

Introduction

A few years back, I had a vision of God rummaging through my heart. He picked up a brick and said, “What’s this? How did this get here?” Then, He set it aside to reach deeper. The last thing I heard Him say while holding something I didn’t recognize was, “I thought this had been thrown out a long time ago. We need to get rid of this.”

I was blown away by the symbolism of God wanting to clean up my heart. At the time, it hadn’t dawned on me that my heart needed to be cleansed, or healed for that matter. Everything that life had thrown at me—the rejection of my father in childhood, sexual assault as a teenager, infidelity in marriage, single parenthood, and a host of other situations—I’d survived. I weathered every storm.

But what God was saying to me in that vision was, yes, you weathered the storms, but your heart was wounded in the process and in some areas became ill. The wounded places in the vision represented the hurt caused by rejection, mistreatment, disappointment, discouragement, ill-spoken words toward me, and the like. And the object that God held in his hand that I didn’t recognize represented the sick places in my heart that grew from being unforgiving.

God found grudges, roots of bitterness, anger, and even hatred deeply tucked away in my heart. Even now, thinking about the condition of my heart back then makes me cringe. How could I love anyone, including myself, from a place that unhealthy?

Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted, it says in Isaiah 61:1, to set the captives free. Salvation through Jesus Christ is only the beginning. Setting the captives free has more to do with your heart being healed than it does any other part of your being.

It is a spiritual injustice for your heart to remain broken. It is a spiritual injustice for you to feel insecure, hopeless, unloved, and unworthy of God's best for your life. If you are experiencing spiritual injustices in your life, there is a lie at the root—a lie that has crept into your personal belief system and is masquerading as the truth.

For me, feeling unwanted by my father as a child, and later experiencing sexual assault as a teenager, planted seeds of rejection, hate, bitterness, jealousy, shame, and rage that grew into deeply rooted insecurities and a lack of self-love. I didn't believe that I was enough for a man. Yes, I knew I was attractive, but it had already been proven in my life that looks weren't enough to keep a man—it didn't keep my father present. So for years, I held my life together, excelling in my career, providing for my two sons, and crying out to God when life overwhelmed me, pressing forward no matter what, yet I ached on the inside for someone to love and accept me for who I was. The little girl inside of me, who was taken advantage of and rejected, wanted to feel loved.

Those negative seeds in my heart manifested in my adult relationships with harsh words toward anyone who had something to say that I didn't like, and I definitely didn't stick around in romantic relationships with men who didn't show me love the way I needed to receive it. It was always easy to walk away and move on like nothing ever happened. Life had taught me that.

Shortly after my thirty-ninth birthday, God used a Believer that I'd recently met on a trip to my hometown in Alabama to say these words to me: God said to tell you that you don't love yourself.

Now, I was surprised, stunned, taken aback, shocked, appalled—everything you can think of when someone drops an unexpected bomb on your life. This person had been apprehensive to tell me, and therefore, he'd waited two months before finally obeying God. Needless to say, those

words shook my world. That was foolishness. My appearance was very important to me. I always kept myself together—hair, nails, the way I dressed. I was the consummate professional at work, and I didn't leave home without at least eyeliner, mascara, lip gloss, and my brows filled in. This word from the Lord had to be wrong.

Nevertheless, I asked God, how could it be? How could I not love myself? And after I asked the question and really opened up to hearing from God on the matter, the answer came as clear as you see the words on this page. God said, “You don’t honor yourself in relationships with men. You allow yourself to be used in ways you don’t agree with because you believe that you have to do what they want to get what you want. But it doesn’t work like that,” He said. “I am Lord of your life and I love you. The void you’re trying to fill is My place in your heart. Let me love you, Vanessa. Honor yourself, Vanessa. As you honor yourself, I will honor you with a man who will honor you too.”

My goodness. What a powerful word from the Lord! Yet, even after hearing God speak those life-changing words to me in my brokenness, I struggled with the truth of it. I had believed a lie for so long—that I wasn’t enough without doing something special—till it was a major task to accept my own truth. What I really wanted was love and acceptance, to be honored, but because of the lie, I had settled for sex and indifference.

Lies and Love is about cleaning up the chaos in your heart. By the word of God’s power, in 30 days, we will utterly destroy every lie and injustice operating in your life. Your heart will be made free to trust, to hope, to forgive, to love, and to be loved. You will discover the radical love of God working in your life as He meets you where you are.

