

LEONIE H. MATTISON, Ed.D.

Foreword by Cindy Weingartner, ACC, ELI-MP



The
THREAD

SIX STEPS TO RESTORE YOUR FAITH, LOVE, AND LIFE

LEONIE. H. MATTISON

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The Thread. Six Steps to Restore Your Faith, Love, and Life.

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Dedication

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO ALL WOMEN WHO CONTINUE TO
SURVIVE TRAUMA

Transforming the scraps and threads in our lives is all about how we handle and value what happens to us. Whatever your scraps and threads, God can use them; and you can learn from them, grow through them, and find a healthy way to design a better version of yourself from them.

*"So be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid and do not panic before them.
For the LORD, your God will go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you."
(Deuteronomy 31:6, New Living Translation)*

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Thank you to my three daughters and my puppy, whose love and support encouraged me to finish this book. Thank you to my bishop, Dr. Philip Bonaparte, the New Hope Church of God prayer group, and my immediate church family, who diligently prayed for me. Thank you to my family, coworkers, friends, mentors, coaches, counselors, writing and design team, mentees, and supporters, without whom I could not have fulfilled this assignment.

"I know what it means to lack, and I know what it means to experience overwhelming abundance. For I'm trained in the secret of overcoming all things, whether in fullness or in hunger. And I find that the strength of Christ's explosive power infuses me to conquer every difficulty."

(Philippians 4:12–13, The Passion Translation).

Preface

Trauma has a way of following us and squeezing joy from every aspect of our lives. The pain seems to bring about more pain, knocking us to the ground time after time. Again and again, we struggle to rise, only to fall to a new low. But how do we end this cycle and free ourselves of the shackles of our trauma? Is it possible to become the women we are worthy of being and mend the tatters, shreds, and scraps of trauma and shame once and for all? Well, the answer is 'YES,' and I honor your courage, spirit, and your curiosity, and I pledge to respect and have full regard for you as an individual.

You can mend your life, and you can heal your heart. You can stitch the scraps others have torn from your spirit back together to create a beautiful quilt of comfort, hope, and peace. When I was a child, my grandmother taught me how to quilt. She began with a pile of mismatched scraps, threads, and an image in her mind of the beauty it could be. Her vision to rework what others regarded as no longer useful proved a lesson for life. As she stitched the scraps together, I questioned both her skill and her judgment. She had nothing more than a pile of messy cloth, but when she finished and flipped the quilt over, it amazed me. My grandmother had taken the scraps of discarded material and used her threads to make them into something whole and created something beautiful.

My upbringing was tough, with an absent father and a mother unable to support my siblings and me. As many families do, they tried their best, but, as harsh as it sounds, they neglected us. Passed around caregivers, I became a wounded little girl molested, raped, and abused. That wounded girl grew to a desperate teen, a scared single mom, who became an injured, suicidal woman. Looking in the mirror, I saw an unloved, empty, and lonely girl with a sick soul, a noisy mind, a broken heart, an imperfect body, and a life shattered beyond repair. I felt unworthy, valueless, and helpless, and trusted no one. My life amounted to so many leftover bits that others had thrown away and discarded without a thought. Small pieces and fragments I no longer attended to because of the hurt.

My grandmother taught me the wonder of turning to God for help, and I awakened memories of my Creator. Out of nowhere, I remembered my grandmother's quilt, and

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I realized what He could do with the scraps of my spirit and the threads of my experiences if only I'd let Him thread the needle. And that is exactly what I did. I gave over my life to Him to rework. And since then:

My life has become a beautiful patchwork of pain and healing, despair and hope, and fear and peace. God made me whole, and now I am sharing the warmth of God's love to empower you to lead a life with passion and purpose.

No matter how painful your traumatic experiences, they do not have to ruin your life or define your future. You are not a lost cause, far from it. Your experiences give you the wisdom to bring good to the world in a unique and unequalled way.

With guidance, you can transform your imperfect steps into an ordained purpose. Because right now, you may be:

Going through a crisis or trauma and you aspire to heal your heart and reclaim your life.

Struggle with unresolved pain from the past and need help to support you on your healing journey.

Anticipate a future crisis or trauma and wish to ensure you rise from it.

But these do not have to be the case. By the end of this book, you can break free from some of these painful patterns and know **how to use the power of intentionality to help you choose the outcome you want to achieve in situations that damage your soul.** You will explore how to trust again and know how to surround yourself with dependable allies. Your bright and happy future will begin. You will realize it is possible to be whole once more.

Through my experiences of trauma, recovery, and God's guidance, I have developed the Thread Self-Help Toolkit to aid your spiritual healing journey. It contains this book with the six-step T.H.R.E.A.D. System, the Workbook, Devotional Journal, Intentional Affirmation Cards, Intentional Conversation Questions, the Adult Coloring Book, and the T.H.R.E.A.D Audio Recording.

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Foreword

My first virtual introduction to Leonie occurred in 2017 when she decided it was time to break through the barriers that have historically impeded her personal and professional development and gain skills to stand out as a leader in her field. To crack out of her protective shell and do something that would help her to move forward, beyond her past, and to forge her new life, she chose me as her Executive Coach. But, as I already knew, Leonie was in for much more than she ever expected. When I work with women in leadership to develop the skills required to contribute meaningfully and achieve their loftiest goals, I don't just focus on the professional woman; instead, I coach the whole woman. I see it as a true partnership to transform the entire woman, not only a part of her.

So, we embarked on a fantastic journey together! Working with Leonie was a mixture of helping her to discover and own her values, learning how to apply them in her daily work, as well as breaking down barriers that interfered with her self-worth and confidence. Working with the concepts from the Energy Leadership Index™ to build her Emotional Intelligence, Leonie learned how to recognize her emotions and reactions to these emotions that were not serving her at work and home. As she learned how to develop her Emotional Intelligence, Leonie learned that she held the keys to her personal and professional success.

Feeling empowered through the coaching process, Leonie set some aggressive goals, and in less than 18 months, she improved her performance to win the elite "40 Under 40" award. She also set a goal to lead change and grow revenue in her department by securing grant funding to build new local government programs. Her final big goal was to shift her current strategy and increase her impact on the world by publishing her first book. Completing just one of these goals would be a significant accomplishment, but that is not how Leonie rolls. She marched forward to set and achieve milestones to attain all three of these goals ultimately. Now, having worked with Leonie over these last two years, it didn't surprise me at all that she would one day write a book that would be so meaningful and transformational for so many women. Breaking out of her abusive shell, she proclaimed to me early in our coaching that she felt empowered to write a book that would allow her to continue her intentional transformation; however, she didn't want to

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stop there. Leonie had the vision to create an avenue for other women, defined by abuse, to join her on a journey of intentional transformation.

