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**YOU'RE GOING TO SEE ME
BECAUSE I AM ALIVE
AND YOU'RE ABOUT TO
COME ALIVE.**

JESUS

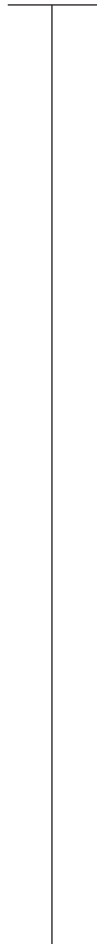
CHAPTER 1

MOMENT

SOAKING SESSION

Shine by William Matthews

You Came by Jonathan David & Melissa Helser



“You’re going to see me because I am alive
and you’re about to come alive.

At that moment you will know absolutely
that I’m in my Father, and you’re in me, and I’m in you.”

Jesus (from John 14:20)

Two thousand years ago, our Creator, out of love, sent his son to bear the burdens of this life that no human could possibly bear. Why would Jesus want to come to this earth to die? The answer is simple. He came to die for *one thing*. He came to die for the most valuable prize in the universe—and *you* are that prize. *You* are his great love.

When Jesus died on the cross, he took upon himself all the pain, hurt, evil, trauma, and darkness that no one can fix. He has a message and a hope for anyone who will receive it: “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly” (Matthew 11:28-30).

NO MOMENT LIKE THE PRESENT

God’s love *always* finds you. In the second half of the verse (John 14:20), Jesus assures us, “*At that moment* you will know *absolutely* that I’m in my Father, and you’re in me, and I’m in you.” Today is that day. *Now is that moment*. God will use anyone and anything, even the words in this book, to reach out to you in the hope you will reach back to him. It’s not a small thing, and this moment is not a coincidence. He is a good Father. In fact, whether you realize it or not, you were looking for him all along, and he can’t wait for you to find him. The apostle Paul explained to the people of Athens:

*The God who made the world and everything in it, this Master of sky and land, doesn’t live in custom-made shrines or need the human race to run errands for him, as if he couldn’t take care of himself. He makes the creatures; the creatures don’t make him. Starting from scratch, he made the entire human race and made the earth hospitable, with plenty of time and space for living so we could seek after God, and not just grope around in the dark but actually **find** him. He doesn’t play hide-and-seek with us. He’s not remote; he’s **near**. We live and move in him, can’t get away from him! (Acts 17:24–27)*

We are God’s dear children. He is near and his love always finds you. You are his child . . . and he is so taken with you!



God wants to be found by you. He longs for a real relationship with you. What gets in the way of you fully knowing his love and care? How do these things affect you?

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**NO ONE HAS HEARD, NO EAR HAS PERCEIVED,
NO EYE HAS SEEN ANY GOD BESIDES YOU,
WHO ACTS ON BEHALF OF THOSE WHO WAIT FOR HIM.**

ISAIAH 64:4 NIV

God's love is active. He acts on your behalf and does for you what you cannot do for yourself. Read Isaiah 64:4. What would you like him to do on your behalf?

KARA'S MOMENT

You may identify with Kara's struggles. I've included parts of her story in different parts of this book. Here, she describes the *moment* that made all the difference in her life.

A free treatment facility for women was located not far from my parents' house. Women could show up whenever they wanted to go for as long as they wanted to be there. I went to the center and just sat and cried, day after day. My mind was working like someone hit "play" on a recorder. All the vile and hateful things I'd ever thought, said, or done played in stereo in my mind. It was everything I'd tried so hard to escape for so long, but it all came flooding back. This pain and insanity is why I'd used drugs in the past, but this time would be different . . . at least, I hoped it would be different.

I didn't drink or use during that time, but the bulimia came back. I ate everything I could get my hands on. I was so confused and felt so ashamed. Women in the program told me to take things one at a time. "Get sober first," they assured me. One of the women comforted me: "You only have to feel this way once. It'll get better. Keep walking. There's sunshine on the other side." It occurred to me that I'd never even really tried to be sober. I wanted to give it a shot.

After going to this treatment center for 40 days, I thought I'd die from all the pain. A woman who had used with me years before had gotten clean, and she was at the center. When I was at my lowest, she sat with me all day and held me while I cried. I wasn't even sure I wanted her to touch me, but she hugged me, and she put her hand on my head and prayed for me. She gave me a little piece of paper. She had written, "Be still and know that I am God, and I will heal you."

