

*Papa God
and Ashley*

It's a Relationship

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ASHLEY SCHROEDER



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Whoever humbles himself like this child
is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
Matthew 18:4 ESV

Dedication

Thank you, Papa God, for entrusting me with these encounters with You so that I can share You with others who want to know You on a deeper level through Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior.

I also dedicate this book to a group of people who are very important to me.

First are my parents. Thank you for loving me through all of life's ups and downs and for teaching me the Word of God. The best gift you have ever given me is the gift of knowing our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Hey, Dad! Thanks for being like the father waiting on the hill for me when I needed to come home to Papa God. Mom, thank you for your wonderful love for people and the exceedingly amazing gift of personality that comes from God. You are a truly talented woman, and you light up the room everywhere you go!

I also dedicate this book to my husband, Kurt, and our girls, Rachael and Reagan. My heartfelt prayer for you is that this wisdom and relationship with Papa God be passed down generation to generation. Girls, you are my joy and my heart. I am so proud of you both. Thank you, Kurt, for your love and support. You have the most giving heart,

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and I admire that about you. I am truly blessed that you are my husband, and I love you.

Thank you, Papa and Grandmomma Mashburn for being such wonderful grandparents. I treasure you both with all my heart.

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I want to acknowledge some amazing people, the first two being Pastor Debra Kaplan with Branch of Christ Ministries and Deborah Yoerg with Crowns for Christ Ministries. These two ladies have helped shape me into the godly woman I am today. I am honored to walk beside you both into our calling for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May we finish our race and hear those words, “Good and faithful servant, well done!”

To Bonita Sawyer and Victoria Oberle: You are amazing women of God who have been instrumental in kick-starting the path Papa God has called me to. Wow! What a journey!

Martha Bootle and Author Kathy Jones, thank you for your wisdom and direction in writing this book. I appreciate you both and love your hearts for Papa God and His children.

To the Crowns for Christ team, Deborah Yoerg, Nikki Robles, Sonia Diaz, Madeline Hernandez and Tina Santiago-Betancourt: I am so glad to walk beside you on this amazing journey. May God bless our paths as we step out to rise and S.O.A.R on wings like eagles! (Isa. 40:31). The gift and message from Papa God in return to these amazing women of God is this:

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Still, other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown. When he said this, he called out, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”

His disciples asked him what this parable meant. He said, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, ‘though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.’ This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God.” (Luke 8:8–11)

Biography

Ashley Schroeder is married to the love of her life, Kurt Schroeder. Kurt and Ashley have two beautiful daughters. Ashley started out in sales in 1993 and today owns her own business.

In March of 2015, Ashley started Papa God and Ashley, teaching people how to have a relationship with God, whom Ashley calls, Papa God. Motivated by her Facebook blog, “Papa God and Ashley Devotionals” and through the dreams and visions God gives her, most of these stories were prompted by her quiet time with God in His Word.

Ashley is a motivational speaker, enthusiastic author, and advocate for abused and abandoned children for Holt International, a Christian organization dedicated to finding families for the world’s orphaned and abandoned children. The Lord put it on Ashley’s heart, through verses like James 1:27, to raise awareness to help these children through sponsorships that provide a healthy and loving environment, proper nutrition, education and medical care.

Ashley is a natural-born speaker with an encouraging approach on who we are to Christ and as children of the King! Ashley says, “If He

is the King and He is our Creator, then that makes us royalty in the kingdom of God” (See 1 Peter 2:9.)

Her inspiring stories will help you realize who you are in Christ Jesus and know that as a son or daughter of Christ, you can overcome anything that comes against you. You will rise above who the world says you are and become a true son or daughter of the King of all kings!

Please visit www.PapaGodandAshley.com to find out more about Ashley’s ministry.

To learn more about adoption and sponsorship opportunities with Holt International, please go to: www.holtinternational.org.

Endorsements

Ashley is a loyal ambassador for Holt International that serves as a bridge of hope to the orphaned and vulnerable children of the world while they wait for their forever family. In this book, she brilliantly shares the biblical challenge for choosing life for the unborn child and also shares the alternative answer for abortion. Thousands of loving couples are praying for a child to adopt, love and care for without reservation—a compelling answer and hope for those who want and need it the most.

Kris Thompson
Executive Director, Holt International Children's Services

Papa God and Ashley: It's a Relationship is a book that will warm your heart. Ashley's wisdom and encouragement through these pages will captivate your heart to go deeper in your walk with the Lord. It is a beautiful opportunity to grow closer to the One who created you. Ashley is a dynamic speaker and author who will bless you with her humility and her love for *Papa God*. Be blessed, dear reader!

Deborah Yoerg
Founder, Crowns for Christ Ministries

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Papa God . . . If you want to know about developing intimacy and friendship with God, this is the book for you! Ashley takes us on a wonderful journey of the friendship, revelation, and love that she has experienced with Father God.

