

VINEMAKER PUBLISHING

Inside the Work

Invitations into the Life of the Kingdom

John Himmelberger

READING SAMPLE

Opening material and Part I: The Door

An excerpt from the supplied book PDF. Original pages, formatting and pagination are retained.

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Inside the Work

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DEDICATION

For those still standing at the doorway.

*May you discover
it has never been locked.*

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Foreword

There are moments in every life when we quietly wonder if something has been lost.

Not because life has fallen apart.

Quite the opposite.

Work continues. Conversations fill our days. The calendar grows crowded. Responsibilities multiply. From the outside, everything appears to be moving exactly as it should.

Yet somewhere beneath the movement another question waits.

Is this the life I was created to live?

Most of us have learned to answer that question by doing more. We gather information. We improve ourselves. We work harder. We become more efficient. Even our spiritual lives can quietly become another project to manage, another list to complete, another habit to master, another goal to achieve. Yet the Kingdom is not something we accomplish. It is a life we learn to receive.

Jesus offered something entirely different.

Again and again, He spoke about things that could easily be overlooked: a seed hidden in the soil, yeast disappearing into dough, a pearl found unexpectedly, treasure buried in a field, a shepherd searching for one sheep, branches quietly abiding in a vine. His Kingdom rarely arrived where people expected to find it. Instead, it appeared beneath the surface, where hearts are formed long before lives are changed.

That is the work.

Not the work of earning God's approval.

Not the work of becoming more impressive.

Not the work of constructing a better version of ourselves through determination alone.

The work is learning to receive the life that has already been given.

It is allowing the life of Christ to become the life from which everything else flows.

It is learning, day by day, to live from the inside out.

Transformation seldom announces itself.

It usually arrives quietly.

One honest prayer.

One act of forgiveness.

One deep breath before speaking.

One ordinary moment when we choose attention instead of hurry.

The Kingdom grows like that.

Slowly.

Faithfully.

Almost invisibly.

This book was written for those moments.

It is not meant to be read quickly. It is not a curriculum to complete or a devotional to finish. It is a companion for the journey.

Each reflection begins with an image, offers a simple saying, lingers briefly in reflection, and concludes with a single question. The question may be the most important part. Questions slow us down. They make room for wonder. They invite us to listen rather than merely collect answers.

If you read one reflection each morning, that is enough.

If one page stays with you for an entire week, even better.

If you skip ahead because a particular title seems to call your name, trust that instinct.

This book was never intended to be mastered.

Only inhabited.

As you move through these pages, you may notice a rhythm.

The journey begins with a doorway.

From there it leads into stillness, attention, identity, trust, compassion, freedom, communion, community, creation, mission, and rest before arriving, once again, at another open door.

That is no accident.

The Christian life is rarely a straight line. It is a rhythm of entering and returning, of wandering and coming home, of beginning again. Again and again, grace meets us where it always has—at the doorway.

My hope is not that these pages give you something entirely new.

My hope is that they help you notice what has been true all along.

God is nearer than you imagine.

His invitation has never been withdrawn.

The doorway has never been locked.

So take your time.

Read slowly.

Leave room for silence.

Carry the questions with you into ordinary life.

Then, when you reach the final page, do not think of it as an ending.

Simply look up.

There is another open door waiting before you.

And the invitation is the same as it has always been.

Come in.

How to Use This Book

There is no wrong way to read this book.

You may begin at the beginning and walk through each invitation in order. You may open to a random page and discover the reflection waiting there. You may return to the same page for several days because one question continues to follow you. Every approach is welcome.

This book was not written to be finished quickly.

It was written to be lived.

Each reflection follows the same simple rhythm:

An image to awaken attention.

A saying to carry with you.

A reflection to open another way of seeing.

A question to accompany you into ordinary life.

Resist the urge to hurry to the next page.

If one reflection lingers, let it linger. If one question remains unanswered, allow it to become a companion rather than a problem to solve. Growth often happens quietly, beneath the surface, long before we recognize it.

