

Chapter 10 Tough Talk: Crucial Conversations Create Bold Colors

Sometimes talk can be tricky. It's not the tough-talking, but listening to the words that peppered at you like a spray of bullets you were not expecting is tough. Some talk gets delivered in that whining annoying same old way. You learn how to tune it out or turn it to a low drum in the background. And then, again, there is that type of talk that is like a spray of bullets that never kills you, but they get your attention.

For me and many like me in the black community, when we have troubles, problems, and things, we should go to a counselor because we don't. Instead, we go to church. I was no different. The church was and is that place of safety. No one will think that you are "crazy" in how "crazy" is intended. You will just be meeting with the pastor and trying to find and figure out what is going on—you know, *Come to Jesus*. It's true. You have read through enough of my own crazy to see that I really had a lot of crazy happening. So it was time for me to go to Church and to *Come to Jesus*, and it happened with my pastor, Pastor Coleman.

Pastor Coleman was a man that would help me to make the change for good. He had been doing this for years for me, but I needed more. I needed a little more support than what Greg could give me, and I needed to bring myself to a sense of sobriety that would stick with me. I needed a change and knew that I could not do this alone—not even with the goodness of Greg's heart. I had to hack through the knots and tangled weave of my tapestry until I got to the center of my pain to find the gain.

Now, committing to dig through the pain of my past was terrifying. No one decent person wants to unearth what you have hidden—least of all you. Who wants to see and smell the rotting flesh of the sin-zombie skeletons I keep trying to bury? No one. That is why I buried them. However, traumatic memories are relentless in their clawing through the dirt breakthrough trying to consume you.

"Thanks for coming, Marlisse," said Pastor Coleman. I just nodded and smiled a bit. My forehead is beaded up with sweat. *Stay and listen*, I ordered myself. *You have come so far. I remind myself. You met for weeks and weeks. You have done steps one through ten. Today is eleven—let's do it.*

I knew what step eleven was. I was to discover God's plan for me. Together, Pastor Colmen and I sought through prayer and meditation to improve my conscious contact with God as I understood Him. Step eleven was all about this power I had been praying for. I wanted to know and have a knowledge of His will for me and the power to carry that out.

As Pastor Coleman shared insight and information, I responded and talked to him about the pain of my past. It was a fair exchange about love, God, and the *F* word, *forgiveness*. Yes, the F-word. I knew this word. It was not new to me, but it was one that I don't take lightly. I mean, how do you forgive people who have robbed you of your innocence?

With that thought, two images flashed up, burning their image into my eyelids. My shut eyes saw the details of their faces, their evil sneers, and my nose almost seemed to recall the smell of both of them. Two men who robbed me of everything. How does forgiveness really work for cowards like that because my innocence could never be restored?

"Marlisse," said Pastor Coleman. My eyes flew open, bringing me out of my thoughts and back into the present. "It was not your fault that those terrible acts happened to you." His words fell on me like a warm blanket. I nodded at him. He continued, "But, it is your responsibility to become free of these burdens, of these pains by taking advantage of the atonement of Christ." His voice cracked with emotion. "He gave His life for you."

I looked up at him, watching a single tear slide down his worn chocolate cheek. I had heard this again and again. I was comfortable with God. I knew He listened to me, but I didn't know how to apply it. I had been praying, working, dancing, and submerging myself in His word, but I still was missing something.

My mind seemed to open up a filing cabinet full of *Atonement stories*. I knew the analogy of not forgiving others was being compared to a back full of rocks you lug around, not wanting them to let it go. That it only hurts you, and not the other person. Or the other one about drinking poison expecting the other person to die.

"I know, I know," I said, waving him off again. "Marlisse, what do you need to know about to make this right?" he asked. "I guess," I said with a shrug of my shoulders, "I guess—I just need a bit more time. It's like I'm so close. I can feel it." I said with a wavery voice and my eyes pooling up wet.

"Ok, Marlisse. Ok," Pastor Coleman said. He took a deep breath, looked around the room at the pictures and the potted plant, and then back to me. He smiled and asked, "How is the dance team coming along?"

I was surprised that he wanted to talk about the dance team. "I love dancing for God," I said enthusiastically. "Yes, and you do a fine job of it," he said, folding his hands together and placing them in his lap. He was quiet for a space of time. I could feel my chest gently begin to burn and felt a peaceful excitement start to flutter in my guts. I was about to continue, but I felt hushed.

He thoughtfully looked out the window. I looked as well at the steady rain that was falling. It was a gentle cleansing rain. As each drop fell, I felt something. It seemed to help wash many painful memories—somehow making them fade and my present brighter. I smiled a bit as one memory hit me: cussing Pastor Coleman out because of what he had said. It went against my being, but then it seemed to soak into the tapestry fibers-like a deep dry cleaning. The fibers were brighter because of it.

Well, here I was, again, for my tough talk meeting, and I was getting a little bit better. Pastor Coleman had worked the twelve-step program with me, and I felt my heart healed each week. The pain of the past being purged from me like the rain that dripped down the window, leaving a fresh streak with a beaded trail in its wake. I was so close. We finished our meeting, and I knew that answers would come.

Sometimes answers come in ways you are not expecting. Sometimes they come as you read the word of God. Sometimes through friends, and sometimes through tough talk. Tough talk can lead to answers in ways that you don't always see coming, like the answer that was part of my twelve-step program. I found an answer to becoming a minister. How all of that came about was clear to me; however, it shocked many people.

My mind was a web of confusion. I felt myself looking into my tapestry for answers for a weaving pattern, for some way to make sense of the calling—the calling to become a ministry. I had been working for months and years on my relationships with God. The twelve-step program put that focus into a higher intense gear, and now, I felt called to His work. Now what was interesting was that when God called me, I acted. The challenge was getting others around me to accept my call, or so I thought.

The rain splattered on the windshield as the squeaky wipers squeezed it off. My mind was hot with anger, and my heart heavy with hurt. I just ran out of that house. I ran from my Papaw and Greg. Imagine. I had just left Pastor Coleman's office and went to tell my Papaw all about the great news!

I met Greg there. He had the kids with him, so we were all there. But as soon as the doubt was filling the room, squeezing out my faith, I found myself running from his words and Greg. I left. Why did I even go over there? What was wrong with me? Why did I care so much about what he thought about my calling? Why did he not jump up and congratulate me? Why was he so filled with doubt? My Papaw doubted me? He doubted that God called me to be a Minister?

