



**REVOLUTIONARY**  
find the path to deeper living with Jesus

**BOOK 1: Called Out**



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GET READY TO MOVE

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**REVOLUTIONARY: find the path to deeper living with Jesus.**

**Book 1: Called Out**

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# 1

## Called Out

### Jesus is called out and confirmed as God's Son

It is common to think of Jesus' birth as humble: almost unnoticed in the feed trough of a barn. Would it be fresh to call it covert? What if the reason Jesus came as a baby – into the dingy backstreet life of disreputable Bethlehem – was to begin a clandestine invasion, a sneak attack of sorts. Sure, we can see the humble birth as God willing to get dirty for our sakes. But what if it was the first phase of some spiritual “black-ops”? Then Jesus was not born a helpless baby, but rather a dangerous revolutionary.

Could this be why Jesus was born in a smalltime town rather than a capital city — to virtual nobodies rather than noteworthy parents? It wasn't long after his birth that Herod, the puppet-king of the Romans, began hunting him. Herod's curiosity was stirred by the arrival of mysterious strangers seeking the “new king.” Being the current ruler, he was more than a little concerned. He feared the archaic prophecy would be fulfilled, and this child would one day rise up to replace him as “King of the Jews.”

Just ahead of Herod's assassins, Jesus' parents smuggled him out of the country. We know nothing of his exile in Egypt, except that it lasted until Herod died. Then, on the dusty caravan roads to Palestine, three figures made their way back to the Promised Land in the footsteps of the exodus of God's people. The journey was more than coming out from hiding – it was prophecy fulfilled: “Out of Egypt, I called my Son” [Matthew 2:15, NIV].

Our times are just as pregnant with expectation as the days of Jesus' Israel. People are hungry for something that will make a difference – some redemption of our mundane, largely meaningless lives. Who will crack the boredom and up-heave the status-quo? Who will tear down the systems of oppression so heavy they have become the inevitable? Who will silence the religious “talking-heads” so obsessed with self-promotion and fear-mongering?

The Sunday school answer to these questions is Jesus. But what if God thought the answer was you – a vital part of the body of Christ – Jesus in the flesh today? That would make you less of a helpless believer trying to survive in a world of darkness, and more of a dangerous revolutionary commissioned to infiltrate and undermine the territories of darkness. Just like the birth of Jesus, your quiet spiritual rebirth – celebrated by only a few – was a strategic deployment under the cover of darkness, beneath the radar. Soon after your arrival, you slipped away unnoticed into hiding, into a sleeper cell of sorts, training in secret, waiting for action.

## Called out as daughters and sons

Movement out of hiding begins with the call of God. Is God calling you out of your Egypt? If so, he is calling you as his daughter or son. For some, it is the call to leave comfort zones. For others, it is the call to re-engage the world. And still for others, it is the call to move into risky, dangerous, passionate living. The call is always back to the places of uncertainty, where dependence on God will be essential to survival. It is always a call to join God in his work — in the great “out there” of unfamiliar roads, new places, and different horizons where he is rebuilding the creation he loves.

Some are called like Abraham. “Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's house, and go to the land I will show you” [Genesis 12:1, NLT]. No other instructions are included. In other words, for

**Enter the Story:**

*The Birth of Jesus and the Escape to Egypt:*  
Matthew 1:18-2:23

**Important Note:**

The term “sons” is used in Bible to refer to our spiritual inheritance with God. Although “sons” implies male children, the Bible is clear that this inheritance includes both genders [see Gal. 3:26-28]. This teaching would have been scandalous in its day because it implied that, as sons, women had the same rights of inheritance with God as did men.

