

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. "For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him." He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. "And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. All things were created through him and for him. He and the Father are one." and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the

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CAROLYN MOORE



Sow for a Great Awakening

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Printed in the United States of America

Paperback ISBN: 978-1-62824-208-9

Mobi ISBN: 978-1-62824-209-6

ePub ISBN: 978-1-62824-210-2

uPDF ISBN: 978-1-62824-211-9

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2015939288

Cover and page design by Ellen Parker Bibb

SEEDBED PUBLISHING
Franklin, Tennessee
Seedbed.com
SOW FOR A GREAT AWAKENING

*For my Steve
whose life and example
have allowed me to encounter
the Father's unconditional love*

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am surrounded by greatness.

Michelle Bauer made outlines of each week's study, greatly simplifying the job of organizing the material. Her great spirit and deep insights helped to make the writing a joy.

The women of Trinity on the Hill United Methodist Church are great partners in ministry. They have adopted me into their fold, allowing me to participate in three retreats and share the Word with them. Being among them, I am inspired, challenged, humbled, and grateful.

The community of Mosaic Church consistently demonstrates the love of the Father in practical yet grace-filled ways. For eleven years and counting, we have learned together what it means to do church and follow Jesus. Pretty much everything I know, I learned from these great hearts whose lives daily glorify the Father.

Nobody has given me a better example of the unconditional love of the Father than Steve Moore, my husband of twenty-nine years. Steve, Claire, and Pierce (my daughter and son-in-love) are three of the best reasons I have to trust that the Father's love is real.

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

For this Encounter, you will need:

- A Bible
- A journal
- A couple of pens (in more than one color)
- An internet connection
- A quiet place where you can encounter the Father

A note about how to use these resources

This is the third in a series of guidebooks designed to help you encounter the holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In a culture that tends to make even God compete with Himself, we want to give you a faithful, balanced approach to understanding God in all His fullness, with the hope that your relationship will be deepened and made more authentic. We want you to do so much more than study the Bible or enjoy productive small-group discussions. We want you to encounter God.

We've structured these exercises to give you every opportunity for a deep, personal spiritual experience. Rather than providing all the Scripture references within the text, we are asking you to do the work of finding the passages in your own Bible so you can mark up the sections studied and begin to create a habit of looking for where God is at work in Scripture.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

We want you to begin to own the Word, to let it sink into your spirit and change you, to experience the Bible as Living Word. The Bible is the one book that has the ability to speak a fresh word into your life wherever you are, and to be relevant over and over again. That's the power of the Living Word.

Though we do provide space to answer some questions directly in this book, for the most part we want you to write your responses in your own journal or notebook. By giving you resources and inviting your active participation, we hope to help you cultivate devotional practices that will continue long after this guidebook has been shelved.

A note from Carolyn about journaling

I have a confession to make. I've journaled on and off for years and, for the most part, it has been a richly rewarding part of my personal time with God. For way too long, however, my journal entries were written as if to be read (Who knows? Maybe even published!). Because I approached journaling as if someone might one day read what I'd written, it always had a veneer to it. A little too much polish, not enough transparency.

I've since conquered that silliness and have learned how to write in my journal only for Jesus and me. I've discovered Jesus doesn't grade on penmanship. In my conversations with Him, I can be as messy as I want to be. I can scribble, cross through, make notes in the margins, draw nonsensical pictures, and generally do whatever works in the moment.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

I often journal in two colors, writing my own thoughts in black or blue ink and what I sense may be Spirit-inspired thoughts in red. In this study, you'll often be asked to write a question in blue or black ink across the top of your journal page then listen for an answer, which you'll record in red. When I do this in my own time with God, I don't try to analyze it; I just listen for the voice of the Spirit and write what I hear. A week or so down the road, I may come back to that entry to see how it sounds with the benefit of a little time and perspective. Often, I am amazed at how helpful those entries can be to my journey with Jesus. I do believe He still speaks into our lives. I have encountered Him in the practice of journaling. I hope you will, too.

When I come across a thought that seems profound ("smarter than I could have thought of myself," as Asbury professor Dr. Bob Tuttle would say), I note that thought in red, too, as the words of Jesus are in my Bible.

I hope the combination of this guidebook, your own journal (or blog), the creative prayer exercises, interaction with the Word of God, and a quiet place to encounter the Father will all converge to create a spiritual revival in your life.

