ARISE AGAIN

Healing from Heartbreak and Rebuilding Your Future



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PUBLICATION INFORMATION

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This book offers Christian pastoral encouragement and practical reflection, especially for young women recovering from relationship betrayal. It does not provide a diagnosis, treatment plan, individual legal advice or an assurance about employment, migration, marriage or financial recovery. Qualified local advice may be needed for your circumstances.

Scripture references are provided for reading in the New King James Version or another Bible translation you understand. The biblical discussions in this manuscript are the authors' explanations and paraphrases, not verbatim quotations from a published translation. Read each passage in its surrounding context.

The two anonymised counselling accounts were supplied by the author from his pastoral work. He confirms that they were recorded and that the people concerned gave permission for publication. Names and unnecessary identifying details are withheld. The separate public testimony is attributed to its published sources. General questions and practical exercises are teaching guidance, not additional client testimonies.

The six colour illustrations inside the book are AI-generated. They depict imagined scenes, not the actual people whose testimonies appear in the book. No illustration should be read as photographic evidence of a counselling account. The cover uses the co-authors' supplied photograph with AI-assisted background and design editing.

The sources at the back support selected factual passages. Their inclusion does not imply endorsement of this book or its theological views. International guidance is distinguished from national law. Information and service arrangements can change.

DEDICATION

To my biological children, my adopted children and my spiritual children, especially every daughter whom God has entrusted to my care through our family and ministry: I dedicate this book to you with a father's love and prayer.

May it become a life companion you return to before making promises that may shape your future. Your life is precious, and your years are too valuable to surrender to decisions made without knowledge, understanding, wisdom and spiritual guidance. Learn patiently, ask honest questions and seek God before giving your heart or making a lifelong commitment.

My conviction is that marriage is a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman, to be honoured until death. I do not advocate divorce. That conviction makes careful preparation essential: choose with a sober mind, sound knowledge, prayer and wise counsel. Honouring marriage never excuses violence or coercion. If you are unsafe, seek protection and appropriate support.

I also dedicate these pages to those who have suffered through circumstances they did not choose: single mothers carrying heavy responsibilities; workers who spent years abroad only to lose their savings to deception; those whose trust was used against them; and those who lost a spouse or fiance to a trusted friend. To every person wounded by false promises, fraud, abandonment or betrayal, these pages are offered with compassion.

To those who have given up on love, those considering parenthood while uncertain about marriage, and those wrestling with questions of relationships, identity or faith: your story deserves to be heard without humiliation. May you find truth, care and a hopeful way forward.

My children and every reader who recognises their pain here, do not let that pain make every future decision. Receive help, learn from what has happened, and give your next choice the attention it deserves. May God's grace guide you towards a life of dignity, faithful love and purpose.

With love and prayer,
Ssentaba Ronald Salongo

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I give all thanks, honour and glory to the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

To God the Father, I give thanks for life, mercy and the privilege of caring for the children and people entrusted to me. His faithfulness has sustained my calling and given me reason to continue teaching hope in difficult circumstances.

To the Lord Jesus Christ, I give thanks for salvation, grace and the example of love that serves without exploiting. His compassion is the foundation of the pastoral care and Christian counsel offered in these pages.

To the Holy Spirit, I give thanks for illumination, conviction, guidance and the grace to teach. Through prayer, Scripture and the experiences brought before me, I have been led to reflect on choices, responsibility, healing and the future of our children.

May this book serve God's purposes rather than my own praise. May its words direct readers towards truth, thoughtful decisions, compassion and a deeper response to Christ. Where people have been wounded, may they encounter care. Where change is needed, may they find courage to take a faithful step.

All glory belongs to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

A LETTER TO THE READER

Dear reader,

Perhaps you are reading while travelling to work, after putting a child to bed, or in a room where nobody knows how much you are carrying. A relationship ended, a promise was broken, money disappeared, or someone you trusted made you doubt yourself. You may still love that person. You may feel relieved that the relationship ended. You may not yet know what you feel.

I have written this book to help you make informed choices without condemning yourself. You can name what happened, care for yourself, ask for support and act on what you learn. Its final chapter calls you to bring knowledge, understanding and wisdom into the decisions shaping your future.

I write as a Christian minister and Bible teacher. My hope is rooted in the character of God and the compassion of Jesus Christ. I will explain that foundation openly. Readers of other faiths, and readers who are uncertain about faith, are welcome to consider the practical guidance without pretending to share every conviction.

This book speaks mainly to young women, including those living away from home and those parenting while rebuilding their lives. Young men, parents, pastors and mentors also have responsibilities here. Preventing harm cannot be left to the person most likely to suffer it.

Arising again does not mean rushing into another relationship, proving your success online or returning to someone who mistreated you. It may begin quietly: making an appointment, protecting a document, attending a class, telling a safe person the truth, or allowing yourself to rest. Some readers will marry. Others will remain single. Some will raise children; others will not. A meaningful future is possible in each of these lives.

Please read at a pace you can manage. You may skip a question, stop a discussion or return to a difficult chapter later. Private reflection is enough; you owe nobody a public account of your pain. Let these pages accompany your recovery, alongside the people and professional support you may need.

With hope,
Ssentaba Ronald Salongo

FROM MY RECRUITMENT EXPERIENCE

For the past fifteen years, I have worked in recruitment, helping people from Uganda travel for domestic work and household management in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, including Dubai, and Oman. Many of the women I have assisted have been single mothers working to support their children. This experience is one reason I care deeply about the connection between relationships, responsibility, work and financial decisions. [13]

I have heard painful accounts of women supporting a partner, sending money for land or a home, or trusting promises of reconciliation, then returning to Uganda to find the expected savings or property absent. Some described renewed affection that appeared to be a way of obtaining access to their earnings. These are accounts shared with me; I do not present an unnamed allegation as a legal finding about an identifiable person.

In some of these families, a father or partner had failed to carry his responsibilities. A mother's ability to obtain work abroad should never become an excuse for someone else to abandon a child. These observations do not describe all men, all marriages or every Ugandan worker's experience. They explain the practical concerns that inform this book.

My appeal is that hope should be accompanied by knowledge, careful judgment and appropriate support. A renewed relationship needs evidence of changed conduct. A property plan needs verified information and suitable independent advice. A worker needs access to documents, reliable records and a plan beyond the next remittance.

My recruitment experience informs the practical questions I raise. I write as a Christian minister and Bible teacher; I do not present that experience as a clinical qualification or as authority to decide individual legal cases. You may contact me through the book's correspondence details for general orientation and pastoral conversation. Employment permissions, legal matters, health concerns and safeguarding need the appropriate qualified or official services.

I offer what I have learned to help you examine your options. The decision should be informed and freely made. Where circumstances limit your options, seek people who will help make a safer and more hopeful choice possible.

TRUE ACCOUNTS FROM PASTORAL COUNSELLING

The two accounts that follow were shared with me in pastoral counselling and supplied as the original testimonies for this book. They are true accounts, not fictional stories. I confirm that they were recorded and that the people concerned gave permission for their accounts to be published to help others. Names and unnecessary identifying details have been withheld. The recordings themselves are not reproduced here. [14]

These brief accounts are included to illuminate the teaching, not to turn private suffering into entertainment. They are not composites, and I have not invented a completed recovery or reconciliation for either person.

Trusting a promise and losing the savings

A young Ugandan woman and the man she loved planned to work abroad and build a future together. She believed that their relationship would lead to marriage. When he lost his job, she supported him with her earnings, meeting their living costs and helping with money sent to his family.

After he found work again, they continued planning for the future. At the end of her contract, she returned to Uganda expecting to prepare for marriage. She had entrusted her savings and end-of-service money to him because he had said he was buying land and building their home.

When she returned, the land and house she expected were not there, and she could not recover the money. Her calls to him went unanswered. She was left facing the loss of her savings as well as the collapse of the future she had imagined.

Her distress became severe. She spoke of feeling that life was no longer worth living. Later, she travelled abroad again to find him. He apologised but had no money to repay her. At the time the account was shared, the hurt and loss of trust remained unresolved.

She questioned whether she would ever trust a man again. In her pain, she also considered having a child without pursuing marriage. These were questions raised in distress, not a basis for condemning her. They showed how deeply betrayal had affected her thoughts about love, family and the future.

Her experience raises the questions developed throughout this book: How can a person care for someone without surrendering control of every resource? What evidence should accompany a promise? How can grief be supported, trust reconsidered and a future rebuilt? A reader whose distress

feels dangerous should seek urgent help, as explained in the guidance on using this book.

A marriage wounded across distance

Another account concerned a married Christian couple who travelled abroad to work for their children's future. Work later placed the husband in a different city. His wife subsequently discovered that he had become involved with another woman. Their marriage was deeply wounded by the betrayal.

Their Christian faith and years of prayer did not remove the husband's responsibility for his conduct or prevent the wife from experiencing grief. This account reminds us that marriage needs faithful decisions and accountability, and that an injured spouse cannot create the other person's honesty alone.

I include these accounts with permission and without naming the people involved. Their circumstances help explain the urgency of this book's teaching on love, wise decisions, work abroad, financial boundaries, faith and responsibility. Their dignity matters more than the details a reader may be curious to know.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The chapters move through worth, recovery, safety, work, relationships and preparing the next generation. Chapter 16 brings these themes together through choice, transformation and responding to Christ. Follow the book in order or begin with an urgent subject. The testimony, guidance, Bible reflections and optional steps are tools for thought, not tests you must pass.

If you feel overwhelmed, close the book and seek support. If you are in immediate danger, have seriously harmed yourself, or think you may act on thoughts of suicide, contact local emergency services or go to the nearest emergency department now. If possible, tell a trusted person and ask them to stay with you while you obtain help. Do not wait to finish a chapter. This book and its author email are not emergency services.

Some readers need safety before reflection. If another person monitors your phone or movements, seek confidential advice through a device and setting they cannot access, where possible. A specialist can help you consider options without requiring you to confront the person first.

Readers under eighteen should use the book with age-appropriate support from a safe adult or qualified professional. Adult courtship discussions are not instructions for minors to enter adult relationships. If a parent or relative is unsafe, another safeguarding professional, teacher or health worker may be a better starting point.

Words used in these pages

Heartbreak is the pain that can follow the loss of a relationship, trust or a hoped-for future. It is an experience, not a statement about your value.

A boundary describes what you are comfortable with and the action you can take to protect your wellbeing. It does not give you control over another person.

Consent means freely agreeing to a particular activity. Pressure, threats and exploitation undermine that freedom. Consent is not a permanent entitlement given to somebody else.

