

Welcome to “more”

My goal is to meet you where you are, not to change you, to gently encourage you to allow a divine transformation to emerge naturally from the quiet place of Presence, where safety governs our every thought and action.

This story has been one of the most vulnerable efforts in my life, exposing sacred parts of me. I choose to risk, to share my story, knowing there are those who will not understand, those who will judge, those who will hate, and those who will resonate a longing that can only be quenched by the Divine.

I want you to open this book and immediately feel: I am safe. It's okay to be me.

I want you to discover the Wellspring of Life that resides within you, the One who has always been there. The Living Water that rushes to reward and refresh you, to overflow its banks into the lives of all who cross your path on your divine journey.

Interlude

The Beautiful Why

The Wisdom of Asking Why

One of the most beautiful gifts I've ever received has come through my wife, Amy. Amy carries with her an honesty that refuses to pretend. She often comes to our conversations with questions, sometimes raw, sometimes tender, sometimes spoken with tears. They may sound simple at first: *"Why?" "How?" "What does that mean?"* Yet over time I've realized these questions are not signs of doubt or weakness. They are signs of wisdom.

For me, decades of study can sometimes become a disadvantage. And in that moment, I remembered: wisdom's first word is a question. My head gets filled with doctrines, arguments, and theological systems. Amy, though, brings me back to the sacred simplicity of wondering. She reminds me that wisdom is not found in having all the answers, but in daring to keep asking. In her voice I hear the echo of Proverbs: *"Wisdom cries aloud in the streets,"* not in locked classrooms, temples, synagogues or churches, but where ordinary hearts live. Questions are not the enemy of faith; questions are prayers with question marks.

When I first came to faith, a priest told me, *"Young man, it's what I say it is. Quit asking questions."* I carried that silence like a stone. But Jesus did not say, *"Hush and obey."* He said, *"Ask... seek... knock."* He invited the child to the center of the room. He defended the shamed and said, *"Go in peace."* The Teacher, who is Truth, made curiosity a doorway, not a crime.

So here is a house rule for this book and for our lives: No shame for honest questions. We handle the word of truth by asking; we receive wisdom by asking; we grow beyond partial answers by asking again. The River of Life needs a riverbed, and your questions carve it. Study is a gift, but wonder keeps it soft. If a voice uses certainty to control or belittle, it is not love's voice. Love is patient with the long arc of understanding. Love walks the extra mile with your why.

Amy has shown me that wisdom often looks like a child asking *"why?"* again and again, not to tear something down, but to understand, to grow, and to see more clearly. Watching her ask questions has moved me to tears more than once. It is holy ground.

So, dear reader, if you come to these pages with your own questions, please know you are in good company. Your questions are not a burden, nor are they proof of a lack of faith. They are, perhaps, the purest evidence of your longing to know, to love, and to live in the light of truth. Amy's courage to ask is one of the purest signs of wisdom I know. May it be yours too.

I've included questions at the end of each chapter, not as tests with right or wrong answers, but as kindling for the fire of *more* to burn brightly in you. May your "why's" not lead you into despair, but into wonder, not into fear, but into freedom.

*Wisdom's first word is a question.
Not a lecture, not a rule,
a whisper that dares to ask "Why?"*

*Amy's questions remind me:
faith is not afraid of wonder.
Questions are not the enemy of truth;
they are prayers with question marks.*

*So, if you carry your own "why's,"
hold them tenderly.
They are not signs of weakness,
but sparks of wisdom.*

*May your questions be kindling wood
for the fire of more to burn in you.
May your why's lead you not to despair,
but to wonder.*

Preface

Dear Reader,

Before you turn these pages, I want to speak plainly from my heart: This book is not for sale; these writings are offered freely and sustained by the generosity of donations used to serve "more" people.

Yes, you may be holding it in your hands, someone may have printed it, formatted it, or even distributed it, but the soul of this book cannot be priced, merchandised or bought. You are holding something sacred, not because I am special, but because *you* are. This journey was never written to make a name for myself, nor born from ambition or hunger for acclaim.

It began in a hospital bed; It rose from the ache of loss.
It was shaped by the laughter of children who wanted more than rules.
It emerged from long nights in homes, detention facilities, prisons, hospital rooms, hospice beds and quiet places of prayer.
It came from the Spirit, and when the Spirit gives,
you don't trademark it; you give it back.
If this book blesses you, please, let it move through you. Pass it on; read it aloud; quote it, share it, scribble in the margins. Let it do in you what it did in me: awaken the more.
And if, by some means, money ever enters the picture, know this: every penny will be given back to those who are aching for more:

To the children who are labeled “too needy.”
To the hospice patients longing for someone to stay just a little longer.
To the caregivers who give until they’re empty.
To the forgotten, the grieving, the overlooked.

This book belongs to them, and so do I.

I am your brother in the longing; I am your companion in the ache; I am one of the more-people and so are you.

With tenderness,

Carlo Griseta

Part 1 - The Birth of More

I am made for more. I’ve always needed more and refuse to apologize for that, for wanting more in life, in love, in relationships, and in faith.

I hate counterfeits. I despise substitutes, placebos and false promises; they’ve only ever distracted me from what is authentic, what is real, what is beautiful, what is **more**. You and I were created for more, it is our birthright, it is our destiny. It is not greed, it is not lack, it’s the sacred ache of the soul to be whole. “More” is the pulse of the soul before it gets silenced. These words are written for the **more-people** of the world, the ones who cannot settle, who ache deeply, who carry the divine ache of longing within their bones.

These thoughts began to unfold, not in a sanctuary or a seminar, but in a place, a camouflaged oasis I never expected, while I was lying in a hospital bed, in an emergency room in Kansas City. I was physically exhausted, spiritually uncertain, and emotionally spent following a divorce. I hadn’t gone to the emergency room seeking wisdom; I arrived simply surviving. This hospitalization certainly didn’t make the list of what I thought “more” would look like. This was certainly not what I had in mind when I thought of “more.” It didn’t feel like more, it felt like loss, it felt like fear, it felt like failure and abandonment all rolled into one.

But it turns out, the road to more sometimes winds through the most unsuspecting places, places we would never choose.

I’ve come to learn, “*more*” *doesn’t always come in gold wrappings*. Sometimes more comes wrapped in IV tubing and fluorescent lights. Sometimes more emerges when everything familiar is stripped away. Sometimes the road to “more” is disguised in suffering, sometimes it feels like pain, sometimes like confusion, sometimes like collapse. The road to more is long, it winds, it disappears around corners I cannot see past. More mocks my illusion of control and exposes every part of me that thought I could navigate this journey alone, it laughs in the face of the false impression that my destiny could be a mere mortal, professional fixer as myself. But it was on *that “more-road”* that I began to see it, to name it, to embrace it, to surrender to it.

Here's a confession: I thought I could "fix" anything. I recall an earlier time of life when my daughter Meagan was a child. Meagan was sitting by herself, attempting to tie her shoes for the first time. Meagan's frustration was evidenced by her grumbles and sighs. "Want me to help?" I asked. "I can do it myself," she said indignantly. I could relate. Why ask for help? Would that be a confession of weakness? I sat down beside her and said, "Did you know there was a time I didn't know how to tie my shoes?" She looked at me skeptically, as if to say, 'don't patronize me'. "It's true, do you know who taught me?" Meagan softly said, "who?" I explained to Meagan that her Nonno (grandpa) and Nonna (grandma) taught me to tie my shoes, I then showed her how, step by step. Meagan watched closely, it was only moments later she was able to do it herself. That moment was a picture of how I lived; the fixer, the teacher, the one who comes alongside to help others reach for more.

Over the years, my children saw me pour myself out for others while neglecting my own needs, it was rewarding, but it didn't mend me. I received two coffee mugs over the years that read: *"If Papa can't fix it, no one can."* I wore the title of "fixer" like an imaginary armor. "I got this," "No problem," "I can fix this" supported the fortress of my self-assurances and achievements. All this collapsed when my marriage of more than three decades ended, a marriage full of trying, hoping, fixing, applying religious platitudes and instructions, yet only surviving at best, and finally, letting go. It doesn't matter how many sermons you've preached or people you've loved - that kind of grief is a death of its own.

Divorce is a soul-tremor, a loss that reorders everything. Some of you know this trauma, the unexplainable chaos, this psychological amputation, the death of a union that masqueraded as my "normal". Divorce is not just a legal event, it's a tearing, a rearranging, and ultimately a place to build a new *normal from the rubble*. But even there, especially there, I found my ache for more did not die, it intensified.

