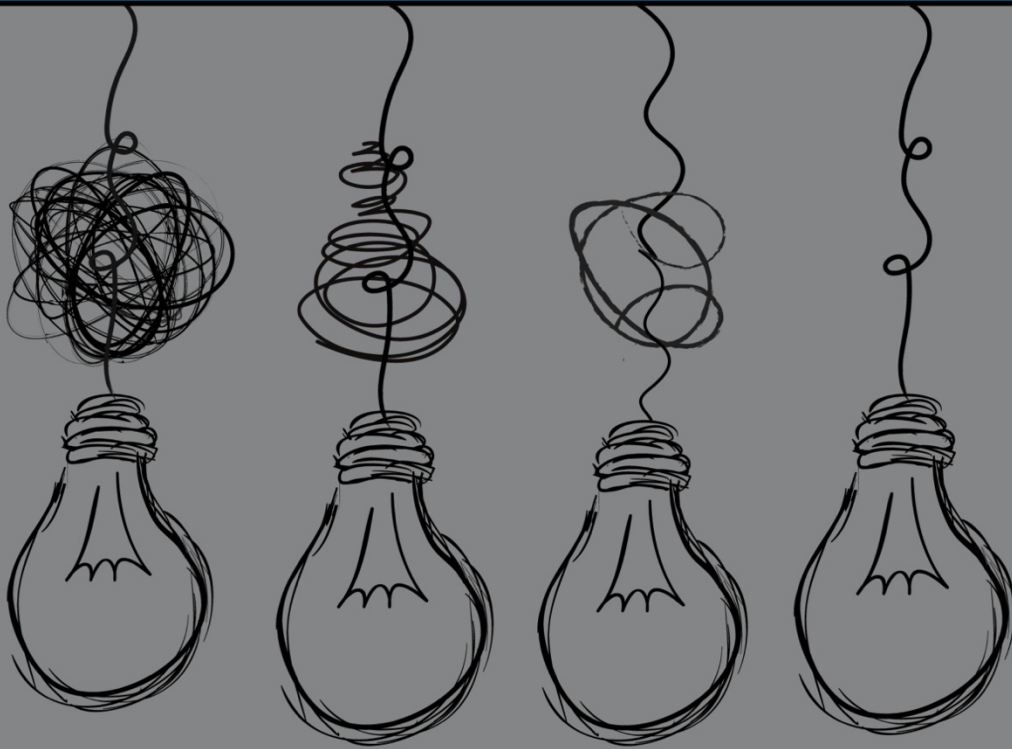


unravel



Make Peace With Your Past,
Learn to See Yourself as God Does
& Create a Life of Purpose



Melissa Lloyd, M.A., BCMMHC

unravel

**Make Peace with Your Past,
Learn to See Yourself as God Does
& Create a Life of Purpose**

Copyright Protected Manuscript

Melissa Lloyd, M.A., BCMMHC

Unravel
All Rights Reserved.
Copyright © 2021 Melissa Lloyd
v1.0

The opinions expressed in this manuscript are solely the opinions of the author and do not represent the opinions or thoughts of the publisher. The author has represented and warranted full ownership and/or legal right to publish all the materials in this book.

This book may not be reproduced, transmitted, or stored in whole or in part by any means, including graphic, electronic, or mechanical without the express written consent of the publisher except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

ISBN: 978-1-9772-4238-9

Cover Photo © 2021 Melissa Lloyd

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Copyright Protected Manuscript

For my brother Chris, with love.

Copyright Protected Manuscript

”

UNRAVEL

un·rav·el

[uhn-rav-uhl]

verb

- to take apart; undo; destroy
- to separate or disentangle
- to free from complication or difficulty
- make plain or clear
- to solve

