

Whispers

Just Before Dawn

An Inspiring Anthology of Poems, Letters, and Essays

Volume I

By

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Forward

I lay there, unable to sleep. My mind racing, my thoughts lacking form or direction, I did my best to take control of the moment and will my dancing thoughts to form an idea. After all, I am the Renaissance man. God has blessed me with the ability to create a plan to remedy whatever obstacle I am confronted with. I knew I could do this, and do it well. But now, there I was, just hours before I needed to present what was the most important creative writing of my life, to date, lying there, my thoughts scattering like light dry snowflakes at the hint of a breeze. Words just seemed to dance one imagining beyond my creative grasp, like a dollar bill that falls to the ground on a windy day in March.

My poem was to be the tribute from my extended family that would be printed on the back page of the funeral bulletin to represent our loving sentiments for our matriarch, my grandmother, Theresa Fauntroy Cohen. I had dread this day for what seemed my entire life, and had rehearsed in my mind a thousand times all the beautiful things I wanted to say about her. Now the moment was here and no words I could bring to mind seemed adequate to express what I felt in my heart.

I had prayed that the Holy Spirit would use me to bless my family and all those that knew her, but the words did not come. I would like to say I got up and took pen in hand as an act of faith, believing that my prayer would be answered if I took that one little step, but it was more an act of desperation. I figured that if I just put a few words to paper the rest would eventually come. As soon as I began to write, the words just flowed from my pen. They came as fast as I could write them, and I knew that they were not my own. “A pink rose bloomed on a red rose vine....” (*In the Fullness of my Time*)

Since that early morning, I have had many such challenges, and He has never failed me. In fact, I have come to know that when my creativity seems to betray me, there is something very special coming; just before dawn.

In my unenlightened days, I considered those buzzer beater experiences as proof that I worked better under pressure. It was an ability I brought to the table. I have since reflected on other instances when the words just seemed to come, and understand that in those days I had been just too spiritually disconnected to see the hand of God in my writing.

Now that I am fully aware of where my creativity comes from, it is not unusual for me to be awakened out of my sleep with a strong urging to go to my quiet place and just listen for a few moments. I don't hear voices, but I hear direction in my spirit of what I am to write. I am sure it is in these moments that God 'supercharges' the gift He has given me to say something that will inspire or encourage someone.

That's why I named my publishing company Goode God. It is my way of acknowledging that He is the one who gives me the very best of my creative capabilities.

This anthology shares many of those creations born in His mind and given to me to put on paper. Those creations address all aspects of life, but share one common thread: the love of God. I am so blessed that He has chosen me to be a vessel through whom His blessing of encouragement can flow during this trying season. I pray that something in these pages blesses you. I pray that I will always have the heart to listen to those whispers, just before dawn.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to all of the loving souls the Lord has blessed me with to share my journey down the road of life. You have encouraged me as much as you have inspired me.

To all of those that have gone on before me; My mother, Yvonne Cohen Goode Satterfield; my father, Thomas “Buck” Goode; my stepfather, John “Jay” Satterfield; my grandmother, Theresa Fauntroy Cohen; my grandfather, George Washington Cohen; my aunts and uncles, especially Magnolia Goode and Delmore Goode; all my cousins and friends, especially my brother from another mother, Albie Reaves, who was the best of both. I pray that your legacy of love will be immortalized by what you have inspired me to share.

To all of those who still walk locked step with me on this pathway through life, and who have in some way counseled, encouraged, or inspired me: my wife, Cleta; my children, Tamika and Trevor and their mates Chamar and Josette; my stepchildren Robyn and Paul; and my grandchildren, Channing, Chris, Nick, Umberto, Anari, Nico, Chanel, Christian, Jacylah (LaLa), and Braylon (BD); my sister Terrie Goode; her son Chris Wright; his wife Mari and their daughter Madison Yvonne; my special brothers Moe and Larry Polite; our special sisters and brothers, my nieces, my nephews, and my 3 living aunts, my mother’s sisters who call me son, Lucy Green, Nellie Wright, and Lillian Polite. You are the wealth I have stored upon this earth. May you be blessed by the words that fill these pages, and know that you have been an inspiration, and have had a profound influence on what I write and the life I live.

To my spiritual teachers, Pastor James C. Jones, Pastor Raymond M. Gordon, Bishop LeRoi Bailey, Bishop Courtney McBath, and Bishop Kim W. Brown: thank you for being vessels of wisdom.

A Special Dedication

Sometimes in life we find ourselves in a special situation that requires special prayer to get us through. Often God uses ordinary people to do unexpected and extraordinary things to answer us. My brother, Michael “Moe” Polite was used by God to lift me from such a situation. I thank him for being a yielded vessel. I praise God for him. May his life be filled with extraordinary blessings.

Thank You Brother Moe for Being There

Thank you Bro for being there;

a tool in God’s strong hand.

We know our help comes from The Lord,

but is delivered man to man.

He uses ordinary people

to administer His grace;

A shining light, a helpful hand,

A loving heart, a familiar face.

I am thankful that He chose you,

And that you saw fit to care,

I thank Him that His word is true;

I thank Him that you were there.



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What's Going On?