As you read *THE THREAD*, you will learn more about Leonie's journey, the struggles, and the triumphs as she took the determined steps to break out of her protective shell. A shell that wasn't serving her and kept her confined, curled up, and unable to spread her beautiful wings and move past the woman that trauma created to become the woman that God designed. Her story is traumatic; however, she tells it in such a beautiful voice that, like me, you may find yourself visualizing her rise like a phoenix from the ashes, word by beautiful word. While Leonie had many audacious goals, writing this book was always at the top of the list. She didn't know two years ago if she was strong enough to break the binds of abuse that held her so tightly to be vulnerable and share her story with others. But, deep down, she always knew it was a story that needed to be told and that it would have a profoundly positive effect on other women. Women, just like her, desperately wanting to work through the past so they could live the life that God envisioned.

Leonie's light shines so bright that you will be instantly drawn to her, see yourself in her, and learn from her journey in a way that will inspire you and allow your light to shine brighter. As an emerging author, I am sure after you read *THE THREAD*, you will be eagerly awaiting future writings from Leonie.

So, wait no longer, grab a cup of tea, get comfy in your favorite chair, and start sewing The Threads of the beautiful quilt that is your life.

To learn more about Energy Leadership and Executive Leadership Coaching:

www.SuccessDimensions.com

Introduction

This book outlines the six-step **T.H.R.E.A.D. System** to help you make the most of your journey. Each step is covered as a distinct section, encouraging you to:

Think of the outcome you want to achieve

Harvest lessons learned from the past

Release fear and break painful patterns

Enlist allies to support and mentor you

Adopt new mindsets and behaviors

Dream of a new self and design a more joyful life

Each step allows you to add your own story and requires a hands-on approach as your life experiences (threads) are reworked in new ways. You learn so much and grow. You may cry, and you may want to turn away as your progress will challenge. You will question yourself, your actions, and those of others, but what begins as searching will turn into a spirit of inquiry.

Please know, Dear Brave Sister, you will heal strong as you create your blueprint for your ultimate wellness in a way that matters to you. No matter where you are on your healing journey, new possibilities, wholeness, and a firm understanding of God's unconditional love for you are within reach. His Masterpiece. Ultimately, you learn the power to weave your life's threads together to start, continue, and finish the work that God has already begun in you. When women heal, they mend their hearts, lift their spirits, restore their souls, and transform lives.

Get Ready to Thread That Needle

OVERVIEW
OF
T-H-R-E-A-D

Step 1
T-THINK

Step 2
H-HARVEST

Step 3
R-RELEASE

Step 4
E-ENLIST

Step 5
A-ADOPT

Step 6
D-DREAM

How to Read This Book

I have divided the book into eight 'Sections' of hope, courage, and wisdom. Each section contains uplifting and inspirational stories of women from the bible, all of whom overcame tragedy, trial, or failure in remarkable ways. Their faith and courage energized each woman to use their threads (experiences) to discover, embrace, and accelerate their God-given purpose.

I share my own inspirational story that transformed a tale of heart-breaking abuse to one of positivity, and I tell of the "threads" I weaved to add depth and authenticity. God provided me with an undeniable example of His ability to shape my horrible experiences into a beautiful quilt and glorified His love, power, and personal care. I am privileged to share this with you.

As you walk through the T.H.R.E.A.D system, you are familiar with exercises to help you reflect and heal. The examples encourage you to take a step forward in your healing and your understanding of yourself. As with all advancements, it will not be easy. The 'not-so-pretty' backside of a quilt in progress is one best handled with care and by those who understand its tenderness.

Your story is a crucial element at each step of the six-step T.H.R.E.A.D System process, and you are invited to add your story at each step in a new and challenging way. I understand how difficult this can be, but it is one of those processes where the more you put in, the more you get out. Information is not publicly shared and remains confidential to you. You can keep your work to look back on it or discard it as a symbol of letting go. Either way, you will reflect on your threads by:

Putting a spotlight on episodes that may embarrass, dishonor, or shame you. It is a false, common misconception to believe you were at fault.

Dealing with your threads once and for all, for the glory of God and the healing of yourself and others.

And, finally, letting go of those things that are not helpful, by destroying things that others forced upon you, and polishing and cherishing those things that build the new you—a Daughter of God.

Your recollections and reflections need detail and attention to arrive at the beautiful covering or finished product. You are the seamstress of your own life's quilt, and now is the time to rid yourselves of the things that keep you from achieving your potential and developing oneness with God. It may take you a month or several months to complete one step, but never mind the time. Your healing is within reach. This is when the effort at the start will determine your recovery and ultimate level of personal transformation.

Once you have collected all your lovely scraps, I will show you how to stitch them together, providing a pattern for you to quilt your bright future. Please embrace this book as your own. Bend the pages. Jot down your reflections, secret desires, thoughts,

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and questions on the pages. Finally, take your time to dig deep as you complete each step. I have interspersed little surprises to encourage you along the way—like a poem or prayer to inspire you on your healing journey. You will cry; you will have remorse; you will question yourself, your actions, and those of others.

My prayer is that the Bible stories, sharing my life story, and the six steps of the T.H.R.E.A.D. will bring peace, healing, and restoration to your life and profoundly greater intimacy. To get the most out of this book, be present in soul and spirit as you read.

"All praises belong to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he is the Father of tender mercy and the God of endless comfort. He always comes alongside us to comfort us in every suffering so that we can come alongside those who are in any painful trial. We can bring them this same comfort that God has poured out upon us. And just as we experience the abundance of Christ's own sufferings, even more of God's comfort will cascade upon us through our union with Christ."

(2 Corinthians 1:3-5, The Passion Translation).

SECTION 1

Step 1 – THINK

CHAPTER 1

Think of the Outcome You Want

"Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long."

(Psalm 25:5, New International Version)

As humans, we have fundamental needs, and across generations and spanning back forever, these have remained the same—water, food, heat, love, comfort, safety, and security. As psychologists understand more about human behavior, needs, and desires, they know each one is as important as the next to develop holistically. But how do you adapt when your needs are not met, and instead, your caregiver or lover abuses, violate and abandons you? Is it ever possible for you to recover from another's misdeeds and evil wrongdoings? And what if this person is the one person in your life that you hold most dear? Where does trust go? And once gone, can you ever recover?

According to the World Health Organization, approximately one in three women has been the victim of severe physical violence at an intimate partner's hands. Worldwide, the figure is nearly one in three.¹ These numbers may be even higher, considering how many women fall prey to these inexcusable crimes don't report abuse. Far too many women are ultimately left in the dark, silenced by humiliation and by the overwhelming burden of blame that society often places on them as victims. The United Nations defines violence against women as *"any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life."*²

Many women are subject to psychological and emotional, financial, or economic coercive control, including direct physical violence, harassment, stalking, and online and digital abuse. Family violence and abuse, including forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and honor crimes, are found throughout the world and in many cultures. One type of abuse can't happen in isolation. It is nearly impossible to see where one begins and ends as the abusive relationship will be a tangled, tortuous mess. Crucially, this abuse impacts babies, children, and young people both directly and indirectly.

