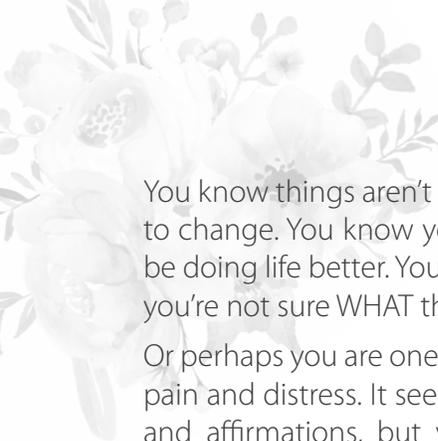


# Chapter One

WHAT DOES HEALING LOOK LIKE?





You know things aren't right in your soul. It may be a niggling, a nagging, or a screech. You know you need to change. You know you have unhealed hurts, but you have put those behind you. You feel you should be doing life better. You feel like you should be doing this Christian walk better. You've tried to change, but you're not sure WHAT that even looks like. How do you get there? What is "there"?

Or perhaps you are one of those women who often finds themselves listening to another woman's story of pain and distress. It seems that women just open up to you. You give them kind words, related scriptures, and affirmations, but you wonder WHAT healing looks like. How can you really help them beyond good advice?

This workbook both lays out the steps for healing and gives you the tools to shift your foundation. It is also an excellent tool for those innately gifted women who want to help others.

I would never suggest that going through a workbook once will be the end of a journey. But I do know that from years of experience, when women have the tools to name the lies in their lives, they find the Truth. They are able to define the errant thinking or behaviors and correct it, moving them further along in their journey of healing. As they continue on this journey, they replace the shifting foundation built on lies with a solid foundation built on Truth. At the end, I will recommend good books to help you continue your journey, but the work you do here will allow you to see what you read with a clear lens.

The steps for healing I list are written consecutively. However, they don't happen consecutively. You can't just check them off one at a time. You will bounce back and forth between them. Taking this journey with God will not be linear, but it will require flexibility. For instance, you may be working on number six when you will unearth a new memory that will bring you momentarily back to number one. It doesn't mean you are going backward. But at least you will know where you have been and where you are. As you mature through this process, you will be able to look back and laugh at your missteps. Learning to be patient and gentle with yourself is part of the gift of freedom!

## **1. EXPLORE THE PAST. YOU MUST BE HONEST ABOUT THE THINGS IN YOUR PAST IN ORDER TO RECOVER FROM THEM.**

Over the years I have taken so many women through this process. Often, I heard, "My childhood was hard, but lots of people have worse." Or, "Yeah, it was bad, but I have moved past it." Or, "It is in the past. It doesn't affect me anymore."

Yet, as we moved further into the process, it became very evident that their past was very much affecting their present—in ways they never realized. It has to be examined and held up against the standard of Truth before the healing can start. This doesn't mean you stay there or that you need to remember every painful detail. But you must be willing to go there for a while in order to move beyond it.

## **2. LEARN TO RECOGNIZE SHAME AND ITS OUTWORKING IN YOUR LIFE.**

Shame is something that so many women carry. Not shame for what you've done, but rather shame about who you are. It is something that you don't recognize is there. Once you understand shame, you will be able to recognize it in your actions, reactions, opinions, and behavior. And you will be able to call it out for the lie it is and replace it with the Truth.

## **3. IDENTIFY CHILDHOOD MESSAGES THAT ARE LIES.**

Thinking of our childhood may provoke horrible memories, or happy memories, or a mixture of both. In the circumstances that created the memories, the messages are ingrained in us. Messages are deep and are not easy to identify. They aren't highlighted in our memory with a fluorescent pink highlighter. Some are



obvious because of the overt messages that we received, repeated over and over when we were growing up. But so many others are hidden or masqueraded as something else. Identifying childhood messages takes time, patience, and perseverance, but this is necessary to move forward toward healing and joy.

#### **4. CONNECT THE LIES TO YOUR BEHAVIOR AS AN ADULT.**

The idea that our past affects our present is often vehemently denied. But the denial doesn't change reality! If we experience something dramatic like a dog attack in childhood, a fear of dogs then often follows us through adulthood. The lie from that experience is that all dogs are dangerous. We know in our reasoning brain that this is not true. But the experience is deeply embedded in our emotional memory, and that is what takes over. The truth is that most dogs are friendly and eager to engage you with slobbery kisses and tail-wagging thumps. But that truth hardly matters when the lie is anchored in deep emotion. And so, the resulting behavior might be walking three blocks out of our way to avoid certain dogs, even if they are contained and not a threat. This is a simple explanation, but it clearly illustrates the concept.

