



# WHAT GOD TOLD ME

A JOURNEY TO LEARNING LOVE

By: Sheena Crawford



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## **Contents**

Introduction.....	1
Understanding My Journey to Love .....	2
Characteristics of Love .....	3
Compassion .....	3
Edifying.....	4
Let Go .....	5
Selfless.....	6
God is Love .....	8
Understanding God’s Love.....	10
Types of Love .....	11
God’s Love.....	15
Self-Giving .....	17
Sacrificial .....	17
Unconditional.....	17
Comforting .....	18
Holy .....	18
Understanding How to Love.....	20
Showing Love to God.....	21
Keeping God’s Commandments .....	23
Using Your Gifts.....	25
Using Your Words .....	27
Valuing the People in Your Life.....	29
Reading God’s Word .....	31



Communicate with God .....	33
Showing Love to a Child .....	34
Loving By Correcting .....	43
Correcting Gently .....	43
Being an Example .....	45
Teaching Emotional Management .....	47
Praying and Fasting .....	49
Showing Love to Your Parents .....	50
Tell Them You're Sorry .....	50
Tell Them You Love Them.....	51
Tell Them You Forgive Them.....	52
Tell Them They Matter.....	52
Tell Them They Did Good .....	53
Showing Love to Your Neighbor .....	55
Understanding What Blocks Love .....	57
The Issues of a Hardened Heart.....	58
The Secrets of Your Heart.....	60
Learning Your Heart.....	62
Insecurity.....	69
Accountability .....	71
Justification .....	72
Anger .....	74
Impatience .....	76
Dominance.....	77



Competitiveness .....	79
Superiority .....	81
Stubbornness.....	83
Working On Your Heart.....	85
Understanding What Releases Love .....	88
Softening Your Heart.....	89
Preparing Your Heart .....	92
Understanding How to Keep Love .....	96
Moving Forward .....	97
Accept the Past .....	97
Let Go of the Past.....	98
Let the New Exist .....	99
Trust God.....	99
Take a Step .....	100
Maintaining a Healthy Heart .....	102
Walking in Love.....	103
What to Remember .....	104



## Introduction

When I was 21, I graduated from college and I thought “what now?” I realized, I hadn’t been close with any guy. My relationship with my parents didn’t exist. I had two friends, one of which I barely spoke to. It was at this time that I realized I didn’t know what love felt like. I questioned if anyone loved me and I couldn’t think of anyone I loved.

Every time I turned on the TV, turned on the radio, talked to a friend, overheard a conversation, love was the topic of discussion. I started hearing the saying so much “It’s better to have loved and lost, than to have never loved at all”.

Since then I have been in one relationship, have a wonderful son, many more friends, and a restored relationship with my parents. I see God clearer and have a deeper relationship with God. I am grateful that God answered my desperate prayer “Lord, teach me how to love”.

{ All the knowledge I possess everyone else can acquire, but my heart is all my own. ~ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe }



## **Understanding My Journey to Love**

If your reasoning tells you one thing, and your feelings tell you another, before you do anything, you should first decide which is healthier; your reasoning (mental state) or your feelings (emotional state). ~ Sheena Crawford



## Characteristics of Love

During my journey to learning love, I learned several lessons. Lessons that shaped the way I treat people, speak to people, acknowledge people, and look at life. The top five things I learned about love is that it is compassion, edifying, encourages growth, selfless, and comes from God.

### Compassion

You have to understand or truly put yourself in someone else's shoes. Can you envision yourself homeless? Caring for a sick child? Asking for food because you lost your job and surprisingly can't find another? These situations can happen to anyone and when you realize that, it's easier to show compassion and understanding; true love.

My Growing Moment: I used to judge almost everyone. If I saw a single mom struggling to take care of her kids, I thought "they probably should stop having sex". If I saw someone begging, I thought "they should get a job". If they were handicap, I thought "they're probably getting social security payments and I pay for that every other week". If I heard of a woman being abused,





I would think “she should just leave”. Then I ended up going through almost all of those things myself. I realized how someone could end up in an abusive relationship. How someone could end up homeless even with an advanced education. How someone could find themselves becoming a single parent. It taught me compassion.

{ Educating the mind without educating the heart  
is no education at all. ~ Aristotle }

## **Edifying**

Love is edifying. It makes someone better and desires the best. It doesn't mean accepting pain, drama, confusion, or strife from other people. You can forgive someone and still not accept their negativity. If someone is treating you in a destructive manner, it's not love. And if you're accepting this, it's not out of love but a deeper pain, insecurity, or fear.

My Growing Moment: When I was with my ex, it was the fear and insecurity of being a single mom that made me stay even though he was violent. I didn't love him and he didn't love me. When I got over this fear by literally practicing doing things



with my son alone for months, it was easier for me to finally leave and never look back.

{ Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ~  
Philippians 2:3 }

## **Let Go**

One of the biggest misconceptions of love is that we're supposed to accept people's mistreatment of us; whether verbal, emotional, mental, or financial. God loves us but God does not accept our destructive behavior. We still face the consequences of our actions. Sometimes, we try to "help" people and "save" people and say it's because we love them.

If we truly love them, we would correct them so they can be better; not console them and pacify them to the point that there is no growth. Sometimes we have to let the people we love face their consequences. It may seem harsh to them but if they grow from it, they will thank you.



**Sometimes we have to let the people we love face their consequences.**



My Growing Moment: I used to know I could call my Dad when I was in a bind and needed money. Whether it was for my car, to keep a roof over my head, or food in my stomach I knew he would come through for me. One day, I needed his help again. I had to pay \$1,500 in two days to keep my apartment. He said in a very reluctant and low voice “I can’t”.

I was so upset and initially I was hurt. I thought “You can’t?” I knew he could! He chose not to help. But in him choosing not to pacify me anymore, in him choosing not to bail me from my consequence, I faced it. I learned from it. And I haven’t made a decision that put myself in that position again. I grew from it and I thank him for it.

{ Don't be reckless with other people's hearts, don't put up with those who are reckless with yours. ~ Mary Schmich }

## **Selfless**

When you truly love someone, you put their needs first. This is really amazing and works perfectly when you have two people who truly love. So one person is looking out for the other and vice versa.



This becomes a mess when you have one person who truly loves but it's not reciprocated.

That person who's expressing true love will eventually feel used and out of energy. Just think about how it would look if everyone truly loved and everyone looked out for one another. No one would be in need and no one would hurt. It would be like heaven.

My Growing Moment: God loves us selflessly. God sent Jesus who died for us in the most selfless way. God cares, guides, and instructs us in the most selfless way but His word says "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

 **Because I love God, I don't want to grieve Him.**

Basically, "If you love Me, you will put Me first, you will be selfless toward Me, like I'm selfless toward you". Because I love God, I don't want to grieve Him. Through the Holy Spirit, I follow God's commandments and put Him first and God continues to put me first. A balanced act of




selfless love that is only achieved through God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

{ You change your life by changing your heart. ~  
Max Lucado }

### **God is Love**

Sometimes you just don't have the strength, courage, or energy to keep loving someone unconditionally. People are tiresome, our patience gets thin, and our heart gets weary. We don't even know how to love without God.

Some people make it hard to stay in a mindset of love. Some people act like they simply don't want your love. But before you give up, go to God. God is love and our strength and pours out whatever we need with limitless supply. Pray and ask God to help you love.

 **I asked God to help me love, teach me how, and He did.**

My Growing Moment: As I stated earlier, there was a moment in my life when I questioned if



anyone loved me and I realized I hadn't loved anyone else. I asked God to help me love, teach me how, and He did. I asked for it, I sought it out, I knocked and the door was opened (Matthew 7:7).