Debra Kaplan
Senior Pastor, Branch of Christ Church
Chaplin, Pasco County Sheriff's Department
Pastoral Counselor

F O R E W O R D

The Papa God and Ashley Story

The name *Papa* is endearing to me because that is what I call my mom's dad.

In 2013, I attended a women's conference. The speakers, Bonita and Victoria, asked us to spend some time talking with God, and it was suggested that if there was unforgiveness in our hearts, we were to bring it to God at that time.

I will never forget the moment when I heard God's voice in my spirit. He told me that I put my papa on a pedestal (because I do love Papa Mashburn dearly). For as far back as I can remember, Papa Mashburn was the love of my life. I recall the overwhelming excitement I had as a little girl in the car rides each summer break when we would go to Georgia to see my grandparents. We had a tradition that every time we crossed the Florida-Georgia line, we would honk our car horn in gladness. I knew in my heart that my grandparents looked forward to these summer visits as well.

To give you a little insight into my grandparents, Papa Mashburn would save coins all year to give his grandbabies when we came to see him. Even as a small child, I knew that this was an act of love, and that

he also had been looking forward to the summer all year long. I like to think of these coins as little tokens of love, and that he was thinking of my sister Che' and me and longing to time to spend with us.

I recall Papa Mashburn coming home from work and telling us to get ready to jump in the car to go get ice cream and do a little shopping at the mall with his saved-up money. Oh, what great memories I have of those summers. I loved swimming in the streams with my cousins and watching local Georgia football games. Vacation Bible school was always on the list of summer activities, too. Oh yes, I must not forget about picking butter beans and getting stung by a sweat bee. That was the end of that!

My grandmamma is also one of the sweetest little ladies you would ever meet. She's petite in size and soft spoken with the cutest southern drawl. She loved to bake chocolate oatmeal cookies for us, which were some of my favorites. Oh, I can even smell them now as I write!

During my time with God at this women's retreat, He reminded me of these tokens of love from my grandparents. Although I knew God was pleased I had loved my grandparents so much, I felt in my spirit that He wanted more from me; He wanted me to view Him higher than I had before. It was a very tender moment, and I knew in my heart that He wanted to be my first love.

To help you get to know me a little better, I want to tell you why this conversation with God was so imperative for me and the journey that I was about to take with God. Although I didn't know it or understand at the time, this was the beginning of my calling and my true purpose in life. God had great plans to use me, and this retreat was just the beginning of an awe-inspiring journey with God.

Over the years, people I love have disappointed me, although I believe no one did it intentionally, and most offenses were just circumstances of life or were weapons used by the enemy to divide our family. My parents are only human just like I am, and trust me, I make

all kinds of mistakes. The Lord pointed out that my parents were young when they got married, and I heard God say, “Your parents were babies having babies.” They both made mistakes along the way, but God is a merciful, loving and patient parent, full of grace and compassion. And I am so grateful for the sacrifices that both of my parents made to make sure my sister and I lived a safe and good life growing up. They did the best they could do with the knowledge they had at that time. God can make beauty from ashes if we trust and allow Him to lead us as both my parents have done. (See Isa. 61:3.)

Like most people’s, my story is one with many twists and turns. I had a good childhood with parents who loved me, but because my family was divided due to divorce, I switched schools many times in my elementary years and went to three high schools during my teenage years. For a teenager, that is not the best scenario, but our loving God uses all things for our good. Because of family circumstances, I lived with a family friend for three months my sophomore year, and in my senior year, I moved back to Orlando and lived with my friend Dawn and her mom, Nancy. I was eighteen at this time, and it was my decision to move in with them. Prior to that, my mom and I had moved back to Georgia, but I wasn’t happy there. I was a teenager and wanted to be with the friends I grew up with. Looking back on all of that, I feel horrible for what I must have put my mom through, but I was determined, and I wanted to prove I was strong and could make it on my own. Even though I was not mature and was still in high school, I was eighteen and wanted to be an adult. The problem was, I was running, but I didn’t quite know what from at that moment. I know now that I was looking for a family and a relationship with the One who calls us His own, Jesus Christ.

By the time I reached my early thirties, I had run far away from the Christian values and beliefs instilled in me as a child. Finally, I went to a Christian counselor, and the Lord had me reconcile all the hurt I held in my heart against anyone.

This healing process took approximately two years, and during that time, I also apologized for the hurts I had caused others. So as you can imagine, when the speaker at the women's retreat asked us to forgive others, I thought I was good to go!

While alone with God, I proceeded to tell Him, "I do not have anyone I want to bring up to You to forgive. I have already had conversations with anyone who caused me emotional pain." Any misunderstandings I may have had before those conversations had already been clarified and rectified. I did not realize that I was still holding onto a grudge against God for those things.

In that moment God told me, "Ashley, the only One you have not forgiven is Me." Then I could hear in my spirit that God was saying, "I want to be your number One, and I want you to view Me higher than your earthly papa." Then the Lord asked me something that touched my heart to the core. He said, "Ashley, can I be your Papa?"