Reconciliation means rebuilding a relationship. It differs from forgiveness and requires more than one person's willingness.

Depression is a mental health condition that should be assessed by a qualified health professional. Feeling sad after a loss does not by itself establish a diagnosis. [1, 2]

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CHAPTER 1

YOUR WORTH HAS NOT CHANGED



AI-generated illustration: Hope and a future beyond heartbreak.

When a promise collapses

The first counselling account in this book concerns a woman who lost savings and the future she expected to build with a partner. Betrayal can leave a person questioning her worth as well as her judgment. These are different questions, and it matters how we answer them.

Another person's conduct and your own worth are different matters. Betrayal can damage finances, plans and confidence. It does not establish that the person betrayed is less valuable. A broken promise tells us something about a promise and the person who broke it; it does not measure the value of the person who believed it.

You may recognise that confusion. Perhaps you were told that nobody else would want you, that having a child reduced your chances of happiness, or that leaving meant you had failed. Such statements can become a voice you carry long after the relationship ends. One part of recovery is learning to question that voice rather than treating it as a reliable judge.

Responsibility without self-condemnation

There may be choices you want to understand. You might wish you had kept separate savings, asked more questions or sought advice earlier. Learning from those choices can help. Taking responsibility for another person's deception cannot help you judge events fairly.

Try writing three separate sentences: "What happened was ..."; "What I was responsible for was ..."; "What was outside my control was ..." Keep to actions and facts. "I transferred money without checking ownership" describes a decision. "I am stupid and deserve this" insults a person and explains nothing. If you were coerced, assaulted or exploited, the responsibility for that harm belongs to the person who committed it.

Sometimes there is no lesson that makes the loss feel acceptable. You do not have to declare the experience necessary or call it a blessing. You can grieve it and still decide what you want to protect now.

A future wider than one relationship

Marriage can be a good and deeply desired part of life. It is not a certificate of human worth. Education, friendship, work, service, rest and faith also belong to your future. None must wait until someone chooses you romantically.

For someone facing this kind of loss, an initial goal might be obtaining a clear record of the money transferred and asking a qualified adviser about her options. A second might be returning to a course she abandoned. Neither decision guarantees repayment or removes grief. Both give her something she can do without waiting for her former partner to change.

Name the roles you still hold: learner, friend, daughter, colleague, citizen, neighbour, believer, parent, or someone exploring what she believes. A relationship may have occupied a large part of your life. It did not create every part of you.

Scripture in context

Read Genesis 1:26-27 and Psalm 139:13-18. Human dignity begins in God's creation, before achievement, income or marital status. These passages do not deny suffering. They give Christians a reason to honour the person who suffers.

Read Proverbs 24:15-16 within its warning against attacking the righteous. The image of rising after repeated falls encourages perseverance through adversity; it is not permission to keep returning to a dangerous situation. The title Arise Again is an invitation to hope, not an order to recover quickly.

A step you can take

Choose one sentence to keep: "What happened deserves attention, but it does not decide my worth." Identify one practical matter that needs care this week and one person who may help with it. If writing is painful or unsafe, think it through privately instead.

Optional reflection: Which part of your future have you placed on hold because of another person's decision? What is one small, realistic way to give that part of your life attention again?

CHAPTER 2

LOVE PRESSURE AND THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

The pressure to appear chosen

Engagement photographs, family questions and online displays of romance can make being chosen feel like proof of success. Under that pressure, intense attention may appear to answer a need before you have had time to examine the relationship.

The desire to be loved is ordinary. Pressure can make that desire feel like an emergency. A person may begin to ask, "Will he leave if I refuse?" before asking, "Do I want this, and is it good for me?" Learning to hear that difference can create room for a more deliberate decision.

No single explanation fits every early or painful relationship. Young people have different histories, resources and choices. Poverty, family conflict, isolation and unequal power can complicate decisions, but they do not determine a person's character or make abuse inevitable. A supportive home can help without guaranteeing protection from deception. An absent parent does not condemn a child to unhealthy love.

What communities can keep and change

Many families and communities have traditions of guidance, generosity and shared responsibility worth preserving. Elders may offer experience, practical support and a wider view of a potential partner's conduct. Those strengths should not be lost.

Earlier communities also contained silence, coercion and unequal expectations. We do not need to imagine that every older marriage was safe in order to value commitment. A custom deserves examination if it protects appearances while denying a young person the freedom to refuse harm.

Phones and social media can connect people with education, friendship, work and help. They can also present carefully selected images of romance and success. A photograph cannot show how a couple manages consent, debt, anger or disappointment. Use what you see as a limited picture, not a timetable for your own life.

Shared responsibility at home

A woman earning more than a man is not, by itself, a broken family structure. A man seeking help is not, by itself, a failure of manhood. Families

need honest agreements about earning, care, decisions and responsibility. The question is whether people act fairly and respectfully, including when circumstances change.

Young women should not be trained only to avoid danger while young men are excused for causing it. Boys need guidance about consent, emotional expression, domestic work and accountability. Girls need opportunities to learn, earn, ask questions and make decisions. Both need examples of adults who apologise and change their behaviour.

Practising a pause

Before a major relationship decision, ask what is creating the urgency. Is there a genuine deadline, or fear of rejection? What information is missing? Who benefits if you cannot consult anyone? Can you say no without punishment?

A useful pause might sound like this: "I care about this decision, so I will not make it tonight. I need time to understand it." You do not need to debate your right to think. If the response is a threat, that response is important information.

Scripture in context

Read Romans 12:2 and James 1:5. Christian discernment includes examining the patterns around us and asking God for wisdom. It is not automatic approval of everything new or everything traditional. Read James 1:19 as well: listening before speaking matters in families and mentoring relationships.

A step you can take

List three messages you have received about love, money or marriage. Beside each, write who taught it and whether it encourages dignity, freedom and responsibility. Keep the helpful guidance; question the messages that depend on shame or fear.

Optional reflection: What would you choose differently if you did not have to prove that your life was progressing at the same speed as someone else's?

CHAPTER 3

NAMING THE HURT

More than the loss of a person

The end of a relationship can also mean losing the home, family or future you had imagined. A reminder of those hopes may stir grief even after you no longer wish to return to the person involved.

Loss may include companionship, money, trust, a pregnancy, family approval or a picture of who you expected to become. Naming the different losses can help you see why one apology or a new relationship cannot settle every part of the pain. Each practical problem may need a different response.

You might feel sadness one day and anger the next. You might miss someone you do not want to return to. Mixed feelings do not cancel your reasons for keeping a boundary. Nor must you feel pain in a particular way to prove that a relationship mattered.

Guilt and shame need careful questions

Guilt is often described as feeling bad about something you did, while shame attacks who you are. That distinction can be useful, but feelings are not a court verdict. People sometimes feel guilty for leaving an unsafe situation or for failing to prevent another person's violence. Feeling responsible does not necessarily mean you were responsible.

Ask: What action am I judging? What information and freedom did I have at the time? Am I holding myself responsible for what somebody else chose? Would I use these words about a friend in the same situation?

If you did harm someone, growth can include acknowledging it, making safe and appropriate amends, and changing the behaviour. That is different from accepting humiliation or returning to a harmful relationship to prove that you are sorry.

Pregnancy and reproductive experiences

Pregnancy, birth, miscarriage and abortion are different experiences. They must not be treated as one category of failure. A young mother may need childcare and education support. Someone who has experienced pregnancy loss may need space to grieve. Someone who has had an abortion may feel relief, sadness, mixed feelings or something else. Do not prescribe an emotion for another person.

For medical concerns about pregnancy, contraception, abortion or complications, seek a qualified health professional. If you want counselling,

you deserve respectful, accurate support that listens to your needs. WHO guidance describes abortion-related counselling as voluntary and centred on the individual; a person should not be pressured into counselling or a predetermined emotional response. [7]

Christian pastoral conversation can include convictions, questions, prayer and grace without delaying healthcare or extracting a confession as the price of care. A reader's body and experiences should never become a public lesson without her freely given permission.

Deciding what to tell

You may benefit from speaking with someone, but you do not owe everyone your story. Begin with the kind of help you want: listening, a medical appointment, childcare, advice about money or protection from threats. Ask how the person handles privacy and what they would be required to report, particularly where a child or serious risk is involved.

You can say, "I want support, but I am not ready to share every detail." A trustworthy helper respects that boundary while explaining any professional safeguarding responsibilities. If someone gossips, mocks you or pressures you to disclose publicly, look for another source of support.

Scripture in context

Read Psalm 13. The writer brings distress and questions to God rather than pretending to feel peaceful. Lament belongs within faith. Read Romans 8:1-4 in its discussion of life in Christ. Grace is a foundation for Christian hope, not permission to ignore harm or evade responsibility.

A step you can take

Name up to three things you have lost and one form of support that fits each. You do not have to write down details that could expose you. An optional prayer is: "Lord, help me tell the truth about my pain without using it to condemn myself."

CHAPTER 4

CARING FOR YOUR MIND AND FINDING SUPPORT



AI-generated illustration: Seeking care through a supportive conversation.

When ordinary tasks become difficult

After a breakup, a person may continue attending work while struggling to concentrate, sleep or enjoy time with friends. Repeatedly reading old messages may become part of the night. Seeking care should not be treated as a spiritual failure.

Being able to work does not mean every part of life is manageable. Faith does not require a person to conceal distress. You can pray and speak to a qualified professional; these actions need not compete.

Distress and depression

Grief after loss is not automatically depression. Depression can involve persistent low mood or loss of interest, along with changes in sleep, appetite, energy, concentration or feelings of worth. WHO describes depressive episodes as lasting most of the day, nearly every day, for at least two weeks. This is information, not a self-diagnosis or an instruction to wait: seek help earlier if symptoms are severe, worsening or affecting your safety.

Depression has effective treatments, including psychological treatment and, where appropriate, medication. [1]

A qualified professional can assess what you are experiencing and discuss options. This book cannot decide whether your distress is depression, trauma-related, another health problem or a combination of difficulties. Tell the professional about how you are functioning and any thoughts about harming yourself. [2]

If you may be unsafe

If you think you may act on thoughts of suicide, cannot keep yourself safe, or have already seriously harmed yourself, obtain urgent help through local emergency services or the nearest emergency department. If possible, ask a trusted person to remain with you while you receive help. Do not wait for a reply to an email, a prayer meeting or a later chapter. Thoughts about suicide deserve care, not blame. [2]

Making an appointment less difficult

You do not need a perfect account of everything that happened. You might begin, "For the past few weeks I have struggled to sleep and concentrate, and I need help." Write down questions if that helps. Ask about cost, language, privacy and follow-up arrangements. If you cannot afford the first service you find, ask whether lower-cost services or a public-health route are available.

