

# PRAISE FOR *HEALTHY. HAPPY. HOLY.*

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"The pages of this book are filled with the heart and soul of a friend who has learned many life-changing lessons, often through difficult and trying times. Joe writes not as an expert who has all the answers but as a fellow traveler who has learned to integrate body, soul, mind, and spirit into his journey as a disciple of Jesus Christ. This book will challenge, encourage, and inspire your journey of discipleship too."

Rev. Jeff Whitney

Lead Pastor

Apple Valley (CA) Church of the Nazarene

"From the beginning, one of the unique marks of God's people in the world is a life shaped by the peace, rest, and security of the Sabbath. Unfortunately, in a world of hurry, busyness, and isolation, it is easy for the faithful to lose sight of God's *shalom* for the soul. Thankfully, with wisdom, creativity, and practical insight, Joe Gorman invites believers to rediscover that Christ's yoke is easy and his burden light. For those of us who allow even good things to pull us too many directions and live on the edge of burnout, this book is a balm for the soul."

Dr. Scott Daniels

Lead Pastor

Nampa College Church of the Nazarene

"As a Christian and healthcare provider, I find the principles in *Healthy. Happy. Holy.* to be applicable in both my personal life and clinical practice. Caring for oneself is an act of obedience and worship that glorifies and honors our great Creator. Additionally, when we live a healthy, balanced life that includes Sabbath rest, nutritious foods, exercise, hobbies, and adequate sleep, we are better equipped to serve in our ministries. In my clinical practice I take a 'lifestyle first' approach to managing acute and chronic medical issues. I believe the majority of the concerns I'm presented with each day could be significantly improved, if not completely solved, by the application of the principles in *Healthy. Happy. Holy.* A movement toward healthier living should begin with Christians, since it is God's design and desire for our lives."

Dr. Erik Linn

Family Practice Physician

Nampa, Idaho

"Joe Gorman has thoughtfully and thoroughly outlined a passionate call for those who seek holiness to consider the relevance of nutrition as an imperative component to a holistic lifestyle. Impressively, Joe not only writes instruction on this topic but also lives it out in his daily walk. He is a great example of one striving to live the holy life."

Sandy Kipp

Registered Dietitian Nutritionist, Certified LEAP Therapist

Nampa, Idaho

"Drawing from the wells of good research and firsthand experience, Dr. Joe Gorman calls pastors and leaders to examine the need for healthy and balanced lives. If heeded, his timely words of caution and encouragement will result in healthier ministers, families, and churches. This book will be a lifeline for many."

Rev. Jerry Kester  
District Superintendent  
Washington Pacific District, Church of the Nazarene

"Spiritual formation is often reduced to personal piety, individualistic faith, and worship of God, but Joe Gorman reminds us that a central aspect of our spiritual growth is to love and care for ourselves. Loving and caring for our bodies is an essential part of human flourishing and well-being. *Healthy. Happy. Holy.* provides a strong theological framework with practical guidance in how to love ourselves as God loves us. A must-read for everyone, most especially caregivers such as pastors, counselors, and social workers."

Dr. Mark Maddix  
Dean, School of Theology and Christian Ministry  
Point Loma Nazarene University

"Joe wisely and pastorally breathes fresh air into our lives to revive our toxic souls that have been polluted from caring for everyone but ourselves. A must-read for anyone who needs to take better care of themselves and those they love and serve."

Rev. Tom Leavitt  
Director of Family Services  
Denver Rescue Mission

"In *Healthy. Happy. Holy.*, Joe writes a thoroughly researched, theologically sound, deeply personal handbook on missional living. In order to fully love God and love others, we must love and offer our best selves. In essence, Joe has given us a means of grace by which we can think and act in ways that strengthen and steward the gift of abundant living in and for Christ. As a pastor, I have learned a couple of the lessons from this book the hard way. Thankfully, I've now learned the others now from Joe."

Rev. Michael O'Neill  
Lead Pastor  
West Valley (WA) Church of the Nazarene

"The soul often seems like a fragile abstraction, but Joe Gorman reminds us that our soul is the fullness of who we are! We are called to steward the gift of life in body, mind, and spirit. Gorman writes as a companion on the Way who offers personal insights and the sage advice of a well-read guide on how to glorify God as we work, play, and inhabit our daily lives."

