

THE HEART WORK

Declutter Your Past To Make
Room For An Amazing Future



JACKIE DORMAN

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Preface

Arise, my dearest. Hurry, my darling. Come away with me! I have come as you have asked to draw you to my heart and lead you out. For now is the time, my beautiful one. The season has changed, the bondage of your barren winter has ended, and the season of hiding is over and gone. Song of Songs 2:10 (TPT)

Over a decade ago, one of my closest and dearest friends went through devastation in her life. I tend to be overly dramatic when describing things, and my husband calls it speaking evangelistically. So, when I explain what she went through, there is no other way for me to say it except, one day out of nowhere the locusts came. We hear about locusts mostly in movies or Bible stories, but I don't think most people living in industrialized nations know the almost immediate and utter destruction they can create.

A locust swarm can be 460 miles in size, and pack between 40 and 80 million locusts into less than one-half a square mile. Woah, that's a lot of bugs! A swarm that size can eat up to 423 million pounds of plants a day. Locusts are relentless and unmerciful, and when they show up, they leave nothing

behind but famine and heartache. As dramatic as that sounds, some things happen in our lives that feel like a locust swarm just hit us. That was the case for my dear friend. I didn't see her for nearly seven years after this devastating event happened in her life, and when I saw her again, I was overjoyed. She looked great, and by all outside appearances, she seemed to have recovered completely.

I was ministering at a nearby church, so I invited her to come and see me. She seemed hesitant, but she said she would try. When the day came, she showed up. I saw her walk in the door from where I stood on the stage. But something was not quite right. She seemed uncomfortable, and she kept moving her hands like she wasn't quite sure what to do with them. I tried to catch her eye, to smile, and to let her know I was glad she accepted my invitation to come. But I couldn't. She was looking to the side the way someone does when they don't know where to look or what to look at.

Nevertheless, I was excited to see her there. It had been a long time since I had seen her in this context. Sure we had gone shopping and had lunch, we had caught up on life and family, but it had been many years, almost a decade since I had been able to come together with her in worship and spiritual community.

My mind traveled back to all the incredible experiences we had shared. She had been my fearless leader, my mentor, my spiritual mother, my teacher, my friend. She had pushed me to my potential by her devotion and modeled a life of passion for God and His people like nothing I had ever seen in anyone else. Her life itself was worship - beautiful, uninhibited, and devoted. As I watched her now, fumbling awkwardly in the very atmosphere that she once created by her presence, my heart broke.

I thought about the tragedy that had torn through her life. I remembered the great pain of that time and the overwhelming loss of the years that followed. She had been through so much. But that was over seven years ago! Why wasn't she bouncing back? Where was the woman that I knew, where had she gone? I didn't just want answers; I needed them. Not just for her, but myself, and for my daughters, and for all the women that I taught weekly through my women's workshops. I instinctively knew that whatever it was that I was seeing, wasn't just about my dear friend; it was about us all.

A few years later, I went through my own season of disconnection, and pain so great that it caused months of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual paralysis. It was during this hard time in my own life that I received my

answer. Trauma happens to us all, and when it does, it doesn't just hurt us, it creates different versions of us. Versions of us called **victim** and **survivor**. These counterfeit identities cannot **fully possess** the abundant life Jesus died to give us. We must come back to ourselves, to our true identities if we want to live out the spectacular destinies we have been created to live. Destinies that are befitting of a daughter of God.

So many of us have been forced by circumstances to settle for too little, for too long. Many no longer even allow themselves to hope that there is something more for them. It's time for restoration. So how do we move forward? How do we get back to our original selves? The answer to that question has become the catalyst for this book and so much more, an answer that is spawning a great awakening, a revolution, and a heart reformation that will change the world as we know it for all people. I dedicate this book to all of you, God's WOW women, His sleeping princess-daughters, it's time to come out of hiding, it's time to heal, and it's time to **ARISE** and become **THE REAL YOU!**

Introduction

HI, I'M JACKIE!

I am so excited that you are reading *The Heart Work*. What a privilege and honor it is to guide you on this journey to a wholehearted abundant life. Some of you may have become aware of this book serendipitously, and you might not even know who I am, so allow me to introduce myself. I am a hope dealer, a truth teller, a pioneer, a thought-leader, an influencer, and most importantly a daughter of God.

These are just a few words I use to describe myself, and my passions to others. I have a list of accomplishments and credentials, as we all do, but all you really need to know about me is I've chosen to spend my life awakening others. I have had the opportunity to be an author, a conference speaker, a television executive, a producer, a media missionary, a wife and a mother. None of the things I've done, however, has ever compared to the great honor of being a daughter of God. This identity and relationship is my most genuine passion, and my **greatest hope is that I can be a supernatural voice in your life**. Speaking God's heart over you in a way that will awaken you to your greatest destiny, your highest identity, and propel you into your most authentic and abundant life.

I believe you are here by divine appointment. The word *divine* means, "Relating to, coming from, or like God," and an *appointment* is, "an arrangement to meet someone at a particular time and place." Now if you put those together, the *divine appointment* means you have a pre-arranged appointment to meet God, at a particular time and place, and guess what my friend that place is right here, and that time is right now! You are being drawn here. Chances are you have been crying out, or at least your heart has, for healing and wholeness. God desires to answer those cries, you are having a close encounter of the divine kind! That should excite you so much because this a time of accelerated healing and growth in your life.

There is one thing to keep in mind as you embark on this journey with me; it's just like a scheduled surgery. When you are scheduled for surgery, you make room in your life for it. You give yourself plenty of what I like to call, space and grace. Give yourself space, or time to dig into the material this month and make sure you offer yourself grace as you rest, and allow the healing process to take over.

This book is very special to me; it's my life's message. I struggled for years in these areas, always wishing I could find someone who understood what I was going through. I wanted

to live a good life, I did, but every time I would start to make progress, I would always find myself flat on my back again. I read the books and went to the conferences, but I always felt like everyone else knew something I didn't know. All the women around me seemed to have it together, while I was hanging on by a thread year after year. "I must be too messed up, or this God stuff just doesn't work," I thought to myself. I was half right; God didn't want to fix my mess. **He wanted to heal my heart.** God doesn't want to duct tape our current lives, He wants to reveal our REAL lives. Ones that are vibrant, beautiful, and world-changing. I don't just teach what's in this book; I was the first student. The Heart Work is an inner healing philosophy based on my best selling 30-day online workshop.

It will help you uncover the hidden things in your heart that are holding you back from the life you have been created to live. You will discover and discard the roots to some of your most chronic heart and life issues, and gain the practical and spiritual tools to overcome them for good. I can honestly say my life is completely transformed, and I have now been teaching publicly on The Heart Work for over a decade. You can do this! I promise you, and I have seen nothing short of

other-worldly results for those who set aside the time to do the work and focus on their healing.

YOUR NEXT 30 DAYS!

I know 30 days sounds like a long time in our busy world. But the time is going to pass anyway, so you might as well use it to do something that will change your life.

“Let's just process that,” is one of my favorite things to say, and it's essential that you take time to do that while you are reading this book. When it comes to books, I love a good page-turner, one that you stay up all night reading because you can't wait to see what happens next. Although I do consider this book an excellent book that is not the way I want you to read it.

I have divided this book into Four Parts, and Fourteen Chapters. Each Part is equally important and builds upon the healing of the one before it. I encourage you to read no more than one Part a week and take time to process and reflect on the content of each Chapter before going on to the next one.

BONUS FEATURES

At the end of each Chapter there is a section called, **Let's Just Process That!**. There you will find:

Questions - I love to ask myself questions. I want to teach you the power of question asking. Remember they that ask - RECEIVE! I want to encourage you to have a notebook or journal ready to write down the answers and revelations that will be surfacing in your mind and heart.

Greater Truth - You can't just erase the lies you believe, you have to replace them with Greater Truth. These key verses of the ancient wisdom will help you get started.

I have also included at the end of each of the four Parts a section called, **The Heart Check-In**. There you will find:

What to Expect - Think of it as your sister-friend who has "been there and done that," giving you some advice and encouragement about what might be happening to you, and what you might be feeling at that point in the process.

I believe this will be a life changing month for you. I know you may have heard that before, and you may have tried a million times to get past whatever it is that's holding you back - pain from the past, addictions, toxic mindsets, or unhealthy patterns, etc. You may even be reading this because you are currently in pain due to a broken relationship with a friend, parent, child, or spouse.

Let me guess, you probably have tried everything, but nothing has worked so far, am I right? This time is different. I promise you. Not because of me, I'm not magic. But because of you, you're finally ready.

You are here to have an encounter that is going to change your life forever and have you living more abundantly than you ever thought possible.

So when you're ready, let the heart healing begin!

PART ONE

GETTING STARTED: SETTING EXPECTATIONS

1

Expectancy - It's All About Faith

***Expectancy:** (verb) The state of thinking or hoping that something, especially something pleasant, will happen or be the case.*

The very first thing that I want to do is set a tone of expectancy. This is a vital ingredient to your success because you are only going to get out of this book what you put into it. When I say, "What you put into it," I don't mean just your dedicated attention, but also your expectation - spiritually, emotionally and mentally. Expectancy also is known as hope that leads to faith, and it's all about faith because faith is the currency of the unseen world. Faith in what? Faith in God. But not just belief in His existence but that He is good and emotionally involved in your life. He listens to and answers those that look to Him for help.

It's impossible to please God apart from faith. And why? Because anyone who wants to approach God must believe both that He exists and that He cares enough to respond to those who seek Him out.
Hebrews 11:6 (MSG)

So how does this faith thing work? Let me break it down for you. If you try to go to the mall and buy that sweater you've been admiring with a plate of chocolate chip cookies, you won't get very far. Why? Because chocolate chip cookies don't have any worth in our economy (okay maybe chocolate chip cookies are a bad example because let's face it they are LIFE), we value money, credit, gold, silver, diamonds, and precious jewels. These are the things that can purchase for us what we need in our material world. I'm happy to report; however, those things aren't considered precious in the spiritual stock market. It is **expectancy** or *hope that leads to faith*, which is of greatest value, and it is the key to receiving everything you could ever need from heaven.

You might think this immediately counts you out. You've been through so much, and you don't know what to believe in anymore. Perhaps your faith is hanging by a thread, it's virtually non-existent, or maybe you don't know if you ever had much faith in the first place. I hate to disagree with you so

early into our journey together, but if you didn't have any faith, you wouldn't be reading this book. So stop beating yourself up. If all you feel you have left is a tiny shred of hope, there's good news, that's all you need for a miracle, a small seed of faith.

WATER THE SEED - ACTIVATION

Now that we have established that you have what you need for a life-changing, radical, mind-blowing transformation, let's activate that seed. Get somewhere quiet where you can focus, and I want you to picture God, the divine, the creator of the universe, whatever you would imagine if you were picturing that. Now I want you to picture Him coming to you, racing towards you, passing up the other seven billion-plus people on the planet just to get to YOU.

He has heard the cries of your heart, seen your expectancy, your longing, and He wants to answer the call of the deepest places in your soul. Those fissures and fractures in your heart don't disqualify you, they are the reason He is pursuing you because He has promised to be close to the brokenhearted.

Tell him all your troubles and pour out your heart-longings to him. Believe me, when I tell you—he will help you! Psalm 62:8 (TPT)

Hear Him whisper, "Move your heart closer to me, and I will come close to you." Put your name in there, "Come close _____, come closer to me." This is His promise to you, come closer to me, and I will come closer to you. God is attracted to those that believe in Him, and His words, and who want the abundant life that He has promised them. He is attracted to seekers, knockers and askers. You are a seeker, and you want more. You are a knocker, and you are going to keep beating on that door until it opens because no matter how hard life has been so far, you know this is not the way you were created to live. Something inside of you intrinsically longs for your real life.

That's why you are here. So ask for it. Release the expectancy that's in your heart. What is it that has brought you here? What do you want? God is a God of seasons, of order and of timing. What are you expecting to happen in this season for you? Get it in your mind right now, and then verbalize it. Speak it out loud. Sometimes we don't even know what we want until we hear our own voices saying it out loud.

So release the expectancy that's in your heart. What is it that has brought you here? **WHAT DO YOU WANT?**

GO AHEAD, SAY IT

Everyone is going to have something different come from their heart. We are all here for various reasons. We all have different stories, but we have one thing in common - hunger. For some it's a desperate hunger, "I can't go on like this anymore, something has to change, S.O.S, I'm sinking." For others it's more of a missing piece, a void, a "there has to be more to life than this" hunger. For someone else it's a, "I'm not sure why I am here; something is pulling me." And for the rest, it is, "I don't feel anything at all; I am numb right now." Whether you fit one of these categories or all of them, you are here because have been drawn by something much bigger than your vocabulary, more complex than your understanding, and much greater than your pain.

NEW BEGINNINGS

Many people have picked up this book hoping for a new beginning and a fresh start. If that is what you are expecting you can have it, but it will first require some endings. So often we try to have beginnings without any endings. Sometimes I forget who I used to be before my divine revealing. It seems far away, like another lifetime, like another person. Because it WAS another person. It was a counterfeit life that had to end before my best life could begin. These two lives can't co-exist.

One has to die. New beginnings are not for the faint of heart, because they require us to let go of things we have been dragging around through life. They need us to sign the "do not resuscitate orders" on our old hurts, and bury those things once and for all. We have to make room for all the things we are asking God to do in our life by letting go of the past, and all the things that no longer serve us. It's time for more. Are you ready?

LET'S JUST PROCESS THAT!

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Do you believe that God is emotionally involved in your life?

Describe an instance in which you KNEW God was reaching out to you in some way? Through a person, a sign, an experience, or any other encounter?

What is the expectancy in your heart? Why are you here? What are you hoping will happen in your life?

What are some of the things that come to mind that you need to let go of to have a new beginning? (It's okay if you don't know yet.)

GREATER TRUTH TO EMBRACE

How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered! I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! And when I wake up, you are still with me! Psalm 139:17-18 (NLT)

This is the reason I urge you to boldly believe for whatever you ask for in prayer—be convinced that you have received it and it will be yours. Mark 11:24 (TPT)

Be alert, be present. I'm about to do something brand-new. It's bursting out! Don't you see it? There it is! I'm making a road through the desert, rivers in the badlands. Isaiah 43:19 (MSG)

2

Why It's Different This Time

There's an opportune time to do things, a right time for everything on the earth. Ecclesiastes 3:1 (MSG)

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

I know you're skeptical. Let's get honest and ask ourselves the question, "What makes this time any different?" If you're anything like me, you probably have already tried a million things to fix yourself and your life. You have read countless books, been to all the seminars, and you have every t-shirt and every mug. What is it you've been doing? You have been trying to get over it - the divorce, the adverse childhood, the thing that didn't work out in your life.

So what makes this time any different? All the other times that we've gotten excited about the change, we have had to eventually admit, "I don't think this is working, nothing has changed." I used to get ridiculously excited about the New

Year. I am not kidding when I say I was over the top, and I had expectations of a fairytale transformation from just one flip of the calendar page. I wanted BIG MAGIC. It was big alright; it was a big letdown every time. By about March, I would have to reluctantly concede that it was indeed the same old life, just a different year. It took me decades to realize that each New Year isn't magic; our lives don't change until our hearts do.

TRANSFORMATION IS SUPERNATURAL

Transformation: (verb) a process of profound and radical change.

We can't have the type of change we want overnight. Real and lasting change is a process, and nobody likes the word *process*. It immediately implies discomfort and work, and we tend to run from that word when at all possible. Allow me to reframe the word *process* for you so that you can begin to embrace it, and all the wonder that it truly implies.

We live in a culture where everyone wants a drive through transformation. We pull up to the self-help book section and say, "I will have the number seven please, a beautiful, fulfilling life, happy marriage, great kids, endless energy and ambition, and can I add a side of well-toned abs. Thank you!"

You have no idea how much I wish it worked this way, but it doesn't.

The transformation looks more like a cocoon.

We all love butterflies, but do you know what happens inside that cocoon? First of all the caterpillar disintegrates, it releases enzymes that break down its body into a gooey mess. If you were to peek inside, please don't, you would see caterpillar soup! You would not see anything that suggests what it once was or even a hint of what it might become. We are talking organized chaos here! A complete overhaul. A total rebirth. All that was is abandoned in exchange for what will be. This type of upgrade doesn't come easily, and it certainly doesn't come from buying a book or attending a workshop. It requires an all-in attitude and a supernatural surrender to a divine process that begins when you say YES.

THE MAGIC PILL

The opposite of the process is the quick fix. A quick fix is a desirable option because the process is often associated with pain, and nobody likes to be in pain. Most of us will do almost anything to avoid feeling any type of discomfort. And why shouldn't we, we live in a society of pharmaceuticals, there's a magic pill for everything. Don't believe it? Watch Prime Time

television, and you will see an advertisement for every disease and disorder in the universe, many you've never even heard of, and it's matching miracle pill. Sounds good right? Just don't read the small print! Don't get me wrong; I'm not against medication. I even went to college to be a prescribing Psychologist. But I abandoned that field of study when I realized that it was all about treating the symptoms and never about getting to the root of the problem.

That's what a quick fix will do for you. It will deal with your symptoms. It will push back the discomfort for a while. You have a headache; you take an Aleve. Poof the headache is gone, or is it? It sure feels like it's gone, but the reason for the trouble is still there, i.e., stress, eye strain, bad diet, but because now that you have masked the pain you are fooled into believing the problem is solved.

PAIN IS YOUR FRIEND

Pain is not your problem; actually, pain is your friend. I remember when I came to understand this somewhat oxymoronic revelation about pain. I was watching a documentary about a little girl who had a rare genetic disorder that prevented her from being able to feel pain. Sounds like a fantastic condition to have, right? Wrong! The child lived a very impaired and limited life just because she

couldn't receive the critical warning signals we refer to as pain. She couldn't even participate in the simplest daily activities without close supervision. Brushing her teeth became a serious situation when coupled with the inability to feel whether or not she was applying too much pressure. What about playing on the playground? It seems safe enough. But if she can't feel the pain, she would never know if she was overdoing it, if she had twisted her ankle while running, or whether that playful push from another child caused an injury. Now playing on the playground became dangerous without pain setting the physical boundaries necessary to keep her safe from harm.

So you see, pain is actually a gift. It's like that engine light on your car that begins to flash when there is something that needs your attention. It is a warning, a constant reminder that something is not right, something is out of alignment, and if you don't stop and take a more in-depth look at what's happening you could be headed for some trouble. But you aren't meant to stay in pain forever. If you have been in pain for a long time, it's a good indicator that it's time for some Heart Work.

GOOD PAIN AND BAD PAIN

There are two types of pain, the temporary kind that leads to the most amazing life changes, or the permanent kind that seems to last forever. The permanent type of pain comes as a result of continuously ignoring the invitation to go to a deeper level of healing, or self-medicating, or treating only the symptoms but never allowing ourselves to learn what the pain is trying to teach us.

For instance, when we refuse to stay single long enough to find out why we keep choosing dysfunctional relationships, we don't want the pain of loneliness, so we jump right into the next relationship. We try to avoid the temporary discomfort of changing our patterns, and we end up in a different kind of pain that lasts longer and does far more damage. My definition of *rebounding* is, "trying again without any new information." It never works.

Unhealed heart wounds cause perpetual pain. Pain that will never end. It's not enough to stop the bleeding, it's time to heal the wound. And somewhere deep inside we know we can never do that on our own. That's why we are here. We want to be healed. But healing, true healing is going to take a supernatural surrender.

I remember so many times in my life when I thought I was ready to surrender. So many times when my life choices, being led by my dysfunctional and broken heart had landed me in harrowing situations. I convinced myself and others that this time I was going to change. I was sick and tired of being sick and tired. But the truth is, I just wanted to be out of pain, I was willing to do anything to get the pain to go away, and it did for a short time. But every time the pain found its way back into my life in one way or another until I finally admitted I did not know how to heal myself. Until I finally realized it was beyond my power, and my control to change. Until I finally admitted it was time to surrender.

I'm ready Lord, I surrender.

LET'S JUST PROCESS THAT!

QUESTIONS TO ASK

What are some of the things you have done to try and fix yourself? What makes this time different?

How do you feel about the word *process*? Do you have a difficult time sticking with things when they get too hard or painful?

What are some of the ways you self-medicate? Why?

Make a list of things you know need to be addressed now in your life (engine lights) before they become more significant problems down the road.

GREATER TRUTH TO EMBRACE

Has anyone by fussing before the mirror ever gotten taller by so much as an inch? If fussing can't even do that, why fuss at all? Walk into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They don't fuss with their appearance—but have you ever seen color and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside them. If God gives such attention to the wildflowers, most of them never even seen, don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? Luke 12:25-28 (MSG)

Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand. Isaiah 41:10 (NLT)

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. 2 Timothy 1:7 (NLT)

So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up. Galatians 6:9 (NLT)

3

A Supernatural Surrender

The harder you work, the harder it is to surrender. - Vince Lombardi

I could have titled this book *The Hard Work*, and even more people would have bought it. There is a drive in the human condition to be self-sufficient. We love to take care of ourselves. Ever since we were toddlers, our mantra has been, "I do it myself!" We have been programmed by our broken world to never depend on anyone or anything, and people that do are considered foolish and naive. All through our lives, we are taught overtly and covertly that it's a good thing to be in, and stay in control, and that is a lot of hard work.

One of the main reasons we don't want to depend on anyone else is, we don't want to be disappointed. Being disappointed is painful, maybe even more painful than not trusting anyone to help us in the first place. And this applies to God too. Let's talk about disappointment, I don't think we talk about it enough.

We often pretend like the life of a believer is supposed to be rainbows and butterflies, and cresting the mountain to see the fertile valley of promise. Uh, NO! I personally have crested the mountain too many times to see ten more mountains that need to be climbed. I can't tell you how many times I shook my fist at the sky in a Bruce Almighty fashion, "Smite me, almighty smiter," in response to some failed effort to get God to help in my current self-induced emergency. "God, what are you doing up there, are you sleeping, are you off the job, are you watching *The Bachelor*?" So many times we think we have asked God to help us, but then when the answer doesn't show up immediately, and in the way with want it to, we think God failed us. We think God is not doing what we have asked Him to do when in reality He is doing exactly what we asked Him to do. But because it doesn't feel good, we declare God incompetent, and off we go to try and fix it ourselves. Self-help isn't a thing. God doesn't ever tell us to go figure it out. "Good luck kid! I hope you make it!"

ARE YOU DONE YET?

We have to get honest with ourselves and ask, "Are we done yet? Are we done with this crazy cycle? Jesus take the wheel, no give it back, uh oh, this road is really rocky, take it! Okay, it's better now, I got it from here." Are we done with crisis

surrender, done trying to figure out how to stay in control? Women especially have become so controlling in current times. I get it, we've been hurt, we've been oppressed, and now we are taking back our power. Are we? Or are we really just becoming scary, bitter control freaks? Control is an illusion ladies, and out of control can be a good and even healthy place to be.

If we want to be real, we're never really in control of anything except ourselves, our beliefs and our response. "But Jackie I'm just trying to have healthy boundaries." Nah, you're just trying to keep from getting hurt. The more hurt we are, the more we try to control our environment. Keep everyone right where we want them, so they can't hurt us. But when we do that we can't live abundantly. We have to make a decision. Are we ready to surrender? Have we come to the end of ourselves? If so, it's about time we start yielding to God.

The word yield means, "To give up, give in, let go, throw in the towel, to concede, wave the white flag." You might ask, "Why would we need to wave the white flag to God?" It's simple, because we're in a power struggle with Him, and it's time for us to give up. There's one more definition of *yield*, and it's my absolute favorite, it means, "To fall back into the arms of." I love that word picture, don't you?

Do you know what it makes me think about? Remember the Trust Fall game that we used to play when we were kids, where you would lean as far back as you can until you start to fall? You are expecting that person standing behind you to catch you, and hopefully, they did. My friends and I had so much fun falling, and catching each other, but my brother on the other hand always let me fall, so I stopped playing that game with him. You have probably had many people let you down in life as well, but the good news is we can trust God. This is about trust. We can safely fall back into God's arms, and He will catch us.

HEART HOARDERS

We all know that only real friends show up when it's time to help move. Can I get a witness? Ha-ha! My husband and I have moved eight times in the last ten years, and we are thankful for the many friends that have shown up to pitch in. *And if you didn't, you know who you are.* When you're helping people move, it is one thing to load and unload the truck, but it's another thing to help unpack their belongings, decide what to keep and what to toss, and organize what's left over. You have to be a close friend to get that job. People don't just want anyone looking through their stuff. And by looking through, I mean judging. *Side note, I always think I'm a*

minimalist until I move, and then I'm like, "My God, I have a real problem."