The *Lies and Love* 30-Day Heart Cleanse is where we declare war and victory over your life and destiny. Whether you find yourself in the place where God found me, broken and

dishonoring myself, or you need to be encouraged in your faith, the 30-day cleanse will reset and refresh your heart.

My journey to make room for radical love took eight years. There were so many challenges and so much pain involved in the process, but now I understand why the road had to be so rough. I went through it all so that I could write this book for you. God loves you too much to leave you where you are. He wants to reset your entire way of thinking and processing life in thirty days! Will you let Him do it?

Lastly, before we start your journey to a free heart, if the word that God spoke directly to me about honoring myself speaks to where you are in your life right now, replace my name with yours in that paragraph and speak that word over your life daily during the 30-day cleanse. God will help you in that area and inspire you with ways to change your life for the better.

Peace in all things,

Vanessa

Chapter One

Is the 30-Day Cleanse for You?

So, you're probably thinking that my case of heart issues is extreme and your life experiences are nothing like mine. Perhaps you're right. Honestly, I didn't realize how bad off the condition of my heart was until God got my attention.

Trust me. It made no sense then, but that one statement caused me to seek the Lord's guidance about *love*, and it has changed the course of my life. So maybe your issues don't have to do with rejection in childhood by your father or sexual assault, but I can guarantee you that life in general has impacted your heart in a way that God would like to heal and make whole.

Any attitude, behavior, or habit that is counterproductive to your life is an indicator that something is going on in the heart that should be addressed. If any of the following issues play out in your life or concern you on a regular basis, you are reading the right book and, yes, this 30-day cleanse will help you.

- Are you angry often and take it out on those close to you?
- Are you easily frustrated with people in general?
- Are you frustrated with your current station in life (career, personal, spiritual)?
- Is sarcasm your way of communicating with people?

- Are you single and discouraged by the dating scene?
- Do you have strained relationships with loved ones?
- Does your childhood still haunt you today?
- Do you have poor customer service?
- Do you have a bias against a particular group of people?
- Are you indifferent about major decisions you need to make?

This is a short list, but I think it makes the point that the issues of life vary and can affect how we function day to day and how we treat people. God wants to change that, and love—radical and free—is the answer. During the 30-Day Heart Cleanse, your heart will be cleansed of the chaos that is at the root of the issues in the list above. God’s love for you will have the final say and not your past.

So, what is your heart story? You’ve had a glimpse at mine. How has life and your experiences of other people changed who you are? If you don’t fully know, God will unpack and reveal the condition of your heart as you read *Lies and Love*. Are you ready for the challenge?

Chapter Two

The Heart

The heart is deceitful above all things and it is extremely sick; who can understand it fully and know its secret motives? “I, the Lord, search and examine the mind, I test the heart, to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds.” (Jeremiah 17:9–10 AMP)

I don't know about you, but this passage grips me. To know that God himself finds the heart to be deceitful above all things and extremely sick is disturbing. Yet for these reasons, the heart of mankind is God's foremost focus. God knows that your heart will determine everything you do. He knows that your heart will determine whether you fight or give up. That's why He wants your heart to be healed. Only from a healthy heart can you fully love. Only from a healthy heart can you see and understand the beauty of life. And only from a free heart will you unabashedly trust God.

It is your heart that God is after. He knows that if He gets your heart to surrender to Him, the rest of your life will follow. He knows that if your heart is free of chaos, you will be bold and fearless, and that you will awaken to your destiny and chase it down. God knows that, once you

know exactly who you are in Christ, no devil in hell or hurt from your past will be able to stop you from fulfilling your unique purpose on the earth.

Remember the brick that God picked up as He rummaged through my heart? There were actually many bricks scattered about. The scene looked like it had been bombed and God was walking through the rubble. I was defenseless when those things happened to me in childhood: things that blew up my world and changed the condition of my heart, perverting my understanding of love. So, I learned how to protect myself, or at least that was my goal, but what I'd really done was imprison the chaos (rejection, hate, bitterness, jealousy, shame, and rage) in my heart. I held it hostage, waiting and hoping that someone would come along and pay the ransom to set the real me free. I processed life through the eyes of that chaotic heart for years.

Life is *lived* inside of you. Even as you experience people and things through your five senses, your inside world is on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week processing away, taking it all in, attaching emotions and thoughts to every encounter you have. As a result, your likes and dislikes set in, and what you feel and think about people is decided.

