

MOLD ME

— LIKE —

Clay

A CHRISTIAN JOURNEY OF
HEALING, STRENGTH,
AND PURPOSE



AS THE CLAY IS
IN THE POTTER'S HANDS,
SO ARE YOU
IN MY HANDS.

JEREMIAH 18:6

REVISED
EDITION
2026



— HOPE AND RESTORATION FOR EVERY SEASON —

SANDRA GILBERT



Walking with Jesus 365

A Ministry of Hope, Healing, and Restoration

"He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

— **Psalm 23:3**

Welcome

Walking with Jesus 365 is a ministry dedicated to helping individuals find freedom emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually. Our prayer is that through these pages you will discover that walking with Jesus is not merely a destination, but a lifelong journey of healing, restoration, growth, and purpose.

Whether you are recovering from life's hurts, habits, and hang-ups, seeking a deeper relationship with Christ, or simply looking for encouragement along the way, this workbook was written with you in mind.

About This Workbook

This recovery workbook is a revised edition of *Mold Me Like Clay*, originally copyrighted in 2004. The first edition was registered with the Library of Congress. Although the book was never formally published, copies were freely distributed to individuals seeking encouragement, recovery, and spiritual growth.

Over the years, many lives have been touched by the lessons and principles contained within these pages. This revised edition has been updated and expanded to continue that mission of helping others find hope and healing through Jesus Christ.

Some resources and materials referenced in the original edition were used with permission from authors and ministries whose websites or organizations may no longer be active. Every effort has been made to acknowledge sources and permissions where applicable throughout this workbook.

Our Mission

To encourage every person to experience:

- ✓ Emotional Healing
- ✓ Mental Renewal
- ✓ Physical Restoration
- ✓ Spiritual Growth
- ✓ Freedom Through Christ

We believe true recovery comes when we allow God to work in every area of our lives, transforming us from the inside out.

A Gift to You

This workbook is being made available in digital download format so that anyone seeking help may have access to its contents.

Donations to support the ministry are appreciated but are never required. Our desire is simply to place resources into the hands of those who need encouragement, hope, and practical tools for their journey with Christ.

A Prayer for Your Journey

Heavenly Father,

As each person opens these pages, may they encounter Your love, grace, and healing presence. Mold them according to Your purpose. Restore what has been broken, strengthen what has grown weak, and guide them into the abundant life You have promised.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen

"Yet, O Lord, You are our Father. We are the clay, and You are our potter; we are all the work of Your hand."

Isaiah 64:8

COPYRIGHT

Mold Me Like Clay

A Faith-Based Recovery and Life Restoration Workbook

Copyright © 2026 Sandra Gilbert

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means—including electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise—without prior written permission from the author, except for brief quotations used in reviews, educational settings, or ministry discussions with proper attribution.

Author

Sandra Gilbert

Walking With Jesus 365

wwj365.com

Sandra.Gilbert@wwj365.com

Scripture References

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from:

New King James Version® (NKJV®)

Copyright © Thomas Nelson.

New International Version® (NIV®)

Copyright © Biblica, Inc.

New Living Translation® (NLT®)

Copyright © Tyndale House Foundation.

Scripture quotations are used in accordance with applicable publisher permissions and guidelines.

Disclaimer

This workbook is intended for educational, spiritual growth, recovery support, and personal development purposes only.

It is not intended to replace professional counseling, mental health treatment, medical care, legal advice, or other professional services.

Readers experiencing serious emotional, mental health, addiction, abuse, medical, or legal issues should seek assistance from qualified professionals.

The author and publisher assume no responsibility for actions taken by readers based upon the information contained within this workbook.

Special Acknowledgments

Certain materials, testimonies, articles, and educational resources included in this workbook have been used with permission or adapted from sources acknowledged within the text and Credits section.

The author gratefully acknowledges all contributors whose work has helped support the development of this ministry resource.

First Edition

Published by: Sandra Swain 2003

Walking With Jesus 365

River Oasis Ministry

Elizabeth City, North Carolina

United States of America

Contact Information

For information regarding:

- **Church Studies**
- **Recovery Groups**

- **Community Programs**
- **Speaking Engagements**
- **Life Recovery Ministry**
- **River Oasis**
- **The Praise Pups**

Please contact:

Sandra.Gilbert@wwj365.com

wwj365.com

Walking with Jesus 365 Ministries

I first of all Dedicate this book:

To the glory of God.

To every person seeking healing, hope, freedom, and restoration.

May you discover that no matter what life has brought your way, God is still molding the clay.

"Being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

— Philippians 1:6

Dedication

To My Mother

This book is lovingly dedicated to my mother, Betty Koch.

I thank God every day for blessing me with a Christian mother who has stood by my side through every season of life. She did not always agree with my choices, but she never stopped loving me, encouraging me, and praying for me.

Through life's joys and struggles, she has always been there to listen, offer wisdom, and help me pick up the pieces when I felt broken. Her faith, patience, strength, and unconditional love have been a constant source of comfort and inspiration.

Mom, thank you for being the best mother a daughter could ask for and one of my very best friends. Thank you for your love, your prayers, your guidance, and the countless sacrifices you have made throughout my life.

I love you and thank God for you.

In Loving Memory of My Husband

This revised edition is also dedicated to my beloved husband, Rick Gilbert, who went home to be with the Lord in October 2024 after a courageous battle with Glioblastoma.

Rick was a passionate advocate for substance abuse recovery, mental health awareness, and helping others find hope and healing. His compassion, encouragement, and unwavering support touched many lives.

I am especially grateful that he helped me edit and review portions of this workbook before his illness. The completion of this revised edition was delayed as I devoted my time to caring for him at home during his final journey.

Not a day goes by that I do not miss him. Yet I am thankful for the years we shared, the love we built, and the faith that carried us through every season.

Rick, thank you for believing in me, supporting this ministry, and helping make this book possible. Your love, encouragement, and legacy live on within these pages.

Until we meet again in the presence of our Savior, I will carry you in my heart.

I love you, sweetheart. I will see you on the other side.

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

Psalm 34:18

Part One: Beginning the Journey

- Prelude
- Serenity Prayer
- Introduction
- Group Guidelines
- Listening Rules
- Your Will Be Done
- My Life Story

Part Two: Understanding Yourself

- Hope
- Women of the Bible
- Men of the Bible
- Codependency
- Stress
- Perfectionism
- A Good Night's Sleep
- Feelings

Part Three: Healing from Life's Wounds

- Domestic Violence
- Narcissism
- Verbal and Emotional Abuse
- Anger Management
- Addiction and Substance Abuse
- Forgiveness
- Self-Esteem

- Encouragement

Part Four: Relationships and Sexual Integrity

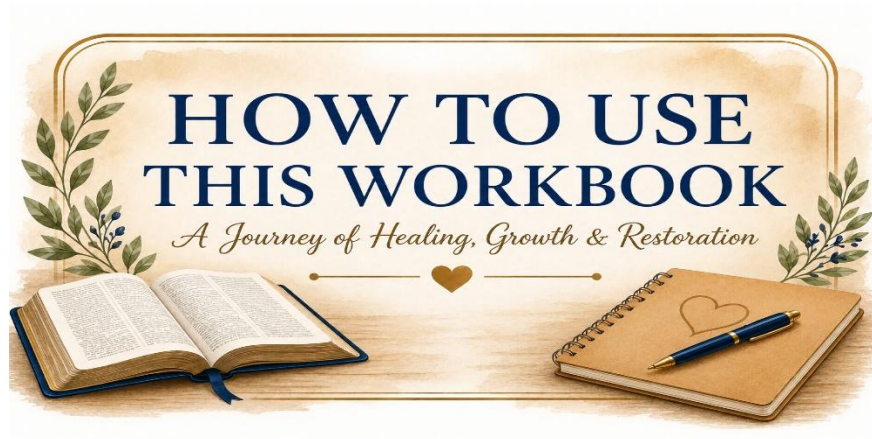
- Sexual Addiction
- Personal Safety and Sexual Assault Prevention
- Freedom from Sexual Sin
- Marriage

Part Five: Moving Forward

- Conclusion
- Emergency Contacts
- Copyright Permissions
- About the Author and Ministry

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

A Journey of Healing, Growth & Restoration



This Workbook May Be Used:

- Individually
- In Small Groups
- In Churches
- In Recovery Ministries
- In Community Outreach Programs
- With Mentors, Coaches, Pastors, or Counselors

As You Work Through This Study

- ✓ Take your time.
- ✓ Pray before each lesson.
- ✓ Complete the assignments honestly.
- ✓ There are no perfect people.
- ✓ The goal is progress, not perfection.
- ✓ Bring your Bible, journal, and an open heart.
- ✓ Allow God to speak to you throughout this journey.

Remember

God is not looking for perfection.

He is looking for willing hearts.

A Few Helpful Suggestions

- Read all Scripture references.
- Keep a journal throughout the study.
- Be honest with yourself.
- Participate in discussions when possible.
- Seek wise counsel when needed.
- Celebrate progress, even small victories.
- Ask God to reveal areas where healing is needed.
- Trust the process.

Before You Begin

Take a moment to pray and dedicate this journey to God.

Ask Him to:

- Teach you.
- Guide you.
- Strengthen you.
- Heal you.
- Restore you.
- Help you become everything He created you to be.

Key Thought

Progress, not perfection.

God is still molding the clay

Prelude

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Jeremiah 29:11

The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah:

"Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause you to hear My words."

So Jeremiah went down to the potter's house and watched as the potter worked at his wheel. The vessel he was making from clay became marred in his hands. Instead of discarding it, the potter reshaped and remade the clay into a vessel that seemed best to him.

Then the Lord said:

"Can I not do with you as this potter does? Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in My hand."

Jeremiah 18:1–6 (Paraphrased)

Hope is the confident expectation that God is still working, even when we cannot see the finished result.

Many people begin their recovery journey feeling broken, discouraged, fearful, or uncertain about the future. Yet God specializes in restoring what has been damaged and rebuilding what has been wounded. Just as the potter reshapes the clay, God lovingly molds our lives according to His purpose.

As you begin this journey, remember:

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV)

We are not powerless in our struggles. Through Christ, we have been given strength, courage, wisdom, and the ability to overcome.

Scripture reminds us:

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

Ephesians 6:12

The battles we face are often deeper than what appears on the surface. Many of our wounds are emotional, spiritual, mental, and relational. Recovery is not simply about changing behaviors; it is about allowing God to heal the heart, renew the mind, and restore the soul.

Walking with Jesus 365 is dedicated to helping individuals find freedom emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually through a Christ-centered approach to recovery and personal growth.

Throughout this workbook, biblical principles are combined with proven recovery tools to help identify unhealthy patterns, break chains of bondage, discover healing, and develop a stronger relationship with Jesus Christ.

This is not merely a book about recovery.

It is a book about hope.

It is about learning to trust God one day at a time.

It is about discovering that your past does not determine your future.

Most of all, it is about understanding that the Master Potter has not finished His work in you.

No matter where you are in your journey, there is hope.

May God's blessings, grace, wisdom, and hedge of protection surround you as you walk through this healing process and continue your daily journey with Christ.

Sandra Gilbert

Walking with Jesus 365 Ministries

THE POTTER'S HANDS

"Yet You, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, and You are our potter; we all are the work of Your hand."

Isaiah 64:8

Every life bears the marks of its journey.

Some have been shaped by love.

Some have been shaped by loss.

Some have been shaped by disappointment, abuse, addiction, grief, fear, or broken dreams.

Yet no life is beyond the reach of the Master Potter.

Just as a potter carefully shapes clay upon the wheel, God lovingly works within each of us. When life leaves us cracked, wounded, or misshapen, He does not throw us away. Instead, He patiently restores, rebuilds, and remolds us into something beautiful for His purpose and glory.

You may be holding pieces of your life that seem broken beyond repair.

You may feel weary from battles no one else can see.

You may wonder if change is possible.

This workbook was created to remind you that there is hope.

The same God who formed you has never abandoned you.

The same God who knows every wound also knows every possibility.

The same God who began a good work in you is faithful to complete it.

As you begin this journey, surrender your fears, your struggles, your hurts, and your expectations into His hands.

Trust the process.

Trust the Potter.

Trust the One who sees not only who you are today, but who you can become through Him.

"Can I not do with you as this potter does?" declares the Lord. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in My hand."

Jeremiah 18:6

A Prayer Before You Begin

Heavenly Father,

Place my life upon Your wheel.

Mold me where I have become hardened.

Heal me where I have been wounded.

Strengthen me where I have become weak.

Guide me where I have lost my way.

Help me trust Your plans for my life, even when I cannot see the finished design.

Teach me to walk with You one day at a time.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen

A close-up photograph of a potter's hands, covered in wet clay, shaping a clay pot on a pottery wheel. The potter is wearing a brown long-sleeved shirt and a dark apron. The background is softly blurred, showing a workshop setting with other pottery items.

THE POTTER'S HANDS



*Yet You, Lord,
are our Father.
We are the clay,
and You are
our potter;
we all are
the work of
Your hand.*

ISAIAH 64:8

THE SERENITY PRAYER

*"God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference."*

Recovery begins when we learn to surrender what we cannot control and trust God with the outcome.

Some things in life cannot be changed. The past cannot be rewritten. Other people's choices cannot be controlled. Certain circumstances may be beyond our ability to fix.

Yet God gives us the courage to face today, the strength to make healthy choices, and the wisdom to recognize the difference between what is ours to carry and what belongs in His hands.

As you begin this journey of healing and restoration, take a moment to pause and invite God into the process.

A Prayer for the Journey Ahead

Heavenly Father,

Grant me peace when life feels uncertain.

Give me courage to face the challenges before me.

Help me release the burdens I was never meant to carry.

Teach me to trust You one day at a time.

Renew my mind, heal my heart, strengthen my spirit, and guide my steps.

May Your grace sustain me and Your love surround me as I walk this path of recovery and growth.

In Jesus' Name,

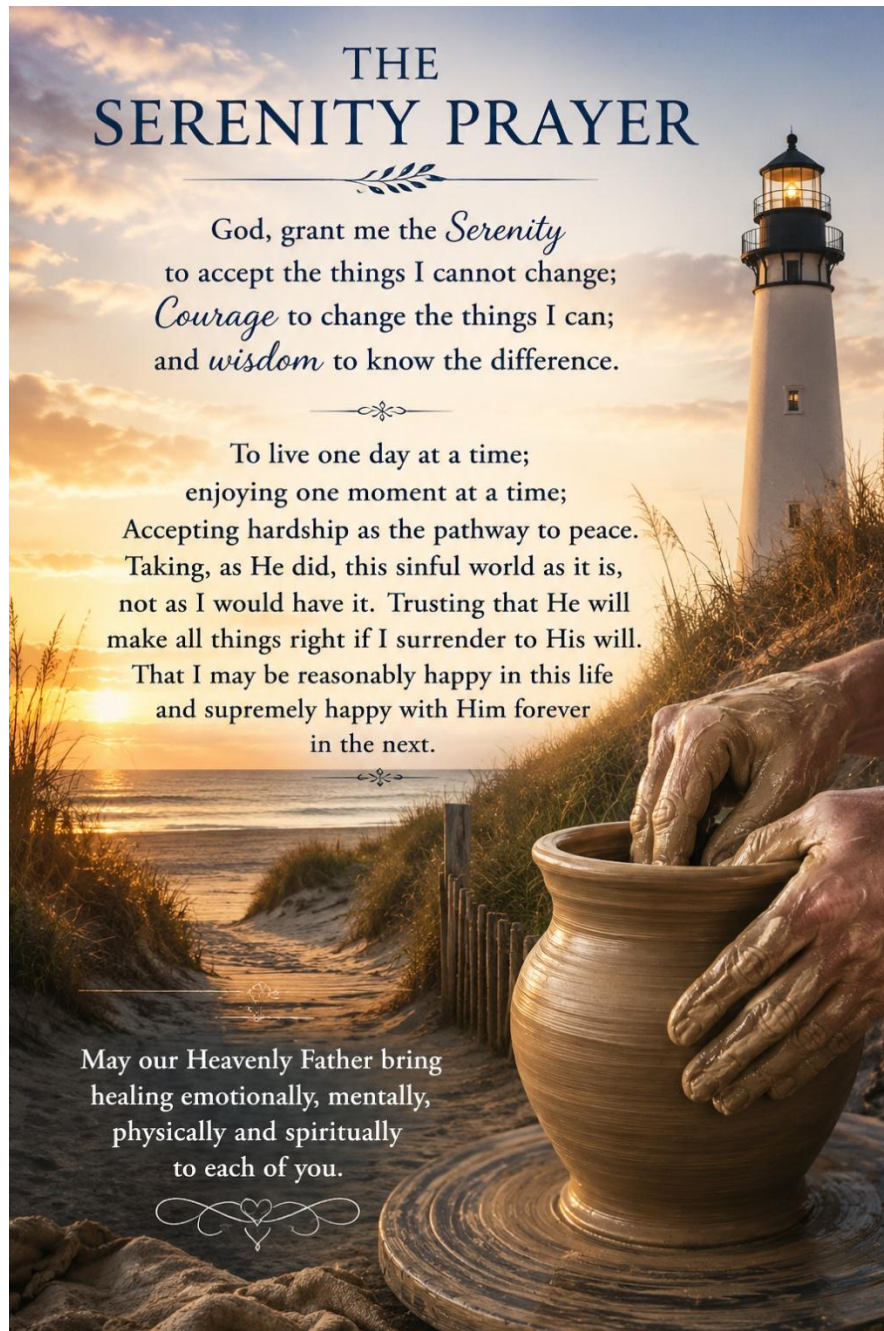
Amen

Blessing

May our Heavenly Father bring healing emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually to each of you.

May His peace guard your heart, His wisdom guide your decisions, and His love remind you that you are never alone.

Walking with Jesus 365 Ministries



Introduction

You never truly know what another person's life has been like unless you have walked in their shoes.

In today's world, judgment, gossip, lies, false accusations, and criticism seem to spread rapidly. People often bring up mistakes from decades ago as though they happened yesterday. Whatever happened to forgiveness?

The truth is that every one of us has enough work to do in our own lives to keep us busy full-time. None of us are perfect. Instead of tearing one another down, we need to learn how to encourage, support, and build one another up.

You never know what battles someone may be facing. You may not see the trauma they have endured, the bullying they have experienced, the grief they carry, or the wounds they are struggling to overcome.

In recent years, the effects of the COVID pandemic, social unrest, personal hardships, and the pressures of everyday life have left many people feeling overwhelmed. Suicide rates, substance abuse, depression, anxiety, and emotional struggles continue to affect countless individuals and families.

People are hurting.

Many are searching for peace, hope, and healing.

True and lasting heart change can only be found through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Jesus is our hope.

When Jesus walked this earth, He demonstrated mercy, grace, compassion, and unconditional love. He lived what He taught. He served others and reached out to those whom society often rejected.

As you read the New Testament, you will see the many lives Jesus touched and transformed. He showed compassion for the hurting, forgave the broken, healed the sick, and offered hope to the hopeless. He did not judge people based on their social status, ethnicity, gender, past mistakes, or personal struggles.

Jesus reached out to fishermen, tax collectors, beggars, lepers, the woman caught in adultery, the Samaritan woman at the well, thieves, and countless others.

Those who sincerely came to Him never left the same.

They left renewed.

They left refreshed.

They left forgiven.

They left transformed.

God can do the same for you.

The question is not whether God can change your life.

The question is: **Will you allow Him to?**

As you work through this workbook, I encourage you to spend time with God each day through prayer, Bible reading, worship, and personal reflection. Consider keeping a journal to record your thoughts, prayers, victories, and challenges throughout your journey.

It is also important to have trusted people in your life who will encourage and support your growth. If possible, seek out a mature Christian mentor who can walk alongside you and provide wisdom, accountability, and prayer.

Choose your support system carefully. Recovery and healing require a safe environment where you can share openly without fear of judgment, gossip, or betrayal.

I also encourage you to find a Bible-believing church where God's Word is taught faithfully and where you can grow in fellowship with other believers. Healing often happens best within a healthy community of faith.

Remember, change is not always easy.

At times, it may be painful.

Old wounds may surface. Buried emotions may rise to the surface. There may be tears, struggles, setbacks, and difficult moments along the way.

But do not lose heart.

Healing comes.

Restoration comes.

Freedom comes.

You cannot change other people, but with God's help, you can change yourself.

As you begin this journey, may God bless you, strengthen you, and fill your life with His peace. May you experience the joy, hope, healing, and freedom that can only be found in Jesus Christ. Welcome to the journey.

Group Guidelines and Preparation

If you are using *Mold Me Like Clay* in a small group, recovery group, Bible study, mentoring relationship, or one-on-one setting, the following resources are recommended for each participant:

Each Person Should Have:

- A copy of *Mold Me Like Clay*
- A Bible (NIV, NKJV, or NLT translations are recommended for ease of reading)
- A notebook for weekly notes and study
- A personal journal to record goals, prayers, recovery progress, and healing milestones
- A prayer partner
- A list of local emergency and support resources
- Your pastor's contact information
- Your mentor's contact information

Remember, recovery is a journey. Having the right tools and support system in place can make a significant difference as you work toward healing and growth.

Listening Rules

Listening is one of the most important skills we can develop. Whether in a group setting or a one-on-one conversation, healing often begins when a person feels heard, valued, and understood.

Many of us are quick to respond before someone has finished speaking. We may be thinking about our answer rather than truly listening. Learning to listen well is an important part of personal growth and recovery.

Group Guidelines

1. Focus on encouragement and hope.
2. Do not minimize another person's feelings or experiences.
3. Allow each person to finish speaking before responding.

4. Ask questions for clarification rather than making assumptions.
5. Do not offer advice unless it is requested.
6. Respect differing viewpoints and experiences.
7. Maintain confidentiality at all times.

Why Listening Matters

Listening is a lifelong skill that helps us become:

- Better friends
- Better spouses
- Better parents
- Better coworkers
- Better leaders
- Better followers of Christ

Listening helps us develop compassion, understanding, patience, and wisdom.

If you are serving as a group leader or facilitator, listening is essential. After each meeting, ask yourself:

"What did I learn about this person today that I did not know before?"

People do not always need someone to fix their problems. Often, they simply need someone who will listen without judgment.

Many individuals who are struggling with emotional pain, addiction, trauma, grief, or low self-esteem already feel misunderstood and alone. As believers, we can offer support by listening, encouraging, and pointing them toward Christ.

Pray with people whenever appropriate. When possible, pray specifically for the needs they have shared.

Effective Listening Skills

When speaking with someone who is seeking support or guidance:

1. Create a quiet environment with minimal distractions. Turn off cell phones and other devices when possible.

2. Be patient. People often need time to express their thoughts and emotions.
3. Listen carefully to understand rather than preparing your response.
4. Keep an open mind and avoid rushing to judgment.
5. If something is unclear, ask respectful questions for clarification.
6. Be present and attentive.
7. Maintain confidentiality.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is one of the most important foundations of trust.

People must feel safe when sharing personal struggles, hurts, fears, and experiences. Trust can be damaged quickly when private information is shared without permission.

What is shared within the group should remain within the group, except in situations involving harm to oneself, harm to others, abuse, or circumstances requiring legal reporting.

Protecting another person's trust is an important part of showing Christ's love and compassion.

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up."

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Group Covenant

Our Commitment to One Another

As participants in this recovery and discipleship journey, we recognize that healing takes place in an atmosphere of trust, respect, honesty, and grace.

To help create a safe and supportive environment, we agree to the following commitments:

Confidentiality

What is shared within the group stays within the group.

