

GOD  
WAS NEVER  
THE  
PROBLEM



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# **God Was Never the Problem**

**Defying the Religion That Forgot How to Love**

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## **Dedication**

To those who held on to God  
even when religion let go of them

This is for your strength  
your scars  
and your faith

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## Chapter 1

### The God They Gave Me

I was introduced to God before I knew the meaning of my own breath.  
He was spoken of often, in whispers and warnings.  
His name came with rules, with silence, with expectations.  
They told me He was love, but what I was shown felt more like fear.

I accepted Him completely. Not because I understood Him, but because I trusted the ones who told me who He was. They sounded sure. They spoke with the weight of generations. I learned early to obey what I could not question. To believe what I could not feel.

The God they gave me was powerful. He was holy. He was always watching.  
But somehow, I believed He was always watching to see where I would fail.

I was told He loved me. But I was also told I had to earn it.  
That I had to be good. Quiet. Modest. Grateful.  
That I had to pray a certain way. Dress a certain way. Think a certain way.  
And if I didn't, His love would turn to disappointment.

So I tried.  
I tried with everything I had.  
I memorized the verses. I bowed my head. I said amen with my whole heart.  
I gave up pieces of myself thinking I was giving them to God.  
But what I was really doing was handing them to a system that had confused control for holiness.

It took me a long time to realize that God was not the one who made me feel small.  
God was not the one who turned away when I cried.  
God was not the one who told me my questions made me unfaithful.  
That was people. That was culture. That was doctrine.  
Not God.

God stayed.  
Even when the religion around me felt like it was breaking apart, God stayed.  
Even when I didn't feel worthy to speak His name, He listened.  
Even when I walked away from the noise, I could still feel Him in the quiet.

What they gave me was not the fullness of God.  
It was the version they had been given.  
A version shaped by fear.  
A version that made them feel safe.  
A version that could be taught, enforced, passed down.

But God cannot be reduced to rules.  
He cannot be owned or defended by systems.  
He cannot be limited by the failures of people.

I never stopped loving God.  
What I stopped doing was pretending that fear and shame were the same as reverence.  
What I walked away from was the idea that love had to be earned.  
That I had to be perfect before I could be close to Him.

God was never the problem.  
He has always been love.  
Even when I could not see it.  
Even when I was too tired to believe it.  
Even when everything around me used His name to control, to shame, to silence.

The God they gave me was a shadow.  
The God I found for myself is the light.

And He is still here.

I think about the first time I truly felt God for myself.  
Not in a church. Not during a sermon. Not in the voice of anyone else.  
It was in the quiet, when everything was still  
and I had nothing left to offer but my breath.

There was no performance in that moment.  
No scripture in my mouth.  
No perfection in my posture.  
I was just there. Broken and breathing.  
And He was there too. Not to scold. Not to measure. Just to be.

I had spent so many years believing that God required my excellence  
that He was waiting to see me stumble  
that He needed me to keep pretending I was whole  
when I was actually afraid to even be seen.

The truth is I did not feel close to God in my best moments  
I felt Him most in my weakest ones.  
When I was tired. When I was unsure. When I was grieving quietly and no one could see it.  
That is when I felt Him most clearly.  
And yet, those were the exact moments I was taught to hide.

What they gave me was a God who responded to performance  
but the One I met responded to presence.  
They gave me a God who came alive during worship  
but the One I met was already sitting beside me in silence.  
They gave me a God who lived in stained glass and sermons  
but the One I met showed up in my kitchen when I was doing dishes and trying not to cry.

I do not say this to sound wise. I am not trying to be profound.  
I say this because I remember the confusion of feeling far from God while doing everything right.  
I remember showing up, dressing up, praying out loud, and still feeling alone.  
And I thought it was my fault.  
I thought I lacked faith.  
I thought maybe I had failed Him.  
But I know now that it was not failure. It was longing.  
It was the part of me that could no longer settle for someone else's version of God.  
I needed more. I needed truth. I needed real.

It is not rebellion to want to know God for yourself.  
It is not disobedience to ask why the love they described felt so cold.  
It is not pride to listen to your own spirit when it says something is off.  
Those things are not sins.  
They are signals.  
They are how God calls us closer.

I had to unlearn some things to find peace.  
Not to throw them away in anger  
but to lay them down with gratitude and walk forward with clearer eyes.  
I had to unlearn fear.  
I had to unlearn shame.  
I had to unlearn the idea that closeness with God is a reward for perfection.

Sometimes we are taught to confuse control with holiness.  
Sometimes we are told that reverence looks like silence  
that obedience looks like shrinking  
that faith means never having a question.  
But that is not faith. That is fear dressed up in scripture.

God is not threatened by my voice.  
He is not offended by my questions.  
He is not insecure when I tell the truth.  
And He is not asking me to pretend I am fine just to make Him comfortable.

The God they gave me had rules  
but the God I know has room.  
Room for grief. Room for hope. Room for the journey in between.  
He is not measuring how quickly I recover.  
He is not disappointed that it takes me time.  
He knows how deeply I feel.  
He made me this way.

If anything, God is waiting for me to stop hiding.  
To stop shrinking.



To stop apologizing for how deeply I love, how loudly I speak, how fully I want to live.  
Not because I am flawless. But because I am His.

They gave me God as a set of steps  
but I have found Him in every stumble.

They gave me God as an answer sheet  
but I found Him in the questions that would not go away.

They gave me God with conditions  
but He keeps meeting me with compassion.

And so I say it again  
God was never the problem.  
The problem was what they built in His name  
and the silence they demanded when it no longer held me.

But God did not demand my silence.  
He waited for my voice.

And now  
finally  
I speak.

## Chapter 2

### Holy Fear

There was a time when I believed that fear was the beginning of wisdom.  
Not because I had come to that belief through revelation  
but because it had been repeated to me over and over  
like a warning wrapped in scripture.

Fear God.

That was the instruction.

It was given in classrooms, in pulpits, in quiet conversations meant to save your soul.

It sounded noble.

It sounded spiritual.

And for a while, it worked.

I feared Him.

Not with awe. Not with wonder.

With trembling.

With guilt.

With the weight of never being enough.

I feared Him the way a child fears a belt hung quietly on the wall.

The way you memorize your missteps before they happen.

The way you say sorry for things you did not do  
just in case.

I was told this was holy.

That this was righteousness.

That the ones who feared God the most were the ones He loved best.

So I learned to worship from a distance.

To approach with caution.

To speak softly

not because I respected Him

but because I did not want to provoke Him.

They said He was good.

But the fear made it hard to believe.

What does goodness mean when it walks hand in hand with terror  
when you love a God you are afraid to look in the eyes  
when your relationship is built on silence and performance  
and your prayers sound more like confessions than conversations?

I did not know how to explain it  
but something in me always resisted.

Not God  
but the fear that stood in the middle of the room like an old man  
saying  
Be careful  
Be quiet  
Be small

I confused that fear with holiness for years.  
I confused fear with reverence  
with submission  
with surrender  
but it was not the voice of God.  
It was the voice of shame dressed up like discipline.

I saw people speak of God with boldness  
and I wanted to know how they did it  
how they lifted their hands with joy and not trembling  
how they cried in worship without the sound of apology in their breath  
how they danced  
how they smiled  
how they called Him Father without the hesitation I carried

I wanted that  
but fear was all I had been taught.  
So I held onto it  
thinking it would protect me  
thinking it would make me righteous  
thinking it would prove my loyalty

But fear never protected me.  
It paralyzed me.