Years ago, I heard a pastor refer to the heart as a “clearinghouse” and I thought, how brilliant. This is how the heart functions in our life. Everything that happens to us—everything that we experience in life—is processed and filtered through the clearinghouse, or “grand central” as I affectionately call it.

Grand central, or the heart, is always collecting new experiences, categorizing, and filing them away, and then telling you how to respond. It’s almost like the heart speaks to you, saying, “Remember when that happened? Well, this is the same type of situation, so we need to respond to it the same way we did the last time. Been there, done that.”

Isn't that incredible? The heart always remembers how you felt about an experience. Your mind may not be able to recall the details involved, but your heart certainly does. The heart doesn't waste anytime reminding you that you were happy or sad, hurt or angry. Anything new looks old and familiar to a sick heart.

Nevertheless, there is a constant flow of healing in our lives that takes us from faith to faith and glory to glory when we seek God to be our best. He is intimately familiar with your heart's story and knows what you need personally to bring about the healing and restoration to make your life better.

As we pray and do our best to walk in faith, God is steadily transforming our heart. Being the big God that He is who cannot be contained in a box, He uses anything He so desires to woo our hearts into a place of healing and trusting Him.

In my life, God has used my kids to bring me joy and keep me going when I wanted to stop caring and throw in the towel. He's used conversations with girlfriends that were more like testimony-sharing sessions that caused me to see a different perspective, and He used the strength I saw in my mother to know that life can't keep you down if you keep going. God used all of these people and many more to help His Word come alive in my heart and take me to new levels of faith and glory in Him.

When you overcome something or gain a new perspective, it represents spiritually that a healing has taken place in your heart and mind. You have the ability to now *see* the same situations differently and respond in faith and not from hurt-based emotions. This is part of the Biblical transformation process where God is working to transform us into the image of Christ. The healing power of God is always at work, calling you to a better, higher version of yourself. He has a vested

interest in you. You matter to Him. Your life, as you read this book right now, and the final outcome of your journey matters to God.

In light of this wonderful truth, when we look back at the passage in the beginning of this chapter (Jeremiah 17:9–10), especially the line about deceit and secret motives in the heart, my thoughts naturally turn to how we experience people.

The things we say and how we treat people reflect what's going on in the heart. Check out this passage:

Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.

(Proverbs 4:23)

The “issues of life” are what we experience when we interact with people. We encounter each other’s heart story.

Does it irritate you when you meet someone for the first time and they treat you like you did something to them? Unless they’ve heard of you from someone else and formed an opinion, there’s no reason for their negative behavior—at least none that makes sense. So what you’re encountering are their heart issues. It could be insecurity, jealousy, envy, whatever. Something about “your type” represents and reminds them of a painful or unfavorable experience in their life, so you’re treated accordingly.

There’s a popular saying that hurt people hurt people. I’ll also add my own saying: Broken hearts break hearts. It’s true. But here’s the real deal. When you meet someone who treats you badly, it’s not the true person you’re encountering but rather their brokenness. It’s difficult, if not

impossible, for a broken heart to function in a healthy way. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (see Matthew 12:34).

Consider the following questions as you think about your own heart story: Is your heart healthy enough to represent the real you? What flows from your heart and out of your mouth that is hurtful to others? What are you speaking to yourself? Whatever immediately comes to mind, write it down. This is part of your heart story.

Faith

From the beginning of life, God deals to each of us a measure of faith. In Romans, chapter 10, the Apostle Paul tells us that the word of faith is near you in your mouth and in your heart. Therefore, it's safe to conclude that faith only works in two places: your heart and your mouth. Notice that faith is *not* in your head. The mind has to be renewed by the Word into proper thinking and harmony with your faith.

When the Word comes alive in your heart, it chokes out the weeds and waters the dry places. But the mind will war against your faith every time you start believing God for something that seems impossible, wanting you to see first, then believe. Your mind wants to analyze things and have safety nets and a plan B. But faith simply says trust God. For this reason, the mind must be renewed continually with the Word and made to come into agreement with what your faith is doing and saying. It takes minutes for God to snatch a person out of the world (through the prayer of salvation), but it can take a lifetime to prune the world (and its way of doing things) out of them.

The longest journey you'll experience as a Christian is getting the Word you know in your *head* to reach your heart. Knowledge is powerful, but God is Spirit. The Word must reach your heart for you to truly live a life of faith.

