

A black silhouette of a superhero woman with a cape, standing against a background of white clouds on a grey sky. The text is overlaid on the image.

ARE YOU
SUPERWOMAN OR A
SUPER
MESS?

**GET
REAL**

KEISHA B. SPIVEY

Get Real!

...are you a
Superwoman
or Supermess?

by **Keisha B. Spivey**

Bible Resources

The Message//Remix – Eugene H. Peterson, Navpress

Life Application Bible - New International Version,
Tyndale House & Zondervan

Holy Bible – New King James Version, Nelson

The Everyday Life Bible – Joyce Meyer, Warner Faith

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my Grandmother, Pauline Battle, a matriarch like no other. As a child she made sure I learned that walking hand in hand with Christ opens doors that man closes and makes the impossible... possible.

She taught me that... "I am the master of my fate and the captain of my soul!"

Thanks, Grandma, for allowing your legacy of faith,
family, and food to live on in me.

real

adjective | re•al | \ˈrē(-ə)l\

: not fake, false, or artificial

: actually existing or happening : not imaginary

: important and deserving to be regarded or treated in a serious way

Get Real!

Contents

Acknowledgements	vi
Forward	vii
Preface	1
Introduction	3
Minimized Chaos	8
Mandatory Joy	17
Mobilized Passion	26
Muted Negativity	32
Magnetic Peace	43
Manifested Wisdom	51
Magnificent Praise	60
Majestic Love	70
Modified Mind	75
Mission Possible	82
Motivated Confessions	87

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To my grandparents, Henry and Pauline Battle, thank you for being living examples of commitment and strength. Your marriage of over 70 years has taught me that quitting is never an option when you play to win.

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To my dream-maker, my very best friend, my hero, my husband, Eric, you really are the wind beneath my wings. Thank you for releasing me to “Get Real” with myself and begin the journey of change. Your unconditional love and encouragement have allowed me to turn my mess into a message giving God all the glory and the praise. Our latter truly will be greater than our past!

To the SGW team, thanks for believing in this project and guiding the process.

Foreword

Every year during Thanksgiving week I get to get away from the daily pressures of ministry, counseling sessions, staff issues, new building pressures, and enjoy a week off with my family in Ohio. So as we rush to the airport with too much luggage, baby, and baby gear in tow for a week of relaxation I remember, I need to read Keisha Spivey's manuscript, listen to a couple of music CD's, and read a business plan. I must be honest with you when I thought about reading another manuscript, hearing another music CD, or viewing another business plan from a member of the church it sounded like a lot of work during a time I designated to get some R and R, so I was not real exited about the tasks.

While sitting in the airport, I decided to start reading the book you now hold in your hands and I have to tell you that I could not stop reading! As the announcer called for those with small children to start boarding, I stepped onto the airplane, but I held onto my manuscript because I could not put "Get Real" down. Even with our one year old son pulling on the pages as he climbed between my wife and me, I continued to hang on every word. Before long I heard myself talking out loud like I am sitting in the pews at church saying "AMEN," "For Real Girl", and "Say That!" I immediately started thinking about many of my buddies and women that I wanted to read this book. I know Get Real was written for women, but every man I know including myself could benefit from Get Real Moments.

Keisha has broken through in areas of her life in which so many others have gotten stuck. In the book that you are now holding, you will learn how to "Get Real" with yourself, with God, and with all the other people around you. Until we face the truth about ourselves and our lives, we can never truly confront our issues and resolve them. Get Real guides you in the process of confronting the person who has the most impact in your life... you.

I personally know the love, commitment and dedication that Keisha has for God, her husband and three beautiful children. I do not think I have ever met a more disciplined person. She makes the most of every moment of her time, and I assure you that the moments you spend reading this book will net you changes in your life that you long to enjoy. If you make application to the Get Real Moments described in this book, you can expect to experience benefits beyond measure. Regardless of your age, gender, career path, or where you are on the economic ladder, you will find this book helpful. In fact, do not be surprised if you start shouting out loud, taking notes, underlining passages with your highlighter, and ultimately get pushed to take action in your life today!

Lee Stokes – Senior Pastor –Destiny Christian Center

Preface

It is my prayer that you picked up this copy of GET REAL and saw a personal reflection of yourself on the cover. Before you begin to take the journey of “transformation,” I wanted you to get clarity on how this book was birthed. Just a few short years ago, my life was in limbo. I had an awesome husband, three beautiful children, and what appeared to be a “happy” life, but I was miserable. I had all of the disciplines of a Christian woman. I prayed, I studied the Word, I went to church, and I loved the Lord with all my heart. At church, I praised and worshipped with the best of them, but inside I was hurting. I could not understand the source of my pain; I just knew that the pain was real.

One Sunday morning during praise and worship, tears ran uncontrollably down my face and I wept before God with every ounce of strength in my body. I began to tell God how I really felt deep down on the inside and asked him to help me overcome. At the alter, I released my agenda, my will, my desires, and asked God to only give me what He wanted me to have. Whatever He told me to do, I would do. Wherever He told me to go, I would go. Whatever He told me to say, I would say. I truly surrendered all. As I am writing this page, my mind reflects back to that life-changing day.

After I had shared my heart with God, the great exchange began to take place between the two of us. I had given him all of me and now I was ready to commit at a completely different level. I had already accepted Jesus as Lord of my life and had a personal relationship with Him, but it was this cold February day that I truly yielded my all. It was no longer about me; it was all about Him. The only issue with this “transformation” was that I did not know how to describe it without it appearing that I had backslid in my walk with Christ. Of course, I could not have anyone doubting my Christian walk. I knew something had changed, but I did not know what to do with it. One morning

during my prayer time, God began to show me myself in a completely different way. I was not prepared for the things that needed to be revealed to me. What I saw was ugly! I saw anger, unforgiveness, bitterness, pride, jealousy, impatience, conditional love and regret – none of it represented the life of a Believer. Yes, I had all the trappings of a Christian woman, but I had allowed my appearance to hide the truth. In all honesty, I was a dressed up mess. Once again, this fresh revelation of my “mess” brought me to my knees in prayer. Through the tears, I repented for my ways and thoughts, and God shared the following word with me:

“It is time to take off your Superwoman cape and deal with the Supermess issues in your life. Everyone sees you as having it all together, but I see what is in your heart. You are forever flying in to resolve the issues in everyone else’s life, but the cape does not fool me. Until you GET REAL with yourself and GET REAL with me, you will never understand how great your life can be. Instead of hiding your issues and shortcomings, it is time to bring them out in the open and deal with them. I do not expect you to be perfect, but I do expect you to be REAL. As you begin to overcome in the areas that have kept you bound for so many years, you will be able to help others do the same thing. I am not looking for Superwomen, I am looking for REAL women who live for me, take responsibility for their choices, and consider themselves a constant work in progress. I am not searching the earth for a woman who can fool the world who hides behind a mask and cape, I am looking for a woman who can lay aside her “self created image” and tap into My image. Deal with the mess head on, and let me do a new thing in you!”

Ladies, I share that same word with you. God does not expect you to be perfect, but he does need you to be real. As you read the pages of GET REAL: Superwoman or Supermess, allow God to reveal your “mess” to you. It takes a real woman to acknowledge her shortcomings and then do something about them. I challenge you to do just as God instructed me to do... take off your cape and GET REAL!

Introduction

Every time I ever went to a Christian bookstore, library, or web site, I was either suffering from hunger, helplessness, or hopelessness. Need always was the driving force to buy a book. I never just breezed in to see what was on the shelf, I knew that I had a void and longed to fill it with the Word. No matter what the “symptoms” were, I knew that a Word would offer me the cure and fresh insight for my journey. Which avenue led you to pick up this book: hunger, helplessness, or hopelessness? GET REAL!! Something, some situation, or someone has helped you face the fact that you need to be real with God, yourself, and those around you.

Hunger: When hunger was my driving force, I was excitedly, enthusiastically seeking my Savior, my friend, my creator. I desired more of Him and less of me. I longed for fellowship, revelation, and guidance. I knew I could not accomplish or be anything apart from Him. Because I had been actively fellowshipping with Him, I needed more of Him. I craved the Word, like I did collard greens when I was pregnant. I could wake up in the middle of the night and want collards. I was not satisfied until I had wrapped my lips around a fork full of luscious greens. My husband could not understand it, but he knew he needed to keep a steady supply on hand to meet my needs because nothing else was good enough. Hunger for the Word causes you to live in a seeking mode. You desire all of Him, and all He has to offer. We love it when we are in this season, but sometimes life happens and we find ourselves in another “not so confident” season.

Hopelessness: Although I loved the Lord with all my heart, soul, and mind, there were times, when I felt all hope was gone. I am fully aware that most people would not admit this, but I am all about keeping it real. Sometimes life can be hard with all of the unexpected obstacles that require hurdling and not to even

mention the emotional roller coaster rides. The Word tells us that “many are the afflictions of the righteous” (Psalms 34:19), but we tend to believe that verse is for someone else. Mr. Webster defines hopeless as having no possibility of a solution. Yes, there have been times in my life where I did not know where to turn, when to turn, or how to turn. I should have stopped and sought help from the Counselor of all Counselors, but it is so much easier to have a pity party. You don’t invite your friends, and you definitely do not invite your Manufacturer. It is amazing how a state of complete hopelessness can shift into a state of confidence once you change your focus from you to Him. And, before you realize it, you are back in a season of hunger.

Helplessness: Even though I have a super-charged, type A personality, I have constantly had to battle the feeling that my hands were tied, and I could do nothing to change my circumstances. A state of helplessness is nothing more than feeling powerless in your current situation or circumstances. Usually during these times we are looking for strength within ourselves, instead of looking to the One that strengthens us. The enemy is excellent at deception and distorting our focus. Actually, he is a master deceiver who is constantly looking for one he can devour (1 Peter 5:8). Satan begins this devouring in our minds as he begins to feed us thoughts of defeat. We sometimes forget that the battle is fought in our minds and not our spirits. If the enemy can ever convince us that we cannot win, he automatically wins because we quit trying. Please recognize that this is a lie from the pit of hell. The fight is fixed in our favor, and we win! The Word tells us that the Holy Spirit dwells inside of each of us. Your Ever Present Help is available to help you through whatever life serves you. Once you grab a hold of the assurance that there is not a situation too hard or problem too big for God, you can leave the state of feeling weak and transition into your God ordained position of strength. When you begin to shift your thoughts, you realize that Christ died and sent Our Helper, the Holy Spirit just to help you. He had you on His mind when He said, “It is finished!” (John 19:30). Taking

ownership of this God given right and privilege moves you from a state of hopelessness to hunger because you recognize your hope is grounded and fixed in His strength and His power – the Wonder Working, Miracle Performing, and Yoke Destroying Power that only comes through Christ. Only Christ can fill this void.

No matter what I had going on in my life, one of these “conditions” was always my driving force for a “Word” from God through any possible source I could get my hands on. I knew I needed to hear from God because something inside of me was crying out for more – more of His presence, more of His Word, more of His peace, or more of His joy. I knew I was in need of a fresh fill or a refill because I could feel my spirit yearning for the fulfillment only found in Christ. There is never an adequate substitute for an area in your life designed to be occupied by your Creator.

No matter what the condition is that brought you to this book, I pray you open your heart and mind and allow God to truly do a new thing in you. It is my prayer that you GET REAL right where you are in life and allow the Holy Spirit to use these words to refill your empty, dry, and hardened places. Come clean and step out from your current hiding places. You have to allow God to deal with your mess so that you can turn it into your message for His glory and the benefit of others. There is not any new challenge under the sun, and no matter what you are going through, you are not alone. Every one of us is in the process of overcoming daily challenges that need us to GET REAL. As Joyce Meyer is known for saying, “The grass always looks greener on the other side, but it still needs to be mowed.” Your friends, peers, and associates may look like they have it all together, but rest assured if they did truly have it ALL together, they would be in glory waiting for you to join them. Our living on earth reminds us daily that God is not finished with any of us; there is still work to be done. Smile.... every one of us has issues, no one is exempt. We are not going to play

the “let’s compare issues game,” but I do desire to offer you the opportunity to peek inside yourself so that you can GET REAL with yourself and grow into the hand crafted and life changing masterpiece you were designed to be.

By the time you have completed this book, I pray that you are well on your way to enjoying a life of “Maximum Living”. In order to experience a maximized life, you have to assign the conditions of your life the highest possible level of importance. Your life, needs, and issues have to matter to you, and you have to be woman enough to accept your role and responsibility in how you choose to live your life. God has an awesome plan for your life, but you are probably not experiencing it to the fullest because of the “Little Foxes” that hide out in your vineyard. Sometimes these foxes just stop by uninvited and you weren’t expecting them, so you weren’t prepared. As you turn the pages of this book, fox after fox will be revealed to you. Now that you know that they are there, it is completely up to you to decide if you are going to let them take over, or if you are going to get rid of them once and for all and enjoy the Best Life Possible without the mask or facade.

As women, many of us have become experts at pretending we have everything together. Many mornings we “cape up” and act like a superwoman. We strut our perfectly made up faces around acting like we have it all together. We make sure everyone around us believes that we do not have any problems, any concerns or pressing issues. However, the truth of the matter is we are one step away from pulling out our own hair, throwing dinner through the window, yelling at our children, and kicking the dog. We are far from superwomen; we are more like a “super-mess”.