#### **5. REPLACE CHILDHOOD LIES WITH TRUTH.**

Once you start identifying the lies, you can begin replacing them with Truth. These are just not words. Recognizing the physical feelings, emotions and reactions that ride on the backs of these childhood lies can allow them to be replaced. At first, the lies resist. But they eventually give way to the Truth because the Truth is Christ, and nothing can stand against Him.

#### **6. RECOGNIZE THE LITTLE GIRL AND LET HER SPEAK.**

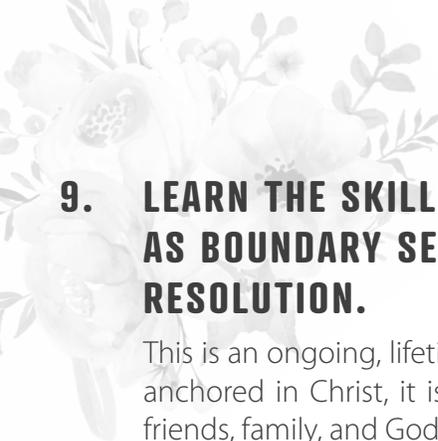
When you experience chaos, neglect, abandonment, and trauma as a child, you become arrested in your emotional development. All the women I have come alongside of have described feeling like a "little girl" inside. "When will I feel like a grown-up" is a question that is often asked. As a little girl, you had no voice. It is important to allow her (you) to talk about the feelings and emotions denied you in childhood. This is called validation, and it is necessary in order to walk in freedom.

#### **7. EXPERIENCE THE FEELINGS DENIED IN CHILDHOOD.**

Yikes! This one is scary for most women. After all, most women spend a lifetime avoiding these feelings. In the process, women actually lose the capacity to even identify what they are feeling. But the old saying, "feelings pushed down come out sideways" is very true. Those feelings are still there. They are deep and are festering. When you are triggered by something, those feelings come out like a can of soda that has been shaken and then opened. Learning to recognize and manage feelings is a normal part of growing up. This can be difficult when those who should have guided you in the process were the ones who created those feelings through abuse, neglect, abandonment, addiction, or another type of dysfunction. In this case, those feelings become frightening and dangerous. In addition, those who should have guided you might have told you that your feelings were wrong or put guilt on you for having them. Feelings by their very nature are not right or wrong. The reality is, the only way to heal is to feel. The good news is that you aren't a child anymore, so you are able to face this process as an adult.

#### **8. FORGIVE, BUT DON'T FORGET.**

Have you ever heard the adage, "forgive and forget"? I think this is the Christian version of a frontal lobotomy. To even suggest that one could forget the terrible things done to them that are seared into one's memory is absurd. To forget is impossible, and we shouldn't. But when we truly forgive—through Christ's power, not ours—then the memory does not hold us in bondage. And oftentimes, it is the very thing we are told to forget that God uses to help others and draw them to Him.



**9. LEARN THE SKILLS THAT YOU DID NOT DEVELOP IN CHILDHOOD, SUCH AS BOUNDARY SETTING, IDENTIFYING FEELINGS, AND HEALTHY CONFLICT RESOLUTION.**

This is an ongoing, lifetime endeavor. But when you have a foundation of Truth and your identity is firmly anchored in Christ, it is a matter of exposure to new ideas you use to build healthy relationships with friends, family, and God.

