Radical Welcome

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37 The Father runs. This detail is extraordinary for reasons we might miss in a modern reading.

In the culture of Jesus' day, a dignified older man did not run.

Running was undignified. For a patriarch to run toward a disgraced

son was a public statement to everyone watching: I am willing to look undignified for this child. My love for my child is more important than my reputation.

This is the Father. He does not wait for you to clean up before He welcomes you. He runs toward you in the mess, falls on your neck, and kisses you before you have delivered your prepared speech. He does not demote you. He calls for the best robe, the family ring, the sandals, the feast. Not because you earned them — because you came home. And coming home is its own qualification.

“Let's have a celebration feast! For this son of mine was

once dead and is now alive again. He was lost but now is found!”

— Luke 15:23 –24, NIV

The child who knows this Father does not stay in the pigpen. Cannot stay in the pigpen. Because the pigpen makes no sense when there is a feast with your name on it and a Father who has been watching the road since the moment you left.

— SELAH —

Is there a pigpen you have been managing in private? Something kept out of the Presence because you cannot quite believe the robe and the ring are still available to someone who made your choices? The Father is watching the road. You are still a great way off. But He can already see you. And He is already moving.

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38 Run.

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39 Chapter 8



The Family Table

Belonging before behaving — and why the Church keeps getting this the wrong way around



"For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back

into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, Abba! Father!"

— *Romans 8:15, NIV*

Most families have a table. And at the table, something happens that is different from what happens anywhere else in the house.

At the table, you sit with your family. Not because you have earned the seat. Not because you performed adequately this week and have been granted temporary access as a result. You sit at the table because you belong to the family. That is the only qualification. That is the full qualification.

The family table is where identity is reinforced. Where stories are told. Where the older generation passes something to the younger. Where the difficult week is processed in the safety of people who are not going anywhere. Where food is shared, and shared food is a sacrament of belonging.

The Father's table works the same way.

(One of the great confusions in the Church is the belief that you have to behave your way to the table, when actually you belong your way to it. Behaviour changes at the table — because identity is confirmed

there, and changed identity eventually changes behaviour — but behaviour is never the price of admission. The price of admission was paid two thousand years ago by Someone who had no unpaid debt of His own.)

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40 Grace does not say 'clean up and then come.' Grace says 'come, and I will clean you up.'

This is the order that the Prodigal Son's father understood and that the older brother catastrophically missed. The older brother was furious — righteously, understandably, humanly furious — that a party was being thrown for someone who had spent half the estate on recklessness. From a human fairness standpoint, the older brother has a case.

But the Father's response is the most tender sentence in the parable: 'Son, you have always been with me, and everything I have is yours.' The older brother had been at the table all along without knowing it. He had been so focused on earning and performing and keeping score that he had missed the extraordinary reality of his own inheritance.

Orphan Spirit vs. Sonship Spirit

''For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the

children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.''

— Romans 8:14–15, NIV

There are two ways to live in the Father's house. You can live as a son or daughter. Or you can live as an orphan who happens to

be indoors.

The orphan spirit is not loud about its condition. It simply shapes everything you do in God's house. The orphan works to earn what the child receives freely. The orphan competes because there might not be enough — love, recognition, favour, blessing — to go around. The orphan does not ask the Father for things because they have learned not to presume. The orphan is grateful for every crumb and secretly terrified that the crumbs might stop.

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41 The child of God who has genuinely received the Spirit of adoption lives differently. The child asks freely because the Father gives freely. The child does not compete because the Father's resources are not subject to scarcity. The child rejoices when a sibling receives a blessing because one person's blessing is not another person's loss. (You can tell whether you are operating from sonship or an orphan spirit by asking one question: when someone else is celebrated, do you feel glad for them or diminished by them? Sonship says: their promotion does not threaten mine because we share the same Father. Orphan spirit says: their platform is smaller space for me. One of these postures makes you a joy to be around. The other makes you exhausting.)

The Church has an epidemic of orphan -spirit Christianity. And it is producing exhausted, competitive, performance -driven believers who are technically inside the Father's house but not experiencing the Father's table.

