

LEONIE H. MATTISON, Ed.D.

∞ BESIDE STILL ∞  
WATERS

Finding Rest, Refreshment, and  
Restoration for Your Soul

21-Day  
Devotional  
for Survivors  
of Abuse

# BESIDE STILL WATERS

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and Restoration for Your Soul

21-Day Devotional

LEONIE H. MATTISON, ED.D.

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# WELCOME TO BESIDE STILL WATERS!

This devotional is dedicated to women who have survived the soul-crushing reality, pain, and impact of abuse. I'm so glad you've chosen to join me for twenty-one days to finding rest, refreshment, and restoration for your soul by the still waters.

This is part of the Thread collection which consists of the main Thread book, this devotional, an adult coloring book, and an audio tape. Each can be used separately in your spiritual healing process. But better still, they can also be used simultaneously to support the transformative process, as one reinforces the other.

Read the book and do the exercises required, listen to the audio book to remind yourself that others have also suffered as you have. Use this devotional in the morning or during the day as a reminder of the path to healing you have chosen. Color in the adult coloring book to start designing your best self.

My prayer is that the stories, the sharing of my life story and the six steps of the THREAD will work to bring peace, healing, and restoration to your life and a profoundly greater intimacy with God.

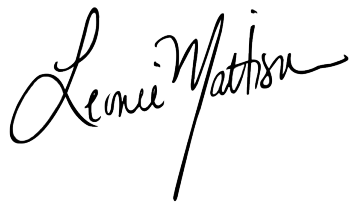
I've designed these twenty-one days of Scripture verses, prayers, and exercises to help you rest in God's love, stop reliving the past, and continue pressing into God and His Word. Then you will move forward in power and might.

This devotional is all about you. It's your time to shut out the world and be intentional about finding rest, refreshment, and restoration. Think of these twenty-one days as your personal retreat with God. Don't pack anything. Leave it all behind as you pursue healing from physical, emotional, sexual, and/or spiritual abuse.

*"Come!" Anyone who is thirsty should come to Jesus. He will give the water of true life to anyone who wants it. They will not have to pay anything for it"*

Revelation 22:17 EASY

May you find wholeness in God as you rest your heart, quiet your soul, and meditate on the refreshing and restorative life-giving Word of Truth.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lennie Mathison". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping underline.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my mother, Joy May Lawrence. It was you who introduced me to the Lord and taught me that, no matter what life throws my way, I can call on Jesus anytime of the day, especially in the morning. Thank you, Mommy!

I also want to thank God and everyone who empowered, inspired, and supported me throughout this journey. I appreciate you all.

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# SOME TIPS FOR USING THIS DEVOTIONAL

This twenty-one-day devotional is to help you focus on tapping into your Spirit-led power and resources. This will help you decide on the direction of your life and achieve the results you want to accomplish. I believe that when we know what we don't want, we can give full attention to coming into alignment with what we do want. To become a deliberate creator, it's important to set the tone for seeking and becoming one with God, refueling your faith, and empowering your resolve to complete this devotional.

To set things in motion, I've provided instructions below to guide your journey. Each day, we'll be digging into Scripture to focus our study for the day. Prayerfully read the selected "Key Verses" and personalize the Word of God when you read it.

Next, tap in to the "Thoughts on Today's Verse," then, to hone your focus, connect to God through "Prayer" and ask Him for what you want. It's crucial that you take time to quiet your mind. When your mind settles down, listen to God's response to what you've requested.

To guide yourself to a new result, speak aloud the "Personal Declaration" as you allow the manifestation of your request. Remember, the happier you are, the better things will flow.

Finally, “Take Soul Care Actions” to help you identify the beliefs and habits you want to keep, release, and establish to achieve your vision of success. Be sure to take “Time For Self-Reflection.”

Here are a few things that will help you develop a routine or improve the one you already faithfully use:

- **Decide** what results you want from this devotional (for example, to hear from God about a specific issue you’re facing) and write it down.
- **Prepare** and plan a set time to meet with the Lord. Adjust distractions such as social media, TV, etc. If necessary, set an alarm on your device so you’ll be reminded. Keep your time doable and make sure it works for you. Make any adjustments to improve on your routine.
- **Create** your own “quiet oasis” where you meet with the Lord on a regular basis (in your home, in your car, in a park). One of mine is my lazy chair by the window. I love sunlight, so it’s the perfect place. I have a little end table, a plant, a lamp, my iPad (for music), my Bible, my journal, and my devotional material. Everything is right there, so I can meet with the Lord each morning.
- **Get** into Scripture and see what the Lord has to say to you in the Key Verse. Then focus on how to apply that verse to your life, and be sure to hold on to the Word in your spirit and feel the joy of the Lord with daily affirmation.
- **Use** your prayer journal to surrender things to God, then write in your journal. Finally, plan what you’ll accomplish in the day. You can practice these steps each day (or whatever routine you establish).

Remember, this is your time to learn from the Lord and become consistent in seeking and delighting yourself in Him; He will give you your heart’s desires (Psalm 37:4). Follow these simple daily instructions as you spend time pressing into God:

## STEP 1:

Read today's devotion in your quiet time.

## STEP 2:

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal what God wants you to know through His Word.

## STEP 3:

Receive God's instructions.

## STEP 4:

Live out loud what you read in your daily life.

ADDITIONALLY, YOU CAN:

## STEP 5:

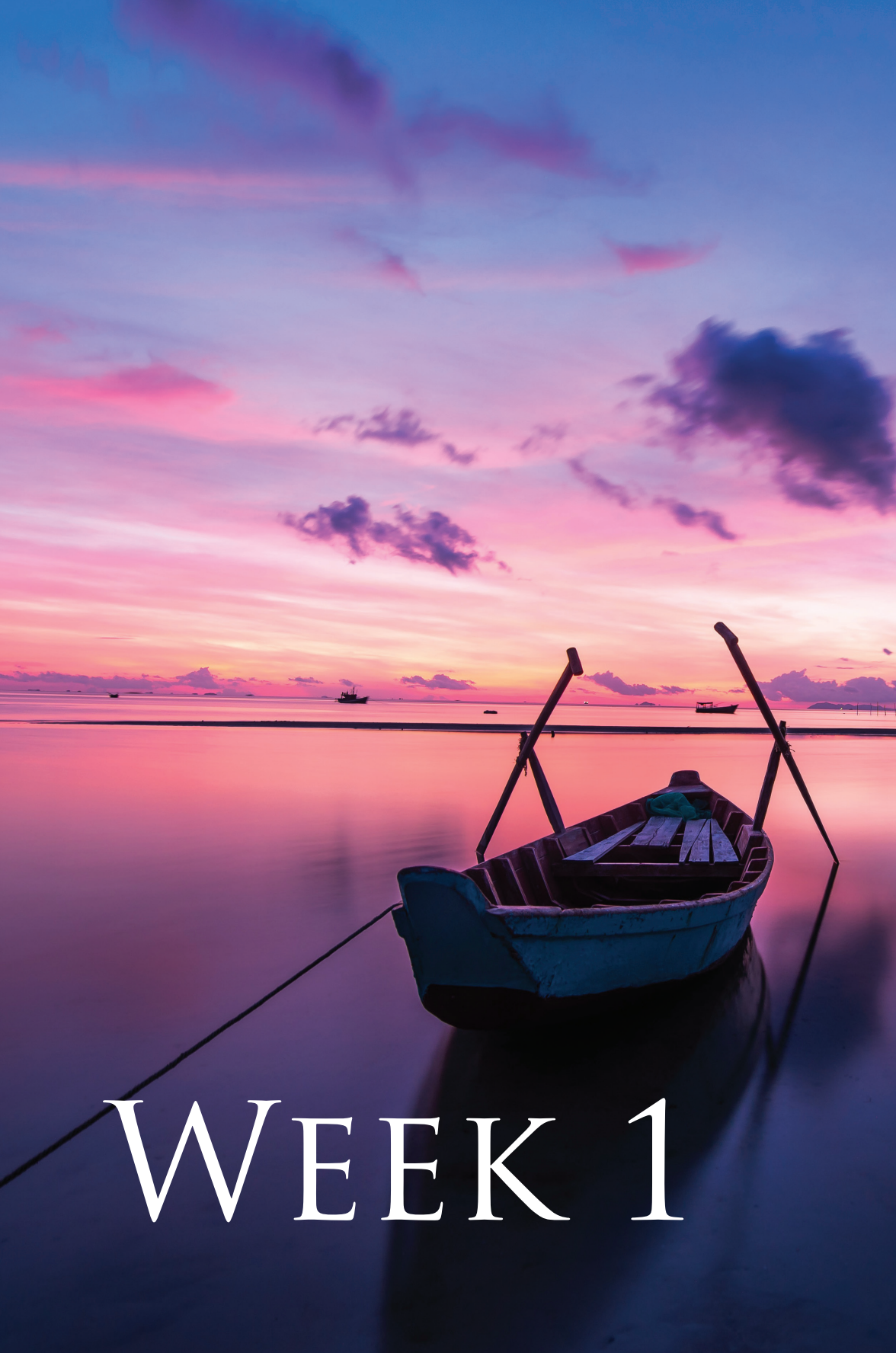
Purchase the audio version of this devotional on my website at [www.leoniemattison.com](http://www.leoniemattison.com).

## STEP 6:

Join our Facebook Group and share with others what you're learning and feel free to post your thoughts in the comments section at <https://www.facebook.com/LeonieMattisonOfficial>

## STEP 7:

Join “**Yes to Intentional Transformation**” a yearlong learning journey where you **connect** with other like-minded women, receive live group **monthly mentoring** from me, weekly **transformation tips**, and year-end retreat that offer you the chance to disconnect, reflect, and celebrate your accomplishments.



WEEK 1



# FIND REST

*Your life is a beautiful masterpiece you get to co-create with God.*

Leonie H. Mattison



DAY 1

# TAKE YOUR BURDEN TO THE LORD

## KEY VERSE

*“Come to me, all of you who are tired and have heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Accept my teachings and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit, and you will find rest for your lives. The burden that I ask you to accept is easy; the load I give you to carry is light.”*

(Matthew 11:28–30 NCV)

## THOUGHTS ON TODAY'S KEY VERSE

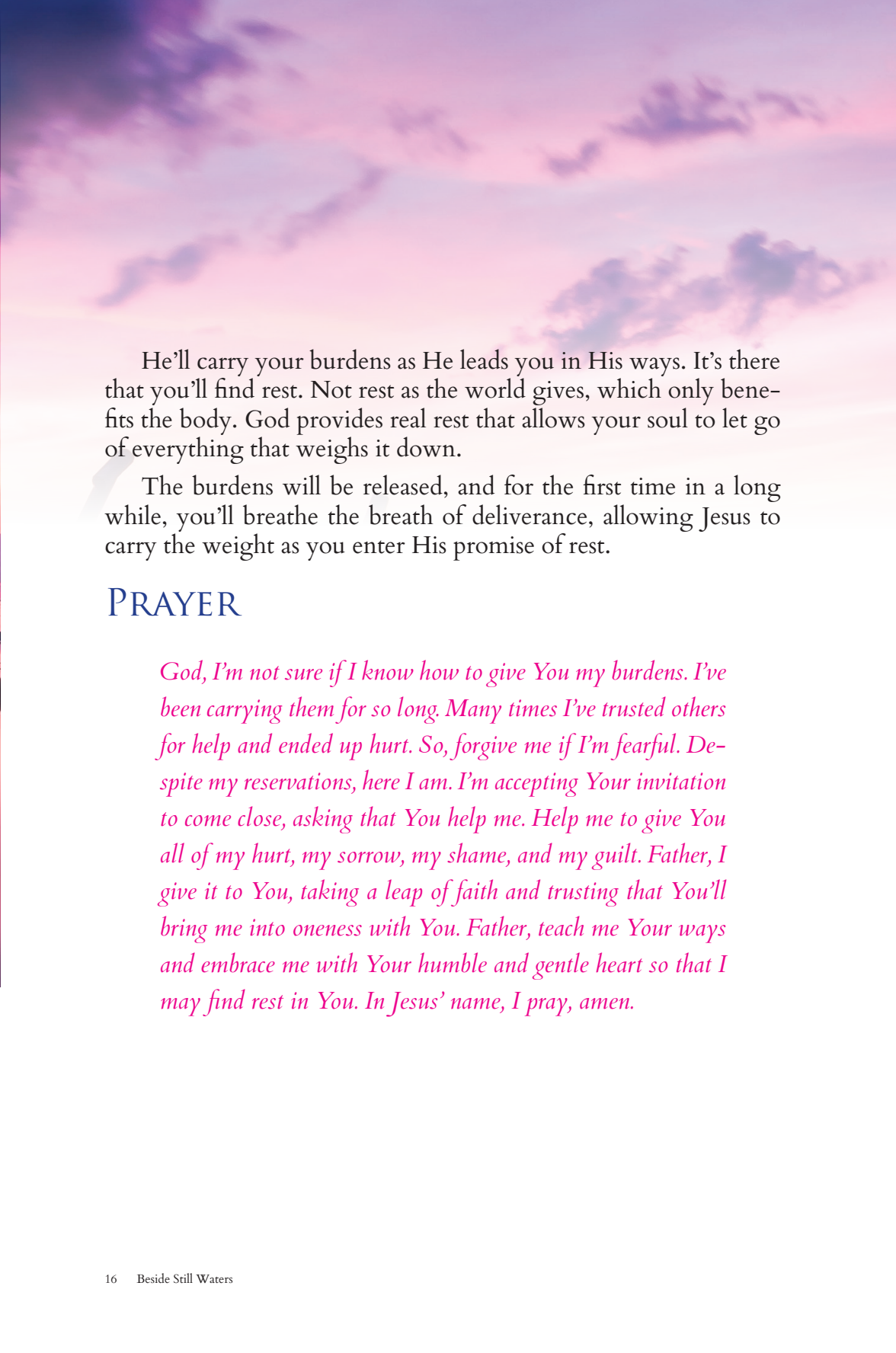
Have you ever shown up somewhere uninvited? You knock on the door, waiting for an answer and hoping that you'll be let in. We often take the same approach with God. We come to Him in our times of desperation, beating on the door of His heart in our weariness, desiring rest.