un·rav·el, un·rav·eled, un·rav·el·ing

“

Table of Contents



Giving Thanks	i
Crisis Phone Number Directory	ii
Getting Started	iii
Part I: Leaving the Wilderness – Journey Preparation	
Exodus Recap	2
Mile 1: Digging Ditches	4
Mile 2: Your Garage is Full	9
Part II: Exaggerated Giants – What’s Keeping You Stuck in the Wilderness	
Rest Stop ONE	14
Mile 3: Shame & Self-Loathing	18
Mile 4: Fear & Friends	26
Mile 5: Guilt Comes in Two Flavors	31
Mile 6: Anger is a YOU Problem	35
Mile 7: Trippin’ on Pride	40
Rest Stop TWO	48
Part III: Egypt – A Place to Learn: Ages 0-17	
Mile 8: Abuse Doesn’t Define You	50
Mile 9: Sex is a Big Deal	57
Mile 10: Your Inner Child	65
Mile 11: Understanding Your Mother Wounds	69
Mile 12: Understanding Your Father Wounds	77
<i>Making Camp: Mapping the Peaks & Unpacking the Valleys: Ages 0-17</i>	88
Part IV: Wilderness – A Place for Testing & Development: Ages 18-present	
Mile 13: A Careful Exploration of Your Emotional Health	105
Mile 14: Sacred Space & Circles of Influence	109
Mile 15: Settling for Counterfeit Comfort	117
<i>Making Camp: Mapping the Peaks & Unpacking the Valleys: The Adult Years</i>	123

Part V: Slaying Giants – You Need More Than a Slingshot

Mile 16: Using Your V.O.I.C.E to Back-Talk Shame	142
Mile 17: Fear’s Kryptonite	156
Mile 18: Separating Out Your Guilt	168
Mile 19: Dealing with Your Guilt by Making Things Right	179
Mile 20: Anger is a Choice	186
Mile 21: Disarming Anger with Forgiveness & Acceptance	191
Mile 22: Disarming Anger with Boundaries	196
Mile 23: UNlearning UNhealthy Love After Abuse	203
Mile 24: Cutting the Cord on Sexual Sin	213
Mile 25: Humility is a Superpower	218

Part VI: The Promised Land: A Place of New Beginnings & Blessings

Promised Land Life	225
Mile 26.1: Saying Grace	226
Mile 26.2: Reframing Your Story	232
Conclusion: Living with Purpose	239
Notes	244

Copyright Protected Manuscript

Giving Thanks

Zachary, Joshua, Madeline—thank you for making me a mom and showing me a depth of love on this side of heaven that I could never quantify. Being your mom is *the* joy of my life. Each of you teaches me something about love and makes me a better person. I love you so very much.

Bill—thank you for being on the journey with me. We’ve had our highs and lows, but God has healed us in ways that didn’t seem possible. Thank you for encouraging me, seeing something in me that I didn’t always see in myself, and having a genuine, unselfish desire to help me achieve my dreams and live my calling. I couldn’t ask for a better partner. I love you very much.

Bethany Reese-Guerra—thank you for helping me dream bigger! Thank you for dinners where we share our hearts, laugh till it hurts, and eat carbs without guilt. Your friendship, encouragement, and insight mean so much to me.

Mom & Dad—thank you for taking me to church every week and setting the example of using your gifts and your time to give back to others. I love you both.

Dr. Yolanda Lopez—thank you for your tireless efforts, your overflowing grace, and your wisdom that has helped me see clearly countless times. Your impact on my life is immeasurable, and I pray that God blesses you richly.

To all the others who helped me through my journey of healing... thank you.

Crisis Phone Number Directory

National
Suicide Hotline:
1-800-273-8255

National
Abuse Hotline:
1-800-799-7233

National Child
Abuse Hotline:
1-800-422-4453

Text HOME to
741741 to reach
a Crisis
Counselor.
Free 24/7
Support.

Rape and Incest
National Network
(RAINN) Crisis
Hotline:
1-800-656-4673

National
Substance
Abuse & Mental
Health Services:
1-800-662-4357

If you need crisis assistance, a trained mental health professional will answer the phone numbers above any time of the day or night.



This book is not meant to replace professional counseling or medications prescribed by a licensed physician to treat diagnosed mental health issues. The content in this book is meant to enhance the care you may be receiving from a licensed professional.

The hotline numbers listed above are subject to change without notice and are not affiliated or endorsed by Melissa Lloyd. Services provided by these organizations are at their sole discretion and outside the purview of Melissa Lloyd. The phone numbers provided are meant to provide a resource for help in a crisis situation only.