Fear told me to hide my flaws from God  
to dress my wounds before bringing them to Him  
to silence my sadness and call it strength  
but God was never afraid of my pain.

I remember the first time I felt Him differently.  
It was not in a moment of obedience  
but in a moment of collapse  
when everything I had built to please Him fell apart  
and I was left sitting on the floor  
too tired to pretend  
too honest to perform

And He did not turn away.  
He did not correct me.  
He did not lift His hand in anger.

He stayed.  
He waited.  
He covered me in something I had never known before  
peace without condition

That was the beginning of my healing  
when I realized that the fear they taught me was not holy  
it was heavy  
and God did not give it to me

He does not need to be feared in order to be honored  
He does not demand fear in place of intimacy  
He is not glorified by my trembling  
He is not worshipped through my shame

Holy fear is not terror  
it is not flinching  
it is not walking on eggshells around a God who is love

Holy fear is wonder  
it is humility  
it is bowing not because I am worthless  
but because I know I am standing in the presence of something eternal

I no longer confuse fear with devotion  
I no longer measure my faith by how afraid I am to fail  
I no longer call my anxiety about God spiritual

Real fear has no place in love  
and God is love  
so I let it go

I still tremble sometimes  
but it is not because I think He will harm me  
it is because I know He sees me  
and still draws near

That is what I call holy.

There are certain kinds of fear that do not feel like fear until you try to live without them.  
That is how it was for me.  
I did not know I was afraid.  
I thought I was just being faithful.  
I thought trembling before God meant I truly loved Him.  
I thought keeping quiet meant I was honoring Him.  
I thought shrinking myself into obedience was the same as surrender.  
But I was afraid  
Afraid of being too much

Afraid of being wrong  
Afraid of being seen

That kind of fear lives in your body  
It is not just an idea  
It is a rhythm  
A pattern  
A weight that teaches you how to breathe a little shallower  
How to speak a little softer  
How to disappear while looking devoted

I wore it like a second skin  
Fear wrapped around me like something sacred  
And because everyone around me carried the same fear  
I never thought to question it

It was in the way we sat  
The way we prayed  
The way we said God's name like it might break us if we said it too loud  
The way we feared joy  
The way we feared freedom  
The way we feared our own voice

I thought that was reverence  
But it was really resignation

Real reverence is not silence born of shame  
It is not stillness born of fear  
It is not hiding behind holiness so we never have to be honest

Real reverence is when you know who you are standing in front of  
And still you stand  
Still you come close  
Still you lift your head and say here I am  
Not perfect  
Not polished  
But present

I have lived both  
I have lived the kind of fear that kept me from God  
And I have lived the kind of reverence that drew me closer than I ever thought possible

The first made me feel like I was always one mistake away from being cast out  
The second made me realize I had never been outside His love in the first place

Holy fear is not fear at all in the way we have been taught it  
It is not walking around with your head down  
It is not tiptoeing through your life trying not to offend heaven

Holy fear is when your heart knows the weight of eternity  
And yet you still feel safe  
Still feel seen  
Still feel known

Holy fear is not a threat  
It is an invitation  
An invitation to step into something larger than yourself  
Not to be consumed  
But to be held

I do not fear God because He is angry  
I stand in awe because He is not  
Because I have brought Him the worst of me  
And He has answered with mercy  
Because I have broken every image of what I was told He required  
And still He came close

There were seasons I could not pray  
Not because I did not believe  
But because I was afraid of what I might hear if I got quiet enough  
Afraid that maybe I had gone too far  
Said too much  
Been too human  
But even in my silence  
Even in my hiding  
I felt Him near

There is a love that does not flinch when you are honest  
There is a love that does not require perfection  
There is a love that knows your story before you speak it  
And still calls you beloved

That is what I found in Him

That is holy

Not the fear that kept me quiet  
But the presence that told me I could finally speak

I used to tremble because I was afraid of judgment  
Now I tremble because I am overwhelmed by grace

I used to come before Him like a servant trying not to disappoint a master  
Now I come like a daughter  
Still healing  
Still learning  
But home

This is what they never told me  
That fear is not the foundation of faith  
That love is not earned through fear  
That God is not waiting for me to grovel  
He is waiting for me to return

And I have  
Not with perfection  
Not with pride  
Just with a heart that has known both fear and love  
And has finally learned the difference

That is what I call holy fear  
The kind that makes you fall to your knees  
Not because you are scared  
But because you are seen.

## Chapter 3

### The Sin of Asking Why

They told me questions were dangerous.  
That asking meant doubting  
and doubting meant I was slipping  
falling  
failing

They told me faith meant silence  
That if I just believed enough  
I would not need to understand

They told me not to question the pastor  
Not to question the rules  
Not to question the way things were done  
And certainly not to question God

So I didn't  
Not at first  
I bit my tongue  
I bowed my head  
I swallowed every ache that rose like a wave behind my teeth

I carried questions in my bones  
and called it obedience

But the truth is I always wanted to understand  
Not to destroy anything  
Not to rebel  
Just to know

Why did love feel so heavy  
Why did grace come with conditions  
Why did silence feel more holy than honesty  
Why did I feel guilty for simply wanting to breathe without explanation

I asked why  
Not because I was faithless  
But because something in me believed there was more  
That there had to be something richer  
Something deeper  
Something real beneath the rules



I asked why  
And they called it sin

I asked why women could not speak  
I asked why pain was praised  
I asked why joy felt like a risk  
I asked why control was called structure  
Why hierarchy was called order  
Why suffering was spiritual and questions were rebellion

They told me to stop thinking so much  
They said the devil works in the details  
They warned me that curiosity kills faith  
That the faithful obey without complaint

But I was not complaining  
I was trying to understand the God I loved  
I was trying to find Him beneath the noise  
I was trying to meet Him for myself  
Not through someone else's voice  
Not through someone else's fear  
Not through someone else's need for control

I did not want to tear anything down  
I wanted to build something I could live inside  
A faith that breathed  
A truth that held me

The more I asked  
The more alone I felt  
Not because God turned away  
But because people did

They began to look at me with suspicion  
They whispered that I was wandering  
That I had been influenced  
That I was falling  
That I had become proud

But it was not pride  
It was hunger  
It was longing  
It was the ache to know a God who could handle the truth

What kind of love requires blindness  
What kind of truth needs silence to survive  
What kind of God falls apart when I speak honestly

Not mine

God was not offended by my voice  
He was not intimidated by my doubt  
He was not insecure about my questions  
He did not shrink when I said  
I do not understand

He leaned closer

He listened

He did not answer everything  
But He did not walk away

That was when I knew  
My questions were not sin  
They were sacred

They were how I came closer  
Not how I drifted

They were how I let go of fear  
How I let go of performance  
How I laid down the mask and finally asked  
Who are You  
Really

And who am I  
When I stop trying to earn Your approval  
When I stop hiding my confusion  
When I stop pretending I am not afraid

There is no sin in asking why  
There is sin in pretending you do not need to ask

There is sin in systems that demand silence  
That punish honesty  
That shame a soul for seeking truth

I do not worship a God who punishes hunger  
I worship a God who is Bread  
Who is Water  
Who is the Answer and the Silence that surrounds it

I will keep asking  
Not because I am lost  
But because I am found enough to know I am safe

I will keep asking  
Because He does not flinch when I do

I will keep asking  
Because it has never been questions that destroy faith  
It has always been fear  
It has always been shame  
It has always been pretending

But I do not pretend anymore

I ask because I believe

And He answers  
Sometimes with words  
Sometimes with presence  
Sometimes with nothing but the peace that lets me keep breathing

That is enough

That is holy

That is love.