Let's be honest though most of us have tons of stuff. We have more things than we even realize we have. The American dream is not just to have a house, it's to have a house with a closet, a crawl space, and an attic or a basement that's full of stuff. This is the proof of a capitalist life well lived. But it's not everyday stuff, let's call it extra stuff.

There are a few categories for extra stuff. There are the sentimental or keepsakes, which usually consists of baby blankets, old pictures, locks of hair, teeth and other weird stuff. Then there's the special occasion or seasonal categories like Christmas decorations, pool noodles, and camping gear. There's the yard sale stuff which is basically a pile of eclectic junk that we keep holding onto because we have deceived ourselves into thinking we are going to sell it, and make a bunch of extra money for a vacation. Secretly we know we are going to take it all to Goodwill. We just aren't ready to admit that yet. And then there's the last category which is the mystery stuff. These are boxes and containers that haven't been opened in years, and we don't even know what's in them anymore.

Our family has lots of these boxes, and every year when we moved, all eight times, they would go on the moving truck with still no clue of what they contained. At one point I was going to get out the sharpie and label them Pandora's Box because I wasn't sure I wanted to know what was in them anymore. But even those boxes were less intimidating than the boxes I had stored up in my heart. I, like most of you, will Marie Kondo the crap out of my closet, and expect it to be life changing, while my heart would still look like an episode of *Hoarders*.

Now that we have surrendered to God, and His divine process, it's time to invite Him to help us unpack those mystery boxes in our hearts.

God, I invite your searching gaze into my heart. Examine me through and through; find out everything that may be hidden within me. Put me to the test and sift through all my anxious cares. See if there is any path of pain I'm walking on, and lead me back to your glorious ways- the path that brings me back to you. Psalm 139: 23-24 (TPT)

We need God to help us sift through those junk drawers of life. The places where we have shoved everything that we didn't know what to do with at the time. That messy divorce that we went through, that we didn't have time to process because there were kids to raise or the abusive childhood that continues to sabotage our mental health. The disappointments, betrayals, losses, broken dreams and failed relationships. We are aware of the stuff that's lying on top of these heart piles, the things that happened last week or last year, but what about what's underneath? What about the stuff that happened 5, 10 maybe even 20 years ago? "Oh, that stuff doesn't matter, it's water under the bridge, and after all, time heals all wounds, right?"

TIME WOUNDS ALL HEALS

Time heals all wounds. That's silly talk. To quote one of my favorite teachers, "Let's just laugh at that!" Time alone cannot heal our wounds, and it actually can wound what we convinced ourselves was already healed. **TIME WOUNDS ALL HEALS.** How does it do this? Time removes us far enough away from the original trauma that we are deceived into thinking that it doesn't bother us anymore.

Here's an example, let's say you hurt your knee running. You know you injured it, and at first, it feels awful. Wisdom says

you probably need to see a doctor, and perhaps even have surgery to repair it. But you don't have the time, energy or resources to deal with it at the moment, so you put it off. As time goes by you learn to live with the pain. Is your knee still injured, yes! Did time heal it? No! But it doesn't bother you much anymore. Why? Because you have stopped running, you don't cross your legs, you don't wear heels, and you avoid all activities that might trigger that pain again. You haven't truly healed, you have just learned to alter your lifestyle to accommodate and suppress your pain.

This is how trauma doesn't just hurt us; it creates different versions of us. It establishes false identities and lives that repress the real person we have been designed to be. We will talk about this extensively in Part Two but first, let's give God permission to find the real us under all these layers, and bring us to the surface again. He doesn't want us to continue to be the people trauma has created. The real you needs to come up for air. You have been missing in action for a long time, and it's time for a search and rescue!

PERMISSION REQUESTED

Permission: (noun) authorization granted to do something: formal consent.

It's so important to give God permission to help us get to the bottom of things. To find these lies we are believing, these false lives we have been living, and reveal them to us. You notice I didn't use the word *expose*. Expose has a negative connotation. It means, "To strip bare and to show the true objectionable nature of something." God has no desire to expose you, to prove you are a fraud or put your business out on Front Street for all to see.

Reveal simply means, "To make something known through divine inspiration." I like to call it a **Revealing for a Healing**. But if you have a do not disturb sign or a keep out sign on specific memories or areas of your life, God will not trespass, He must be permitted to enter. God is a giver, and one of the most beautiful gifts He has given us is free will or choice, He respects our boundaries, and He is not going to force anything on you. And while He will not force you to deal with anything you're not ready to deal with, He will continue to love you and invite you into a more abundant life.

You may have been through some terrible things in life, and you're worried if they come out your whole life will fall apart. You don't have to worry about that, God is a master Jenga player. If you have ever played Jenga, you know that if you pull out the wrong block first, the whole thing will come

tumbling down. Some things have to come to light first in our hearts before other things can be revealed. God knows the perfect way to heal your heart without causing any more collateral damage.

THE “S” WORD

Yes, I’m talking about the word *submission*. I used to hate the word *submission* because in the religious circles I grew up around, it was used to oppress and ultimately abuse women and children. These religious men and women had weaponized the word with the worst form of sexism, sexism that they portrayed as ordained and sanctioned by God himself. An innate and incurable inferiority that could not be overcome even by the most talented and deserving woman. They would take the Bible verses that contained the word *submit*, and words like it and use them to force all women into a permanently lower, unseen and subservient role in life.

I grew up and got the heck out of there. But not without some very deep wounds when it came to authority including spiritual authority. Anytime someone hurts you, it has the ability to fragment you. But when they hurt you and ascribe that hurt to God, they create a rift between you and the only one that can put your pieces back together again. God is the only true mender of broken hearts.

Why am I telling you this? Because in the process of revealing for healing you are going to uncover many lies that you believe about yourself, and others, and even God. Lies, misconceptions and belief systems that are preventing you from living a healthy and amazing life. But how do you know something is a lie unless there's something infallible with which to compare it? An absolute and unchanging truth. You won't be able to merely erase these lies you will have to replace them with a Greater Truth. God's truth about you. Many of you may have been beaten down or disappointed by the Word of God because it has been taught incorrectly to you through voices of religion, control, manipulation, condemnation or legalism. If that has happened to you, as it did me, I am very sorry.

God's absolute truth brings death when it's read without His great love. That's why we need Holy Spirit, He is the game changer. Who is Holy Spirit? He is the active form of God on the earth right now. He is the Spirit of truth, and He has been sent by Jesus to help remind us of His great love for us, and lead us into a more profound revelation of that love. But that's not all He was sent to do, He was also sent to comfort us, teach us, counsel us, and help us become the highest version of our authentic selves.

WAIT, WHAT?

I just lost a few of you. Wait, what? You mean this is another Bible study book? I thought this was something new, some magic formula or an exciting new program. "I already tried the Bible Jackie, and it didn't work for me." Or, "I don't believe in the Bible and even if I did it's just a bunch of words on paper. How can words change my life?" Well, to be fair THIS book is just a bunch of words on paper, but I feel you. I understand your doubt. When I was in my deepest pain, I felt the same way. People were always telling me to read the Bible, and I was like, "Whatever, that isn't gonna help me." I was a mess, and I couldn't even focus long enough to read something. Every day was a fight to stay alive. I was sick and suffering. How can words and ideas make me better? Well friends, I submit to you that it was words and ideas that were making me sick in the first place.

Past words that were spoken over me as a child, a young woman, and even an adult. Words that told me I was a problem, unwanted, rejected, ruining the lives of everyone around me. Hopeless, unworthy, never going to amount to anything. Those words had become my inner voice and were the catalyst for a type of self-fulfilling prophecy. They gave birth to my current reality, and they slowly became the facts of

my life. And I was dying because of those facts. I was physically ill, mentally ill, I couldn't leave my house for weeks at a time, hold a job or even finish school. My "truth" had turned me into an invalid.

Maybe that's happening to you too. You have mistaken your current reality, the facts of your present life as truth. It's easy to do, it seems so real, and it's hard to believe that there could be another reality besides the one we are living. The funny thing about facts is that they have a habit of changing fast when absolute truth is applied. For instance, they used to think the world was flat. All the evidence they had access to at that time pointed to a flat earth, but when they received some new and more accurate information, they realized it was actually round. Truth always trumps fact.

Jesus said: If you continue in My word, you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. John 8:31-32 (NKJV)

If we want to know the truth about ourselves we are going to have to submit to God's words about us. The word *submission* means, "To yield to the power of another." There's that word *yield* again. To find the truth, we once again have to let go in this process and trust God. We must be willing to submit to

absolute and Greater Truth than what has happened, or is happening in our lives right now.

I have tested submission out, and it works. I am living proof. I shouldn't be here, and I shouldn't be writing this book. My facts said I was headed for a mental institution and possibly even an early grave. But these words are words of life, and they renewed and restored me, and they will do the same for you. Make a decision right now that you are going to come out of agreement with every lie that gets revealed through this process. Every diagnosis, every symptom, every failure, every fear! And replace those lies with God's beautiful truth about you and whose you are.

I like to put feet on my prayers, and even though true submission comes from the heart, I have included an activation prayer below that you can use. Read it to yourself and even pray it out loud in order to come in agreement with the Greater Truth.

SUBMISSION - ACTIVATION

Father God,

I give you permission to search me and to reveal anything in my heart that does not belong to my true identity, and that is hindering me from living the life you created me to live. Holy

Spirit I invite you into the darkest places in my heart. Show me the areas that are still wounded, and are still hurting. When you reveal these broken places to me, I covenant with you to release them into your care and to respond with forgiveness and repentance. I set aside this season of my life for a time of healing and wholeness, and ask Holy Spirit to take charge of this process. I ask that you dwell with me and in me. I need you. I cannot heal myself. I want to be free from the past, free to be who I truly am. Help me to become who You created me to be.

Show me the lies I have believed about myself, my life, my surroundings, even the lies I have believed about you. Teach me the Greater Truth, teach me your ways, teach me how to think, and how to live abundantly.

Teach me, Show me, Heal me, Grow me.

LET'S JUST PROCESS THAT!

QUESTIONS TO ASK

When was the last time you felt disappointed by God? How has that affected your ability to trust Him?

On a scale from 1-10 (1 lowest- 10 highest) how controlling would you say you are? Do you notice any area where you are more controlling than other areas?

What thoughts and feelings come up when you hear each of the following words: Surrender - Submission - Authority

Any negative reactions? Why or why not?

When was the last time you trusted another person to do something important for you?

Do you trust easily? Why or why not?

GREATER TRUTH TO EMBRACE

Submit to God, and you will have peace; then things will go well for you. Job 22:21 (NLT)

Give in to God, come to terms with Him and everything will turn out just fine. Let Him tell you what to do; take His words to heart. Come back to God Almighty, and He'll rebuild your life. Job 22:21-23 (MSG)

Unrelenting disappointment leaves you heartsick, but a sudden good break can turn life around. Proverbs 13:12 (MSG)

So then, surrender to God. Stand up to the devil and resist him and he will turn and run away from you James 4:7 (TPT)

Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track. Don't assume that you know it all. Proverbs 3:5 (MSG)

A Heart Check-In

How are you doing so far? Are you nervous yet?

I remember when I was pregnant with my daughter. I was so nervous because I didn't know what to expect. How will I know what to do, I frequently asked myself? Then it happened. Women started reaching out to me. At first, before I was showing, it was only friends, family, and people that knew I was pregnant. But soon after that bump started making its appearance, what was once a private affair now became a public announcement. Strangers in grocery lines, people passing on the street, waitresses at restaurants. It seems like everyone wanted to share their story or experience about when they too were having a baby. Not every tale was heartwarming or positive, "No, I don't want to hear about your 72-hour labor with your first one." But all of them had three things in common, they were trying to help me, encourage me, and strengthen me for what was to come.

But why? Why would other women reach out to a complete stranger? Because THAT'S what WOMEN do. It's hardwired into our DNA. We teach and prepare one another for the things we will go through in life. And boy was I glad because I

needed lots of help! Every weird sound, smell, skin ripple, or body fluid was immediately brought before these women for their expert advice and diagnosis. And just like those women helped me walk through that massive event in my life, my team and I are here to hold your hand and walk you through this massive event in your life.

The first thing I'd like to do is prepare you for this month by telling you some common things you might experience in advance so that if, or when, they happen, you don't think you've gone crazy.

THINGS YOU MIGHT EXPERIENCE

To feel all the feels -

We have to feel the feels, in order to heal the feels

This is especially true if you have been numbing for a long time. Some of you are going to be awakening for the first time in a long time in areas where you have completely shut down. It might be scary at first especially if you have tried hard not to feel anything in that area. Just stay open, you can do this!

To feel angry, weepy, irritable,
alert and on a hair trigger

Anger is a secondary emotion, and I like to call it **hurt and fear's bodyguard**. It tends to show up quickly when we feel afraid, threatened, or vulnerable. This is totally normal, and

that's why they call it the FIGHT or FLIGHT response. You can expect to be irrational and unreasonable at times, to feel like you're looking for a fight, or you have chronic PMS. And if that's your current personality, you may be even more "testy" than usual.

Drama, or as I like to call it "all hell breaking loose."

There's an unseen realm all around us that influences a lot more of our everyday lives than we would like to believe. When we begin to pursue more in life the opposing forces will always try to push back. Don't allow that to intimidate you. Think of it as border bullies, they stand at the entrance to a better life and try to scare you to get you to turn around. Don't worry they can't stop you unless you let them. So don't let them.

Distraction

Every distraction in the world will show up to try and steal your focus during this season. Children that have been feeding and dressing themselves for years, all of a sudden won't know how to tie their shoes or use the microwave. Your car won't start, you will get assigned to an "extra" project at work. Your best friend will get dumped yet again, and want to call you every day to cry it out. DO NOT allow yourself to be distracted. Remember, this is YOUR time.

Night Dreaming

Many people start night dreaming. Keep a journal by your bed to record these dreams because they contain important information. God often talks to people through dreams, but not always. If you don't start having night dreams don't worry, it doesn't mean anything is wrong with you. It just means that isn't the way you are receiving your divine downloads right now. Trust me, God will be communicating with you in many ways this month, so don't limit how and when He can speak to you. For those with dreams that are confusing, or incomplete you can submit your dream to The Heart Work Team in the online social media community for help with clarity and interpretation.

Daydreaming

Many people experience an increase in imagination or what some call daydreaming. One of the byproducts of restored hope is believing good things can, and will happen in your life again. This leads to wanting the dreams you previously thought were impossible and maybe even gave up on. It also leads to having even bigger goals than you have ever even imagined for yourself and the people around you.

Heightened Senses

If you have ever been pregnant, you know that your senses can seem superhuman at times. When you start to come alive from the Heart Work some people start experiencing more intense smell, sight, touch, and taste. It's like waking up after a long time of being asleep, and everything seems new and different. It is similar to looking through a dirty pair of glasses, and after cleaning them, now the lens is clear. You can see so much better and in vibrant, colorful detail.

Personality and Lifestyle Changes

It is very common to have personality changes while doing The Heart Work. You might stop liking certain things and start loving other things. As the real self emerges, you will begin to see all the thoughts, attitudes, behaviors and even clothing styles that were tied to your false identities. Your pendulum may swing at first from one polar to the other. (I pierced my nose and dyed my hair purple. Do not worry, you will eventually come back to the middle, or maybe you won't because purple hair and piercings ARE your thing.) My best advice is not to make any BIG decisions during your month of healing, give yourself time to completely process what is happening in your heart.

Divine Appointments

Part of your heightened senses will be having a stronger awareness of the spiritual realm around you, and of God within you. You may be awakened frequently in the middle of the night. Don't think of it as insomnia and try to get back to sleep. Get up. Talk aloud to God. Now Listen. That voice you hear, the one that sounds like you, but it's coming from deep inside - that's God. Write down what you hear, see and feel. These supernatural moments of awareness whether they are during the day, or at night, will be a game changer in your life.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Journal your thoughts and feelings. They might not make sense at the moment, but they will make sense later. Don't shrink back and close off because of fear and pain, remember it's only temporary. Push through, stay open, and be willing to do the work this month! I promise it will be MORE than worth it! <3

PART TWO

UNDERSTANDING THE HEART

4

What Is The Heart?

We are going to be hearing a lot about the heart throughout this book, so it's important to define what are we talking about? Is it the organ in your chest that pumps the blood through your body? No, that heart is essential, but it's not the heart we are talking about right now. But first things first, before we can really define what the heart is, we have first to define what we are.

WHAT ARE WE?

What am I? What are you? The simplest answer to that question is, you are a spirit, you are a soul, and you are a body. Three basic components make up each one of us. The main component is that we are a spirit, but we also possess a soul, and we temporarily live in this body. The essence of what we are is a spirit. We are all eternal beings.

I was joking around with my kids the other day, since I'm about to have another birthday, and I said to them, "The next time someone asks me how old I am, I'm going to tell them

I'm eternal." My kids were not amused, they were like, "Please mom, don't be that weird person." So I said, "How about if I say, I'm timeless." They said, "Please stop." Oh well, but it is the truth, I am an eternal being, and so are you. We had our beginning in the imagination of God, and we have no end. We are eternal spirits that are having a human experience in a temporary case, vehicle, or house we call our body. That thing you see in the mirror is temporary (Thank God, am I right?), and it possesses a little thing called your soul. For the purpose of this book, when I refer to the heart that's the part of you to which I am referring. I am talking about your soul part.

MASTER CONTROL

Your heart, also known as your soul, can further be defined as the seat of your mind, will, and emotions. Confused yet? Let me break it down for you. Have you ever seen the animated movie, *Inside Out*? If not, it's about a little girl and a cast of characters that live inside her head. From a cerebral control tower, they influence her emotions, decisions, and ultimately her destiny. Your heart is like that master control tower. So, from now on when I refer to your heart, picture the epicenter of your life, it's the thing that defines and drives you. It's that place where all the vital information is being kept, the area that can either make or break your life, where all your

thoughts, feelings and decisions originate. Your heart is like Master Control.

HEART, FRIEND OR FOE?

The heart is hopelessly dark and deceitful, a puzzle that no one can figure out. But I, God, search the heart and examine the mind. I get to the heart of the human. I get to the root of things. I treat them as they really are, not as they pretend to be.
Jeremiah 17:9-10 (MSG)

Wow! This heart has a lot of responsibility. Almost as much responsibility as the one beating in your chest right now. And just like the one beating in your chest, when a heart is unhealthy, it can cause a plethora of problems in our lives. Let's talk about the nature or characteristics of the unhealthy heart.

THE UNHEALTHY HEART IS A LIAR

Manipulative, scheming, deceitful, and untrustworthy. No, I am not talking about your "ex." I am talking about your unhealthy heart. It's important to know the nature of the human heart when it's broken. When the powerful control center of our mind, will, and emotions is damaged, hurting and un-surrendered to God, it's capable of many unworthy

things. Instead of being our compass guiding us into abundant life, it becomes an outlaw, a rebel with a cause, continually resisting the divine things God is trying to do in our lives.

Does that sound like someone you want at the wheel of the car? No way! So when I see all the little posters and bumper stickers that say, "Follow your heart," I answer under my breath, "Not unless you want to end up in a ditch." You can't trust it. You can't listen to it. You can't follow after its deepest desires until it's healed and regenerated. Until then it's sure to lead you into some troubled waters and to be one of your greatest enemies. Why? Because first off, it's a stinkin' liar, that's why!

Who exactly is your heart lying to? Well, it's lying to everyone, but it's mainly lying to YOU. Telling you that you want things that you don't want, telling you that you need things that you don't need. If you just had what such and such has, you would finally be happy! "But nobody can help it, Jackie, the heart wants what it wants!" Yeah, the problem is, it usually wants something that doesn't belong to it, like someone else's husband. "If my husband treated me like Carrie's husband I would be happy, she's doesn't deserve him, I should be married to him instead of Carrie!" You think to yourself,

"Those are just words, I would never really try to steal someone else's man." Listen sister, don't kid yourself! You can't turn your back on a broken heart for even a minute, it is vengeful and selfish, and able to cause considerable damage to yourself and others if left unsupervised.

THE UNHEALTHY HEART IS A PUZZLE

It reminds me of that one friend you just never know if you should trust. They are so two-faced you often wanted to say, "It must be hard putting makeup on your two faces every day!" It seemed like they were always lying about something, and as soon as you thought you knew them, they would change again. Yep. Welcome to your messed up heart, it's your best frenemy. As soon as you have it figured out, as soon as you think you know it, it changes. You just about kill yourself running around trying to give it everything it wants, and it's still never satisfied. It's like a sleepy, cranky toddler throwing a tantrum. They whine and carry on, pointing at the sippy cup, and when you hand it to them, they just scream, throw it on the floor, and point to something else. This is your unhealthy heart. Scary isn't it?

Don't get me wrong, it's not always that dramatic and not everything it wants is always bad. It does want some of the right things, but the problem is when it's hurting, it wants the

right things for all the wrong reasons. It wants success but only because it feels worthless unless it's achieving something. It wants to help others, but only to prove it's good. It wants expensive things because it wants to show all the people that rejected it that it's important. That broken heart will have you chasing shadows, and living a completely counterfeit life that is unworthy of you and your true destiny if you continue to let it take the lead.

For example, when I was a young, hurting and confused girl, I had convinced myself that I wanted to be with a certain young man. My heart would not settle for anything other than marrying this particular man. The problem was, this man did not want to marry me. In fact, every time we did have a relationship we always fought and broke up. He was content to move on, but I couldn't let the "dream" go. It was obvious we were a bad match to everyone but my poor little deceived heart. It thought it couldn't live without him. Later my healed heart would realize it couldn't live with him. I would have begged, borrowed and stolen to get that man to "love" me, and I practically did.

I finally won, I got that ring on my finger through much manipulation, scheming, and outright pretending to be what he wanted. I didn't know I was acting, I was just convinced I

could be everything he wanted me to be because I "loved him" so much. Unfortunately, I couldn't, and that was a blessing in disguise because keeping up that false identity was harder than I ever imagined, and several times it nearly cost me my life.

I realized after much Heart Work that I only wanted him because he was a life rope for me when I was a young girl drowning in a troubled adolescence. He was the first person who had ever shown me any real affection and kindness, and even after I grew up and he had stopped showing me that same kindness, I was afraid to let him go.

THE UNHEALTHY HEART IS A GREAT PRETENDER

Let's be honest with ourselves. How often do we pretend to get what we think we want or need? We pretend to be okay, or amicable, or satisfied. We tell ourselves that it's more important to be loved than to be happy, to be accepted than it is to be respected. We pretend to be content with the way life has turned out for us because we no longer believe we have any options for something different. God doesn't want to bless who you are pretending to be, the person you have become because of hurt, shame, failure, and disappointment. The person who you become to please others. He knows who you really are. And He knows the life He created you to live.

I treat them as they really are, not as they pretend to be. Jeremiah 17: 9-10 (MSG)

Perhaps you have been pretending for so long that you have forgotten who you really are. Or maybe like in my case you never really knew who you were in the first place. It's time to change all that. We need to put away the costumes and the masks and face the future with a healed and healthy heart. To do that, we have to see how our hearts get damaged and broken in the first place. How do they get so full of all these unhealthy things? Let's go take a look.

LET'S JUST PROCESS THAT!

QUESTIONS TO ASK

What do you think it means to be an eternal being?

In the animated movie *Inside Out*, one of the emotions in Master Control had gone rogue. What emotion do you feel has gone rogue in your heart? (ex: Sadness, Anger, Confusion, Fear, Guilt, Numbness) How or why do you think it's become imbalanced?

When was the last time you caught your heart in a lie?
What did you do?

Describe the last time you knew you wanted the right thing but for the wrong reason? Did you get it? What happened?

In what ways or areas of life are you pretending to be someone or something you're not? Why?

