Outline: "Arsenal Against Accusation" -Silencing the Critique Within

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* Setting the stage for the journey of overcoming self-accusation and lies.

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III. Believing the Lies, Living in Fear

* Internalization of past experiences and resulting beliefs:
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Introduction

In ths journey of life, we encounter moments that shape our beliefs about ourselves and the world around us. These moments can plant seeds—seeds of truth or seeds of deception—that take root in the soil of our hearts and minds. For me, these seeds of deception were sown early on, leading me down a path of self-condemnation and fear.

Reflecting on my childhood, I remember the subtle yet profound impact of parental words and actions. Little did I know then, the weight these interactions carried in shaping my self-image. The shattering experience of my parents' divorce left me grappling with a misplaced burden of blame as if my existence had caused their rift. Coupled with high expectations from authority figures, I grew up believing I could never measure up, that my best efforts were inherently inadequate.

The trauma of childhood abuse further distorted my perception of self-worth, planting insidious lies that I somehow deserved such treatment. As I stumbled through adolescence, facing challenges like depression and delayed graduation from high school, I internalized the lie of being a failure—a narrative that echoed relentlessly in my mind.

These early experiences birthed a cascade of fears—fear of success, fear of failure, fear of making decisions, and ultimately, fear of being myself. They built a stronghold in my mind, fostering a constant state of anxiety and self-doubt. Little did I realize then, this was the enemy's strategy—to ensnare me in a web of lies that would cripple my potential and suffocate my spirit.

As I ventured into adulthood, the seeds of deception blossomed into a full-blown identity crisis! Depression became a familiar companion and suicidal ideations a compelling associate, fueled by the lies I had unwittingly accepted about myself. Nearly every lie and fear I believed about myself and the direction of my life came to life in my first marriage. I found myself stripped of all that I thought I was, and too tired to care.

Rock bottom arrived swiftly, accompanied by the haunting echoes of double-mindedness and addiction. The desire for escape, even from existence itself, became palpable. Amidst physical decline and spiritual numbness, I found myself at a crossroads—a precipice between life and death.

It was here, in the depths of despair, that revelation dawned. I began to discern the difference between truth and deception, realizing that God—the embodiment of ultimate truth and perfect love—held the key to liberation. Through a journey of self-discovery and spiritual warfare, I learned to identify and dismantle the lies that had held me captive for so long.

This book is a testament to that journey—a narrative of redemption, resilience, and relentless pursuit of truth. It is my earnest hope that in sharing my story, others may find solace, encouragement, and practical tools for their own battles against accusation and fear. May we embark together on a quest for freedom—a journey toward embracing our true identities in the light of God's unyielding love and grace.

Chapter 1

**( -needs new name)**

If you took a moment to analyze and track the conversations that play out in your thoughts throughout your day, what would it say about you? What story would those thoughts tell? Would it speak of your strength, your courage and your dependency on God or would it display a narrative of doubt, fear and shame? Would the summary intrigue readers to read with a great expectation of learning what it means to rest in the joy and love of God despite all odds? Or would it give a synopsis of self hatred and constant defeat? If your thoughts were read aloud would they inspire or trigger your audience? We don’t necessarily think of our thoughts in this way. I don’t know about you, but I tend to give a lot more grace to others than I do myself, and the ways I’ve thought about myself and what I have to offer this world have not always been kind. We hear the phrase all the time, you are your own worst critic and for many of us this at some point in our lives has become a major hurdle we’ve lacked the capacity or stamina to jump over without further injury to our fragile souls that have been warped for years under venomous scrutiny.

Has life ever backed you into a corner with things completely out of your control yet you were 110% certain it was your fault? Do you blame yourself for everything or see one minor mistake as a complete failure? Are you constantly rehearsing conversations you wish went differently in your mind instead of actually communicating your thoughts, then beating yourself up for being afraid to speak your mind? When bad things happen to you or people misuse you do you automatically begin to conjure up reasons like you deserve it or you’re not worth being with or fighting for or you did something wrong? Is negative self talk and self reproach your mental default? If any of this hits you in your gut, it’s OK… Take a deep breath. I know exactly where you are and I declare you won’t be there much longer. My name is Cha’Nequa Hoskins and I am a 32-year-old creative entrepreneur who had for years wrestled with the spirit of accusation, rejection, and self-condemnation. It completely stifled the flow of God’s love and provision in my life and was a clear dagger from the enemy to abort God’s will from manifesting for me and through me. The adversary is very sneaky and cunning and I had to realize he was using “inner-me” to be my biggest enemy. This tone of accusation, self-reproach, and shame became the voice that filtered through every area of my life. It constantly caused me to believe a false narrative about myself, my life, my purpose, and my identity, as a daughter loved by the Father. When my parents got divorced in my mind, it was my fault when I was molested time and time again by an extended family member, it was my fault. When I couldn’t speak up about it, it was my fault, when I, despite my best efforts didn’t graduate high school on time, I was a failure. When I was assaulted at a subway, I believed I’d brought that upon myself. When my first marriage failed, when I lost several jobs, had to sleep in my car, had a miscarriage, or anything negative happened in my life occurred – I was a failure, I deserved it, and it was my fault. I believed this so much that when something I did or received was good, I was on eggshells waiting to be proven wrong. This mindset kept me from stepping fully into any creative space God had called me to for business or ministry as I felt like I was an impostor and feared failure. I believed this inner voice more than God and what His words said concerning me, and because of it, my momentum was stalled in every area. This quickly turned into anxiety and depression. It caused me to retreat in times that God was calling me to blaze the trail. Living with this mindset brought me to a place where I was paralyzed by fear. The traumas and failures I experienced developed resistance to decision-making and altered my ability to perceive the situations and circumstances I was encountering.