We will not discuss another person's story, struggles, experiences, or personal information outside of the group without their permission.

The only exceptions are situations involving abuse, self-harm, threats of harm to others, or circumstances that legally require reporting.

Respect

We will treat one another with kindness, dignity, and respect.

We recognize that each person is on a unique journey and may be at a different place in their healing process.

Listening

We will listen attentively without interrupting.

We will seek to understand rather than judge, criticize, or correct.

We will allow others the opportunity to share without rushing to give advice.

Honesty

We will strive to be truthful with ourselves and others.

Healing begins when we are willing to acknowledge our struggles, fears, hurts, and victories.

Encouragement

We will build one another up rather than tear one another down.

We will speak words of hope, grace, and encouragement.

Accountability

We will take responsibility for our own choices, actions, attitudes, and recovery.

We understand that lasting change begins with personal responsibility and dependence upon God.

Prayer

We will pray for one another and encourage one another in our walk with Jesus Christ.

We will seek God's wisdom, guidance, healing, and strength throughout this journey.

Grace

We understand that none of us are perfect.

There may be setbacks, struggles, and difficult days along the way.

We choose to extend grace to one another just as Christ extends grace to us.

Our Commitment

By signing below, I agree to honor this covenant and help create a safe, supportive, Christ-centered environment for healing, growth, and recovery.

Participant Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

Galatians 6:2

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up."

1 Thessalonians 5:11

GROUP Covenant

*For we are God's handiwork,
created in Christ Jesus to do
good works, which God prepared
in advance for us to do.*

EPHESIANS 2:10

OUR COMMITMENT TO ONE ANOTHER

As participants in this recovery and discipleship journey, we recognize that healing takes place in an atmosphere of trust, respect, honesty, and grace.

To help create a safe and supportive environment, we agree to the following commitments:



CONFIDENTIALITY

What is shared within the group stays within the group. We will not discuss another person's story, struggles, experiences, or personal information outside of the group without their permission. The only exceptions are situations involving abuse, self-harm, threats of harm to others, or circumstances that legally require reporting.



RESPECT

We will treat one another with kindness, dignity, and respect. We recognize that each person is on a unique journey and may be at a different place in their healing process.



LISTENING

We will listen attentively without interrupting. We will seek to understand rather than judge, criticize, or correct. We will allow others the opportunity to share without rushing to give advice.



HONESTY

We will strive to be truthful with ourselves and others. Healing begins when we are willing to acknowledge our struggles, fears, hurts, and victories.



ENCOURAGEMENT

We will build one another up rather than tear one another down. We will speak words of hope, grace, and encouragement.



ACCOUNTABILITY

We will take responsibility for our own choices, actions, attitudes, and recovery. We understand that lasting change begins with personal responsibility and dependence upon God.



PRAYER

We will pray for one another and encourage one another in our walk with Jesus Christ. We will seek God's wisdom, guidance, healing, and strength throughout this journey.



GRACE

We understand that none of us are perfect. There may be setbacks, struggles, and difficult days along the way. We choose to extend grace to one another just as Christ extends grace to us.

OUR COMMITMENT

*By signing below, I agree to honor this covenant and help create a safe, supportive,
Christ-centered environment for healing, growth, and recovery.*

Participant Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

*"Carry each other's burdens,
and in this way you will
fulfill the law of Christ."*

GALATIANS 6:2

*"Therefore encourage one another
and build each other up."*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:11

Your Will Be Done

A Prayer of Surrender

Father, I thank You for this day.
Father, I thank You for this day sober
And I offer myself to You
For You to build with me and do
What You will, Your will be done.

Father, help me reflect your Love
To everyone I see today
From my heart thru my eyes
In my deeds, in the words I say
Help me reflect your precious love today

Relieve me of the bondage of myself
So I can better do Your will
Take away my worries and troubles too
That my victory will bear witness to
Your love, Your power and Your way of Life.

Chorus

Your will be done, not mine
In Your way, in Your time
Your will be done, not mine
Help me to seek, help me to find

I pray in the name of
Jesus Christ Amen

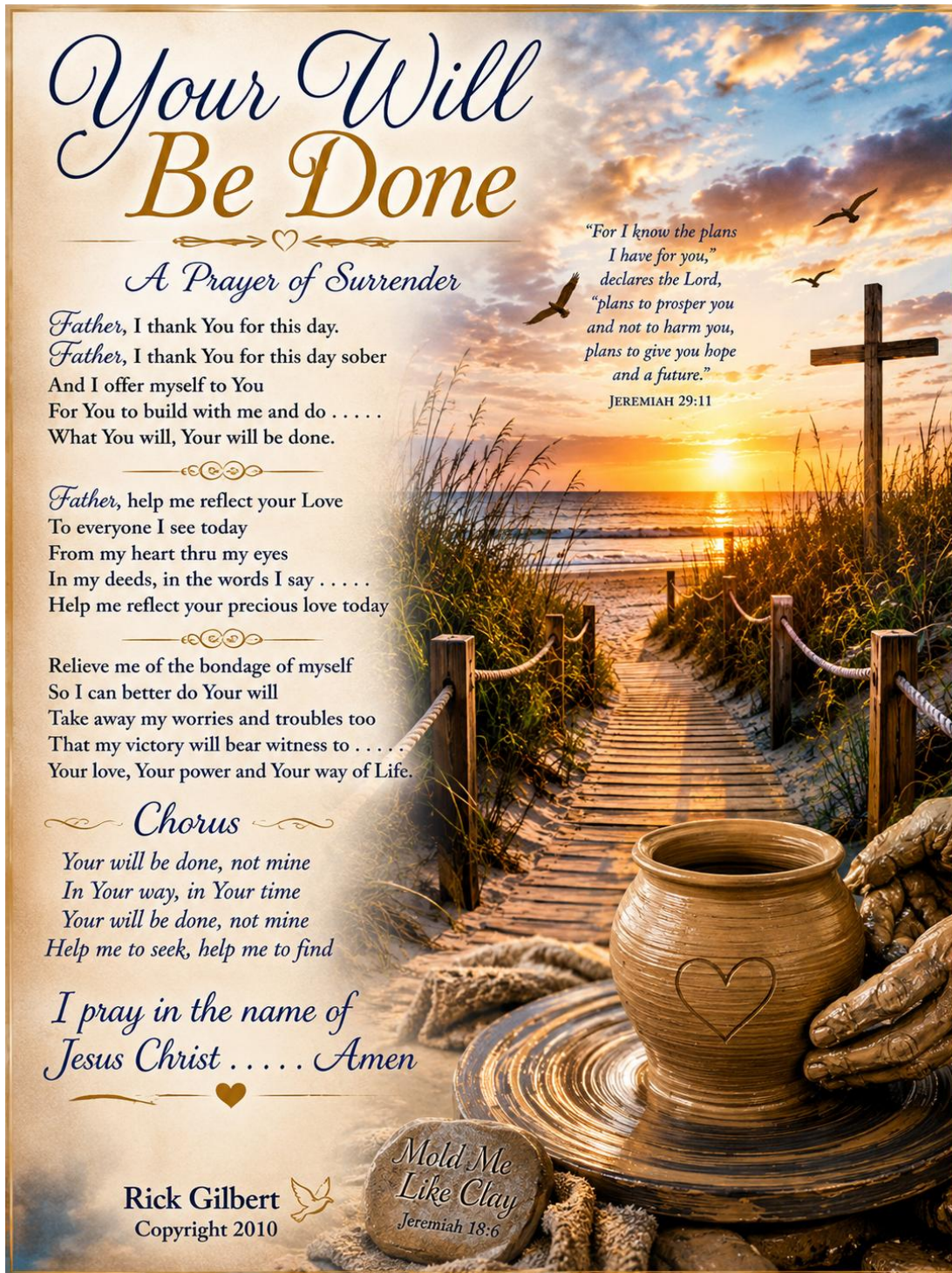
"For I know the plans
I have for you,"
declares the Lord,
"plans to prosper you
and not to harm you,
plans to give you hope
and a future."

JEREMIAH 29:11

Rick Gilbert
Copyright 2010



Mold Me
Like Clay
Jeremiah 18:6



My Life Story



From Brokenness to Restoration

As you work through this workbook, I encourage you to begin writing your own life story. Every person's journey is unique, and every testimony reflects the faithfulness of God in different ways.

What follows is a brief version of my story—from wounded to restored. God truly can transform a life when we surrender it to Him.

I originally wrote the first edition of *Mold Me Like Clay* in 2004. I never published it; instead, I simply shared copies with people who needed encouragement and hope. Over the years, much has changed in my life, and with those changes came new lessons, new healing, and a deeper understanding of God's grace.

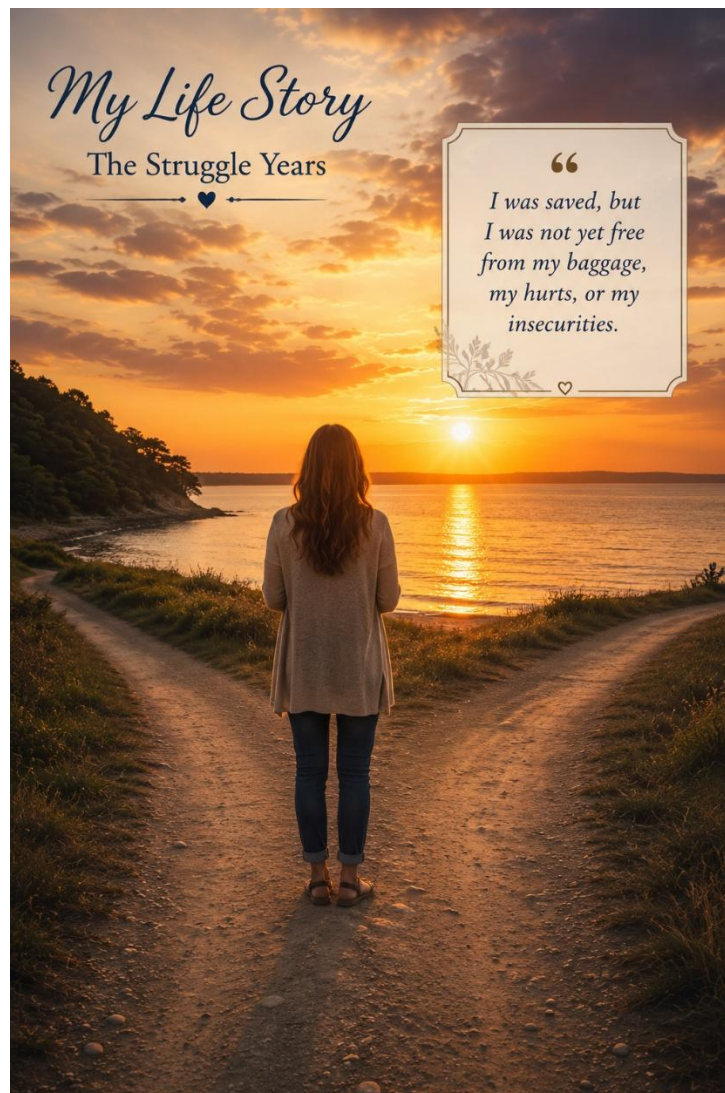
I have always related to the woman at the well in Scripture. Her story reminds me that no matter our past, God's redemption is available to all of us.

I grew up in the South with strong family values, a solid work ethic, and a deep respect for others. While there were many blessings in my childhood, there were also wounds and insecurities that followed me into adulthood. Like many people, I spent years searching for

acceptance, significance, and love in places that could never fully satisfy the needs of my heart.

As a young woman, I made many choices that led me down difficult roads. I experienced unhealthy relationships, addiction, codependency, heartbreak, rejection, abuse, and emotional pain. I was searching for love but often looked in the wrong places. What I did not realize at the time was that many of my decisions were being influenced by unresolved hurts, insecurities, and unhealthy patterns that had developed over the years.

At age twenty-five, I gave my life to Christ. Although I was saved, I soon learned that salvation was only the beginning of my healing journey. God had forgiven me, but there were still wounds that needed healing, beliefs that needed changing, and patterns that needed breaking.



Over time, God began revealing areas of my life that needed transformation. He showed me the effects of codependency, unhealthy relationships, fear, insecurity, and misplaced identity. Through His Word, prayer, counseling, recovery tools, and the guidance of mature believers, He slowly began setting me free.

The process was not quick.

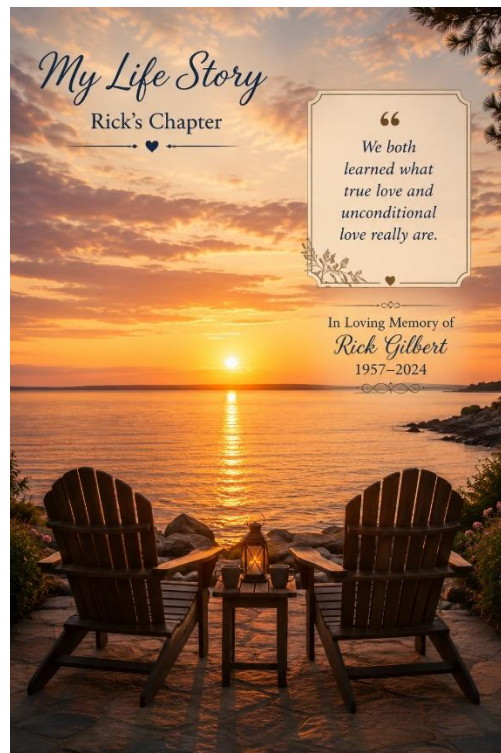
It was not easy.

But it was worth it.

As the years passed, God continued to heal my heart and renew my mind. I learned that my worth was not determined by a relationship, another person's approval, or my past mistakes. My identity was found in Christ alone.

One of God's greatest blessings in my life was bringing my husband, Rick Gilbert, into my journey. We were together for fifteen years and married for thirteen. Through our relationship, I learned what healthy, unconditional love truly looks like. Rick was passionate about helping others find recovery and healing. He dedicated much of his life to serving those struggling with addiction, mental health challenges, and life-controlling issues.

In October 2024, after a courageous battle with Glioblastoma, Rick went home to be with the Lord. His loss has been one of the greatest heartbreaks of my life. Yet even in grief, I have experienced God's comfort, strength, and faithfulness.



Throughout the years, God also opened doors for me to work with individuals facing mental health challenges, addiction, trauma, and life struggles. As I listened to their stories, I often recognized pieces of my own journey. I understood what it felt like to struggle, to feel lost, and to wonder if life could ever be different.

The answer is yes.

Healing is possible.

Freedom is possible.

Restoration is possible.

Today, I am grateful for the work God has done in my life. I have experienced healing emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and relationally. While none of us ever arrive at perfection, I can honestly say that I am no longer the person I once was.

God has restored relationships.

He has healed wounds.

He has broken chains.

He has given me purpose.

Today, through Walking with Jesus 365 Ministries, I have the privilege of encouraging others on their own journeys toward healing and freedom.

Thank God for the prayers of a faithful mother who never gave up on me.

Thank God for His grace that never gave up on me.

Thank God for His mercy that carried me through every season of life.

That is about as short as I can make my life story to show you that God heals! Never give up. Always have hope!

The journey to **65 years old** has had many speed bumps, but by God's grace I have continued moving forward. There have been challenges, disappointments, losses, and lessons along the way. There have also been blessings, victories, friendships, family, healing, and joy.

I miss my husband dearly, and there are still days when grief is difficult. Yet I trust God with this season just as I have trusted Him through every other season of my life.

God is still writing my story. and He is still writing yours.



Assignment

Begin writing your own life story.

Write honestly.

Write prayerfully.

Write courageously.

Your story matters.

Keep your writing in a safe place and share it only with trusted individuals who can encourage and support your healing journey.

Remember, the truth has a way of bringing freedom into the places we have hidden for years.

Do not try to walk this journey alone. Seek out a trusted mentor, pastor, counselor, recovery leader, or mature Christian friend who can walk alongside you.

Healing happens best in healthy relationships.

Most importantly, remember this:

Your past does not determine your future.

Your mistakes do not define you.

God is not finished with you yet.

Begin Your Story

Your story matters.

The truth has a way of bringing freedom
into the places we have hidden for years.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Begin writing your own life story. Write honestly. Write prayerfully. Write courageously.



My earliest
memories...



The greatest
challenge
I have faced...



A time God
helped me...



What healing
do I need
today?



What do I hope
God will do
in my life?



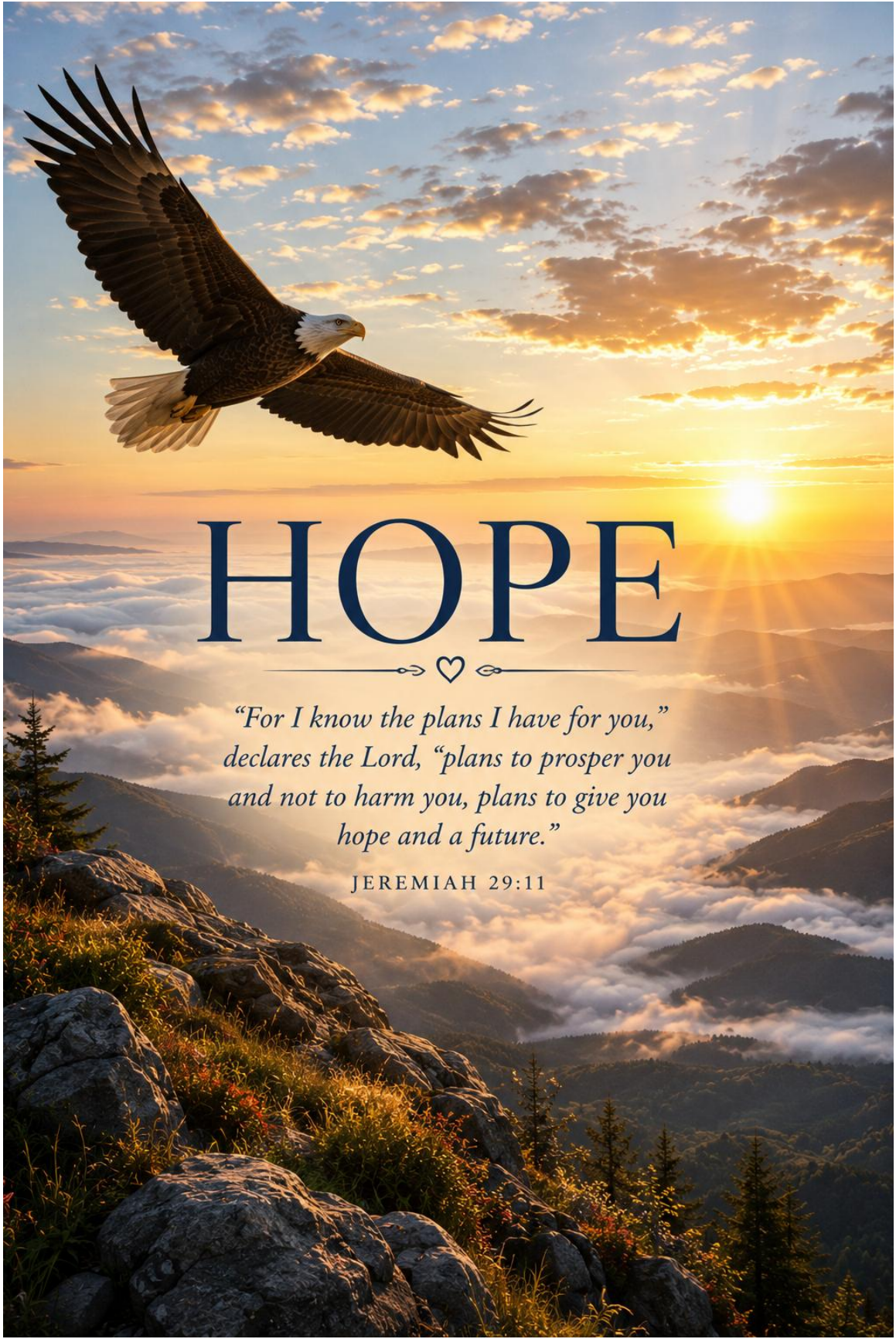
A Gentle Reminder

Do not try to walk this journey alone. Seek out a trusted mentor, pastor,
counselor, recovery leader, or mature Christian friend who can walk alongside you.

Healing happens best in healthy relationships.

“The truth shall set you free.”

— John 8:32



HOPE



*“For I know the plans I have for you,”
declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you
and not to harm you, plans to give you
hope and a future.”*

JEREMIAH 29:11

Hope

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Jeremiah 29:11

As we begin this journey of life recovery, **hope** is essential.

Hope keeps us moving forward when life becomes difficult. It helps us endure hardships, overcome disappointments, and believe that better days are ahead.

Through all the challenges, losses, mistakes, and struggles I have faced throughout my life, I may have given up on certain situations, but I never stopped hoping for a better future.

What are you hoping for?

What dreams has God placed within your heart?

What desires have you buried because of fear, disappointment, or past failures?

Is God part of your future?

Take time to reflect on these questions and journal your thoughts.

The following Scriptures have encouraged me throughout my own journey. As you read them, ask God to reveal how they apply to your life.

Faith and Hope Work Together

Hebrews 11:1

"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."

Faith and hope are closely connected.

I cannot physically see God, yet I have seen His hand at work throughout my life. I have experienced His protection, guidance, provision, and mercy. There have been times when He placed people on my heart to pray for, only to later discover they were facing a crisis at that exact moment.

Do I ever have doubts?

Of course.

We all do.

Yet whenever I return to prayer, God's Word, and fellowship with other believers, my hope is renewed.

God's Plans Are Greater Than Our Understanding

Jeremiah 29:11

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

God does not force His will upon us. He gives us choices.

Throughout Scripture, we see examples of people choosing either obedience or disobedience. Sometimes our choices bring blessings, and sometimes they bring consequences.

Even when life feels confusing, we can trust that God has a purpose for our lives.

His plans are not intended to destroy us.

His plans are filled with hope.

His plans include a future.

When life feels uncertain, remember that God sees the entire picture even when we only see a small part.

Hope Beyond This Life

1 Peter 1:13

"Set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at His coming."

One of the greatest sources of hope for believers is the promise of eternal life.

This world is not our final home.

As Christians, we have hope not only for today but for eternity.

Because of Jesus Christ, we can face life's challenges knowing that God's grace sustains us both now and forever.

God's Purpose for Your Life

Ephesians 1:18

"That you may know the hope to which He has called you."

God created you with purpose.

You are not an accident.

You are not forgotten.

You are not without value.

Scripture reminds us:

"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works."

Ephesians 2:10

God has a plan for your life, and part of recovery is discovering the person He created you to be.

Walking by the Spirit

Galatians 6:8

"Whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life."

The choices we make today influence the direction of our future.

Scripture teaches us to walk by the Spirit rather than being controlled by unhealthy desires, destructive behaviors, or harmful patterns.

As we grow closer to Christ, the fruit of the Spirit begins to develop within us:

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience

- Kindness
- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-control

Recovery is not simply about stopping unhealthy behaviors.

It is about developing a healthy relationship with God and allowing Him to transform us from the inside out.



Group Discussion: Read Galatians 5:13-26 together and discuss how the Fruit of the Spirit can support healing and recovery.

Rising Above the Storm

Isaiah 40:31

"But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles."

This has always been one of my favorite verses.

Eagles do not avoid storms. They rise above them.

Life will bring difficulties.

There will be disappointments, frustrations, losses, and challenges.

The question is not whether storms will come.

The question is where your hope is anchored when they do.

When I spend time in prayer, read God's Word, and surround myself with positive, faith-filled people, I find my strength renewed.

What we feed our minds matters.

