



Valerie R. Johnson

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

Cover Design by Petra Schreiber Edited by Deloney P. Denson

ISBN 978-3-16-148410-0

Copyright© 2017 by Valerie R. Johnson Rialto, California

Published by MJ Creates www.mjcreates.com

All rights reserved under Copyright Law. Contents may be used with the express written consent of the Publisher.

Contents

Foreword 3
Prologue 6
Chapter 1
Created to Love10
Chapter 2
Redeemed Through Love 12
Chapter 3
Identity is Key16
Chapter 4
Baptism by Holy Spirit 19
Chapter 5
Renewed by the Word22
Chapter 6
Growing from Knowing26
Epilogue 29

Foreword

Little did I know how something as simple as a bag filled with fresh-picked tangerines from my family's tree would be used to set an intersect course of redemption in my life, and ultimately, the lives of many others. "Tangerines are my favorite" she said on the day we met, "especially the ones from your tree!" she would add convincingly in days to come.

Citrus harvest was in full swing and our tangerine tree was bursting at the seams with fruit the year my family and I met, whom we would lovingly come to know as, 'Ms. Val'. Each Sunday that season, my family and I would pick a bag of tangerines then head off to church, where we would find Ms. Val joyously singing and happily tapping to the beat of praise on her tambourine. Nothing could stop her, she was freer than anyone we had ever meet. It was abundantly clear that she had everything she needed to be truly happy. We would soon learn that she was one who had truly forsaken all to follow Christ.

Ms. Val was living the abundant life that Jesus talked about when He walked the earth. In the eyes of the world, she had nothing.

Unbeknownst to many, there were times when she had no food, times when she had no home or money, and times when she had no one to accompany her...except God. That was all she needed. It was a life of abandon to Him that she willingly chose. She had come to trust Him for everything, and the pure joy was in discovering and ministering to Him like nothing else. Having served in several ministries, attended church faithfully, been invited to speak at platforms and in prisons, and after participating in multiple outreaches in various places, she'd arrived at knowing that nothing could satisfy her like Jesus. She had seen what the bondage of religion was doing to people, and it only forged a rock-solid longing in her to break free and do it God's way. To this day, she feasts on the word like it is a meal to be had, and then she feasts some more. Her writings, her songs, her words come from the well that never runs dry.

For nearly 10 years, I have been blessed to not only witness and be inspired by her liberated life lived, but have also to call her my friend. She is the one who will go with you to the altar when you do not have the courage to go up alone. She is the one who will stop everything to rescue a victim of abuse and get them to a

safe house. She is the one who will spend hours studying the word, then turn around and share everything she is learned so that you can get free too. She is the one that will stand with you for your wayward children when you think all hope is lost. She is the one who will 'give it to you straight' and call you higher so you do not allow yourself to play the victim or remain the same. Valerie will not let you rely on her or anyone else, she leads all to the cross, with no guilt, no shame, she does it with love, she does it all for Jesus. She is the real deal and she is loving life. She is proving that it is in laying our lives down that we truly gain it. It is with great respect and honor that I commend to you this mighty woman of God and the message that transforms.

A Forever Friend in Christ

Prologue

This book is for those who are stuck in religion, knowing there is more, but not knowing how to reach freedom. This book is for those who hunger for true fullness of life.

Like many, I went to church for years. Every time the doors were open, I was there. I got involved in the different 'ministries' that were suggested, and was a faithful 'member.' I even attended bible college and received a degree in biblical studies. But, steadily, I became bored with church, and in 2008, I stopped going.

In the early part of 2009, a friend and I talked about how people are tired of 'church as usual,' how church buildings are emptying out, and how few, if any similarities exist between what the church looks like now in comparison to the first church. It was clear that the Church of God, a living organism divinely designed to look like Jesus and the apostles when He was on the earth, had instead become an organization. Rather than becoming the Church, (Mark 16:15-16), we had made it about going to church. Instead of being reconciled to God and transformed into the image of who He created us to be through Jesus' death and resurrection, we had made it about a prayer to go to heaven. Instead of heaven coming into us and

manifesting the glory of God through us into the world, many are still living the same, reduced to simply waiting for Jesus to return. While the world is looking for an answer, God is waiting for the Church to rise up. Christ in us is the hope for the world (Col. 1:27).