Dr. Rebecca Laird  
Associate Professor of Theology  
Point Loma Nazarene University

"From Christ's command to love God with all one's being and others as oneself, it seems that the element with which one should least be concerned is the love of self. But *Healthy. Happy. Holy.* addresses the fact that the love of self in God's kingdom is different from the world's self-love. This is a great read in learning how to love ourselves and others through Christ's perspective and the Spirit's empowerment, resulting in health, happiness, and holiness in every area of life."

Rev. Raquel Pereira  
Registrar and Teacher  
European Nazarene College

"Dr. Gorman addresses one of the most critical issues facing many people around the world today—the need for a holistic lifestyle that enables us to love God and to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. I find this book well balanced in its biblical-theological foundation, its well-researched data, and its practical applications for readers. I trust it will help many people to live a healthy, happy, and holy life."

Dr. Klaus Arnold  
Rector  
European Nazarene College

"Dr. Gorman's voice makes solid research both accessible and enjoyable. His text is convicting in a life-giving, joy-bringing kind of way. I long to share it with friends who have jumped on the latest healthcare bandwagon. I want to spend a season studying this book with a small group willing to allow ourselves to be shaped by communal rhythms of grace."

Rev. Kim Nichols  
Associate Pastor, Culver (OR) Church of the Nazarene  
Middle School Teacher, Paisley (OR) School District

"*Healthy. Happy. Holy.* is like a long conversation with a trusted mentor who cares enough about you to tell you the hard truth. Dr. Gorman offers biblically based, theologically rooted, and intensely practical wisdom for a sustained life of vocational ministry. These pieces of advice are applicable to ministers of all ages, locations, and experiences. Here is actionable help for the exhausted pastor from one who demonstrates the courage to open his own life to us for our learning."

Dr. Jeren Rowell  
President  
Nazarene Theological Seminary

"Many of us have seen the devastating effects of burnout on families, communities, and ministries. It's time for Christians to stop relying on default habits and patterns and start living in a way that honestly trusts God. *Healthy. Happy. Holy.* gives a path forward with inspiration and practical truths to apply. The insights found here are tried and true. I had Dr. Joe Gorman as a professor for a class on this subject, and I am healthier as a leader because of the truths he helped reveal. His book brings this same help to a broader community."

Rev. Dave Mowry  
Lead Pastor  
Twin Falls (ID) Church of the Nazarene

"When I first met Dr. Gorman, he asked me about my personal care routine as a pastor. Dr. Gorman is a practical Christian leader who lives out his faith with care and sincere concern. This book is an extension of his compassionate and wise heart. Filled with eye-opening scriptural references and day-to-day, life-preserving encouragement, this book challenges the heart and head simultaneously."

Rev. Gabriel Benjiman  
Africa Regional Education and Clergy Development Coordinator  
Church of the Nazarene

"Dr. Joe Gorman's self-care results in an inner strength that allows him to make a significant difference in the lives of others. In his first chapter, Joe writes, 'Soul care looks at the practices of loving our body and building emotional resilience by engaging in Sabbath, play, adequate sleep, regular exercise, and healthier eating as means of grace through which God intends us to be healthy, happy, and holy.' This book is an important read for all who desire to live that kind of life."

Dr. Michael Pitts  
Dean of College of Adult and Graduate Studies  
Northwest Nazarene University

This book is a life-saving message to me, my family, my community, and the pastors and churches on my district. Too often I forget to care for myself in the midst of traveling, preaching, and teaching. This is a must-read book. I recommend it to all of God's people who are serving the Lord in various ways. Your very life depends on it."

Rev. Celestin Chishibanji  
District Superintendent and Nazarene Compassionate Ministries Coordinator  
South Katanga District, Democratic Republic of Congo

"A step-by-step approach to one of life's hardest journeys. If your life feels out of balance, *Healthy. Happy. Holy.* might be what you need. Dr. Joe Gorman focuses on key ingredients and makes recommendations that will improve your entire life. His is a comprehensive plan for total spirit, mind, and body health."