If we continually fill our lives with negativity, fear, anger, and hopelessness, those things will eventually affect our outlook.

But when we fill our hearts with God's truth, our perspective changes.

Our hope grows stronger.

Everything Is Possible With God

Mark 9:23

"Everything is possible for one who believes."

We live in a world that wants everything immediately.

God often works differently.

Growth takes time.

Healing takes time.

Recovery takes time.

Trust God's timing.

Do not give up simply because the process is taking longer than you expected.

A Work in Progress

Philippians 1:6

"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion."

None of us have arrived.

We are all works in progress.

Every step toward healing matters.

Every lesson learned matters.

Every victory matters.

God is still working in you.

Never forget that.

You Are Not Forgotten

Psalm 9:18

"The hope of the afflicted will never perish."

If you feel broken, discouraged, forgotten, or overwhelmed, know this:

God sees you.

God loves you.

God has not forgotten you.

There is still hope.

If you are struggling deeply, reach out for help. Talk to a pastor, counselor, therapist, mentor, recovery leader, or trusted friend.

You do not have to walk through life's difficulties alone.

The God of Hope

Romans 15:13

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him."

Hope grows when trust grows.

The closer we draw to God, the more we experience His peace, joy, and strength.

God is not merely the giver of hope.

He is the God of Hope.

Do You Want to Get Well?

John 5:6

"Do you want to get well?"

This question Jesus asked many years ago is still relevant today.

Healing requires willingness.

Recovery requires effort.

Freedom requires change.

The hand of help may be extended toward you, but you must choose whether to take it.

Fear often keeps people trapped in unhealthy situations.

Hope gives us the courage to take the next step.

Hope Defeats Shame

Romans 5:5

"Hope does not put us to shame."

Shame tells us we will never change.

Shame tells us we are failures.

Shame tells us we are beyond help.

God says otherwise.

His love brings healing.

His grace brings restoration.

His hope brings freedom.

Final Thoughts

To have hope, we must learn to trust.

When we have been hurt, betrayed, rejected, or disappointed, trust can be difficult.

Life teaches us that people sometimes fail.

But God never fails.

Over the years, I have learned that God is the one constant I can depend upon completely.

I do not say that lightly.

I say it from lived experience.

When everything else seems uncertain, my hope remains in Him.

And because my hope is in Him, I know that no matter what I face, there is always a reason to keep moving forward.

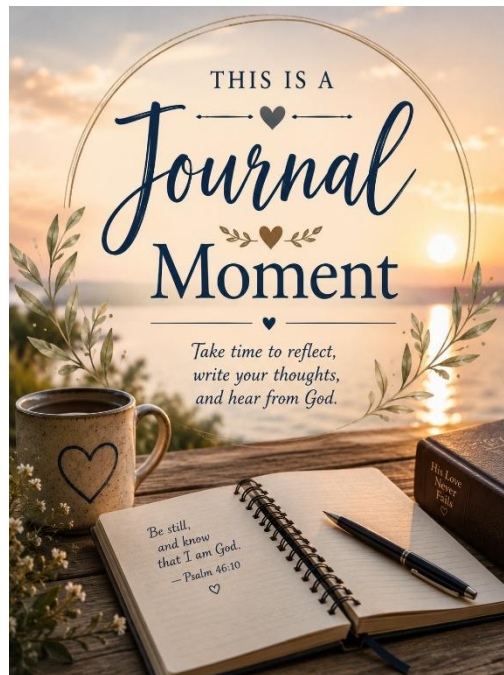
Always Hope.

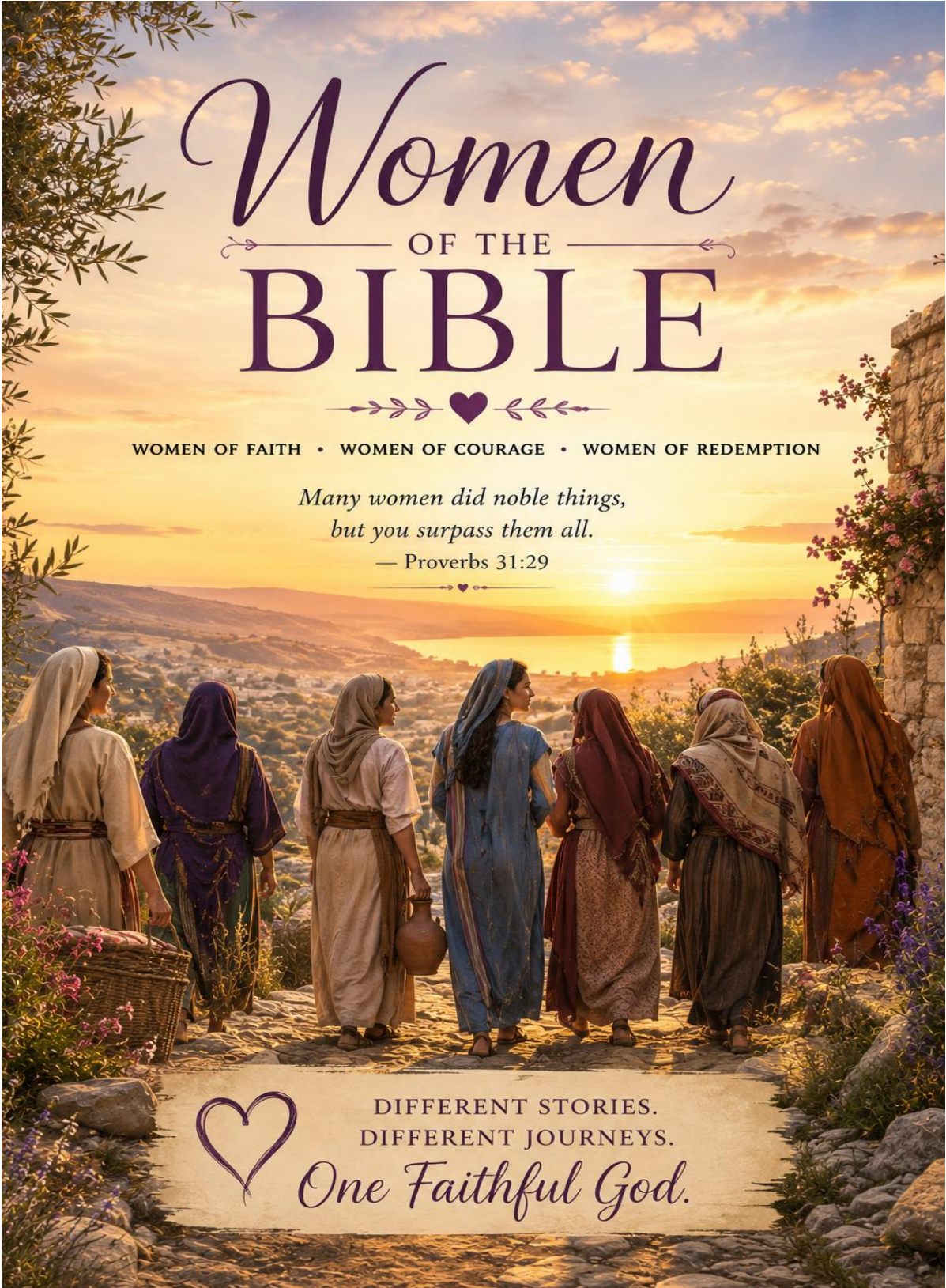
Reflection and Journal Questions

1. What are you hoping for today?
2. What dreams has God placed on your heart?
3. What areas of your life need healing?
4. Where do you need to trust God more?
5. What Scripture in this chapter encouraged you the most and why?
6. What is one step you can take this week toward healing and recovery?

"Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength."

Isaiah 40:31





Women OF THE BIBLE

WOMEN OF FAITH • WOMEN OF COURAGE • WOMEN OF REDEMPTION

*Many women did noble things,
but you surpass them all.*

— Proverbs 31:29



DIFFERENT STORIES.
DIFFERENT JOURNEYS.
One Faithful God.

Women of the Bible

Women of Faith, Women of Struggle, Women of Redemption

The Bible is filled with stories of women from many different backgrounds. Some were known for their faith and obedience. Others made poor choices and experienced painful consequences. Some were leaders. Some were mothers. Some were widows. Some were outcasts. Some were victims. Some were survivors.

Yet they all have something in common:

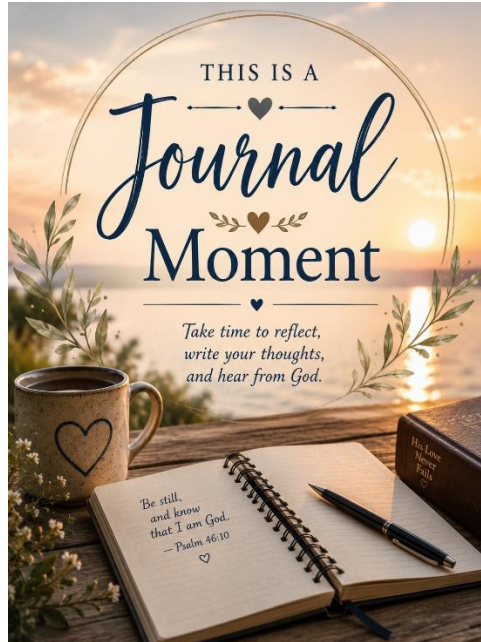
God loved them.

God saw their struggles, their fears, their mistakes, and their victories. He worked in their lives and offered them hope, purpose, forgiveness, and restoration.

The women of the Bible are not very different from women today. They faced relationship struggles, family challenges, rejection, grief, temptation, disappointment, betrayal, and difficult decisions. Their stories remind us that human nature has not changed very much over the centuries.

The good news is that God's love has not changed either.

No matter what you have done, where you have been, or what mistakes you have made, God loves you and desires a relationship with you. While our choices often have consequences, God's grace offers forgiveness, healing, and a new beginning.



Take a moment to reflect in your journal:

Journal Moment

- What consequences have I experienced because of poor choices?
- What lessons have I learned from those experiences?
- Where have I experienced God's grace in my life?
- What areas of my life still need healing and restoration?

Remember, people may walk away.

Relationships may change.

Friends may disappoint us.

But God remains faithful.

He stands ready to help us pick up the pieces and move forward.

Our hope is in Him.

Learning from the Women of Scripture

As you read the following stories, pay attention to both the strengths and weaknesses of each woman. Consider how their experiences relate to modern life and what lessons can be applied to your own journey.

Some of these women became examples of faith, courage, perseverance, and obedience.

Others serve as warnings about deception, manipulation, pride, and poor choices.

All of their stories teach valuable lessons.

Eve

Genesis Chapters 2–3

Eve lived in a perfect environment. She knew only goodness, peace, and fellowship with God. Yet she faced temptation and made a choice that affected all of humanity.

One of the lessons we learn from Eve is that temptation often appears attractive in the moment. Sometimes we want the very thing we have been told is not good for us.

Ask yourself:

- What is my "forbidden tree"?
- Are there areas where I am ignoring God's wisdom?
- Who am I listening to when making important decisions?

Another important lesson from Eve's story is the introduction of shame. When Adam and Eve sinned, shame entered their lives.

God's answer to shame has always been restoration.

Ruth

The Book of Ruth

Ruth was a widow who faced an uncertain future. Yet she remained loyal, faithful, hardworking, and committed to caring for Naomi.

Her integrity and character gained the respect of Boaz, a godly man who protected and provided for her.

Ruth reminds us that faithfulness during difficult seasons often prepares us for future blessings.

Her story teaches us:

- Loyalty matters.
- Character matters.
- Hard work matters.
- God can bring beauty from loss.

Ruth's faithfulness eventually placed her in the lineage of King David and ultimately Jesus Christ.



Bible Study and Group Discussion

Read the following stories and discuss how they relate to life today.

Consider:

- What challenges did this woman face?
- What choices did she make?
- What were the consequences of those choices?
- How did God work in her life?
- What lessons can I apply to my own life?

Women to Study

Deborah – Judges 4–5

Esther – The Book of Esther

Hagar – Genesis 16; Genesis 21:9–21

Rahab – Joshua 2

Delilah – Judges 16

Bathsheba – 2 Samuel 11–12

Mary, Mother of Jesus – Matthew 1:18–25; John 19:25–27

The Sinful Woman – Luke 7:36–50

Mary Magdalene – Luke 8:1–2

Women in Ministry – Luke 8:1–3; Luke 23:27–30; Luke 24:1–12

The Persistent Woman – Matthew 15:21–28

The Woman at the Well – John 4

Closing Thought

Every woman in Scripture has a story.

Some stories are filled with victory.

Some stories are filled with failure.

Some stories are filled with redemption.


The same God who worked in their lives is still working today.

As you study these women, remember that God is still writing your story too.

No matter where your journey has taken you, His grace is greater than your mistakes, His mercy is greater than your failures, and His love is greater than your fears.

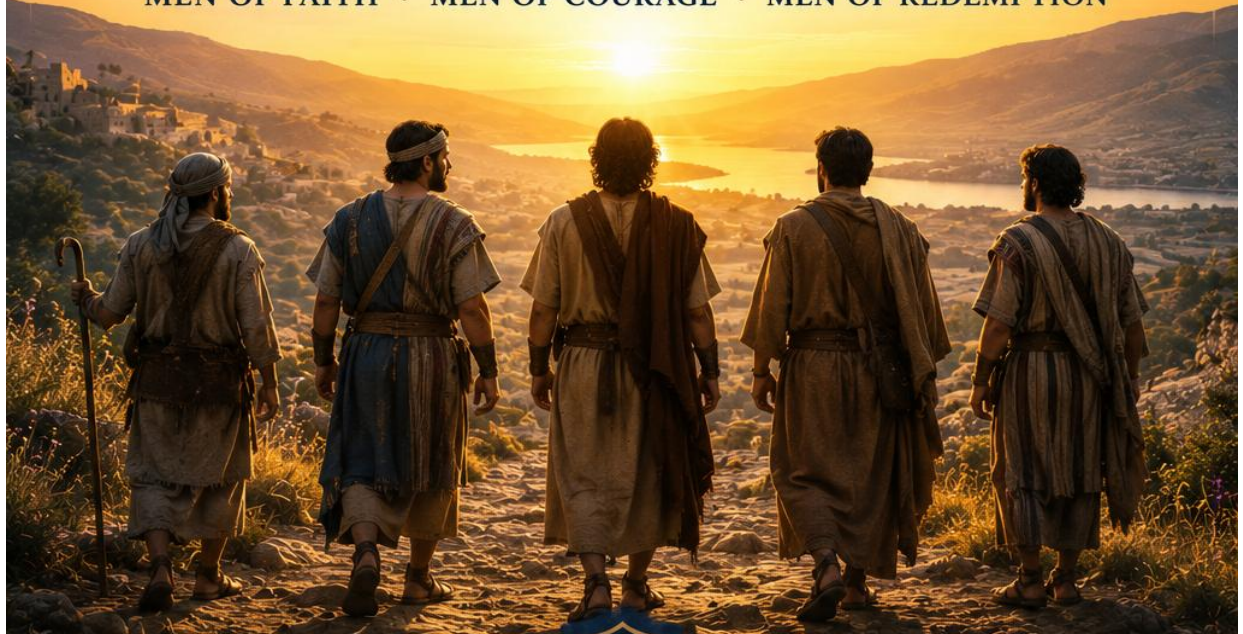
Your story is not over.

God is still at work.



MEN OF THE BIBLE

MEN OF FAITH • MEN OF COURAGE • MEN OF REDEMPTION



DIFFERENT STORIES.
DIFFERENT BATTLES.
One Faithful God.

Men of the Bible

Men of Strength, Men of Struggle, Men of Redemption

The stories of men in the Bible are filled with courage, faith, failure, redemption, and transformation.

Although these stories took place thousands of years ago, many of the struggles these men faced are remarkably similar to those we face today. They dealt with temptation, fear, pride, anger, lust, greed, disappointment, loss, leadership challenges, family conflicts, and questions about God's purpose for their lives.

The Bible does not hide the weaknesses of its heroes.

Instead, it reveals how God worked through imperfect people to accomplish His perfect plan.

One lesson becomes very clear as we study these men:

God can change a life.

Many of the men in Scripture made serious mistakes. Some wandered far from God. Some failed morally. Some struggled with fear and doubt. Yet many of them eventually returned to God with humble and repentant hearts.

Thank God for forgiveness.

Thank God for mercy.

Thank God for grace.

God specializes in taking broken lives and transforming them into something beautiful.

Just as pressure turns coal into a diamond, God often uses life's challenges to shape our character and strengthen our faith.

The process is not always comfortable, but it is often necessary.

As you read these stories, remember that God is still transforming lives today.

Your story is not finished yet.

A Little Humor About Bible Times

One interesting difference between biblical times and today is that some cultures practiced polygamy. While Scripture records men having multiple wives, this was never God's original design for marriage.

From the beginning, God created one man and one woman and established marriage as a lifelong covenant relationship.

As Genesis tells us:

"A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

Now let's be honest, gentlemen.

Solomon had **700 wives and 300 concubines**.

Many husbands have jokingly admitted they sometimes struggle to understand the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of one wife.

Can you imagine trying to understand one thousand?

One thousand personalities.

One thousand opinions.

One thousand different perspectives.

One thousand women wanting your attention at the same time.

Suddenly, Solomon's life does not sound quite as glamorous as it first appears!

While we can smile at the thought, Solomon's story teaches an important lesson. Despite his wisdom, power, and wealth, many of his relationships eventually pulled his heart away from God.

The lesson is simple:

No amount of success, possessions, relationships, or accomplishments can replace a close relationship with God.

Only God can truly satisfy the deepest needs of the human heart.



Bible Study and Group Discussion

Read the following stories and discuss what lessons can be learned from each man's life.

Consider the following questions:

- What strengths did this person demonstrate?
- What weaknesses did they struggle with?
- What consequences resulted from their choices?
- How did God work in their life?
- What can I learn from their successes and failures?

Samson

Judges 13–16

Samson was blessed with incredible strength and a special calling from God. Yet despite his gifts, he often made poor choices and struggled with temptation.

His story reminds us that great potential can be undermined by a lack of self-control.



Group Discussion

How do you relate to Samson?

Are there areas where you are allowing temptation, pride, or poor choices to weaken your spiritual strength?

David

1 Samuel 16 – 2 Samuel 24

1 Kings 1–2

David is one of the most well-known figures in Scripture.

He was a shepherd, warrior, musician, king, poet, and a man after God's own heart.

The Psalms reveal David's deepest thoughts and emotions. They show his love for God, his fears, his failures, his victories, his grief, and his worship.

David faced giants both literal and personal.

He defeated Goliath through faith in God.

Yet later in life, he struggled with temptation, adultery, deception, and the consequences of poor choices.

David's story reminds us that even faithful believers can fall.

It also reminds us that repentance and restoration are possible.



Group Discussion

What giants are you facing in your life today?

How do you relate to David's journey?

Job

The Book of Job

Job experienced unimaginable loss, suffering, and hardship.

He lost his wealth, his health, and many of the people he loved.

Yet through it all, Job continued to seek God.

His story teaches perseverance, faith, and endurance during difficult seasons.

There are times in life when we do not understand why we are suffering.

Job reminds us that God remains faithful even when circumstances are confusing.



Group Discussion

How do you relate to Job?

What trials have strengthened your faith?

Saul / Paul

The Book of Acts

Before becoming the Apostle Paul, Saul actively persecuted Christians and approved of their imprisonment and deaths.

Then everything changed.

After a dramatic encounter with Jesus, Saul's life was completely transformed.

He became one of the most influential leaders in the early church and devoted the remainder of his life to sharing the Gospel.

Paul's story is one of the greatest examples of God's power to change a person.

No one is beyond God's reach.

No past is too dark.

No mistake is too great for God's forgiveness.



Group Discussion

How do you relate to Saul's transformation into Paul?

Are there areas of your life where God is calling you to change?

Closing Thoughts

The men of the Bible were not perfect.

They struggled.

They failed.

They doubted.

They suffered.

Yet God continued working in their lives.

The same God who strengthened Samson, forgave David, sustained Job, and transformed Paul is still working today.

As you study these men, remember that God is not looking for perfection.

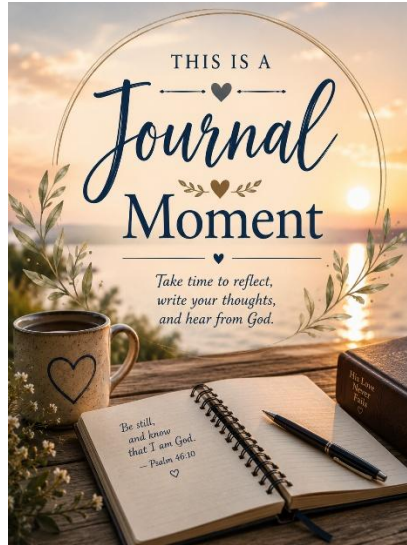
He is looking for willing hearts.

No matter where you are on your journey, God can use your story for His glory.

Trust Him.

Follow Him.

Allow Him to continue shaping you into the person He created you to be.



Journal Moment

1. Which biblical man do you relate to most and why?
2. What strengths do you see in your own life?
3. What weaknesses do you need God's help to overcome?
4. What "giants" are you facing right now?
5. How has God shown mercy and grace in your life?
6. What is one step you can take this week to grow closer to God?

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the examples of faith, courage, perseverance, and redemption found in Scripture.

Help me learn from the successes and failures of those who have gone before me.

Strengthen me where I am weak.

Guide me where I am uncertain.

Forgive me where I have failed.

Continue shaping my life according to Your purpose.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen.



CODEPENDENCY

BREAKING UNHEALTHY PATTERNS • SETTING HEALTHY
HEALTHY BOUNDARIES • FINDING FREEDOM IN CHRIST

*You are not
responsible for
fixing everyone.
God never asked
you to carry what
only He can carry.*



DIFFERENT STRUGGLES.
DIFFERENT CHOICES.



One Faithful God.

Codependency

Time to Cut the Cords and Stop Enabling

No More Excuses

Freedom is a powerful word.

The American flag symbolizes freedom.

The Statue of Liberty symbolizes freedom.

As Christians, however, our greatest freedom is found through Jesus Christ.

The Bible teaches us that true freedom comes when we surrender our lives to God and allow Him to transform us from the inside out. Through Christ, strongholds can be broken, addictions can be overcome, and unhealthy relationship patterns can be changed.

One of those unhealthy patterns is **codependency**.

Codependency develops when we become overly responsible for another person's choices, emotions, behaviors, or problems. While caring for others is healthy, taking responsibility for their lives is not.

Many codependent relationships involve addiction, substance abuse, unhealthy family dynamics, emotional struggles, or controlling behaviors.

The problem is that helping often turns into rescuing.

Rescuing someone from the consequences of their choices may actually keep them from growing.

Sometimes the most loving thing we can do is allow people to experience the results of their own decisions.

This is called **healthy detachment**.

Healthy detachment does not mean you stop loving someone.

It means you stop trying to do for them what they need to do for themselves.

You can encourage.

You can pray.

You can support.

But you cannot live another person's life.

Change is a personal choice.

You may influence another person, but you cannot change them.

Only God can change a heart.

The Bible speaks of generational patterns and cycles that are often passed from one generation to another. The good news is that those cycles can be broken.

Perhaps this is your generation for change.

Acknowledgment

Portions of the Codependency section are adapted from concepts and educational materials developed by **Kay Marie Porterfield**, author of *Coping with Codependency* and *Violent Voices*.

Permission to use this material was granted for the original edition of *Mold Me Like Clay*. The content has been revised, edited, and expanded for educational purposes within this workbook while maintaining the original concepts and intent.

