Dear Ones,
As you pursue truth, I pray you discover love.
In a world gone harsh, you must have the courage to
be tender as a blossom and tough as a diamond.
Stand faithful. Stand true. Stand strong.
In word and deed light the way to the rock of refuge.
Be confident. You cannot fail for you were
hewn from the invincible stone.
“There’s no foundation more solid than the Rock on which we’re called to build our lives, our marriages, and our dreams. Lisa’s new book, *Adamant*, will challenge you to discover more about who God is, and in turn, more about who you are.”

Steven Furtick, pastor, Elevation Church; *New York Times* bestselling author

“There is so much uncertainty in our world today. It’s hard to know what or who to believe. That’s why Lisa Bevere’s new book, *Adamant*, is powerfully relevant. Lisa writes with confidence, poise, and grace as she leads you on a spiritual journey toward unshakable truth. Her words are timeless and timely, inviting us back to a place of sanctity, stability, and truth grounded in Christ.”

Craig and Amy Groeschel, pastors of Life.Church; authors of *From This Day Forward*

“Important. Weighty. Convicting. Lisa Bevere is relentless in her conviction to stand on and for the Truth. Her clarion voice reminds us that Truth has a Name, and it’s a Name we can know. If you’re longing for an unshakable place to anchor your life (and all of us are), *Adamant* will help lead you to the only unchanging Rock—Jesus. Keep this book nearby, and more often, keep its conviction-filled pages open in your hands.”

Louie and Shelley Giglio, founders of Passion Conferences

“Wow! My dear friend Lisa hit a home run: ‘When truth becomes fluid, we lose contact with answers larger than ourselves. Real truth is a Rock. Adamant. Indivisible. Immovable. Invincible.’ In a generation and culture where truth moves with the trends, the scriptural truths Lisa shares in this book are so greatly needed.”

Christine Caine, bestselling author and founder of The A21 Campaign and Propel Women

“Like a beautiful tapestry made of the most elegant fabric, *Adamant* combines Lisa Bevere’s undeniable passion, vulnerability, and divine gift as wind to set each reader free. With love and understanding, Bevere takes us on a journey that will transform your mind, heal your heart, and fill your spirit with the revelation of God’s perfect plan for your life.”

Sarah Jakes Roberts, author of *Don’t Settle for Safe*
“This book is profound in its wisdom, yet deeply personal. Lisa is a gifted writer and a trusted friend who will guide us to a rock-solid understanding of our true identity in Christ.”

Sheila Walsh, author of *In the Middle of the Mess*

“In reading the opening pages of this bold new work, two statements resonate with my experience of the Christ and his Kingdom. ‘When stripped of awe, we find ourselves clothed in confusion and comparison’ and ‘when truth becomes fluid, we lose contact with answers that are bigger than ourselves.’ These two realities are as profound as it gets when it comes to the human condition. I am excited for what this book will stir, affirm, and ignite. In a world grasping for genuine reality, may you find wisdom for the journey, confidence of conviction, grace to be the child you truly are, and boldness to become light in the darkness for others.”

Bobbie Houston, co-senior pastor of Hillsong Church

“Lots of preachers and authors talk about living an ‘Adamant’ life for Jesus, but Lisa Bevere truly defines it. This book is Holy Spirit–breathed, and the anointing on her life through this book is evident.”

Heather Lindsey, author/speaker

“I’ll never forget the moment Lisa shared with me her plans to write her new book, *Adamant*. Sitting in my car, tears streaming down my face, I was struck with this very moving and relevant topic. In a world that sees truth as relative, Lisa masterfully tackles difficult topics, answers unearthing questions, and builds a biblical foundation we can lean on for years to come. Lisa has done it again! She writes the books we all love to read but also find ourselves needing to read at the same time.”

Havilah Cunnington, co-founder of Truth to Table

“I’m so excited for this new book from Lisa! She is such a dear friend of ours, and she carries such a timely word for this hour. She and John have been incredible friends and leaders in our lives, and we absolutely love what God is doing in and through them.”

Brian and Jenn Johnson, founders of Bethel Music
ADAMANT

FINDING
TRUTH
IN A UNIVERSE OF
OPINIONS

LISA BEVERE
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For more than a year, I have pondered this verse and found myself captivated by the concept of this rock, this stone, this . . . adamant.

We know the word to mean immovable, impervious, and unyielding in opinion or position. And as such, the word adamant has gained a reputation for more than its fair share of stubbornness. But the adjectives and the adverbs we commonly associate with the term adamant are not the original meaning of the word. Adamant began as a noun and in so many ways as a dream.

The concept of adamant has a rather ancient and mythical history. Adamant was first known as a stone. Correction: as an unknown stone. It represented an elusive mineral whose...
existence was hypothesized in ancient Greece. It was there that mathematicians, philosophers, and mystics first imagined the existence of a rock like none other, a stone woven so tightly that it would be simultaneously impenetrable and unbreakable. Void of fractures or fragments, it would be hard beyond measure and yet . . . irresistible.

This stone would have the singular ability to attract and repel objects. It would draw but not be drawn, be magnetic yet immovable. The stone would have a unique relationship with light. It would be capable of gathering rays, focusing them, and redirecting their radiance. Fire would not be able to penetrate its shell, and once drawn from the flames, the rock would be cool to the touch.