GREATER TRUTH TO EMBRACE

He has made everything beautiful and appropriate in its time. He has also planted eternity [a sense of divine purpose] in the human heart [a mysterious longing which nothing under the sun can satisfy, except God]—yet man cannot find out (comprehend, grasp) what God has done (His overall plan) from the beginning to the end. Ecclesiastes 3:11 (AMP)

So my friends, don't be fooled by your own desires! Every gift God freely gives us is good and perfect, streaming down from the Father of lights, who shines from the heavens with no hidden shadow or darkness and is never subject to change. James 1:16-17 (TPT)

Whenever our hearts make us feel guilty and remind us of our failures, we know that God is much greater and more merciful than our conscience, and he knows everything there is to know about us. 1 John 3:20 (TPT)

5

The Heart Womb

So above all, guard the affections of your heart, for they affect all that you are. Pay attention to the welfare of your innermost being, for from there flows the wellspring of life. Proverbs 4:23 (TPT)

THE HEART IS A WOMB

How **does** all this unhealthy stuff get into our hearts? I know it sounds weird, but your heart is one of the most reproductive places in your body. Think of it as a womb or a garden. It's fertile soil and whatever is conceived in it or planted in it, whether it is good or bad, will reproduce and then produce the quality of your life. The Word of God says that "Above all things valuable that you guard, guard your heart because it creates the quality of your life." If you don't like the quality of your life right now, it's a good indication that you haven't protected and guarded this significant place. And why would you? Probably nobody has ever told you that you should.

Let's just be real! Chances are, as you were growing up you were informed many times about the sacred nature of your vagina, and the dangers of letting the wrong things (or people) get in there. But your heart was never mentioned. We keep our private parts hidden (hopefully) under our clothes, and we aren't going to let just any seed get near our "vajayjay." But nobody tells us anything about our other wombs, our heart wombs. We don't think of them as impressionable and sensitive places. We wear them out on our sleeves and allow them to be impregnated by all kinds of junk that eventually gives birth to a big mess in our lives.

UNGUARDED HEARTS

Think about it! We have passwords for everything, our phones, our computers, our bank accounts. My husband even has passwords for his passwords. Don't ask! It's like a spy movie around here. When you want to log into anything, you need to use your thumbprint, scan your retina, I mean my God, I'm just trying to watch Netflix. We have locks on our doors and cars, even our locker at the gym (just kidding, I wish I went to the gym enough to have my own locker). But seriously, why? Why are we so protective of all these material possessions? Because we know the value of these things. When you see the value of something, you understand what

boundaries or safeguards you need to put into place to protect it. We do not show the same respect to our hearts.

IT'S A FAMILY TRADITION

*When that doctor asked me, Son how did you
get in this condition? I said, hey sawbones,
I'm just carrying on an 'ole family tradition
-Hank Williams Jr., 1979*

Some people believe that family is the most important thing on earth. I just happen to be one of those people. The quality of your family can set you up for success, or disaster in this life and many have experienced the latter. The majority of people that read this book will have never been taught the value of themselves or their hearts, and to be fair, in most cases, your family didn't know the value of your heart or their own either. They can't teach you what they don't know themselves.

You may have been raised in a family where abuse of self and others was considered normal. A place where codependency and addiction were commonplace and where the only kind of heart was a broken heart. I kind of liken it to credit. If you were born in America, you were given your own unique personal identification number. It's called a social security

number, and attached to that number is your ability to buy or sell things, it's called your credit or your credit score.

I have known people that have had bad credit from the womb. Before they were even old enough to buy anything they were already in massive debt. How is that possible? Because their families didn't respect their identities. They used their social security numbers to take out credit cards and max them out, buy vehicles and wreck them, open bank accounts and write bad checks. I know it sounds crazy, but I even knew a guy who had several warrants for his arrest because different members of his family used his identity while committing crimes.

I know those are extreme examples, but most people come into this world with an unfair amount of emotional debt, or what I will call inherited trauma. It's in these types of families, relationships and communities that we typically experience the first wounds to our hearts.

EVERYBODY SUFFERS

I know there will be people that immediately jump to the defense of their family. I was raised by a great family. My parents were wonderful, and my childhood was idyllic. Don't get me wrong, this doesn't mean you have to be raised by

wolves to have heart wounds and trauma. Trauma is not a respecter of persons. My oldest daughter has a friend that accidentally witnessed a murder. She was in college and her, and her friends were sitting on their porch enjoying the beautiful weather when they saw a man across the street stab another man to death. They called the police and rushed to the man's aid, but he was already dying and could not be saved. Her heart shattered that day.

We live in a world that is full of opportunities to have your heart broken. Bad things happen to good people so to speak. In my twenty years of ministering to women, I have heard some of the saddest stories and experiences from people that came from the best of families. Everyone suffers in life, everyone experiences hurt and pain, and because we are the sum total of all our experiences, as a result, everyone without exception is left with a wounded heart.

MY LIFE IS PRETTY GOOD, EXCEPT FOR...

You might be saying, "Well, maybe I do have some heart wounds, but I'm doing pretty good."

Most people have at least one area in their life where they have it semi-together. It kind of fools them into thinking they don't really need to do the Heart Work. I would almost rather

be tore up from the floor up and KNOW that I need a total overhaul. At least then, I wouldn't spend the rest of my life settling for far less than I could have had, just because at the moment everything is "pretty good."

But is it good? Let's consider the word *good* for a minute. The word *good* is a funny word because it's meaning to most people is relative. What I believe is good may not be what you believe is good, based on our different preferences and experiences. For instance, I recently saw a documentary about women in Africa who make cookies out of the dirt. The main ingredient in these cookies is clay, and they look a lot like and have the texture of dried mud or pottery. People come from all over to buy these cookies because food is scarce and they are filling. While I was watching it, I was thinking, these people are literally eating dirt! I thought about how they would probably love a McDonald's Happy Meal and a Coke. But other people, myself included, think McDonald's is junk food. I love a restaurant called Brio, and I think that is fancy food, but someone else who is used to living the high life might think what I love is on the same level as dirt cookies.

I think you see what I mean when I say the word *good* is relative to the person using it and their expectations. So this is why it's important to settle right up front that when God uses

the word *good*, He isn't talking about our human standard of good. He is referring to His standard of good.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” Jeremiah 29:11 (NLT)

So maybe you do have a little something working out, but is it God's version of good yet? Probably not, and that's why we are here, we want more. Most of us have a tendency to live in crisis mode, only focusing on the areas that are a complete train wreck, and not realizing there's an upgrade available in every area of our life if we are willing to be shown what we can't yet see.

LIES DISGUISED AS PROBLEM AREAS

So how does that work? How can one area of our life be "pretty good", and another area be a total disaster? Remember I said we become the sum total of all our experiences. The state of your life has everything to do with your experiences and your perception of those experiences. Let me explain.

Your problem areas are the places you have the most unhealed wounds. These unhealed wounds that are harboring fears, lies, and false narratives, create havoc in that area of your life

as they mature and manifest through emotions like shame, guilt, unworthiness, and fear. These are powerful emotions that can begin to lead to all types of painful behaviors, which are "the problems".

If anyone of us was asked today, "Hey, what's your problem?" we would probably have a list of things ready in our minds to declare as the problem. You might say, "Do you want them in alphabetical order, or should I just list them in the order of how many glasses of wine I have to drink to forget about them?"

Problem: (noun) a matter or situation regarded as unwelcome or harmful, and needs to be dealt with and overcome.

But what if I told you that your problem isn't really your problem? What we often see as our problem, i.e., "I have anxiety," "I hate my job," "I can't find a good man," is only a symptom of the problem, or what we can call the FRUIT of the problem. If you really want to get rid of your problem, you will have to get down to the root.

FRUITS VS. ROOTS

Fruits are the emotional or physical manifestations, and the subsequent actions you have been taking as a result of what

you believe in your heart. Fruits may include sickness, self-pity, a victim mentality, despair (not sadness), suicidal tendencies, disgust, and judgment. Just a side note, if you have a problem with judging others, it's because you have a fragmented heart. A judgmental heart is a hurting heart.

Some more fruits are - obesity, perversion, addiction, sexual dysfunction, hopelessness, hatred, and self-hatred. Just so you know, all forms of hatred begin with self-hatred, you can't hate someone else without hating yourself.

Some others - abrasiveness, short temper, irritability, jealousy, envy, competitiveness, comparing, gossiping, backstabbing, being unhappy, ungratefulness, selfishness, having a poverty mentality.

If you are habitually negative, unfaithful, or have any form of "dis", including dis-ease, disconnection, discontent, and disappointment, you are suffering from a broken heart. I could go on and on.

As you can see, what we often believe is the problem, is just the fruit of the real problem. If we really want these areas of our lives to become healthy and abundant, we have to pull these things out by their roots. That means locating and isolating the lie we believe that is at the core of all these

behaviors. Many times what we think is the root, is not the root at all, which is why we need the help of Holy Spirit. Don't pull out your gardening gloves just yet. We have some more groundwork to cover, and we will get to actual root pulling in Part Three.

THE BIGGEST LIE

But not everyone sees the dysfunction in their life as a problem. The biggest lie that you may believe in life is that your life is normal. Many people that live broken lives believe that it's reasonable to live that way. They have inherited that emotional debt or trauma from their family, and they think it's normal to be overweight and unhappy, to be unfaithful, to be in a relationship where someone mistreats you, or to be sick all the time. They think it's okay to have massive amounts of debt and spend all their energy trying to figure out how to pay the bills. Or an even more severe deception, like it's normal to abuse and hurt others, or yourself.

I knew someone like that. They thought it was normal to be molested by family members because it's all they had ever known. When they were confronted by an outsider about the abuse they said, "That happens in everyone's family, doesn't it?" No, it does not. Maybe you have been confronted by people in your life, friends, co-workers, or even family that are

trying to get you to see how dysfunctional an area of your life has become. I have done this for people over the years, some people call it an intervention. It's a reality check when someone is so deep in a lie that their behavior has become dangerous to others or themselves. The desired outcome is that the person will "wake up", and see what they are doing, and ask for help.

THERE'S NO HOPE

Besides the obvious problem areas in our lives, another way that we can detect the places where lies are believed is a lack of hope. It may be in your relationships, finances, health, or something else. If you can't dream about it anymore, if you can't picture a better or brighter day, if you don't believe anything will ever change - you have accepted a lie.

I hear it when I am teaching all the time, "Nothing good can ever happen to me. I will never get married. I will always be broke. I am never going to be out of pain from my health problem." If you have no hope for change, or worse, you see no need for change, there's an obstacle that's blocking you from being able to receive what God wants to give to you in that area of your life. Let's call it a blind spot or a filter. But how do these blind spots or filters get there? Where do all these lies we believe come from? Let's find out.

LET'S JUST PROCESS THAT!

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Are you happy about the quality of your life? Why or why not?

What are some ways that you have failed to guard your heart?

Do you have any inherited trauma? What is it and where did it come from?

List some areas where your life is “pretty good”?

What are some areas of your life you think are “problem areas”?

What are the fruits of these problem areas? What do you think are the roots?

Do you have any areas of your life where you think your life is “normal” but others tell you that it’s not? For instance, are people that care about you continuously concerned about your habits, relationships, financial state, quality of living, or health?

Have you lost hope in any area of your life? What do you say when you talk about this area of your life?

GREATER TRUTH TO EMBRACE

A thief has only one thing in mind, he wants to steal, slaughter, and destroy. But I have come to give you everything in abundance, more than you expect –life in its fullness until you overflow! John 10:10 (TPT)

Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7 (NLT)

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)

Embrace the truth and hold it close. Don't let go of wisdom, instruction, and life-giving understanding. Proverbs 23:23 (TPT)

6

Flies, Lies and Counterfeit Lives

First off, as we explore where these lies we believe come from, we must accept that there is an unseen world hidden, but in plain sight, if we have eyes to see it. I want to clarify that I believe that within that invisible world, a disarmed adversary is working against us all. What I mean by disarmed is, this entity has no real power besides what we might allow. Some of the many names used to describe this adversary are Satan, Lucifer, the devil, the wicked one, the prince of darkness, accuser, tempter, serpent, and as my 5-year-old daughter called him, "the debil". She said this in response to the question, "Why did you tell your dad to shut up?" Whatever you want to call it, it's all the same thing, the enemy of your heart, your soul, your true identity and your ultimate destiny.

THE LORD OF THE FLIES AND THE FATHER OF LIES

Whichever name you choose for this opposing force, there is one name that isn't commonly used or known, and that name

is Beelzebub. I know it's pretty weird, and when it was first brought to my attention by Holy Spirit my reaction was, "ew". It just sounded gross. The meaning of the name is, "Lord of the Flies". Gag-a-maggot! I, like most people, hate flies. For me, they conjure up thoughts of stinky garbage, cow poop, and disease. Nothing good.

I know flies serve a purpose in the decomposition process of organic materials, but I still detest them. However, knowing this nickname of the enemy helps us to understand how our heart wounds get infected with these lies. What flies do is they find an unhealed wound, a sore or some place of decomposition and they lay their eggs inside of that place. They do this so when the eggs hatch, the larvae will have an unlimited food source. These unhealed heart wounds, traumas, and rejections become an ideal place for the enemy to sow his seeds (lies) because our hearts are fertile wombs remember? And anything that gets in there reproduces. So that's what these lies do to us, they find their way into a heart wound, and begin to eat us from the inside out, destroying the abundance of our heart and eventually our lives.

MATURE LIES, COUNTERFEIT LIVES

These lies might not become evident immediately, in fact, they usually don't. These seeds are well, seeds, and just like when

you sow a seed in the ground, and you don't see the plant spring up right away, the same is true here. There is an incubation or maturity process.

It can take years for those seeds (lies) to mature in someone's life, and when they do, they bring with them fully formed false identities, or what I call a FRAGMENTED HEART.

For instance, say your parents got a divorce when you were very young, or perhaps never married at all. Your father left the household and abandoned his responsibility towards you. Keep in mind, abandonment doesn't have to be physical, it can also be emotional, spiritual, or financial. While that would be a terrible thing to happen to you, the trauma doesn't even have to happen to you personally. It may have been your grandpa, or great-grandpa, that abandoned his family, but because it affected your mother or father, they may have unconsciously passed those lies down to you. This is how we INHERIT emotional debt and heart wounds from our families. But whether it's a firsthand trauma or not, the event itself is not going to be the thing that keeps you from having a good life. It's the LIES you believe that will, as a result of the trauma. "I'm worthless." "Nobody loves me." "It's my fault." "Men can't be trusted." These are mental scripts you rehearse because of what you BELIEVE as a result of what happened.

WHAT YOU BELIEVE ABOUT YOURSELF YOU BECOME

*For as [a person] thinks in his heart, so is he.
Proverbs 23:7 (AMP)*

This process happens because the Word of God tells us that we can never be more than we believe we are in our hearts, no matter what we are pretending to be on the outside. Whatever we think about ourselves, we will become. How does that happen? It happens because the stuff that's in our hearts doesn't stay there. As our hearts become full, whatever is in there eventually spills out through our mouths.

Jesus said: A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart. Luke 6:45 (NLT)

Things just got real. These wrong thoughts are no longer just staying in our hearts, they are multiplying like bunnies in our fertile heart wombs and spilling out through our mouths. We can't take it lightly because this is now a life or death situation. The real you is in mortal danger because God's Word goes on to tell us this about our words:

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit. Proverbs 18:21 (NASB)

Hopefully, you can see how this becomes a vicious cycle. Our hearts are poisoned by lies, we believe those lies, and when we continually speak those lies, they become our truth and eventually our everyday reality.

THE PROCESS

1. First, we believe the lie. (“I’m abandoned”)
2. Next, we speak the lie. (“Nobody is ever there for me”)
3. Finally, we become the lie. (Behavior toward isolation and withdrawal from others creates a false sense of abandonment)

“Ok, easy fix! I’m just gonna stop believing lies about myself.”
Yeah, that would be great! The problem is, we aren’t aware of most of the lies we believe about ourselves, others, or the world around us, that’s why they are called lies.

No matter how hard you try to change yourself, you will never be able to interact with the world around you as anybody other than the person that you think you are. You can try to act the way you think is right, but it will just be that, acting! You're not really fooling anyone, except maybe

yourself. When something isn't authentically coming from your heart, you will not be able to sustain it for very long. You will eventually revert back to the script that those broken areas of your heart have written for you, and you won't even know you're doing it. There is no fake it 'til you make it. It's more like, **you can't be it until you see it**. And seeing it is why we are here. We want to see not only what we do, but why we do it. So often we place the blame for our trouble on the wrong thing. The thing we have decided is "our problem," but isn't the problem at all.

IT'S NOT ME, IT MUST BE THEM

When I was a young woman, I was invited to dinner with my boyfriend and his family. This was a huge deal because up until this point I hadn't made the best impression on his parents. They thought I was "a little wild" which was completely inaccurate. I was a lot, wild. This was my chance to really win them over. They were taking us to Captain D's. Yeah, I know, they really wanted to wine and dine me, right? If you don't know what Captain D's is you're not missing much. I will tell you for the sake of full disclosure that it is a fast food, fried fish restaurant mainly found in the southern States. I had never been to Captain D's before because number one, I didn't like fish and number two, I was from the north. I

was determined to make these people like me, so I didn't fuss about the restaurant choice. I decided I would eat whatever was on the menu, and I would pretend to like it.

The day arrived to have dinner with the folks. I got myself fixed up to look nice and homely. It was my best impression of the girl you would take home to meet your mother and take to church, but would never, ever think about sleeping with. The meals were ordered - fried fish, fries and hushpuppies all the way around. I quickly realized that anything can be eaten with enough tartar sauce, and everything seemed to be going fine. That's when it happened. I got violently ill. I had to excuse myself and make a beeline to the restroom. It was so bad that I had to leave, and go straight home where I spent the next couple days in bed. I had never been so sick in my life. But what happened after that is the real story. I became convinced that I had food poisoning. It didn't matter that I worked at a daycare and the flu was going around. It didn't matter that I had a high fever, body aches, and chills which are not symptoms of food poisoning. It also didn't matter that everyone at the table ate the same thing, and I was the only one that got sick. I refused all reasonable explanations. I was convinced that the fried fish restaurant had made me sick.

Every time I saw the sign to Captain D's or any advertising for the restaurant, I felt sick all over again. It's a good thing there wasn't social media back then because I would have definitely posted some terrible things about the ol' Captain. After all, he did this to me!

We tell ourselves some version of this lie every day, "This is their fault, not mine. They did this to me."

But the truth is, the restaurant didn't make me sick. I was already carrying the virus. It was inside of me before I even ordered my food. No matter what food I ate, my stomach was poised and ready to be upset, and hurl it back at me. But I couldn't see it because I had a blind spot.

BLIND SPOTS AND FILTERS

This happens so often to all of us in life. We can't see that the bomb was already there inside of us, waiting for a trigger. Let me tell you something. When you walk into any situation, it doesn't matter what it is, bad or good. You don't see that thing, that place, those people, the way they are, you see them the way YOU are, inside. Let me say that again, so you can really get ahold of it. **We don't see things the way they truly are, we see them the way WE are.**

For instance, say you were severely hurt by a group of people. They mistreated you, lied about you, and then discarded you. The heart wounds and lies that were created as a result of that trauma will give you a skewed perception of groups in the future. You may avoid groups or communities of people like the plague convincing yourself that they are all bad. Or, you may try again to search for community, but if you do decide to join a similar group in the future your most significant obstacle to belonging will be the filter that was created by your prior experience. Chances are, you will be very sensitive and find fault or become offended quickly. If you haven't done any Heart Work, it won't be long before your heart is crying, "Danger, danger," because of something that you are seeing through your damaged lens and you will leave.

To thrive in a community again, you will have to have those filters removed by doing your Heart Work.

Don't misunderstand. We all have filters, we all have schemas, and we all have belief systems. Not all of these things are bad, they make up who you are and how you see the world around you. But they can quickly become unhealthy and detrimental to our lives when they are based on anything except the highest truth.

GARBAGE IN, GARBAGE OUT

We have already established that our hearts are the places that contain vital information that makes or breaks our lives. But what if the information being kept there isn't necessary, what if it isn't even true. Then what happens? Our master control center is now being managed by a bunch of rogue memories that are taking their plays from the wrong playbook, and as a result, we are on a losing streak in life. We can't continue on this way. We need some WINS in life, and to get to where we want to be we have to be willing to take out the garbage.

A WHOLE NEW WORLD

So let's get into those heart boxes and see what's really in there. Many of the lies, blind spots and filters you will find during this process will be a huge surprise to you. You may even see for the very first time how far below abundance you have been living in some areas of your life.

For some, this time is going to be very enlightening. It will be like going up to the front of the plane and pulling back the little curtain. There you find, there has been a whole other world of hot towels, complimentary champagne and free movies waiting all along. You are going to find yourself asking, "Why have I been crammed in coach all my life, with a

seat that reclines one centimeter, and a big sweaty man on either side of me.”

God is inviting you into first class, to a higher level of living than you have ever experienced before in every area of your life. Holy Spirit is here like that good friend that you can trust to go through your stuff with you, without judgment, and help you decide what you need to keep, and what you need to throw away. **It’s time for a revealing for a healing!**

LET’S JUST PROCESS THAT!

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Do you believe in the existence of opposing forces? Why or why not?

What are some lies your family has passed down to you? Have you passed them down to your children?

Now that you see the process of how lies can become our truth, do you see any area where this has happened in your life? What lies have become your everyday reality?

What are some of the things you have been blaming as “the problem” in your life?

Do you believe you have any negative filters or blind spots? Are you overly sensitive? Do you find fault, or

become offended quickly? Do you often find yourself in misunderstandings with others?

GREATER TRUTH TO EMBRACE

Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. 1 Peter 5:8 (NLT)

For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. Ephesians 6:12 (NLT)

It is easier to conquer a strong city than to win back a friend whom you've offended. Their walls go up, making it nearly impossible to win them back. Proverbs 18:19 (TPT)

There is such a great peace and well-being that comes to the lovers of your word, and they will never be offended. Psalms 119:165 (TPT)

I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands. Exodus 20:6 (NLT)

We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:5 (NIV)

A HEART CHECK-IN

Yay! You made it through Part Two!

Wow! That was a lot! It's kind of like drinking out of a fire hydrant, isn't it? Don't worry even if you think your mind got numb and didn't catch it all your heart is still listening.

Let's take a minute to check in with what our hearts are hearing before we move on to Part 3.

Here's a recap.

We set some very specific expectations. We engaged our faith and made a decision that we were finally ready to surrender. We gave God permission to do some heart surgery on us. We allowed him access to the deepest and darkest places of our hearts where we have stored away our most painful hurts, offenses, and traumas. We also promised that when these things were revealed that we would not only release them but submit them to a higher and absolute truth.

We are beginning to see how the heart works and even some of the lies we believe about our lives. It's been painful and hard at times for so many of you, and I am happy you didn't give up!

Now it's time to make some room for the good stuff. It's time to unpack these heart boxes with the help of Holy Spirit so we can have room for more. More what? More joy, more peace, more purpose and more of who we really are! Our true identity!

At this point, there should be some level of revealing happening in your heart but just wait there's more coming. Many layers are going to begin to get peeled back this week, showing you what's really beneath them. You are going to want to take a lot of time for self-care this week. Quiet time to reflect and rest and take care of your healing heart. Remember there's no "right way" to heal. Don't think you have to be falling apart emotionally to be healing and don't think just because you are falling apart emotionally that you aren't healing. Everyone is different.

We are going to learn this week that some traumas are more deeply hidden than others, sometimes so deeply hidden we have entirely forgotten about them. While others are hidden in plain sight disguised as our most significant problem areas in life. I am going to teach you this week how to get rid of them all! For good!

Remember as we go forward:

NO FIXING! We made a decision that we would give up on trying to fix ourselves, the others around us and the problems in our lives. Remember if we could fix it, we wouldn't even be here reading this book. Heck if we could even identify what really needed to be fixed, we wouldn't be reading this book. We are hopefully seeing by now most of the time what we think is wrong isn't actually what's really wrong, or in other words, our problem isn't really our problem, but in reality, it's something much deeper.

NO DIGGING. If you're anything like me, you want to cut to the chase and just get this healing stuff done so we can move on to the abundant life stuff. I'm a pull-the-Band-Aid-off-quickly kind of girl. If this is you too you might want to immediately go after some of your "known traumas" or the things that you assume must be causing all of the trouble. For instance the childhood sexual abuse, or the betrayal by the ex-best friend. You may want to grab that pet snake by the throat and make it into a pair of shoes and a purse. Not so fast there missy, you know what they say never assume! Unless Holy Spirit is specifically highlighting that memory or event to you go ahead and wait for it to surface. There's a strategy to this, and you have to let Holy Spirit lead the way. If you dig out deep roots, you will harm the plant. You must wait for the

rains to come. The rains of God's love and presence will come and soften the soil in your heart. They will move the dirt out of the way so you can see the roots in your heart more clearly.