The video teachings are designed as a starting place for the daily exercises, to orient you to the focus for the coming week. Begin the study by watching the first video. In the week following, work through Week One of the exercises, and continue that pattern through all seven sessions. Some exercises will reference the video teaching; they should compliment each other and help you get the most from your daily encounters with the Father.

Know that as you begin, I am praying for you.

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INTRODUCTION

In the beginning, God created. Stars and dirt, jagged rocks and endless oceans. He created the noise of tree frogs, the rhythmic whoosh of waves on the beach, and music. Harmonious and dissonant, giving voice to the mystery of God.

And color. Every possible color. Brown people and green trees, gray whales and red bugs, fields of yellow wheat and blue grass.

God gave pine trees their fragrance and puppies their breath, and He gave each person a smell so that if you know someone well enough, you can tell he has been there by the scent he leaves in his wake.

God gave chocolate its taste and us a desire for it. And He created other cravings, too—for hugs, for love, for water, for answers . . . for Him. And it is God, I believe, who instilled in us that sort of desperation for significance, that desire to be worth something. Not at the expense of others (that craving is not from God) but for the sake of being *real*. Worthy. To answer that desperation, God has spoken descriptive phrases into the stories of our lives that when expressed define us at our deepest: *Musician. Dancer. Painter. Storyteller. Teacher. Servant. Comedian. Manager. Healer. Listener.*

Our Father made us great, and as we discover our worth and live out our stories, He watches with eyes of grace. Under that gaze, it is safe. Over you the Father has spoken the eternal word of acceptance: “It is good.”

INTRODUCTION

In Lewis Smedes's book *Shame and Grace*, he describes the radical nature of this divine acceptance:

The grace of God comes to us in our scrambled spiritual disorder, our mangled inner mass, and accepts us with all our unsorted clutter, accepts us with all our potential for doing real evil and all our fascinating flaws that make us such interesting people. He accepts us totally as the spiritual stew we are. We are accepted in our most fantastic contradictions and our boring corruptions. Accepted with our roaring vices and our purring virtues. We are damaged masterpieces, stunted saints; there are ogres and angels in our basements that we can hardly tell apart and that we have not dared to face up to. For the whole shadowed self each one of us is, grace has one loving phrase: you are accepted. Accepted. Accepted. Accepted.¹

This acceptance forms the foundation for any claim on our destiny. Before we can claim the purpose our Creator has spoken into our lives, we must claim the acceptance our Father has spoken over us, not for what we can do but simply for who we are. His.

And that forms my prayer for you as you begin this study. As you study the Scriptures, may you encounter the One who loved you first and loves you most. May you encounter the Father—*your* Father—who speaks a healing word of acceptance over your tangled life. May you experience intimacy with the Father and deep peace and real joy in the truth that He accepts you as you are.

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WEEK 1

THE FATHER'S CREATIVITY

EXERCISE #1

Our Father is creative.

Read Genesis 1:1.

In a journal or on a piece of paper, write the words “beginning” and “create,” then write down all that these words might mean in the context of this verse and all that they mean to you personally. What are the positives about a God who has been here from the beginning? What are the positives about a God who creates? In other words, what do you learn about God from this opening verse of the Bible?

From the first lines of the creation story, here's what I learn about our Father. He is the Creator of heaven and earth. God made all this, which means our world is a great gift and God's treasure. I learn that He can make something good out of anything and even out of nothing, which means He can make something out of my mess or even out of my nothing. He can see possibilities I can't imagine, and He can make things I can't see.

Yes, the world is fallen, but the Creator is redeeming the world; and He has a marvelous capacity to make good things happen. This is great news for us who have made mistakes. Nothing is beyond God's redemptive, creative power. That power is ours to call on for the healing of relationships and the restoration of our souls. We can bring His creative power into every encounter.

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Write this truth in your journal: our God is able to make all things new! What does that mean for the world? What does it mean for you?

Read Hebrews 1:1–3.

Make two columns on a page. In the first column, list everything you learn about Jesus from this passage. In the second column, list everything you can know about the Father because of what you have encountered in Jesus, His Son. For instance, through this passage in Hebrews, we know that Jesus has the exact nature of the Father. Taking that truth and applying it to the stories in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we discover that the Father (who has the exact nature of Jesus) heals diseases and casts out demons, eats with sinners and touches lepers. What we know of Jesus informs our understanding of the very nature of God.

In other words, Jesus proves the nature of our heavenly Father. After all, Jesus was there at creation. John reminds us that Jesus is the Word spoken in the creation stories of Genesis. It is through Jesus that the Father created all things. So the creative power of God rests in Jesus, and Jesus shows us the nature of our Father.