These are but a few of the traits theorized about this adamant ore. The troublesome part was the matter of discovering it. Would it be found in the dark heart of the earth? Were these stones born of fire and released from the belly of a volcano? Or were these stones of wonder hidden in the depths of the sea? Would the gods award them as a gift of merit?

The Greeks named the obscure stone adamas, which is best translated “invincible.” And even though there was not a shred of proof that adamas existed, they dreamed of ways this invincible stone could be put to use.

Weapons would be forged out of this mineral. Adamas would birth swords, axes, and knives that would not break in battle and shields that would not yield. The slenderest arrowhead fashioned of adamas would penetrate the most formidable target with ease. What of armor? Warriors cloaked in the impenetrable armor of adamas would be rendered invincible. Darkness would not stop them, for the rays captured
by adamas would blind their enemies even as the stone lit their way to victory.

The belief in this rock was so compelling that the theory of its existence spread northward through Europe until it reached the shores of Great Britain. It was there that the Greek word *adamas* became the word we know, *adamant*. And there the word waited to be revealed.

With the discovery of diamonds around 400 BC in India, it was thought that man had finally found the long-sought adamant. No other stone’s strength compared with that of the diamond. Every rock born of inferior fire fragmented under the force of the diamond adamant. These gems were born in wombs of such intense fire and pressure that all lesser components were consumed and what remained was a singular element: carbon, bound in the crystalline form of a diamond.

For centuries, the words *adamant* and *diamond* were used interchangeably to describe all that was invincible, immovable, and indestructible. Both the prince of preachers, Charles Spurgeon, and Puritan legend John Bunyan echoed the words of the prophet Zechariah when he bemoaned the condition of adamant hearts impervious to the Word of God and harder than flint:

> Yea, they made their hearts as an *adamant* stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the L**ord** of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the L**ord** of hosts. (Zech. 7:12 KJV)

More contemporary translations of this passage replaced the word *adamant* with the word *diamond*:
They made their hearts *diamond*-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts.

It wasn’t until the late 1700s that French scientist Antoine Lavoisier discovered that, given enough heat and oxygen, diamonds would actually evaporate. With this revelation, the words *diamond* and *adamant* were disassociated, and the search for the indestructible, immovable, invincible adamant faded. The word remained as a descriptor of what was never a reality. But men dreamed. The revered Arkenstone found in the writings of J. R. R. Tolkien seems a nod to the mythical origin of the adamant. For more than two millennia, people searched for and failed to find the adamant.

And yet I wonder . . .

What was the origin of this quest? Was this concept of the adamant a seed of inspiration planted by God? Why dream of what no one had yet seen, and why refer to the unknown? Or is this stone among us and unrecognized? Perhaps the adamant was never meant to be an implement of war and destruction but one of refuge and provision. Shouldn’t the stone we seek welcome all?

Could the purpose of the adamant be to mine what is hidden within us? In a world where truth slips and slides according to the latest popular trend and current culture, wouldn’t it be nice to have something that was constant?

    Immovable?
    Invincible?
    Unchanging?
Perhaps these musings are nothing more than silly questions about a nonexistent stone. After all, we live in a time when no one goes on quests for stones of power. We are realists who have learned that stars are nothing more than luminous vapor. We have walked upon the barren moon and sent probes into the deep, dark caverns of the ocean floor. We have demystified much of what once inspired wonder.

And yet, stripped of our awe, we find ourselves clothed in confusion and comparison.

The highly educated often lack both purpose and opportunities.

We have bound ourselves to monetary systems of credit designed to entrap in debt those who purchase.

The political system created by our forefathers to unite the people now divides us.

Our networks are vast, but our connections are shallow and void of true intimacy.

We have chosen to become what we do and yet remain unfulfilled.

We use technology to throw stones at people we will never see.

When truth becomes fluid, we lose contact with answers larger than ourselves.


Jesus is truth. And I propose that Jesus is the Adamant.

**Jesus the Adamant**

No stone born of earth can stand before the living Stone. In Christ, all that the Greeks and the mystics looked for was
realized. He is our Rock, our Cornerstone, and our long-awaited Adamant. Christ alone is the unchanging Stone with the power to change everything. And long has the Rock of Ages been among us. As the children of Israel wandered the desert in what seemed to be an aimless pursuit, Moses declared the presence of this Rock:

The Rock, his work is perfect,  
for all his ways are justice.  
A God of faithfulness and without iniquity,  
just and upright is he. (Deut. 32:4)

And after a season in the wilderness, David cried out to God on the day of his deliverance:

I love you, O LORD, my strength.  
The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my  
deliverer,  
my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,  
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my  
stronghold. (Ps. 18:1–2)

The Old Testament Hebrew word used here for rock means “the inaccessible refuge.” The Rock is our strength, our sure footing in a world littered with gravel. Jesus is our stronghold when our enemies want to put us in a stranglehold. The Rock is our rescue, safeguard, and armor of defense. Christ anoints us with the oil of his Spirit and declares his salvation to our detractors.

In so many ways, we are all refugees on this earth looking for that high, secure, and sacred place. We long for the safety of a realm ruled by untainted justice. Like the Israelites, we have left behind our Egyptian taskmasters, but we have yet to master the enslaving voices that their cruelty imprinted
on us. Even so, the Rock accompanied us as we wandered in wildernesses of purpose and preparation, but we knew it not. It is time we acknowledge our brokenness and fall again upon the Rock that we might be mended.