In 2014, I attended the American Association for Christian Counselors conference. During this experience, I learned the outcomes of the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACEs Study, a breakthrough from the Centers for Disease Control and Kaiser Permanente). The ACEs Study shows that many major health and social issues have their roots in childhood trauma and adult health and well-being. Exposure to A.C.E's can cause damage to a child's brain, leading to major health problems such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, lung cancer, sexually transmitted diseases (S.T.D.), depression, and even attempted suicide.³ Reflecting every other segment of society, American Christian communities feel the impact of adverse childhood experiences as they support their communities. The testimony of survivors and ministers of various groups supports these claims.⁴

As a Christian, I've attended Protestant Christian churches all my life. I have heard sermons on every topic, from marriage to tithing, but I've never listened to a sermon or participated in a class or seminar about sexual abuse. Perhaps the Protestants' heavy focus on New Testament studies has done us a disservice? Do we lack a spiritual understanding of the truth, Christian laws, and ethics regarding these topics from the Old Testament's perspective? I stop to consider these questions throughout each Step of the T.H.R.E.A.D System.

Indeed, when it comes to the topic of sexual abuse and its impact on women in the community of faith, I'm incensed to watch our local churches treat these issues like a well-guarded family secret. Like a skeleton in the closet, it still feels that no one dares to mention the subject, making matters worse one victim at a time. However, I have witnessed many people condemned by the "Bible police" for fornication, adultery, or living with a partner without being married. We're told not to have sex outside of marriage, but what about sexual acts forced on us without our consent? Where are the teachings on this? Does any exist? I aim to discover and help you understand the Bible's position and guide you on your road to recovery.

Despite the shortage of teaching in the church regarding sexual abuse, the Bible is not silent about sexual crimes against women per se. Surrounded in the narrative of God's unconditional love—where most of us go for spiritual guidance, comfort, restoration, and soul nourishment—we find Scriptures depicting traumatic stories of sexual violence against women. But what do they tell us, and how can they help you in the twenty-first century?

The first biblical examples to study are Dinah's and Tamar's mortifying stories in the Old Testament. While these soul-crushing, unfathomable, and ancient biblical stories

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are overwhelming and sometimes upsetting to read, it's important to shine a light on these stories. I hope you will feel encouraged to know that God does not cover up, overlook, or support sexual abuse against women. He is not one that ignores the 'Elephant in the Room.' God deliberately gives us the full scope of these stories in the Bible so we can:

Grasp the difference between lust and love,

Understand what an inappropriate sexual encounter looks like,

Recognize that God does not accept or condone violence against women

When committed, God does not turn a blind eye and,

Find freedom and restoration in knowing God included the stories, for;

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and training in righteousness" I feel blessed to be part of the body of Christ. I am grateful that I have come to the knowledge that the gospel was written for the sick, for the lost, for the lonely, for the broken, for those struggling to rise from the scars embedded by the sinful residue of trauma that's negatively impacted people like you and me. Thank God for the power of Jesus Christ not only to help us overcome the effects of trauma but also to provide the hope of healing either in this life or the next.

(2 Timothy 3:16; (Matthew 9:12-13; John 8:31-31)

CHAPTER 2

The Story of Dinah

"Christ has set us free to live a free life. So, take your stand!

Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you."

(Galatians 5:1, The Message).

It is hard to comprehend why good, bad, and painful experiences are knitted together in the creation of our destiny. I know I have spent many long hours musing over this one as an adult, debating with my contemporaries, and lamenting with my inner child. But I am fortunate as I have my ultimate guide, my faith, and my belief. No matter what we face, we can trust that God will ultimately work everything together for our good.

As already discussed, God does not hide from heinous acts undertaken by villainous perpetrators in the Bible. Let's examine Dinah's story in the Old Testament book of Genesis 34 in the English Standard Version of the Bible. Shechem, the son of a powerful man, raped Dinah. After the stranger violated her, he demanded she was his wife, but she hid in shame. When Dinah's brothers heard of the crime, they killed the committer and all the men in the city. The following two verses capture Dinah's rape:

"Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah, went to visit some of the women who lived there. She was seen by Hamor's son Shechem, the leader of the Hivites, and he grabbed her and raped her"

(Genesis 34:1–2, Contemporary English Version).

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Shechem's violation of Dinah showed a blatant disregard for her virtue, her right to consent, her body, her feelings, and the aftermath of his decision to impose himself violently upon her. Afterward, he developed sinful lust that yielded further calamity. Shechem tried to win Dinah's affection with his tender words but unsuccessfully instructed his father, Hamor, to secure Dinah for him:

"Then he spoke to his father about it.

"Get this girl for me," he demanded.

"I want to marry her."

(Genesis 34:4, The Living Bible).

Shechem didn't love Dinah - violation and mistreatment is not loved. He treated her as an object when he demanded his father make Dinah his wife. As Shechem raped Dinah, it is highly unlikely that she would jump for joy at a marriage suggestion. In those days, arranged marriages and marriages as reparation for rape were common. Shechem manipulated both his and Dinah's fathers and the established laws to control her fate.

From my experience, not marrying a perpetrator is neither every woman's reaction nor their perspective. Some women may not have a choice. For example, even today, poverty-stricken women living in Jamaica who become pregnant through rape may be relieved to have the perpetrator be with them to help take care of the baby. Sometimes, they will marry a man who commits a crime against them. This proved true in Dinah's story.

"What's done in darkness will come to light."

(A paraphrase of Luke 8:17)

I also pray that God will expose and avenge the wrong you suffered. We don't know how Jacob discovered Shechem's wrong's, but we know he intended to inform Dinah's brothers of the happenings:

"Now Jacob heard that [Shechem] had raped his daughter Dinah. But his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Jacob held his peace until they came. And Hamor, the father of Shechem, went out to Jacob to speak with him. The sons of Jacob had come in from the field as soon as they heard of it, and the men were indignant and very angry because he had done an outrageous thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing must not be done."

(Genesis 34:5-7).

Dinah's story shows Jewish law and God prohibited rape, to which Hamor and Shechem showed no respect or reverence. What is more, Hamor did everything within his power to ensure Shechem's humiliated Dinah further by arranging their marriage, even when she openly expressed a desire not to marry him.

Jacob was a God-fearing man, and his decision to hold his peace was intentional and not passive. Instead of retaliating in anger, he waited for his son's return. When Jacob's sons arrived, Hamor tried to calm and convince them. He promised both families could trade their daughters in marriage and share land:

"Make marriages with us. Give your daughters to us and take our daughters for yourselves. You shall dwell with us, and the land shall be open to you. Dwell and trade in it and get property in it."

(Genesis 34:9–10).

An accepted social pattern with women used as objects and bartering tools is seen as Shechem promises to do anything Jacob and his sons ask if only they let him marry Dinah. Deceitfully, they agree, under one condition—that all the men in their city are circumcised. The men agreed, and they were too weak and defenseless when Jacob's sons, Simeon, and Levi, attack. The sons kill all the men and return to their father with Dinah:

"Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, 'You have brought trouble on me by making me stink to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites. My numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household.' But they said, 'Should we treat our sister like a prostitute?'"

(Genesis, 34:31).

When Shechem raped Dinah, there was no way he would realize that his actions would prove fatal for himself, his father, and all the men in his city. He didn't know that dozens of women and children would be left without husbands and fathers and taken as captives. Simeon and Levi were determined to ensure that this heinous crime didn't go unpunished, but their method of avenging Dinah was not pleasing to God. They should not have taken matters into their own hands, which is my message of hope and love.