President Mark Brozovich  
Founder, First Payment Solutions  
Denver, Colorado

"*Healthy. Happy. Holy.* paints a way of life that we all desire: being fully dedicated to our various responsibilities while also being healthy and happy. With persuasion and gentleness, Gorman convinces us that lifestyle does indeed matter for those who follow Christ. The many examples from Joe's personal experience show that he practices what he believes."

Rev. Wilma Holleman  
Co-pastor, Zaanstad Church of the Nazarene  
The Netherlands

"Just a little warning: this book may be convicting. Far too many have taken their own personal care for granted. Gorman reminds us what it means to love and care for our own souls so that we can be faithful reflections of Christ. I encourage every serious follower of Jesus Christ to read this book and consider what it means to be good stewards of what God has given us."

Dr. Carla Sunberg  
General Superintendent  
Church of the Nazarene

"In his new book, Joe Gorman addresses one of the great needs in my life and the lives of many others in an engaging and practical way. He shares lessons he has learned and continues to learn from his personal journey about taking care of ourselves so we can be at our best for God, our families, and our world. This is not another self-help book but a spiritual understanding that Jesus's call to an overflowing, abundant life covers every aspect of our existence. Gorman deals in an informative and positive way with the topics covered by each chapter and concludes by giving the reader a practical plan for soul care. This is a timely book for me, and I know it will help every person who reads it."

Dr. David Graves  
General Superintendent  
Church of the Nazarene

"Joe Gorman calls us to faithful Christian discipleship and the development of true incarnational theology. Our belief in the physical incarnation of Jesus must impact the way in which we care for our own physical beings. *Healthy. Happy. Holy.* balances theological reflection, scientific information, and practical tools to guide us in developing a healthy pattern of living. Gorman provides a powerful antidote to any Christian leader who has fallen prey to the unhealthy theology that stress, exhaustion, and overwork are essential signs of total dedication to God."

Dr. Judith A. Schwanz  
Director, Wynkoop Center for Women in Ministry  
Nazarene Theological Seminary

"Sometimes in ministry, we're tempted to develop a messiah complex because we feel our efforts are indispensable. As a result, it's easy to wind up overworked and stressed, feeling inadequate to the task of ministry. Ironically, Jesus never had this problem. Joe Gorman's thoughtful reflections remind us of the importance of developing healthy, holistic, Christlike rhythms that can restore our depleted reservoirs. If you love God, this book can help you learn to love yourself too. You, your family, and your ministry will be better for it!"

Dr. Jay Richard Akkerman  
Professor of Pastoral Theology  
Northwest Nazarene University

For Shelly—my partner in life, companion in adventure,  
and best friend always.



*"Tell me, what is it you plan to do with  
your one wild and precious life?"*

—Mary Oliver, "The Summer Day"

# HEALTHY.

7 PRACTICES TOWARD

# HAPPY.

A HOLISTIC LIFE

# HOLY.

JOE GORMAN



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PUBLISHING

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ONE

# SECURE YOUR OWN OXYGEN MASK FIRST

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*"Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul."*

—3 John 1:2, ESV

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*"Do justice to your own soul;  
give it time and means to grow.*

*Do not starve yourself any longer. Take up your cross,  
and be a Christian altogether."*

—John Wesley<sup>1</sup>

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*"The glory of God is a human being fully alive."*

—Irenaeus, second-century theologian<sup>2</sup>

Human beings are multi-faceted. We worship. We pray. We serve. But we also work, make love, sing, dance, play, laugh, sleep, exercise, and eat. God's gift of life extends to every dimension of our lives. Since God created every aspect of our lives, God is concerned about everything that concerns us.

"You are your chief neighbor," St. Catherine of Siena wrote more than 650 years ago.<sup>3</sup> Catherine only lived to be thirty-three years old, but she learned in her short life what takes many of

us a lifetime to figure out: the Christian life is indeed a journey of loving God and others, but it is also a journey of learning to love ourselves. As Catherine reminds us, the first neighbor God calls us to love is ourselves. Loving ourselves as our neighbor will likely go against the grain of what many of us have been taught throughout our lives. But the logic is simple: if we do not know how to love ourselves as a neighbor in need of our love, how can we know how to truly love our neighbor?

