# We Rise Higher

Poems and Prayers for Graduates

JOE DAVIS

This book is dedicated to the next generation of graduates who are showing the world just how high we can rise together.

### To the Reader

I wouldn't have survived high school if it wasn't for how God showed up through my community. There were times when I felt alone in the struggle, and I wondered if anyone else shared my fears and doubts.

Will I even graduate? Will I trip and fall in front of everyone when I go onstage to get my diploma?

What happens next? What does "adulting" even mean, and do I have what it takes to make it in life? Am I enough?

How can I ever live up to all the expectations people have of me? Can I even live up to the expectations I have of myself?

Every single day we're bombarded with messages from media machines, assaulted by microaggressions, or unexpectedly bumping against unhealed wounds.

This is why I need prayers, practices, and community to remind me, and help me remind others, of who I am, who we are, and who we can become together.

Whenever I forget, I'm reminded of how the beauty and power of God lives within me because of the beauty and power of God I see reflected in you and those around us.

God is always moving within us.

The ways God shows up through prayers, practices, and community have always been what most powerfully transforms me and calls me to action. During my transition into the world after high school, I realized how much I

needed these reminders. It was then that I learned not only did others share my fears and doubts, but they also shared my hopes and dreams.

My highest hope and biggest dream for you is that you live into the fullness of who God called and created you to be. I pray that all of who you are is not just tolerated but celebrated. I pray that you know your value doesn't decrease based on someone else's opinion—and that you know this truth so deeply within yourself that it vibrates in every cell of your being until you rise above any obstacle or challenge.

You are enough.
You are good and worthy of love.

You are whole just as you are in this very moment. Nothing anyone says or does, even yourself, can ever change that.

You are filled with an infinite abundance of grace, resilience, and brilliance because this is who the Creator created you to be.

And if you ever forget, may the poems and prayers in this book serve as reminders of the beauty and power of God within you and your community.

Even if we fall, we fall in love. We catch each other, we hold each other. Ultimately, we rise as high as we lift each other.

I rise, you rise, you rise, I rise, together we rise higher.

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# This Place

## A poem to honor where you feel most like you

Here is where we give you the permission you haven't yet given yourself to show up and be your most authentic self.

You can cry here, you can take your time here, to be you is not a crime here.

We are all divine here,
we shine brighter when we all shine here,
we rise higher when we all rise here,
we practice being kind here,
we celebrate the fact that we are still alive here.

You can make mistakes here,
no guilt, blame, or shame here,
there's only grace here,
we know you by name here,
we've been waiting for you,
so glad you came here,
we hope that you stay here,
all that you are can be reclaimed and embraced here.

### An Invitation:

Place your hand over your heart, breathe deeply, and thank God for the gift of your body. What's the most compassionate thing you can do for yourself in this moment?

Go and do that.