For a young reader, a safe adult may help arrange care. If the first adult dismisses you, that does not settle whether you deserve help. Seek another appropriate adult or professional. If a helper's response is only to blame you or tell you to hide symptoms, look for qualified assessment.

A gentler daily structure

While arranging support, consider one manageable routine rather than a complete reinvention of your life. A regular meal, a short walk if suitable for your health, a consistent sleep opportunity and a brief conversation can give the day some shape. These are supportive habits, not a treatment guarantee.

Do not use missed goals as evidence against yourself. Shift work, parenting, illness and poor accommodation can limit what is possible. Adjust the plan to your circumstances. Choose an achievable step, such as preparing food for tomorrow, rather than demanding a perfect morning routine.

If online content repeatedly draws you into checking a former partner's life, consider muting or stepping away from it. Tell a safe friend what kind of contact helps: "Please ask how I am doing, but do not send me updates about him."

Scripture in context

Read 1 Kings 19:1-8. Elijah's exhaustion is met with practical care before the story moves forward. This is not a diagnostic account, but it reminds Christian readers that bodily needs matter. Read Matthew 11:28-30 as an invitation to come to Christ; do not turn it into a claim that treatment is unnecessary or that continued symptoms prove weak faith.

A step you can take

Choose one route to support and one small task for today. Record what you need to say or ask. If you are struggling to begin, a suitable request is: "Will you sit with me while I arrange an appointment?"

Optional reflection: What belief has made it difficult to ask for care? Does that belief reflect the compassion you would offer someone else?

CHAPTER 5

BOUNDARIES CONSENT AND SAFETY

When a refusal carries a price

When financial support is followed by pressure for intimacy, the person receiving help may wonder whether she has lost the right to refuse. Threatening to withdraw shelter or support to obtain sexual access raises a serious concern about coercion.

Financial assistance, a gift, courtship, engagement or marriage does not give one person ownership of another person's body. A relationship should leave room for a freely made decision. If refusal brings threats, fear or punishment, the problem is not that the refusal was insufficiently polite.

Recognising control

Disagreement can happen without abuse. A couple might disagree about spending and still allow each person to speak without fear. Abuse involves harm and may include physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse or controlling behaviour. It does not have to leave a visible injury. WHO identifies these behaviours within intimate partner violence. [3]

Consider patterns: Does someone isolate you from friends, control access to money, threaten your child, demand sexual activity, restrict your movements or use your immigration situation against you? One act of serious violence also matters; you do not need to wait for a pattern before seeking help.

Responsibility belongs to the person choosing to harm. Poverty, stress, alcohol, jealousy or a difficult childhood do not make another person responsible for that choice. Both partners may need communication skills; that does not mean both are responsible for one partner's abuse.

Understanding consent

Consent concerns a specific activity at a particular time. Agreeing to a date does not mean agreeing to sex. Agreeing before does not require agreeing now. A person can change her mind. Silence, fear or giving in to stop threats is not the same as a freely made choice.

A person who is asleep or unable to make a free, informed decision cannot provide that agreement. Adults also carry responsibilities towards children; adult relationships should not be imposed on minors. Applicable law matters, and a young person's apparent agreement does not remove an adult's safeguarding responsibilities.

The Christian sexual ethic I commend locates sexual intimacy within faithful marriage. That conviction must never be used to excuse coercion within marriage, punish someone who has been assaulted, or deny another person's right to refuse.

Boundaries you can use

A boundary can be simple: "I will not share my bank PIN" or "I am not comfortable with that contact." When it is safe to speak, clear words may help. You do not need a long defence of your dignity.

However, a script is not a safety plan. If setting a boundary could trigger violence, exposure or loss of shelter, speak privately with a qualified domestic-abuse or safeguarding professional where possible. They can help you consider safety, housing, children, documents and available local protection. Do not confront a dangerous person to demonstrate confidence. Planning should fit your circumstances, including disability, finances and immigration concerns.

If danger is immediate, seek emergency help. If you are not ready or able to leave, you still deserve support. A helper should not shame you for needing time or resources.

Scripture in context

Read Ephesians 5:21-33 together, rather than using a single instruction to demand compliance. Christians interpret aspects of household roles differently, but coercion cannot be justified by Christ's self-giving love. Read Mark 10:42-45: Jesus challenges the use of authority to dominate. Spiritual language must not turn harm into a duty to endure.

A step you can take

Think privately about whether you can refuse without fear. If you cannot, identify a suitable professional or safe adult to consult. If you can, practise one modest boundary and notice whether it is respected. You may skip written reflection if keeping notes would increase risk.

CHAPTER 6

TRUST FORGIVENESS AND MOVING FORWARD

An apology and a decision

An apology may arrive with a request to meet or restart a relationship. A demand that forgiveness must be proved by renewed access can leave the person harmed feeling trapped between faith and self-protection.

The apology and the visit are separate matters. You can consider forgiveness without offering contact, money or a restored relationship. You can ask for accountability without abandoning compassion. Another person's demand cannot define what your faith requires in a particular meeting.

Four different questions

Forgiveness, in this Christian discussion, concerns releasing personal vengeance and bringing the wrong before God. It does not mean that the wrong was acceptable or that its effects have disappeared. Christians may describe its process differently; no helper should turn those differences into pressure for instant emotional relief.

Trust concerns whether someone has shown reliability. It is strengthened by conduct over time, including how a person responds to limits and consequences. Reconciliation concerns whether a relationship can be rebuilt safely and honestly. Justice concerns accountability and appropriate remedies. These questions overlap, but they are not interchangeable.

A person can forgive while reporting an offence. A person can hope someone changes while declining renewed contact. Recovering money may require qualified legal advice; it is not automatically secured by a private promise. Do not meet an unsafe person alone to arrange repayment or accept mediation as the only way to prove goodwill.

Change that can be observed

An apology names the behaviour without blaming the person harmed. It does not begin, "I am sorry, but you made me ..." Meaningful change also accepts consequences, honours boundaries and continues when there is no immediate reward.

A repayment proposal is more useful than an emotional declaration, but even a written proposal may need independent advice. A promise to seek help is

different from actually seeking it. You do not need to supervise someone's entire improvement or remain in a relationship as payment for it.

There is no percentage or fixed number of good days that makes someone safe. Where abuse has occurred, obtain specialist guidance rather than relying on a private experiment in renewed trust.

Rebuilding trust in yourself

You may have ignored a concern. You may also have been deceived by someone who worked hard to appear trustworthy. Learning can begin without making yourself the enemy.

Try describing what you know now and what you will do differently. "I will verify an important financial claim independently" is useful. "I will never believe anybody again" may protect you from some risks but also close off helpful friendships and advice. Start with people and situations that allow a modest, freely chosen level of trust. Romance does not have to be the first place you practise.

Some questions will remain unresolved. You may never receive a complete explanation. Moving forward can mean deciding what to do with the information available rather than waiting for a confession that never comes.

Scripture in context

Read Romans 12:17-21. Paul directs believers away from personal revenge and towards good. This does not instruct someone to conceal harm. Read Luke 17:3-4, where rebuke, repentance and forgiveness appear together. The passage does not provide a formula requiring restored access after abuse. Read Psalm 10 as well: bringing injustice to God includes naming it honestly.

A step you can take

Make four separate headings in your mind or notebook: forgiveness, trust, reconciliation and accountability. Ask what each would mean in your situation. You do not have to decide all four today. A suitable prayer is: "God, help me release revenge without surrendering wisdom or safety."

Optional reflection: Is someone asking you to confuse forgiveness with a benefit they want? What boundary would help you keep those questions separate?

CHAPTER 7

DIGITAL LOVE AND ONLINE SAFETY

When attention arrives through a screen

My daughters, my pastoral advice is to avoid online dating and blind dates. I would rather you get to know a person through ordinary life, trusted introductions and a community where conduct can be observed. An introduction is only a beginning; even someone introduced by a relative or church member must be known over time. Do not hand a stranger the place in your heart that belongs to a person whose character you have had time to understand.

An account can display wedding language while its owner is seeking sex, money or control. A flattering message, a prayer sent at midnight or an attractive photograph cannot establish intentions. This is a warning about a real risk, not a claim that every online relationship is false. If you already have such a relationship, you can pause, ask questions and seek support without shame.

Online affection can involve warm conversation about faith, marriage and a shared future. When it becomes an urgent request for money or secrecy, pause and examine the request rather than treating questions as a betrayal of love.

Online affection can be real, but affection is not identity verification. The Federal Trade Commission warns against sending money or gifts to a romantic interest you have not met in person. Urgent requests and an effort to move communication away from a platform can be warning signs. Report suspected fraud to the relevant platform and appropriate local authorities; if you have paid, contact the payment provider promptly to ask about available options. [9]

Meeting someone once does not establish financial reliability either. The principles of slow trust, independent checks and control over your own resources still apply.

Privacy is compatible with love

You do not need to exchange passwords to prove commitment. Do not give another person your bank PIN, verification codes or access to accounts. Consider strong, separate passwords and multi-factor authentication where available. If you suspect an abusive partner monitors your device, seek specialist advice before making changes that could alert them or increase danger.

A partner can have private conversations and still be honest. Privacy becomes a concern when it is used to conceal conduct that affects agreed commitments, not merely because a phone has a lock. Surveillance is not a substitute for trust.

For an initial meeting with someone known only online, consider a public setting, independent transport and a trusted person's awareness of your plan. These precautions cannot guarantee safety, and wrongdoing remains the other person's responsibility.

Images threats and blackmail

Never send nude photographs, sexual videos or intimate recordings to prove love, including to someone promising marriage. Refuse requests to undress on a video call. A disappearing message can be captured; a promise to delete a file leaves its control in another person's hands. Ordinary photographs and recordings can also be copied or misused. Be thoughtful about what you share and whom you allow to record you.

"Your body is not an application form for somebody's love." This is a reminder I want my daughters to carry. A respectful person can hear, "I do not send intimate pictures," without turning that boundary into an argument about loyalty. If you have already sent something, your dignity remains intact and help is still available.

Sharing or threatening to share intimate images without consent is a serious form of abuse. eSafety guidance advises people facing sexual blackmail not to pay or provide more material. Seek support and use appropriate reporting channels. If safe, keep non-explicit details such as account names, links and threatening messages for reporting; ask a specialist how to handle evidence in your location. Do not forward intimate content, especially images involving anyone under eighteen. [4]

You may fear that a past decision makes you undeserving of help. It does not. Permission to share an image with one person is not permission to distribute it. If you are a minor, tell a safe adult or safeguarding professional; you do not have to negotiate alone. If the threat makes you feel at risk of harming yourself, obtain urgent help as described earlier.