In the Great Commandment Jesus provides three strands of Christian spiritual formation: love God; love your neighbor; love yourself (Matt. 22:37–40). Love of neighbor and love of self are intimately interconnected for Jesus. They are two sides of the same coin. Notice Jesus's message here: love your neighbor *as yourself*, not *instead of yourself* or *more than yourself*.<sup>4</sup> He is not saying that you either love your neighbor *or* you love yourself. It's love your neighbor *and* love yourself. So do we love our neighbor or love ourselves first? Yes. It's both. It's like trying to decide whether the chicken or the egg came first. As Sam Wells puts it, "In other words, regard yourself as the first among all the neighbors God calls you to love. God's got a lot to be doing with the whole creation, but the wonderful thing is, God has chosen to start with you."<sup>5</sup>

## **Secure Your Own Oxygen Mask First**

I was on a flight recently when the flight attendant told us, as they do before every takeoff, "In the event of the loss of cabin pressure, an oxygen mask will drop down. Be sure to secure your own oxygen mask before assisting others. Parents who are traveling with young children, please firmly secure your own mask first." For a parent, this instruction is counterintuitive. In an emergency, it is my instinct to ensure my children are safe first. But when I think about the situation rationally, it makes perfect sense that, in order to best care for my children, I must first secure my own oxygen mask. If I pass out while helping my children put on

their oxygen masks, I am not going to be able to help them or anyone else who may need assistance.

Like putting on my oxygen mask first during an in-flight emergency, caring for myself is an act of love, both for myself and others. To love God, others, and all creation well, I will also need to love myself. A theology of health affirms that self-care is not selfish but gives us greater energy to love God and others wholeheartedly. As Parker Palmer asserts, “Self-care is never a selfish act—it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer to others. Anytime we can listen to true self and give it the care it requires, we do so not only for ourselves but for the many others whose lives we touch.”<sup>6</sup>

Healthy people love. Healthy people are generous. Healthy people serve. Healthy people are physically strong, mentally alert, and emotionally resilient. Healthy people are more loving spouses, more patient parents, more effective employees, and more involved in service to others. Soul care is neighborly love extended toward ourselves, others, and all creation. We nourish ourselves so that all can flourish. The well-being of the world starts with our own personal health.

## **My Journey of Self Care**

For many years now, I have been on a personal journey of living a healthier life by engaging in practices that help me manage and prevent stress, burnout, and depression as well as lower my weight, blood pressure, and cholesterol. Rather than viewing these practices as incidental to my spiritual life, I understand them to be an act of worship, honoring God by caring for his gifts of body, mind, and emotions. In the interest of full disclosure, I do not live out perfectly the practices discussed in this book. Some days are better than others. I simply get up one more time than I fall down. In this book I share the lessons I’ve learned and continue to learn every day. So please don’t think I have it all together. Too often I still learn the hard way. I do

not consider myself to be an expert in this subject matter but, rather, a sometimes weary, fellow traveler—perhaps (or perhaps not) a few more steps along on the journey but clearly one who is still very much on the way. The following personal story is a brief chapter in my three-steps-forward-two-steps-back journey toward a more flourishing life.

It took a personal crisis for me to begin intentionally caring for myself. Several years ago my wife, Shelly, and I prayed one night with our two children and tucked them into bed. As I sat quietly reading later that evening, I couldn't ignore the pounding in my chest. I was most likely reading a theology book of some sort—hardly the kind of book to get my heart pumping. The television was off. I had *thought* I was relaxing. Yet the thumping in my chest continued. I took hold of my left wrist and began to count. My pulse was more than one hundred beats a minute. Until this moment, I had felt fine. But now I felt anxious and sick to my stomach. All kinds of end-of-life scenarios flashed in front of me. I made an appointment with a doctor the next day.