There’s nothing like the feeling of life passing you by while you’re stuck grappling between the truth and a lie. This kind of mental anguish begins to weigh on your physical body, and if you’re anything like I was, it can become so overwhelmingly loud that you’ve felt so inferior and insignificant that you perceive you’d find more solace in death then the life you’re living. You just want it all to stop!!! You want to be able to think clear positive thoughts without the intrusive, overwhelmingly critical one coming to steal and destroy the last ounce of peace you’re fighting so hard to cling to. You’re trying to figure out how in the world do you get up from this place where the voice of your enemy is so prevalent, so boisterous that you feel like you can’t find the voice of Holy Spirit anywhere.

You are not crazy and you are not alone. Let that sink in a moment… You my sister or my brother… are not crazy, you are not losing your mind, you are not defeated and you are not alone. I’ve been in this low place before, and I have journeyed with God into a new level of awareness, love and grace. Through awareness, I’ve discovered the entry points of these intrusive strongholds, and I’m now able to effectively and proactively combat them. I’ve learned to challenge the spirits of rejection, accusation and shame under the love of God and extend grace to myself when needed. I’m still a work in progress, and this voice still tries to break back in, but now I war from a completely different place mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. I was fighting from defeat and believing the lies. I was retreating from shame and fear, instead of leaning into what God has spoken and combating them. I was crippled by anxiety which led to double mindedness which led to more shame, and I was in a vicious cycle without any hope of freedom. Once I came to a place within myself where enough was enough, and I knew if I didn’t start fighting back and putting a chokehold on what was attempting to rob me of my identity, my destiny and my voice, things would not end well for me. It literally became a matter of life and death where I could literally see the direct effects of this critical venomous way of thinking on my physical health, and I refused to allow it to take me out of here prematurely. This is when I began to really sit with God and be transparent. In transparency, He began to reveal the entry points of triggers and even showed me areas I either didn’t trust Him in, or was holding resentment in my heart towards Him because I believed what I saw in the natural or what the voice of the enemy spoke over what He had declared over me. It is my prayer that this book helps you to identify the entry points of any strongholds in your mind, aids you in gaining the spiritual awareness needed to to assess yourself through the love of God and not the lens of scrutiny, learn to receive the truth and reject the lies and break free from the spirits of shame, accusation, and self reproach that are after your voice, your identity and your destiny.

 Chapter 2.

I remember the day that I lost my voice. It was traded for the belief that no one believed me and my pain was just an excuse I gave to blame someone that made me angry. I confessed something that had taken me years to tell anyone and I was told not to play with stories like that just because I was upset.

From that day, I stopped being honest about how I felt. I was always “good”. How I really felt and what I was truly experiencing didn’t matter right? There wasn’t anything anyone could do and no one would believe me anyways so why bother… Right? I was very wrong but I could not see that then. I began to wrestle, trying to find the version of myself that was a liar, or constantly cried wolf – just trying to see if I gave people a reason to disregard the things I expressed, but that person did not exist. Since I couldn’t find her I settled for believing I just wasn’t worth fighting for or listening to. I developed a fear to speak my mind or to be honest about my feelings and became increasingly critical of myself. This led to chronic internalization of all of my traumas, and anything I needed advice on. I just wouldn’t speak. I wouldn’t ask. I would just internalize it. My esteem had been crushed because I felt those that should trust, know, love, and protect me the most did not trust me, did not believe me, and worse they believed an outsider’s word above mine. This was life altering for me and it became a stronghold that bled into the fabric who I grew up to be. It shaped how I responded to the world around me. I’d been given a new lens. One that made me see myself as one not worth fighting for, as one who had to endure pain alone, as one who would always be unheard and unprotected. This took a major jab at my self-worth and caused me to be intimidated by tough conversations. I would fear that in sharing something personal and painful I would not be heard, I would be rejected, or people would not believe me. Not being believed had me fixated on finding out what it was about me that caused those close to me to dismiss my issues as if they were fabricated, even though I never found the answer I settled on blaming myself. My conclusion was simple… It was just my fault. There was just something about me that wasn’t believable.

I fell right into the trap of the enemy to scare me with shame and false accusation. Have you ever believed something about yourself even though your tangible track record in that area was clean? Can you recall a time when you had a disagreement with someone and they accused you of something and even though you certainly didn’t do what they said, how they said it was so convincing that you kept searching yourself to see if they were right-vigorously trying to find fault with yourself because of their expression of pain or anger?

Typically in situations like this the accuser is confronting something they themselves are doing and you are the person that is constantly over analyzing yourself or you’re wrongs to make them right. This can be a great quality, but unbalanced or from the wrong root it can be debilitating. You become your own unrighteous judge and in your heart, despite all of the evidence pointing to your innocence, you have a prejudice against yourself and you give yourself a life sentence while letting the convict run free. This was me.

If the enemy can keep us in condemnation we will never receive the love of God and all the beautiful things He has for our lives. We will never rise to the place where we believe we deserve anything good in our lives. We start to think that fear, rejection, shame, failure, trauma and tribulations are our only portion. The enemy uses fear and rejection as his most conniving weapons. They reinforce every false accusation, take jabs at your ideology, and make attempts to redefine your identity. The tripped out part about his scheme is that he uses us to take ourselves down. Daily we are in a fight against the self we default to in pain and tribulation, and for the one God ordained us to be before the foundations of the earth. We often block the flow of God’s blessings and favor to our lives because we refuse to show up as the vessel He created. Instead, we show up as the product of our shame, rejection and self-reproach.