If you're reading this book, you or someone you know has already come through or is coming through (and overcoming) abuse. You are one relentless, fearless, and courageous soul. Do not let anyone tell you differently. Yes, what you've been through was unfair, and like Dinah, you did nothing to deserve your mistreatment. The very step that Dinah took to speak the truth is reflected throughout society today, and please believe; you are not alone. You've endured soul-crushing experiences and had many things to cope with. It's hard to forgive and forget, and you may ask yourself, is this even possible? Yet you are here because you've survived the trauma. You're alive. I honor your tenacity. I celebrate you for the person you are. I'm holding the light of hope for you as you wait on God to act on your behalf, and it will happen. I encourage you to take heart. I encourage you to continue to trust God.

"Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord."

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(Romans, 12:19).

Keep going. Don't give up. Don't turn back. You are of tremendous value to a lost world.

CHAPTER 3

The Story of Tamar

"You are no longer slaves.

You are God's children, and you will be given what he has promised."

(Galatians, 16:13).

Tamar, King David's beautiful daughter, was an innocent virgin taken advantage of by her half-brother Amnon. Sadly, this story provides you with another example of how, every day, wonderful women are exploited for pleasure. Amnon lusted after Tamar, and his sinful longing for her tormented him so much that it made him ill. When his cousin Jonadab expressed concern, Amnon told him about this sinful lust that he erroneously called love. Jonadab encouraged Amnon's deviance, giving him step-by-step instructions on how to manipulate King David into sending Tamar to his quarters:

"Jonadab said to him, 'Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill. And when your father comes to see you, say to him, "Let my sister Tamar come and give me bread to eat, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see it and eat it from her hand."' So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. And when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, 'Please let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight that I may eat from her hand.' Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, 'Go to your brother Amnon's house and prepare food for him'"

(2 Samuel 13:5–7).

Amnon saw Tamar as an object. Jonadab's plan provided Amnon the occasion to have his way with her, satisfying his appetite for immediate and selfish sexual desire. It is not God's will for us to lust after sex. For lust is a perversion that produces trauma and ends

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in tragedy. Instead, God gave us the incredible gift of love and created sex to be good within a consensual relationship. However, Amnon wanted to have sex with Tamar and would stop at nothing:

“But as she was feeding him, he grabbed her and demanded,

“Come to bed with me, my darling sister.”

“No, my brother!” she cried. “Don’t be foolish! Don’t do this to me! Such wicked things aren’t done in Israel. Where could I go in my shame? And you would be called one of the greatest fools in Israel. Please, just speak to the king about it, and he will let you marry me.” But Amnon wouldn’t listen to her, and since he was stronger than she was, he raped her.”

(2 Samuel 13:11–14, New Living Translation).

Tamar’s interaction with her brother was out of docile respect to her father and a genuine concern for Amnon in his feigned sickness. As soon as she realized Amnon’s intentions, Tamar took four inspired actions to disrupt the silence. She:

1. **Protested:** When Amnon told her to lie with him, she pleaded with him not to violate her.
2. **Protected:** She protected herself by calling attention to the fact that rape is a severe crime in Israel.
3. **Advocated:** She advocated for righteousness by saying what consequences this would have for her and Amnon.
4. **Advised:** She advised Amnon to do the right thing and talk to King David, suggesting that their father would let Amnon marry Tamar instead of raping and dishonoring her.

Notably, Tamar did everything within her power to prevent Amnon from raping her. This included physically attempting to fight him off, but Amnon was stronger than she.

“Then Amnon hated her with very great hatred so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, ‘Get up! Go!’”

(2 Samuel 13:15).

Amnon hated and rejected Tamar because she was a tangible reminder of the sin that lurked inside him, and he spitefully had Tamar put out of his room in shame. But it was Tamar who had to deal with physical, mental, and emotional pain. She was the one who mourned the loss of her virtue and wrestled with the guilt and condemnation of Amnon’s sin. She was innocent, yet she was the one who paid the price.

“And Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the long robe that she wore. And she laid her hand on her head and went away, crying aloud as she went. And her brother Absalom said to her, ‘Has Amnon your brother been with you? Now hold your peace, my sister. He is your brother; do not take

this to heart.' So, Tamar lived, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom's house." (2 Samuel 13:19–20).

When Amnon raped Tamar, he knew she was a virgin and that this act would ruin her, making her unworthy of marriage, which was why she begged him not to do it. Her rape created a scar they forced her to wear. Tamar's devastation echoed throughout history, and to turn a blind eye to her pain would be to silence the stories of countless other women. Her reaction to the rape teaches us how to take action to disrupt the silence and to speak the truth. Consider the lessons of Tamar's actions:

Tamar **to**re off the shame that came from her virgin robe, a sign, and symbol of a woman who took charge of her dignity and the right to stand up for injustice.

Tamar **put** ashes on her head, an external mark that signified her deep grief for the calamity which had befallen her.

Tamar **cried** openly to manifest her disgust because Amnon did not have her consent. Tamar did not stifle the cry of a bereaved, violated woman who was in mourning for what they took.

Tamar **exposed** the truth to Absalom when he asked by acknowledging Amnon's sin instead of hiding it. Her actions define what a true self-activist is.

King David's passive response to Tamar's rape only exacerbated the situation. Despite being angry, David didn't rightfully avenge Tamar by punishing Amnon, possibly because he felt guilty for his past sins. I discuss this in the next step. Regardless, David should have protected and defended his daughter as a loving father, and he should have dealt with Amnon swiftly.

However, the crime enraged Tamar's brother, Absalom, and two years later, determined to take Amnon's vengeance, he commanded his servants to ensure that Amnon was drunk and he killed him. This tragedy proves sins left unchecked create dangerous cycles—generational curses that need destroying.

While often viewed as a tragedy, Tamar's story is one of triumph with lessons for us all to learn. Tamar refused for this one debilitating event to define her. It wasn't easy, but she overcame it through the power of her spoken word. Her grief expressed bravery because, in her vulnerability, her strength remained. She took her control back by speaking the truth despite being disgraced, distraught, exiled, and forsaken. Although her father did not offer her any comfort, and she did not have anyone to ease her shame, she was no longer Amnon's victim. She was a survivor. And stands as an example for all survivors today.

With Tamar's limited choices of either marrying her rapist or choosing to isolate herself, Tamar lived as a desolate woman in Absalom's house. Her decision is open to interpretation, but perhaps it was a radical act of self-care. Fortunately, today, a woman has more choices (although this isn't true in all countries). In many societies, she can go

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to counseling, take time to heal through therapy, still engage with the world, and even find love.

* * *

Both Dinah and Tamar exemplify courage because they broke the silence and spoke the truth about what happened to them in the face of potential execution. Law called for women to be put to death for sexual misconduct. According to societal norms, both women should have screamed out as the assault was happening, but they didn't. Because of this, these women would have been considered complicit in the attack against them. And this reflects the intricacies of both the law and society. Rape and sexual offenses take place in the labyrinth of social interactions and relationships.

