

Born Royal

OVERCOMING INSECURITY TO BECOME
THE WOMAN GOD SAYS YOU ARE

ONEKA McCLELLAN



WaterBrook

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INTRODUCTION

Almost every woman we meet, from the playground to the boardroom, hides a deeper story of broken friendship, insecurity, betrayal, unmet expectations, and feelings of abandonment. Sadly, we live in a world where these struggles are almost unavoidable. And the flip side is true too: At some point in our imperfect lives, nearly every one of us has torn another woman down or allowed a friend to gossip to us about someone when we should have been speaking words of life and encouragement over the women around us.

Born Royal isn't just a catchphrase; rather, this is a movement, a value revolution of everyday women who are passionate about being a part of bringing heaven to earth. Passionate about turning the tide of comparison and competition and criticism. And passionate about lifting one another up instead of tearing one another down. Even as we navigate our own insecurities, a part of us all is

longing to bring hope and healing to our world today and to the next generation.

I think it's time to break the mold of what we've been pressured to be. It's time to break the box we've been locked in.

*It's time to put what should be
behind us and step into
what could be.*

What if we celebrated women of all backgrounds and walked with our heads held high instead of taking ourselves for granted? What if we began to see ourselves the way Christ sees us? What if we lived as though our royalty was not just a thing in storybooks or a position for a select few but a posture of the heart and a way of life?

Because here's the truth: It's about *who* you are, not just *what* you are.

If I start living into the fullness of who God has called me to be and if you start living into the fullness of who God has called you to be, then together we start a movement. A movement that grows and grows to become a sisterhood.

As a sisterhood, we can commit to standing up for the women in our lives and also for ourselves. As royal women, we can lean in to strengthen and lift up girls of all ages in our communities, in our churches, and all around the globe.

And I am telling you now that you are a part of this movement.

It begins with each of us agreeing to a set of shared values and principles and declaring that we will embrace our worth, stand up for other women, and refuse to stop being forces of good in the world. We won't stop fighting this uphill battle until every woman is loved and valued for who she truly is, for the beauty inside her. But we're not doing this alone. God goes before us and has shown us the simple yet powerful way this is done.

Micah 5:1 says, "Gather yourself in troops, O daughter of troops; a state of siege has been placed against us" (AMP). This is unfortunately and horrifically true today. We are under siege in every area of our culture, from brutal bullying in schools to the horrendous crimes committed against women. Like it or not, we're engaged in a war, my friend. But the divisive plan of the Enemy to sow enmity in our ranks has been exposed by the work of Jesus, and we can rise up against it, as daughters of God. We have the opportunity to join forces and sing a new anthem, which will send ripples of love and acceptance out into the world, and our song won't be silenced.

We will know we're living into our royalty when we realize our limitless value and recognize the same in every woman we meet as we walk this planet. We will live in our royal identity when, as a company of God's daughters, we encourage and fan the flames of life and purpose in one another. Can you imagine? How powerful could this company become if girls in middle school and high school watched out for one another and defended classmates who were being bullied? The royal sisterhood will be on display when college girls love and accept one another, when both stay-at-home moms and working moms notice the inherent strength in one another and call it out for the whole world to see. The royal sisterhood will be at work when we develop a deep passion for praying

for one another like we never have before.

Think about it like this: You and I have been selected by God to be alive at this very moment in history. You and I were born for such a time as this—we're here for a very real, eternal reason. Instead of competing with one another or arguing about politics or parenting or how to school our children, let's commit to encouraging and speaking life over the women around us.

The time for this kind of out-loud faith is right now. This movement starts with each of us. This movement starts with *you*.

So join me. Let's set our faces like flint and turn our hearts toward heaven. We will be a part of bringing heaven to earth in our own communities! We will rise up when it's easy, and we will rise up when it's difficult and uncomfortable. We will stand on the shoulders of the men and women who came before us in this fight, and in doing so, we will honor their contributions and sacrifice. We will speak for those who can't speak for themselves, commit to lifting up the name of Jesus, and invite every woman we meet to join us on the journey.

It's my prayer that this book would inspire you to join this movement, heart and soul. These pages are filled with words that I'm praying and believing will till the soil of your heart. Then a seed of change can take root, sprout, and grow, causing you and the women in your world to flourish. I believe in you, I love you, and "I will not stop praying for [you] until [your] righteousness shines like the dawn" (Isaiah 62:1)!