At the end of the day, I told her, "Thank you so much for caring for me, but I can't do this anymore."

She asked, "What are you going to do?"

I explained, "I'm going to see my dealer and get something to numb the pain."

She looked into my eyes and said, "I'm going to pray for you."

I left and went directly to the dealer's house. I gave him \$40, but he said, "I don't have anything right now. Wait here. I'll be back in a little while."

I sat in his back yard with a friend who had used with me for years. When I looked at her, I saw that she looked awful. She had been using meth and speed, and she had been picking her skin. Nicks and cuts were all over her face and arms, and her color was deathly pale.

She was looking at me, too. Compared to her, I looked like the picture of health. She didn't need an explanation of why I looked good. She asked, "You got out, didn't you? Why in the world are you back here?"

I told her, "I feel like I'm dying. I can't feel this way anymore."

"Yeah," she interrupted insistently, "but you got out!" She couldn't imagine anyone would come back to a life of such misery.

At that moment, I saw reality. I realized using was a huge lie. It promised relief, but it only guaranteed more pain and deeper darkness. I saw that all my using was killing me, robbing me of life and hope, stealing love, and ruining everything I treasured.

At that moment, the dealer walked out his back door with a bag for me. I felt another presence with us. The presence spoke with great tenderness in the stillness of my mind: "This isn't the life I have for you, baby girl. I have so much more!" It was a voice

of pure, unconditional love, a voice that drowned out all the vile memories and horrible names I called myself.

The dealer held out the drugs for me, but I shook my head and told him, "I can't. I just can't." And I walked through the house and to my car. I spoke to the voice and said, "I don't know who you are or what you are, but I want to know you. I don't want to be confused about you any longer." I'd been to 12-Step meetings and heard people talk about God in all kinds of ways: Buddha, the Spirit of the Universe, the Great Spirit, God, Jesus, and many other conceptions. I wanted to know who could love me enough to speak to me with such kindness at a moment when I desperately needed him.

I went on a spiritual journey. I attended churches, I went to Buddhist temples, and I found my way to New Age gatherings. I was listening for the same kind of kindness and love I'd experienced when the voice spoke to me, but I didn't hear it in most of those places. Too many churches seemed to be just going through the motions instead of being overwhelmed with the wonder of the kindness of God—if, in fact, it was their God who had spoken to me with such tenderness and affection.

Two years into this journey, I sat in a church service on Easter with my family. In the middle of the service, I had a vision of Jesus holding my hand when I was a little girl. Then I saw him hold my hand as a teenager, and then as a drug-addicted adult when I

was at my worst. I saw a crowd of doubters—and I was one of them—taunting him, "You're not real! You don't even care!" In that precious moment, I realized that all my life, Jesus had loved me and had walked with me even when I doubted him and even when I rejected him. He loved me all the way to the cross.

In that vision, I saw that Jesus had orchestrated events to protect me. One night, I had been late to a drug dealer's house, and there had been a police raid just minutes before I arrived. Once, I ran a red light, but he had kept a car from being in the intersection so there wasn't a collision with injuries or deaths. I remembered a flat tire I had on a freeway. I had been so angry about it, but the delay caused me to miss a huge fight at the dealer's house minutes before I finally arrived. In those moments, Jesus showed me that he had always been with me—and he had always loved me. His love didn't change when I was a good girl or a bad girl. It never changed.

The presence that had spoken to me with such kindness was Jesus, but my journey to know him was just beginning. I wanted to be near him, to experience more of his affection, and to feel the protection of his wisdom and strength.

Soon after that Easter, I was baptized. I wish I could say that everything went smoothly from the day I saw the vision of Jesus, but that's not the case. I was still a mess, but I was no longer alone in my mess.



MOMENT SKILLS

Three things will last forever—*faith, hope, and love*—
and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:13 (NLT)

FAITH SEES

Hear Jesus' words to you again: *"You're going to see me because I am alive and you're about to come alive."* Jesus, the one who conquered death itself for you by his great love, is the only one with the power to free you from the wounds and lies that have been threatening your life and destroying your hope. Look! You're going to see him, and when you do, you will come alive. Faith gives us the power to see things that our natural eyes will never see. It's not your faith that saves you. It's God's faithfulness. When we see things through the eyes of faith, we see his faithfulness, and we get a bird's eye view into God's world.