Getting Started

Unravel. If you've watched the movie *Christmas Vacation* with Chevy Chase, you might remember the Christmas lights scene. After all the grandparents arrive, Clark is outside putting lights on the house to create this magical Christmas for his family and avoid the chaos brewing inside. Russ, Clark's son, comes out of the garage with this string of lights with a knot in it the size of a beach ball. Undeterred by this massive ball of tangled wires and bulbs, he goes to work on the knot that must be unraveled before he can create the "old-fashion Christmas" that he is determined to have. To unravel something is to take it apart, untangle it, make sense of it, simplify it, and solve it. Your past requires unraveling so that your present and your future can be everything you want them to be—so your little bulbs will twinkle.

”

If you want a changed life, you will have to **work** for it.

- Make a daily commitment to do the work
- Be completely honest with yourself and God
- Allow yourself to be open and vulnerable to the feelings you've buried
- Write down everything that comes to your mind as you work
- Cry the tears and grieve what you've lost, what changed, or what ended
- Admit your mistakes and shortcomings
- Answer all of the questions in the book
- Question the events/thoughts that have caused you pain

“

This process requires you to write. You don't need to be able to write poetry or novels. Your spelling doesn't need to be perfect. Your handwriting doesn't need to be legible to anyone but you. It's okay to erase or scribble out things, write in the margins, highlight, underline, or anything else you need to do. This is your book, your unique journey, and there is no normal, right, or perfect way of completing this book. But writing is a key to healing. Write in full sentences or write using bullets. Just write! Moving things from inside your head onto paper is the first step in getting the darkness, the pain, and the "guck" out of you; getting the "guck" out is the goal, by the way. Getting the unhealthy stuff out so that it can be replaced with healthy stuff is what will change your life. **You may need more space to write than what is offered in this book. I encourage you to use a notebook or journal to answer the questions.** Don't leave details out. In fact, the details you are tempted to leave out are the details that you need to put under the microscope. **You will also need a Bible or a free Bible app for your phone or tablet.** I recommend the NIV or the ESV versions for ease of reading and clarity. Additional copies of parts of this book are available for free at www.melissalloyd.org.

This journey is best completed with a small group of trusted and committed individuals. Women sharing with women and men sharing with men has proven to be the best method of safely and openly talking about issues that affect men and women differently. Going on this journey requires safety and strict confidentiality. Your group will need to commit to this before you start. There is power in speaking that which you have kept

locked up and hidden. No matter how deep you bury your pain, it will have an effect on you, holding you back from the person you want to be and all that God has for you. A group setting will help to hold you accountable to see this book through to the end.

For most, not all wounds are self-inflicted. Other people may have wounded you, but now you have an opportunity to take control of your story and write the next chapters of your life. This will require you to view the events of your life through a different lens. A lens of discovery, honesty, and responsibility. The only control you have in this life is over yourself. With that in mind, the focus will be on how you're feeling, what you're thinking, how you're acting, etc.

In my years of experience working with hurting people, I've seen individuals unsure of why they needed help with their past or how it would help with their life now, moving forward and trusting God's prompting. The decision to move forward became clear when the pain of their past surfaced and illuminated the mess it was making in the present. Others started this journey with the mindset of "if this doesn't help, I am ending my life,"

but they pushed through the challenging moments to find peace and a desire to not just live, but live big. Others started this process because the rug was pulled out from under them unexpectedly due to a divorce, death, or something else outside of their control, and found the life and purpose that God had for them in spite of their circumstances. Even more began this journey hoping to save their marriage and not have to sign the divorce papers only to figure out that cleaning up their individual mess

breathed life and reconciliation into their relationship. Many walked down this path to find their joy, their true self, their purpose, and their definition of the good life. The longer they stayed on the path, the more people kept asking, "What is different about you? You seem much lighter and happier."

I know this may be a scary step, and you may feel overwhelmed right now. I won't sugarcoat it: This is hard! It is emotionally draining to confront the past that you'd rather forget. It takes work to unravel the knots and the mess they've made in your life. It's time to take responsibility for your life and do something about the dysfunction. Stop blaming your knots on other people, or trying to give them to other people to untangle, or passing your mess down to your children.

What you put into this journey is what you will get out of it. You are worth the time and effort, so be honest and dig deep. Life is messy and you should expect healing to be messy too. You are stronger than you give yourself credit for, and you *can* complete this journey. Your survival rate for rough days is 100 percent; you may be bruised and battered, but you are still standing nonetheless.

