

SEEING THE HIDDEN VALUE THAT GOD SEES

Birds of the Air

S. E. M. ISHIDA

illustrated by Wendy Tan



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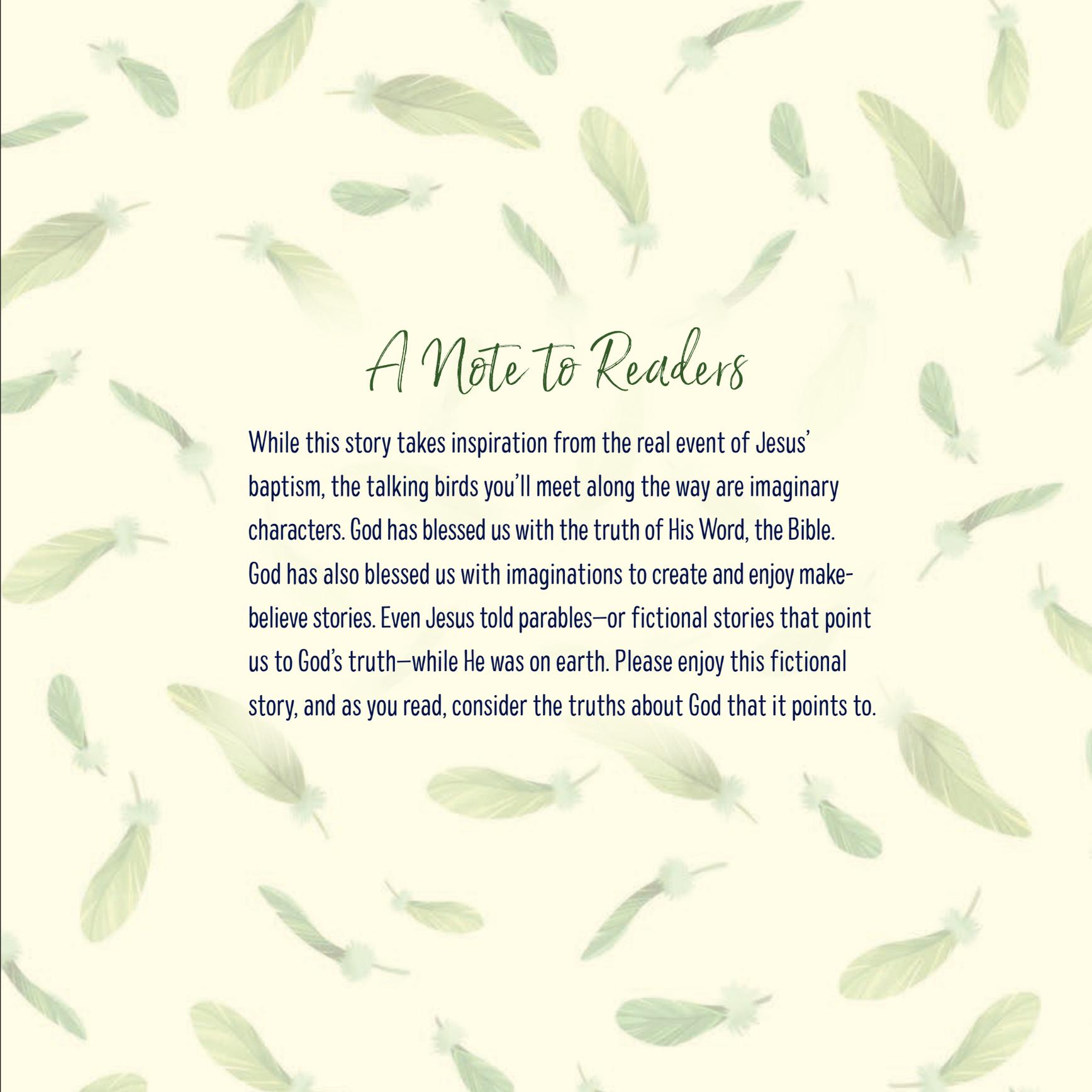


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A Note to Readers

While this story takes inspiration from the real event of Jesus' baptism, the talking birds you'll meet along the way are imaginary characters. God has blessed us with the truth of His Word, the Bible. God has also blessed us with imaginations to create and enjoy make-believe stories. Even Jesus told parables—or fictional stories that point us to God's truth—while He was on earth. Please enjoy this fictional story, and as you read, consider the truths about God that it points to.





“**H**e’s coming! He’s coming!” the sparrow cried.
Birds squawked and flew from their branches.
They crowded around to listen to the news.





“Creator God is coming to visit!” The sparrow landed in their midst. “Jesus, His Son, is to be baptized, and the Holy Spirit will appear in the shape of a bird.”

“Which bird?” the owl asked.

“I don’t know,” the sparrow said. “But surely this bird will be remembered forever as a symbol of God.”



Immediately, the birds began to compare themselves.
“God loves music,” the canary said. “If I am chosen,
I can express His delight in song.”



“God is mighty,” the eagle said.
“I am strong. I can represent His power.”



“God knows everything,”
said the parrot. “I am smart.
I can remind people of His
wisdom.”



“Don’t be silly!” The peacock strutted before the others. “I will be God’s symbol. He is beautiful, and I am the most beautiful creature here.”



The peacock spread his curtain of tail feathers. All eyes looked at him.