And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him. (Matt. 21:44)

This verse refers to Jesus, who is both the Stone and the Son. Both were rejected by man though authored by God. The Son was the Stone that came to crush the oppressive kingdoms of man and act as the Cornerstone that establishes the kingdom of God. N. T. Wright highlights this profound connection:

And—just as in English the letters of the word “Son” are the same as the letters of the word “Stone,” with two more added, so in Hebrew, by coincidence, the letters of the word ben (son) are the same as those of the word eben (stone), with one more added.¹

I am so thankful that in Christ we were added to both the Stone and the Son. In Christ, the isolated find their home and the many become one. Christ is the Stone fashioned from the mountain of God yet untouched by human hands. He is the Rock before which no earthly kingdom can stand. Daniel prophesied this confrontation with Christ our Adamant when he described both the hidden dream and the interpretation of the dream to King Nebuchadnezzar:

You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze,
ADAMANT

its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. (Dan. 2:31–35)

In Christ, a seed became a stone, and the stone grew into a mountain. The mountain that filled the whole earth is Zion, and the seed stone of this mountain is Christ. If we foolishly attempt to build our lives with the very materials that cannot stand the blow of the Stone, our pursuits will be shattered then scattered, blown by the winds of time. Jesus shakes all that can be shaken so that only the unshakable and true remain. Embrace the trembling, my friend. Let your heart quake, for he loves you far too much to allow you to be ensnared in half-truths.

Living Stones

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be
a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 2:4–5)

In the Message translation, this passage begins with “Welcome to the living Stone, the source of life.” In Christ, our hearts come alive, and we too become living stones, set in the body to realize our purposes. We are here to offer our lives in the service of building a spiritual house or sanctuary. We do not hold the role of builder. We are the raw material Christ uses to construct his church.

I love the word sanctuary. It is a preserve or shelter, a haven of safety, protection, and immunity. What a picture of our lives as adamant stones of safety! This is not a dead building. It is a refuge, vibrant with life, where we offer our Father our lives, just as the priests of the temple did. Peter continues this image in 1 Peter 2:6–8:

For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

I know sometimes things are said and done that make us want to go quiet about the fact that we are churchgoing Christians, but never for a minute should we be ashamed of our Cornerstone. Jesus is flawless. We are flawed diamonds that often diminish his radiance with our inclusions, but our Master Builder weaves us together so that the best of each of us is magnified and the flaws are redeemed.
People fail us.
People fail to see us.
We fail people and fail to see each other the way Jesus sees us.

But for all our days, we must honor Jesus, for he never disappoints. He was tested without faltering or failing. Jesus is committed to loving his flawed bride, the church, into radiance and readiness. Shouldn’t we do the same?

In the book of Isaiah, we read:

Therefore thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: ‘Whoever believes will not be in haste.’” (28:16)

The Hebrew word for haste means more than hurried—it also means “to be agitated and disturbed.” That’s a promise to us—to you and to me: we who believe will not be agitated or disturbed. We will be kept in perfect peace as our minds are stayed on our adamant Cornerstone (Isa. 26:3).

With Jesus, the focus shifted, and the cast-aside one (Jesus) became a home for the outcast.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Pet. 2:9–10)
Once we were not his; now we are. Once we were rejected; now we are accepted. Once we were divided; now in Christ we are one.

But you... but me... but we the many outsiders... were chosen by God and called to the priestly work of a holy people. We give witness to what he has done in our lives. His new is exchanged for our old, and our death is exchanged for his life. We embrace the Stone and cry out from the pile of our broken pieces by inviting our Cornerstone to make us whole. In Christ, we have gone from the rejected to the accepted. In him, we who were nothing got in on everything.

Our Cornerstone is not a buried remnant of the past. Jesus is not a dead stone mined from the depths of the molten earth. Christ is the living Stone and as such the architect of our new beginning. He is an unchanging Stone with the power to change us.

Stones and Seeds

In ancient architecture, the cornerstone was considered the seed from which the entire building would germinate. The cornerstone began the pattern that every other stone would follow. It was so important that the cornerstone be precisely set in place that builders would use the stars to align the cornerstone with the points of a compass. How beautiful that the stars declared the coming of our Cornerstone.

Our modern architecture no longer uses the cornerstone as the seed of a building. Our cornerstones are merely decorative.
plaques added on after the building is complete to commemorate the date it was established. These cornerstones serve no structural purpose; they are simply a commemorative add-on. Conversely, Jesus is not a decorative add-on to our lives. He is our pattern and the seed from which our entire lives will come.

Not only is he our refuge and the seed of our foundation, but he is also our refreshing.

With the coming of Jesus Christ, Paul explains the Rock of Exodus to the church at Corinth: “For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ” (1 Cor. 10:4). As the Israelites followed Moses through the desert, they were refreshed by water from a rock—a rock that followed them. Christ was that Rock. Even then, the tender love and provision of God was present, and Jesus was their rearguard.

How curious.