My mind continued to play Greg's face and Papaw's words repeatedly in my head. "Marlisse. Do you know what kind of life *you* must leave behind once you are called?" The tone. His tone was so accusatory—*you have to leave behind!* It was like he hadn't seen any of the changes I had been going through these past ten years! It was like I was still a teenager in his mind. I was still a teenage mom. I was still stuck in college. I was still stuck in the drink. It was like I was stuck with making dumb choices, or I was never going to move forward because of my stupid past. Greg's facial expressions just seemed to emphasize everything.

Doub, doubt, doubt! It began to pour over me like the rain on my window, washing away the energy of my calling. My Papaw's words echoed in my heart and haunted me like a shadow. It engulfed me in darkness. His doubt was leaving me with more suspicion. All of this was a massive part of my confusion now.

How could Papaw doubt? How? He was a minister. He had been called! Well, I had been called too. Why was my calling any different? Did everyone only look at me like I was a broken teenager, so I wasn't worthy enough or could not change my lifestyle? But if God thought I was worthy, then why couldn't they accept that?

The sky flashed and rumbled again and again. My tires went around and around that city as I tried to understand his words and Greg's face. Suddenly the sky was split open, pouring more and more rain onto my car. My wipers could not keep up with it. It was like the doubt from the world had been unleashed on my vehicle in the form of rain, and I was like my windshield wipers trying to clear it off, but it could not keep up, and the doubt started to drown me.

A voice said in my head. *Maybe I really can't do this. Perhaps, I got the message from God wrong. Perhaps this will be too hard.* I found myself allowing the dark fog to surround me. I started to embrace the coolness of the darkness and wanted to agree with the voice.

Suddenly in the fog of confusion, it was like I hit an iceberg of fear. I was triggered into anger. It filled my belly, and I cried out, "Take the calling, God. Take it back! This is too much pain. I ain't got what it takes. Papaw knows me. He...he...he knows I ain't cut out for this." I shouted in my car. I felt my light leave and gray confusing unworthiness fill in like a heavy London fog. The tendrils from the fog brought up a word from out of my tapestry, *shame*. I saw that word reflected in Papaw's eyes—shame.

More tears fell, and my throat was choked off, but my car kept rolling forward. Suddenly I felt a block of emptiness engulf me. It was God, or rather, I felt Him leave. He was just gone. It happened so fast; it was like I could understand that He instantly removed the calling. It was just gone, a void, emptiness, and nothing replaced it . . . but a dark nothingness. No, wait, it was more like it was hollow—like He had carved out more than just the calling. Like some of my soul had left. I could feel my tapestry begin to unravel, leaving a hole in its center.

The word LIFE started to circulate in this empty hollow space with thread fraying all about me. *Marlisse* said a thought from an evil, ugly place. *Marlisse, you have to leave your life behind.* It circulated on an endless loop. I could not rid myself of the fear that I could not change and the dark space growing in my tapestry.

How could I go from utter euphoria a few moments before knowing that God called me to do His work to now a heavy black emptiness in a few words of doubt from my Papaw?

I propelled the car forward, rattling over the series of railroad tracks. *The tracks*, I thought with spite. *The tracks*, I repeated. On impulse, I slammed on the brakes allowing my car to straddle two sets of tracks perfectly. My heart was pounding, and I breathed heavily out of panic. *Put it into park*, commanded a dark thought. I felt my hand slide up the gearshift and put it into park. As my hand left the knob, I heard and felt each stab of the words *Unworthy! Useless! Worthless!* My hand dropped to my side. I hear the faint sound of a train whistle. But only barely through the pounding rain.

Then the voice again, *Shit girl! You?? You called from God? You ain't worthy of the calling. Papaw knows it!* The ferocity of that voice chilled me, causing me to shake. The faint toot of the train whistle seemed a little closer.

More fat rain splattered and pounded the car. And still, I sat there. *You know*, hissed the evil voice. *You could end your pain right now*, he said silkily. *Right here. Just stay on these tracks and take it. It will be over in a few minutes. You will be free from your so-called—calling.* Suddenly the horn blast of the train sounded. I looked up. Then a sharp cry, that earsplitting cry, wailed from the back seat of the car, jump-started my heart into my throat.

It was Demetrius—my fourth child. How? Who? How did he get in the back of the car? I had run away from my Papaw's house. I had run from Greg. I had to drive to be alone! ALONE! BLAHHHHHH. The horn blasted again, matching Demetrius's cry. This second blast jolted me out of my hollow space, propelling me into action. I grasped the cold metal lever with my right hand and slammed it into the drive. The blast of the third horn and the flashing lights of the railroad crossing started in their rhythmic pattern, forced my foot down on the peddle, and helped me rumble off the tracks. With Demetrius crying, the crashing thoughts of ending my life entirely left me.

I stopped the car a mile from the tracks and turned to see Demetrius's wet face looking at mine. I scooped him up and held him in a rocking motion. With each rock, I felt an incremental amount of light radiate back into my hollow space. Tough talk. Tough words. Warmth flooded me, and my words cried out, "I accept the calling. I accept the calling. I accept the calling." The deep hole in my tapestry started to fill in and heal my tapestry. And at that moment, my life would never be the same.

Tough talk. The Lord, in His wisdom, knows all. He knows when I can and can't handle life, but He never lets me quit. Stepping into my calling on that day was the right thing to do. I've learned that as soon as God Shows up, so will the Devil. There is opposition in all things. Like that day of my calling, I had Papaw spreading doubt in me (even though I don't think he meant to).

When I approached Pastor Coleman with the news of my Calling, he was surprised yet excited, yet he was cautious. He asked me to hold onto my knowledge for about a month before professing it in church. But Pastor Coleman's warning was not filled with doubt. It was more like waiting for the right moment to surprise someone with a gift. That was something I could wait to do.

Tapestry Talks

Dear Reader,

Well, what do you think? I mean, we have come through my trauma-filled childhood through distraught teen years, and then you saw how life began to change for me as I changed for the better. Can you believe I finished college? Can you believe that Greg and I got married? Can you think that people sat around for five hours waiting at the church for us? Umm, I tell you what, that day in my lavender dress is a powerful part of my tapestry.

What do you think about me becoming a preacher? Do you see that if we put our fear in the hands of the Master, He can do anything with our lives? Ok, ok. Now it is time to get down to work. I want to show you what has helped me to come through my trauma and find healing. I promise you that you will get a reward if you work.

Your commitment to the healing process will determine your level of success. This is not an easy process and will take time and focused effort. It is not linear. Come to think about it, what journey ever is? During the journey towards healing from trauma, you might find yourself revisiting a stage or two, meaning you might feel a few setbacks. That is normal and is to be expected. Also, please know that some steps will be more manageable for you than others.