We show up as the imposter. We show up as the intimidated, inferior, timid half baked versions cultivated by the enemy. I can remember a time where I literally had the worst anxiety about handling peoples money. I would not apply for a job that would possibly put me in a position to have to work at a register. This may seem silly to some, but this was such a real fear, I couldn’t even understand why it shook me so much. Eventually, I realized I had internalized all the C’, D’s and F’s I’d ever received on a math test and convinced myself I was just dumb with numbers. I stayed far away from things I could fail at. I feared failure too much to see it as a healthy challenge. A healed mind sees something new as a challenge to grow and conquer. The mind of a critical, rejected, and wounded person considers a challenge to be an attack or an opportunity for failure and cowers away remaining in a place of that stagnation crippled by fear. This kind of thinking keeps us from maturing into the strong men and women of God we’ve been called to be. How we respond in the face of challenges, adversity, conflict, lack, etc. determines how we are shaped in our minds and how we grow in character. You can’t conquer something you always run from. I did this by saying “ oh that’s just not my ministry”.

We often say this about things we perceive we are not good at and don’t get me wrong. There are definitely things we are just not called to yet, at times, this can be used as a cover for fear of failure. The voice inside that says “You failed that before” keeps you from pursuing the promise of God because it’s on the other side of intimidation.

How we respond to challenges can bring awareness to our feelings about ourselves. How do you respond to pain? How do you respond to new tasks that are intimidating? How do you respond when approached with tough conversations? How do you respond after a failure? These are all significant questions to ask yourself when journeying to heal the mind from shame, rejection, and self-reproach.

If in pain you respond to yourself with criticism like: “Why are you crying like this? Stop being weak, stop being a punk. You just can’t seem to ever pull it together. Look at you, here again”-this is not a healed mind. If when approached with a daunting task, your response is to cower and fear, constantly putting off the task for another day because you can’t find the courage to start something you have already told yourself you will fail -this is not a healed mind. If after experiencing a failure, you remain in a place of defeat never willing to try again, and do not have the capacity to analyze the situation in a positive light to draw skills and insight to grow-this is not a healed mind.

I did not have a healed mind. I constantly ran from challenges and tasks that seemed daunting and procrastinated relentlessly when given tasks I perceived I would fail at. When I experienced any level of failure I believed that I was a failure. I did not have the ability to separate the failed attempt from my identity. The most minuscule thing became a monument in my mind and I could not get away from it. I was petrified by tough conversations as I strongly felt, I would be misunderstood, unheard, or not believed. When approached with a tough conversation, I would automatically presume the worst. I would automatically believe whatever was being said was my fault that I was causing the other individual pain and this caused me to listen and respond from a place of defense.

I recall this indescribable immeasurable level of anxiety clenching me by the throat and causing my heart to beat so fast that my chest would hurt and pain would radiate down my arm causing me to fear that I would have a heart attack just from being in a disagreement with someone. All the layers of feeling like a disappointment, feeling as if my feelings weren’t valid or important, perceiving that any form of argument meant separation or that I failed or wasn’t good enough at something, and so many other lies ran rampant in my mind, causing me to completely shut down instead of communicating. I had thoughts about my thoughts that I could not utter and before the conversation fully started, I had already determined the resolution and it was never positive. Before the person could speak a sentence my mind had written a novel that was not in my favor. They were leaving because I wasn’t worth fighting for. They weren’t happy with me because I couldn’t do anything right. I was certain whatever was going to be said was about to tear my heart out and stomp on it. I braced for impacts that weren’t coming but it most cases I would never find out because I would push away or reject those I thought were about to reject me. I had this knowing deep set within me that I wasn’t good enough, I couldn’t do anything right, I wasn’t worth defending and nothing good came to me without a tremendous struggle. This was the truth that I lived in, this was my truth, but it was not The Truth.

Well my friend, if you’ve made it this far you must find some common ground with this self-condemning, shame-filled individual I once was. Another thing I know you have in common with that version of me, just because you still have this book in your hands is.… You have an overwhelming desire to break free and find the root cause of your dysfunctional, self-belittling mindset. You are eager to find out where it came from, when it began, and how on earth you got to the point where it was normal to think this way!? So normal it’s gone unnoticed for months or even years and made a tremendous impact on your overall personality and character. It was when noticing an overall theme in my thoughts and responses to people and situations that caused me to realize that I had some major healing to do. I was wounded and bleeding and didn’t even know it.

I observed some common themes in my responses. I’d become very sensitive to criticism, my self-esteem had diminished in several areas, I had a perfectionist mindset, struggled with self-acceptance, and had difficulty accepting compliments. These, I’ve come to know are all a common result of experiencing a lack of affirmation, receiving high levels of criticism, and experiencing abuse, abandonment, betrayal, or rejection. Let’s take a deeper look into how these affect our way of thinking and adjust the lens we see ourselves and the world around us through.

Chapter 3 Criticism and Affirmation

 Criticism is like nasty cough syrup. It burns a little going down, opens your system wide up, and tastes absolutely disgusting-but helps you get better faster than you would on your own. At least, this is the case in a person with a healthy thought process. Affirmation is an essential ingredient in the health of the mind and soul and when it is missing or received on a scale far less than criticism it can cause one to be more conscious of their problems and failures than their accomplishments and good qualities.

