

I DON'T NEED A MAN

What Love, Pain, and God Were Really Trying to Teach You

Melissa Israel-Petion

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To all women—past, present, and future—
the backbone of generations, the strength behind every beginning.
You are the reason humanity exists.
The world may lie, erase, and dismiss you—
but heaven knows,
and your ancestors remember.
You are Eve: the mother of all the living.

INTRODUCTION

REAL TALK TUESDAY

(Even if you're not reading this on a Tuesday, it sounds good and rolls off the tongue, so just roll with it.)

Let's start with five things I was advised not to do — and I did them anyway.

1. Don't use slang or colloquial language.

They say it's "unprofessional." But let's be honest, most self-help books are boring as hell. I didn't want this to be one of them. I wanted it to feel like you were talking to your most honest, funny, well-read friend — the one who's mostly holy, but the Lord is still working on her. The one who won't let you self-sabotage, even if she has to snatch your edges, hand you a mirror, and remind you who you really are. The one who talks about God and growth without sounding like a motivational coffee mug. So yes, you'll see slang. You'll see metaphors. You might even see a little "Whew, chile!" every now and then.

2. Don't write for both secular and Christian readers. Pick one.

To which I kindly said: no. Because the truth is, most Christians I know live in the same world as everyone else. They're not floating around on holy clouds. They're dating, working, parenting, breaking down, scrolling, healing, and trying to trust God and their therapist at the same time. They love Jesus, and they still cuss. They pray and still wrestle with anxiety. They want to do better and still don't always know how. So, I wrote this book for real people. People who live by faith but have been hurt by the ones who claimed to love them. People who are asking hard questions. People who want to be whole, not just spiritually saved.

This book is for the woman who doesn't fit neatly into a box. She's tired of hearing "You're too much" and "You're not enough" in the same breath. She's the strong friend. The overthinker. The one who got called "wise beyond her years" ...but never really felt safe being young. She's the woman who doesn't just want a relationship. She wants a relationship that doesn't require her to abandon herself to keep it. She wants softness, but she's not willing to trade her voice for it. She wants connection, but not at the cost of clarity. She wants healing, but she's done with shame-based sermons and one-size-fits-all advice.

Let me be clear: This is not a guidebook on how to get a man. This is a healing manual for the woman who forgot that she was never supposed to *lose herself trying to keep one*.

BEFORE WE GO ANY FURTHER

Let me say this: yes, this book will challenge you. Yes, it will make you uncomfortable. But not in a way that leaves you feeling judged or abandoned. I don't write from a pedestal. I write as my scars continue to heal. I'm not here to fix you. I'm here to walk with you—with truth, compassion, and a little "*that ain't it, sis,*" when needed.

3. Don't cuss if you talk about God.

I chose to include it, not because I think cussing is holy, but because authenticity gives people the freedom to make their own choice about you. And everyone deserves the right to stay or to walk away. I don't find it helpful — or healing — to pretend that adults, Christian or otherwise, don't cuss. Let's not lie to ourselves in the name of sounding holy. That kind of performative "clean up" is why so many of us are spiritually stuck and emotionally stunted. I trust you to discern what feeds your spirit and what doesn't. If a word doesn't land well, skip past it. If a truth does, lean into it. Because here's the thing: most people who talk about God still cuss. You may not do it in front of your pastor, but when your phone falls face down and you haven't bought the screen protector yet? "*The Lord is my shepherd*" isn't always what comes out. I chose not to remove the cuss words in this book because I don't believe in pretending to be someone I'm not just to earn your

trust. That's not authenticity. That's performance. And if you've come this far in your healing journey, I imagine you're tired of pretending, too.

You have a right to your boundaries. If a few four-letter words in a book about healing and God are going to make you clutch your pearls and toss it across the room, you should know upfront: there are about 10 cuss words in this book... and more than 70,000 non-cuss words. If about 10 cuss words are a dealbreaker for you, I get it. You must guard your spirit. But if you're willing to hear the truth with a little edge, welcome. I kept it real for a reason. Self-help books are just guided tours into someone else's mind. And if I pretend to be someone I'm not just to earn your trust — that's not transformation. That's manipulation. And deception? Whew. She's not one of my favorite designers. So, I choose not to wear her.

