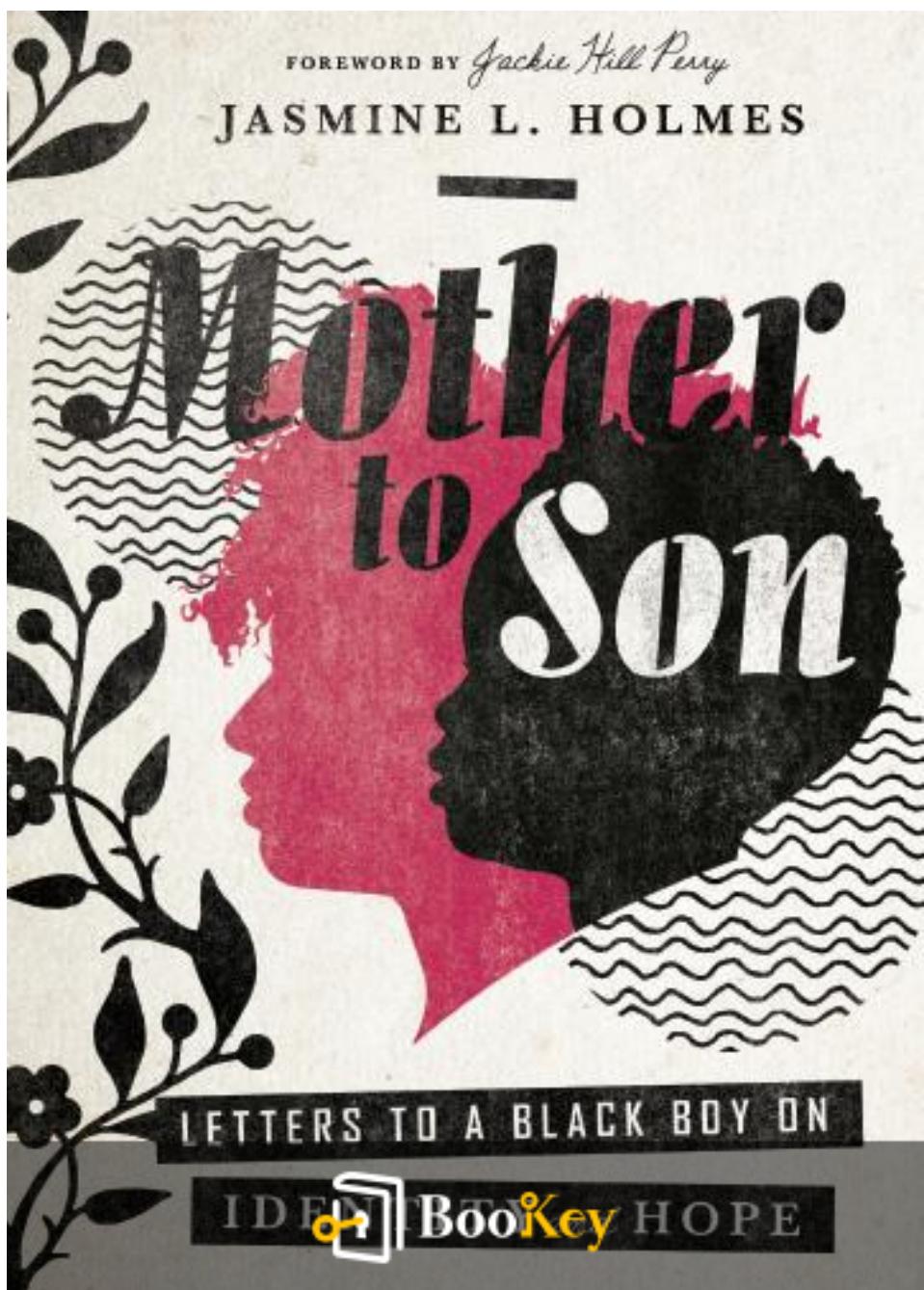


Mother To Son PDF (Limited Copy)

Jasmine L. Holmes



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Mother To Son Summary

Wisdom for Navigating Life's Challenges with Grace.

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About the book

In "Mother to Son," Jasmine L. Holmes poignantly weaves a tapestry of faith and resilience, addressing the struggles and triumphs of motherhood in the tapestry of life. Drawing inspiration from the powerful metaphor of Langston Hughes' poem, Holmes offers a heartfelt letter of encouragement to her own son—and to all mothers raising sons—inviting readers into a deeply personal narrative filled with wisdom, vulnerability, and hope. Through rich storytelling and prayerful reflection, she navigates the complexities of love, hardship, and the unwavering belief in a brighter future, fostering a sense of collective strength and shared experiences that resonate with readers from all walks of life. This book is not just a tribute to the beauty and challenges of motherhood, but a call to embrace the journey with grace and determination, reminding us all that the path may be rough, but it is one worth traveling together.

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About the author

Jasmine L. Holmes is a gifted writer, speaker, and thought leader known for her thoughtful explorations of faith, culture, and identity. With a background rooted in her experiences as a black woman navigating life and faith, Holmes brings a unique perspective to contemporary discussions surrounding race, motherhood, and spirituality. Her engaging prose reflects a deep commitment to connecting personal narratives with broader societal issues, making her a compelling voice in Christian literature. In addition to her writing, Holmes actively contributes to various platforms, where she encourages young women and mothers to lead lives of purpose, resilience, and grace.