Their failure to cry out doesn't invalidate either Dinah or Tamar's trauma and doesn't take away from the courage of speaking up about it later. These stories illustrate "*that God sees when men abuse women, and ... [shows] that God's heart breaks for the abused.*"⁵

Beloved, you too might not have been ready to speak up when modern society dictates that you should have. Maybe you didn't immediately file a police report, and perhaps you're still burdened with the shame. To this day, you may not speak about what happened to you. You might even have the perpetrator in your life, out of necessity or choice. None of this distracts from the courage needed to continue, to go on living and breathing, and to survive. Maybe you're barely making it, yet you persist. We are not here to judge or pass comments. Don't condemn yourself or allow anyone to make you feel guilty, worthless, or degraded. Give yourself credit for getting to where you are and allow yourself some time to get to know you as the new person you will become. Use the knowledge gained and the lessons learned to practice being compassionate with yourself as you take the courageous steps to move forward. Be gentle and be kind to yourself, and you will pass with ease from one Step to the next.

CHAPTER 4

My Story: Truth from My New Strength

“Hold on to loyal love, and don’t let go and be faithful to all that you’ve been taught. Let your life be shaped by integrity, with truth written upon your heart.”

(Proverbs 3:3, The Passion Translation).

I grew up on the beautiful island of Jamaica. My sweet Jamaica, the land where the Caribbean Sea’s turquoise waves roll gently onto white sand beaches on the northern shores and black sand beaches on the southern shores. The palm trees sway in the breeze beneath majestic blue mountains. The temperatures hover in the seventies and eighties—the tropical island, studded with resort hotels that cater to travelers from around the world.

Despite being raised in a lush, tropical paradise, I grew up on the wrong side of the island—the harsh realities of my life overshadowed the beauty surrounding me. Mommy told me I was five years old when Daddy moved overseas to build a better life for the family. He’d gone to a foreign country to get a job, secure a home, and save money to bring over to his wife and children. I imagined that we’d live together in a new house, and although I’d never seen this country, I knew it was one where we’d be happy together as a family. Ten years in a row, I waited in anticipation to see daddy and dreamed of opening my Christmas and birthday presents Daddy promised he would send to my siblings and me. But to no avail. My dreams never came to pass, and daddy never showed up or sent me a gift. As I got older, I grew to hate my birthday and isolated during the holiday seasons.

Life was hard in Jamaica, and six days a week, Mommy walked many miles every day to find steady, well-paid work. I remember the tired look on Mommy’s face as she

dropped her body in the chair, shook her head, looked up to the ceiling, and then hung down her head in tears. She didn't see me peeking through the door, and in my heart, I told myself, "One day, I'm gonna make sure Mama won't cry." Some days we could hear our stomachs growl, forcing Mommy to go on long, water-only-fasting, hoping that if she prayed long enough, God would send someone to help us. A couple of times, it worked. And when it didn't, she'd beg the neighbors for food. I could see the shame on Mommy's face as she negotiated all sorts of deals to ensure that we had food to eat and a safe place to lay our heads.

When Mommy could no longer afford to take care of my siblings and me, she migrated too. She left Jamaica, as she had no choice, and my siblings and I frequently moved, with no permanent place to call home. By now, I was gathering the 'scraps' of my life. The bits and pieces of my life that no-one else wanted. The bits that were debris, unwanted and leftover...no use to anyone. The quilt scrap I collected from the fear of homelessness was never to feel safe or comfortable and never relax. As a five-year-old, the story I told myself was that people I love always leave me, and nobody loved me because I was an unwanted little girl. In my young mind, had I wanted or been pretty and a "good girl," my parents would not have left me. This was the scrap I gathered from my father's decision to leave the family, which forced my mother to do the same. Only now that I'm older do I know this is a story told by many young girls to themselves when their father is absent.

As a helpless child, being moved from house to house and staying with strangers, I was vulnerable to physical and verbal abuse. People felt sorry enough to allow us to stay for a night or a couple of days, but this was always temporary. I lived in fear of nowhere to stay with the constant reminders that they could kick us out at a moment's notice. This creates the thread of fear that I would never be happy. What was happy? I could not be sure.

Many homes where we lived had teenage boys, and they left me unprotected from sexual abuse. In these households, they treated the men and boys as kings and could do no wrong. They treated us as young girls as slaves. We cooked, washed, and cleaned while the boys could play outside with their peers. We served the men meals in our old, tattered, secondhand clothes while they dressed nicely and reaped the benefits of our labor. Subservience was another scrap for my quilt. I came to believe that women were subservient to men.

I was first molested by an older male family member when I was eight years old, and he sexually and physically abused me. My young brain could not process the trauma, and of course, these acts cannot be taken out of context and considered 'sexual abuse' or 'physical abuse.' When his sexual frustration got the better of him, he violently assaulted me, manipulated and tormented me. I saw things a child should never see, smelled things a child should never smell, and felt things a child should never feel. And these lay in the deep recess of my mind. Because of our housing instability and my existing fear of homelessness, I was afraid to tell adults of his crimes against me.

When I finally spoke up, the adults who should have protected and defended me scolded me instead of confronting him. They accused me of lying, and I forced myself to keep the assault a secret. “Shame on you.” “What happened in the home stays in the home,” was the threat. And now, I try to recall. ‘What was said by who?’ My brain is so clear with what happened, it lives it like a film, but those adults’ words negated it. They punished me by not combing my hair for several hours after washing it, causing it to dry matted. They further tortured me by harshly combing the nappy hair. They deprived me of food to humble me, leaving a new quilt scrap of fear. Ultimately, I learned to tell authority figures the truth, which resulted in punishment for me.

* * *

When living with my maternal grandmother, aunt, uncle, cousins, and other tenants, I suffered from chronic bronchitis when I was again violated. My grandmother left me in the care of another male cousin, a teenager. While I was sleeping, he entered my bedroom and covered my mouth, so I could not scream, and he then raped me. My first experience with sex was assault. I tried to fight him off, but he overpowered me. This time, I didn’t tell anyone. I was fearful that they wouldn’t believe me and that they would punish me again. This created a quilt scrap in which I said to myself that keeping a secret was the safest thing to do. In my heart, I slowly began disconnecting my family. I blamed myself. They broke my spirit. I learned to hate my hair, body, and distrust adults, both male and female.

At school, the abuse continued. Male teachers inappropriately touched many of my friends and me. On several occasions, a male teacher touched my butt, pinched my breasts, or brushed his crotch against me in the classroom. I protested, begged him to stop, and threatened to report his behavior. But that didn’t stop him. In a male-dominated society, such as the Jamaica of my youth, the girl or woman is often punished. The scraps I accumulated from molestation and sexual assault were worthlessness, self-hatred, and self-blame; I believed, as a thirteen-year-old teen, that I was worthless because no one protected me, and I could not defend myself.