Born Royal

YOUR TIME IS NOW

I remember when I became a mom. I remember what I thought it would look like. I remember all the things I saw in magazines (there was no Instagram at the time), and I remember seeing moms fit back in their jeans two days to two weeks after giving birth. I remember everyone telling me how incredible it would be and all the love I would have and how I would fall more in love with my husband. And all those things are true.

But what I didn't know, what no one told me, was how sleep deprivation would turn into anxiety. No one told me that our firstborn would cry for no reason or that I would hear crying even when he wasn't. No one told me how hard my first day of solo parenting would be when my husband went back to work. No one told me how difficult breastfeeding could be or about the challenges of recovering from a C-section while also caring for one of the greatest gifts in my life. My reality was the opposite of the pictures I saw,

the opposite of the stories I was told. I felt like a failure because my life wasn't matching up to the examples I saw in magazines.

So do you make it through the sleepless nights? You sure do. Do you eventually get your body back? It's totally possible in many cases. But is it still hard eighteen years in? Heck, yes. Is it the most rewarding delight and the joy of my heart? You'd better believe it. I say all of this not to scare you but to prepare you for when what you face is the opposite of what you feel prepared for. You'll be stronger on the other side. You'll be able to hold the hand of moms that come after you, and you'll wake up a new kind of fight and determination that you never knew you had.

For many of us, the tension we carry every day is deep and painful. Maybe we don't know what we'll encounter at home, at work, or at school from a roommate, friend, spouse, boyfriend, or colleague. We might feel confident and strong one day, while on other days we'll feel overwhelmed and think, *I'm going to sink under all this pressure!* Can you relate?

For some of us, this pressure manifests in our own minds, in our thoughts. Many of us battle negative thinking constantly, especially in today's world, in which we're bombarded by bad news—it comes at us from all sides. On the outside, we might look like we're doing just fine, but inside, our minds are waging war. In fact, we may feel the physical effects of all this negativity in our bodies, with our health taking a hit. One day we might receive a positive health report from the doctor, and we feel fantastic. But after a particularly stressful season, we might receive a very different report on our health. We all face struggles in different ways.

The Bible gives us story after story of how God showed up for people who felt unprepared.

When Joshua took over the leadership of Israel after Moses

died, God told him, “Be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).

To the Israelites taken captive and forced to live in the Babylonian Empire far from their homeland, who surely felt unprepared for and confused about their new life, God said, “I know the plans I have for you. . . . They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen” (Jeremiah 29:11–12).

When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, she felt confused and disturbed about how her life may be changing, but the angel had said, “Don’t be afraid, Mary” (Luke 1:30) and promised the Holy Spirit would come to her (verse 35).

And when Jesus ascended, leaving the disciples to carry out His work on earth with the Holy Spirit—and can you imagine the state of their emotions?—Jesus reassured them: “Be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

I give the same message to you, reader: God is with *you*.

God is with you.

He’s with you on your good days and your bad days. He’s with you when you have it all together and when you feel like you’re about to lose your mind. Sometimes you just have to know that God is with you and that He is there to bring you peace, grace, strength, and hope. God also reminds you that no matter what battle you are currently facing or will face in the future, He sent His Son in the form of a baby, and this promise is just as relevant

to your life today as it was yesterday. I think sometimes we forget about the hope of the world: Jesus is here with us now.

The road wasn't easy for Joshua, the Israelites, Mary, or the disciples, but what might have felt like the wrong time was truly the right time.

I love Galatians 4:4: "When the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman." Look at that first part: "When the right time came."

When I read those words, I recalled the time many years ago when God placed a dream in both my husband, Earl, and me to plant a church. While we were on staff at a church in Austin, a business leader came up to us and said, "I feel like you guys are supposed to go to this conference." It was prophetic. He continued, "I just feel like I'm supposed to pay your way to go to London." This offer was an out-of-the-blue blessing. My mother-in-law then paid for us to take our son, Parker, who was five years old at the time. So Earl and I packed our bags, bundled up our son, and caught a flight to London.

The first night we were there, Earl woke up in the middle of the night, having had a dream. He turned to me and said, "This sounds crazy, honestly, but I feel like we're supposed to start a church."

"I've known that since I met you in college," I responded. "I'm so glad you got that revelation."