The first time I can remember ‘waking up with a song in my heart’, as I used to call it, was the morning of April 6, 1968. I was in my own bed, in my mother’s house, and it was a sunny morning, though no sunshine was shining on me as I looked out of my window, down the driveway, out to Edgewood Street. The apartment building that was less than 25 feet away, cast a shadow on my window, and was the only other view from my vantage point. Ordinarily, being here would have been a treat at this point in the semester. Spring football practice at UConn had been cancelled on Friday. It was the day before my mother’s 40th birthday, and that likely would have meant I would get to party with all of my aunts and uncles and cousins and family friends. But there was an emptiness in the pit of my stomach and a gnawing pain in my spirit. I was grieving the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, who had been shot down while standing on a balcony in Memphis, just two days before.

My creative writing professor had assigned the class to write something that expressed how we felt about what was going on in our country. The Civil Rights Act of 1968 was on the table as a follow-up of THE Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Dr. King, and all the other heroes who so nobly offered their lives a ransom for a higher cause, were still marching to make it significant. I wanted to do a work that Dr. King would have been proud to hear. Just as importantly, because I wanted to show some of the uppity students in my otherwise all white class, that people like me were more than a bunch of ‘colored’ jocks who were given a break, but rather young black student-athletes who simply sought equal rights to take advantage of the opportunities they had so long been accustomed to.

In my melancholia, I reached for my duffle bag that had my notebook in it and began to write:

‘I rise and I look around me; I see fear, anguish, and pain.
The days of my life flee from me, but hopes and dreams remain.’

“What’s Going On?” contains responses to social and/or political circumstances that have been driven by “whispers” of inspiration.

We are in a season when the world is changing at an accelerated rate; distances between nations are shrinking due to advances in transportation and communications; cultural differences are diminishing due to exposure to foreign cultures, and thus we are constantly rewriting the standards that our children are to recognize; science and technology are transforming our fantastical excursions into the frontiers of tomorrow into the commonplace of our today; the efficiencies gained in our real life allow one man to do the job of many, and from a place far distant from the place that pays for the end result of that effort; the wealthy are gaining wealth at a rapid pace because of their positioning within the new world economy, and the middle is being pulled out as the jobs go away, and as they tumble to move the poor off of their precarious perches.

We yet have hope! Keep Christ central in your life and He will provide the way; not so much by miracles, but by doing a work in you that will equip you to handle the coming season, and to grab prosperity from the hands of discouragement!

Voting for Obama

Today I stood beneath a tree; its broad branches a canopy over a large grassy courtyard.

Six large men, holding hands, arms extended, would barely circle her broad trunk.

I was in Virginia under such a tree, and I could scarcely avoid asking my question of her, silently:

“Were you here? Were you here when my people trudged past your spindly arms, when this commonwealth held no wealth for those who were common to the shores of Africa?”

“Did you ever feel the sting of the rope that used your stability to suddenly stop the downward lunge of a dark man accused of nothing more than seeking to be a man?”

“Did you ever feel the forced, naked embrace of a mother who simply sought to protect her child; her body shielding you from the blood that the snake drew from her back as he hissed against her time and time again?”

“Did you ever serve as the cathedral for the faith filled prayers of frustrated dreamers?”

“Did you ever hear them dare to whisper their audacious hope that a day such as today would ever come to pass?”

I dared not speak my inquiry aloud, not so much that there were scores of all races and hues around me, neither was I concerned that such words might arouse either emotions or commotions from those who might be

otherwise focused on such a reverential occasion, but more that I dared not speak, so full was my heart.

There, under that tree, a silent ambassador to the past, I was about to do what even I dared not dream. I stood, as did many others in the long line, to vote; to entrust the future of this great nation, dedicated to freedom and equality and bravery, into the hands of the son of a people that were not free, and legally declared unequal, by the cowardly and the unjust who ironically assigned the broad powers to the office he was seeking.

I wondered if they were turning in their graves; or jumping higher in the eternal fires they danced in. Assuredly they weren't smiling down from heaven.

How grateful was I that the rains that threatened kept their promise, and danced between the openings of the dense canopy above. As they fell upon my face, I rejoiced that I now had manly cause to wipe the water that threatened to leap from the mounds of my cheeks. Today I stood beneath a tree and could swear I heard her whisper "Hallelujah!"

No Regrets

If I never sail the ocean, for fear of the raging sea;

Nor pull too hard on life's restraints for fear of breaking free;

If I never listen closely afraid of what I'd hear;

Or seek to hide in yesterdays, to subdue tomorrow's fear;

Or if I never seek the truth for fear of what I'd see;

Or let others' thoughts control my own so they'd think well of me;

Then I'll betray myself, and I'll live my life a lie,

For if I live in fear of life, then from birth I began to die.

So I'll live my life and enjoy it, and praise God for the tests that come;

For I'd rather be sorry for the things I've tried, than regret what I've never
done.

For dreams are far too precious, and my chances much too few

To let my quest of caution's rest keep dreams from coming true.

A Very Present Help

I never would have figured out how special those “Whispers” were, until I figured out just how real God is in the everyday aspects of my life. It’s safe to say that I don’t stand alone in my conclusions, but I will speak from my singular perspective because what He gives me will be different from what He gives you. How He works with or through me will be different from how He interacts with you. His design for my life will be different from His design for yours. He will prosper me in ways that He will not prosper you. He will correct me in ways He will not correct you. He will bless me in ways He may not bless you, but we can stand on this common bridge, that carries us safely over the turbulences of life: He is God Almighty, and He loves and cares for us, and He is ready to step into our lives to whatever degree we ask of Him, and have the faith to believe that He will!