This stone not only provided water for millions but also moved along with them. God appeared as a pillar of cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night, and both day and night the rock that followed. This is such a beautiful picture of God’s ever-present care for the children of Israel as they traveled through the wilderness. Some rabbinic traditions say this was an actual rock that resembled a sieve, which rolled along with them and came to rest at the tent of meeting when they settled.2

Whether this wilderness rock literally or figuratively followed them, Paul is saying this rock represented the preexistent Christ, their ever-present rearguard. The rock foreshadowed Emmanuel, our always present Lord. Even now Christ is the Rock who travels with us through the wildresses of life, refreshing us with living water.
He opened the rock, and water gushed out; it flowed through the desert like a river.
(Ps. 105:41)

Life can be riddled with desert seasons, and deserts have a way of revealing our source of life. Some arid seasons last weeks, others months, and then there are those that stretch their parched hands over years. But no matter how desolate your current surroundings may seem or how long they last, there is a river hidden within your wilderness. This river is not around you; it is within you. If you are thirsty, if your life is desolate, cry out to the Rock.

On the cross, this Rock, Jesus, was opened once again, and this time blood and water flowed from his side... water to wash and blood to redeem.

The goodness of our Rock is impervious to our awfulness. As our Adamant encounters our flaws, they become as dust in the presence of his perfection. It is not that he is unaware of our violations. He sees the pain and shame that our willful choices bring upon ourselves and others. It is just that he cannot help but be what he is... good and merciful. He is the Lord and Savior of all, and any who throw their broken lives on his adamant mercy are transformed.

A New Name

And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this...
rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matt. 16:17–18)

“You are Peter.”

New life requires a renewed nature. A new nature requires the gift of a new name.

This declaration must have reverberated deep within Simon’s soul. What must it have felt like to be singled out and called a rock after he’d spent his entire life known by a very different name?

Simon. There was nothing wrong with this name. It just wasn’t big enough. It spoke of who he had been rather than who he was becoming. When we speak and say something different, we begin to see differently. Peter was the new name that fit his divine destiny.

Simon means “to listen and to hear.” It can also mean “reed-like and pliable in nature.” When we weave these two together, we find a name that could mean one who is bent in the direction of what they hear and listen to. In that light, we are all Simons, waiting to be renamed in the light of our destiny, for like him we tend to move in the direction of what we hear.

In this conversation with Simon, the name change foreshadowed our position in Christ, for he changes each of us from a swaying reed to a rampart of adamant.

Simon needed to transition from a fisherman to a fisher of men. The renaming of Simon closed the pages of an old book so God could take pen and paper in hand to write a new one.

I wonder if the name Peter felt odd at first. Or was it the name he had longed to be called all his life? Will the same be true for us? Did you know that in heaven we will all receive a stone with our truest name on it? Jesus promised:
To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it. (Rev. 2:17)

This new name declares victories. It is etched with how we conquered our fears and became who God created us to be. I find it fascinating that our new name is written in stone. To me this says that who we have been is in flux, but who we are becoming is eternal. Why would I choose to live in the confines of a name that fits my *now* when my Rock is fashioning one for me that will fit forever?

I am alive to grow into the likeness of my new name.

Something shifts when what Jesus says about us becomes a part of us. In those moments, we glimpse a fraction of what it means to know as we are known. This is one of the many reasons why I love that it is Peter the rock who welcomes us to our Cornerstone.

This isn’t the first time that Jesus worked with stone. When we think of carpenters, we think of those who work with wood, but in Jesus’s day, carpenters were also “artificers in stone, iron and copper, as well as in wood.” Our Cornerstone was familiar with stones.

On earth, we are known by the name given by our parents. In eternity, we will have a new name known only to us. Until that time when the unknown is made known to us, we have the privilege of living in the wonder of the name of Jesus.

In Christ, rocks join together to form a holy mountain. In Christ, small seeds grow into large trees.
In Christ, hearts of rock become living stones.
In Christ, the many become one.

Secure in Him

Our position in Christ is not based on our ability to hold on. The moment we hide ourselves in him, we are secured in his ability to hold us. In Christ, our Rock, our Adamant, our Cornerstone, we are safe.

Recently, I flew into Chicago, and on the hour-long taxi ride to my hotel, my Muslim driver tried to convert me to Islam. He assured me that if I prayed every day and lived according to the tenets of Islam, there would be a chance I’d make it to paradise. It was a definite maybe. No guarantee, but there was a chance. He kindly offered me a place on a rock, with no promise. I was painfully aware that I could slip and fall off this rock. I choose to remain in Christ; I will fall but never outside of him.

We fall in him not off him.

In order that we might abide in him, God places a measure of his faith in us. We stumble when we place our faith in someone. We will never falter when our faith is in God. Let the faith of God have entrance in your life. Invite it in. You have tried and failed in your own strength. You have watched as others have faltered as they attempted to climb the scree-strewn rock of faith in the strength of self. Just because faith is unseen doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist or it won’t happen. Faith is the hidden quickening of hope that leaps within us to help us believe there can be more. Faith gives us the courage to ask for more, to dare
to dream that in Christ we too can be adamant, immovable, and invincible.

Mountains

We are invited to climb the mountains of our lives by God’s strength, following in his footprints. Recently, I wrote this in my journal:

They call to me, these mountain heights, oh come away and be my delight. They lure me with mysteries beyond compare, known only by those who dare. But I am old and not as strong. Why did your call wait so long? He answered, “Yes, the climb is steep, but I am strong. Your youth renews as you follow the path I’ve set you on.”