But we waited a few years before we moved on that dream to plant our church, Shoreline City Church. We could have gone to Dallas prematurely, but we waited and prayed and planned, then went at the appointed time. At just the right time, God assembled a team. At just the right time, He provided finances, volunteers, and more. At just the right time, He provided a movie theater

when we needed a second building. At just the right time, He provided a cute little church on Town North when we needed a third building. And at just the right time, He provided our current building. After experiencing every step in this miraculous journey, I can tell you with confidence that God is in control of every moment of your life. Every single thing that you're waiting, trusting, and believing for—He's already got it all worked out. And guess what? It's going to turn out even better than you're thinking or dreaming today.

Just because we *felt* ready didn't mean we *were* ready. We wanted to get married a year before it was truly time. We wanted to launch our church a year or two before it was truly time. I'm so glad we had people who had gone before us praying for us and giving us wisdom. We thought we were ready, but in reality, we needed more time to prepare for what we were stepping into. Now eleven years into leading our church, I can truly say that slow-cooking our way to becoming pastors prepared us for all the curveballs we encountered in starting something from the ground up and leading our church family through Covid—all while raising our own family.

How do we know if we're ready? I've learned to trust I'm ready to move forward after praying and directly asking God if the timing is right, turning to Scripture and reviewing the promises in His Word, and consulting trusted mentors and friends. There is such wisdom in the advice of respected and trusted role models.

And what do we do if we jump too soon and find ourselves in over our heads? Ask for help, and remember that His grace is more than sufficient. He will always send you guidance when you ask for it. So find rest in knowing that whether you feel prepared or unprepared, your heavenly Father has you and will never fail you.

So, when it comes to timing, we don't need to force it. I'm so glad we didn't rush the dream and move to Dallas two years earlier, because I wouldn't have been ready. Starting a church is real—like, *real*. I didn't know how much faith or strength or backbone I would need for the journey. I didn't realize just how much time I would need to spend on my face crying out to God. So I'm glad we moved when it was God's perfect time.

We're called to give life to powerful things. You know it's true, because God chose a woman to bring Jesus to this earth. He chose a woman because He knew that He could trust her to nurture this promise. What a calling. Yet so many of us women constantly deal with insecurity, doubt, fear, and backbiting. We experience bullying and judgment from other women and from our own internal critics every day. If women could simply remember what we're capable of bringing forth into the world and recall that God picked a woman to bring the Son of God to the earth, I believe that realization would give us power and confidence.

*If women remembered what
we're capable of bringing forth
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power and confidence.*

Sin came into this world through a woman in the Garden of Eden, but Jesus, who saves us from sin, also came into this world

through a woman. Meditate on that truth for a moment. I think about those who have made lots of mistakes, myself included. I think about those who feel discounted, forgotten, or as though they can't be used by God. Maybe you think that, because of the choices you've made, God can't work through you to touch someone else, change their life, or make a difference. You'd be wrong, my friend. I had you on my mind as I wrote this chapter.

Here's the deal: He can redeem your past and use it for His glory. You may be reading this and feeling guilty, thinking about how you messed up last night, but God can flip your situation and give you a fresh start right now. Any time, any place. You may be thinking, *I'm going to give up on God. If He doesn't show up, I'm just going to give up.* Right now, I promise you, God can flip your situation around. He can change things before your eyes at exactly the right time. If you're waiting for God to show up, for a sign from Him, these words are that sign!

Our world is full of heaviness. I think about the stories that have been going viral in recent years, especially those of kids who have committed suicide because of bullying. One of them was a ten-year-old girl. She got in a fight with another student at school and was beaten up pretty bad. The fight was recorded and posted on social media, and it went viral. When the little girl saw the video, she couldn't handle the embarrassment and the pressure and she took her own life.

When I heard this story, I kept thinking, *What if she knew that she had the seeds of greatness inside? What if she knew that God had an epic plan for her life? What if the girls around her defended her instead of filming the fight? What if they formed a circle of protection around her?* That's what we're called to do for one another. We're called to save lives. This world is crazy. We've got to get our act together, my friend. We've got to

read our Bibles. We've got to speak the Word of God over one another and over our situations because there are ten-year-old kids watching us.

I'm not saying we could have saved her life, necessarily. What I am saying is that when you know confidently that you have the seeds of greatness planted deep inside you, not much can shake you. Yes, you may cry. Yes, you may grow frustrated. But you keep fighting and you keep going with perseverance, because you know that God has planted greatness within you for such a time as this.