Here's an important point: God doesn't reveal Jesus to us; Jesus reveals God. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature. God said of Jesus, "This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). And Jesus said of His Father, "I do nothing except in obedience to His will" (John 5:19). Jesus said, "Your Creator is my Father, and I reveal Him to you" (Matt. 16:17).

Encounter

Already we've learned some things about the Father. We made lists of two important facts about Him found in Genesis 1:1: He was there in the beginning, and He creates. We've also listed everything we discover about Jesus from the passage in Hebrews, and a second list with what we know of the Father because of what we have encountered in Jesus.

Now, make a third column, and list all you can know about the Holy Spirit because of what you know of the Father and Son.

Because God is Trinity, what is revealed about the Father in Christ is manifested in us through the presence of the Holy Spirit. That means that all those things present in God come to rest in us when we accept the Holy Spirit into our lives. We have the power to heal and cast out demons. We have the courage and compassion to eat with sinners and touch the lives of those in the margins—not on our own strength but through the Holy Spirit in us.

Using those three lists as a guide, make a prayer to the God of your life, asking Him to reveal His character more fully through your life and actions. Ask for Him to make you completely open to His creative power, so He can create something new in you.

WEEK 1: EXERCISE #2

Our Father is loving.

Reread Genesis 1:1.

In your Bible, circle the word “God,” and then write its Hebrew equivalent in the margins: *Elohim*.

This is the first name we find for God in the Bible. Elohim. This Hebrew term is plural; and because we believe every word of the Bible is inspired, we trust that this is not a coincidence! From the very first words of God’s story, He shows up as Trinity. And in that first scene of creation, He is all there: the Father creates; the Spirit hovers; the Word speaks. Elohim.



The Hebrew letter that represents Elohim is *shin*. It is the twenty-first letter of the Hebrew alphabet (see the image on this page). Meditate on that image for a moment. Take it in. What do you see?

Isn’t it interesting that in this one letter, which represents the earliest name for God, are signs of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Some have even seen the floating dot above the third prong as a dove, suggesting the Holy Spirit at Jesus’ baptism. Or as the fire at Pentecost.

Such a beautiful symbol for our three-person God! Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct yet appear as one, with one foundation. Here in this symbol and name, we encounter God as community. He exists in three parts and demonstrates within Himself the very nature of complete sanctification—pure love encountered without flaw within community.

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Our Father is both big and bighearted! This is what the Trinity (the trinity) teaches us about God. At His core, our Father is loving. Hallelujah!

Encounter

Read Isaiah 42:1–9.

Using a black pen, mark in this passage of your Bible all the words and phrases that seem to refer to Jesus, the Messiah. Now with a blue pen, mark the words or phrases that refer to the Holy Spirit. And finally, using a red pen mark all the words and phrases that refer to our Father as Creator. As you mark the passage in this way, do you see the Trinity begin to emerge?

The essence of the Trinity is deeply embedded in the story of God, and the love of God is deeply rooted in the Trinity. Look at verses 1–3. Notice that the Father’s chosen one, anointed by the Spirit, will not break a bruised reed. That means He sees our fragile state, and rather than crushing us beneath His holiness, He chooses to care for us ever so gently. He is love, and love bends.

Has your teaching on the nature of God given you a balance of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? If not, which relationship is weakest? Confess that aloud, and ask God to help you know Him in His fullness even as He knows you.

Using this passage from Isaiah 42, form a prayer rooted in the love of the Father that calls Him into your bruised and smoldering places. Speak that promise of this passage over the damaged parts of your life. After acknowledging each area of brokenness in prayer, allow these words to be the Father’s response to you: “You are accepted. Accepted. Accepted. Accepted.”

WEEK 1: EXERCISE #3

Our Father is good.

Read Genesis 1:3–31.

Underline or circle every use of the word “good” in this story. What do you notice about the use of that word in verse 31? What does this teach you about what God creates, what God believes about His creation, and what God values? How do you think the quality of goodness figures into God’s character?

Over and over in the creation story, we hear one refrain: God saw what He made, and He said it was good. And He called us, His children, *very* good. Creation is good because the Creator is good. His perfect goodness allows us to trust Him completely, which ought to come as a great relief.

The fact is, some of us had great fathers and a great home life, but some of us were not so fortunate. Because of our early experiences, some of us don’t have great examples of good fathers. But even those of us who didn’t have great fathers know what a good father is *supposed* to be like. We know what we wanted in a father even if we didn’t have it. God is that kind of father. He is not a user or slave driver or a manipulative, angry, overpowering ogre. He is *good*.