It is time out for pretending and playing games because life is too short. We only have one opportunity to truly perform; we get one curtain call, and one lifetime to leave our fingerprint on humanity. In order to make the most out of our “one shot,” we need to make sure that we are truly real from the inside out.

Someone who is real on the inside understands that they are in the process of becoming a beautiful woman of God. She is not afraid to admit she entertains fears, doubts, and sometimes wants to throw a fit. She knows that God is doing a mighty work on her, and she recognizes that flesh dying is a painful thing. A woman who is real from the inside out is not ashamed of her mistakes, past, or challenges, and is willing to allow her mess to be a message of hope to other women.

It is my prayer today that as you read the pages of this book, you decide to GET REAL. No more playing games, no more capes, no more masks, and no more phoniness. As you become true to your authentic self, the woman God designed you to be, you will begin to enjoy the God kind of life which was preordained before you arrived on the scene. Our God loves each of us too much to have us spend our precious days being a cheap copy of a man made cartoon character. God created each of us magnificently, wonderfully, and uniquely for purposes greater than we can imagine.

GET REAL with yourself, GET REAL with God and make room for your refill. Let's begin the journey...

1

Got Chaos? Minimize it!

“God make a fresh start in me; shape a Genesis week from the chaos in my life?” Psalm 51 (Message Bible)

When you saw the word chaos, you found yourself wondering if someone told me about your “mess” or you may be pondering over the people in your life who you think need to read this chapter. Before you put on your shame face (because you know I am talking to you) or judgmental robe (I can’t possibly be talking about you), lets GET REAL with the facts and with the truth. Chaos is defined by Mr. Webster as a state or place of total confusion or disorder. To those of you who said yes to the question, Got Chaos, I want to begin by saying, relax it is OK! Psalm 51 reminds us that everyone at some time or another battles the “chaos” syndrome in their life.

1. Some of us are about to enter a season of chaos (frustration).
2. Some of us are smack dab in the middle of it (preparation).
3. Some of us are shouting with joy because we are leaving that season heading into our next (exhilaration).

Do not be misled; you can actually experience all three seasons in a matter of moments. Let’s GET REAL for a moment. Picture this... you have your praise and worship music playing in the background, and you are preparing dinner. Scriptures such as the “joy of the Lord is my strength” are dancing in your

head, then all of a sudden you hear the following screams from upstairs, “Mom, Michael hit me,” “You hit me first,” “You are lying,” “Mom ...” Then you turn around while the screams are still piercing in your ears, and your little girl has opened the fridge to get juice, and spilled the entire pitcher in your freshly scrubbed kitchen floor... then your husband says... “Honey, do you know where my blue shirt is”... And before you know it your season of peace has turned into a storm of chaos. I refuse to believe that I am the only person that can be in God’s presence one moment, and in two seconds begin to feel horns sprouting out of the top of my head. Let’s be real... chaos happens. The question then shifts from the focus of the chaos to “what am I going to do now.” When the storm is fierce all around you, when the thunder of screams are rolling, and the lightning of the needs of everyone around you is striking, do you yield to the moment, or do you realize, like all storms they pass? Psalm 51 reminds us so beautifully that God can form something absolutely beautiful and astounding out of the chaos. He can create a beautiful beginning in your life out of the chaos, if you choose to yield your emotions, feelings, and thoughts to Him during the storm. It is so comfortable to come to Him, once the storm has ceased repenting because you need forgiveness for losing it... again. But, God is asking you to come to Him, while the storm is at its fiercest. Your chaos, or storm may not be needy children or a needy husband, but I guarantee you do have something in your life, something in your spirit that is out of order. Your chaos may be impatience, anger, bitterness, unforgiveness, disorganization, the list could be endless, but whatever it is, God knows it exists, and you know it exists because you are reading this page and it is calling out to you. Please realize that chaos, storms, and seasons all change; however, the God that moves directs, and guides during these times “changes not”. The peace, joy, and quiet that you are longing for during these turbulent times are all found in Him.

Peter In The Storm

But the boat was by this time out to sea, many furlongs {a furlong is one eighth of a mile} distant from the land, beaten and tossed by the waves, for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus came to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified and said, "It is a ghost!" And they screamed out in fright. But instantly He spoke to them saying take courage! I am! Stop being afraid. And Peter answered Him, Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water. He said, Come! So Peter got out of the boat and walked on water, and He came toward Jesus. But when he perceived and felt the strong wind, he was frightened, and as he began to sink, he cried out, Lord save me. Instantly Jesus reached out His hand and caught and held him, saying to him, O you of little faith, why did you doubt? And when they got into the boat the wind ceased. (Matthew 14:24-32)

This passage is jammed packed with revelation on how we react to storms in our lives. Get the image in your mind of these sailors in the middle of a storm. Jesus had already told them what to do when He directed them in verse 22 to get into the boat and go before Him to the other side. The objective or goal was placed before them, but while they were on the way...a little storm arrived.

Let's GET REAL for a minute. Peter's situation occurred in a boat, but ask yourself where yours usually occurs. Do the majority of your storms happen at home, work, or in the car? A storm is nothing more than a distraction to keep you from getting where you are supposed to go at the appointed time to get there. It is usually packaged so neatly that you do not realize it contains fear, doubt, and unbelief...just like Peter's.

Peter knew Jesus could perform miracles, he had just left a dinner where Jesus took a two piece fish dinner and fed potentially 10,000+ people and had leftovers. So in all actuality, Peter knew there were not any limits to Jesus' power. I would think the first thing that would come to their mind when they looked out over the water was "That has to be Jesus, who else

could walk on water”. It is so easy to make assumptions when it comes to others and their relationship with Christ, but let’s do a little self examination. When the car breaks, the children scream, the boss demands, your flesh has pain, you cannot find your keys, do you stop and say, “Only Jesus can help me with this.” No, we react in fear just like Peter and his boys. We lose courage instead of take courage. We become afraid of the unknown, completely forgetting that we know the Man and the promised outcome. Our other reaction is to begin to doubt and question God. Peter’s style of doubt manifested in his question of “if it’s you, bid me to come.”

As we look a little further in the text we recognize that Peter did get out of the boat and walk toward Jesus, BUT, when the “strong winds blew” he became frightened and acted in fear. As you read this text, you are probably saying, “Peter, Peter, come on... it is Jesus we are talking about.” OK... Let’s GET REAL! During our own personal storms, we tend to doubt the plan, doubt our purpose, or doubt our calling. We begin to say things like “God, maybe this is not what I am supposed to be doing... it just seems too hard to be of you... maybe I missed you” fully knowing that God has already told us to go to the other side. He never said there would not be storms on the journey, but getting to the other side is a promise.

Maybe you are someone who is guilty of self inflicted chaos or storms; declare that those days are no more. Decide to live a life free of unnecessary confusion because life has enough worries of its own. Ask God to take control of any disorder or confusion that is active or dormant in your life. We have to include dormant disorder because sometimes you are so accustomed to the disorder in your life that it becomes comfortable to you. Dormant disorder is a trick of the enemy because you are weighted down without realizing it. You may believe that you are running the race God has designed for you to run not realizing that you are not at full speed. Sometimes the enemy is not focused on stopping us; his goal may be to slow us

down. As women, we must become wise to these tactics because the pace that we are running our race tremendously affects our entire household.

No matter what type of chaos you are incurring, overcoming, or battling, realize that you are victorious through it by learning how to minimize it. Some of the chaos that is self-inflicted can be totally erased from your life by making wiser decisions. I could lecture on and on about scriptures that instruct us to “get wisdom and understanding,” but most of the time we are not making those decisions from a lack of wisdom, it is usually a lack of control over our flesh. How many times have you made a decision and you knew that you were making a terrible mistake? But you did it anyway? Wisdom was not your problem; your problem was that you allowed your flesh to make a decision for you instead of your mind. You allowed your flesh to maximize chaos in your life instead of minimize it. Minimizing your chaos means allowing the Spirit of God to lead you instead of your fleshly body. Minimizing the self-inflicted chaos in your life simply boils down to making mature decisions. Deciding that what you want most is more important than what will give you the quick fix or immediate satisfaction. Our God is awesome, and His grace covers our “mess”; however, how much further along would you be in your life if God’s grace was promoting you to higher levels, instead of constantly covering the “oohps” that keep you traveling around the same mountain, day after day, month after month, year after year. Enough already! How do you expect to become more in Christ, if you continue to make the same mistakes without any evidence of growth or maturity? God is looking for people who desire to go to the next level, not the ones who are content with “just living.”

Minimizing the chaos that results from day to day life is also a decision. You are probably already asking yourself, “How do I minimize the things that I cannot control?” Excellent, I am so glad you asked that question. You have the full power to minimize the effect of those “Life just happening” moments and

incidents in your life by determining how much value you place in it. You cannot control every situation; however, you have complete control over how you react to all incidents in your life. Your reaction determines if you truly believe in your heart of hearts that God is in complete control or not. So your light bill is more than you budgeted for, do you panic or begin to speak God's Word back to him... "My God shall supply all my needs... He will open up to me His good treasure... ask and it shall be given... all things are possible to she who believes..." "Do you remind God that you are a tither and a giver... with covenant rights... who has a heart toward Him...?" "Or do you walk in fear speaking that..." "I do not know what I am going to do... times are just hard... woe is me... the harder I try..." You are able to minimize these chaotic moments and situations in your life by your attitude. Your finances may not be where you desire them to be, but does your attitude reflect where they are going or where they are now? Your marriage may not be where you desire it to be, but does your attitude reflect where it is going, or where it is now? Apply this same question to your children, your job, or anything else that has "chaos" potential. Please remember that you have the key in your possession at all times; it is called your attitude. How are you going to maximize your life, if your attitude is one of defeat? How can you GET REAL with yourself if you do not know what real looks like? You have to see yourself over all things in your life, even the chaos.

Everything in your life comes back to faith or fear. At this point, whether the chaos is self-inflicted or due to just living is irrelevant. No matter the source or the reason you can rest in the assurance that "God can make a fresh start in you, He can shape a Genesis week for any chaos found in your life" if you allow Him to mature, develop, and perfect everything that pertains to your life. God needs you to understand that chaos is part of this life package. He gave us a hint when He said, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but He delivers us from them all." Affliction is defined as a cause of pain, suffering or distress. I can only speak for myself, but most of the chaos that I have

had to deal with fell into one of these three categories – pain, suffering, or distress. Marriage challenges, financial challenges, children challenges, emotional challenges, lack of transportation challenges, loneliness challenges, and the list could continue on forever, but the Word clearly states that He will deliver us from them ALL. All means every single one of them. So, is what you're going through really that big of a deal... if you already know you have been delivered... that a way has already been made... that God has your back? Either you know this or you are being deceived. Sorry, but those are really the only two categories. You are either walking by faith in what God's Word says or you are walking in fear of what you don't know! Think on that for a moment, Selah. Everything in your life comes back to faith or fear. Your engine is being fueled by one or the other... fear or faith. If it is fear, no problem... just change! Do not try to make it any deeper or more spiritual than it is... just change! Choose to change...

At this point, whether the chaos is self inflicted or due to just living is absolutely totally irrelevant. No matter the source or the reason, you can rest in the assurance that "God can make a fresh start in you, He can shape a Genesis week from ANY chaos found in your life" if you allow him to mature, develop, and perfect everything that pertains to your life. GET REAL... you got chaos... He has the solution!

Get Real Moment!

Identify the chaos that you are currently working through.

On a scale of 1-10, how are you managing this situation? _____

What are actionable steps that you can take TODAY to better manage YOU in the mist of minimizing the chaos?

What is one thing that you learned in this chapter that you can hold onto and utilize in your personal life?

Personal Thoughts & Prayers

2

Got Joy? It's Required... Mandatory Joy

“Consider it wholly joyful, my brethren, whenever you are enveloped in or encounter trials of any sort or fall into various temptations”

James 1:1 (Amplified)

“Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-filled life is forced in the open and shows its true colors”

James 1:1 (Message)

Before you determine what your opinion of this chapter will be by the title, let me help you by telling you why you either have on your black robe of judgment or you have your antennas up ready to hear what I have to say. The first thing we need to do is establish where your mind, mood, and attitude are right now this specific moment while you are reading this page. Are you in a state of praise because all is well, no major storms or bumps that you presently have to push through? Are you catching your breath from coming out of a storm that was fiercer and stronger than you anticipated? Are you in the process of being refreshed because you have learned a lesson from the storm you just came through? Or, are you sweating, fussing, and mad because you are in a storm and actually circling the same mountain you just went around? No matter where you find yourself in those questions, God's Word still proclaims that we are to... count it ALL joy.

The word “All” keeps popping up to remind us that all inclusive is all inclusive. We cannot take anything from the Word of God or add anything to the Word of God. God always said what He meant and meant what He said. Your situation does not make

you an exception to the rule. Before we start studying about what joy is and what it is not, let's GET REAL!

I will be the first to admit that there have been a few times in my life where joy was as far from my mind and heart as possible. I was saved, loved the Lord, on the way to heaven, and not ashamed to tell you about my relationship with my heavenly Father. God had brought me through things that I knew were only possible through Him. However, I still did not have a clear understanding of the meaning of joy. Joy never lived in my house when I was a child. Actually, I did not know what real joy was until much later in my life. I had watched adults “fake being happy” or use other substances and sources to obtain temporary happiness, but I had seen enough behind the scenes to realize they were trying to mask pain, rejection, fear, doubt, and poor self esteem. I had a very clear picture of what I did not want, and I only dreamed of what I thought I wanted.