The Father's table is for children. Imperfect, growing, sometimes messy and occasionally catastrophically wrong children — but children. Children who know they belong, who know the food will be there, who know that the Father at the head of the table is

watching them with an expression that no religious performance
ever earned and no religious failure can remove. It is called love.
And it is set, permanently, with your name on it.

— SELAH —

Are you eating at the table or standing outside it? Do you feel that
the Father's house is home — or do you feel like a permanent guest
who is grateful not to have been asked to leave?
The spirit of adoption is the birthright of every born -again believer.
If it has not become a living reality in your experience — ask for it.
Specifically. Persistently. With the expectation that the Father who

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42 gave you the Spirit of adoption does not intend for that adoption to
remain theoretical.
You belong here. Pull up your chair.

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43 Chapter 9



Loved Like This

The Father's love — wider than theology and wilder than religion



"'Look with wonder at the depth of the Father's

marvellous love that he has lavished on us! He has called
us and made us his very own beloved children."

— 1 John 3:1, TPT

John writes this sentence and then — you can almost feel it —
he stops and stares at it.

'Look with wonder.' He does not say 'consider' or 'note' or
'acknowledge.' He says look with wonder. The kind of directed,
arrested attention you give something when it stops you. When you
cannot walk past it. When it demands your full sight.

What has arrested John's wonder? The depth of the Father's love.
And specifically — not just that it exists — but the mode of its
expression: He has called us and made us His children. Not His
students. Not His servants. Not His admirers or His employees. His
children. His very own beloved children.

John was there when Jesus walked the earth. He leaned against Him
at the Last Supper. He watched Him die. He ran to the empty tomb.
He had experienced more of Jesus in a more direct, embodied,
extraordinary way than any of us ever will in this life.

(And yet John's response to the love of God is still: look with wonder.
After everything. After the miracles, the cross, the resurrection, the
decades of ministry, the island of Patmos, the visions of Revelation.
Still wonder. Still: this stops me. If John — with everything he had
experienced — could still find the Father's love surprising, we have
no business treating it as background information.)

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44 The Four Dimensions of Love

Paul prays one of the most ambitious prayers in Scripture for
the church at Ephesus. He prays that they will have power to
comprehend — experientially, not just intellectually — how
wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

"'And I pray that you, being rooted and established in

love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

— *Ephesians 3:17–19, NIV*

Four dimensions. As if to say: whatever angle you approach it from, it extends beyond your sight. No matter how far you go in any direction, you cannot reach the edge of it. By every measurement available to a finite human mind, it is infinite.

Wide enough to include you, regardless of what you have done or who you have been. Long enough to reach back before you were born — 'before the creation of the world' is when He chose you

(Ephesians 1:4). High enough to be above every accusation, every

shame, every record of failure. Deep enough to reach you in the lowest place you have ever been. In the pigpen. In the midnight. In the season when you were so far from feeling loved that the concept seemed theoretical.

And then Paul adds, almost as an afterthought that is actually the point of everything: this love surpasses knowledge.

Which means: you will never fully understand it. You can spend a lifetime plumbing it and still not reach the bottom. The Father's love for His children is not a finite resource that can be studied until it is comprehended. It is a living, endless, always -more reality.

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45 (This is excellent news for those of us who are convinced that if God truly knew us — really, fully, in the secret places — He would love us

less. The love that surpasses knowledge has already factored in everything you are afraid He will discover. And it is still wide. Still long. Still high. Still deep. He knows. He still loves. That is the point.)

Known and Loved — Permanently

There is a staggering phrase in the first letter Paul writes to the Corinthians: 'But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.' (1

Corinthians 8:3, NIV)

Known by God. Not observed. Not tracked. Not filed under a case number in a heavenly database of human behaviour. Known. With all the intimacy and tenderness and complete -information -without -judgment that that word carries when used between people who truly love each other.

You are known. The Father knows which childhood wound you are still carrying. He knows what the failure cost you that nobody else knows about. He knows the fear that wakes you at three in the morning. He knows the hope you have stopped allowing yourself to feel because the disappointment last time was too sharp. He knows all of it. And He looks at all of it and calls you His. Beloved. Chosen. Child.

And this knowing is not conditional on your current spiritual temperature. The knowing is as permanent as the love. The love is as permanent as the covenant. And the covenant was sealed with a blood that does not expire and a resurrection that cannot be undone. You are permanently, irrevocably, always -and-without -exception known and loved.

