

No Shame



A Devotional for Survivors
of Sexual Abuse

MELISSA HEILAND

No Shame

Hendrickson Books by Melissa Heiland

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La Esperanza de una Madre

A Mother's Journey
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You Are Wonderful
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Get Set

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*A Devotional
for Survivors of
Sexual Abuse*

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No Shame: A Devotional for Survivors of Sexual Abuse

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Published by Hendrickson Publishers
an imprint of Hendrickson Publishing Group
Hendrickson Publishers, LLC
P. O. Box 3473
Peabody, Massachusetts 01961-3473
www.hendricksonpublishinggroup.com

ISBN 978-1-4964-8208-2

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Printed in the United States of America

First Printing — January 2023

*This book is dedicated to you, the survivors.
You are seen. You are heard. You are loved.*

Foreword

Dear Readers,

It is both shocking and heartbreaking to hear that, according to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), an American is sexually assaulted every 68 seconds.¹ Even more alarming is that this statistic would be even graver outside of the US, considering how much more taboo the subject is in other countries. You are likely holding this book for one of two reasons: you are a survivor of sexual assault or you wish to help a survivor. This book is certainly an invaluable tool in either endeavor. In the footnotes below, you will see just the beginnings of some resources for more information.

Sexual trauma holds the potential to fragment an individual's phenomenological experience.² That is, “normally integrated functions” of a person's body and mind become compartmentalized and separated.³ The survivor experiences dissociation and confusion deep within the self. As Christians, we believe that there is not just the physical side to a person but also also a spiritual side—and that these two are related to each other in great degree. Forget to eat lunch and you

1. “About Sexual Assault,” RAINN, <https://www.rainn.org/about-sexual-assault>.

2. Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (Boston: Basic Books, 2015).

3. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 34.

may begin to act in ways you know are spiritually unhealthy, like losing your temper quickly or making an impulsive decision you later regret. The ramifications of sexual trauma, therefore, can certainly spill over into the spiritual side of life. And indeed, the goal throughout the journey to healing from any trauma—sexual included—is the recovered, reintegrated self.⁴

Such a journey for Christians, when they are ready, includes contemplation and engagement in the spiritual self. As Melissa Heiland gently reflects throughout this devotional, our understanding of God and God’s stance toward us can be confusing or even painful in light of sexual assault. As a mental health therapist, I can say with a full heart that Melissa is a compassionate and paced guide as she considers Scripture, with its implications and applications, for the survivor of sexual abuse in small, succinct doses. This is a read that I believe is excellent to turn to not once, but many times. Survivors recover and reintegrate their internal self in the presence, promise, and protection of a God who, having walked the road from birth to public execution, knows all too well the journey of trauma and the redemption and resurrection possible in its wake.

This devotional is not in the place of counseling, and my recommendation of this book does not replace seeking the help of a mental health professional. Trauma of any kind, particularly of a sexual nature, most often requires a complex treatment course. This includes the help of a mental health

4. Heather Davediuk Gingrich and Fred C. Gingrich, *Treating Trauma in Christian Counseling* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017).

professional, because trauma has a complex effect across multiple fronts of a person. This devotional should be viewed as an excellent supplemental tool in a robust therapeutic approach to helping the healing journey of survivors.

May God grant you the strength and peace needed with each step forward.

Lisa Clay
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Acknowledgments

I would first like to thank the brave survivors who talked to me about their experiences, their feelings, their wounds, their healing. You are courageous, strong, and kind.

My sincere thanks to Paul Hendrickson of Hendrickson Publishing Group. Paul, your humility and grace continue to bless me. Thank you for answering God's call in your life and for your continued patience and kindness toward me.

Thank you, Lissi, for translating with love, tenderness, and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit.

Thank you to those who edited this work. I trust the Lord's leading as you worked.

I want to thank those who work with survivors to bring hope and healing. You are a blessing.

I am deeply grateful for each of my children: Michael, Josh, Melissa, Jack, Andy, and Nick. You are my inspiration and my joy.

I am also grateful for my grandchildren: Graciana, Matthew, Gabriel, Kara, Courtney, Anna, Carla, Madilyn, Jacob, and Eli. You fill this GiGi's life with love and laughter. May God protect you always.

Sincere thanks to my husband, Ken, who always encourages me to keep writing when my heart is full of self-doubt. Thank you for believing in God's call on my life and for the sacrifices you make when you allow me to answer his call.