4. Say “people” or “individuals” instead of “men” or “women.”

This one cracked me up. I'm a relationship coach. We talk about men and women and things like masculine and feminine energy. I use those words throughout the book because they're contextually relevant. Simple as that.

5. Use lots of citations.

There are no footnotes here. Not because I don't believe in research — I do. But because when a woman has lived it, questioned it, prayed through it, gone to therapy for it, and written from the scar instead of the wound — that's a citation too. This book isn't about quoting experts. It's about becoming one in your own life.

WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN THIS BOOK

Let's start here: this is not a soft, feel-good, bubble bath and affirmations kind of self-help book. This book will not lie to you, flatter you, or tell you what you want to hear. It will challenge you. It will stretch you. But it will also honor you. Because telling the truth is a form of love. And I love you enough to say the hard things. The goal of this book is simple but bold: To help you decide your next move when it comes to love and relationships. Whether that move is staying, leaving, starting, or finally stopping... You need to know what you're deciding from. Is it pain? Fear? Fantasy? Pressure? Or is it clarity, peace, and divine alignment?

But before we dive into your love life, we must go inward. And not in a surface-level “just focus on yourself” kind of way. We're talking full excavation. That's why a substantial portion of this book is dedicated to personal and spiritual healing. We talk about identity, patterns, trauma, survival strategies, emotional and spiritual blind spots, and the parts of yourself you've been protecting just to function in a world that didn't see you. We dig into the Heart Postures, the difference between psychological healing and spiritual healing, and the inner work that no Instagram quote can fix for you. This is about you getting radically honest with yourself and finally coming home to who God created you to be. Because you can't choose healthy love when you're disconnected from yourself.

Throughout this book, we also explore relationship dynamics—but through a different lens. We look at masculine and feminine energy, boundaries, dating myths, submission, relationship structures, connection, respect, and what “God-centered” relationships actually require. This is about breaking cycles, not just repeating useless “advice.” And by the time you reach the end, this book will not have told you what to do. It will have shown you who you are. And from that space of sacred self-awareness, you will decide what's next. So, if you're tired of performing, pleasing, doubting, and shrinking... If you're ready to stop letting pain write your love story...Then let's begin. You are worthy of truth. You are worthy of peace. You are worthy of a love that doesn't hurt to hold. Let's find your way home.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Whether you're single, in a relationship, engaged, married, or somewhere in between, this book is for you. Why? Because this book isn't about your relationship status. It's about your relationship capacity. And that lives inside you.

For the single woman:

You'll use this book to confront the real reasons you say you "don't need a man"—not just as a slogan, but as a protective strategy. You'll explore where that came from, what it's guarding, and whether it's still serving you. You'll learn to identify your needs without shame, name your fears without judgment, and soften your armor without losing your strength. This book will challenge you to stop asking if a man can handle you, and start asking—can you even recognize a man who could? Because without healing, you'll keep picking based on pattern, not purpose. If you finish this book and do the work, maybe you won't build a legacy with someone who only makes sense to your trauma.

For the woman in a relationship or married:

You'll use this book to finally get honest about where the emotional disconnection lives—within yourself and within your relationship. You'll be asked to look in the mirror without shame, but with full accountability. You'll uncover the ways you've over-functioned, under-expressed, made yourself invisible, or maybe even emotionally overpowered your partner without realizing it.

This book will not tell you whether to stay or go. But it will help you listen deeply to the wisdom of your own heart—and to God's voice inside of you. You'll learn how to rebuild emotional safety, recognize when you're operating from old survival roles, and stop using performance as a substitute for presence.

Because love isn't just about staying. It's about staying connected. And you can't connect without being emotionally available to yourself first. Whether you're single or partnered, this book invites you to stop outsourcing your healing. It's time to grow, not just go through it. It's time to reclaim your voice, your story, and your spiritual power. This book won't save your relationship. It will save you from losing yourself in it. You'll see two recurring sections throughout this book.

1. I Said What I Said...

These are bold truths — the kind that shake your soul awake. No fluff. No disclaimers. Just the hard, healing reminders we all need from time to time.