## **Understanding God's Love**

Whoever does not love does not know God,  
because God is love. ~ 1 John 4:8



## Types of Love

There are four types of love mentioned in the Bible:

- Storge love is an affection you would have toward family.
- Philia love is a fondness you would have toward a person or thing.
- Eros love is a romantic love you would have toward your wife or husband.
- Agape love is to favor someone without needing justification.

Out of all the types of love mentioned in the Bible agape love is the most misunderstood. Agape means to prefer something or “have a preference”. You may philia your dog but God says to agape one another.

If you prefer something, you choose it, like God chose us. To choose something you must consider it for a purpose and determine that it is good for that purpose.

You preferred your spouse and chose your spouse. It was a choice, not a feeling, and you





determined that your spouse is good for that purpose.

Likewise, our fellow brothers and sisters are good for the purpose of the kingdom. Whether we see it with our eyes or not, we must realize that God ordained it and chose them, and we should choose them too. Otherwise we are disserving God's Kingdom, Will, and Word.



**True love is a choice and it does not shift with emotions.**

True love is a conscious preference. True love is a choice and it does not shift with emotions. Because love is a choice, it is sacrificial. You may not always *feel* like choosing your spouse. You may not *feel* like choosing your family. You may not *feel* like choosing your brothers and sisters in Christ. But since you choose them anyway, you are making a sacrifice, and you are operating in love.

The opposite is true with hate. Hate sounds so negative and hurtful but you may “hate” sausage. This means you don't prefer it and you wouldn't



choose it. Luke 14:26 says “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”

This is not negative, it means that a child of God should not choose anyone, including themselves over God. They should prefer God more than anything else, otherwise this would create an idol.

Likewise, God chose us even though we didn't deserve it. God gave Jesus as a sacrifice for our sins. God chose us over Himself. This is love. If we love God, we will choose God. We will choose God's Word. We will choose God's Will. Our sacrifice would be our living bodies (Romans 12:1). This is our love to God.

Scripture says that if we fear the day of judgement, it is because we have not been made perfect in love (1 John 4:18). It is because we have not truly chosen God in our heart and we know God knows this.



If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love. ~ 1 Corinthians 13



## God's Love

It's literally impossible to put anything pertaining to God in a "nutshell". It's hard to summarize God or use only one word to describe Him. However, there are a few characteristics that are everlasting when it comes to God and God's love.

*One of our greatest needs as human beings is to be loved. We all need love. We need to know that we are important to someone. For example, we may act irresponsibly in a desperate attempt to get attention. Attention is a poor substitute for love but it seems better than nothing at all. We may develop physical symptoms that bring us sympathy and concern.*

*The symptoms cause us genuine pain, but the pain of sickness is more bearable than the pain of admitting that nobody cares. We may angrily lash out at those whom we think should care or we may try to run away from them and hide, but in either case, we are trying to protect ourselves from the hurt they are causing us by their lack of concern. We all need to know that someone loves us.*



 **To know God is to find release from the crippling effects of feeling unloved.**

*The good news from God's Word is that someone does. To know God is to find release from the crippling effects of feeling unloved. God is love. Love is one of the warmest words in any translated language, and that God is love is one of the most sublime, uplifting, and reassuring truths known to mankind. Love is God's nature. It is not merely a friendly attitude He projects. It is the essence of His being. He is always going to act toward us in love because He cannot do otherwise. Love is the way He is. (Bible.org)*

I love that excerpt from Bible.org and I couldn't summarize our need for love and God's love any better.



## **Self-Giving**

God gives Himself for us continuously and He gave us Jesus who died and resurrected for our sins. God actually created beings to manifest His love, before the foundation of the earth. God loves to give. This is why He loves a cheerful giver. God's love is self-giving.

## **Sacrificial**

God endures disappointment, anger, and sadness through His patient love which puts us first. If God was anything like humans, He would have said "I can't do this anymore" and left us or destroyed us. God has the power but He continues daily to forgive us, call for us, and reach for us, and set aside His disappointment and hurt from our choices to not love Him and to not keep His commandments. God's love is sacrificial.

## **Unconditional**

God puts us before Himself and He also will never change His love for us. To change His love for us, would be to change His very nature and His nature does not change. He will not stop loving



us. There really is nothing we can do to make Him not love us. God's love is not here today, gone tomorrow; it is forever. God wants everyone to come to repentance, but we have free will and we have a choice. God's love is unconditional.

## **Comforting**

God has a way to lift all feelings of guilt, shame, embarrassment, and pain. I and others have described it as a *literal* feeling of something being lifted from you; negative feelings being taken from you; and God begins to heal you.

One of my favorite realizations in the Bible was in Matthew, when the leper came to Jesus and said "Lord, if you are willing, you can heal me" and Jesus simply said "I am willing". As I read through Matthew, Jesus healed constantly. Jesus wanted to heal and came to heal. God's love is healing and comforting.

## **Holy**

God's love is self-giving, sacrificial, unconditional, and comforting but God still has standards and expectations expressed through His Word and God shows this by correcting us. He does not



want anyone to perish so His desire is to bring us into a righteous standing with Himself.

God uses His Holy Spirit to renew our minds, and change our ways, so when judgement day comes He can continue to pour His love out on us, throughout eternity. God will not reconcile unholy people to Himself. His desire is to shed unholy things once and for all. God's love is holy.





## **Understanding How to Love**


My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. ~ 1 John 3:18



## Showing Love to God

God has shown me more than I could ever imagine about myself, about Him, and about His will. Out of everything God has shown me the most important is His love. In “A Journey to the Ultimate Marriage” I go into detail about my first experience with God at 12 years old.

I was feeling depressed, trapped, stuck, and unloved and God instructed me to pray one night while I rested in bed. After being instructed more than once to pray, I finally kneeled on the side of my bed and lowered my head in prayer. I began to cry as I felt every burden lift from me. I felt God’s love.

 **You develop a deeper relationship with God by learning who He is.**

When I was being healed physically, emotionally, and financially I felt God’s love. When God was teaching and growing me, I felt His love. When the thought would pop into my mind, “I am useless, God does not love me anymore, I am unlovable”



God immediately removed the thoughts and replaced it with His presence and love.

You develop a deeper relationship with God by learning who He is. Isn't that true with everyone? God is love and as you grow closer to God, you will grow more in the area of love. God is so much more though; we all could write a book just using descriptive words of what God is, but I like this particular characteristic, love.

So to develop a closer relationship with God, you have to understand real love, God's love. You have to understand how to let God love you and how to love others. Love starts in your mind.

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as above all. ~ 1 Chronicles 29:11



## **Keeping God's Commandments**

As I laid in bed one night I started to praise God for being a loving, compassionate, merciful, holy, and perfect God. I started thanking God for the sacrifice that was made just so we can be close to Him. Then I started thinking about how we had to make sacrifices in the Old Testament. This led me to ask, "What is the significance in sacrifice?" In my soul, I was convicted with God's answer, "love".

The point of sacrifice is to show love because in Scripture God says love covers all sin. To love is to be selfless or unselfish. When Jesus was sacrificed He was putting us first and that was an act of love. Sacrifice brings you closer in relationship. Whatever you sacrifice for, you will be closer to it. If you sacrifice for your children, you will inevitably grow your relationship with them.

If you sacrifice for your job you will inevitably grow in your career. Since God sacrificed for us, if we accept it, we will inevitably grow closer to God. We sacrifice to God through our obedience, by laying down our will for God's. By keeping God's commandments.



**We sacrifice to God through our obedience.**

What commandments can you work on keeping?

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{ If ye love me, keep my commandments. ~ John  
14:15 }

\*To understand God's commandments in further detail read "A Journey to Learning God's Word".