I kept my questions hidden for years  
tucked behind polite nods and quiet amens  
smiled away with a kind of grace that was more survival than belief  
I thought if I prayed harder the questions would stop  
if I fasted longer the silence would speak  
if I obeyed perfectly I would stop aching for answers

But the ache only grew louder  
not because I was falling away  
but because I was waking up  
not because I had lost my faith  
but because it was finally becoming mine

Some people find God in still waters  
I found Him in the storm  
Some people hear God in the choir  
I heard Him in the absence  
in the quiet between my questions  
in the nights when no one had answers but I still felt something holy sitting with me in the dark

I used to feel ashamed for needing to understand  
They told me that faith means surrender  
that faith means letting go of the need to know

but I learned that surrender is not silence  
Surrender is not pretending you do not want to ask

Real surrender is asking every question your soul needs to ask  
and trusting that God can take it  
that He is not panicked by your need to know  
that He does not leave when you are confused  
that He does not abandon when the light dims

My questions became prayers  
not because I spoke them in the language of religion  
but because I spoke them with my whole heart  
because I meant them  
because I could not lie to a God who knew me better than I knew myself

I stopped asking to provoke  
I asked to breathe  
I asked to stay alive in a system that wanted me numb  
I asked because I had to  
because I could not follow blindly  
because blind faith always ends in a cliff

Some people called me rebellious  
but rebellion is when you stop caring  
I asked because I still cared  
because I wanted to know what was real  
not what was safe  
not what was comfortable  
but what was real

I never asked to hurt  
I asked to heal

There were moments I thought God was silent  
but now I see He was speaking in a different language  
the language of waiting  
the language of trust  
the language of presence

There were answers  
but not the kind I could write in a notebook  
not the kind that closed the question forever  
They came in moments I did not expect  
in the middle of ordinary things  
while washing my face  
while standing in line  
while crying alone in a room no one knew I was in

God answers in presence  
and sometimes that is all the answer I need

He has never once told me I asked too much  
He has never once told me to be quiet  
He has never once said  
that question is too dangerous  
that thought is too wild  
that ache is too messy

It was never Him who said that  
It was always people  
people who needed control  
people who were afraid of anything they could not explain

But I am not afraid anymore  
and I do not need everything explained  
I just need to know I am safe to ask

And I am  
I am safe  
I am heard  
I am still welcome at the table  
even when I arrive carrying questions

This is what they did not teach me  
That faith and questions are not enemies  
That God and wonder walk together  
That asking why is not an act of betrayal  
It is the beginning of intimacy

It is how we draw near  
It is how we learn to listen  
It is how we find the courage to stay

I still ask  
I will always ask  
Because I believe there is more  
Because love does not hide behind silence  
And because truth is never afraid to be searched for

This is not sin  
This is worship

And God is still here



## Chapter 4

### God in a Cage

They told me who God was before I ever met Him for myself  
They handed me a version of Him that fit into their rules  
into their language  
into their systems  
into their fear

They did not say He was small  
But the way they lived said it for them  
The way they spoke about Him  
The way they guarded His name like it could break  
The way they built boxes around holiness  
and warned anyone who tried to step outside

They taught me about a God who was always watching  
Always weighing  
Always waiting for me to do better  
to be quieter  
to be less

And I believed them  
Because they seemed so sure  
Because I was young  
Because it felt dangerous to ask if there might be more

I learned early what I was allowed to say  
What I was allowed to feel  
Where I was allowed to find God  
and where I was not

He was in the church building  
but not in my body  
He was in the voice of the preacher  
but not in the questions I whispered to myself  
He was in the hymns  
but not in my heartbreak  
He was sacred  
but He was not safe

And I wondered  
Why would a God so big need so much protection

Why would a God who created oceans be offended by my tears  
Why would a God who knit the galaxies together need to be shielded from my humanity

The answer is  
He never did

But the people who spoke for Him  
were the ones who needed control

They caged Him  
not because He is weak  
but because they were afraid of what would happen if He truly roamed free  
if He walked with the doubters  
if He listened to the wounded  
if He answered prayers in voices they did not approve

They made Him sound like them  
and called it holiness  
They made Him predictable  
and called it order  
They made Him rigid  
and called it truth

But God is not rigid  
God is not confined to pulpits or programs or doctrines that shame people into silence

He is not afraid of wilderness  
He is not shaken by questions  
He is not confined by culture or language or rules that were never rooted in love

I used to pray like I had to earn His attention  
I used to worship like I had to get His approval  
I used to walk into church afraid that if I was not pure enough  
I would not be welcome in His presence

But the truth is  
His presence is the only place I have ever been fully welcome

Not the false version they constructed  
Not the God who flinches at my story  
But the real God  
The one who sits beside me when no one understands  
The one who stays  
even when the lights go out  
even when I fall apart  
even when I cannot find the words to pray



I know now  
God was never in the cage  
He was always outside  
waiting for me to come home to myself  
to stop shrinking  
to stop trying to fit into someone else's image of what a believer should look like

They caged their own idea of God  
but God kept moving

He is in the wilderness  
He is in the questions  
He is in the stories we were told not to tell  
He is in the bodies we were told not to trust  
He is in the laughter they tried to silence  
He is in the tears they tried to shame  
He is in the woman who stopped performing and started breathing again

God cannot be caged  
not by theology  
not by tradition  
not by fear

They tried to make Him small  
but He still split seas  
still lit fires  
still whispered to prophets  
still comforted the forgotten  
still walked with the ones who had been cast out

I do not serve a God who hides from humanity  
I serve a God who enters it fully  
Who weeps with us  
Who walks with us  
Who knows our names before we say them  
Who calls us beloved even when we forget how to pray

This is the God I have found outside the cage  
And I will not go back in

Shall we continue this chapter further  
or are you ready to move on to **Chapter 5: Rage as Revelation?**

Yes. Let's keep going — deeper into the heart of **God in a Cage**  
We will continue in your voice  
Still reverent

Still human  
Still honest  
And yes, no dashes  
And no repeating what's already been said.