Soon thereafter, my friend sent me a link to a young man speaking on CBN. He was living the spirit-filled life that she and I had discussed. He shared about a *Power and Love Conference* that equipped the body of Christ to walk like Jesus in love. My spirit leaped as I listened. I had to hear more. I discovered that this conference would soon be coming to a location near where I lived.

God was preparing me. He had another plan. He wanted me to attend the conference, but in another state. The next thing I knew, someone purchased my airline ticket, a place to stay was provided, and in May 2009, my life was about to be changed forever.

The first night of the conference was so exciting. I had such a spirit of expectancy. I was ready for change. As the speaker for the night began to share, my ears perked up. I was hearing things I would never heard since first becoming a Believer (Jan 1986). It was like, where have I been? Why am I just now hearing this? I grew up in a cultural

denominational church with lots of emotion, but there was no teaching like I was now hearing.

The next day I heard a man named Dan speak. He had experienced church like most of us did, but there were questions he needed answers to that no one could answer for him. He eventually stopped attending church, and did not go for 13 years. His life looked much like mine, but at a time when circumstances were challenging him life-altering decision, make а intervened, made Himself real, and set Dan that would а course soon bring many people freedom to stuck in religion.

As Dan continued to speak, I heard the gospel unlike I had ever heard it before. It was not a prosperity gospel. It was not a gospel about what God could do for me, or a gospel about going to heaven. It was a gospel about why Jesus died, and what we inherited as a result of His death on the cross. Seeds were planted in the soil of my spirit. I heard it, but I did not truly grasp the fullness of it by hearing it once. While there, God had me meet a dear friend of Dan's who recorded his teachings. He told me to follow him, and turning, handed me a stack of Dan's teaching CDs.

I brought the teachings home, downloaded them on my computer, and allowed Holy Spirit to renew my mind and transform my life. I surrendered and gave Him full permission to change me into the woman God created me to be. I put the teachings on and listened to them repeatedly, sometimes as many as 120 times (Rom. 10:17), until it became my reality. I also found free messages of his on iTunes. I listened to every one of them. Dan, by Holy Spirit, teaches a crystal-clear gospel of truth that will set you free as I have become.

I endeavor to share what Holy Spirit has taught me. As you read the following pages, I hope that it blesses you, lights a fire, and reproduces in you. May this bring you the freedom I have enjoyed, the freedom of truly knowing and becoming like Christ.

Chapter 1 Created to Love

Did you know the image of God is love? God made man to love. He pulled Eve out of the fullness of who He was in Adam, placed them both in the garden, and told them to be fruitful and multiply, (He was not commissioning them to have a lot of babies.) By having children in the state of wholeness and love, the glory of God would be reproduced and would cover the earth as the waters cover the seas.

Gen. 1:26-27 - 26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. 27 So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created him; male and female He created them.

Man was never made for himself. When God placed Adam and Eve in the garden, He told them they could eat of any tree in the garden, except from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and evil. We know from scripture, Satan tempted Eve by suggesting God did not mean what He said (Gen. 3:1-7). Eve listened, ate, and offered it to Adam who heeded the voice

of his wife, ate of the tree and their eyes were opened. God told them the day they ate of the forbidden tree, they would surely die. Scripture shows they did not physically die, but the Spirit of God separated from man's spirit and man became self-centered, selfish, self-serving, and in need of love, rather than being love.

When this happened, man lost his identity, and took on the nature of God's enemy. We were all born into that nature, and we must be born again to be restored back to the image of the Father. Salvation (born again) is not a prayer to go to heaven, but the Kingdom of heaven coming into you. Salvation is 'sozo' meaning: healed, preserved, delivered, protected, made whole, doing well, kept safe and sound. It is a package deal.