At the doctor's office, I went through a gauntlet of examinations. As I awaited the diagnosis, hypochondria kicked into high gear: *I've suffered a heart attack and might die at any moment. I'm a father with young children. This can't be happening to me!*

While I continued to obsess about my imminent death, a knock came on the examination room door, and the doctor entered. As I braced myself for the worst, the doctor told me matter-of-factly, "Everything looks fine. When this happens to guys your age, it's usually because of stress and lack of exercise."

*Guys my age?* I asked myself. I was in my late thirties at the time, and I was, admittedly, experiencing chronic stress. I also had not been exercising regularly. I was about sixty pounds overweight, didn't eat well, and rarely got eight hours of sleep, but I felt fine—well, most of the time. How had I arrived at this point?

In my early years I was a chubby, though active, kid. I developed unhealthy eating habits as a child that led to consistent

weight gain and great difficulty losing weight. Obesity led to my being teased mercilessly in grade school. Because of my chubbiness, I had very low self-esteem and hated myself for much of my childhood and early adolescence. I started playing football in middle school, which helped me feel better about myself and reach a healthy weight for the first time in my life. But then in high school, my football coaches wanted me to bulk up, so I put on forty-five pounds. By this time no one teased me about being overweight as long as I was a decent football player.

After graduating from college, I became busy with ministry and further schooling. I understood well the importance of worship, prayer, Bible reading, and other spiritual disciplines for becoming more like Christ, and I regularly practiced these. But I was ill prepared for the added stresses of “real” life. I slept too little, didn’t understand the need for a healthy diet, and rarely exercised. Even though a church member gave our pastoral staff and families a membership at a health club just two blocks away from the church, I didn’t sense the need for regular exercise. I thought I was too busy—as a newlywed, as a youth pastor with a full schedule of activities, and as a part-time student in a master’s program—to worry about exercise. A couple years later, when I went to seminary, I did well academically but failed to balance the rest of my life. After our two children were born, there was even less time to care for my health than there had been in seminary. As the lead pastor in my first church, the emotional hazards of ministry took a toll on me. I was good at caring for others but not so good at caring for myself.

My lack of healthy attention to self-care reminds me of the frog-in-a-pot-of-water syndrome. Little by little as the heat of my life turned up, I remained oblivious to the effects unmanaged stress and weight gain had on me physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Once I was caught in the pot, I didn’t even know I had a problem. It wasn’t until my pseudo-heart attack that I became aware of the need to change my habits. That evening in our liv-

ing room with my heart pounding was a defining moment for me: would I continue to fall into the bad habits of the past, or with God's help, would I start to revise my life story?

My pseudo-heart attack set my life on a new trajectory. I tell my story about overcoming unhealthy habits to encourage you to take healthy steps in your own life before you possibly receive a similar wake-up call. My wake-up call helped me realize how vitally interconnected every area of my life is with the others. As a result, I no longer view my physical, mental, and emotional life as unrelated to my spiritual life. After hitting the snooze button of life more often than I'd like to admit, I came to realize that cultivating my spiritual life alone was not enough to live fully the abundant life to which Christ calls me. In fits and starts, I slowly began to care better for *all* of myself. My reasons for living a healthier life during this time were mostly personal and practical—better health, lower weight, increased emotional resilience, more energy, an improved sense of well-being, and the ability to keep up with my kids. For too long I took for granted self-care practices like adequate rest, regular exercise, and life-giving play. Over time, I have discovered that these are as vital to holiness and health as are worship and serving others.

As I've read Scripture and reflected on the implications of Jesus's incarnation for our entire lives, I've become convinced that God is concerned not only with the kind of holiness that is related to our spiritual well-being but also with the kind of holiness that leads to the flourishing of every dimension of our lives. This is one of the many things I love about our Wesleyan theological tradition. John Wesley did not separate holiness and happiness but viewed them as two sides of the same coin. For Wesley, a happy life is not necessarily a holy life, but the trajectory of holiness tends toward happiness—not a McDonald's-Happy-Meal kind of happiness but "happiness in God."<sup>7</sup> Wesley was adamant that "true religion, or a right heart toward God and man, implies happiness as well as holi-

ness.”<sup>8</sup> Wesley was also a champion of health. Health, happiness, and holiness were inseparable in his theology.