My sister, you're not a stranger showing up at God's door unwanted. Therefore, you can expect Him to respond. I know many people have caused you to feel unwelcome or unimportant, but that is completely opposite of how God feels about you. He has invited you to rest beside the still waters, and with the warmest of welcomes, He says, "Come to me."

Jesus has offered you His yoke; it's an offering of oneness, partnership, freedom from shame and guilt, and connection to the heart and love of God. The yoke of God is His understanding, peace, truth, promises, rest, love, and knowledge. You can think of it as a care package from God to you, His beloved.

God is saying to you, "Daughter, let me help you. Why are you trying to do everything on your own?" As the yolk of an egg is one with the egg itself, you are one with God. He knows that you're unable to enter his rest by your own strength, so He's offering to help you. He's calling you into oneness with Him so that He can teach you how to rest in His presence.

But how do you come to God and give Him your burdens? By following as the Holy Spirit guides you to the still waters. Get alone with God, tell Him your troubles, and then release them to Him in faith, knowing He'll help you—because He will!



He'll carry your burdens as He leads you in His ways. It's there that you'll find rest. Not rest as the world gives, which only benefits the body. God provides real rest that allows your soul to let go of everything that weighs it down.

The burdens will be released, and for the first time in a long while, you'll breathe the breath of deliverance, allowing Jesus to carry the weight as you enter His promise of rest.

## PRAYER

*God, I'm not sure if I know how to give You my burdens. I've been carrying them for so long. Many times I've trusted others for help and ended up hurt. So, forgive me if I'm fearful. Despite my reservations, here I am. I'm accepting Your invitation to come close, asking that You help me. Help me to give You all of my hurt, my sorrow, my shame, and my guilt. Father, I give it to You, taking a leap of faith and trusting that You'll bring me into oneness with You. Father, teach me Your ways and embrace me with Your humble and gentle heart so that I may find rest in You. In Jesus' name, I pray, amen.*



# PERSONAL DECLARATION

I am one with God and can trust Him with my burdens.

## TAKE SOUL CARE ACTIONS

1. What things have been preventing you from finding rest, especially the ones that you think about often?

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2. What beliefs and habits do you want to keep, release, and establish today?

- Keep: \_\_\_\_\_
- Release: \_\_\_\_\_
- Establish: \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**







DAY 2

# SAFETY FROM THE STORM

## KEY VERSE

*Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty. This I declare about the LORD: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; He is my God, and I trust in Him.*

(Psalm 91:1–2 NLT)

# THOUGHTS ON TODAY'S KEY VERSE

Where have you been seeking safety during life's storms? If you're anything like me, you've sought shelter wherever you could find it, whether that place was healthy for you or not.

No one wants to be left out in the rain, right? You're standing outside and, without warning, a storm rolls in. The rain falls, leaving every part of you drenched. Your hair is dripping, and your clothes are heavy from the weight of the downpour. Lightning shoots from the clouds, and thunder roars through the sky like a lion seeking vengeance. And there you are, standing alone—no raincoat, no umbrella, not even a hood. Unprotected, your only choice is to seek shelter in the nearest place of safety.

The presence of God is the only place we are indeed safe. At times my lack of safety has kept me up at night. Rest was far from me. I didn't know then that in the shadow of the Almighty is where rest is found. If you've been drenched by the storms of this life, shelter awaits you by the still waters of the Father's assurance.

Like a mother bird covering her young with her wings, so does your Father cover and shelter you from the storms of life.

Seeking shelter in the wrong places only further jeopardizes your rest and well-being. God's best is that we live in the shelter of the Most High. Here's where we're protected, where true refuge is found, and where true rest is given.

Don't just visit: live on the calm waters. Take up residence there. Get comfortable in the presence of God, trusting Him to be your safeguard, so that you find rest.



## PRAYER

*Father, I'll be honest: In the past I've sought out shelter in the wrong places. But this time I'm choosing to live in Your shelter. I've been through many storms in my life and now realize I don't have to go through them alone. I will trust that You will be a place of safety, as You have promised, giving me respite when I need it most. As I come in out of the rain, I seek your covering and find rest in Your faithfulness. In Jesus' name, I pray, amen.*

# PERSONAL DECLARATION

I am protected when I rest in the shelter of the Almighty.