— S E L A H —

S E L A H : G R O W I N G U P T O B E A C H I L D

Let that land. The Father has been waiting to love you in this specific, quiet, non -performing way for longer than you know. Look with wonder. He has called you His.

People were bringing infants and small children to Jesus — pushing through the crowd, holding them up, asking Him to touch them, to bless them, to pray over them. And the disciples, who were sensible adults with a programme to manage and a limited amount of the Teacher's time to steward, began to rebuke the people. Gently, no

doubt. Professionally. 'He is very busy. There are important matters.

Come back another time.'

Jesus' response is one of the sharpest things He says in the Gospels — and Mark uses the word 'indignation' specifically for this moment: 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them.' Do not hinder them.

It is a rebuke of everyone who positions themselves as the gatekeeper between a child and the Father. Everyone who adds requirements that the Father has not added. Everyone who makes the Kingdom harder to access than the King intended. Do not hinder them.

(The disciples were doing what well -meaning religious people have done throughout history: trying to protect the sacred by managing access to it. The problem is that the 'sacred' they were protecting was Jesus Himself, who was entirely capable of managing His own

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48 schedule and had repeatedly demonstrated that the people the gatekeepers turned away were precisely the people He came for.)

The Kingdom Belongs to Such as These

'Of such is the kingdom of God.' This phrase is the hinge on which the entire first section of this book has been turning.

Not 'such as these will eventually be admitted, once they grow up enough to understand it.' The kingdom belongs to such as these.

Present tense. Ownership language. These children — with their uncomplicated trust, their unashamed asking, their instinct to run toward rather than away, their capacity for wonder, their total dependence — they are the demographic of the Kingdom.

We do not graduate out of childhood before God. The elder statesman of faith who has walked with God for sixty years and the

teenager who gave their life to Christ last Tuesday are both equally children before the Father. The knowledge grows. The understanding deepens. But the fundamental posture — dependent, trusting, wondering, belonging — never changes. It was never supposed to.

One of the great markers of spiritual maturity in the Kingdom is the ability to be more fully childlike before God, not less. The person who has truly grown in God is not the one who no longer needs the Father as much — it is the one who has discovered how much they need the Father and has stopped being embarrassed about it.

A Summary in the Form of a Child

Picture the child Jesus called forward. Stand where the disciples stood and look at this child.

The child does not know how to perform. There is no spiritual posturing, no careful positioning. The child simply came when Jesus

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49 called. That itself is a sermon: when Jesus calls, children come.

Adults negotiate. Adults ask questions about implications. Adults check whether this aligns with their current priorities. Children come.

The child is entirely present. Not thinking about what happened yesterday or planning for tomorrow. Here. Now. In front of Jesus.

How much of our spiritual life is spent anywhere other than the present moment — in regret about the past, anxiety about the future, comparison with someone else's journey — when the entire Kingdom is available here, now, in this?

(The most important thing about this child is not their theological credentials. Not their ministry track record. The most important thing

is that when Jesus called, they came. Everything else is derivative of that. Just as it is with us.)

— SELAH —

Before we move to the final two chapters — pause here. Let the nine chapters sit. Let the implications be felt.

A companion volume — *The Prayer He Still Prays* — takes up from here, asking: what happens when all these children of God gather together? But for now — you are a child. Now. Let us talk about what being a firstborn son or daughter actually means.

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50 Chapter 11



Firstborn Sons and Daughters

The difference between being a child in the house and being co-heir of the house — and why it changes everything



“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be

conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”

— *Romans 8:29, NIV*

There is a difference between being a child in the house and being a firstborn son or daughter.

In the ancient world, the firstborn held a position that was different in kind, not merely in degree, from the younger children. The firstborn carried the family name into the next generation. The

firstborn received the double portion of the inheritance. The firstborn had the authority to act on behalf of the father when the father was not present. The firstborn was not merely a beneficiary of the family — the firstborn was the representative of the family. When Paul says that Jesus is 'the firstborn among many brothers and sisters,' he is not saying that Jesus is merely the first Christian. He is saying something far more explosive: that Jesus, in His resurrection and ascension, has opened a new category of humanity. A category in which those who are joined to Him by faith share not just in His salvation but in His status.