**Enter the Story:**

*Take a look at these stories of God's call:*

Abraham —  
Genesis 12:1-9

Moses —  
Exodus 3:1-4:31

Samuel —  
1 Samuel 3

David —  
1 Samuel 16

Ezekiel —  
Ezekiel 2:1-3:15

Jeremiah —  
Jeremiah 1

Jonah —  
Jonah 1:1-3

The Disciples —  
John 1:35-51

Paul —  
Acts 9:1-19

some people the only thing specific about the call is what they will be leaving behind. They will step away from “point A” without any idea of where “point B” might be. This is the call of “I’ll let you know when you get there.” Maybe this call begins with a general sense of restlessness. Maybe it comes through dreams unfulfilled. It might be that Abraham followed the call of this unfamiliar God simply because it came with the promise to fulfill his greatest desire: “I will cause you to become [a] father” [Genesis 12:2 NLT]. And so Abraham stepped out onto the sands of the unknown in search of some faint hope.

Others are called like Moses. “Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You will lead my people, the Israelites out of Egypt” [Exodus 3:10, NLT]. God gave Moses details. Go here. Do this. Say that. This kind of call is to a specific purpose. In some ways, it is a call that requires a different kind of faith. It is faith to face the known obstacle: Moses was raised in Pharaoh’s house. He knew the magnitude of what God was asking him to do. It was as if God had asked him, “Go and challenge the most ruthless, powerful king on the earth, even though you were once banished by this king for murdering one of his men.”

The commonality in the call of both Abraham and Moses is that they were both propelled from the settled, safe, comfortable life to risky, dangerous, uncertain journeys. Quite frankly, both were called to leave. That’s the simple truth about moving from your spiritual Egypt. It will always take you to the land of taking chances and of giving things up. Perhaps this is because God must lead us to places that require greater dependence on him before we can actually live as his daughters and sons. In ancient prophecies, God had called Jesus his Servant [Isaiah 53:2]. But he says, “Out of Egypt, I called my Son,” not “My Servant.” As servants, we will always struggle to have the confidence to step out into unsettled pathways. But as a child of God we can have that kind of confidence.

Think of the surprising words of Jesus when the disciples tried to turn away the children who were coming to Jesus for blessings. He told them, “the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these” [Mark 10:14; Matthew 19:14, NLT]. Jesus was more emphatic when he told them, “I’m telling you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven” [Matthew 18:3]. Parents will tell you that Jesus is not talking about the extraordinary purity or love of children — if left alone, young humans will become selfish, twisted creatures. But all children begin with extraordinary dependency on their parents which in turn fuels their molding into pure and loving people. Dependence is the scriptural definition of faith: a living and constant trust — not holding a certain set of beliefs. It is this faith that brings about our adoptions as daughters and sons of God, which in turn gives us the confidence to follow the call.

**Start with Prayer:**

*Pray for God to show you your call and give you the courage to follow it. Meditate on the dependency that your call will require.*

**Discussion Questions**

Describe the call of God in your life. What is the “spiritual Egypt” that God is calling you out of?

Is your call more like the call of Abraham or the call of Moses?

**Seekers, Servants, and Sons**

For most people, God doesn’t call just once in life. In fact, it seems that he is calling all the time: asking you to move further into his life and journey. A friend and I were talking about the call of God in both our lives. She felt God’s call for the first time during the birth of her first child several years ago. It was obvious that God was calling her to living for more than herself. God called again when it was time for my friend to move out of comfortable-but-stifling religious zones into a more on-the-edge faith. As we talked over several weeks about her call, she told me, “I think right now, God’s really calling me to have a relationship with him. I’ve never really prayed before like this, or felt like I am so dependent on him.”

God calls so frequently in most people’s lives, it could be said that the call of God is constant and it is

More about...

Here's more verses about seeking God:

Hebrews 11:6  
 Isaiah 26:9, 51:1, 55:6  
 Psalm 27:4  
 1 Chronicles 22:19

our orientation to that call that changes. Whether we're called to big or small things, spirituality means always being divinely encouraged to step out onto the road of growth. However, we generally respond to the call of growth in several ways. We could say that there are three main ways — or maybe we could call them identities — in response to the call of God: the *Seeker*, the *Servant*, and the *Son*.

When we meet God for the first time — or even the first several times — through experiences or through our relationships to others, we respond as the *Seeker*. Our response could be described as curiosity. We've seen God for the first time and we would like to know more. The call at this point is heard as "come and see me."