## TAKE SOUL CARE ACTIONS

1. What are some ways and places that you have been seeking shelter?

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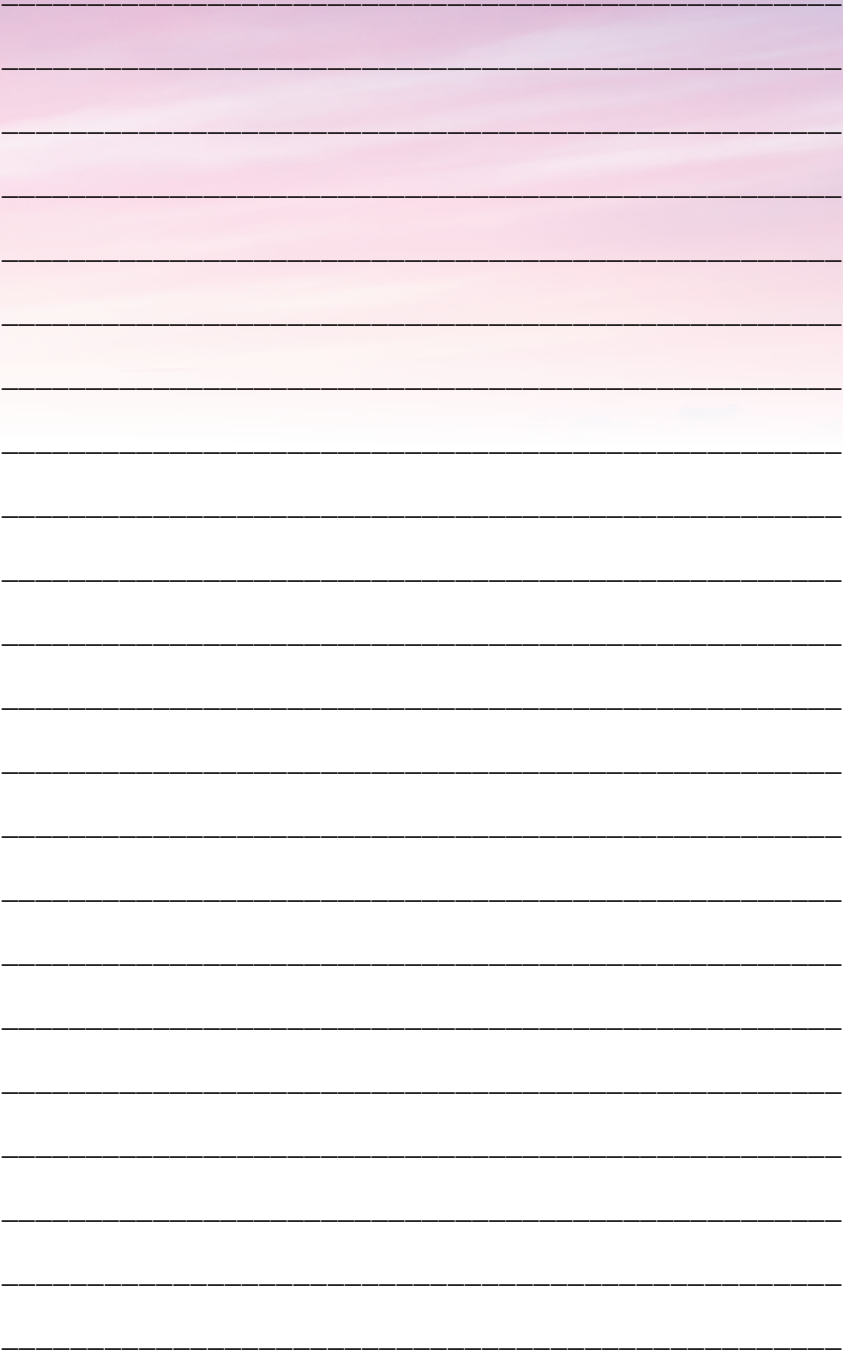
2. What beliefs and habits do you want to keep, release, and establish today?

- Keep: \_\_\_\_\_
- Release: \_\_\_\_\_
- Establish: \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**







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DAY 3

DON'T GO  
ALONE

KEY VERSE

*The LORD replied, “I will personally go with you, Moses, and I will give you rest—everything will be fine for you.”*

(Exodus 33:14 NLT)

# THOUGHTS ON TODAY'S KEY VERSE

Has fear ever kept you from moving forward? Women all over the world are stuck in abusive relationships. They're suffering physical, emotional, sexual, and spiritual abuse in silence because fear has hindered them from walking out, speaking up, or getting help.