Artificial intelligence and false appearances

AI tools can create or alter sexual images and other media. A convincing image may therefore be false, but the distress and harassment can still be real. eSafety's guide on AI deepfakes emphasises timely support for the person targeted. Its legal and reporting arrangements apply to Australia; readers elsewhere need local guidance. [5]

Treat an unexpected request for money, even one using a familiar-looking account or voice, as something to verify through a separate trusted channel. Do not assume that a video call, religious quotation or photograph settles every question about identity. New tools will change; the habit of slowing down and checking independently remains useful.

Give social media a useful purpose

Use these tools intentionally: market an honest business, show a skill, learn, apply for genuine opportunities, encourage others or share your faith respectfully. Decide what you came online to do before a feed decides how you will spend the evening. A business page does not require access to your private life, home address or intimate photographs.

Present yourself with decency and treat other people with the same respect. Do not build an audience by humiliating someone, forwarding their private pictures or offering sexual attention you do not wish to give. Modesty is part of my Christian counsel; it is never an excuse for someone else's abuse. Clothing and online visibility do not give anybody permission to exploit you.

When a customer or follower changes a useful conversation into sexual pressure, you may end it. You can say, "This account is for my work. Please keep the conversation professional." Attention is plentiful online; trustworthy conduct takes longer to establish.

Scripture in context

Read Proverbs 14:15 in its contrast between credulity and prudent attention. It encourages care, not suspicion of everyone. Read Ephesians 4:29 and apply it to what you post, forward or comment. Refusing to spread a humiliating image is one practical way to protect another person's dignity.

A step you can take

Review one account's security and privacy settings if it is safe. Identify the platform's reporting route. Then practise this sentence: "I will not send money or private material because a message says the matter is urgent. I will verify it first."

Optional reflection: Who could you contact without fear of ridicule if an online interaction became threatening? Save that person's contact somewhere you can access safely.

CHAPTER 8

PARENTING WITH HOPE AND PROTECTING CHILDREN



AI-generated illustration: Steady care and learning together.

Parenting while you are still healing

Raising a child while recovering from loss can make ordinary tiredness feel like a personal failure. You may also need to explain an absent parent without making a child carry adult anger. Both concerns deserve practical support.

A parent does not need to reach perfect healing before giving a child love and care. You can be grieving and still offer a dependable meal, an honest reassurance or a kind response. You also need support. Asking for help is part of caring for your household, not evidence that the household has no future.

Single-parent families differ. A parent may be separated, divorced, widowed, never married or living far from a co-parent. Do not assume the reason or treat every family as a warning story. Children and caregivers deserve dignity in each situation.

A workable household plan

Begin with ordinary needs: food, shelter, health appointments, schooling and safe care during work. Identify which are covered, which are uncertain and where another person or service might help. A small predictable routine can be more useful than expensive attempts to compensate for family change.

Build support carefully. A trusted relative, neighbour, faith community or other parent may help with transport or childcare, but shared identity alone does not establish safety. Discuss who supervises the child, how emergencies are handled and what the child can do if uncomfortable.

If another parent is involved, decisions about care, contact and financial support may require local legal advice. Do not rely on this book to determine custody or maintenance. Where abuse is involved, seek safeguarding guidance rather than assuming more contact is always better.

Talking without placing a burden on the child

Offer age-appropriate truth. You might say, "The adults are living separately. You did not cause this, and we are working on the arrangements." Avoid making promises about another parent's return that you cannot keep.

A child should not act as a messenger, investigator or emotional counsellor for adults. It is possible to describe unsafe behaviour without insulting the child's identity: "That behaviour was not safe" is different from "You are just like your father." Children may have feelings different from yours. Let them ask questions without having to choose which adult to love.

New relationships and older children

You do not owe a new partner quick access to your child or authority over the home. Move at a pace that allows you to observe conduct. Listen if your child expresses discomfort. A marriage proposal, church role or generous gift is not a safeguarding check.

Teach children that they can refuse unwanted affection and tell a safe adult when someone asks them to keep a frightening secret. Avoid promising that all secrets will remain private; a responsible adult may need professional help to protect them. Do not shame a child for reporting something upsetting.

Scripture in context

Read Mark 10:13-16. Jesus receives children and challenges adults who obstruct them. The passage invites the church to treat children's access, dignity and wellbeing as serious responsibilities. Read Psalm 68:5-6 as an expression of God's care for people whose family support is fragile. It should

move a community towards practical help, not replace that help with a slogan.

A step you can take

Write a simple care plan covering one ordinary week and one emergency. Include a safe caregiver, necessary health or school information and a way to reach you. Keep sensitive information secure. If you are not a parent, consider one practical form of support you can offer a caregiver without taking over their decisions.

Optional reflection: Which expectation are you placing on yourself that no parent could sustain alone? Who might share a specific part of that load?

CHAPTER 9

SAFEGUARDING OUR CHILDREN

By Nakasita Josephine Nalongo

Love that listens and protects

Our children bring joy into our homes. Loving them also asks something of us: our time, our attention and our willingness to discuss difficult matters. We must prepare them for life while making our homes places where they can speak about what troubles them. A child should not have to choose between telling the truth and keeping a parent's love.

This is my appeal to mothers, fathers, guardians and everyone entrusted with a child. Protection is more than warning a daughter to behave well. Boys need protection too. Children with disabilities need information and ways to communicate that suit them. A quiet child, an outspoken child, a child struggling at school and a child achieving well all deserve to be heard. The safeguarding articles listed in the sources offer further reading for parents. [17, 22]

Abuse and exploitation are real concerns, both in person and online. WHO describes child maltreatment as harm or potential harm occurring in relationships of responsibility, trust or power. Prevention requires support for families and action by institutions as well as conversations at home. No child or parent can guarantee another person's behaviour through a perfect set of precautions. [15]

If harm has already happened, this chapter is not an accusation that you failed to teach enough or that your child failed to listen. The responsibility belongs to the person who harmed them. Our task is to notice concerns, respond with care and obtain appropriate help.

Begin with ordinary conversations

Do not wait for a crisis before speaking about body safety. Use short, calm conversations suited to your child's age and understanding. Explain the names of body parts in language they can use clearly. A child should be able to tell you where something hurts or describe an unwanted touch without being scolded for naming the body.

Teach that private parts deserve privacy. The NSPCC's Talk PANTS resources offer a simple way to begin. Necessary hygiene assistance or healthcare should be explained in an age-appropriate way, with dignity and

appropriate support. A care need is never permission for sexual touching. Help the child understand the difference between care and someone asking for a private look, touch or photograph for their own purposes. [16]

Do not force a hug or kiss to demonstrate respect for an elder. Offer another greeting. Children learn about boundaries partly through what adults allow in ordinary family life. Our teaching loses force if we say that a body belongs to its owner and then punish a child for declining affection.

Explain the difference between a temporary, happy surprise and a secret that causes fear, confusion or shame. A birthday surprise has an ending. A demand to hide touching, sexual messages or threats should be told to a safe adult. The child may tell even if they promised silence. [16]

Familiarity does not replace accountability

A person who harms a child may already be known to the family. Safety cannot be judged by a friendly face, a respected occupation, a ministry title or years of acquaintance. The interview with Christine Marsh supplied for this chapter stresses the importance of looking at boundaries and adult conduct rather than imagining that an unsafe person will be easy to recognise. [17]

Ask what happens in the settings where your child spends time. Who supervises activities? How are transport, toilet visits, changing areas and private messages handled? Who receives a concern about the leader? What happens if that person is the subject of the concern? Seek clear answers and an independent reporting route. A claim that everyone there is trustworthy is not a safeguarding procedure.

Be alert when a person repeatedly bypasses agreed arrangements, insists on unnecessary secrecy or seeks access to a child without appropriate oversight. A gift or offer of help alone does not prove abuse. The concern is the pattern, the disregard for boundaries and the response when a reasonable question is asked. These are reasons to seek guidance and improve protection, not to conduct a public trial on social media.

Explain grooming without frightening your child

Grooming involves building trust or emotional connection in order to manipulate or exploit a child. It can happen face to face or through technology. Attention, gifts, apparent understanding and shared interests may be used to create dependence, then secrecy, pressure or threats. An offender may also cultivate the family's trust. [18]

Explain it simply: "Someone can be kind at first and later ask for something that is not safe. You can tell me even if you liked them, accepted a gift or

answered their messages." A child may feel attached to the person or fear getting them into trouble. Those feelings do not establish consent to abuse. [18]

A young person who is lonely or facing difficulty needs more support, not suspicion or a label. Never describe a child with a disability as less believable. Make time to understand how the child communicates and arrange appropriate help when communication is difficult. The obligation to protect does not depend on how confidently a child can explain what happened.

Stay involved in their digital world

Ask your child to show you the games, groups and services they use. Learn who can contact them and how to report an unwelcome approach. Sexual exploitation can begin through familiar online activities; technology can also be used to create or alter abusive material. UNICEF emphasises that protection requires action from platforms and public authorities as well as families. [19]

Review privacy and safety settings together. Consider contact permissions, location sharing, camera and microphone access, photo permissions and suitable parental controls. Settings differ between devices and change over time, so use the current instructions for the particular device or service. Controls support supervision; they cannot replace a relationship in which a child can ask for help. [20]

Consider what adults post too. Avoid exposing a child's location, daily routine, school details or private experiences unnecessarily. Seek age-appropriate agreement before posting a photograph. A parent's pride should not cost a child privacy.

Tell children not to send sexual pictures, undress on camera or meet an online contact secretly. If something has already happened, begin with support: "You can tell me. You are not in trouble for asking for help." Follow the image-abuse guidance in Chapter 7. Do not forward sexual images of children, demand to see more, pay a blackmailer or negotiate alone. Obtain specialist advice about safe reporting and handling evidence. [4]

Practise a way to ask for help

Preparation should be calm and brief. Ask, "What could you do if someone wanted you to keep a worrying secret? Who could help if I was not there?" Identify more than one safe adult and make sure the child knows how to reach them. Include someone outside the immediate household where possible. If the first adult does not help, encourage the child to tell another.

Practise simple words: "I do not want that," "I need to leave," or "I need help." These are options, not a test a child must pass. They may freeze, comply from fear, feel confused or be unable to get away. A child who did not resist still deserves complete protection and care.

Explain that help is available even when a child has broken a household rule. A late message, a forbidden app or a secret visit must not become a reason to hide exploitation. Our response to a small mistake today can influence whether a child will trust us with a serious concern tomorrow.