## Using Your Gifts

The key to using your gift as a sacrifice is to not just use it, but to specifically use it for God's glory. You may be able to sing, but sing to glorify God. You may be able to cook, but cook to glorify God. You may be able to build businesses, build businesses that magnify God.

Personally, I use every single thing in me for God, even things that I may be weaker in. Many people may say that's too much or they may want to use their gift how they want to, but that's the point in sacrifice. It's not for you, you don't use it for you. It's God's first, therefore, you use it for God and encouraging others.

What gifts do you have and how can you use them to glorify God?

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{ Everyone has been made for some particular work, and the desire for that work has been put in every heart. ~ Rumi }




\*If you don't know your gifts pray for guidance and understanding from God.



## Using Your Words

We are called to edify people with our words, let our words be like honey to another person's ears, speak life and not death, and speak the Word of God. The tongue is the most untamed part of the human body.

We find it much easier to train our arms, legs, and abs than our tongue, which can be like daggers and weapons. Daily, we should ask God to guide our words in a way that magnifies Him.

 **We find it much easier to train our arms, legs, and abs than our tongue.**

Have you hurt anyone with your words? How can you use your words to help them heal?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Hurtful Words: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Healing Words: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_





Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Hurtful Words: \_\_\_\_\_

Healing Words: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Hurtful Words: \_\_\_\_\_

Healing Words: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\*Your healing words can include “I’m sorry, I love you, I believe in you, you are important to me, I forgive you” and so much more. Remember to speak these words to the person as well.

{ A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man  
keepeth it in till afterwards. ~ Proverbs 29:11 }



## **Valuing the People in Your Life**

When we sacrifice our time, energy, and love for other people God is pleased. When we show people that they matter and that they're valued, it creates a culture of unity that God is also pleased with.

Scripture says to count others as more significant than yourself and to outdo one another in showing honor. God says to honor your father and mother and that loving your neighbor as yourself is the second most important commandment.

Who are some people that you'd like to start showing value towards? How can you do that?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Value Action: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Value Action: \_\_\_\_\_



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Value Action: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Value Action: \_\_\_\_\_

{ *Be kindly affectioned one to another with  
brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.*  
~ Romans 12:10 }



## **Reading God's Word**

I love reading Scripture and very often, while I'm reading, I have revelations and new understanding. When we take the time to read The Holy Bible we are making a sacrifice that brings us closer to God, to knowing God, and learning God's ways. When we start to walk in those things, we are committing the ultimate act of love toward God.

Can you increase your knowledge of Scripture? What is your goal for reading? How will you keep this goal?

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\*Consider adding a Bible study app to your phone or whatever technology you carry with you. Add reminders in your calendar or alerts so you don't forget.



All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. ~ 2 Timothy 3:16-17



## Communicate with God

Prayer is simply conversation and during a conversation someone speaks and then that same person has an opportunity to listen. We sacrifice to God through prayer by speaking to God and then listening for a response. God is a spirit being, so although God speaks in many ways, God primarily speaks through the spirit. For us, it feels like a conviction, urge, vibe, or “feeling”. Many times God will confirm His Word through people, prophets, and other messengers like David, Daniel, and Joseph. Prayer is special, because it’s a direct way to communicate with God.

How can you increase your prayer time with God?  
Do you petition and thank God when you pray?  
Do you pause or take a moment to listen?

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{ Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving. ~ Colossians 4:2 }



## Showing Love to a Child

God's relationship with us is very similar to a parent/child relationship. One way that we show love to a child is through correction. Scripture says "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." ~ Hebrews 12:6-8

 **Our love for a child should mimic God's love for us.**

In this world we correct a child physically with spanking, emotionally with isolation, or mentally with conversation. God corrects us by guiding us with knowledge and instruction and when we are stubborn, God allows us to learn by freeing us to our own choices and also our own consequences. God does not cause hurt or pain to us physically, emotionally, or mentally. Our love for a child should mimic God's love for us, and our



corrections for a child should mimic God's correction.

Giving birth is a miracle by itself, but giving birth to my son was beyond the “normal” miracle. Although I was having contractions, I did not feel them. I felt absolutely no pain and my son's first few years were blissful. He slept through the night quickly, barely cried, rarely threw up, rarely had temper tantrums, and overall was simply a peaceful human being. I rarely corrected my son physically, beyond a few taps on his hand to let him know he did something wrong. Even that small tap of the hand was enough to make him cry, but most of the time my stern voice was enough.

Everyone who taught my son thought he was a model child. People would stop me in grocery stores to compliment his temperament and manners and they would ask me what I do to make him behave so well. I would tell them that my son is “just that way”. Yes, I taught him, told him what I expect, and was consistent with him, but that was his behavior with very little correction.





When my son left first grade we bought a home, so he started second grade at a new school. At this time my son became a child that I was not familiar with. I began getting phone calls from his teacher about classroom disruptions and although I know my child, I didn't want to be "the parent that makes excuses".

I just found out that I started him a year early for school, so maybe he was emotionally immature. We did just move, so maybe he was having difficulty with the change. He's trying to make new friends. There were so many possible reasons for his behavior but overall, disruptions aren't acceptable and therefore had to be corrected. So, I assured her I would handle it.

I began to realize from conversations with her, that she simply did not like my son. During meetings, the principal would ask her to name any positive traits about my son and she couldn't name any. She began to purposely provoke my son to send him to peak. She would tell him to "look at her when she asked a question" and if he didn't she would send him to peak. She would tell him to answer a question on the board and if he didn't know it, she would send him to peak. She would tell him to stay turned around in his



isolated seat turned toward a wall and if he turned around toward the class, she would send him to peak. The list continues.

She began calling me and sending him to peak or the assistant principal nearly every day. I understood his feelings toward his teacher but I tried to help him build a more positive relationship and thoughts toward her too. I began to get frustrated because nothing I was doing to correct his behavior was working. So, I turned to spanking as a last resort.

I began spanking him nearly every day because he was sent to peak nearly every day. My frustration turned to anger and twice I spanked him out of emotion, I lost control. I felt horrible but I didn't know what to do and I felt like I was losing my little seven year old son. Although, the spanking helped short term sometimes, it did not correct his behavior long term, so I began to pray.

How did my absolutely pleasant son turn into "this" all of a sudden? I began to look at my sons face when I picked him up from school. He looked so stressed with dark circles around his eyes like he was oppressed or not sleeping. He looked so



much older than seven and I remember holding back tears.

I felt anger toward his teacher because she did nothing to help the situation and admitted to behaviors that purposely provoked my son simply to send him to peak. I wanted to protect my son but the principal supported her. The days I specifically prayed for my son and his teacher were the days I wasn't called, the days he was not sent to peak, and therefore the days he was not spanked.

I felt drained as I prayed continuously for them both; before I dropped him off, while I was at work, and before I would pick him up. But I noticed something as I was praying; prayer worked. It reinforced that this battle was spiritual. I continued to pray until one night I had a dream.

In the dream, I sat on my couch in our new home watching him play outside by the garage through the window. There was a large figure outside that resembled a person, at least seven feet tall. This figure began to stick something in my son's ear and my son fell to the ground and began convulsing. As he laid on the ground, it stuck



something in his ear again, and my son began convulsing violently.

It continued to torment my son by sticking something in his ear and stopping briefly to watch him convulse. I ran outside with a large stick swinging at its head with all the force I had. I used every ounce of strength I had to fight this thing and get it away from my son. It remained calm. With every forceful swing I made, it calmly moved its body back, with a smile on its face, as I missed. Twice I made contact with its face, thinking I would break the stick or cause major damage to its face because I swung that hard, but it made no impact and it continued to smile. I was out of breath as I continued to fight this thing with my large stick.