I must warn you that at some point during this journey from tragedy to triumph, you will want to quit—I promise you will be at mile nine and looking like you have a billion more to go, and you will want to step off the path and rest. You will feel every fiber of your being say, “This hurts! Stop it.” But I implore you to hold on, even if it means that you have to push pause and do so self-care.

Please take breaks, rest, and do self-care. But please, promise me you won’t abandon the path. This is for you. It is for you to find your way, heal, and live the life that is for you. That every fiber of your being will say, “This hurts! Stop it.” But I implore you to hold on, even if it means that you have to push pause and do so self-care.

Ready? Here we go.

Step One:
Journaling!

Step one requires that you do some journaling or find an empathic person and a nonjudgement listener. It is time to talk, write it out, or combine both. This is the purge. I don’t care what you write it on or how you write it out, but you need to grab the words banging around in your head, heart, and body and put them down. When you have kept it all inside, the negativity/trauma hurting you needs to be released.

This part of the process requires at least one support buddy or a tribe that can support you as you work through this. I am 100% in favor of coaches because they are great at asking

questions that get to the root of the problem. But you may also need a medical certified mental health specialist who can reliably diagnose and create a treatment plan to aid you as you navigate this step.

This step is complex and will take a lot of energy and commitment from you. When I shared my story in bits and pieces here and there, tears, choking anger, and deep pain was everywhere. It was the ugly-booger type of cry. But, know that the first step is traditional, the most challenging step for everyone.

Step Two:

Clean Out Your House.

This step requires you to identify the behavior (actions), the people in your life, and your beliefs about yourself that are no longer serving you. It means going through the process of boxing them up and removing them from your house. It is messy, complex, and painful. I know, sounds like fun, right? But, like hoarders, if we hold onto all of this, it will bury us in the end. I pray I have built enough trust with you to help you through step one.

Look at the visible parts of your life—the parts that the rest of the world sees. It's like your front room where you entertain company. You try to keep the showroom presentable because it reflects the image you want others to see. It's time to clean it up. Keep the room but clean it. (We all know that there are more rooms to clean).

How does that look? Presentable? Ok, now it is time to deep clean the kitchen. Let's open the fridge. Oh, man! What is that smell? It looks like it is three weeks old, Lasagna. (I hope it's not from Aunt Jennifer!). Wash, wipe, rinse those shelves a few more times, and then let's wipe down the doors. Better. Nice work.

Now let's look at the funk on that stove and the grease on the backsplash—time for some elbow grease to remove this grease. Scrub, scrub, scrub. Wipe, spray, wipe and wipe. WOW! I can see a reflection on the stovetop. Great work.

Hum, I wonder what is in that cupboard? Look at the Tupperware mess inside there! Do you even have lids for all of those containers? You know what to do. Grab a donation box, start putting everything you need to give away in it and take it to Goodwill.

Time to wipe the counters, sweep, and mop the floors. Let's do it! I'm here with you the whole time. As you clean and I mop, you talk; we will watch the pain go into the soap bubbles and float away from us. Well done! Take a breath and breathe in that clean lemon fresh with a hint of bleach smell.

Now, onto the closet. I know, I know—your bedroom closet, where you have allowed your hopes and dreams to lay on the floor, discarded and often forgotten. It's time to pick them up. Hang them up, find the parts of your wardrobe that bring you joy, and put the colorful dreams where you can find them. There. Do you see why you need a support system to get through the work? We still have that basement and attic to go through—deep breath. Here we go.

Where is that light switch? Click! We are in the basement of your life. I know that you are shuttering just a little bit. I can see that there are quite a few boxes here. It's time to open

each one and go through the memories that had gotten wet and have mildewed from the tears that you had cried when you thought no one could see you. It's time to cry again, but I am with you. This will take the pain away. We will take our time here. Don't worry about the phone ringing or about kids coming down to interrupt. I blocked this time off for you.

As the last tear falls and the final box shuts, I look you in the eye and hug you. I'm proud of you. Well, all we have left is the attic, your mind, where you have boxed memories both good and evil have been hidden away. I can see you not wanting to face it—even that one box over there in the corner. Yes, that one underneath the one you tried to ignore because even looking at it causes pain to flood your mind. I want you to know that I'm here. Right here. I'll give you some private time. I'll be here at the top of the stairs when you wrestle this one. Hello? Wow, you did it. It's okay if your eyes are puffy and swollen; mine are too if you look at me. We all have a similar box.

Readers, are you doing ok? I know I keep interrupting your thoughts, but that is just to check in on you. I'm a teacher at heart, and I have to monitor how y'all are doing. We are about to go into step three. Are you ready? Deep breath, here we go.

Step Three

The Boot!

Giving someone the boot means you will kick them out of someplace somewhere and soon. Kicking people out in your life happens during this process; I am talking about several things occurring, so let's get started. First, let's deal with the easy part; you need to physically kick some people out of your life. They are energy drainers. They don't respect your boundaries. They are harmful. These people may or may not be family, but you must bless them and show them the door. Believe it or not, those are the most accessible people to deal with.

The next group is a little harder because you have some attachment to them. Maybe their immediate family, like a son, a daughter, or an overbearing mother. In those cases, you need to confine them to rooms in your house that you consider public spaces, like the family room and the dining room. But you must keep them out of your personal space—like your bedroom. The key to addressing their negative impact on you is limiting their access to your inner chambers.

The final group of individuals is not individuals at all. They are ghosts from your past that live in your present. They have taken up residence in your life because of the traumatic event or chronic abuse they did to you. Their actions taught you that the world was not a safe place, and they have altered your perspective of life.

You have written your *life script* based on the pain they have caused. They have affected your ability to dream and hope. They have stolen your power and left you to survive as a woman trapped in a childhood experience. They have left you angry, bitter, and confused. You are unable to establish boundaries because of the damage they have caused.

Today, it is time to open some windows in your house and let the fresh air blow them away. It's time to forgive them. Forgiving them does not mean acting as if they didn't do it. I am saying reconcile with them. Forgiveness means that you stop waiting for an apology. You

acknowledge the other person's actions as wrong, but you start the process of allowing the negative emotion you have toward that person to connect you to them.

You began addressing the event, not the person who caused the event to occur. Instead of saying, "I hate John for violating me." You started by saying, "I hate the fact that John violated me." You change where your energy and thoughts are directed. You change why you are still giving the individual ownership for the action.