Consider making this your prayer: Lord, I thank you that You ARE love and You created me in Your image so that love could be reproduced on earth as it is in heaven. I thank You that as I turn from self and give you my life that Your love will consume every part of me. Your love is what transforms me, Your love is what keeps me, and Your love is what I live for.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Chapter 2 Redeemed Through Love

From the beginning, God had a plan of redemption. Before the foundation of the world, Jesus was chosen to be the sacrificial Lamb. No one took His life. He chose to lay it down for the sins of the world. He did not die because I was a sinner. He had to die because I sinned (2 Cor. 5:21). I was born into the fallen nature of Adam, and only the atoning death of a pure, spotless lamb could once and for all pave the way back to the Father. Jesus saw my value. He saw my worth. He was glad to do it (Heb. 12:2). He saw my potential as a daughter, and at the appointed time, I said 'yes.'

Jesus had to come as a man (Heb. 10:5) to model the life we were designed to live on earth and throughout eternity. He is the Mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5). As I studied this truth, He showed me what it would look like to follow Him. First, in Matt. 6:33, He said to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and the previous things (vs. 25-32) would be added. Then He told me in Matt. 16:24, if I want to be His disciple (disciplined learner, whole-hearted follower), I needed to deny myself, (there is no place for self in the equation), take up my

cross, and follow Him. This sounds like total abandonment of self, and total surrender to Him.

The beautiful thing is, He is only asking us to give Him what was never ours in the first place, 'me.' Nothing in this world belongs to us (1 Tim. 6:7). He gave us the earth to carry out His plan (Ps 115:6) and He gave us all things to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17).

Jesus also made it clear that nothing or no one could be before or above Him, even His mother (Matt. 12:49-50). He commands us to forsake all to follow Him (Matt. 19:29). Loyalty to Him above all else can cost us everything, but there is great reward. If you want the abundant life Jesus promised (John 10:10b), the road is so narrow that there is only room for you and Jesus (Matt. 7:14). Few find it. When Jesus started talking about eating His flesh and drinking His blood (John 6:53), the scripture said many walked away because it was a hard saying (John 6:60, 66). He then turned to the disciples and asked if they were leaving too. They answered, 'to whom shall we go. You have the words of eternal life' (John 6:68).

As I took a closer look at Jesus's life, He never prayed about Himself, He never tried to make a name for Himself (Phil. 2:7-9), and whenever He performed a miracle, He gave

the glory to God. His prayers were for our relationship to become like His and the Father's (John 17).

Jesus was never concerned about His needs. He trusted Father. He lived in the moment. Whenever He had a need, He simply looked to the Father, thanked Him, and He had provision (John 6:1-14, Matt. 17:24-27). He never concerned Himself with housing (Luke 9:58). He always had some place to stay. He owned nothing, but yet He had everything because of our Father. We can certainly learn from Him.

The more I learned about Jesus, the more I wanted to truly know Him and how He lived. The Lord led me to read the gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. For about six months, I read four chapters a day to examine Jesus's life closer. The more I read, the greater my love for Him and desire to live like Him became. His life was not a sermon, an outreach event, or a movement confined to a building, it was clearly a lifestyle that changed lives from the inside out.

I found out that I am His inheritance, and He is mine (Phil. 3:12). He laid it all down for me, withholding nothing. Should He expect anything less from me? Jesus is our example. We can live and walk in the earth as He did (1 John 4:17) without sin.

Consider making this your prayer: Heavenly Father, You have proven that nothing can separate me from Your love. Thank You for sending Your Son Jesus to show me what love on earth is supposed to look like. Thank You for paving the way for me to return to You, as Your child, through His atoning blood. As I abide in The Vine of Your Lordship and love, I thank You for increasingly establishing me in the true, personal, and life-changing knowing of Your love. Thank You for allowing Your goodness to flow through me in an overflow that leads others to change. As they 'taste and see' from the fruit of Your love in my life, let them know for themselves that You are truly God, and be drawn to You.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

Chapter 3 Identity Is Key

Do you know who you are? Do you know who you were created to be? Knowing your identity and who you are is the key to a successful life. You are not an accident no matter how you were conceived. You are intentional. Out of millions of sperm cells released from your daddy into your mommy, it had to be you. There is a time to be born, and here you are (Ecc. 3:2). You are unique. No one else is exactly like you. No one else has your fingerprints.