When I woke up, I laid in my bed and cried the most I had cried in years. In that moment, God told me that my son was being tormented spiritually and the earthly weapons I was using do not work. I must fight spiritually. Now, I was so angry at myself. Sheena, you are a child of God, you are aware of these things, you've had your own battles. How could you miss this?! How could you let your child be tortured for this long?!



I blew my nose, washed my face, dried my eyes, and went downstairs to greet my son, who had already turned on cartoons. As I got to the bottom of the steps I saw my son lying on the floor shaking his body as it had shook in the dream. I yelled “Joseph!!! What are you doing?!” He stopped immediately, looked up at me from the floor, and smiled and said “nothing”.

I asked “why are you doing that?” He sat up and began to look concerned like he always does when he thinks I’m sad and said “I don’t know, what’s wrong?” I said “nothing love, just don’t do that”. I told him I would be down soon and went back to my room to pray and rebuke the tormenting spirit. I decided to fast for my son and came back downstairs and hugged him tightly.

I also decided at that moment that I would not spank my son and I haven’t since. Within weeks I saw a physical difference in my son. His stressed face, darkened eyes, and beaten down demeanor was gone. Sadly the school year was nearly over so he endured this torture for a long time but we had a whole summer to heal. My son didn’t like school after dealing with that teacher and spirit, but within weeks of the new school year he was excited and he was the little boy I knew him to be.



I began receiving the comments and compliments I was used to hearing about him. Staff members that worked with him the previous year all noticed the difference with praise in their voices. I ran into his old teacher and peak teacher the next school year but they said nothing to me. I was relieved that they said nothing, quite honestly, and I'm sure they heard the praise reports as well.

I was happy that the moment I seen his old teacher, we were leaving the building, laughing, with him excited about his award, and me showing him love. My thoughts weren't really directed at his old teacher though but the spirit that used her to do its mess. If it was still there, I was happy to show that we won.

I remember going to a "Stop the Violence" community event where former gang members were giving their testimony. They were men that created these gangs, were in jail for decades, and turned their lives around. One year after my son's horrible school year, I sat with him, listening to them speak. The host asked them questions one by one, one of the questions was "how did you end up in a gang"?



Shawn's answer stood out. He said that he was in grade school and had dyslexia before it was identified as a learning disability. The kids teased him and he began to get in trouble in school. He specifically said he was "tired of going to school and being spanked every day for having bad grades and getting in trouble". I'm not suggesting that spanking leads to gangs, but spanking leads to physical, emotional, and mental anguish and nothing positive comes from that.

The reality is, evil spirits have no boundaries. They will use anyone who is willing or anyone who simply does not realize that they are being used to plant negative seeds into people. And it's sad but children are under spiritual attack as well.

It would be nice if the enemy would let children grow into an adult or at least a preteen and give you time to talk to them about spiritual warfare but really, what enemy will give you time to prepare for battle? As a parent you must realize that some of the issues your child has, yes even your five year old, may be spiritual but you can prepare them by loving them in these five biblical ways.



## **Loving By Correcting**

You have to actually steer children. Don't ignore their behavior or do nothing, not even sometimes. If you "let it go" sometimes, you are sending a message to the child that the behavior is okay sometimes. You want them to know that whatever behavior they are displaying is not okay, period. This can be tiring because most correction takes multiple attempts but you will cause them to stumble if you don't correct it, and the more inconsistent you are the longer and possibly unfruitful your attempts will be. God's word says that God corrects His children because He loves them. If you love your child(ren), you will correct them too.

## **Correcting Gently**

Discipline shouldn't hurt a child physically, mentally, or emotionally. It's simply to show them a better way to behave and thrive in this world and ultimately the Kingdom of God. Discipline is all about teaching. Ephesians 6:4 says "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." To nurture means to care for and encourage growth. Nurturing is gentle and loving





and it does not cause pain or harm. It may be uncomfortable or undesirable in other ways but it doesn't damage a child's being (spirit, soul, or body).

The reality is, physical pain will change any living creature's behavior whether you're training a dog, bridling a horse, testing on a rat, or desire obedience in a slave. If you punish them physically, torture them physically, or cause any level of physical pain you will, in most cases, see a change in behavior. This does not mean that it is the right or best way to train a child.

Some parents defend spanking based on Proverbs 23:13 which says "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die". Any parent that truly wants to follow God has to ask themselves, what is a rod? A rod is not a stick, a rod is anything you use for correction; a rod is something that is placed in someone's back to correct their spine, a rod could be a prayer and a rod could be your words.

But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his



mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. ~ Isaiah 11:4

## **Being an Example**

Just like parents don't like it when their child misbehaves because it reflects poorly on them, God does not like when His children misbehaves because it reflects poorly on Him. Remember, people are watching you and forming thoughts about God based on your actions because you claim to represent Him.

The difference between God as a Father and humans as parents is that God is perfect love and our behavior comes from a tattered relationship from a sinful nature. The reality for our children is that the child is getting their behavior from their parent. Either they see it directly, they see it indirectly, or they were not corrected about the behavior at all or consistently.

My Growing Moment: I remember my son began saying "What the heck!" when he was four years old. He said it with so much force that he might as well said "What the hell!" or "What the f\*\*\*!". I knew he didn't mean it the way it sounded so I didn't correct him for some time. One day I had



enough, and I told him I don't like the way it sounds coming out of his mouth and I asked him where he learned it from. He said "I don't know".

I told him "Well you definitely didn't learn it from me!" I shared in my book "A Journey to the Ultimate Marriage" how God immediately corrects me with everything and immediately after I dropped him off at daycare, I started driving to work, and someone flew out in front of me. I slammed on my brakes and said "What the heck!!!" in the same tone that my son said it. I thought "Wow, he actually did learn that from me".



**If there is a behavior that you're trying to correct in your child, correct it in yourself first.**

I didn't even realize that I was saying it and many times as parents we're not aware of every single thing we do and say that our impressionable children are picking up on. If there is a behavior that you're trying to correct in your child, correct it in yourself first, (take the log out of your own eye) and be an example, then correct them.



Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. ~ 1 Timothy 4:12

## **Teaching Emotional Management**

Expressing emotions in a healthy and knowledgeable manner doesn't come out of nowhere. It's taught. Your child watches you, their other parent(s), their siblings, their grandparents, and their friends express their emotions. The larger the scope of emotions they're exposed to, the more capable they will be in expressing themselves in healthy ways.

You have to allow them to see this in action and intentionally teach them about their emotions. If you're a single parent or married couple that communicates poorly, your children probably see emotions expressed on an extremely lower level than other children because a healthy dialogue between a man and a woman is missing. If you have one child, their emotional capacity may be challenged also because they don't have a sibling to dialogue with and there's less opportunity for



correction because you don't see their emotional interactions as often.

My Growing Moment: I didn't realize how many emotions we felt as human beings until I was 19 years old. 19! Until then, I thought there were two emotions; mad and happy, and I didn't express my emotions as anything other than that. It was a guy that liked me in college that made me realize that there were more than two emotions. After trying to have sex with me and me telling him no, he walked away, stopped, and I heard him make a loud sigh. I laughed to myself, I thought he was mad.

He then said, "Sheena, you frustrate me". I said, "I frustrate you? You're not mad?" He responded, "Why would I be mad? No I'm not mad, but I am irritated". I learned two new emotions, frustrated and irritated. I realized that I wasn't always mad or happy either. I literally went to the computer lab on campus and started "researching" all the emotions a person could feel.

{ Tears are holy, because they show us that the ice of our heart is melting. ~ Barbara De Angelis }



## **Praying and Fasting**

You should be proactive with praying and fasting. Don't wait for your child to appear to be in a battle. Also teach them that they have authority and how to protect themselves spiritually. Teach them the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) and allow them to practice fasting. Look up fun lessons and projects they can do about spiritual weapons and don't limit them.

