

Chapter 15

Questions to Ponder

1. As you reflect on the phrase “free to love, *really* love again,” what thoughts come to your mind as this pertains to you? What feelings does this stir inside you?
2. How has your experience in an abusive relationship affected your desire to meet someone new?
3. How is your commitment to healing well preparing you for the possibility of a future relationship?
4. Are there areas in which you believe you still need to grow and heal before you fully open your heart and life to a new person? What are those areas?

5. After reading what emotionally healthy love looks like, do you believe you are loving yourself in this manner? Where do you shine? Where do you falter?
6. Have you made the committed decision to have an intimate relationship only with someone who loves you in the 1 Corinthians 13 sort of way? Remember to refer back to this litmus test for love as your gauge for a healthy relationship.
7. You have learned a great deal, and you have come a long way. How has your belief level in yourself changed? How have your beliefs about God's love and His heart for you been affected? How have these new acquired beliefs affected how you view yourself?
8. Take a moment to write how you intend to remain committed to healing well and living free for the rest of your life. Reflect on this when you feel weary or discouraged. Share it with a trusted friend who can come alongside you when you need a gentle reminder of how far you've come.

Prayer of Reflection

Jesus, I was so broken and carrying such deep pain inside that I never thought it was possible to experience the budding freedom and genuine healing that are growing in my life today. You saw me when I lost sight of myself. You saw a future for me I never imagined. I still have moments when I struggle with doubt and fear. But I know You are with me. I know You understand me. I know You do not hold my frailty against me. Thank You, Jesus, that when I am weak, through You I am strong (2 Corinthians 12:9–10). I ask You to heal any remaining places within me that keep me from being all You created me to be. Please replace any residual effects from the abuse with strength and an authentic love

for myself. I ask You to do the same for my children. Heal them where they still hurt and struggle. Only You can bring good out of this pain for me and for my kids.

Help me to never permit anyone to abuse me or treat me in any way that does not reflect true love, the kind of love in 1 Corinthians 13. Mold me into that kind of lover. I want to love You, myself, and others as You love me. Apart from You, this is impossible. Hold me close by Your side. If I ever start to wander, come get me and bring me back into Your fold. Thank You for being the conduit through which healing well and living free have translated into my life. Please continue to lead my steps, my choices, and my life as You know best. I surrender myself into Your hands, the safest place for me to be. I love You. Thank You for loving me first. Amen.

God's Enduring Promises

We love because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1)

Trust in the LORD and do good.

Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.

Take delight in the LORD,

and he will give you your heart's desires.

Commit everything you do to the LORD.

Trust him, and he will help you. (Psalm 37:3–5 NLT)

Wait patiently for the LORD.

Be brave and courageous.

Yes, wait patiently for the LORD. (Psalm 27:14 NLT)

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go. (Joshua 1:9 NKJV)

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. (Philippians 1:6 NLT)

My Promise and Prayer for You

As I bring this book to a close, I'd like to leave you with a promise and a prayer. My promise is that you will remain in my prayers for the rest of my life. To me, prayer is both a privilege and a responsibility. Although our lives have not physically intersected, our stories have. Stories that involve pain, regardless of the unique nuisances, bind people together in a way few things can. Thank you for entrusting me to walk alongside you as you have embarked on the most courageous journey ever: facing your pain with courage and determination so you can authentically heal and experience what it means to be truly free on the deepest level. My first prayer for you is below. Together, my Sweetie and I will continue to bring you and your needs before the throne of Jesus. Know with confidence you are being prayed for. And we know that when we pray, He hears us. That's His promise!

Sweet Jesus, with all my heart I want to thank You for coming alongside my friend and me as together we have traversed the healing well journey laid out in the pages of this book. You alone are fully aware of their pain and the details of their story. You alone are fully aware of the deep, miry pit that they were in. Only You can reach down into their abyss and draw them out. Thank You for the promise that Your hand is never too short to save. You are able to reach us regardless of how deep our pit is or how excruciating our pain may be.

Please allow them to feel You especially when they doubt You most. Meet them wherever they are and continue to hold their hand in the days ahead.

I may never meet them, but we share a bond that only those who have walked this path truly understand. I know and trust that You will continue to walk beside them, hold them, and remind them that You will never leave them. When they stumble, as we all do, lift them up, dust them off, and put the skip back into their step so they can continue moving forward with You. Open their eyes and heart to see and know You as You truly are. Wherever faulty thinking about themselves, You, or their future remains, please heal those areas and replace misunderstanding with Your truth. Help them to see that their pain will not be wasted. Rather, their pain will be used for good in ways they may not recognize now.

Help them to trust You, to believe in You, and to allow You to love them as You so earnestly desire. In turn, help them to love themselves as You love them. Unconditionally. Keep Your hand of protection upon them. Grant them the desires of their heart. Daily whisper to them, "It is for freedom that I have set you free." Give them the wisdom to walk in this freedom and to treasure it as a gift directly from Your hand to theirs. In Your beautiful name, Jesus, I pray. Amen.

A Personal Word to You

If you have never made the decision to commit your life and heart to Jesus, I encourage you to not let this moment slip away. A personal relationship with Jesus Christ is not about do's and don'ts. It's not about religion or rituals. It's about relationship. We don't have to get all cleaned up to embrace His love and forgiveness.

He took care of “cleaning us all up” when He went to the cross. His death and resurrection is the reason we can be forgiven and set free. He paid the price for our sin. Something we could never do for ourselves. Something we can only choose to receive as the gift it was intended to be. You are unconditionally loved by God. His Son’s nail-pierced hands and feet testify to His love for you. Will you open your heart to Jesus and let Him in? If so, pray with me now . . .

Jesus, I have come a long way and done a tremendous amount of work to get here. I have had conversations with You all throughout this book. However, I know I have never made the conscious decision to ask You into my life. Today, Jesus, I ask you to forgive me of my sins. I ask you to wash me clean through Your shed blood on the cross. I ask You to be my Lord and Savior from this day forward. I don’t want to live another day apart from You. Thank You, Jesus, for wrapping me in Your arms and holding me forevermore. Amen.

If you prayed this prayer (or something similar in your own words) know your name has been permanently written on the palm of His hand (Isaiah 49:16). This is a huge cause to celebrate! I encourage you to connect with a healthy church community. One that loves Jesus and loves people. Your decision today will not magically make life a stroll in the park, but it will give you the assurance that you are never alone. Jesus will continue to walk with you through the ups and downs of your life, giving you comfort when you are weary and celebrating over you when life is great. Today you made the most important decision you could ever make! I’m so happy for you I could turn cartwheels!!