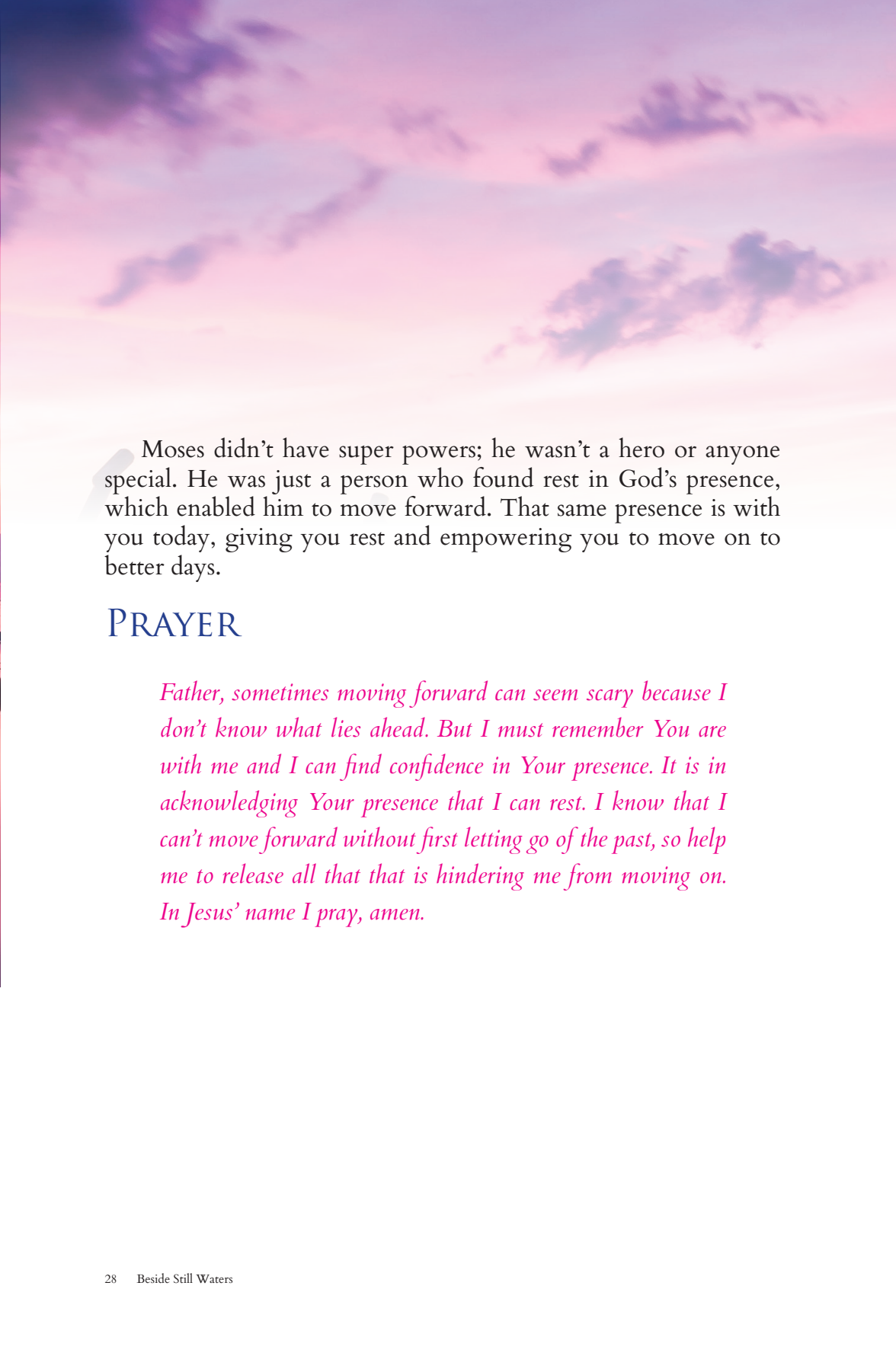
The traumatic events in our lives can keep us constrained, inhibiting our ability to move forward. Fear cripples our desire for more and challenges our worthiness. In order to leave the past, we must move forward.

God is not asking you to move forward alone. He wants to hold your hand and take every step with you. Don't be afraid of the waters. He wants you to move with Him.

Have you ever seen a waltz? The man takes the lead and the woman follows as they gracefully glide across the floor. God is going to make the journey from victim to victor with you. When you take His hand, He places His arm around your back and you'll glide forward as you rest, allowing Him to lead the way.

God makes this possible through the Holy Spirit, who empowers you to step into freedom. In taking the first step, you can rest as He assures you, "Everything will be fine."

God knows you're afraid. He knows your heart and is aware of all you've been through. He doesn't pressure you. He wants you to take your time, but, most importantly, He wants you to know that He's taking every step with you and empowering you along the way. The knowledge of God's presence is the factor that changes everything. In times of fear and insecurity in the Bible, you'll often find God directing the focus back to Himself. When you become aware that the Lord of Hosts is with you, it has a way of ushering you into a place of rest and assurance.



Moses didn't have super powers; he wasn't a hero or anyone special. He was just a person who found rest in God's presence, which enabled him to move forward. That same presence is with you today, giving you rest and empowering you to move on to better days.

## PRAYER

*Father, sometimes moving forward can seem scary because I don't know what lies ahead. But I must remember You are with me and I can find confidence in Your presence. It is in acknowledging Your presence that I can rest. I know that I can't move forward without first letting go of the past, so help me to release all that is hindering me from moving on. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.*

# PERSONAL DECLARATION

I am not bound by fear; I am moving forward with God.

## TAKE SOUL CARE ACTIONS

1. Is there a secret that you have been holding on to in fear?

Share it here and release it to God once and for all.

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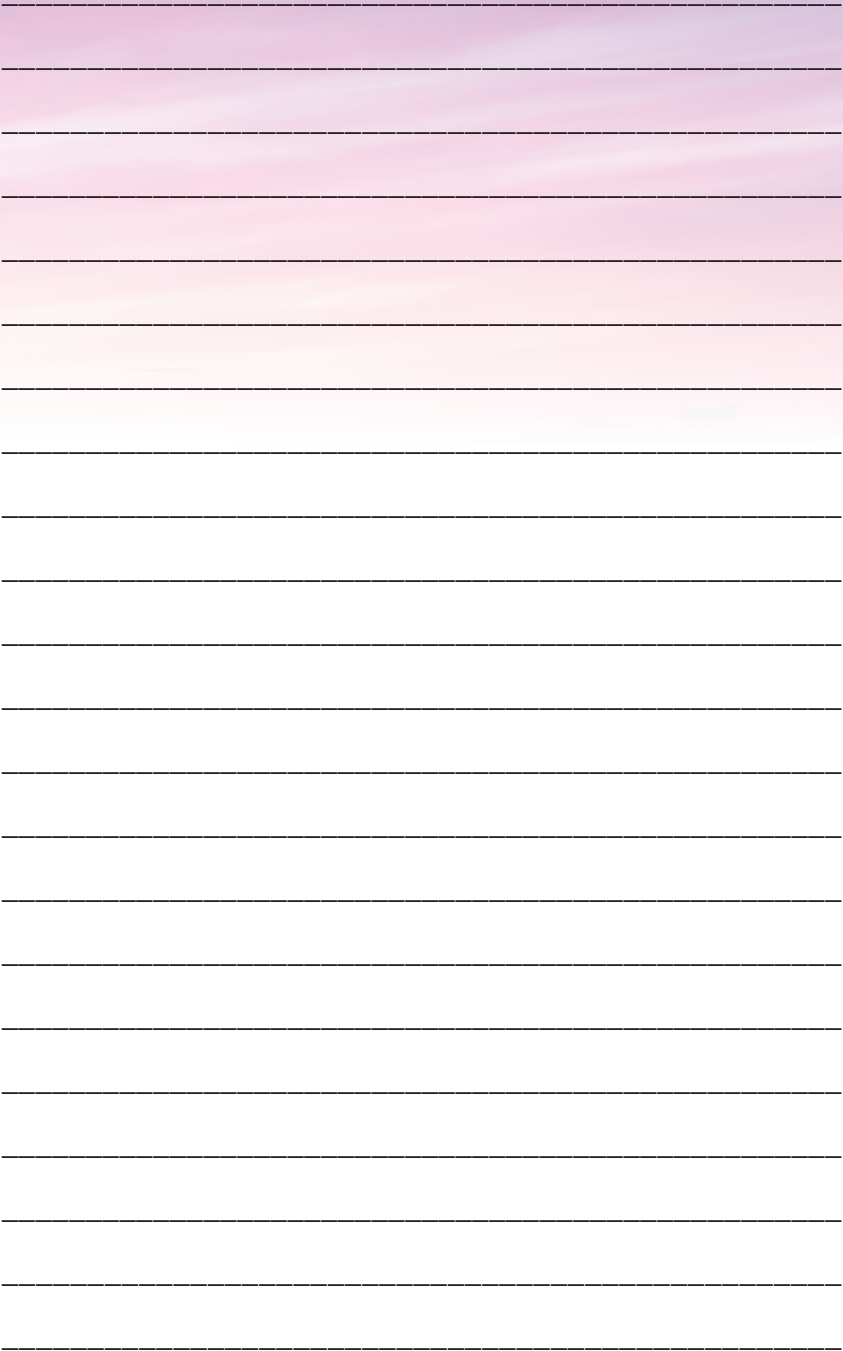
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2. What beliefs and habits do you want to keep, release, and establish today?

