

Chapter Seven

REPLACING THE LIES WITH TRUTH



Sometimes you wonder if you will ever get past your past. You do fine and think you are over it, and then bam...something happens that triggers those old, scary emotions. The good news is, you can heal. You will never forget the hurt, but it can be put in its proper place in your life. The first part of this chapter deals with how our brains store memories. There is a reason I am laying this foundation, which will become apparent later in the chapter.

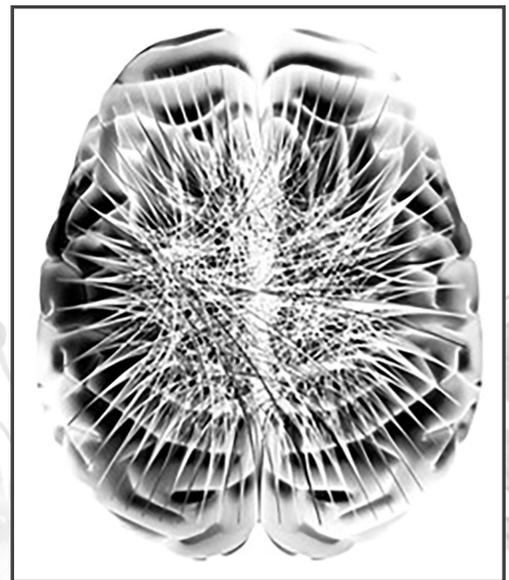
MEMORIES

Some memories seem seared into our brains, while others are fleeting wisps of recollection. If it is a memory created by trauma, the emotions that surrounded the memory, such as fear, helplessness, pain, abandonment, etc., are stored in our brains as part of the memory. For instance, the emotions connected with the memories are there if you were brought up being called stupid and worthless. How you felt when that happened is what triggers your reactions when you find yourself in similar circumstances as an adult. If someone doesn't listen to you or dismisses you, all of those feelings you felt surrounding similar experiences as a child flood over you. When this happens, your reactions to the current circumstance stem from those feelings from that memory. Here is an example from pre-cell phone years. A client of mine named Sandy told me of a time when she was at a shopping mall with her husband of thirty years. He went to get the car and was to meet her out front. What should have taken only a few minutes was taking a long time. She waited and waited. At first, she was aggravated, which quickly morphed into sheer panic—not panic that something had happened to him, but that she had been abandoned, that he had left her. In thirty years, he had never done anything to indicate this was even a possibility. But, it's important to note that Sandy's fear did not come from the reality of her stable marriage to a good man. It came from numerous times in her childhood when she had been abandoned, along with other unspeakable incidents of abuse. Her husband actually had been in a minor accident in the parking lot. Imagine what he found when he finally did connect with his wife!

EMOTIONAL MEMORIES

One factor that imprints memories into our long-term memory is whether or not it is accompanied by strong emotional content. Do you remember your first kiss, or where you were when you found out that a close family member had passed away? In my generation, everyone I have ever talked to has detailed memories of where they were when President Kennedy was assassinated. This happens because of the amygdala, which, brain imaging studies have shown, is activated by emotional events. The amygdala boosts memory encoding by enhancing attention and perception, and it can help memory retention by triggering the release of stress hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol, to boost arousal.

While memories of a stressful event can be sharpened, stress tends to have negative effects on memory storage for events that coincide with, but are not the direct cause of, the stress. In my personal experience, the phone call that told me of my husband's death is vivid in my memory, including where I was, what I did, who was there, what was said, my reaction, my feelings, and the time that it happened. But I can remember little from the months that followed.



MEMORY PATHWAYS

How are memories formed? A good analogy for memory formation is the way foot traffic creates a path along a stretch of grass. The more a patch of grass is trampled as people pass along it, the clearer the path becomes and the easier it is to follow—it's as if a "memory" of all the walking has been created. The same thing happens in the brain. The more a neural pathway is activated, the stronger the synaptic connections along the way become. Then, when a thought enters our heads—say, a crackling fire on a cold evening—we recall related experiences or knowledge, such as the feel of the blanket around us and the warmth from the fire, as our minds funnel our thoughts along well-established neural pathways. Conversely, traumatic events create a "footpath" that, though traveled once, registers deeply in our brains. Trauma and fear release the hormones cortisol and adrenaline. The release of these hormones deepens the memory. Our memory of that event, and all the corresponding emotions, race along that neural pathway. You can imagine what happens to neural pathways when a child receives consistent, long-term abuse.