There is an abundance of science behind the effectiveness of a proper praise-to-criticism ratio the effects individuals' productivity. I am a bit of a behavioral therapy nerd and have spent a few years in the field of Applied Behavior Analysis with children on the Autism Spectrum and like disabilities. It was when starting to study to get my certification that I actually learned that the unbalance of these two in my life was a key reason why I was experiencing a lot of stagnation and developing poor thinking of myself. As humans, we are wired to desire acceptance and affirmation. They make us feel loved, and appreciated and let us know in some way shape, or form we are adding value to the world around us. Praise or affirmation is even more valuable in the presence of mistakes and shortcomings as it provides a level of encouragement that decreases the likelihood of the individual being afraid to try again. Our experiences with how our peers and authoritative figures respond to our failure or mistakes no matter how big or small play a major part in the development of either positive or negative self-talk and motivation to either try again or shy away in fear. God used this career path to shine a light on the ruts I was stuck in because I felt that the mistakes I made got more attention or bigger responses than then anything I did successfully. In return, I became hyper-focused on my mistakes or the thought of a potential one. This became more important to me than my successes, even to the point where I could barely celebrate something I did great at without minimizing it with something I should have done differently. If I made a mistake and fell short of a perfect score on something I was terrified to try again for fear that somehow the next time I would do even worse. A lack of affirmation especially in childhood can be just as crucial to the development of great mental health as over-criticism could be on poor mental health. Constantly approaching a child with intense emotions such as anger, extreme disappointment, or disgust when confronting a their mistakes without some level of assurance or affirmation can cause them to take the matter personally and instill a level of fear of being a disappointment or cause the authority figure frustration. After some time, they begin to feel in the way or like they are a failure. This though very innocent and unseemingly harmful communication is the seed that takes root in a child and as they grow and experience various trials-it grows vastly into an ugly field of insecurities, critical self-talk and anxiety.

Let’s look at an example.

Johnny is 5 years old and wants to be a big boy and pour his own milk into his cereal. He pours and is unable to keep his hand steady and drops the milk carton on the table tipping the bowl onto the floor and spilling almost the entire carton of milk. Mom or dad yells at Johnny (who should’ve come to ask for help) “What in the world are you doing?! Look at this mess! Now clean it up and get out of my kitchen!” A couple of weeks later Johnny wants cereal again and asks for help getting it. Mom or Dad says ok, you’re going to pour it-attempting to give him another chance to learn. But Johnny just remembers what happened before and that mom/dad was angry at him. He keeps begging mom/dad to do it for him for fear of it happening again.

What do you think would have happened if mom or dad's response to the mistake was one with both praise and correction? Let’s look at this example on the other side of the spectrum. Johnny spills all the milk and cereal when he’s not supposed to be in the kitchen. Mom or dad says to Johnny- were you trying to be a big boy and pour your milk all by yourself? Johnny shakes his head yes. Mom or dad says -I love that you are trying to do things on your own and I’m proud of you for being brave enough to try but are you supposed to be in the kitchen without me? Next time you want to try to do something by yourself tell me so that if you need help I can be there. Now clean up this mess and get out my kitchen (LOL). In this approach Johnny not only knows that it’s a good thing to try new things but also understands his boundaries with the kitchen and that it's best to have someone nearby for help. He knows that mom/dad is not punishing him for failing but providing guidelines that will help him accomplish what he was trying to do in the future.

 It takes a lot of grace to parent that way and I think that’s a book of its own but I wanted to highlight this as the foundation for an individual's mental health starts at home and very early on. I wanted to use this example in hopes that for some who may not know why they think like they do can begin to trace the seeds and begin to rethink the thoughts they started learning in childhood. This is where it began for me and I do not fault my parents at all. I have some of the most amazing parents on the planet! They mean the world to me and always push me to be all I can be. They simply parented me the way they knew best as all good parents do, and I had no language for what I was experiencing until it was too late.

 On the other hand, there are unfortunate cases where parents are truly aware and intentionally seeking to tear their children down with their words. Usually, this is because of their own perceived shortcomings and failures. But for the most part, I truly believe parents do this in error due to frustration and habit from how they were raised. I was blessed with parents that genuinely cared about me and were very proud of me but because I am and have always been a person who takes words to heart-I was in need of something I had no ability to communicate. I needed the affirmations and assurance to know despite my mistakes I was still good, I could ask for help, and that even in the moment while they were frustrated with whatever it was I made a mistake on-that they were still proud that I tried. I am 110% certain that if as a child I was able to communicate this need they would have jumped on it with ease, but since I had no language for what I was experiencing, I internalized it and there the seed was planted for fear of failure and I constantly replayed mistakes in my mind trying to rewrite them in my imagination.

In my early 20’s I realized I would have a lot of anxiety when critiqued on anything outside of performing. It was like I had this hyper-awareness that it was coming and such a sensitivity to it once it came that I would either completely shut down or become very defensive. If you’ve noticed that when corrected or given constructive criticism you shut down, get defensive, or have a lot of anxiety it is an indication of a lack of esteem and affirmation. I can remember just a couple of years ago the Lord speaking to me when I was in a very dark space and just coming into the knowledge of why my thinking was so poor and He said to me very clearly. Let Me affirm you. I wept and wept as I sat criss-cross apple sauce on my bed like a child at her daddy’s feet sensing this overwhelming presence of love and peace. It’s hard for any voice of fear, criticism or self-reproach to remain under the affirmation of the Father. I want to take a moment to pause and just encourage you. If you feel like you’ve made too many mistakes, or fallen too far to be redeemed, let me tell you God is not standing with a gavel in His hand waiting for you to return for punishment. He is affirming you right now. He says He loves you. He says you are fearfully and wonderfully made. He desires to love on you, pick you up, dust you off, take you by the hand, and show you the way.