If a friend discloses harm, the child should seek a safe adult rather than promise secrecy or try to investigate. Protecting a friend does not require confronting an offender or collecting explicit material.

Notice changes without making a diagnosis

Unexplained distress, withdrawal, changes in sleep, school difficulties, new gifts or fear of a person may deserve attention. Such changes can have many causes; none is proof of sexual abuse on its own. Some children show few obvious changes. Look for the child's needs rather than waiting for a checklist to be completed. [18]

Speak gently: "I have noticed you seem worried after this activity. Is there anything you want me to know?" Do not supply an answer or repeatedly question the child. Pain, injury or other health concerns need appropriate professional assessment. Parents should not perform intimate examinations or demand proof of virginity.

When a child tells you

Pause and listen. Thank the child for telling you, take the account seriously and make clear that the harm is not their fault. Avoid blaming questions such as, "Why did you go there?" Do not promise complete secrecy; explain that you may need to involve people whose job is to help protect them. [21]

Let the child speak in their own words. Ask only what is needed to understand immediate safety; do not conduct an interview, suggest details or repeatedly ask them to retell the account. Where appropriate, make a secure, factual note of what was said, including the child's words, and seek prompt safeguarding advice. [21]

If there is immediate danger, contact local emergency services. Arrange appropriate medical care and protection promptly. Use the child-protection and reporting procedures applicable where the child is located. If a staff member or religious leader is involved, an internal conversation must not replace referral to appropriate authorities. Do not confront the suspected offender in a way that could increase danger. [21]

The child needs continuing reassurance, privacy, routine and suitable professional support. Do not turn their experience into a public testimony, demand forgiveness or arrange contact with the person accused in order to preserve appearances. A family's reputation must never become more important than a child's protection.

A mother's closing word

My daughters, my sons and every young reader: you are not a burden when you ask for help. Your questions deserve time. Your discomfort deserves attention. No gift, promise or person's position gives them ownership of you. If someone has harmed you, your dignity remains, and you deserve care.

Parents, let us make protection an ordinary practice. Listen during the small conversations. Ask clear questions about supervision. Learn the tools your children use. When a difficult disclosure comes, be the adult who stays calm enough to help.

Read Mark 10:13-16, where Jesus welcomes children, and Ephesians 6:4, which addresses adults' responsibilities in raising them. Let our faith be visible in patient listening and responsible action. Prayer should accompany protection, never delay it.

Nakasita Josephine Nalongo

CHAPTER 10

WORKING ABROAD WITH A PLAN



AI-generated illustration: Keeping records and planning ahead.

Opportunity needs clear information

Before accepting an overseas job offer, make sure you understand the deductions, accommodation and duties. An intermediary's demand for immediate payment is a reason to verify the offer, not a reason to stop asking questions.

Working abroad offers opportunities alongside separation, unfamiliar systems and unequal bargaining power. Employer misconduct, deception and exploitation can defeat careful plans. Preparation helps you ask questions; it does not make you responsible for someone else's wrongdoing.

Before accepting an offer

Verify the recruiter through the responsible official authority rather than only through a business card or forwarded licence photograph. Obtain the employer's identity and a written explanation of duties, work location, pay, deductions, accommodation, working time, leave and the process for raising concerns. Understand the contract before agreeing, and seek qualified advice about terms you cannot interpret.

The ILO's fair recruitment principles say workers should not bear recruitment fees or related costs, should receive understandable contract information and should retain their identity documents. These are international principles, not a substitute for checking the laws and procedures governing your particular recruitment and destination. [6]

Ask the appropriate official authority about work authorisation, any proposed charge and how to verify documents. Do not assume that every permission to enter a country permits the proposed work. A genuine opportunity should allow questions and independent checks. A person demanding secrecy or immediate payment has not removed your right to understand the arrangement.

Prepare for practical difficulties

Keep secure passport and contract copies and appropriate copies with a trusted person. Obtain labour-authority and consular contacts from official websites. Know how to reach healthcare and seek advice if employment or accommodation changes.

Where available, use financial services in your own name and maintain control of authentication details. A partner's account or a recruiter's informal promise should not be your only record of savings. Before travel, discuss realistic family support expectations. Compare the promised income with likely costs and deductions rather than promising relatives the entire headline salary.

While abroad

Keep clear records of pay received and agreed employment terms. If the job differs from what you were promised, wages are withheld, your movements are restricted or you are threatened, seek advice from an appropriate labour authority, consular service or specialist support organisation. In immediate danger, use local emergency services. Do not assume that an intermediary is your only possible source of help.

Loneliness can make a new friendship important very quickly. Enjoy companionship without combining every decision about love, housing, documents and money. A relationship that controls all of those areas can leave you with few options if it changes.

You may also need ordinary community: people with whom you can speak about more than work or romance. Where possible, choose activities that fit your rest, budget and safety. You are allowed to build a life abroad without spending all your free time proving that you are coping.

Preparing to return

Review your plan before a contract ends. Consider where you will live, what savings you can access, what records and qualifications you need, and whether work or training is available. If possible, speak with family about what help you can realistically provide after returning. Coming home with less money than expected does not make you less worthy of welcome.

Scripture in context

Read Luke 14:28-33. Jesus uses counting the cost to teach the seriousness of discipleship. By analogy, careful planning can also help with a major practical decision; the passage is not a promise that every planned venture succeeds. Read Proverbs 22:3 as encouragement to pay attention to danger rather than ignore it to appear brave.

A step you can take

Check your offer, contract, documents, contacts and money plan. Ask: "What would I need if this job or relationship ended unexpectedly?"

CHAPTER 11

SKILLS MONEY AND AN INDEPENDENT FUTURE

Rebuilding without a shortcut promise

When you need income, a guaranteed job after training or a promise of quick investment profits can feel like the only way forward. A slower, verifiable route deserves attention before a persuasive promise determines your next step.

A convincing promise does not remove the need to understand costs, risks and entry requirements. Urgency can come from genuine need, but it can also be used to prevent questions. Begin with what you can verify. What is the skill? Who recognises the training? What does the employer require? What income is realistic after transport, equipment and other costs?

Every worker has dignity

Cleaning, construction, hospitality, caregiving, beauty work and other lawful occupations deserve respect. Legitimate massage or spa employment must not be confused with sexual services. A person's job title does not reveal whether the working conditions are safe or fair.

If an offer involves hidden duties, threats, sexual demands, confinement or control of earnings, seek specialist advice and support. People facing exploitation need safety and options, not condemnation. Poverty, coercion and a lack of alternatives can make departure difficult. Do not tell someone simply to leave without considering shelter, documents, children and immediate risk.

Laws about particular activities differ. This chapter does not give a Gulf-wide rule or promise a specific legal outcome. Seek qualified local guidance where an activity, employment arrangement or threat raises legal questions.

Choosing one realistic skill

A useful skill connects your interests and abilities with actual demand. Start by speaking to people doing the work, examining genuine job advertisements and checking training providers. Some learning is free; some needs supervised practice, equipment, certification or professional registration. Watching online lessons alone may not qualify you for regulated work.

Compare two or three options using the same questions: total cost, time to competence, entry requirements, practical experience, recognition and a

realistic first paid opportunity. Include transport and childcare. A cheaper course that employers do not recognise may be more costly in the end.

Start with a manageable learning commitment. Keep a record of completed work and feedback. For practical or digital work, a small portfolio can show what you can do. Do not fabricate qualifications or use another person's work as your own. Progress should create evidence of ability, not only a certificate to display.

A budget that fits your situation

There is no single savings percentage that suits every household. Begin with the money you actually receive. List necessary living costs, family obligations, debt payments and any amount available for savings or training. If essentials exceed income, the problem cannot be solved by blaming yourself for failing to save. You may need help with income, costs or debt advice.

For illustration only, someone receiving AED 2,000 might allocate AED 900 to living costs, AED 600 to family support, AED 200 to agreed debt payments, AED 200 to emergency savings and AED 100 to training. These amounts total AED 2,000; they are not a wage recommendation or a claim that they will suit your circumstances.

Keep a record of transfers and distinguish a gift from a loan. Before helping someone, consider what would happen if nothing came back. Do not risk rent, food or children's needs to prove affection. If fraud or disputed ownership has already occurred, seek appropriate advice rather than relying on a new promise from the same person.

Scripture in context

Read Proverbs 21:5 and Ephesians 4:28. They encourage diligence, honest work and generosity. They do not teach that poverty proves laziness or that hard work protects everyone from exploitation. Christian responsibility includes challenging unfair treatment and helping people whose resources are limited.

A step you can take

Choose one skill to investigate rather than purchase immediately. Obtain two independent pieces of information about its cost and entry route. Then make a one-month record of money received and spent, if safe to do so. Use the facts to choose the next step.

CHAPTER 12

CHOOSING A PARTNER WITH CHARACTER



AI-generated illustration: Friendship and respectful conversation.

Look beyond the wedding day

My daughters, choose with the ordinary years of marriage in mind. You are considering the person with whom you may face illness, school fees, unpaid bills, family disagreements and changing work. Admiration is a beginning. A shared life asks more of both people.

For a fuller discussion of how to conduct courtship, questions to ask, red flags to examine and the realities that follow the honeymoon, read my book Before You Say I Do. Use it to open honest conversations before making a lifelong commitment. In this book, I want to draw your attention especially to character, boundaries and the costly mistakes affection can persuade us to overlook.

"Choose for the ordinary days, not only for the wedding photographs." By this I mean: pay attention to the person who will still be there when the celebration is over. Can you discuss a problem without being insulted? Does this person honour a responsibility when nobody is praising them? Do their promises survive inconvenience?

A person cannot be reduced to a score

A person may meet many preferences on your list and still respond to disagreement with ridicule or pressure. Attractive qualities do not cancel a serious concern about how someone treats you.

Some preferences can be flexible. Respect and freedom from coercion cannot be traded away for generosity, attraction or success. These standards are mutual: bring the honesty and accountability you seek in another person.

Essentials growth areas and preferences

Essentials concern the conditions in which a relationship can be healthy: honesty about matters that affect you, respect for refusal, responsibility for conduct and a willingness to address problems. Shared values also matter. Christians considering marriage should discuss what faith means in actual decisions rather than assuming that attending the same church answers every question.

Growth areas may include learning to plan a budget, speak more clearly about feelings or manage ordinary disagreements. Growth needs effort from the person concerned. You cannot supply another person's willingness simply by loving harder.

Preferences concern matters such as appearance, hobbies, background or particular tastes. Some may matter deeply to you; others may become less important when you know someone. Flexibility about a preference is different from silencing a concern about mistreatment.