The following is a description of why traumatic memories are so much more entrenched in our brains and stimulate our reactions. (Source unknown)

NORMAL STIMULUS RESPONSE VERSUS TRAUMA REACTION

"Information comes into the brain from various sensory organs and usually enters the thalamus region. The thalamus asks itself, 'Is this a threat?' The prefrontal cortex and other cortical, or 'thinking,' areas of the brain consider this new information and asks itself, 'Have I ever experienced this before? What is the best thing to do? What might the consequences be?' After processing the information, the prefrontal cortex sends a signal to the amygdala, which provides a measure of emotional output that is appropriate, based on the analysis of the prefrontal cortex. This experience is then carefully stored in the hippocampus. The brain stem may never be activated at all (or minimally activated) depending on the experience."

REACTION TO STIMULUS IN A TRAUMATIZED BRAIN

"Information comes into the brain from various sensory organs, and the thalamus assesses if there is a present threat. Immediately, things begin functioning differently than in a typical brain. Past trauma experiences trigger a trauma reaction in the brain, which causes the thalamus to interpret even small losses or rejections—losing a shoe, being asked to do a chore, being denied a snack—as a new traumatic event. Once the thalamus has interpreted the experience as a trauma, the amygdala shifts into overdrive. The amygdala has a disproportionate fear/emotional response to the experience and sends signals to the brain stem. Consequently, the individual gets a dose of cortisol and adrenaline. Palms may sweat, or the person may feel shaky. He experiences a fight-or-flight urge. Around this time, we may see some troubling behaviors, such as impulsive decisions, verbal or physical aggression, self-harm, etc. The reason is that the prefrontal cortex was skipped. The memories of this event can be foggy and stored erratically in the hippocampus. If the prefrontal cortex is involved at all, it may be after the crisis is over, when the child thinks about what just happened."

While you cannot erase your memories, the good news is that you can change your thinking about them and your reaction to them.



RENEWING YOUR MIND

Recently, I came across this article by Dee Chan on a Hey Sigmund blog. Dee Chan was diagnosed with bipolar disorder more than thirty-five years ago, back when the diagnosis was still fairly new and not very well understood. For many years, her life was marked by manic highs and depressed lows. After a suicide attempt, she decided to find new ways of coping and living. She researched the brain and developed mindfulness (the new term for choosing gratitude and joy). She has been able to put her bipolar disorder into complete remission and turned her life around completely, predominantly through the practices of gratitude, forgiveness, and accountability. She writes:



"Neuroscience now knows that the brain is an unbelievably plastic organ that does not remain static over a lifetime. I know this is true because about twelve years ago, I gave myself a traumatic brain injury following a massive drug overdose which I took during a suicide attempt. The doctors told me that however much recovery I had achieved after two years would likely be all I would gain, but even now, some twelve years later, I still see improvement on a weekly basis. I attribute much of this to my daily practice of mindfulness.

"Our brains were born to adapt. Scientists know that people are able to train their brains to change and that these changes can be measured. They also know that when you teach your brain to think in different ways, it causes the brain to change as well for the better.