## The Soul

These days we talk a lot about the *self*. There are self-help books, self-improvement programs, self-image retreats, and more. These things can be very helpful—even for our relationships with God and others. *Talk* of the self can be misleading, however.

*Soul* is a term Scripture often uses as shorthand for *the whole person*, or what we often refer to as *the self*. As souls, human beings have spiritual, mental, physical, emotional, and relational dimensions. All of these different threads of being human are intimately interrelated with and inseparable from each other. The way these various facets of our lives mutually influence each other is what Scripture is talking about when it refers to “the soul.”<sup>9</sup>

Everything that has to do with being human is related to the soul: loving, laughing, learning. The notion of *soul* expresses who human beings are in the totality of our relationships with God, each other, ourselves, and all creation. In this sense, we do not so much *have* a soul as we *are* a soul.<sup>10</sup>

Genesis 2:7 says, “Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” The Hebrew word *nephesh*, translated here as “living being,” is the word also often translated into English as “soul.” As Joel Green notes, *nephesh* can also be translated here as “the human being became fully alive.”<sup>11</sup> *Soul* is the most comprehensive term available to us when talking about who we human beings are in the totality of our lives.

What I intend when I use the term *soul care* is very similar to the Hebrew understanding of *shalom* (holistic peace, both personal and social), for soul care seeks the wholeness, wellness, and peace of Christ in every dimension of our lives—spirit, mind, body, emotions, and relationships. Jesus put such a life in the form of an invitation: “Come to me, all you who are weary and



burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). "Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them" (John 7:38). "I have come that [you] may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10). Jesus's call to overflowing, abundant life has repercussions for every aspect of our lives. His invitation may not usually be heard as a call to health, happiness, and holiness, but that is exactly what it is. It is a call to fully integrated, flourishing lives in relation to God, others, ourselves, and all creation.

## John Wesley and Soul Therapy

John Wesley referred to God's healing work in human beings as "soul therapy." Sanctification and holiness are terms he used more often, but what he means by "soul therapy" is the healing of the soul in all its faculties. This is holiness through and through. Employing the biblical concept of soul as the whole person, Wesley says that "the religion of Jesus Christ . . . is *θεραπεία ψυχῆς* [*therapeia psychēs*, or soul therapy], God's method of healing a soul which is thus diseased. Hereby the great Physician of souls applies medicine to heal this sickness: to restore human nature, totally corrupted in all its faculties."<sup>12</sup> Wesley affirms that God's salvific reach extends to every area of human need: spirit, mind, emotions, and body. This is good news, indeed, for churches, local communities, and all of creation.<sup>13</sup>

For this reason God is concerned not only with the kind of holiness that is related to our spiritual well-being but also with the kind of holiness that leads to the flourishing of our entire lives—mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. The apostle Paul speaks of this dynamic interrelationship of spirituality, psychology, and biology when he writes to the church at Thessalonica: "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24). Soul care

seeks to integrate into one praying, playing, loving, laughing, getting up, fixing and eating meals, working, going to school, exercising, living with family and friends, cleaning the house, traveling, talking, sleeping, aging, serving life what it means to be fully alive in Christ.

The message of this book is simple: God intends for you to flourish in every area of your life—to live a radiant, vibrant, healthy life of joy, peace, love, and faithful service.

Although my hope is that you will read the entire book, I have organized the chapters in such a way that you can read any chapter that scratches a personal itch and then come back to the other chapters later. While there is a certain logic to the order I've set out, you can read whichever chapter is of most immediate concern to you. Each chapter offers a different resource for cultivating a healthier, happier, and more Christlike life.

That evening in the quiet of our living room was a defining moment for me in which I began to see that I was living a diminished life. My life at that moment was not the expansive, fully alive life for which God had created me. God used what could have been a crisis in my life to wake me up to the importance of caring for my entire life. Though changing from a lifestyle of self-neglect to one of soul care has been extremely difficult at times, it has also been the most rewarding season of my life. I invite you to join me on the journey of soul care.