(Read that again slowly. Your status in the family of God is not 'grateful recipient of mercy.' That is your entry point — and what a mercy it is. But the Father's intention for His children does not stop at entry. He intends you as an heir. A joint heir. Someone who co-inherits with the Son. We have spent so long celebrating our rescue that we have not fully grasped what we were rescued into.)

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51 Joint Heirs With Christ

"Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of

God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."

— Romans 8:17, NIV

Co-heirs. Co-heirs with Christ. Paul does not write this as a modest claim.

Children of God are heirs of God — meaning everything that belongs to the Father is what you are being raised toward. And not solo heirs but co-heirs with Christ — meaning the inheritance you

are walking toward is shared with the Son, whose relationship with the Father is perfect, eternal, and without limit.

This is the theology of the ring and the robe in the Prodigal Son story. The father did not bring out a servant's contract. He brought out the family ring — the ring of authority. The robe of family identity. He did not restore the son to something less than what he had been. He restored him fully and publicly to his place as son. The Church has frequently settled for a 'grateful servant' identity when the Father has been pressing a 'beloved son' identity. Sonship and daughterhood are messier and more demanding and more glorious — they require that we believe the Father loves us not because of what we produce but because of who we are in Him.

Daughters of the King

Let us be specific here, because the Church has not always been. The language of 'firstborn son' in the ancient world was inherently patriarchal. But the Kingdom of God has always operated by a different design. Paul declares in Galatians 3:28: 'There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female,

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52 for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' The inheritance of the Kingdom does not follow the inheritance rules of the ancient Near East.

Daughters of the King are co-heirs with the same completeness as sons of the King. The woman who prays is not praying as a second-class citizen of the Kingdom. The daughter who carries the gifts of the Spirit carries them with the same authority as her brother. The firstborn calling — the representative function, the capacity to think with the mind of Christ, the responsibility to carry younger siblings — belongs as fully to daughters as to sons.

(If the person sitting next to you in church — regardless of gender —

is a genuinely born -again, Spirit -filled, Word -formed child of God, then they are your co -heir. The family table is large. There are no secondhand seats.)

Having the Mind of Christ

''But we have the mind of Christ.''

— 1 Corinthians 2:16, NIV

Paul drops this statement almost casually, as if it were a known quantity. But it is anything but casual.

The mind of Christ is not a superior IQ. It is the capacity to see from the Father's perspective. To look at a situation the way Heaven looks at it. To feel what the Father feels about what the Father sees. To have the priorities of the Son — which were entirely, permanently, completely oriented toward the Father's will and the world's redemption.

This is what the firstborn son or daughter carries. Not merely the knowledge that they are loved — every child in the house has that. But the capacity to represent the Father. To think with His mind. To act with His authority. To be, in the world, what Christ was in the world: the exact representation of the Father's nature.

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53 'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father,' Jesus said (John 14:9,

NIV). This is the firstborn calling — to be people of whom the same might gradually, increasingly, imperfectly but genuinely be said.

The Responsibilities of the Firstborn

With the inheritance comes the responsibility. This is not a burden added to grace — it is the natural shape of what grace produces in a person who has grown into it.

The firstborn in a household carries the younger children. They model the family culture. The firstborn is not more loved — all the children are equally loved — but the firstborn carries a representative function.

In the Kingdom, this means the mature child of God carries a responsibility for the community of faith. Not a heavy, performative responsibility rooted in fear — but the natural outflow of someone who knows the Father well enough to point others toward Him . Who has been loved well enough to love. Who has received freely and therefore gives freely.

"Freely you have received; freely give."

— Matthew 10:8, NIV

The first ten chapters of this book were about receiving. These final two chapters are about what you do with what you have received. And the answer, always, in the Kingdom, is: you pass it on. You bring others to the table. You refuse to be a gatekeeper. You say, with every choice and every word and every act of love: the Father's arms are open, and I know — because I have been in them.

— SELAH —

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54 What does it mean for you, specifically, with your specific gifts and context and history and calling — what does it mean for you to be a firstborn son or daughter? Not a spiritual concept to affirm, but a lived reality to walk in?

The mind of Christ is not a theological credential. It is a daily practice of asking: What does the Father see here? What does love

require here? What does the Son's nature look like in this specific, unglamorous, ordinary moment?