I was in shock! Of course, I had not realized that my heart was hardened to God in this way, and I immediately asked God to forgive me. As tears rolled down my face, I told God, "Yes, I want You to be my Papa! Please forgive me for not realizing that I held a grudge against *You!*"

Oh, how my heart sank in that very moment. I love God with all my heart. To know I had done something to hurt my Lord was just unimaginable to me. I so desperately wanted to please Him. He knew this, but for years I would only pray or call out to God when I needed something from Him. I would put God on a shelf and say, "I'll contact You if and when I need You." Like every relationship we have, there must be regular communication between both parties involved. I believe that God has feelings just like we do. After all, we were made in His image.

The naysayers or someone who may not believe in God on this level might be thinking that's an odd thing to say and do. Please understand, these are not conversations I made up or have with myself. God is a living God. If you speak to Him, He will speak to you in return. For

the naysayers, I double dare you to try it. “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you” (Matt. 7:7).

That day was a turning point in my life. It was when I started writing my story and I was catapulted into a deeper relationship with God. I not only acknowledged Jesus as the Savior of my life, but on a more intimate and personal level with Him that day, Jesus became my Lord.

As you can read through my writings, I am so grateful to Jesus and all that He has brought me through. After all, it’s *all* about Him and not about me.

There is no condemnation in these writings, and this is not about religion. If you call me religious, I will tell you bluntly, “No, I am not religious; I have a personal relationship with my Papa God.” My goal is for you to experience God on this same level and to have your own encounters with Him to share with others—to see Him as He truly is. He so desperately wants you to know Him, not just know of Him. For years, I knew of Him more than I knew Him on a personal level. To only know of someone is not having a relationship; it’s division, separation, and it creates confusion about who we are and what our purpose is in this temporary world.

I think it’s important to define the word *relationship* so you can see the various levels of it. Speak the hyphenated word *relationship* out loud to really hear the true meaning.

Relationship

[ri-ley-shuh n-ship]

noun

1. a connection, association, or involvement
2. connection between persons by blood or marriage
3. an emotional or other connection between people: the relationship between teachers and students

Synonyms

dependence, alliance, kinship

1. affinity, consanguinity. The relationship, kinship refers to connection with others by blood or marriage. The relationship can be applied to connection, either by birth or by marriage: *relationship to a ruling family*. Kinship generally denotes common descent and implies a more intimate connection than relationship: *the ties and obligations of kinship*.¹

Notice that the word *relationship* often refers to kinship, involvement, or some sort of connection with others. The root word means “to rely on” and to bring back into restoration based on the Latin version of this word.

Friend, God did not send His Son to die on a cross so we could have a religion. Jesus died and rose again so that we could reconnect with a living God full of compassion, mercy, and justice for His beloved, His sons and daughters.

God has given me this task through these chapters to show you that you can have this same kind of relationship with Him and to walk out the purpose He has for you. He loves you that much, and so do I as a brother or sister in Christ. If you don't know Him like this, then this is your chance. God is a spirit so we must connect to Him in our spirits in prayer, reading our Bibles, and worship. I will explain more about this throughout these chapters.

I have heard many people say that they have never heard God speak to them. The Holy Spirit revealed to me that this is because these people don't spend time with God reading His Word regularly, and they rarely pray with the expectation of hearing a reply from God. My question to you is this: Do you want to know God on a personal level? If you do, then come along with me on this journey. My only requirement is for

1 <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/relationship?s=t>

you to keep an open mind and heart to what God is saying to you in this book.

Several of these writings were posted on a Facebook called, “Papa God and Ashley Devotionals” in a free and less detailed, unedited format. These stories and words of inspiration come from the time I spend with God. I know He is the inspiration behind all my stories, dreams, and visions. That is why I always sign His name with mine. If it is not from the Lord, I will never sign, “Papa God.” I always pray prior to writing and ask the Holy Spirit to speak through me. The awesome part is that most of the time, I have no idea what I’m going to write before I sit down. That is why I know they are from Him. I am completely and fully surrendered to His purpose when I write. I know that these stories are not only for me. They are meant for you as well, and I am ready to share them with you.

I also want to thank the people in these stories for allowing me to use our experiences for the glory of God alone. I have written them to the best of my recollection as they have occurred.

I hope these writings stir up something in you and bring you to a closer relationship with our Creator whom I call Papa God. Spend time with Him daily, and He will show you the most amazing things. If I say something more than once, well then, good! It is meant to get deeply rooted in you. Jesus told the same stories over and over, saying them in different ways because there was a point to the story every time He told them.

Oh! One more thing before we get started: I love to give hugs. My mentor, Pastor Debra Kaplan, gives the best heartfelt hugs, and I learned that hugs are a sign of kindness and warm sincerity from one person to another. It’s my way of giving you my best heartfelt wishes at the end of the writings. Let’s begin!

Big hugs,
Papa God and Ashley