One can memorize the Bible from cover to cover, but unless that Word gets down in the heart, where it can grow roots, one's relationship will be with Scripture rather than with the true and living God. The Pharisees, Sadducees, and the scribes prove this point nicely.

Faith works. The Word of God works. There is comfort, grace, guidance, healing, hope, instruction, mercy, peace, strategy, and truth in those pages. Nothing can come against you that won't bow the knee to Jesus—the living Word—when you apply the Truth to the situation.

A Brave Heart

When I think about brave hearts in Scripture, there are many that come to mind, but for me, Peter stands out in a way that is relatable for the twenty-first century. He seems to me like the Believer who wants to get it right. As one of the twelve disciples and also one of three included in Jesus's intimate circle, Peter was a big-time hater with serious jealousy issues, who abandoned and denied Jesus in moments of fear. Yet, his heart was the most zealous, courageous, and trusting of the twelve. Whenever Jesus corrected him, he made the necessary adjustments and kept on following.

It was Peter to whom God gave the revelation of Jesus being the “Christ of God” (see Luke 9:20); this same Peter pursued Jesus when he saw Him walking on the sea and asked if he could come to Him, and, pushing past his fear and stepping out into the deep, he walked on water (see Matthew 14:26–29). Scripture tells us that after the ascension of Jesus Christ, Peter goes on to be

a powerhouse for the kingdom of God with an anointing so powerful that even his shadow healed many (see Act 5:12–16).

Now that's a brave heart that overcame significant heart issues. That's the kind of heart I want and the kind that God is after in you with this 30-day cleanse: A heart that adjusts to His hand of correction quickly and becomes an unstoppable force on earth, ready to impact the lives of many.

Fear

There is no fear in love [dread does not exist]. But perfect (complete, full-grown) love drives out fear, because fear involves [the expectation of divine] punishment, so the one who is afraid [of God's judgment] is not perfected in love [has not grown into a sufficient understanding of God's love]. (1 John 4:18 AMP)

The first instance of fear in the Bible is captured in the book of Genesis when Adam and Eve hid from God because they were *afraid* after eating fruit from the forbidden tree.

Fear gets in the way of everything good. Fear will stop you from being who you are, from trying new things, from believing, from hoping, praying, and forgiving. It will kill your dreams and vision. It will hinder your ministry, keep you from receiving your healing, and keep you in wrong relationships. Fear will even make you afraid to succeed.

The only thing fear does not interfere with is sin. Isn't that amazing? But not too surprising though. Think about it. Whenever the notion comes to do something worthy of regret, fear is nowhere to be found. And after the deed is done, condemnation and fear-based thoughts, such as

shame and guilt, kick in with the intent to have us shrink back from God, feeling unworthy, much like Adam did when he hid from God in the garden. This is the expectation of punishment that fear brings. But God is not out to punish or judge us. He wants to love us beyond our wildest understanding. This is what perfect love does.

God doesn't want us tormented with questions like "how will I make it?" and "what will happen next?" When this happens, fear is attempting to rule in the heart. But the passage from First John at the start of this topic says that perfect (completed, full-grown) love drives out fear. God's radical love for you will send your fears packing.

Remember Jesus in the wilderness when He was tempted? Jesus responded with the Word. After three attempts by the enemy to get Jesus to choose him over God, the confession of the Word ended the attacks and sent the devil on his defeated way.

This is exactly what we must remember to do when fear is masquerading around in our lives causing stress, anxiety, panic, and dread. When the love of God has taken over your heart, you won't have to deal with the torment of fear anymore. Even if fear tries to enter again, your heart will recognize it, process it for the lie that it is, and prompt you to speak the word of Truth to destroy it in its tracks.

I can recall times when I was stressed out to the max with the demands of my life as a working, single mom. Anxious thoughts, over time, turned into panic attacks which led me to visit the emergency room on a couple of occasions for chest pains. But each time, by God's grace, I was sent home with instructions for stress management. The last time this happened was in December 2014. I was given an IV to administer a muscle relaxer for chest pains. After a battery of cardiac tests were run and deemed normal, I was released with a prescription for more of the

same muscle relaxer and instructions to follow up with my primary care doctor. I filled the prescription and took the pills while at the same time commanding fear to leave my life and proclaiming healing over my body and thoughts.