My teacher, incensed that I would report him, moved beyond sexual abuse and abused me emotionally in front of the class, “You, Leonie, shame on you. You failed. Again. Come, take this test paper with this ‘C’ grade.” He told me. “you will never amount to anything.” I believed his words. I hung my head in shame as my peers giggled and repeated the words, “You failed again, Leonie.” This public shaming gravely wounded my heart. I was humiliated and mortified, resulting in more negative internal dialogue. As the humiliation increased, the thread of worthlessness resulted in further self-blame and depression. My teacher’s relentless and continued abuse of power caused me to hate school and fear learning. I became confused about my role in the situation. I had become used to men having power over me, shaming me, and sadly, abusing me.

Emotional, verbal, and sexual abuse during my childhood at the hands of those I thought I could trust shattered every ounce of my identity. All these soul-crushing life events left deep wounds in my heart and a hunger for kindness and love that could heal my wounds, and this impacted future relationships, which I explore in further Steps. My

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unresolved feelings of abandonment, the devastation of being sexually abused and assaulted, together with the scorn placed upon me for trying to report it, caused me to both fear and distrust adults for a long time. They were the source of my terrors, dysfunctions, insecurities, and feelings of rejection. Like many sexual assault victims, I was mad at myself. I feared going to school, church, and home. I hated my life.

* * *

It was not until 2013 that I finally took steps to recover and heal my trauma after I hit rock bottom- emotionally, mentally, financially, and physically. I remember standing in the mirror the first time I look myself in the eyes, and I saw anger, pain, uncertainty, and brokenness. The eyes are truly the window to the soul because, as I look at myself, I felt like I did not know who I was. As I chopped my hair off with my kitchen scissors, I realized I had lost myself to becoming my children's mother, my ex-husband's wife, and a dependable worker bee. At that moment, I started "thinking," did I give myself away to the pain of my past? Was I to relinquish the woman I was created to be to the fear of facing my trauma? If so, how could I get Leonie back? Where and how do I begin? Because the truth as it was, there was a dissonance between the woman I was living and the woman I felt deep in my heart I was meant to be. The first step for me was to:

Think of the outcome I want to achieve.

After chopping my hair off, I started my healing journey. I want to invite you to consider taking these steps to empower you to think of the outcome you want to achieve as you embark upon or persist through your healing journey

Stand in front of your mirror and look yourself in the eyes and say, "_____, let's go on a journey together, girl."

"Think" back on past events you are most proud of.

Celebrate the things in your past you are most proud of. *For example, I would say, "Leonie, I am so proud of you for finishing that degree in 2012."*

"Think" on current events and how they make you feel today.

Say how you are feeling? *For example, I would say something to myself like, "Leonie, I feel lost today. I don't know who I am, why I am here, and how to find myself."*

Honor how you are feeling at this moment.

"Still looking in the mirror, "think" back over past events that made you feel shamed, dishonored, and the ones that created the trauma for you. *For me, it was saying something to myself, Leonie, they abused you as a child, and we need to go find that little girl and help her heal."*

Over the next three years, and with integrating clinical, medical, practical, and spiritual interventions, I went on a seemingly impossible spiritual healing journey to forgive everyone who had violated me. But mostly, I needed to stop hating myself and, from there, **“think of the outcome I wanted to achieve,”** so I could re-discover my self-worth. Here are some steps I took that helped me achieved that goal.

Awareness and acknowledgment of the level of my trauma and what I had been through so I could disrupt the silence and speak the truth about the trauma I suffered. For years I lived in shame and blamed myself for what happened, thinking I was at fault for the sins of my abusers. This created a false sense of value and identity that I found in relationships with certain people, things, and places. I was trapped in a closet.

Understanding the impact my culture, spirituality, and family had over my life and getting help to dismantle and uproot, let go of the toxic tie to people and things. We all have these and the impact in different ways. I knew deep down that I did not need these in my life, but I was soul tie to people with who I invested my hope and longing. But my heart was sick because of unfulfilled deferred hope. I needed God’s intervention and healing from manipulation (where a narcissist pushed my sexual limits and made me feel no one could fulfill me, but he imprisoned me). This destroyed my capacity to trust and created a sense of personal insecurity and unworthiness).

Learning to manage the gift of empathy as I permit myself to let go of negative experiences, grabbing hold of the things that would help shape me into the woman God created me to be. It feels terrific being the woman who lives with intentionality while deepening my relationship with God. I realize now, more than ever, that as survivors, we are genuinely courageous women. Although others have knocked us down, we have found the vigor to rise and forge ahead. And if you are reading this book, you too are being shaped, and God can use you to help others find hope along their journey of healing.

Healing of trauma. Trauma is a demonic attack and stronghold on our self-worth. While therapy, medication, support from trusted allies, and counseling were helpful for me, it was the power of the Holy Spirit within me that destroyed everything that hindered my purpose and transformed my life. I’ve discovered that an individual cannot make a change without awareness of “the” or “her” problem and accept that there is always more than just one solution to the problem. [Example: Our religious faith has clearly stated how sexual abuse is “a problem” and not to be tolerated; we accept that there are many solutions to stop the abuse.] That is where we all must start.

Rising from rape, I know God loves us unconditionally, and he does not judge us by the number of scars on our bodies or in our hearts. God does not hate you. He does not blame you for the wrongs committed against you or to you, or that you have done to yourself. God loves you, and His love never requires you to walk in fear of who you are. You do not have to fear punishment for your past if you surrender all to Jesus and accept that you have a future in God going forward.

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“Look with wonder at a depth of the Father’s wondrous love that he has lavished on us! He has called us and made us his very own beloved children. The reason the world doesn’t recognize who we are is that they didn’t recognize him.”

(1 John 3:1).

Like Mama taught me, our lives are just like that quilt—composed of multiple scraps held together by threads of experience. Separately these scraps appear useless, but along with the thread, they form a remarkable story. I have survived multiple sexual assaults and trauma and suffered pain. But I have since used my life’s scraps and threads to design a remarkable and beautiful life through Christ. Your threads may look dark at times, and they might even become tangled, broken, weak, or knotted. But keep your focus on God’s design for your life and what better purpose you can achieve. With all the obstacles we as women have experienced and endured within our cultures and traditions, and how we have fought hard to not sink deeper in depression and self-hatred, I can’t help but say, “Thank you, Lord.” If God made way for me, then He will also make way for you. Life is a patchwork of exciting opportunities, waiting to reconnect by your threads and your understanding. Your threads of experience, both good and bad, are unique. And the God that is weaving the together knows what He is doing.

Think

*Today take a
few minutes to sit
quietly ...and Think*



*...on what is true, honest, inspiring,
necessary and kind.*

CHAPTER 5

Your Story

“We can demolish every deceptive fantasy that opposes God and breakthrough every arrogant attitude that is raised in defiance of the true knowledge of God. We capture, like prisoners of war, every thought and insist that it bow in obedience to the Anointed One.”

(2 Corinthians 10:5, The Passion Translation).

I know you have a deep-seated desire to heal strong, maximize your potential, and to live your best life, and I want you to know that you can. Sometimes because of the hardship, setbacks, and constant interruptions of life, negative thoughts enter. And this is normal. Why wouldn't they? Life can challenge. But before long, these thoughts can take over the mind. God's Word encourages and helps us, as Christians, to recognize that we have the power to get rid of the thoughts that prevent us from putting on the mind of Christ.