Remember

“Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Didn’t God choose the poor in this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him?”—James 2:5

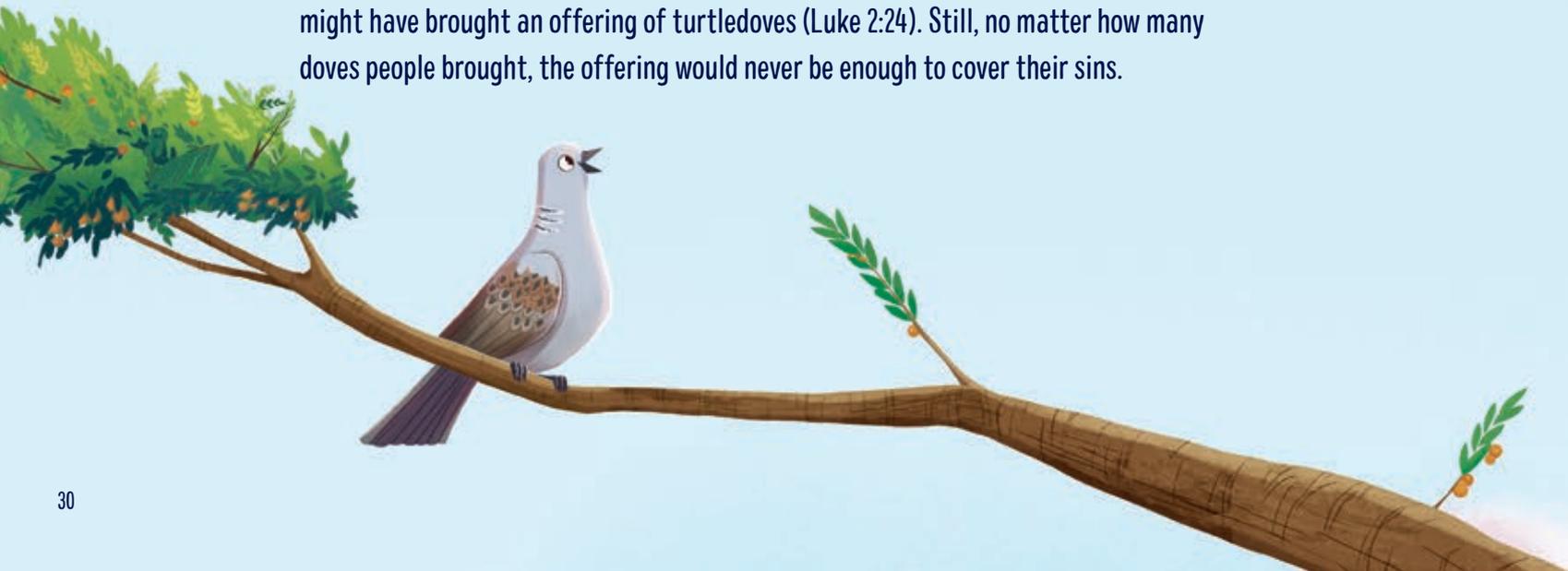
Read

Matthew 3:13-17: “Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. But John tried to stop him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?’

“Jesus answered him, ‘Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then John allowed him to be baptized.

“When Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water. The heavens suddenly opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased.’”

When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove. Although the Bible doesn’t explain exactly why the form of a dove was chosen, we do know that people offered doves to God at the temple. Even Mary and Joseph, Jesus’ earthly parents, might have brought an offering of turtledoves (Luke 2:24). Still, no matter how many doves people brought, the offering would never be enough to cover their sins.



A vibrant yellow bird is perched on a brown tree branch that extends from the top left towards the right. The bird has its wings slightly spread and is looking towards the left. The background is a bright blue sky filled with soft, white and pinkish clouds. The overall scene is bright and cheerful.

Jesus, who is God's Son, came to earth as the ultimate offering. He lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again to show that He is strong enough to overcome evil and death. Jesus' sacrifice was the perfect one! All who confess their sins and trust in Jesus are forgiven of their sins and will live forever with God.

Think

1. In this make-believe story, the birds compare themselves to one another, and the dove wonders if God will even notice him when there are so many other wonderful birds. Have you ever compared yourself to someone else? How did it make you feel? What does the Bible say about comparison? (See 2 Corinthians 10:12.)
2. When God visits the birds, they show off their looks and abilities. They are focusing on themselves instead of their Creator. When we worship God, where should our focus be?
3. The peacock thinks he should be God's symbol, but God has different plans for him. Have you ever wanted something you didn't get? How might something different still be good for you?
4. Even though the dove isn't the strongest, smartest, or most beautiful bird, God still chooses him. Although this is a make-believe story, it shows God chooses the weak and gives us gifts we don't deserve, which is called *grace*. How have you seen God's grace in your life?



Whom will God choose?

The birds of the air are in a tizzy. At Jesus' baptism, the Holy Spirit will take the form of a bird—but no one knows which one! Will it be the canary, a bird of song? Will it be the eagle, a bird of strength? Or maybe the peacock, a bird of beauty? As the birds boast about why they should be a symbol for God, the humble dove watches and wonders, *Would God possibly choose me?*

Birds of the Air is a whimsical, fictional tale that reveals important truths about God: He sees the hidden value in each of us, and He often chooses the least likely among us to do great things for Him.



S.E.M. Ishida's work spans from middle grade fiction to technical documentation. *Birds of the Air* started as a high school English assignment to write a fable. After graduating with a BA in humanities and an MS in technical communication, she didn't stop writing even after the school assignments stopped coming. Ishida enjoys experiencing stories in various forms, including books, films, and games.

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