If your earthly father was harsh, you may project that experience onto your heavenly Father, making Him into a disciplinarian who is constantly out to trip you up. You may not feel at all like God is a good father but more

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like a harsh master, while you are the slave or servant trying desperately to figure out what He wants so you can please Him. That mind-set is common, but it is not a biblical mind-set; and it can deeply compromise our relationship with our heavenly Father.

Throughout this study, we will return to the theme of connection between Father and Son to remind ourselves that what we see, accept, and trust in Jesus is present in our heavenly Father. Remember what we learned in Hebrews, chapter 1: Jesus has the exact nature of the Father. The character of Christ is the character of our Father.

Read Galatians 4:6–9. Then read John 15:15.

Underline in each of these passages the words of promise and acceptance. How are you known in the kingdom of God? How are you labeled? What words in these passages make you feel safe and secure? What words make you feel valued?

How do the words used to define our identity in these passages stack up against the labels you give yourself or others around you?

It is said that when we don't feel safe, little else matters. God's acceptance of us forms a foundation of security that allows us to explore the world and our place in it without fear or shame. And this is the essence of biblical

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power. It is not force (remember: He doesn't break bruised reeds), but authority to reject rejection so that we no longer have to fight for our own rights. With a sense of belonging, we are free to let our Father have our whole heart. In Him, we are home.

Encounter

On a piece of paper, make two columns. Above the first column, write this heading: "Slave/Servant." Above the second column, write: "Son/Daughter/Friend."

Now, make some notes about what characterizes each of those terms. For instance, in the slave/servant column, I might write "control." And maybe "unwilling." And in the son/daughter/friend column, I might write "accepted." And maybe "treasured." These are your words, so write whatever comes to mind. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you.

How do you experience your relationship with God: as a servant or as a son or daughter? Did you know that God wants to be your partner, your friend?

Write this statement of faith in your journal: "Whatever God is doing in my life, I can trust it because God is good, and what God creates is good. I can rest in that. I *need* to rest in that." Take some time to rest in your Father, as if you and He are resting together in the room He has prepared for you in the kingdom. For five or ten minutes, allow yourself to simply be. Allow yourself to rest in Him—no agenda, no worries, no hurries. Enjoy His presence as He enjoys yours.

WEEK 1: Exercise #4 **Our Father rests in us.**

Read Genesis 2:1–3.

Within Himself, God created. And when He stood back and looked at it, He called it good. And then He *rested*. Complete peace.

Rest is built into the work of creation. God's Sabbath is proof that He is at peace with us, His creation. He loves us. He is pleased with us. He can look at us and be at peace. Not because everything is perfect, but because He is perfect.

And when we rest in Jesus, it is how we demonstrate trust in the goodness of God. This is why God calls us to Sabbath rest. It is not just a way to get some time off. Sabbath is a call to trust; resting in God is an act of trust. It is a willingness to trust our Father with all the questions that remain in our lives. To believe that the best we can do is good enough for Him. To trust that how we're made is good, and that this marvelous Creator God can make good out of anything.

Read Ecclesiastes 4:7–8.

Make notes on a page of what Solomon observed among his fellow humans. What do you learn from Solomon about the dangers of isolation? What do you learn about the value of partnership? What can you say from these lines about the nature of healthy and unhealthy work habits?

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There is a saying: “Pray as if it all depends on God but work as if it all depends on you.” Great idea. Terrible theology. If we work as if it all depends on us, then where do we stop? We must believe and declare that we will not finish the work by working more, longer, or harder. Eventually, there has to be an acknowledgment that God is Author and Finisher of anything worth doing.

The better formula for the long haul is: “Pray as if it all depends on God and work as if it all depends on God.” One project discerned in prayer and surrendered to the Father is better than a hundred major events a committee planned.

Sabbath is about partnership with God. It is a way of acknowledging that not only are we incapable of doing it all on our own, but we’re not expected to do it all alone. When we cease work, it is our way of trusting that God will complete those things that need to be completed—including the restoration of our souls.

The best thing we can give those we love is an invitation to cease work and worry, to rest deeply in the grace of God, to embrace the values of the Christian community, and to feast physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially, and spiritually.

When was the last time you rested in Jesus as an act of trust in God?

Encounter

Read Psalm 23.

Now read it again, slowly and aloud. Meditate on its promises.