That is why so much of what I write is centered on His place in our lives. He wakes me up to address things so that His message can be delivered. I am here to tell you just how beautiful and wonderful He is, and how we can nurture our relationships through Him and with Him.

I pray you will be blessed as I share what He has given me to proclaim Him and exhort you. I give Him all the praise, the honor, and the glory!

Living in a Basement.

I am living in a basement;
You know, at the bottom of the building.
I didn't always live in such a humble place,
But a strange thing happened on my way to the top.
I prayed that a door would open, and was glad when it did.
It barely opened up a crack, when through that crack I slid.
I prayed for favor for my rent and miraculously received it.
My fortunes changed so suddenly, I scarcely could believe it.
I thought I made my mad money by using my sound mind.
I could not see this subtle trap; my spiritual eyes were blind!
I found a lofty place I liked and I decided to move right in.
I stayed and played until I strayed; I had been seduced by sin!
I envied the elite; their lifestyle so sweet that I sincerely yearned to taste it.
To me their wealth signified that they were truly dignified; I envied wealth
and chased it.
I did things I detested; but I never did confess it. I was penthouse bound.
To them I seemed legit, but I was a cold hypocrite; no integrity could be
found.
I feared being rejected and danced to be accepted; their rhythm was so
controlling.
Subverting who I prayed to, I acted just like they do, but man, I was
rolling!
Decaying like a cavity from all the depravity from all that milk and honey.
I was hangin' and bangin' and whorin' and scorin' and rollin' in the
money;

I dined on thick steaks and cocktails at eight and the necks of some pretty young things.

There were dudes quite dapper and baggy pant rappers, but I never sought The King.

I only waved at God, barely giving a nod, as I passed the stairway to heaven!

Though abundantly blessed, I denied my success was by the Grace that He had given.

I wouldn't use the stairs; with no time to spare, I took the elevator to the top.

Laughing and joking the doors hardly opened; the elevator barely stopped. I didn't notice the floor as I rushed through the door and then took a sudden drop.

My heart pounded to a beat like stampeding feet; the wind whistled in my ears.

Through this pit black as night, devoid of the light, I was filled with crushing fear.

Blind and unseeing I screamed for some being to save me as I fell.

I was tumbling quite madly, scarred and bruised badly, I yelled, and I yelled, and I yelled.

Then out of the darkness came a voice; a voice to avoid if given a choice; this voice most dark and grim.

Not quite a bark; almost a hiss; this voice calling from my abyss; Yes, I was terrified of him.

“Yo bro’ you just fell and headed straight to hell, but, my man, I can assist you.

I'll give you great things; you'll dine with great kings; there'll be none who can resist you.”

Then said that voice most dark and grim, “I’ve watched you run away from Him, so I lured you with my charm.

I made you rush through that door, into the car that had no floor, you fell right into my arms.

In you came! You got caught in my game! Now it’s time to settle the score.

I won’t let you drop, but you will need to stop praying to God anymore.”

Then from deep down inside, my spirit man cried, “Resist him and he will flee.”

Like a mourner’s moan I heard myself groan, “Satan get away from me.”

“Okay! You can go, but surely you know your landing will be your end.

You’ve fallen from grace. He can’t stand your face. He won’t take you back again!”

Then I said, “No more conversation! Here’s my observation; you’re talking about my Father,

The One who dismissed you and those who assist you, so you really needn’t bother!

I’ve opened my eyes and I now realize, the error of my ways

But I am content that if I just repent, He’ll forgive me this very day!

So I’ll repent my fall, but it’s really His call, whether I continue falling.

But I assure you of this, I’m equipped to resist, so be gone. You’re defeated. Stop stalling.”

In a flash he was gone. I was tumbling headlong, as natural forces propelled me.

Then as soon as I prayed, my freefall was stayed as a loving hand upheld me.

“I heard your voice as you made your choice between mammon and My calling.

And now that grace, that your deeds can't erase, has come to ease your falling.”

It hurt when I landed, but I understand it was the crash that comes with climbing.

I brushed myself off. I wheezed and I coughed. This darkness was so confining.

Still limping and sore, I sought the first floor, but could not find the stairs. Had I lost my sight? I could not see the light, and I wondered if any was there.

I wept and I prayed. I was so dismayed that I had fallen so far from the top I felt lost in this place, and here only by Grace, there is no lower place to drop.

So I desperately prayed, that a door be displayed, and when it was I moved right in.

And the cost of my rent was the Son God had sent; who paid my price for sin.

So I found a new pace in a more humble place, not so high and lifted up. Though not an obscenity, it lacked some amenities, but not bitter in my cup.

It took me a while to embrace my lifestyle, the change was so abrupt.

In a room with one view, my choices are few; my only view is up.

I watch haughty fools, or rather their shoes, as they hastily come and go.

They wear sling backs and mules, and brogues fit for fools, all scrambling to and fro.

Like mannequins in pretty clothes, with painted smiles and empty souls, they rush to meet their friends.

Mindless clones they hardly know, meeting in places that they shouldn't go; they rush to meet their ends.

Coming and going without caring or knowing where their old friend had gone.

They seemed unaffected but you had to expect it; they had been so blind for so long.

Sometimes I look up and close my eyes, and see soft clouds floating in sunny skies, and find a sense of peace.

I'm not up there any longer, but inside I'm feeling stronger, and I feel my joy release.