We gratefully acknowledge Kay Marie Porterfield's contribution to helping individuals understand codependency, boundaries, healthy relationships, and personal growth.

What Is Codependency?

Codependency often involves becoming a caretaker for people who are unwilling or unable to solve their own problems.

This commonly occurs in relationships involving:

- Addiction
- Alcoholism
- Drug abuse
- Mental health struggles
- Dysfunctional family systems
- Controlling relationships

The codependent person often feels responsible for fixing, rescuing, protecting, or managing another person's life.

Over time this becomes exhausting and emotionally damaging.

Codependency can become just as destructive as the addiction or behavior being enabled.

Christ has compassion for us, but He does not force us to change.

People never learn to stand on their own if someone continually carries them.

To detach from a codependent relationship means allowing a person to become responsible for their own choices, actions, and consequences.

Codependency Symptoms

The following concepts were originally adapted from educational materials by **Kay Marie Porterfield** and are used with appreciation for her contribution to the understanding of codependency and recovery.

As you read through these symptoms, remember that identifying unhealthy patterns is not about condemnation. It is about awareness.

Awareness is often the first step toward healing and freedom.

Many codependent people struggle with boundaries.

Instead of respecting the boundaries of others, they attempt to manage or control situations around them.

Often this behavior is rooted in fear, insecurity, rejection, or childhood experiences.

Controlling others may temporarily create a feeling of safety, but it rarely produces healthy relationships.

Manipulation Tactics Codependents Use

1. People Pleasing

Telling people what we think they want to hear rather than expressing what we truly think or feel.

2. Instant Intimacy

Sharing too much too soon, demanding loyalty, or becoming emotionally dependent upon someone very quickly.

3. Caretaking

Confusing caring about people with taking responsibility for them.

4. Fixing

Trying to change, repair, rescue, or reform others rather than allowing them to take responsibility for themselves.

5. Guilt Games

Using disappointment, sadness, or guilt to influence others when our attempts to control situations fail.

Codependency Myths

Myth #1: "I Was Born This Way"

Codependency is learned behavior.

What is learned can be unlearned.

Myth #2: "I'll Outgrow It"

Codependency rarely disappears on its own.

Healing requires awareness and intentional change.

Myth #3: "Codependency Is a Disease With No Cure"

Codependency is not a life sentence.

It is a collection of unhealthy coping patterns that can be replaced with healthier ones.

Myth #4: "Everyone Is Picking On Me"

Codependency is not your fault.

However, healing becomes your responsibility.

Myth #5: "I Must Be Crazy"

You are not crazy.

You simply learned unhealthy survival skills that are no longer serving you well.

Learning to Detach

Detachment does not mean becoming cold or uncaring.

It means allowing another person to experience responsibility for their own life.

Healthy detachment says:

- I love you.
- I care about you.
- I will pray for you.
- I will encourage you.
- But I will not control your life.

Detachment creates room for growth.

Building Healthy Self-Esteem

Many codependent people struggle with self-worth.

Their value becomes dependent upon how much they do for others.

God never intended your identity to come from rescuing people.

Your identity comes from being a child of God.

Ways to Build Healthy Self-Esteem

1. Take care of your physical health through proper nutrition, exercise, and rest.
2. Stop speaking negatively about yourself.
3. Practice patience and self-compassion.
4. Celebrate progress instead of focusing only on shortcomings.
5. Forgive yourself.
6. Replace negative thoughts with positive truths.
7. Learn Scripture and use God's Word when temptation comes.
8. Build a strong support system.

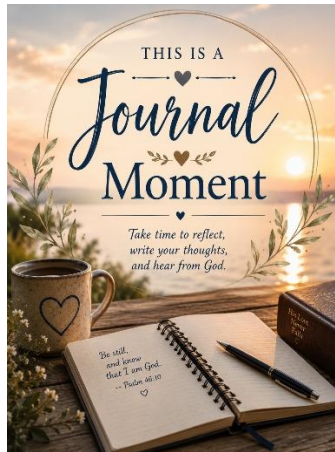
9. Learn to enjoy life and healthy recreation.

Remember:

When God forgives you, He removes your sins as far as the east is from the west.

It is time to forgive yourself.

When Satan reminds you of your past, remind him of his future.



Journal Moment

Ask yourself:

- Do I focus on solving other people's problems instead of my own?
- Do I need everyone to like me?
- Do I sacrifice my own needs to keep others happy?
- Do I feel responsible for another person's emotions?
- Do I lose my identity in relationships?
- Do I abandon my dreams for someone else's dreams?
- Does fear of rejection control my choices?
- Do I allow another person's anger to dictate my behavior?
- Do I enable unhealthy behaviors?
- Does my happiness depend on someone else's approval?

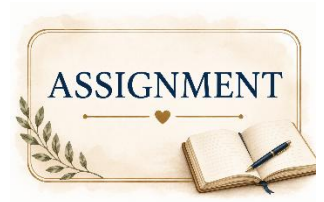
Be honest.

Awareness is the first step toward healing.



Group Discussion

1. What symptoms of codependency do you recognize in yourself?
2. How has codependency affected your relationships?
3. What healthy boundaries do you need to establish?
4. What fears make detachment difficult?
5. How can faith in Christ help you find freedom?



Homework Assignment

Part One

What has it cost you in your attempts to control others?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

Part Two

List personal behaviors, attitudes, and reactions you can control.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

Part Three

List examples of ways you attempt to control others.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

Part Four

How effective have your attempts been?

What were the outcomes?

Part Five

List two things you recently did for someone that they could have done for themselves.

1.

2.

Part Six

List positive things you have done for yourself during the past week.

Part Seven

What boundaries do you need to establish with:

- Family
- Friends
- Coworkers
- Spouse or Significant Other
- Children

Write your answers below.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Help me recognize unhealthy patterns in my relationships.

Teach me to love others without trying to control them.

Give me wisdom to set healthy boundaries.

Help me trust You with the people I love.

Teach me to find my identity in You rather than in the approval of others.

Guide me into freedom, healing, and emotional health.

Help me become the person You created me to be.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen.

—
—

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Finding Peace in a Busy World

—
—

Come to Me,
all you who are weary
and burdened,
and I will give you rest.

MATTHEW 11:28



RENEW
your mind



RESTORE
your heart



REFRESH
your soul



RELY
on God

*When life feels overwhelming,
God offers rest for your soul.*

Stress Management

Finding Peace in a Busy World

"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Matthew 11:28

Stress has become a normal part of life for many people.

Work responsibilities, family obligations, finances, health concerns, relationships, ministry, and everyday challenges can leave us feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, and discouraged.

Webster's Dictionary defines stress as physical, mental, or emotional strain resulting from demanding circumstances.

Stress affects the whole person.

It impacts us mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

Some stress is caused by negative events such as illness, loss, conflict, financial hardship, or relationship problems.

Other stress can come from positive events such as marriage, moving, a new job, retirement, ministry opportunities, or the birth of a child.

Change itself can create stress.

When stress becomes overwhelming and unmanaged, it can affect our health, our relationships, our work, our decision-making, and even our walk with God.

The good news is that God never intended for us to carry our burdens alone.

Throughout Scripture, we are reminded to bring our concerns to Him and trust Him to guide us through life's challenges.

As you work through this chapter, take an honest look at the stressors in your life.

The goal is not to eliminate every source of stress.

The goal is to learn healthy ways to manage stress so it no longer manages you.

Understanding Stress

Stress affects us in three primary ways:

Mental Effects

Stress can affect our ability to think clearly.

Common mental symptoms include:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Forgetfulness
- Poor decision-making
- Lack of focus
- Trouble solving problems
- Feeling overwhelmed

When our minds become overloaded, even simple tasks can feel difficult.

Emotional Effects

Stress often impacts our emotions.

Common emotional responses include:

- Anxiety
- Worry
- Irritability
- Discouragement
- Mood swings
- Sadness
- Depression
- Feeling emotionally exhausted

Physical Effects

Stress also affects the body.

When we feel threatened or overwhelmed, our bodies enter what is known as the "fight or flight" response.

This response was designed by God to help us react to danger, but when it remains activated for long periods of time, it can damage our health.

Stress Symptoms Checklist

Check any symptoms you have experienced during the past thirty days.

Emotional Symptoms

- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Anger
- Depression
- Jealousy
- Apathy
- Isolation
- Loss of joy
- Excessive worry
- Frequent crying

Mental Symptoms

- Forgetfulness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Negative thinking
- Procrastination
- Dwelling on the past
- Lack of productivity
- Poor attention to detail

Physical Symptoms

- Fatigue
- Increased heart rate
- Tightness in chest

What practical steps can you take this week to reduce your stress level?

Draw Your Stress

Using a blank sheet of paper, draw a picture that represents how you currently feel.

There are no right or wrong answers.

Sometimes drawing can reveal emotions that are difficult to put into words.

Burnout Assessment

Are You Headed Toward Burnout?

Stress is a normal part of life. However, prolonged stress without adequate rest, healthy boundaries, and self-care can lead to burnout.

Burnout affects us emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually. It can leave us feeling exhausted, discouraged, disconnected from others, and unable to enjoy life.

Take a few minutes to answer the following questions honestly.

Scoring Instructions

For each question, rate yourself using the following scale:

Score Description

- 1 Hardly any problems at all
 - 2 Some minor concerns
 - 3 Starting to experience difficulties
 - 4 Having significant problems
 - 5 Feeling overwhelmed and unable to cope
-

Burnout Assessment

1.

Do you have trouble finding joy in your life?

_____ Score

2.

Do you spend less time with friends and family than you once did?

_____ Score

3.

Do you find yourself too busy to call, visit, or connect with people you care about?

_____ Score

4.

Do you feel tired most of the time, even after resting?

_____ Score

5.

Have people commented that you look exhausted, stressed, or overwhelmed?

_____ Score

6.

Were you once more outgoing, but now find yourself withdrawing from others?

_____ Score

7.

Do you seem to accomplish less even though you are working harder?

_____ Score

8.

Do you experience sadness, loneliness, or depression that you cannot fully explain?

_____ Score

9.

Do you frequently forget appointments, lose things, or misplace important items?

_____ Score

10.

Do you have difficulty laughing, relaxing, or enjoying yourself?

_____ Score

11.

Has intimacy with your spouse become less enjoyable or begun to feel like another responsibility?

_____ Score

12.

Have you developed physical symptoms such as headaches, muscle tension, fatigue, or recurring illness?

_____ Score

13.

Do you find yourself becoming more critical, impatient, or easily irritated with others?

_____ Score

14.

At the end of the day, do you feel lost, directionless, or uncertain about where your life is headed?

_____ Score

15.

Do you find yourself with less patience and a shorter fuse than you once had?

_____ Score

Your Total Score

Add all your scores together.

TOTAL: _____

Burnout Score Interpretation

15–25

Healthy Balance

Great job! You appear to be managing life's stressors reasonably well. Continue practicing healthy habits and maintaining balance.

26–45

Caution Zone

You may be experiencing increased stress. Pay attention to your emotional, physical, and spiritual wellbeing.

Consider simplifying your schedule and increasing your self-care practices.

46–60

At Risk for Burnout

Your stress level is becoming unhealthy.

This is the time to reevaluate priorities, establish boundaries, and begin making intentional changes.

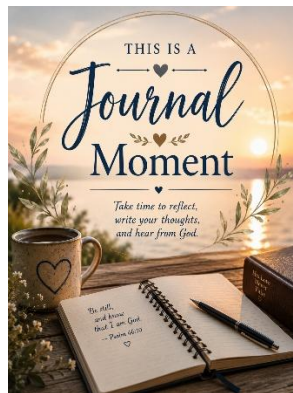
61–75

Burnout Warning

You are showing significant signs of burnout.

Your physical health, emotional wellbeing, relationships, and spiritual life may be suffering.

It is time to seek support and make meaningful changes before further damage occurs.



Journal Moment

What areas of your life are creating the most stress?

What can you remove, simplify, delegate, or change?

What is one practical step you can take this week to reduce stress?

Reflection Scripture

Matthew 11:28

"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Jesus never intended for us to carry every burden alone.

Sometimes the healthiest thing we can do is stop, rest, pray, and allow God to renew our strength.

Am I a Perfectionist?

Striving for Excellence or Demanding Perfection?

There is nothing wrong with wanting to do things well.

In fact, Scripture encourages us to work with excellence and to do our best in whatever we do.

However, there is a difference between striving for excellence and demanding perfection.

Only God is perfect.

We all make mistakes.

Mistakes are often some of life's greatest teachers. Through our failures, we learn, grow, mature, and gain wisdom.

Perfectionism can create enormous stress for both ourselves and the people around us. A perfectionist often places unrealistic expectations on themselves, family members, friends, coworkers, and even God.

While some perfectionist traits can be helpful, taken to the extreme they can become unhealthy and destructive.

As you read the following statements, answer honestly.

Remember:

The goal is not perfection.

The goal is growth.

Signs of Perfectionism

Ask yourself:

1. Do I place excessive demands on myself?
2. Do I place excessive demands on others?
3. Do I constantly seek approval from others?
4. Is my desire to succeed becoming a compulsive need to prove myself?
5. Do I see situations only in black-and-white terms, with little room for flexibility or compromise?

6. Am I overly critical of myself when I make mistakes?
7. Do obsessive thoughts keep me from enjoying life?
8. Do I move from one crisis to another and feel uncomfortable when life is peaceful?
9. Do unresolved problems keep me awake at night?
10. Do I need everything arranged in a particular way?
11. Do I struggle to listen to others because I believe my way is best?
12. Do I judge my worth by my accomplishments?
13. Do I view average performance as failure?
14. Do I become discouraged when things don't go exactly as planned?
15. Do I often wonder if I am doing enough for God?

Perfectionism Assessment

Rate each statement from **1–10**

1 = Not at All True

10 = Very True

Rate Yourself

_____ I am often frustrated with other people's performance.

_____ If a job is worth doing, it is worth doing perfectly.

_____ If I cannot do my best, I would rather not do it at all.

_____ People should always do the right thing.

_____ Things should always go according to plan.

_____ Life would be easier if everyone cooperated with me.

_____ Life would be easier if I could get everything together.

_____ Small mistakes bother me more than they should.

_____ I wish every day could be a perfect day.

____ I often remember vacations, events, or experiences that were ruined because something went wrong.

____ I frequently replay situations and think about what I should have done differently.

____ I have trouble leaving things alone until they meet my expectations.

____ I believe someday everything will finally run smoothly.

____ Life often feels harder than it should.

____ I sometimes wonder if I am doing enough for God.

Total Score

Add your scores together.

TOTAL: _____

Understanding Your Score

15–49

Healthy Standards

You strive for excellence while maintaining balance.

You understand that mistakes are part of growth.

50–74

Borderline Perfectionist

You may be placing unnecessary pressure on yourself and others.

Watch for increasing stress and unrealistic expectations.

75–99

Strong Perfectionist Tendencies

Perfectionism is likely affecting your relationships, emotional health, and stress levels.

Learning flexibility and self-compassion may help reduce stress.

100–150

Perfectionism Is Controlling Too Much

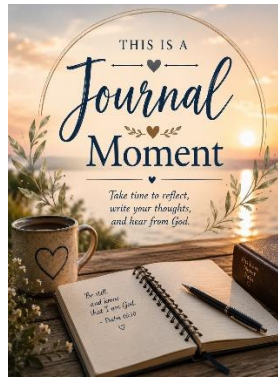
Your expectations may be creating significant stress for yourself and others.

Remember:

God never called us to be perfect.

He calls us to be faithful.

Progress is often more important than perfection.



Journal Moment

Which perfectionist traits describe you most?

How has perfectionism affected your:

Relationships

Work

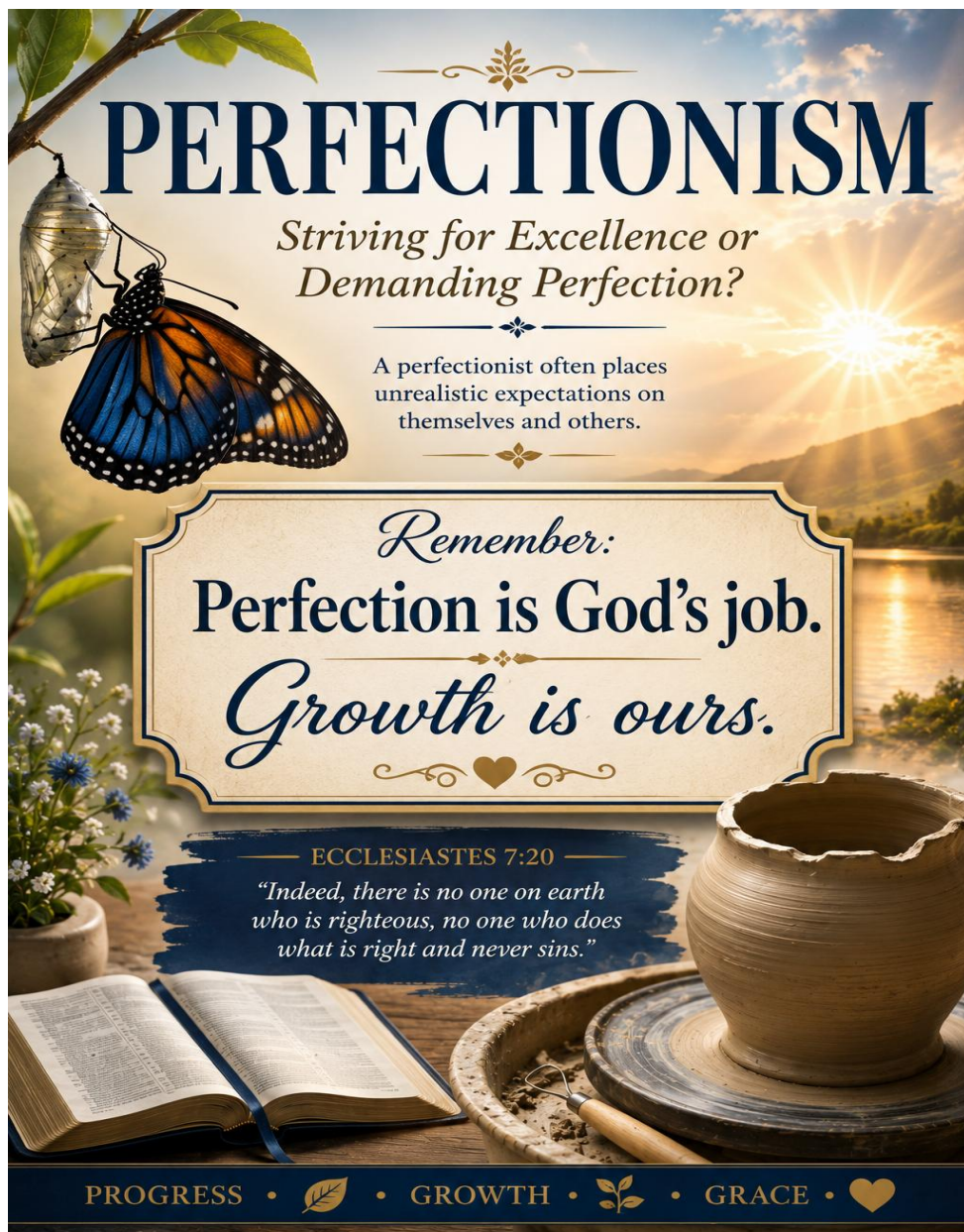
Spiritual Life

Emotional Health

What would change if you gave yourself permission to be imperfect?

Key Thought

Perfection is God's job. Growth is ours.



Ways to Manage Stress

Learning to Live with Greater Peace

Stress is a part of life.

We cannot eliminate every stressful situation, but we can learn healthier ways to respond to stress. Managing stress is about making choices that protect our emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing.

Remember:

You cannot control everything that happens to you, but you can control how you respond to it.

Change Your Perspective

Ask Yourself:

"Will this matter six months from now?"

If the answer is no, try not to spend excessive time worrying about it.

Not every problem deserves permanent space in your mind.

Develop a Forgiving Attitude

Most people are doing the best they can with the knowledge and experiences they have.

Holding onto bitterness, resentment, and unforgiveness creates tremendous stress.

Forgiveness does not excuse harmful behavior.

Forgiveness frees you from carrying the burden.

Know Your Worth

Your value does not come from:

- Your job
- Your income
- Your accomplishments

- Other people's opinions

Your worth comes from being created in God's image.

Know who you are in Christ.

Set Healthy Boundaries

Know Your Limits

It is okay to say:

"No."

You do not have to attend every event.

You do not have to solve every problem.

You do not have to rescue every person.

Healthy boundaries reduce stress and prevent burnout.

Stop Trying to Control Everything

Take responsibility for what you can control:

- Your attitude
- Your choices
- Your reactions
- Your behavior

Leave the rest to God.

Manage Your Time Wisely

Prioritize

Do not schedule more than you can realistically handle.

Learn to distinguish between:

- Urgent tasks

- Important tasks
- Optional tasks

Everything is not equally important.

Learn to Delegate

You do not have to do everything yourself.

Allow others to help.

Delegating responsibilities is a sign of wisdom, not weakness.

Think Before You Commit

Before saying "yes," ask:

- Do I have time?
- Do I have energy?
- Is this truly important?
- Is God leading me to do this?

Create a Peaceful Environment

Have a Quiet Time

Spend time daily:

- Praying
- Reading Scripture
- Worshiping
- Sitting quietly before God

Even a few minutes of quiet can help calm a stressed mind.

Choose Healthy Relationships

Spend time with people who:

- Encourage you
- Support your growth
- Speak truth in love
- Bring peace rather than chaos

Negative people can increase stress significantly.

Choose Healthy Environments

Your home, workplace, and recreational environments should support your wellbeing whenever possible.

A peaceful environment often creates a more peaceful mind.

Care for Your Physical Health

Eat Healthy

Your body functions best when properly nourished.

Try to eat balanced meals and drink plenty of water.

Exercise Regularly

Exercise reduces stress and improves both physical and emotional health.

You do not need to become a marathon runner.

Even:

- Walking
- Swimming
- Gardening
- Dancing

- Stretching

can help relieve stress.

Avoid Harmful Coping Methods

Many people attempt to manage stress through:

- Alcohol
- Drugs
- Smoking
- Overeating
- Excessive spending

These may provide temporary relief but often create additional problems.

Get Organized

Prepare Ahead

Simple preparation reduces daily stress.

Examples:

- Lay out clothes the night before.
- Pack lunches ahead of time.
- Keep a calendar.
- Allow extra travel time.
- Write down appointments.

Organization creates peace.

Don't Rely Solely on Memory

Keep track of:

- Appointments

- Deadlines
- Family events
- Prayer requests
- Important tasks

A planner or calendar can reduce mental overload.

Focus on Today

One of the greatest stress reducers is learning to live one day at a time.

We cannot change the past.

We cannot control tomorrow.

We can only manage today.

Jesus said:

Matthew 6:34

"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Count Your Blessings

For every problem in your life, there are often many blessings.

Make a habit of gratitude.

Each evening write down:

- Three blessings
- Three answered prayers
- Three things you are thankful for

Gratitude changes perspective.

Learn to Laugh

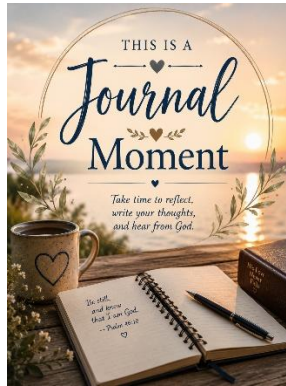
Laughter truly is good medicine.

Find reasons to smile.

Enjoy healthy humor.