2. What Had Happened Was...

This section is where the reflection gets real. I've created custom questions for both single and partnered women, so no matter what season you're in, you'll be guided toward deeper truth, clarity, and healing. I use the word "partnered" to include all women in committed relationships, whether married or not. This is not about giving the "right" answer. It's about giving the honest one.

If this book feels like it's too much right now, or at any point throughout your journey, that's okay. Some truths land before we're ready to carry them. Bookmark it. Come back when your heart is ready to be held accountable — without being shamed, silenced, or left behind. Healing has its own timing, and you get to honor yours just like everyone else. Let's dive in.

CHAPTER 1: What Healing Really Takes

What it really takes to heal for real—and why most of us avoid it.

“This is not about becoming a better version of yourself. It’s about remembering who you were before you had to perform to survive.”

I have a bad temper that most people never see. I don’t externalize my anger by yelling, throwing things, or cussing folks out. But make no mistake—I know it’s there. It’s a deep, righteous anger at the world we live in. The kind of anger that bubbles up when I see how the world punishes women simply for having the audacity to survive. Ugh. The world doesn’t really let us be complex, does it? We don’t get to be both strong and soft, empathic and assertive, spiritual and a little petty, educated and a little ratchet, a good mom and completely exhausted, loving and fed up, and independent and tender.

Nope. The world boxes us in—or at least, it tries to.

I believe a lot of women wrestle with this. Deep down, we know who we are. We hear the voice of God whispering in the background, *“This is who you are.”* But we were also taught not to trust that voice. We were conditioned to believe that what others say about us is more accurate than what God or our own spirit reveals. The world hates nuance. It can’t handle it. It’s like people can’t wrap their heads around the fact that you can know your strengths and still hide them, whether you’re doing it on purpose or not. Some folks genuinely believe the only parts of you that exist are the parts they can see. And I bet you’ve done the same thing to yourself. You’ve boxed yourself in and convinced yourself that the only parts of you that exist are the ones you can consciously name or that other people have validated.

But *au contraire*, sis. The parts of you you’ve identified so far? That’s just your *survival strategy*. That’s not your essence or the full picture of who you are. Those parts are simply the version of you that was required to make it in this world. They’re real, yes—but they’re not all of you. Now let me say something you need to take all the way in: Every single person is the main character in their own life story. Always. Even if they’re playing the victim in the scene, they’re still framing themselves as the hero of the larger plot. But here’s why this matters:

If everyone sees themselves as the main character, then you automatically become a supporting character in their story. And without realizing it, they'll assign you a role. They'll unconsciously decide what part you play in their narrative. And in order for their story to work, to stay emotionally intact, they have to ignore certain parts of you, especially the parts that don't fit the version of you they need you to be.

So, what happens? Even when the evidence is right in front of them—that you're layered and complex—they might not see it. Or worse, they may choose *not* to see it. Because acknowledging the fullness of who you are would force them to adjust their entire storyline. And here's the kicker: Most of this happens unconsciously. It's not malicious. But it's still real. And it's why you need discernment. Not everyone's opinion of you should carry equal weight. Not every narrative you've been cast in is worth continuing.

The story of Jesus and Judas is a striking example of what happens when someone refuses to fit the role they've been assigned. That's the thing about transformation—yours or someone else's. It threatens the roles we've assigned others, shatters our illusion of control, and forces us to make a decision: evolve, or cling to the version of the story that feels safer but no longer fits. Every transformation journey begins with a catalyst. Sometimes it's beautiful and sometimes it's brutal. But either way, it shakes the ground beneath you just enough to make staying the same no longer an option.

The Judas Pattern: When You Don't Fit Their Story

For Judas, the catalyst may have been the moment he realized Jesus wasn't going to overthrow Rome. Many Jews in that era expected the Messiah to be a revolutionary—a political warrior. Someone who would march into Jerusalem, dismantle oppression, and restore power back to Israel. They didn't expect a healer, and they definitely didn't expect a man who would preach “love your enemies.” So, when Jesus refused to fit that mold—when He didn't rise up with a sword—Judas's version of the story started falling apart. And when someone's story falls apart, so does their sense of self. Judas wasn't just disillusioned with Jesus. He was disillusioned with the version of himself that depended on Jesus becoming a certain kind of Messiah. And when Jesus refused to play the part, Judas betrayed Him—not because Jesus did something wrong, but because Jesus no longer made sense inside the story Judas had written. Let that land for a second.