As early as I can remember, I always enjoyed going to church. I would get up and get dressed and ride with my Grandparents who lived next door. I can remember singing songs in Sunday School about the joy of the Lord. Around the age of 9, the scripture “the joy of the Lord is my strength” (Nehemiah 8:10) became my battle cry. I did not fully understand the scriptures, but I did know that God's Word said He would never leave or forsake me. So, if the Bible was true, I could hold on to the Lord's joy and be strong no matter what I endured. I have to admit that there were turbulent years ahead that I never expected, but I learned to hold on to the Lord's joy when I did not have any of my own.

Just because we get older, does not mean that life gets simpler. I went from a turbulent childhood, to an adulthood of new “obstacles.” When I began to write this chapter on joy, my mind quickly took me to a time when being joyful was extremely difficult for me. This time of warfare began when I miscarried not once but twice. I could not understand what was wrong with me, what was wrong with my faith, what was missing from my

walk, what in the world was happening to me. I felt like my world was crumbling down all around me, and I could not stop it.

Pushing through this trying time took everything I had in me from my toes to the top of my head. I knew that James 1:3 told me that these types of challenges bring out endurance, patience, and steadfastness, but I was fighting to keep my sanity. It was in these times that I realized knowing the Word in your mind, does not sustain you during trying times. Word in your head only carries you so far. The Word has to be written in your heart in order for you to maintain joy... in spite of your circumstances, in spite of your back being up against the wall, in spite of not understanding the “how, when, where, and why’s” of a situation. When you have faith that can stand under the pressures of life and you can still maintain joy, there is nothing the enemy can do to you, say to you, or put upon you that you are not equipped to stand against. When your faith is rooted in your heart, you can call on it when your mind and body are all out of sorts. My flesh was angry, screaming, and mad at God. My mind was constantly speaking thoughts of defeat fueling me to back away from what I knew to be true. But, in the midst of all this confusion, my heart knew the Word and would not let me fall. My heart had enough Word stored in it that when the rest of me was acting like a fool, I was able to hold on to the truth that God loved me. So often, in these types of situations, we underestimate the enemy. We think he

wants our stuff - our children, our marriages, our finances, when in all actuality he wants our Joy. He doesn't care that your car broke down; he wants you distracted and upset as you work through this situation so that the “joy of the Lord” is the last thing on your mind. The enemy does not care what your children do or don't do; he wants you so focused on their actions and behavior that your joy just seeps through your cracks until none is left. The enemy does not care about your money. He cannot do anything with your money, he wants you uptight and joyless because you are broke and disgusted. The enemy did not want my miscarried children, he wanted me to lose faith in God, and hand him my joy on a silver platter. Satan does not want your goods, he wants your joy.

You would think that we would become aware of his sad predictable tactics, but unfortunately, he uses the same “mess” that took your joy last time, to get your joy over and over again. We constantly hear the saying “if it ain’t broke don’t fix it.” Satan may be a defeated foe, but he is not stupid. I do not like to admit it, but the actual foolishness falls on our part because we should know better. In *The Battlefield of the Mind*, Joyce Meyer teaches an awesome Word on how the enemy studies us and our every move; how he patiently waits for the best time to push us over the edge. The enemy actually sets us up to take our joy. As I was writing “takes our joy” the Spirit of the Lord clearly reminded me that the enemy does not take our joy, we simply give it to him. God has equipped us with every thing that we need to hold to our joy, to keep it no matter what, to rest in the assurance that all things work together for our good, to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that no matter what the weapon is we win. Your circumstances, financial status, marital troubles, children’s issues, or your health challenges do not negate the Word of God. God’s Word teaches us that there is nothing new under the sun – nothing. Nothing includes everything, and your situation or crisis is not new to Him. Stop for a second and meditate on the fact that God knows the number of hairs you have on your head. Do you think that He does not know what you are dealing with right now? Not only does He know what you are dealing with, He has a plan to get you through them. He has a master plan for your life even if you are in a self-inflicted wilderness, even if you have slowly wandered from the course, or even if you are looking for your way.

One of my favorite stories in the bible is Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Their story puts any “crisis” that we are facing in proper perspective.

“They (astrologers) said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! You have issued a decree, O king, that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown

into a blazing furnace. But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon – Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego – who pay not attention to you, O king. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up. Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of God I have set up? Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?” Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing fire, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of God you have set up. Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. ...these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace. Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisors “Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?” They replied, “Certainly O king.” He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods. Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!” So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came out of the fire, and the satraps, prefects, governors, and royal advisors crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.” (Daniel 3:9-27)

In these verses, we learn that these young men went into the fiery furnace. They actually went in for doing the right thing. It

is almost easier to go through a fire when you messed things up, but when you are going through the fire and it is no fault of your own; it requires strength beyond your natural ability. As you follow the story, we see that the fire was turned up seven times hotter than normal. Just reading this text brings back memories of fires I have endured (and I know you have endured a few yourself). My mind reminisces to specific points during trials in my life that my fire went from extremely warm to unbearably hot. Do not think you are alone because it happens to everyone. I do not care how good some one looks, acts, or sounds they have fires as well. The key is to mature to a point where you do not wear your fires on your sleeves, but we will come back to that at a later time.

The message behind these guys is miraculous in every way; however, the part that impresses me is that these men went through the fire... and they did not smell like smoke! Praise God! If they did not have to smell like smoke, we don't have to either. These young men endured their trial with confidence and assurance that God was who He said He was, and would do exactly as He said. No matter the outcome, their trust was completely in God. These men were literally "in" the fire. We just feel like we are "on" fire. Feelings have strengths and weaknesses associated with them. One weakness is that they can literally destroy your perspective about everything. These scriptures did not tell us what Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego were feeling, it just told us what they knew – God's Word. They did not concern themselves with things that lacked value. They focused on what they knew. There is a major lesson in that one sentence. At my wedding reception, my Great Grandmother stood and quoted how she lived her life by one quotation... "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can, and wisdom to know the difference." Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego walked in the wisdom of knowing the difference. If we walk securely in the footsteps of Jesus, we too can have the wisdom to trust God in spite of what we see. We too can joyfully sing, no matter what

the conditions are. We too can know, that we know, beyond a shadow of any doubt, that God has a perfect will for our lives, and our joy rests in trusting Him, His will, and His way. It does not say anywhere in the good book that we have to understand. We are just constantly reminded to obey. When each of us chooses to walk out every step of our journey in obedience just like these young men, we can joyfully travel through each day. The conditions of the day: rain, sleet, sunshine, cloudiness, wind speed, and temperature do not effect our expectation of what the day holds. God showed up and miraculously delivered those young men, and He will deliver you if your trust is in Him. You cannot expect miracles in your life, if you do not believe God for miracles. You cannot expect God's favor in your life, if you do not believe for God's favor. We will address the faith factor in another chapter, but realize that no matter what you see, feel, or expect... God expects you to joyfully enjoy your journey.

I recently read on a bulletin board that J.O.Y. stood for Jesus Only You. This statement is so true. Every time I have ever tried to be joyful in my power, I fell flat on my face. True joy, lasting joy, life changing joy only comes through realizing that the "joy of the Lord, is your strength." His joy gives you strength and ability beyond all you could ever think or do. His joy keeps you centered when you feel tossed to and fro in your life. His joy strengthens you when you want to scream and throw a temper tantrum. His joy keeps you centered when everything in your life is out of balance. His joy keeps you sane on those days that you feel like you are losing your mind. His joy keeps you still when you just want to run away. As I write these sentences, I am reminded that without His joy, we would be miserable, sad, helpless, and hopeless individuals. This moment... right now, cry out for His joy that lasts forever. GET REAL... You got issues too... you need this joy just as much as I do!

Get Real Moment!

Identify the things that challenge your joy.

On a scale of 1-10, how do you currently manage these things? _____

What are actionable steps that you can take TODAY to better manage YOU in the midst of everyday life?

What is one thing that you learned in this chapter that you can hold onto and utilize in your personal life?

Personal Thoughts & Prayers

3

Got Passion? Mobilize it!

“I know your deeds that are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold - I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”

Revelations 3:15-16 (NIV)

“I know you inside and out, and find little to my liking. You’re not cold; you’re not hot – far better to be either cold or hot! You’re stale. You’re stagnant. You make me want to vomit.”

Revelations 3:15-16 (Message)

I did not have any plans to write this chapter, but on my way into the office today, I was on the phone with a girlfriend, and I found myself repeating the same thing to her that I had shared with a group of ladies at church on yesterday. I did not intend to say those same words, but as I heard myself say them, I realized people find themselves in one of three categories when it comes to passion.

Passion is their greatest strength and their greatest weakness.

Passion is no longer the driving force in their every day lives – circumstances dictate their course.

Passion is exhibited partially through their actions.

Category 1 People:

Passion is their greatest strength and their greatest weakness.

When passion is your greatest strength, you do everything with all of your heart. Extremely passionate people get their hands on a goal, objective, or dream and turn into a bulldog. Bulldogs are dangerous animals because of the strength of their

jaws. They lock down on an object, and they refuse to let it go. Passionate people are the same way. They lock their eyes on the prize and run for it with all that they have. Passionate people do not see stumbling blocks as hindrances; they just go over them or around them. Type A personality people fall into this category. Someone calls a play, and while the others are sitting around devising a plan, the type A's are already in the action mode making it happen. Passionate people are usually categorized as the go getters – the ones that get the job done. We could take pages to address their strengths, but let's switch gears, and look at the other side of the spectrum.

The wonderful thing about passionate people is they are focused; the not so wonderful thing about them is that their focus may not always be on the right thing. Being an extremely passionate person myself, I have to admit I am one of those people who runs around 120 miles an hour every day. I am always about getting the job done as efficiently and effectively as possible. The end goal is the target, so what are we sitting around talking about? Having this thought process is helpful, when you have a workable plan before you, and you know the necessary steps to meet the goal. But there are times, I have to admit, that I was going 120 miles an hour in the wrong direction. Running hard, with purpose, with passion, with zeal, and might - right until I hit the wall head on and ended up flat on my back! Even if someone told me that I was headed in the wrong direction, I probably would not have heard them because I would have considered them a distraction. If you are a person moved by passion, you have to surrender your agenda and will to God minute by minute, because in a given day, your emotions, passions, and desires can change 20 different times. Category 1 people are usually your dreamers. They see things big, they see every problem as having a solution, and they are full of hope and expectation; however, they really need guidance.

Category 2 People:

**Passion is no longer the driving force in their every day lives
– circumstances dictate their course.**

Category 2 people, used to be category 1 people. They probably had big dreams as well, but usually their dreams have been rocked to sleep by life. I do not believe anyone purposes in his heart to let his dream go to sleep. The process usually begins when you are a tad bit weary on your journey. Just maybe you have not seen the success you desired, just maybe the price is a little higher than you were prepared to pay, just maybe an unhappy marriage or troubled finances, led you to shift gears. Whatever the case, circumstances caused you to shift your focus from what you were passionate about doing to whatever you felt you had to do to survive. I am going to GET REAL for a moment. This book is being birthed out of my own personal category 2 experience. I had to GET REAL with myself and admit that I did not like where I was in life, what I was doing to create income, and how I spent my time. The sad thing was that I was letting my bank account tell me that, “Girl, you best keep doing what you are doing because you have babies and bills... you are not 21 years old any more, be content with what you have... it’s too late, you are too old.” The enemy always wants you to look at where you are and make you think that things are never going to change. He will always give you a good excuse why “not” to do what you know you need to do, and he usually wraps it up in a package called feelings. Whatever the case, he gets you to turn the light off of your dreams, and convinces you to settle for less than God’s best for you. God has a plan for you, He knows what tickles your fancy, what adds to your life, He knows the root of your true passions because He gave them to you. Quit allowing the enemy to convince you that his way or your way is better. The only way for you to live a fulfilling maximized life is to pursue the passions that were implanted in you before the foundations of the world. Reawaken that passion and go for the gusto. Nothing is keeping you from a passionate, fulfilled, maximized life, but you.

Category 3 People:**Passion is exhibited partially through their actions.**

It is pretty evident that we all have passion on the inside; in some of us it is out of control, in others of us it is sleep, and in others of us it is lazy. Oohps! I said a curse word to many people – Lazy! I tried to come up with a prettier more politically correct word, but the only word that sums up what I am about to discuss is lazy. We have established that we all have passion, but if you are honest with yourself, can you say that you are living the life you desire to live? I did not ask that question to depress you, but I did want you to reflect for a moment about where you actually are in reality, and where you desire to be? In most cases, these places are not the same. Why? Is it a lack of not knowing what you want your life to look like, or is it a result of you not seeing the process through to completion. For 95% of the people reading this, the answer is that you have not seen it through to completion? So, now I present another question. Why? Meditate for a moment and write the most honest answer you can come up with in the space provided. Where do you desire to be in life, and why are you not there?

I guarantee the answers that you wrote down or even pondered in your mind ranged from: money, time, responsibilities, jobs, and the list could actually be endless. But, I encourage you to stop and take a look within yourself. Yes, these circumstances could lead you to get off course, but if you would have followed your passion with a plan and a determination to win, would you be in a different place in life? When you first realized what you wanted to be when you grew up and how you wanted to live did you take the necessary steps to pursue the passion? Did you start the process and then quit

when it got a little too hard? Did you stop because what you were doing was not acceptable to your friends and family? Sometimes things happen such as a death in the family, a family move, or the birth of a child, that you were not prepared for. Let's resolve within ourselves that "life happens." Now that you have put your finger on that something for you, what are you going to do about it? It may have happened 5, 10, 15, or even 20 years ago, but are you going to let it haunt you for the rest of your life? So you quit college, so what! So you are not 21, so what! So your bank account is negative, so what! So you hate your job, so what. SO WHAT! Say it out loud so that you can hear yourself say it. SO WHAT! SO WHAT! SO WHAT!