My ache for more, that began as a boy, grew and morphed as a husband, a father, a lover, a friend. I've always craved more, I not only craved more, but I also gave more too. I *loved* loving people. I've loved so deeply it sometimes overwhelmed others, overwhelmed myself. Some viewed my determination to *love, and be loved*, as a weakness; some, as a compensating insecurity; some, as a deep need to prove myself. Others assumed my "more" expressions were simply a twisted kind of narcissism, but I ask you to consider another lens: a demonstration *to reach out to the unknown, to grasp a sense of meaning and purpose in life*. Maybe, if you're honest, it's who you are too. I know now, what I didn't back then: I was born for **more**.

My Italian father, Vito, a giant in my life, would retell a favorite memory in his beautiful Italian accent, "When I come home, all my children would run to the door shouting, 'Papa's home, Papa's home!' I would kiss you all and tell you all to go play; four of you would run and play, one would stay. Can you guess who that one was? Yes, that one is you, Carlo." I am the more-child, the one who stayed, the one who needed more. I was never satisfied with a quick hug; I needed to be held. I wasn't okay with a smile from across the room; I needed to be seen, spoken to, valued, remembered. I stayed, I wanted more, more of him, more love, more time, more closeness, more of something I couldn't consciously comprehend or verbalize. Over the years, some found me adorable, others found me exhausting. Many teachers loved me, some tried to avoid me or to punish me. I wasn't bad; I was **hungry**; I was *the boy who "needed too much."* And

when you don't know what to do with that kind of hunger, you try to feed it wherever you can: I rationalized it, minimized it, justified it.

In my early years, I relentlessly pursued substitutes for "more." Unhealthy love was certainly another drug-of-choice: relationships that numbed rather than nurtured. I even chased the shimmering illusion of the American Dream; and then there was the "religious zeal" phase: trying to win attention or favor through adhering to rules, to doctrines and dogmas. Religion was another attempt to surround myself with imaginary fences to feel safe, in an attempt to manage my inner cry. But none of it touched the ache, none of it satisfied, because none of it was the authentic "more," not the kind I ached for, not the kind I was born for. I was not meant to be less; I was not meant to be numb; *I was meant to reflect and long for love, to pursue and embrace love.* So now, after all these years, I've decided: I will stop apologizing for wanting more. I will stop shaming that boy who *stayed by the door*, I will love him; I will honor him, because he wasn't needy, he was brave, vulnerable, honest; he was true. I confess, I am a "more" man, and I bless the boy in me who still dares to long for more, to stay at the door, arms open, heart unashamed. I will shamelessly be the image-bearer of the Divine.

*I've made peace with my more-nature.
I've come to love the boy who just wanted more love.
The man who couldn't stop loving others.
The soul who aches to love and be loved.*

Yes, it's exhausting. Yes, it sometimes hurts, but I wouldn't trade it for anything, because I've learned this: more is not a weakness, it's a calling, it's a blessing and it's who **I am**.

Let the boy stay by the door.

Let him reach, let him ache, let him yearn.

For the door is not weakness, it is the threshold to wonder.

May you never again apologize for the holy hunger within you.

May your ache lead you not to numbness, but to naming.

May you stay by the door, for the Beloved comes through it.

Reader Reflection:

What part of me still waits at the door, longing to be held, seen, or remembered?

What substitutes for more have I relied upon?

What do I need to bless, not fix, my younger self?

Part 2: Where Longing Begins - Gloria Jean's Story

We inherit more than eye color and the shape of our smile from those who came before us. We inherit stories, both the ones told around the table and the ones never spoken aloud. We inherit unspoken vows. We inherit patterns of love, patterns of hurt, examples of rejections and sometimes, we adopt the ache of longing that shaped them.

Gloria Jean was born in Kentucky, the daughter of a tall, slender man named Virgil, whose absence would mark her early years. Gloria would later learn that her father's absence was a direct result of his early years of abandonment and rejection experienced as a child. Virgil's parents died while he was very young, his father was "a drinker," his mother died from illness at a very young age. Virgil was placed in an orphanage, familiar with the longing for more. Virgil's brokenness rendered him unable to maintain a healthy relationship, consequently, my mother's mom, Ann, a single mother now, gathered her few belongings and her daughter Gloria and moved elsewhere, seeking to establish a home together. Anna was a gentle, steady presence, a sweet soul who carried her daughter through those years.

At seventeen, Gloria worked in a dress shop in the city. One afternoon, a young Italian immigrant came in with his stepmother, Mae. His accent thick, his English limited, but his eyes were clear in their purpose. Looking at her across the counter, he introduced himself as "Vito" and asked, "What is your phone number?" That night became the beginning of a love story, one that was both beautiful and complicated.

Gloria was a "more" person from the start. Losing her father created a silent vow within her: her children would never be without a father. This resolve would be one of the threads that kept her marriage intact, even when the fabric frayed.

My father was also a "more" man, carrying his own wounds from a fractured family history in Italy. His father, my grandfather (Nonno) would leave his wife, my grandmother (Nonna) in Italy, and though being married in Italy, would marry another woman in America. My father was the firstborn boy, magnetic, bright, and gifted, with an ability to love people deeply, but that charisma sometimes contributed to his wanderings in other directions that would eventually emerge as an unsuitable characteristic for developing a stable marriage and family. My mother's world revolved around my father. Even through betrayals, she forgave, always returning to the hope that their love could be restored. She wanted to learn how to love him in a way that would reach him fully, but never quite knew if what he longed for was truly love or something else. Were my father's misguided pursuits a trauma echo of his past? Time would soon reveal.

And yet, my mother remained steady. She was consistent. She was a lover of God. She mothered with devotion and faith. She stayed because she believed her children's lives would be stronger with both parents under one roof. She stayed because she carried a vision of more, of family, of faithfulness, of love that endured.

When I think of my mother, I think of a woman who never stopped wanting more for her family, even when her own heart went without. A mother, whose kindness to others was characterized by giving "more" yet receiving less in return. As a child, I inherited "more" through a genetic transference of love, sorrow, connection, betrayal and compromise.

Reader Reflection:

Think about someone in your life whose love has been marked by steadfastness, even in seasons of difficulty. What did their “holding on” teach you about love?

Consider the unspoken vows you’ve made in your own heart. Where did those vows come from—loss, hope, faith, or something else?

When you picture “more” in the context of family and relationships, does it look like staying, like leaving, like forgiving, or like learning new ways to love? Why?

Pause in the quiet and let the faces and moments rise in your mind. What you remember may reveal the shape of your own “more.”

Part 3: The Rise of More Children - The Wound of More, the Witness of Love

More is beautiful, but more is costly. The world deeply needs these sacred echoes, these heavenly reflections, though oftentimes misunderstood, mislabeled or misdiagnosed. The emergence of these divine images of “more” ultimately reveal the mystery of life: we are birthed in and through weakness; we develop in vulnerability and trust; we are ultimately established by divine design to multiply an image, not of failure or dysfunction, but an image of our Creator, an image of victory through perseverance.

It wasn’t long ago I began to fully realize how often I had been told, implicitly or explicitly that my need for more was “too much,” that my longing made me unstable, insecure, alienated from God, even dangerous. You see, many hold to the mistaken understanding that their brand of religion is “the way”, forgetting that the “Way” was an incarnate demonstration of love, not a set of rules or dogmas to adhere to. I would soon discover, I wasn’t alone, there are countless others who were sidelined from the faith, whose only crime was to long for more. These overlooked creations weren’t problems to be fixed; they were sacred invitations to love deeper.

While managing an adolescent psychiatric community, I recognized this longing for more in those I served daily. It was in that environment of rehabilitation I was honored to be a participant, a presence, a witness, a familiar. I discovered countless children who longed for “more,” who grew up in less than adequate environments, whose developmental process had become stunted resulting in a failure to thrive, a failure of receiving “more”. This *failure to thrive* left behind indelible wounds and scars; I knew this familiar malady. I was familiar with their longing, not just because I worked there, but because I was them. Generations of my family were also victims of this failure to thrive, being starved of “more.” I looked into their eyes of those who had been admitted to this potential “place of healing” and I recognized it: the emotional paralysis, the thirst for more, the ache to be seen, to be heard, to be held; the sacred cry for attention that wasn’t performative, but eternal.