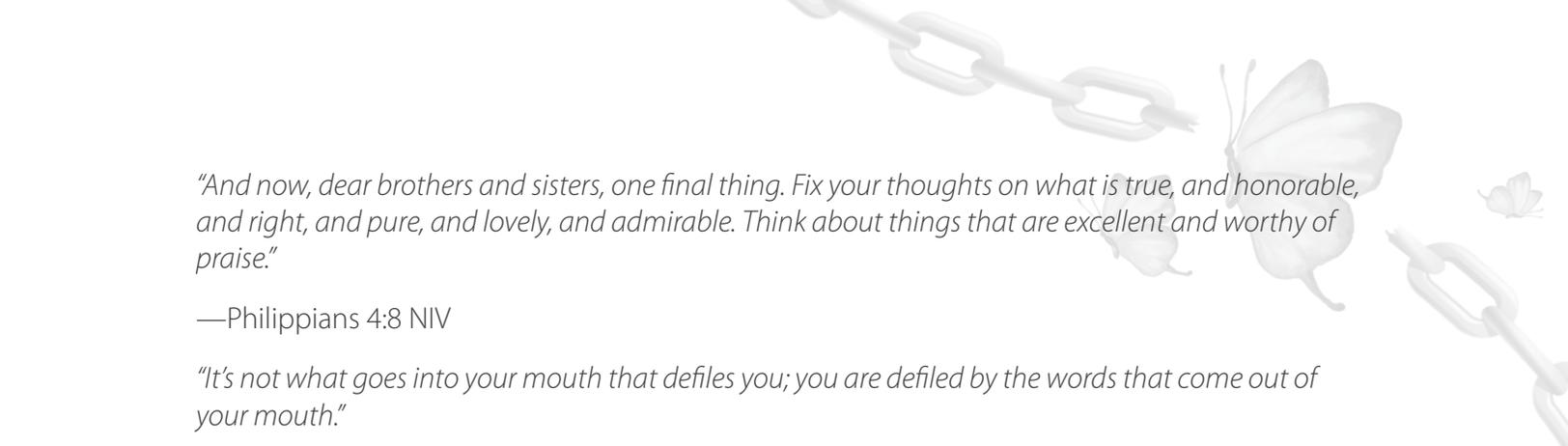
"Practicing mindfulness intentionally changes the brain's plasticity by teaching the brain to focus on positive thoughts. By focusing on qualities such as happiness and the present moment, we learn new distress tolerance skills.

"Scientists now know that practicing mindfulness for as little as thirty minutes per day has a profound effect on the brain. These changes can be seen during an MRI scan."

What is mindfulness? It is being aware of the moment, seeing the beauty in the small things, being grateful, forgiving, choosing kindness, and focusing on the positive things. This is not "positive thinking" psychobabble. This isn't trying to convince yourself you are a valuable and wonderful person by repeating that to yourself twenty times in the mirror. This is opening your eyes, and especially your heart, to the beauty around you, the blessings you do have, and the joy in the small things. It is recapturing the wonder of things all around you, like the beauty in the perfect symmetry of a flower or the clouds piling upon each other high in the sky. It is NOT denying your problems. It is changing the lens through which you see them. For a Christian, the power of mindfulness comes by acknowledging and focusing on God and His blessings.

What is a "plastic" brain? It is a brain that learns and changes. We know that from infancy to the age of three, children's brains are incredibly plastic. During this time, their brains undergo an amazing period of development, producing more than a million neural connections each second. This slows down as the child ages. It used to be thought that around middle age, an adult's brain was pretty well set. But recent research on the brain has proved that our brains are still plastic, and we can actually change our brain by changing our thinking!

Here is the amazing thing. Science is catching up with God's Word! Look at these Bible passages that reinforce this. After each verse, discuss how this reflects mindfulness.



"And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise."

—Philippians 4:8 NIV

"It's not what goes into your mouth that defiles you; you are defiled by the words that come out of your mouth."

—Matthew 15:11 NIV

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?"

—Romans 8:28–31 NIV

"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."

—Proverbs 4:23 NIV

"Yet I am confident I will see the LORD's goodness while I am here in the land of the living."

—Psalm 27:13 NIV

"Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you."

—Ephesians 4:31–32 NIV

"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid."

—John 14:27 NIV

"As a man thinks, so is he."

—Proverbs 23:7 NIV

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

—2 Corinthians 10:4–5 NIV



PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

So, how do you apply all the information above? For years I have been using a simple and powerful method that helps women to release the lies and replace them with truth.