I can confidently tell you to say "SO WHAT" because I had to say it! Every one of those "so whats" was personal to me. I had to say "so what" to myself. You have to decide that whatever your "so what" is.....SO WHAT. If God placed a passion inside of you to pursue something great for Him, say so what and do it. God does not *keep a score* of your mistakes or even your stupidity. He does not allow your past to cancel out His plan for you. His plan prevails no matter what, but you have to mobilize that passion and go for it. God ordained the plan, but you have to work the plan.

This brings us back to the opening verses of this chapter. We went around the bin to get here, but I wanted you thinking before we truly addressed this scripture. We often hear it quoted, but do you understand that it applies to your very own personal life. Your passions...your desires.... Your life!

"I know your deeds that are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold - I am about to spit you out of my mouth." Rev 3:15-16 (NIV)

"I know you inside and out, and find little to my liking. You're not cold; you're not hot – far better to be either cold or hot! You're stale. You're stagnant. You make me want to vomit." Rev 3:15-16 (Message)

These scriptures were written to the Church in Laodicea. The church of Laodicea had become lukewarm. Most people think that lukewarm water is disgusting and nasty. So, it is safe to assume that they had become a distasteful people. If you study this church, you will quickly discover that they did not take a stand for anything. And when you don't stand for anything, you become idle. When you are an idle person, you are stagnant – neither growing nor developing. This church was not doing anything for Christ and had become hard hearted and focused only on themselves. Anytime someone begins to focus all of their attention on themselves and their circumstances, it naturally sets them up to destroy themselves. “Pride, overly high opinion of ones self, goes before the fall.” You must get YOU off of your mind, and be about God's business. Nothing is more disgusting to God than a half-hearted Christian. God created you to be a passionate individual with an appetite for “that thing” that you were designed to do. Those passions and desires in your heart were placed there with a purpose. Imagine if your child was a gifted talented musician who played the piano with grace and style like no other. It was her passion; all she ever thought about was time at the piano and making music. When she played, she had a glow on her face that would light up an entire room. Then one day, she said to you that the piece she was working on was just too hard. She had never played anything like it before, even though she practiced each day, it still was not good enough. As a parent, would you allow her to quit pursuing music because it became more challenging? No, you would encourage her, maybe get her a little assistance, but you would not allow her to turn from her passion. God is the same way with each of us. So, it got a little hard, tough! So it is taking longer than you thought, tough! So it did not happen like you expected, tough! So, it is much later than you intended, tough! Your passion is in there, wake it up and maximize your life. Mobilize that passion, since you have it in there all tucked away anyway...use it!

You may ask what does all of this have to do with being hot or cold? Let me tell you, God is calling each of us to hotly

pursue with passion the calling that He implanted in each of us. Only then, can we truly enjoy the benefits of a fulfilled life. In this scenario, there is no middle ground. The Word says for us to be one or the other. Standing in the middle and just existing makes Him want to throw up. God is repulsed at our lack of gratitude, or lack of understanding, and our lack of passion. Christ gave his very own life for us to be all that God created us to be. He died in order for us to live the God kind of life, a maximized life. He did not shed his innocent blood for us to walk around confused and unsure of ourselves. God planted greatness, purpose, and the passion to fulfill them all inside of us. It is His will for us to allow those passions to lead us into our promised land here on earth. Determine to live a passionate purposeful life all to the glory of God. Wake up your passions, wake up those sleeping desires, and passionately go for what is rightfully yours – put a smile on the Father’s face, passionately be all that you are ordained to be! GET REAL... you’ve got sleeping passions... wake them up!

Get Real Moment!

Identify the things that you are passionate about.

Are you currently in pursuit of the things that move you? If your answer is yes, how? If your answer is no, why not?

What are actionable steps that you can take TODAY to move YOU to in the direction of your dreams and goals?

What is one thing that you learned in this chapter that you can hold onto and utilize in your personal life?

Personal Thoughts & Prayers:

4

Got complaints? Mute them.

How long will this wicked community grumble against me? I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites.

Numbers 14:26 (NIV)

The next day the whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron Revelations 3:15-16 (Message)

The entire book of Numbers has a continuous pattern of complaining, disobedience, discipline and death. In the beginning of the book of Numbers, the Israelites were at the foot of Mount Sinai preparing to move out to receive their inheritance. They had experienced a miraculous exit from Egypt, enjoyed a wonderful time of resting and fellowship with God, and celebrated God's goodness with different types of feasts. One would like to think that they were prepared and equipped for the journey they had ahead of them. But, you do not have to get far into the chapter to discover, this would be an inaccurate assumption. After you read about the census and the issuing of responsibilities and expectation, we end up in a land of "How quickly can we forget."

God promised His people that they were about to embark upon a journey to their Promised Land. He told them the land was theirs. He sealed the deal with a promise and called the land "Promised". How much clearer can you get? As the Israelites neared the Promised Land, Moses sent twelve of his leaders ahead to check things out. Two reports came back from the spies

when they returned. The first report was a discouraging report from ten of the spies stating all the problems and obstacles that stood in the way. The second report was an encouraging report from two of the spies stating what awaited them on the other side of the obstacles. Joshua and Caleb are the only two adults who left Egypt and entered the Promised Land. Why? Because they held on to their faith in God's promises, in spite of apparent obstacles. We could highlight Joshua and Caleb's strengths all day, but I feel led to ask you a question. Do you know any of the names of the other ten spies who only complained about the giants, the fortified walls, and why they did not need to proceed?

I will venture to say that you do not. I know I did not have a clue who the other guys were.

God had already told the Israelites that the land was rich and fertile. He also said that the land was theirs for the taking. The mysterious ten saw and knew all of the great reasons they had to pursue what God said was theirs, but they allowed the negative voice of fear to control them. Listening to the negatives will make you forget about the rewards. Listening to the negatives robs you of what is rightfully yours. Listening to the negatives keeps you right where you are in the midst of whatever you are going through. Listening to the negatives causes you to lose sight of the positives. Listening to the negatives paralyzes you.

The mysterious ten, of which we cannot even remember their names, allowed their negative opinions and thoughts to cause a rebellion with the Israelite people. Their negativity not only affected them, but it affected the entire Israelite community.

That night all the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword?" ... Then Moses and Aaron fell down in the front of the Assembly gathered there. Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes and said to the entire

Israelite assembly, “The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us.....But the whole assembly talked about stoning them...

Then Lord said to Moses and Aaron: “How long will this wicked community grumble against me: I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites...Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun...so the men Moses had sent to explore the land, who returned and made the whole community grumble against him by spreading a bad report about it – these men responsible for spreading the bad report about the land were struck down and died of a plague before the Lord. Of the men who went to explore the land, only Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh survived. (Numbers 14: 1-37)

Massive amounts of information are found in these verses. I highly recommend that you take a few moments and read the entire chapter. This text begins after the Israelites had experienced God’s miraculous deeds, they had his laws, and they had even enjoyed His sweet presence. These people knew Him better than any other people that lived before them. The Israelites were His chosen people. However, they chose to listen to the negative radiating on the inside of them, they chose to entertain the grumbings of others and to participate with their own portion of complaining. Although, they had limitless things to be positive about, they chose to allow the negative to play, and play, and play until it robbed them of what God had promised them they could have. God had painted an awesome picture for them to visualize what awaited them. But, they chose to mute the visual image and play the negativity. God is calling us to mute the negative and play the positive. It is a choice that we have to make. If you are going to listen to something, what is it going to be? I am going to GET REAL with you for a moment. As I am writing this paragraph, my finger is on the mute button for the devil. My husband and I had found a beautiful home that we were excited about purchasing. For the past 3 weeks, we have done everything that the banks, realtors, and processors have

asked us to do plus some. Two nights ago, I was told to keep today open on my schedule because we would be closing on our new home today. I was so excited praising God and rejoicing because I know where we have had to come from financially to be in this position. For years, I thought I had made so many financial goof ups that owning my own home would almost be impossible. I watched the commercials talking about this American Dream, and I dreamed. Anyway, to make a long story short everything was lining up for this to become a done deal. My children were so excited. We have gone by the home several times praying and thanking God. We have been inside the home dreaming of what we would like to do with each room. We have even selected our carpet colors and paint. However, on last night I received a call (one day before we are suppose to seal this deal) that it was rejected. There have been days when I would have fell into depression, other times when I would have thrown a raging fit, days when I would have blamed, cried, fussed, and the list doesn't really end. But I did not do any of the above; I told my husband that I needed to go to sleep. The enemy began playing scenarios in my mind of how much I had believed God through this process. He reminded me of my prayers for God's guidance and direction. He reminded me of the friends I had standing in agreement on this house. I had to mute him. I knew that I was already physically, emotionally, and mentally drained from a tough day. I knew that I was not prepared to hear those words. So instead of trying to figure out what to do, what to say, I pressed the mute button. I said, "either I trust God or I don't." Simple as that! I then crawled into my bed with my three little blessing on the other side and went to sleep. When I woke up this morning, I CHOSE to put in a Joyce Meyer CD because I needed a Word from God, but I could not afford to let all types of thoughts dance around my head. I heard Joyce talk about the problems of having an Ishmael in your life instead of waiting for the Isaac. I encourage you to read Genesis 16 to get all the details of this story. But I am going to give you the Keisha version. Sarah and Abraham wanted a child so bad. God even

told them that they would have one. One problem, God was taking way too long. Sarah decided in all of her “wisdom” to help God out. She decided that the result was more important than the process, so she told her husband Abraham to have sex with her maid so that they could have their son. She allowed what she wanted to cloud her judgment and her good sense. Sarah’s maid gave birth to a son, and they named Him Ishmael. This created problems that still exist in the world today. She did not wait for the Isaac God promised her; she decided to do her own thing. This morning I woke up with a different perspective. The enemy wanted me convinced that this house was an Ishmael, and that I had totally gotten ahead of God. He wanted me doubting God, my faith, and my desires. Instead of falling into his trap, I said out loud “God, I trust you in all things, with all things, and through all things. Your perfect will be done.” If I believe God has a new home for me and my family, then I need to patiently and confidently trust Him. I had to play a different song – one of praise and thanksgiving in my heart and mind, to drain out the foolish thoughts the enemy played. I was going to hear something today; I just had to decide what it was going to be. OK, I have shared my moment lets get back to the children of Israel.

We often read about these stubborn, pig headed Israelite people and wonder what is their problem. We put on our little black robe and shake our heads at them, because their actions do not make any sense to us. We cannot possibly imagine being that ignorant time and time again. I will come clean first and admit I have questioned their sanity. OK... it’s time... Let’s GET REAL. Look in the mirror. Go... take a look at yourself and then begin to think of all the miracles that God has performed in your life, all of the times that He made a way out of no way, all of the times when you did not have a clue what to do, and He came through for you. OK... you are smiling because you know God is so good. Now, let’s flip the switch. When was the last time you complained about the size of your house, out of control children, demanding spouses, unrewarding careers, inconsiderate

people, incompetent leaders, lifestyle inconveniences, and on and on and on? I guess it was not that long ago. I have to take a breather here and personally repent for myself before I go on because I have voiced these complaints out loud and ran them through my mind repetitively. Complaining is the easy road. Muting those complaints takes making a decision, and then adhering to the decision that you made. You have to make a personal choice to push the mute button to your mental and vocal tape recorder. You have the power in your hand to make it stop or to let it play. If you do not mute it, I assure you that what you are allowing to play in your head will eventually come out of your mouth.

When you allow yourself to complain, you are expressing sincere “unthankfulness”. I can speak confidently on this part because I was a professional complainer. I had mastered the craft so that my complaints even sounded positive. To the average listener, I was the most positive inspirational person they could have ever met. Actually, I had crafted the art of manipulation. What I said sounded good, but I was manipulating my words to not sound like complaining, but in actuality it was murmuring, complaining, and grumbling at the highest degree. As I type, I am smiling because I did this so well that I even had myself fooled. But in the midst of me asking God to shed light on those dark areas of my life, he flashed this habit on the big screen of my mind. I could actually visualize conversations with my husband on things we disagreed about. By the end of the conversation, I had keenly obtained what I wanted. My words sounded sincere in his ears, but to God it was nothing more than an ungrateful complaining heart. If you get to the core of complaints and grumbling, you discover there is a heart issue that needs to be resolved. If we truly were in faith and trusting God, would we need to complain about anything? Or, could we trust that He would work this situation and all situations out for our good because He careth for us? Allowing complaints to come out of your mouth reveals where you truly are in Christ. If you are complaining, you can't really know Him because if

you knew Him... really, really knew Him, and no one could talk you out of knowing Him and His character, then you would only allow His promises and your testimonies of past victories to come out of your mouth.