Spend time with people who make you laugh.

Joy is one of God's gifts.



Journal Moment

What are the three biggest sources of stress in your life right now?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What practical action can you take this week to reduce stress in each area?



Group Discussion

1. What causes the most stress in your life?
2. Which stress-management suggestion was most helpful?
3. What unhealthy coping mechanisms have you used in the past?
4. What healthy habits would you like to develop?
5. How can faith in Christ help you manage stress?

WAYS TO MANAGE STRESS

Learning to Live with Greater Peace



CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE

Focus on what truly matters and let go of the rest.



SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

It's okay to say no. Protect your time, energy, and peace.



MANAGE YOUR TIME WISELY

Prioritize, delegate, and focus on what is important.



CREATE A PEACEFUL ENVIRONMENT

Surround yourself with people and places that bring peace.



CARE FOR YOUR BODY

Eat healthy, exercise, and get enough rest. Your body is a temple.



GET ORGANIZED

Plan ahead, stay organized, and don't rely on memory alone.



FOCUS ON TODAY

You can't change the past or control tomorrow. Live one day at a time.

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Matthew 6:34



KEY THOUGHT

You cannot always
control your circumstances,
but you can choose how
you respond to them.



Ways to Get a Better Night's Sleep

Rest Is Part of God's Design

Many people underestimate the importance of sleep.

When we are tired, everything seems harder. Stress feels heavier, emotions become more intense, concentration decreases, and patience often disappears.

God designed our bodies to need rest.

Sleep is not laziness.

Sleep is necessary for emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual health.

If you struggle with sleep, consider the following suggestions.

Create a Comfortable Sleep Environment

Your bedroom should be a place of peace and relaxation.

Make your room comfortable and inviting.

Choose bedding, pillows, and décor that help you feel calm and rested.

A comfortable environment can greatly improve sleep quality.

Reduce Lighting Before Bed

Soft lighting helps prepare your body for sleep.

As bedtime approaches:

- Dim the lights.
- Turn off bright screens when possible.
- Create a calm atmosphere.

Your body naturally responds to darkness by preparing for rest.

Choose Evening Activities Wisely

Reading can often help you relax before bed.

Choose material that is peaceful and uplifting.

Avoid activities that create stress, fear, or excessive stimulation before bedtime.

Establish a Consistent Sleep Schedule

Try to go to bed and wake up at approximately the same time each day.

Your body functions best when it develops a predictable rhythm.

Consistency helps improve both the quality and quantity of sleep.

Avoid Excessive Daytime Naps

While occasional naps can be helpful, long or frequent naps may interfere with nighttime sleep.

If you nap regularly, try to keep it brief and consistent.

Keep Work Out of the Bedroom

Whenever possible:

- Avoid working in bed.
- Limit television viewing in bed.
- Avoid scrolling endlessly on electronic devices.

Your brain should associate your bedroom with rest.

Limit Stimulants

Several common substances can interfere with sleep:

- Coffee
- Tea
- Energy drinks
- Soda

- Chocolate
- Nicotine

Try limiting these, especially later in the day.

Watch Late-Night Eating

Heavy meals close to bedtime may make sleeping difficult.

If you are hungry before bed, consider a light snack instead.

Keep Your Room Dark

Darkness signals the brain that it is time to sleep.

Blackout curtains, shades, or a small nightlight can help create a restful environment.

Choose Comfortable Bedding

The right mattress, pillows, and bedding can make a significant difference in sleep quality.

Investing in your sleep is investing in your health.

Create a Sense of Safety

Many people sleep better when they feel secure.

Take reasonable precautions:

- Lock doors and windows.
- Check smoke detector batteries.
- Keep a phone nearby for emergencies.

Most importantly, place yourself in God's hands before going to sleep.

Avoid Using Alcohol as a Sleep Aid

Alcohol may make you sleepy initially, but it often disrupts restful sleep later during the night.

Healthy sleep habits provide better long-term results.

Exercise Regularly

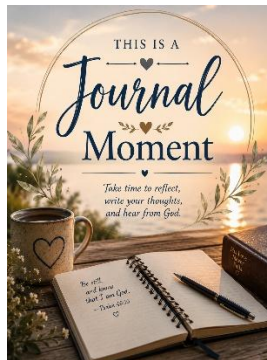
Physical activity helps reduce stress and improve sleep.

However, avoid strenuous exercise immediately before bedtime, as it may make it harder to relax.

Keep Fresh Air Flowing

A comfortable room temperature and good ventilation can improve sleep quality.

Many people sleep better in a cool, fresh environment.



Journal Moment

What currently interferes with your sleep?

What changes could you make this week to improve your nightly rest?



Stress Management Review

Take a moment and reflect on what you have learned throughout this chapter.

What causes the most stress in your life?

What signs of burnout do you recognize in yourself?

How does perfectionism affect your life?

What stress-management tools will you begin using?

What sleep habits do you need to improve?

Final Thoughts

Life can be overwhelming.

There will be seasons when responsibilities pile up, relationships become difficult, finances become tight, health problems arise, and circumstances seem beyond our control.

During those times, remember:

God never intended for you to carry every burden alone.

He invites you to bring your worries, fears, concerns, disappointments, and frustrations to Him.

You may not be able to control every circumstance in life.

But you can choose how you respond.

You can choose faith over fear.

You can choose peace over panic.

You can choose trust over worry.

And you can choose to rest in the promises of God.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for being our source of strength, peace, and rest.

When life becomes overwhelming, help us remember that we do not have to carry our burdens alone.

Teach us to trust You with the things we cannot control.

Help us establish healthy boundaries, manage stress wisely, and care for the bodies and minds You have given us.

Renew our strength when we are weary.

Calm our thoughts when we are anxious.

Give us restful sleep when we are tired.

Help us release fear, worry, perfectionism, and the pressures of life into Your hands.

Fill our hearts with Your peace that surpasses all understanding.

May we learn to live one day at a time, trusting You with our future and resting in Your love.

In the precious name of Jesus Christ we pray,

Amen.

Closing Scripture

Matthew 11:28

"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Remember:

You cannot always control your circumstances, but you can choose how you respond to them and with God's help, you never have to face them alone.



FEELINGS

Understanding Your Emotions Through God's Truth



Ephesians 4:25

*"Therefore each of you must put off falsehood
and speak truthfully to your neighbor,
for we are all members of one body."*



Feelings are not wrong.




Feelings are not weaknesses.



Feelings are signals that tell us
something is happening inside us.



The key is learning to understand
our feelings rather than allowing
our feelings to control us.



Feelings
make wonderful
indicators,
but poor
leaders.



RECOGNIZE
Your Emotions



UNDERSTAND
What They Mean



SURRENDER
Them to God



WALK IN
His Truth & Peace

Feelings

Understanding Your Emotions Through God's Truth

Ephesians 4:25

"Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body."

Why Feelings Matter

God created us with emotions.

We experience joy, sadness, anger, fear, excitement, disappointment, grief, peace, and many other feelings throughout our lives.

Feelings are not wrong.

Feelings are not weaknesses.

Feelings are signals that tell us something is happening inside us.

The key is learning to understand our feelings rather than allowing our feelings to control us.

Many people in recovery have spent years stuffing emotions, denying emotions, or reacting impulsively to emotions. Healing begins when we learn to identify what we are feeling and bring those feelings before God.

Common Feelings People Experience

1. Betrayed or Unprotected

Do you feel betrayed or left unprotected?

Perhaps the people who should have loved, protected, and cared for you failed to do so.

You may have experienced physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, or spiritual abuse.

You may wonder:

- Why did this happen?
- Why didn't someone help me?
- Why didn't someone protect me?

These are normal questions.

What happened to you was unfair.

But what happened to you does not define your value.

God sees your pain and desires to bring healing to your heart.

2. Alone

Many wounded people become isolated.

You may feel:

- Different from everyone else.
- Left out.
- Unwanted.
- Unable to share your pain.

Isolation often increases emotional suffering.

Healing begins when we find safe people with whom we can share our journey.

Remember:

You are not alone.

3. Unable to Trust

Trust is difficult when you have been deeply hurt.

Perhaps someone:

- Lied to you.
- Betrayed you.
- Abused you.
- Broke promises.
- Failed to protect you.

When trust is broken, walls often go up.

Learning to trust again takes time.

Healthy trust is built one step at a time through consistent actions and healthy relationships.

4. Fear

Fear often develops after painful experiences.

You may fear:

- Being hurt again.
- Rejection.
- Failure.
- Abandonment.
- The future.

Fear is one of Satan's favorite tools because it keeps people stuck.

God reminds us:

2 Timothy 1:7

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

Fear may knock on the door.

You do not have to invite it in.

5. Confusion

When life becomes overwhelming, confusion often follows.

You may not know:

- What decision to make.
- Who to trust.
- Which direction to go.

Remember:

God has given you a sound mind.

You may have made mistakes in the past, but mistakes can become valuable teachers.

Learn from them and continue moving forward.

6. Low Self-Esteem

Low self-esteem often develops when negative messages are repeated over time.

You may have been told:

- You're not good enough.
- You'll never succeed.
- Nobody will love you.
- You'll never amount to anything.

These messages are lies.

Your value comes from God—not from other people's opinions.

God created you with purpose.

You have gifts, talents, abilities, and strengths that are uniquely yours.

Do not allow another person's actions to steal what God placed within you.

7. Guilt

Guilt can sometimes be healthy.

Healthy guilt helps us recognize wrongdoing and make changes.

Unhealthy guilt keeps us trapped in shame and self-condemnation.

Ask yourself:

Am I feeling guilty because I did something wrong?

Or am I carrying responsibility for something that was never mine to carry?

God offers forgiveness and restoration.

8. Shame

Shame says:

"I am bad."

Guilt says:

"I made a mistake."

There is a huge difference.

Many people carry shame because of things that happened to them or mistakes they made years ago.

Jesus came to bring forgiveness, healing, and restoration.

Through Christ we can find freedom from shame.

Our past does not determine our future.

9. Anger

Anger is a natural emotion.

The Bible does not say anger itself is sinful.

Ephesians 4:26

"Be angry and do not sin."

The question is not whether we become angry.

The question is how we handle our anger.

Unresolved anger often turns into:

- Bitterness
- Resentment
- Hatred
- Depression
- Isolation

Learning healthy ways to process anger is essential for healing.

Shame-Based Messages

Words are powerful.

They can build people up or tear them down.

Examples of shame-based messages include:

- You are stupid.
- You are ugly.
- You are worthless.
- You will never amount to anything.
- Nobody wants you.

- You don't belong.

When these messages are repeated over time, people often begin believing them.

These lies create deep emotional wounds.

God's truth is stronger.

Your identity should be based on what God says about you—not what others have said about you.

Shame Versus Guilt

Shame

- Focuses on who I am.
- Says: "I am bad."
- Produces hiding, fear, and hopelessness.
- Creates feelings of worthlessness.

Guilt

- Focuses on behavior.
- Says: "I made a mistake."
- Produces conviction and change.
- Encourages responsibility and growth.

Healthy conviction moves us toward God.

Shame pushes us away from Him.

Are My Feelings Telling Me the Truth?

Feelings are real.

But feelings are not always accurate.

Sometimes our feelings are influenced by:

- Past wounds
- Trauma
- Abuse

- Fear
- Lies we have believed
- Temptation

Jesus demonstrated how to overcome temptation in Luke 4:1–13.

Every time Satan tempted Him, Jesus responded with God's Word.

When negative thoughts and emotions arise, ask:

- Is this true?
- What does God's Word say?
- Am I reacting from fear or faith?

God's truth helps us interpret our feelings correctly.



Group Exercise

Develop a healthy response plan.

When I Feel:

My Response Will Be:

When I Feel:

My Response Will Be:

When I Feel:

My Response Will Be:

When I Feel:

My Response Will Be:

When I Feel:

My Response Will Be:

Look up Bible verses that support healthy responses to each feeling.



Homework Assignment

Using your journal:

1.

Write down your personal values.

2.

Find Scriptures that support those values.

3.

Rate yourself from 1–10 on how closely your life reflects those values.

4.

What feelings do you struggle to control?

5.

What feelings do you tend to suppress?

Why?

6.

Which emotions were discouraged or rejected in your family growing up?

7.

How do you protect yourself when you feel vulnerable?

8.

How do you react when emotions feel overwhelming?

Helpful Scriptures

Ephesians 4:26

"Be angry and do not sin."

Ephesians 4:31

"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you."

1 John 4:18

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear."

Isaiah 35:4

"Be strong, do not fear."

Matthew 10:31

"You are worth more than many sparrows."

Key Things to Remember

God Is in Control

Proverbs 19:21

Proverbs 21:24

Psalms 73:23–24

You Are Forgiven

When we confess our sins, God forgives us.

Do not allow people to shame you by constantly bringing up your past.

Ask Yourself:

- Is it true?
- Can I do anything about it?
- Is it my problem or someone else's?
- If it is true, what changes can I make?
- What solution can I work toward?

Ask God for Help

James 4:2 reminds us:

"You have not because you ask not."

God desires to help His children.

Closing Thought

Feelings are gifts from God.

They help us understand what is happening within our hearts.

Feelings should not be ignored.

Feelings should not control us.

Feelings should be acknowledged, understood, and surrendered to God.

As you grow in your relationship with Christ, He will help you heal from past wounds, understand your emotions, and walk in freedom.

Remember: Feelings make wonderful indicators, but poor leaders.

Testing Our Thoughts and Feelings

Luke 4:1-13

Read Luke 4:1-13 and examine how Jesus responded to temptation.

After fasting for forty days in the wilderness, Jesus was hungry, tired, and physically weak. Satan attempted to tempt Him three different times.

Each time, Jesus responded the same way:

He responded with God's Word.

Jesus did not argue.

Jesus did not panic.

Jesus did not compromise.

He answered each temptation with truth.

This is an important lesson for us today.

Many thoughts and feelings that enter our minds may not be based on truth. Sometimes fear, shame, guilt, anger, insecurity, rejection, or past wounds can distort how we view situations.

At other times, we may be tempted to believe lies about ourselves, about others, or about God.

When those thoughts come, we need to ask:

- Is this thought true?
- Does it agree with God's Word?
- Is this feeling pointing me toward God or away from Him?
- Am I responding from faith or from fear?

Just because we feel something does not automatically make it true.

Feelings are real, but they are not always reliable.

That is why we must compare our thoughts and feelings to God's truth.

Jesus set the perfect example.

When temptation came, He answered with Scripture.

When confusion comes, we can answer with Scripture.

When fear comes, we can answer with Scripture.

When shame comes, we can answer with Scripture.

When lies come, we can answer with Scripture.

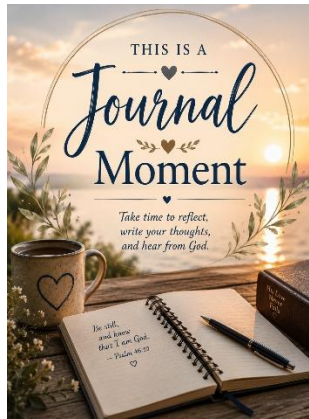
God's Word helps us separate truth from deception and wisdom from temptation.



Assignment

Discuss the following questions:

1. Have you ever believed a feeling that later proved to be untrue?
2. How can past wounds affect our emotions and decision-making?
3. What Scriptures help you when you feel afraid, rejected, ashamed, angry, or discouraged?
4. How did Jesus respond differently to temptation than most people do?
5. What practical steps can you take to compare your feelings with God's truth?



Journal Moment

Think about a feeling you have struggled with recently.

- What triggered that feeling?
- Was the feeling based on facts, assumptions, fear, or past experiences?
- What does God's Word say about the situation?

Write your answers in your journal and spend time praying about them.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & ABUSE RECOVERY

UNDERSTANDING ABUSE • FINDING SAFETY • BREAKING THE CYCLE




Ephesians 4:26
*“Be angry and do not sin;
do not let the sun go down on your wrath.”*


Abuse thrives in secrecy.




*Healing begins when
truth is brought into the light.*



*No one deserves
to live in fear.*



*With God’s help,
cycles of abuse
can be broken.*



HOPE
There is Light



HEALING
There is Help




FREEDOM
There is Release



RESTORATION
There is New Life

*You are not defined by what happened to you.
You are defined by who God says you are.*



Acknowledgment and Source Credit

Portions of this chapter were adapted from educational materials originally provided by **The Broken Spirits Network** and were used with permission in the original edition of *Mold Me Like Clay*.

The information was utilized to help educate individuals regarding domestic violence, abuse recovery, victim advocacy, emotional healing, and personal safety.

Since the publication of the original workbook, the Broken Spirits Network website has become inactive and is no longer available online. Every effort has been made to preserve and update the educational content while maintaining the original purpose and intent of helping abuse survivors find hope, healing, and recovery.

Special appreciation is extended to the founders, contributors, advocates, counselors, and volunteers of The Broken Spirits Network for their dedication to assisting survivors of domestic violence, abuse, sexual assault, and trauma.

The material contained within this chapter has been revised, edited, and expanded for the 2026 edition of *Mold Me Like Clay*.

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." — Psalm 147:3

SECTION ONE

Understanding Anger, Control, and Abuse

Key Scripture

Ephesians 4:26

"Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your wrath."

Read:

- Colossians 3:8-10
- Proverbs 15:1-2

Understanding the Difference

Anger itself is not a sin.

God created us with emotions, including anger.

There are times when anger is a healthy response to injustice, cruelty, abuse, or wrongdoing.

The Bible shows examples of righteous anger. When Jesus entered the temple and saw people dishonoring God's House, He responded with righteous anger because God's holiness was being violated.

The problem is not anger.

The problem is what we do with it.

Anger can become destructive when it turns into:

- Revenge
- Bitterness
- Control
- Intimidation
- Verbal attacks
- Physical violence

God calls us to manage anger rather than allowing anger to manage us.

Definitions

Anger: A strong feeling of displeasure caused by hurt, mistreatment, injustice, or frustration.

Control: Exercising authority over another person in unhealthy ways to manipulate, dominate, or force compliance.

Abuse: The mistreatment of another person physically, emotionally, verbally, sexually, financially, or spiritually.

SECTION TWO

Physical Abuse, Verbal Abuse, and Controlling Behaviors

Abuse rarely begins with physical violence.

Most abusive relationships begin with:

- Controlling behavior

- Manipulation
- Jealousy
- Verbal attacks
- Emotional intimidation

Over time the abuse often escalates.

Verbal Abuse

Words can leave wounds that last for years.

Examples include:

- Name calling
- Belittling
- Humiliation
- Mocking
- Constant criticism
- Threats
- Sarcasm used to wound

The old saying says:

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me."

The reality is often the opposite.

Physical wounds may heal quickly.

Emotional wounds can last a lifetime.

Controlling Behaviors

Control is often disguised as:

- Protection
- Love
- Concern
- Jealousy

Examples include:

- Monitoring phone calls
- Checking social media
- Controlling finances
- Isolating a partner from family and friends
- Excessive jealousy
- Constant accusations
- Threats

Healthy relationships are built on trust.

Abusive relationships are built on control.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse includes:

- Pushing
- Shoving
- Slapping
- Punching
- Choking
- Grabbing
- Physical intimidation
- Destruction of property

No one deserves physical abuse.

No one causes another person to become violent.

Violence is always a choice made by the abuser.

SECTION THREE

Why Victims Stay

People often ask:

"Why doesn't the person just leave?"

The answer is often much more complicated than outsiders realize.

Fear

Victims often fear:

- Injury
- Retaliation
- Death
- Losing children
- Financial ruin

Isolation

Many abusers intentionally separate victims from:

- Family
- Friends
- Churches
- Support systems

Isolation increases dependence.

Financial Dependence

Many victims lack:

- Income
- Transportation
- Housing
- Resources

Leaving may feel impossible.

Childhood Conditioning

Individuals raised in abusive homes sometimes view abuse as normal because it was modeled throughout childhood.

Healing begins when unhealthy patterns are recognized.

SECTION FOUR

Profile of an Abuser

Important Facts

- Abusers can be male or female.
- Not all abusers grew up in abusive homes.
- Abusers are often charming in public.
- Abuse is about power and control.

Common Characteristics

Denial

The abuser minimizes or denies abusive behavior.

Blame Shifting

The victim is blamed for the abuse.

Jealousy and Possessiveness

The abuser demands excessive control and attention.

Domination

The abuser expects submission and obedience.

Manipulation

Guilt, threats, and emotional pressure are frequently used.

Stalking

Following, monitoring, tracking, or surveillance are common control tactics.

SECTION FIVE

From Victim to Survivor

Abuse survivors often experience:

Fear

Fear of the future.

Fear of retaliation.

Fear of trusting again.

Guilt

Many survivors blame themselves.

Shame

Many feel embarrassed or damaged.

Anger

Anger is a natural response to injustice.

Lack of Trust

Trust often takes time to rebuild.

Powerlessness

Many survivors feel trapped and hopeless.

Physical Symptoms

- Headaches
- Anxiety
- Sleep disturbances
- Stomach problems
- Fatigue
- Muscle tension

These are common trauma responses.

SECTION SIX

Tools for Healing and Recovery

Be Gentle With Yourself

Healing is a process.

Recovery takes time.

Express Your Feelings

Healthy expression may include:

- Journaling
- Prayer
- Art
- Counseling
- Group discussions

Listen to Your Body

Rest when needed.

Eat healthy.

Exercise.

Take care of yourself.

Build a Support System

Identify safe people who:

- Listen
- Encourage
- Respect boundaries
- Support your healing

Learn Healthy Boundaries

Boundaries are not selfish.

Boundaries are necessary.

SECTION SEVEN

Victim-Survivor Rights

You have the right:

1. To make decisions about your life.
2. To seek safety.
3. To report abuse.
4. To decide who knows your story.
5. To receive support.
6. To heal.
7. To move beyond victimhood.

Remember

You were a victim of abuse.

You do not have to remain a victim.

You are a survivor.

SECTION EIGHT

Characteristics of Abused People

Abuse often creates:

- Low self-esteem
- Fear
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Difficulty trusting
- Boundary problems
- Codependency

- Addictions
- Relationship difficulties

These responses are understandable.

They are also treatable.

Healing is possible.

SECTION NINE

Breaking Generational Cycles

Children often learn what they live.

Abuse, addiction, anger, and unhealthy relationships are frequently passed from one generation to the next through learned behavior.

The good news is:

The cycle can stop with you.

You may not be responsible for what happened to you.

But you can choose what happens next.

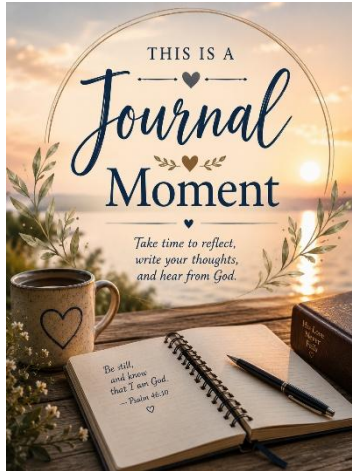
With God's help, unhealthy patterns can be broken.

You can create a healthier future for yourself and the next generation.



Group Discussion

1. What forms of abuse have you witnessed or experienced?
2. How does abuse affect self-esteem?
3. Why do many victims remain in abusive relationships?
4. What boundaries are necessary for healing?
5. How can generational cycles be broken?



Journal Moment

What unhealthy patterns do you want to stop passing to future generations?

What would freedom look like in your life?

Key Thought

The abuse may be part of your story, but it does not have to define your future.