Remember, you have to first identify the lies. Most lies are preceded with a physical feeling. It might be panic, a tightening of the forehead, a pain in your chest, or any number of physical manifestations. That physical sensation is your warning that a lie is following. Once you are aware of the feeling and know a lie is following, you can “take that thought captive” and speak Truth to it—not once, but over and over. What you are doing is creating new neural pathways around the deeply grooved ones that hold the lies about your worth, value, and significance. Imagine that when you speak truth to the lies, which are of Satan, the Holy Spirit is active, driving that truth deep into your neuropathways. Truth is powerful. Truth is Christ. And only in Him can we challenge our lies, replace them, and find healing and rest.

To illustrate this concept, I am going to share some actual worksheets from my clients (with their permission). With the information above as a foundation, you will be able to see how the concept is applied practically.

I gave my clients multiple copies of a worksheet that asked the questions below. The purpose was to identify and name their feelings. Because they were often unsure of their feelings, they would refer to the “Feelings Chart” they received. Please note, this was done not once or twice, but often.

What am I feeling?

Is there a physical sensation that preceded it?

What is the Lie?

What is the Truth?

What do I need to surrender?

Here are some responses to these questions from a client named Kaylee:

What am I feeling? *Rejected, hurt, unloved, unwanted*

Is there a physical sensation that preceded it? *Heaviness in my chest*

What is the Lie? *The lie is that I was not wanted by my kids, just because they didn’t want to sit with me at church this morning.*

What is the Truth? *Truth is, their independence doesn’t define my worth. They are only exercising their maturity and their right to separate into their own persons.*

What do I need to surrender? *Not wanting to be alone, taking their requests as a personal reflection of how they feel about me.*

What am I feeling? *Guilty, like I did something wrong, should have kept quiet, insecure, a troublemaker, like I overreacted, sadness, small, alone, like I’m being avoided, withdrawn, quiet, like everyone knows. (This was after she reported on a male coworker who made inappropriate comments and physical contact to/with her.)*

Is there a physical sensation that preceded it? *Heaviness in my chest, headache*

What is the Lie? *The lie is that I’ve done something wrong. People are avoiding me. Everybody knows about what happened and is judging me.*

What is the Truth? *The truth is it's okay to voice what happened when someone causes me great discomfort. I am not a powerless child with no voice. Only two people know at work. My perception is that people are avoiding me because of my feelings, but it isn't so.*

What do I need to surrender? *Shame, fear, feelings of being bad, self-punishment*

What am I feeling? *Rejected, unlovable, panicked, hard, isolated, uneasy, unhappy, negative, undeserving*

Is there a physical sensation that preceded it? *Heaviness in my chest*

What is the Lie? *The lie is that I'm still rejected, standing on the outside looking at life. I'm so flawed I will always be used and thrown away. Another person can't possibly see past my issues to love the woman beneath the scars. I don't deserve to be loved.*

What is the Truth? *The truth is that I'm rejecting others still. God has never rejected me. I'm only standing on the outside because I'm afraid. God sees past my wounds; He loves me so much that He died for me. That makes me worth being loved and cherished by another human being.*

What do I need to surrender? *My feelings of rejection, feeling unlovable, fear to harden my heart, my choice to be isolated, unhappy, and negative.*

What am I feeling? *Shame, guilt, lack of sense of self, conflicted, vulnerable, numb, regret, insecure*

Is there a physical sensation that preceded it? *Heaviness in my chest*

What is the Lie? *The lie is that I should remain in shame and guilt so I can remember what I am doing wrong and so that my security of being accepted and wanted is gone.*

What is the Truth? *The truth is that God has freed me of shame and guilt. My identity has been moved from relationships with others to a relationship with God.*

What do I need to surrender? *Shame, guilt, insecurity*

Along with their work on the lies and the truth, my clients found truth in Scripture that speaks to their worth and value. These are the truths they needed to dwell on when they found themselves slipping down the slope of lies.