We are each responsible for muting the negative that we allow to come in and muting the negative that goes out. The Word teaches us to guard our hearts because out of it flows the issues of life. Well, I am urging you to guard your ears and your mouth. The computer phrase “garbage in equals garbage out” applies more than to just man made computers. The greatest computer that ever existed is the human brain. The brain calculates, estimates, speculates, and many other fascinating trivial “ates” ...in milliseconds. Your environment is consistently feeding your master computer all the time. What comes out of your mouth feeds right back into your brain because you hear yourself speaking. In essence, you create a vicious cycle. It is like you are a hamster spinning on a wheel. You are moving and going but actually not moving anywhere. You are struggling to figure out what the issue really is, but in all actuality it is the data that is currently programmed and constantly being programmed in your brain. Your mind is polluted with negativity. Declare a mass clean up! Just like a computer program can be cleared off and reprogrammed, so can your mind. You have the power to erase what you have played and replace it with positive fuel. Your car will not run if you put water in the tank because it requires fuel. A specific fuel designed to get that vehicle in motion. This fuel has the purpose of getting the maximum use and benefits out of your car. Your mind needs fuel too; a positive fuel that creates the environment for your brain to get in motion. This fuel has a designated purpose to get the maximum use and benefits out of you. When God sent you to earth, He already had a master plan for you. You came here with a job to do, a problem to solve, and or a difference to make. Everything God made was good.

Go back and read the Book of Genesis as He talks about His creations. You were a part of that chapter- years before you were assigned to show up. Are you going to allow the flame of good in you to be covered by the negatives that show up in your life? Negatives usually show up through people that are the closest to you. What they say usually has enough sting with it that it affects you, your attitude, and your thinking. Are you going to give that much power to outside sources or are you going to declare...enough... and do a mass clean up? You can read books every night and listen to pastors on CD all day, but until you decide that you are the captain of your soul and the master of your fate, the negative will always counteract the positive that you put in. Sometimes superwomen believe that they can handle it all by keeping what they need and dismissing the rest. Sounds good when you are thinking it, but God sent me by to tell you today that you can't. Quit lying to yourself. You are not a superhuman! You are a person who does twice as much listening as you do speaking. Your ears are always tuned into something. You are always in a state of hearing. Your environment contributes to what you hear, your thoughts play a roll, and the people around you are constantly feeding your ears. Decide to only play what you need to hear, to do what you need to do, to become who you need to become as you walk out this journey called life. Hit the mute button!! Quit flying around in your Super Woman cape thinking you can hear it all and decipher through it. Jesus did not stop to talk to and listen to everyone. He chose who surrounded Him and who His audience consisted of. Walk in His footsteps and get dogmatic about what you hear. The Bible tells us to "hear" 550 times, "hearken" 153 times, and "heareth" 52 times. When you combine these, you get over 755 hearing references. It is not a coincidence that he repeated this over and over. He knew who and what you listened to and what you heard would impact you in ways that you cannot even fathom. Quit grumbling and listening to grumbles, quit complaining and listening to complaining, and quit murmuring and listening to murmuring. Quickly analyze where this type

of talk has gotten you. Are you satisfied? Are you pleased? Are you content? If you are not in life right now today where you desire to be, make a few changes. It cost you nothing to become a positive, encouraging, inspiring individual and the benefits are innumerable. When you begin to hear things contrary to the Word, contrary to what you desire, contrary to what you believe, put your hands on your hips and say “enough”. Replace those words with the desires of your heart, how you would like for things to appear, and keep focused on what is real. If the truth be told, every one of us can conjure up a list as long as your arm of things we can complain about. But, will complaining, murmuring, or grumbling change anything about your situation?

No! However, digging deep for what will make things better will.

Treat your hearing like a television show. If you are watching a movie and the scene begins to use unacceptable language or shifts to explicit scenes, you change the channel (at least you should). You consciously decide not to let that garbage into your home. When thoughts enter your mind that do not line up with God’s Word, you have to do the same thing. The first thing you must do is hit the mute button and choose not to listen anymore. Then, change the channel of the image in your mind to what you desire to see manifested in that particular situation. GET REAL... the world does not need your verbal pollution... and you don’t need anyone or anything polluting your garden of possibilities with verbal pesticide. You decide what you want planted in your garden... seeds or weeds!

Get Real Moment!

Identify things that you constantly find yourself complaining about.

On a scale of 1-10, how well do you shift from negative thoughts to positive ones?

What are actionable steps that you can take TODAY to help YOU become more conscientious of your thoughts and environment?

What is one thing that you learned in this chapter that you can hold onto and utilize in your personal life?

Personal Thoughts & Prayers

5

Got Tranquility? Share it.

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your heart be troubled and do not be afraid.”

John 14:27

Embrace peace. Don't let it get away.

Psalm 34 (Message)

First of all, we need to address the questions dancing around in your head. What is tranquility, how do I share it, and what is magnetic about it? Glad you asked! Tranquil is defined as being free from disturbance or agitation – even and steady. Don't shut the book! Keep reading and hang in there with me a little longer and we will discuss how you, yes you, can get to a point in your life that you are tranquil on the inside in spite of the uproar on the outside. Over and over we have discussed how God is concerned with what is going on in each of us on the inside not with our circumstances. Our circumstances merely bring out what is on the inside; they do not create it, they simply reveal it.

John 14:27 should be such a sense of hope for everyone reading this page. Reread the verse slowly and aloud; allowing it to minister to you.

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your heart be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:27)

As you read this verse, you realize that God is not asking you to muster up your own peace....my peace I give to you! Just like salvation, God offers the gift of peace. The verse goes even

further to say that “I do not give to you as the world gives.” The world gives, takes backs, expects, and conditionally gives. The only stipulation God has is that you receive the gift He freely gives. In these verses, Jesus is discussing his leaving and the Holy Spirit’s coming.

“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:25-27)

The Holy Spirit has many jobs that He performs in our lives, and one of the greatest most powerful tasks is providing you with a deep everlasting peace. The world’s peace is usually characterized by the absence of conflict or turbulence, resting your peace in your conditions. Christ’s peace gives us the assurance that there is never a need to fear – not your past, present, or future. This peace is greater than what you are currently pressing through. This peace lifts you up and above your circumstances. The peace of God moves into your heart and takes up residence there. Imagine if your favorite Grandmother moved in with you and you welcomed her presence. She just hung around and stayed out of your way while you lived your everyday life; however, the moment you asked for her assistance or her help you could count it done. If you needed her to help with dinner, done - if you needed her to do the dishes, done... fold the laundry, done. You just asked and your request was done. If your Grandmother recognized that you were about to make a mistake, she may whisper in your ear and direct you another way. The Holy Spirit acts in the same way. He is always there available and waiting for you to make your request of Him. He longs to assist, He longs to direct, He longs to contribute to your life, but you need to ask. The Holy Spirit desires to offer you comfort in times of conflict. He wants to keep you steady and on course, even through the tidal waves of your life. He wants you at peace and enjoying an awesome life.

I assure you that the Holy Spirit is not trying to create havoc and trials behind your back, and then watch you “get through them.” He is patiently waiting and lovingly ready to comfort you through them. So, if you are now wondering where all of the drama is coming from, you are right on point. As we discussed in the chapter on chaos, some of your drama comes from the person who spends the most time with you, hears your every thought, watches you cry through those tough times, etc... that person would be you! However, there is someone else witnessing all of these incidents. Guess who? The master deceiver, evil villain, destroyer, and satan are just a few of his names. The enemy has become an expert on studying you. He knows what ticks you off, he knows what makes you laugh, and he even knows what makes you cry. We would like to think that the enemy is in a hurry, but he is not. He patiently waits for the opportunity to present you with circumstances or people that make you want to pull your hair out. The Holy Spirit is there to guide you through these setups, but you cannot ask Him to guide you if you refuse to move your feet. The Holy Spirit gently maneuvers you through these organized attacks, but if you are not listening, asking or yielding, His hands are tied.

Peace is a choice! If you want to live a peaceful life, you have to decide to. The more I write, the more I realize that everything about this journey called life boils down to the choices we make. Just like chaos happens, so do opportunities to lose your peace. Actually, you do not lose it, you give it away. I’ll take a moment to GET REAL with you. As I write these pages, this morning I had to make a choice. It is that particular time of the month that chocolate and I get reacquainted. I woke up this morning with an attitude. When I open my eyes, I always say, “Good Morning, Holy Spirit.” Well, this morning, I said it and I heard a little “tude in my voice.” I started doing my usual morning routine and everything and everyone was getting on my last nerve. Actually, they were tapping on the very end of it, and I wanted to scream. I repeated to myself over and over that I needed to be grateful for everything that is right in my life and

stop thinking about everything I did not like, did not have, or did not want to deal with. I said the words, I even began to pray in the spirit, and that was hard. I told my husband, I am in a mood, it is that time of the month, and I needed some time. I arrived at work looking for a fight. I was searching for someone to argue with, and as soon as I sat down at my desk... my manager arrives to chat. The first thing out of her mouth completely ticked me off. I really wanted to eat her lunch for breakfast, but I said, "No Keisha - stay saved." I continued through the first couple hours of my day, and realized I was not getting any calmer. I went to the restroom to handle my business and looked in the mirror. I looked like I had the word "MEAN" tattooed on my forehead. It translated into... do not bother me... I will not bother you! I went back to my desk convicted. I did not have one decent reason to act or feel like I felt this morning, except the enemy! He wanted my peace this morning, and had planned to use my cycle to get it. I was playing right into his hands with my attitude. I went into the bathroom and performed an "Attitudinal Cleansing" on myself. I began to sing praises unto God. I went back to my desk and enjoyed lunch while reading a book full of the Word. Within 45 minutes, I had completely changed my mindset, attitude, and perspective. I chose to walk in peace; I decided that I was not going to let the enemy score a point. As soon as I determined within myself that I was going to enjoy a peaceful day and took the necessary steps to begin, the enemy left me alone. My pastor gave an awesome analogy on Sunday about a school bully. He made a list of everyone in the school he could beat up. One day, a young man saw him walking with his list in his hand, and he asked him if his name was on the list. The bully said, "Yes it is". The young man said, "Why - you cannot beat me up!" The bully said, "OK, I will take your name off of the list then." I related this story to the enemy. He has all of our names on his list, and we have to show him that he needs to remove our names. As long as you allow it to stay up there, you will be a victim. The moment you decide, no more... I will live a life enjoying every single thing that Jesus

died to give me... You begin to take yourself off the list. Does taking yourself off mean he will never bother you again? No, it means that when he comes at you, you are grounded and secure in who you are in Christ. You do not allow the circumstances, challenges, or situations to move you. You recognize that your peace is a gift from God, and you have every right to keep what is rightfully yours.

When Jesus died on the cross, his blood covered everything. Mental, physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual matters were paid for by his blood. Once you accept Him, you get His complete benefits package. Now that you have the benefits package working in your life, share it! Allow the benefit of “peace” to be a magnet to those who you deal with on a daily basis.

Peace is a fruit of the Spirit. Has anyone eaten a “peace” from yours today? This world is full of turbulence, confusion, turmoil, instability, chaos, and unrest. So many people are taking uppers, downers, and stabilizers just to make it through a day. They do not realize there is a better way. They think this is just the way life is. They do not know Jesus, they do not know about His sacrifice, and they do not know that they were included when He sealed the deal on the cross. You are God’s hands and feet on earth today. You have the job of reaching those people in your school and on your jobs. It is our responsibility to go about preaching the gospel and only when necessary are we to use words. We reach the world through our example. You have to allow your “Christian benefit package” to shine so that it can be magnetic. Your peace should draw others to you. In today’s society, being a fisher of men should be easy. Why? Because people are looking for a better way. In today’s times everyone is rushing, hustling, and bustling. People are stressed, over committed to everything, and losing themselves and their minds. Our microwave mentality has people fighting to hold on to sanity. When you walk into a room, people should immediately recognize that you are different. They may not know that you are a Christian, but your peace, your shine, and your tranquility

should make them want to know what it is that you have. Once you catch their attention with your peace, you can begin to share the love of Christ and the peace that can only come through Him that dwells in you.

Walking in peace and living in peace costs you nothing and gains you everything. Your faith needs you operating in peace so that you can usher into your life the things that you are believing God for. How can you exercise faith if every bump in the road takes you off course? You can't! Peace must be your umpire. Peace will guide you into everything God's Word says is yours. Once you get a hold of real peace, the peace that God gives, you will never want to let it go. There have been times I could feel my peace slipping, and I knew I had to stop and hold on. I could not afford to give the enemy any room. He is so cunning; he may start out small in one little area of life, but if you do not treat this area, just like infection, it will spread all over. Allow your peace to spread all around you, your life, and the lives of those closest to you. Instead of repelling the world with your religion, rules, and meanness, draw them into the fold through allowing the peace of God to attract them to you. Be a soul winning, life changing magnet. You often hear, "Use what you have, to get what you want." I say... use the peace that God freely gives you as a tool to make a difference for Him. Allow your peace to pave the way for you to be the ambassador God called you to be. You may not be able to quote the bible from cover to cover, but you can stand. You may not know where to find every scripture and verse about peace, but you do know that God has freely given it to you. Walking in peace is nothing more than taking a stand on the promises of God and refusing to be moved. Will you stand? Will you hold on when the waves are pushing and pulling your ship? Will you smile when everything in you wants to frown? Will you tell your flesh no when it tries to act up? Will you choose to allow your peace to attract others to you so that you can offer them Christ? I know, you know, and God knows that you can, but I ask the question... will you?

Get Real Moment!

Identify your peace thieves.

On a scale of 1-10, how much peace does your life exemplify?

What are actionable steps that you can take TODAY to better manage YOU when your peace of mind is being threatened?

What is one thing that you learned in this chapter that you can hold onto and utilize in your personal life?