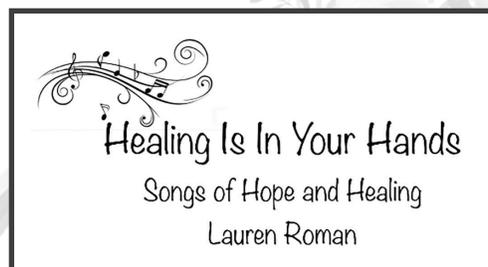
**10. GRIEVE THE CHILDHOOD LOSSES.**

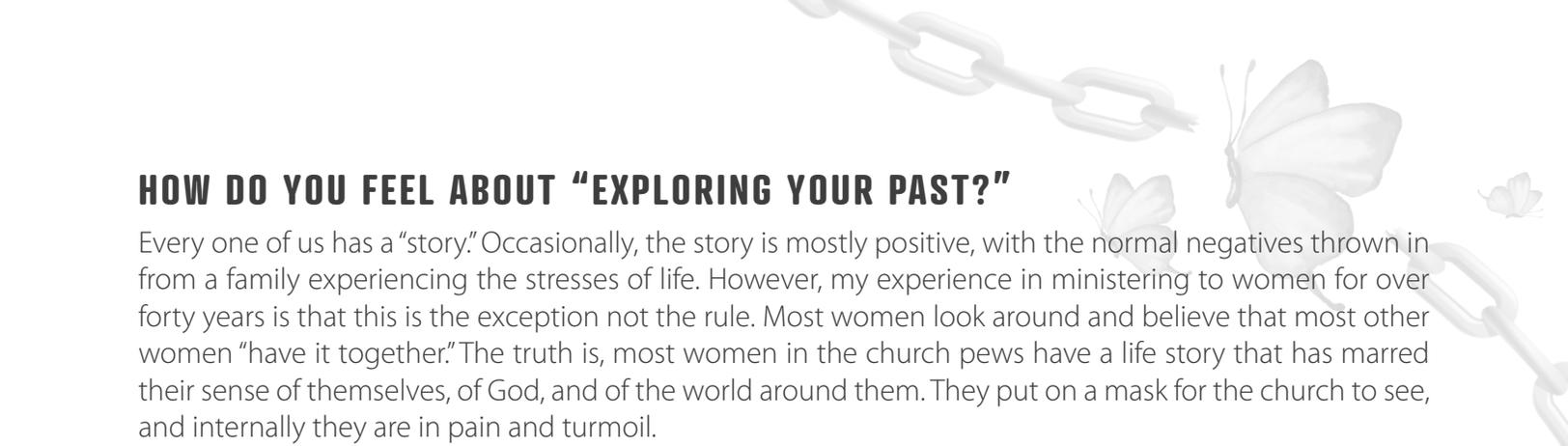
Everyone's childhood is different. But there are common elements that contribute to a happy childhood: family, stability, fun, wonder, and trust, just to name a few. When those necessary elements are absent, violated, or broken, a child loses a part of their childhood. We understand grief when someone we love dies, but there are other losses that are begging to be acknowledged and grieved—then put behind us.

**11. CHANGE YOUR FRIENDS, IF NECESSARY, TO REMOVE BAD INFLUENCES AND TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS FROM YOUR LIFE.**

This one is obvious, but also difficult. Yet, the healthier you become, the more uncomfortable these relationships become! Why did you start this journey of healing? Women have many different reasons. Perhaps it's a crisis, there's an accumulation of bad decisions, or you may just be sick of feeling the way you feel. Whatever the reason, you go into your healing process with one goal: TO FEEL BETTER.

So, I feel it is only fair to warn you, that isn't what happens. Or at least not in the beginning. Women often spend their lives avoiding looking at the painful events of their past. They come up with many defenses to keep people from seeing the "real them," and for that matter, to keep them from seeing it themselves. When you decide to get emotionally healthy, you must look at those painful parts of yourself, and that is uncomfortable. But it is worth it! Stay at it. Freedom awaits you!





## HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT “EXPLORING YOUR PAST?”

Every one of us has a “story.” Occasionally, the story is mostly positive, with the normal negatives thrown in from a family experiencing the stresses of life. However, my experience in ministering to women for over forty years is that this is the exception not the rule. Most women look around and believe that most other women “have it together.” The truth is, most women in the church pews have a life story that has marred their sense of themselves, of God, and of the world around them. They put on a mask for the church to see, and internally they are in pain and turmoil.

If this is you, you are not alone. There is help and healing. It is hard work. It takes courage. Fortunately, Christ is our strength and our courage. His strength is perfected in our weakness.

The atmosphere in your original family, especially in your relationship with your parents, has had a tremendous effect on how your life is now. Yes, it is in your past. But oftentimes, our past is also very much part of our present! You learned your parenting skills, coping skills, sense of self, value, and life skills from the most important school of all—your family. Some of the things you learned were good. Some were not so good. If it was mostly good, life can be manageable, even with the ups and downs. If it was mostly bad, you will want to examine those messages and lies that were laid down in your young heart before you even had a chance to understand them. But whether it was good, bad, or a mixture of both, we all are profoundly affected by how we were brought up.



## YOUR FAMILY OF ORIGIN

The following will help you look back at how you were parented. Maybe you have never thought of these issues. Or maybe you do nothing but think of your childhood. By filling out these questions, you will get to know yourself a little better, and it will also help us to get to know you. This isn't a test.

If there are any questions you don't want to answer, just skip them. Because there are so many blended families, people have natural siblings, half siblings, step siblings, stepmothers, and stepfathers. If any of these people were involved in your childhood in a significant way, indicate them by putting a "S" or an "H" after them where appropriate. Everything you write here is confidential.

1. How many children were in the family? Brothers: \_\_\_\_\_ Sisters: \_\_\_\_\_  
(If there are step or half siblings, put "S" or "H" after the number.)
2. Where did you fall in your family of siblings that you grew up with? Were you the oldest, the middle child, the youngest, etc.? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Were your parents divorced? If so, how old were you when this happened?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Did your mom remarry? \_\_\_\_\_ How many times? \_\_\_\_\_  
How old were you? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Did your dad remarry? \_\_\_\_\_ How many times? \_\_\_\_\_  
How old were you? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Whom did you live with? \_\_\_\_\_

Below are words that describe how a family might seem. While we know all families experience good and bad times simply because that's how life is, most people have a feeling that stands out about their childhood.