To make a long story even longer, about six days after the emergency room visit, I realized that my body was rejecting the muscle relaxer—I had an allergic reaction to the pain killer. So, I made a call back to the hospital where the medicine had been prescribed, and after sharing with the nurse that I had hives all over my arms, stomach, and back, she told me to take Zyrtec and then said, “Good luck.” I looked at the phone like a demon had come through the line. I couldn’t believe what she’d told me. This *is* my life you know? Well, anyways, after I got off the phone, I went to look in the mirror and the hives were continuing to spread, so I went to a different hospital and the ER doctor took one look at my rash and gave me my first dose of a steroid. He told me that the hives would probably get worse before they got better, and of course, that’s exactly what happened. Less than twenty-four hours later, my entire upper body was covered in an itchy, red rash. A couple of days after that, I had hives from head to toe.

Hives may not sound like a big deal, but internally my immune system was going bonkers, throwing off my ability to function. Now, what makes this story noteworthy is that I was out of work for three weeks fighting a stress-induced battle because of fear-based thoughts. What caused me to be out of work for so long was that I’d also been recovering from lingering symptoms of the flu when I went to the emergency room the first time. So, when the muscle relaxer caused an allergic reaction, it affected my energy level to the point of sending my body into extreme exhaustion. And on top of that, I think my immune system wanted to reject the steroid too. I was

a spotted, mildly swollen, exhausted mess. I couldn't drive and could barely shower and dress without feeling wiped out.

In the midst of all of this, the most wonderful thing happened. I got to know God as the Healer. When I first learned that my heart health was good and the whole episode had been stress and worry induced, I knew then that I was in a spiritual test. And it was confirmed when that nurse told me, "Good luck." Who says that in healthcare? So, I spent every day reading, praying, and learning to trust God with my life in new ways. In the past, God had healed bones and minor illness, but I had not experienced calling on Him with serious concerns for the quality of my life and what would happen next with my health.

God used this bizarre chain of events to test my heart. He didn't cause my chest pains or stress, and He didn't like seeing me do this to myself. But the test came to change me. In order to go to a new level of faith and glory, a test came to see what was in my heart—to discover if I would continue to partner with fear or trust God.

My heart had to be reprogrammed by love during this season of my life. And God did it. He reminded me not to exalt my problems above Him because they are no match for His faithfulness and love concerning me. The story ends with me waking up two days before Christmas, which was sixteen days after the first ER visit, feeling refreshed and at peace. Just like that, it was as if none of the craziness had ever happened.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)

Please remember this passage when you start stressing over bills, your health, employment, your supervisor, your children, the future. Just remember that God knows the end of your life from the beginning of your life and everything in between. Seek Him for the answers to your problems and be willing to respond to His way of bringing about resolution and peace in your situations.

Wisdom and Understanding

When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you . . . (Proverbs 2:10–11)

The wisdom of God is a necessary and powerful guide for the Believer. It tells us how to handle a situation the way God would and gives us peace knowing that we did the right thing. We see in the passage above that, when wisdom enters the heart, there's a protection or "keeping power" at work. The Bible tells us to "guard" our heart. We do this by the wisdom of God.

So much of what we fret about in life has to do with our need to fix things based on our own good ideas rather than seeking out what God has to say. The heart becomes troubled and anxious because we're trying to take care of problems ourselves while God is waiting for our prayer requests for more wisdom and understanding.

Wisdom and understanding work together. God gives wisdom to help us navigate life, and He brings about understanding to heal and grow us beyond wrong thinking. In my experience, it can take some time for understanding to take root in the heart, because the heart has to be "teachable" to learn new ways of seeing things.

During this 30-day process, God wants your heart to become pliable and teachable in His hands. He wants you to be open to letting go of old mindsets and ways of looking at life. He wants to give you fresh revelation and a new perspective—His perspective.

Sometimes it is our perspective that needs to change to shift us into breakthrough. Following is one of my life scriptures:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5–6)

God is not surprised about anything that goes on in our lives—good or bad. He is trustworthy and has the answer to every problem we face. The truth is He cares more about us succeeding than we do. He did not create us to fail.

God's wisdom and understanding are key for the heart cleanse. Getting rid of old mindsets will open the door for the new things God is bringing about in this season. Do you have situations in your life right now that need resolution? Ask God for the wisdom to know what to do, the strategy to get it done, favor for others to cooperate, and the peace to trust His timing.

###