I am back to that place, where resting on Grace, I will never again depart. My soul seeks my Lord. My faith is restored. Hope lives and I take heart. I constantly read and I pray; I laugh and I heal each day; I cry because I feel loved.

Darkness and gloom have fled from my room as God's Son alights like a dove.

Yes, now I am living in a basement. You know; at the bottom of the building,

But it is a lofty place, and I will never again live in abasement.

How Can God Be Everywhere?

“How can God be everywhere?” I’ve heard the skeptics ask.

Even for God, to be everywhere, seems much too great a task.

How can He hear all our prayers and hear us all at the same time?

Do you think that it’s impossible? Well, this will blow your mind.

No doubt you surf the internet to get some info that you need,

It provides the required info, and responds at lightning speed.

And it’s not only you that seek, but there are millions at one time

They’re seeking from all places, these millions of different minds.

And it answers all their questions, and most answers we can trust

How much more can God provide, than men He made from dust?

If God made man He made man’s mind, so it comes as no surprise;

Man’s mind cannot perform like God’s, because God is much more wise.

On Red and 'Pank'

And Shades in Between

The most influential person in our life is our mother. Not to say that fathers don't greatly affect us, because they do, but our mothers are our comfort zone. Any stumbling child will call out one name as soon as they hit the ground; Mommy! It's the way God planned it, for she is the bowl in which we are mixed, the oven in which we are baked, and the platter upon which we are presented. Our life comes through her. Our sustenance comes from her. And our comfort comes in being near her. She is the first person we say that we would die for, and she is the last person we would ever want to hurt. Her voice can soothe us to sleep as well as stop us in our tracks. If we can only afford one gift, it's for her. If there is only one seat in the room, it's for her. If there is only one chocolate left in the box, even under weak protest, it's for her. Her position in our lives, if she is worthy of the name, can't be replaced by anyone else, and we revere her all the days of our life.

I was blessed to live in a house where my mother's mother also lived. They were as different, at that point in their lives, as they were alike. My mother was almost six feet tall; my grandmother was barely five-five. My mother slender; my grandmother had grown a bit stout with age. My mother would take a social drink rarely; my grandmother sipped wine, almost daily. My mother smoked cigarettes; my grand-mother dipped snuff. My mother loved to play Pokeno; my grandmother loved to play the numbers. My mother was great at cooking on top of the stove; my grandmother specialized in baking, (although my mother took over a domain that my grandmother had prepared her to take over). But where they were alike was in their gentle but assertive ways; their sharp minds; their being slow to wrath; their unwillingness to spare the rod; their joy in laughter; their faith in God; their caring for people; their love for family; their encouragement of their children and their grand-children.

I watched as the years turned tomorrows into yesterdays and their roles kind of flipped. As best we can tell, my grand-mother was 100 years old when she died in December of 1985. As she grew weaker, I watched as

my mother willed herself stronger so that she could provide my grandmother nurture and care and honor and respect and love until the day she died.

As long as I can remember, my love for them was so strong that I sought to fulfill their highest hopes for who I would become. In watching them, and experiencing them, I learned to love. In honoring them by my life and by my tributes and my commitment to their legacy of love, I feel that the greatest substance of their prayers have been answered. So it is in their honor that I present my writings to them and about them, and to all mothers as well.



Theresa "Pinky" Fauntroy Cohen
"Pank"



Yvonne Cohen Goode-Satterfield
"Red"

The Discipline of Love

If things go as I hope, I will bury my mother, and she not me.

Not that I fear death and want to outlive her, seeking the milestones of longevity,

But rather for love, that she not suffer what I think would be beyond her ability to bear.

Parents aren't meant to bury children, for that is a disruption in the succession of life.

When her time comes, I'll stand in the sanctuary and glorify my inheritance: not of riches but of wealth,

A wealth born by the wings of prayer and delighted by the discipline of love.

For love is a discipline and not an emotion; a decision not a feeling; a destination not a journey.

She has taught me to love my progeny; to represent God in the lives of my children.

As faithfully as the moon represents the sun and reflects His light in the nighttime sky,

So must I reflect the love of God in the lives of those who are my inheritance from Him.

Many were the nights when the moon was all there was to light my way, But always the morning would dawn as dependably as the sun had set, and the Son would light my world.

When the Son rises I bask there, for He warms and nurtures me; He exposes my path; He unmask my enemy.

Even when clouds come, and bring the rains and winds that sweep signposts from my path; even then He shines.

When I have tumbled from the path and was tricked to think I could climb mountains of loose shale;

When I've rolled through the briars and am covered in thorns and thistles and I am drenched in mud;

Though my skin is scraped away and my garments are torn and the stench of the dung of dogs covers me;

When I stand in my nakedness and in the foulness of my filth, nose running, eyes pussy, feet foul and blistered;

Even then He shines upon me; even then His love warms me; even then He shows me the way.

For His love, His light, depends not upon my condition but His position; and He decided to hang upon His love.

I pray that I might play the moon to His Son that I might light the nights of my children.

That I might proffer to them the same degree of grace that He has so freely proffered to me.

That I might truly practice the discipline of love and not be vexed by the fires of my emotions.

That my children might look at me and know the one they see and know my love will not change.

That they might look at me and see that I love them not for what they do, but simply because of who they are.

That they look at me and see that I represent Him, and great is the honor of the representative of a worthy master.

If things go as I hope, my children will bury me, and me not them.