The hardest part was not that they got God wrong  
It was that they made me afraid to seek Him for myself  
They told me who He was and how He spoke  
And every time I heard Him differently  
I questioned myself  
Never them

I would feel something beautiful  
A quiet strength  
A knowing too deep for words  
A comfort that asked for nothing in return  
And I would still wonder if it was real  
Because it did not sound like the voice I had been taught to obey

I kept waiting for correction  
But what I kept receiving was peace  
And that was when I began to understand  
They did not give me God  
They gave me a gatekeeper

They gave me conditions  
They gave me shame  
They gave me fear dressed up as reverence  
And when I finally met the real God  
He looked nothing like what I had been told to expect

He was not distant  
He was not demanding  
He was not counting my sins like currency  
He was not waiting for me to fail so He could say I told you so

He was still  
He was kind  
He was there

No agenda  
No performance  
Just presence

I remember the first time I felt Him in a place I was told He could not be  
It broke something open in me  
Not in a violent way  
But in a freeing one

Like I had been holding my breath without knowing it  
And suddenly I could exhale

If God was with me here  
Then maybe He had never left  
Maybe I had spent years chasing someone who was never running  
Maybe He was with me the whole time  
Quiet  
Patient  
Waiting for me to unlearn the noise

The truth is  
God was never caged  
Only my understanding of Him was

It is not rebellion to say you have outgrown a story that kept you afraid  
It is not pride to say that love must feel like love  
It is not sin to believe that God is better than the image you were given

I do not need to be afraid anymore  
Not of my voice  
Not of my questions  
Not of the way I hear Him in silence  
Not of the way I feel Him in places no one else blesses

I used to think I was wrong for wanting more  
But I see now that wanting more is holy

It is not that God changed  
It is that I stopped mistaking the cage for the truth

They meant well  
But meaning well does not heal the damage  
They built walls to keep God sacred  
But sacred things do not need walls  
They shine by nature  
They speak through everything

I do not need a cage to find God  
I need courage to meet Him where He truly is  
In the mess  
In the longing  
In the honesty I was once told to hide

This is what I know now  
God is not fragile  
God is not afraid of me  
God does not shrink back when I raise my voice

God does not punish curiosity  
God does not demand I disappear to be holy

God is not in the cage  
And neither am I

## Chapter 5

### Rage as Revelation

There was a time I believed that anger was wrong  
That rage was proof I had lost my way  
That if I truly loved God I would be gentle  
Quiet  
Composed  
Always soft  
Always forgiving  
Always smiling through it

I believed that good women did not burn  
They bent  
They prayed instead of protested  
They cried quietly behind closed doors  
And if they ever shouted  
It was in worship, not in pain

I believed that because that is what I was taught  
That rage was the language of rebellion  
That fury was flesh  
That anger was always a sign of sin

But they were wrong

My rage was not rebellion  
It was revelation  
It was the moment I realized I could no longer carry what they handed me  
It was the voice I had silenced for years rising up to say  
This is not okay  
This is not holy  
This is not love

My rage was my body telling the truth before my mouth could find the words

It showed up when I heard sermons that made women smaller  
When I saw how trauma was spiritualized  
When I noticed how silence was rewarded  
While honesty was punished  
When I watched people use God's name to keep others in chains  
While calling it salvation

I tried to pray it away  
I tried to fast it into submission  
But the fire kept rising

Until one day I stopped fighting it  
And I listened

And what I heard was not destruction  
It was clarity

I was angry because I had been silent for too long  
I was angry because I had given too much of myself to people who never saw me  
I was angry because I had confused obedience with erasure  
Because I had made peace with things that were never meant to be tolerated

And when I finally gave myself permission to feel all of it  
I met God there

Not the God who scolds  
Not the God who leaves  
But the God who flipped tables  
The God who wept  
The God who said no more  
The God who walked into temples and disrupted everything that masqueraded as holy

He did not ask me to calm down  
He did not tell me to stay silent  
He did not say that anger made me unworthy  
He stood with me  
In the heat  
In the chaos  
In the honest cry for justice  
For truth  
For freedom

I learned that rage is not the opposite of righteousness  
Sometimes it is the beginning

I learned that what I feel in my body is not betrayal  
It is testimony  
It is the sound of something sacred rising to the surface  
It is the moment when numbness dies  
And truth starts breathing again

There is a kind of rage that comes when you realize you have been gaslit by your religion  
When the very place that promised healing was where you bled the most  
When the hands that blessed you also tried to bind you  
And when you finally name it

When you finally say  
I am not okay  
I am not wrong for feeling this  
You find yourself

And you find God  
Not the false one  
But the one who never asked you to pretend

Rage is not the end of faith  
It is what happens when your soul refuses to accept injustice in sacred spaces  
It is what happens when love finally tells the truth  
And refuses to be quiet about it

This is not sin  
This is sacred  
This is what it means to wake up  
To see clearly  
To feel deeply  
To refuse to make yourself smaller just to be called faithful

I do not worship a God who asks me to ignore my pain  
I worship the God who meets me in the fire  
And stays.

There were days I felt my body trembling with fury  
but I did not know where to put it  
because no one had ever told me that anger could be holy  
that rage could be prophetic  
that fire could be a form of prayer

So I swallowed it  
I buried it beneath long silences and half-smiles  
I offered forgiveness before I had even been heard  
I tried to dress my wounds with polite words  
and I called that healing

But it was not healing  
It was hiding

There is nothing righteous about staying quiet in the face of injustice  
There is nothing holy about pretending everything is fine when your soul is breaking open

I needed someone to tell me that God could handle my rage  
that He was not afraid of it  
that He would not leave the room when I started raising the very questions I was once told  
to bury

But no one said that  
So I had to learn it myself

I learned it when I screamed alone in a room no one could enter  
when I let the grief become loud  
when I stopped apologizing for hurting  
when I let my body feel all of it  
and did not try to make it small

That was when I began to understand  
my rage was not the problem  
the problem was the weight I had been carrying for everyone else  
the silence I had been taught to keep  
the performance I had perfected in the name of spiritual maturity

I was never told that righteous anger was a form of clarity  
that it rises in the presence of injustice  
not to destroy  
but to unveil

Rage is not the absence of grace  
It is the ache for something true  
It is the voice of love when love refuses to stay quiet  
It is the holy fire that burns through pretense  
and makes space for what is real

I used to think that if I could just be good enough  
I would stop being angry  
But the truth is  
my anger was not a flaw in my faith  
It was the part of me that refused to die quietly  
The part of me that remembered I was made in the image of a God who also weeps  
who also grieves  
who also gets angry when His people are harmed in His name

I do not need to be ashamed of that fire  
I need to honor it  
Because it has never led me away from truth  
Only closer

I do not need to suppress my voice for the comfort of those who benefit from my silence  
I do not need to make myself easier to digest so they can keep pretending things are okay  
I do not need to apologize for the holy unrest rising in my spirit  
It is not destruction  
It is revelation

When I look back now  
I see that every moment I allowed myself to feel my rage fully



I also found clarity  
I found God standing with me in the heat  
not to put it out  
but to walk through it with me

He did not say calm down  
He said I see you  
He said I know what they did  
He said your anger is not a betrayal  
It is a sign that your spirit still knows justice  
That your heart still believes love should not come with wounds

There is something sacred about a woman who burns with clarity  
Not because she is cruel  
But because she refuses to pretend  
Because she still expects something better from the world  
Because she has not given up on the God she met in her fire

I am learning that to be a woman of faith does not mean I am always quiet  
It means I am always honest  
It means I bring my whole self  
even the parts they called too loud  
too emotional  
too much

There is room for rage at the altar  
There is room for grief in the sanctuary  
There is room for fire in the presence of God

Because God is not afraid of my rage  
He is not embarrassed by it  
He is not disappointed in me for feeling it

He understands it  
Because He has felt it too

## Chapter 6

### Altars of Oppression

They told me the altar was sacred  
That it was the place I came to be healed  
To be forgiven  
To be made whole

So I came  
Again and again  
Bowing  
Crying  
Confessing  
Surrendering parts of myself I had not even named yet

I came with hope  
I came with hunger  
I came believing they would make space for me  
That my presence would be welcome  
That my pain would be understood

But the altar they built was not for healing  
It was for control

It was a place where I was asked to sacrifice more than my sin  
I was asked to sacrifice my voice  
My questions  
My instincts  
My boundaries  
My body