Observe ordinary conduct

Notice what happens when someone is disappointed, receives criticism or hears no. Does the person listen? Can they acknowledge a mistake without attacking your character? How do they treat people from whom they want nothing?

Talk about money, existing commitments, children, work, faith and family expectations. Ask direct questions respectfully. A person can have financial difficulty and still be honest; wealth does not establish character. Verify important information through lawful and appropriate means. A private phone does not prove deception, and demanding passwords is not a reliable way to establish trust.

Pay attention to patterns rather than dramatic gestures. A public proposal cannot repair repeated humiliation. A church role cannot substitute for respectful behaviour. If you feel afraid to raise an ordinary concern, take that fear seriously and seek independent support.

Bring the conversation beyond the honeymoon. "If one of us loses work, how would we manage? Who will care for children and share household work? What debt or family obligation would affect our budget? How would we respond if pregnancy does not happen when expected? What do you do when you are angry?" Ask these questions in conversation over time, allowing both people to answer. Polished answers still need to be considered alongside conduct.

Do not assume marriage will cure contempt, compulsive secrecy or a refusal to take responsibility. Ordinary differences can be discussed and skills can be learned. Threats, sexual pressure, persistent deception and attempts to isolate you call for a pause and independent support. A wedding date should never make an important question too late to ask.

Outside perspectives and your own decision

A safe mentor or friend may see something you have missed. Ask what they have observed, not only whether they approve of the person's tribe, income or family name. If their advice relies on prejudice or pressure, seek another perspective.

Trusted people should help you think, not make the decision through threats. You retain the right to decline a relationship. You do not need proof that somebody is evil before recognising that you are incompatible or do not wish to continue.

Scripture in context

Read Galatians 5:22-23. The qualities Paul describes belong to Christian character broadly; they are not a guarantee that everyone who names them is a suitable spouse. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 in its setting of love within the Christian community. Patience and kindness do not require silence about harm. Love's commitment to truth is part of its character.

A step you can take

Separate your expectations into essentials, possible growth areas and preferences. Then describe actual examples of conduct. Do not award a final numerical score. Ask instead: "Can I make a free decision here? Are my concerns heard? What needs clarification before I proceed?"

Optional reflection: Are you choosing the person you know, or mainly the person you hope they will become? What would you advise a friend who described the same conduct?

CHAPTER 13

COURTSHIP AND BUILDING TOGETHER

Time should reveal reality

My daughter, a person can speak beautifully about marriage before learning how to be a faithful friend. Do not allow the excitement of being chosen to silence the questions you need to ask. Family enthusiasm and a hoped-for wedding date can arrive before a couple has discussed debt, children or where they would live. Asking those questions is part of responsible preparation for marriage.

A wedding is a significant commitment, not a reward for avoiding difficult questions. Courtship should help two adults discover whether they can freely and responsibly choose marriage. The number of months alone cannot answer that question. Time matters because it can allow ordinary conduct to become visible, but a long relationship can still contain secrecy or coercion.

Do not use a universal one-year or two-year rule as proof of readiness. Ask what you know, what remains uncertain, and whether either person feels pressed to proceed. It is acceptable to postpone a decision or end courtship if the necessary freedom, trust or compatibility is absent.

Let friendship grow into understanding

There is a difference between knowing of someone and knowing them. You may know a name, face, occupation or church role while knowing very little about the person's conduct. Begin as acquaintances. Meet in appropriate settings, speak without pretending, and observe whether the story you hear agrees with the life you can see.

Friendship grows as you share ordinary experiences. Notice whether this person keeps arrangements, respects other friendships and treats people well without expecting a reward. You are also showing your own character. Do not manufacture tests, provoke jealousy or use another person as an experiment. Honest observation is enough.

Closer friendship should bring deeper understanding. Discuss convictions, responsibilities, disappointments and hopes at a pace both people freely accept. You do not owe someone every private detail immediately. Ask how they have handled a mistake, an unpaid obligation or a disagreement. Listen to whether every former partner is blamed and every uncomfortable question is avoided.

Understanding means putting what you learn together. A person says they value family: how do they treat a child for whom they are already

responsible? They speak of saving: can they discuss spending honestly? They promise respect: what happens when you disagree? You cannot understand everything about another human being, but you can learn enough to make a more informed decision.

When mutual interest is clear, name it. "Are we simply friends, or are we considering marriage? What would responsible courtship look like for us?" Intentional courtship gives both adults room to examine compatibility, seek counsel and decide. Friendship is not a promise of romance, and kindness does not create a debt of marriage.

From there, a freely chosen commitment may develop towards marriage. Do not confuse emotional closeness with permission for sex or access to money. You may move through acquaintance, friendship, closer understanding and intentional courtship without surrendering either boundary. No sequence guarantees a good marriage; each stage gives you opportunities to see, ask and decide.

"Let understanding grow before commitment grows beyond what you know." You are building a relationship, not racing another couple to an announcement.

Adulthood readiness and freedom

For readers who are adults, readiness includes free consent, practical understanding of responsibilities and compliance with applicable marriage law. Emotional maturity does not cancel legal requirements or the safeguarding duties adults owe to minors. Young readers should not be encouraged to enter adult relationships because someone considers them mature for their age.

Discuss what marriage means to each person. How will work, care, faith and decisions be shared? What does a respectful disagreement look like? If there are children from another relationship, what responsibilities already exist? What support needs, health matters or financial obligations should be discussed with appropriate privacy and honesty?

Each person should be free to ask questions and seek independent advice. A threat to withdraw affection unless the wedding happens immediately is not a substitute for readiness.

Should you build a house together before marriage

My answer is no. During courtship, do not pool your savings with a boyfriend to buy a plot, build a house or acquire major assets for a promised married future. I give the same advice to young men. Prepare for marriage by learning to plan together while keeping control of your own resources. A

promise of marriage is not a marriage, and a shared dream does not settle who owns the land, the money or the building.

Remember the first true counselling account in this book. A woman entrusted hard-earned savings to a partner for a promised home and future together, then returned to find neither the security nor the money she expected. Her account is not a reason to accuse every man. It is a reason to take financial decisions seriously, even when the language surrounding them is love.

Imagine a proposal you might hear: "Send the money now; we shall put your name on the papers after the wedding." This is an illustration of a decision, not another client testimony. Ask yourself what exists today. You may be paying for a future share while the present documents give you none. A receipt for building materials does not necessarily establish the ownership you assume.

Do not take a loan in your name for a boyfriend's project, guarantee his borrowing, give him your account credentials or send your wages for him to manage. Do not let "our house" replace clear information about whose property it actually is. If refusing brings accusations that you are selfish or unloving, pause the project and examine the pressure itself.

You can say, "I want us to prepare responsibly for marriage. I will keep my savings in my control. We can discuss a future household budget, but I will not finance joint property during courtship." You do not have to argue until the other person agrees. A boundary is useful even when it disappoints someone.

Build habits before building a house together. Discuss income, debt, existing children, family support, saving and the cost of a modest wedding. Find out how each of you responds to a budget. Prepare realistic plans for unemployment or unpaid caregiving. Learning these things does not require a joint account or a transfer of your savings.

"Do not use your savings to prove a love that should be shown through character." Generosity should be freely chosen, affordable and free of emotional threats. A gift does not buy faithfulness; funding a project will not make an unwilling person ready for marriage.

If you have already contributed money, do not panic or send more simply to rescue what has gone before. Keep records safely and obtain independent advice from a qualified professional in the place where the property or transaction is located. Find out what the documents mean and what options you actually have. Do not confront someone alone if you fear retaliation. This advice is an invitation to protect your position, not a judgement on your intelligence.

Marriage itself does not automatically make an investment safe. Property, debt and marital rights differ by jurisdiction. Before a major transaction, understand the documents and seek appropriate independent legal advice. Family approval, a church blessing or a saved message may not provide the protection you assume.

You do not have to prove love through sex

My daughter, do not rush into sex with someone who says he intends to marry you. My Christian counsel is to reserve sexual intimacy for marriage. If you intend to share a lifetime, why should respecting this boundary now be impossible? Desire is real, but a marriage promise does not remove the need for self-control.

"If you loved me, you would let me" is pressure, not a reason to abandon your conviction. Neither is "I must test you before I know whether we are compatible." A human being is not merchandise to be sampled and returned. Discuss expectations about affection, faithfulness, sexual wellbeing and consent honestly, with qualified premarital guidance where needed. Such preparation does not require sexual testing, invasive examinations or humiliating demands for proof of virginity.

Tell him plainly, where it is safe: "I care about you, and I am waiting until marriage. Please respect that decision." If he repeatedly bargains, threatens to leave or accuses you of being childish, take his response seriously. You have learned something important about how he handles a boundary. Do not marry hurriedly merely to end the pressure.

Arrange courtship in ways that support the convictions you share. Choose suitable meeting places, maintain friendships and responsibilities, and agree when a visit will end. Neither clothing, attraction, a prior kiss nor an earlier sexual relationship removes the right to refuse. Consent matters within marriage too; a wedding never gives permission for force.

Value yourself without imagining that your worth is a price somebody must pay. You are worthy of respect before anyone desires, marries or praises you. Boundaries can help you recognise disrespect; they cannot guarantee that every person you meet will act honourably.

If you have already had sex, cohabited or experienced sexual violence, you are not spoiled or beyond God's care. You can seek support, make a new decision and prepare for a future relationship without shame. Responsibility for assault belongs to the person who committed it. This counsel should open a way forward, not close the door on a daughter who needs help.

Do not let a promise become years of waiting

My girls, do not move into a man's home on the strength of an indefinite promise that he will marry you someday. My pastoral counsel is to marry intentionally rather than begin a trial marriage and hope that commitment will follow. Cooking, paying bills or bearing a child cannot make another person choose faithfulness.

Where family involvement is safe, a serious suitor should be willing to approach the family openly, discuss intentions and seek their blessing. If your parents are absent or unsafe, involve appropriate trusted elders or mentors. An introduction is an important step in many families, but it must not be presented as permission to begin cohabiting. Family approval does not replace your free consent or the requirements for a lawful marriage.

Ask concrete questions: "Are we choosing marriage? What must we prepare? Which requirements apply? What can we afford, and when will we review the plan?" Difficulties such as unemployment or family expectations deserve an honest conversation. Repeated vague promises, changing excuses and anger whenever a plan is requested deserve careful attention too.

A costly celebration need not become the reason a couple postpones every meaningful commitment. Ask your church and the relevant marriage authority about an affordable ceremony, premarital preparation and the required formalities and registration. Where appropriate and lawful, a larger celebration may follow later. Do not assume that ceremonies or other requirements can simply be deferred, and do not enter a rushed marriage to solve lust, financial dependence or family pressure.

