

# *Angel* (Abridged)

ASK BROKEN, BRUISED, and set-aside beings or objects to see themselves and their surroundings in a new light. Ask yourself to do the same for yourself but be gracious because it's difficult.

To help find grace, reimagine the story of humanity's downfall.

Come back to now and see whether it's easier to believe that renewal is possible.

Change starts with compassion which commences with comprehension which comes by allowing what affects another to affect us too. At least, that's how this book began. For me, I needed to come to a place of deep feeling before I could have compassion and, while yes - the original goal was sidetracked - I found a purpose far beyond the original goal.

Put aside expectations and let the feelings that arise - loneliness, anger, distrust, and isolation lead to vulnerable connection VS. vice versa.

Cry out to the God that you're not sure you can believe since He has been portrayed as cruel. When ready to give up, try one more time because, yes - life is hard - but God has His people all over the place searching for people stuck in the snow.

Once found, you can grow into a searcher.

He's hidden treasures for you to find throughout His creation if only we can listen long enough to hear Him tell us where they might be found.

Continue to call out clearly with controlled, constrained confidence because tons of things are completely immoral and change is crucial but be careful to not be like those speaking nonsense for the sake of speaking, panicking, and/or causing chaos.

Still, there should be an urgency to our actions. We can't forget the good but should bring that too into how we, as a group, address the bad.

Curiosity and the desire to be connected to something, someone, deeper than ourselves is growing, but the interest is scared and fragile - easily dismantled and discouraged if an interest is proved to be like any other passing fad.

In a dream, a group gathered because they sensed the Spirit of the Lord, but they scattered when someone started preaching. Preaching has its place but if it drowns out what the Lord is trying to do, it can be counter-productive as it interferes with God speaking directly.

We should share the Lord's ache when He is shut down and replaced with a counterfeit.

My heart aches as I grieve that happening in a big way.

Don't be surprised - I've been alluding to it throughout, but the Church at large isn't holding to the Biblical teaching that Jesus is the Savior of the world and will win all of us over.

Don't fall back on straw men arguments but hear what I'm really saying.

The gospel as it has been predominantly taught for 1500 years is NOT the good news originally proclaimed and while there are historical and biblical proofs to go into to back that up, it's primarily a heart issue. The heart of God is for our good because He is good. He has already held us up as good because our future is His immediate and our eventually is His definitely. We see and fight our own and our neighbors' "SIXTH DAY" selves - the imperfect wrecks we wrestle with regularly - but our Savior who isn't stuck in time can see us as we will be in the "SEVENTH DAY" when all is restored. We're not given a free pass though. Instead, a Christian is one who dies to

themselves early and experiences Day Seven rest in the soul, even while the body exists, and suffers, in Day Six. Our souls don't have the skill to control our body so all must hand over control.

Some will die first so grapple with the unfairness of feeling like another is cheating their way into grace but find that that perspective is like Jonah relinquishing himself to ruin - letting himself be overcome by anger and bitterness - even after singing of the Lord's salvation. Weigh in on whether we're babies or adults in comparison to God, criminals or patients. Wonder whether you are me as a sixteen year old keeping the counselor on a backpacking trip from resting by the fire because I wouldn't descend a mountain in the straight-forward easy way like everyone else.

Some may argue that believing Christ stays on the mountain until even the slowest, most stubborn straggler is wooed down insults those who died defending the Christian camp, but I know myself well enough to know that the only hope I'd have of giving grace to someone persecuting me would be if God's heart took over mine and if God's heart isn't looking forward to when He wins someone over in the end, I'd have no chance at wanting that outcome for torturers.

We have to practice letting God take over our hearts, change the atmosphere, shift our perspectives; and how we react under extreme stress will reveal our hearts because whatever attitudes, belief systems, and concerns dominate our easy days will spill out when under stress, and trauma will undermine transformations that stop at the surface.

Do a group's stated convictions stop at the surface and if so, why and at what cost? When should one go against the group? Why do some go along but still rejoice when challenged?

We are drawn to groups because we need them so it's ok to want to rub shoulders with passionate people (*SUCH AS DURING THE ASBURY OUTPOURING*). Casual observers won't understand, but desperate people coming together is powerful and desperation for Abba moreso.

Desperation creates an urgency that allows one to savor even scraps of insight whereas more information often results in more arguing and less peace. Deep dives into the text should be fun but if we depend upon them for peace - especially after a death - they can be very painful.

Death is excruciating and the Church's incomplete hope has compounded the injuries.

Even if we do accept that death will eventually be destroyed, we are still currently destroying ourselves and each other and, while we should seek to rise up to speak against the wrongs we face, not every wrong is ours to address outright. Wanting to weigh in on every conflict can derail actual progress in the areas we can control. Instead of condensing our thoughts into a group's talking points/parodies, we should refrain from giving an immediate opinion on everything.

Christ is not on our side. We are supposed to be on His, but that takes humility as we constantly realign our position as His is revealed. I pray that we'd relinquish "*OUR SIDE*" and run towards the Savior's side, where we'd see a real revival that is rooted in a self and societal awareness that is painful but restorative because it results in repentance - the switching of tactics so that standards and tendencies can shift towards ones that serve instead of sabotage the supposed terminus. To carry the cross He's bidding us to carry, we may have to drop faulty beliefs so there's space in our souls for the breakthrough He's bidding to bring us into, but be careful.

Only when we stop trying to bully our own and others' boats full of blasphemous water back into rightness can we begin to replace our gunk with God's presence, a cupful at a time.

Only then can we really worship with new songs in new spaces that we wouldn't have sought out without coaxing. As we abandon all that we've built up, may we bravely allow Abba to instead send us into new places of influence so the world can taste the redemption to come.