Open your house windows and cut the ties that bind you to them. Let their memory blow away. Remember that as you let them go, you let go of the *victim identity*. It is a surprisingly painful yet beautiful experience. I pray for God to send the wind into your house and allow the wisps of white to vanish.

There are a few more things to say about this. There is real power in all four steps, even though I have only shared three with you in this book. However, I invite you to come to one of my speaking events to understand the past part. I want you to taste the sweetness of transformation as I speak, as you think, and as to take action.

How are you feeling? Are you ready to take and look at how my tapestry is doing for the final three chapters? I know I am prepared to share the final masterpiece with you, so let's take a bathroom break, wash up, grab your favorite hot beverage, and sit and read so we can begin.

Section 4:
Transforming The Tapestry

Chapter 11

True Love Strengthens Your Tapestry

Once I received my calling to the ministry, and now others knew of it, it was time to serve. I knew that the love I had been searching for had been replenished. It was like I had the power to heal and help others deep inside me the whole time—like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz. She had it within her. She simply needed the experience of Oz to teach her how to believe in herself. My serving in the ministry was very similar. God knew I could do it; I just had to start, be patient, serve where I was called, and just do it.

After waiting patiently, compiling bible study, and leading prayer groups, I was given the clearance to meet with the bishops. They poured into me the love and light from God. I shared with the women in our study group this same light. The black pastors imparted their wisdom and strength into my heart, and I could feel my ministry heart grow. I could feel my victim's heart shedding away, which transformed me into a victor over the pain and brought me to healing.

Then God felt it was time to test my strength, testimony, and ability to call on God for forgiveness.

“Ok, sure. We’ll talk soon,” I said to my co-worker. I swung my heavy bag over my shoulder as I left the building. Bing! my phone rang out. My feet continued to walk me towards my car when, bing, my phone chimed again. With my free hand, I unlocked the phone screen and saw a name flash across my Facebook messenger—Charlie.

My breath caught in my throat, and my heavy bag fell from my shoulder, smacking the concrete. *Charlie? No. It can't be.* I felt my shoulder suddenly resting against my car's cold metal and glass window. *Charlie?* I squeezed my eyes shut. In that flash of darkness, pictures, feelings, and smells crossed my reality, trying to pull me back to when I was 16-years-old. “No,” I felt a whisper escape me as my numb hand tried to open the car's handle. Red hot flames seemed to ignite in my gut.

“No!” I shouted. The heaviness of my body sank into the driver's seat, and I hurried to the door shut. In my metal cocoon, I sat in a mixture of feelings—pain, old scars ripped open, freezing fear, and hot white anger licking up the back of my throat. The explosion of emotions was in full battle, and I wondered which feeling would win and transform me back to my reality.

Open the message; I felt my heart say, snapping me back to reality.

No! My mind hissed back.

It's his daughter, Charlie, not him. My heart said.

But he's connected to her. I snapped back.

Still, it's not him. My heart retorted, but silence responded.

Answer it, My heart prompted. *See what it's about.* I felt my finger slide on the cold glass of my phone and open the message.

My eyes fell upon a simple message. “Lisse. Hey, Hi. Look, I know this is out of the blue, but I want to talk to you. Do you have a minute?” —Charlie.

There, you did it! My heart said rewardingly.

Out of the blue? My mind sarcastically shouted back. *I don't know why she would be connecting with me unless . . .* my heart seemed to confirm something that my mind did not want to comprehend.

Lisse. My heart tried again. *She is reaching out to you. There is something important happening here. Reach out to her.* I felt my heart say.

The flame of anger was growing with this encouragement—not abating.

Fine! My head responded. *Fine!* More flames raged up at my insides. I shook with anger as my thumbs danced around the glass screen.

“Hi, Charlie. I responded and swallowed deep, trying to push back the wave of acid that was bubbling up against the back of my throat.

“It’s been a long time.” I typed. With a shallow breath full of anger, I finished with, “What’s up?” I heard the bell tone and swoosh as I pushed send. I counted backward from five and tried to breathe to regain control. Five, four, three, two...Bing, she responded.

“Lisse, thanks for answering. I have a huge favor to ask.” Those words, *favor to ask*, stuck in my craw, but my brain was stumped with what she could want from me, which fed into more of my anger.

Please, Lisse, I felt my heart beg again. *Listen to her. God is in this.* With that prompt, I felt a little spiritual water douse some of my flames.

Just get this over with, I reminded myself. I typed, “Yes, It’s been a long time. How can I help you?” Then, I felt my thumb push send.

Instantly her message came back. “My father,” my eyes read, “is dying.” I felt my mouth whisper the words. My breath caught in my throat. The white-hot anger was damned, leaving my hands to shake. *Is he dying?* My head said back to myself in confusion, but I felt my eyes read on.

“I know you are a pastor, now, and well, can you give my dad his Last Rites?” I froze, suspended in time, but my eyes scanned the last two words again and again, “Last Rites...Last Rites?” The words fell as a haunting echo I could only hear in my mind’s eye. My anger shifted to fill every pore of my skin, pushing sweat out and beading up on my forehead. My hot head leaned against the car’s cold window. My skin registered some relief, but just for that moment. All I could whisper was, “Last Rites.” I felt my hand slip the key into the ignition and cranked over the car. *I needed to go home,* I whispered.

Now. I have no memory of driving home from work that day. I have no memory of making dinner or preparing kids for bed. Instead, my mind was locked on the words “Last Rites” repeating, and my head saying, how could I give Charlie’s dad his Last Rites? How?

I shared with Greg what had happened and why my emotions were all over the map. The exchange between us was not what I was expecting. “Lisse,” Greg said, “You should do it,” he encouraged. “After all, this is what it means to be called into the ministry.” That was both a blow and a truth being spoken simultaneously.

That was how my life was. That was how God taught me. He, in a flash, helped me see both sides of the situation. I knew it was right, and Greg’s words echoed in my heart over the next two days. Those two days were filled with fasting and prayers, yet I still had no peace.

Why no peace? Imagine, if you will, at age sixteen, being asked to babysit a family. Sure, you might think. That’s easy, right? Now imagine that following caring for the kids, cleaning up,

and putting them to bed, the father comes home from the outing, and you figure it is time to receive your pay and go home. It sounds normal, right? But just picture it in your head that he decided NOT to let the babysitter go home. But instead, he attacked and raped the babysitter.

Yes, that is what happened. That night—all those years ago—his smell, the pain of what happened to my body, and the stealing of my innocence again, again . . . and now, twenty-six years later, God was asking me to face this man and give him his Last Rites?