The first step in overcoming all the things that hold us back, causing us shame and self-hatred, is seemingly modest.

Think of the outcome you want to achieve.

Let me ask you this, “who do you want to become?” This is not a simple question, and it's not as easy to answer as you might imagine. If you are like me, many of the things that led me to destructive behavior occurred early in my life and I buried them deep, deep down in my psyche. They influenced my every thought, word, and action. But I hid them below the surface level of my conscious mind. I would often do things and not know why I behaved out of fear or acted in an oversensitive manner.

Here's the thing. What you allow into your thoughts determines your behavior, and those behaviors ultimately lead to actions, and your actions shape the life you live. The brain is like a computer. It collects, processes, and stores many events, images, experiences, and other various information daily. Many of us have lived in toxic environments that taught us how to be a woman who fulfills the fantasy of what other people imagine. However, God created you in His image. He wants you to know who you are in Him and reflect the woman He created you to be.

Like an old itchy sweater or a tight-fitting shoe, you have now outgrown the pain of your past. The emotions that once fitted your soul and mind no longer correspond. Therefore, this step may take longer than you first assume, but this is OK. Yes, your recovery will have its ups and downs, and your emotions will react on and off based on the trauma you have come through. However, I want you to know God is here for you, and He is committed to getting you safely through your healing journey. I invite you to step away from all the noise and commotion of work. Let the kids and pets visit Grandma or not. Find a quiet space where you can begin the process of clearing out the things in your heart that have been hindering you from moving forward in boldness.

Grab your **"Thread Workbook"** or pen and paper and take the following action steps:

* * *

T: Think of the Outcome You Want to Achieve



Let's envision Jesus standing with you, holding your hand. He protects you. You are loved, and nothing can change that. Together with our Redeemer, you are going on a journey. A journey into your past from as far back as you can first remember.

Ask yourself:

- **Who do I want to become?**
 - *Name the woman you envision yourself to be.*
 - *Is she a successful entrepreneur?*
 - *Is she a devoted wife and mother?*
 - *Is she a self-assured business leader?*

What outcome do I want to achieve?

Stand in front of your mirror and look yourself in the eyes and say, _____, *let's go on a journey together, girl.*"

Next, "Think" back on **past** events you are most proud of and say,
"_____, *I achieved _____, and I am proud of you girl.*"

Then "Think" on **current** events and the things you are working on and notice how they make you feel and say, "_____, *I am achieving _____ and that makes me feel _____.*"

Finally, "Think" about 1-3 outcomes you want to achieve in the **future** and by what due date and say

"_____, *I will achieve _____ by _____.*"

Write your thoughts down. Sometimes we find it hard to record our thoughts, opinions, and feelings on paper, but you will get used to it. Practice doing so. You will come to realize it is safe.

Who do I want to be?

What outcome do I want to achieve?

What does "this woman" look like? Describe her character, her lifestyle, her speech.

Write your responses.

Now think of your childhood and the first time a situation led you to feel ashamed, embarrassed, guilty, ridiculed, or neglected. What was the event? Write it. You will build a list of all the scraps and threads of your life that are secretly influencing your present. To completely release all that is holding you back, you will need to go step by step, event by event, from your earliest memory. This may take hours, days, or even months. The critical thing in Step One is not to leave anything out.

Make a complete list of what you remember. For example, after reading what I have shared thus far about my life, you will see that the first event that rocked my world occurred when I was five years old—my father's abandonment. The first few items will come quickly, but at some points, you will think you have it all and then realize there is more to go. Take your time; this is a crucial step.

Give yourself a hug and say the following:

LEONIE. H. MATTISON

What was the event?	At what age did it happen?	Who was involved?

“Those past hurts are powerless to harm me.”

Love surrounds you, and the Holy Spirit is there with you and in you.



Pause, rest your heart, and let's connect to God through prayer.

A Pattern to Quilt – Truth

I invite you to step away from the pain that envelops you. Instead of fixating on the backside of the quilt, you are creating, reach forward, lovingly and slowly flip over the quilt of your life, and look at the stunning work of art God is creating. Get excited. Remember that your quilt is still incomplete, so sit with the finished product and honor your progress.

Visualize what your quilt will look like tomorrow and, once the masterpiece is complete. You deserve to live with joy. You deserve to enjoy peace of mind. You deserve to give yourself the chance to be the woman you always knew God created you to be. You can!

Beloved, Jesus awakened you to this victorious self and launched you into this brand-new day with enough of everything you need. You have power. You have a sound mind. You are loved. You've been created in love. You are a chosen woman. You are part of a royal priesthood. You are a holy nation. You are a precious daughter. You have the right to declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). You are enough! You are beautiful enough; you are healing enough; you are wise enough and compassionate enough. Let your enoughness be enough!

Now, remind your heart that you have power over your mind. Be patient with and kind to yourself. Be okay with embracing and loving who you are right now. Celebrate and honor the woman you are becoming.

Look at the companion Coloring Book.

Enjoy the illustrative art and journal aimed at supporting your healing journey.

CHAPTER 6

A Prayer for Truth

Father, I am calling on the personal power, support, and resources given to me by You, my God, in the form of the Holy Spirit. I am ready to allow You in.

I thank You for opening my eyes to see that I can overcome my past and be made whole.

Please help me break free from the chains of bondage from the past traumatic experiences that hold me back from fulfilling my purpose in You.

Please also forgive me for everything I've done that was not pleasing in Your sight.

Thank You for freeing me from fear to break my silence boldly, face the truth about what has happened to me, and start anew.

Thank You for freeing me from the condemnation and shame of abuse and allowing me to walk forward in the newness of Christ.

Thank You that old things have passed away and that I am a new creature in You.

No longer will I be a victim of shame, guilt, humiliation, or fear, but I am victorious through the power of my testimony.

Thank You, Lord, for victory, freedom, and new beginnings. I declare I am a courageous woman.

In Jesus' name. Amen

A Time to Reflect on Your Truth

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal dotted lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a guide for handwriting practice. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

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Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Book About?

The Thread is my life story, a childhood knitted together with adverse, severe experiences that left me with posttraumatic stress disorder, a prisoner in my soul, and trapped in my mind. As a single mother of three, when I looked at myself in the mirror, I saw myself as a broken girl with a sick soul, a noisy mind, and a broken heart.

The Thread was born out of these life-shattering circumstances. In a tapestry of stories, I share my struggles, pairing them with tales of fifteen women in the Bible who also faced severe tragedy, trial, or failure. I lead readers along a gentle path that shows them how these women responded in faith and explain “the thread” it created in each of them. The result is a resounding call to action.

The women of The Thread have the courage to discover, embrace, and accelerate their God-given purpose. My prayer is that each beloved reader will recognize that they, too, are worthy of love, can find freedom, and enjoy closeness with God.

Why Did you Write the Book?