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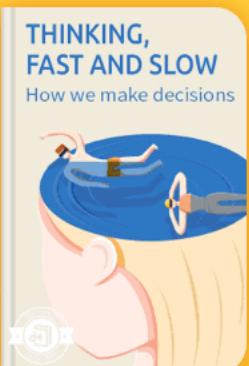
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Summary Content List

Chapter 1: 1. You Are Mine

Chapter 2: 2. You Are God's

Chapter 3: 3. You Are Beautiful

Chapter 4: Interlude: I Didn't Know I Was Beautiful

Chapter 5: 4. You Are American

Chapter 6: Interlude: Ode to Langston

Chapter 7: 5. You Are the Church

Chapter 8: 6. You Are More Than Your Ethnicity

Chapter 9: Interlude: It's Okay to Be Offended

Chapter 10: 7. You Are a Brother

Chapter 11: 8. Be a Good Brother to the Sisters

Chapter 12: 9. Be an Advocate

Chapter 13: Interlude: The Time I Almost Unfollowed Someone
on Twitter

Chapter 14: 10. Be a Bridge

Chapter 15: Interlude: How to Study and How to Talk

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Chapter 16: 11. You Are a Different Story

Chapter 17: Interlude: In Search of Mentorship

Chapter 18: 12. You Are a New Tribe

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Chapter 1 Summary: 1. You Are Mine

Chapter Summary: "You Are Mine"

In the heartfelt opening of this series of letters, a mother expresses her joy and pride in being the mother of her two boys, reflecting on her personal journey and the profound connection she feels with them. She recalls the excitement of discovering she was pregnant with her first child, emphasizing her hope and expectation to have a son. The maternal bond she shares is deepened by her previous experiences with loss, revealing her understanding of motherhood's complexities, including joy intermingled with grief from previous miscarriages.

The mother contemplates what it means to be a parent, particularly focusing on her role in shaping her child's identity. She acknowledges the significance of faith, illustrating how God's acknowledgment and love are essential in forming a child's sense of self. Her reflections on Scripture, particularly the Gospel of John, illuminate the miraculous nature of motherhood and the shared experience of nurturing life, pure dependence, and the humanity of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

She recounts poignant memories, like discovering she was pregnant and the subsequent sadness after suffering a loss. This experience deepened her

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understanding of what it means to be a mother, reshaping her love for her sons into a fiercer, redemptive force. The narrative emphasizes the idea that her children are not just reflections of her but are individuals with their own purposes and destinies.

The mother also acknowledges the legacy of her family, particularly her father—Pappy—a preacher whose influence plays a significant role in her life and perspective on parenting. She expresses her desire for her children to build their unique identities rather than remain in the shadows of their famous lineage.

As her firstborn, her son carries the weight of expectation and the journey of discovery that comes with being the eldest child. Despite being a first-time parent, she embraces the responsibilities of nurturing her son in a way that aligns with biblical principles while recognizing her imperfections on this path.

A crucial aspect of her reflections involves the intersection of race and identity. She highlights the societal challenges her son may face as a Black child, drawing attention to the complexities of navigating the world in a society that often misjudges individuals based on race. Yet, she reinforces that he is not defined by the prejudice he may encounter; rather, his identity stems from God's love and purpose, endowing him with inherent worth.

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Ultimately, this chapter encapsulates a mother's inspiring journey filled with lessons on love, loss, identity, and faith. It establishes a foundation for her sons rooted in divine purpose, legacy, and the profound call to navigate a complicated world with resilience and assurance rooted in their mother's care and God's unwavering love.

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Chapter 2 Summary: 2. You Are God's

In this reflective chapter, a mother shares her tender moments with her young son, showcasing the deep love and care she has for him. She recalls her habit of sneaking into his room at night to check on him, a routine born out of both instinct and affection. Despite him no longer needing to nurse, her habits linger as she cherishes their bond, soaking in precious moments of his childhood. During these quiet times, she fervently prays for him and contemplates the future, pondering who he will become as he grows.

She acknowledges the weight of motherhood, from the practicalities of caring for a toddler to the emotional burden of wanting to nurture and guide him. While she is ever-conscious of his needs, she also finds comfort in her faith, recognizing that God, who created her son, cares for him even more profoundly.

The chapter delves into themes of identity and purpose, emphasizing that the first three chapters of the Bible lay the groundwork for understanding humanity's divine origin. The mother explains that her son is made in God's image, highlighting the intentionality of his creation—both male and female—with the inherent dignity and strength that comes with it. This understanding of identity is crucial, particularly in discussions about race, gender, and humanity.

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The mother poignantly reveals that her son is not just any child; he is a beloved son born into a rich heritage. She describes the joy and wonder of seeing her son interact with an ultrasound of his little brother, evoking memories of his own birth and the divine craftsmanship involved in creating human life. She acknowledges that while he is a "little sinner" inherited from Adam—the first human—his life is beautifully woven into God's larger narrative.

Moreover, she addresses potential struggles her son may face regarding race and identity, expressing hopes that he will embrace his uniqueness as a blessing rather than a burden. She prays that her son's understanding of himself will grow beyond earthly considerations, finding strength and grace in his identity as a child of God. Her closing thoughts are filled with love and a heartfelt acknowledgment that while she wishes to oversee his every moment, he is ultimately cared for by a loving Creator.

In essence, this chapter is an intimate exploration of motherhood, identity, and faith, where the mother shares her prayers and dreams for her son, encouraging him to understand and celebrate who he is within the divine framework of creation. She reinforces that he is truly God's beloved son, crafted with purpose and great love.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Embracing one's identity as a cherished creation of God

Critical Interpretation: In this chapter, you are reminded of the profound significance of understanding your identity, born from divine craftsmanship and purpose. As you navigate your own journey, let the mother's perspective guide you toward embracing your uniqueness as a blessing. Recognize that you are not merely defined by societal molds or struggles, but rather, you are a beloved child of God, woven into a larger narrative that celebrates your inherent dignity. This realization empowers you to face challenges with grace, fostering resilience and confidence that can inspire others to treasure their identities as well.