The answer to that question, practised daily, is called Christlikeness.

And it is the full flower of everything the new birth was planting.

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55 Chapter 12



Grow Up Into Him

The final call — because a child who stays a child forever is not what the Father had in mind



“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to

become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.”

— Ephesians 4:15, NIV

Here is the paradox at the centre of everything this book has been saying, and I am going to state it plainly so that we end well.

You must become like a child. And you must also grow up.

These are not contradictions. They are the two movements of the same life. The childlikeness is the posture — the dependence, the trust, the wonder, the instinctive running toward the Father. The growing up is the trajectory — the increasing capacity to carry the Father's name, to think with His mind, to bear His image in the world.

A child who never grows up is not a Kingdom triumph. It is a

spiritual tragedy. The purpose of a good childhood is not to stay forever in childhood, but to produce an adult who carries the qualities of childhood into everything they become. An adult who still trusts. An adult who still wonders. An adult who still asks and receives and runs toward the Father — but who does so with increasing capacity, increasing authority, increasing resemblance to the Son.

(The goal is not to be a forty -seven -year-old spiritual toddler who cannot eat meat and still needs others to carry them into the Presence. The goal is to be someone who, regardless of age or title or experience,

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56 is fundamentally and irreducibly a child of God — but a child who has grown into the full stature of what that identity means. Someone who is simultaneously dependent on the Father and trusted by the Father with the things of the Father. Both. Always both.)

Growing Into the Full Stature

""until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge

of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

— Ephesians 4:13, NIV

The target Paul sets for the Church is staggering in its ambition: the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Not 'pretty good.' Not 'generally improved' or 'noticeably different from your unsaved neighbour.' The whole measure. The fullness.

This is the Father's vision for His children. He is not aiming for adequate. He is not content with functional. He is raising children who will bear a genuine, recognisable, beautiful resemblance to His

Son — not because they performed their way to it but because they yielded to the work of the Spirit long enough and faithfully enough for the family likeness to emerge.

The most spiritually mature person you know is not the one who needs God least. It is the one who has discovered, at the greatest depth, that they need God most — and who has made peace with that need in a way that produces joy rather than shame.

What the Body of Christ Is Called To

This book has been addressed to the Body of Christ. All of it.

Every chapter.

Because the Body of Christ is not a collection of individual spiritual projects running in parallel. It is a family. The Father's family. And

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57 families share a table, share a name, share a nature, and share a calling.

The calling of the Body of Christ — the whole, glorious, imperfect, extraordinary, fragmented, Spirit-filled, sometimes -confused -but- genuinely -beloved Body — is to grow up into the Head. Into Christ. Together. Not as isolated individuals reaching their personal spiritual potential, but as a community that, in its togetherness, in its loving and forgiving and bearing -with-one-another and celebrating -each-other and weeping -with-each-other, starts to look like something no single person could look like on their own.

"From him the whole body, joined and held together by

every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

— Ephesians 4:16, NIV

(The body metaphor is gloriously unflattering to those who like to feel central. A body has many parts, and most of them are not the face. Some of the most important parts are entirely invisible under normal circumstances and receive no public appreciation, and yet without them the body does not function. That person in your church who just serves — quietly, faithfully, without acknowledgment, week after week, year after year — they are quite possibly the most important person in the room. The Father knows.)

The Final Call

So here is where we end. Not with a summary. With a call.

You have read twelve chapters about what it means to be a child of God. About the new birth that makes it possible, the water and the Spirit that seal it, the trust and wonder and asking and belonging that define it, the table and the love and the robe and the ring that belong to it. And two chapters about what it means to grow into the fullness — the mind of Christ, the firstborn inheritance, the representative calling.

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58 Now what?

Now you put the book down and you live it. Not perfectly. Not without failures and regressions and moments when the old orphan spirit flickers back. But consistently. Intentionally. With the daily practice of choosing the child's posture over the religious adult's performance.

Every morning: Abba. Not a formal address. The word a child uses. Present yourself to the Father as His child — not His employee, not His project, not His occasional visitor. His child.

Every need: ask. Specifically. Persistently. With the expectation of a child who has never yet found the Father unwilling to give good

things to those who ask.