For so deep is my love that I feel I could not bear to suffer my life without them.

It would be better that way, for such is the design of the succession of life.

And when they stand before the sanctuary, may they lean on the strength
of the One who shines within,
And glorify the Lord for giving them a moon that reflected the Light in
their dark and lonely nights
And that they were left with wealth born on the wings of a thousand
prayers and delighted by the discipline of love.



The Persevering Mother

The one who prays while others sleep
That the Lord would find a way to keep

Her children from the tests of life
Or help them rise above the strife.

On many nights she goes to bed
Hungry but her kids get fed;

The one who walks 4 miles each way,
At the start and close of every day.

She tries to make her home a place
Of peace and love and full of grace.

She smiles a lot and fights back tears.

This test has lasted many years.

The one who finds it hard to rest

With work undone, she gives her best,
And prays some more to God at length

To guide her path; to give her strength;

To do her job; to heed her call;

To lead her children through it all.

The one whose kids when they are grown,

Will never leave her there alone.

They'll not forget what she has done.

She'll bring them through it; every one.

They love her much, and much each other.

God bless the persevering mother.

On Fathers and Sons

The two familial titles mentioned most in the Bible are fathers and sons. They are mentioned more, by far, than any other position within the family (wife, husband, mother, daughter, children, brother, or sister). This is not to imply that God sees, or man should consider, any of these other relationships as less precious, but the Father/Son relationship is very important in understanding God's relationship with Christ, His relationship with mankind, and men's relationships with the world.

The son is constantly positioned as an extension of the father, and the father that gives his son Godly direction, usually produces a son who eventually follows his example. The Bible says "Train up a child in the way he must go, *and when he is old* he will not depart from it." The father has historically been called into account for his family's wellbeing, spiritually and otherwise, so a good father that teaches a son well is apt to see a duplication of his household when he visits his son's. The same teaching reaches the daughter, but her position as a wife and mother was not designed to be the one whose headship influences the family to the same extent that a fully functioning husband and father does.

Unfortunately, we must acknowledge that our current condition, with so many single parent homes, has forced women to fill that fatherly role, or the children tend to suffer because she is ill-equipped to take the position she has not been trained to fill. Just as much of a problem is a dysfunctional or absent father. Such a man, displayed before his children, can cause a devastating effect on his family that can often take generations to overcome.

It is in the Father Son relationship that our investment in our children most directly assures a perpetuation of our likeness and our name to future generations. I love my daughter in a very special way, and I love my son in a special way as well; but I love them differently. I helped mold her. I shaped him. I protected her. I taught him to be a protector. I helped teach her to be a woman like the best I saw in her mother, and her grandmothers, great aunts, aunts, and cousins. I took charge of teaching him to be a better man than me.

It was not until my daughter, Tamika, was born, and I took on the mantle of fatherhood, that I fully understood the degree of love and protection that comes from our Heavenly Father. It was not until my son, Trevor, was born that I understood the need to be used of God to help shape a life to become my replacement in the cycle of life. I prayed he would become all the best of what I had ever hoped to be. From the physical, to the emotional, the intellectual, and the spiritual, I valued the opportunity to make a better “me”.

I have tried to represent The Father in the lives of my children, and it has been in my relationship with my children that I have come to fully appreciate how He deals with me. I have learned how He loves, because that is how I love my children; unconditionally. There may be rifts in the fellowship, but the love and the relationship never change. They might tick me off and lose my favor, but I have never felt merciless toward them. Their actions might not have deserved it, but my graciousness towards them has never been quenched. Even in the midst of all that love, I have never been reluctant to say “No” to their desires when my fatherly wisdom tells me that “Yes” will cause them harm. I want all the best for them: the best of health, great success, comfort in wealth, and an overflowing of joy and happiness, but I can only provide that which I am able to. My Father deals with me in the same way, but He is limitless in His ability to provide, so when I try to imagine how much love drove the Father to send His only Son to save me, I think on the love I have for my children and try to magnify it beyond measure and understand that I still fall short of comprehending the love of God towards us.

Still the father/son relationship is more like the God/mankind relationship than any other. It is the only relationship where one of the primary objectives is to replicate the original. Mankind was made in the image of God. Sons are expected to closely resemble their fathers, and when that happens, there is great joy or, in some cases, lamentation. A good father/son relationship involves almost constant mentoring, with the objective of maximizing the son’s position in this world as a man.

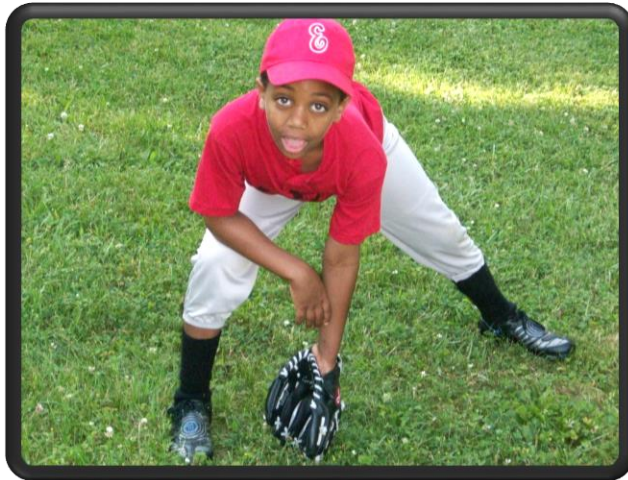
It is amazing how closely my relationship with my son parallels my maturation process in the Lord. I want to share some of the

communication we have had over the years and you'll understand. Trevor was a division one caliber basketball player, so a lot of our communication was flavored by that experience. I will share the period beginning at his high school graduation to his becoming a father. I am also sharing some of my poetry written for my grand-sons. I pray that some young mother raising a son on her own might be able to teach her son through this. I pray that some young father without a good model might gain some insight on becoming a better father through this. I pray that some boy or some young man might get a better insight into manhood through this. I pray that these words encourage hearts and change lives, in the name of Jesus.