Circle the words that best describe your feelings when you were in grade school. If things changed in high school, go back and put a line under the words that apply while you were in high school.

Fun Happy Quiet Orderly Chaotic Close Angry Unhappy  
Confused Fearful Safe Religious Sheltered Judgmental Loving  
Secure Distant Sad Rigid Trusting Neglected Lonely \_\_\_\_\_ (other)

7. Read each statement below. Using a scale of 0–10—0 meaning it was never that way; 10 meaning it was always that way, or any number in between—rate how little or how much each statement is true.

\_\_\_\_\_ In our family, we felt free to share our feelings, and knew we would be listened to. and knew we would be listened to.

\_\_\_\_\_ As children, our parents both told us and showed us that they loved us, no matter what we did.

\_\_\_\_\_ I never felt I had to be good to be loved. I felt I was loved because of who I was inside.

\_\_\_\_\_ In our home, we felt accepted. The climate was positive, and basically nonjudgmental.

\_\_\_\_\_ As a child, I always felt my parents could take care of problems that the family faced.

\_\_\_\_\_ I was able to be a child. I never felt responsible for my parent(s)' happiness.

\_\_\_\_\_ When I had an emotional need, I could verbalize that need, and my parents would respond appropriately.

\_\_\_\_\_ We solved problems in our home by discussing them and working through them.

Continue, using a scale of 0 (never that way) to 10 (always that way) or any number in between to indicate how little or how much each statement is true.

\_\_\_\_\_ There was not much screaming or fighting in my home.

\_\_\_\_\_ I was treated with respect and understanding.

\_\_\_\_\_ Now that we are older, the family can get together without tension and without underlying anger and unresolved issues between family members.

8. Have you ever been to counseling? \_\_\_\_\_ How old were you? \_\_\_\_\_

How would you describe your experience? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Was there any physical abuse in your family? \_\_\_\_\_

Who was the abuser? \_\_\_\_\_

Who were the abused? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Were you ever sexually molested? \_\_\_\_\_

11. When you were growing up, did alcohol or drugs ever affect your parent's parenting abilities?  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. What is your relationship now with your family? Place a check mark behind the person who fits in that category. If you have two brothers who fall under "great" and a sister who falls under "neutral," put two check marks by brother under "great" and one by sister under "neutral." (Remember to indicate stepmothers, stepdads, siblings, and half siblings with the letter "S" or "H" next to the check marks). Natural siblings and parents do not need a letter.

**Great.** We've talked about the past as it really was, and worked through our feelings together. We can now talk about our feelings with honesty and openness. If a conflict comes up, we solve it. This is true with my...

Mom \_\_\_\_\_ Dad \_\_\_\_\_ Brother \_\_\_\_\_ Sister \_\_\_\_\_

**Good.** We never have discussed the problems of the past. We put them behind us and get along, but there are certain subjects that we cannot discuss.



Mom \_\_\_\_\_ Dad \_\_\_\_\_ Brother \_\_\_\_\_ Sister \_\_\_\_\_

**Neutral.** I do my thing he/she does his/hers. We touch base occasionally, but we don't really talk or emotionally connect.

Mom \_\_\_\_\_ Dad \_\_\_\_\_ Brother \_\_\_\_\_ Sister \_\_\_\_\_

**Not so good.** When we talk, there is lots of tension, and bad feelings. I have to be careful about what I say, and sometimes (but not all the time) our talks end in angry, hurtful words.

Mom \_\_\_\_\_ Dad \_\_\_\_\_ Brother \_\_\_\_\_ Sister \_\_\_\_\_

## YOUR IMMEDIATE FAMILY

Are you married? \_\_\_\_\_ Living with someone? \_\_\_\_\_

Divorced? \_\_\_\_\_ How Long? \_\_\_\_\_ Widowed? \_\_\_\_\_ How Long? \_\_\_\_\_

How many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_ Sex and Age(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Did you have any miscarriages? \_\_\_\_\_ Abortions? \_\_\_\_\_

If "yes" for abortion(s), have you gone through a specific abortion healing program? \_\_\_\_\_

## YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

(There is **NO JUDGMENT OR EXPECTATIONS HERE!**)

1. When did your relationship with the Lord begin? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. At this time in your life, how would you describe your walk with the Lord?  
Close and consistent \_\_\_\_\_ Up and down \_\_\_\_\_ Distant \_\_\_\_\_ In crisis \_\_\_\_\_
3. How often do you read your Bible? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Is your prayer life:  
Daily talking to God? \_\_\_\_\_ Regular and disciplined? \_\_\_\_\_ On and off? \_\_\_\_\_  
On the go? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Who is Jesus to you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Do you believe in absolute truth, that right and wrong are determined by God's Word, or do you believe right and wrong are relative, that is, determined by the situation?  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Write anything else you want me to know about your family of origin or immediate family.

