

# Daughter

S L Wade

We have all the generations in together at church. Me, with a warm jacket and greying hair, sitting alongside the aisle. The friend who comes to join me. The little ones at the back on a thick rug and jigsaw mat with toys. Sam, his walking stick heavy on the timber floor, and Jessie, her lined face always glad. And near me, six-month Millie, saying 'Ba ba ba,' and reaching for the girl with sparkles on her cheeks who's turned around to play.

A young man named Daniel walks up to do the Bible reading. He is quiet, a builder, father to three small daughters with beautiful names, and his wife has the grace of a dancer. Daniel stands facing us and begins to read, his voice flowing mellow through the hall. Today the reading is 1 John, chapter 3. 'See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!'

But I'm drawn away from his words as, beside me, his youngest daughter Audrey totters up the aisle as fast as her white stockinged legs will take her – she's going to reach her daddy. Her mother comes up from behind, sweeping her up with a laugh. Audrey has a tiny ponytail, her brown curls escaping, and we all are smiling.

And this is what you teach me as we gather as family today.

'Run to me,' you say. 'Run to me like Audrey.'