I Hope You Run the Bases Well

To My Grandson Christian Otis at 7

I hope you always get a hit when you come up to bat
And when it's time to play the field may you play well at that.
I hope you always play to win, but most of all play fair
And learn if you expect to win, you must faithfully prepare.
I hope that in your life you find, as well as in your games,
That in defeat or victory, you play the game the same.
I hope that every time you play, you always give your best;
And every time a challenge comes, you'll always pass the test.
I hope you heed your coaches well and take their good advice,
And trust in those who earn your trust, but keep your faith in Christ!
Of all the things I wish for you, that wish is number one
I Hope you run life's bases well, and hit a few home runs.



Christian Otis at 7

Potholes

As I was traveling down life's roads, things were running pretty smooth;
All was well within my life; I thought I'd found my groove.
When suddenly I feel a jolt that shakes my very soul
My vehicle shakes. I hit my brakes. I hit a huge pothole.

As I assess the damages, shock gives way to fear.
The road seems so much darker now, and no help seems near.
"I have no way to fix this mess; I have only worn out tools,
How did I miss the danger signs? I've been such a fool!"

Now what once was confidence has given way to doubt,
"I've assessed the situation; it seems there's no way out.
How could I have come this far and moved so well by plan,
To end up here all broken down? How can I start again?"

Suddenly my mind recalled this light I heard about,
They said I'd find one deep inside; if I just sought it out.
Without much thought I found myself dropping to my knees,
"Lord I've never really called on you, but now I'm asking please

"Lord, it seems I'm stuck in danger here in this place so dark and cold,
Everything was going smooth 'til I hit that huge pothole!
I know that you could help me make it through this night.
I have no help; my only hope is to hold onto Your light."

Suddenly there was a light, but not one I could see

Yet I knew that it was there, shining deep inside of me.
I can't begin to tell you of the joy that filled my soul
When I turned my face to Jesus, and gave Him the control.

Without a word He spoke of peace, this light within my soul,
Of how forever He's been there, and will never let me go.
He said I should remember that His word is ever true,
And when I call upon His name there's nothing I can't do.

So I began to build again, with broken worn out tools,
And found the more I sought the light, the more that I could do.
I used a lot of elbow grease, and scraped my hands a bit,
But I held on firmly to His light, and vowed to never quit.

In morning's light I looked upon, what seemed so hard to do,
I stood in awe; the truth sank in; by grace I made it through.
They were the darkest hours, in that cold and lonely time,
But every time I turned that wrench, His hand was guiding mine.

"I let you hit that pothole son to slow you down a bit,
So you could learn to trust in Me, and learn to never quit.
Now you can share with others what happened on this night;
How in your darkest hour you held onto the light.

Bleeding hands are merely signs of what I brought you through,
But the blood you see is mostly mine; I gave my all for you!
There will be other potholes in the middle of the night
But now you know to call My name, and hold on to My light!"

Daddies and Baby Girls

In my introductory chapter on “Fathers and Sons”, I found an abundance of teaching works that I had written over the past 29 years to guide my son and grandsons into manhood and fatherhood. I found the flavor of the poetry and letters I have written to my daughter is very different. With Tamika, I didn’t teach as much as I encouraged; I didn’t guide as much as guard, for such is the nature of the relationship between a father and his daughter. Most of what I wrote to her was too personal to include in this collection. Not in the sense that no one else should read it, but it was specifically applicable to her and had less of a universal appeal.

I was no less attentive to her. In fact, she had me all to herself for five years, and I spent the years after her brother was born assuring her that she had not been displaced in any way by her new brother! I was there when she was born, and it was me who was graced with her first smile. I was there to build castles in the sand, go for long bike rides, teach her to draw, sing her lullabies, teach her to play basketball, attend her basketball and tee-ball and soccer games, take her to choir practice, let her sit though mine, attend her parent teacher nights, help her with her homework, drive her to and from her early teen socials, intimidate her dates when she started dating, taught her to drive, took her to all of her pageant rehearsals, cheered her through her pageants, attended her graduation, walked her down the aisle, attended the birth of both of her sons, and helped her in every way I could as she progressed through life.

I always let her know that she was the more “fragile” vessel and the calling of her father and the men in her life was to protect her and to provide for her. Not that she lacked strength, but that God has made the female more delicate and more intricate because she is the vessel through whom He would send His precious children. Without ever using the words, I sent her this message by the very nature of our relationship. “In the physical realm, I’m your rock. Find a rock like me, but always remember, I will always be your rock.” The message to my son would

have been; “I’ll be your rock until you learn to be a rock and then we’ll be rocks for each other.”

The relationship between a father and a daughter is precious. The value of that relationship often forms a template for her self esteem. It also gives her a measuring stick to determine what a good man should look like. His relationship with his daughter will often determine what she values or disdains in men. It also prepares her to fill in the gaps in helping her mate raise their children.