This is all about surrender just keep giving Holy Spirit permission every day to show you what you can't see, permission to help you unpack all that heavy load you are carrying in your heart, and if you do that, you will be amazed at what happens.

PART THREE

UNPACKING THE HEART BOXES

7

Revealing For A Healing

*"I will not cause pain without allowing something new to be born," says the Lord.
Isaiah 66:9 (NCV)*

This is a necessary time to remember that God doesn't want to cause you any more pain. He doesn't want to expose you, or to make a fool out of you, or to bring up things in your past that cause you more suffering. Some things are being highlighted to you at this time, because whether you have known it or not, they have always been there, lingering in the background, affecting your daily life. It's like having extra apps open on your cell phone, you aren't aware of them, but they are still draining your battery every day. These things that are surfacing are the hidden reasons you can never get ahead in life, the reasons you take one step forward and three steps back. The things we have convinced ourselves that can't hurt us anymore are actually killing us, slowly from the inside out. The truth is, out of sight does not mean out of heart.

Let's take a look at the stuff that's surfacing, and the things that we are remembering and feeling. I know it may look ugly to you at first, but don't look away. I'm here with you, all the sisters reading this book are here with you, and most importantly Holy Spirit is here with you. I know it hurts, but it isn't a regular type of hurt, it's the hurt of healing.

What's in your heart boxes?

The memories of molestation?

The divorce? The abuse?

The bullying? The bankruptcy? The loss of your child, parent or spouse?

The rape? The abortion? The abandonment? The rejection?

All the relationships that have gone awry, from friends to lovers, and everything in between?

There may be things surfacing that you would have never even thought of as a trauma, and that's because the things that break our hearts are different for everyone. Don't think just because nothing "big" has ever happened in your life that you can't have a broken heart.

How about the troubled childhood and all its wounds? Childhood wounds and abuse are common things to have hidden away in a moldy heart box. When we're children, we do not have the language or even the understanding to explain how we feel about what's happening to us. Many have no other choice but to disassociate and pack those hurts away for another day, like a trauma time capsule waiting to be opened by a more equipped future version of ourselves.

I THINK I GOT SOMEONE ELSE'S BOX

We did time capsules when I was in school. This is where your teacher has you put a few things in a box, bag, or envelope that represent your current life, and then they bury them in the ground to be dug up in a different grade a few years from now. I don't know who came up with the idea, or why, but I'm positive nothing got buried. I'm pretty sure it was sitting in some storage closet in the school, and maybe even got lost, because when we opened them up years later, I didn't even recognize the things that were in mine. Did this stuff belong to me? It looked vaguely familiar, but I didn't feel attached to it in any significant way.

The same thing may be happening to you right now. Disjointed memories are emerging that seem too generic or vague. You might be asking yourself, "Did this happen to me,

or did I see this on an episode of my favorite TV show when I was a kid?" There will be things in our hearts that have been buried so deep, for so long, we aren't consciously aware of them anymore, and when they first come to the surface, we might experience a feeling of detachment or disassociation. We are reluctant even to admit they belong to us because they feel like they belong to someone else, and weirdly, they do.

When there's trauma, we become fragmented. I touched on this in the first half of the book. It's crucial that we understand that these events don't just hurt us. They actually create different versions of us. It created a different you, a YOU named Survivor. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, it's actually a self-defense and survival mechanism, but in the revealing for healing process, it may cause you to feel confusion, disconnection or possibly nothing at all. Don't worry, just stay open, as the pieces of your heart come back together you will feel more and more connected to the places that need to heal.

FEEL THE FEELS TO HEAL THE FEELS

You may also have random emotions emerging from these storage places in your heart, but they aren't attached to any specific memory, event, or person. This is also very normal. Don't disregard these emotions as illegitimate just because they aren't giving you context of why they exist. Often we as

women don't have the time to shut down and feel our feelings. We have to keep going for the sake of all the people that are depending on us. We are like Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with The Wind*, "I can't think about this now, I'll go crazy if I do, I'll think about it tomorrow." Have you ever said, "I can't let myself cry about that because if I start, I'm afraid I will never stop?" I have, too many times. These emotions coming to the surface now are just all the things you've never given yourself permission to feel or work through. It's good for them to come out now, and they are asking for nothing else than to be acknowledged and felt.

UNKNOWN AND KNOWN

All the specific memories being revealed right now from your past are probably going to fall into one of two categories, **the unknown and the known**. You can think of it as the equivalent of that storage space in your house where you know what's in the boxes nearest to the door, but you've forgotten what's deep in the back.

The Unknown

Many years ago my good friend had a miscarriage. That event brought up all the pain I had packed away about the loss of my own child. Up until that day, my miscarriage was one of the things I had completely blocked out. It was packed away

so deep inside my broken heart, I was no longer aware of it at all. It was an unknown, or what I refer to as a gas leak. I call it that because gas leaks are mostly undetectable until there is a spark, and then often an explosion! These kinds of memories can be really hard reveals because they seem to come out of nowhere. And just like a gas explosion in the living room, they can do a bunch of damage. The good news is, they are surfacing right now in a controlled environment. A Holy Spirit controlled environment. Outside of a divine appointment like this one, these traumas usually are revealed or triggered by a new devastating trauma or situation, anything that flips your life inside out and shakes out the pieces for all to see. People sometimes refer to it as having a "nervous breakdown" or a "psychotic break".

JENNY

In 2007, I helped spearhead the opening of a comprehensive medical clinic for women. It was designed to be a place where women could make informed decisions about their reproductive health. There was much excitement in the community about the opening of the clinic, and dozens of women signed up to volunteer as staff and peer counselors. During the training process, the regular teacher was out sick, and I was called upon to take her place. "No problem," I

thought, "I'm a teacher. Easy peasy." I didn't realize I was filling in on the day they were going to be learning about abortion and crisis pregnancy. Yikes. I didn't know anything yet about this subject, and I was worried people would have questions. I was very relieved when I found out I would not be teaching but only showing a few short videos. What I didn't know was, these videos would explain in detail, and even show via ultrasound, the entire abortion process.

If you have never had an abortion, or known someone who has had an abortion you probably only hear about abortion around election time, when new legislation is passed, or maybe in a movie here and there. But it really doesn't hit home until you come face to face with it, and the women who have experienced it. I was about to have my first experience with abortion-related trauma. As I was taking out the second movie, I felt shaken to my core, and I was trying my best to process what I had just seen. When I turned around, I noticed several women had left the room, and others were sitting with tears streaming down their faces. I went out into the hallway to find out what happened, and I saw several women crying uncontrollably.

One of these women just happened to be my next door neighbor, Jenny. I went over to comfort her, and between sobs,

she told me that she had an abortion. When she was 20 years old, her father had taken her from South Africa (where it was illegal) to London, to have the procedure done. She was around my age, so we are talking about the '90s, a time before ultrasound aided abortion. A time when very little information was publically known about the process or the aftermath. This precious woman just came face to face with an **unknown**. Even though she had an abortion, she was unfamiliar with what that really meant or looked like until this day. Here she was a married woman with two beautiful daughters thinking she was signing up to do something good to help others, and BAM, out of nowhere, an explosion! This new information ripped through her heart like an atomic bomb, and since Jenny was my neighbor, I would see first-hand the destruction this soul secret had caused.

A few days later, in the middle of the night, my husband and I were called outside when the ambulance came to take her to the hospital for a psychiatric evaluation. She had been found roaming the streets of the neighborhood, knocking on doors and asking people to end her life. That was the beginning of a long healing process for this family. Thank goodness that Jenny was able to get the help she needed to heal and to let go of her tragedy. But that doesn't happen for everyone.

That's one of the main reasons I wrote this book. Even though Jenny's story seems like an extreme example we never know when those gas leaks deeply packed away in our hearts are going to explode. We never know what's going to trigger them and all the lies they're holding. We are going through the material in this book step by step to diffuse those bombs before they go off. So many people go years and years ignoring the mystery pain in their hearts, never bothering to look deeper into what could possibly be the cause, until one day they find themselves flat on their backs. It doesn't have to be that way.

The Known

The unknown always seems scary. But there's also another type of trauma that's being revealed to you right now. These are the known traumas, or the things you are very aware happened to you. In fact, you are so aware of them you spend most of your unconscious energy trying to avoid ever letting them happen again. You would never admit this, that's why it's unconscious. To your conscious mind, these traumas have been filed in the "I'm over that" cabinet.

Remember my knee analogy? These are the things in life we say, "Oh, that old thing! It's harmless, it doesn't bother me anymore!" This statement is only half right. Yes, it doesn't

currently bother us anymore, but it isn't harmless. We are no longer in recognizable pain because we have altered our lives to accommodate that pain. We tiptoe through life, carefully walking on eggshells avoiding anything that might bring that trauma back to life. We avoid things like seeing our families, going to church, driving, going to public places, making close friends, having children, dating, getting married, having sex, it might be something as simple as avoiding having to tell people no. We may even start altering our lives so much that we steer clear of all people, places, and things that we fear might become a trigger, and as a result, our lives get smaller and smaller.

We make all kinds of excuses as to why we change our lives this way, excuses like, "I just really like being alone," or "Not everyone wants children," but the main reason is fear. Whether it's realized, or unrealized **fear**. We make these changes to avoid anything that will bring up the unhealed and hurting places of our hearts. We create these alternate and counterfeit lifestyles and identities, to make sure everything from the past stays packed away in its own little box where it can't hurt us.

Bottom line, we want to avoid pain, and to do that we have to be in total control.

I know a few things about avoidance and control. I suffered from panic disorder for 15 years. One of the characteristics of the disorder is you avoid the places where you've had a panic attack because just the thought, sight, smell, sound of that place is enough to trigger another attack. Before too long, you have to avoid so many places that you don't even leave the house. This is what causes agoraphobia, or the fear of being out of control, or in situations where escape is difficult. You think you are in control, but the truth is, you are slowly becoming a prisoner in your own home, body, and life.

This is what we do with these *known traumas*, we insulate our lives so we can stay in total control of what we experience. Instead of getting rid of the disorder in our lives and unpacking these hurts, we try to co-exist with them.

CAGED TIGERS AND PET SNAKES

I recently heard of two disturbing stories where people had been raising dangerous and unusual animals as pets. In one story the person owned a tiger, and in the other account, they owned a python. These animals were small when the people first obtained them, and I'm sure that was part of the reason they believed they could control them. But as they fed them, they grew, and grew, and grew. They would post pictures of themselves feeding, playing with, and taking care of these

dangerous animals. At times, it even seemed like these animals had a genuine affection for their owners. This pattern continued until one day out of nowhere both owners were found dead killed by their pet. Now granted most of humanity would look at these stories and say, "What the heck is wrong with these people!", but most of us do the same thing.

We put these potentially dangerous past traumas in cages in our heart, and we try to tame or control them.

We cohabitate with these heart predators pretending that they can be domesticated, forgetting that their sole purpose in existing was to kill us. The saying, "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger," isn't true. What didn't kill you, is just waiting for another opportunity. We make treaties with these enemies of abundance, and every year they negotiate for a little more room in our hearts. We need to get serious and get them before they get us. Kick them out for good. It's time for us to stop merely surviving in life, and to start thriving.

LET'S JUST PROCESS THAT!

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Do you believe that God is good? Do you believe that He doesn't want you to be in pain?

What is surfacing from within your heart?

Do you feel disconnected from any of the things that are emerging?

What feelings are showing up? Are you afraid to feel these feelings?

Are there any unknowns coming to the surface? Have you ever hit one of these gas leak memories in the past? What brought it to the surface? What happened as a result?

What are some known traumas being highlighted right now for full healing?

How have you changed your life after these traumas to accommodate your pain?

What are some of the excuses you have made for these life changes?

In what areas of your life do you know you are not thriving but merely surviving?

GREATER TRUTH TO EMBRACE

Because this revelation lamp now shines within you, nothing will be hidden from you—it will all be revealed. Every secret of the kingdom[a] will be unveiled and out in the open, made known by the

revelation-light. 18 So pay careful attention to your hearts as you hear my teaching, for to those who have open hearts, even more revelation will be given to them until it overflows. And for those who do not listen with open hearts, what little light they imagine to have will be taken away. Luke 8:17-19 (TPT)

All who are oppressed may come to you as a shelter in the time of trouble, a perfect hiding place. Psalm 9:9 (TPT)

Send me a miraculous sign to show me how much you love me, so that those who hate me will see it and be ashamed. Don't they know that you, Lord, are my comforter, the one who comes to help me? Psalm 86:17 (TPT)

8

Thriving Not Surviving

Whew! This surviving is super high maintenance, and we eventually just stop enjoying our lives. When we have a broken heart, life can be exhausting. We have all these internal rules we have to follow to stay safe, we place all these limitations and restrictions on ourselves, and others, so nobody can hurt us again. It's too much, and it's hard to keep up. What good is it to have survived the things that have happened to us if we can't enjoy the rest of our lives?

We can either *survive or thrive*, but we can't do both! When we are in survivor mode, we are continually waiting for the other shoe to drop. We are always sleeping with one eye open, watching those predators in our heart making sure they don't get out of their cages and overpower us. We have on permanent boxing gloves expecting a fight and a struggle at every turn. When we are fighters, we can't afford to be lovers. We have to watch our backs and make sure we aren't being tricked, or taken advantage of. Before long we find ourselves

becoming suspicious and cynical. These lies we believe, now so ingrained in our everyday lives, cause our hearts to begin to get hard and dark, and we don't even recognize how far away from abundant lives we have strayed.

HARD HEARTS = HARD LIVES

*I'm gonna harden my heart, I'm gonna
swallow my tears. - Quarterflash, 1981*

With survivor filters, we are always going to use the word *hard* to describe life. We talk about how hard this year has been, or how hard a relationship has become. I'm sure you hear it all the time, "Being single is hard, marriage is hard, parenting is hard, losing weight is hard, working is hard," basically **life is hard**.

Okay let's be honest, maybe we haven't just heard it, but we've actually said it ourselves a couple of times, and by a couple times, I mean a couple of million times. When we have these filters it's so easy to begin to see life as a drudgery to be endured, a stormy sea to navigate, a puzzle to figure out, a crisis to manage or just plain old hard back-breaking work. **Here's the truth. Life is only hard because our hearts are hard.**

Remember whatever you think in your heart becomes your reality. What if I told you that none of these things about life were designed by God to be hard, and they have only become hard because our heart wounds have hardened our hearts in those areas? What if I told you that you could live with grace and ease in every area, and instead of life being hard work, life can be a beautiful adventure?

YOU CAN'T ERASE, YOU MUST REPLACE

If we want amazing lives full of grace and beauty, we have to be full of grace and beauty in our hearts. It would be great if we could get rid of all the junk in there that is causing life to be such drudgery. Just push the delete button, erase it all, and start over from scratch.

I read a story about a woman who actually did that. She is considered one of the first documented cases of amnesia. As a result of an accident, she completely lost all memory of her life. She didn't remember a single thing. Now we would normally consider this a tragedy, but in her case, the life she forgot wasn't a good one. She had never been able to overcome her troubled childhood, so her current life was hard, her relationships were dysfunctional, her mental health was unstable, and she was not thriving in life. This accident became a turning point for her, and a life that was circling the

toilet bowl all of a sudden took a dramatic upturn. The medical community was so amazed at her complete memory loss that they made her quite the celebrity. Doctors and specialists came from all over the world to talk with her and study her case. She became very involved in her own treatment and eventually became very knowledgeable on the subjects of brain trauma and memory loss. As a result of this knowledge, she became a sought after conference speaker and lecturer. It was as if her whole life had been erased and replaced with a much better one.

Wouldn't that be awesome? The only problem is, you would lose the good memories and experiences along with negative ones. You would erase the lessons and wisdom gleaned from those times in your life. Even though there are moments when we would all love to do what Jim Carey's character did in the movie, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, he had the people that hurt him or the experiences that broke him eradicated from his memory. But since that's not possible, there IS something we CAN do that's even better than erasing the past, and that's replacing it. Now don't get too excited, I'm not going to tell you the secret of time travel. I don't have any magic machine that will allow you to go back and change things. But even though you won't be able to replace the

actual events that happened in your life, you can replace the lies you believed, and most importantly, the vows you made as a result of them. When we experience these hurts in life, they make us sad, and when we are sad, that's when anger shows up. **Anger is always the defender.** It always shows up when those wounded and vulnerable parts of our heart feel threatened. I like to think of it as **hurt's bodyguard.**

When anger is around we feel strong, and we start to make inner vows, "Nobody is ever gonna hurt me again," "I don't care about anyone," "I can't trust anybody," "I will never turn out like my mother (father)," "I won't be made a fool anymore," "Nobody is gonna tell me what to do," "I can't tell anybody about this," "I will be perfect from now on so nobody can reject me." We make a decision to harden our hearts, and it makes sense at the moment. We think if we make these vows and build these walls around our hearts, we can keep all the bad things out, but unfortunately, walls are good at keeping things out, but they aren't good at letting things in. And to stop surviving and start thriving, we are going to have to be able to let a lot in. As the lies and their corresponding vows are emerging, we have to replace them with the Greater Truth of God's Word. The problem is, that's impossible to do when our hearts are hard. With hardened hearts, the Greater Truth

cannot penetrate these hurting problem areas and bring transformation to our lives.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Jesus was a great storyteller. For the people that had their spiritual ears open, His stories were life-changing. That's because they weren't just stories, they were profound revelations about how personal transformation works. One of my favorite stories is about a farmer that goes out to plant crops in his fields, and he finds different types of soil there. All the seed is good, but all the ground is not. Some seed falls on hard ground, and it just lays there on top never even having a chance, and the birds come along and eat it. Some seeds find themselves on rocky soil where they gain a little root, but very quickly wither away. And other seed falls on thorny or weedy ground where it shoots up quickly but is eventually choked out by the environment around it.

The very last kind of ground in the story is good ground. The seed can get deeply rooted in the soil, and start producing good and abundant fruit. It's always fun to read these stories in the Bible because most of the people listening to these stories from Jesus have no idea what He is talking about, they were just following Him around hoping to see a miracle. To them, He's like your crazy Uncle Fred that tells weird stories,

but you hang out and listen anyway because at the end he always does some trick like pulling a quarter out of your ear.

However, there were some that Jesus actually took aside, and told the real meaning of these stories. People that He was training for a bigger purpose. I think WE ARE those people that God is taking aside to explain deeper revelation to us. So that we can live abundantly, and be the world changers He's created us to be.

When Jesus explained the story, He said the ground was our hearts, and the seed was the Word of God. You can see, the quality of your heart soil has a big impact on whether or not the Word of God can get in there, get rooted, and create abundance in your life. Let's look at the different levels of hardness of our hearts.

Wasteland Soil

This heart soil is hard as cement. Something terrible has happened in this area of your heart. The death of a child, a terrible tragedy, life-changing abuse. I call this a barren wasteland. Nothing can grow here, we don't visit here, and in many cases, we don't even admit this area of our heart exists. As soon as the Greater Truth of God hits that area of our heart,

it bounces right off, and the lies we believe in that area overpower it and take it away.

Rocky Soil

This heart soil is full of debris. It looks okay on the outside, but it doesn't go deep. It's been made shallow by the rocks of offense, pride and hurt. The truth can find some small cracks in the soil to get in, but it can never get deeply rooted in your life long enough to create any significant change. The first big storm in life that comes along ultimately uproots it, and it's gone.

Weedy Soil

This heart soil has many false beliefs in it. It hasn't been well tended or guarded, and every kind of seed has gotten in there and produced some sort of fruit. So it is full of the lesser-truth, things like "the facts", the predominant views of culture, the advice of so-called experts, and the rationalizing of your human mind. When the Greater Truth gets in this soil, it can grow for a while, but its roots are eventually choked out by all the other things growing in there too, and it isn't able to bear any fruit.

Good Soil

This heart soil is ready for an abundant crop. It's been weeded, the rocks have been removed, it has been plowed, and it's soft and prepared for the seed of God. That Greater Truth will get in this soil and grow firm roots, even the worst storm won't be able to uproot it, and it will cause your life to become a beautiful abundant garden of perpetual fruit.

At any given time in our lives, we probably have more than one type of these soils in our heart. God wants every area of our lives to overflow with His truth and abundance. For that to happen, we will need to do some pruning, plowing and planting with the help of Holy Spirit.

Come Holy Spirit, plow my heart!

LET'S JUST PROCESS THAT!

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Do you expect a struggle in any area of your life? Expect things not to turn out right or expect a fight?

Do you think you have become cynical in any area of your life? Which one? How are you pessimistic about that area of your life?

What areas of your life have you described as hard? Why do you think they are hard?

Has there ever been anything or anyone you wished you could erase from your memory?

What are some areas of your life where anger shows up? What are some memories you have that still make you feel angry?

Have you made vows in response to hurt? What are some of the vows you have made, even the ones from childhood?

What areas of your heart are the different types of soil? (Example: Wasteland Soil: My Finances. Why: Because I got divorced and had to file for bankruptcy. I lost everything, my car got repossessed, I couldn't get any credit, and now I don't believe I can ever recover from it financially.)

Wasteland Soil -

Rocky Soil -

Weedy Soil -

Good Soil -

GREATER TRUTH TO EMBRACE

He will be standing firm like a flourishing tree planted by God's design, deeply rooted by the brooks of bliss, bearing fruit in every season of his life. He is never dry, never fainting, ever blessed, ever prosperous. Psalm 1:3 (TPT)

Stay away from anger and revenge. Keep envy far from you, for it only leads you into lies. Psalm 37:8 (TPT)

Control your temper, for anger labels you a fool. Ecclesiastes 7:9 (NLT)

We give great honor to those who endure under suffering. For instance, you know about Job, a man of great endurance. You can see how the Lord was kind to him at the end, for the Lord is full of tenderness and mercy. James 5:11-12 (NLT)

Send your kind mercy-kiss to comfort me, your servant, just like you promised you would. Psalm 119:76 (TPT)

9

Healthy, Healed and Whole Hearts

I will give them hearts that recognize me as the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me wholeheartedly. Jeremiah 24:7 (NLT)

Here we are, halfway through Part Three, and hopefully, you are getting more and more ready to let go of all the filters, blind spots, and false identities, AND the traumas, lies and vows that created them. We have been hijacked from our natural state as daughters of God, a state where we are loved, protected and overflowing with blessings, and put in an unnatural state where we are survivors that have to strive, fend for ourselves, settle for less and always watch our backs.

This is the part of your story where Holy Spirit pulls back all these counterfeit layers and uncovers the real you. There is a real YOU, the YOU that God has known from the beginning of time, and we will talk about that real you extensively in Part

Four. I'm so excited for you to meet this version of yourself because the real you is fantastic! I was just talking with a young woman the other day, and she said to me, "There's nothing really that special about me." That was one of her false identities talking. So many of the negative things we think about ourselves are the thoughts and ideas that come from these trauma-induced alternate personalities. You may think that way about yourself too, "I'm just a plain Jane, there's nothing special about me." Just wait, as the real, you begins to emerge from your cocoon, you are going to be absolutely blown away at not only how unique you are, but how big the dreams are that belong to your authentic heart.

For us to come back into our natural state as daughters of God, we have to allow Holy Spirit to do some gardening, pull the lies out by the roots, remove the rocks and weeds, and aerate the hard ground. This will cause our hearts to become soft again, and reveal God's greatest truth about who we are, and the lives we have been born to live can finally get activated.

The Heart Work transformation happens through a three-part process of **Repentance, Confession, and Forgiveness**.

First, we will come out of agreement with the lies and vows that have been revealed during this month through **Repentance**.

Next, we will acknowledge, by way of **Confession**, the things we have done to ourselves, and others while operating under the influence of these lies, and what we now know are false identities.

Finally, we will release ourselves, and those that have hurt us, and reconnect to our original and authentic selves through **Forgiveness**.

Using these three spiritual tools with the help of Holy Spirit we will reclaim a healthy, healed and whole heart.

REPENTANCE

When most people think of the word *repentance*, they think of feeling remorse or sorrow, over some type of personal wrongdoing. While repentance does include some of that, it's so much bigger than just being sorry for the things you have and are doing wrong in your life. Many times we feel bad for something, but after a while, we just start doing it again, and then we feel bad again, but we still don't stop. This sin cycle is what produces shame, condemnation, and guilt. True repentance will break the cycle, and set us free from the

mindsets that are behind these patterns. This is why we have to repent as part of The Heart Work. When our hearts change so will our lives. We will never get rid of behavior that's unworthy of us without a heart transformation, and healing from the lie that is the real catalyst behind that habitual sin.