Some readers may enjoy beginning each morning with a single reflection. Others may read one at the close of the day. Some will journal. Some will pray. Some will simply sit in silence for a few moments before turning the page.

There is no prescribed rhythm.

Only the invitation to become attentive.

You will notice that the reflections are arranged in a journey. They begin with a doorway and move through stillness, attention, identity, trust, compassion, freedom, communion, community, creation, mission, and rest before arriving once again at another open door.

That rhythm is intentional.

The Christian life is not a race toward completion. It is a continual returning. We enter. We receive. We wander. We return. We begin again. Over time, you may find that the same reflection speaks differently because you have become different.

That, too, is part of the journey.

When you reach the final page, you have not completed the work.

You have only arrived at another beginning.

So read slowly.

Pay attention.

Leave room for silence.

Carry the questions into your conversations, your work, your relationships, and your prayers.

Then, when you are ready...

Begin again.

THE JOURNEY

Every journey begins with a single step.

Not because the destination has become clear, but because something within us quietly recognizes the invitation to move.

Most of us spend our lives searching for arrival.

We imagine that peace waits just beyond the next accomplishment, the next season, the next answer, or the next success. We tell ourselves that when life finally settles down, when we become wiser, stronger, or more faithful, then we will begin to live.

The Kingdom tells a different story.

Jesus rarely invited people to arrive.

He invited them to follow.

The difference is profound.

Arrival measures progress.

Following transforms the traveler.

That is the journey before you.

It does not ask you to master new ideas or collect spiritual insights. It invites you to become the kind of person who lives

differently because your heart is being shaped by the Presence of Christ.

Along the way you will encounter doorways, stillness, attention, trust, freedom, community, beauty, work, rest, and love.

These are not separate destinations.

They are different landscapes along the same path.

Sometimes one reflection will meet you exactly where you are.

Another may seem distant or difficult to understand.

Months later you may return to that same page and discover that it has been waiting for you all along.

That, too, is part of the journey.

Growth rarely moves in straight lines.

There are seasons of clarity and seasons of silence.

There are moments when everything seems to come alive, and others when little appears to change. Yet beneath the surface, roots continue to grow. Grace continues its quiet work. The Kingdom continues to unfold, often long before we recognize its fruit.

You may notice that this book does not end where most books end.

Its final pages do not offer completion.

They offer another beginning.

That is intentional.

The Christian life is not lived by reaching a finish line.

It is lived by returning.

Returning to stillness.

Returning to attention.

Returning to trust.

Returning to love.

Returning to the One who has never stopped inviting us deeper into His life.

Each return is not a failure to make progress.

It is the rhythm of grace.

If you read these pages with patience, you may discover that the journey itself begins to shape the way you move through ordinary days.

You may become slower to speak and quicker to notice.

More willing to forgive.

More attentive to beauty.

More grateful for simple gifts.

More aware that God is often nearest in places you once overlooked.

These are not achievements.

They are evidence that the life of Christ is quietly becoming your own.

So begin where you are.

Bring your questions.

Bring your doubts.

Bring your hopes.

Bring your ordinary life.

Nothing more is required.

The doorway is open.

Take the next faithful step.

The journey has already begun.

PART I

THE DOOR

Enter the life you were made for.

Every meaningful journey begins at a doorway.

A doorway asks only one question:

Will you enter?

You do not need to know where the path leads before taking the first step. You do not need every answer to say yes. The Kingdom has always welcomed ordinary people willing to trust the One who calls them forward.

That is where this journey begins.

Not with certainty.

Not with accomplishment.

Simply with willingness.

The pages that follow are invitations. Some will comfort you. Others will challenge you. Read slowly. Let the questions linger. Transformation comes one faithful step at a time.

There is nothing to prove here.

Only an invitation.

The door is open. Welcome home.