It’s easy to overlook these “more” humans, to dismiss them as “needy,” “manipulative,” “just trying to get attention.” But do you know what I say to that now? Yes, they do need attention, they’re worth it, just like I was, just like you are. They were unmistakable, their eyes carried that same ache I’d known since I was small, that insatiable longing for love, for recognition, for someone to just see them and stay, not fix them, not label them,

just **stay**. These children didn't know it, but they were my kindred. I recognized them not by diagnosis, not by behavior, but by a "more" heart. Some of them had been told they were "too much," others were simply ignored until their longing erupted in ways adults deemed inconvenient, or unacceptable. But I saw them, I knew them, I **was** them.

One such young man, who I'll call Leo, was sitting in a secure, locked down unit that I managed. Leo had a unique scar on his inner arm; the scar on Leo's inner forearm reflected raised letters: L-O-S-E-R. Leo had experienced a life of disappointments and setbacks and had chosen to take it out on himself by carving the letters LOSER into his forearm. On one day, Leo had chosen to *reopen his case against himself* by using a shard of hard plastic to re-accentuate his message. I asked Leo to give me the object he was attempting to assault himself with; Leo looked at me with apprehension and mistrust. It was in that moment I decided to take a gamble on Leo's resident "more" nature. I said to Leo, "Leo, do you trust me? Have I ever lied to you? If you'll trust me, give me that shard, I promise I'll give it back to you, upon one condition." My supervisor was watching the entire exchange, and I'm sure thought I had lost my mind. It was inconceivable that I would return to Leo anything to assist him to conspire against himself. Leo took the gamble; Leo trusted me and handed me the sharp item. I continued, "Leo, didn't you say earlier that you have a visit with your mom and 7-year-old little brother tonight at 6pm?" Leo's eyes lit up, "yes", he responded. I continued, "tell you what I'm going to do, I'll accompany you to your visit and give you two shards, one for you, and one for your little brother, and you can show him how to do that to himself." Leo's face immediately displayed remorse and pain and he, without hesitation, responded, "oh, my God, NO," Leo's eyes filled with tears. I paused in the divine silence, and said, "Leo, you are an amazing young man. I can see your intense love for your little brother. There's only one problem I see, why can't you love yourself with that same kind of love?" Without giving him a chance to respond, I continued, "Leo, your little brother won't do what you *say to do*, he, will do *what you do*. Your actions speak louder than your words; your brother will someday choose to follow your actions before he will ever follow your words". That day, I watched, as Leo expressed his awareness, a revelation of love, a renewed respect for himself emerged, a love he had neglected to offer himself for years. Leo had a "more" heart but did not feel worthy to administer this love to himself, until he awakened to the knowledge of his self-destructive behavior and how it may influence his little brother's future and well-being. Leo went on to successfully graduate the program, choosing to adopt a new reality of personal love and respect.

There is a dangerous tendency in our world to medicate or to pathologize the ones who hunger deeply. Please don't misunderstand me, I'm not demonizing our medical community; I am grateful each day, as I witness countless healthcare professionals who faithfully serve others through proper diagnosis, treatment and administration of medicines to assist others in their journey towards wholistic health outcomes. In the medical practice there exists the very real need for practical care, warmth, kindness and intuitive logic. Addressing the needs of the hurting oftentimes is accompanied by people's adverse reactions, resulting in flight, fight or freeze responses. Doctors, Nurses, Psychiatrists, Psychologists and Counselors play a vital role in the healing process of young minds and bodies. In the healing process, pain oftentimes emerges, physical, mental and/or emotional. During this *disruption of the familiar*, there comes a need for a consistent, tried and true pathways and methodologies for rehabilitation, no matter the negative responses reflected by the hurting individual(s). When people

respond negatively, it's not uncommon to mistakenly identify or label them as "needy", "disruptive," "overly sensitive", "attention-seeking" and be sidetracked into thinking these triggered humans are unwilling to change. Rather than intuitively grasping they are too hurt to see, hear or receive help. What if their cries for attention are holy? What if their hunger and disruptive responses are a sacred signpost, not of dysfunction, but of divine design? A place of restoration, renewal, reclamation.

You see, more-children, more-people don't want chaos, they want connection; they don't crave drama, they crave presence. They don't want to cause trouble, they want to be **loved enough** to be known, to be recognized and valued. The world often misunderstands the disenfranchised, but I choose not to, because I was one of them; I still am. I recall one such familiar story that occurred at a psychiatric hospital I managed: One evening I received a call from one of the staff who said, "Mr. Carlo, we have a young man discharging tonight, but he refuses to leave until he says goodbye to you." My more heart intuitively caught on fire, and when I picked up the phone, I heard the voice of a little boy who had found something holy in our connection. He said, "I'm going to miss you, Mr. Carlo." I responded I'd miss him too and reminded him of our sacred conversation. "Remember what I told you to say when someone accuses you of acting out just for attention?" And he repeated it, word for word: *"I do need attention. I'm WORTH the attention. And if someone doesn't think so, that's okay, because someone else will. Because I matter. Because I'm worth being loved."*

That's my boy, a more-child, a miracle, a sacred sprout just beginning to grow; a seedling breaking through the concrete. My only fear for this young man, and for all those in pursuit of their identity, is that someone would forget to water what was planted, or carelessly trample the fragile roots with ignorance, impatience or well-meaning platitudes; we must not allow for this to happen. We must remember: More-children, these sometimes-chaotic beings, are not problems to solve, they are sacred invitations to love deeper.

It breaks my heart how many of these more-gifts are mis-labeled using misguided, evocative language such as: "they're too much", "they're too loud," "too needy," "too sensitive," too dramatic," "too disruptive." What if we've been reading the signs all wrong? What if, what they need is not more medication or more restrictions, but more of us, more listening, more time, more patience, more belief, confidence and assurance in who they really are?

Over the years I've loved the trauma out of, and away from, these children, literally. I've loved the shame off their backs, the lies out of their lungs, the numbness out of their eyes. I've loved the despair out, showing despair the exit door. I've loved the self-hatred out, loved the lies out, and if I'm honest, in loving them, I was loving that part of me that was still waiting at the door, the part of me that never stopped wanting someone to notice, to stay, to say, "you matter this much." I encountered one such boy named Nathan, who had been placed in the hospital after his grandmother died resulting from Nathan's carelessness with matches that resulted in his grandmother's home being burned down. Unfortunately, grandma died in that fire. Nathan had practically grown up in the psychiatric hospital. Finding placement, a foster home, was difficult because when Nathan was triggered, he would become volatile, aggressive, physical. Years into Nathan's stay, Nathan was now 17 years old and had grown from a little boy in stature, to a tall, muscular young man who could be rather menacing. Nathan could be

intimidating, when Nathan would trigger, it would take several adults to physically restrain him. I had recently joined the team and was attempting to model to employees the ability to deescalate without putting our hands on the children. On this day, little did I know, I would have the privilege to model de-escalation first-hand. I could hear from a distance a loud banging, upon arrival to the unit, I witnessed the steel door attached to the safe-room slam closed for the last time that day. The safe-room was a place where children would enter when feeling unsafe or angry. Nathan had entered, feeling angry, Nathan slammed the door repeatedly, causing the door to fall, detaching from the door frame, destroying its hinges. As I approached the doorway and looked in, I was rather impressed that someone could slam a door off its hinges; looking down at the door I failed to see Nathan physically charge me. Nathan punched me in the face and chest, causing my glasses to fall off my face. I stepped back, picked up my glasses and returned them to my face and requested that the team stand back and give Nathan room. I continued and said to Nathan, "are you ok?" The comment "are you ok?" and the request to "stand off" to the security team created a bewildered look on Nathan's face. He growled and began to back into the room, confused that he was not immediately put into a physical hold. Nathan backed up, returning into the safe-room, though the door was laying on the floor. I apologized to Nathan, stating, "I apologize Nathan, I should have given you some space." Nathan continued his bewildered gaze. I continued, "Nathan, I'm going to give you the space you need, I will return and maybe we can talk later? We posted several trained employees outside of the safe room. The safe-room was no longer quite safe, now without a door. Nathan waited. It was 20-30 minutes later I approached Nathan's open-door confinement, Nathan looked up at me, with a shame reflected in his eyes, and said, "I'm sorry Mr. Carlo." I responded, "I forgive you Nathan." I deliberately choose not to say, "that's alright Nathan," because it wasn't, Nathan's action's caused harm, but that could be addressed later, but instead I chose to say, "I forgive you Nathan." Nathan's body language softened, I asked Nathan to look up at me, because shame and failure had robbed him of his confidence. I continued, "I forgive you Nathan, I should have given you space; that's my failure. Nathan, I will work on that in the future. What can I do to assist you in the future so that when you are triggered, we can avoid another such incident?" Nathan and I worked on a safety plan, a step-by-step approach to assist him to deescalate and to find practical ways to find help and to be safe. Before I share some of those simple steps, I'd like to fast forward to Nathan's discharge. Yes, Nathan eventually discharged, almost two years later I received a page over the intercom, "Mr. Carlo, someone is at the front desk and would like to see you." It was Nathan, I was surprised that he asked for me, I hadn't known Nathan long, many of the staff practically grew up with him, but I had only known Nathan a very short time. Why me? What did Nathan remember the most? Nathan remembered, "I forgive you". Nathan remembered the refusal to meet aggression with aggression. Nathan remembered that someone was willing to take the hit and model a response of love, of patience, kindness and self-control. Love would crush Nathan's anger, soften his heart and offer him a future. Nathan went on to tell me he was enrolled in a community college, had a job and was driving a car, and Nathan pointed to the car and to his girlfriend waiting in the front seat. That day, I was reminded of more; Nathan needed more; more would cost someone something, but freedom would be the result.