Men will die for their sons, but they will kill for their daughters! With that being said, it is a relationship built on a very special deep seated love. She will always be his princess, and he will always be her hero.

I pray that these writings will encourage some young woman who lacked a positive “Daddy” image in her home that there is a very special place for her in the heart of God and that He sent a man to demonstrate His love to her. It is unfortunate if that man, for what-ever the reason, was unable to fulfill the role; but God loves her nonetheless. I pray that she absorbs all that I write here and claims it as her own. I pray that this teaches some young man how precious the “more fragile vessel” is in the eyes of God, and how well he should treat her; whether it is his wife or his daughter. I pray that it encourages some father that the love and nurture he provides his daughter will far exceed the value of any gifts he might regret he is unable to provide

A Wedding Prayer for Mika

May Love, joy, peace, and happiness,
And health, and wealth, and great success
Fill your lives with His blessedness.
May your love stay vibrant and true.
May you honor each other in all of your ways,
May your lives be filled with fruitful days
May you smile as you watch your children play
May they love and cherish you.
And let Jesus walk closely with you.
And when troubles come, and know that they will,
Just remember the Cross that stood on that hill
And the blood that was shed there delivers you still
When Jesus is walking with you.
And though dark days come, for come they must,
Remember the One in whom you put your trust,
And that with Him you have more than enough
When Jesus is walking with you.
May you live to see all your dreams come true
Not only your dreams but your children's too
May your triumphs be many and your troubles be few,
Just let Jesus walk closely with you.
When your bodies grow old and your heads have turned gray
And most of us here have long gone our way
Remember this song and recall that I prayed
That the words of this song come true
That through all those years,

Through your hopes and your fears
That your love always felt like new
And that two lives that were wedded together
Grew in grace and got better and better
Because Jesus was walking with you.
May Love, joy, peace, and happiness,
And health, and wealth, and great success
Fill your lives with His blessedness.
May your love stay vibrant and true.
But much more than this,
My deepest wish is that Jesus walks always with you.



Good Daddies

As beautiful as a wispy cloud stained golden by the setting sun ,

As warm as a blush, and as gentle as a summer breeze.

Giggling like a mountain stream dancing over smooth rocks, and frolicking like a butterfly exploring a blue buddleias.

As curious as a kitten and as protective as a momma grizzly.

Craving attention like a collie pup and even more huggable.

Delicate as a crystal goblet and as adaptable as the shoreline to ever changing tides.

How naturally they receive the love and wisdom we pour into them; our beautiful daughters.

How unfortunate the man who runs from the immense joy of guiding and protecting her into womanhood.

How impoverished is the man who has never had her draw his image and entitle her masterpiece; “My Daddy” in crayon.

Despicable is the man who confuses correction and abuse, chastisement and degradation, affection and depravity.

Blessed is the man that cherishes the honor of being a Good Daddy to this precious gift from God.

She will honor you in her being, and your grandchildren will speak of you in terms that honor your name.



Love with Certainty

Love; a word we use so capriciously. We say it about things: “I love sunny days.” We say it about words; “I love that idea.” We say it about our cars, our homes, our favorite vacation spots, our favorite foods, our friends, our fellow man, our family, our children, our mates, and our God. If we take a look at how we feel about any of the above, we have to admit that we feel differently about the “love” we have for each of them. The Greeks use five words to better define the types of love being expressed: *Mania* (obsessive desire to possess), *Eros* (emotional, heated, desire to be with intimately), *Philos* (love towards a friend or relative), *Storgy* (‘motherly love’, parent/child love, based on dependency), and *Agapeo* (unconditional love from one party to another).

I created a term for this section; Love with Certainty. It is that love that often begins as *Eros* and grows into *Philos* (or vice versa), that grows to blend with a measure of *Agape*. It is the stuff that makes us fall in love and want to stay in love. It is the type of love that makes us smile when we see the other coming our way. It is the love that makes it feel like holding them close is the natural thing to do. It is the kind of love that drives us to think of ways to bring happiness into their lives. It is the kind of love that makes us wish we could carry all of their troubles and ease all of their pain. It is the type of love that inspires us to put their desires and needs before our own. It is the type of love that drives us to seek time to be alone with them when words are welcome but not necessary; a touch is not needed but highly desired. It is the love a loving husband has for his loving wife. *Mania* and *Storgy* are not welcomed in this mix, because they can pollute the blend. I pray that the words I have written to my wife will

inspire those who fear drinking from this intoxicating cup to sip expectantly, drink deeply, and savor the sweetness of its nectar. I pray that when you decide to, that you love with certainty.

Coming Home to Peace

Peace comes from knowing that there is a someplace
Where fear has no name and scorn has no address.
A place where peace gives rise to comfort;
And comfort to contentment and contentment to rest;
A place to rest my head and bury my face in warm flesh;
A place where I am not only welcomed but desired;
A place where love flows from the depths of our being;
A place designed to buffer against the world.
A place where passion tutors reason.
It is here that passions are fueled,
And we yield to the joy of our peace.
In our passion we fear neither ecstasy nor tears,
For whatever we share is to be cherished.

Above All Else

Love is timeless and boundless.
Love is gentle and love is kind.
Love is warm and love is sweet.
Love carries the scent of roses,
caresses like a summer breeze,
and soothes like a gentle rain!
Love sings songs and whispers!
It writes letters that melt hearts.