Every failure: run toward, not away. The Father is watching the road. He is already moving before you have finished rehearsing the speech.

Every wonder: let it land. Do not explain it away. Stand in front of it and say: the Father made this, and the Father made me, and the Father loves me, and that is more than enough.

Every brother and sister in the Body: receive them as the Father receives you. At the table. Before the behaviour is perfect. With the robe and the ring and the feast that grace provides and performance never could. Remember: they are co-heirs with you. The Father's love for them is the same love He has for you — and when you love them with that same love, the watching world begins to wonder what holds people like this together. That wondering is the opening prayer of a heart moving toward the Kingdom.

''And because of his glory and excellence, he has given

us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.''

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59 — 2 Peter 1:4, NLT

Sharing His divine nature. Not religion. Not performance. Not a better version of the person you were before you met Him. A sharer of His nature. A child grown into the family likeness. Someone of whom it can be said, by the watching world and the watching heavens: there goes someone who belongs to the Father. You can tell by the eyes.

This is what the Church is being called to. Not to argue about what is in the hands — to look like the One who holds the hands. Not to manage the entry process into the Kingdom — to live in it so fully and so visibly that others cannot help but ask how to find the door. Not to perform for the Father. To belong to the Father. Completely. Unashamedly. With the total, trusting, wondering, asking, running, resting confidence of a child who has been told — and fully believes — that everything He has is yours.

— SELAH —

Pause here.

Let this land.

You are a child of God.

A firstborn son. A beloved daughter.

A joint heir with Christ.

A carrier of His mind.

And you have only just begun.



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60 A WORD TO WHOEVER IS

READING THIS

You May Not Have Called It Faith Yet — But Something in You Has Been Stirring



This book has been about children. The Father's children. The ones who are born again, who belong, who run to the table, who ask freely, who trust completely.

But maybe you have been reading it as an observer. Something in

you has been watching all of this and wanting it — without being entirely sure you have it.

That wanting is not an accident. It is the Holy Spirit, drawing you toward the door. And the door is not a religion, not a tradition, not a set of rules to follow until you qualify. The door is a Person. His name is Jesus. And He said it Himself: 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.' (John

14:6).

The Father that this entire book has been talking about — the One who runs toward you, who sets the table with your name on it, who calls you son and daughter and means it with everything He has — that Father is available to you. Right now. Not after you clean up. Not after you figure out theology. Now. Here is what you do.

"Lord Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God.

I believe You died for me and rose from the dead.
I come to You now — not to a religion, but to You.
Forgive my sins. Come and live in me.
I receive You as my Saviour and my Lord.
I am Yours."

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61 If you prayed that and meant it — you are now a child. Not by performance. By birth. The Father just received you at the table. Tell someone. Find a community of believers who love Jesus and love each other. Stay there. Grow up — the way this book has been describing.

And if you want to tell us, we would love to hear.

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62 About The Author



Timilehin Idowu is a pastor, youth mentor, and transformational writer based in Lagos, Nigeria. He serves as a pastor at Worship Nation International Church, and co-founded Flourish Playhouse — a Creche, Nursery, and Primary School in Festac Town. For years he has stood at the intersection of Scripture and the human condition, preaching, teaching, and walking alongside people through their most crucial seasons of growth and crisis.

His publishing and content work operates under the brand The Kingdom Lifestyle — a conviction made visible: that the life Jesus modelled is the everyday inheritance of every child of God. *Selah: Growing Up to Be a Child* is part of the *Becoming Great Series*, alongside nine companion books exploring what it means to flourish fully in God.

The Prayer He Still Prays — his companion volume to this book — explores the unity Jesus prayed for in John 17, asking what it costs the Body of Christ to leave that prayer unanswered, and what it would look like to finally answer it together.

Timilehin is married to Oluwakemi. They are raising three children — Mojolaoluwa, Olaoluwatitomi, and Oluwafeyinsolami — who, he admits, teach him something new about childlike faith nearly every week.

About the Author

Timilehin Idowu is a teacher, author, and minister of the Word. His passion is helping believers discover the depths of Scripture and grow into the fullness of their calling in Christ. He is the author of the Becoming Great Series, a collection of devotional and theological works designed to equip the body of Christ.