 When you come to terms with the fact that you are fully loved by Him, it casts out all fear and destroys every device connected to it that’s wreaking havoc in your life.

Chapter 4-Self-esteem

There came a time when I was reflecting and realized the version of me that I remembered -the one that knew her worth and didn’t care if people did or didn’t like her was long gone and I didn’t even know when she made her grand departure!

I realized I’d gone from a place of wearing makeup because I enjoyed playing with it like an art, to not being able to leave the house without it because I felt the need to cover imperfections. I genuinely didn’t feel like I was beautiful without it. When trying to see when this changed, considering the fact that my appearance and sense of style were something I had let’s say an extremely healthy confidence in. And I did, because my dad always told me I was beautiful, and I didn’t grow up hearing anything negative concerning my appearance, always compliments. It wasn’t something I became concerned about until the one person I desired to hear it from never said it unless I was made up. Although he had to have some level of attraction to me to be with me I was convinced that he wasn’t and internalized this fear of not being pretty without makeup.

I also became aware of a change in my confidence as a singer, dancer, and actress to constantly second-guessed my artistic choices. My confidence in this area changed because I internalized my current state as a performer as a failure. I’d gone from being selected out of thousands to perform in a broadways rising star showcase in Time Square New York, and getting back to back calls from directors that wanted me to audition for big name broadway productions like Rent and the Lion King, to living back in Joliet IL with my parents working as a home health aide.

I didn’t celebrate the fact that I was considered for these roles before even fully finishing the school of arts I was attending, I could on,y hear over and over again the same speel I got at every audition. “ Your voice is amazing and that was great but your voice doesn’t match your look and it will be hard to cast you for the role we were looking for”. This was a major blow to my self-esteem. I felt like Inwas being punished for having a petite figure with a large voice. It made me feel displaced and outcast. When life made its turns and I ended up back home with my dreams of being on broadway thrown out the window I felt like I failed myself and my family and that I didn’t make it because I wasn’t up out for it. God had other plans for me but I couldn’t see it then, I only saw the failure. Because of this I continually wrestled with thoughts of not being good enough, or not feeling qualified to teach or coach when parents requested me for private lessons with their child. I did not have the mental fortitude to see this as an opportunity to grow and use my gifts to make money. I could only see it as something I had not yet qualified for and would not be good at. Who could I be to teach them if I didn’t have any major accomplishments I thought. I saw an opportunity for failure before seeing the opportunity for growth and it prevented me from stepping into a means to supplement my income. I’d pray for opportunities to make money doing what I love so that I could transition from the 9-5 life and when the opportunities presented themselves I found myself chasing another job and declining gigs for fear of failure.

 Bit by bit the enemy was eating away at my identity, my confidence, and muzzling my voice. I could remember at the age of 16 leading ministry work in my school after hours. I remember peers getting deliverance in a choir rehearsal and prophesying to people without hesitation. I remember preaching under the anointing of God at an early age and having confidence that I heard Him and was chosen by Him to be His mouthpiece in the earth. I also recall when that all came to a halt. After years of dedication to ministry and truly running hard after God, knowing my relationship with Him was solid, and being confident in the fact the Holy Spirit used me; when I made a very big decision believing that I heard God and it nearly killed me-I completely lost hope in the fact that He could use me or speak to me. I was convinced I no longer knew how to hear from God and I did not trust anything I heard in prayer. This level of low esteem crept its way between me and God and was on an assignment to demolish me. It caused me to, though I had a strong desire to remain in God's presence and speak to Him I’d be paralyzed and unable to. Low self-esteem and shame go hand and hand and if you are carrying shame it will be hard to face God. God desires that we lay down all of our guilt and shame. They are burdens too heavy for us to carry. There’s nothing we can do to cause Him to turn His face from us because He has already been made to turn His face from Jesus on the cross in our place. Low self-esteem and shame are seeking to keep you silent when the Father is longing for you to express to Him your deepest concerns. He knows your faults, He knows where you’d mess up before you do and He loves you the same. He isn’t embarrassed by you and He’s not going to beat you over the head for messing something up. God is love, love is long-suffering, love is patient and kind as the word tells us, it holds no record of wrong and agape love is unconditional.

When we rest in the love of God and allow His Holy Spirit and His Word to affirm us in the areas we are carrying shame and have low esteem by bringing them to Him, he strengthens our inner man and begins to remove the muzzle the enemy is trying to keep on us all while gathering back the fragments of our identity that have been scattered in our troubles whether they were from ugly encounters with people or messes we made ourselves. It is so important that we consider where we may have low self-esteem as it is a clear indication that we haven’t been speaking to ourselves kindly. We must address low thinking of ourselves swiftly, not allowing the thoughts to fester and take root, but instantly speaking the opposite of what we feel or perceive that does not align with the identity and quality of person God says that we are.

We become increasingly critical and our negative thoughts about ourselves begin to spiral out of control until they are so common that we don’t even notice. Low self esteem is rooted in a lack of identity and typically these individuals identify with the quality of the outcomes of their actions as opposed to who they actually are. I know…THAT WAS ME. This causes one to contantly strive to DO instead of just BEING! When your identity is found in God you are able to rest in the fact that you are His and you are loved and would be still apart from any accomplishments.