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Chapter 3 Summary: 3. You Are Beautiful

Chapter Summary: You Are Beautiful

In this heartfelt letter, a mother reflects on the beauty and significance of her son's birth, contrasting it with the painful history of racial violence in America. She begins with a tender recollection of his arrival, an experience filled with wonder and joy, emphasizing that despite his initial appearance, he was the most beautiful sight she had ever seen.

The mother expresses her understanding of the admiration others have for her son, noting instances where his cuteness is highlighted—at daycare, in public settings, and even humorously during awkward encounters with strangers. However, she is acutely aware that not everyone sees him through a mother's lens, especially given the historical context of racial commodification and trauma linked to the Black experience.

She shares a poignant story about Emmett Till, a young Black boy whose life was cut short due to racial violence. Emmett's story resonates deeply with the mother, transforming from a historical narrative into a personal and emotional connection now that she has a son of her own. She reflects on the societal perception of Emmett and others like him—not as beautiful children full of potential, but as threats to a status quo. This stark contrast amplifies

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her fear for her son, who must navigate a world that often views Black boys through a lens of racial prejudice and danger.

The mother articulates her worry not only about the physical threats that could face her son but more broadly about the psychological impact of living in a society that can easily politicize and dehumanize Black lives. Drawing from her own experiences and the tumultuous events surrounding police violence against Black men, she emphasizes the importance of recognizing the humanity behind each life lost to violence, urging her son to remember that he is more than a hashtag or statistic.

She reassures him of his inherent worth, framing his identity as beautiful both because of and beyond his ethnicity. She urges him to embrace the rich heritage that accompanies being a Black boy, insisting that his value extends far beyond societal labels and expectations.

The letter concludes with a powerful declaration of his worth as created in God's image. The mother envisions a future where her son, shaped by love and wisdom, will grow into a remarkable individual who transcends stereotypes, navigating the world with courage and grace. She reminds him that he is precious and loved for who he is—and that this truth is vital in a world that may not always see it.

In closing, the mother conveys a message of hope, strength, and beauty that

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resonates deeply, offering a profound reflection on the complex identity of being a Black boy in America and the love that will guide him through life's challenges.

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Chapter 4: Interlude: I Didn't Know I Was Beautiful

Interlude: Didn't Know I Was Beautiful

In this heartfelt interlude addressed to her son, the author explores the complexities of beauty standards influenced by skin color within her family and culture. She reflects on a legacy of colorism passed down through generations, where lighter skin was historically deemed more beautiful. This narrative is deeply rooted in her family history, beginning with her great-great-grandmother, a mulatto woman who navigated the intricacies of race by passing for white and favoring lighter-skinned grandchildren with gifts, while darker-skinned ones received less. This bias lingered and manifested in extended family dynamics, subtly reinforcing the idea that lighter skin equated to greater beauty.

As the author grew up, she felt the paradox of wanting to embrace her black identity while grappling with comments about her appearance that made her feel different and less beautiful. This internal conflict led to a temporary shame about her skin tone, a sentiment not uncommon amongst people grappling with societal beauty standards. However, she found empowerment in her diverse family, which celebrated the beauty in varying skin tones, including her fair-skinned uncle and her chocolate-hued siblings. Their love and acceptance illuminated her sense of self-worth and beauty.

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A pivotal moment for her was reading Mildred D. Taylor's *Roll of Thunder*, where she learned to appreciate the uniqueness of brown skin described as the color of pecans. This revelation marked the beginning of her journey in embracing her own skin color as a reflection of divine creativity.

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Chapter 5 Summary: 4. You Are American

In this chapter titled "You Are American," the narrator addresses her two-year-old son, reflecting on the significance of representation and identity in America, particularly for Black individuals. The chapter opens with the boy's fascination for "The Snowy Day," a children's story featuring a Black protagonist, Peter, which resonates deeply with both mother and child. The mother reminisces about how this representation shaped her own feelings of identification and belonging, noting that they named the boy's baby brother after the author, Ezra Jack Keats, who created relatable characters for Black children.

She discusses the importance of representation amidst a fractured political landscape, hinting at how some individuals dismiss its importance, yet use it selectively to further their own agendas. The mother recalls her excitement when she voted in the historic election of President Obama, reflecting on the deep emotional significance that moment held for her as a young Black woman despite her disagreement with many of his policies.

The chapter elaborates on the complex dynamics of race and representation in American politics, illustrating how both major parties manipulate issues of race for their benefits. The author underscores that while race can be a social construct, it undeniably matters in the political sphere. As an expression of disparity, she highlights the alarming rates of abortion in the

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Black community, framing it as a significant issue that intertwines with broader systemic injustices.

She navigates the complexities surrounding these topics, urging her son to understand that the conversation about racial disparities and political affiliations should go beyond mere statistics. This complexity is illustrated through contrasting views on historical figures whose legacies are celebrated despite their flaws. By teaching her son to appreciate the multifaceted nature of American history and the significant contributions of Black individuals, she encourages him to forge his identity not solely based on the challenges faced but also the triumphs achieved by his ancestors.

Throughout the chapter, the mother emphasizes the importance of recognizing one's identity in Christ, encouraging her son to transcend simplistic understandings of race and history. She acknowledges the struggles of the past while also celebrating the progress made, instilling a sense of pride and agency in her son's understanding of his heritage. Ultimately, the chapter presents a nuanced view of being both Black and American, reinforcing that the complexities of identity are an integral part of the journey toward self-discovery and understanding.

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Chapter 6 Summary: Interlude: Ode to Langston

Interlude: Ode to Langston

In this heartfelt letter, a mother reflects on the significance behind her son Langston's name, drawing connections to literature, legacy, and identity. The name Langston honors poet Langston Hughes, an influential figure whose work explores the complexities of being Black and American. The mother reveals that her connection to Hughes stems from his ability to articulate the painful realities of racial inequity while holding onto hope for a brighter future.