The weapons we use to deal with our pain in one season of life may not work in another season, which may require us to utilize different weapons to take back what belongs to us: *freedom*. Jesus died to save us from everything that holds us down and holds us back.

Everything that you are about to study has been my passion (read: obsession) since 2015. By nature, I am a perpetual student with stacks of books surrounding me in my office that I can't read fast enough before I accumulate more. I don't collect shoes or purses, although I like both. I collect knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. Getting paid to study might be my ideal job. My happy place is in the chair in my office, with an iced coffee, covered in my cozy blanket, sitting quietly with a Bible study, asking God to impress upon my heart His truth. I have spent countless hours reading about every subject in this book, studying the concepts within myself and others, and going in-depth to understand how God created us to live, think, and thrive. Researching these topics from all sides and dissecting them has led me to understanding them in ways that changed my life and the lives of many others! I've walked with numerous people as they traversed the rocky path of these lessons, given countless lectures on these topics, led groups, coached leaders, and worked one-on-one with weary people. The lessons you will go through have been battle-tested by myself and the hundreds of others who I have guided on this journey.

Never underestimate the storehouses of blessings that God has, and the plan that He designed just for you that will change your life and the lives of others for good. While working in a small group is the ideal method,

”

Your comfort is going to be challenged and you will be tempted to say “this is too hard,” but that is just fear trying to push you down like the school yard bully he is.

“

I have written this book in such a way that I believe you can work through it with only you and God. Again, I recommend the small, intimate group setting, but I believe in the power of God to use whatever circumstances to bring healing into your life to change you and your family for generations to come.

Speaking of Jesus. Can we be real for a moment? Some of you are not sure about God or Jesus. You wonder where He was when you were being hurt. You wonder if He is really up there and if your name is one that He knows or even cares about. For some, your view of God is that of a distant, disappointed, angry, and forbidding Father who is impossible to please and requires you to earn His love. I get it. I really do. I have had those same thoughts. But can I encourage you to give God a chance? Each section of this journey will ask you to read or write out a bit of scripture. Please don't skip this just because you aren't sure about God. Allow Him the opportunity to convince you that He *loves you, is for you, wants to heal you, is safe, and most of all is trustworthy.*

One final thought. I don't know what your background is regarding church or religion. I don't know what your experience has been with Christians. What I do know is that there are all kinds of wounded people and misguided institutions that have imposed judgement and poured out condemnation on people. Maybe this has been your experience and the whole thing has left a bad taste in your mouth. I get it – I really do. On behalf of the people and institutions that didn't reflect Jesus and *His church*, I am sorry. I want you to know that nothing in this book is meant to judge or condemn you. I wrote this book because my heart's desire is for you to live without the junk that weighs you down, to know your true identity in Christ, and to know who God really is and how much He loves and adores you.

No matter what your life looks like right now, no matter how messy...Jesus can take all the pain, disappointment, and mistakes you've made and use them to make you shine. Nothing that has happened to you or that you've done disqualifies you from God's grace. Before you start, I praise Him in advance for the healing you are about to receive! God is good!

Copyright Protected Manuscript

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "M".

”

Courage doesn't
happen when you
have all the answers.
It happens when you
are ready to face the
questions you have
been avoiding your
whole life.

Shannon L. Alder

“

Part I
Leaving the Desert

”

JOURNEY PREPARATION

jour·ney
[jur-nee]
noun

traveling from one place to
another

prep·a·ra·tion
[prep-uh-rey-shuhn]
noun

to get ready
to prepare

“

THE LORD YOUR GOD HAS BLESSED
YOU IN ALL THE WORK OF YOUR
HANDS. HE HAS WATCHED OVER
YOUR JOURNEY THROUGH THIS
VAST WILDERNESS. THESE FORTY
YEARS THE LORD YOUR GOD HAS
BEEN WITH YOU, AND YOU HAVE
NOT LACKED ANYTHING.
DEUTERONOMY 2:7 NIV

Exodus Recap

The story below illustrates the battle everyone fights to live the better life they desire. What seems like ancient history is a modern and applicable story that serves as a guide to help us on our path to healing. The people in this story, the Israelites, faced relatable obstacles and experiences not unlike the ones we face today. Their story is relevant to our healing.