Personal Thoughts & Prayers:

6

Got Sense? Use It.

“Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore
get wisdom” Proverbs 4:7

Wisdom is both the ability to discern what is best and the strength of character to act upon that knowledge. How you apply wisdom to your life demonstrates your level of discernment. We have to open up this chapter with wisdom 101 because most people claim they are wise, yet their actions and applications indicate otherwise. Unfortunately, knowledge is plentiful, but wisdom in today’s society is a pretty scarce commodity. Knowledge is plenteous because we as a society know more than we have ever known. The internet places history and facts at our fingertips. If you genuinely have a question, plug it to a web site, and instantly you have answers. However, wisdom means much more than knowing a lot of information about anything, one can only become wise by trusting in the One who created all things.

Wisdom is essentially being able to see life from God’s perspective, allowing you to hear from Him so that He can direct your course. Daily you are faced with choices, obstacles, and opportunities. In order for you to know which course of action to take, you have to have a guide. What most people fail to realize is that wisdom is not found on earth. Wisdom is found only in God. The earth is full of facts, knowledge, and speculations, but only God holds the Truth. Let’s get back to the basics. Intelligent people or people with different experiences

are not necessarily wise. They may be quite knowledgeable, but they are not wise. The only way a person gains wisdom is through a relationship with the Creator of knowledge... the Creator of the Universe... your very own Manufacturer. Proverbs 2:3-6 says “The Lord gives wisdom and from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding.” In essence, true wisdom goes beyond gaining knowledge; it is grounded in applying your gained knowledge in ways that change your life and the lives of the people closest to you. As you walk in wisdom, you create a legacy for those to follow who come after you. We will address that further in the chapter.

Now that you realize that wisdom is a gift that only comes from God, what are you going to do with it? Whenever someone offers you a gift, you have to do your part... receive it. The same concept applies with wisdom – receive it. Once you decide to receive the gift, you have to open it and begin to apply it and use it in your life. Once you ask for wisdom, you have to place yourself in a position to hear what God is saying to you. In order to receive God’s advice, you have to be willing to listen and not allow your own personal agenda or pride to hinder the Word you receive. Pride is a stronghold that I had to get free of. Daily, I have to choose to live a humbled life and not become prideful. When you realize it, pride is nothing more than thinking more highly of your own smarts and desires than of God’s. A quick indicator that you are falling into pride is when you begin your thought, sentence, or complaint with the word “I”. I think... I feel... I know... I want... You cannot entertain prideful thoughts or even tickle your selfish side and hear from God. Actually, you cannot even see God because you are completely consumed with your own image of you. As we journey back to getting a better understanding of wisdom, we come to the realization that there is no wisdom outside of God. I do not care how many degrees you have behind your name, how many victories you have under your belt, or what your title is. All wisdom comes from God.

Wisdom comes from God in two ways. The first way wisdom is received is in the form of a gift. The second means to obtaining wisdom is to seek, search, and to pursue it. The Word constantly reminds us that God gives wisdom to those who earnestly seek Him. Seek implies that action is being taken. You are either in a seeking mode or you are not. I relate this to pregnancy. You cannot be kind of pregnant. You either are or you are not. The same applies with seeking wisdom. Sometimes we try to trick ourselves into thinking that we are in a seeking mode, when in all actuality we are in a looking mode. There is a tremendous difference between seeking and looking. If I head to the mall to buy a black pair of shoes, I have a purpose and a goal when I go through the door. I am not casually looking at the blue shoes or the brown shoes; my focus is on securing a black pair of shoes. If I went to the mall looking at shoes, every pair of shoes with a little glitter and flair would catch my eye. I would casually stop and try on a pair and browse along my merry way. Same function, different goals. When you are in the seeking mode for wisdom, you are in hot pursuit of wisdom. You are hungry to gain a better understanding and more knowledge of God so that you can live a life characterized by wise choices, wise directions, and wise perspectives. The pathway to wisdom requires lots of effort and diligence. You have to decide to pursue wisdom no matter what your circumstances say and no matter what the cost.

The book of Proverbs constantly talks about the wise person and the foolish person. Throughout the text, you get very vivid descriptions of the characteristics of the wise and the foolish. After searching and reading all the scriptures in the Word concerning the two, it is evident that both lifestyles are chosen. The same situations are presented to the same people, but how they choose to react or act determines their state. The common theme among the wise people discussed throughout the Word is that the wise made choices that had mental reasoning and ability supporting their decisions. The common theme among the foolish was that their choices were made based on their senses,

most of which were very temporary with devastating results. At the time the wise man and the foolish man were making decisions, they both thought they were “choosing correctly.” Most people do not realize that there are two types of wisdom working in their life. One is human wisdom which is grounded in your experience, your knowledge, and your plans. The second is God’s wisdom which is supreme and grounded in His master plan, His omniscience, omnipotence, and His omnipresence. When you look at the foundations from this perspective, it seems so easy.

Wisdom is not something that you just wake up and have. Wisdom is gained in the daily process of making right choices. Obtaining wisdom is also a process of growth. The process consists of 5 basic steps:

1. Process begins with you learning to trust God and His plan for your life.
2. Process continues with you beginning to read the Word and seek biblical knowledge of God’s character, desires, and ways.
3. Process then moves to living a surrendered yielded life to Christ by seeking Him in order to make right choices and avoiding sinful opportunities.
4. Process then progresses to learning from your mistakes. Your ability to discern what is of God and what is not of God.
5. Process ends with you recognizing your mistakes, seeking God for forgiveness, and recovering to a new level in Christ.

This is a repetitive cycle that we are constantly on our entire lives. God gives us the gift of wisdom and victory for His purposes to be fulfilled. He does not give these treasures to us for us to walk around earth acting irresponsibly by wasting His gifts and resources.

Through our daily choices, we all have the power to become all that we were designed to be. Wisdom is not grounded in an age or obtained when you become a particular age. Take the time to read 2 Chronicles 34.

“Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. 2 He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left. 3 In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David.”

Josiah was 8 years old when he became king. He operated in greater wisdom than several of the older kings that ruled before him. The difference between Josiah and the other kings was Josiah decided to seek God and His wisdom in his daily decisions and actions. You may be young in years like Josiah, or you may be young in your faith. So what? Do not let “any age” disqualify you from walking in the wisdom that God freely offers you.

Let’s begin to tie all of these words of wisdom back to the title of this chapter which is “Manifested Wisdom.” Manifested Wisdom is when your life clearly and plainly reflects that you understand the relationship between you and God. People around you recognize that you are obviously different. They may not understand the “what, when, or how” but they know that you move to the beat of a different drum. Is your life perfect? Absolutely not, but you are living life with purpose, on purpose, in pursuit of His purpose. Earlier we defined wisdom as the ability to see life from God’s perspective and then to know the best course of action to take. When your life is saturated with Christ, the steps you take are grounded and founded on principles bigger than you. No one makes the right choices all the time, but when you are walking in wisdom and trusting God, you know that He will work everything out for your good as long as you are trusting in Him. Even when you make an error, you know that God has got your back. There is nothing that you can do that will take you away from His course for you, because you are allowing him to direct your steps. So you step wrong, too quickly, too slowly, or on the wrong step... you ask Him to gently guide you back to His course for you. Josiah was not a

perfect king, but he was a yielded king. I am pretty certain he made a few errors, but because of His relationship with God his wisdom made history. Your name may not be Josiah, and you may not have been chosen to be a king, but you do have a name, and you have been chosen.

Let's GET REAL a moment! There is so much knowledge in your head that you could classify yourself as "Mentally Constipated." The "know how" is there, but it is not moving. You have to allow what you know to manifest in your life, so that you can make room for more. You have to "pass" what is in there. This may not be the prettiest comparison, but it is one you can relate to. You have to allow the knowledge you have to manifest so that you can receive more and proceed to new levels in Christ. You have to make room. Allow the wisdom of God to manifest in your life. How do you know if it is manifested in your life? Glad you asked! Are you satisfied? The satisfaction that wisdom brings is mind boggling. If you are uneasy, unsure, confused... you are not operating in wisdom. These qualities are not of God... fear is not of God... doubt... is not of God. Will these feelings try to creep up on you? YES, all the time! But someone walking in wisdom recognizes these emotions, their source, and determines to win the battle in their minds. They arrest these thoughts before they can take root. Many times, we know what we should be doing, know what we should be saying, and know God's view on a specific thing, but all that knowing is just knowledge, unless it manifests itself in your life. Knowing without doing is useless to you. Applying what you know allows you to maximize your life, your family, your finances, your dreams, and your goals. Knowledge is power... when it is applied. Dynamite sitting in a box is powerful, but unless you do something with it, it is useless. It is just a tool waiting to be used on something. The same applies to your mind. Knowledge is just a tool until you determine to use it and apply it.

We need to pause and have a "let's GET REAL" moment. The Word says in Proverbs 4:7, "Wisdom is the principle thing;

therefore get wisdom.” This is not a filler verse. God purposely placed this verse with you and me in mind. In order to live a life that reflects the wisdom of God, we have to first understand who He is and why He came. Raise your hand today and choose to become a woman who seeks wisdom, guidance, and understanding, so that you can become the “for Real” woman of God that you were appointed and anointed to become.

Get Real Moment!

Identify areas that you have wisdom, but do not walk in consistently. (Get Real!)

On a scale of 1-10, how much do you seek the wisdom of God on a daily basis?

What are actionable steps that you can take TODAY to position YOU to make God's wisdom your principle thing?

What is one thing that you learned in this chapter that you can hold onto and utilize in your personal life?

Personal Thoughts & Prayers:

7

Got Breath? Release It.

“Let every living, breathing creature
praise God!” Psalm 150:6

As I begin this chapter, so many songs of praise are rising in my spirit. All the different melodies are dancing in my head, and I just want to jump up and begin to dance. Praising God is actually one of the simplest things in the world to do. Just thinking on His goodness, His grace, His mercy, His everlasting love, makes you want to say thank you. Praise may be a simple task, but if you do not know your source of everything, if you do not know the manufacturer of the universe, and if you do not have a relationship with the Father of the universe it is impossible.

Most people view praise as an outward appearance of expression and admiration to God; however, in order for your praise to be genuine, it must come from an inward relationship between you and your heavenly Father. Anyone can jump up and down and even say a hallelujah. However, when you know that you would be nothing, have nothing, and would be in process of becoming nothing if it was not for your Father’s hand keeping you, it is a completely different experience. I just happen to believe that praise comes from the overflow of your heart. Your heart fills up with so much appreciation, so much joy, that it comes bubbling out of your very essence. Praise is not what you do when you come to church on Sunday; it is who you are when no one is looking. Praise is not something that you can turn on

and off. When you walk in the room, your praise walks in with you. A simple smile, a heartfelt hello, a kind gesture can all be indicators of a person who desires to truly represent Christ on earth. Your praise does not have to be yelled from the rooftop, it can be revealed through the quietest thank you spoken to God or even a gesture to an associate, family member, or friend.

Praise is a choice. The Word tells us that we are to... put on our garment of praise. As I read that scripture, I imagined my usual morning routine. When I get dressed, I choose to put on my socks, put on my pants, put on my shirt, and to put on my shoes. I do not care how spiritual or non-spiritual I am, they are not going to jump on me. I have to mentally decide to take physical action to “put on” my garments. The same thing happens when you get up in the morning. You decide if today is going to be a day of rejoicing or a day of complaining. You decide if you are going to view the glass half full or half empty. You decide if you are going to have a little pep in your step, or if you are going to mope around. Before you step out of the house every single morning, you either have on your garment of praise, or you have on your garment of pity. You are dressed in something! You may be in denial, but you are wearing something. You are presenting something to your Master, you are sharing something with your family and friends, and you are revealing something to the persons you come into contact with every day of your life. What are you presenting, sharing, and revealing? Now that you know that your undergarments are actually outer garments totally visible to the world, how do you feel about what you are wearing?

As I am writing this very sentence, a grin is on my face. I have an analogy that I think will put a clear spin on this. If you have a doctor’s appointment, do you carefully select your undergarments or do you grab those ones you wear when you absolutely have nothing else clean in your dresser drawer? If you knew that someone was going to see you in your most vulnerable state, would you prepare with a little more care?

Of course, we all would. Think of the most recent occasion in your life that you “dressed” for the occasion. Your hair, nails, clothes, pantyhose, and even possibly your panties were selected prior to your occasion. You knew exactly the look you wanted to present when you walked into the room. You even imagined the expression on the faces of the people as you entered the room. As you smile from reflecting, I would like to present another twist to this image. These people that you strived to impress as you sauntered into the room... just who are they... just how important are they to you... if you needed them for any small thing could you count on them... if you were in a bind could you call them... do they know your deepest hurts, your greatest accomplishments, what brings you joy, what brings you pain? I would venture to say no. However, you dress to impress them. You meditated on your outfit, scheduled a hair appointment, picked the perfect shoes, and prepared well in advance for them. Who are the “them” that I am referring to? The same people you just identified as non-supporting, unaccountable, and vapors in your life – here today, gone tomorrow.