When my son was 10 years old, I allowed him to fast for one whole day without food or water with me. I reminded him throughout the day that he can break his fast anytime he feels he need to. How many times do you think he broke the fast that day? Zero. I was super surprised and it made me realize that kids are capable of much more than we think.

Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.  
~ Luke 10:19

\*Make sure you're keep watch physically when your child is fasting. Don't allow them to push themselves to unsafe limits.



## **Showing Love to Your Parents**

I stated in my books within this series that God has led me to keep His commandments. The first commandment God corrected me of, was honoring my father and mother. God simply told me I wasn't doing it. I asked God to show me how to honor them and He told me to show them that they're valued. This pertains to every child of God, no matter what type of parents you had.

No one is perfect and everyone makes mistakes; pastors, teachers, lawyers, doctors, parents, children, employees, and supervisors. Everyone messes up sometimes, that's a reality of being in this world. Without God we can never be perfect. With the Holy Spirit, we can be exactly what God created us to be. And for any child, there are many ways to show value toward your parents.

### **Tell Them You're Sorry**

Some of us may have had amazing parents that supported us and nurtured us. Others may have had harsh parents that hurt us emotionally or physically. But no matter what type of parent we had, we always have something that we can apologize for. Whether you have to apologize for



being unruly, disrespectful, unforgiving, selfish, impatient, etc. you have something to apologize for, just like they have something to apologize for. Regardless if they apologize or not, to show honor to your father and mother, you should most definitely apologize to them.

### **Tell Them You Love Them**

Again, many people believe that love is a feeling, but love is a choice. You must make a conscious decision to love your parents every day. It doesn't matter how their behavior is toward you, you make the choice to love them anyway. Every single night, my son and I go through our bedtime routine. We've had the same routine since he was a baby in his crib.



**Love is a choice.**

I say "good night", he says it back. I say "I love you", he says it back. I say "Have sweet dreams", he says that back too. When he turned three he started saying "You're the best Mom". He doesn't





tell me based on whether I corrected him that day, whether I was clearly frustrated, or obviously irritable. He makes a choice to love his Mom and tell her she's the best even when I didn't act that way. In this way, we all should make the choice to love our parents and tell them.

### **Tell Them You Forgive Them**

Just like everyone has a reason to apologize, everyone has something to forgive. Whether your parent abused you or abandoned you, caused turmoil in your marriage, or you feel that they didn't adequately prepare you for life, you have to forgive them. Most importantly God will not forgive you if you don't forgive others (Matthew 6:15), but when it comes to your parents it's even more crucial. It's tied with your obedience to honor your father and mother. Don't just tell them you forgive them though; actually forgive them. Ask God to help you forgive, and remember the fruit of forgiveness (like a restored relationship) takes time.

### **Tell Them They Matter**

A lot of times, especially when children become adults, we go our way and it's as if our parent's



value in our lives diminish. Sometimes it's not until they pass away or we're in need that we realize just how much they matter to us.

We should be taking the time to tell them they matter while they're alive and whether we need something or not. Even if your parents weren't around while you were growing up or didn't fulfill the position like they should have, that position is still a valuable position. Our parent's matter and we should tell them and find ways to show them.

### **Tell Them They Did Good**

No matter what kind of parent you had, there is always at least one thing they did good. They may not have provided the best home, but you had a home. You may have struggled financially, but they protected you, taught you, and loved you. They may not have protected you like they should have, but they never gave you up or away, they tried.

They may have given you up for adoption or foster care, but they did it because they knew financially, mentally, and/or emotionally you would be better in another environment. They



may have completely ignored you and abused you, but it brought you to know God and made you stronger. No matter the circumstances, there is always at least one thing that they did that went in your favor and for that, you should tell them they did something good.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. ~ Ephesians 6:1-3



## Showing Love to Your Neighbor

In the book “A Journey to Learning God’s Word”, I speak about God’s laws and commandments. They’re essential and Jesus tells us that loving God and loving people fulfills the law. Now that we know what love is, we have to know how to love our neighbor.

{ Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. ~ Romans 13:10 }

Our neighbor is every person, not just the people we live by. Loving our neighbor means that we will do good toward them. We won’t steal from them, kill them, or have affairs with their wife or husband, just to name a few. All of these things hurt people. If you love, you will not hurt; and you will inevitably and undeniably follow God’s commandments.

 **Loving our neighbor means that we will do good toward them.**

I hear some people say, sometimes jokingly, that they hate people or prefer animals. You can’t hate



people and say you love God. 1 John 4:20 says “If a man says, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” As you grow to love God, your love for people will grow too.

{ Smile, it is the key that fits the lock of everybody's heart. ~ Anthony D'Angelo }



## **Understanding What Blocks Love**

Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it. ~ Rumi



## **The Issues of a Hardened Heart**


When we are hurt, our reaction is to prevent ourselves from being hurt again. We do this by shielding our emotions and putting up “walls”. These walls are strongholds and these strongholds cause us to harden our hearts. The wall that we build to protect ourselves is called pride and pride blinds us.

Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. ~ Ephesians 4:18

The current definition of disease is, any harmful, depraved, or morbid condition, as of the mind or society. Based on this definition, pride is a disease because it is a harmful condition of the mind.

It's like high blood pressure, in that it is a silent killer. It kills your relationships, hopes, and dreams slowly and you don't even know it's doing it. It's sneaky because pride itself, makes you think you don't even have it!



 **Pride is not so much about the overestimation of one's self, as it is about the *underestimation* of others.**

Pride is the reason our hearts are hardened, the reason we fail, the reason our relationships suffer, the reason for distance with our God, the reason we find it hard to love and be loved. It's harmful because it's a form of self-delusion. Pride is not so much about the *overestimation* of one's self, as it is about the *underestimation* of others.

Throughout the Bible, primarily Proverbs, people talked heavily about the importance of humility. They say that when pride comes, dishonor follows. When people are prideful they don't seek God; and after pride, comes destruction and stumbling. Scripture is very specific about God's position on pride and it is labeled as one of the seven deadly sins.





## **The Secrets of Your Heart**

One thing I realized is that our minds are extremely complex. Things can happen years ago as children and our mind builds a coping mechanism automatically from it. Those coping mechanisms become strongholds. Sometimes the stronghold is so old or we're so unaware that we don't get to the root of our issues.

For this reason, it's critical to ask God to reveal the secrets in your heart. Ask God to show you yourself. God knows you better than you do and He will show you things about yourself that will shock you. This was an amazing part of my journey because I realized that despite all the ugliness that God was revealing in my heart, He still loves me.

{ Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts. ~ Psalm 139:23 }

One thing you must be careful of, is not being afraid of seeing yourself and once you see yourself (your heart) do not feel ashamed. One of the first emotions satan played with (with Adam and Eve) was shame. When they disobeyed God, when they saw the "ugliness" of sin, they became ashamed



and tried to hide from God. Reality check, God already knows anyway. When God asked Adam where he was, He wasn't asking because He didn't know, He was asking so Adam would be aware of himself.

When we feel ashamed, our immediate response as human beings is to hide. These days we hide by building facades or showing a shallow or fake side of ourselves. What ultimately happens is we open ourselves up to a prideful nature and a hardened heart.

If you work on loving yourself for who you are, faults and all, you will eventually become comfortable and realistic with your shortcomings. This eliminates any shameful feelings and strongholds surrounding them.


Once shame is eliminated you will have no need to be prideful but the remnants of pride may still remain. If you don't work on removing the remnants of pride (i.e. anger, impatience, competitiveness, etc.) you may find yourself dealing with pride all over again.