Sometimes people don't betray you because you failed them. They betray you because you grew beyond the role they cast you in. You stopped performing, you changed the plot, and you dared to be more than the version of yourself that made them comfortable. And in doing so, you forced them to confront their own illusion of control, and not everyone can handle that. That's why discernment is necessary. Because someone can love their *false or limited idea* of you and still turn on you when the *real* you threatens the role they need you to play.

Judas kissed Jesus on the cheek after betraying him. And how did Jesus respond? He didn't flinch, call down fire from heaven, or clap back and expose Judas. He simply said, "*Do what you came to do.*" That's not passivity. That's power. That's what it means to turn the other cheek when you're clear on who you are. It's not naivety, it's the courage to let someone reveal who they are, without letting it pull you out of who you are. And this isn't about villainizing Judas. This is about understanding what happens when our expectations are so rigid, we'd rather destroy a person than update our story. We'd rather hold on to the fantasy than face the complexity of our humanity. And truthfully? Most of us have done this at some point. We've all wanted someone to stay the same because their growth made us feel lost, left behind, or unprepared to meet them where they were going.

But here's the call to maturity: When someone transforms in front of you, *you don't have to understand it to honor it*. And when *you* transform? You don't owe anyone the performance of who you used to be.

Judas had a storyline in his head—and when Jesus didn't follow the plot, Judas couldn't reconcile it. He wasn't just disillusioned with Jesus. He was disillusioned with the version of himself that depended on Jesus being something he wasn't. So, remember this: Their inability to recognize your fullness doesn't erase it. Their lens is limited, not your expansiveness. Expecting everyone to put in the effort to see you fully is expecting them to make you the main character in their life story. And beloved, this is where I call you out—with love, but with honesty. That expectation? It's delusional. And it will have you bending yourself into a damn pretzel trying to please everyone, gain approval, or dodge rejection like it's a student loan collector.

Let's be clear: **it ain't gonna happen, sis**. Not everyone will see you or honor you. And truthfully? Not everyone is supposed to. Rejection doesn't just sting — it guides. It's not just pain. It's a sacred filter meant to align you with purpose. The more you try to be for *everyone*, the more you end up being for *no one*, and the more you delay your peace and living in your purpose.

People rarely value what's too accessible or too easily attained. And every time you shrink to fit in, you chip away at who you really are. Here's the hard truth: You might be the one manifesting your own suffering. Let that sink in. By the end of this book, one of our shared goals is simple but soul-shifting: That you'll learn to pay attention to the people who see you clearly—and pay *even closer* attention to the ones who *refuse to*. Because that's how you'll know who to stop proving yourself to—and who was never qualified to shape your story in the first place.

The Cost of Owning Your Story

I've been watching people refuse to see clearly since I was a kid. I used to think of adults as chickens running around with their heads cut off. I know that's a graphic image—sorry in advance—but it's the best way I can describe what I saw. A chicken can still run after its head has been cut off because its nervous system remains intact. It can still move, even without a brain. That's how I saw adulthood. People moving, functioning, living—but mindlessly. I'd watch adults make choices that led to obvious, avoidable outcomes, and then act confused when things fell apart. They'd gossip about other people but be furious when someone gossiped about them. They'd criticize their kids and then shame other parents for doing the same. They'd complain about the sermon being too long while sitting in church, as if they were obligated to be there. The hypocrisy was everywhere. And it lit a fire in me. A righteous one.

From a young age, I was explaining dynamics to both kids and adults—things that felt obvious to me but invisible to them. I could see the layers behind people's words. I could hear what they weren't saying. And while that gift has served me, it hasn't always felt like a blessing. It started early. This wasn't something I learned. It was something I was. I've had this awareness for as far back as I can remember—age three or four. But what I learned quickly was that most people didn't like it. Not one bit. And here's the kicker: I was an introvert—a shy kid. I never inserted myself into other people's drama. I minded my business. But people would ask me, “What do you think?” I'd answer. I'd tell the truth—and boom. Metaphorically smacked, like a game of whack-a-mole. Especially by adults. Especially by caregivers.