This was the scenario that cycled round and round for over one week. However, I had no confirmation that I would forgive him and perform the rites on him.

My eyes shut tight as I knelt to pray again for what felt like the hundredth time. My prayer to Heavenly Father about this situation felt the same. It was never really ending, and I was never really getting anywhere since first reading the request from Charlie. This loop going on in my head was worse than any of the rides at Kings Island.

I had been over and over this again and again with Pastor Coleman and with Greg. Their advice was the same, “go fast and pray about it.” So this scenario cycled round and round for over one week. I had no confirmation that I would be able to forgive him, to perform the rites on him. But I mustered up the courage and went to the hospital anyway.

Ding, the heavy and slightly dented metal door slid open. My eyes registered on the fourth floor. *I’m here*, I thought. *I’m on the 4th floor*. Suddenly I was at the door to his room. I pushed the heavy door open and slipped inside. My nose wrinkled at the smell of death, my ears registered the soft tones and bells of the machines keeping him alive, and my eyes saw the silhouette of Charlie standing at the darkening window.

“You’re here,” Charlie said. “You’re a real Preacher, now. A real Preacher,” she said with flat emotion. I nodded my response and looked at the shape resting on the bed. He was smaller and bent from years of hard living—a shell of who he was and what was left. He turned his head from the machine and looked in my direction, but I refused to meet his sunken eyes. As my feet approached him, my skin began to itch and crawl, and I could almost recall his evil touch. My nose smelled that pungent death smell again. *God, please help me. Please help me*; I feel my heart cry.

At the side of his bed, I gently pulled the curtain to separate us from Charlie slightly. I could see half of her as I looked back around it towards Charlie. She seemed to be frozen there in numb wet silence. Suddenly his hand reached from the bed and a bone-chilling icy grip clasped around my forearm. My head and heart seemed to split in two. I was frozen there.

“*You must feel God’s love to give him Last Rites*,” my heart whispered.

“*How can I feel anything but hatred?*” my head responded.

“*Focus on your prayers for over a week. You are prepared. You can do this.*” my heart said.

“*See that pillow?*” my head said. “*All you would have to do is place it over his face—That face that mocked you. That face that laughed as he took your innocence. Pick up the pillow.*” my head suggested.

“*Lisse, focus! Think about the love of God. We all need His love. This is not about you.*”

“*Put the pillow over his mouth and gently press down. You are behind the curtain; no one would know.*” My blood ran cold at my head’s suggestion, and I started to shake.

“*Stop!*” my heart begged. *This is not about you! Help him! He needs the Last Rites.*”

“Lisse?” I heard Charlie’s voice again, breaking me from this emotional tug of war to kill or give Last Rites, yet his grip remained there. I heard the squeaking of her shoes walking towards the bed, and the curtain was pulled aside. She was standing there, empty, numb, a shell of her former self. Instantly, my mind focused on Charlie. Charlie, who was five years younger than me. Charlie—his daughter. Charlie. She stood there with tears but mechanically no deep emotion, her empty face again. I hear my heart wonder, *what did he do to her? Did he do the same thing to her?*

His icy grip was still upon me and had not slackened his grip on my skin. The skeleton of the man—he was as good as gone. I looked at the protruding bones and sick yellow skin from his hands up to his face. I glanced at fear-filled eyes. I seemed to take a tiny moment of pleasure in his fear. I thought *He knows who he would face in a matter of minutes*. I nearly smiled, but this was out of my hands, but I felt something bigger than all of this start to enter into my heart.

Give him Last Rites. My heart pleaded with my head. I took a deep breath, and I started coughing because of the smell, but I tried to settle down and bring the words to my voice—nothing—only silence. I felt trapped within the pain of my past, the pain of his destruction, and Charlie’s pain as well. My eyes flashed in a triangle fashion between her, him, and the faint light that was left from the window.

Suddenly, I took in a sharp breath, and I stopped the noise that was going on in my head. Out of the quiet in the room, I heard from his shell a faint, “I’m sorry.” The word fell like a led balloon with no hope, no air, and I could not accept it. He squeaked out a choking whisper, “I’m sorry,” again when the dam of empty emotion from Charlie suddenly broke into wailing and screaming. The quiet was shattered. My heart skipped and raced. *Try Lisse. Try for the Last Rites*. My heart begged again. If you can’t forgive him yet, just try for the rites. My mouth opened, but only a prayer escaped my lips—it was not Last Rites. The prayer mainly was for her, and some seemed to fall on him.

That was all the strength I could muster. I twisted my forearm out of his icy grip and didn’t look back. Her wailing, painful cries echoed down the hall as my feet carried me away from the room, from the hospital, and from that face.

I ran and ran in the parking lot towards my car. I could feel the room’s smell leave my clothing with the speed I was going. I yanked the car door open and slammed myself inside. Once inside that metal shell, a sound of pain escaped my throat that felt like it would shatter my windows. Bam, bam, bam, bam, bam, repeated my fists on the steering wheel. I felt my feet lift into the air as I started to kick and strike at the dashboard.

Ugly guttural noises tore at my whole body. “Why, why, why, why?” It was the only word repeated for over an hour as my eyes shed tears and my body physically rid itself of him—of Don, of Cliff, of everyone who had ever taken anything from me. They all surfaced as a tsunami tearing the pain from the very fabric and tapestry of my life.

I felt the engine of the car start with the twist of the key, and my mind snapped from the pain and focused on driving. Gasps, sobs, and fifteen minutes of steering wheel thumps continued until my exhaustion overcame the pain. As I struck the wheel one last time, it released my final pain. Then, there was silence—just silence. My hand then slid from the wheel to the gear shift, put it into drive, and I fled away from the hospital.

As the car went down the road, suddenly my eyes could see only light from the sun. Rays of sunbeams seemed to be directed at my car like a spotlight. They entered into the window allowing for the rays to gently touch the fabric of the seats and spill onto me. Once my entire

body was in the light, it fully engulfed my car. Finally, I slowed down and pulled over, putting the car into park as the light was upon me. It was God's light!

More and more of His light from heaven streamed in through the glass, beginning to cleanse and purify the surfaces it touched. It was a warm, joyous, incredible light. I closed my eyes and could feel the warmth and light through my closed eyes.

I saw the tapestry reveal itself to me, almost waving like a flag in glory towards me. The deep hues in the background anchored it; there were so many golden threads—even light was woven into it. It seemed to be cleansed within this moment as well.