My main hope was to create a solution that could be useful to help women free themselves from being the woman who trauma created. So, I focused on inviting readers into my journey of trauma, sufferings, and faith with loads of vulnerability, bravery, and honesty. This is not an indictment of the Christian church or any church. It is not a vehicle to seek revenge for past wrongs (no matter how horrible), nor is it meant to undermine men or men in ministry. This book is all about healing.

The circumstances I have written about are an important part of my story, but the names of individuals have been changed, characters have been combined for brevity, and locations have been switched to protect the innocent as well as any other victims who have chosen not to be identified.

I hope to bring people inside the experience of a girl who endured Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs, whose life has been radically transformed by the power of God,

and how she became the woman who's helping individuals, teams and organizations achieve intentional transformation. My prayer is that the stories, the sharing of my life story will empower you to release your story and allow God to transform your brokenness into a life-sized breakthrough.

Who is the book written for?

Women who have suffered trauma and are left in the dark, silenced by guilt, shame, and the overwhelming burden of blame that society often places on the victim.

Organizations and individuals working to end abuse, as well as men who are interested in gaining a better understanding of the impact of severe trauma, will get an insight into how they can better support and love people through and beyond trauma.

How will women overcome trauma?

As a result of the six-step THREAD system where women usually feel unworthy, damaged, and humiliated, they might begin to feel whole, at peace, happy, and complete, as a Daughter of God. I see women living a brand-new life as overcomers with no limitations on who, how, and what they can become in God. They are living an abundant life in Christ and have even launched careers that are positively impacting the world.

The steps of The Thread, when followed, will allow women to:

Step 1: Think of the Outcome They Want to Achieve

Step 2: Harvest the Lessons They've Learned and Heal Their Heart

Step 3: Release Trauma, Choose Courage, and Reclaim Their Life

Step 4: Enlist Allies to Becoming the Person who has Been Locked Inside

Step 5: Adopt New Mindsets to Break the Painful Patterns and Create New Healthy Behaviors

Step 6: Dream of A New You and Design Your Joyful Life

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Leonie H Mattison knows what keeps most survivors of trauma, and those living in crisis feeling unworthy, and not living the life they deserve, because she's been there! Leonie spent many days, with the burden of guilt, trauma, shame and self-loathing until she learned there was another way. And since then, she has never looked back. She now knows, identifying, applying, and practicing the art of intentional living, should never be an afterthought. It should be a daily endeavor, and she guides you to use the power of intentionality to choose the desired outcome you want to achieve in every situation.

As an Organizational and Talent Development Practitioner, Motivational Speaker, and Author of The Thread collection, Dr. Mattison has dedicated her career to transforming lives through high-quality education, cutting-edge research, and people-centric leadership. She is an adjunct graduate and undergraduate professor, student advisor, and mentor and her 23 years career spans nonprofits, government, and the private sector, building strong leaders and high-performing teams. She has a strong track record of increasing employee engagement and cultivating continuous learning cultures that inspire people to achieve measurable organizational outcomes. Leonie is adept at leading concurrent projects, teams, and initiatives, impacting up to 60 departments, 26,000 employees, and 8.4 million constituents. An entrepreneurial fundraiser with a successful track record of securing and administering budgets and grant awards up to \$45 million.

On a personal level, Leonie has overcome many of life's worst challenges, including a series of adverse childhood experiences, severe bouts of Bell's Palsy, a near-death Stroke, a difficult failed marriage, and a close fatal suicide attempt. Leonie has an amazing story of how God transformed her traumatic life experiences into ordained purpose. As an international speaker, her women empowerment workshops, learning programs, and resources are filled with hopeful life lessons to empower women to break free from unhealthy relationships and behaviors that make them feel unworthy or undeserving and win back their power.

Her infectious energy, coupled with her engaging, uplifting, and educational - six-step T.H.R.E.A.D System©, aims to empower women achieve intentional

transformation. As a motivational “arsonist,” her presentations “fire you up” with concrete ideas to help you discover your personal worth, embrace an intentional mindset, and make your dreams a reality. As a “Get Intentional” expert, her core belief is based upon, “being intentional is the key to achieving success at work, in school, at home, and in life.”

Her core belief is, **“transformed people transform others to impact the world.”**

Further Work and Educational Experiences

Dr. Mattison is currently serving as the Chief of Organizational and Talent Development division at the County of Santa Barbara (C.O.S.B.). Under her leadership, the C.O.S.B.’s training center has transformed into an accredited Employees’ University, offering its 4,000+ workforce access to graduate and undergraduate degrees and high-quality learning programs.

Before joining COSB, Dr. Mattison served in leadership roles as Sansum Diabetes Director of Clinical Research Operations and Major Grants, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene’s Public Health Research Grant Administrator, Newark Alliance Workforce and Economic Development Program Officer, and Merck Pharmaceutical Continuing Medical Education Coordinator and Business Analyst.

DISCLAIMER

The information provided in *The Thread collection* is offered for educational and informational purposes solely, and it is made available to you as a self-help tool for your use. Reasonable care is taken to ensure that the information presented is accurate to the best of the Author's knowledge, views, and belief.

Before going further, I need to categorically state that this book is not an indictment of the Christian church or any church. It is not a vehicle to seek revenge for past wrongs (no matter how horrible), nor is it meant to undermine men or men in ministry. This book is strictly about healing and drawing closer to God than you have ever imagined possible. This book is written with a focus on the many waves of abuse women suffer (physical, mental, sexual, and spiritual), but it can also be used by anyone who wants to overcome shadows from the past that are holding them back.

The Thread collection is designed to help you cope in your present life right now after the trauma. The author does not ask you to think about the traumatic experience itself or its details. However, some of the stories and exercises in this book may call up powerful unpleasant memories accompanied by overwhelming feelings. One of this book's first tasks is to teach you how to guard your heart should this happen. The author offers tools to help you along your healing journey later in the book. For this reason, you are encouraged to read through the prologue and the first five chapters of this book in sequence. Don't skip ahead until you are sure you have ways to take care of yourself when strong feelings arise.

The circumstances the author has written about or share publicly are an important part of her story. But the names of individuals have been changed, characters have been combined for brevity, and locations have been switched to protect the innocent and any other victims who have chosen not to be identified. The author added undeniable examples of God's ability to transform those horrible experiences into a beautiful quilt that would glorify His love, power, and personal care

The information in *The Thread collection* is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment that can be provided by your own Medical Provider (including doctor/physician, nurse, physician's assistant, or any other health professional), Mental Health Provider (including psychiatrist, psychologist, therapist, counselor, or social worker), or member of the clergy.

Therefore, do not disregard or delay seeking professional medical, mental health, or religious advice because of information you have read from the author either through her books, online resources, online coaching, mentoring, post, or speaking sessions. Do not stop taking any medications without speaking to your own Medical Provider or Mental Health Provider. If you have or suspect that you have a medical or mental health problem, contact your own Medical Provider or Mental Health Provider promptly.

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THE THREAD

Sew

Your Best Life Tapestry with Intention

If variety is the spice of life, then your vibrant life threads
are the ingredients of the recipe that make you who you are.

Love,

Your Sister in Intentional Transformation

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