A simple definition of *repentance* is, "a change of mind, or heart."

It is a personal, absolute, and unconditional surrender to God. It is also a full admittance that God is Sovereign, or as I put it, God is God, and you are not. When we acknowledge God's sovereignty, we are also declaring that his way is the best way and that he knows more than we do. So with that in mind, repentance also includes turning around from whatever course we were following and submitting to God's plan for our lives. Think of it as if you have been riding in the car, and your lies were at the wheel, and they were taking you wherever THEY wanted to take you. Repentance says, "Stop the car, I'm getting out!" You may have noticed that nowhere in this lengthy definition have I included feeling guilty, ashamed, or beating yourself up over past failures. That doesn't create change, so stop doing it.

Repentance is going to be an ongoing part of your life until every lie is found and replaced with truth. Think of it as a GPS

that continues to adjust and correct your course. You set it to where you want to go, and as you're driving along the GPS says to you, there's a better route available, do you want to take it? This is very similar to how God uses repentance to get us living our best lives, and taking the best routes to get there.

The Word of God says, "For the Lord corrects those he loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights." If you have only known punishment or harsh "discipline" from authority figures like parents, bosses, pastors, or even oppressive spouses, then let me tell you what a course correction from Father God, via Holy Spirit, looks and sounds like. It sounds a lot like this, "Hey baby girl, you're better than this, you don't have to live this way. This is not who I created you to be. Let me teach you something new." "Sweetheart, you're taking the hard road, take my hand, and I will show you a better way." "Daughter, you're headed for danger, listen to me, trust me, this road is a dead end. Stop the car, and let me drive, I will get us to safety." Any voice of correction that comes your way that is harsh, demeaning, degrading, that causes fear or confusion, or makes you want to run and hide is not of God. God's correction will never diminish you, make you feel small, or put you in the corner. His correction enlarges your possibilities, shows you that you are living far

below the way you were created to live, it makes you feel safe, loved, protected and seen. You may not always like it, especially if your little deceived heart wanted to do it your own way, but you will learn pretty quickly God's way is a much better choice.

The changing of your heart and mind will be a process, and it will take time. You didn't get in the place you are overnight, and you won't get to where God wants to take you overnight, but the good news is you will start seeing a dramatic change right away. As I have watched many women go through this change, I can say it looks like this - One HUGE shift, followed by several smaller shifts, a period of adjustment to your new mindsets, a couple small roadblocks, maybe even a big one, and then another HUGE shift, etc.

Now that we know the real definition and all the benefits of repentance, we are going to repent of all the lies we have believed about ourselves, others and God. As you go forward, lots of lies will be revealed, and the first step to healing will always be coming out of agreement with them. When we agree with something, we give it permission to keep manifesting in our lives. We have to revoke those permission slips. We can no longer allow these lies to be our GPS in life. If

we want an abundant life, we have to be led by the Greater Truth.

Here's how we locate the lie and repent (come out of agreement with it), and replace it with the truth:

1. Start with the most significant problem areas in your life. These troubled areas are an indication that lies are being believed in that area which needs healing.
2. Ask Holy Spirit to show you the lie you are believing. When it is revealed, repent of believing the lie, and be willing to release it, and the behavior and emotions attached to it. Ask Holy Spirit to help you.
3. Now ask Holy Spirit to show you the truth about this area and about yourself. Repeat this truth to yourself regularly, and embrace scriptures and other divine confirmations of this truth to continue to reinforce your new belief system.

Here's an example -

Problem: I can't be myself around people

Lie believed: If people knew me, they wouldn't like me. If I tell the truth about myself, people will judge me. I won't be loved and accepted anymore.

Truth: I am already accepted and loved by God. He knows everything about me and loves me still. When I live truthfully (in the light), I will be close to God because He is in the light. I don't need to be accepted by everybody, anybody that rejects me when I am living truthfully is not someone I need in my life.

Use this template every time a lie you believe, is revealed to you. Stop whatever you're doing, and repent. Journal and keep track of what Holy Spirit says to you. Make this a habit, and you will see significant and fast changes in your life.

CONFESSION

Nothing you confess could make me love you less - The Pretenders, 1994

As women, we have been conditioned for generations to wear masks - to hide our real thoughts and feelings, and to pretend everything is okay, or in other words, put on a happy face! You see this in sayings like, "A happy girl is a pretty girl," and, "a smile is the best accessory a girl can wear!" All the media

ads we have seen for the last 50 years show smiling, happy, and carefree women frolicking in the waves, laughing over salads and periods (salads aren't funny, and neither are periods). Thanks to Photoshop and filters, these happy women are living the perfect stretch mark, cellulite, wrinkle-free life. And don't get me started on those mom Instagrams. Not one of them shows a mom screaming like a lunatic at her kids, her kids staring back at her as if they have literally seen the devil, and then mom locking herself in the bathroom to cry. Let me see that on your Instagram story.

That brings up one of the great mysteries of motherhood. Why do we always hide to cry? The only place I ever cried for the first ten years after becoming a mom was in the shower. Apparently, we haven't come as far as society likes to tell us we have come. Those crazy ads of smiling housewives vacuuming in their heels and pearls might be gone, but the idea that women should hide their "ugly" is still very much alive and well! And by ugly, I mean anything that is going to make other people feel uncomfortable, anything that might rock the boat or anything that isn't considered "feminine". As women, we aren't allowed to be hurt, unhappy, or God forbid, angry. This creates a fear of appearing too emotional because

those women are labeled psycho, unstable, aggressive, or just a plain old 'b*tch'.

So instead of talking about what we are thinking and feeling, instead of letting people see us between the smiles, we push it down and pack it away in these heart boxes until it turns into depression, anxiety, or some other taboo thing. Then, we just have one more thing we need to keep a secret, so we pop a pill to try and hold the whole hot mess together.

Well, I call BS on all that. Society has to change, and the people that need to lead the way into this uprising of change and vulnerability are the people of God. In fact, to be honest, the places that we should be able to be the most vulnerable, are in our spiritual communities, yet these are the places historically that we have been encouraged to put on the biggest show. Often it isn't an overt suggestion, but just an unspoken insinuation that if you know Jesus, you should have all your ducks in a row. I didn't have any ducks or a row, but what I did have was ninety-nine problems, and a duck wasn't even one of them. I can't tell you how many times as a young believer I was shut down when I tried to talk about what I was going through. I was given the worst sexist advice, or I was told cute cliché phrases like, "this too shall pass". Pass

what? A liquor store? I hope so because after I leave here, I'm gonna go get drunk.

NEVER LET THEM SEE YOU SWEAT

I don't know how many people reading this will remember the antiperspirant commercial with the tagline, "Never let them see you sweat," or in other words, stay unemotional, be in control, and never let them see any weakness.

If we are going to get free to be our real selves, we have to throw out these cultural lies. Being weak is okay! It's okay to admit you don't have it all together, that you've made mistakes. I will tell you this, I'll show you mine if you show me yours. And not just your highlight reel, but your blooper reel too. I want to see all the skeletons in your closet. Your wounds, scars, weaknesses, the bodies in the trunk of your car, go ahead and bring them all out. Somebody needs to see them. Let's declare war on a culture of angles and filters, auto-tune and Photoshop because real freedom is found in vulnerability.

Make this scripture below your common practice -

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you can live together whole and healed. James 5:16 (MSG)

There's power in confession when we are brave enough to admit that we don't have it all together, and our life isn't perfect, that is when we get healed. The Greater Truth of God's Word says we should make this a common practice, which means it should be a part of regular life.

I think you might have guessed by now that when I first started waking up spiritually, I was a hot mess. I was very young, and had only been married for a couple years, but was already separated and facing a divorce. I had a rough start in life, and as a result, I was struggling with addiction, low self-esteem, and mental, physical, emotional and spiritual issues. I was "tore up from the floor up" as they say. That's when a well-meaning friend started inviting me to some women's gatherings, but instead of helping me, it only increased my self-hatred and confusion.

The women at these gatherings appeared perfect. I felt like a total loser as I listened to them talk about their wonderful husbands and brilliant children. I found myself looking for the nearest exit sign, and panicking that someone might ask me a question about myself or my family. I imagined myself blurting out that my husband was a jerk, I was sleeping with a guy I met at a party, and I'm pretty sure I have a half drunk bottle of vodka under the seat in my car. I left every gathering

feeling like I must be even more screwed up than I initially thought, especially if these women represented the ordinary reality of domestic life.

But these women weren't what they appeared to be, they weren't being honest with themselves or each other. I learned years later that some of the women I met at those meetings were cheating on their wonderful husbands because they weren't so wonderful after all. Several had prescription drug addictions, eating disorders and chronic physical pain. More than half had a severe bout with depression or anxiety over the years, and nearly all of them felt isolated in their pain while they strived to hide the truth from everyone around them.

These are the masks we are talking about, women are great at wearing them, and these broken hearts are great at pretending. We are taught to keep our "crazy" hidden. But consider this is your invitation to let it all hang out.

Constantly hiding what's inside our hearts makes life so complicated. I once dyed my very dark hair, blonde. Disclaimer - *Blondes may have more fun, but orange haired girls do not!* It was a full time job to try and get my hair to stay blonde, it wanted to be brassy and sassy every time I turned around. I finally gave up and went back to my natural color.

It's time for us to give up our masks. It's too much work! It's time to heal the REAL, so we don't have to maintain the counterfeit.

When we confess our weaknesses, failures, and faults to one another, we create an atmosphere of healing. There is a power that can only be accessed through confession and vulnerability. I have personally witnessed it in my own life and in the lives of others. The other thing that is as dangerous to our identity as lies is secrets.

READY TO TELL

Secrets are dangerous because they are an infection that's trapped inside these heart wounds of ours. Infection is easily treated when it's able to be let out of the body but when it's trapped inside it can cause life-threatening damage. I remember when I got my nose pierced, they told me if it does get infected whatever you do, DO NOT take the piercing out. Why? Because then the hole would close up and trap the infection inside my body. This is what happens to us when we have secrets.

It was six years ago that I was sitting in a doctor's office for a yearly check-up, and a tiny little question on the family history form hit a gas leak in my heart. It asked, "Have you

ever been sexually abused?" Just a little spark and I exploded with rage, how dare they ask such a question? Why is that any of their business? My blood pressure started rising, as I felt all the secrets I had been keeping for so long start tumbling out of their heart boxes. I could have quickly picked them up and shoved them back into their hiding places before anyone could see, but this time I didn't want to anymore. I was ready to tell. I checked the box YES. I was ready to confess to the world, it was time to finally step out from under the heavy weights that had held me back for so long. I had already spent 30 something years in denial, not owning my pain. I was pretending that what happened didn't affect my life. That it didn't have any bearings on my relationships or self-worth. I realized I can't be healed of something I won't even admit happened. I had been doing women's media and ministry for a decade at that point, and I knew someone needed to hear my secret so that they could heal too. I wanted whoever she was to know she was not alone, and when she was finally able to show up to the table, I would be here holding a seat for her.

There is nothing more beautiful than when a heavy and hurting soul, beleaguered with shame and secrecy, bravely shares her pain. You might expect to be met with disapproval, but instead, you are met by cries of "me too", and "I thought I

was the only one". This is when you realize the very thing you have been hiding from others, is the very thing others needed you to share all along. When you own your own failures, weaknesses, and traumas, they no longer own you, and it gives others permission and courage to do the same.

I am not suggesting that you run out and confess your faults, and share your secrets with just anyone. Some people will leverage information like that against you. That's the unfortunate truth. There are people waiting for a weakness in your armor so they can stab you, but you'll know when it's the right time and when it's the right person or community. We will talk about this more in the Boundaries chapter of Part Four.

So how about it? Are you ready to come out of hiding? Are you ready to tell your secrets? If so, it's time to stop hiding and start healing.

LET'S JUST PROCESS THAT!

QUESTIONS TO ASK

List three things that make you unique?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Have you ever been stuck, or are you currently stuck in the sin cycle? You mess up, feel guilty, ask for forgiveness, but then eventually just do it again?

What sin do you keep committing and can't seem to break free from?

Do you beat yourself up when you fail? What are some of the things you say to yourself?

Do you expect harsh discipline or punishment from God when you screw up?

What are some words you would use to describe God's demeanor towards you when you sin?

What are three of the lies you have believed that you need to repent from?

1.

2.

3.

Do you feel pressured to have it all together? By who?

Do you find yourself hiding your real feelings or pain, because you are worried about what people might think of

you, or you don't want to make other people uncomfortable?

Do you hide when you cry?

When is the last time you told someone about something you were struggling with?

Do you have any secrets? Are you ready to tell?

GREATER TRUTH TO EMBRACE

I will give thanks and praise to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well. Psalm 139:14 (AMP)

Whenever our hearts make us feel guilty and remind us of our failures, we know that God is much greater and more merciful than our conscience, and he knows everything there is to know about us. 1 John 3:20 (TPT)

Jesus heard about it and spoke up, "Who needs a doctor: the healthy or the sick? I'm here inviting outsiders, not insiders—an invitation to a changed life changed inside and out." Luke 5:31-32 (MSG)

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. James 5:16 (NLT)

Everything hidden and covered up will soon be exposed. For the facade is falling down, and nothing will be kept secret for long. Luke 12:2 (TPT)

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and eliminate death entirely. No one will mourn or weep any longer. The pain of wounds will no longer exist, for the old order has ceased. Revelation 21:4 (TPT)

10

Forgiveness

*We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. -
Martin Luther King Jr.*

This is one of my favorite chapters. Learning to forgive myself and others has been a real game changer in my life. Trust me when I tell you that forgiveness, along with repentance and confession, is the only thing that has the power to put you back in touch with your authentic identity. I know it seems so simple, but it isn't because it requires us to humble ourselves, it is just something that most people really don't want to do. Let me explain how forgiveness is such an identity game-changer.

All the other versions of us, these fragmented identities created by heart wounds and the lies we believe, as a result, are usually caused by something someone else did to us, right? For that reason, it's very easy for us to cross the line

from survivor to a slightly different and false identity called the victim. When we are in victim mode, we become fixated on what happened to us and blame it unconsciously and consciously for the current state of our life.

VICTIM MODE

We will all be the victim of something, or someone, in our lifetime, but staying in victim mode is dangerous. It can lead to many self-destructive behaviors. Most addictions, self-mutilation, suicidal tendencies, chronic and toxic relationship patterns stem from viewing ourselves as victims. When you think of yourself as a victim, you create opportunities with your choices that continue to reinforce that identity. If you're not careful, you can use the bad things that have happened to you as an excuse to not only do bad things to yourself, and others, but to continue to choose things that will bring you more and more suffering.

REGINA

I once knew a woman who was so stuck in a victim mentality by the things that had been done to her as a child, that it was physically killing her. I met her through her two teenage daughters. After hearing her heartbreaking story of childhood incest and abuse, I began to try and help her through the process of forgiving, but she refused. She was struggling with

many manifestations of the bitterness she was harboring in her heart, the most dangerous one being an addiction to alcohol. Every night she would get to drinking and feeling sorry for herself, and she would call me on the phone to rehash and rehearse all the things that were done to her as a child. She would cry in torment like it just happened yesterday, instead of thirty-something years ago. At first, I prayed with her, I cried with her, I tried to reason with her about letting go of the past, but nothing worked. She was addicted to suffering. Eventually, I had no choice but to stop answering the phone late at night. The last time I saw this precious woman she had sent her daughter to ask me to come and see her, and when I arrived, I found her deathly ill. She was bedridden at 42 years old and quite possibly facing her last moments on this earth, still consumed with anger and hate.

What happened to her? The same thing that happens to so many others. She refused to forgive. She wanted everyone to know that she was a victim, and even though life tried to kill her, she was still here, and she was *damn* proud of it. It became her excuse to drink, and in a very warped way, it became the thing in her mind that justified her self-destruction. We often hear that un-forgiveness is like drinking

poison, and expecting the other person to die. I don't think that saying was ever more accurate than in the case of my friend Regina.

Unfortunately, it's a sorrowful, but familiar story. I have met so many people that love to tell everyone about the terrible things they have been through, and everything everyone has done to them. But they don't see that they are continuing to do the same terrible things to themselves. They date every *player* within a fifty-mile radius, and then they hold court with anyone who will listen to their latest soap opera of being cheated on and dumped. It's as if they unconsciously believe there is a trophy for their trauma. The pain becomes their claim to fame, and inviting other people to their perpetual pity party becomes their life. They cannot be delivered from this cycle because they have become proud of their suffering. This isn't who they were created to be, but they have **chosen pain as their identity**.

People that are stuck in a victim identity say things like:

"They ruined my life."

"I will never recover."

"I can't get over this"

"This can never be fixed."

"It's not fair."

"They made me like this"

I recently saw a post on social media that said, "We all have been so hurt by somebody that it changed us forever." How about changing our confession to, we've all been so loved by somebody that it changed us forever. The greatest truth is, **nothing that anybody has ever done to us is more powerful than what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross.**

Nothing has any more power over our destiny than what we assign to it. Forgiveness reassigns the power over our destiny back to God, not to the people and things that have hurt us. Forgiveness says, "Yes this hurt me, but it's not gonna kill me because my identity is much bigger than what has happened to me." Nothing that I go through in this life can change who God says I am.

But when we refuse to forgive, it keeps us in that victim identity even longer. It actually tethers us to the trauma, it chains us to the hurt, to the abuse, whatever the situation may be. It creates a type of soul tie, and we stay stuck with that thing like a ball and chain for the rest of our lives.

The act of forgiveness is a process with many layers, and it is complete when we are willing to no longer identify a person by the hurt that they have caused us. Often when people wrong us, they actually become their wrongdoing in our minds. We think of them by their sin, instead of who they really are. They are the liar, the cheater, the thief, etc. The problem with that is, we also become their sin in our minds, we become the lied *to*, the cheated *on*, the stolen *from*, or to make it easier, the *victim*.

When we truly forgive someone, we are releasing them and ourselves into our authentic identities again. After all, they are not their mistakes, just like we are not our pain. When we don't forgive, we both stay stuck together in the trauma and the false selves that it has created. They stay the *villain*, and we stay their *victim*.

God doesn't see them as their mistakes, failures or sin. He doesn't have *narcissist*, *pedophile*, or *manipulator* written down in His little black book in the place where their name should be. He sees them as they really are, just like He sees you as you really are. And by the way, if you are the villain in this scenario and not the victim, if you have wronged and hurt others, **you can forgive yourself too.**

If we want our true identities back, we must forgive. When we do, it releases everyone involved, and it breaks the control of the trauma, and we all get set free.

IT ISN'T ALWAYS EASY, BUT IT'S ALWAYS WORTH IT.

Forgiveness is not always easy. At times, it feels more painful than the wound we suffered, to forgive the one that inflicted it. And yet, there is no peace without forgiveness. - Marianne Williamson

Many people have a hard time forgiving, because ironically not enough of their heart is in it. They just don't FEEL like forgiving. Well, of course, you don't feel like forgiving. Depending on what was done to you, or what you did to others you might still be paying the consequences of those actions. When something is devastating, many times all you can see is what was stolen from you. You don't think you can recover. You might even still be filled with anger or rage. This is the BEST time to start forgiving.

“Wait, what? Why?”

Because **forgiveness is not a feeling**. So the best time to get that ball rolling is when you absolutely have no desire to do it. It will keep your fickle feelings out of the equation. Otherwise,

you will wait until a moment of pity, when you feel sorry for the person, or maybe you just feel like you want to be a noble and kind person that day. You know, take the high road and all that jazz, and you will offer your forgiveness only to revoke it the first time you feel triggered by something they say or do. When you think of forgiveness as a feeling, this is what you will do through your whole healing process, forgive and take it back, forgive and take it back.

“But they are not even sorry!”

Many times in forgiving others we have to receive the apology that's never been given to us. And by that I mean, we have to forgive people even if they have never asked for forgiveness, or in many cases, they never even admitted wrongdoing, and they might not even believe they have done us any harm. Now, that's a real punch in the *boobie!*

“I don't get it, how can you forgive someone who isn't even sorry?”

Because **forgiveness is a choice!** It's an act of obedience to God's Word. True forgiveness is a supernatural debt canceling transaction.

CANCELING THE DEBT

We all owe debts. Whether it's a car or house payment, credit cards, or just a small loan from a friend because we forgot our wallet at work one day. They are our debts, and we will need to pay them. When someone wrongs us, they sin against us, and they owe us a debt. These are spiritual debts, and they can't be seen with the human eye. But they are debts just the same, and they are binding to you. These people and their debts are literally tied to you in the unseen realm. This is the same concept behind *soul ties*. **Forgiveness is about canceling that debt and cutting those ties.**

If you could hang out with Jesus in person when He was on the earth and ask Him for advice on anything, what would you want to know? There were a group of people that got to do that very thing, and one of the things they asked Him about was prayer. They wanted to know what their daily prayers should include. The prayer template that Jesus gave them is what some refer to as the Lord's Prayer. It's a great prayer example, but there is one specific line in this prayer that I want to highlight right now.

It is, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," Matthew 6:12 (NKJ). Another translation says, "Forgive us the

wrongs we have done, as we ourselves release forgiveness to those who have wronged us,” Matthew 6:12 (TPT).

Jesus is telling us to receive forgiveness for ourselves daily and then in turn release forgiveness to those that owe us debts. In the more modern translation, it says the debts are actually wrongs that have been committed by others towards us.

FORGIVE TO BE FORGIVEN

That passage of prose in the Greater Truth of God’s Word goes on to tell us that if we do not forgive, we cannot be forgiven. And when you pray, make sure you forgive the faults of others, so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you.

Jesus said: But if you withhold forgiveness from others, your Father withholds forgiveness from you. Matthew 6:14-15 (TPT)

In this area, there is a connection between what God does and what we do. We can’t receive forgiveness from God, without also forgiving others. If we refuse to do our part, we cut ourselves off from God’s part.

Jesus told a story about a man that owed an outrageous amount of money. It was a debt that someone in his station of

life would never be able to repay. When his master asked for him to pay the debt, he begged to be given more time. In the ancient days, when you couldn't pay a debt, you didn't just file for bankruptcy, or get your cars repossessed. They sold everything you owned, they took your family and made them slaves to work off the debt, and they put YOU in prison. They called it *debtor's prison*. His master would not give him more time, knowing that all the time in the world would not help him pay off the debt. Instead, he did something amazing, he FORGAVE the debt, wiped the slate clean, and allowed this man to go away debt free.

This same man, the same day he was forgiven of his vast debt found a fellow servant of his that owed him a much smaller amount and demanded that he pay him back. The friend did not have the money and asked for more time, the man refused and called the authorities, and had his friend thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the man's master heard what he had done he was furious. He called the man back in and said that in response to what he had done to his fellow servant, he would also be imprisoned and tormented until he could pay his debt.

This is what happens to us spiritually when we don't forgive. We become imprisoned and tormented by our un-forgiveness.

We become blind to the abundance that is available to us, and we begin to settle for much less than what Jesus died to give us. Even though Jesus died to set us free, we will continue to sit in a mental, emotional and spiritual prison, not understanding that the door is wide open. We also often become tormented in our minds and bodies by the bitterness that results from un-forgiveness. Not forgiving others and self, causes us to forfeit all the benefits of the cross. And those benefits are immense. This isn't just about heaven someday when you die. This is about having **heaven on earth**, it's about healing, prosperity, hope, wholeness, joy, peace, and every other ingredient to a world-changing life.

“But you don’t know what they did to me!”

Look, I know what I am asking here. I know some of you aren't just struggling with forgiving someone who hurt your feelings, stole your boyfriend, or talked about you behind your back. I am talking about forgiving people who killed your only child when they got behind the wheel of their car while intoxicated. I am talking about forgiving the person who sexually assaulted you in the parking lot at your job and stole your ability to work without panic attacks and emotional breakdowns. I am talking about forgiving people that ruined your reputation with lies, or family members that abused you,

and neglected you, and destroyed your childhood. It isn't always easy things that we need to forgive. Some things you have been through may even seem **unforgivable**. The good news is, even when things seem too big and too devastating for us humans to forgive, God is still able to forgive people through us.

BRENDA

I spent a few years working as a social worker with homeless and chemically dependent women. In 1997, I worked second shift at a women's shelter doing intakes with homeless women. Some of the women were the victims of domestic violence, and because of that, the shelter had a locked front door with a security camera monitoring it. Nobody could enter the shelter without being buzzed into the door.