Later that day I shared with Jason 5 simple principles to put himself F.I.R.S.T.:

F = FORGIVE: Yourself, God, *if you believe in God*, and lastly, Others

Determine *who* or *what's* hurt you? (name them one by one)

What boundaries have been crossed/violated?

What boundaries need to be reinforced or established?

What boundaries have I not maintained? (guilt-free-zone)

I = IDENTITY: Know who you are.

Ask, what motivates me? What are my likes and dislikes?

What are my strength and qualities?

Who or what has contributed to your stinking-thinking?

Determine to replace negative or self-debasing thoughts with positive affirmations.

Ask, what do I value? What are my beliefs?

R = RESPONSIBILITY: Own your actions.

Willingly ask, "what worked?"; "what can I do differently?"

Face your failures with honesty and grace; refuse to minimize, rationalize and justify your negative behavior.

Be intentional: ask, "What if I refuse to act?"

Remember yourself: denial, shame, blame, excuses only prolong the pain.

Practice grounding techniques by identifying:

5 things I can see around me

4 things I can touch around me.

3 things I can hear around me.

2 things I can smell.

1 thing I can taste.

S = SUPPORT: Seek Healthy Relationships

What are my coping skills: those things that help me manage stress?

Who are those who can help? List them.

List those I should avoid, and why?

Consider: Yoga, Bicycling, reading, exercise, walking, support groups.

T = TRANSITION: Plan for Your Future.

Write it down, what are my goals?

Specific: (describe your goal)

Measurable: (how can I track my progress?)

Achievable: (who can help me reach my goal?)

Relevant: (Is this goal relevant to my wishes, dream, desires?)

Time-based: (set short, mid, and long-range check-in times/dates)

**** I have written an entire workbook dedicated to this subject entitled: "Lifecare FIRST", it is available in PDF free to all those who request.*

You can recognize a "more" child if you slow down long enough, to see past the behavior. These "more" creations carry a fire in their eyes, an ache for connection. I used to resent that fire of "more" in myself, I tried to extinguish it; I tried to fit in; I tried to pretend I was okay with less. But I'm done apologizing, I'm done shrinking, I will embrace the more in me.

And if you're reading this, and feel this familiar longing for more, hear me clearly: You are not too much, the world desperately needs you. You are not a problem to be fixed; you are a soul to be honored, to be revered.

More-people teach us; more-people remind us, more-people call us back to our own hunger, to the part of us we buried under efficiency, under adulthood, under fear.

To be a "more-person" is to be a torchbearer, a champion, an advocate: to feel too much, love too deep, ache too long, and still rise. Be assured of this: *when* "more" children are loved consistently, tenderly, they become more-women, more-men: healers, prophets, truth-tellers, lovers of the least and the last.

When you see a child misbehaving, do you ask, "What's wrong with you?" Instead, ask, "What happened to you, baby?" because, behind every explosive behavior is an unmet need, a sacred cry, a flicker of more.

To the more child in all of us:

You are not too much; you are not too late.

You are not alone; you are the echo of Eden.

You are the whisper of what's next, and the world waits for your light.

Reader Reflection:

Was there ever a time I was labeled “too much” or “too emotional”?

How did those words shape me?

What images, words or experience echo in your mind, attempting to discredit you?

What steps are you taking to address that destructive false narrative.

What might it look like to reclaim my sacred sensitivity?

Are there any principles in F.I.R.S.T. that resonate with your inner child?

Part 4: The Calling of More *Misunderstood and Weaponized*

My name is Carlo.

I used to be Carl; that was the name I was given at birth, named after Dr. Carl Joseph Champagne, the physician who delivered me prematurely into this world. Looking back, it seems I was in a hurry, even then, for more. From the very beginning I was the fixer, a doer, the one who held things together. Something changed at 19 years of age, I discovered the Source of Love that lived in me, it transformed the way I looked at everything, including myself. It was as if the Spirit whispered: “that old name” Carl” bore the burden; this one will carry the calling, your name is Carlo”, a name reflecting tenderness, openness, and a little more breath in it. That's what faith gave me: more breath, more space, more awareness.

Many years would pass, my pursuit of more motivated me to pursue education, which led me to imbibe in the study of the faith through theological studies. Those who have pursued this course of study become aware too soon that whatever “brand” of religious training you pursue, this “brand” will indoctrinate you into its way of believing - not necessarily “the correct Way,” just “a” way. I dare say, the study of religion is a double-edged sword that can contribute to a mentality of segregation, self-imposed piety, division, judgementalism, even arrogance. I would ultimately discover that *loving my Creator, loving myself and loving others would be the fundamental foundation for all that I would embrace in my life*. This pursuit of love, and loving others, would accompany me to Mexico, West Africa, South Africa, East Africa and many parts of the United States.

I married at 25 years of age, looking back, I was never ready, but who really is? Part of the reasoning for my choice for marriage was to satisfy the loneliness, and to ensure any unnecessary improprieties. I would certainly not recommend anyone marry for such a reason, it is a poor foundation to build upon. As I mentioned earlier, over three decades would pass before I would realize, “this is not working.” Our incompatibility could not be transformed through wishing, praying, pleading or counseling. Consequently, we chose to do the brave thing, the right thing, move on. We would remain friends, but realized, we were not meant for marriage. Our needs from the very start of our relationship were divergent from the start; no amount of cajoling or mental exercises was going to change that. Each of us had a cry for more that neither one of us could meet, so, we chose to love each other enough to let go.

After my divorce, something unexpected began to rise, not bitterness, not self-pity, not even resignation, but love, more love; not romantic love, but a holy resolve to love deeper, without strategy or scarcity. To give without controlling the outcome; to pour out, even if it left me tired and unappreciated. I began to realize something anew: love is how *more-people* survive; love is how *more-people* live; love is how *more-people* stay awake in a world that keeps trying to lull them to sleep.

I love loving people, I don't say that for applause, I say it because it's the purest truth I know. I love looking into someone's eyes and saying without words: "You are NOT a problem," "you are NOT a burden," "you are NOT too much," "you ARE worth every ounce of attention I must give." Sometimes, people tell me it sounds exhausting, it can be, but it's also the most life-giving thing I've ever done. I've spent hours sitting beside people in their grief, in hospice, in addiction, in traumas, in loss and I don't rush them. I don't try to fix them; I just stay. Because that's what "more" people long for, more than anything, someone who stays. That's what I wanted as a child, what I still want as a man. I've learned that sometimes the greatest calling in life is simply this, *to be the person you needed when you were young*. So, I show up; I listen; I choose love, I choose more. Not because I'm trying to earn anything, but because I finally believe I am something: I am love; I am enough, and I am more.

I want to share with you something very personal: the day I had a dream: A young woman's face, framed in stillness, her eyes steady, unblinking. They held a piercing love I could not name. No smile, no words, only presence. It overwhelmed me so deeply that in the dream I felt tears rise. I remember whispering, "but God, I'm married." Then, "she's so young," and I woke. That morning, I called my wife into the room. We had been married more than thirty years — years that began with unmet expectations and a slow, steady ache that no amount of cajoling or counseling could heal. "If it's a friend you want," I told her, "I'll always be your friend. But if you can't love me because you want to — not because you must — you need to let me go." She chose to let me go, a decision we both recognized as holy and necessary if we were truly honest with one another.