I live in Colorado with a view of the mountains all day long. So for me, God’s whisper to follow him to the mountain makes sense. I don’t know the geography of where you live, but know this—you have been invited to the ascent as well. Not to Sinai the stony mountain, whose very base could not be touched. You have been welcomed to Zion, a living mountain of wonder.

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (Heb. 12:22–24)
Something happens as we step into the wonder of this invitation.

John Muir, the respected naturalist who championed the need for wild spaces, once said, “We are now in the mountains and they are in us, kindling enthusiasm, making every nerve quiver, filling every pore and cell of us.” These words were penned to describe the wonder of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, an earthly range covered with nature and wildlife. How much more could this be said of a living mountain we could enter even as it enters us? For not only are we in Christ . . . but Christ is also the hope within us. Our hope comes from the Mount of Zion, even as we invite his reign within us.

May these pages serve as a welcome to all who have ever felt rejected and as a refuge to all who quake with fear. As you journey, may you enter into the wonder and solidarity of truth and escape the snare of confusion and earthbound opinions. Our Adamant has not moved; he has ever been with us.

Dear heavenly Father,
I choose to embrace all that it means to be a living stone and a royal priest. Be my refuge and my strength, my refreshing and my hope. Etch the name you have given me upon my heart. Christ, my Cornerstone and Adamant, the unmovable and invincible source of life, I fall upon you. Have your way in my life.
ADAMANTLY INTIMATE

We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

I was not an easy child. I was strong-willed and stubborn. I could also be melancholy, withdrawn, and easily distracted. If I was sent to my room to clean it, in a matter of minutes, I would forget why I was there. When my door closed, I turned on my music and my imagination took over. Rather than straighten my room, I might rearrange my furniture. At other times, I donned a sunbonnet and pretended I was Laura Ingalls Wilder. In a drawer, there was a blue block of clay begging me to sculpt a horse, or there were the dolls my grandmother had brought me from faraway lands that wanted rearranging. And there were always books demanding my attention. In my room, I lost all sense of time. An hour felt like fifteen minutes.
It wasn’t until I heard my mother calling my name that I’d remember I had been sent to my room for a reason. But I just could not remember what it was. So when my mother checked on me, there was no evidence of progress. Rather, the room had grown worse rather than better.

It wasn’t that I meant to disobey, but somehow I always did. This pattern of behavior understandably frustrated my mother to no end. I would try to counter her anger by drawing her into my world of pretend, but my mother was living in a very real nightmare she couldn’t escape. She was caught in the cycle of chaos that only someone married to an adulterer and an alcoholic would understand.

Because I was the oldest and the only daughter, her anger was vented on me. In so many ways, I looked and acted like my father. She said many things she probably never meant and did things she would have gladly taken back—things so long ago forgiven they are not worth repeating. But the words that passed between us and the things that were done made me never want a daughter. I share this only so you can understand how beautiful the encounter I had with Jesus really was.

When I was pregnant for the fourth time, many assumed the child would be a girl. I mean, who has four boys in a row . . . right? It was early in my pregnancy, and I was wrestling with the fear that the birth of a daughter might be imminent.

So many times my mother had scolded me with, “I hope you have a daughter just like you!”

And so many times I had defiantly countered, “I hope I do too!”

Maybe at one point those words had been true, but as time passed, they became a lie. I didn’t want that daughter, not
even a little bit. I was already overwhelmed with a husband who traveled all the time and three young sons. What would adding a daughter into our crazy mix look like? I didn’t know how to do girl!

In a time of prayer, I got gut-level honest with God.

In whispered tones, I voiced each of the fears that stormed through my head. I let him know that giving me a daughter would be a big mistake. I didn’t want to hurt her like my mother had hurt me and her mother had hurt her. I was afraid I wouldn’t bond with her. In my willful youth, I had said things I didn’t mean. I didn’t want a daughter like me.

After a while, my torrent of words ran dry and a sense of stillness settled over me. My eyes were closed as I took a deep breath and let it out.

In my mind’s eye, I saw myself at the edge of a wide-open meadow where flowers and emerald grass swayed in the light of golden sunshine. It was the type of field that invites you to run through it. In the distance was a single tower. I felt compelled to go to it. The tower had a single entrance and was wrapped with tall, narrow windows that made their way upward in a spiral. (I know now they were arrow slits.) I opened the door. The interior was dim in contrast with the bright sunshine, but not dark or foreboding. The windows revealed a staircase that wound upwards. I climbed the stairs, pausing at each window. As far as I could see, there were neither people nor houses. Each opening gave me a view of another portion of the meadow.

When I reached the top of the stairs, I found a round room with windows under the eaves. The far wall sheltered a large wooden chest. I wanted to look inside it. I expected it to hold weapons, supplies, or possibly even treasure of some
sort. I knelt on the floor and lifted the unlocked lid. What I found astounded me. The chest was filled with photos of me as a child.

There were pictures of me with missing teeth. Photos of me before and after my eye had been removed. Photos of summer holidays, Christmases, birthdays, and my parents smiling. I held in my hands all the pictures that had been lost decades earlier when our basement had flooded. Here they were in a watchtower, safely hidden away in a treasure chest. Caught up in this joy of recovery, I held one up for a closer look. I was probably no more than five, my face and hair full of sunshine. I was squinting like Popeye and flashing my father a crooked smile as he captured the moment. I can still see it.