Exodus Recap: From the books of Exodus, Numbers, and Joshua

The Israelites (Hebrews), during the time of Jacob and his son Joseph, went to Egypt to escape a famine in their country. During this time, they were welcomed by the pharaoh and the people of Egypt and lived in the land freely. After a period of about thirty years, a new pharaoh took over who didn't have the same generosity and kindness toward the foreigners in his land. He enslaved the Israelites, using them as his workforce. This enslavement was harsh and the Hebrews were treated poorly. For 400 years the Israelites were slaves to multiple pharaohs until God sent Moses to free them from the tyranny they had endured. The pharaoh at the time was an especially harsh ruler, but he was no match for God. Eventually, Moses marched out of Egypt with 600,000 Israelite men plus an unknown number of women and children (Exodus 12:37, NIV).

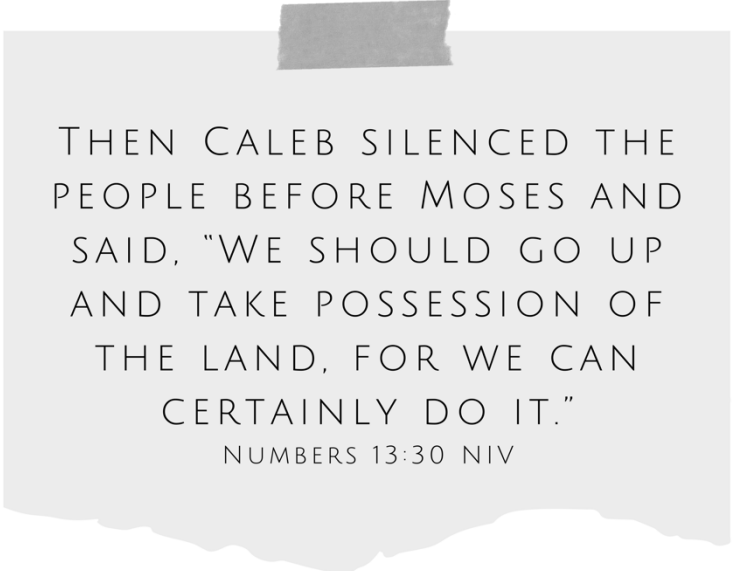
Their destination was the Promised Land, the land of Canaan, which was said to be fertile and flowing with milk and honey. Generational enslavement had weakened the Israelites. Slavery was all they knew. They had no concept of freedom and had never dreamed of living as free people. Their parents and grandparents were slaves, and they believed that their children and grandchildren would be slaves. Hope had run out. They were run down by life physically, mentally, and emotionally. Their faith was depleted, and they had surrendered to the pain of their circumstances. Can you relate?

The shortest route to the Promised Land from Egypt would have them follow the seashore, but require them to fight the Philistines, who were great warriors. Knowing the fragile state that the Israelites were in, and the unlikelihood of them winning against the Philistine army, God took them the long way through the wilderness. The journey was not easy, and the Israelites mumbled, grumbled, acted out, and were defiant and difficult the entire time. While God knew the messiness of their hearts, minds, and souls, He patiently led, fed, and provided for them. Their rebellious behavior and attitude kept them wandering aimlessly in the wilderness much longer than what was required.

“They saw
“undefeatable”
giants, and
wanted to quit
before they
even started.”

Finally, an opportunity to walk into the land that God had promised to them was theirs for the taking, and Moses sent twelve men into the land of Canaan to spy out the inhabitants and see if the land was as good as advertised. The spies spent forty days there and after they had seen everything they needed to see, they came back to report to Moses and the Israelites. Ten of the twelve spies were overcome with fear about the people they saw in the land. When they got back to Moses, they told him that they saw “undefeatable” giants and they should quit before they even started. Joshua and Caleb, the two remaining spies, felt differently and knew that God would help them defeat the giants and give them the land He promised.

God rewarded Joshua and Caleb’s faith by vowing they would enter the Promised Land after a period



THEN CALEB SILENCED THE
PEOPLE BEFORE MOSES AND
SAID, “WE SHOULD GO UP
AND TAKE POSSESSION OF
THE LAND, FOR WE CAN
CERTAINLY DO IT.”