FORGIVEN: *"Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that (your name) is righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when He freed her from the penalty for her sins" (see Romans 3:24).*

SET FREE: *"So now there is no condemnation for (your name), who belongs to Christ Jesus. And because she belongs to Him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed her from the power of sin that leads to death" (see Romans 8:12).*

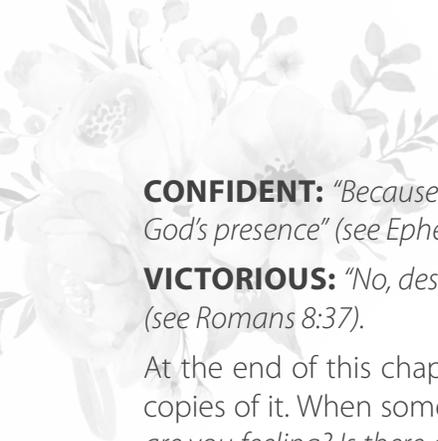
ACCEPTED: *"I am writing to God's church in Corinth, to (your name) who has been called by God to be his own holy people. He made her holy by means of Christ Jesus, just as He did for all people everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours" (see 1 Corinthians 1:2).*

HOLY: *"God has united (your name) with Christ Jesus. For her benefit God has made Him to be wisdom itself. Christ made her right with God; He made her pure and holy and freed her from sin" (see 1 Corinthians 1:30).*

MADE NEW: *"This means that (your name), who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!" (see 1 Corinthians 5:17).*

LOVED: *"Even before He made the world, God loved (your name) and chose her in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes" (see Ephesians 1:4).*





CONFIDENT: *“Because of Christ and our faith in Him, (your name) can now come boldly and confidently into God’s presence” (see Ephesians 3:12).*

VICTORIOUS: *“No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is (your name) through Christ, who loved us” (see Romans 8:37).*

At the end of this chapter, you will find the worksheet entitled “Truth and Lies.” If you can, make twenty copies of it. When something happens that brings up the lies, stop and pay attention. Ask yourself: *What are you feeling? Is there a physical feeling? What is Truth? What is the lie? What do you need to surrender at the foot of the cross?* Take the time to write these answers down. Be honest. That is the first step in this journey. It is what God wants. Psalm 51:6 says, *“Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.”*

Along with this exercise, get some 3X5 notecards and write out the Scriptures that speak to you. Insert your own name. Then post these around your home, in your car, in your purse, or anywhere you will see them. Speak them. Ponder them. And make these truths your truths!

SHIFTING YOUR FOUNDATION

What happens when you start identifying the lies and replacing them with truth by doing this exercise? You start shifting your foundation. It doesn’t happen all at once. But over time, you gain more and more freedom as you pull the lies out by the roots and replace them with Truth.

The following exercise will show you just how much shame affects your relationships with others and with God and how walking in Truth changes that!

Ask yourself: If **shame is at your core** and you see yourself as fundamentally flawed, can you be:

Honest with yourself?

Why or why not?

Trusting of others?

Why or why not?

Vulnerable?

Why or why not?

Transparent?

Why or why not?

Honest with God?

Why or why not?