My reverie was interrupted when I heard a man’s voice say, “I always thought you were funny.”

I turned, but Jesus was not there. I knew it was he who spoke because the warmth of his tangible presence lingered. The love of God hovered over me as I wept like a baby.

In that single moment, every word that had ever been spoken that caused me to see myself as an awful child took flight like a winged bird. How poignant that these images were kept in an armory, for they were intimate weapons of healing.

Intimate

Our God is adamantly intimate. He knew my fears and spoke directly into my spirit. That is how he wants to speak to you.
as well. He remembers those moments that made him smile, the very ones we have forgotten. He has forgotten our sin and shame and buried our transgressions in a sea of forgetfulness. He draws us near to heal and mend.

We lose sight of our identities when we attach them to the wrong imagery. We lose our abilities when we allow fear and even the pain of others to bury our gifts. But we can run and hide in him, and he will speak truth to the most intimate places of our hearts. He longs to rock the rejected in his arms and then plant us in his truth.

I hope you already know this:

You are so much more than what you or others can see or touch.
You are so much more than what you’ve known or done.
You are so much more than what others think or even how your perceptions frame your self-image.
You could never be accurately measured by what you own or lack.
You are more than the span of your years and therefore cannot be tethered to the adages of young or old.
You are a child of the eternal realm.
You are more than single, divorced, widowed, or married.
You are far more than your gender.

These attributes are tangible expressions of the structure that houses the real life that is you. They are relational dynamics and material possessions. They are like pieces of clothing that cover us and the bodies that shelter us. They represent how our lives appear to be, but they are not our source of life.
ADAMANT

If a fire ravaged my house and consumed all of its contents but I escaped through a veil of the flames, my life would be intact.

Spirit

I am a living spirit.
You are a living spirit.
We were created in the image of God, and God is spirit. Though it is invisible, this spirit is as real and as near as the very breath we draw. And yet it is something deeper than the passage of air through our lungs. It is the quickening of God dwelling within us. The God of fire and love consumes all that hinders the expression and reception of his love.

God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:24)

God is spirit. God is truth. Therefore, we worship him both in spirit and in truth.

Presently, the flawed confines of our human frames are an awkward fit for our spirits. The tension between our longing for release and the reality of our earthly containment is often the very thing that awakens a desire for more.

When we were young, this frustration urged us to grow. That thing just beyond our reach is what drove us to roll or crawl. After a while, movement alone was not enough. Why spend our days looking at the floor? In answer, we left behind the safety and speed of crawling to pull up and stand. Standing expanded our view, and for a short season, we were content to drop back on our bottoms to move. But there came a day
when standing on two legs and then dropping back to all fours was no longer enough. We lifted our heads to walk erect.

Young and old, we are frustrated by limits and betrayed by the same. So why would any of us ever imagine that a human physical experience would have the power to heal the human spirit? Our emotions can be touched and our bodies can be pleased, but the covering of flesh cannot touch spirit.

Even though it is the very breath of God’s Spirit that animates all that can be touched and gives us the capacity to feel.

And it is the spirit that quickens the body, as James says:

The body apart from the spirit is dead. (James 2:26)

Once the spirit has departed the body, the body is drawn back toward the realm of the earth, from which it was formed. The spirit was all that gave the body life and purpose, and with its absence, the body is compelled to decay. But there is another kind of death that James and Paul talk about—a dead faith.

Faith apart from works is dead. (James 2:26)

The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (2 Cor. 3:6)

Don’t settle for religion void of God’s presence or for turning the pages of the Bible without the wind of his Spirit. His voice speaks life. The limits of the letter of the law are not simply the humanly impossible legalities of religion—the law also includes what our culture has scribed on our flesh. It is the labels we are encouraged to wear.
Until we see that living by labels and letters is death, we will continue to turn to the wrong source for the right thing. We need someone to speak spirit-to-spirit to the depths of our longing and bring clarity to our human confusion. There are far too many smoke-and-mirrors games in play in our culture. People are distracted by an illusion, while an operator behind the curtain controls what we see and hear. Maybe you’re hiding behind that curtain, making things appear one way when in reality you are desperate to be seen. Truly seen. Our God sees.

**The God Who Hovers**

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. (Gen. 1:1–2)

From the very beginning, our God was the Creator. When the earth was held captive, shrouded in a formless void of water, and darkness which veiled the countenance of the deep . . . God drew near. Rather than turn away in disappointment or distance himself from the shapeless, barren abyss of dark water, the Spirit of God hovered.

I want to pause and paint some imagery around this word *hovering*.

The Hebrew word for *hovering*, *rachaf*, evokes such a beautiful picture and is best translated as “to linger or to float in a manner that is at once gentle and cherishing.” The rabbinic notation that accompanies this word for *hovering* is “like a dove.”¹
**Rachaf** also means “to flutter over.” The word is seen again in this reference:

He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, *that flutters over its young*, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions. (Deut. 32:10–11)

This reference compares how God protected and cared for the children of Israel to how an eagle interacts with its young. The Spirit of God hovered over them with protection as he led them from a place of desolation to a land of promise.

I can’t help but imagine the tenderness of a mother as she pauses over the bed of her sleeping child tossing fretfully in the throes of a bad dream. Are we willing to be awakened?