NARCISSISM, GASLIGHTING & EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION

RECOGNIZING TOXIC BEHAVIORS • UNDERSTANDING REALITY • FINDING HEALING



PROVERBS 26:23-25
(NLT)

*“Smooth words may
hide a wicked heart,
just as a pretty glaze
covers a clay pot.”*



*Manipulation loses its power
when truth is brought into the light.*

*Wisdom helps us recognize the
difference between love, control,
and deception.*

Not every difficult person is a narcissist.
But repeated patterns of manipulation, control,
and emotional abuse should never be ignored.



TRUTH



DISCERNMENT



BOUNDARIES



HEALING

*You are not losing your mind.
God's truth helps you see clearly again.*

NARCISSISM, GASLIGHTING & EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION

Recognizing Toxic Behaviors • Understanding Reality • Finding Healing

Key Scripture

"Smooth words may hide a wicked heart, just as a pretty glaze covers a clay pot."

Proverbs 26:23-25

Introduction

Most people have encountered difficult individuals at some point in their lives. Some people are selfish. Some are controlling. Some are manipulative. Others seem to leave a trail of hurt wherever they go.

In today's world, the term *narcissist* is used frequently. While not every difficult person is a narcissist, there are behaviors that can be harmful to relationships, families, workplaces, ministries, and friendships.

This chapter is designed to help you recognize unhealthy patterns, understand emotional manipulation, and learn how to establish healthy boundaries. It is not intended to diagnose anyone. Only qualified mental health professionals can make a clinical diagnosis.

As Christians, we are called to love others, but we are not called to tolerate abuse, manipulation, or control. God desires healthy relationships built on truth, respect, honesty, and love.

What Is Narcissism?

Narcissism exists on a spectrum.

Many people occasionally display narcissistic traits such as pride, selfishness, or a desire for attention. However, Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is a recognized mental health condition that significantly impacts relationships and daily life.

People with strong narcissistic traits often:

- Have an inflated sense of importance.
- Need excessive admiration.
- Struggle with criticism.

- Lack empathy for others.
- Feel entitled to special treatment.
- Manipulate situations to benefit themselves.
- Focus primarily on their own needs and desires.

Ironically, beneath the outward confidence there is often deep insecurity and a fragile sense of self-worth.

Common Narcissistic Traits

A person displaying strong narcissistic tendencies may:

- Constantly seek attention.
- Exaggerate accomplishments.
- Believe they are superior to others.
- Become angry when challenged.
- Struggle to accept responsibility.
- Blame others for problems.
- Use guilt and manipulation.
- Have difficulty empathizing with others.
- Feel entitled to special treatment.
- Become jealous of others' success.

Not every person displaying one or two of these traits is narcissistic. The issue is the ongoing pattern of behavior.

A Word of Caution

Today, the word *narcissist* is often overused.

Not every selfish person is a narcissist.

Not every disagreement is gaslighting.

Not every difficult person is abusive.

However, repeated patterns of manipulation, control, dishonesty, exploitation, and lack of empathy should never be ignored.

The goal of this chapter is not to label people.

The goal is to help readers recognize unhealthy behaviors and protect themselves from emotional harm.

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

Jesus warned us about people who appear one way on the outside but are very different on the inside.

Matthew 7:15

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves."

Many manipulative people appear:

- Charming
- Friendly
- Successful
- Generous
- Spiritual
- Helpful

They may be respected in the community and admired by others.

Yet privately they may be:

- Controlling
- Cruel
- Deceptive
- Manipulative
- Abusive

This can make it difficult for others to believe the victim's experience.

Always pay attention to actions, not just words.

Understanding Gaslighting

Gaslighting is a form of emotional manipulation that causes someone to question their own memory, perceptions, judgment, and reality.

Over time, the victim may begin doubting themselves and relying more heavily on the manipulator for validation.

Common gaslighting statements include:

- "That never happened."
- "You're too sensitive."
- "You're imagining things."
- "You're overreacting."
- "You're remembering it wrong."
- "Everyone agrees with me."

The goal is control.

If a person can make you doubt your own reality, they gain power over you.

Signs You May Be Experiencing Gaslighting

You may find yourself:

- Constantly apologizing.
- Questioning your memory.
- Feeling confused.
- Walking on eggshells.
- Doubting your decisions.
- Feeling anxious around one person.
- Second-guessing yourself.
- Losing confidence.

- Feeling like you can never do anything right.

If this sounds familiar, begin documenting conversations, journaling events, and speaking with trusted individuals.

Truth brings clarity.

Manipulation Tactics

Manipulative people often use various methods to gain control.

Guilt

Making you feel responsible for their emotions or behavior.

Fear

Using intimidation, threats, or consequences to control you.

Shame

Making you feel defective, inadequate, or unworthy.

Silent Treatment

Withholding communication to punish or control.

Playing the Victim

Avoiding responsibility by making themselves appear wronged.

Triangulation

Using other people to create conflict, jealousy, or confusion.

Love Bombing

Excessive attention and affection early in a relationship to gain control.

Protecting Yourself

You cannot change another person.

You can change how you respond.

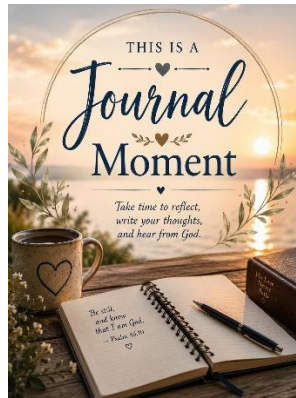
Helpful Tools

- Establish healthy boundaries.

- Learn to say no.
- Keep a journal.
- Seek wise counsel.
- Verify facts.
- Trust actions over promises.
- Stay connected to healthy people.
- Pray for wisdom and discernment.

Healthy boundaries are not selfish.

Healthy boundaries are necessary.



Journal Moment

Think about a difficult relationship.

Answer the following:

1. What behaviors concern you most?
2. Have you ignored warning signs?
3. Are healthy boundaries needed?
4. What would a healthier relationship look like?
5. What steps can you take toward healing?

Write your answers in your journal.



Group Discussion

1. What is the difference between confidence and narcissism?
2. Why do people remain in manipulative relationships?
3. How does gaslighting affect self-esteem?
4. Why are boundaries important?
5. What biblical principles help us recognize deception?

Hope for Healing

All people struggle with areas of brokenness.

Some struggle with pride.

Some struggle with control.

Some struggle with addiction.

Some struggle with fear.

Others struggle with narcissistic traits.

The good news is that God specializes in transformation.

No one is beyond God's reach.

Through accountability, counseling, healthy relationships, self-awareness, and a relationship with Jesus Christ, people can change.

Healing is possible.

Growth is possible.

Freedom is possible.

Key Things to Remember

- Trust actions more than words.
- Healthy relationships require mutual respect.
- Boundaries are biblical and healthy.
- You are not responsible for another person's choices.
- Manipulation loses its power when truth is brought into the light.
- God is not the author of confusion.
- Wisdom and discernment are gifts from God.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Give me wisdom to recognize truth and courage to walk in it.

Help me identify unhealthy relationships and establish healthy boundaries.

Protect my mind from confusion, manipulation, fear, and deception.

Teach me to trust Your Word above the opinions and pressures of others.

Bring healing to areas where I have been hurt and help me extend grace without sacrificing truth.

Fill me with discernment, strength, peace, and confidence as I walk with You.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Closing Scripture

James 1:5

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."

Key Thought

Manipulation loses its power when truth is brought into the light.

ANGER MANAGEMENT

UNDERSTANDING ANGER • FINDING PEACE • CHOOSING HEALTHY RESPONSES

Ephesians 4:26

*“Be angry
and do not sin;
do not let
the sun go down
on your wrath.”*

Anger is
an emotion.

What we do with
that anger becomes
our choice.

Healing begins
when we learn to
respond rather
than react.

Uncontrolled
anger destroys.

Godly
self-control
restores.



PEACE



SELF-CONTROL



HEALING



RESTORATION

*A gentle answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.*

PROVERBS 15:1

ANGER MANAGEMENT

Understanding Anger • Finding Peace • Choosing Healthy Responses

Key Scripture

Ephesians 4:26

"Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your wrath."

Introduction

Anger is one of the strongest emotions we experience.

Every person becomes angry at some point in life. Anger itself is not a sin. In fact, there are times when anger is an appropriate response to injustice, cruelty, abuse, or wrongdoing.

The problem is not anger.

The problem is what we do with it.

Uncontrolled anger can damage relationships, careers, marriages, families, ministries, and even our physical health.

Learning to recognize, understand, and manage anger is an important step in emotional and spiritual maturity.

God calls us to respond wisely rather than react impulsively.

Understanding Anger

According to Webster's Dictionary, anger is a strong feeling of displeasure resulting from injury, mistreatment, opposition, frustration, or injustice.

Anger often includes:

- Hurt
- Frustration
- Fear
- Resentment
- Disappointment
- A desire to fight back

Sometimes anger is obvious.

Other times anger hides beneath the surface and appears as:

- Sarcasm
- Bitterness
- Withdrawal
- Passive-aggressive behavior
- Depression
- Resentment

Many people are not actually angry about the current situation. They are carrying unresolved hurt from past situations.

Common Sources of Anger

Anger is often rooted in:

- Fear
- Rejection
- Betrayal
- Abuse
- Disappointment
- Grief
- Unmet expectations
- Loss of control
- Feeling unheard
- Feeling disrespected

Understanding the source of your anger is often the first step toward healing.

Recognizing Your Warning Signs

Every person has anger signals.

These may include:

- Raised voice
- Clenched fists
- Rapid heartbeat
- Muscle tension
- Pacing
- Irritability
- Sarcasm
- Negative thoughts

When you notice these warning signs, it is time to pause before responding.

Healthy Ways to Direct Anger

Take a Time-Out

Remove yourself from the situation until you can think clearly.

Take a walk.

Pray.

Breathe deeply.

Allow yourself time to calm down.

Talk to a Trusted Person

A healthy friend, pastor, mentor, or counselor can often help you gain perspective.

Choose people who encourage growth rather than fueling anger.

Journal Your Feelings

Writing can help you identify patterns and triggers.

Ask yourself:

- What happened?
- How did I feel?
- Why did it affect me?
- How could I respond differently next time?

Change Negative Thinking

Anger often grows when negative thoughts are repeated.

Instead of focusing on:

- "This always happens."
- "Nothing ever changes."
- "Nobody cares."

Try focusing on:

- What can I learn?
- What can I control?
- What solution is available?

Learn Patience

Patience allows us to respond thoughtfully instead of reacting emotionally.

Growth takes time.

Healing takes time.

Relationships take time.

Try to Understand Different Perspectives

Ask yourself:

- What is the other person feeling?
- What fears may be driving their behavior?
- Is there information I don't know?

Understanding does not excuse harmful behavior.

It simply helps us respond with wisdom.

Know Your Triggers

Certain situations may trigger stronger reactions because of past experiences.

Examples include:

- Rejection
- Criticism
- Feeling ignored
- Feeling controlled
- Childhood wounds
- Grief and loss

Knowing your triggers helps you prepare healthier responses.

When Anger Becomes a Problem

Anger becomes destructive when it leads to:

- Verbal abuse
- Physical violence
- Intimidation
- Threats
- Revenge
- Destruction of property
- Substance abuse
- Ongoing bitterness

If anger is consistently affecting your relationships, work, health, or daily life, seek professional help.

There is strength in asking for help.

The Fence Story

Once there was a young girl with a terrible temper.

Her mother gave her a bag of nails and told her that every time she lost her temper, she must hammer a nail into the fence.

The first day she drove thirty-seven nails into the fence.

Over time, she learned it was easier to control her temper than hammer nails into the wood.

Eventually, she went an entire day without losing her temper.

Her mother then told her to remove one nail for each day she controlled her anger.

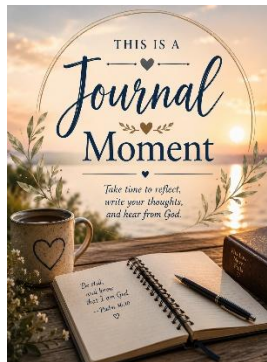
Finally, all the nails were removed.

The mother took her daughter to the fence and said:

"You have done well, but look at the holes left behind. The fence will never be the same. When we speak in anger, we can leave wounds that remain long after the words are spoken."

Words have power.

Choose them carefully.



Journal Moment

What situations make you angry most often?

How do you usually respond?

What healthier response could you practice?

Who can help hold you accountable?



Homework

1.

List examples of times you overreacted.

2.

List examples of times you underreacted.

3.

Identify situations where you were in denial.

4.

Create two lists:

Things I Like About Myself

Things I Would Like to Improve

For the second list, identify practical steps toward growth.

Helpful Scriptures

- Ephesians 4:26
- Proverbs 15:1
- Colossians 3:8-10
- 1 Peter 5:10
- Matthew 9:10-13
- Matthew 9:21-22
- Colossians 1:9-14

Key Things to Remember

- You are responsible for how you respond to anger.
- Anger is an emotion, not an excuse.
- Healthy boundaries reduce unnecessary conflict.
- Healing often begins by identifying the root cause.
- Forgiveness does not excuse harmful behavior.
- Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Help me recognize my anger before it controls me.

Give me wisdom to understand the root of my emotions and the courage to respond in healthy ways.

Teach me patience, self-control, forgiveness, and grace.

Heal the wounds that continue to fuel anger within my heart.

Help me become a person who reflects Your love, peace, and compassion.

Guide my words, my actions, and my responses.

May my life honor You in all I do.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

BREAKING CHAINS • RESTORING HOPE • CHOOSING LIFE

1 PETER 5:8-9

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith.”

Addiction may steal years from your life, but God’s grace can restore what was lost.

Freedom begins with one decision:
Choose Life.

Every addiction begins with a choice.
Every recovery begins with a decision.
Every breakthrough begins with **hope**.



RECOVERY



REDEMPTION



RESTORATION



HOPE

IN LOVING MEMORY OF RICK GILBERT

Recovery Advocate • Encourager • Friend

1957 – 2024

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Breaking Chains • Restoring Hope • Choosing Life

Key Scripture

1 Peter 5:8-9

"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith."

Introduction

Alcohol and drugs devour and kill.

The Bible warns us to remain alert because there is an enemy who desires to destroy our lives. Addiction destroys individuals, families, friendships, careers, and futures. It leaves behind broken hearts and shattered dreams.

Psalms 9:9-10 reminds us:

"The Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. Those who know Your name will put their trust in You; for You, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You."

If you are struggling with addiction, or if someone you love is trapped in addiction, there is hope. God is still in the business of restoration. He can heal what addiction has damaged and restore what the enemy has stolen.

Went To A Party Mom

Author Unknown

WENT TO A PARTY MOM

I went to a party and remembered what you said. You told me not to drink mom, so I had sprite instead. I felt proud of myself the way you said I would, that I did not drink and drive though some friends said I should. I made a healthy choice. Your advice to me was right. The party finally ended, and the kids drove far out of sight. I got into my car, sure to make it home in one piece. I never knew what was coming, Mom. Something I expected least. Now I am lying on the pavement, and I hear the policeman say, the kid that caused the wreck was drunk. Mom, his voice seems far

away. My own blood is all around me, as I try hard not to cry. I can hear the paramedic say, this girl is going to die. I am sure the guy had no idea, while he was flying high, because he chose to drink and drive. Now I would have to die. So why do people do it, Mom, knowing that it ruins lives? Now the pain is cutting me, like a hundred stabbing! Knives. Tell sister not to be afraid, Mom. Tell daddy to be brave. When I go to heaven, put Daddy's Girl on my grave. Someone should have taught him that it is wrong to drink and drive. Maybe if his parents had, I would still be alive. My breath is getting shorter, Mom, as I lie here and die. I wish that I could say, "I love you, Mom!" So, I love you and good-bye.

Reflection

After reading this poem, consider the following:

- How many lives were affected by one person's decision?
- How many families suffer every year because of alcohol and drugs?
- What choices are you making today that may affect your future tomorrow?

The Reality of Addiction

Over the years I have witnessed the devastating effects of drugs and alcohol firsthand.

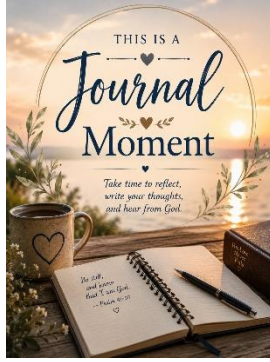
A few examples include:

- A sixteen-year-old who died after sniffing chemicals.
- Teenagers killed while drinking and racing.
- A young surfer who drowned while under the influence.
- A young man who took his own life while high on drugs.
- Individuals whose bodies were destroyed by years of alcohol abuse.

Each death affected parents, siblings, friends, and entire communities.

Addiction never affects only the user.

It impacts everyone around them.



Journal Moment

Think About It

Have alcohol or drugs affected your life?

- A parent?
- A spouse?
- A child?
- A friend?
- Yourself?

Write about how addiction has impacted you and what healing you still need.

Choices

Every Choice Has a Consequence

God has given mankind the freedom to choose since the Garden of Eden.

Adam and Eve made a choice.

That choice affected generations.

Today we still face choices every day.

Some choices lead to life.

Some choices lead to destruction.

The following story illustrates the power of both good and bad choices.

Choices: A Life Lost Too Soon

The choice made in the Garden of Eden affected all generations to come. Thank God for His redemptive plan at Calvary. Through Jesus Christ, life can be restored if we ask forgiveness for our sins, accept Him as our Savior, and allow God to be Lord over our lives.

Today, we continue to make choices. Those choices can lead to life or death. They can place us on a collision course with disaster, or they can lead us toward a fruitful and abundant life.

The following is a true story of many wrong choices—choices made by one individual and choices made by others. In the end, however, the most important choice was made: the choice that determines eternal life or eternal death.

There was a baby boy born in September 1963. He grew up with his father, mother, and three sisters. He loved music and had a unique style of playing the guitar. He had a kind heart, loved animals, and was not a fighter by nature. As he grew older, however, he found it necessary to learn self-defense because of the lifestyle he was choosing.

During his teenage years, he became involved with drugs. He remained trapped in addiction until a short time before his death.

As a young man, he married and had a child. Because of his addiction to alcohol and drugs, his wife left and took their child with her. In 2006, the family was miraculously reunited with their grandchild, nephew, and cousin. Praise God for miracles.

He also lost his best friend. His friend became involved with drugs, was stabbed, and ultimately died.

This handsome, strong young man learned the trade of brick masonry and became one of the best around. People contacted him from all over the state for artistic masonry work. He was a master brick mason who could lay up to 2,000 bricks in a single day when challenged. He chose excellence in his profession.

Then came another wrong choice.

He spent nearly every dollar he earned on drugs. His addiction of choice was crack cocaine. At one point, he received \$6,000 and spent every cent of it on his addiction. He nearly lost his life as a result. He would disappear for days at a time, leaving his family worried about his safety and well-being.

Throughout his life, he continued using drugs. His addiction resulted in numerous arrests and frequent jail sentences.

At the age of thirty-eight, he suffered a collapsed lung while working. After being hospitalized and released, he was required to serve a jail sentence for violating probation. While incarcerated, he began showing signs of serious health complications. He coughed constantly, spit up blood, and became increasingly weak.

When family members visited him, they could barely communicate because he was coughing so severely.

His choices had affected his health, landed him in jail, and brought tremendous heartache to his family.

At this point, other poor choices were being made—choices that would further affect his well-being.

He was ridiculed by jail staff and accused of faking his illness. They insisted he only had a cold, despite the fact that he was coughing up blood.

One guard approached him kindly and told him to come along because they were going to reevaluate his condition. Believing he was finally receiving medical attention, he followed the guard. Instead, the guard placed him in an empty cell and mockingly told him that he would "evaluate" him himself.

What a tragic and unnecessary choice.

As Christians, we believe that every action has consequences. The family has struggled for years with the treatment their loved one received. They considered pursuing legal action but were never certain how to proceed.

The guard's actions were unnecessary and cruel. Correctional officers must be firm, but they must also show compassion when genuine medical needs arise. Proper medical attention could have prolonged this man's life.

The family shares this portion of his story in hopes that greater attention will be given to jail and prison medical policies. They do not want another family to endure what they experienced.

The jail nurse was aware that he had recently been hospitalized for lung problems. His father had personally informed her, yet she continued to dismiss his condition as a cold.

The family later learned about the guard's actions.

When his parents arrived for a visit, they discovered he had been transferred without notification. They were told that a doctor across the street had reviewed his X-rays and sent him to a prison hospital because there was no room for him at the jail.

This, too, was untrue.

He had been transferred to a prison that had a hospital facility, yet he was housed in the prison population and was not receiving medical treatment.

The family repeatedly requested medical records from the doctor who supposedly reviewed the X-rays, but no records could be produced.

His mother posted a large bail within the week to secure his release.

Within two days of his release, surgery revealed the truth.

He had cancer.

Doctors removed an entire lung and discovered a tumor the size of an orange.

For the next two years, he underwent chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

From December 2003 through March 2004, his life changed dramatically. The strong, handsome man his family knew became thin and frail. Years of poor choices had begun to reveal their physical consequences.

As the cancer spread, he was hospitalized once again.

During this stay, a terrible accident occurred. The combination of medications administered by the hospital and drugs already present in his system left him disoriented and unaware of his surroundings.

He fell from a second-story hospital window.

By the grace of God, he survived.

He suffered a broken foot, severe head injuries, and required numerous stitches.

Soon afterward, his condition worsened, and he was airlifted to another hospital. During transport, oxygen to his brain was interrupted.

He was placed on life support.

The family was forced to face the decision no family ever wants to make—whether to continue life support or let him go.

Many members of this family were Christians.

Prayer warriors across the United States began interceding on his behalf.

Before life support was removed, a chaplain and several believers entered his room and began praying over him.

As they prayed, something remarkable happened.

He suddenly cried out:

"Get out!"

"Get out of this room!"

Then he shouted:

"Snakes, leave me! Get out of my legs!"

Prior to this event, a close friend had shared a dream in which snakes were leaving him.

After this experience, there was noticeable peace.

Praise God!

The family believes that God brought deliverance into his life. He finally made the most important choice of all. He surrendered his life completely to Jesus Christ.

Thank God for obedient believers who listened to God's voice and prayed.

Life support was eventually removed.

In the final three months of his life, he accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

His attitude changed dramatically.

When he asked God for forgiveness, he specifically repented for the abuse he had inflicted upon his own body. Any bitterness he had carried toward family members was replaced with love.

Despite his suffering, he rarely complained and never blamed God.

Instead, he looked forward to his eternal home in Heaven.

He shared his faith with family members and ministered to them about their own lives.

Near the end of his life, he had a dream.

He wanted to take his story to youth groups, schools, churches, and recovery meetings. He wanted young people to see what drugs had done to his body and to hear what God had done in his life.

He wanted them to make the right choices while they were still young—not when they were standing at death's door.

He wanted others to understand that the cancer he developed was linked to years of crack cocaine and drug abuse.

In March 2004, he went home to be with the Lord.

Although he was unable to share his testimony in person, his story continues through books, recovery meetings, conversations, and the lives of those who share it.

His family hopes and prays that his story touches your heart.

They pray that someone reading this will find hope, courage, and strength to face whatever challenge lies before them.

It is time to confront the things that are destroying your life.

It is time to stop allowing addiction to devour you.

It is time to take back control and allow God to become your refuge instead of drugs, alcohol, or destructive habits.

The question remains:

What will your choice be?

Key Thought

It is never too late to make a new choice.

As long as there is breath, there is hope.



Discussion Questions

1. Which choices in this story led toward destruction?
2. Which choices led toward healing?
3. How did addiction affect the family?
4. What role did faith play in the final months of life?
5. How can this story help someone struggling today?