THE DOOR

SAYING

*Inside the work.
outside the work.*

REFLECTION

Every moment places us before a doorway. Outside the work we are driven by urgency, fear, comparison, and the need to prove ourselves. Inside the work we become still enough to hear, humble enough to receive, and free enough to love. The doorway has never been locked. It simply waits for us to enter again.

QUESTION

Where am I living today—inside the work or outside it?



THRESHOLD

SAYING

*Every threshold
is an invitation,
not an obstacle.*

REFLECTION

Growth rarely begins with certainty. It begins with crossing a threshold. We often wait until we feel prepared before stepping forward, yet transformation usually meets us on the other side of obedience. The Kingdom is entered one faithful step at a time, never all at once.

QUESTION

What doorway am I hesitating to cross?



ENTER

SAYING

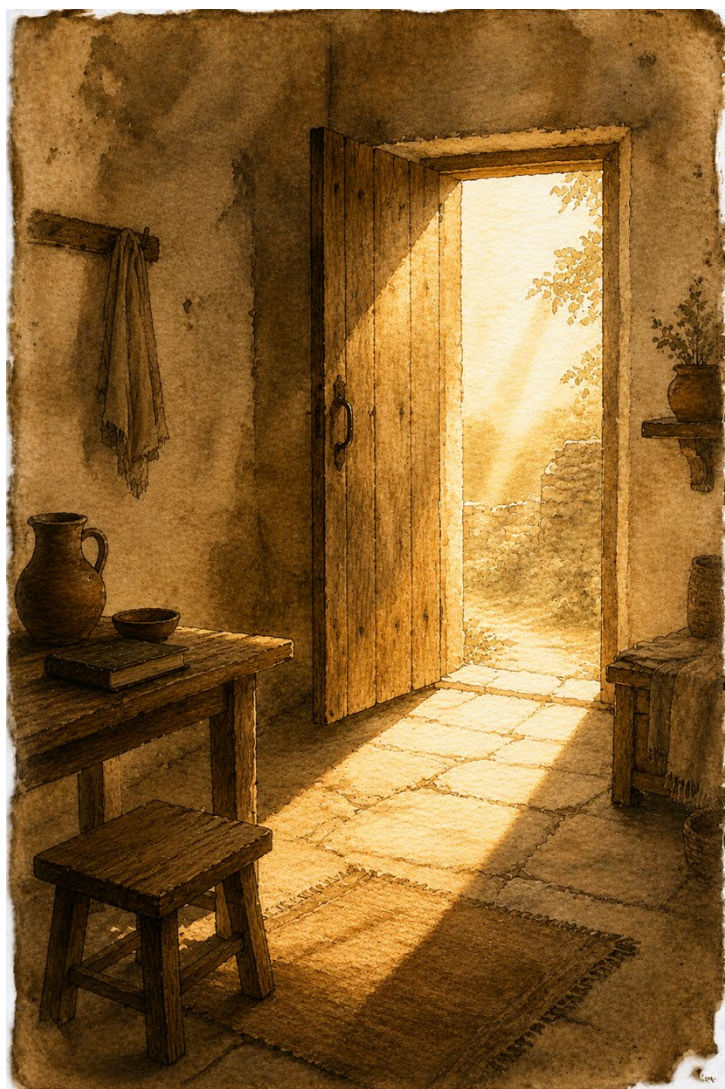
*You cannot become
what you refuse
to enter.*

REFLECTION

Information can gather outside the doorway forever.
Transformation happens only when we step inside.
Wisdom is not measured by what we know but by what we
practice. Every invitation from God asks us to move
beyond observation into participation.

QUESTION

What truth have I admired without entering?



WELCOME

SAYING

*The Kingdom is entered,
not achieved.*

REFLECTION

Much of life teaches us to earn our place. The Kingdom teaches us to receive it. We begin not with accomplishment but with welcome. Grace is the atmosphere of God's house, and every invitation begins with the words, "Come in."

QUESTION

Am I trying to earn what has already been given?

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Thank you for reading

Inside the Work

John Himmelberger

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