

# INTRODUCTION

## Symbolon

Our stories anchor us. They are integral to who we are and to who we become. They give our lives meaning and make us each human. They connect us. While they strengthen us, inspire us, and encourage us as we traverse this unpredictable journey of life, they can also hinder us and hold us back from truly becoming the people we are meant to be. Our stories matter and telling our stories can break down barriers, open doors, and bring freedom, liberation, and even healing. So why do we have such difficulty in telling our stories?

Perhaps we are silenced because of our pride and egos, or our pain and disappointments, or shame and embarrassment. Maybe we think it's too uncomfortable to be vulnerable like that. Recognizing just how common our stories are, however, frees us to share them. As God's children, God's extensions here on Earth, we ultimately all share the same story, God's story. And when we say yes to that story, we realize that all of our individual stories—regardless of our unique journeys—connect, reflect, and point to that one story.

## BECOMING WHO I AM

This book offers Jesus's story as a real-life mirror to our own stories, ultimately making God's story, our story, and our story, God's story. For nearly all my life, every Sunday at church I, along with millions around the world, recite the Nicene Creed, Jesus's story, as a statement of what we believe. It is a story we profess as the embodiment of our faith. But how do these words penetrate into the messiness of our real lives? How does this story help us to make sense of our own individual stories? The Greek word for creed is *symbolon*, which means half of a broken object which, when placed together with the other half, verifies the bearer's identity, or two halves of a whole. I want to fill my brokenness with Jesus's story. Such that my story becomes Jesus's and Jesus's story becomes mine. I want to wholly live into my identity. I want to become who I am. And that is what this book is about. Aligning our stories with Jesus's story. Telling our stories in such a way that imitates and becomes one with God's Magnum Opus, the ultimate story of grace, mercy, hope, healing, joy, and victory. *Becoming Who I Am* encourages us to embrace and tell our whole stories and to discover our divine capacity for true life transformation and joy!

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I use 8 moments in the Nicene Creed to give new meaning to real-life circumstances of identity, pain, family life, dealing with depression, and healing. When we do this—seek to embody Jesus’s story—we are able to see our life events and experiences differently with the template of Jesus’s story overlaying them. We feel differently—grateful, hopeful, liberated, and empowered, especially when we recognize our own divine potential and capacity—our divine stories. And finally, we act differently, choosing new ways of being in the world and exercising our power to write the endings of our stories, no matter where they began or have taken us.

I recently turned 40, a pivotal age for many. Our bodies begin to talk back to us in rather intriguing ways. We become reflective about where we are in our lives. We ask, is this where I want to be? Is this who I want to be? When I turned 40, I was overwhelmed with gratitude. Gratitude for being alive, because in my darkest moments I wanted to end my life. Gratitude for God’s grace—free and unmerited—for showing me that light can break through the darkness, that joy and healing are possible and that I can experience the miracle of laughter once again. Grateful that each new day is an opportunity to love God more, love myself

## BECOMING WHO I AM

more, and to love others more. To my surprise, turning 40 marked a new beginning for me. I still had questions and doubt, but I did not ask them the same way. The questions were more filled with possibility and excitement and above all, hope.

In the Bible the number 40, from Jesus being sent out into the wilderness for 40 days to the 40 years of God's people roaming the desert, represents periods of trial and revelatory clarity, leading to renewal and revival. In other words, turning 40 is a beginning not an ending! That is a word many of us can hold onto! That is why the book consists of 40 spiritual reflections. Ultimately, however, we can by partnering with God transform each age, each period in our lives to be moments of new beginnings.

Begotten.

Light from Light.

And Was Made Woman.

Suffering Death.

Rising Again.

In Accordance with the Stories.

Giver of Life.

Life of the World to Come.

## Introduction

How will you live your life in the world to come?

Me? I want to become who I am!