One day as I was doing bed assignments and nighttime check-ins, I looked up to see what appeared to be a very tall man standing in front of my desk. I was startled, and without even asking how he entered the building I said, "Sir, you cannot be in here, you have to leave." "I am not a man," she responded. What? I looked at her more closely, "I'm going to have to see your I.D." Sure enough, this was a woman standing in front of me, a very large, strong, could have played linebacker for the Cleveland Browns, woman.

A couple minutes later, a co-worker rounded the corner and took one look at our visitor, and said, "Sir, I am going to call security if you don't leave." I spoke up even before Brenda had a chance to rip her a new one, and said, "Laura, she's not a man." As my co-worker stood there looking at me very confused, I invited our new resident to take a seat so I could get her checked in. Getting any personal information from her for the intake form was like pulling teeth out of a crocodile's mouth, and a couple times I was afraid I was going to get my hand bit off.

In the weeks that followed, she had many issues with other residents, she didn't play very well with others. She was angry at everyone, but she seemed to hate me the most. If I walked in a room, she walked out, cussing me under her breath. She quickly became a mysterious figure in the shelter, and when she was there, she kept to herself.

One day as I was praying, God spoke to me about Brenda, He said, "Brenda is special to me, I have a great purpose for her life, I want you to tell her that." "WHAT," I said. "Are you freaking kidding me? You don't understand God, I can't talk to her, she hates me because I thought she was a man, she practically growls at me every time I pass by her, she's so

unfriendly, nobody talks to her, and I'm sure she doesn't believe in You anyway, I just can't do it!"

It's always fun to argue with God like we know more than He does. I'm sure it's very amusing to him, like a five-year-old telling his mom how she's wrong about rain. "It isn't 'praiser-wation' mom, it's God crying."

Needless to say, I ended up doing what He asked me to do. A few days later I walked into the shelter kitchen, and there she was sitting at a table. We were the only two people in the room, and surprisingly this time when I came in, she didn't walk out. "Brenda," I started. "WHAT," she responded.

"God told me he loves you and he has a special purpose for your life." I literally said it that fast. I could have won an auctioneer contest.

She became agitated, "What did you say," she growled. I now could feel Holy Spirit with me, and I became bold, "God told me He loves you, and that He has a special purpose for your life," I said slowly. Her shoulders relaxed, and she sighed, "That's what I thought you said, someone, told me that on the bus yesterday." "I'm going to go to church," she said as a matter of fact. "Oh that's great," I said excitedly. "I'm going to

go to YOUR church," she said. I laughed nervously, "Oh okay, cool, that would be great."

Now, I used to take a few ladies from the shelter to my church every once in a while, but BRENDA? "God, what have you gotten me into?" The very next Sunday, I picked her up in front of the shelter, and she got into my tiny little Dodge Omni. She barely fit, her head was touching the ceiling, and her knees were up around her neck. My car was noticeably tilted to one side as we drove the eight miles to church. I rattled on and on nervously about my church, but she only made sounds as responses.

I was nervous because I knew my church could get wild. People danced around very loud, and there were passionate speakers. I had no idea how she was going to react to it all. It ended up being a reasonably tame service with a beautiful "Come to Jesus He loves you" message at the end. Everyone made a beeline to the altar, me included. As I stood there praying, I felt a large shadow looming over me. I looked up, and there she was as stoic as a stone statue. "What do I do now," she asked me wearily. I didn't know exactly how to answer, after all, I was only 22 years old. This was way above my pay grade.

Thankfully, I didn't have to because at that very moment the pastor came by and asked her what her name was. "Brenda," she replied. "Brenda, God wants to deliver you from drug addiction completely, and heal your heart, but first you have to forgive your father." She bucked like a bull in a rodeo, she stepped back with rage in her eyes, and responded, "NO, I CANNOT DO THAT!"

What on earth just happened, I got scared, I thought, Pastor what are you doing? I have to ride home with this woman! He didn't relent. He said gently, "I know you're hurting, and I know it's hard, but you have to forgive your father."

I didn't know Brenda yet, but in the years that followed this encounter, we would become friends and I would have a chance to hear her story. She was a little girl sexually, physically, and verbally abused so severely by her father that she ran away, lived on the streets, and became addicted to drugs. She had to become very tough and hard, to survive on her own at such a young age, and she was raped and assaulted several times, so she began presenting herself as a male to avoid further sexual assault and trauma.

She looked up at the pastor, "I'm sorry, I can't," she said bitterly. He began to walk away, and then he turned back quickly with a new God inspired thought. "If you can't forgive

your father, can you at least ask God to forgive him?" She thought for a moment about this new possibility, I could see her face being to relax and soften, "Yes, I think I can do that." He looked elated, he immediately took her hands and began to lead her in a prayer releasing her Father to God's grace and mercy. What happened next was nothing short of amazing.

No sooner were the words out of her mouth than her hands shot in the air and she began to weep. It was like watching someone who had been living on death row find out they were being set free. She was a stone statue that turned to life. All the hardness and anger left her face, and it was replaced by beauty and joy. Brenda began to thrive after that day, she got out of the shelter, got a place to live and kicked her crack cocaine and alcohol addiction. She had many layers to work through over time, but she no longer needed to medicate her pain with drugs because she had released it to God.

Brenda is just one small example of the people whose lives I have seen do a one hundred eighty degree turn around after they agreed to forgive.

When working through to forgive these types of devastating traumas, it's important to remember the following.

Forgiveness is not:

Saying that what they did wasn't wrong.

Condoning what they did.

Letting them get away with what they did.

I have run into many people over the years that cannot forgive the people that have hurt them because they are afraid if they do, the person will not pay for what they did. Listen my friend, they are already paying for what they did to you. They aren't getting away with anything. The spiritual law in place in the universe will not be circumvented, and the law says that the product of un-repentant sin is death. Death to potential, death to revelation, death to prosperity. If they are not sorry for what they have done, they are suffering. Their lives are being plagued by the natural and spiritual consequences of what they have done to you and others, and just because you can't see those consequences doesn't mean they are not there.

FORGIVING YOURSELF

So many have a much easier time forgiving others than they do forgiving themselves. It's possible that you are the one that you need to forgive. Perhaps you have allowed your own pain to lead you into doing things that have hurt other people.

Frequently we hurt others in an effort to try and heal ourselves. Maybe you are even reading this book from prison right now for things that you have done to yourself or others. Whether that's the case, or you are just sitting in a mental prison of shame and self-bitterness, I want to let you know there is nothing you could ever do that is too big that God can't forgive. There is **no scenario** in which you come to the cross, the place where Jesus shed His blood for your redemption, and Jesus rejects you or turns you away.

*Jesus said: And all who come to me, I will embrace and will never turn them away.
John 6:37 (TPT)*

It's time to be free. You might not think it's important to forgive yourself only to forgive others. The problem with that is that if you don't forgive yourself you won't be able to forgive others. If you continue to punish yourself for your mistakes you are going to insist that others be punished for theirs as well. Forgiveness is a gift we choose to give ourselves, and a gift we choose to give others as we will see in the next chapter. It is a divine exchange program where we offer God our greatest sorrows and receive more than we ever thought possible in return.

LET'S JUST PROCESS THAT!

QUESTIONS TO ASK

How would you define forgiveness?

Do you find it easy to forgive? Why or why not?

Have you ever been, or are you now stuck in a victim mode? What is the trauma that you keep rehashing over and over?

Have you ever justified self-destructive behavior (drug abuse, sex abuse, verbal abuse, promiscuity, over or under eating, escapism, etc.) because of something someone else did to you?

Is there anyone that you are still identifying by their sin? (cheater, liar, thief, narcissist, rapist, manipulator, etc.)

Name five people right off the top of your head that have hurt you and that you still need to forgive fully.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Is there anyone or anything that you are refusing to forgive because what they did was too devastating? If you can't forgive them, can you ask God to forgive them?

Do you need to forgive yourself? For What? Do you believe you can be forgiven by God, even if others don't forgive you for what you have done?

GREATER TRUTH TO EMBRACE

So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it. Colossians 3:13-14 (MSG)

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 (NKJV)

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Psalms 51:10 (NKJV)

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Forgiveness Continues

The Gift That Keeps On Giving

*So we are convinced that every detail of our lives is continually woven together to fit into God's perfect plan of bringing good into our lives, for we are his lovers who have been called to fulfill his designed purpose.
Romans 8:28 (TPT)*

Another amazing thing that happens when we forgive is, we release God to use the hard things that have happened in our lives for our good, and the greater good of humankind. I know that seems impossible in some cases. The things that happened in your life may be so diabolical that you don't see how they could ever be used for any kind of good. It's like looking at the back of a woven tapestry, it just looks like a mess of strings and patterns with no purpose whatsoever until you turn it over and see the beautiful picture on the other side.

A great example of this in scripture is the life of Joseph. He had a bunch of brothers that were jealous of him, and they beat him up and threw him in a ditch. Yikes! Any sibling rivalry out there? They were about to kill him, but a band of gypsies was passing by so they decided to make some money instead and sell him into slavery. "Great! Thanks, bros! That's much better."

Life as a slave was hard for Joseph, and more terrible and tragic things started happening to him. This is often the case in our lives when one trauma just keeps giving birth to more, and more hard times. Finally he finds himself in prison, but God was with him, in fact, he was with him during everything that he had been through. I know that's a hard pill to swallow. Was God with him? Then why did he let all that stuff happen to him? Why didn't he just save him from it?

I don't know about you but I really struggled with this question in my own life. The more I learned about the goodness of God the more I didn't understand why he would allow the things that had happened to me. The answer to why God allowed this to happen to Joseph is in the end of the story. While Joseph was in prison, the leader of the country had troubling dreams that only Joseph could interpret for him. He was rewarded by the leader and became the second

highest leader in that country. Later when a famine hits the continent, Joseph's brothers are forced to come to the foreign land in which Joseph is a leader to look for food.

By the time the famine hit, Joseph had done his Heart Work and forgiven his brothers. When they came looking for food, it had been decades since they saw him and they did not recognize him. At this point, he had a huge opportunity to get revenge and make them pay for what they had done to him, but instead, he said this to them:

*Joseph replied, (...) "Don't you see, you planned evil against me, but God used those same plans for my good, as you see all around you right now—life for many people. Easy now, you have nothing to fear; I'll take care of you and your children." He reassured them, speaking with them heart-to-heart.
Genesis 50:20 (MSG)*

Because he had forgiven, Joseph was able to see the BIG picture. He understood that revenge was not the same thing as justice. He was able to see that even though God didn't rescue him from the enemy's plan, He rescued all of them, and an entire nation, through the enemy's plan. He was able to see beyond the ashes of his past to the beauty of the future. The

reason that things happen in our lives can be very complicated. It can be anything from us exercising our free will and making bad choices all the way to spiritual warfare and demonic attacks. The good news is that no matter what the reason for it may be God will never leave you through it and if you allow him he will make it all work out to your good.

BEAUTY FOR ASHES

*To bestow on them a crown of beauty
instead of ashes. Isaiah 61:3 (NIV)*

If when you look at your life, all you still see is ashes, all you can see is all the tangled up string of what has happened to you. If all your pain still makes no sense, and your life and future looks like a hot mess, that is a good indication that you haven't fully forgiven others or yourself. When you forgive, you will give God permission to make everything that has happened to you into something beautiful. Remember, we are talking about God here! If He can take some dirt and make us, He can take the dirt in your life and make something beautiful out of it.

God didn't choose the word *ashes* on accident for this scripture. His words are intentional, and they are inspired by

His great love for you and His desire to restore to you all that has been lost. Ashes were a symbol of mourning at the time that scripture was written. Ancient people would put ashes on their heads and weep because of whatever tragedy that had befallen them in life. You are still walking around with ashes on your head, and God wants to give you a crown in exchange. Don't you think it's time to trust Him to take your ashes and make them beautiful? Will you trust him? How long are you going to let what hurt you, haunt you?

“But I just want closure!”

I run into many people that say they need closure before they can let go of what has happened to them. The definition of *closure* is, "the feeling that an emotional or traumatic experience has been resolved." Closure is tricky because often this means that the person will keep exposing themselves to the situation or person that has hurt them, to fix what went wrong or understand why it happened to them. This causes them to be stuck in trauma that they can't let go. This is a result of un-forgiveness. Remember I said in the last chapter that we become tethered to that trauma until we can release it through forgiveness. So if you feel stuck in pain, like something is still unfinished, and you can't move on, I want to encourage you to forgive. Forgiveness is the fastest way to be

released from the past, receive your closure, and move forward to the future.

FORGIVENESS PREVENTS FUTURE TRAUMA

Do not give place to the enemy. Don't give him legal access to your life and your family. And do not give the devil an opportunity [to lead you into sin by holding a grudge, or nurturing anger, or harboring resentment, or cultivating bitterness]. Ephesians 4:27 (AMP)

Forgiveness has yet another benefit, and that is protecting you from the enemy's future plans and plots against you. While he is disempowered by what Jesus did on the cross, we can re-empower him through our unwillingness to forgive. We give him legal access to our lives when we hold grudges, nurture anger, harbor resentment, or cultivate bitterness through unforgiveness.

When I gave my life to Jesus at 22 years old, I began attending a small family style church, the one my husband at the time had grown up in since a child. I loved my church and my pastors and served God's purpose in that place for over a decade of my life. One day the pastor was accused of stealing by some of the church members a considerable amount of

money from the building fund. What happened after that was nothing short of complete chaos. Constant fighting and bickering back and forth, it was heartbreaking to see. This was my family, I had grown to love all of these people, and we had all been so close over the years.

Unfortunately, the accusations ended up being true for the most part, and before long the pastor was facing quite a bit of time in prison. I was torn, I knew I was supposed to feel angry, but I loved this man and his wife. They were like surrogate parents to me. My love for them superseded his wrongdoing, and I forgave him in my heart. Because of that forgiveness, I didn't feel bitter about what he had done, I only felt sad and confused. Most of the leaders of the church wanted to see the pastor pay dearly for his wrongdoing. While I didn't feel judgmental towards them for their pain, God was allowing me to see the bigger picture because of my willingness to forgive.

God spoke to my heart to write the pastor a letter detailing not only my forgiveness but also thanking him for all the positive things he had contributed to my life over the years. It felt silly to write the letter since I didn't know how I was going to get it to him. I didn't even know where he was living. He and his family disappeared because of the constant harassment of the

church members. I felt divinely directed to keep the letter in my car, and a few months later I was driving past a Walmart, and I felt God say, "Go in that store and take the letter you wrote to your pastor." I did, and sure enough, I ran right into one of his daughters. I am so glad I was obedient because this act of forgiveness released me from experiencing any more trauma connected to that situation. Starting that day my heart began to fully heal.

CYCLE OF BITTERNESS

1. Holding a grudge
2. Nurturing anger
3. Harboring resentment
4. Cultivating bitterness

A sound mind makes for a robust body, but runaway emotions corrode the bones.

Proverbs 14:30 (MSG)

Many of the church members that would not forgive ended up in a cycle of bitterness and deception. They were blinded by their hatred and could no longer even see the ugliness of their words and actions. Their hearts became hardened by unforgiveness, and the lies of the enemy started replacing the

truth in their lives. This led to many negative outcomes, sickness, divorce, loss of belief in God, destroyed friendships and relationships, etc. Holding on to these negative emotions destroys our lives from the inside out.

VICTIM TO VICTOR

Jesus said: I will not speak with you much longer, for the ruler of the world (Satan) is coming. And he has no claim on Me [no power over Me nor anything that he can use against Me] John 14:30 (AMP)

Jesus was saying that the opposing force's plot against Him of stirring up hatred in the heart of the religious leaders was heating up, but Satan couldn't do anything to Him because he did not have any legal access to Him. He didn't have any hooks in Jesus (seeds in His heart). Remember the Lord of the Flies? Jesus is saying here there aren't any lies of the enemy inside His heart. He knew His full identity as the Son of God, and the enemy could not gain access to His life. This is proven in the fact that Jesus wasn't murdered, they could have never murdered Him because the enemy had no power over Him to destroy him. He laid His life down freely for us to pay the debts for our sins, and become the ransom for our souls fulfilling His destiny.

Jesus said: I surrender my own life, and no one has the power to take my life from me. I have the authority to lay it down and the power to take it back again. This is the destiny my Father has set before me. John 10:18 (TPT)

So many people reading this book are wearied by what you see as the constant struggle with the opposing forces in your life and over your destiny. It's important to ask yourself if you have given them permission to be there through the things you are harboring in your heart.

Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. 1 Peter 5:8 (NLT)

When we forgive we release ourselves from a victim destiny, we are no longer the enemy's favorite prey. The devil doesn't want to have to work too hard just as lions go after the feeble, the young, and the stragglers, so the enemy of our souls will always seek out those who are isolated, alone, or depressed. He devours those who are already victims so take yourself off the dinner menu for good.

DON'T FORGET TO GET A RECEIPT

As you start down the road of a life of forgiveness I want to show you a practical way to know you have forgiven someone. Remember that forgiveness is not a feeling it is the canceling of a debt that is rightfully owed you. When you pay your car payment, your mortgage, your credit card bills, how can you prove you paid that debt? They give you some type of receipt, whether it's a confirmation number, an email summary of your payment, or even a piece of paper. That way if they call you midway through the month and say, "Hey Mrs. So-and-so, you still owe us," you can say, "Oh no I don't, here's my receipt."

I have created a forgiveness template that gives you a kind of receipt because the accusing voices of the enemy are going to come calling and question whether you have genuinely forgiven or not. There will be times when you see that person again, or something happens that reminds you of the event that occurred in your life, and you are going to wonder, "Did I really forgive?"

Healing takes time. Think of it like having a tender or bruised area in your heart. Your heart is not going to be whole overnight. But you can rest in peace knowing that you have been obedient and you have done your part in forgiving, and

now it's up to God to do His part and bring real and lasting healing to that area of your life.

Now let's take a moment to get activated. Read the prayer below out loud, and then in the Heart Check-In, you will find the Forgiveness Template which will help you through the process of forgiving.

Father God,

Thank you for giving me a heart that's willing to forgive. I choose to obey your word and release those who have hurt me and owe me debts.

I ask you to show me the areas where I have not forgiven myself, others, or even you. Let them surface fully so that I can release them to you and be free in those areas to have an abundant life.

Holy Spirit, come and plow every place in my heart that is barren right now because of hurt, shame, pain, anger or bitterness so that I can grow your fruit of peace, joy, and love in my life.

LET'S JUST PROCESS THAT!

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Have you ever seen anything negative in your life that was turned around for good? What was it? How did it feel?

Is there any area of your life that when you look at it, you still only see the ashes?

Have you given God permission to make that area of your life beautiful by forgiving?

Have you ever said that you needed closure about something? Did you get it?

Is there anyone that you need to write a forgiveness letter to? Who is it?

Have you ever done any of the following:

Held a grudge? If so, against who?

Stayed angry at someone for something they did to you?
What made you finally let go of the anger?

Held resentment against someone in your heart?

Became bitter about something that has happened to you?

Have you ever let your emotions get so far out of control that it made you sick?

Do you experience what you might call *attacks of the enemy* or *warfare* a lot in your life?

While spiritual opposition is part of every believer's life, after reading this chapter, do you think any of it could be because you are inviting it in by your un-forgiveness?

GREATER TRUTH TO EMBRACE

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. Romans 8:28 (NLT)

You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people. Genesis 50:20 (NLT)

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, for the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the Lord's favor has come, and with it, the day of God's anger against their enemies. To all who mourn in Israel, he will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair. In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks that the Lord has planted for his own glory. They will rebuild the ancient ruins, repairing cities destroyed long ago. They will revive them, though they have been deserted for many generations. Isaiah 61 (NLT)

My fellow believers, when it seems as though you are facing nothing but difficulties see it as an invaluable opportunity to experience the greatest joy that you can! For you know that when your faith is tested, it stirs up power within you to endure all things. And then as your endurance grows even stronger, it will release perfection into every part of your being until there is nothing missing and nothing lacking. James 1:2-4 (TPT)

But don't let the passion of your emotions lead you to sin! Don't let anger control you or be fuel for revenge, not for even a day. Don't give the slanderous accuser, the Devil, an opportunity to manipulate you! Ephesians 4:26-27 (TPT)

A HEART CHECK-IN

So now that your heart is activated, I'm going to show you the practical way to really know that you have forgiven. Because remember, forgiveness is not a feeling. Consider this your forgiveness receipt.

I hope you have been journaling all the things that have been coming up during the course of reading this book, all the bad memories, and all the traumas that tried to destroy you. Your list needs to include all the people that hurt you, and even the times when you hurt yourself. This is where you are finally going to release them for good.

You might have an extensive list, so here's a quick way to decide which memories have bitterness and un-forgiveness still in them. When you think of the person, memory, event or current situation, does it evoke a negative emotion? Things like guilt, anger, hurt, shame, sorrow, grief, embarrassment, humiliation, rage, confusion, revenge, jealousy, bitterness; basically any memory that holds negative emotions is an area where you still are believing a lie that needs to be released through forgiveness.

When you use the template below, you want to be very specific. Here's an example:

Dear Heavenly Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus, I purpose and choose to forgive (my father) for (abandoning our family).

I release (my father). I cancel their debts and obligations to me in this issue. Dear Lord, I ask you to forgive me for my bitterness toward (my father) in this situation.

In the name of Jesus, I cancel all Satan's power and authority over me in this issue because I have forgiven them, and God has forgiven me. It is done and over.

Holy Spirit, please come and heal my heart, and tell me your truth about this situation.

Do one of these for each person, memory, or traumatic event that is being revealed to you in the process of unpacking your heart boxes.

Here is a blank template for you to use.

Dear Heavenly Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus, I purpose and choose to forgive _____ for _____.

I release _____. I cancel their debts and obligations to me in this issue.

Dear Lord, I ask you to forgive me for my bitterness toward _____ in this situation.

In the name of Jesus, I cancel all Satan's power and authority over me in this issue because I have forgiven them, and God has forgiven me. It is done and over.

Holy Spirit, please come and heal my heart, and tell me your truth about this situation.

When I first began to do my Heart Work, I had pages and pages of people and things to forgive. You don't have to do it all in one day. Let Holy Spirit show you where you need to start. Be prepared, it may be an emotionally exhausting process, so give yourself grace and take as much time as you need.

After each forgiveness transaction, it's important to get quiet and listen to what truth Holy Spirit wants to reveal to you about that specific person or situation. He communicates differently to different people, and some of the ways may be the following:

A dream or vision

Word picture

Another layer of that memory to forgive

Feeling of peace

A weight lifted

A release

A small inner voice

An impression or knowing

If you don't feel or hear anything, no worries, there is no need to dwell on it, just move on to the next one on your list. You may hear or experience something later the same day, or in the near future. The most crucial part of forgiveness is your simple obedience and willingness to do it, and let God do the rest.

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PART FOUR

THE REAL YOU

12

Who Do You Think You Are?

Let's start out this last leg of our journey together with a question. You should have guessed by now that I like to ask questions, and there's a good reason for that. My life started changing when I stopped looking for all the right answers, and I started asking all the right questions. God taught me this practice one night as I was lying in bed battling anxiety, insomnia, and depression.

I had been battling it this time around for about a month, and this night was just like any other night. Everyone was sleeping peacefully, but I was awake staring at the ceiling wracked with fear. I just wished I was anybody else instead of me. "Why can't you be normal," I asked myself. You see we have no problem asking ourselves these kinds of questions, "What's wrong with you," or "How could be so stupid," or "Why can't you be normal?"

And then out of nowhere, God said to me, "What are you afraid of?" His question caught me off guard, I was so used to living in fear that I no longer even knew what I was actually fearing. I thought about it for a few minutes, and then I soul puked all kinds of shadowy ideas that were hanging out in my subconscious mind. After I was done with my word vomit and it was all out there for God and me to see, we both started laughing. Not just regular laughing, but BIG HUGE, right from the belly, laughing.

Now that I had become consciously aware and connected to what I was fearing it seemed ridiculous. It's like when you're a child, and the light gets shut off, and everything in your room becomes shadowy and mysterious. It isn't really a monster, it's just your pants over the back of a chair, but in the dark, it seems ominous. Questions shine the light into the dark places of our hearts and show us what's really there. Questions like, "What am I afraid is going to happen," and "Why does this offend me," and "Where am I hurting right now?" So many of us are not self-aware. These areas of our hearts have been closed off for a long time, and asking questions is the key that unlocks the door.