Featured Recovery Testimony

Blessed By Addiction and Born Again

Written by Rick Gilbert (2010)

Blessed by Addiction and Born Again

"He was waiting patiently while I tried to run the show. He was watching over me, but I just didn't know."

It seems very strange to look back at my alcoholism and addictions as blessings, but these afflictions are the things that led me to a new life in Christ. This is my story—how, while out there getting incredibly lost, I was being brought home to our Father... finally. His will be done.

I am often amazed to hear so many of my AA friends explain that at the heart of their addiction was a feeling of not belonging—of being on the outside of everything and everyone else. This was not my experience growing up at all. I liked people, and they liked me. My family moved around quite a bit, and I never had trouble making friends—lots of them.

I was a popular kid. Unlike many of my friends in recovery, I was also a happy kid and had every reason to be. Things came easily to me. I excelled at sports, music, and student politics. I was loved at home, and almost everything I tried turned out well for me.

At fifteen, I remember going down to the Potomac River with a group of friends one night. I had three malt liquors, laid down, watched the stars twinkle, and had an epiphany. I loved being high.

I felt like I had just discovered another one of life's great gifts—another bonus. To me, getting loaded was simply another way of grabbing more of the good things life had to offer.

I did not call or go home that night. I called my mother from a pay phone the next morning and told her I had spent the night at a friend's house and was sorry I forgot to call. I told her I had been having such a good time that I simply forgot—a partial truth.

Lying and getting high became partners that night, and they went hand in hand for the next thirty years.

My friends and I could drink beer at my home during high school, but not to excess. My folks were the "cool parents" and even helped me throw an annual student-faculty Christmas party complete with champagne punch.

I loved bending the rules and stretching the boundaries of acceptability. Using my popularity to do just that became one of my specialties.

I remember carrying a case of alcohol openly past a reception line of parents and faculty at the senior prom. Maybe it was because I was president of this and winner of that, or maybe I was simply full of myself. Whatever the reason, no one stopped me—and I loved it.

I was creating my own standards of right and wrong, and other people were buying into them.

Then I went off to college and was introduced to narcotics.

I had the same feeling about drugs that I had about alcohol. I liked being high, and it seemed natural to me—something I was entitled to enjoy along with everything else I wanted.

The real seduction had begun.

But at this point, I was no longer a big man on campus, and when things stopped falling into my lap so easily, I found that getting high was a decent substitute.

I got lost in that whole hippie drug culture for a while until I realized that being poor was no fun and that I needed to grow up and become productive in order to live the lifestyle I wanted—one that included lots and lots of partying.

Making money seemed like a cool thing to do, and I found the same sort of acceptance and admiration in doing so that I had enjoyed during high school for being popular. I moved to Southern California to find my fame and fortune, and within a year and a half, I was making more money than my father ever had.

Along with the money came a lot of hard work and tremendous stress, but I found that the right drugs helped me cope with those things. Because I had achieved financial success at such an early age, I felt entitled to do drugs. They helped me become Superman, and I believed I was smart enough to recognize the advantages they gave me.

The seduction was now well underway.

Spending money on a lavish lifestyle and partying with large amounts of alcohol and cocaine seemed to be proof that I had made it. It was not just the fancy BMW. It was the lines of cocaine that made me feel special.

With all the drugs I was doing, I was bound to feel something, and I felt it was my right to "have it all" and make myself feel as good as possible.

It was around this time that I began to notice, at least vaguely, that I was not truly comfortable in my own skin.

Somehow, it never occurred to me that having to be high on something almost all the time might be a warning sign that I was out of control. To me, it was simply reality.

There were pharmaceuticals to increase my endurance and ability to work, and others to help me stay relaxed and loose. There was marijuana to help me get through tedious, boring days and cocaine for the inevitable celebrations.

I convinced myself there was a perfect combination of drugs for every occasion. The only thing that became foreign to me was the concept of being completely sober for any meaningful length of time.

But I never, ever forgot my first friend—alcohol.

I intentionally intensified the effects of drugs with alcohol and reduced the effects of alcohol with drugs.

The possibility of alcoholism and addiction had never truly crossed my mind. I simply would not allow myself to consider it. Any mention of such things was immediately dismissed.

Sobriety might be for some people—poor, unenlightened souls that they were—but they were not going to fool me into it.

I was special.

Feeling giddy and invincible at the same time felt like my birthright.

To me, sobriety was lumped into the same category as religion—something for weak people who needed to believe in something because they could not handle reality on their own.

My father raised me to believe that concepts like hope and faith were not real. They were merely ideas used by weak people who could not make things happen in the real world.

I was taught that I would create my own results and that through my own efforts, I would either succeed or fail. Things like hope and faith had nothing to do with it.

I certainly considered myself lucky, and I was always grateful for my good fortune.

But it was just that—good fortune.

I was loved, and I loved several people. I rarely met anyone I truly disliked.

I have only hated once or twice in my life, and in those days, I simply crushed those people and removed them from my life.

Everything seemed fine as long as I had the required money and drugs.

I could even handle life when things were not going perfectly—as long as I had my drugs and alcohol.

Looking back, I hurt and disappointed many people. In my selfishness, I believed they deserved it because, after all, they had allowed it to happen. I thought that was simply what happened to people who were not in control of their own lives.

The great irony, of course, is that I was anything but in control.

If I felt guilty about hurting someone, I would go to great lengths to be nice to them or win back their approval.

If that did not work, I simply did enough drugs and drank enough alcohol to stop caring.

I had a vague sense that "God" was some kind of spirit that lived within all of us and that because some people were evil or misguided, evil existed in the world.

But that belief was little more than a passing thought.

It is often said in recovery that alcoholics process alcohol differently than other people.

I believe that is true.

The effect that one drink had on me was to make me incapable of saying no to the next one—or the next ten. It also created physiological changes that do not occur in nonalcoholic drinkers.

What I have heard less about is the similar effect drugs can have on an addict.

When I used my drugs of choice in the quantities and frequency I preferred, I experienced a type of euphoria that went beyond the effects of the narcotics themselves.

The drugs gave me a sense of power over my circumstances—over people, places, and things. They created the illusion that I was in complete control of my own destiny.

As my supply began to run low, I felt that power slipping away until I could stock up again and ensure I had enough for the foreseeable future.

That became my reality.

All-powerful when I had enough.

Powerless when I did not.

What a way to live.

I believe casual drug users experience only the immediate effects of drugs. They do not receive this false sense of control over everything around them—the illusion that they can somehow master every circumstance in life.

Over time, these things began to fail me.

Money came and went, and even when I had plenty, it did not make me happy. I had meaningful relationships, but they did not last. I was too selfish and too concerned with my own comfort to be deeply loved for very long.

My allegiance was to substances. I loved what made me feel good and little else.

Into my forties, I built successful businesses and lost them. I moved in and out of addictions to cocaine and opiates and became a full-blown alcoholic.

I finally married a strong and very straight-laced woman, thinking that would surely cure me. When that failed to work, we had a beautiful child, and I was certain that would cure me.

I stopped drinking for a while but simply became more deceptive about my drug use. I stayed high on pain medication and Valium for several years without my loved ones being any wiser, but it was a constant struggle.

I could not live without drugs and alcohol, and I could not live with them.

When my loving sister forced me into rehab, I went. But after thirty days, I checked myself into a hotel and got drunk for two straight days.

I pretended to be sober so I could see my child over the next few months, but I lived with heavy drinkers and drowned my feelings in alcohol every chance I got. I drank well beyond the limits of even my heaviest-drinking friends.

The failures and disappointments were beginning to pile up and take their toll. Regret and guilt became constant companions.

Occasionally, I would wonder if maybe I would be better off quitting drinking and drugging altogether.

That thought never lasted more than a day or two.

Even when I concluded that sobriety might be best, I had no idea how to achieve it, much less how to live that way.

I had lost any sense of being comfortable in my own skin.

I began to dislike myself.

That dislike would soon become hatred.

Looking back, I realize that Satan must have believed his work was nearly complete.

The man who once believed getting high was simply another bonus of life had become enslaved to the very things he thought he controlled.

For most of my life, I bought all the drugs I wanted.

Now they owned me.

Spiritually bankrupt, physically weak, lost, alone, and utterly miserable, I was farther gone than I ever imagined possible.

About that time, I received my second DUI.

A state trooper passed me, turned around, and came after me. I was making a turn onto a side road when I saw his lights rapidly approaching in my rearview mirror.

Unlike previous encounters, a strange calm came over me.

I did not know it then, but it was God's hand upon me.

He was leading me to Him.

That night, in His infinite wisdom, God outsmarted the enemy and began bringing me home.

At the time, that arrest seemed like the end of the world.

In reality, it was the beginning of a new life—a real life.

I was about to be born again.

Even though I did not believe in God at that time, He was rescuing me from the enemy and drawing me into His way of life.

That is why I felt calm as everything unfolded.

I was far from happy.

Over the next twelve days in jail, I went through detox the hard way.

I had lost my job, my car, and soon I would lose my place to live.

But by the time I was bailed out by the one remaining person who still believed I deserved another chance, I had been sober longer than I had in over thirty years.

As my ex-mother-in-law drove me to her house that night, she made something very clear.

If I stayed sober and attended AA meetings, she would give me a place to live and help me get back on my feet.

If I drank again, I would be on my own.

I already knew that if I continued drinking, I would die.

There was no longer any life for me with alcohol in it.

The very next night, I attended an AA meeting.

Step One became easy.

I had become powerless over alcohol, and my life had unquestionably become unmanageable.

My pain was enormous and seemed to grow larger every day.

I can only thank God for giving me the strength to do something different.

For once, no matter how bad things became, I did not pick up a bottle.

I knew alcohol would not solve anything. It would only make everything worse.

I had also learned about Step Two.

Although I was not completely convinced it would work, I had nothing left to lose.

I came to believe that a Power greater than myself could restore me to sanity.

Without alcohol to numb my pain, the regret, guilt, self-loathing, and emotional suffering became almost unbearable.

One night, I finally ran out of places to turn.

In tears, I dropped to my knees and asked God to remove the horrible pain I could no longer bear.

And that is exactly what He did.

Immediately.

He comforted me.

I was amazed.

The next few weeks were nothing short of miraculous.

It was the first time I had ever prayed in my life.

Prior to that, I had not even prayed the desperate "deal prayers" that people often pray.

You know the kind:

"God, get me out of this, and I'll never do it again."

It wasn't that I thought I was above praying.

I simply had so little faith that prayer seemed like a waste of time.

Yet after receiving an answer to my very first prayer, I was encouraged to continue.

Over the next several days and nights, I was rewarded with a calm sense of peace.

I asked God to remove my overwhelming compulsion to drink alcohol.

And He did.

Just like that.

That does not mean I never thought about drinking again.

It means the obsession—the overwhelming compulsion—was gone.

I was greatly encouraged and moved forward into Step Three.

I surrendered my will and my life to the care of God as I understood Him.

I memorized the Third Step Prayer and allowed it to come from my heart every morning and every night:

"I offer myself to You—to build with me and do with me as You will. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Your will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Your Power, Your Love, and Your Way of Life. May I do Your will always."

During this season, I asked God to forgive me and accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.

Alone with Him in that bedroom, I accepted Christ.

I was reborn.

I was given a new life.

I continued attending AA meetings almost every night until I had to return to jail for the DUI.

Although I am not recommending jail, it turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

I was placed in a housing unit with a man of God who was serving time for a non-DUI driving offense.

Together we studied the Bible almost every day.

He opened my eyes to God's Word.

I know now that he was one of many people God placed in my life to help me along my journey.

Soon after meeting him, I began feeling tremendous remorse over the life I had lived.

One day, noticing how weighed down I was by guilt, he asked me a simple question.

"Are you saved?"

He asked if I had accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior and asked Him to forgive my sins.

When I told him I had, he replied:

"Then you have to let that guilt go. The Almighty has already forgiven you. Who are you to continue carrying guilt that God Himself has removed?"

His words hit me like a ton of bricks.

From that day forward, I stopped wallowing in guilt.

In His infinite wisdom, God knew I needed tangible evidence to strengthen my faith.

At that time, the heaviest burden on my heart was my daughter.

I had not seen her in three months.

I had not even been able to tell her goodbye.

Her mother, an attorney, learned about my DUI when she saw me being escorted into court in handcuffs and shackles.

She had forbidden me from seeing my daughter.

One day while on work release, I called her.

To my surprise, she was happy to hear from me.

Word had spread that I had been sober for several months.

She explained that she had never wanted to keep me from our daughter.

She simply did not want me drifting in and out of her life.

Now that I was sober, she welcomed me back.

Soon we made plans for me to walk alongside my daughter while she participated in the local Christmas parade.

What a wonderful night that was.

I had only allowed my daughter to see me drunk once, but many times I had pretended to be "Super Dad," powered by pharmaceuticals.

This time was different.

This time I was the real deal.

My heart overflowed with the love of a father—not the love of a drug-addicted father, but the love of a healthy father.

Together, we built a clean, faith-based relationship.

A few months later, God blessed me again by bringing Sandie into my life.

I became even more convinced that God knew exactly what I needed.

He brought me a wonderful Christian woman with a heart for the Lord.

At about the same time, God began giving me original praise songs.

With His help, I completed twelve songs and was blessed with opportunities to perform them in churches and alongside wonderful Christian musicians.

The songs were always well received and became a testimony to what God can do when we get out of the way and allow Him to work in our lives.

These blessings strengthened my faith and helped me continue growing in my relationship with Christ.

God loved me so much that He used my addictions to bring me to Him.

Once I acknowledged Him and accepted His love, my life began changing in wonderful ways.

Your life can change too.

You do not need to be addicted as I was.

But you do need to understand that your way only works for so long.

Eventually, we all reach the end of ourselves.

I was blessed by my addiction because it finally brought me to my knees and led me to the Lord.

In the end, we all need what has already been offered through Jesus Christ—a personal relationship with God Almighty, the Creator of the universe and our loving Heavenly Father.

I have gone from simply acknowledging Him, to loving Him, to trusting Him.

I do not know what comes next.

But I can honestly tell you that I trust it all to Him.

Even if there are difficult seasons ahead or debts yet to be paid, I know His plan for my life is far greater than anything I could ever imagine or accomplish on my own.

— Rick Gilbert, 2010

Reflection on Rick's Story

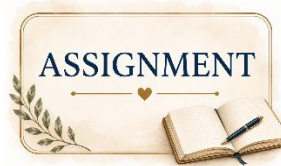
Rick's testimony reminds us that recovery is possible.

God can meet us in our lowest moments.

What seems like the end may become the beginning of a new life.

Rick spent years helping others in recovery and sharing God's love with those who struggled with addiction.

His story continues to impact lives today.



Research Assignment

Visit recovery and educational resources and learn:

- The effects of alcohol on the body.
- The effects of drugs on the brain.

- The effects addiction has on families.
- The effects addiction has on innocent victims.

Children of Addiction

Growing up in an addicted home often creates lifelong struggles.

Children of addiction may experience:

- Trust issues
- Low self-esteem
- Depression
- Relationship difficulties
- Fear of intimacy
- Anxiety
- Difficulty expressing affection
- Increased risk of addiction themselves

Many children grow up surrounded by:

- Anger
- Rage
- Violence
- Instability
- Emotional neglect
- Abuse

Yet healing is possible.

Generational cycles can be broken.

Breaking the Cycle

You may not have chosen the environment you grew up in.

You may not be responsible for what happened to you.

But you can choose what happens next.

With God's help:

- Addiction can be overcome.
- Families can heal.
- Trust can be rebuilt.
- New patterns can be established.

The cycle can stop with you.

Group Discussion

1. How has addiction affected your family?
2. What patterns have been passed down through generations?
3. What healthy changes can begin today?
4. What role does faith play in recovery?
5. How can support groups and accountability help?

Homework

Using your journal:

1. Write about the impact addiction has had on your life.
2. Identify unhealthy family patterns.
3. List three goals for healing and recovery.
4. Find three Bible verses that encourage hope and perseverance.
5. Write a prayer asking God for strength and guidance.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Many people are hurting because of addiction. Some are trapped in it. Others are watching loved ones suffer.

Give us courage to face reality and wisdom to seek help.

Break chains of addiction, fear, shame, guilt, and hopelessness.

Restore families.

Heal wounded hearts.

Help us make choices that honor You and lead us toward freedom.

Thank You for Your mercy, grace, and unfailing love.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Key Thought

Addiction may begin with a choice.

Recovery begins with a decision.

Freedom begins with Jesus Christ.

Chapter Credits

Featured Materials

"**Went To A Party Mom**" — Author Unknown

"**Choices**" — Family testimony shared for educational purposes.

"**Blessed By Addiction and Born Again**" — Written by **Rick Gilbert (2010)**.

In Loving Memory

Rick Gilbert

1957–2024

Recovery Advocate • Mentor • Musician • Encourager

"Whom the Son sets free is free indeed." — John 8:36

Additional Commentary and Compilation

Sandra Gilbert *Mold Me Like Clay – Revised Edition 2026*



Research Assignment

Research the effects of drugs and alcohol and take notes on what makes the greatest impact on you.

Consider the effects on:

- Your physical health
- Your mental and emotional well-being
- Family and friends
- Innocent victims and bystanders

In the previous stories, we have read about the devastating effects that drugs and alcohol can have on people's lives. These were true stories.

If you are an alcoholic, or if your children are growing up in a home affected by alcoholism or addiction, please read the following carefully. Growing up in this environment can create lifelong challenges for children exposed to this lifestyle.

Effects on Children Growing Up in Addiction

- Children raised in addicted homes often enter relationships with people who struggle with addiction themselves.
- They may have difficulty forming healthy intimate relationships, starting relationships, or maintaining them. Having grown up without healthy affection, they may not know how to express it themselves.
- They are at a higher risk of becoming chemically dependent on drugs or alcohol.
- Many struggle with low self-esteem and depression. They may have been raised in highly critical environments and repeatedly told they were worthless, failures, or not good enough.

- Trust issues are common. Many grow up surrounded by lies, deception, secrets, and cover-ups. They may feel embarrassed by their parents' drunkenness, rage, or destructive behavior. Over time, these patterns can become learned behaviors.

Remember, children often learn what they live.

- Many children from addicted homes have difficulty relaxing, playing, or simply enjoying life. They may have grown up in homes filled with anger, violence, instability, neglect, or abuse. They often have no concept of healthy family relationships until they visit a friend's home and witness laughter, love, safety, and stability.

These children become victims of circumstances they did not create.

Breaking the Cycle

We need to pray for these cycles to be broken.

We need to pray that destructive patterns passed from generation to generation will end.

We need to pray for healing in our homes, our families, and our communities.

I have worked with children on and off for more than twenty-five years across the United States. I have worked with children from churches, inner-city communities, and families of every race and background.

Alcohol and drug abuse can be found in every socioeconomic group.

Abuse, addiction, and family dysfunction affect people from all walks of life.

It is heartbreaking to witness the struggles many of these children face.

I have listened to five-year-olds talk about guns being pointed at people, about their mothers exchanging sex for money, and about being beaten so severely that they no longer feel physical pain.

Teenagers in many communities fear for their safety at school, in their neighborhoods, and sometimes even in their own homes.

These children deserve better.

Restoring the Home

It is time to turn our homes back to Christ.

It is time to restore moral values, personal responsibility, compassion, and respect in our homes, schools, communities, and churches.

I am passionate about protecting children.

I thank God for foster parents, children's homes, mentors, teachers, pastors, and caregivers who demonstrate love, forgiveness, guidance, and stability.

It is time for families to heal.

It is time for alcohol, drugs, hatred, abuse, and violence to leave our homes.

It is time for fathers and mothers to take responsibility for nurturing and loving their children.

If you bring together a blended family, love the entire family.

If you struggle with loving every member of your family, ask God to change your heart.

God has called us to love others, not reject them.

Carrying God's love into the world begins at home.

Final Thought

The true key to freedom from addiction, abuse, hatred, bitterness, and destructive behavior is found in a relationship with God Almighty.

Programs can help.

Counseling can help.

Recovery groups can help.

Support systems can help.

But lasting transformation begins when we surrender our lives to Jesus Christ and allow Him to heal our hearts, renew our minds, and guide our steps.

The true key to deliverance from drugs, alcohol, abuse, and hate is God Almighty.

FORGIVENESS

Letting Go • Healing the Heart • Walking in Freedom

Ephesians 4:32

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

Forgiveness does not change the past,
but it changes the future.

When we forgive,
we release ourselves from the chains of bitterness, anger, and regret.

REFLECTION

Forgiveness is not saying the hurt did not happen.

Forgiveness is choosing not to let the hurt control your future.

FORGIVENESS ♥ COMPASSION ♥ HEALING ♥ RESTORATION

Mold Me Like Clay
FINDING FREEDOM THROUGH GOD'S GRACE

FORGIVENESS

God forgives us when we ask Him. After God has forgiven us, we need to learn how to forgive ourselves. Do not allow Satan to keep you in bondage. He will try to place guilt and shame upon you because of your past.

You cannot change yesterday, but you can change today and every day God blesses you with.

Whether you have been the victim or the abuser, remember one thing: destruction was never God's plan for your life. It is time for family members and friends to forgive one another and allow God's redemptive plan to work in their lives.

As God has shown mercy and grace to us, let us show mercy and grace to one another.

Remember, while hanging on the cross, Jesus said:

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

— Luke 23:34

Verses on Forgiveness

1. God's Forgiveness

- Isaiah 43:25 – God forgives and remembers our sins no more.
- Colossians 1:21-23 – Through Christ, you are made holy and blameless.
- Psalm 103 – Your sins are forgiven, your diseases healed, and your sins removed as far as the east is from the west.

2. Forgiving Yourself

- Romans 8:31-39 – Christ does not condemn you, so stop condemning yourself.
- John 8:36 – Jesus makes you free from sin. If Christ has set you free, forgive yourself and walk in that freedom.
- Romans 6:20-23 – We have been set free from sin through Christ.

3. Forgiving Others

- Mark 11:25 – Forgive others so that your Heavenly Father may forgive you.
- Luke 6:35-42 – Judge not, condemn not, forgive and you will be forgiven.
- Ephesians 4:31-32 – "...forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you."

Four Words of Healing

Forgiveness

Compassion

Healing

Restoration

What do these four words mean to you?

It is time to begin the healing process.

Jesus died on the cross so that we could be forgiven, restored, and healed. These four words represent major steps on the journey toward emotional, spiritual, and relational healing.



Forgiveness Assignment

1. Forgiving Yourself

Take a long, honest look at your life.

Are there things for which you have never forgiven yourself?

Using your journal, write today's date and make a list of the things that still bring you guilt, shame, or regret.

After you have written them down, pray and ask God to forgive you.

Then destroy the list.

Throw it away.

Why?

Because that is what God does with confessed sin. He removes it from us and chooses not to hold it against us any longer.

2. Forgiving Others

Make a list of people against whom you are holding grudges.

Begin praying for those individuals.

Ask God to help you release bitterness, anger, and resentment.

It is difficult to continue hating someone you consistently pray for.

As God helps you forgive, mark each person's name off your list.

Remember, God does not hold grudges against us. He offers forgiveness, grace, and mercy.

We are called to do the same.

Forgiveness is easier said than done.

Personally, it took me nearly twenty-five years to release one particular grudge.

Thank God I forgive much more easily today, although I still have room to grow.

God has taught me to pray for those who have hurt me.

Over the years, I have watched Him work miracles in many of the lives of people I once held resentment toward.

Praise God!

He loves us unconditionally.

My desire is to love others the way He loves us.