I'm here to tell every one of you reading this book that God isn't finished with your life. He called you to bear His promises in this world and share those promises with others. He called you to plant seeds in hearts, deposit confidence in your community, and unlock dreams in the people you meet. He called you to be a solution to some of the problems we see in this world.

The solutions we need for our world are in seed form within us. So, whatever pressures we may face, whatever conversations we engage in about politics, pain, or the tragedies happening all around us, God calls us to bring life and hope and, wherever possible, a solution. We aren't called to participate in the heaviness or darkness. Rather, we're called to bring peace, encouragement, and strength.

Jesus came into this world "born of a woman," and He plans to do much more through women too! He's not done with me, and He's not done with you. He's just getting started. We are the women that He picked for such a time as this.

Every night before bed, we read Scripture with our kids, pray over them, and speak words of life to them. Our kids are seven, twelve, and eighteen. We've done this since they were born. It's beautiful to see how these words come to pass in their lives. Words

are powerful, and when we set aside time to speak life over ourselves and our family and friends, something powerful happens.

One of the things we pray over our kids is our church creed:

I am loved by God.
 I cannot earn it.
 I cannot lose it.
 In Christ I am forgiven and made brand new.
 I live with passion and purpose.
 I am empowered by the Spirit
 To be the Church in the world
 And to live for the glory of God.¹

This creed is my prayer for you, and I urge you to make your own version as your personal creed.

We have to get into the rhythm of preaching to ourselves: “I have the peace of God in me. The hope of the world lives in my heart. Yes, the storm may be raging outside, but I’m going to speak life. Everything may feel heavy right now, but I’m going to speak life. The situation may seem hopeless, but I’m going to speak life. I may be experiencing financial tension this month, no one notices the hard work I put into school or my job, my marriage is struggling, but I’m going to keep believing that God is working here. Jesus is with me now.”

I can’t wait to see what God does in your heart and life.

Isaiah 9 is the perfect response to the times we’re all living through:

Nevertheless, the time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be humbled,

but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory.

The people who walk in darkness
will see a great light.

For those who live in a land of deep darkness,
a light will shine.

You will enlarge the nation of Israel,
and its people will rejoice.

They will rejoice before you
as people rejoice at the harvest
and like warriors dividing the plunder.

For you will break the yoke of their slavery
and lift the heavy burden from their shoulders.

You will break the oppressor's rod,
just as you did when you destroyed the army of Mid-
ian. . . .

For a child is born to us,
a son is given to us.

The government will rest on his shoulders.
And he will be called:

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (verses 1–4, 6)

Wow, doesn't that make you feel so empowered? The situation you're facing today isn't going to last forever. I promise, you're going to come out on the other side.

Your home will be filled with glory. Your neighborhood will be

filled with glory. Some of you are surrounded by some serious darkness, and you're trying to be a light for your family and your neighborhood, but Jesus wants to be the light that shines *through* you.

I've been so captivated by the simple line from Galatians 4:4 telling us that Jesus was "born of a woman." Do you feel that call? We are the Marys for this generation.

Take a minute and consider what God has called you to give life to. Maybe He's already given you something to nurture—your career, your family, your neighborhood, a creative project, or a ministry idea. God might be preparing you, revealing ways you can strengthen your skills so that when the time is right, you're ready to partner with Him in bringing light to the world.

You are called for such a time as this!

Remember, God has selected you and I to be alive at this very moment in history. You and I are here for a very real, eternal reason. This moment, this year, is the exact time He has positioned you for greatness. He has set you apart to bring healing to a hurting world. Your story, your example, your perspective, your highs and lows—God can transform them into a powerful road map for others to follow. It's not by accident that He has called you to be on the earth at this appointed time. You're not here by mistake or just to exist. You're here because you bring so much goodness and life; you're here because someone else needs what you have. So hold your head up high, and walk into the next room with confidence, knowing your time is now, the girl is you, and your heavenly Father has called you just like He called so many before you.

Let's Pray —————

Jesus, You came into this world born of a woman, so what do You want to bring life to through me? Choose me, God. Pick me, God. Use me to seek and save the lost and to help those in need. Thank You, Lord, that You are almighty God. Thank You that You bring everlasting peace to circumstances, families, and neighborhoods. Thank You for choosing a woman to bring forth the Savior of the world. Would You remind me that Your peace can calm any storm and that You can grow trust and confidence inside me? You know what I'm facing and what I need. May faith and purpose rise up in me. May my heart believe.