So here is your question? WHO do you THINK you are?

Many times people ask us that question in a not so nice tone of voice. "WHO do you think YOU are," they say with a little head jerk. This question is usually asked in response to us doing or saying something that others think is a bit too sassy, or big for our britches.

But I am asking it for real, "Who DO you THINK you are?"

It's an important question.

The answer to it can make or break your life.

Before now much of what we have believed about ourselves has come from false identities, and these identities don't travel light, they have all their own baggage. They have their own motivations, agendas, wants, and desires, which are all based on trying to heal or hide that broken place in the heart that created them.

Since most of those desires have not been in alignment with who we have been created to be, or for what we have been created to do, we have to replace them. Remember we can't erase it. We have to replace it. God wants us to live full and filled lives, or *fulfilled* lives.

That's a very important word. Do you want to know what it means?

Well, I'm glad you asked, *fulfilled* means, "the happiness or satisfaction of fully developing one's abilities; completion, realization of something desired, promised or predicted."

YOU ARE GOD'S DREAM

WHAT has been desired, promised or predicted? YOU! You have been desired, YOU have been promised, and YOU have been predicted. God had a dream, and He wrapped your body around it. You are a gift from God to the world. He predicted you, He planned you, and He promised you to this generation.

Let that sink in for a moment.

It doesn't matter what story you have been told about how you were conceived. You are not random, unwanted, or unplanned because there's no such thing. If that's ever been said to you, **I break that lie off of you right now.** Your parents might not have been expecting you, but God certainly was.

If you're anything like I used to be when you hear this kind of stuff, you assume it's for everyone else, but I'm not talking to everyone else. I'm talking to YOU!

YOU WERE PREDICTED, YOU WERE PROMISED, AND YOU WERE PLANNED! And I can prove it. Let's look at what the Greater Truth says about your life.

THE STORY OF YOU

Did you know there's a book about you? A book where every day of your real life, your epic world-changing life, is written down, every day planned for you by a loving heavenly Father.

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed. Psalm 139: 13-16 (NLT)

This story is about YOU! You are the heroine, you are the star, and you are the protagonist. You're not a supporting actress, you're not a bit player, and you are not an extra. Somebody needs to hear that. You have always felt like an extra in your own story, an extra with no lines. You have felt like your voice was silenced, and you have been upstaged by something or

someone else in your story. Something or someone else has been stealing the spotlight. The time for living in the shadows is over. It's time for you to step out and SHINE! It's time for you to start living what's been written in that story about you.

YOU WERE MADE TO SHINE

Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you?

I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16 (MSG)

God doesn't write sad, boring stories. Sin does. Rebellion does. A broken heart does. Many of the things that have happened in our lives weren't part of God's original story for us. The one thing I want you to remember is if it wasn't good it didn't come from God, but if you give it to Him, He can

certainly make it into something good now. He's got a wild imagination. If you want to see that imagination, all you have to do is look around at creation. All the beautiful things you see all around you, amazing right down to the smallest detail, God pulled those things right out of His imagination. Guess what else came out of His imagination? You! We are talking about the same God that made 20,000 different kinds of butterflies. Why? Why not?

God is not practical, He's extravagant. No offense to all my Practical Polly's out there, but often we become practical because we are afraid to dream anymore. We settle for just what we need because we tell ourselves we are being efficient and realistic. The truth is we are just scared of being disappointed again. Babe! It's time you knew the God that created you is not efficient, He's extravagant. If He were a human woman, He would not be wearing sensible shoes. This next statement is not for everyone, but many women have been deceived into thinking they are living responsible lives when in reality, they are living fearful lives. If you expect the story of your life to be rational, practical and safe, then you aren't reading the book God wrote about your life. God's plan for your life will not always be safe, you're going to have to let go of control, and learn to walk on the wild side. This is one of

the main reasons we have to get ourselves back into alignment with our true identities, because God's plans for us, while they are not usually practical, they are always amazing.

Before I shaped you in the womb, I knew all about you. Before you saw the light of day, I had holy plans for you. Jeremiah 1:5 (MSG)

So, to sum it up, if you don't like your life right now, if you don't jump out of bed excited to see what new adventure the day will bring, you probably aren't fully living the story that God wrote about you yet. This is not saying we don't all go through hard times, but when we are living our best lives, even in the hard times, we are assured in our hearts that better and brighter days are coming.

SPECIAL VESSELS

Are you getting excited yet? You should be! The REAL YOU is beginning to emerge, the chosen you, the designed you. You are a special vessel. Did your mom or your grandma have, or do they still have, one of those big cabinets in the dining room called a *china cabinet*? People don't have them as much anymore because we aren't as fancy or formal of a society as we used to be, but these cabinets used to be the norm.

When women got married in past generations, they would pick out a china pattern that they wanted for their new household, or a set of china dishes would be handed down to them as a family heirloom. If you don't know what china is, it's basically fancy, fragile, and expensive dishes that live in their own special piece of furniture called a china cabinet. The thing that made these dishes special was not just their beauty, or their cost, but also their significance. These were not ordinary, everyday dishes. Usually, they had a family story behind them, and these dishes were reserved for only the most important occasions. If you got into that cabinet and got out a cup to say, drink your Kool-Aid out of it, because all the regular cups were dirty, and your mouth was sticky from peanut butter and jelly, you would probably get a swat. I'm just guessing, however, I would have never done such a thing.

These dishes only emerged from their hiding places when something amazing was about to happen. If you walked in the dining room and saw the china laid out on the table, you knew it was a holiday or a wedding, or important company was coming to visit. Whatever the case may be, it was not an ordinary use for an average day.

This is why I am so glad that you have chosen to do the Heart Work right now! Because I believe we are living in one of

those special occasion times. It's not just an ordinary time in history. God is opening up those heavenly china cabinet doors and taking out all His hidden specialized vessels. I believe with all my heart that you are one of those specialized vessels that He wants to display for His Glory, for all the world to see.

THIS IS YOUR DEBUT

It's time for your debut. There's a reason why this is the last part of the book. No matter how awakened you think you are, the truth of who you really are, and what you are really here to do comes as quite a shock and surprise to most of us. Our plans and understanding of our lives are tiny compared to God's plans for us. If I had shared these things at the beginning of the book, you would have never believed me. But as the filters are disappearing and all the blind spots are fading, you are beginning to see the truth more clearly. Before this month is over, you will come out of agreement with all the lies that tell you that you aren't glorious. The lies that say you weren't made in the image of the almighty GOD!

Then God said, "Let Us (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) make man in Our image, according to Our likeness [not physical, but a spiritual personality and moral likeness]; and let them have complete authority over the fish

of the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, and over the entire earth, and over everything that creeps and crawls on the earth.” So God created man in His own image, in the image and likeness of God He created him; male and female He created them. Genesis 1:26-27 (AMP)

We have been made in the image of the creator of the universe, the author of all living things, and the inventor of the cosmos. What we see when we look in the mirror is nothing short of miraculous. No one has seen God, but they have seen you, and you are made in His image! Jesus said, "You want to see the Father, look no further, if you have seen me, you have seen my father." The Son looks like the father and guess what, we are His sons and daughters too!

But those who embraced him and took hold of his name were given authority to become the children of God! John 1:12 (TPT)

When we believe in the name of Jesus, we go from being men and women to being sons and daughters, we go from being the creation of God, to the children of God. Check out this same verse in The Message translation of the Bible:

*But whoever did want him, who believed he was who he claimed and would do what he said, He made to be their **true selves**, their **child-of-God selves**. John 1:12 (MSG)*

He made them to be their **true selves**. There's the proof if you needed it, that when we are under the influence of all these counterfeit layers, and all the lies, we are not our true and real selves. Holy Spirit has come alongside us like the fairy-godmother in Cinderella, and He's saying, "I don't want just to clean up your outside identity, but only you can surrender your inside identity." Jesus doesn't want you to lay there in the ashes anymore, He wants you to go to the ball, but He also wants to make you into someone who believes in her heart that she belongs at the ball.

In the old days, they used to have these events called debutante balls. Families would host parties to reveal, or debut, their daughters to the community to say, "This is our beautiful, accomplished daughter, we are very proud of her, she's ready to be seen by the world." It's time for your debut, and it's not about a fancy dress and a great pair of shoes, it's about God revealing YOU, His beautiful daughter to the world.

I went through a season where I was really struggling with identity and purpose. When I asked God, “What is my purpose,” His answer was not what I expected. He said, “Your primary and most important purpose in this life is to be my daughter, and to show this world what a daughter of God looks like.”

What do the daughters of God look like?

Daughters don't worry, they worship.

Daughters don't strive, they surrender.

Daughters don't hate, they celebrate.

Daughters don't slave, they inherit.

FATHERS BE GOOD TO YOUR DAUGHTERS

It doesn't always come naturally to us to be daughters. I know it didn't for me. I had a strained and hard relationship with my mother for most of my life, and a non-existent relationship with my father. I am happy to report that is not the case today. God has healed and restored my family beyond my wildest imagination. But for most of my life, I felt like an orphan. I didn't belong anywhere, or to anyone. I always thought I was on the outside looking in, and that made me feel envious of other people that had strong connections to

their family. It seemed like they had better opportunities in life than I did because, in my opinion, they were more stable, confident and prosperous than people like me.

So, when God started calling me a daughter, it changed my life. Now don't get me wrong, it didn't change my life overnight, or even in one year. I had a huge learning curve, and that was mostly because I had nobody to teach me how to be a daughter. Learning how to depend on a Father, when that was something I had never done before in my life, was hard. Learning how to trust someone to take care of me and protect me was even harder. It took me many years to fully surrender to my new identity as daddy's little girl, but papa God was very patient and loving to me in my process, and He will be with you too. My greatest hope is that with resources like this book, it won't take you as long as it did me to believe you are a beloved daughter of God, and when you believe that it changes everything!

SUPERNOVAS

I tell you this timeless truth: The person who follows me in faith, believing in me, will do the same mighty miracles that I do—even greater miracles than these because I go to be with my Father! John 14:12 (TPT)

I always joke around with my husband that if anybody could hear the thoughts that go on inside my head, they would think I was crazy. Either that or they would think I was very arrogant and suffering from delusions of grandeur. I regularly have world changing, culture shifting, and reality-defying thoughts, now that my heart is healed. It all started one night as I was downstairs in my house praying in the middle of the night, while everyone else slept. It is common for me to be awakened in the night to have a little daddy/daughter time with God. It was during one of these prayer talks that God whispered to me, "You're a Supernova." My self-esteem and identity were still pretty precarious at this stage of my heart healing, and I was regularly struggling with feelings of insignificance. So you can imagine this type of declaration from God was almost more than my little neglected, rejected, heart could take. I went flying up the stairs into my bedroom, and jumped on my husband, "Wake up babe, God just told me I'm a Supernova!" Now, if my memory of 5th Grade science served me correctly, I knew this was some kind of star, and I wasn't going to just let that slide. "What are you talking about," my husband answered me in a not so friendly tone of voice. I quickly explained to him what had happened, and why I was so excited, and why I thought this was a good

enough reason to awaken him at 3 o'clock AM. He didn't look convinced.

But being the supportive husband he is, he got out his cool new phone and researched it for me anyway. This was when smartphones had just come out, and he was the only one in the family that had one. Now I just want to interject here that I can be very, "I love Lucy" at times, and my husband is a saint for letting me drag him into all of my shenanigans. He slowly got out his phone and began to research the Internet for information on supernovas. I laid on the bed in eager anticipation talking a mile a minute about being a star! I always wanted to be a star, I wondered aloud what kind of star I would be, a singer, an actress, perhaps a politician? The possibilities were endless. Finally, my husband says, "Yes babe, supernovas are stars, they are actually massive stars." "Yes, go on," I said excitedly. "They are big stars in their last stages of life, and then they explode and put off more light and energy than even the Sun in our galaxy, and after a few years they die out and become black holes." "Ok? Are you happy? I'm going to bed, goodnight!"

What?? I laid there staring at the ceiling, my mind going supersonic. Last stages of life? Explode? Black holes? I almost started to cry. Que the victim, the drama-queen personality

that I wasn't quite healed from yet. "What happens to me, a car crash, a terrible disease, a fatal and tragic explosion," I whimpered to no one in particular. I laid there, and let my mind go down every dark alley before God gently said to me, "Nothing happens to you, you have been created to live in a generation of supernovas. Go and tell them, Jackie. Tell them in their brief vapor like lives on earth, I have destined them to explode upon this generation with my love and my power, they are created to be a sign and a wonder, and shine brighter and do greater works than even my Son."

So here I am, and I am telling YOU, so lean in close and listen up! You were born for more than this! You haven't even scratched the surface yet! Stop settling! Let go of the past! Let go of the layers! You were born to shine! You are a SUPERNOVA!

LET'S JUST PROCESS THAT!

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Make an introduction, tell me who you are. Not what you are or what you do, but WHO are you?

Do you consider yourself self-aware?

Do you regularly check in with your heart to see how you are feeling?

Do you blow things out of proportion in your mind? What are those things?

On a scale of 1-10, how fulfilled do you feel?

Were you ever told you were an accident, unexpected, a mistake, or an “oopsie”? How did that make you feel?

Were your parents prepared for your birth?

In this stage of your life, which role below best describes how you have been living?

Heroine

Star

Supporting actress

Extra

Are you a Practical Polly? When is the last time you did something unexpected or exciting?

When did you last night dream? What was it about?

Are you excited about your life?

Does it come easy to you to be a daughter? Why or why not?

Have you ever experienced a miracle? What kind of miracle would you like to see?

If you could do anything, how would you want God to use you to shine in the earth?

GREATER TRUTH TO EMBRACE

Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16 (MSG)

Having determined our destiny ahead of time, he called us to himself and transferred his perfect righteousness to everyone he called. And those who possess his perfect righteousness he co-glorified with his Son! So, what does all this mean? If God has determined to stand with us, tell me, who then could ever stand against us? For God has proved his love by giving us his greatest treasure, the gift of his Son. And since God freely offered him up as the sacrifice for us all, he certainly won't withhold from us anything else he has to give. Romans 8:30-32 (TPT)

And since we are his true children, we qualify to share all his treasures, for indeed, we are heirs of God himself. And since we are joined to Christ, we also inherit all that he is and all that he has. We will experience being co-glorified with him provided that we accept his sufferings as our own. Romans 8:17 (TPT)

Never doubt God's mighty power to work in you and accomplish all this. He will achieve infinitely more than your greatest request, your most unbelievable dream, and exceed your wildest imagination! He will outdo them all, for his miraculous power constantly energizes you. Ephesians 3:20-21 (TPT)

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Rooted In Love

Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. Ephesians 3:17-19 (NLT)

Let's put down some new roots, shall we? This is going to be very important going forward. Our old trauma induced identities were rooted in - rejection, disappointment, fear, self-hatred, bitterness, disease, deception, abuse, etc. So, that means that these real selves that are emerging have to be firmly rooted in the opposite - *love, acceptance, approval, grace, mercy, hope and faith*. And the most crucial thing in that list is love, God's love.

The verse above talks about trusting Jesus, and him making his home in our hearts, or in other words abiding continuously with us. When that happens our roots grow down deep into the unconditional love of Father God. It's hard to understand a love like that when most of what we have known is "puddle love", that's what I call human love that is often shallow, and narrow, and quickly dried up. We are going to need Holy Spirit's power to understand how BIG God's love is for us.

It isn't shallow and narrow like a puddle, it's vast and deep like an ocean. The scripture also says we can never fully understand it. This unconditional love that doesn't wax or wane based on our performance or our goodness. God can never love you any more or any less than He already does. His love is the constant that will never change based on anything you do or don't do in this life. His passion is unmeasurable and unchanging.

When we get rooted in that endless love, fear can't find its way into our hearts anymore, and without fear to fuel them all of our false identities will eventually run out of gas. Because every one of them is rooted in the opposite of love, which is fear. If we aren't rooted in love, the first time a big wind blows through our lives, we are going to get uprooted again. Every

time something we consider “bad” happens, or someone says something contrary to our new understanding of who we are, we will feel our identity start to waver.

IS IT TRUE?

You didn't think this new identity was going to go unchallenged, did you? You are going to be challenged every day and in every way.

Your bank account balance is going to challenge you. If the cashier at Piggly Wiggly says, “Sorry Ma’am, it says your card was declined.”

You say, “God will meet my every need.” (Philippians 4:19)

Your naysayers are going to challenge you. After an argument, they say, “You haven't changed, you are still the same old you!”

You say, “I am a new creation in Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

At your annual checkup. The doctor says, “Something doesn't look right in this bloodwork.”

You say, “You have healed me inside and out from every disease.” (Psalm 103:3)

I can't tell you how many times my identity as a beloved daughter was challenged as I was just starting to do my Heart Work. You've lived a long time under the influence of these lies, and they aren't going to go away overnight. Sometimes I would successfully resist the lies, but even more times I would invite those lies over for dinner, and drinks, and I would stay stuck in that area for a while. By the way, feeling stuck is a GOOD THING.

It means that you know that your destiny is so much higher than your current reality. Only people that are awakening to their true identity feel stuck because their lives don't match up with the vision God is placing in their healed hearts. Once again, it was a question that God used to get my wheels out of the mud and back onto the road to healing again.

I had a person in my life that always accused me of terrible intentions. Every conversation I had with this person was strained and uncomfortable, and because of hurt and unforgiveness, every encounter always deteriorated into them verbally attacking my identity and destiny. "You're not a good person," they would say. "You're a liar, and one day you are going to get what's coming to you." A long time ago, I had hurt this person with my behavior, and so when I interacted with them, even though I was a much different person than I

used to be, I always felt like I could not object to their verbal abuse.

When I got off the phone with them, I always felt defeated, and this was someone I was stuck in a relationship with whether I liked it or not. I will teach you in the next chapter how to deal with these types of ongoing abusive relationships without becoming abused. Most of the time I could just shake off what they said, but this one time when I hung up the phone, I began to cry. *I've had enough*, I thought. I began to complain to God about how I was being mistreated. I told Him how I just couldn't take it anymore, and that's when He said to me, "Is it true?"

"Is WHAT true," I responded. "What they just said about you, is it true," He gently replied. I calmed down and realized what He was asking me, and then my heart got stronger. "No, it isn't true," I said confidently! "Then why do you believe it," He said matter-of-factly. WOW! Why did I believe it? What part of my heart still thought I was a bad person for what I had done so many years ago? I realized through this divine question that I had never fully forgiven myself for these past mistakes, and once I did this person's accusations never bothered me again.

So, as you go forward, remember when things come to attack your identity, and they will, you can get out your forgiveness receipts. Nope Satan, not today! I have forgiven others, and God has forgiven me, and you got to get out! If that doesn't work and it still bothers you, offends you, or sends you into a downward spiral back into old habits and patterns, it's because you still believe in some place of your heart that it's true. **What bothers and offends us, is always about us.** What I mean by that are the things that still hurt you are showing you an unhealed part of your heart. A place where there's still an active and infected heart wound. The lie (root) must be discovered and pulled out so our new roots can go even deeper down into God's unconditional love for us in that area of our lives.

We have to build our new lives on the solid foundation of truth which is Christ and his love for us. When we do that, nothing that anybody else does or says about us, no storm that comes our way will be able to shake our foundations.

Jesus said: These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you are like a smart

*carpenter who built his house on solid rock.
Rain poured down, the river flooded, a
tornado hit—but nothing moved that house.
It was fixed to the rock. Matthew 7:24-25
(MSG)*

This is why self-help and other psychology philosophies never work for very long. They may give us some good sounding information that appeals to our ego and our innate desire to fix ourselves, but they don't have the power to really set us free. Jesus said to the people who believed in Him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free," John 8:31-32 (NLT).

The truth isn't just a book, it's a person. It's Jesus himself. You cannot have the truth about yourself, or your life, without Him. Other methods and teachings can expose our wounds by teaching us the art of self-introspection, the laws of attraction, and other forms of transcendentalism, but they can't really heal our wounds because they didn't shed their blood for that healing.

*Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was
our sorrows[a] that weighed him down. And
we thought his troubles were a punishment*

from God, a punishment for his own sins! But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. Isaiah 53:4-6 (NLT)

Jesus is the only one who can heal our hearts, He is the only one who can truly set us free.

IT'S HARDER THAN YOU THINK TO BE YOURSELF

Another enemy of the real you that will come to challenge your new revelation of self is comparison, competition, and imitation. We live in a culture of copying. I don't care what the world's greatest quote book says, imitation is *not* the highest form of flattery. Imitation is not flattery at all, it's an identity crisis.

God speaks to me through the simplest of things. As I was having coffee with some friends one day, and I glanced down at my friend's keys and saw this message, Do Not Duplicate. The key to every individual destiny is, not becoming a copy or a duplicate of anything or anyone else. That is easier said, than done in a culture that thrives on comparison and competition. Every day we are bombarded with images and language about who and what we SHOULD want to be. We are told to be, the person with the highest number of followers

on Instagram, the hottest singer at the moment, the next greatest thing to grace the television screen, the most talented athlete, or the even the freshest and most famous spiritual leader. It doesn't matter what you're into - sports, music, ministry, fashion - there's always a person in that arena that is what my daughter would call, "goals".

While you are becoming the most excellent and highest version of yourself, you will have to take more time to tune out from these comparison frequencies. You will find it necessary to shut out all the noise and zero in on your own instincts, your own unique flow. It's hard to turn off all the media, but trust me, it will be worth it. Every time I do this, I find several areas of my life where I am not being authentically myself and listening to my own heart. There's only one you. Don't dumb yourself down by taking your cues from someone else. Go with your own flow, dance to your own beat. You get to decide every day what influences you, don't let anything, or anyone, get louder than the voice of God inside your own heart. This includes people in your own workplace, community or family. It's wonderful to be surrounded by amazing people we admire, but imitation isn't the highest form of flattery, it's the lowest form of identity. Humanity needs you, and it needs you to show up as

YOURSELF. Don't change who you are to fit into a space. Be yourself, and God will make a space for you.

PAIN WITH A PURPOSE

*All praise to the God and Father of our Master, Jesus the Messiah! Father of all mercy! God of all healing counsel! He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us. 2
Corinthians 1:3-4 (MSG)*

So often we are encouraged to leave out the "ugly" parts of our story. Hide the scars of the things that almost killed us. Everybody loves to see the finished product, but some people are squeamish to hear about the process. They love to see a newborn baby, but they don't want to know the gory details of the birth. We love butterflies, but don't want to hear about what happened inside the cocoon. But do you know who does want to hear about what happened? The person that is still in the birthing suite. Life is messy folks. The big life-changing moments aren't pretty. They look a lot like that birthing suite. There is pain, sweat, unidentifiable body fluids, screaming, and yet out of all that chaos comes, new life.

But somewhere in that messy place, God stepped in and gave you strength and peace, and began to open your eyes to the truth about your situation. The truth is that you were not dying at all, but you were actually being reborn. They need YOU to give them that same hope. The hope that the pain in the process they are experiencing is worth it, and will eventually give way to new life, revelation, and purpose.

THE BOOK

I spent over a decade of my life suffering from debilitating mental illness as a result of trauma. I remember praying with all my heart that I would find someone, anyone, who understood the pain of what I was going through and could help me. But there was no one. There wasn't any Internet then, and people didn't talk about mental health openly, it was a taboo subject. I am so glad that one woman in Indiana decided she wasn't going to let that stop her, and through her bravery, God was able to answer my decade long prayer.

One summer I found myself out at a campground. I didn't go very far away from my house in those days as I suffered from agoraphobia and panic disorder. At this campground, they happened to have a bookstore in the cafeteria. I was halfheartedly looking through the odd collection of books when I saw this one that caught my eye. The cover looked

strange, very primitive in its design, and I realized years later it was because it was self-published, which was not a common thing to do. Little did I know that this small book, in this raggedy little book store, with its unprofessional looking cover, was about to change my life.

When I got the book home and began to read it, I was blown away. It was as if the book was written for me. It told my entire story to a tee. For the first time in a long time, I felt hope rise up in my soul. I carried that little book around with me everywhere, like it was my best friend. It gave me strength, and confidence that I was going to make it through these hard times, and that I was GOING to get BETTER! My situation was not permanent, because the author of this book who completely understood what I was going through, assured me that she made it through this, and so can I!

Isn't that crazy? A woman I have never met, changed my life because she decided to share her pain and shame, and offer hope to anyone who could relate to her story. She will never even know what she did for me on this earth, but she saved my life.