Marriage needs a prepared mind as well as affection. Both people should understand the commitment and enter it freely. A simple wedding can begin a serious covenant; an elaborate wedding cannot create readiness that is absent.

If you already live together, begin with an honest assessment and suitable independent counsel. Children, housing, safety and financial dependence may make the next step complicated. You deserve practical help rather than public humiliation. Do not marry an unsafe person just to correct appearances, and do not put yourself or your children in danger to satisfy a timetable.

Faith family and boundaries

For Christian readers, discuss prayer, worship, church involvement and how faith shapes daily life. If beliefs differ, speak honestly about the implications, including children and family expectations. Do not promise to change your convictions only to avoid losing the relationship.

Safe relatives and mentors can contribute. Their involvement must not remove either person's consent. Some families are protective; others may pressure a couple for money, status or appearances. Choose support that helps both people think clearly.

State physical and emotional boundaries early where safe. A prior decision does not take away your right to change a boundary. Premarital guidance should include consent, conflict, money, family influence, parenting and practical responsibilities, rather than only ceremony arrangements.

Scripture in context

Read Matthew 7:24-27. Jesus speaks about hearing and doing his words; the foundation is lived obedience, not an impressive appearance. Applied carefully to courtship, this encourages looking for conduct rather than promises alone. Read Proverbs 15:22 as encouragement to seek sound counsel without surrendering personal responsibility.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 for Paul's call to sexual holiness and his warning against wronging or exploiting another person in this matter. Read 2 Timothy 2:22 for the call to pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace in good company. These passages invite self-control and honour; they do not give anyone permission to shame survivors or demand access to another person's body.

A step you can take

Arrange a calm conversation about one unresolved subject. Begin, "Before we make this commitment, I need us to understand ..." If you cannot raise a normal question safely, seek independent support before proceeding. Neither wedding expenses nor the time already invested obliges you to ignore a serious concern.

CHAPTER 14

MARRIAGE ACROSS DISTANCE AND CHANGE

Love under changed conditions

The second counselling account in this book describes a Christian marriage wounded when work separated the couple and the husband became involved with another woman. Distance created circumstances the couple had to manage; it did not remove responsibility for betrayal.

Distance changes daily life. Work schedules, costs, fatigue and immigration arrangements can limit contact. These pressures deserve honest discussion, but they do not make betrayal inevitable or excuse mistreatment. Some couples adapt well; others need more support or a different plan.

Make agreements that can be reviewed

Discuss a workable communication rhythm instead of demanding constant availability. A missed call during a shift is different from a pattern of deception. Tell each other what a normal working day allows and how urgent matters should be communicated.

Talk about money in concrete terms: what is available, what must be paid, what is being saved and what happens if earnings change. Include the unpaid work of childcare and household management. The person receiving remittances may be carrying responsibilities that cannot be measured only by cash.

Review separation at agreed intervals. A reunion date can be a useful goal, but job conditions, visas, illness or debt may change it. Discuss what would trigger a new decision rather than leaving the arrangement indefinitely unexamined. If a promise cannot be kept, explain the circumstances and consider options together.

Openness without surveillance

Sharing plans and introducing friends can help connection when it is mutual and freely agreed. It should not become compulsory location tracking, password demands or punishment for delayed responses. Healthy openness leaves room for work, privacy and ordinary friendships.

Where a concern arises, name the behaviour and its effect. "We agreed to discuss transfers, and this payment was hidden" is more useful than a general

accusation. Where both people can speak safely, appropriate counselling may help with communication and decisions.

If there is abuse or coercive control, joint counselling or mediation can create further risk and blur responsibility. Seek individual specialist support rather than treating abuse as a shared communication problem. An NHS domestic-abuse policy specifically advises against couple counselling and mediation in abusive relationships. [8]

When betrayal is discovered

You do not have to make a permanent decision on the same night you learn painful news. Attend to immediate safety, health, children, finances and documents. Consider individual professional and pastoral support. Qualified legal advice may be needed where marriage, immigration, property or parenting arrangements are affected.

Reconciliation needs more than a desire to preserve the marriage. It requires safety, honest acknowledgement, changed behaviour and freedom for both people to decide. An injured spouse cannot create these conditions alone. Neither a public apology nor family pressure establishes that trust has returned.

My conviction is that marriage is a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman, to be honoured until death, and I do not advocate divorce. This makes faithful conduct, careful preparation and appropriate support essential. Protecting a person from violence or coercion must never be treated as a betrayal of that conviction. Seek careful pastoral guidance and qualified advice about your circumstances; immediate safety comes first. Community support should remain available without forcing unsafe contact or reconciliation.

Scripture in context

Read Ephesians 4:25-32 for its teaching on truth, anger, speech and kindness within Christian community. These qualities matter across distance as well as at home. Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 as a picture of mutual support; it is not a promise that a marriage will survive if one person alone does enough praying or sacrificing.

A step you can take

If it is safe, review one practical agreement with your spouse: contact, money, care of children or the next review of separation. Make it specific and realistic. If it is not safe, identify an independent source of support instead. You are not required to attempt a joint exercise with someone who threatens you.

CHAPTER 15

RAISING RESPONSIBLE YOUNG PEOPLE

The lesson in an ordinary home

When a parent speaks harshly, a sincere apology can teach a child that responsibility includes correcting yourself. Explain what will change without blaming the child for the adult's outburst. Ordinary conduct gives weight to what we teach.

Preparing the next generation requires more than warning girls to be careful and boys to be strong. Young people need models of dignity, consent, honest work, emotional expression and accountability. Parents matter, but so do schools, faith communities, employers, peers and the choices young people make themselves.

No method guarantees a child's adult behaviour. Good parenting does not remove another person's agency, and a child's harmful choice is not automatic proof that the mother failed. Prevention is a shared responsibility and an ongoing practice.

Prepare boys for more than provision

Parents, the preparation of boys deserves as much attention as the protection of girls. A daughter may be taught patience, work, faith and responsibility, then be deeply wounded by a partner who has never accepted those responsibilities himself. We cannot keep giving girls longer lists of precautions while excusing dishonesty, sexual pressure and abandonment in boys.

The man a daughter marries can profoundly affect her home and future. That is why I urge parents to prepare sons for the weight of marriage. A girl's whole future, however, does not belong to a man. She also has a calling, abilities, education, work and relationships worth nurturing. Prepare both young people to contribute to a shared life without making either one's dignity dependent on being chosen.

Teach boys that earning money does not purchase authority over another person's body, friendships or choices. Domestic work, caregiving and listening are responsibilities they can learn. Kindness should not depend on whether a girl may become a romantic partner.

Help a boy name disappointment, fear and sadness without ridicule. Feeling anger does not permit intimidation or violence. Teach him how to pause, seek help and repair harm. If an adult says that boys never cry, consider what else the child may learn about hiding pain.

Talk about sexual respect, consent and online behaviour in age-appropriate ways. A young man should know that pressuring someone for an image, forwarding private material or using affection to obtain money can harm another person. Do not excuse conduct as something all boys do.

Give these lessons work to do at home. Let a son cook, clean, keep an agreed responsibility and account honestly for money entrusted to him. When he hurts someone, help him name the conduct, apologise without excuses and make appropriate repair. Praise patience and honesty, not only achievement or confidence. A boy should not grow up expecting that a wife will become the adult responsible for everything he neglects.

Fathers, guardians and male mentors must demonstrate the same standards. A son who hears teaching about fidelity while watching secret relationships receives a divided lesson. Let him see respectful disagreement, shared work and responsibility towards children. If an adult has failed, an honest acknowledgement and sustained change teach more than pretending that reputation is enough.

To the young man reading: do not pursue a woman with promises you have no intention of keeping. Do not receive her savings as though affection entitles you to them. Do not turn her refusal of sex into an offence against you. If you become a father, your responsibility to your child continues even when the romantic relationship ends. Seek appropriate guidance and fulfil your responsibilities; another person's work abroad is not permission for you to disappear.

"Raise a son who can be trusted with responsibility before urging him to seek a wife." Better preparation can help prevent harm, but parents cannot guarantee every adult choice. A man remains accountable for his conduct. Where a woman or child has been harmed, the community must offer support and pursue appropriate accountability rather than protect the man's reputation at their expense.

Prepare girls for agency and opportunity

Teach girls practical money skills, safe decision-making and the right to ask questions. Let them pursue learning and work without treating those ambitions as a threat to future marriage. Avoid making obedience to every adult the highest virtue; a child also needs to know whom to tell when an adult behaves unsafely.

Girls, like boys, can learn responsibility for their own conduct without being assigned responsibility for everyone else's. Clothing, politeness or a perfect set of precautions cannot guarantee protection from wrongdoing. If harm occurs, the child needs a supportive response rather than an interrogation designed to find a reason to blame her.

Listen before delivering the lesson

Young people may disclose a difficulty in fragments. A dismissive laugh or immediate sermon can end the conversation before the real issue appears. Ask what happened, listen and clarify what support is needed. UNICEF's guidance on communicating with teenagers emphasises active listening and helping adolescents feel understood. [10]

Avoid using someone else's painful experience as a public warning. Ask permission before sharing personal information, and explain safeguarding limits where they apply. A youth leader should not promise absolute secrecy about danger or abuse.

Set an example online. Do not forward humiliating photographs, mock a young person's disclosure or use private messages as entertainment. A community cannot teach dignity credibly while rewarding public shame.

Scripture in context

Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9, where instruction is woven into ordinary life. Read Ephesians 6:1-4 in full, including the instruction to adults not to provoke children. Read Proverbs 22:6 as wisdom about formation, not a guarantee that allows parents to control every later choice. Christian teaching should be accompanied by the conduct adults want children to learn.

A step you can take

Choose one habit to model this month: sharing household work, admitting a mistake, discussing money honestly or listening without interruption. Ask a young person what adults misunderstand about their lives, and listen before responding. You do not have to agree with everything to show respect.

Optional reflection: Which lesson about relationships did you have to unlearn? How could you help the next generation examine it without making them afraid to speak?

CHAPTER 16

CHOOSE LIFE AND BUILD YOUR FUTURE



AI-generated illustration: Making time to learn and choose wisely.

Your next choice matters

You did not choose the family into which you were born, the place where your life began, or many of the conditions you inherited. You did not choose every opportunity you received or every opportunity denied to you. Someone else's betrayal may have entered your story without your permission. Yet your life still contains decisions that deserve your attention. Where there is a step you can take, even with help, that step matters.

