



# up front

with Brad Goins

## The Light of Love

Claire Boudreaux Bateman is a Lake Charles native who's just published her second children's book, *This Little Light of Mine*.

The book is illustrated with watercolors by Baton Rouge artist Katie Norwood Alexander, whose mother, Cammie Quinn, grew up in Lake Charles.

Bateman was inspired to write the book by a dream she had after a long period during which she tried unsuccessfully to conceive her second child. Bateman dreamed she heard a man shouting, "It's a girl and we're ready to turn on her light." She soon learned she was pregnant.

A second inspiration was the Bible verse, Jeremiah 1:5, that begins the book's narrative. Its words — "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you" — have long played a key role in theological discussions of the nature of God.

The book's narrative takes the form of a conversation between God and Bateman's daughter Avery that takes place in heaven some time before Avery is born on earth. In the book, the child is never called by name, but instead is gently addressed by God as "little one." (At present, real-life Avery is two years old.)

God gives the child a light he says comes "straight from [his] heart." When the child expresses concern she may lose the light, God tells her "it's impossible." He explains: "... my light will always be in you."

He goes on to tell the child that his light "is made of [his] love."

"You will," God tells the little one, "use [my light] to love others, and your kindness will lead you right back to me. You will recognize the light in people when they are sweet or forgiving."

Toward the end of the story, God's statement, "I have given my light to everyone," is accompanied by a painting of the earth surrounded by a large yellow glow.

The book, says Bateman, sends two main messages: "God is involved, and ... if we go back to the belief that we all have [God's] light within us, then any problem is approachable. It's solvable."

Different people have different ideas of what God is. This book presents a vision of God as a loving, compassionate, accepting and joyful being. The God in this story is, as far as I can tell, portrayed in entirely positive terms. Parents who'd like their children to grow up with the conception of God as a positive, loving figure will find this book a valuable addition to the family library.

The book's illustrations are in keeping with traditional Christian imagery. The angels have wings and wear white gowns. God is portrayed as an old man whose hair and beard are long, flowing and white.

The artist is sparing in her use of detail, stopping just short of minimalism. Figures often hover in the multi-hued blue backgrounds that represent heaven or in glowing washes of yellow that represent the light of God's love. Children of all ages should find the simple and direct art easy and appealing to look at.

Bateman feels her story could be helpful when parents need to inform young children about such difficult issues as illness and death. The artist does in fact manage to depict scenes of illness and old age in images that will not disturb children.

The hardback book, which retails for \$18.50, can be purchased locally at The Cotswold and Threadworks, or online at Barnes and Noble or Amazon.

Bateman is a graduate of St. Louis High School. She has a master's in urban planning from U.N.O. She and her husband run an event planning firm in Baton Rouge.