

No Longer Afraid

Tom Clark lives a full life. A principal and financial advisor until his retirement in August 2019, Tom has more time now to spend with his 10 grandchildren with another soon to be born. Not only that, but he's been writing a 12-book series to help allay children's fears through the power of God's love.

"I love the interaction I could have with them," Tom says of his grandchildren. "One of the biggest interactions I learned to have with them that I always looked forward to even before I had grandchildren was reading them books. There's something really connecting and kinetic in the relationship when you can sit them on your lap on the couch and begin reading books."

Sometimes a child gives their grandfather or grandmother a special title, but this time, Tom chose his own.

"I didn't really like the title grandfather or grandpa, so I wanted a different name for myself," he says. "So I told my grandchildren, 'I would like you to call me Papa.'"

It was only natural then that when he decided to write for them, his series would be named "Papa Tom's Tales: A Grandfather's Bedtime Stories."

The Search for Quality

Interestingly enough, Papa Tom never visited bookstores with his own children when they were young. It was only when he had grandchildren that he went to the children's section in bookstores to look for good books to read to them.

But with his high standards for quality, he ran into a problem.

"I found one really good author out of looking at hundreds of books," he says. "His name is Kobi Yamada, and he wrote the books What Do You Do With an Idea? and What Do You Do With a

Problem? These kinds of books that are very creative are appealing to a child who's younger, but the books could be for all ages."

Looking to the Gospels, Papa Tom considered what Jesus said about the kingdom of heaven.

"Unless you become like a child again, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven," he says, noting sometimes "you can even see the child in people who are 60 years old."

Papa Tom says he finds this childlikeness in every age "very refreshing."

"As children get older, it seems like the cosmos of their thinking gets more and more closed down, unfortunately, but God didn't create us that way," he says. "He really wants us to open our minds up."

Papa Tom decided to help solve the problem of the lack of quality literature for children with his new series, "Papa Tom's Tales." The art is quality too.

"Jerry Mosemak is a very well known illustrator, but it's the first time he's ever done children's books. And the way he has been able to capture concept art—every page is painted. So they're literally works of art on every page."

Mosemak is in demand for his illustrations.

"He cut his teeth with USA Today and then went on to do illustrations," Papa Tom says. "He does illustrations for all the big tech companies like Amazon, Google and so on and so forth on the West Coast. He works with a church now in Kansas City, Missouri. He has his own production company."

The Heart of a Child

The topics of the series go right to the heart of a child. Each of the series' 12 books will address a fear that a child

is likely to have in their life:

Book 1: Fear of not knowing who you are or identity

Book 2: Mistaken identity or confused gender

Book 3: Fear of forgotten identity

Book 4: Fear of abandonment or being left in an orphanage

Book 5: Fear of rejection

Book 6: Fear of doing something wrong or guilt

Book 7: Fear of being a bad person or shame

Book 8: Fear of intimidation or bullying

Book 9: Fear of insufficiency or never having enough

Book 10: Fear of punishment

Book 11: Fear of failure

Book 12: Fear of not being accepted

“These books deal with a fear that a child is likely to have in their life and how the love of God overcomes the fear,” Papa Tom says. “After my children had grown up, I was asking myself the question: How could I have been a better father? And the thought came to me that the way I can be a better father is to help them overcome their fears. Well, it’s a little bit more difficult when they’re in their 20s and 30s and out of the house already. So I thought, Well, how can I help my grandchildren overcome their fears?”

“First of all, you’ve got to identify what they are and then get them release from their fears because all fears are based upon lies that people have been told. All the mistakes that anybody will ever make in their life come from a lie.”

Our Relationship With God

The fictional story in The Boy Who Found His Name comes from a dream Papa Tom had. Michael is the character in the book who didn't know who he was or who God created him to be. The story tells how he came to understand his identity through the protagonist, Luke the Lightbearer. This character appears in all of the books in the series and brings light and truth into the world. Luke the Lightbearer is modeled after Papa Tom's oldest grandson, also named Luke. In the first book, Luke helps the boy find his identity through meeting with God the Father.

"This gives us a foundation in our personhood from which we can address all the issues of life," Papa Tom says of the identity we find in our relationship with the Creator.

In book 1, "God begins to tell this child what his name is and why his name is what it is, his name being Michael," Papa Tom says. "And then He describes to him what the word 'Michael' means, 'one who stands in the place of God.' So throughout the book, when words are coming out, I also explain what those words mean because they have importance to the storyline and what's happening. So each child is going on his journey. And in his particular case, he finds out his name is Michael, then God describes to him why he named him Michael and what his calling and destiny is with that name."

Although each story teaches many truths, the one essential principle in the first book is "only God can tell you who you are," Papa Tom says, adding, "When God says to Michael, 'Now that you know who you are, you need to know who I am.'"

Luke the Lightbearer plays a powerful role in all of these books.

"In all these stories, Luke the Lightbearer will deal with different children with different fears," Papa Tom says. "He connects them to God the Father, and God the Father teaches them when they go up to heaven. And God the Father teaches

them truth about themselves and about the world. There's a lot of teaching going on in each book."

Papa Tom's second book, *The Boy Who Found Understanding*, also addresses identity, but this time the story speaks to the confused sexual identity of a boy who thinks he is a girl. The spirit of confusion stands opposed to the Holy Spirit or the breath of God.

"When the breath of God is breathed into a person, the spirit of confusion leaves and disperses," Papa Tom says.

Each of the books will be available in hardcover and paperback formats.

Papa Tom is also on a mission to give his books to children whose families may not be able to purchase them. For every 5- or 10-pack of books purchased through his website, , he will give a book free of charge to a single-parent family.

Papa Tom has heard from mothers who have read the first book to their child, and the child is asking interesting questions. The books target children ages 6-10, but younger and older children and adults are getting something helpful from their stories.

"The books are really written on a spirit-to-spirit level," he says. "And what the Lord showed me was that the person reading the book, in most cases the parent or the grandparent, will actually get something out of it as much as the child."

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