## Learning Your Heart

Pride takes baby steps, just like most other diseases. Pride starts off small with maybe one symptom and if left untreated, it grows. If you are prideful most of your beliefs may be based off your own personal opinions.

These opinions may be limited since it doesn't fully consider others opinions, feelings, or beliefs. It causes you to trust more in yourself than others, to trust more in yourself than in God.

 **Pride starts off small with maybe one symptom and if left untreated, it grows.**

It causes you to care for yourself and think about yourself more than you do about others since pride brings selfishness. It causes you to fall because you're less likely to take someone else's advice or constructive criticism or ask for help.

Most importantly, it keeps you from making deep bonds with other people because it shuts down the process of communication that portrays



respect, caring, sympathy, sharing, and giving with others.

I said before that humility is the cure for pride. The dictionary says that “humility” means to look at yourself with low importance. For me, this definition was contradictory to God’s Word. You see, Scripture says we’re the head and not the tail, we’re precious in God’s sight, a noble woman is more precious than rubies, and we are more valuable than hundreds of other animals that God created. So, how are we to look at ourselves with low importance?



**When we keep our hearts “teachable”, there is no room for pride.**

My Growing Moment: I was driving down the street when I heard my six year old son’s voice in the back seat ask a random question, “Mom, what does humble mean?” I wanted to answer his question but I didn’t know how to break it down to a six year old, so in that moment I asked God to give me the words. God said “tell him teachable”. I thought that was so amazing. “Teachable” wouldn’t have even crossed my mind



but it made so much sense. We are not of low importance which is how humility is defined in the dictionary. What God wants is for our heart to stay “teachable”, “moldable”, “unhardened”, “un-stubborn”. When we keep our hearts “teachable”, there is no room for pride.

Some signs to look for if you are trying to determine if you have pride are below. It’s important to be completely honest with yourself and one way to do that is to try to think of at least five recent situations and remember how you handled them.

- Insecurity or Conceitedness: Do you provoke people to give you praise and attention? Is it hard for you to handle being blamed for something or for others to see your faults? Do you believe that you are the best or one of the best even on your worst day?
  
- Unaccountable: When people point out your faults or wrong doing, is it hard for you to admit you are wrong? Is it even harder to receive constructive feedback? Do people claim you’re wrong often but you



honestly can't see where they are coming from?

- Justified: Do you always have a reason for why you did or said something that may have hurt someone else? Is it hard for you to apologize for hurting people?
  
- Stubbornness: Do you seldom change your mind, even when you're approached with hard hitting facts? If someone has earned trust do you continue to distrust them? Do you hold onto negative situations and thoughts? Is it hard for you to forgive?
  
- Anger: Is it hard to control your anger or do you handle your anger in aggressive ways? Do you feel like you are more angry than happy even if that anger is quiet and subtle? Do you find that you are always arguing with someone and trying to get a point across?
  
- Impatience: Are you impatient with people or do you expect people to do things how you do it, at the speed that you do them? Do you expect people to meet your standards all the time?



- Dominance: Do you want yourself to be in leadership roles because it's hard to follow other's lead? How do handle yourself when you feel someone is trying to influence, control, or guide you? Do you always have to be in control?
  
- Competitive: Do you compare yourself, your situation, title, degree, home, car, etc. to other people? Do you have to feel like you're on top?
  
- Achievement: Do you need to have obvious measures of achievement and need acknowledgement and praise for them? Do you place a high emphasis on titles, names, position, and awards?

The result of pride is hardening of the heart. God said guard your heart, not close it, and definitely not harden it. Pride keeps us from communicating our true feelings. It keeps people from admitting their weaknesses, instabilities, insecurities, and fears. It keeps people from bonding, understanding, relating and cooperating with one another.



Imagine if your spouse or parents continued to practice unaccountability; they don't feel like they are the reason for your hurt and it's your fault you're hurting. Imagine if you're spouse refused to take accountability; if you handled a situation differently, your spouse wouldn't have done what they did.

What if they practiced justification; they know it may be their fault that you're hurting but they have reasons and excuses for doing it? Would you feel love coming from them? After a while would you harden your heart for protection? What if they took accountability for it, understood you, and listened and made promises of correction and followed through?

Imagine that you are in disagreement with someone you love. The disagreement turns into an argument, the argument into anger, maybe it even escalates to violence. Imagine how that could have changed if both people practiced self-control and felt they had nothing to prove?

Imagine how happy, supportive, peaceful, and loving a life can be if you take accountability for your actions, control your anger, and forgive the people who have hurt you. Imagine how much





better your relationships will be if you rid yourself from pride and encouraged your loved ones to do it too.

{ And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them,  
Why reason ye, because ye have no bread?  
perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye  
your heart yet hardened? ~ Mark 8:17 }



## **Insecurity**

Most people who are dealing with insecurity handle it by being boastful and conceited or shameful and discrediting. It is important for you to understand and accept that you are not perfect yet. This is especially important for any perfectionist out there like I used to be. I used to be so hard on myself if I felt I messed up or failed. I would become disappointed in myself easily because I expected perfection.

Now, I just expect God to show up where I'm weak. I realize that not being perfect is okay as God perfects our hearts through His Holy Spirit. Not being perfect is what makes us rely on God and other people and ultimately develop those critical relationships. What really matters, is that you are not content with mediocrity, you are being who God called *you* to be, and you are always striving to be better at that.

Overall, someone dealing with insecurity or conceitedness should pray and work on loving themselves for who they are and who they were made to be. Once you begin to let God guide you and use your strengths, confidence is a given, humility is easier, and success is inevitable. View



“failure” as an opportunity for improvement and correction. Reflect and see what you can learn and move on.

Remember, you may get knocked down, you may get scared, you may feel embarrassed or ashamed, but don't give up on your “self-changing” process! It doesn't happen over-night and one day you will be exactly where you expect to be and exactly where you are supposed to be.

{ There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. ~ 1 John 4:18 }



## **Accountability**

There are various reasons why someone doesn't want to take accountability; they don't want to feel guilty, they don't value the thing that they're supposed to be accountable for, or they don't want to invest the time or money.

If it's hard taking responsibility when things go wrong, start practicing that. Think of ways you could have made something better. If you missed a deadline because someone responded to a needed item late, maybe you could have reminded them. If you and your spouse got into an argument, maybe you could have approached the conversation differently or maybe you could have been calmer.

Trying to see where you can improve is how you take accountability. You're not taking blame, you're just acknowledging that you could have done something different to produce another outcome.


{ Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. ~ Proverbs 28:13 }



## **Justification**

Justifying something you did that is wrong is second nature when you don't want to "get in trouble". Yet it can be perceived as dismissing an important issue or making light of a situation that someone may really care about.

You may think you are simply giving an answer or expressing how you didn't mean harm but what the person really wants is to know that you understand how they feel and why. They are not interested in excuses no matter how logical the reasons may be.

 **They want to know that you understand how they feel and why.**

When an issue is dismissed it signals "I don't care". More than likely the person knows you didn't mean to and if they are bringing it up, it is likely serious to them. They need to know that you care. Make it clear that you know what you did was hurtful, annoying, or frustrating and apologize for making them feel that way. It shows



that you are capable of thinking about how you affect others.

{ He who is often rebuked, *and* hardens *his* neck,  
Will suddenly be destroyed, and that without  
remedy. ~ Proverbs 29:1 }



## **Anger**

I remembered a time when I was getting in my car and putting my seat belt on in 15-degree weather. It was freezing, my hands were freezing, and I didn't have on gloves. The metal part of the seat belt hit my middle finger so hard it began to throb and I thought it might start bleeding or bruising. I noticed that although my finger was hurt, I didn't want to cry. My first emotion wasn't sadness; it was anger. The pain made me angry.