And while the Spirit of God hovered and covered, he spoke. His words were chosen with care. He did not echo the reality of a formless, void sphere of darkness. He released what would shape what should be. In the face of chaos and darkness, God called forth an awakening. Face-to-face with the finality of dark waters, God spoke a dawn, a new beginning, a day. God spoke light.

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. (Gen. 1:3–4)

And light appeared, and it was good. The Hebrew word for *light* here has its origin in God, which isn’t surprising because God is light void of shadow. This was not the placement
of the sun. That event came later in creation. This light emanated from God and reached out to illuminate the dark recesses of the earth. It is one thing to have a torch in our hand and quite another to be a light source. We carry light. But God is light. Quickening light is in his very breath.

Therefore, he spoke his very essence into our earth, and it was good because . . . God is good.

The Hebrew word used here in Genesis 1 for good encompasses many English words: desirable, efficient, kind, moral, and increasing in value are just a few. When light was released, the earth was seeded with all of these attributes and more. This genesis positioned the earth to become an attractive, productive environment that was kind and moral to its inhabitants, and with each passing year, it would become increasingly more valuable. A pattern of the goodness of God was set in motion.

We have no sure way of knowing if this origin of earth light was an explosion or if the light levels rose slowly like the dawning of a new day. What we do know for certain is that God was the light source, the light was good, and the light was best separated from darkness.

God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.
And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.
(Gen. 1:5)

Once light was released, things began to happen. Next God separated the waters by an expanse, thus creating the atmosphere and cushion of space that surrounds the earth. Once this protective environment was in place, things long
submerged and hidden by the dark deep rose to the light and surfaced.

And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. (Gen. 1:9–10)

What was hidden was revealed. The land had always been there, covered by fathoms of dark water, awaiting its release. I imagine the earth held its breath and watched in hope as light appeared through the wavering waters. The land waited for the word of God to call it forth. And the land began to burst with life.

And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. (Gen. 1:11)

The next day the rulers of the day and the night, the sun and the moon and the stars, were appointed. This means that all the living things were at first growing under the warmth and golden glow of the light of God. He was the light source, just as one day he will be again.

And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. (Rev. 22:5)

Once the reign and the realms of the sun and the moon were established, God spoke to the domains of water and sky
and called forth the fish and the flying creatures of the air. The depths of the oceans and the expanse of the sky teemed with their flitting and fluttering life. Where the Spirit of God had once hovered, now creatures flew. The following day was set aside for the life that roamed the land.

And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. (Gen. 1:24)

The sea, the air, and the earth had each brought forth according to its kind and nature. It was time the Creator brought forth according to his.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Gen. 1:27)

Humankind was created in his image. I wonder if we understand the privilege of being formed as a reflection of our masterful Creator.

Before the fall, we can only guess at the magnificence of each creature. And yet they cannot approach the image of God woven within you. I’m not just saying this. I know it to be true. You doubt it because you cannot actually see who you really are. Man and woman were created magnificent.

Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. (Gen. 2:7)

First God formed, then God breathed. Using the dust of this light-quickened realm, the Creator gave man the capacity to contain his very own breath. The I Am Who I Am
breathed his life into the shape of a man, and what was a shell came alive. When Adam was first created, he was whole. He was perfect in physical form, and man’s spirit and soul were unified. Adam and Eve were perfect.

Don’t be frightened by what I have just said. Don’t let it puff you up with arrogance either. Allow the royal designation of God’s original intent for us to be image bearers of the Most High God to place its weight upon your shoulders. In the trespass of Adam and Eve, we toppled further than we could ever retrieve ourselves. Now, hidden within our invincible refuge, Christ our Cornerstone, we dimly reflect what we had been and wait for the glorious hope of what we one day will be. As C. S. Lewis so aptly noted:

“You come of the Lord Adam and the Lady Eve,” said Aslan. “And that is both honour enough to erect the head of the poorest beggar, and shame enough to bow the shoulders of the greatest emperor on earth. Be content.”

You were made for intimate, spirit-filled connection with the Father.

We are children of soil formed from the dust of the earth long after the fall had its way with our world. Our spirits came alive when we were born again, but our minds and bodies are in need of sanctuary and renewal.

He reveals deep and hidden things;
he knows what is in the darkness,
and the light dwells with him. (Dan. 2:22)
In the fall this intimate weaving of the soul and spirit was rent. To understand this better it could be likened to a vessel that is present but no longer full. Even though it is his breath that sustains our frame, we carry an awareness of our gap, our void. We breathe because he is, but the shallowness of each breath says there is more because it doesn’t fill us. Without God’s spirit we live as those who are on life support.