Chris Tomlin sings about the glory of God's world that we can access through the eyes of faith:

I know who goes before me

I know who stands behind

The God of angel armies

Is always by my side

The one who reigns forever

He is a friend of mine

The God of angel armies

Is always by my side

My strength is in your name

For you alone can save

You will deliver me

Yours is the victory!

Faith is also about believing and seeing the impossible happen because in Jesus' faith-filled world, "what is impossible for people is possible with God" (Luke 18:27 NLT). What Kara heard from her heavenly Father went beyond what she knew was even possible. He really is that good! The apostle Paul reminds us, "God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us" (Ephesians 3:20–21).

Open your heart to him. Open your eyes of faith to see what he has for you. Let him speak into your circumstances—no matter what's going on in your life. There's no time like the present. In fact, this present moment is precious. Surrender it to him and just be in it *with* him. He is speaking to you right now. Realize that in this moment, you can *begin* to hear his voice. That's all it takes. No matter your circumstance or need or wherever you find yourself in life right now, just *begin* to believe that in this moment in the presence of God is the very potential for him to speak to you and for you to hear his voice.

Read Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:18–21. It contains powerful truths and promises about how God sees you that will strengthen your faith. Highlight or circle the specific truths and promises that will strengthen your faith.

As an act of faith, close your eyes and ask God to open your spiritual eyes, the eyes of your heart. Imagine him filling your heart with light.

Ask God to open the eyes of your heart to:

- » Know the hope of your calling as his child . . .
- » Show you why he calls you a citizen of his kingdom made up of "holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance."
- » Experience the Spirit's power to bring life out of death, to direct, comfort, and encourage you . . .

HOPE FEELS

Like Kara, when we hear God speak to us, he speaks to the need in our hearts like no one else can. His voice is the voice of hope. As we shed our misconceptions of him that have grown out of wounds and lies, we begin to hear him more clearly, know his heart, and feel him comforting us in a deep and healing way as he fills our hearts with hope.

Hope lives inside of you. To experience him, you only need to ask. You are his cherished creation, and you were *designed* to hear his voice. It doesn't matter if you feel like you can't hear him like you use to. It doesn't matter how crazy your circumstances might be. Jesus meets us in the middle of our storms. You are safe. You don't have to be afraid to hope because your hope is safe with him. As I sit here writing this, I hear him saying to you, "My precious child, welcome home!"

Being fully present in the moment allows us to experience the presence of God. For many of us, being fully present in the moment is difficult, but we can learn through practice. Three steps can help us to be fully present: observing, describing, and participating.²

Observing is sensing or experiencing without describing or labeling the experience. It is noticing or attending to something. It's about paying attention with all five senses. With practice, you will be able to "just notice" without distractions or racing thoughts. When our thoughts take on an obsessive quality, it's a sign that we are getting *caught up in* the experience instead of *moving through* the experience. When you are practicing presence, you are fully aware of what is around you.

As you sit with God, just notice. Turn your attention to him the way you would have a conversation with a friend. When we practice observing, we learn to activate our spirit and quiet our mind.

Describing: When you're ready, you can move to the next phase, which involves putting words to your experience. This phase is not about judging, understanding, or explaining; it's just about describing the experience using words. Many of the psalms are an example of David being present with God and describing his experiences. He writes his thoughts in the form of a song (Psalm is the Hebrew word for song).

Participating: Observing and describing your experience, without judgment, allows you to let go and fully engage in the present moment, experiencing it with your whole self: body, mind, and spirit.

Entering the presence of God begins with your observation skills. God will speak to you as you tune in to him with your senses— sight, smell, sound, taste, or touch. You can ask him to come and then trust that he is right beside you.

In the stillness right now in that place he has reserved especially for you, close your eyes and turn your attention toward God. Begin by just being with him, fully present in his presence. Read this verse aloud and allow him to open your eyes of faith. This is your moment.

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LET *ALL THAT I AM* WAIT QUIETLY BEFORE GOD,

FOR MY HOPE IS IN HIM.

PSALM 62:5 (NLT)



Wait and listen. He is right beside you.

Stop and observe. What are you noticing with your five senses right now?

Describe what you experienced. Write it here. What did you sense? Hear? Feel?