They did not say it out loud  
But the message was clear  
To belong here  
You must become small  
You must not speak unless spoken to  
You must not challenge what you were handed  
You must smile through it  
You must call it love even when it hurts

And I did  
For years  
I called it spiritual  
Even when it silenced me

I called it obedience  
Even when it meant disappearing

They said God required surrender  
But what they demanded looked nothing like freedom

They demanded submission  
Not to God  
But to themselves  
To their systems  
To their interpretations  
To their power

And they called it holy

But holiness does not require harm

The altar was supposed to be a place of grace  
But it became a place where people bled quietly  
Where abuse was forgiven faster than it was named  
Where victims were told to pray harder  
Where trauma was baptized and called testimony  
Where women were told to be quiet for the sake of unity  
Where rage was labeled rebellion  
And grief was mistaken for weakness

They made the altar into a stage  
And we became the performance

But I do not perform anymore

I see now that what they called surrender was often suppression  
That what they called discipline was sometimes spiritualized domination  
That what they called covering was control  
That what they called humility was humiliation

And God was not in it

God was not in the shame  
God was not in the manipulation  
God was not in the hands that hurt while quoting scripture  
God was not in the theology that demanded my silence

I still believe in altars  
But not the kind that require my erasure

I believe in altars where truth is welcome  
Where healing does not come at the cost of dignity

Where you can lay your sorrow down without being blamed for it  
Where fire purifies, not punishes  
Where presence is not performance  
And where love is not used as a leash

I believe in altars where God actually meets people  
Not where people pretend to speak for Him while building kingdoms of fear

There is a difference  
And I have lived it

They built their altars high  
Covered them in gold  
Filled them with rules  
Filled them with fear  
But the real altar  
The one that holds  
Is the one built in the wilderness  
Out of broken things  
Out of grief and honesty and the courage to stay

The true altar is where you come with nothing left  
No mask  
No script  
Just yourself  
And still hear Him say  
You are welcome here.

There are things I used to call faith that were really fear  
I obeyed  
But not because I trusted God  
I obeyed because I was afraid of what would happen if I didn't  
Afraid of being cast out  
Afraid of disappointing leaders who claimed to speak for Him  
Afraid of being called rebellious  
Afraid of being alone

They taught me that suffering made me holy  
That endurance was more important than honesty  
That silence in the face of abuse was spiritual maturity  
That if I wanted to be like Christ  
I had to carry crosses that were never mine to bear

So I stayed  
In churches that gaslit me  
In relationships that diminished me  
In roles that asked for my labor but never offered rest

I stayed because they told me that leaving would mean leaving God  
They made no room for holy disobedience  
No room for sacred exit  
No room for liberation that looks like walking away from what was never rooted in love to begin with

They did not teach me how to recognize oppression  
They taught me how to survive it  
And then praised me for surviving quietly

But I am done surviving sacred spaces that require my silence  
I am done calling it love when it feels like control  
I am done confusing loyalty with spiritual stagnation

I have learned that leaving an oppressive altar is not the same as walking away from God  
Sometimes it is the only way back to Him

Because God never required what they demanded  
God never asked for my voice in exchange for belonging  
God never required that I stay in systems that bruised me and then blamed me for the pain

God is not glorified when His name is used to keep people in chains  
God is not present in power structures that elevate a few and erase the rest  
God is not honored by performance  
He is revealed in truth

I used to think I had to be quiet in order to be spiritual  
Now I know that sometimes the most spiritual thing I can do is speak

Speak for the women who never found language for what was done to them  
Speak for the child I was when I first felt the dissonance  
Speak for the girl who thought she had to earn her way back to God by pretending she was fine

I do not need to pretend anymore  
The altar they built taught me shame  
But the altar I found in my wilderness taught me how to breathe again

It was not in the temple  
It was not in the sanctuary  
It was not at the front of a church under dimmed lights and rehearsed music

It was in my room  
With tears on my face  
And no one there to perform for

It was in the question I finally dared to ask  
God, are You still with me

And the answer came  
Not in thunder  
But in the steady presence of love that never left

God never lived inside the altar of oppression  
He stayed with me  
While I found the strength to walk away

## Chapter 7

### The Day I Let Go of Their God

It did not happen all at once  
It was not a dramatic break or a shouted goodbye  
It was quiet  
Subtle  
The kind of release that feels more like returning than walking away

I did not slam the door  
I simply stopped knocking

I stopped searching for God in places that only ever made me feel small  
I stopped trying to find holiness in people who taught me that doubt was dangerous  
That questioning was rebellion  
That curiosity meant I lacked faith  
That feeling too deeply made me unstable

Their God was always watching  
But never weeping  
Always speaking  
But never listening  
Always powerful  
But somehow so insecure He could not handle the sound of my voice

Their God demanded perfection but offered no safety  
He ruled with fear  
With punishment  
With shame

He was always a little out of reach  
Always disappointed  
Always more invested in rules than restoration

And I tried  
For so long I tried to love Him  
I tried to fear Him in the right way  
Tried to serve Him the way they said I should  
Tried to surrender what made me human and call that holiness

But it never felt like love  
Not real love  
Not the kind that steadies you  
Not the kind that stays

And the day I let go of their God  
Was the day I finally told the truth

I do not believe God is like that

I do not believe God asks me to disappear to be holy  
I do not believe He is threatened by my mind  
I do not believe He turns His face when I cry in anger  
I do not believe He sends suffering to teach me obedience  
I do not believe He stands with the powerful while the wounded kneel in silence

I let go of their God  
Because I needed to breathe

Because I could not keep carrying a theology that suffocated me  
Because I could not keep praying to a God who sounded more like a tyrant than a father  
Because I could not keep shrinking and calling it surrender

And when I let go  
I expected emptiness  
But what I found was peace

What I found was presence  
Not loud  
Not flashy  
Just there  
Steady  
Patient  
Still

I realized I had not walked away from God  
I had walked away from the idea of God that kept me afraid  
That kept me quiet  
That kept me chained

And I was not alone  
I began to meet others who had let go too  
Others who were taught to fear questions  
Others who were told they were too much  
Too loud  
Too wild  
Too bold  
Too broken

And all of us  
In our separate corners  
Had come to the same truth



God is not who they said He was  
God is better

Letting go was not the end of my faith  
It was the beginning of something deeper  
Something truer  
Something I did not have to fake  
Something I could finally live with

I still believe  
Not because they told me to  
But because I have met God for myself  
And He is nothing like what they warned me about.

There was grief  
Of course there was  
Grief for the time I spent trying to earn love that was already mine  
Grief for the parts of myself I buried to fit in  
Grief for the rituals that once gave me comfort but slowly turned to cages

It is not easy to let go of what you were raised to believe  
Even when it is hurting you  
Even when it stops making sense  
Even when your body keeps telling the truth before your mouth does

I wrestled with guilt  
Not because I had done something wrong  
But because I was trained to believe that freedom meant failure  
That liberation meant leaving God  
That joy outside of the old language was counterfeit

But I have never felt more held  
More known  
More heard

In the letting go  
I did not find distance  
I found closeness  
Not with their version of God  
But with the real one  
The one who stays  
The one who heals  
The one who says you were never too much for Me

They told me faith meant certainty  
But I have found more faith in the questions  
More faith in the wandering  
More faith in the honest aching for something real

And when I finally stopped striving  
Stopped chasing  
Stopped trying to climb the ladder they built to reach Him  
I looked around  
And realized God had been beside me the whole time

He was never up there  
He was always right here  
In the ache  
In the mess  
In the quiet rooms where I finally told the truth

The day I let go of their God  
I made space for the One who never needed defending  
The One who does not need a performance  
The One who still meets women at wells  
And still speaks through broken things

I do not miss the cage  
I do not miss the shame  
I do not miss the tightness in my chest when I was told that holiness looked like erasure

I do not miss their God  
Because I have found the One who calls me beloved with no conditions

This is not the end of belief  
It is the beginning of trust  
Not trust in a system  
Not trust in a structure  
But trust in the still small voice  
That led me out of the fire  
And into myself.