I saw the dark colors of my childhood seem to have more sparkle like gold threads had been woven in to show that God had been there the whole time. I could never see those threads of gold and light until this moment as the tapestry seemed to wave and shine with each movement. He was with me the whole time, I think. The whole time! Even in the acts of darkness, He was there supporting me.

The light then seemed to penetrate directly into my heart, ridding it of the darkness, the shame, the pain, the fear—I became light.

Then, I felt a voice flow to me and through me. "Lisse, you are forgiven." More and more light-filled my soul. He continued, "and now, forgive others." I sat wrapped in this light, the warmth, the energy for hours. I never wanted it to end.

I aligned the light to warm my soul, heart, and head, and there was no more fear. There was no more darkness. My tapestry shimmered and shone with a thread of love—of gold—of light! I was whole; I was free! I whispered. *I forgive...*, and all was well.

Chapter 12

Transformation:

Stepping Back to Take in the Tapestry

My thumb reached up and pushed the red circle to stop recording. The screen went to the home page, where I saw my grandchild looking up at me from his wheelchair. I felt my face pull back to a smile as my other hand touched the cold rock I was sitting on. The rock in my backyard was smooth in some places and rough along the backside, but still, it was a great place to record my thoughts and share them with my social media friends. I called my little show, *Moments on the Rock*, and for obvious reasons, I knew that it was the best place to share what was in my heart with the world.

The world? No, it was just with myself and a few other people, but if anyone worldwide ever found it on Facebook, they too could be inspired. Who was I kidding? I only had about six or seven people comment, but it was a great place to think, practice, and figure out if this prompting I had would go anywhere.

A few years back, I knew I could touch and reach people in my ministry. I did all I could within the church building, bible study, and so forth. But then, there was this new platform called Social Media. I thought that there was a powerful way to do this. I guess right near the start of the social media craze; I was supposed to go to my rock and just talk—share my healing journey to where I was up to that point. Not churchy stuff, but just my story. I thought maybe it could help someone. If you follow the path, it leads to God through truth and light, so I obediently started the *Moments on the Rock* recordings to say that I was listening and following God's advice.

My eyes took another glance around the autumn-colored yard. Nearly all the trees had turned, and I knew that my final days of recording for the season had ended. I knew I didn't want to stomp across the snow-filled yard and out to the rock—that would be just too cold.

Bing! My phone rang out. A portion of a message flashed across my screen, and my eyes started to read it. "I just saw your show. Do you know there is more to you and this show than meets the eye?" I looked up from the screen and towards the direction of my home through the yellow and orange foliage and laughed a bit. *Oh, you don't even know a third of it*, I thought. My eyes returned to the screen to read on and came to this line, "Your *Moments on the Rock* show is bigger than you think." My eyes looked up again. I felt myself wanting to laugh, but the feeling dropped, leaving me with just a smile. I finished reading through the message and came to the last sentence, "I feel that I need to help you with something. Check your FB messenger in a few days for my surprise."

Suddenly that was the end of the message. As I slid off the rock and crunched on the leaf-covered yard, I could not guess what this total stranger would do. I had no idea who this lady was or what the surprise would be. I had no idea that she had even been watching “the show”—The show (that sounded like it was a podcast or something). No, it was just me, my thoughts, the rock, and then God filling my heart with things to say, memories of my dark past that were now healed and filled with light—stories, I mean, after all, I’m a preacher, and I know how to tell a great story.

Days and weeks passed, then winter came, and no message from this mysterious fan: nothing in the message box or email as far as I could tell, so I just stopped looking and kept up with my full-time teaching, mothering, and grandmothering, and preaching. I was busy with life, but something in the back of my mind would remind me that “there was more to me than meets the eye.”

Until one day, I decided to clean out my email box. About four years’ worth of stuff was ignored and stuck there. I clicked on email after email, sent it to the trash, deleted it, or saved it to read later. About halfway through this crazy process, I came to an email with a PNG attached. I read through the email—the date was nearly two years ago. I always smirked and smiled at that thought.

Dear Marlisse,

“I felt inspired to do something. I’m a designer, and God laid it on my heart to help you. Here is a logo for what you are doing. Your words are transformational. Do what you will with this gift.”

I read the message a few times, “do what you will with this gift?” I clicked open the PNG, and my eyes fell on soft gold and pink colors, a golden butterfly, and the words, *Transformation Speaks* all in a design/logo that forced my mouth to hang open. The message and logo left me a bit speechless. This was the design and logo my head would have envisioned if I had designed it myself. How could she have known? This lady had sent this to me nearly two years ago. My heart was flooded with gratitude, and my hands flew across the keyboard, thanking this person for this beautiful gift.

My heart told me I would start speaking professionally on stages worldwide. Instantly, I knew what I was going to do with the design. I knew that I would help bring transformation to many women who had been through similar situations. Not that I was transformational, but that *God* was. I knew that the timing was right. I think that was why I hadn’t found the email until now. God knows me and saved this until the timing was right.

This design set me in motion, and the next day, after teaching, I started my bold journey into the unknown.

Buzz, buzz—buzz, the sound came out of the old intercom as my finger dropped from the button. The speaker crackled to life. “Yes? How can I help you?” I took a deep breath, looked up at the sign above the door, *Project Women*, and responded into the silver box, “I’m here to speak to the director of outreach. My name is Marlisse Hardamon,” I said, dropping my hand from the button. The crackle of the box sparked back at me, “Thank you. Wait right there.” So I did. I waited outside in the chilly air for over fifteen minutes.

Those fifteen minutes were like a tennis match for my confidence between the two voices inside me:

What do you think you are doing, Marlissee? You ain't good enough to be here, the voice said.

Don't listen to that. My heart said. *You have every right to be here and share your story.*

Oh yeah, right! The voice said. *She ain't even brave enough to share this story with anyone.*

She is brave enough! She's outside Project Women to see the director. BRAVE! My heart said.

She's still outside, and we are going on 13 minutes. Looks like they forgot you! The voice said.

Stand your ground, my heart said. *You are here for a reason—don't move off this doorstep!*

It's getting late, and you need to get home. You really ain't supposed to be here.

I'm here, and I ain't moving, my heart shouted back.

They're gonna laugh, the voice responded.

This is for Marlissee and all the women that have been and will be transformed, my heart said.

Suddenly the buzzing sound of the door interrupted the internal fight. Thank the Lord!

Then the click of the lock indicated that the door was opened. I pushed my way inside before my head could respond. I found myself in a well-designed office, and a beautiful woman asked a few questions; before I knew it, I heard my story spill from my mouth to this woman I had never met.