- Keep: \_\_\_\_\_
- Release: \_\_\_\_\_
- Establish: \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**





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## MY STORY

# LEONIE H. MATTISON

I'm Leonie, and I know from experience how important it is to trust and follow God when nothing else makes sense. Everything around you is yelling and you're in need of something—someone—to quiet the noise. I know. I understand.

I was a victim of emotional, sexual, and spiritual abuse, and have survived serious bouts of Bell's palsy and a stroke all before the age of thirty-six. None of those things caused me to be defeated. That victim became the victor who stands here today. I became more than just someone who survived. I became victorious.

It hasn't always been that way though. But the experience paid off. Having experienced assault throughout my life, relating to women who are hurting as a result of traumatic injuries comes easy to me. Like these women, life held me hostage to abuse at the hands of people who I thought cared about me. I was sexually abused at a young age, and manipulated into accepting sexual advances.

This abuse of power stripped me of my own personal power. I was left feeling hopeless and confused. Was I to blame for these assaults? Should I have made greater efforts to stop them? I now know that my mind was filled with lies stemming from my abusers. I now know that I was molested, like many other women, and that I was taken advantage of by those men.

They acted in sin and hurt a child, depriving me of my innocence. Until I sought help for my trauma, their selfish sexual desires caused me years of unhealthy behavior, self-doubt, and depression.

I knew I needed help to overcome my pain, but my trust was broken again and again. The resiliency I felt after the molestations



and emotional abuse was ebbing, and I was unsure of how to go on. On one hand I felt used by men, but on the other I was confused about my role in the situation, unsure if I had given consent.

So, I did what many other women do: I kept silent. I had been taught to keep quiet. I lived in an environment where sharing my story would only lead to more pain and suffering, so I hid it. I tucked my trauma away, hiding it in my heart where no one would find it. I chose to internalize my pain and avoid the conflict.

Having been assaulted by so many authority figures in my life, I had no idea where to turn for help. I confided in women I looked up to, desperately seeking a safe place to unload the heavy burden. But those women were not true to their word, and, like a fallen vase of dead roses, my heart was broken yet again. Instead of being welcomed with open arms, I was greeted with scorn. Instead of seeing my need for help, they only compounded my shame.

I began to lose all hope for recovery. But even in my place of hiding, I was found by God. I reached out to Him in desperation, begging Him to send help, to show me a way out of my suffering. I had desperately wanted to feel the love of Christ through others. In my naïve search for healthy intimacy with others, I was left broken, battered, and torn.

Like a stone thrown in the sea, I sank deeper and deeper into depression with no one to pull me out. God was silent, so far away. I couldn't hear His voice or see an answer to my prayers. I was alone. I had nothing. No one left in the world. I attempted suicide.

Yet the life I longed to end was the very life God wanted to revive. Just like the still waters, His silence didn't mean He wasn't there. And in His love, I found the forgiveness and grace to renew my faith and bring healing to every broken part of me. In the process, I discovered what we all need to know: there is a personal power within each Christian that no one can take away—it's the Holy Spirit residing within every true believer. He protected me during my darkest hour and rekindled my hope for happiness.

Today I'm empowered to share my journey without shame or retribution. I didn't do it alone; I needed God's help. Along the way I discovered that, as a child of God, I have His Spirit within me, a personal Counselor who is always there, ready to comfort, guide, and protect me.

Through the Holy Spirit I learned how to rise and take control of my life. I used what He taught me to bridge the gap between pain and promise, and co-create with Jesus to design a better life.

My life story is much like a quilt of little scraps of fabric that, in themselves, appear useless—worthless, even. But when you put them all together, they become a beautiful covering that provides warmth and security. Each piece is unique, telling its own story.

Many of the scraps of your life may seem worthless, too. But when you allow God to sew them all together in love, they'll complete your story and give purpose to your pain.

I'm using my story to help women unlock their true potential and rise to the best version of themselves, all while giving praise to God, the Father of heaven and earth. My vision is to see women and girls survive and heal after abuse. I believe that through God's healing, grace, and redemption, all Christian women can survive—and even thrive—after an abuse.

# APPENDIX:

## BIBLE VERSES

1. “Come!” Anyone who is thirsty should come to Jesus. He will give the water of true life to anyone who wants it. They will not have to pay anything for it (Revelation 22:17 EASY).
2. “...those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life” (John 4:14 NLT).
3. “He offers a resting place for me in his luxurious love. His tracks take me to an oasis of peace, the quiet brook of bliss. That’s where he restores and revives my life. He opens before me pathways to God’s pleasure and leads me along in his footsteps of righteousness so that I can bring honor to his name” (Psalms 23:2–3 TPT).
4. Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart (Psalm 37:4 ESV).
5. “Come to me, all of you who are tired and have heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Accept my teachings and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit, and you will find rest for your lives. The burden that I ask you to accept is easy; the load I give you to carry is light” (Matthew 11:28–30 NCV).
6. Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty. This I declare about the LORD: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; he is my God, and I trust in him (Psalm 91:1–2 NLT).
7. The LORD replied, “I will personally go with you, Moses, and I will give you rest—everything will be fine for you” (Exodus 33:14 NLT).
8. You, LORD, give true peace to those who depend on you, because they trust you (Isaiah 26:3 NCV).