## Chapter 8

### The Silence After Fire

No one talks about what happens after the fire  
After the flames have raged  
After the walls have come down  
After the shouting is done  
After the courage is spent

They do not tell you how quiet it gets  
How unfamiliar the silence feels  
How strange it is to no longer be burning  
But not yet fully healed

I thought liberation would feel like dancing  
But for me  
It felt like stillness  
Like sitting in the ruins  
and wondering what parts of me were smoke  
and what parts were soul

I was no longer in the war  
But I was not yet in the new beginning  
I was in the middle  
The ache between undoing and becoming

I did not hear God in those first few days  
Not because He was gone  
But because I was learning how to listen again  
without fear  
without performance  
without the voices that had once drowned Him out

There was no lightning  
No thunder  
Just breath  
Just quiet  
Just the slow return to myself

And that quiet  
That silence  
Was holy

For the first time I was not chasing answers  
I was not begging for signs

I was not asking if I had done the right thing  
I simply sat  
And the silence did not accuse me  
It comforted me

There is a kind of peace that only comes after fire  
After you have watched everything you thought would save you  
collapse  
After you have stopped clinging  
After you have run out of prayers you do not mean

I did not feel strong  
I did not feel sure  
I just felt real

And in that stillness  
I began to feel something familiar  
Something steady  
Not a voice  
Not a vision  
Just presence

I knew then  
God was still with me  
Not the God of fear  
Not the God of noise  
But the quiet God  
The patient God  
The God who stays even when there is nothing left to give Him

I do not need loud anymore  
I do not need certainty  
I do not need the rush of spiritual adrenaline that made me feel worthy

I just need this  
This sacred silence  
This space where I can hear my own soul again  
This space where God is not a performance  
But a presence  
A presence that does not demand  
That does not shame  
That does not flee

The fire burned away what I no longer needed  
And what remained was enough.

There is a kind of silence that feels like loss  
And another that feels like mercy

This was the second kind

No more shouting

No more scrambling to be understood

No more explaining myself to people who had already decided who I was

Just quiet

Thick and holy

Like the air after a storm

The kind of silence that wraps around you and says

You are safe now

I did not realize how loud it had all been

Until it stopped

The sermons

The expectations

The constant measuring of my worth against a version of holiness I could never reach

The silence that followed was not absence

It was presence without pressure

God without noise

Me without striving

At first I kept trying to fill it

To make the silence useful

To pray the right way

To write something beautiful

To prove that I was still worthy of the divine

But the silence did not ask for that

It asked for nothing

It waited

Not impatiently

Not with judgment

Just waited

For me to come home to myself

So I did

I stopped performing

I stopped apologizing for needing rest

I stopped pretending I was not tired

And in that sacred stillness

Something inside me began to return

Not in a blaze

Not in a grand revelation

But in a whisper

You are not lost  
You are becoming

The silence began to teach me  
That God is not only found in fire  
But also in the slow healing that follows  
In the breath you did not know you were holding  
In the tears you no longer feel the need to hide

I used to believe that faith had to be loud  
That devotion had to be visible  
That worship had to be wild

But now  
I believe in the holiness of stillness  
Of walking without a map  
Of sitting in the quiet  
And trusting that God is in no rush

The silence after fire is not a punishment  
It is a sanctuary

It is the place where all that is false falls away  
And all that is real remains

The presence of God is here  
Not in the form of a command  
But in the form of a gentle stillness that asks nothing  
but to be felt

I am not in a hurry anymore  
There is nowhere to arrive  
Only deeper to go

And the silence is guiding me.

## Chapter 9

### She Who Wrestles With God

There are those who run from God  
And those who perform for Him  
But I became the one who wrestled

Not because I stopped believing  
But because I needed to know if what I believed could survive the weight of my truth

I did not want the God who sat far away and asked me to be quiet  
I wanted the God who came close enough to feel my questions  
Close enough to hold me steady when I did not have the right words  
Close enough to wrestle

There is a story in the old texts  
Of a man who wrestled with God until daybreak  
Who would not let go until he received a blessing  
Who limped for the rest of his life  
But walked away with a new name

I used to think that story was too bold  
That faith meant submission  
Not struggle  
That God only blessed the obedient  
The soft-spoken  
The compliant

But now I see it clearly  
God does not fear the wrestle  
He meets us in it  
He invites it  
He stays through it

And I am not afraid to say that I have wrestled with Him  
In the middle of the night  
In the thick of my grief  
In the questions no one could answer  
In the prayers that felt like silence  
In the moments when I wanted to believe  
But could not pretend

I wrestled because I wanted to stay  
Because walking away was never the hardest part

Staying with a broken heart  
That was harder

I wrestled with the pain of what was done in His name  
With the doctrines that wounded more than they healed  
With the weight of silence I carried for years  
With the confusion of loving a God who felt so far  
And still calling Him good

And every time I came with my fists  
I found His open hands  
Not angry  
Not withdrawn  
Just waiting

Not every question was answered  
But I was heard  
Not every scar was erased  
But I was held

Wrestling did not weaken my faith  
It made it honest  
It made it strong  
It made it mine

This is not the faith I was handed  
This is the faith I built in the dark  
The faith that limps sometimes  
The faith that is shaped by questions  
But rooted in presence

I do not worship a God who demands I get it right  
I worship a God who says  
Stay with Me  
Even when it hurts  
Even when it's hard  
Even when your hands are shaking  
I will stay too.

I did not wrestle to win  
I wrestled because I could not pretend anymore  
Because the stories I was told no longer held me  
Because the words that once comforted now sounded hollow

I wrestled because I loved God  
And I needed to know if He could love me back without conditions  
Without the pretending



Without the constant proving  
Without the fear of being too much

The wrestle was not an act of disobedience  
It was intimacy  
It was the cry of someone who had stayed silent for too long  
Someone who wanted more than rituals  
Someone who needed more than certainty  
Someone who had been told her doubt made her dangerous  
But who was brave enough to bring that doubt to the altar anyway

It was in the wrestling that I stopped being afraid of God  
I started to see that the real danger was not in questioning Him  
But in never daring to approach Him honestly

They told me to bow  
I did  
But I bowed so deeply I disappeared  
And in the disappearance I lost the sound of my own voice

So I stood up  
Not in defiance  
But in dignity  
I stood up to ask  
Are You still here  
Do You see me  
Even now  
Even after all this

And He did

He was not offended by the questions  
He did not shame me for the fight  
He did not demand I return to the script

He let me come undone  
He let me be wild and weary and wordless  
He let me be

There is a kind of love that holds you while you fall apart  
Not trying to fix you  
Not asking you to hide  
Just holding

And that is what I found in the middle of the night  
In the room with no lights  
In the questions with no answers  
I found God

Not the God of fear  
But the God of presence

I used to think that if I wrestled with God I might lose Him  
Now I know  
The ones who wrestle are the ones who stay

And staying is not passive  
It is fierce  
It is choosing to remain  
Even when you are angry  
Even when you are confused  
Even when you are undone

This is not the kind of faith they put in the manuals  
This is not the faith that wins applause  
This is the faith that breathes in the dark  
The faith that limps  
The faith that whispers instead of shouts  
The faith that does not need to be right  
Only real

I will never again be ashamed of the wrestling  
Because it brought me back to a God who is not fragile  
Who is not threatened by emotion  
Who does not flinch when I ask  
Why did You let them hurt me  
Where were You when I cried  
Why does it still ache

He does not rush me past those questions  
He sits with me in them  
And somehow  
That is enough

I still wrestle sometimes  
But I do not wrestle alone  
And I no longer wrestle to escape  
I wrestle to stay

Because this is what love looks like now  
Not perfection  
Not pretending  
But presence that does not walk away  
Even when I come with trembling hands  
Even when all I can offer is the truth.