The biggest question to ask…. Who does God say that you are? I found myself asking this over and over and still occasionally have to today when faced with something that’s making me second guess my worth or abilities. WHO DOES GOD SAY THAT YOU ARE? Not your situation, not your resources, not your peers or family, not your failures or past experiences because none of that defines you. You will find liberty in knowing that the only identity you can carry that is true is the one given by God. Anything else is a lie. Living by anything else means you are living beneath your means. Ask yourself- challenge that voice of low self-esteem- who does God say that you are? What did He say you could do?-All things through Christ who gives you strength. PERIOD.

Chapter 5-The Perfectionist

This critical voice that was birthed out of my childhood, developed an obsession with perfection. I always felt I was ensnared by the conflicting apologue my thoughts and my reality would propose. It was the torment of knowing how imperfect I was, wanting to strive to be perfect, knowing that there’s no such thing as perfection outside of Christ, yet still expecting it of myself, and continually coming up short. For many, this looks like very over-the-top, overly analytical, super high-functioning organization, but for me, it didn’t look like that. I was on the opposite side of the gamut. There are those perfectionists that I refer to as the i dotting t crossing type. They would never have a hair out of place, they audit their own moves repeatedly always scanning for any error, they are extremely tidy and timely and the world has to evolve around their time-blocked schedule or they become incredibly anxious or blame themselves for poor planning. These individuals have an obsession with routines and their planning skills could put anyone else's to shame, yet they continue scanning for ways to be the most efficient in every area and aspect of their lives. These are great qualities to have, yet not at the expense of your sanity or walk with God. Leaning too far into this can cause a great deal of frustration and anxiety when routines are interrupted and life starts “life-in’ ”.

On the other hand, you have those I refer to as the turtles. Not just because of their speed but because of their constant retreating into their little shells in the face of a perceived threat. These individuals are the complete opposite of the i dotting t crossing types. The turtle type is completely crippled by fear to the point it has stunted momentum in their lives. They are overtaken by the thought that they will never be perfect. They feel everything has to be perfect, but they also are fully aware they are incapable of perfection so they just don’t move. They don’t take any steps forward even with the plan in hand. They refuse to move or progress …if it looks like they can’t be perfect at it, or get a finished product that is top tier, it is a threat and into the turtle shell they go while life continues to pass them by. These individuals spend more time planning than taking action. They will research until they are blue in the face, searching for all the probable experiences and outcomes to develop the best plan to change a habit in their lives, start a business, or do something they feel God has called them to do; but it is really just a decoy to keep putting off the actual opportunity to take any action. Instead of trying something new, this overwhelming sense of pressure to perform drains the life out of them, and they find themselves in a dark room, in bed, with a deadline approaching quickly, nothing accomplished, and no desire to try. They find themselves crushed under the weight of all of the tasks they have before them because they don’t believe they have what it takes, and they know what they produce won't be perfect even if it is the best they an do at the moment given their current resources and capailities. This was me. I was the retreating turtle. The things that came naturally to me I would do with no problem because I was certain I could be one of the best at it. I also received utmost praise for performing growing up so this was not something I could be shaken in. If I was approached with something I did not perceive myself to be good at, something that took training and didn’t come naturally to me as singing, dancing, acting, and even public speaking did, or even if I could see myself be successful at something but I didn’t have all the tools and resources needed to make it the absolute best outcome or product…I WAS NOT DOING IT! In my mind I could sense an alarm screeching: ALERT ALERT DANGER Into the turtle shell I go -uh uhnn not coming out, no ma’am no ham, not turkey. I was fine being in my little shell but always had that inner pull of the Holy Spirit constantly trying to get me back out and on my feet again.

The tug of war I felt between my spirit and my mind at times became unbearable and would send me into bouts of depression as I felt I was failing God, myself, and my family because of my inability to get a grip on these fears. I was a starter but because I couldn’t make things perfect, I was not a finisher and that hurt to realize. It hurt to see this pattern and not have the willpower to fight it. I felt that when I did fight it things went very wrong and that just reinforced my fears of failure. The enemy had been watching me like a hawk, monitoring how I navigated in order to keep me stagnant by using my own thoughts. I could see myself as this individual who was very disciplined, managed time and stewarded life well. I could see myself being an individual that was on her “p’s and q’s” s to speak, not running from confrontation, not procrastinating because of fear, finishing things I started, being a person of consistency in my walk with God, in ministry, in business…etc. I could see this version of me with high esteem, polished and determined. This was not some calculated vision based upon what I’d seen in the lives of others but I’d seen a glimpse of this version of me when I was living in New York and attending a school of arts. I rose earlier than necessary to prepare for the day, delegated my time well enough to practice more hours than most and still balance it with self-care. I had an amazing relationship with God and despite the fact that 80% of my day was time blocked with classes, rehearsals, and ministry things I always made time to sit with God. I crossed my t’s and dotted my eyes but still had balance and I was advancing in every area of my life. Until that all changed with a job loss that sent me back home to Illinois. I honestly believe I became afraid of becoming that version of me again. Reaching a place of success and seeing great fruit from it and being unable to sustain it can be crushing and I didn't believe I could handle it again. That is one wild thing about fear; you can get to a place where you fear success. A mind full of self-doubt and criticism will talk you out of success by telling you once you do become “that person” you won't be able to maintain it. This fear of failure will say if I can’t maintain this level of perfection it would be best if I didn't start, as having a great accomplishment and not being able to see it through to its finish would be a greater embarrassment and shame you just can’t bear the weight of.