NUMBERS 13:30 NIV

of forty years. The Israelites’ unbelief cost them God’s blessings. After the waiting period was over, Joshua and Caleb fought numerous battles to claim the land and the freedom that God set aside for them. Each battle they fought was a testament to God never leaving their side and ensuring their victory. Joshua and Caleb didn’t always know how the battle would be won, but they clung to their faith (even if all they had was a little) and chose obedience. The more they fought, the bigger God got, and the smaller those giants became. Joshua and Caleb proved that a little bit of faith plus obedience to God equals a blessing of epic proportions. Unraveling the giants resulted in freedom, open spaces, fertile ground, blessings, and living instead of merely existing.

God gives His people a life to *live*. *Really live*. Not just exist or make it through but live to the fullest. He wants to go on a grand adventure with you on this side of heaven. Existing is wilderness living. Day to day just trying to survive as you search for relief. Truly living is the kind of life that makes you jump out of bed in the morning! Promised Land living ignites passion, excitement, joy, and gratitude. Are you stuck in the wilderness? The journey starts now...

Mile One

Digging Ditches

Scripture Focus: Luke 5:1-11

My story. I grew up in a small, farming town smack-dab in the middle of Kansas. My parents were never rich; in fact, we probably vacillated between middle class and poor depending on the year. Church was a five-minute drive, maybe six minutes if traffic was “crazy,” and I was a faithful Southern Baptist girl who never missed a week. If the church doors were open, I was probably there. I especially loved spending time with my grandparents. My grandmother is the definition of optimism and gratitude, and her smile does something to my heart that can’t be described with words. My grandfather modeled integrity, patience, and hard work. He taught me many skills, but some of the best “little girl” moments were stopping by to see him at his business. He would see me, smile, and invite me into the best hugs. I adored him—still do.

While there was good in my story, there was also adversity. Behind the closed doors of our house were secrets that caused wounds that festered and infected all the days that would be laid out in front of me for the next thirty years. My *secrets-and-all* story consists of abuse, betrayal, a failed first marriage, a struggling second marriage, a distorted sense of God, and more faulty coping mechanisms than I can count. I lost my sense of self. Scars from wounds of my past played over and over in my mind, and they were wreaking havoc in my life.



”

As long as you keep secrets and suppress information, you are fundamentally at war with yourself...The critical issue is allowing yourself to know what you know. That takes an enormous amount of courage.

— Bessel A. van der Kolk

“

As an adult, I spent years trying to hold my life, my marriage, and my family together, but it wasn’t working. Ways of coping that were effective as a kid or when I was in my twenties strangled me in my thirties and forties. Tightening my grip on the illusion of control I thought I had in my life proved to be an exercise in futility. The harder I tried, the more unhappy I became. My failings only added to my pain and frustration. Life

wasn't what I thought it would be like. I thought my childhood years were over, but now I know they followed me into my adult years like a relentless shadow I couldn't escape. I was disappointed and wondered if this was all life was ever going to be... painful, messy, and difficult.

In the summer of 2015, I was at a low point in my life, sitting in a church service listening to the morning announcements about upcoming events and classes. That summer had been especially hard and I was worn down to what felt like faded threads. I lacked ideas on how to fix myself, my husband, or my family. As I sat through the church service, I couldn't stop thinking about this class that offered the holy grail of hope. Since I was fresh out of hope, this group felt like something that couldn't hurt.

1. What in your life is not working?

The Israelites were also at a low point when they sought out the help of Elisha, one of the great prophets of Israel. In 2 Kings 3, Elisha had taken over the prophet-and-miracle mantle from his predecessor, Elijah. Israel had found itself in a conflict with the Moabites. Fearing this conflict, King Joram of Israel joined forces with King Jehoshaphat of Judah and the king of Edom to defeat the Moabites. But problems arose when the armies ran out of water to drink for both themselves and their animals in the hot desert. King Joram looked for some divine intervention, not because he was a particularly godly man, but because he was in a life-or-death situation. King Jehoshaphat recalled a guy named Elisha and recommended they pay him a visit to see if he could fix their issue. All three kings showed up in kingly style to see Elisha, who was not impressed with them or their issues, but agreed to help because he had a bit of respect for King Jehoshaphat.

Elisha began his work with the three kings by requesting some light harp music to set the tone for his conversation with God.