9. Don't worry about anything; instead pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6–7 NLT).
10. I find rest in God; only He can save me. He is my rock and my salvation. He is my defender; I will not be defeated (Psalm 62:1–2 NCV).
11. I said to myself, "Relax and rest. God has showered you with blessings. Soul, you've been rescued from death; Eye, you've been rescued from tears; And you, Foot, were kept from stumbling" (Psalm 116:7–8 MSG).
12. I will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint (Jeremiah 31:25 NIV).
13. He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake (Psalm 23:3 NIV).
14. So repent [change your inner self, your old way of thinking, regret past sins] and return [to God; seek His purpose for your life], so that your sins may be wiped away [blotted out, completely erased], so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord [restoring you like a cool wind on a hot day] (Acts 3:19 AMP).
15. The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul (Psalm 19:7 NIV).
16. "Forget about what's happened; don't keep going over old history. 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. Wild animals will say 'Thank you!'—the coyotes and the buzzards—because I provided water in the desert, rivers through the sun-baked earth, drinking water for the people I chose, the people I made especially for myself, a people custom-made to praise me" (Isaiah 43:16–21 MSG).

17. Don't think for a moment that you know it all, for wisdom comes when you adore Him with undivided devotion and avoid everything that's wrong. Then you will find the healing refreshment your body and spirit long for (Proverbs 3:7–8 TPT).
18. You're all I want in heaven! You're all I want on earth! When my skin sags and my bones get brittle, GOD is rock-firm and faithful. Look! Those who left you are falling apart! Deserters, they'll never be heard from again. But I'm in the very presence of GOD—oh, how refreshing it is! I've made Lord GOD my home. GOD, I'm telling the world what you do! (Psalm 73:25–28 MSG).
19. Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you (2 Corinthians 13:11 NIV).
20. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me (Psalm 51:12 NIV).
21. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him (Isaiah 53:2 NIV).
22. Heal me, LORD, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise (Jeremiah 17:14 NIV).
23. “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV).
24. “But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,” declares the Lord (Jeremiah 30:17 NIV).
25. Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours (Isaiah 61:7 NIV).
26. Then the Lord your God will rescue you from your captivity! He will have mercy upon you and come and gather you out of

all the nations where he will have scattered you (Deuteronomy 30:3 TLB).

27. “Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen]” (Matthew 6:9–13 NASB).

# APPENDIX II:

## 21 SELF-CARE IDEAS

1. **Encourage yourself:** The fact that you've survived whatever you've been faced with is enough to acknowledge your effort, and celebrate the progress you've made. Do your best to be loyal to yourself in the times when you feel defeated. Be there for yourself. You need to be able to count on yourself and to believe in yourself. Treat yourself and speak to yourself the way you would a good friend. Encourage yourself using the Word of God.
2. **Smile:** A real smile can quickly and naturally lift your spirits. It's like you're showing no fear and that, despite your circumstances, you'll be happy because you have Jesus on your side. Smiling also contributes to longevity, as it helps increase your well-being and general happiness. Smiling makes you more likeable and courteous, which yields wonderful results for yourself and others.
3. **Laugh:** While smiling boosts your happiness, laughing is a physical manifestation you're not perturbed by your situation because you know the one called "Abba Father." Like Sarah, with laughter you can boldly say God has your back. "*God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me*" (Genesis 21:6).

Some of the simple ways I brought laughter back into my life after Bell's palsy, was to watch funny videos online and on DVDs, tune in to my favorite sitcoms and plays, listen to some comedy on the radio, and read jokes and quotes of the day. I also read entertaining children's books while spending time with my daughter.

4. **Play:** Dwelling on your present situation will keep you feeling sad, worried, and stressed, but tapping into your inner child can take your mind off your troubles. One of my friends encouraged me to volunteer in the toddler classroom at the

preschool where I worked. This was a breakthrough in my healing process. One child asked if I was now the class clown. I told her, yes, and every afternoon for one hour I changed out of my work clothes into a red clown suit and allowed twenty toddlers the joy of my crooked smile for thirty minutes. It was painful for me to flex my facial muscles, but seeing these innocent children take joy in something I thought was so painful made me smile from the inside out. For the first time, I saw that something good could come from my pain.

5. **Get creative:** Creativity is a powerful way we craft new and beautiful things. So, even when your situation feels out of control, harnessing your creativity will inspire you to make something wonderful. Coloring, painting, sewing, making crafts, or writing are all ways to create something you can be proud of. They allow you to put your difficult situation on the back burner.

Some of the world's greatest masterpieces have been borne out of pain, such as the paintings from Picasso's blue period. If you're having trouble stirring up your creativity, you can do something simple such as coloring. It's not just for kids; there are some beautiful adult coloring books out there that have been shown to reduce stress and anxiety. I have also designed an adult coloring book to help bring peace, healing, and restoration to your life and a profound closeness with God.

6. **Eat well and rest:** Except when we're fasting, it's not recommended that we go without food. Situations can make us lose our appetite, but eating healthy food is what gives us the physical ammunition to restore our body. In the Bible, Paul suggested this to the people on a sinking ship with him when they were afraid:

*"Therefore, I urge you to take some food. For it will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you."* (Acts 27:34).

During my recovery from Bell's palsy and before I could eat solid food again, soups, mashed potatoes, avocados, and coconut water became my best friends. But I was careful not to



binge eat. In addition to feeding the body with the right foods, we must carve out meaningful time to exercise and rest, one of the best ways to rejuvenate and restore a well-nourished body. In doing so, the seed of healing took root in my heart, and color began to come back to my cheeks. I was smiling again and have been smiling ever since.