One day John the Baptist noticed Jesus walking by. He said to two of his disciples standing nearby, "Look! There is the Lamb of God!" Immediately, these two men took off after Jesus. Glancing over his shoulder, Jesus asked them, "What do you want?" They replied, "Rabbi, where are you staying?" "Come and see," he said [John 1:35-39 NLT]. We was inviting them to more than a quick look around his bedroom. Instead, he was calling them to observe up close what Jesus was all about.

The response of the Seeker is absolutely essential to the spiritual life. In fact it is the universal starting point, since it is "his purpose in all of this that the nations should seek after God" [Acts 17:27 NLT]. As Seekers, our learning is mostly gathering knowledge about God through various encounters with his word and experiences. But this research is usually somewhat tentative. As our knowledge grows the first bits of trust begin to sprout. But for the Seeker, no firm commitment to God has been made. We may profess faith, but it has yet to yield the type of conviction that leads to constant trust in concrete matters, life transformation, and faith-driven action.

Once knowledge gives birth to action — which means that commitment has been made — we begin to move into the identity of the *Servant*. We hear the call to "come follow me" and we begin to obediently walk in the footsteps of the Master. The *Servant* has seen God and knows him on some level and is ready the respond in grateful obedience. This doesn't mean we never need a "why" in order to act. But it does mean that the faith that sprouted while we were Seekers is beginning to grow into a stronger plant and even produce some fruit.

This doesn't mean that we ever stop being Seekers in some things. Jesus' command to "seek first the Kingdom" was a life-time injunction. It never stops. What would the spiritual life be like if all curiosity was answered and all mysteries solved? We first meet every new call and every new horizon as Seekers, knowing first — before we move forward. What changes is our main identity in relation to God. When we see ourselves as *Servants* our response is obedience in gratitude rather than reserved curiosity. Practically speaking, as we move into *Servant-hood*, we should move sooner into action because of our commitment, without requiring the convincing once necessary when we first discovered God.

The *Servant* views their response to God as described in the Parable of the Talents [Matthew 25:14-30]. A wealthy man was going on a trip, so he divided a fortune between three servants. He gave each one money to invest according to his ability: to the first: ten talents (which is a lot of money), the second: five, and the third: one. When the master returned from the trip, he asked his servants to return the money and what their investments had earned. The first two had doubled their money, and the rich man told them, "Well done my good and faithful servants. You have proven yourselves faithful in small things, so I will put you in charge of large things. Let's celebrate together." But the last servant simply returned the money he was given. The rich man was furious and took the money from him. He fired the servant and threw him off the estate and gave his money to the one who began with ten talents.

Like the story, a *Servant* defines their response to God by what they are doing. They are committed to God in more than just some mental assertions. They are committed to him in obedience, which comes from their wonder and gratitude generated by getting to know God in the *Seeker* role. Faithfulness, for the *Servant*, is based on what they do with what God has given them. How do they use their healed lives? In what way will they put their new found freedom in Christ to work? Could they find ways to employ their spiritual gifts in the service of God and others? If they answer these questions well, they expect to hear the "well done good and faithful servant" when they check in with their master.

Even though the servant is obviously a committed believer, they have not yet reached the final identity in response to God: the Son. Notice in the above parable that the master is absent while the servants are working. This is the great difference between the Servant and the Son. The Servant sees his work as something separate, but related to the work of God. It is his job, but it was commissioned by his Master. A Son owns the work of God on a deeper level. He is sure his work is really participation in God's work.

Some time ago, I received an email from a friend. She was a little perplexed by God. "Why isn't he using me more?" she wondered. It seemed like she judged her approval from God by how much he was using her in service to others with measurable results. I wrote back something like this: "lately, I've been trying to find a place with God where I can know his affirmation apart from other people or ministry. I think I'm drifting from a place of me serving in response to God to a place of me joining him in participation. In that place, the distinction between him working and me working is so blurred, I can't tell where I end or where he begins."

A few days later she wrote back that she had found the connection to God I had described. She moved from perplexed to peaceful and immediately noticed new doors open to serving others — doors to where God was asking her to join his work, not do something all on her own. We both had heard the call of God to "come and be with me." It is a call of becoming a living vessel of the Spirit of God — of being Jesus to the world.