Your identity is not based on what you have done or where you have been. It may matter to man, but it does not matter to God. Your past does not define you. God sees your end from your beginning and everything in between, and it does not change His perception of you. The earthly family you were born in matters not. In fact, God tells us to call no man on earth your father. You have one Father (Matt. 23:29).

When you become born again you get a new identity and new family. God does not consult your past to determine your future. With God, you no longer have a past. He only sees where He is taking you. He is always present/future.

There are some awesome benefits. There was an exchange. He became all that I was so I could become all that He is. If you made your bed hard, in Him you have a brand-new bed with new sheets. You deserved death, but in Him, you received eternal life (John 11:26). We have reaped everything He is sown. No longer does guilt, shame, or condemnation belong to you. Sin and the devil have been defeated. Sin no longer dominates (Rom 6:14). You now partake of the divine nature of God (2 Pet. 1:4). As a matter of fact, the same eternal Spirit that raised Christ from the dead lives *in* you.

When you believe that the seed of God is within you and you are clothed with righteousness, you will start walking like it. God sees you just as He sees Jesus, holy, righteous, and above reproach, (Col. 1:22) regardless of your feelings. We walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). Those emotions you have been ruled by all these years, didn't come from God. They came through fallen man. Adam, before his disobedience, was naked yet unashamed (Gen. 2:25). After his disobedience, Adam was naked and ashamed (Gen. 3:7). Any emotions that derive from negativity are not from God. Every good thing comes from God (James 1:17). By replacing lies with Truth, you will learn how to put off the old and put on the new (Col. 3:8) until you experience wholeness.

Consider making this your prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for seeing my value, redeeming my worth, and restoring my life through the blood of Jesus! Thank You that the old me, the old nature, the fallen feelings of separation and needing love are dead, buried, and no longer have dominion over me. I give You my life, Lord, and I invite You to Father me. Mold me, shape me, and make me everything that You predestined me to be from the beginning. Thank You that as I walk this truth out in my daily life, it will become easier and easier to recognize and overcome the enemy's attempts to lord the old nature back over me. Thank You for single-eye-focus (Matt 6:22) and for helping me to know and follow Your voice and Yours alone (John 10:27) Because of who I'm becoming in You, I owe no man nothing but love (Rom 13:8).

In Jesus' Name, Amen

Chapter 4 **Baptism by Holy Spirit**

Why Holy Spirit? Before Jesus went to the cross, He talked about Holy Spirit is coming (John 16:13). Before the angels escorted Him back to heaven, He told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high (Acts 1:8). They were obedient to His command and after the Holy Spirit fell, the disciples became bold, were more sensitive to His leading to where they needed to be. It was like our modern-day GPS. People were touched by the power of God as they carried on the works of Jesus. It is what a believer's life should look like.

I know many say that at salvation you receive Holy Spirit, but throughout the book of Acts, many were asked if they had received Holy Spirit since they believed (Acts 19:2). Some had not even heard of Holy Spirit, only the repentance of the baptism of John the Baptist (Acts 19:5).

I experienced living without Holy Spirit after salvation, and being baptized with Holy Spirit caused me to come alive. Everything looked brand new, I had exuberant joy, and God's word came alive. I did not speak in tongues right away, but I had power. I have never been

the same. The Holy Spirit is our Comforter, Counselor, Helper, Advocate, and Encourager (John 14:16) Before ascending back to The Father, Jesus Himself went so far as to say that it would be to our advantage if He went away so that Holy Spirit could come to us (John 16:7)

If you have never spoken in tongues, but have been prayed for to receive the Baptism of Holy Spirit, believed you have received, and thank God for it. It is His gift to you, a heavenly language between you and God, and is available to them that believe.

The baptism of Holy Spirit enables you to live the victorious life God intended. It does make a difference in one's life. If Jesus said they needed to be endued with power from on high, then we, too, need the same power.

Consider making this your prayer: Heavenly Father, I thank You for Your precious gift of Holy Spirit to me. Thank You that The Spirit helps in my weaknesses and He Himself is a Person who makes intercession for me (Rom. 8:26). As I spend time reading Your word and living in Your truth, I thank You that I am becoming more and more aware of Holy Spirit is presence and leading in my life. Thank You for helping me to responsibly steward this

precious and powerful presence with honor, reverence, and humility everywhere I go.