Everyone in this world have experienced pain. They've experienced trauma physically, emotionally, mentally, or financially and many people that are traumatized try to protect themselves, sometimes subconsciously. Although they are hurt and sad and probably want to cry, just like my hurt finger, they transfer that energy into anger.

Most people who are dealing with anger are like a light switch. They turn on and off and once they are turned on they aren't as cognizant or in control of their actions and words. The more you try to control your anger, the more conscious you'll be of it, which in turn makes it easier for you to control it.



If you have issues with anger, try to be conscious of what takes you there. When you're approached with a situation make a choice not to get angry. If you get angry, stop as soon as you realize it. If you've already reacted, try it again next time. It takes time to remove a habit and replace it with another but from personal experience, you'll get there.

{ Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down  
upon your wrath. ~ Ephesians 4:26 }





## **Impatience**

It's important to understand that everyone has their own upbringing which correlates into why they act the way they do. People may not make the wisest decisions. People may make decisions that you think you would “never” make yourself. “I would never steal!”, “I would never drop out of school”, “I would never ever ever!” But as I stated earlier in the book, compassion is key.

If you've been blessed enough to have a drama free life then count your blessings but know that everyone else's life is not always so peaceful. Know that those same things you think you would “never” do could happen to you, especially if you were under the same pressures and raised in the same circumstances. Have patience and compassion for other people by trying to understand their situation and help them along.

{ With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love. ~  
Ephesians 4:2 }



## **Dominance**

Dominance is an important issue in relationships because the underlying problem normally stems from respect. Respect or lack of it, invites pride. It's important to realize that in every situation there are certain roles to play. Your role may be different and it may not always be “the leader”.

Have you heard of two kings over one nation, two presidents of one country, two captains of one ship or team? There wouldn't be peace, unity, or cooperation with two equal leaders. Know that it is just as critical to be a queen, a vice president, or a co-captain.

 **If you have a problem letting someone lead, you likely have an issue with pride.**

If you have a problem letting someone lead, you likely have an issue with pride. Remember that you can lead by example and by coaching others to be successful. Show your coaching skills if it's necessary. If they're experienced and capable, let them own it. It shows trust, confidence, and respect and you'll get all of that in return.



But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.  
~ Galatians 6:14



## **Competitiveness**

It does not matter how intelligent, beautiful, charismatic, creative, or funny you are, there is always someone ahead of you and behind you. Like the villain always tries to find the hero's weakness, and there is always a weakness found. That's how we were made and this helps with interdependence and connectedness with each other and God.

That's why there are beautiful women wondering "why is he with her?", there are smart people thinking "why didn't I get that job?", there are charismatic people thinking "why didn't they choose me?". God will surely humble a prideful person. God cannot stand a person who is puffed up.



**Once you realize that all of your greatness is for God it will be easier to set aside your competitive nature and let everyone shine.**

Realize that in most cases where you express competitiveness, you are on the same team.




Whether it's family, work, or another type of relationship, you don't have to compete. You have to work together. This is the same in the Kingdom of God. Once you realize that all of your greatness is for God it will be easier to set aside your competitive nature and let everyone shine.

{ That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, }  
{ let him glory in the Lord." ~ 1 Corinthians 1:31 }



## **Superiority**

There is nothing wrong with having high expectations. There is nothing wrong with aiming high if you're doing it for the right reasons. When I battled my sense of superiority, I was always worried about how others viewed me and if they viewed me "wrong". I wanted to make sure people understood who I was, that I mattered, and what I can accomplish. But after every accomplishment and title is stripped away, who am I?

 **But after every accomplishment and title is stripped away, who am I?**

I am a child of God and the same goes for you. You are not an executive or a customer service rep. You are not a lawyer or a student. Realize who you truly are. Eventually, you won't be so concerned with titles and images. This "superiority" mindset will hold you back with your relationship with God, your spouse, parents, siblings, friends, and co-laborers.

Remember that your achievements, titles, fame, or riches came from God for a reason. Don't let it



become an idol. Don't let it make you prideful, because pride comes before a fall (Proverbs 16:18).

{ And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. ~ 1 Corinthians 9:25 }



## **Stubbornness**

Most people have stubborn hearts because of unforgiveness. Sometimes stubbornness is linked to other prideful issues like competitiveness and insecurity. It's understandable how someone could create these barriers of protection when they've been hurt, but once you're knowledgeable of how dangerous it is, it should be addressed.

Everyone has been hurt at one point, by a lover, a sibling, a parent, a stranger, a customer or some other type of relationship. You have to forgive in order to be forgiven yourself (Matthew 6:14). This doesn't mean inviting pain. If someone hurt you maliciously, let them go but let it *all* go.

 **You have to forgive in order to be forgiven yourself (Matthew 6:14).**

After all, if you can't forgive others for their wrong, is it fair for you to be forgiven for yours? God gave us Jesus because He knew we would need some type of avenue for forgiveness and redemption so He can have a relationship with us. If God is able to forgive us for all that we do, surely we can too.





{ He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a  
city that is broken down, and without walls. ~  
Proverbs 25:28 }



## **Working On Your Heart**

Now that you know the issues of a hardened heart, use the next writing page to list qualities you'd like to strengthen and qualities that you'd like God's help to remove. If you can't think of any, ask other people who are around you the most. If you can't see these things in yourself, others can.

I have a friend that mentioned to me "Sheena, you're always working on yourself, I wish I had things to work on". I told her "I can think of a few things". She said "What?" I told her "First, your complaining". She didn't respond, the conversation just changed.

About a year later, to my surprise, she said "Sheena, have you noticed anything about me?" I said "Like what?" She said "I haven't been complaining". That made my heart smile. She really took my words and applied them to her life, and I really did notice the change.

Once you become more aware of who you are, you become more aware of other people. You discover how you can work with them to fulfill your purpose and how you can help them fulfill theirs.



You inadvertently build strong relationships and bonds with people and you find peace that you may not have felt before.

As you list your qualities, be sure that they are *internal* qualities such as “thoughtful”, “dependable”, “jealous”, etc. List the issues that pertain to you regarding a hardened heart as well. Once you note those qualities, pray to God that He helps you strengthen the “best qualities” and remove the qualities that interfere with having healthy relationships.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye. ~ Matthew 7:3-5



### Best Qualities (Internal)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

### Qualities to Remove (Internal)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Notes

{ Every day people straighten up their hair, why not  
the heart? ~ Che Guevara }



## **Understanding What Releases Love**

The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart. ~ Helen Keller



## **Softening Your Heart**

After I realized that a hardened heart is caused by pride, I started to wonder “how do you soften a hardened heart?” Softening your heart requires real moments of self-reflection. Remembering painful memories, accepting the outcome of those situations, forgiving the people involved including yourself, and allowing yourself to “feel” again; to be vulnerable again.

If your heart is hardened this will be challenging because your natural reaction is likely to shield yourself. When people get too close, when you feel people see you in an exposed state, when you feel like you could be hurt or embarrassed, these are the moments that you must push through. Get comfortable being vulnerable. Get comfortable being uncomfortable. Be you unapologetically. Make mistakes and learn from them.

There will be times when you feel embarrassed but you must stay teachable; moldable; humble. You must be willing to acknowledge that you don't know and ask for direction and correction. You must be willing to be taught how to love God, people, and yourself according to the Word of God.



Matthew 22:37-39 says “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

The problem that most people face when trying to change is that when they feel they have “failed”, they think “I can’t”, they give up, and eventually start back over when they’re ready again.