I soon moved into my own apartment. For a year and a half, I was single, working with adolescents in a psychiatric hospital. When I began dating, the first attempt was a disaster; the second, equally incompatible. I then prayed a very specific prayer: "God, bring me someone who loves You, someone who can also say, without hesitation, 'Go fuck yourself.'" Not for the crudeness, but for the honesty. I longed for someone real, unpolished by religious pretense, yet shaped by divine love.

Then one day on Facebook, I noticed her. Her name felt familiar. We liked each other's posts. I sent a message, cautious, not to sound like I was flirting: "I know this sounds like a pickup line, but I don't mean it that way. Your name seems familiar. Do I know you?" Her reply: "Yes, of course. LOL. You were my youth pastor when I was 13." Thirty-five plus years had passed; I didn't remember her, not until she showed me a picture from those years. More than three decades had passed since we'd crossed paths. It was as if God had reached back to the very place, the place I'd first lost my footing in life and then divinely placed in my hands the gift, a gift I didn't know I was waiting for all along, like Abraham, and the ram in the thicket. We talked for hours. Amy shared her story, an abusive marriage, a heart that loved too much for some to understand. Amy had been told she would never find someone who could love her the

way she needed. When she said that, I knew. I had just met someone who understood more.

The first time we met in person, I stepped within two feet of her, and the realization hit me like lightning — this was the face from my dream. My dream girl. Amy. From the first day on the phone, I fell in love with her, and in the five years we have been together, I have fallen in love with her every morning, every afternoon, every evening.

She is strong, tender, and real; she has endured loss and still loves with abandon. She calls me to my best self, and she says I have brought out the best in her. We are more people, two souls who know that love, when it is honest and whole, is worth waiting a lifetime for.

She was laughter after long silence, truth after half-spoken prayers.

Her eyes had visited me once, in the stillness of a dream, before I knew her name, before I knew what I was missing.

She had walked through fire—loss, betrayal, the kind of pain that teaches the soul to keep both sword and shield nearby. And yet, when loved in the way her heart deserved, she bloomed.

She loved God, loved others, and told the truth without apology.

She loved me, the real me, not the version I thought I had to be.

We are two more people, finding that when two longings meet, the whole becomes a kind of holy.

The world does not know what to do with people who want more, it's easier to label them, quieter to dismiss them, safer to box them up and shove them to the margins. But “more”, when denied, distorted, or demonized, doesn't go away, it adapts, it learns to hide or to fight: to fight, flight or freeze.

The “more-child” misdiagnosed becomes the “troubled teen.” The aching adolescent becomes the “problem adult.” The girl who once reached for affection now holds back everything. The boy who cried for attention now pretends not to care, *but the longing never left, it just put on different clothes.*

Society gets uncomfortable with neediness, so, it rewrites it as pathology. We say: “she's too emotional,” “he just wants attention,” “they're manipulative.” It's time to abolish these negative pronouncements from our vocabularies'. We whisper these judgments behind office doors, pulpits, podiums, platforms, and clinical charts, but all the while, we are naming what we fear in ourselves, the deep, aching-vulnerability of being human.

What's more threatening than someone who feels everything? Who refuses to settle? Who dares to say: *This isn't enough?* We tend to punish “more” when it threatens our systems, but *systems were never meant to replace souls, they were meant to serve them. Institutions become cruel when they forget to serve the sacred.* When a child's cry for love is met with cold bureaucracy, what are we teaching them about a loving Creator? About life? About themselves?

Sometimes I think the world would rather numb children than listen to them, medicate them instead of mentor them, silence them instead of soothing them. *Behavior management without heart connection is just damage control in disguise.*

It's why I say again: More is not a diagnosis, it's a gift, but it must be nurtured, not manipulated. In contrast, unchecked, "more" can run wild, it can morph into addiction, obsession, or self-destruction: Lust posing as love; Greed masquerading as ambition. We've all seen what happens when "more" is severed from love, it burns down everything in sight, but when "more" is held in the arms of compassion, when it is taught to breathe, to trust, to serve, it becomes firelight instead of wildfire.

There is risk in "more." But there is far greater risk in silencing it. *We must become guardians of the flame, not firefighters. We must listen more and label less; we must see people not as diagnoses, but as sacred stories.*

One such sacred story is the story of a 13-year-old boy named Brandon. Brandon was a "gift" I had the privilege of being a caretaker of. Brandon had made a plethora of destructive choices that resulted in him being placed in a psychiatric hospital for his protection. This day I had the privilege of sharing on the topic of forgiveness; I began by requesting that each child write a "forgiveness letter." I deliberately chose to be vague as to my expectations, so that my audience would take whatever liberties they could personally imagine and manifest them with words on paper. My goal was to assist each child to understand the baggage each of us carry when we choose to limit ourselves through unforgiveness, whether that be towards God (if one believed in God), or unforgiveness of others resulting in resentment, physical and/or emotional pain. Also, my goal was to remind my listeners that forgiveness does not mean that we provide a pardon, a hall pass, or a get-out-of-jail-card, for those who have wronged us. Forgiveness does not require we invite the offender back into our lives. We also discussed the boundaries necessary for forgiveness to be comprehended, apprehended and valued. Out of all the children who attended this meeting that day, Brandon was the one who protested the loudest, stating, "I can't do this". I continued to patiently request his cooperation, which resulted in this letter:

"Dear Trust, Over the years, we both have been clashing in a long, painful, burdensome self-destruction. We have gone to the end of our road and back in constant battle with each other, starting with bullies in 2nd grade, the first mistake I ever made, and going all the way to now, where I've completely lost you. Trust, you are like a piece of paper. You can fold it and ball it up, but when you are unfolded and smoothed out, you are never the same. I forgive you for collapsing and disappearing into a pile of dust, and I have yet to forgive myself for causing that. I hope to build strong bridges out of you again. Brandon"

That letter shook me; Brandon's approach to speak to "Trust" was so creative, so empathic, so brilliant. I responded to Brandon, "Please don't ever tell me again that you can't do anything. This writing is brilliant, it's genius; I'm moved by this. There's only one problem..." Brandon responded, "What's the problem?" I continued, "This is amazing, but it's not finished, do you notice the phrase, 'I have yet to forgive myself for causing that?'" I handed Brandon another piece of paper, and without complaint he continued to write, this is what he wrote:

“Dear Addiction, you took trust in your grasp and crushed it. You’ve taken over my mind and hypnotized me into loving you, blinding me to your evil self. You are comforting in the moment when you are used, but you are hurting my health, brain and most of all, Trust. However, I must bring myself to forgive you. You are the shittiest thing to ever come into my life, but I’m the one who let you take control, and now, I am sending you away. I will no longer give in to your wrath. You can lurk in my mind and urge me to come back to you all you want, but you destroy me and other people who are close to me. Now that I think about it, you are not just addiction or actions, you are me! You were created by me and now I can’t get you out of my head. So no, I do not forgive you Addiction, because that demon does not exist. I forgive myself for putting that pressure on me and creating that brain-washing demon inside of me. I created it to be evil and doing that was horrible for me, and that consequence is the demon inside of me. I forgive myself for making me my own enemy. Brandon”

I’m certain if you read this you were moved. How does a 13-year-old write such a masterpiece of self-reflection? How? Because Brandon was a “more” child, a developing “more” man, with a bright future ahead of him, a future dependent on patience, instruction, guidance and encouragement. Brandon’s future was hanging in the balance. Brandon needed to be reminded of WHO he is: “more”. I had the privilege of seeing Brandon a few years later, puberty had emerged, and Brandon’s voice was significantly deeper, and his height was towering over me. Brandon had returned to the hospital to have his medications adjusted. I recognized him immediately. Brandon greeted me and apologized for returning to the hospital. Brandon thought that his return to the hospital may in some way be disappointing. I very quickly responded with enthusiasm for seeing him. Brandon avoided eye contact, a familiar shame that many children reflected when feeling inadequate or feeling they have disappointed someone. I encouraged Brandon, “it’s always my privilege to see you, and to witness your continued growth, you’re not where you used to be, and you’re not where you’re going to be, but you’re certainly not where you were. Brandon, you’re a work in progress, like me.” I then asked Brandon, “how do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. Step by step, one bite at a time you’re going to win.” I continued, “Brandon, if you saw me in the community at the gas station, standing next to my car kicking it, what would you do?” Brandon said, “I’d ask you ‘what’s wrong Mr. Carlo?’” I responded, “what if my response was, ‘I’m out of gas’, what would you say?” Brandon stated, “Mr. Carlo, do you need any gas money?” I continued, “what if I said, ‘No, Brandon, I don’t need gas money, I’m tired of putting gas in this car, if I put gas in it, it will just empty again.’” Brandon said, “well, Mr. Carlo, if you want to drive your car, you’ve got to put gas in it”. I responded, “That’s right Brandon, the same applies to you, you are here at the hospital, to simply top off your gas, fill your tank, and get back on the road. If you’re ever short of gas, let me know, I am always here to assist you on your journey.”