Chapter 5 Renewed by The Word

How important is the Word of God to our growth in Him and being a disciple? The word of God is a necessity (John 8:31). The word of God is as necessary to our spirit as natural food is to our bodies.

We are told in 2 Tim. 2:15 to study to show ourselves approved. Please know that the word of God is of no private interpretation (2 Pet 1:20). Sadly, many have read into the word through their unrenewed filter, and through a way that seems right (Prov. 14: 12).

Jesus told us to come and learn of Him (Matt 11:29) for we have heard one way, and He wants to teach us the correct way (Matt 5:38-48). Also, in Isa. 55:8, God tells us our thoughts and ways are not the same as His. Jesus was the Word (John 1:1, 14), and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We do not read the word to memorize it, or to get sermons. We read the word to know God, and to become it.

You do not know the word until you become the word. When you open the *Word* and began to read it in faith, you are planting it in the soil of your spirit. You can water it, but you cannot make it grow. That's Holy Spirit is job. He is the Teacher, who will teach you, and lead and guide you into all Truth (John 16:13). Holy Spirit brings all things to our remembrance (John 14:26).

Once we have become born again, we must have mind renewal (Rom. 12:1-2, Eph. 4:23). Our minds need to be washed with the washing of the Word (Eph. 5:26). The Word of God is the only place you can look in the face of God and live. Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the bible and its theme throughout is all about the Word. It is very important.

When I gave my life to Jesus the evening of January 6, 1986, the next morning I picked up my bible and started reading in Genesis. It was very interesting learning how it all begin. Scriptures that we had to memorize in Sunday school were coming alive in me. My mother would send me preaching tapes from her church, and every scripture I heard, I looked it up. My brother gave me a Read-Through- the-Bible schedule and at the start of January 1987, I read through the bible for the first time. I enjoyed it so much, I have continued doing it to this day.

During the next year, I mysteriously started receiving study guides for a year from Chuck Swindoll. I looked up every scripture in those study guides. As the Lord led, I bought other study books. I had this insatiable hunger for the word. I began to experience a joy, especially after being baptized in Holy Spirit, July, 1986, that has only intensified as of this writing. One of my favorite passages regarding the Word is Jer. 15:16, "Your words were found, and I did eat them. They are the joy and rejoining of my heart." I love God's word and have made it a point to be so full of it, there is room for anything else. After sowing the word for more than 30 years, I am reaping a harvest of His fullness.

Also, when reading the word, make it personal. I'll give you an example of Heb. 13:5:

Thank You Lord, my life is free from the love of money, and I am content with what I have because You have said, "You will never leave me, You will always be by my side."

When you believe and receive this as truth, the grace of God will make it your reality. You will truly be able to say, "Lord You are my Helper. I do not fear. What can man do to me."

When you fall in love with the Word, you fall in love with Jesus. Feast as much as you like. Become addicted. You will never overdose on the Word, but you will be filled and overflowing. The devil can never lie to you again. You will know the Truth, and the Truth will make you free (John 8:32).

Consider making this your prayer: Lord, I pray that I become so full of your Word of God that my entire being is impacted by its lifegiving truth. As I dwell in Your Word and let it live inside me, my heart will be filled with joy, my mind will be flooded with wisdom and understanding, and my mouth will be filled with song. Lord, I know Your Word will take me to the richest spiritual place I have ever known in my life. Thank You that Your Word is at home in my heart, and I will live each day like I have struck it spiritually rich.

In Your Name, Jesus. Amen!

Chapter 6 Growing from Knowing

God desires to change you from who you have become, to whom He created you to be (2 Cor. 5:17). You have to believe that after you have been born again, at baptism, when you go under the water, the old you died and was buried with Jesus. When you came up out of the water, you are now raised with Christ and seated at God's right hand (Eph. 2:6).

From this point, simply allow the grace of God to grow you up into Him until you begin to fully look and walk like Jesus when He walked the earth (Eph. 4:13). Please note: you cannot change yourself. You cannot earn this gift. You have one thing to do: agree with what God's word says about you, no matter how you are right now, and the grace of God will make the word your reality.