7. **Give:** Giving to and investing in others is a sure way of taking the focus off yourself. Doing this will bring you inner joy and fulfillment as well. I loved giving to others while I was recovering because blessing others helped me see that it wasn't all about me. I started writing short inspirational messages and daily texted them to my girlfriends, encouraging them to build their faith in God. In doing so, I, too, was encouraged. As I did this, God, through His Holy Spirit, kept whispering into my spirit promises so grand that my faith grew as tall as a mountain.
8. **Practice self-care:** You need appropriate time for healing and recovery to be your best self. Self-care is not selfish; it's a vital part of the healing process. Self-care can be as simple as a warm bath or as extravagant as going to the spa. Take some time to focus on loving and nurturing yourself. Daily, I would affirm, *"I now release with joy every sickness, every disease, every pain, and every misaligned emotion from my body. I bless with love my being and welcome with joy my well-being. My body is healed, and I appreciate my body parts for their support in helping me to fulfill my purpose."* I still do that today. Love and appreciate the body God has blessed you with.
9. **Forgive:** Forgiving yourself and others gives you a peace that cannot be found in physical possessions or activities. Because I blamed myself for past painful experiences, I had to release the blame and regret, knowing that it wasn't my fault. I also had to forgive everyone who had looked down on and talked about me because of my condition. Release the negative emotions and burdens that come from guilt and hurt.
10. **Embrace peace:** It doesn't matter how loud the noise around you is; make sure it's not louder inside of you. *Watch over your*

*heart, for from it flow the springs of life* (Proverbs 4:23 NASB). Protect the personal peace of your heart, for in the absence of peace, turmoil abounds. But when you know the truth, the truth will set you free. Let His peace wash over you, cleansing away your doubt, fear, and anxiety.

11. **Activate your faith:** I spent many days in isolation and hopelessness. I began praying, reading, reciting God's Word and giving thanks, activating my faith in God's power to heal me of this illness, just like the woman with the issue of blood. Jeremiah 17:14 became one of my favorite prayers: *"Heal me, LORD, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise"* (NIV).
12. **Create an amazing space of love:** Share love often and willingly. You don't need to go into anyone's darkness to help them. The only way to lead others out of darkness is to hold your light high so they can see their way out.
13. **Reflect:** Take some time to reflect on what got you here without placing blame on or judging yourself. It's okay to hold yourself accountable and identify the behaviors that will help you to make better decisions in the future. Don't allow yourself or the Enemy to weigh you down with what you wish you had done differently. Always speak as encouragingly to yourself as you would to a dear friend going through trauma.
14. **Take Epsom salt baths:** I take Epsom salt baths, hugging myself and pampering myself with lotion to be therapeutic. I also practice praying the Word of God over my life and speaking these words of truth over my body, "I love you," reminding my soul that "God loves you more" and "You are enough." Know that you can, and will make it through this, and walk into your much brighter future with God. Determine that you are a changed person and that from this point forward you will protect and assert yourself.
15. **Decide today that your past will not define you:** Use these life threads to help others get through their trauma, too. Rise above the temptation to give up or feel as though there's no

hope left. If you have breath in your body, you have an opportunity to override every circumstance that makes you think life isn't worth living anymore. You have a chance now to use the power God has invested in you to take control of your life, take back your joy, and share it with the world.

16. **Develop a strong devotional life:** If you have thoughts of leaving the church as a result of the spiritual abuse you've experienced, don't be ashamed. This is an entirely normal reaction. At one point, I walked away from the church because it was difficult for me to trust God. I blamed Him and the clergy who were a representation of Him. It wasn't until after I started processing my trauma that I was able to begin my relationship with God anew.
17. **Choose to pursue a deeper relationship with God:** Recognize that His love will deliver you from the shame of your past. He will give you the strength and courage to overcome your defeat and to come out of the darkness once and for all. Through understanding who God is and how much He loves you, you'll find the ability to love and forgive yourself and your abuser(s).
18. **Refuse to play the victim:** God doesn't want us to walk around with the shame of what we've done or what's happened to us. He came to set the captives free, so let His redeeming power expel all guilt and shame from you. God knows the end from the beginning. Over time, you'll be able to separate your abuser from God and the church. God doesn't want to see you in pain. He wants to restore you and show you that He is sovereign, even in your tragedy.
19. **Remember, this isn't a journey you have to walk alone:** Many resources are available, such as counseling. The effects of abuse are damaging and isolating, and they invade every aspect of your life mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. The effects remain long after the abuse has ended. It's therefore crucial for you to work through these emotions so they won't have power over you or keep you from fulfilling your purpose in Christ.

20. **Allow God to help you to overcome:** You are not too broken to be healed. God loves you and He wants you to heal and thrive beyond that abuse you've experienced. Rest in the Lord!
21. **Love yourself: You are love!** You were created in love and by love. Stay in the presence of God's genuine love, for His unconditional love will fill you up continually.

*I am a living testimony of God's faithfulness. God is about transformation. As you allow Him to sift through your life experiences and transform your tears of shame to joyful freedom, your purpose will soar. You were born to make a difference. You have a God-given purpose that the world needs to see, hear, and feel. It's time for it to come forth. Today can be your new beginning.*

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

*“Pray, then, in this way:*

*‘Our Father who is in heaven,*

*Hallowed be Your name.*

*Your kingdom come.*

*Your will be done,*

*On earth as it is in heaven.*

*Give us this day our daily bread.*

*And forgive us our debts, as we also have  
forgiven our debtors.*

*And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver  
us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom  
and the power and the glory forever. Amen.’ ”*

Matthew 6:9–13 NASB

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Before going further, I need to categorically state that this book is not an indictment of the Christian church or any church. It is not a vehicle to seek revenge for past wrongs (*no matter how horrible*), nor is it meant to undermine men or men in ministry. This book is strictly about healing and drawing closer to God than you have ever imagined possible. This book is written with a focus on the many waves of abuse women suffer (physical, mental, sexual, and spiritual), but it can also be used by anyone who wants to overcome shadows from the past that are holding them back.

In addition, the circumstances I have written about are an important part of my story, but the names of individuals have been changed, characters have been combined for brevity, and locations have been switched to protect the innocent as well as any other victims who have chosen not to be identified. I have added an undeniable example of God's ability to transform those horrible experiences into a beautiful quilt that would glorify His love, power, and personal care

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