## Chapter 10

### The God Who Stayed

After the fire  
After the grief  
After the letting go  
After the wilderness  
After the wrestling  
He was still there

Not the God they gave me  
Not the God I feared  
Not the God who sat behind a veil of rules and unreachable holiness  
But the God who stayed  
The God who never once asked me to earn His presence  
The God who did not walk away when I did not know what I believed anymore

He stayed when I let go of the prayers that no longer felt honest  
He stayed when I questioned the scriptures that had once been my lifeline  
He stayed when I was too exhausted to lift my head  
Too tired to pretend  
Too bruised to sing the songs they taught me

He stayed in the silence  
He stayed in the questions  
He stayed when I did not know how to find Him  
Because He was never lost

I was told He would turn His face if I doubted  
That He would withdraw if I broke the rules  
That He would only stay if I stayed inside the lines

But I crossed every line they drew  
And when I looked up  
There He was  
Unmoved  
Unthreatened  
Unashamed to be seen with me

This is not the God of fear  
This is the God of presence  
This is the God who weeps  
The God who listens

The God who does not need a stage or a microphone  
The God who comes close when everyone else steps away

He is not in a hurry  
He is not offended by my pace  
He is not interested in performance  
He is not measuring my worth by how loud I pray  
Or how often I show up to buildings built in His name

He is here  
When I wake up unsure  
When I am angry  
When I am quiet  
When I am not sure if I'm healing or just surviving

He is not the one who told me to shrink  
Or the one who used scripture as a weapon  
Or the one who needed me to be perfect before He called me worthy

He is the one who stayed  
When I fell apart  
When I let go  
When I stopped trying so hard to be enough

And the longer I sit with Him  
The more I believe this truth  
I never had to earn what was already mine  
I never had to strive for the love that was never going to leave

The God who stayed is the God who sees me as I am  
Not as who I pretend to be  
Not as who they told me I should become  
But as the one who kept showing up  
Even with shaking hands  
Even with doubts  
Even with the weight of a thousand Sundays pressed into my skin

He calls me beloved  
Even when I have no words left  
Even when all I bring is my breath and my bare honesty

And that is enough.

I used to think I had to chase Him  
That if I missed a step  
He would slip away  
That His love was conditional  
That His presence was fragile

But the more I unraveled  
The more I realized  
He never moved

He stayed  
When my theology fell apart  
When the church became a wound  
When I stopped having tidy words for big emotions  
He stayed

Not to lecture  
Not to shame  
Not even to fix me

He just stayed

There is something so healing  
about a love that does not flinch  
about a presence that does not pressure  
about a God who is not waiting for me to put myself back together before He draws near

I stopped needing to perform holiness  
Because He showed me what holiness really is  
It is not perfection  
It is not silence  
It is not getting all the answers right

It is presence  
It is truth  
It is the choice to stay close  
even when things are messy  
even when the prayers sound more like sighs

That is what He has done with me

He has sat in the room  
while I asked the questions I was once told were dangerous  
He has held space for my sorrow  
without rushing me through it  
He has whispered  
I am not going anywhere  
over and over  
until I started to believe it

I think we underestimate the power of presence  
In a world obsessed with noise and certainty  
We forget how sacred it is for someone to simply stay

That is what sets Him apart  
He is not afraid of the dark  
He does not leave when the flames go out  
He does not need me to perform peace  
He just sits beside me  
Until the quiet feels like safety  
Instead of shame

I look back now  
And I see how many times I thought He had left  
But it was never Him  
It was the sound of religion fading  
It was the echo of other voices losing power  
It was the silence I mistook for absence  
Because I had never been taught that God could speak through stillness

But He does  
He always has

I feel Him now  
Not in the way I used to  
Not in the certainty of systems  
Or the rhythm of rituals  
But in the softness  
In the breath  
In the fact that I no longer have to hide

He is not watching to judge  
He is watching to stay close  
He is not demanding answers  
He is asking for truth

And all I have to offer is this  
Here I am  
Still here  
Still unsure  
Still healing  
Still believing  
And that  
It turns out  
Is enough.

## Chapter 11

### Love as Doctrine

They gave me rules first  
Then fear  
Then shame  
And called it theology

They told me love was in there somewhere  
But I had to earn it  
Prove it  
Reach it  
Behave my way into it

And I tried  
I really tried

I followed the teachings  
I memorized the verses  
I obeyed the men on the stages  
I swallowed my questions  
I silenced my gut  
I turned my heart into a checklist

And I called it faith

But it never felt like love  
Not real love  
Not the kind that steadies your breath and stays when you unravel  
Not the kind that heals instead of haunts

They taught me doctrine as defense  
As boundary  
As border  
As reason to divide  
To exclude  
To gatekeep

But they never taught me love as the foundation

They taught me how to be right  
Not how to be kind  
They taught me how to win arguments  
But not how to listen



They taught me how to behave  
But not how to belong

And when it all started to crumble  
When the noise faded  
When I was left with nothing but ashes and ache  
I asked the only question that mattered  
Is love enough  
Is it enough to rebuild my faith on love alone

And the answer came  
Not in thunder  
But in the soft steady knowing in my chest  
Yes  
Yes it is

If the doctrine does not lead to love  
Then it is not holy  
If the teaching does not make room for the wounded  
Then it is not sacred  
If the theology cannot sit with the grieving  
The questioning  
The ones who no longer fit the mold  
Then it is not of God

Because God is love  
Not love as a concept  
But love as a way of being  
Love as breath  
Love as presence  
Love as welcome  
Love as the first and final word

Love is not the bonus at the end of a long performance  
It is the beginning  
It is the doctrine  
It is the banner  
It is the baseline

It is not soft  
It is not shallow  
It is the most powerful thing that exists

And when I stopped trying to build my belief system on rules and fear  
And started building on love  
Everything changed

Suddenly I did not need all the answers  
I just needed to be honest  
Suddenly I did not need to convince anyone  
I just needed to embody what I believed

And what I believe  
More than anything else  
Is that God is love  
And that love does not leave when you fall apart  
Love does not punish questions  
Love does not demand a mask

Love tells the truth  
And stays.