Near the end of Jesus' life, in the anxious hours before his arrest, he told his disciples, "I no longer call you servants, because a master doesn't confide in his servants. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me" [John 15:15, NLT]. The disciples had been trained during their service to Jesus. Now it was time that they directly participated in the Father's work in the same way that Christ did. Later that same night, as Jesus was praying he said, "My prayer for all of them is that they will be one, just as you and I are one, Father — that just as you are in me and I am in you, so they will be in us, and the world will believe you sent me" [John 17:21, NLT].

In describing this intimate participatory relationship with God, the Apostle Paul goes as far as to say that the Spirit of God within us confirms that we are God's children and that we are "heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ" [Romans 8:16-18]. He explains elsewhere that at first we are no different from household slaves, even though we are children of God. But that as faith matures, we outgrow the law of 'do this' and 'don't do that' to shed our servant-like identity and live fully as sons [Galatians 3:21-4:7]. While in God's reality this change is given to us when we commit in faith to Christ, in our reality, it is something we have to grow into — as we mature it becomes more and more a part of our experience.

As Paul says, the Servant role is tied to the law. There is always a command and a penalty for disobedience. While a believer should no longer live as though they were righteous by keeping a law, there is "law" in what Jesus taught his disciples [Matthew 5:17-20]. He commanded them and often mentioned what the penalty would be from those who ignored him. However, as "perfect love" grows in the relationship of the disciple and Master, the fear of punishment melts away [1 John 4:17]. Obedience is such a part of their nature it is more like a deep participation. But it's only through consistency — doing it over and over — that it becomes something you are. Repetitive obedience is the foundation for the Son identity laid by the Servant identity. Without it, there is no transition into participation with God in his works. Instead, we will struggle with obedience, doing our own works and being disciplined by the Father until we learn to join him in his nature.

	<b>Seeker</b>	<b>Servant</b>	<b>Son (Child)</b>
<i>Response</i>	Curiosity	Grateful Service	Participation
<i>God's call</i>	"Come and see me"	"Come and follow me"	"Come and be with me"
<i>Focus</i>	self, "what is God saying to me?"	Focus: group, "what can we do for God?"	Focus: God, "God, who am I in you?"
<i>Learning level</i>	Knowing	Doing	Becoming
<i>Value Emphasis:</i>	Divine Truth	Nurturing Relationships	Apostolic Mission

Perhaps a parable would help to illustrate the way the Seeker, Servant and Son operate. Imagine for a minute that the mission organization American Missions International was publishing the following three job descriptions for positions in the First, Second, and Third Worlds, socio-economically speaking:

**Wanted: First World Missionary** — Great job with a great salary. Reasonable work hours. All expenses for ministry provided. Needs to have a good intellectual understanding of God and ability to produce emotionally moving worship experiences. Needs good answers to questions such as the meaning of life and so on. Church is economically stable with good contribution.

**Wanted: Second (Developing) World Missionary** — Amazing opportunity to grow the church. Long work hours and overtime a must. Must be willing to raise own salary and expense account. Needs strong work ethic, motivational skills, and firm understanding of church growth principles. Will be asked to educate members for service and develop successful programming. Must be orthodox (please submit statement of faith). Church has been blessed with growth, but is still needing much work.

**Wanted: Third World Missionary** — Those called by God to a Mother Theresa-like ministry, look no further. Situation of local people is profound poverty, epidemic disease, crippling social problems, corruption, crime, and famine. Must be willing to live and work round the clock with people. No salary offered. Missionary must have strong prayer life, intense connection to God, and significant experience living in the grace of God, otherwise you will go nuts. Church is non-existent or very weak, but God is working among the people.

Looking at these job descriptions, what is the minimal connection you would need to survive in each ministry situation? In the first description, where almost all physical and material needs are met, you only need to connect to God in an intellectual and emotional way. According to this description, all that's required is communicating particular thoughts about God to help people feel better about the meaning of life and so on. In this way, it's only really necessary for you to be a *Seeker* to get the job.