True story.

Is it me, or does it seem like Elisha is messing with them to see how serious they are about getting God's help?

The kings complied. Elisha got his music and talked with God about the royal trio and their water problem. When Elisha returned and relayed God's message that they would defeat the Moabites and He would bring the rain to meet their needs, the kings were overjoyed... until Elisha shared what they must do before the rain would fall.

2. How do you want your life to change?

Elisha told the kings that if they wanted the rain, they'd have to dig ditches throughout the valley (2 Kings 3:16). God would send the rain, but how much water they got would depend on how many ditches they dug and how deep those ditches were. These men were sweaty and covered in dirt from the dry, dusty landscape, and thirsty from going days without water, while fighting exhausting battles over many miles. Being told they would have to dig ditches to get the rain they desperately needed was no small ask. In their weakened and weary state, their need for rain outweighed their deteriorated physical and emotional condition, so they picked up shovels and started digging. Rain to quench their thirst. Rain to wash the dust out of their eyes and the soot out of their mouths. Rain to clean out their wounds. Rain that would reveal God. Rain that would give them hope. Rain that would save their lives.

Some of these men had to question if the ditch-digging would be worth it or would all the work be for nothing. It's hard to have hope when the dark cloud of disappointment looms overhead. But they pushed past

the dark thoughts and dug all night to comply with their instructions. *All night*. They had to dig through the dark to get to the rain in the light. You will too. You will have to dig ditches in the darkness of your past for God to bring the rain to change your life. For the men of Israel, when the sun came up the next day, God did His part and filled those ditches with a downpour of rain.

For the rain to fall, the kings and their people had to do their part before God would do His part—and so do you. Only you can go on this journey and change your life. Jesus will help you, but you have to get busy digging ditches, humbling yourself to ask for help, and completing the work throughout this book. The more work you do, the more rain you will get. Ditch-digging is responding to questions with in-depth answers, praying for guidance, asking for help, sharing with other fellow ditch-diggers, letting go of your pride, reading all of the pages in the lessons, and answering all the questions, even the ones that require vulnerability. At times, you may wish that you were outside digging a ditch instead of dealing with your darkness. This is challenging, painful work, but nothing could be more important!

And yet the reason you don't have what you want is that you don't ask God for it.

James 4:2b

My ditch-digging began after going through the orientation and listening to the *misery back guarantee*. I signed up and gave everything to the process that promised help and healing. I dug ditches: I didn't miss a class. I did all of the homework and then some. I did everything they asked of me to the best of my ability. What I didn't know is that the ditches I dug would collect rain that changed me, my husband, my marriage, and my family in ways that my (then hopeless) mind and heart couldn't have conceived.

The rain that filled my ditches cleansed me and watered the parts of me that were dry and dying. What I learned about myself was life-changing; I don't say that lightly. *Life-changing*. Digging the ditch of honesty about what had happened to me, carefully dissecting the painful events of my story, and unlearning what I thought I knew about God overhauled my life. I started with a feeling of emptiness and with barely enough hope to walk through the doors each week, but God took my efforts and combined it His love and began removing the pain and stitching up old wounds in ways that only He can. He poured His rain (love) into those empty places and gave me His hope to move me closer closer to Him. The more ditches I dug, the freer I became. Every week, with every lesson, I walked lighter than I had in years, in some ways, ever.

Before you start digging, it's important to know *why* you want the rain to fall in the first place. If you don't know *why*, you may give up when it gets too hard. It's not easy working through the wounds of your yesterdays, but it's not easy living with them either. I'm guessing that if you bought this book, your life isn't everything you want it to be. It may be in complete shambles, and this is the last hope. That's how it was for me... the last hope. I get your heartache, your pain, your deep sorrow, your self-loathing, and the fear that says *why bother* or *what if this doesn't work*.

I'm sure you've tried different techniques to alleviate your pain and turn your life around and they didn't work like you'd hoped. Maybe you've read self-help books, or joined various groups, or talked with a counselor, or relied on willpower, or told yourself that you are fine but everyone around you knows you are not. Maybe you tried something else entirely like alcohol or drugs to numb the pain, eating your feelings, watching pornography, engaging in one-night stands, or shopping yourself into debt. You may have tried numerous times, made countless promises, and your life didn't change the way you hoped. And now, your hope has dwindled. I get all of that, but can I share some advice? I would tell you to try something different so that you could hope for something better. Try putting God in the middle of it all. What do you have to lose?