Compassion Assignment

What Is Compassion?

Compassion is a deep awareness of another person's suffering combined with a desire to help relieve that suffering.

Take an honest look at yourself.

- How much compassion do you show others?
- Are you focused primarily on yourself and your own needs?
- Can you care for others without becoming codependent?
- How have you shown compassion during the last month?
- In what ways has compassion been shown to you?

Write your answers in your journal.



Healing Assignment

What areas of your life need healing?

Consider:

- Emotional healing
- Spiritual healing
- Physical healing
- Family relationships
- Friendships
- Self-esteem
- Grief and loss

For each area, write one practical step you can take to begin the healing process.



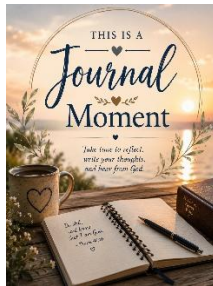
Restoration Assignment

Restoration means:

- Returning something to its original condition.
- Putting something back into proper working order.

God originally intended for you to be whole, healthy, and complete.

He did not create you for a life of addiction, bitterness, hopelessness, or heartache.



Journal Questions

- What areas of your life need restoration?
- What relationships need restoration?
- What dreams or goals need restoration?
- What steps can you begin taking today to move toward restoration?

Unconditional Love

Printed by permission of Allison Chambers Coxsey

Copyright 1996

A treasure to be cherished,
a gift from God above,
is the beauty of friendship,
touched by unconditional love.

A love that asks no questions,
believes in all the best;
never doubting, ever trusting,
withstanding every test.

A love that weathers any storm,
and yet that love still stands;
through the darkest hour,
it still reaches out a hand.

There in that hand is the sweetest gift
that you can give a friend:
a heart that cares,
a love that shares,
that will be there until the end.

A treasure to be cherished,
a gift from God above,
is what I share with you, my friend—

An Unconditional Love.

— Allison Chambers Coxsey

SELF-ESTEEM & ENCOURAGEMENT

Seeing Yourself Through God's Eyes

JOEL 2:25-26

“So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten... You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied and praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you; and My people shall never be put to shame.”

*Be the clay
in the
Great Potter's
Hands.*

ISAIAH 64:8

God does not see you
as *broken*.

He sees you as
becoming.

The pressure was never
meant to destroy you.

It was meant to reveal
the *diamond* within.



RAW



PRESSURE



REFINED



DONE SHINING
FOR HIS GLORY

IDENTITY



PURPOSE



GROWTH



RESTORATION

Mold Me Like Clay

REVISED EDITION 2026

SELF-ESTEEM & ENCOURAGEMENT

Seeing Yourself Through God's Eyes

Key Scripture

Joel 2:25-26

"So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten..."

Introduction

One of the greatest battles many people face is not with others—it is with themselves.

Many people struggle with feelings of inadequacy, rejection, shame, guilt, failure, or worthlessness. Life experiences, criticism, abuse, neglect, poor choices, broken relationships, and disappointments can damage how we view ourselves.

The good news is that God does not see us through the eyes of our failures.

He sees us through the eyes of His love.

God created you with purpose.

You are valuable.

You are important.

You are loved.

As you begin this chapter, ask God to help you see yourself through His eyes instead of through the lens of your past.

Learning to Value Yourself

Learn to value yourself through the eyes of God.

You are important to God.

God loves you.

Take time to read:

- Matthew 10:29-31
- Psalm 139

God desires to restore your life.

Release your past to Him and allow Him to begin His work in your life.

Be the clay in the Great Potter's hands.

The Diamond Principle

Look at a diamond.

Diamonds in their natural state are not dazzling.

They begin as a lump of carbon buried deep beneath the earth.

Over time, tremendous pressure is applied.

Eventually a diamond begins to form.

Then it must be dug from the earth.

The impurities must be removed.

The stone is cut, shaped, polished, and refined.

Only then does it shine.

We are much the same way.

Life applies pressure.

Trials apply pressure.

Relationships apply pressure.

Disappointments apply pressure.

As pressure is applied, we gain wisdom, maturity, and understanding.

Just as a diamond is not formed overnight, neither are we.

Change takes time.

Growth takes time.

Healing takes time.

The first step is accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Salvation happens immediately.

Transformation is a process.

As God continues His work in your life, He removes impurities and teaches you new ways of thinking and living.

The more we surrender to Him, the brighter His light shines through us.

Restoration

Joel 2:25-26 says:

"So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten..."

Many people feel they have wasted years.

Years lost to:

- Addiction
- Abuse
- Bad relationships
- Poor choices
- Fear
- Anger
- Bitterness
- Depression

God specializes in restoration.

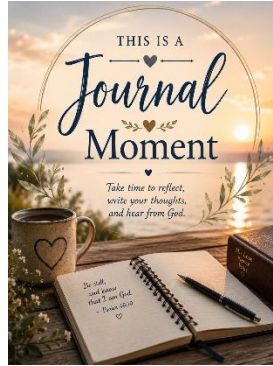
He can restore relationships.

He can restore purpose.

He can restore hope.

He can restore joy.

He can restore your future.



Journal Assignment

What does restoration mean to you?

Write about:

- Areas where you need restoration.
 - Relationships that need healing.
 - Dreams that need renewed purpose.
 - Ways God has already restored parts of your life.
-

Building Healthy Self-Esteem

Healthy self-esteem is not pride.

Healthy self-esteem is understanding who God says you are.

Many people have low self-esteem because they believe messages spoken over them by others.

Examples:

- "You are not good enough."
- "You will never succeed."
- "You are worthless."
- "You are a failure."

These statements are lies.

God's Word says something different.

God's Truth About You

Read the following verses:

- Romans 6:6 — The old self is gone.
- 2 Corinthians 5:17 — You are a new creation.
- Colossians 1:22 — You are holy and blameless.
- 1 Peter 2:9 — You are chosen.
- Ephesians 2:10 — You are God's workmanship.
- Ephesians 4:24 — You are created to be righteous and holy.



Self-Esteem Assignment

Read this chapter again carefully.

Then answer the following questions in your journal:

1. Why do you struggle with self-esteem?
2. What negative thoughts do you have about yourself?
3. Where did those thoughts come from?
4. What Bible verses challenge those thoughts?
5. How can you begin replacing negative thoughts with positive truths?

If you do not know how to change your thought patterns, write down areas where you need help and discuss them with your group leader, pastor, counselor, mentor, or trusted friend.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Are You an Encourager or a Critic?

We need to encourage one another, not tear one another down.

It is easy to find fault.

It is easy to criticize.

It is easy to point out weaknesses.

Encouragement requires effort.

Encouragement requires humility.

Jesus modeled humility.

He lifted people up.

He restored people.

He offered hope.

Many people criticize others because they struggle with their own insecurities.

People who constantly tear others down often battle their own low self-esteem.

They attempt to build themselves up by making others feel smaller.

This should never be the way of a believer.

A Heart of Humility

There has only been one perfect person to ever walk this earth.

His name is Jesus Christ.

Every one of us has weaknesses.

Every one of us has shortcomings.

Every one of us needs God's grace.

Instead of focusing on the failures of others, ask God to reveal areas where you need growth.

Ask yourself:

- Am I humble?
- Am I encouraging?
- Am I critical?
- Do I build others up?

- Do I listen before judging?

Encouragement at Home

Do you encourage your children?

When they struggle:

- Do you help them?
- Do you teach them?
- Do you guide them?

Or do you criticize them?

Children thrive when they are encouraged.

Help them set goals.

Help them discover their gifts.

Help them believe they can succeed.

Encouragement in Marriage

When dating, many couples encourage one another.

After marriage, criticism often replaces encouragement.

Healthy marriages require:

- Respect
- Encouragement
- Kind words
- Patience
- Understanding

Be genuine.

Encouragement is most powerful when it is sincere.

Encouragement at Church

When problems arise, avoid gossip.

Go directly to the source.

Ask questions.

Seek understanding.

Offer solutions.

Encourage one another rather than tearing down the Body of Christ.

Encouragement at Work

Managers should correct privately and encourage publicly.

Employees should communicate respectfully.

Everyone benefits when people treat one another with dignity and respect.

A team becomes stronger when people encourage one another.



Assignment

Look up the following scriptures and write ways they teach us to encourage others:

1. James 1:19
2. 1 John 3:18
3. Ephesians 4:29
4. Romans 15:1-2
5. 1 Peter 4:9-10
6. Galatians 6:10

Practical Ways to Encourage Others

- Pray for people.
- Listen to them.
- Speak uplifting words.
- Write notes of encouragement.
- Leave a kind message.
- Give a thoughtful card.
- Celebrate their victories.
- Thank them for their efforts.
- Tell them you appreciate them.

Small acts of encouragement can change a person's entire day.

Sometimes they can change a life.

The Encouragement Formula

When addressing a difficult issue:

1. Begin with encouragement.
2. Address the problem honestly.
3. Develop a plan for improvement.
4. End on a positive note.

This approach helps people grow while preserving dignity and respect.

Key Thought

TO ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER IS ONE OF YOUR GREATEST TASKS IN LIFE.

People remember how you made them feel.

Choose to leave others stronger, not weaker.

Choose to build up rather than tear down.

Choose encouragement.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Help me see myself through Your eyes.

Teach me to value the life You have given me.

Heal the wounds that have damaged my self-esteem.

Help me release negative thoughts and replace them with Your truth.

Teach me to encourage others as You have encouraged me.

Help me speak words that bring life, hope, healing, and strength.

May my life reflect Your love and Your grace.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

SEXUAL ADDICTION, HEALING & *Healthy Relationships*

FREEDOM ♥ HEALING ♥ RESTORATION ♥ HOPE

1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20

*"You are not your own;
you were bought
at a price.
Therefore honor God
with your body."*

God's desire is not for
shame, bondage,
or brokenness.

His desire is
healing, restoration,
healthy relationships,
and freedom.

REMEMBER

No matter what has happened to you...
No matter what choices you have made...
No matter what wounds you carry...

God's grace is greater.

♥
Healing
is possible.

✈
Freedom
is possible.

★
Hope
is possible.

A new beginning is possible.

♥ HEALING

✈ FREEDOM

★ HOPE

🌿 RESTORATION

Mold Me Like Clay

HOPE LIFE RECOVERY WORKBOOK

God specializes in restoring broken
places and bringing hope to
wounded hearts.



SEXUAL ADDICTION, HEALING & HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Freedom • Healing • Restoration • Hope

Introduction

Sexuality was created by God as a beautiful gift to be enjoyed within healthy, loving, and committed relationships. Unfortunately, because we live in a broken world, many people have experienced confusion, abuse, addiction, betrayal, unhealthy relationships, or deep emotional wounds connected to sexuality.

Some people have been victims.

Some have made poor choices.

Some have struggled with addiction.

Others have carried shame, guilt, rejection, or fear for years.

No matter where you find yourself today, there is hope.

God's desire is not to condemn you. His desire is to heal you, restore you, and help you walk in freedom.

Remember:

Your past does not determine your future.

God is able to restore what has been broken and bring healing to wounded hearts.

SECTION ONE

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS & GOD'S DESIGN

Key Scripture

Genesis 2:24

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

Understanding Healthy Relationships

Healthy relationships are built upon:

- Trust

- Respect
- Honesty
- Commitment
- Communication
- Mutual care
- Personal boundaries

A healthy relationship does not involve:

- Manipulation
- Coercion
- Threats
- Control
- Fear
- Abuse

God desires relationships that build one another up rather than tear one another down.

Relationship Inventory

Answer honestly:

- Do I feel safe in my relationships?
- Am I respected?
- Do I respect others?
- Am I honest?
- Do I communicate well?
- Do I have healthy boundaries?



Group Discussion

What qualities make a relationship healthy?

What qualities make a relationship unhealthy?

How can we develop healthier relationships moving forward?

SECTION TWO

SEXUAL ADDICTION & RECOVERY

Key Scripture

1 Corinthians 6:12

"I will not be mastered by anything."

What Is Sexual Addiction?

Sexual addiction occurs when sexual thoughts, behaviors, pornography, fantasies, or activities become controlling forces in a person's life.

Like other addictions, the behavior is often used to:

- Escape emotional pain
- Cope with loneliness
- Cover feelings of rejection
- Avoid stress
- Mask depression
- Deal with trauma

The addiction becomes a substitute for genuine intimacy.

Understanding the Difference

Healthy intimacy is based upon:

- Connection
- Trust
- Respect
- Commitment

Addictive behavior is often based upon:

- Escape
- Fantasy
- Control
- Temporary pleasure
- Emotional avoidance

Signs of Sexual Addiction

- Obsessive thoughts
- Secretive behavior
- Excessive pornography use
- Compulsive sexual behaviors
- Difficulty maintaining healthy relationships
- Feelings of guilt or shame afterward
- Repeated failed attempts to stop

The Cycle of Addiction

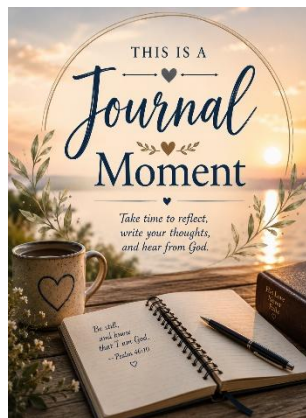
1. Emotional pain
2. Escapism
3. Temporary relief
4. Guilt and shame
5. More emotional pain
6. Repeating the cycle

Breaking the Cycle

Recovery begins with honesty.

Recovery continues with:

- Accountability
- Counseling
- Recovery programs
- Spiritual growth
- Healthy relationships
- Prayer
- Support systems



Journal Assignment

- What emotions trigger unhealthy behaviors?
- What situations create temptation?
- What healthy alternatives can you develop?
- Who can you trust for accountability?

Key Truth

Addiction thrives in secrecy.

Healing grows in honesty.

SECTION THREE

SEXUAL ABUSE & RAPE PREVENTION

Key Scripture

Psalm 34:18

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

Important Truth

If you have experienced sexual abuse or assault:

It was not your fault.

Abusers make choices.

Victims do not cause abuse.

Many survivors struggle with:

- Fear
- Shame
- Guilt
- Anger
- Trust issues
- Depression
- Anxiety

These reactions are common responses to trauma.

Safety Awareness

While no one can completely prevent another person's choices, there are ways to improve personal safety:

- Trust your instincts.
- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Avoid isolated situations when possible.
- Let trusted people know where you are.

- Seek help immediately if you feel unsafe.
- Learn healthy boundaries.
- Understand that "No" is a complete sentence.

Warning Signs of Predatory Behavior

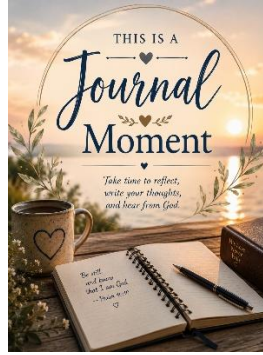
- Excessive control
- Isolation from friends and family
- Manipulation
- Threats
- Boundary violations
- Obsessive jealousy
- Attempts to create dependency

Healing After Abuse

Healing is a journey.

Healing may involve:

- Counseling
- Support groups
- Trusted friends
- Pastoral care
- Recovery programs
- Prayer
- Time
-



Journal Assignment

- What fears do I still carry?
- What areas need healing?
- What support systems do I have?
- What boundaries do I need to establish?



Group Discussion

What does healthy trust look like?

How can we support survivors without judgment?

What role does faith play in healing?

FINAL REFLECTION

Many people carry wounds related to relationships, addiction, abuse, rejection, or broken trust.

Some wounds are visible.

Many are not.

The good news is that God sees every wound.

He sees every tear.

He understands every hurt.

Nothing is hidden from Him.

No matter what has happened in your life, healing is possible.

Freedom is possible.

Hope is possible.

Restoration is possible.

God's grace is greater than your past.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for Your love and mercy.

Thank You for seeing us as we are and loving us enough to help us grow.

Bring healing where there is hurt.

Bring freedom where there is bondage.

Bring hope where there is discouragement.

Help us establish healthy relationships, healthy boundaries, and healthy choices.

Restore what has been broken.

Teach us to trust You more each day.

Help us walk in wisdom, strength, and freedom.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Chapter Credits

Portions of this chapter are based upon recovery education materials, personal testimonies, counseling resources, prevention education, and faith-based recovery principles compiled for the *Mold Me Like Clay* workbook. Additional historical source materials were adapted from resources used with permission throughout earlier editions of the workbook. ❤️ 📖 🌱

RECOVERY PROGRESS REFLECTION

Looking Back • Moving Forward

"Being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

— Philipians 1:6

Take a few moments to reflect on your journey through this workbook. There are no right or wrong answers. This is your opportunity to celebrate growth, recognize areas that still need healing, and thank God for the work He is doing in your life.

1. What chapter impacted you the most?

2. What area has God helped you grow in?

3. What strongholds, habits, or unhealthy patterns have been broken or weakened?

4. What goals do you still have for your life and recovery journey?

5. How has your relationship with Jesus Christ changed during this study?

6. What is your next step?

- Daily Prayer
- Bible Study
- Church Involvement
- Recovery Group
- Counseling
- Mentoring
- Serving Others
- Strengthening Relationships
- Other: _____

Personal Commitment

With God's help, I commit to continue growing, healing, and walking forward in faith.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

My Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for bringing me through this journey. Thank You for the lessons I have learned, the healing You have begun, and the hope You have restored. Continue to guide my steps, strengthen my faith, and help me become the person You created me to be.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen.

Remember

You are loved.

You are valuable.

You are forgiven.

You are growing.

And God is not finished with your story.

CONCLUSION

The Potter Is Still Working

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

“Being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

God is not finished with you.

The Potter is still shaping the clay.

Your story is still being written.

*There is hope.
There is healing.
There is restoration.*

*Behold,
I am doing
a new thing!*
ISAIAH 43:19

HOPE ♥ HEALING ♥ RESTORATION ♥ NEW BEGINNINGS

Mold Me Like Clay

A JOURNEY OF RECOVERY, FAITH, AND RESTORATION

You are loved.
You are valuable.
You are never alone.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for taking this journey through *Mold Me Like Clay*.

This workbook was created to help guide you toward healing, restoration, spiritual growth, and a deeper relationship with God. The lessons contained within these pages have been compiled from life experiences, Bible studies, seminars, college courses, recovery programs, counseling resources, and over thirty years of ministry and personal growth.

Throughout this book, I have shared lessons learned through victories and failures, through times of joy and times of heartbreak. Some of the greatest lessons have come through life's refining fires. It is often during those difficult seasons that God teaches us the most about faith, perseverance, grace, mercy, forgiveness, and unconditional love.

The information in this workbook is intended to be a tool for self-assessment, personal growth, and spiritual development. It is not intended to replace professional counseling, medical care, or mental health treatment. If you are facing severe emotional, mental, physical, or spiritual struggles, please seek assistance from qualified professionals, licensed counselors, therapists, pastors, recovery groups, or support organizations.

God often works through people.

Sometimes healing comes through prayer.

Sometimes it comes through wise counsel.

Sometimes it comes through recovery programs, support groups, mentors, or trusted friends.

Never be afraid to ask for help.

I am deeply grateful for the many mentors, teachers, counselors, pastors, family members, and friends who have invested in my life throughout the years. Their encouragement, wisdom, friendship, and prayers have helped shape the person I am today.

Most of all, I thank God for His Holy Word, the Bible, which continues to serve as the foundation and guide for life.

To God the Father be all praise, honor, and glory.

Thank You, Jesus Christ, for Your sacrifice on the cross and for the gift of salvation.

Thank You for Your grace, mercy, forgiveness, and unconditional love.

Thank You, Holy Spirit, for Your guidance, comfort, conviction, wisdom, and direction.

You have carried us through every season and continue to mold us into the people You created us to be.

Special Acknowledgments

Special thanks are extended to the individuals and organizations who graciously shared their knowledge, research, testimony, and copyrighted materials for previous editions of this workbook.

Contributors and Resources

Kay Marie Porterfield

"Codependency Symptoms and Myths"

The Broken Spirits Network

Domestic Violence, Victims of Abuse, Victim Survivor Rights, Sexual Abuse and Assault Resources

Irene Matiatos, PhD

Signs of Verbal and Emotional Abuse

National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center

Teen Dating Violence Resources

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

Alcohol Education and Statistics

Allison Chambers Coxsey

"Unconditional Love"

Pastor/Evangelist Dale P. Kruse

"How to Have Victory Over Sexual Sins"

Carol J. Ross, MA, CADAC

"Controlled by Desire"

A special thank you to the family who shared their son's testimony and final wishes so that his story could continue to help others make better choices and find hope through Christ.

May his testimony continue touching lives for generations to come.

A Final Word

No matter what you have experienced...

No matter what mistakes you have made...

No matter how broken life may seem...

God is not finished with you.

The Potter is still working with the clay.

Your story is still being written.

There is hope.

There is healing.

There is restoration.

There is forgiveness.

There is purpose.

And there is new life through Jesus Christ.

My prayer is that this workbook has encouraged you, challenged you, and helped you take another step toward becoming the person God created you to be.

May God richly bless you as you continue your journey.

"Being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

— Philippians 1:6

God Bless You.




ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sandra Gilbert

Walking With Jesus 365

 Sandra.Gilbert@wwj365.com

 wwj365.com

Sandra Gilbert is a Christian author, speaker, ministry leader, and recovery advocate with a passion for helping people find healing, hope, and restoration through Jesus Christ.

Drawing from decades of life experience, ministry, recovery work, biblical study, and counseling education, Sandra developed the *Mold Me Like Clay* Recovery Workbook to help individuals navigate life's challenges through faith, personal growth, and practical application of God's Word.

Professional Credentials

- Board Certified Master Mental Health Coach
- Certified Life Coach
- Ordained Minister
- Life Recovery Ministry Leader
- Member, American Association of Christian Counselors
- Member, National Association of Christian Ministers
- Destiny Bible College
- Light University

Sandra has dedicated much of her life to encouraging individuals and families affected by addiction, abuse, codependency, grief, trauma, and life-controlling issues. Her heart is to see people discover the freedom, healing, and purpose that can only be found through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

"Being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

— Philipians 1:6

A Personal Note From Sandra

As you reach the end of this workbook, I want to personally thank you for taking this journey.

My prayer is that you have found encouragement, healing, hope, and a deeper understanding of God's love for you.

Life is not always easy. We all experience seasons of loss, disappointment, grief, mistakes, and challenges. Yet through every season, God remains faithful.

Many of the lessons found in this workbook were learned through personal experience, ministry, recovery work, and walking with others through difficult seasons of life.

The beautiful river behind us represents one of my favorite reminders from God: life keeps moving forward.

*Just as a river continues its journey,
God continues His work in us.*

My two companions, *Reba and Coco*, have brought countless smiles, laughter, and moments of joy into my life. Through *The Praise Pups* ministry, they remind people that God's love can often be seen in the simplest moments and through the most unexpected messengers.

Whether through Walking With Jesus 365, River Oasis, The Praise Pups, ministry work, life coaching, or simply a conversation with someone who needs encouragement, my desire remains the same:

To point people toward Jesus Christ.

Sandra Gilbert 

WALKING WITH JESUS 365

✉ Sandra.Gilbert@wwj365.com

🌐 wwj365.com

MY MINISTRIES

RIVER OASIS

A ministry of encouragement, fellowship, spiritual growth, and outreach—creating a place of hope, healing, and refreshment for life.

THE PRAISE PUPS

Using the joy and companionship of God's creatures to bring smiles, encouragement, and opportunities to share God's love in the simplest and most unexpected ways.

HOPE  HEALING  RESTORATION  NEW BEGINNINGS

"Being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