In the case of the second job in the Second World, you would need a different minimal connection to God. The developing world is full of people trying to make it, but not there yet. According to this description, you need to do some hard work based on some good logic, but there is a general optimism that God is blessing the church and that you will arrive at your goal if you remain faithful to the task. Still, not a lot is said in this description about God's involvement. It is assumed that a knowledgeable and skilled worker will be able to accomplish the task. All it takes is to be a good *Servant* and the job is yours.

Finally, in the Third World you would have to have a totally different connection to God — in fact if it was "minimal" in any way, you might want to rethink going on the assignment. The problems are huge and there are almost no resources available to meet any needs. Any action seems hopeless - it won't even make a dent. There's no way that you, even as the best *Servant* imaginable, could simply work hard, use your head, and make any progress. You would go nuts. You must have a relationship with God that is so intense and connected that the suffering around you produces hope and not despair. You would need to see your life as tied up in and protected by God. You would need to be affirmed by his using you and not by success. You would need to be a participant in the nature, life, and work of God himself. You would need to be a *Son* or *Daughter* to survive this ministry.

Now, this is just used for illustrative purposes. In reality, the idea we need only be Seekers in the First World is totally wrong: our poverty in the First World is as great as the Third world, but it is a poverty of invisible things. Once we admit true spiritual poverty ("blessed are the poor in spirit..." [Matthew 5:3]), we understand that it is just as essential to become Sons in the First World as the Third World. It is this sense of spiritual poverty that drives us to such dependence on God that we will not work apart from participation with him as daughters and sons. Through this participation as his children, our confidence in God grows, which is vitally important when following the call of God on the mission of eye-opening, life-transforming, and world-changing.

For the believer, there is nothing more dangerous than venturing out on the mission alone, whatever it is. Like Moses said to God, "If you don't go with us personally, don't let us move a step from this

place” [Exodus 33:15, NLT]. Too often we enthusiastically rush ahead when we hear the call without being equipped by God and with little attention to joining him in what he is already doing where he has called us. Before long, our own energy is exhausted and burn-out sets in. Other times, we are well-meaning but our mission is clouded by personality quirks, clashes with others, and overall defensiveness. This is bred by insecurity, since our status with God is still measured as a Servant—by performance. We lack the confidence in and affirmation of God we desperately need to be effective.

**Start with Prayer:**

*Pray for God to honestly reveal to you how you are a seeker, servant, and a son in response to him. Ask God to confirm your identity as an heir of his Kingdom and a co-heir with Christ. Request that he teach you what life as a daughter or son looks like. Meditate on your inheritance that comes by grace through faith and why that should give you confidence with God.*

**Discussion Questions**

What have you experienced or observed the three identities of response to God in your life or the lives of others?

Which identity do you live in the most considering the majority your thoughts, emotions, and behaviors?

What could be the practical pitfalls of following the call without living in the identity of a daughter or son of God?

**Confirmed as Sons**

From the time that God called his Son out of Egypt until he appears again in adulthood, many years of silence pass—at least silence in the Biblical narrative. It could be that silence means nothing meaningful happened in those in-between times. But maybe the silence is less cold. What if it means that those times were in fact warm, intimate days spent with the Father? Although we hear no tales of adventures on long summer days or pithy lessons from the carpenter’s shop, you can almost imagine the many walks and talks shared by the odd, beautiful boy and his unseen Parent. You could dream endlessly about what filled those days in between Nazareth and the Jordan where John was baptizing. But the one story we do have gives a clue:

Every year, Joseph and Mary would take the family to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Passover. When Jesus was twelve years old, the usual trip took an interesting twist. The family celebrated as usual and began the journey home at the end of festivities. But a day into the return trip, Mary and Joseph discovered Jesus was not among the relatives as they had supposed. They immediately turned back to Jerusalem and began a frantic search for their son. Three days later they found him in the temple compound. He was questioning the religious teachers and amazing them by his answers.