I wasn't raised by my mother or father. I carried an ever-present fear of abandonment. My caregivers didn't "owe" me anything—or at least, that's how my child-brain interpreted it. So, I internalized a rule: "Don't rock the boat. Be grateful. Don't make anyone uncomfortable." But here's the thing—I didn't challenge people with attitude or disrespect. I was soft-spoken. Shy. But my words hit too close to home, and that made people defensive. I got punished for speaking the truth. So, I learned to survive by hiding. I shut my mouth. I played the "good girl." I followed the rules. I stopped offering insight, even when I saw the train wreck coming. And then, in high school, something shifted. My uncle came to visit. He told my caregivers, "Let her speak—she's right." Just like that, he didn't even know it, but in that moment, he handed me something I thought I had to earn: permission. Permission to speak. Permission to think. Permission to be me. That changed everything.

So now, dear sister, I'm offering that same permission to you. That's what this book is. It's not a manual. It's not a checklist. It's a permission slip with your own signature on it.

Permission to breathe.

Permission to break.

Permission to cry.

Permission to scream until your voice gives out.

Permission to heal.

Permission to feel joy.

Permission to change your mind.

Permission to be loved.

Permission to be *free*.

Because freedom starts when we stop waiting for the world to approve of us, and start giving ourselves the permission to show up authentically.

Before You Go Any Further: How to Read This Book (Without Losing Your Mind)

This book is a deep dive into the intersection where growth, healing, spirituality, and love collide. It's not a quick read, and it's not meant to be. For most people, this won't be a one-and-done, cover-to-cover-in-a-day kind of experience. This book excavates and it rebuilds. It asks you to look inward and come back stronger. So, to get the most out of it, honor the process.

Choose a quiet, comforting space where you feel most at peace. Take it slowly—one section at a time. Pause. Breathe. Let the words land before rushing into the next idea. Set yourself up with snacks, tea, water, or coffee. Keep a journal and pen nearby to catch the truths that rise up. And most importantly, honor your body and spirit. When you need a break, take one. Go for a walk, stretch, cry, rest, or dance in your kitchen like no one's watching. Let your breaks be as long as you need—even if they stretch into weeks. But whatever you do, return. Come back to the page. Come back to the work. You will thank yourself for it.

This book goes deep and covers a lot of ground for a reason: I want it to be a resource you can return to for years to come, no matter what season of love or life you're in. So, take a breath. Are you ready to be challenged—and to rise? Let's begin.

But before we go any further, let's clear something up. You're holding a self-help book—not a psychology textbook, not a Bible study, not a substitute for therapy. It's important to know what kind of help this book can offer—and what kind it can't. Throughout this book, I'll use the word *healing*. A lot. But let me be clear: when I say healing, I'm primarily referring to spiritual healing. That is different from psychological healing, which belongs in the hands of a licensed therapist. This book might read you for filth, but it's not licensed to treat you.

Self-help books are powerful tools. They can spark reflection, offer insight, provide validation, and introduce new frameworks. They can give language to what you've been feeling but couldn't quite name. They can even help you recognize patterns and shift your lens. But here's the truth: A book cannot do the hard work of healing for you. And deep down, you already know that. We've all done it. Bought the book, highlighted the quotes, shared a few posts, and felt inspired for a week. Then, life hits. And suddenly, the transformation we thought we'd downloaded like an app hasn't taken root. Why? Because we expect self-help books to deliver results that only inner work can produce. We hope the book will be the healer. But insight isn't transformation. Awareness is just the beginning.

That's why I believe psychological healing belongs in the care of trained therapists—people who are skilled, equipped, and licensed to help you untangle trauma, manage mental health, and work through the complexities of the mind. This book? This book is here to offer spiritual reflection, insight, and truth-telling—but it can't diagnose, treat, or replace therapy. It was never meant to.

So, what *can* this book do?

This book can support spiritual healing—the kind that reconnects you with yourself and God, helps you shed shame, examine your heart, reframe pain, and realign with truth. In ancient cultures, people didn't go to therapists—they went to sages, wisdom-bearers. They didn't just want coping skills; they wanted clarity. They weren't asking, "How do I fix this behavior?"—they were asking, "What is my soul trying to say?" And that's what spiritual healing does: it connects you to the part of you that still knows who you are, even when life has tried to make you forget. In our modern society, we've devalued spiritual healing and placed nearly all the weight on psychological frameworks. And while psychology is incredibly important, it's not complete without the soul. Psychological healing and spiritual healing were never meant to compete—they were meant to collaborate. One helps you stabilize; the other helps you transcend. And now let's talk about church.