We consider it acceptable to jump through all kinds of hoops for them, but do not see the importance of putting on our garment of praise every single morning when we open our eyes. I think it is only fitting to dress for your maker. You dress for your spouse, you dress for your boss, and you even dress for your friends. Admit it... you have some friends that you hang out with and your sweats and baseball cap is acceptable; however, you have those friends who make you “up your game.” You know they are going to look the part, so you feel obligated to look your best when you are with them. As you begin to get a clearer perspective on your priorities, you may begin to realize that your thinking needs to change in regards to dressing for your Creator, the Creator of the universe, the One who hung the Sun, the one who preordained your life before you even came onto the scene, the One who knows the number of hairs you have on your head, the One who knows your “mess” and loves you anyway, the One who has watched you “miss it” time and time again, and

still offers you forgiveness and grace. Do you know the One to which I am referring? If you know the One, you know that He loved you so much that He sent His one and only Son to come and die for you. If you really know the One, you also know that His shed blood paid the price for all of your goof ups, mistakes, sins, and junk! If you really really know the One, you know that praising Him is a non-negotiable.

Praise needs to be who you are and not just what you do. Praise needs to be a way of life and not just the way you are at church. So often, Christians like to make things difficult. I just happen to believe that the K.I.S.S model (keep it simple saint) is the way that God desires us to live. I used to be a Children's Ministry Director, and one of the things that I learned was that every lesson needs to be simple enough for a child to grasp. If it is too difficult for a seven year old, it is too difficult for some twenty-seven year old. Keeping it simple allows us all to get on one accord. Our education and backgrounds no longer separate us. If we can all comprehend it on the same level, everyone wins. Praise is the same way! Praise is simple! You decide when you open your eyes in the morning that... "This is the day the Lord has made, I will rejoice and be glad in it." You recognize that God is in control and that... "no weapon formed against you will prosper." You determine that today will be a victorious day. You remember where your life used to be in comparison to where it is now. You reflect on the days you were lost and did not even know that you were lost. You meditate on the Word of God that says... "you are blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out." You think on His awesome promises of health, peace, joy, prosperity, and fullness of life. You refuse to allow the enemy to have any power in your life. You release yourself into your Father's hands and begin to praise him. Praise Him for who He is in your life... praise Him for breath in your body... a new day to begin again... fresh mercy... fresh grace... fresh opportunities... fresh anointing... fresh revelation... fresh favor... fresh provisions. This list is endless and could go on for pages and pages. I am just asking

you to grab a hold of whichever one moves you. The one that encourages you and motivates you to put on your garment of praise is the one that you need to identify.

There is a common theme that is running through these paragraphs of praise. You have to do it for yourself. Your spouse, your children, your Pastor, nor your friends can do it for you. Just like you have to dress yourself with garments of clothes, you have to dress yourself with a garment of praise. Determine what works for you. It may be putting on a CD of your favorite Christian music as soon as your feet hit the floor. It could be hitting your knees beside your bed before you start your day. Whatever it is, make it your own. Own it in such a way that you are excited about beginning your day with a magnificent praise. Do not make this a ritualistic time, but choose to make it a special time. Some people need coffee to jumpstart their day, determine that your jumpstart comes from ushering in the presence of the Lord into your day through your praise. The Word teaches us that God inhabits the praises of His people. You are His people. He longs to come and commune with you. He is actually waiting for you to invite Him into your day. The Holy Spirit is gentle and a still small voice. He is not going to intrude into your day; however, once you make the call, He always shows up. Your praise dials Him up. Imagine your mother sitting by the phone waiting for you to call. She desires to tell you how much she loves you, and how much you mean to her, but you never pick up the phone and dial her number. Oh, how she longs to hear your voice because it has been a while since you have talked. The Holy Spirit longs to fellowship with you in much the same way. Your praise ushers Him in. When you begin the day in His presence, you invite Him into the affairs of your day and of your life. You know you are nothing without Him and can do nothing without Him, but sometimes you get moving before you realize that you did not invite Him along. You need Him, you know you have to have Him, yet you forget to include Him. Please realize that it is a trick of the enemy to get you so busy and focused on “life” that you forget to tap

into the “giver of your life.” The enemy desires that you try to accomplish things on your own and do things your way. What is so crazy about this situation is that we fall into the vicious trap. He gets us out there doing it on our own, and then the master deceiver sets traps so that we fall into the pit of disappointment, disillusionment, discouragement, dissatisfaction, discontentment, and distress. All these “dis” words simply translate into frustration and regret. Once you have taken the bait, you are a sitting target for the enemy. He believes that he has gotten you isolated and away from your manufacturer. He then tries to reprogram you into accepting his way of thinking. The enemy wants you feeling confused and like a failure. He plants thoughts of defeat, unworthiness, and doubt. I do not like to give the enemy credit, but he is quite crafty and extremely patient. Usually, he does not come at us full speed ahead. Instead, he masterminds a plot and lures you a little bit at a time.

As soon as you open your eyes, thoughts begin to pop into your mind. How you choose to address those thoughts determines who you will give the upper hand for the day. If you use your mouth to declare praise for what is and what is to come, you launch a counter attack on the enemy. You bring God on the scene, and the Word clearly teaches us that the battle is not ours but it is the Lords. Your praise releases God’s power to work on your behalf. Your praise reminds the enemy that you know who you are in Christ and what authority you have in Him. You have to put him in his place. As long as you allow him to wreak havoc in your life, he will. You just have to take ownership and responsibility of what you allow in your life. Praise is a weapon that allows you to fight on the offense! During times of war, soldiers do not wait to be attacked before they fight back. They know the enemy has waged war so they are prepared and fighting offensively well before they have to defend themselves.

There is an all out war going on for your destiny. God desires you to walk in the calling He ordained for you well before the world was formed. The enemy wants you separated

from God which in turn separates you from your created purpose. The phenomenal thing about this war is that the fight is fixed. You win! The enemy was defeated well before you showed up on the scene. The only victory he receives is when you allow him to win in your life. If he can trick you into believing him over the Word, he wins! You hand your victory over to him when you refuse the victory that is already yours.

You may be wondering what all of this has to do with praise. Let me simplify it for you. Praise gives you the upper hand in your day and every thing that gets rolled into your life. Praise takes the pressure off of you and releases it to God. The bible teaches us to cast our cares. When you wake up in the morning, you have cares! From finances, to family, to careers, to bad hair days, to PMS, to challenging children, to forgetful spouses, to dinner, to laundry, to the price of gasoline... whatever it is for you... you have cares. Beginning your day with praise, speak volumes to God about your faith and trust in Him. Your opening your heart and hands to Him first thing in the morning say to Him, "God, I do not know what today holds, but you do. I do not know what challenges I have to face, but you do. I do not know what the provisions will be for my needs, but you do. I may not have any idea how to accomplish everything on my to do list, but you do. And I place all of me and all of them in your hands."

Let's enjoy a GET REAL moment. Life can be challenging and some days you feel like you are surrounded by leeches instead of people. Everything and everyone is making demands of you. You can begin to feel your pressure gage rising. You already know that in approximately 20 seconds you are going to blow a fuse. (Am I the only one who has ever been there? I think not!) Just stop, and begin to thank God for your blessings, the joy you have from the relationship of the person you are about to eat alive. Begin to lift your hands in admiration of His goodness, begin to express thanksgiving to Him for calming you this very moment. Do not release your hands or your heart until you begin to feel yourself calm down. It is amazing how

you cannot stay enraged and praise God. There is a real power in exchanging your negativity for His positivity, your anger for His love, and your fear for His faith. Martha Munizzi has a song discussing “The Great Exchange.” If you release what you have to receive what He has, the exchange truly changes you, your life, and your future.

Beginning your day with a magnificent praise empowers you from the very beginning of your day to win. Dressing in praise should be a part of your morning routine. Just like brushing your teeth is something you do every day, taking the time to put on praise should be so ingrained in your brain that you do not even think about it. Before you know it, you are engulfed in praise, adoration and full of thanksgiving for your creator. Your praise garment prepares you for every battle that you will fight.

Get Real Moment!

Identify the ways in which you praise God. How do you say thank you?

On a scale of 1-10, how free are you in your praise and worship?

What are actionable steps that you can take TODAY to allow YOU to praise God in total liberty?

What is one thing that you learned in this chapter that you can hold onto and utilize in your personal life?

Personal Thoughts & Prayers:

8

Got Love? Major In It.

“Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous, it does not brag, and it is not proud. Love is not rude, is not selfish, and does not get upset with others.

Love does not count up wrongs that have been done. Love takes no pleasure in evil but rejoices over truth. Love patiently accepts all things. It always trusts, always hopes, and always endures. Love never ends.”

(1 Corinthians 13:4-8 NCV)

How many times have you heard “quit majoring in the minors?” Yet, how often do we find ourselves spending our precious time on valueless things? As you read this scripture that describes the characteristics of love, your mind quickly takes you to the countless times you have missed it. OK, lets not talk in the third person; I will share my personal experience. Let’s keep it real! Patience is not a natural talent of mine. Actually, I am one of those people who usually want things done yesterday. When I ask my husband to do something, I may not say it, but I want him to stop what he is doing, and do whatever I asked. When he does not move as quickly as I would like, I have to remind myself that “Love is patient and kind.” I have actually written a little country tune that I sing to keep my love walk pure. As you move further in the scripture, we are reminded that love is not proud, rude, selfish, or gets upset with others. This verse actually should be our daily confession because nothing in my flesh wants to cooperate with this. My flesh is selfish, self-righteous and self-consuming. My flesh is bossy, demanding, and darn right ugly at times. Because I am willing to admit these “fleshly”

character flaws, I am able to rise above them. Just because my flesh wants to cut up, I have to choose not to allow it. Why am I sharing all of this? Glad you asked.

In order to walk in the love that God has charged us to live; we have to know what the majors and the minors in our life really are. Too often we spend our time consumed over things that are self serving, when God has called us to be a servant of others. Just in case, you are still wearing a mask, I feel led to explain what self serving looks like. When you think more highly of yourself than others, you are serving self. If you find it difficult to be kind, you are serving self. If you think you are always right, you are serving self. How many times have you stood in line at the grocery store with an attitude because the clerk was taking too long to get to you? I bet you did not have any concern for her, the type of day she was having, or even the customers in between you and her. All you could think about was your schedule and what you needed to do. I picked this scenario because we have all done it. We can all see ourselves in this reflection. As you take a closer look into your personal life, you can see conversations, images, and attitudes that are considered anything but Godly. You see yourself mad at your husband because he forgot “your” birthday. You can quickly imagine yourself mad at the kids because they put dirt on “your” clean floor. You can see yourself angry at a friend because they have not called “you” back. Are you getting the picture? We spend the majority of the time thinking about “me, myself, and I.” We may not realize it, but our consumption with our desires can hinder us from enjoying a wonderful fulfilling life.

God and love cannot be separated. The Word says, “God is love.” Everything about Him is engulfed in love. From sending His son to earth to redeem mankind, to allowing His son to be crucified on the cross, to making sure we were not left alone, resulted in His love for us. God has not asked any of us to physically lay down our lives for Him through death. However, He did ask us to love Him with all our hearts and to love

others as ourselves. Sounds simple and doable, yet we allow ourselves to get into our own way on a regular basis and we wonder why we are so unhappy. Instead of looking to God and His Word for clarity we try to find something else or someone else to make us feel good about who we are. The only person who is able to validate us has already done His part. However, when we fail to do our part, we feel unfulfilled and unhappy. This is usually when we join another committee, sign up for another responsibility, or start coaching our kid's team. Yes, we already know in advance that we really cannot handle one more responsibility, but we are still searching for answers in the wrong places.

Time to GET REAL! Love is such a wonderful thing. One of my favorite Christian songs is by Vickie Winans entitled "Oh, What Love." The verse says, "...Oh what love, He has for me – that He would give His life!" Jesus laid down His life for you and me. In return, He asked that we love Him and others in the same manner as we love ourselves. It is time for us to be mature women of God and live a life that represents the love of Christ. Is this an easy task? Of course not, remember we are getting real. However, it is a doable task when you decide in your heart to allow the majestic love of God to flow through you. Become a pipe with ever flowing and ever sharing love.

Get Real Moment!

Identify your challenge with 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 NCV.
Which portion of these scriptures challenges you?

Why?

What are actionable steps that you can take TODAY to ensure that YOU walk in love on a daily basis?

What is one thing that you learned in this chapter that you can hold onto and utilize in your personal life?

Personal Thoughts & Prayers:

9

Thinking Stinks? Modify It.

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

(Romans 12:2 NKJ)

You had to suspect that a chapter on your mind would come sooner or later. We cannot even begin to touch the subject of getting real without checking our thinking. As women, our thoughts tend to get out of control. On the surface, we look like ducks smooth as can be on top, but underneath everything in us is moving 100 miles per hour. One of the first indicators that we need a mind renewal is evident in our attitude.

How often do you find yourself thinking less than Godly thoughts about certain issues, people, or responsibilities you have in your life? If you are honest with yourself, it is probably more often than you would want anyone to know.

Personally, I have a naturally busy mind. It is always in motion attempting to create a plan B, C and D... just in case it is needed. If left unattended, it would direct me to the land of reasoning and logic. What tends to happen when this occurs is that I get farther and farther away from God’s Word, faith, and peace. The enemy strives to get me so focused on the “unknown possibilities” that I lose sight of what I do know which is His Word. As my mind travels and begins to analyze this land of “unknown possibilities” my attitude tends to slip from mental

stability to mental instability in a very short period of time. Once my mind gets unstable, my attitude quickly follows because I am now allowing the enemy to direct my path through fear, doubt, and confusion. I no longer control my emotions, he does. I do not have to tell you the problems that result with this scenario.