She reminisces about a conversation with her partner, where he shared that his beloved professor, Dr. Walter Wynn Kenyon, inspired them to choose Langston's name. Dr. Kenyon's legacy continues through his influence on younger generations and is intertwined with their family history. Meanwhile, she is also expecting another child, whose name carries a special significance yet to be revealed.

The mother expresses the beauty of living in Mississippi, where she finds charm in its cultural richness—even in mundane encounters like explaining her son's name to an inquisitive stranger. She connects Hughes's work to her own experiences, noting how his poetry resonates profoundly with her

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understanding of hope, despair, and resilience in the Black experience.

She delves into specific poems, including "I, Too, Sing America," which captures the duality of Black existence in America—aware of social injustices yet hopeful for future recognition and equality. The poem speaks to the historical legacy of Negro spirituals that highlight both suffering and the aspiration for liberation.

Conversely, "Song for a Dark Girl" exposes the harsh realities of racism and violence, illustrating the psychological scars inflicted by historical atrocities like lynching. The mother discusses the juxtaposition of light and darkness in Hughes's work, emphasizing how even amid tragedy, there is a glimmer of hope that mirrors her own beliefs about faith and deliverance.

Using imagery from Hughes's poetry, she likens the suffering of Christ on the cross to the struggles of her ancestors, suggesting that both experiences unify in their shared pain and resilience. This presents a broader reflection on the nature of love and suffering which resonates with her own calls for justice, perseverance, and faith in the face of adversity.

In closing, she advises her son to navigate the complexities of identity and politics with care, prioritizing allegiance to their faith above partisan divides. With this guidance, she instills in him the understanding that, despite the hardships faced as a Black American, there is strength in community, hope

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in love, and a promise of ultimate redemption. Wrapped in her words is a legacy of wisdom and love that she hopes will light his path as he grows.

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Chapter 7 Summary: 5. You Are the Church

Chapter Five Summary: You Are the Church

In a heartfelt letter to her son, the author reflects on her experiences while pregnant in 2016, during an unusually harsh winter in Minneapolis. She paints a vivid picture of balancing family and professional obligations amidst the snow, while hinting at their eventual move to a milder Mississippi climate. This nostalgic backdrop serves to introduce broader themes of faith, race, and justice, as she contemplates the implications of the gospel amid personal and societal struggles.

Drawing on C.S. Lewis's metaphor of Narnia's endless winter, she begins to connect the concept of spiritual renewal with the reality of racial injustice. She contrasts the comforting phrase “just preach the gospel” with the complexities of navigating modern discussions about race and justice. The sentiment often arises from a desire to address social issues without fully engaging in the uncomfortable depths of their implications. Yet, she asserts that while the gospel—a promise of reconciliation through Christ—remains central to faith, it must not be treated as a catch-all solution that oversimplifies the struggle against racism or injustice.

The author highlights that the gospel is not merely news but carries a

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command to make disciples of all nations, according to Jesus' Great Commission. This entails forming relationships grounded in God's teaching, and actively engaging with the world's problems by applying the gospel's implications to every facet of life. She emphasizes that the gospel's transformative power should inform believers' actions beyond proclamation—a call to apply love and grace in tangible ways, even when it challenges comfort zones.

The chapter also delves into the discomfort associated with vulnerability in society and the church, ultimately revealing the complexity of human nature. The expectation to provide quick fixes often leads to avoidance of deeper issues, especially those related to race, identity, and heritage. The author pushes back against the oversimplification of the gospel to silence discussions, pointing out the historical ramifications of such attitudes, exemplified through William Furness's antislavery sermons met with resistance from his congregation.

In tying personal identity to the gospel message, she underscores the importance of patience and empathy in relationships, especially for those who may struggle to understand the nuances of race and justice. Ultimately, she calls for a balanced approach that acknowledges the gospel's overarching promise while engaging with the messiness of human experience and societal implications, encouraging her son to welcome the complexities of life and relationships in light of faith.

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Love, Mama

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The Gospel Calls for Active Engagement

Critical Interpretation: Imagine standing at the intersection of faith and social justice, where the words ‘just preach the gospel’ become a whisper challenged by the realities of your world. This chapter reminds you that faith is not a passive endeavor; it’s a vibrant, dynamic call to action. As you navigate the complexities of life, you learn that understanding and addressing societal issues, especially those related to race and justice, is not just important—it’s essential. You are inspired to step out of your comfort zone, to engage in difficult conversations, and to embody the love and grace that the gospel teaches. By doing so, you become a living testament to your faith, one that transforms not only your life but also the lives of those around you.

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Chapter 8: 6. You Are More Than Your Ethnicity

Chapter Six: You Are More Than Your Ethnicity

In this chapter, a mother reflects on the complex interplay of race, identity, and faith as she prepares her son for the realities of being a Black man in a predominantly white Christian context. She begins by sharing her own experiences growing up as a Black pastor's kid, noting how people often uncomfortable with her skin tone would avoid the topic altogether, ultimately redefining her identity beyond her ethnicity.

The mother emphasizes that while the world will always grapple with racism, it is crucial for Christians not to sidestep the conversation. Just as believers advocate against other societal sins, like misogyny and murder, so too must they address racial injustice. The author argues that cultural constructs of race have historically been used to oppress, and thus, a biblical approach to discussing these issues is essential.

Drawing on Galatians 3:28, she explains Paul's message—that in Christ, all believers stand equally before God—and clarifies that this does not mean ignoring ethnic distinctions. Instead, it's a call to recognize our identities in the context of the larger Christian family. The mother urges her son to appreciate his ethnicity as an integral part of his story rather than an obstacle

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to overcome.