Many people turn to pastors for spiritual healing, and sometimes, that's beautiful. But here's what I need you to hear: Pastors are shepherds, not healers. Their job is to guide, teach, and protect—not to be your personal spiritual surgeon. When we expect pastors to do the deep, personal, transformative healing work for us, we set ourselves up for disappointment. And when that disappointment comes, we call it “church hurt”—but the truth is, we were expecting one person to carry a spiritual weight that was never theirs to carry. God is the healer, and we are the conduits for our healing. The people around us—the books, the sermons, the therapy sessions—are just tools He uses. But the healing itself? That's your work.

So, as you read this book, know this:

- **You will be stretched.**
- **You will be challenged.**
- **You will be invited to be honest with yourself in ways you may have never been.**

But healing won't come just because you turned the last page. Healing comes when you turn inward and turn back to God. One of my favorite quotes from a therapist, Dr. K, is: *“Humans are great at inventing things. But we suck at predicting the consequences of the things we create.”* And whew—does that ring true when it comes to our therapy-saturated culture. In many ways, we've turned therapy into a savior. And spoiler alert: it can't be. That's not what it was designed for. Dr. Anita Phillips said it best when she described her role as a therapist like that of a midwife. She said her job is to witness and support the birth (healing) process, not to perform the birth. Only the mother can do that. Everyone else is just there to assist. But as a culture, we've put so much pressure on therapists that, honestly, I wouldn't be surprised if many struggle with impostor syndrome. And who could blame them? When we make therapists responsible for our healing, we misunderstand what healing even is.

I once heard this hilarious story from a therapist. He was livid. He'd been working with a client for years, and no matter what he tried, the client stayed stuck. Same complaint and the same patterns. Eventually, the client stopped going to sessions. A few months later, the therapist heard from him—and this time, the man had completely transformed. The therapist, stunned, asked, *“What brought about this change?”*

And the client said, “*I was driving one day and saw a bumper sticker that said...*”

Insert dramatic pause.

“*WHAT?!!!*” the therapist said—internally, of course. “All those years of deep work, only for a bumper sticker to get the credit.” But he said it was humbling. Because even though he knew people only change when they’re ready, a part of him still believed it was his job to make the change happen. That story stuck with me. So, here’s what many people don’t want to hear: No matter how much therapy you do, how many self-help books you read, how often you go to church, or how often you read your Bible, you will stay stuck until you’re ready to set yourself free. Therapy is powerful. Church is powerful. Books are powerful. But none of them will carry you across the threshold. Only you can do that.

Therapy Isn’t God

Let’s bring it full circle. Therapy is valuable. It can help you make sense of your story, recognize your patterns, and learn tools to regulate your emotions and nervous system. It can walk you up to the door of healing. But it can’t drag you through it like a kid with a doctor’s appointment. Therapy is not a miracle. It’s a mirror. It reflects. It reveals. But it doesn’t redeem. That’s God’s territory. Exhale. You’re not failing. You’re just waking up. And that’s holy work. Spiritual healing speaks to the heart, the soul, and the invisible wounds no empirically validated treatment plan can fully reach. It wrestles with the eternal, not just the emotional. It teaches surrender, not just self-awareness. It transforms you, not because you read the right books or got the right diagnosis, but because you finally gave God permission to reveal what life tried to bury.

This book is not therapy. It’s not a replacement for professional help. But it is a spiritual tool. A catalyst. A flashlight for your inner life. It’s here to provoke your growth, stir your soul, and disrupt the lies you’ve been living under. And yes, this does matter for your love life. Because until you confront the lies that shaped you, you’ll keep attracting people who reflect them. We live in a culture that says, “Go to therapy.” And I agree. But also: *Go to God*. Not to perform or beg, but to tell the truth, to surrender the control, and to say, “I’m ready to heal for real.” So, no—this isn’t a how-to manual. This is a *soul map*. And now that you’ve read this far, you’re already on the path. Let’s keep walking. God’s not done with you yet.