Your story has value. It has the ability to change someone's world. They need someone who has been there to help them reframe the hurt and confusion they are feeling, and open

their eyes to the joy of transformation. Not that what they are going through isn't their truth. It's just not their whole truth. Their whole truth is who they are becoming, because of their pain. They are becoming empathetic, compassionate, wise, loving and creative daughters.

DEEP WELLS

One of the unexpected byproducts of pain is creativity. Many of the songs we love so much, the poems, and the good screenplays, all came from someone else's painful process. The paintings that stir your soul, and the books that you can't put down, were all created by people that have experienced what some might call the dark night of the soul. You know what I'm talking about, those times of deep sorrow, rejection, disappointment, and heartbreak that feel like they will never end.

Creativity is the soul sharing its pain, love, joy and hopefully eventual victory. This is why it is essential to do your Heart Work so that the things your soul is creating bring life to others and not death. We have all seen art, heard songs, or seen movies that left us feeling icky. It feels a lot like being slimed. That's what happens when people create, out of unhealed hearts. Suffering is sacred, and it will create depth in the sufferer. It will carve out a deep well inside of you, but

only you can decide whether the water in that well will be bitter or sweet.

BITTER WATER VS. SWEET

I was once filled with bitter water. All I could see was, what I thought was stolen from me. I was filled with continuous anger. You have heard me say that anger is hurt's bodyguard. It comes out to protect us from any more trauma to our hearts. But as our heart heals there isn't anything left to protect, and the anger eventually goes away. When it leaves, it makes space for a new perspective. It's all about perspective. When I began to focus on the blessings of my back story my life began to change. There was a perspective of all the good that had come out of my trauma, the truth that nothing had really ever been permanently stolen from me. To the contrary, if anything, because of my pain, the power of God was resting on my life in an even greater way.

SHATTERED LIVES CREATE GOLDEN HEARTS

In Japan, there is an art of repairing broken pottery called, Kintsugi. The words, *Kin* (gold), and *Tsugi* (joinery), literally mean, "To join with gold." In Eastern cultures, they believe that just because a vessel (vase, bowl, or cup) becomes damaged, or broken, it doesn't mean that item loses its beauty, value or importance. They believe these things should still

attract our respect and attention, and be repaired with enormous care. The shattered pieces should be carefully picked up, reassembled and then glued together with lacquer inflected with the most expensive gold powder. When these cracks and crevices are filled with this gold lacquer, there is no way to disguise the damage, and that's the whole point. They are not intending to hide the damage, but to portray the fault lines as beautiful and strong, making the vessel even more valuable than before it was broken.

That's a very different philosophy from the disposable western culture in which I grew up, where things are mass produced, and then when they break or get worn out, you just throw them away and get another one. The Eastern philosophy is much more in alignment with Heaven's philosophy about our brokenness. You are not disposable. Your brokenness is valuable. It's priceless. It's not something to be hidden from the world, or covered up in shame. When it's filled with the golden lacquer of your true identity, God can use it to change the world. Brokenness in God's hands is a shortcut to destiny.

Are you ready to tell your story?

Here are a few questions to ask yourself, to see if your story is ready to be told to the world.

Is there still blame in your story?

Is there still a villain and a victim?

Is there any hatred, anger or fear?

If you answered yes, to any of these questions, you might not be quite ready yet. Give yourself some more time to heal, and keep doing your Heart Work. Don't jump the gun because your story is a powerful one and its divine purpose is to encourage, heal and awaken others and when you tell it with a broken heart that's been mended with gold you are going to change the world.

LET'S JUST PROCESS THAT!

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Give some examples of when you have experienced "puddle love" (shallow and conditional)?

Do you believe God loves you without condition or exception?

In what ways has your new identity been challenged? How did you respond?

Describe an area where you feel stuck? What is the more excellent vision for your life in that area? Or where would you like to be?

Do you have any accusing voices in your life? If so, what are they telling you about yourself?

Do you believe them, yes or no? If yes, why?

What still offends you? What area of your unhealed heart is it revealing?

Who do you imitate? What about them, or which characteristics, are attractive to you?

Do you struggle with competition or comparison? In what way? Does it ever turn into jealousy?

Do you hide the “ugly” parts of your story?

Have you ever created anything out of your pain, i.e., a song, poem, painting, or story? How does it make you feel when you see or hear it now? Is it laced with grief, fear, or anger?

Is the water in your well bitter or sweet?

Are you ready to tell your story? Who do you hope to help?

GREATER TRUTH TO EMBRACE

He heals the wounds of every shattered heart. He sets his stars in place, calling them all by their names. Psalm 147:3-4 (TPT)

Would you look for olives hanging on a fig tree or go to pick figs from a grapevine? Is it possible that fresh and bitter water can flow out of the same spring? So neither can a bitter spring produce fresh water. James 3:11-12 (TPT)

Everyone who hears my teaching and applies it to his life can be compared to a wise man who built his house on an unshakable foundation. When the rains fell and the flood came, with fierce winds beating upon his house, it stood firm because of its strong foundation. Matthew 7:24-25 (TPT)

Then I heard a triumphant voice in heaven proclaiming: “Now salvation and power are set in place, and the kingdom reign of our God, and the ruling authority of his Anointed One are established. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who relentlessly accused them day and night before our God, has now been defeated—cast out once and for all! Revelation 12:9-11 (TPT)

For this is how much God loved the world—he gave his one and only, unique Son as a gift. So now everyone who believes in him will never perish but experience everlasting life. John 3:16 (TPT)14

14

Guarding The Healed Heart

*I keep a close watch on this heart of mine -
Johnny Cash*

When I was a little kid, we used to go and visit my grandparents for the summer in Tennessee. At the time they lived out on a farm, and if you have ever lived on a farm or visited a farm then you know it's a pretty dirty business. My grandma being the good southern housewife she was kept a clean and tidy house, and she did not want what was outside getting inside. That's a pretty tall order when you have six little ragamuffin grandkids running around the farm getting into all kinds of messes.

Now my grandma is the kind of lady that still had the plastic on her good couches in the sitting room, and she had a sharp eye for dirty grandkids messing up her sitting room. Most farmhouses have two doors on every entry point, a regular

wood door, and a screen door. During the hot summer months in Tennessee, the regular doors would stay wide open to create a cross breeze through the house but the screen door would remain shut to keep the flies out, and in this case, the grandkids too. My grandma would latch that little hook on the screen door, and no matter how hard we hollered and carried on, she would not let us in the house, until we were cleaned up. She even threw a bar of soap out there one day and told us to take a bath with the hose. She was not playing around, she was keeping a close watch on her clean house.

We live in a dirty world, and if you're going to keep your heart clean, healed, and healthy you are going to have to keep a close watch on that heart of yours, just like my grandma kept a close watch on her sitting room.

BOUNDARIES

In the darkest times of my life I was blessed to find a very gifted counselor, and every time I would talk to them I would leave feeling great. All my anxiety would be gone, and I would see the truth about my distorted thinking and the lies I believed about my life. God really used this counselor to help set me free from my state of depression. But as soon as I left their office and returned to my life, everything would come back again. I remember thinking to myself how am I going to

stay healthy if I have to live in an environment that is making me sick. But it wasn't my environment that was making me sick, it was the way I was responding to it.

Boundaries are about identity.

When our hearts are continually being hurt by others, it's usually a good sign that we don't have, and have never been taught healthy boundaries. Remember when I talked about how we have locks and passwords for everything except our hearts? We allow everyone and everything to stomp all over our hearts. Well, not anymore. God wants us to take care of these real identities that are emerging, He wants us to choose relationships and activities that reinforce who we are becoming and not who we used to be. Good boundaries will reinforce that original and authentic you that has been emerging from under all those layers.

Boundaries help us to tell others what we like and don't like, what we want and don't want, and what we will allow and what we will not allow in the relationship.

We get to choose! Nobody can hurt, reject, offend, or belittle us without our consent. We alone choose what feelings we will feel. Boundaries, in short, define us, protect us, and empower us.

They are your rules of engagement. Many will try to use boundaries as an excuse to cut off all difficult or hard relationships. But that isn't always possible. What if they are your co-worker, and you love your job? What if they are a family member or a co-parent that you cannot avoid? We live in a world of hurting and damaged people, and if your happiness and well-being are dependent on not being around any "toxic" people, you will very quickly need to move and live on an island all by yourself.

Boundaries aren't meant to help us disconnect with the world around us. They aren't about disconnection at all, they are about connection. Healthy connection. They aren't about burning bridges, they are about building bridges.

YOUR ENEMIES ARE NEVER HUMAN

Your hand-to-hand combat is not with human beings, but with the highest principalities and authorities operating in rebellion under the heavenly realms. Ephesians 6:12

As you continue to forgive, you will begin to see that most people just hurt others in an effort to heal themselves. They are in full orphan mode just trying to do whatever it takes to survive. Very rarely is the pain that someone else is causing

you conscious and malicious. I know when we are angry, it makes us feel better by saying things like, "Oh, they knew what they were doing!"

HURTING PEOPLE, HURT PEOPLE

But do they? My husband and I moved into a condo in which the master bedroom faced a street light. That light bothered the heck out of me, and I kept complaining that it was preventing me from getting a good night's sleep. His simple solution was to go buy some darkening shades for our window. We had never had darkening shades before, and boy were we in for a BIG surprise.

The first night he put them up, I woke up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom, and I had no idea where I was. The room was pitch black, and I could not even see my hand in front of my own face. For some crazy reason, I had forgotten which way the room was oriented. The darkness was confusing me. Was I facing the wall or the window? Immediately I heard a crash, I had knocked over the bedside table and broken the lamp. This woke my husband up, and because I couldn't see where he was, I elbowed him in the nose - HARD.

I tried to recover my balance and ended up stubbing my toe so hard it started bleeding profusely. After turning on the lights and checking to see if his nose was broken, cleaning up the lamp, and bandaging up my toe, we were finally able to get back to bed. God taught me a powerful lesson through this experience. When people are living in the dark, they can't see what they are doing. They don't know where they are going or how to get there, and they end up hurting themselves and others in the process.

Don't get me wrong, people do become puppets for those opposing forces, sometimes by their own free will but most of the time unconsciously. They are not self-aware that they are manifesting destructive things and hurting everyone around them. Because of that, yes, some people need to be carefully handled for the sake of your growth and development, and sometimes even safety at least until they become conscious of their dangerous behavior.

GOLD DIGGERS

God will sometimes use you to help awaken others to their rightful identity. You may resist that until you are at a certain point of heart healing. Don't worry, forgiveness is a process. You just started the process this month, but let me go ahead and tell you what a completed forgiveness process looks like.

It is, when you look at that person, and all you see is what God sees; when you see the gold in them. It's when you no longer see what they did to you, or what they said to you, or any other counterfeit identity. A full forgiveness cycle is when you allow them to be in your heart who they really are in God's heart, and you begin to treat them like that person instead of by what they have done or even continue to do.

That's forgiveness. That's enlightenment. There is no room for any resentment, bitterness, or bad blood in a totally healed heart. Keep going, and you will get there.

NECESSARY ENDINGS

Sometimes we will have to say goodbye to people and things to become all that God has created us to be. Occasionally it will be because the person or situation refuses to respect our boundaries and continues to cause us hurt, trauma or loss. But a lot of times it will be just because it's time for a new adventure, a bigger horizon, or a new assignment from Heaven. The issue here is, most of us don't do endings well. When it's time to move on from people, places, jobs or communities, it doesn't have to mean it's terrible or you're angry. One of the mistakes people make when leaving something is trying to pick a fight with it. We often do this because we feel disloyal or guilty for leaving, and we think we

have to find something wrong with it to justify leaving it behind.

You don't have to pick a fight with something just because you've outgrown it. Life is about growth, it's a journey that will include new beginnings, as well as necessary endings. Don't burn your bridges. Bless your previous seasons and places of preparation and development. Thank them for the deposit, be grateful for all you've learned and experienced, good and bad. You will soon see how it's uniquely prepared you for what's ahead. People and places rarely take being left behind well. They may wish you well or they may not, but in either case, you don't have to allow their view of you to become your own. You can value peace or ego, but not both. Be a good person but don't waste your time trying to prove it. If someone is wrong about you, just let them be wrong. The fruit from your life will speak for itself.

CRABS IN THE BUCKET

As you grow in your new identity, there will be a lot of pushback. Maybe you have heard of the crabs in the bucket mentality. It goes like this, if you put one crab in a bucket it will eventually claw its way out, but if you put a bunch of crabs in a bucket they will actually keep pulling each other

down, hence keeping any of them from getting out and to safety.

It's the same mentality behind the statement, "If it's good enough for me, it's good enough for you," or, "If I can't have it, I don't want you to have it either." Unfortunately, this behavior is common in unhealthy families and communities. They will actually verbally attack someone who is trying to make progress by saying things like, "What's the matter with you? Who do you think you are? You're acting weird, or you're not yourself today."

People that have known you the longest may be the most unsupportive and uncomfortable with the NEW you. Their discomfort stems from fear. Your life changes may inadvertently make them feel like they need to change too, and maybe they don't feel ready for that quite yet. This happened to me. When I started doing the Heart Work I wanted everyone else to start doing their Heart Work too. Just remember we can't force anybody to do their Heart Work. This is why we need boundaries because it will be necessary for us to be able to be in relationship with people whose hearts are still damaged without allowing their damage to re-damage us or stop us from becoming who God has created us to be. Give them what I like to call - Grace, Truth and Time.

Offer to them the same GRACE that God has shown you in this process, STAY in your TRUTH, and just have patience, give it TIME, change doesn't happen overnight.

A HAIR OF THE DOG THAT BIT YOU

Often the antidote to the poison is the very thing that poisoned you, but this time mixed with other active ingredients. Most of us were hurt in a relationship, and now it seems intuitive to avoid relationships. Here's the truth about that, the way to heal from bad relationships is through good relationships.

Let me say that again: If you were hurt and wounded by bad relationship, God will heal you through good relationship. You have been created for relationship. You can't fulfill your God-given destiny without community. There aren't any solo acts in the Kingdom. We need each other. I have seen so many people including myself be chased out of community by bad experiences with people and then spend months, years or even decades doing everything they can to avoid that type of hurt, pain or offense again. It was never God's intention for you to be alive and alone. If you're afraid of relationship that is the area where the fear will be healed. God places the solitary in family. Let Him put you into yours.

YOU WERE CREATED FOR COMMUNITY

I don't know why we think good relationships are only the easy ones. Good and easy are not synonyms. I had easy teachers in school, and I can't tell you a thing they taught me. But the hard teachers, the ones that challenged me, the ones that didn't let me off the hook but encouraged me to dig deep, those are the teachers I remember.

If you are going to continue to grow into the real, authentic, world-changing person God created you to be, you are going to need good teachers, mentors, friends, and community. You might not feel like it is good at first because God will likely put you into a community with people that are already past your level of healing, and they will refine you, challenge you, stretch you, and hold you accountable to your potential and destiny. Those things aren't always easy, but that doesn't mean they can't be amazing. If we cut and run as soon as someone says something we don't like then we still have a broken heart. If everyone who tells us something we don't want to hear gets labeled toxic by us, that's a sure indicator that we are still dealing with filters and blind-spots.

OFFENSE IS A GIFT

Let me tell you a secret, as you are healing, sometimes God will set you up for an offense. You will have a divine

appointment with the exact person that is going to just offend the crap out of you. It is part of that revealing for a healing process we have been talking about all month. Offense shows us the hard places in our hearts. The rough, dry places where nothing is still growing.

When we try to insulate ourselves and stay away from everything that offends us, we aren't giving ourselves a chance to grow. It's ok to say, "I don't like that, that hurts me, or that makes me angry!" But don't stop there. Remember, "Don't just feel the feels, heal the feels".

Now Ask God why –

Why does that word offend me?

Why does that person's life choices offend me?

Why does that topic make me so angry?

Why does that person's success, beauty, or attitude bother me?

The answers to those questions will set you free from the lie you believe, and bring yet another layer of healing to your heart.

Use this declaration as often as necessary:

I am a world changer, an atmosphere shifter, a light bearer, a truth teller, and a hope dealer.

My heart is awakening.

It's my time to be made whole.

I contain the beauty of all creation, the mysteries of the entire universe reside in ME.

I AM the image of the ALMIGHTY GOD.

The offspring of the great I AM.

I AM A BELOVED DAUGHTER OF GOD.

My original heart is one of love, joy, peace, hope, and innocence.

I was created for community.

I am accepted in the family of God.

I have been created to prosper.

I will not be anyone besides who Love has made me to be.

From this moment forward every day when I look in the mirror, I am going to see more and more of what God sees.

LET'S JUST PROCESS THAT!

QUESTIONS TO ASK

What is your current understanding of boundaries?

Do you use boundaries as an excuse to disconnect from things or people you don't like?

Do you see other people as the enemy? This includes leaders and influencers that you don't know, that may hold a different world view other than yours.

On a scale of 1-10, how compassionate are you of other people's pain?

Do you actively try to understand why people do what they do?

Do you look for the good (gold) in others?

How well do you do endings?

Describe an ending you did badly. Why or how did it go bad?

Do you allow others to do endings well, or do you try to hang on?

Describe a time you felt like a crab in a bucket. Who was trying to hold you back and why?

Are you afraid of relationship? Intimacy? Community? Why, or why not?

Describe your current community. Do they challenge you?
Do they support you? Do they clap when you win?

How easily do you run away from things that offend you?

GREATER TRUTH TO EMBRACE

There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears. Philippians 1:6 (MSG)

This is not the time to pull away and neglect meeting together, as some have formed the habit of doing, because we need each other! In fact, we should come together even more frequently, eager to encourage and urge each other onward as we anticipate that day dawning. Hebrews 10:25 (TPT)

A time to search and a time to quit searching. A time to keep and a time to throw away. Ecclesiastes 3:6 (NLT)

I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. Philippians 3:12 (NLT)

Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the

Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. Ephesians 4:21-24 (NLT)

Conclusion

Darling Friends,

WOW! It's has been a great month. We have laughed together, cried together, manifested together! So much has happened and will continue to happen. Some of you have already had significant breakthroughs. You have started dreaming again, feeling again, laughing again, and believing again.

One of my longtime students got healed in a dream she had about her counterfeit self. In the dream, she saw someone who looked just like her riding around in a car with her family. She confronted this imposter, but it just laughed at her. She confronted her family for believing this imposter was her, but they just dismissed her. Finally, she got mad and threw the imposter out. When she woke up several longtime pervasive people-pleasing tendencies that she could never seem to overcome had vanished. She was able to tell people exactly what she wanted and did not want for the first time in her life.

She had what I like to call a *suddenly*.

Suddenlies don't happen overnight, they only seem like they do. They are the product of what is called a *tipping point*.

A *tipping point* is defined as, “the point at which a series of small changes or incidents becomes significant enough to cause a larger, more important change.”

My student’s heart work finally caught up with her. That’s what happened to me too. Suddenly, one day things were just different. I didn’t feel the same. It will happen to you as well. If you haven’t seen your desired result, keep doing the Heart Work every day and don’t forget to celebrate your progress! You are allowed to be a work in progress and God’s masterpiece all at the same time.

Let’s look at what’s happening in your life this month through the lens of progress. Remember, your eyes are no longer looking for perfection but progress - searching for how much you’ve grown, changed and done better in areas that used to always get the better of you.

First, let’s celebrate revelation, you’re awakened right now, if you know more than you knew last month about life, love, happiness, God, you need to celebrate that! You know why? Because there are so many people that are not; they are still asleep. Get excited that you realize something new about your life, even if you don’t dare to put it into full practice yet! You’re awake! And that’s worth celebrating!

Here's the truth - we have no problem beating ourselves up over the tiniest mistakes, but we never celebrate the small wins! This is truly where the magic lies because big goals are made up of small victories.

The BIG changes aren't going to happen overnight. You didn't gain those twenty pounds in one week, did you? No, of course not, you gained it over time eating those Ding Dongs, and Little Debbie's that you had been hiding from the other people in your house behind the extra rolls of paper towels. Why would you think you're going to lose it in one week? Give yourself a break! If you decided to love yourself at whatever weight you are today, go ahead and give yourself a big warm hug.

YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY BABY

Remember your finger hovering over the send button on that really nasty email you wrote to that person that ticked you off? Yeah, you wrote it - but you didn't SEND it!

Let's have a party over that friends!

Two weeks ago your victim identity would have hit send and sat back as smug as the Cheshire Cat, but you didn't, did you? You didn't push *send*. You didn't say what was in your mouth to that person who loves to push all your buttons. It came into

your head and down to the launching pad in your mouth, but it didn't come out. You practiced boundaries and self-control! BRAVO! You bit your tongue and didn't accept their invitation to a fight. You checked the *cannot attend box* and moved right along. This is progress - this is major progress!

Every time you overcome something you have struggled with previously you need to have a little happy dance. When we don't acknowledge progress even in the smallest amount of change, we become discouraged and unmotivated, and we are tempted to give up.

"But Jackie, I'm not who I want to be yet!" I know honey! I'm not who I want to be yet either, but guess what, we're also not who we used to be! We are not even who we were yesterday, we are not only progressing, we are progressing at lightning speed. I know we can't see it all the time, but we really are!

There will be setbacks. For instance, recently I hit a bump in the road. Our family had a big milestone event that left me feeling neglected, left out, and unappreciated. I tripped over that stone and fell flat on my face but here's the thing, I got up and shook it off. It didn't even take me more than two hours to look at it from a different perspective, stop playing the victim, and move on.

I didn't sit around and mope about it, I didn't brood about it. I didn't reject them because I felt like they were rejecting me. A few years ago, it would have taken me two months to get over that, I would have lashed out, acted like a fool, and held a grudge. But I didn't! In fact, the next time I saw my family, I embraced them with genuine love and forgiveness.

Some of you might think you're still so far away from your breakthrough in an area that has always plagued you when in truth, it's really right around the corner! You feel like you haven't changed at all, but you have, you just can't see it yet. We are usually the last ones to see elements about ourselves that are good--and we are last to appreciate how far we've come.

Instead of giving what is still *wrong* your energy and focus, focus on what's RIGHT! What we focus on, we MAGNIFY! Magnify the good stuff. The reason why this is so important is because good and bad are not equal. Positive far outweighs negative and when you give your focus to the positive, the negative disappears all on its own.

Remember, healing isn't a feeling. There is more happening than you realize. There will be days when you don't FEEL different. But the healing afterburn will continue to happen.

You have flipped a switch. That's right. You don't get to just camp here. The Heart Work never ends.

The things you have learned here become a lifestyle. A lifestyle of forgiveness, of repentance, and of surrender. A lifestyle of pruning and guarding your heart garden.

Let's use some analogies.

If you let a garden go and don't take care of it, it will go to pot, maybe not overnight but eventually, those weeds and rocks will find their way in again.

Same with your muscles. If you stop working out, you will get flabby. The longer you have worked out, the longer it will take, but eventually, it will happen.

I have to get up every day, and focus my heart and mind on my greater truth, forgive others, let go of offenses, repent, and surrender and so will you. My favorite daily prayer is, **Teach me, Show me, Heal me, Grow me.**

I have to come into agreement with that absolute truth of who I am and whose I am every day.

We are in a war over identity and a fight over destiny. Every battle is being waged against your destiny, your future, and your purpose on the earth. Your weapons in this war are the

tools in this book. Don't worry it will get easier. It becomes a part of you, it doesn't feel like work anymore, it becomes organic. Some bridges you will never have to cross back over. There will be continual tipping points where you will catapult to a whole new level.

You can do this. You want this. God is with you! Nothing can stop you but you. You are being transformed into the REAL YOU one precious, beautiful moment at a time.

I believe in you!

Love,

Jackie

About The Author

JACKIE DORMAN is a relationship coach, professional matchmaker, and speaker who has been empowering women to live their best lives for decades. She is a regular contributor on national radio, reaching millions with her humorous, no-nonsense, and relatable style.

Her breakthrough mentoring program for dating and relationships, *Married in 12 Months or Less*, has become an international movement that has helped thousands of singles find love and rediscover hope and healing for their lives in a vibrant relationship community. Jackie calls Austin, Texas, home with her husband, David. Together they are the proud parents of a blended family that includes three adult children.

Follow Jackie (@jackiedormanofficial) on Facebook and Instagram to know the latest on The Heart Work story, and advance notice of live in-person events scheduled in your area. See you soon!