To want more is not a crime; to ask for more is not rebellion, it is the soul remembering something true: *I was made for more.*

To the one renamed, reclaimed, reborn. May your ache be honored, not pathologized. May your love pour without measure and still never run dry. May your more be held gently by those who see, and fiercely by the One who made you. You are not too much. You are just in time, and the world needs exactly the soul you carry.

Reader Reflection:

Have I ever shrunk to fit a space that couldn't hold my more?

What are my concerns regarding "more?"

What would it mean to stop apologizing and start embracing my fire?

Think about a time you met someone who saw you for who you truly are. What changed in you when you realized you were safe to be yourself?

What qualities in another person call you toward your best self?

Consider your own "dream people" — those who arrived in your life like answers to prayers you didn't know you had. What does their presence say to you about timing, trust, and divine orchestration?

*Sometimes, love is not found — it is revealed,
as if it had been waiting all along for the moment you were ready.*

Part 5: The Redemption of More - The Courage to Stay Soft, the Strength to Stay More

Sometimes the greatest calling in life is simply this: to be the person you needed when you were young. There is a quiet kind of bravery that doesn't make headlines, it doesn't shout, it doesn't perform, it doesn't win awards, it simply *stays*.

It *stays soft* when it would be easier to harden, it *stays open* when it would be safer to close; it *stays "more"* when everything around says, "Just be less."

I have come to believe that staying "*more*" is one of the most radical acts a soul can make in this world, because being a more person is not easy. Being "*more*" means walking into rooms and feeling the room before anyone says a word. Being "*more*" means carrying a heart that absorbs *more*, breaks *more*, loves *more*, and therefore, hurts *more*. Being "*more*" means seeing others' pain before they're ready to speak it, it means wanting to hug someone who just wants to push you away, it means showing up again, even when it wasn't noticed the first time.

But here's what I've learned: there is a strength in staying soft; there is a power in refusing to go numb; there is a holiness in still hoping for "*more*." The world doesn't always reward this kind of person, sometimes, it calls us needy, or too emotional, or codependent, or unstable.

But I'll tell you what we really are:

We are prophets of Presence.

We are lovers of Truth.

We are midwives of healing.

We are the ones who refuse to give up on people.

We are the ones who don't walk away when it gets messy.

We are the ones who cry, not because we're weak, but because our hearts haven't calcified.

How hearts remain soft: we are "more."

And the truth is, I've tried numbing; I've tried shutting down; I've tried becoming what people wanted, quieter, cleaner, more palatable, but every time I did, something sacred inside me withered, something divine within me dulled and I knew: *I was not meant to shrink*. So, I decided: I would not become less to fit into spaces that couldn't hold my *more*.

I would not minimize the tenderness; I would not apologize for the passion; I would not forsake the mission I didn't ask for, but now embrace with my whole heart, because this is my calling: to be a voice for the "*more*" people. To bless them; to name them; to tell them: "You're not crazy; you're not broken; you're not too much; you are sacred; you are powerful; you are deeply, divinely right to want more and you're not alone. I'm here, still standing, still soft, still loving, still more."

And if that's you too, I want to say this as clearly as I can: Don't change, stay "more," it's the bravest thing you'll ever do.

From the ashes of misunderstanding rises a new kind of humanity, more-men and more-women, who've been through the furnace and emerged not charred, but refined.

They are not perfect; they are not immune to suffering, but they are **willing**, willing to feel, to hope, to rise again with open hands and open hearts. More has forged them into lovers of the broken. More has trained them to see beauty in places others miss. More has made them tender, resilient, and courageous.

These more-souls are the teachers, the mentors, the sacred interrupters of business-as-usual. More-souls do not settle for performative kindness or shallow faith. More-souls insist on depth, on truth, on presence and they show up again in the lives of those others forgot.

I've seen these "more" reflections in hospital corridors, alongside of those suffering. I've seen them in single mothers and weary nurses, brokenhearted pastors, leaders, servants, *regular folks* and children, who should have given up by now, but haven't. More doesn't retire with age, it matures. More doesn't fade with hardship, it deepens.

There's something holy about those who have carried pain and chosen love anyway; the ones who could have shut down but chose instead to become safe havens, I call them the redeemed more-people. These "redeemed ones" are not afraid of big emotions, deep needs, or sacred questions, they are the ones who will sit with you in your sorrow and not try to fix it. They will listen without rushing; they will hold space without condition, and in doing so, they redeem even more.

Because the truth is, more is not just a desire, “more” is a **mirror** of the Divine: The One who formed galaxies and laced the DNA of dragonflies. This One is the same One who put a longing in us that no job, drug, relationship, or religion can ever fully satisfy.

We were made for the Eternal, for the One, the Divine Expression. The One more than enough, the Great I AM, to whom and to where we cry, “in-to-me-see.” That’s true INTIMACY, the longing for more. That is why I believe: love is the only force strong enough to tame and transform more, not love as sentiment, not love as control, but love as Presence. A Love that sits down in the ashes and says: “I’m not going anywhere.” Love that sees the storm and says: “I still choose you.” Love that whispers into the ache: “You are not too much, you are mine.” This is the redemption of more, the Love of more: not that it is erased, but that it is **EMBRACED**. And through that embrace, more becomes not a danger, but a gift, a calling, a sacred fire that lights the way home for us, and for others still walking in the dark.

One normative day in the Hospice continuum, I sat with a man in hospice care, a self-proclaimed atheist, weary and uncertain. He expressed concern when he learned I was a chaplain. “I don’t believe in God,” he said carefully. I smiled gently and asked, “Do you believe in love?” He paused. “Yes. I do.” “Then,” I said, “you believe in God.” He looked puzzled. “I didn’t ask if you believed in a Baptist God, or a Lutheran God, or a Catholic God, did I? I didn’t mention any denomination; I asked if you believed in love.” And then I shared something ancient, something true: “God is love, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If you say you love God, whom you cannot see, but do not love your brother, whom you do see, you are lying to yourself. Love is not confined to buildings or doctrines; Love is the fingerprint of the Divine.”

He sat quietly, I gestured to the beautiful chair beside him, handcrafted, sturdy, expensive. “That chair didn’t just fall out of the sky,” I said. “It had a manufacturer, a designer, an engineer. So, if that chair has a creator, how much more does a fragile, beautiful, complex human being like you and I have a Designer?” He softened, as if something opened in him, not toward religion, but toward wonder, toward **more**.

You don’t have to belong to a church to belong to Love; you don’t need a pulpit to believe in meaning, because God is not locked behind stained glass or creeds; God is not the property of denominations. The Eternal One is Love, and wherever Love is, there God is, and I believe this Love, the purest “more,” calls to us all, and through that embrace, “more” becomes not a danger, but a gift, a calling, a sacred fire that lights the way home for us, and for others still walking in the dark. A cry with a beautiful invitation to, “*come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.*”

May your longing never again be mistaken for lack.

May your ache lead not to shame, but to sacredness.

May you stay soft, not because it’s easy, but because it’s holy.

And may the fire of your “more” light the path home, for yourself, and for those still stumbling in the dark.

Reader Reflection: *Who in my life has carried pain and still chosen to love?*

Where do I see love—not sentiment, but presence—calling me to stay?

Part 6: Voices of More - A Manifesto for the More-Hearted

To the ones who've been told they're too much, too sensitive, too intense, too emotional, too needy, I see you. You are not too much. You are a miracle in motion, you are "more", and it is not a flaw, it is your fingerprint, this is your manifesto; this is your reminder; this is your return.