You might be thinking, “Ma’am, what does all of this have to do with a man, love, and relationships?” We’re getting there. But first, we need to do a little house cleaning and unpack a few things. So, sit tight—like that shapewear we insist on wearing under every freakum dress—and let me get transparent, like grade-A lace front glue after a fresh melt. I’ve done a lot of therapy. And I mean a lot. I went to sessions on and off for about five years. So, indulge me while I give you a little behind-the-scenes. Therapy was not what I expected. And it most definitely was not what the culture marketed it as. No one tells you that most therapists won’t give you advice, won’t directly tell you what’s “wrong” with you, and definitely won’t tell you what to do.

There’s a great movie called *Molly’s Game*, starring Jessica Chastain and Kevin Costner. Molly’s a former Olympic skier turned high-stakes poker queen who ends up on the FBI’s radar. Kevin Costner plays her father—a therapist—and there’s this one scene I would’ve completely missed the depth of had I never sat on a therapist’s couch myself. In it, he says:

“I get that I’m not welcome in your life right now as your father—though you should know I couldn’t give a shit if I’m welcomed or not. But I’m not here in my capacity as your father... I’m a very expensive therapist, and I’m here to give you one free session. We’re gonna do three years of therapy in three minutes. I’m gonna do what patients have been begging therapists to do for a hundred years. I’m just gonna give you the answers.”

Then he asks Molly, “*Why does a young woman who, at 22, has a gold-plated resume, run poker games?*”

Molly guesses, “*I don’t know. Drugs?*”

And he hits her with: “*The drugs weren’t the problem. They were the medicine. You wanted to control powerful men. Your addiction was having power over powerful men.*” He then continues and explains how that desire was linked to him cheating on her mother when she was young.

Whew. That scene stirred something in me. Because if I'm honest? I wanted my therapist to give me the answers, too. To tell me what my problem is, what to do, fix it all, and let me get on with my life. But that desire? That's a cop-out. And not just for me. For a lot of us. When someone else tells us what to do, we get to make them responsible for our outcomes. We get to detach from our shortcomings. We get to say, "*Well, I only did what they told me.*" It gives us a way out of doing the work. But here's the problem: that's not how healing works. As any therapist or coach will tell you, telling people what to do rarely creates change. The shift happens when we come to the answer ourselves. That's what creates ownership. And without ownership, you will stay stuck waiting for someone else to rescue you from a life you were called to build yourself. So, if you've been waiting for a savior in human form? You've already met her. She's the woman staring back at you in the mirror every morning while you fix your edges. She's the one adjusting her bonnet before doom-scrolling TikTok at night. She's always been there, waiting for you. And when you're finally ready to do the work that human hands—yours included—can't finish?

God's waiting, too. Arms wide open.

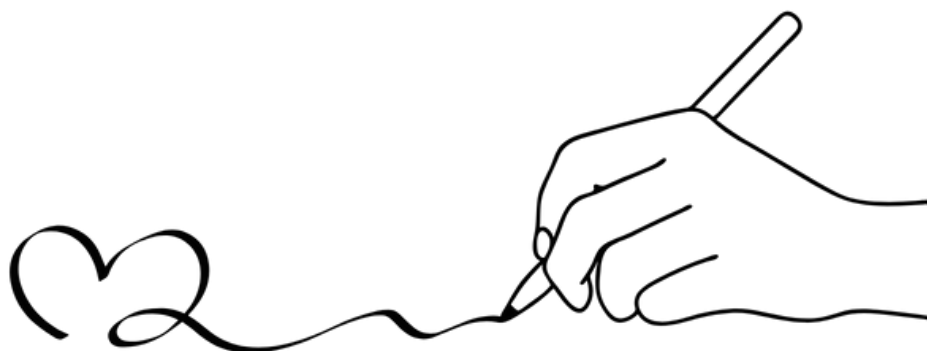
Therapy vs Spiritual Healing

Bible in one hand, copay in the other.