Twelve is an important age. It is the time of making almost daily decisions about who you are and what you want to be. Perhaps this is why this story is told. Jesus, like many boys-becoming-men, is in trouble because he’s trying on his new identity. His mother charges him harshly, “Why have you treated us this way?” But there is a deeper question underneath: Will he be the boy who belongs to Mary and Joseph? Or will Jesus become someone more? After three days on in his own at the temple, he has his answer. Even though he goes back home with Mary and Joseph, in a way he will never live with them again. From this point on he will be living with his Father. And because of this “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” [Luke 2:52 NIV].

From twelve to thirty-something, again nothing is said, but when Jesus reappears he has arrived to complete his mission. His cousin John is somewhere on the Jordan river baptizing the crowds who come to see him. Jesus sought him out there. John must have turned around to receive the next in line and was startled to see Jesus there. He asked Jesus, “I am the one who needs to be baptized by you, so why are you coming to me?” But Jesus insisted that it was the right thing to do, and John baptized him. Matthew puts it simply:

**Enter the Story:**

*Read the story of Jesus’ trip to the temple as a boy:*

Luke 2:41-52

**Enter the Story:**

*Read about the baptism of Jesus:*

Matthew 3:13-17  
Mark 1:9-13  
Luke 3:21-22



*After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, and I am fully pleased with him." [Matthew 3:16-17 NLT]*

Put these two stories together, and you get a pretty hopeful message. God was proud of his Son, but he was proud of him before Jesus had done any preaching or even a single miracle. This is a crucial point: God said "I'm proud of you," but not on the basis of Jesus' performance in ministry. Instead, Jesus grew in God's favor simply by knowing him. If the same is true for us as daughters and sons of God, then his pride for us is not evaluative — based on some standard of performance to which we will never measure up. We are not supposed to be perpetually insecure children, always trying to please an over-stern father who cuts us down when we fail and gives sparse praise. He's no over-ambitious soccer-dad ready to ground us when we miss a goal. Instead, God's pride in us comes from our relational closeness to him. He is pleased with us when we call him 'Father' and snuggle up for affection.

Paul puts it this way:

*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

*What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. [Galatians 3:26-4:7 NLT]*

**More about...**  
Here's more verses about our the meaning of our baptism:

Romans 6:1-14  
1 Peter 3:15-22

Unfortunately, baptism was a word left un-translated, so it has become an official church term. Originally it meant "immerse," which is really rich imagery. When someone takes an 'immersion course' in a language, he is fully plunged into the culture until it saturates him and comes out his pores as fluency. The meaning of Jesus' baptism was a plunge into God. It was being fully saturated with God's identity, which was totally appropriate since Christ is "the exact representation of [God's] being" [Hebrews 1:3 NIV].

In the same way, our baptism 'into Christ' totally saturates us in his identity as the Son. In fact, it is the Spirit of the Son that cries from within our redeemed hearts, "Daddy, Father!" Just as Christ's baptism is a confirmation of his Sonship, our baptism is a confirmation of our identities as daughters and sons of God. This is because we have died to our old, broken ways of defining ourselves and have been raised again into the definition of the Son.

This idea is full of implications. First, our status as daughters and sons comes through faith in Christ, it is not something changed by outside influences. This should give us the same confidence that Christ demonstrated in serving others, even when it required extreme personal sacrifice (as true service always does). But this means that our faithfulness — our active trusting — is what maintains that identity. If we are actively trusting, prayer is even more important than independent action and worship is more vital than personal success. It's not that we will not act. To live in the identity of Christ is to be full of action. But like Christ says, "my Father who lives in me does his work through me" [John 14:10 NLT]. Our work blends seamlessly into the work of Christ as the momentum of every act begins in him, moves through us, and ends in results that reveal his glory. Prayer becomes a place for us to find the orientation in the identity of Christ to be ready to participate in what God is about to do. In prayer the momentum begins and flows through our activity. In praise — both our worship and the worship of those who have seen God revealed in his work — we complete the flow-through of his work as it returns to him. This *pray-act-praise cycle* of praying, then acting, then praising God, is essential to living sonship.