As she speaks to her young son, she encourages him to embrace his skin color, reminding him that being Black does not diminish his worth or his standing before God. She passionately conveys that ethnicity contributes to

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Chapter 9 Summary: Interlude: It's Okay to Be Offended

Interlude: It's Okay to Be Offended

In this interlude, a mother addresses her son about the complexities of navigating racial discussions within predominantly white church communities, especially as a Black young woman. She emphasizes that the call to "just preach the gospel" often overlooks the nuanced struggles experienced by black Americans in such environments.

The mother reflects on her own experiences of feeling marginalized and silenced. She shares that in her efforts to fit in, she often ignored hurtful comments from her peers, believing that to be accepted, she had to suppress her emotions. These comments ranged from innocuous curiosities about her appearance and culture to deeply hurtful remarks questioning her desirability or potential as a partner based on her race.

She conveys that these statements stemmed from ignorance, a cycle perpetuated by both the predominantly white church community and her own reluctance to speak out. The mother explains her motivation for teaching her son about his heritage; it is not to foster a spirit of perpetual offense but to empower him to address ignorance with understanding and courage.

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She argues against the notion that minorities should simply endure discomfort for the sake of majority comfort, recognizing the problematic nature of silencing any one voice in the name of peace. The mother urges her son to understand that while Christians may face suffering, they should always retain their dignity and advocate for necessary change based on truth.

Ultimately, she highlights the importance of having honest dialogues that acknowledge discomfort without descending into accusations or suppressive behaviors. The mother suggests that love and truth should guide these conversations, where everyone is encouraged to voice their feelings and experiences.

In this way, she cultivates a framework for understanding race within the church, advocating for mutual understanding and the commitment to both the gospel and the social implications of its teachings.

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Chapter 10 Summary: 7. You Are a Brother

Chapter Summary: You Are a Brother

In this heartfelt chapter, a mother writes to her first son about the joy and responsibility of brotherhood as they prepare to welcome a new member to their family, Langston. She begins by recounting her son's enthusiastic anticipation when he realized she was pregnant, expressing her hope for the bond between the two brothers to flourish. The mother emphasizes her desire for both her sons to understand the depth of her love and the importance of their familial connection, which extends beyond their immediate family to a much larger spiritual narrative.

As she reflects on her own experiences growing up as the only Black girl in predominantly white spaces, she conveys the nuances of Black identity and culture that her sons will need to navigate. She describes the subtle gestures—like the knowing head nod among Black people—that signify shared identity and community understanding. This insight illustrates to her son that while he may learn about his heritage from his father, he will always be perceived as a Black man in society, a fact that carries both historical weight and cultural connection.

The chapter delves into the concept of the Black family and societal

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challenges, particularly the prevalence of fatherlessness. However, she shines a light on the resilience and strength of Black women who have often taken the lead in nurturing their children and their communities. Through vivid anecdotes about family bonds and the communal upbringing of children, she reinforces the notion of familial love that transcends individual pain and struggles.

She extends the idea of brotherhood beyond blood relations to encompass spiritual ties within the body of Christ, explaining that her son's identity is not only tied to his family by flesh but also linked to a diverse family of faith. Citing the Apostle Paul, she articulates how one's cultural background can be an asset in ministry, enriching the collective experience while promoting unity among believers from various backgrounds.

Furthermore, the mother encourages her son to be a good brother—both in the family and within the church. She underlines the importance of uplifting others through sincere exhortation, emphasizing the need for empathy and integrity in all forms of communication. Exhortation should not be rooted in personal ambition but rather in a genuine desire to connect and support one another in faith.

She warns her son against falling into the traps of division and conflict that can arise in communal spaces, urging him to embody the fruits of the Spirit in all his interactions. Ultimately, she positions him as a mediator, someone

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who fosters understanding and compassion not only among his own kin but across all communities, echoing the example of Jesus, who exemplified love and unity.

In conclusion, the mother's letter serves as both a personal reflection on family and a broader call to action for her son to understand and embrace the complexities of identity, brotherhood, and community with grace and compassion.

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Chapter 11 Summary: 8. Be a Good Brother to the Sisters

In this heartfelt chapter titled "Be a Good Brother to the Sisters," a mother shares invaluable wisdom with her son about the experiences of black women in society, particularly within the evangelical community. She begins by reflecting on the significance of the term "sister" as used among black communities—a term embodying familial and communal bonds. Her husband humorously notes her tendency to compliment other black women, leading her to admit that she believes in starting a revolution of affirmation and support for black women.

She draws attention to the unique challenges faced by black women compared to black men, emphasizing the importance of her son being a source of encouragement and affirmation in their lives. This notion is exemplified by a friend's social media post that asked black men to share positive, non-physical attributes about black women. While some responses were affirmative, many others displayed confusion regarding the necessity of such a conversation, underscored by a societal tendency to overlook the importance of affirming black womanhood.

To understand these complexities, the mother provides historical context, discussing how black bodies were commodified during slavery. She references Joel McDurmon's work, which highlights the inequities in the

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status of children born to black slaves, revealing how these injustices have continued to impact perceptions of black women. After slavery, the perception of black women shifted, with them often being oversexualized and devalued in contrast to the purity valued in white femininity.

Through personal anecdotes, she illustrates the residue of this historical devaluation and the ignorance surrounding racial issues that many people experience. She acknowledges that discussions about race often elicit simplistic responses, emphasizing the need to engage deeply with the social constructs surrounding race instead of dismissing them with trite phrases.

The mother concludes by urging her son to embody a supportive and loving demeanor toward young, black women, especially those who may feel lonely in their faith journeys. She calls for a change in the narrative that often portrays black women negatively, urging her son to recognize their strength, loyalty, and protective nature while also acknowledging the historical factors that have shaped these traits.