As my mind travels from “faith and stability” to “fear and instability,” my focus transitions from God to the world. My concentration is now on the cares of the world, my current situations, and any challenges that I am in the process of overcoming. You and I both know this is a dangerous place to be. Why? Because your attitude is horrible, your thinking is stinking, and our vision is limited. You are not in any position to represent salt or light to anyone because the only thing on your mind is you.

Romans 12:2 explains that our minds must be renewed to the Word of God in order to prove the acceptable and perfect will of God. God desires to prove himself in each of our lives. He longs to show himself strong! The thing that I love the most about this verse is that we have the power within ourselves to renew our own minds. So often, we make excuses for our circumstances because of our parents, spouse, and children. It is so easy to blame everything wrong with our lives on someone else. However, this verse clearly levels the playing field for all Believers. The proving of God’s perfect and acceptable will is only a “renewing away.” At any time in our lives, we can make a decision to change the status of our finances, family, and future by simply renewing our minds. Regardless of your current conditions, you have the power to change it. It does not take a financial investment, it does not take a college education, and it does not take perfect circumstances. Renewing your mind begins with...

Acknowledging that God has a perfect will and plan for your life

Accepting the fact that He knows more about
your past, present, and future than you do

Humbling yourself to do things God's way

Committing to a life of Godly obedience.

Once you begin the process, God's Word literally does the rest. When you begin to acknowledge that God has a perfect will and plan for your life, you position yourself to obtain it. When your mind is "world bound," your focus is on what you think is best for you, not God. You find yourself searching for fulfillment in all the wrong places, because you never sought guidance from the one who created you. You make decisions for your life based on what you think, instead of what God knows. After you acknowledge that God does have a plan for you, you can see how his plan has always existed for your life. Although, you may have ventured off course, you can identify how God continuously nudged you to get back on track. You can look back over your life and physically see His hands at work. With this fresh revelation, comes the desire to avoid unnecessary pitfalls and bumps in the road for the future. As your mind is renewed to His plan, you seek Him and His Word in new ways to direct you to the future He desires for you to enjoy. This process requires you humbling yourself and dying to self. As your mind becomes renewed to God's Word, your focus is no longer satisfying your flesh, it is pleasing God. We please God through our obedient lifestyles.

The world tells you to do what feels good, what pleases you, and gives you the quickest gratification. God's Word says we are in this world but not of it. We cannot conform to the world or do as the world instructs. Our minds have to be renewed. Mind renewal is not one stop shopping; it requires a lifetime commitment.

Daily, the enemy plots opportunities to make us look like the world. Let's GET REAL a moment! Someone cuts

you off in traffic - your first reaction may not be to pray for them. It very well could be to practice a negative form of sign language. When this happens, realize your mind needs a little more renewal. When someone says something unkind and inconsiderate to you, do you react like the world and give it back to them – stronger than they gave it to you or do you look for an opportunity to minister to them. Any time I find myself being short with my husband or children, I realize that I need to renew my mind to a new level. After I have reacted in a negative manner, my Spirit quickens and I immediately say, “I need more Word! I am looking like the world right now.” I used to spend time being condemned and upset with myself because I knew better, but now I repent, recognize that I am forgiven, and take action to look more like Christ. I do not spend time sulking in self pity because I missed it. I used those “slip ups” as indicators that I am not where I need to be.

Living a Christian lifestyle is a journey of continual growth, development, and maturity. The enemy would love for you to focus on all that you are not, but God’s Word consistently teaches us who we are. When the enemy attempts to remind me of my faults, I remind him of where I came from. When I recognize that my attitude stinks, I first acknowledge it, and then I begin to praise God that I did not curse, break something, or have a full-blown temper tantrum. Yes, I may have thought a few thoughts that were less than Godly, and yes I may have a long way to go to become all that God created me to be, but PRAISE GOD, I am not where I used to be. Instead of letting the enemy talk to me and affect my attitude, I interrupt him with a praise report. The enemy’s job is to destroy me. The Word boldly tells us that he came to steal, kill, and destroy! It would be ignorant of me to expect anything less than destructive thoughts or patterns from him. Although his mission is to twist my thinking and focus on worldly things and desires, he has been defeated. He only wins when I allow him to. By determining to renew my mind and pursue God’s perfect will for my life, I become knowledgeable of the power that I have through Christ Jesus, the promises that

are available to me as a Believer, and prepared to pursue the God kind of life. God's very best is available to every born again Believer; however, only Believers with a renewed mind understand the requirements and commitments necessary for them to manifest in their life.

The Bible tells us "people perish for a lack of knowledge." Each of us are born into this world in sin. Our knowledge is naturally derived from the world in which we live. Once you become Born Again, the knowledge you need to live a Godly lifestyle and enjoy the benefits of a God kind of life are found in the Word of God. Your mind has to be renewed to what the Word says about you, your rights, and your future. The answer to every problem or situation that can arise in your life is found in the Word of God. The Bible says that there is nothing new under the sun. Your problem has a solution and can be overcome. Your attitude can change, your circumstances can change, and your entire world can change if you commit to changing how you think. Choose today to get rid of stinking thinking and modify your mind by renewing it to the Word of God.

Get Real Moment!

Identify the ways in which you “battle” ungodly thoughts?

On a scale of 1-10, how well is your method working for you?

What are actionable steps that you can take TODAY to help YOU recognize an onset of stinking thinking?

What is one thing that you learned in this chapter that you can hold onto and utilize in your personal life?

Personal Thoughts & Prayers:

10

Ready To Be Authentic? Make Your Move.

“All things are possible to the woman who
believes.” Matthew 19:26, Mark 10:27

It is my prayer that the previous pages have released you to be open, honest, and real with where you really are in life, in your relationships, and in your walk with God. The real you that often hides behind the mask yearns to come out and face the world. I often tell ladies that they need to put on their big girl panties and act like the woman they were created to be. Men often say “man up” to a male that is acting immature and irresponsible. Today, I am charging you to “woman up.” It is time for you to become an authentic woman of God. The word authentic means genuine. If I were purchasing a brand new leather sofa, pleather would be unacceptable. If I desired 14 carat gold earrings, gold plated would not be good enough. Why? Because a substitute is never good enough.

Let’s personalize this and make it a little clearer. The God of this phenomenal universe designed and handcrafted each of us as a beautiful specimen with purpose, vision, and destiny; however, we hide that creation and “recreate” the being we believe is acceptable and pleasing to man. Whatever happened to pleasing God? God longs to be the object of your affection and devotion. The Word tells us that He wants TRUE worshippers that worship Him in spirit and in truth. Being a true worshipper means being true to God by pursuing and becoming the woman you were designed to be. True worshippers are real through and through...

no mask, no cape, and no façade. If you have made the decision to “GET REAL” and live an authentic life, it is time to make your move. Making your move involves change. Insanity is often quoted as doing the same thing and expecting different results. By picking up this book you acknowledge the fact that you are not crazy and desire to experience change in your life. Desiring to change and deciding to change are not even close. I may desire a new Mercedes Benz, but if I do not decide to take the steps to get one, my desire is void.

At the end of each chapter, you were asked to GET REAL and unveil. I pray you did not skip those pages because the healing, maturity, and change begins when you can honestly take a look in the mirror and analyze what you see. Sometimes the picture is not pretty. Sometimes it even hurts to look into your own eyes staring back at you because you know the truth. You know deep in your heart that you are not really the woman that you present to the world every day. The fears, doubts, confusion, and pain that hide in your heart are really eating you from the inside out. No one sees you when you are crying yourself to sleep. No one hears you screaming at the kids or fighting with your husband. No one knows the bitterness, strife, or unforgiveness that haunts you on a daily basis. No one knows this person but you!

The only way you can win this fight and become authentic through and through is to accept where you are right now as... where you are. The next thing you must do is identify the person you desire to be. Not only identify it, but crystallize it. Write a very clear and vivid description of this lady down and take the time to get to know her. How does this lady respond to crisis? How does she look? How does she dress? How clean is her home? What is her attitude at work? Get as specific as you need to in order to get to the core of your authentic self. You will never become the woman that lives in your head, if you do not begin to shift your thinking. Once you have identified who this woman is, you can begin to live your life according to

her standard. When you are about to lose your temper, you can boldly ask yourself, “How would the woman I am working to become handle this?” One of the best Christian mottos of our time is “What would Jesus do?” I encourage you to take that a step further and personalize it. Every woman dreams of who she wants to be when she grows up. The only problem with this is our standards are usually screwed up because they are based on the world’s guidelines. As a grown woman, it is time for you to reset your standard and make your move. Only you hold the power to change you. If you have the power and do not use it, you decided by default to merely exist during your lifetime instead of making your time on planet earth count. The power, the choice, and the decision are all yours, what are you going to do with it?

Get Real Moment

Describe the woman that lives in your dreams:

Physically:

Emotionally:

Mentally:

Socially:

What does the woman that lives in your dreams do for a living?

**What are 3 things that the woman that lives in your dreams
refuses to compromise?**

11

Maintain the Journey through...

Motivated Confessions

“The power of life and death is in the tongue.”

Proverb 18:21

After you identify the characteristics of the woman that lives in your dreams, you need to begin to create her existence through the words you speak. Your mouth is the link to the present and the future that you long to enjoy. Words are merely containers that carry creative power to shape your destiny. Every word that you speak, positively or negatively, impacts the quality of your life. If you are constantly telling yourself what you are not, how ugly you are, and that your conditions will never change, be prepared to receive exactly what you are saying.

The Bible repetitively tells us who we are in Christ and what we can accomplish in His power. As you begin to shed what you show the world and tap into who God says you are, the Word of God takes on an entirely different meaning. It is no longer what you say about you, it is what HE says about you. It is no longer what you think you can or cannot do, it is about what He says you can do through Him. In order to maintain this “realness” journey, you need to begin to change what you are saying. Naturally, your words are spoken for everyone else. Spiritually, your words are spoken to you (reminding you what the Word says), to God (releasing Him to help you become that which you are confessing), and to the devil (removing His plan out of your

mind). If we are in this world but not of it, our focus needs to remain on the spiritual power that our words possess.

I have included a few of my favorite confessions to jump start your journey. Dig deep in the Word and add additional ones that minister to your specific circumstances, journey, and life.

I pray that the words on these pages have blessed and energized you to GET REAL. Life is too short to play games. This is not a dress rehearsal. We all get one lifetime to impact the world and make a difference. I charge you to let this difference begin with you – in your life – in your family. As you GET REAL and become the woman you were destined to be, your light will shine and impact those that are around you. When you light a match in a dark room, it radiates through the entire room. Let your life be the light that radiates your world.

God Bless,

Keisha

Confessions

Today is an awesome day because God's grace and mercies are new every morning. (Lamentations 3:23)

I am changing and becoming more like Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. I am compassionate, gracious, generous, and loving. (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)

The enemy may come at me one way, but he will be forced to flee from me seven ways. (Deuteronomy 28:7)

God has not given me a spirit of fear, but of love, power and a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)

I chose to magnify God and not my challenges. (Psalm 69:30)

Everything that has happened to me, even the pain and disappointment, will be turned into something good. (Romans 8:28)

Complaining is verbal pollution. I refuse to do it. (Philippians 2:14)

I do not make excuses for my circumstances or behavior. I choose to change. (1 John 1:8-9).

I let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart remain acceptable before God. (Psalm 19:14)

I guard my mouth and my tongue to keep away from trouble. (Proverbs 21:23)

I refuse to judge others. My focus is on changing me. (Matthew 7:1)

I choose to believe that God is able to do anything in and through my life. (Luke 8:50)

I declare that God is perfecting everything that concerns me, my family, my future, and my finances. (Psalm 138:8)

I am happy. My circumstances do not change my happiness because my joy, my help and my hope come from God. (Psalm 146:5)

I live my life in a spirit of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving proclaiming God's presence at all times in all my affairs. (Ephesians 6:10)

Prayer of Salvation

If you have never received God's loving invitation of salvation, make today your day of decision. Acts 15:8 NIV says, "I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation." Respond to God's call by crying out to the Lord, repenting of your sins, and accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and savior. God accepts you just as you are – issues, problems, and junk. When you repent, God forgives your sins and cleanses you from all un-righteousness. When you believe in Jesus, God baptizes you into Christ, makes you a new creature, and the Spirit of God begins to dwell in your heart. As you continue in faith, reading the Word of God daily, growing in Christ daily, God will reveal himself to you and share his love, joy, peace, and power with you.

Salvation is not earned, it is freely given! If you desire to make this change today, simply pray the following prayer:

"Dear Heavenly Father, I realize that Jesus is the only Way, the Truth, and the Life. I acknowledge that I am a sinner. I believe that your only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, shed his precious blood on the cross for me. I am sorry for every deed that I have committed against you and I repent of those sins. I ask you to have mercy on me, cleanse me, and forgive me for all that I have done. I desire to serve you starting right now. Please help me to hear your small voice and to be led by the Holy Spirit so that I can faithfully follow and obey you. I ask for strength to love you more than anything so I will not fall back into my old behavior. I also ask that you lead me to Believers who will encourage my journey and help me stay accountable. Thank you for becoming Lord of my life and for another chance to transform my life so that I may bring glory and honor to you in everything I do. I ask all of this in the name of MY Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen"

Welcome to the Family!!!



Keisha is currently the Founder and President of Maximize Results Group LLC. Keisha is an educator, workshop facilitator, and consultant whose expertise includes time-management, organization, and productivity. Keisha believes that the personal success of an individual greatly influences their ability to add value to any organization or business. The central

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