As I wiped the emotion from my eyes with the tissue from the box on her desk, she responded with grace and love that she asked me to stay there while she went to get the Educational director. I dabbed my eyes and face to clean up and sniffed a few times. *There,* my heart said. *She heard your words, and they pierced her.*

No way, said the voice. *You ran her off and made them think you're crazy.* I could feel my heart wanting to respond with another round of smackdown when the women returned with the Educational Director.

The woman politely asked me to share my story again. I did—complete with full emotions ranging from weeping to laughter. The Educational Director listened intently as the last word fell from my mouth. The air was silent, and we all just stayed in the vibration of the previous syllable. Then, with her expression, the spell we had all been captured in was broken, and she told me she wanted my information so she could call me. The two thanked me for coming to *Project Women*, and then I left.

Two weeks later, she called me and left a message asking if I would accompany them as an advocate of Ohio for *Project Women* as they went to the state legislature to lobby their cause in front of the lawmakers. The word “yes” escaped me before I could think.

The day arrived, and we all rode up together. My head was swirling with excitement, astonishment, shame, and fear. Those last two feelings were directly from my head. Man, my head was pounding with all the negative thoughts trying to take me down as we rode together towards the state capital. I listened to their conversations—the names they were tossing around—I only knew one of two of the legislators from the news.

We arrived, parked, and I followed this group of powerful women as a child would their parents. I listened and drank in everything around me. My eyes looked at the present moment: the amazing women, the setting at the capital, the lawmakers, the order, the impressive offices, the discussions filled with logic and strategy. I was so engaged at the moment to allow that voice in my head to pull me into a trap of fear and despair.

I listened to women as they lobbied, spoke politely, and tried to get the attention of the lawmakers. Again, I followed them around, smiled, listened, and lived for the moment until one lawmaker caught my eye. His energy and directness bypassed everyone trying to get his

attention, and he went straight for me like a hunting dog. I felt like a sitting duck, and I'm sure I had a *deer in the headlights* look about me.

"Hi," he said very curtly. "Tell me why *you* are here? What's *your* story?" The buzzing room fell silent like a bucket of water had been dumped over everyone. Instantly the Educational director from our group spoke up in defense of me, and the lawmaker cut her off. "I want to know your story," he repeated, pointing to my chest. I swallowed hard, took a deep breath, and listened to myself share my story with power and conviction.

He was intensely looking at me as I shared the painful moments of my life. He was not thinking of anything else. He connected to the story to the point that his eyes pooled up and emotion sketched on his face. I held his gaze as I closed my story, and the only sound in the room was that of some sniffing and throat clearing. "This," his voice filled the room. "This is what I needed to hear. I needed to know the pain, the conflict, and the impact so that the words and her face are with me as I present my proposed bill to the floor of the state legislature."

I felt the Educational director slip her arm into my arm, weaving it there to help prop me up as the words fell from his lips. He looked at me one more time, grasped my hand, and shook it with emotion and firmness. Then he turned and engaged with the other women from *Project Women* about the cause, and he could help. The story, the one God gave me through my life experience, had been heard by the lawmaker, and transformation was going to happen for the women of Ohio. I truly felt that.

As we completed the day and then returned home together, I felt I had one eye in the conversations that surrounded me and the other towards my heart, who started to dream of stages that I would speak on, of conferences I would keynote speak at, and to youth groups, I could impact and help to steer them of the pain I had suffered. I felt and saw all of it.

Suddenly I saw the tapestry of my life unroll and stretch out before me. I looked over it in awe and wondered how the deep dark colors, the contract of sunshine and lavender, and the golden threads were all woven together to create me. The threads in their singularity could not do much but, woven together by the Master, have transformed me.

Chapter 13

Triumph! The Tapestry of a Victor

My tapestry is that of a victor. Now that you are at the last chapter in the book, you have seen the skeins and yards of the thread of my tapestry stretched, cut, knotted, and tamped into place. I'm sure there were times when looking at my tapestry was painful, humiliating, and victorious.

The millions of threads pulled from shelves stretched out tight over the Master's loom were set for me to have a wonderful foundational tapestry. You read through the stories in the previous chapters about how He wove, twisted, pulled, and stretched the loose threads on the loom throughout my life. Now that you have come to the last chapter, can you see the process and journey God has led me? It is that of transformation.

Moving from my tapestry from trauma to triumph was and is a journey. You can't simply *twitch your nose* and expect you to be at the end. The real secret is that there is no *end*. There is always another hour, day, week, month, and year to be tested, tried, and challenged to see if and how you will respond and overcome. That is both comforting and a little tiring.

The transformation process starts with your heart telling your head that it needs to get rid of the *Stinking Thinking* and replace it with love and light daily. That's easy to say but tough to do. However, if we are working on it daily, we will see a change over time in the long run. (Remember the tapestry talk in Section three? Oh yeah, baby!)

Have you ever seen a tapestry being worked on, pulled, stretched, tamped, and woven? Think of a tapestry as a grid of threads fixed on a large frame (the loom). Let's set up the loom and the whole process so you can see how The Master weaves a tapestry. First, tapestries need threads to be pulled and tightened across a loom. These threads are the same for all of us; the vertical threads of the loom are called *the warp*.

The warp is the foundation; they are pulled and tightened onto the loom by the Master's hands. They are the background and the bones for the structure of the entire piece for all the colorful threads woven into it. *The warp* comes from Heavenly Father. It is your foundation. We

all have that warp from inside us—from God, so He is interwoven into your tapestry. He has the strength to hold your tapestry together. He is always with you and will never abandon you.

The horizontal threads are called *the weft*. They are the colors and the pattern of the tapestry. They come to life bit by bit by repeatedly weaving the weft threads over and under the warp threads. The weft is also stretched, pulled, knotted, and cut tight across the loom.

The wefts are many separate wool or silk thread pieces in different colors. The colorful threads are individual strands from emotions, events, trauma, responses to experiences, light, and love. All of those experiences, events and even trauma determine the color. So, if you want to have a more colorful tapestry, then you will have experiences that will be dipped into different vats of dye.

Who is selecting the colors? This is where it gets tricky—you are because God allows us the agency to make our choices—for good or ill. He does not interfere with our colorful choices, and sometimes the choices we make lead us to get some of the ugliest colors for our tapestry.

The colorful shuttle is passed across the horizontal threads or the weft. The shuttle or the Spirit holds the colorful thread and goes over-under, over-under the vertical threads. The colorful shuttle is passed across the horizontal threads or the weft. Who is weaving it together? The Savior. To be clear, The Master is at the loom, selecting the different colors and passing the shuttle through the warp to create your tapestry. Although your experiences determine the color, the Savior, our Master, has the grand design of our life and is weaving the masterpiece.