My deepest gratitude is always for my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He saved me, and he continues to hold me and heal me as I trust him in even the darkest of times.

Dear Friend,

Survivors of abuse hear a lot of messages that condemn, confuse, and wound. These messages are based on lies. Truth is found in the word of God. I have spent two years asking the Lord to show me Scriptures to share with you that will bring you comfort and peace. I have written this for you at the prompting of the Holy Spirit so that you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

With love,
Melissa

DAY 1

Singing over You

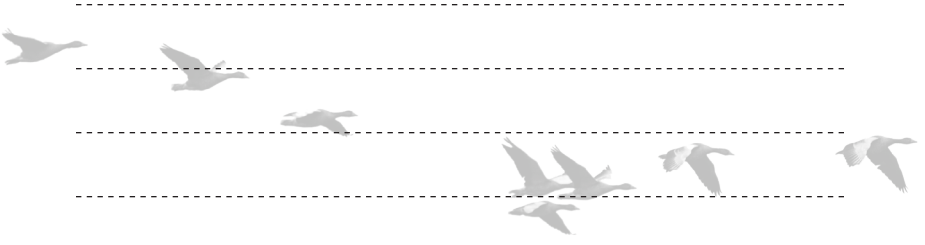
Read Zephaniah 3:17

*The LORD your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you;
in his love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing.*

This verse is full of beautiful truths. Not only does God save you but he also *delights* in you. Take a moment and contemplate the magnitude of that statement. The God who created the whole world is singing over you. He takes delight in you. He loves you as a father. Not only is he a mighty warrior, but he is also gentle, like a parent singing over a child. Maybe you don't have any memories of a person singing to you. If so, then close your eyes now and imagine that display of love from God. What would he say? Would it be a song of encouragement? Hope?

Dear God, thank you for loving me and saving me. I have not always felt safe, and I am thankful to know that you are a mighty warrior who watches over me and delights in me. Please help me to find peace in your safety. Amen.

*How does it make you feel to think
about a God who loves you and rejoices
over you? Write your thoughts.*



DAY 2

Close to the Broken-Hearted

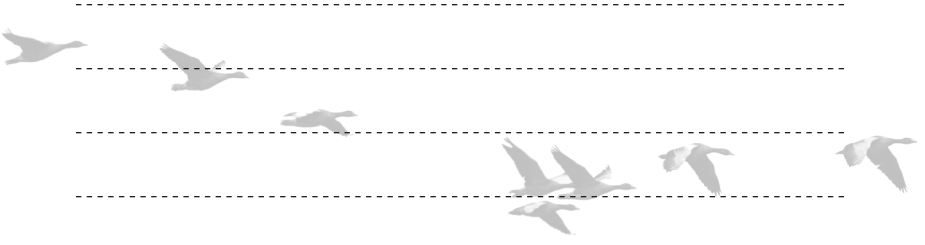
Read Psalm 34:15-19

*The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,
and his ears are attentive to their cry;
but the face of the LORD is against those who
do evil,
to blot out their name from the earth.
The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them;
he delivers them from all their troubles.
The LORD is close to the brokenhearted
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.
The righteous person may have many troubles,
but the LORD delivers him from them all.*

This passage brought me great comfort during a dark time in my life. I found comfort in the fact that God saw me and heard my cry. He promised to deliver me from what I was going through. I also found comfort in knowing that the Lord is just and that those who do evil will not go unpunished. The Lord will deliver the righteous from all their troubles.

Dear God, thank you for seeing me and hearing me. Thank you for promising to deliver me from anything that I am going through. Help me to trust in your promises. Amen.

How do you feel knowing that God sees and hears you? Knowing that God is close to you, listening to you, what do you want to tell him?



DAY 3

A Strong Tower

Read Proverbs 18:10

*The name of the LORD is a fortified tower;
the righteous run to it and are safe.*

Today we read that God is a fortress, a place of safety and protection. If you are like me, you may often feel afraid and exposed, unsure of whom you can trust. When we are afraid, we want to run and hide. God knows this and tells us to run to him instead. He knows our every fear and provides us with a fortified tower in his name. He always has our best interest at heart. It can be difficult to trust others after someone has betrayed us, but God will not do us harm. Run to God today and find a place of safety and rest.

Dear God, I thank you that I can run to you for safety. Please help me to remember that you offer healing when we come to you. Amen.

Can you think of a place where you feel or of a person who makes you feel safe? What about this place or person makes you feel safe? How can God provide safety for you?