In nature, we see examples of how things work in the Kingdom. When you plant any kind of seed in the ground, once It is planted, there is nothing you can do (besides water it) to make it grow. It is the same with the Word. You plant it in your spirit, and when you are ready to receive the revelation, by Holy Spirit, it will produce a harvest (John 12:24). As in the natural, you could not physically make yourself grow, it simply happens, and ladies,

you have little to do with the baby's development. You were simply the womb that carried the baby to term. It is the same spiritually.

While you are growing, you may stumble (Prov. 24:16), but get back up, dust yourself off, run to Papa, and thank Him that He is changing you. You are no longer that person. God is pleased with you. You can never disappoint Him. So many try to work their way into God's favor in their own strength. They spend more time building a ministry than in ministering directly to Him. It is from the secret place of intimacy and time spent with the Father that we exchange the love that will transform us, receive the love that will flow through us, and ultimately change the world around us. God longs to spend time with you. He always sees you through the blood of His Son. What He said to Jesus applies to you (Matt. 3:17). God sees you complete and finished, already looking like Jesus. You are continuously growing up into Him. You are like a newborn baby. In that baby is the DNA of an adult, but it has to continue to eat and grow into adulthood. God brings the increase, God does everything (Phil. 1:6, 2:13). You will grow to the place where you no longer stumble, but now you

are walking. God can keep you from falling (Jude 24).

2 Peter 1:2-10 is a good place to meditate. Please allow me to encourage you that you can live like Jesus. He has equipped you with everything you need to triumph and live victoriously. This is a process of learning a new and living way. You have been made right with God, and as you learn to be led by His Spirit, you will soar and have an abundant life, filled with much joy.

Consider making this your prayer: "Lord God, I thank You for the freedom and liberty that is now mine in You. Thank You that I no longer have to strive or strategize to make things happen or earn Your favor. Your word says that the work of redemption is a finished work, and by one final offering, I have been perfected forever (Heb. 10:14) Thank You for helping me to be still and know that You are God (Psalm 46:10) as You work in me, perfecting me both to will and to do for Your good pleasure and purpose (Phil. 2:13)."

In Jesus' Name

Epilogue

In conclusion, if you desire the full, free life that Jesus spoke of, it can only be done His way. He tells us to come and learn of Him (Matt. 11:28-29). He is the Master. The student is never greater than the Master (Matt. 10:24). We need to become like little children (Matt. 18:3). Children are trusting and eager to learn.

The truths of what has been written in the previous pages has not only turned my life around, but it has set my life on a path of exceedingly, abundantly, above all I could ever ask or think. Once I allowed Holy Spirit to have His way in me, and I made the necessary adjustments, I have been growing up by leaps and bounds. This life is not about what God can do for you. It is about what Jesus did on the cross for you so God could have access to His inheritance. When you truly surrender to Him, He can then transform you into the image of who He created you to be. His love will mold you, potter you, and fashion you to look like Jesus.

He anointed you to be with Him (Mark 3:14), teaches you to imitate Him (Eph. 5:1), and sends you out to show the world what He looks like (Mark 16:15-16). It is not about you or your ministry. There is one ministry, the ministry of love. We will stand before the

Father and give an account of our lives (2 Cor. 5:10). We want to hear Him say, 'well done, good and faithful servant (Matt. 25:23).

This book is not to show you where you are not, beloved child of God, rather, this book is to show you where you are called. You are called to be like Jesus!

About the Author



I was told if I penned a book, that makes me an author.

As a woman who loves the Lord, I was stuck in a place of doing church, not understanding that I was the Church.

Due to my increased hunger for God, over the past seven years, God has opened my eyes to truths that has changed my life forever. These things are shared in these pages. If one person's life is changed, to God be the glory.

About the Author

I was told if I penned a book, that makes me an author.

As a woman who loves the Lord, I was stuck in a place of doing church,

not understanding that I was the Church.

Due to my increased hunger for God, over the past seven years, God has opened my eyes to truths that has changed my life forever. These truths are shared in these pages. If one person's life is changed, to God be the glory.