I used to be afraid that love wasn't strong enough  
That if I let go of all the rules  
All the rigidity  
All the fear-based scaffolding  
Everything would collapse

But the opposite happened

When I let love lead  
What remained was what mattered

The noise fell away  
But not the sacred  
The pressure dissolved  
But not the presence  
The fear scattered  
But not the truth

Because love  
Real love  
Is not the absence of discipline  
It is the beginning of transformation

When I started asking  
What would love do here  
Everything changed

It changed the way I read scripture  
It changed the way I spoke to myself  
It changed how I showed up in the world  
It changed how I saw God

I stopped seeing Him as a distant judge  
And started seeing Him as the one who sits with the outcast  
The doubter  
The weary one who doesn't have the strength to sing anymore

Love taught me to listen to people I had been warned about  
Love taught me to trust my body when it said  
This isn't safe  
Love taught me that holiness is not about hiding  
It is about wholeness

They told me truth was hard and sharp and unforgiving  
But I have found that truth wrapped in love still convicts  
But it never crushes

It calls you home  
It holds a mirror  
But it never asks you to disappear

And once I tasted that  
I could never go back to fear

Because love does not coerce  
Love does not shame  
Love does not rush you  
Love does not keep score  
Love does not wait for you to be perfect before it wraps its arms around you and says  
You are mine  
Even now  
Especially now

Love does not mean anything goes  
But it does mean everyone gets to come

Even the broken  
Even the bold  
Even the ones who have been told they are too much

Because love makes space  
Love goes first  
Love kneels down  
Love breaks the rules that were never God's to begin with

And that is the doctrine I will follow

Not the one that excludes  
Not the one that elevates some and erases others  
Not the one that mistakes tradition for truth

But the doctrine that looks like Jesus  
Who always moved toward pain  
Who saw people before He corrected them  
Who called people in instead of casting them out

Love is not a compromise  
It is the clearest vision of God we have

And if my theology cannot hold a hurting person and still call them beloved  
Then it is not holy

The doctrine is love  
It has always been love  
And I am no longer ashamed to say  
That is enough.

## Chapter 12

### A New Theology for the Bold

This is not the theology I was given  
This is the one I built from the ground up  
Brick by brick  
Scar by scar  
Truth by trembling truth

It is not neat  
It is not polished  
It does not fit in a box or on a bumper sticker  
But it is mine  
And it is holy

This theology was born in the wreckage  
In the ashes of what collapsed  
In the silence after the shouting stopped  
In the questions they told me not to ask  
In the prayers that came from my gut  
Not from the script

This is a theology that does not fear the dark  
Because it was shaped in the dark  
A theology that was not handed down  
But dug out  
Fought for  
Clawed into being with blood and breath

And it is not timid  
It does not whisper  
It speaks clearly  
It speaks tenderly  
It speaks with authority earned in fire

This is a theology for the bold

It does not wait for permission  
It does not ask to be understood by the gatekeepers  
It does not apologize for feeling too much  
For thinking too deeply  
For refusing to shrink

It believes God is not threatened by truth  
That God does not fear the voice of a woman who has found her voice again

That God does not punish courage  
But honors it

This theology has no room for shame  
No patience for cruelty dressed as doctrine  
No tolerance for power that silences pain

It is a theology that begins with love  
And ends with love  
And trusts love to hold everything in between

It says  
Come with your questions  
Come with your fury  
Come with your story  
Come with your full self  
There is room here  
There is always room

It no longer bows to fear  
It no longer pretends to be small  
It no longer serves systems that demand silence as proof of faith

This theology is loud when it needs to be  
And still when it chooses to be  
But it is always true

It blesses the doubter  
The dreamer  
The exile  
The heretic  
The one who stayed  
And the one who walked away

It sees the sacred in the everyday  
In the body  
In the breath  
In the woman who never gave up  
Even when they told her she had to

And it names this truth  
God was never the problem  
The problem was the god they created to control  
To conquer  
To condemn

But that god is gone now  
And in his place

There is space  
There is healing  
There is voice  
There is fire  
There is God  
The real one  
The one who stays

This is a new theology  
Not because God changed  
But because I did  
Because I returned to the beginning  
To love  
To breath  
To a faith that does not demand I disappear  
But invites me to rise

And I have risen

I carry no shame  
I carry no apology  
I carry the sacred truth of a woman who lost everything she thought she believed  
And found God waiting in the ruins

So here I am  
Unbowed  
Unshaken  
Unashamed

This is my new theology  
And it is bold  
Because I am bold  
Because He made me that way  
And called it good.

## Reflection

If you have made it this far  
Thank you  
For staying  
For wrestling  
For feeling every word in your body  
For letting this book become a mirror

This was never meant to be a manual  
Or a doctrine  
Or a new set of rules to follow

It was meant to be a hand held out in the dark  
A quiet voice beside you saying  
You are not the only one  
You are not wrong for needing more  
You are not broken for asking why

This is the story of a faith that unraveled  
And a God who stayed  
It is a map drawn in fire and silence  
In grief and hope  
In questions that never got answered  
And love that never stopped showing up

It is not finished  
Because I am not finished  
And neither are you

But maybe now you believe  
That God is not waiting behind a wall of perfection  
That holiness can look like healing  
That theology can be rewritten  
That freedom and faith can live in the same breath

You do not have to go back to what broke you  
You do not have to explain your ache  
You do not have to fear your own voice

God is not afraid of your story  
And you should not be either

So write it  
Speak it  
Live it loud  
Even if your hands shake



Because your voice  
Your questions  
Your love  
Your wild, sacred, honest becoming

It matters

And it is holy.

## Acknowledgments

To the women who were told to stay small, stay silent, stay holy in the ways that broke them  
This book is for you  
You gave me courage without even knowing it

To those who held space for my questions instead of fearing them  
Thank you  
You reminded me that God is not afraid of my voice

To my friends, my sisters, my readers  
Those who saw me when I did not yet have the words  
I am here because you were

To every woman who taught me how to speak truth in a world that punishes it  
I honor you  
I carry your names in the marrow of these pages

To the God who never walked away  
Even when I doubted  
Even when I unraveled  
Even when I thought I had lost Him  
Thank You  
You were always the quiet in the chaos  
The fire that stayed warm

## About the Author

Sonia Benjoye is an entrepreneur and the founder of SB CLASSIC  
A fashion brand rooted in timeless style and class

With a deep belief in emotional honesty  
Self-awareness  
And personal growth  
Sonia's creative journey extends far beyond fashion  
Into the raw and personal landscapes of identity  
Healing  
And becoming

She writes the way she lives  
With truth  
With tenderness  
And without performance

Her work explores the complexities of rebuilding after hard seasons  
Of choosing yourself when it is not easy  
And of finding strength in the parts no one sees

What began as private reflections in the midst of personal grief  
Became a body of work that speaks to anyone who has ever questioned their worth  
Carried invisible weight  
Or fought to come home to themselves

Her first book  
The Paradox of Passion  
Opened the door  
What It Took went even deeper  
A reflection of what happens when we stop performing and start telling the truth

Now  
God Was Never the Problem  
Marks a bold turning point  
A spiritual unearthing that dares to speak what many feel but are afraid to say

Sonia writes not to impress  
But to connect  
Her presence offers the kind of permission that is hard to find in a loud world

The permission to slow down  
To feel  
To begin again.

## More from Sonia Benjoye

Her next book  
Mother  
Monster  
Machine  
is coming soon

Raw  
Political  
Personal  
Poetic

It continues the work of spiritual unmaking  
Feminine power  
And rebuilding faith from within the body

Follow her journey  
Join the unfolding

## Connect With the Author

For speaking  
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