To make the tapestry tight, tamping or squishing the weft threads down, so they are very close together is next. The Master hides the warp through this tamping process, which can cause much pain. However, that tamping also keeps the tapestry together. They are necessary to hide the vertical threads.

“Although you cannot see them in a finished tapestry, the vertical warp threads are vital components of each piece—they are the backbone of every tapestry.” This is God interweaving into our lives. He provides support for the weft threads. The warps the blank canvas, and the wefts are the paint strokes on that canvas.

The weft threads are the colors that gradually build up to form a tapestry's picture. God is not cloth to be measured, cut, and sewn, but he is designing your masterpiece. His hands take the wefts and weave the designs as patches of particular colors. Then He knots them into place, snipping and tucking the loose ends and introducing a different weft thread next to it. It is complex, individual, and beautiful—just like you!

Our tapestries influence people for good or for ill. My tapestry (to share something deep and personal) has impacted others in ways that I did not understand—for good or ill. Many people who know me now see more of a *finished product*, or at least they can see the direction and pattern of my life and see the truth. They know that I am human and will make mistakes, but they can see how I have overcome many trials and that I'm headed toward love and serve God.

Unfortunately, others who were exposed to my tapestry, metaphorically, at a young age were impacted by the images they saw woven there. Some images of my tapestry caused grief and pain for even the strongest people. When I saw these flaws, I would do all that I could to

cover them up, hide them, and control my children to look away from my mistakes to protect them—I just wanted to protect them.

Protection leads to controlling behaviors, and often, we try to control in an UNHEALTHY way. What happens if you try to maintain a horse by pulling too hard on the reins? They will toss their head, stop, and sometimes buck you off. You usually end up on your backside wondering what hit you. I tried emphasizing safety for my one and only daughter in this situation. I tried to control who she hung out with, who she could sleep over with, who she could date etc. Ultimately, she found her way to what she wanted, no matter how I tried to protect her from looking at my tapestry.

Even though she was very young when I struggled with the decisions I made in my life, she saw, experienced, and felt their impact. It was like she was watching the tapestry begin to be woven right in front of her young eyes and looking at its effect on my life. She was wounded by me not being able to be there for her. It's hard to admit it. I knew what I did was wrong, so I thought protecting her from my mistakes would help her.

I thought that taking a short, short thread from my tapestry and tying it onto her so I could control things would help. Why did I try to control things? Because I was afraid—I did it out of fear. I thought someone would take advantage of her (like what happened to me). But as a result, she rebelled. We work through the result of her rebellion by helping to raise her son, my grandson.

I think part of me taking on the responsibility to raise my grandson was I felt very guilty about the strain and control I put on her. In my fear of her repeating my mistakes, I put pressure on her to be perfect. I won't go into detail because I desire to respect her privacy.

Well, It is what it is. She is in the Master's hands. With time, just like me, she will find her way. Right now, her tapestry is messy and knotted, and there are some tangles just like mine tapestry was—and dare I say like so many of us—however, with time, her tapestry will reflect those challenges and also her victories. It is in my heart to do my part—to love and pray for her no matter what.

That is a sign of another small victory. It is another thread that The Master has woven into my tapestry, and I can see a portion of what the image is, and I am excited to see what it will become.

Even though I have written this book, the work in transformation is only beginning. I felt called to start an organization about transformation—taking your pain and making it your purpose. I assume you are from victim to victor and trauma to triumph. There is a word of caution that comes with it. (You know me and Murphy's Law: Whatever can go wrong, will go wrong, but you can still put your shoulder into the work).

Remember, it takes our effort and energy along with the Master. We never truly never arrive because there is still 80% insanity and about 20% come for the ride. Our efforts are multiplied by the Savior—and thank heavens for that.

I have had ups and downs, but I know I can get to a better place, so I push to stand up. I push to be the best; however, sometimes, we don't need to push alone. We need to trust Him

more and let go of the control we think we have in our lives. We are silly creatures thinking that we can control anything. That's more *stinking thinking* right there.

Confession. I'm not great at celebrating success. It's kind of like I've been running a marathon, and I'm just about to cross the finish line. I can hear fans cheering; my family is fist-pumping; my husband has the refreshment in his hand; I see it all. I listen to it all. I feel it all! But then, I run through the finish line—right past everyone, and I don't stop running.

My family's shocked look of surprise is seen in my rearview mirror, the fan fades, the cheers die, and I push past everyone. Why? Because there is so much more work to do. Who can relate to that? Now, how many of you have been running like that and continued to run a double marathon before you finally stopped? Where did the push get you? Nowhere. It was like a thread pulled from a tapestry—it weakens it and leaves a small hole.

We need to see the finish line, hear the fans cheering, see our family, cross the line, hug and embrace our family, wave to the fans, thank the crowd of supporters, and throw our hands up in the air, praising God and celebrating the moment. You are worth every cheer! We are worth celebrating.

Let's realize that if you have been through trauma, it causes you to take a second look at others, but more are cheering for you than are not. See your truth through your pain, acknowledge it, and get the help you can. You can keep going; it is a journey that we all must take—SUCCESS. It is about what you think it is—one step at a time in the right direction. Celebrate it more than you do.

Remember, you are the combination of what you think and what you say about yourself, just like your tapestry. Your thought process and mindset can be tuned to remind yourself to have a better tomorrow, take action, follow the promptings, and love others.

Finally, as I look over my tapestry again with my eyes and hands, I feel the soft silks, the knotted wool, and the smooth cotton fibers that the Master wove. I see the colors as rich, deep, and powerful. It's just like the parable of the seeds, If you sew rich, you reap rich. You need to use everything God has given you and the talents he has given you, which will be reflected in your masterpiece. Work on you, love others, and healing can happen in the Master's hands one thread at a time. Remember to be patient and kind to yourself and others—with time you too will have a tapestry of a victor!

End Notes

Tapestry Talk One

1. Berne, Eric. *What Do You Say After You Say Hello?* (London: Corgi Books, 1975).
2. Clear, James. *Tiny Changes, Remarkable Results: Atomic Habits An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones* (United Kingdom, Random House, 2018).

Tapestry Talk Section 2

1. Clear, James. *Tiny Changes, Remarkable Results: Atomic Habits An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones* (United Kingdom, Random House, 2018).
2. Cloud, Henry. Townsend, John. *Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How To Say No, To Take Control Of Your Life* (Michigan, Zondervan, 1995).