You are a More Person, you feel deeply because you were meant to carry love, not just understand it. You ask questions because the shallow end never satisfied you; you long for real connection because your soul was not designed for artificial relationships. You give more because something inside you knows what it's like to live without it. You stay soft not because you haven't been hurt, but because you refused to let pain define you. You are not weak for wanting more, you are wise, you are awake, and while the world may not know what to do with people like you, I do: We bless you; we need you; we are you.

*To the mothers who keep giving even when they're empty;
To the fathers who stay even when they're unseen, who long for a nap;
To the friends who call just to say, "I thought of you";
To the lovers who risk vulnerability even after betrayal;
To the children who wait by the door, hoping someone sees them;
To the elderly who still weep during quiet prayers;
To the ones who stayed tender when it was easier to get bitter;*

This world will try to shut you down, don't let it, stay soft, stay deep, stay true, stay more. And so, I say: *Blessed are the more people, for they will not be satisfied with cheap imitations of life, they will seek what is good and real and true, they will hunger and thirst for what is eternal, and they will find it, in one another.* We are not a small tribe, we are everywhere, and when we find one another, the world begins to heal.

So don't stop now.

Don't shrink to fit into the world's boxes.

Don't dull your light to avoid rejection.

Don't let the noise convince you to settle.

You were born for more,

You exist for a world,

aching, tired, and desperately in need of tenderness,

waiting for you to believe that.

Your name is Carlo; you are not who you once were; you are who you were always becoming. *This sacred journey, this relentless longing, this holy love, has never been a flaw. It's been your anointing all along.*

The story of more is not mine alone, it's ancient, it's global and it's woven into the very fabric of history. More has whispered through jail cells and pulpits, through protest marches and midnight prayers. More is the force that moved the hearts of those who refused to settle for injustice, bigotry, silence or shallow peace. It was the passion for "more" that stirred Abraham Lincoln to sign the Emancipation Proclamation, a moral fire that would not be extinguished by politics or opposition. President Lincoln entertained more when he created the Secret Service just hours before his assassination.

It was "more" that walked beside Martin Luther King Jr. reminding him of his divine identity and worth as he declared, "I have a dream," a dream which has materialized exponentially to liberate our nation from the evil bigoted ignorance of racism and has exponentially transformed millions of lives; that dream wasn't just about policy, it was about *Presence*, about dignity, humanity and love demonstrated in the public square. "More" carried the feet of those brave children who marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, carrying the weight of a nation's conscience in their small bodies. "More" whispered to Rosa Parks: "Don't move, not today, there is more." "More" thundered through the poetry of Muhammad Ali voice, a voice that refused to be afraid, a voice that *loved himself loudly* in a world that tried to quiet him. Muhammad Ali said, "Impossible is just a big word thrown around by small men who find it easier to live in the world they've been given than to explore the power they have to change it. Impossible is not a fact, it's an opinion. Impossible is not a declaration, it's a dare. Impossible is potential. Impossible is temporary." More broke through the childhood silence of Albert Einstein and whispered a theory into his soul that reshaped the universe. Einstein reportedly never spoke for the first 3 years of his life, consequently, teachers throughout his elementary education believed Albert was lazy and had little hope that he would ever experience MORE.

More kept Thomas Edison trying after thousands of failures to invent the light bulb, each spark, each flicker, a stubborn flame that said: *keep going*. Edison was quoted as saying, "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." "More" took Jesus, the man of sorrows, the Prince of Peace, down the Via Dolorosa, carrying a cross he didn't deserve, a demonstration of the power and influence of "more."

More is a motivator and an instigator. More nudges men and women to pursue education, relationships, careers, goals, and countless opportunities when the odds are less than favorable. In contrast, more brings nations, peoples, companies to their knees, as greed, covetousness and jealousy abounds. More is much like fire, what warms us can also burn us. What comforts us can also inflame and destroy us.

You and I know MORE requires a delicate balance, too much of an emphasis on MORE risk's addiction and abuse, too little emphasis risks withdrawal, neglect, abandonment or rejection.

"More" scares a whole lot of folks. "More" is responsible for many life-altering addictions and tragic detours in life. Ever heard the comment, "too much of anything good can be too much"? Donna Tartt, in her book "The Goldfinch" wrote, "Sometimes we want what we want even if we know it's going to kill us", that's the trauma of "more", the dilemma of unchecked cravings. The human desire for love frequently is substituted or

counterfeited for meaningless sex or unbridled lust, yet in contrast, the heart of the more-child craves to be embraced, cared for, listened to, given eye contact, and simply told, “I love you, you matter”. Can you see why religious frauds draw away so many gifted “more-people”? Religion single-handedly appeals to people’s need for being truly “fulfilled”, instead, these wholesale “wheeler and dealers” exchange true intimacy for a cheap, counterfeit dependence on buildings, budgets, and institutions rather than developing the treasured “more-person” to recognize their intrinsic value and worth?

More has been responsible for the rise and fall of nations, more has peered through time sarcastically smirking through the successes and failures of kings, celebrities, dignitaries, and royalties, while contributing simultaneously to the destructive influences of addiction, tragedies and loss.

More can be an opportunistic impulse that innocently disguises itself as human need, camouflaging its intentions for evil, and in the most unsuspecting moment, this impulse for more explodes or implodes the healthiest of foundations and structures. More can be a formidable force for immense good, driving innovation, creativity, and selfless acts of service, but it can also be twisted and manipulated to serve destructive ends, subtly yet powerfully influencing our choices and actions in ways we may not always recognize.

We are all too familiar with the phrase, “I just can’t get enough of that”. Histories tragedies and inhumanities have been directly and indirectly linked to this culprit called more. Ancient writ says it like this, *“Where do you think all these appalling wars and quarrels come from? Do you think they just happen? Think again. They come about because you want your own way, and fight for it deep inside yourselves. You lust for what you don't have and are willing to kill to get it. You want what isn't yours and will risk violence to get your hands on it. And why not? Because you know you'd be asking for what you have no right to. You're spoiled children, each wanting your own way.”* (James 4:1-3) **The Message**

How do we ameliorate such a formidable friend and foe such as more? Is it possible to coexist with such an unpredictable, even imaginary force such as more? I believe there is only one antidote to such a malleable character: that antidote is love. Love is what motivated men and women over centuries to commit themselves to a dream, a mission, a plight, that few, in their right mind, would dare pursue.

“More” is not new; “more” is Eternal. More is the Voice of the Creator saying, “I am not finished with you yet.” Every generation has its more-bearers, they are the ones who dream when others sleep, who speak when others are silent, who rise when others shrink. You may be one of them, you may feel out of place in a world that says, “Be quiet,” but that’s only because you were made to **cry out: “I AM more”**.

Let these voices remind you: *you are not alone in your hunger; you are not broken because you want more; you are in good company, the company of firebrands, healers, prophets, and peacemakers.*

You are a voice of more. And the world is waiting to hear your song.

You who burn with longing, you who ache with unrelenting hope, you who have been labeled too much, you are not a problem; you are a prophecy. So, sing your song; shout your truth; stay soft; stay strong. Be the voice of more, the world is listening.

Reader Reflection:

What voices of “more” have inspired me—whether public figures or private saints?

What truth or dream is rising in me that the world might need to hear?

Part 7: You, Too Are More

If you’ve made it this far, let me whisper something sacred to your soul: You are not too much; your longing is not a defect. Your ache is not an accident; you were made for more. I don’t say that lightly, I say it because I see you. I hear your internal questions; I’ve felt that same restlessness, the one that stirs when you lie awake at night and wonder, *‘is this all there is?’*

I want to tell you emphatically, **NO**, there is more, more wonder, more love, more depth, more meaning... the ache you feel? It’s the compass, it’s the spark, it’s the invitation to keep seeking what is true and beautiful and holy.

You may have been told to tone it down; you may have been told to settle, to calm down, to stop needing so much, but let me be one voice in your life who says: **Don’t**, don’t shrink, don’t quiet your song, don’t apologize for needing more than scraps.

The world has enough people who’ve learned to live half-alive, what we need are those brave enough to feel the whole weight of *the sacred longing* and still move toward the Light. You, too, are a more-child, and your hunger is not something to cure, it’s something to **honor**. So, love deeply; peak boldly; rest when you must, and never forget:

You were made by Love, for Love, to give Love. And that, dear soul, is the most sacred more of all.