It is sparkling wine and
strawberries and candlelight.
Love floats like goose down.
And soars like an eagle in pursuit.
Love basks like a cat in sunlight,
And frolics like puppies in tall grass.
Love's call is primal like an alpha wolf
And protects like a she bear in May.
Love is steamy and love is hot.
Love is neither a weakness
Nor a strength that makes us weak.
Love is mysterious, yet it enlightens.
Love seeks peace and avoids strife.
It neither walks in fear nor in malice.
Love is commanded but never demanding.
Love is patient and deferential.
Love is pure and love is sacred.
Love is of God; for God is Love.
True love is faithful and everlasting,
and above all else,
Love fights to endure all things!

In Remembrance

I remember the last day I spent with my mother. It was a big family weekend: Christmas party on Saturday and my sister's annual charity banquet on Sunday. She was so full of laughter, and peacemaking, and encouragement, and kindness, and love. How beautiful it was to be her family at Christmas time. At any time really, but Christmas was the time of the year that she shined even more brightly.

How could I know when I hugged her and kissed her good-bye that day, that it would be the last embrace, the last kiss, the last knowing nod, the last good-bye? Within the week, so many were expressing love and support during our hour of sorrow.

There was nothing left unsaid between us. I am not unveiling any depths of feeling or admiration or thankfulness now that I had not expressed to her in life. Thanks be to Jesus that I had the opportunity, from 500 miles away, to tell her I loved her, one more time, within the hour that she took her last breath; at a moment when we were optimistically looking forward to the next UConn basketball game, and Christmas, less than 5 days away.

Life is fragile and very precious, and with great care and tenderness should we treat those lives God has placed within our influence to uphold, protect, and encourage. Those of you who still have your mothers and fathers and grandmothers and grandfathers and aunts and uncles with you, give them an extra measure of love and attention. It will be a gift to them far more precious than anything you could wrap in pretty paper. And if they are no longer here, honor them by honoring their husbands or wives, or fathers or mothers or sisters or brothers or children or grandchildren. Leave no words of love unexpressed or acts of kindness left in a basket of promises.

Unfortunately, life will provide a season for all of us to someday experience this peculiar brand of sadness. Hopefully, when that time comes, you will not be found regretting that which you did not say; that

which you did not do; but rather rejoicing that you loved them as best you could and poured out that love in thought, word, and deed.

Time tries all things. Now fades to then. Today serves its purpose and turns to slip away with yesterday on its shadowy journey. Even tomorrow visits only for a moment in its headlong race to that place in time that is too long ago to remember.

Our babies become elders who keep us alive only in the elusive, memories they convey and the faded photos they serve like so many sugar cookies on a silver tray. Nothing stays the same. Mountain peaks will one day crumble into sand dunes and raging rivers will become nothing more than stains on the rocks they polish as smooth as jewels.

Yet it is important that we remember “those times” that are anchors to our pasts that refrain the ship of time from breaking free and dashing madly into the future without connection to the navigational skills that come from all those things that “those times” taught us.

My prayer is that this section will spark a recollection of a pleasant place in your memories, or inspire you to value the people, places, and pleasures we too often take for granted.

Today is That Tomorrow

I fear that today is that tomorrow that I dreaded yesterday
When I'd look back, and mourn the days that I let slip away.
It seemed like there was so much time. This day seemed so distant,
But I could not restrain those days. They fled me in an instant.
So I warn those just starting out on the road to the setting sun,
Value each moment; cherish each day and work to squander none.
Time like sand in a tight clenched hand will too soon slip away.
And I pray when your tomorrows come, that you not mourn your
yesterdays.

My Big Green Book

Time stands still in my big green book
Filled with love and all the time it took
To assemble my awards and words of praise
With pictures and clippings from yesterdays.
Memories I am glad that my mother kept
Because I was too busy at being adept
At those things she so proudly memorialized,
Her hero viewed through timeless eyes.
Oh how I cherish my big green book,
But more the woman whose love it took.
When my grandchildren see it, I hope they think of,
Not about what I did, but how great was her love!

About the Author

Chuck Goode was born in Hartford, CT, in 1949, into a working class family that put great value on the importance of bringing honor to God and family. His childhood was marked by the conflicts of trying to excel in a neighborhood that was more focused on the physical prowess of a young man than the intellectual. He was successful as he learned to purge bad influences and gain favor with those he respected.



Influenced by Rudyard Kipling’s poem “If”, he learned to ‘walk with kings...’ yet never lost ‘...the common touch.’

Chuck showed skills in art and poetry at an early age. His first published poem, “Books”, was a prize winner in a national poetry contest, but he never saw it again after it was published.

An excellent student and athlete, he received scholarship offers from some of the best universities in the country, but the one he cherished and honored was from his beloved state university; UConn. A serious knee injury in his sophomore year, allowed him only sporadic practice time during his junior and senior campaigns, but he started every game and performed admirably. He carried that same competitive spirit and tenacity into his life after graduation. Over the years, as his relationship with God grew, his writing became more inspired by revelations from The Spirit, and his deep love for his family. Most of his work involves Godly encouragement, and many of his works were birthed in creating greeting cards and tributes for his family.

After his retirement from a career as a sales manager, in 2011, he completed his first novel, “Our Season in Grasmere”, began his own publishing company, Goode God Publishing, and completed this book, “Whispers Just Before Dawn”.