CATEGORY	THERAPY 	SPIRITUAL HEALING 
Main Focus	Your mind and behavior	Your soul and heart posture
Language	“How does that make you feel?”	“Have you talked to God about this?”
Goal	Emotional regulation + healthier coping mechanisms	Alignment with divine truth + internal surrender
Primary Tool	CBT worksheets, boundary-setting, inner child work	Prayer, stillness, scripture, falling apart in the presence of God
Homework	Journal about your triggers.	Let go of control and trust what you can't see.
Vibe Check	Let's unpack that childhood wound.	Take your shoes off. We're standing on holy ground.
Healing Style	Structured, evidence-based, trauma-informed	Nuanced, transformative, Spirit-led
Typical Phrase	“What I hear you saying is...”	“Be still and know.”
You After A Session	“That made me cry but I learned something.”	“I just met God in the shower and I'm forever changed.”
Biggest Risk	Over-analyzing instead of actually changing	Calling it faith when it's really avoidance
Biggest Strength	Clarity + emotional language	Wisdom + heart clarity
Who's In Charge	You + your licensed therapist	God + your willingness to surrender
When It Works Best	When you're ready to take responsibility	When you're ready to let go
Core Mantra	“Name it to tame it.”	“Not my will, but Yours.”

Now that you've gotten your footing and taken that first deep breath into truth, let's talk about one of the most overused—and underexplained—phrases in the healing world: “Do the work.” In Chapter 2, we're peeling back the buzzwords and going deeper. Because the work? It's not what you think. And it definitely doesn't come with step-by-step instructions. But I've got you.

WHAT HAD HAPPENED WAS...



For single women:

What definition of “healing” have you been living by—and who taught it to you?

In what ways have you performed strength to avoid vulnerability in dating or relationships?

What would it look like to stop seeing healing as a prerequisite for being “chosen” and start seeing it as a return to you?

For partnered women:

In your relationship, where are you performing peace instead of practicing truth?

Are there places where “doing the work” has become a performance for your partner's approval instead of an act of self-liberation?

How has your view of healing influenced how you give or withhold emotional intimacy?

I DON'T NEED A *Man*

What Love, Pain, and God Were Really Trying to Teach You

What if the real reason you say you don't need a man... is because you don't trust love to hold you?

This isn't a book about chasing relationships. It's a book about facing yourself.

Whether you're single, dating, married, or in the "*it's complicated*" phase, this book invites you to tell the truth—the raw, inconvenient, soul-stretching truth—about what love has really cost you... and what it's still trying to teach you.

Inside these pages, you'll:

- Uncover how your childhood, heartbreak, and hidden beliefs shaped your relationship patterns
- Identify your emotional defense mechanisms (without shame)
- Learn the five Heart Postures™ and how they impact your love life
- Understand your dominant emotional drive—and how it affects connection
- Explore what healing *actually* looks like, spiritually and emotionally
- Discern when it's your intuition speaking... and when it's your fear

You'll also get clarity on the cultural lies we've internalized about love, marriage, femininity, submission, emotional availability, and God. Spoiler alert: this book doesn't pick sides. Christian or secular. Spiritual or skeptical. Empath or emotionally exhausted. If you're emotionally complex and growth-minded—this book was written with you in mind.

For the single woman: This book will help you stop repeating old patterns, reclaim your power, and choose love from wholeness—not wounds.

For the partnered woman: This book will help you stop performing, start feeling again, and create emotional safety within yourself and your relationship.

What you won't find in this book: Sugar-coated clichés. Respectability politics. Or a 10-step plan to find "your man."

What you *will* find: Truth. Self-ownership. And a mirror.

Because before you can decide whether or not you want a man in your life—you need to understand who you are when love isn't performing for anyone.

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**BUY NOW ON AMAZON TO CONTINUE READING
AND DOING THE WORK.**



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Melissa Israel-Petion



I am a certified Holistic Wellness and Relationship Coach with expertise in Christian marriage, Positive Psychology, various personality models, and somatic healing practices.

With a transformative approach, I empower individuals and couples to break through negative inherited generational patterns to harness their unique strengths and cultivate deeper connections. My work integrates science and soul, guiding clients toward greater self-awareness, emotional resilience, and authentic relationships.

Passionate about growth and healing, I offer practical tools and profound insights that inspire lasting change, helping people live more fulfilling, aligned, and connected lives.

Learn more about my work at:

CouplesDevelopment.com