Now I must share why I have taken the time and space to unpack the creation account in this manner for you. I have a sense that the Spirit of God wants to hover over some areas in your life. He wants to do a Genesis makeover. He wants to:

- quicken you with his light (2 Cor. 4:6)
- separate light from darkness (2 Cor. 6:14)
- create a canopy of expanse over your life (Rom. 4:7–8)
- roll back the dark blanket of water and reveal the new ground (Heb. 11:29)
- release the seeds buried within your soil so they may sprout and bring forth fruit (Mark 4:20)
- call forth life and wonder in your deep waters (John 7:38)
- free your heart from fear so it can take flight in faith (Matt. 6:22; Mark 6:50)
- astound you with the creativity of his vast creation (Ps. 19:1–6)
- breathe life, his life, into the cavity created by sin, reweave your spirit and soul and heal all that has been torn and rent (John 20:21–22; Col. 2:2)

Even now our Creator longs to draw near and come face-to-face with any place veiled in darkness or misty confusion.
and shed his light. His Spirit hovers over the formless, voided places in our lives. He is not ignorant of our pain or repulsed by our condition. He sees us wrestling with confusion. He does not pull away when he sees us struggling. His Spirit draws near, waiting, lingering, oh so gently, like a mother beside a frightened or fitful child, like an eagle fluttering over a nest of baby birds as they hatch, watching expectantly as they escape the confines of their thin shells. Later, the eagle will hover again as they learn to fly. This is the adamantly intimate, steadfast nature of our Creator, who is at once around us and within us. Intimacy leaves no room for shadowed spaces, so do not hide. Your Father sees and loves the real you. Trust that the one who formed you will also breathe his life into you.

Intimacy Brings Wholeness

One thing God cannot do is lie.

He will not repeat the lies others have spoken over you.

He will not allow a lie you’ve spoken over yourself to be called truth.

He will not allow a label to be your limit. In his presence, every label falls away, even the ones you’ve written on yourself.

He calls you by name, not the names you’ve been called.

He calls you by the name the Spirit sees when it hovers.

He’s been face-to-face with your deepest longings and darkest fears.

He sees the unformed places.
He sees the disappointed hope.
He sees the misty clouds of confusion.
He sees the heaving tumult of humanity in crisis.
He hears the cries of the frightened and the lonely.
He feels the pain of the shunned and the isolated.
He sees the snare of sin and shame.
He sees the many waters that threaten to overwhelm.
He sees through the fathoms of darkness that grayed the color of your world with swaths of shadow.
He sees all of this and speaks light.
Others may call you girl. He calls you daughter.
Others may call you a failure. He calls you daughter.
You may call yourself heterosexual, transgender, asexual, lesbian, or any other of a vast assortment of labels. He calls you his own.
Daughter is higher and reaches deeper than gender.
Daughter is more intimate than your sexual orientation.
Daughter is who you are to your Creator.
God doesn’t address us as girls and boys.
He calls us daughters and sons.
There are intimate places in each of us that can be touched only by him. There are places within us that were created to respond to God’s Spirit. We call out for his touch each time we breathe the name of Jesus.
I don’t know if our planet cried out when it was submerged in the depths of a watery grave. I don’t know why the Spirit of God chose then to hover. I do know that now the Spirit of God is as close to us as a whisper, waiting to encircle us and gather us close.
In the New Testament, the heart of the Creator was echoed in the words of Jesus:
O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! (Matt. 23:37)

How tragic are the words “you were not willing.”

Even now the Spirit of God hovers, waiting to speak peace to the storms and to silence the cries of our howling wastelands. He waits, longing to encircle us with the protection and warmth of his wings. Are we willing? Will we invite the Holy Spirit who hovers to draw near? Will we allow him to cover us? Will we persist with our attempts to cover ourselves even as we uncover others? Will we listen to our Creator?

Intimacy is part of our deep and desperate human desire to simply belong.

We long to belong . . . because we were created to belong.

We crave intimacy . . . because we were created for intimacy.

We need to love and be loved . . . because we were created for love.

And we were created by love.

The truth is we tend to oversimplify some things and complicate others. When it comes to gender, we do both. I live in a woman’s body, but ultimately I am a spirit. We are all spiritual beings having a rather rough human experience. This earth is not our home, so it shouldn’t surprise us that at times our bodies feel awkward, limiting, and constrictive. They will never feel otherwise until our mortal, corruptible frames put on their immortal bodies. We are seeds awaiting release. Then and only then will we discover who and what we really are.
We are all broken. Belonging to other broken people will not fix our brokenness any more than having sex will fulfill our longing for intimacy. If it did, prostitutes and sex addicts would be the most fulfilled people on the planet. (I think we all agree that’s not the case.) But there is One to whom we belong, One who can heal our brokenness and fulfill our need for intimacy. It is the Spirit of God who hovers and makes us once again whole.

Remember the verse in Daniel 2, where the stone untouched by human hands becomes the mountain? This concept is echoed in the book of Isaiah:

There’s a day coming when the mountain of God’s House will be The Mountain—solid, towering over all mountains. All nations will river toward it, people from all over set out for it. They’ll say, “Come, let’s climb God’s Mountain, go to the House of the God of Jacob. He’ll show us the way he works so we can live the way we’re made.” Zion’s the source of the revelation. God’s Message comes from Jerusalem. (2:2–3 Message)

God will show us the way he works so we can live the way we’re made. We were made for immovable, invincible intimacy that will not be dissuaded by our deepest longings or put off by our most primal fears. If we ask, he will show us the light of his goodness. Pause, ponder, and allow his light to quicken you.

Dear heavenly Father,
I dare to believe that you are not distant or disapproving; you are near. There are things immersed in the deep waters of my life that I can no longer see. I give you permission to speak into my life. Release your light
and separate it from any darkness and confusion in my life. I receive your designation of daughter. Show me the way you are working in my life so I can live the way I was made . . . for your glory. In the name of Jesus, amen.