For as metaphorical as it sounds, this idea is amazingly practical. For years I attempted to serve God

with little or no prayer life (a testimony to my Western materialism that believed that what is done in the seen world is more real than what is done in the unseen). I would continually hit walls in my service. Sometimes I would run out of energy in a relationship just when the person needed extra support to make a transformed behavior stick. Other times I was constantly distracted by my drive to be acceptable to others. My lack of intimacy with God cut me off from all the ways he could communicate his affirmation to me, so I would seek it from friends and those who were unable to give it. Still, in other times, I would fill my schedule with activity to try to be doing my job — accomplishing my mission. In the end, God hadn't asked for my flailing around. He just wanted me to do one or two things well (or faithfully) that would make a decided difference. My lack of faithfulness came from my attempts to serve God from my own identity. I was trying to be a good me, working on an empty tank, without any of the resources to be truly effective. Until I started understanding how God wanted to cloth me in Christ — in his thoughts, ways, and power — and fill me with the Spirit of his Son — which could cry out "Abba, Father" and actually hear an answer — I was always a slave and never an heir.

**Start with Prayer:**

*Ask God to show you the identity of Jesus and to plunge you into his identity. Pray that he shows you how you currently seek his approval. Ask him to show you the affirmation that comes from being in Christ. Request that he reveal to you how you can use what your learning.*

**Discussion Questions**

How immersed do you think you are in the identity of Jesus?

Do you feel God's "I'm proud of you" because of your connection to him? Do you every try to make him proud by what you do or worry he isn't proud because you haven't done enough?

How could you build in a pray-act-praise cycle in your personal and group experiences?

**Making it Real**

1. Take some time to think seriously about your call. Discuss it with a couple of people you trust. What is God calling you away from? Whatever it is, it's time to make the preparations to leave it behind. Some of it may be pretty hard to let go. For example, a comfort zone is usually reinforced by behaviors. It could be as simple as avoiding involvement in the lives of others by watching TV or not talking to others to keep from forming potentially entangling relationships. God will point out what he wants you to leave behind, but you may need an exit strategy. This could include enlisting the help of those you trust (like a mentor) to help you break old habits and start new ones. Ask yourself the question, "what is God calling me away from?" Make a concrete plan complete with definite strategies for leaving. If you think God is also showing you the destination, you can add the question, "What things will I need to do and who will I need to be to get there?"
2. Spend some time praying for God to reveal where you are in the Seeker, Servant, and Son identities. Share these ideas with three people who are around you a lot and then ask them about behaviors that they think indicate you lean towards one identity more than others. Just listen to what they have to say. Don't defend yourself or explain your behaviors or why you think they are wrong. Take their observations before God and ask him to reveal the truth. If you think God's telling you that you are a strong Seeker, concentrate on putting more of what you know about God into action. If you are more of a Servant, find ways to grow your intimacy with God: You might spend time in solitude with him. Read a book on the inner life with God. Look for him to drop you messages and affirmations along the way. Wait to serve until you know God wants you to do the action with him. If you operate mostly out of the identity of a Son ask God for humility to know that the connection with Him must be maintained. Reflect on the times that you feel the closest and most dependent on God and make these times into regular practices.
3. Pray and meditate on the commitment of your baptism to be immersed into Christ. It might be time to rededicate yourself to that commitment. Listen to the Spirit of his Son crying out to God from your heart. Take some time to express this deep desire for God in some way. Write some thoughts down, even if you never intend to let anyone read them. Paint a picture or write a song

that expresses this cry of “Abba, Father.” This cry could come out as desperation if you feel far from God, or as thankfulness if you feel God is close. Either way, express it to God. It isn’t for anyone else, so it doesn’t matter what others might think about it.

4. We’ll talk more about the pray-act-praise cycle later. For right now, begin to practice the pray-act-praise cycle by asking God to identify something he wants you to do with him. This could be a simple everyday activity that you always do or something new that he’s calling you to (even like washing the dishes, which is a service to others). When doing the activity, do your best and attempt to recognize how God has empowered you to the task — even your common physical and mental abilities come from him. When you are finished, praise God for his presence during the task, any effects it had on others, and for any ways you grew while doing it.