One such soul is my beautiful daughter Melodie Joy, from the first moment I held her, I saw the music in her name woven into her spirit. Melodie didn’t demand the spotlight; she didn’t push to be seen. She smiled with tiny, cute lips and eyes that squinted like they were holding a secret joy. Melodie is my second-born, her older sister, Meagan, shone so brightly ahead of her arrival, and then Noah arrived shortly after her, the first boy, and he too inadvertently drew so much attention from everyone, even from Melodie. Somewhere in that mix, Melodie learned to live in the quiet spaces between.

Melodie didn’t clamor to be noticed, she pursued achievement. She dreamed, and then she chased those dreams until they were hers. She scaled every mountain she faced and became the first to earn her master’s degree. Numbers bowed to her mind; equations found their answers in and through her. And yet, while she was winning on paper, she quietly carried battles in her heart and mind.

I didn't know, back then, about the eating disorder she hid so well. I didn't see the way her body image whispered its cruel lies to her. She carried that weight, not just on her frame, but in her soul, and never spoke of it. Perhaps she thought no one would understand. Perhaps she thought her worth was something she had to protect in silence.

And still, Melodie loved; she gave. She kept moving forward. Today, Melodie is an amazing mother to beautiful little boy named John Luke, she is a wife to a man named Luke who is a gentle giant and treasures her. Melodie has built a life rich with love, stability, and grace, she's proof that *more* does not always arrive in shouts and banners, Sometimes, *more* comes in a quiet, steady melody, the kind that lingers in the heart long after the song is over.

Melodie has been my *more* child—not because she ever asked for more, but because she is more. She always was and is.

"In the quiet of your life, you carried Joy like a hidden crown."

"You scaled mountains without asking for applause."

"You have always been more, quietly, beautifully, undeniably more."

Mel-Belle

*In the shadow, you shone.
In the quiet, you conquered.
Dream-chaser, mountain-climber,
keeper of silent battles
and radiant Joy.*

*You are the melody that lingers,
not loud, but lasting.
Not demanding, but unforgettable.*

*You have always been more,
and you always will be.*

With love, your Papa and fellow *more-child* who stayed by the door

Reader Reflection:

Who in your life has inspired you, not through grand gestures, but through steady, quiet faithfulness? Write about what you've learned from them.

Think of a time you carried a private struggle. What did you wish others could have understood about you in that moment?

In what ways have you underestimated your own worth or presence? How might you embrace those qualities now?

What would you want others to remember about the way you lived, loved, and persevered?

How can you honor both the hidden and the seen parts of your story?

What am I still longing for, and what if that longing is holy?

If I believed I was truly made by Love, for Love, to give Love, how would I live differently today?

Epilogue: The Final Word

Dear Beloved Reader,

If you're holding this book, it means something in you recognized the sound of your own soul echoing through mine. Maybe it was the ache, maybe it was the hunger, maybe it was the longing for more that the world told you to suppress. Let me tell you something now, as plainly and as personally as I can: You are not alone, you never were. Even in the silence, even in the ache, even when your voice trembled or disappeared altogether, the Presence was with you; Love was with you. "More" was whispering beneath the surface of your sorrow.

This book is not just about my story, it's about ours, it's about the sacred longing that binds us, the divine ache that refuses to be silenced, and the courage it takes to believe that life still holds beauty, mystery, and purpose for you.

You are a more person, you always have been, now, bless that truth, live from it. This is your sacred ache; it's not a flaw; it's a flame to light the path and warm the hearts of all you encounter. Speak from it; love from it, and when others question your depth or your need, smile gently and remember this: You were made for more, and the world needs what only you can offer. May you go forward with tenderness for your past, grace for your present, and holy anticipation for your future. May you remember you are never alone, and may you always, always return to the whisper: "You were made for more."

With holy affection, Carlo Griseta,

A fellow pilgrim of the ache, the beauty, and the sacred more

Not for Sale

There is something deeply troubling in the way mankind has monetized nearly everything. It isn't just about price tags on goods; it's about the quiet conversion of *care* into *currency*. We sell what should be freely given, we charge for what should be willingly shared, and in doing so, we lose a part of our soul.

We've monetized **faith**: Churches preach tithes as taxes, not as acts of joyful surrender. Pulpits build empires that, according to churchtrac.com: "allocate 40-60% of their contributions on salaries and 20-30% on facilities and operations." Ministries and

denominations seek to brand themselves, to *keep up with the joneses*, striving to attract their next victim. We've traded communion for consumerism, and in too many places, people exit our places of worship not more loved, but more burdened.

We've monetized **healing**: Doctors "practice" medicine, while the unsuspecting fail to realize the "practice" is on or with their welfare, while insurance companies and pharmaceutical giants orchestrate the real symphony behind the scenes. Treatments become guesses; prescriptions become products; patients become statistics. Meanwhile, drug reps walk into clinics seeking to "incentivize" with golf invitations and steakhouse lunches, and no one blinks. Prescriptions are written to satisfy the industries greed for more, an inverted twist on healthcare.

We've monetized **mental health**: Counselors and Therapists, too often bound by billing codes and progress notes, stretch their clients suffering into twelve sessions instead of one moment of breakthrough. We prolong pain, not always to heal it, but sometimes to preserve the business of it. Worse, we create dependency when we should be empowering healing and growth, the journey towards wholeness.

We've monetized **ministry**: Religious leaders collect six-figure salaries while preaching sacrificial living, attempting to sell the perverted lie of "multiplication" resulting in monetary prosperity. We build sanctuaries of stone while neglecting the living temples of people. We manufacture followers and dependents, instead of forming sons and daughters of the Divine who demonstrate love through their day-to-day interactions. Sermons soothe, but they fail to empower, they fail to send, instead they seek to create religious adherents to duplicate their shades of grey.

What we need now is not more monetization, but **re-sacralization**: *a return to the holy ground of human dignity, where care is offered freely, where healing is not withheld for profit, and where love is never charged by the hour*, thus restoring the reverence and meaning of our existence.

This is why I cannot sell "*more*," it is not mine to sell. More is something I've been given, through fire, tears, and presence, and it must be given again, reinvested. The people who most need to hear, that they are not too much, that they are seen, that they are sacred, are the ones least likely to afford a book, a counselor, or a retreat.

This is for them.

So let it be known, I will not monetize this sacred offering. If anything within these pages stirs something in you, you may offer a gift, not to me, but to the work of compassion, to the continued circulation of love that costs nothing, and is worth everything.

A non-profit will soon be named to direct all funds to be distributed to needs related to a "more" needs and will be scrutinized to ensure its gifts are solely used for these purposes, void of salaries, operational costs or ancillary expenses.

Author Bio: Carlo Griseta is a companion and lifelong advocate for the misunderstood, the misnamed, and the "more" hearted. A former pastor, hospice chaplain, bereavement coordinator, teacher, probation officer, adolescent psychiatric hospital manager who continues to unashamedly profess his love for the entire human

race. Carlo's life has always orbited around one core calling: to love and be loved deeply.

Carlo has walked alongside grieving families, foster children, troubled teens, wounded, addicted and forgotten souls. His sacred vocation is not bound by religion, but by a longing for the Presence, healing, and Truth. *MORE* is Carlo's heart-song, a poetic reflection of a boy who always needed more, a man who gave more, and a soul who believes we were all made for something deeper, something "more".

Carlo lives with his wife Amy, his "more girl" and life companion, and continues to serve and bless the "more" of the world, wherever they may be found.

Dedication; To my wife, Amy: my love, my more girl, my dream girl who loves so deeply, so hard and tender, who dispelled all doubts that there could be such a life as "more" on this planet.

To my parents, Vito and Gloria: who tended to my fire and embraced my more-nature.

To my brothers: Vito, Mario, Fred, and Kenny, faithful companions, encouragers in the journey of life.

To Bobby Poe who saw the "more" in me as a boy when others were distracted by the noise.

To my children: Meagan, Melodie, Noah, Sabrina, Gina, Jonathon, and our son Anthony, who has already graduated into the Eternal Presence. You are all the breath behind these words. Thank you for the lessons you all teach me each day as I celebrate the "more" in you.

To all the Angels at Monarch Hospice and Palliative Care and Eden Home Care who masquerade as people and reflect an exceptional service of "more".

And **last**, but never least, to all the "more people" of the world: the ones who stayed by the door, who wanted too much, who felt too deeply, who were told to be less; may you finally believe: *you were right to want more.*