My Growing Moment: When I was 25, I started a fast. I was going to drink nothing but water, no shopping for unnecessary items, and exercise at least thirty minutes each day, for 40 days! This was a true test for me since I usually drank water about once a week, I shopped at every opportunity, and I didn’t exercise or eat healthy at that time. Around 20 days into the fast, I had “failed” at all of them. I was doing really good at first!

I had a lot of momentum like most people do initially and once I slipped, my thoughts were “Well you already failed. You already broke the fast. You might as well just do what you want



now”. Right? Wrong! You get back on the right path. I completed my fast, falls and all.

Throughout your life you will fall off of your path but once you realize it...stop...and correct yourself. Over and over again if you have to. Change does not happen overnight. It takes self-awareness, dedication, and continuous correction, but one day you will be there.

{ To hide the key to your heart is to risk forgetting  
where you placed it. ~ Timothy Childers }





## **Preparing Your Heart**

To prepare your heart, you first need to break down negative strongholds. Stronghold means fortress, defense, or shelter. Psalms speaks about God being a fortress, defense, and shelter and having God as a stronghold is a good thing.

However, due to pain and hurt, many of our strongholds are negative and block people out. We allow strongholds to form when words are spoken into our lives or when someone takes some form of action toward us. The more it's repeated, either by someone else or in our own minds, the stronger the stronghold becomes.

If the words and actions are loving and positive the stronghold will be good. If the words and actions are hurtful and destructive the stronghold will be negative. You need to remove the negative strongholds and the process is outlined in the book "What God Told Me: A Journey to Health and Healing".



For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. ~ 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

When I decided to let God heal my heart, I didn't know what to expect but one thing did change in my mind; I no longer cared what people thought about me.



**The enemy will try to make you feel like you are less than what you truly are.**

The enemy will try to make you feel like you are less than what you truly are. Please, if you don't know, remember, or believe anything else, know that's a lie. God knows our purpose. God knows why we go through what we go through. God knows why some parents were abusive or passed away at a young age. God knows why some people have no children and why others have multiple.



God knows why we struggle or why we may have “had it easy”.

At the end of everything, it's not about us. It's about God and who God is molding us into so we can do what we were created to do. For this transformation to happen we have to soften our heart. God cannot give everything He desires to give to someone who has hardened their heart. Their heart is not only blocking pain, hurt, and tears. It is blocking positivity, love, and blessings. Make a ball with your fist tightly. Look at your balled up fist. No one will be able to take anything out of your hand but no one can put anything in your hand either.

You definitely want to receive all the blessings God has for you. They flow every day but the receiving is up to you and you have to prepare. If someone says they are giving away a brand new car to the first person that arrives and you're the first person, that's great. But if you don't have a license or insurance, that blessing which was meant for you is going to the second person that walks through that door and is prepared. Prepare yourself, prepare your heart.



{ And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh. ~ Ezekiel 11:19 }



## **Understanding How to Keep Love**

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before. ~ Philippians 3:13



## **Moving Forward**

God knows everything. And in some circumstances God knows that we will not make a move unless our current situation forces us to make a change. It's hard for us to move out of a comfort zone into the unknown; sometimes, it's hard for us to turn away from the past and move forward; but God's Word gives us direction.

I have heard some people say “why am I still here?” I've known people that were ready to give up. Know that God knows you are stronger than that. He did make you. Know that everything has a season and a purpose. Ask God “what do you want me to do?” Listen and let Him answer.

{ Your vision will become clear only when you look into your heart...who looks outside, dreams. Who looks inside, awakens. ~ Carl Jung }

## **Accept the Past**

Too often we dwell, repeat, and watch the past in our minds over and over again. Can you literally forget the past? Likely not, but you can prevent the past from hindering your future by accepting it and moving forward. Don't continue referencing



the past or relishing it. Don't focus on should've, could've, or would've; focus on the present.

Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. ~ Isaiah 43:18-19

### **Let Go of the Past**

No matter what you did or where you are right now, God can use you and your situation, as is. God will continue to mold you into what He desires (if you let Him) and every situation will be used for your good and God's glory.

It may be painful or feel like wasted time, energy, or money to just "let go" but God can bring you into something even more fulfilling if you don't harden your heart. God is amazing at making something beautiful from a mass of nothing. Just look around you.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. ~ Romans 8:28



## **Let the New Exist**

Get rid of your walls. Get rid of whatever is blocking you from your new thing. Sometimes our hearts aren't ready to accept something new. In these instances, we have to ask God to help renew our mind. God gives new mercies every day and will also renew your relationships, friendships, purpose, and more. We just have to let the Holy Spirit work and let the new thing exist.

{ Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. ~ 2 Corinthians 5:17 }

## **Trust God**

There are times when things don't make sense. We simply don't understand why things are the way they are or why things are happening to us or the ones we love. But we have to respect God's process and trust God's ways. He has purpose in everything and if we truly trust God we would have more peace in the plan God chose for us. God can be trusted more than you can trust yourself or anyone else. Just breathe, relax, and release.





Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.  
~ Proverbs 3:5-6

## **Take a Step**

Sometimes we trust God, we let go, and we're ready to move forward but we feel paralyzed. When the time comes for us to make a move, we just sit there. A great opportunity passes us by and we're asking (sometimes begging) God for another opportunity. When God says move, take that first step.



**When God says move, take that first step.**

After confirming your next move with God, remind yourself that God has your best interest in mind and have faith. If you take a step and fall, you will fall into the hands of God. If you sit there, you will have “what ifs” for the rest of your life.



I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way  
which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine  
eye. ~ Psalm 32:8



## **Maintaining a Healthy Heart**

After you acknowledge the things that are causing pride and start working on those areas, you have to know how to maintain a healthy heart. This comes through prayer, forgiveness, and understanding others. Think about others and how your pride affects them. Be transparent and vulnerable. Be open, real, and honest and don't be afraid of what people may think, people are attracted to realness.

Remember that there is only One who is all knowing. Unless God has revealed your entire life to you, you do not know exactly where you are going or how you will get there. It is an amazing journey that requires you to trust God, knowing that He will guide you and never forsake you.

You may go through situations that are unwanted, caused by your own choices, other people, or destiny but God has a way of taking negative situations and changing it into something positive. He will help you love; just open your heart.

{ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see  
God. ~ Matthew 5:8 }



## **Walking in Love**

“Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.

God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.” ~ 1 John 4:13-21



## What to Remember

I've concluded that everything I need to know about life; how to handle every situation from a friend that betrays you, to family that needs you, to finances is found in the Bible. Scientists can continue their job, proving God's word but I don't need proof or scientific verification.

I find myself using the Bible like a dictionary. Every time I come across a situation that seems to have me confused or questioning, I ask "What did God say about it?", I find it in the Bible, and I follow God's instructions.



**And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins.**

Most importantly, I've come to the conclusion that we truly need to love each other. 1 Peter 4:8 (NKJV) says: "And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins".



We must understand that we affect every person in a positive way, or in a negative way and we should try to make sure that each encounter with every person is in love and lifts the person up.



## **About the Author**

Sheena Crawford is a writer after God's own heart. She writes blogs, books, and music. Her blog typically consist of "Top 5" tips about life from a biblical perspective and misunderstood truths pertaining to Scripture. The book series "What God Told Me" has multiple books that focus on God's truth and teaching and encouraging others. Her music consists of poetical lyrics, infused with her love for God, and is typically paired with contemporary instrumentals. Her calling is to teach believers and encourage them to prepare for the coming of Jesus.

Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not. ~ Jeremiah 33:3

Inspire • Enlighten • Awaken

# IF YOU EVER Wondered

If you ever wondered “What is true love?”, “How do I love others?”, “How should someone love me?” then this book is a must-read. “What God Told Me” is a book series that sheds light, understanding, and truth on some of the most pressing questions concerning the Bible and the Kingdom of God.