“Your “why” has to be bigger than your discomfort and come with a “no matter what” commitment.”

with
all
and
and
you
you

3. What have you tried in the past to solve your issues?

4. Which of these methods were successful? Which were unsuccessful?

Every mile in this book is an opportunity to dig a ditch so that the rain can come and wash you clean, quench your thirst, take the dust out of your eyes, increase your faith, and give you hope for the road ahead. The ground may be dry, hard, and filled with rocks, making the digging especially difficult. You may question your ability to break through the hard ground and want to quit, but don't. The rain will come. Will you keep digging when you are tired and in pain? Will you keep digging when there are blisters on your hands? Will you keep digging when you are uncomfortable? Or are you going to keep walking in the desert looking for your own water? *Growth demands your ability to endure discomfort. This journey will be uncomfortable.*

Digging ditches takes time and effort. What are you willing to give up to dig? The time spent on social media every day? One Netflix binge session a week? The time you spend watching or reading the news? The Israelites dug all night. They didn't start digging thirty minutes before sunrise. They gave up their sleep, their last little bit of strength, their time, and their pride. Digging ditches isn't glamorous work, but it's honest work, and work to be proud of when the sun comes over the horizon.

5. What can you temporarily remove from your schedule to work through the pages of this book?

You've spent years and decades walking around, ignoring, and adding to your mess, and it will take time and a concerted effort to clean it up. Think slow cooker, not microwave. God asks that you work at the level of your capability, and when you have done all you can do, He will step in and do for you what only He can. You can trust Him to come through for you. He brought the rain for the Jews when there wasn't a cloud in the sky. He'll bring the rain to your life too, but not before you do your part. He won't do the work for you.

Find Isaiah 41:13 in your Bible and write it down below. What does God promise in this verse?

6. Do you believe that God can and will help you? Why or why not?

Can: has the ability

Want: has the desire

God convinced my husband to go on the same journey (with different people) at the same time. My husband also did the work, discovered truths about himself, and saw God work in ways he never dreamed possible. When we started our individual journeys, our marriage was in a rough place, and I wasn't sure if it would survive but working on ourselves individually proved to be the help and healing that our relationship needed. What was destroying our bond was the mess that each of us brought into it that hadn't been dealt with or healed. God unraveled our mess and transformed our broken marriage. Knowing where we started and where we are today almost leaves me speechless.

You deserve to be free from the pain of your past and to create a life filled with peace and purpose.

Do you have painful memories from your past that replay over and over in your mind? Are there people you know you need to forgive, but you don't know how to do it? Do you second-guess yourself often? Does your inner critic say *you aren't good enough*? Are there relationships in your life that are dysfunctional, toxic, or estranged?

Melissa has struggled with all these issues and understands how hard it is to carry the disappointments of life. Her dysfunctional childhood, an unwanted divorce, and a second marriage struggling to survive brought her to a crossroads in life. There, she sought God and went on a journey to discover healing and wholeness that profoundly changed her life, her marriage, and her family.

With deep compassion, psychological coaching, and God's Word, Melissa will help you:

- Learn how to forgive people who aren't sorry and don't want to change
- Work through painful memories to process them correctly so you can move on
- Discover how your faulty coping mechanisms are sabotaging you
- Understand your emotional triggers, what they mean, and how they are limiting you
- Identify the thought patterns that are leading to negativity, anxiety, or depression
- Develop new strategies to cope with pressure, deal with fear, and resolve anger
- Gain the confidence, knowledge, and skills to set boundaries, live authentically, and improve your relationships
- Release the emotional and mental damage of abuse
- Make things right with the people you've hurt
- Grow in your relationship with God and allow Him to heal your heart, soul, and mind



Melissa Lloyd is on a mission to help hurting people transform their lives. She loves coffee, hanging out with her husband and three kids, and writing from her back porch in San Antonio, Texas. She is a Board Certified Master Mental Health Coach with a master's degree in Leadership, and has helped hundreds on their path to freedom via group lectures and one-on-one coaching. Hang out with Melissa at www.melissalloyd.org for encouragement and inspiration.