Ultimately, this chapter serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of affirming black womanhood within the church and society at large, framing the conversation in a way that ties personal stories to larger historical truths, all while centered in the love of Christ. The mother aims to empower her son to play a crucial role in nurturing the dignity and worth of black women, beckoning him to be a positive force in their lives as he grows into

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adulthood.

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Chapter 12: 9. Be an Advocate

Chapter Nine: Be an Advocate

Dear Son,

The day you were born was a profoundly beautiful moment in my life, igniting not only our bond but also my journey toward self-advocacy. As your mother, I learned the importance of standing up for myself when I realized that black women face a staggering risk during childbirth—300 times more likely to die than women of other ethnicities, regardless of socioeconomic status. This awakening compelled me to leave my original OB and seek a supportive birth environment, ultimately leading to the joyous experience of your arrival.

Upon moving to Mississippi—a state notorious for its high C-section rates and alarming statistics on maternal mortality among black mothers—I recognized that my journey of advocacy was not over. I had to continue advocating not just for myself, but for you as well. Through a chance encounter in a coffee shop, I connected with black healthcare professionals passionate about supporting black mothers. This encounter led me to a black female obstetrician who understands and prioritizes our needs, further deepening my commitment to advocacy.

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As I share this with you, I hope you grasp that your path toward self-advocacy may differ from mine. Regardless, it is crucial to equip you to stand confidently for yourself and others.

Be More Than Angry

You are likely familiar with the stereotype of the "angry black woman," and while the "angry black man" stereotype is less recognized, it still exists. Growing up, I observed how my father faced suspicion purely based on his appearance. As you grow, you will be seen not just for your character, but also for your stature and the color of your skin. In a world that has seen young black boys tragically mistaken for threats, I encourage you to be fearless in expressing your emotions and asserting your needs.

I know the burden of being perceived as "difficult" or "dramatic," especially in medical settings where biases often undermine our pain. I've been in labor, apologizing for expressing my agony due to the fear of being misunderstood. I worry you might inherit this tendency to downplay your emotions. However, I want you to understand that advocating for yourself, even in discomfort, is vital. You are called to aspire to reconciliation—navigating relationships with honesty and courage while also fighting for justice, even when it feels uncomfortable.

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You Matter

Navigating self-advocacy can be daunting, particularly when in the minority. The beauty industry illustrates this well: black women wield significant buying power but remain underrepresented. The frustration I experience while searching for makeup that matches my skin tone exemplifies a broader issue of invisibility.

While you may not face the same struggles in finding your shade, you will likely find yourself one of very few in predominantly white spaces. Embrace the challenge of speaking up for yourself, even if it feels awkward or if you fear what others might think. Our faith teaches us to bear one another's burdens—acting on this call might mean voicing your feelings and experiences, however uncomfortable.

You Will Be Misunderstood

As you navigate life, be prepared to encounter people who will not seek to understand your experience. Many will expect you to sacrifice your needs for their comfort, often overlooking the privileges they take for granted. Some may interpret your journey as complaining rather than authentic self-advocacy, shaming you into silence.

You will endure heartache as some fail to comprehend your perspective, but

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know that I will be here to support and comfort you through those wounds. Just as I tended to your first scrape with a comforting kiss, I'll assist you in the more profound struggles of life. Your wounds may come not just from ill intentions but from misunderstandings fostered by privilege.

Remember, my beautiful brown-skinned boy, falling and hurting is part of growth. I encourage you to advocate for yourself earnestly, armed with the wisdom that your heavenly Father is always by your side, healing you and guiding those around you to understand.

With love,

Mama

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Finish Your Reading Challenge, Donate Books to African Children.

The Concept



This book donation activity is rolling out together with Books For Africa. We release this project because we share the same belief as BFA: For many children in Africa, the gift of books truly is a gift of hope.

The Rule



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Donate to Africa

Your learning not only brings knowledge but also allows you to earn points for charitable causes! For every 100 points you earn, a book will be donated to Africa.

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Chapter 13 Summary: Interlude: The Time I Almost Unfollowed Someone on Twitter

In the interlude letter titled "The Time I Almost Unfollowed Someone on Twitter," the author reflects on a significant social media encounter that illustrates the complexity of human interactions and the challenge of navigating differing opinions, particularly on sensitive topics like race.

The author begins by addressing their son and providing context about Twitter's current relevance, describing it as a platform where diverse opinions converge in real-time, fostering immediate reactions. Just days before, the author had begun following a new acquaintance whose views they had found compelling—until she retweeted a provocative statement about racism that stirred deep feelings.

The original tweet, made by a white man, asserted that white people cannot be victims of racism, explaining that systemic racism is built into societal structures that favor white individuals. This comment, while contentious, drew a retweet from the woman, who used it as a platform to share her own painful experiences, claiming a form of victimhood she believed applied universally, regardless of race. This sparked a moment of internal conflict in the author, who nearly unfollowed her due to her dismissive stance and emotionally charged response.

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However, the author chose to pause and reflect, realizing the complexity of emotional reactions and the importance of understanding personal histories behind such statements. They acknowledged that each person, including themselves and the woman, views the world through a lens colored by past traumas and experiences, which can cloud rational discourse.

This reflection led the author to a vital conclusion: rather than viewing the woman as a misguided adversary, they chose to see her as a fellow human being, emphasizing empathy over division. They decided not to unfollow her, recognizing that their future interactions might still be challenging but appreciating the victory of resisting impulsive reactions in this moment.

Ultimately, the author imparts valuable lessons to their son on the importance of separating people from their ideas, being uncompromisingly truthful while also compassionate, and recognizing the shared humanity in others, even amid ideological clashes. They encourage him to approach discussions with love and understanding, cautioning against the superficiality found in social media discourse. Conclusively, the author suggests that stepping back from platforms like Twitter might be beneficial for maintaining deeper connections and perspectives.