Now, read it a third time as a proclamation of God's provision being lived out over your life right now.

Psalm 23 teaches us that God is in the soul-restoration business. While the world is designed to deplete and weary us, our Father desires to restore us. Our Father rests in us.

Write this statement at the top of a journal page: "He restores my soul." Now, list the habits in your life that restore your soul. It may be as obvious as sleep or as counterintuitive as running. Rest and restoration aren't primarily about physical inactivity (although some of us could use a decent night's sleep without guilt). Restoration is about rebuilding the foundation, or refilling the well.

What activities and habits refill your well? Are those activities and habits a regular part of your life (or what John Wesley might call a means of grace)? Do you need to take time to sit in quiet prayer, on the listening side of a conversation with your Father? How about going for a walk in the woods with Him? Or preparing a great meal for your family or yourself in His presence?

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What restful, restorative habits have you let go of for the sake of getting more things done? As a way of expressing trust in God while you allow your Father to restore your soul, choose one activity to include in your life this week. Calendar this activity so you will follow through on it.

WEEK 1: EXERCISE #5 **Our Father is present with us.**

Read Genesis 1:1–2.

Focus on the person of the Holy Spirit in these verses. What do you learn about Him? Write down everything you learn about the Spirit through these verses only. Have you internalized the fact yet that the Messiah and the Holy Spirit have been part of the plan since the beginning?

The Father creates. The Spirit hovers. The Word speaks. He is not distant and disconnected. He is here with us, involved with our lives. The Holy Spirit reflects His nearness.

Several times a year, I drive between Georgia and Kentucky, a trip that includes two mountain ranges. Because I'm no good with details, I still use my GPS to get me there even though I've made the drive dozens of times. Mostly, I use it to negotiate the rural routes at the beginning and end of the journey. The middle part—all interstate—I can handle on my own.

Some time ago, I was making that drive again, and the weather was severe. It wasn't the rain so much as the fog that made the driving so treacherous. Fog so dense I couldn't see the side of the road in either direction. Fog so dense I couldn't see more than a few feet beyond my hood. I became incredibly grateful for a truck in front of me with good taillights. As soon as I got behind that truck, I decided to stay there and

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let him guide me over the mountain. If I ever meet the guy who drove that truck, I'm going to hug him for saving my life that day. Or at least, that's how it felt at the time.

Somewhere along the trip, I discovered a metaphor for the spiritual life. So often we treat God the way I treat my GPS. We acknowledge Him as the Author and Guide at the beginning and end of our lives, but as for the middle part, we take care of it ourselves. And then we panic midlife when the fog is dense, and we don't know how to get over the mountains.

The Holy Spirit is the close and intimate presence of God, who guides through the fog and stays with us even when we don't know where we're headed. He is given to us because God our Father wants to be present with His children through the Spirit. The Spirit is the abiding presence of the Father with us, expressing His heart for us, empowering us to stay on course, shaping the destiny placed within us by our Creator God.

Read John 1:1–3.

Underline all the words in these three verses that are also found in Genesis 1:1–2. Through these three verses only, what do you learn about Jesus? Make a list of all the truths described here.

Throughout the Bible, we are shown that God is with us—*our* God. Father, Son, and Spirit. He was fully present in the beginning and fully present at the birth of Christ, and He is fully present today. He was present

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at your conception, and He is present with you now. Why? Because He loves you *as you are*. The message of the Bible from the creation story forward is this: who you are is more important than what you do. It is so easy for us to get bogged down in the doing and forget the part about simply being. And yet, while we frantically try to prove ourselves, our Father rests in us. He rests because He is at peace with what He has created.

You are loved, always and unconditionally. And you have your heavenly Father to thank for that truth.

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Read John 15:1–10.

We have already learned from Paul that we are children of God. Jesus called His followers friends. And in John 15, He called them branches. Which of these terms most resonates or gives assurance to you? In your journal, write those three terms—child, friend, branch—and then journal about how they inform your relationship with your Father. How do they connect to each other? How do they connect to you?

Now, write some “I am” statements that reflect the nature of your relationship to God as a child, a friend, and a branch (for instance: “I am treasured.” “I am heard.” “I am connected.”).

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Now, consider the word “abide” in this passage from John. How is that word connected to Sabbath rest and restoration? What does it mean to you personally to abide in Christ? What have you learned in this week’s study about rest that helps you understand what Jesus says here about abiding?

Create a prayer that reflects what you’ve learned about yourself, about your Father, and about the intimate connection that comes only through the Holy Spirit.