If you are here I get it. You may be terrified to succeed, or fear the need to sustain some level of perfection, or worse do something better the next time. I would be crippled in fear, cower away, and retreat into my little turtle shell. I would decide that it just “wasn’t God’s timing for me yet”. Another common cover-up for fear of failure. Do you have perfectionist tendencies? Do you put off doing tasks if you don’t feel that you have the resources to complete your goal? Do you get debilitatingly frustrated and anxious when things don’t go according to your plans, and routines, or feel outside of your control? When people compliment you on your efforts or you achieve something do you without though make comments that belittle that achievement and only acknowledge what you wish you could have done better? This is merely a branch off the tree in the mind rooted in self-criticism.

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By now I’m sure you’ve found something here that rings true for you. You may have even discovered some mindsets and triggers you were not previously aware of. I believe it is key when journeying into healing to first get the scales removed from our eyes. You can not be delivered in denial and God can’t heal the version of you you’re pretending to be. It is the strategy of the enemy to keep us deceived and fighting a war against ourslves that we blame on our encounters and inabilities. He wants us to remain blind and fearful. Without vision we perish and without faith it is impossible to please God. If he can achieve his goal to invad our thought life with critical, demeaning thoughts about ourselves he has successfully stalled our momentum and built a dam between us and the flow of Gods provision, love, and peace in our lives. In this next chapter we will unveil the tactics of the enemy that keep us in self-doubt, self-critism, shame, and self-condemnation.

Chapter 6: Believing the lies. Living in Fear

There are 3 main things we as believers are familiar with that the enemy comes to do: steal, kill, and destroy. The Word tells us that though this is the enemy's goal, Jesus came that we may have life and experience it in abundance-John 10:10. This abundance is often equated to financial well-being and worldly desires. Still, my friend, it is far greater than any of that. God is a God of wholeness. He values each and every part of our lives. His greatest desire is that we prosper and be in good health even as our souls prosper-3 John 1:2. This prosperity refers to our total self: mind, body, soul, spirit, and even our tangible needs that He’s promised to provide according to His riches in Glory. One of the greatest weapons the enemy uses against believrs is fear. Fear goes hand in hand with this self critical mindset you are dealing with. It is actually one of the root causes that shapes a condemning or self-critical mindset.

-Talk about how my marriage caused me to believe lies about myself

-how i lost trust that I heard God about anything because this relationship nearly killed me and I was just certain God wanted me to marry him.

-Talk about how I fought to regain that trust and fight fear of hearing God

-Talk about how I partnered with HS to silence the voice of fear and condemnation and begin to minister again.

-Give practical examples of how someone can do this after what appears to be a major fail.

Chapter 7: Sick and Believing it’s My Fault

Have you ever felt as if all you were experiencing in your physical body, and all you were faced with in life , was a reflection of your failure to be or do something? I don’t know about you but when it comes to the body and mental health, I’m a bit of a nerd. I’ve always had a strong interest in behavioral and mental health and how it directly affects our physical health. I’ve always enjoyed learning about the anatomy of the brain and what parts cause different things to function in the body and how diet, mental health and physical activity impacts the sustainability of our health. I have a love for lookng at “the whole person” and identifying where trauma may be sitting in the body causing pain and affliction because I could pin point these things early on in my life. I was young and honestly thought I was just a bit looney until research I found supported the arguments in my mind. This only increased my fascination and desires to help people experience total healing. This isn’t necissarily a bad thing, but we all know the saying “when you know better, you do better”. Well, with a self critical mind that phrase can be detrimental.

 It’s hard to justify where you are when you’re experiencing physical and mental challenges that should be easy to resolve because you’ve done your due diligence, and know the ins and out of “root causes”. You uderstand and are aware of all your triggers, and attempt to be as proactive as possible to take care of your body, mind and spirit. You are the one everyone comes to for diet and health advise, you know the best natural remedies to stay healthy, you’re the one everyone calls for counsel because they are use to you getting under all the fluff and garbage and getting to theg core of the issue. What happens when all you know to do, the same advise you’ve seen cause those you’ve mentored or counseled to breakthrough and flourish doesn’t seen to work for you?

It can get tough looking at the state of your mental or pysicall health during crisis when you a=have been known to be a person that always has an answer. A self critical mindset will cause you to constantly spiral between thoughts of what you know, what you do, don’t do, and don’t know. It will keep you in this viscous cycle of dependency on yourself instead of total dependance on the Holy Spirit, leaving you crushed under the weight of failed attempts at breakthroughs for things that have been proven to work. When you have the logic down pat, the science backed proof that you have done absolutely done the necessary things to walk in wholeness, mentally and physically-then you begin to see yourself as the problem yet again. The thought “it worked for everyone else but me”, or “what’s wrong with me” invade your thoughts and you begin to toggle nack and fort between researching another answer and feeling defeated because it’s probably your fault. You war within yourself tryg to figure out where you went wrong. You go through your check list physically, spiritually, and emotionally trying to analyze the data of your own life. Am I walkin in unforiveness, did I sin and not repent, does my family have unrepented sins, am I being punished for something, am I supposed t be learning something from this, what am I missing, am I resting enough, am I resting to much, do I need to try a different diet, am I eating to much, am I not eating enough, am I connected to the wrong people, I probably misheard God, am I bringing this on myself!?