Through this letter, the author not only shares a personal experience but also instills a broader understanding of communication, empathy, and the complexities of human interaction in a digital age.

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Chapter 14 Summary: 10. Be a Bridge

Chapter Summary: Dear Son

In this heartfelt letter, the narrator shares a foundational memory from her childhood to illustrate the challenges of navigating race and identity. At just four years old, she faced bullying in a predominantly white daycare, where she was subjected to racial slurs and felt shame for who she was—a painful experience compounded by the absence of support from her caregivers at first. However, when the bullying escalated and resulted in a physical injury, her grandmother's fierce defense marked a turning point. This dramatic shift highlighted the unwavering love of family and cemented the narrator's belief in standing against injustice—lessons she wishes to pass on to her son.

The letter aims to serve as a guide on discussing complex issues of race and ethnicity, emphasizing the importance of dialogue with those who are willing to listen and engage. It advocates for being a "bridge" in these conversations rather than succumbing to the divisive nature of modern discourse, especially online.

Key Principles

1. Be Transcendent The narrator defines her family as striving for a

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transcendent perspective, seeking to rise above societal divisions and speak to the shared truths in faith rather than getting lost in polarizing debates. She encourages her son to embrace complexity and promote unity, valuing the gospel above social cliques and divisions.

2. Know When to Walk Away: Envisioning conversation as a potential beast similar to the character in "Beauty and the Beast," she warns against succumbing to mob mentality, particularly online. Instead, she urges her son to maintain compassion and discernment, recognizing when the effort to engage is futile and when it is best to step away for the sake of peace.

3. Don't Fear the Gray: The narrator confronts the limitations of black-and-white thinking often prevalent in discussions about race. While certain aspects of racism are clear-cut, navigating racial dynamics requires a nuanced approach that considers individual experiences and societal complexities. She encourages empathy towards all perspectives, even those that differ from one's own, and promotes a love that fosters understanding.

4. Be Willing to Learn: The importance of learning and growing in knowledge is emphasized. The narrator intends for her son to cultivate a love for reading and understanding historical context to deepen his perspective on race and promote meaningful dialogue. She reinforces that the truth of the gospel complements socio-historical understanding, enhancing one's ability to share it effectively.

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5. Operate with Love: A poignant reminder frames the narrative—true dialogue about race must be steeped in love, as articulated in 1 Corinthians 13:1. The narrator acknowledges that criticisms and labels will come, but encourages her son to stay grounded in love, which is essential for building bridges in divisive conversations.

In conclusion, the letter encapsulates a mother's desire to equip her son with vital skills for addressing difficult discussions about race and identity, underscoring the values of love, empathy, and the pursuit of truth. Ultimately, she reassures him of her unwavering support and commitment to defend him against the ugliness he may encounter, just as her grandmother did for her.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Operate with Love

Critical Interpretation: Imagine standing at the center of a heated discussion, where tensions run high and words are exchanged with a sharp edge. What if, in that moment, you chose to infuse the conversation with love? Embracing the key principle of operating from a place of love enables you to approach challenging dialogues about race and identity with grace and understanding, rather than defensiveness or anger. It inspires you to listen more deeply, to empathize with differing viewpoints, and to build bridges rather than walls. Through love, you become a beacon of hope in divisive times, reminding others of our shared humanity and the power of compassion in fostering meaningful connection.

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Chapter 15 Summary: Interlude: How to Study and How to Talk

In the *Interlude: How to Study and How to Talk*, a mother shares a heartfelt letter to her son, focusing on the importance of education and meaningful dialogue about race and identity, particularly in evangelical settings. She reflects on her own experiences of carrying her baby brother and parallels this journey to the need for deeper understanding in discussions surrounding race. She emphasizes that while faith can be a simple understanding of Christ, navigating the complexities of race in society requires effort and learning.

Learning as a Lifelong Journey

The mother encourages her son to be passionate about acquiring knowledge, particularly about racial history. Excited about recent learnings, she cites her own enthusiasm from a class on eugenics and how it spurred rich discussions. She warns against merely learning enough to win debates and instead advocates for a more comprehensive understanding that allows for productive conversation—learning not as a tool for argument's sake but as a means of understanding diverse perspectives.

Engaging in Productive Conversations

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She provides practical guidelines for engagement. For instance, redefining common ideologies instead of resorting to labels that close down discourse is crucial. She recalls her own experiences of labeling people and argues against this tendency, advocating instead for nuanced discussions that delve deeper into the meanings behind terms like "feminism" and "cultural Marxism." The mother stresses that learning should challenge preconceived ideas, enrich faith, and promote personal growth rather than just reaffirming existing beliefs.

Building Connections Through Stories

The narrative also highlights the significance of personal storytelling. By sharing her experiences as a Black woman in predominantly white evangelical spaces, she hopes to encourage empathy and understanding. Her identity enriches her story but does not solely define her faith. She stresses the responsibility brothers and sisters in Christ have to bear each other's burdens, which requires openness and attentiveness to unfamiliar stories.

Encouraging Authenticity

The mother advises against approaching conversations as competition or spaces for contradiction. This perspective can impede genuine learning and relationship-building. Instead, she encourages spotting hypocrisy and reading with charity, pointing out that discussions about race should be

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approached with humility and honesty. Acknowledging the complexities of these conversations, she reminds her son to avoid vilifying others based on ideological differences.

Staying Grounded in the Gospel

Finally, she cautions against aligning with groups that shift their stances based on convenience, urging her son to be mindful of the gospel's centrality in navigating these discussions. While acknowledging personal and communal struggles, she emphasizes the importance of compassion and understanding in discussing sensitive topics, avoiding the pitfalls of judgment based on identity or circumstance.