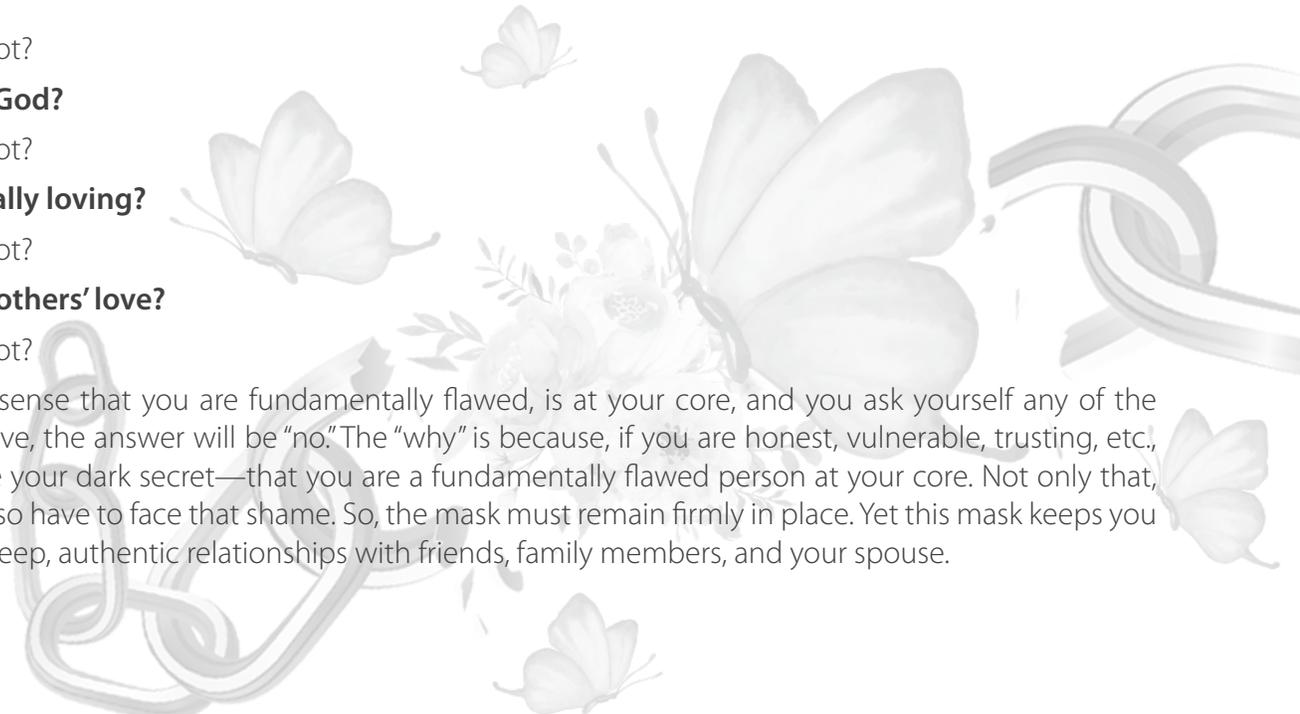
Unconditionally loving?

Why or why not?

Receiving of others’ love?

Why or why not?

If shame, the sense that you are fundamentally flawed, is at your core, and you ask yourself any of the questions above, the answer will be “no.” The “why” is because, if you are honest, vulnerable, trusting, etc., others will see your dark secret—that you are a fundamentally flawed person at your core. Not only that, but you will also have to face that shame. So, the mask must remain firmly in place. Yet this mask keeps you from having deep, authentic relationships with friends, family members, and your spouse.



Now ask yourself, if you are a cherished child of God at your core, can you be:

Honest with yourself?

Why or why not?

Trusting of others?

Why or why not?

Vulnerable?

Why or why not?

Transparent?

Why or why not?

Honest with God?

Why or why not?

Unconditionally loving?

Why or why not?

Receiving of others' love?

Why or why not?

If the knowledge that you are cherished by God is at your core, and if you ask any of these questions above, the answer will be "yes." The answer to "why" is because, if you are honest, vulnerable, trusting, etc., you and those around you will only discover that truth. There is no fear of "being found out" because no matter how deep they go, they find your identity is that of a cherished child of God. This allows you to create deep, authentic relationships with God, friends, family members, and your spouse.



Shifting Your Foundation from Shame to Truth



<i>Honest with self</i>	<i>Honest with God</i>
<i>Trust others</i>	<i>Trust God</i>
<i>Vulnerable</i>	<i>Love</i>
<i>Transparent</i>	<i>Receive Love</i>
Fundamentally Flawed	





Shifting Your Foundation from Shame to Truth



<i>Honest with self</i>	<i>Honest with God</i>
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Fundamentally Flawed	

<i>Honest with self</i>	<i>Honest with God</i>
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<i>Vulnerable</i>	<i>Love</i>
<i>Transparent</i>	<i>Receive Love</i>
Cherished By God	



Your foundation is formed as a young child. If it is a foundation of shame, all of your actions, reactions, relationships, self perceptions and spiritual beliefs are colored by this. It is Satan's greatest triumph - the most destructive lie of all. When your foundation is founded on Truth, everything in your life shifts. Anger, defensiveness, guardedness, duplicity, game playing, and facade are no longer needed to protect you.



You Say

Lauren Daigle





SHIFTING MY FOUNDATION

(Print out 10 to 20 copies of this page, and each time you are "triggered" by lies, stop and complete this worksheet.)

What am I feeling?

Is there a physical sensation that preceded it?

What is the Lie?



What is the Truth?



What do I need to surrender?