Sound familiar? You become convinced that somewhere somehow the condition you are in is your fault because… you know better.

 Maybe this has been you, maybe you are spirialing; wondering what you should or shouldn’t do; concerned about doing to much or not enough. This mindset can cause great affliction in our bodies. I experienced itfirst hand. There’s a book called “The Body Keeps Score” and indeed it does. Looking back I can clearly pinpoint shift for the worse in my health and their direct coralation with specific trauma’s in my life.

I started dealing with issues with my voice and couldn’t manage my weight starting in high school right after revealing to family that I had been abused but not really feeling heard about it. It got sick constantly because of the stress my body was carrying in an unhealthy marriage. Something was seriously wrong but the doctors couldn’t figure me out. My body took another serious deline after loosing my granny and another after losing my first child. Once I realized the pattern my first thought was not to seek help, my first thought was that I did this to myself. I did work through my pain well enough, I internallized things to much, I did this to myself.

 When the Lord slowed me down and told me I need to learn to give myself grace I prayed He’d send me help. I knew I needed a therapist, a christian therapist that would understand the pressures of life from a spiritual perspective. I wasn’t in the position to afford one but Lord sent one my way. I had joined a new church, after a really ugly transition from my previou minstry that made me anxious about my decision-afraid to screw my life up anymore than I already felt I had. The first thing that happened there, was a women walked up to me who didn’t even know me and she said “the Lord told me to be your therapist-free of charge”. This blessed me two fold. It was confirmation that in all the mess I felt like I made the right decision and it opened a door for healing to begin.

 I put in the work in therapy and it was not easy but it was extemel liberating and I would strongly suggest every believer see a christian therapist even if you feel all is well in your life. I was given some great tools to dismantle mindsets that were keeping me from receiving breakthroughs in m relationships and in life, that in turn made a great benefit on my health.

I am yet still on my journey to wholeness, and though I still experience challenges in my health God has led me to a place where I am not walking in shame with my head held down blaming myself. I came to understand that a root in self-condensation an being overly critical of myself was a very sneaky form of a toxic combo. Fear and Pride. I had a saying engraved in my soul that I heard as a child “Everything in your life is a result of your thoughts and words” Tough this holds truth-those with critical minds take this to an extreme as I did. So much of an extreme that you become fearful to speak on fears to anyone, you know because the word says what you fear can come upon you and as you think you are right? Pride and fear will cause you to make YOU the center of absolutely everything and become the sword you raise against yourself. Internalizing fears that were created by the enemy twisting the truth. I became sick because I was afraid that my words either wouldn’t be heard or would bring to life what I was terrified of. Either way, the results would be my fault and I ad to control the outcome.

We have to remember that God is in control. We have to be willing to relinquish control to the Holy Spirit and trust that our lives- our mind, body, and soul arre in His fully capable hands. When we are insecure and constantly condemning ourselves it is an indication that our trust, reliance, or total dependence is in our own strength, our own abilities, capabilities, and knowledge and must be sustained by our own means. We may say with our mouths that we trust God and we are leaning on Him but when we find ourselves on Google more than in our Bibles, researching “How To” videos more than asking Holy Spirit How to, we’ve made our fear our motivation and we are walking in pride.

The Lord showed be that I needed to humble myself and ruly seek him first. He showed me that I was taking my life into my own hands because of fear. Fear to remain ill, fear of the pressures felt concerning breaking this curse off my family, fear of not just staying sick but knowing if I didn’t beat it my children would face it…I put pressure on myself that God never called me to carry. You may be putting pressure on yourself that God has not called you to carry. In order for us to receive freedom we must daily remind ourselves of the finished work of the cross. Jesus loved us enough to die for us. He loved us enough to bear our infirmities on that cursed tree. We must know that when we take matters into our own hands and allow self condemnation to change our position we move from the place of grace and protection as we operate in our own strength.

When you are partnering with the Holy Spirit concerning your health don’t allow the enemy to use accusing and condemning thoughts to bring you shame. It may be your assignment to break the curse of infirmity off of your family but it is not your power but Gods you have to rely on. There is nothing wrong with keeping up with what research says about the condition you’ve been diagnosed with so that you know that you are eating what's best for your body or working out in a way that is beneficial and not detrimental to your health. Yet it is harmful to your health to follow these things blindly and put all your hope and trust in the latest research. Holy Spirit is All Knowing and God made you. He knows your body better than any doctor. Now don’t get me wrong, I’m not speaking against doctors. They're given by God. But they are not to be idolized as our healers. I experienced more healing listening to the unction of the Holy Spirit telling me, eat this, don’t eat this, rest now, change how you exercise, etc. He walked me through a season where I realized that even though I couldn’t physically do what I was used to doing isn’t mean that what I could do was any less effective nor did it decrease my value as a person and that is what I want you to know.

Life happens but we choose whether it happens to us or for us, we choose whether we walk through the fire with the Lord or we stay on the outskirts crippled by fear. We can choose to embrace the love of God that will always focus our attention on His strengths and how it’s made perfect in our weaknesses and that in itself frees us from the mindset that says we have to save ourselves. Your body may not be well, you may be experiencing affliction in your body, it is not your fault. Choose to find od in it. Choose to grow through it. Choose to rely on Him more than yourself, your knowledge, or anything! Choose to be free from fear and pride! Wholeness IS your portion. God doesn’t choose favorites. Healing is for you too. It’s a gift given freely because of love. My friend, you don't have to put sweat equity into it, it was yours before you were born.