In summary, the letter encapsulates a mother's desire for her son to embrace lifelong learning, engage meaningfully with diverse perspectives, and navigate the complexities of race and identity through the lens of faith and compassion.

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Chapter 16: 11. You Are a Different Story

Chapter Summary: You Are a Different Story

In a heartfelt letter to her son, the narrator reflects on her early misconceptions about Africa, particularly influenced by limited representation and stereotypes perpetuated during her upbringing. During a conversation with her father, she reveals her anxiety about visiting Zambia, highlighting the stark contrast between his excitement for ancestral discovery and her fearful perception of the continent as a place filled with danger and shame. She candidly admits her ignorance, recognizing that her education had neglected the richness of Africa's histories and cultures, a gap that has begun to be filled in her siblings' learning.

The narrator expresses admiration for author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and her compelling TED Talk, "The Danger of a Single Story," which resonates with her own experiences of encountering simplistic narratives about race and identity. The chapter unveils the complexities of tribalism—identifying groups and aligning with them based on political, ideological, or theological beliefs. The author notes how this divisiveness impacts conversations and understanding, often reducing individuals to stereotypes rather than acknowledging their unique complexities.

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Through lessons on the limitations of labels and the power of diverse narratives, the narrator encourages her son to embrace different perspectives. She emphasizes the importance of understanding the stories behind statistics, urging him to define his identity by Christ's love rather than by societal expectations. She advocates for a broad exploration of voices in literature

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- Boots Riley

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Chapter 17 Summary: Interlude: In Search of Mentorship

Interlude: In Search of Mentorship

In this deeply reflective interlude, a mother shares her thoughts with her son about mentorship and the complexities of racial identity in America. She recalls a pivotal conversation with her own mentor, a learned woman who challenged her views on race and history—yet left her feeling silenced rather than supported. The mother highlights the importance of engaging in uncomfortable dialogues, especially regarding race, and the necessity for mentors to not only challenge but also to guide and uplift.

She contrasts her past experience with that of her relationship with her own father, affectionately referred to as "Pappy." While grappling with the legacy of his larger-than-life persona, she expresses both love and the potential challenges that arise from living in his shadow. The mother reflects on how Pappy has instilled in her the need to think critically and independently—not merely to echo his beliefs but to understand the nuanced complexities of those beliefs.

As she contemplates raising her son under Pappy's influence, she acknowledges the expectation that he may be associated with his

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grandfather's prominent name. Yet, she hopes for her son to develop his own identity, one that builds upon the principles of faith, critical thinking, and the pursuit of wisdom from various mentors, not just family.

The mother emphasizes her commitment to challenge her son lovingly while respecting his individual journey. She expresses a prayerful hope that her son finds mentors who will walk alongside him in the difficult moments of his life, helping him navigate the complexities of faith and ideology. In the end, her longing is that he prioritizes a biblical foundation for his beliefs, no matter the paths he chooses—whether it be in faith practices, political affiliations, or career pursuits.

Through this letter, the mother conveys the vital role of mentorship in finding one's voice amid historical and cultural narratives, encouraging her son to soar independently while deeply rooted in faith.

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Chapter 18 Summary: 12. You Are a New Tribe

Chapter Twelve: You Are a New Tribe

In this heartfelt letter to her son, the narrator reflects on her own upbringing and the struggles she faced with people-pleasing and the challenges of standing up for herself in a world filled with prejudice. As a child, she grappled with the societal pressures to conform and the fear of rejection, often at the cost of her self-respect and emotional well-being. Her experiences, from receiving hurtful comments about her appearance to feeling insufficiently angry in situations where she should have been, laid the groundwork for her journey toward self-discovery and empowerment.

The narrator shares that it was only after marrying her husband that she began to recognize her true self—one who is principled and assertive, rather than simply accommodating. This transformation helped her uncover a hidden strength, along with a fiery temper that had been suppressed during her earlier years. She realizes now that her inclination toward passivity was not merely a personality quirk, but a symptom of her greater desire for acceptance.

The chapter delves into the complexities of anger from a Christian perspective, noting that Jesus and biblical figures like Paul and Nathan

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expressed righteous anger against wrongdoing. The narrator emphasizes that while it is valid to feel anger, it should be handled with care—encouraging her son to express his feelings appropriately rather than suppressing them out of a desire for acceptance. She shares her frustrations about the cultural expectations placed on her as a black woman and the pressure she felt to "perform" in a manner that countered these expectations, often at the expense of her emotional health.

As a mother, she wishes to instill in her son the value of integrity over mere acceptance. She recognizes that while being part of a group can offer comfort, it should never come at the cost of one's truth or relationships. She stresses the importance of addressing wrongs in a loving manner and encourages him not to fear losing friendships over speaking his mind. Instead, she wants him to cultivate the courage to stand firm in his beliefs and to seek relationships that promote mutual respect and authenticity without the burden of unspoken resentment.

In the playful moments shared between mother and son, she celebrates his tender-hearted nature, urging him to maintain that kindness even in the face of adversity or misunderstanding. The relationship with Christ serves as the ultimate model for love, acceptance, and the handling of emotions—a reminder that even in disagreement, one can express thoughts with grace and humility.

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The chapter concludes with a call to form a new tribe—one rooted in biblical truths that embrace unity, humility, and love, transcending societal divisions. As the narrator pens her advice for her son, she reflects on the difficult yet essential journey of building a community that honors truth and compassion while striving for growth and understanding amidst the complexities of the modern world. This letter serves as both a guide and a source of encouragement for her son as he navigates relationships and the challenges of life.

Ultimately, she hopes that he will embrace the idea that vulnerability, honesty, and integrity are the pillars of true community, and that finding his place within a loving and truth-seeking tribe will aid him tremendously as he matures.

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