The strongest invitation of this book is to become an active participant in your future. Receive knowledge, seek understanding, ask for wisdom and act on what you learn. Do not leave every decision to pressure, loneliness, fear, habit or another person's convenience. When a decision is genuinely yours to make, take it seriously.

I often express this conviction in these words: "We are what we choose to be." I mean that our repeated choices help shape our character and direction. Our dignity comes before those choices, and circumstances can limit our options. The sentence should awaken responsibility, not condemn someone for poverty, illness, abuse or an outcome they could not control. You remain a person of value while learning to choose differently.

A person who has made a damaging decision needs truth and a way forward. A person who has been harmed needs care and justice. Sometimes both descriptions belong to one reader. Wise pastoral guidance helps us distinguish them so that repentance is directed towards our own wrongdoing and blame is not assigned to us for somebody else's.

What a choice becomes

A choice is a selection between available courses of action. A decision commits you to a course; a habit develops as actions are repeated. Consequences may follow immediately or emerge gradually. Some can be repaired; others remain part of the situation you must now address. Understanding these connections helps us give small decisions their proper weight.

What you practise in ordinary moments can prepare you for larger commitments. Keeping a modest savings record, telling the truth when embarrassed, listening before answering and respecting another person's refusal all contribute to character. In a relationship, a dramatic promise cannot replace these daily practices. At work, a certificate does not replace the habit of learning and doing the job honestly.

Consider an unhelpful pattern without insulting yourself. You feel lonely, read old messages, agree to a meeting you do not want, and later regret abandoning a boundary. The point where you might change the pattern could be earlier than the meeting: arranging supportive company, putting the messages aside, or telling a friend that you feel vulnerable. A practical plan makes a different choice easier to carry out.

Some decisions are made under pressure, deception or coercion. Before judging yourself or someone else, ask what was actually known and what freedom existed. Having a theoretical option is different from having safe housing, transport, money or support to use it. Communities should help create real options rather than praise freedom while leaving people trapped.

Freedom and responsibility begin in Genesis

Read Genesis 2:15-17 and Genesis 3:1-13. God gives a command before the fruit is eaten. Adam and Eve therefore face a question of trust and obedience before crossing the boundary. The account invites serious reflection on desire, deception, responsibility and the human tendency to shift blame.

The Bible names the tree as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Calling its fruit a "fruit of choice" can illustrate the decision in the story, but that is our teaching image, not the biblical name. Eating it did not first create the ability to choose. The warning already called for a response.

For our lives, the question is whether a desire or persuasive voice will be allowed to overrule what we have reason to know is right. Something can look attractive and still lead us away from trust, honesty or safety. A promise of quick gain does not answer the question of how that gain is obtained. A person's insistence that a boundary is unnecessary does not make the boundary foolish.

The story also challenges excuses. Taking responsibility can begin with an honest sentence: "I did this, and I need to change it." That sentence should concern something you actually did. It must not be demanded from a person as an explanation for the abuse someone else committed.

Choose life as a direction

Read Deuteronomy 30:11-20. Moses addresses Israel within the covenant and calls the people towards faithful love and obedience to God. The alternatives of life and death concern a serious covenantal direction, not a technique for obtaining every outcome a person wants. The appeal to choose life is guidance with consequences, not an indifferent invitation to do anything at all.

For Christian readers, this passage challenges passive living. What direction are your decisions taking? What are you learning to love, tolerate or excuse? Which practices serve life, faithfulness and the wellbeing of others? Read Joshua 24:14-15 as another call to deliberate allegiance rather than drifting with the surrounding culture.

Do not use these passages to tell someone that illness, a child's death, infertility, depression or poverty proves that they chose death. Nor should a person facing suicidal thoughts be given a moral slogan instead of urgent care. Choosing a direction includes seeking the help needed to remain safe; the earlier emergency guidance still applies.

We can urge people towards what is good while respecting their agency. Parents, pastors and mentors can explain, warn, encourage and support. They should not obtain compliance through humiliation or make material help conditional on a profession of faith. A response to God should be sincere. Pressure can produce words without producing trust.

Knowledge understanding and wisdom

The following distinction is a practical teaching tool. These terms overlap in Scripture and everyday speech; they are not three sealed compartments or a complete biblical dictionary. Read Proverbs 2:1-11 alongside James 1:5. Christian wisdom involves listening to God, receiving correction and acting with discernment.

Resource	Its practical question	A relationship example
Knowledge	What information do I have?	I know what this person says about work, money and commitment.
Understanding	What does the information mean?	I compare those claims with conduct, context and reliable evidence.
Wisdom	What is the responsible next step?	I proceed, pause, seek advice or decline in light of what I understand.

Knowledge starts with learning. Ask questions, read the relevant documents, hear the other person's account and seek information from reliable sources. Be honest about what is missing. Knowing someone's online photographs or preferred worship songs is not the same as knowing how they act when disappointed.

Understanding requires interpretation. A missed call may reflect a work shift rather than rejection. Repeated threats whenever you disagree point to a different concern. Notice patterns and context without inventing explanations to protect a preferred conclusion. Consider whether the facts support your hope, contradict it or leave a question open.

Wisdom turns reflection into a fitting response. It can say yes, but it can also wait or refuse. It considers duties, consent, safety, character and consequences. A wise decision may feel uncomfortable because it disappoints someone or delays a desired result. Ease is not the only measure of a good choice.

You need humility at every stage. Information can be incomplete; interpretation can be mistaken; a decision may need revision. Seeking counsel and changing course when new facts appear are signs of responsibility. Prayer should accompany careful attention rather than replace the information needed for a decision.

Build friendship before making a lifelong promise

A relationship can be built with the care of someone laying a foundation. Moving from knowing about a person to knowing them more personally should involve appropriate time, observation and freely agreed boundaries. The stages below are a guide for thought, not a required timetable or a ladder someone is entitled to climb.

At the first stage, you know of someone. You may recognise a name, face, role or reputation. You have an impression, not a complete account of character. Avoid making financial or lifelong commitments on the strength of recognition alone.

At the acquaintance stage, ordinary conversation begins. You learn what the person says about beliefs, work, family and interests. Keep your own judgment and other sources of support. Interest does not create an obligation to offer money, private images or physical access.

Friendship allows more observation. You see whether words and conduct agree, whether disagreements can be discussed respectfully, and whether the person treats others fairly. Friendship is valuable in its own right. It does not become a debt that must later be repaid with romance.

A close friendship may involve deeper emotional knowledge and mutual confidence. Before interpreting that closeness as a promise of marriage, discuss intentions. One person's hope does not establish the other's agreement. Either person can decide that friendship should remain friendship.

Intentional courtship is a more explicit exploration of marriage between adults who are free to make that decision. Discuss the subjects in Chapters 12 and 13, involve safe advisers and pay attention to existing obligations. Emotional intimacy can deepen through honest, respectful conversation. Here, intimacy means closeness and being known; it is not an instruction to become sexually involved before engagement or marriage. The Christian sexual ethic commended in this book places sexual intimacy within marriage.

A proposal and an accepted commitment should grow from mutual understanding, not be used to stop questions. Neither a proposal nor the expenses already incurred remove the right to raise a concern or withdraw consent to marriage. A wedding must not be treated as the only possible ending of every courtship.

Love grows through choices

The language of "falling in love" describes feelings that can arise quickly and unexpectedly. Attraction itself is not always chosen. The choices that follow deserve deliberate attention: how you behave, how much access you offer, what promises you make and whether you commit. Strong feelings do not complete those decisions for you.

Love is practised in truthfulness, care, faithfulness and respect. You choose whether to listen, whether to manipulate, whether to honour an agreement and whether to seek help with conduct that harms someone. You cannot

command another person to return your love or become trustworthy. A relationship requires more than one person's willingness.

If an earlier relationship ended painfully, it may help to review how you made decisions. Perhaps you moved too quickly or confused support with ownership. Those are questions for learning, not proof that your partner's betrayal was caused by your failure to love correctly. Sometimes the other person chose deception despite your care. Their responsibility remains theirs.

Within marriage, you can choose honest communication, shared responsibilities, respectful conduct and appropriate support. Where both partners can participate safely, those choices can help them address difficulties. One spouse cannot choose fidelity or repentance on behalf of the other. If abuse is present, seek individual specialist support rather than treating endurance as the proof that you have chosen your marriage.

A different approach can improve your judgment and reduce some risks. It cannot guarantee a faithful partner, a wedding or freedom from grief. Choose wisely because it honours your life and the other person's life, not because it gives you control over every result.

Choosing your values in relationships and family life

You can decide that you want sexual boundaries consistent with your Christian convictions. If you have chosen to remain sexually abstinent, you deserve respect rather than mockery or pressure. If your past differs from that intention, you can still establish a new boundary. A person who has been sexually assaulted did not choose that harm and has not become morally less worthy.

You may decide to remain with family while preparing for marriage, where that home is safe and the arrangement is workable. Some families mark marriage with bridewealth or other customary commitments. Such traditions should be handled lawfully and respectfully; they do not purchase ownership of a woman or override either person's consent. Character and readiness require attention beyond any payment or ceremony.

Parenthood also deserves thoughtful decisions. Consider a child's needs, your health, care arrangements, support and resources. A child should not be given the task of curing loneliness or proving that an absent partner has been defeated. Many people did not choose the circumstances that left them parenting alone. They still deserve support and can make responsible decisions within those circumstances.

Parents and elders can help you see what you may have overlooked. They can ask questions about a proposed spouse's character, responsibilities and compatibility. Their guidance should strengthen your ability to make a free,

informed decision. Neither family approval nor family pressure can supply your personal consent.

Daily decisions can change a family pattern

A family pattern can become so familiar that it feels inevitable. It may involve silence about money, anger expressed through threats, unequal care responsibilities or the expectation that one person must sacrifice without question. You may be unable to change everyone involved. You can identify the conduct you want to stop practising and seek support where safety is involved.

Begin with a specific action. If money repeatedly disappears without explanation, propose a clear record and shared discussion where safe. If your own speech becomes insulting, take responsibility for changing it. If every problem is hidden to protect appearances, seek an appropriate confidential source of help. Transformation becomes more practical when a general wish is translated into an observable action.

Choices about food, clothes, housing and companionship also operate within real limits. Income, disability, safety, climate and culture affect what is possible. Make responsible choices within those limits without judging another person's worth by appearance or address. A modest home or limited wardrobe is not evidence of a failed life.

You may choose companions and activities that support your values. A group that mocks refusal or encourages harmful conduct deserves examination. Seek people who can celebrate your progress without requiring you to abandon judgment. Church involvement can offer worship, teaching and community; attendance or a title alone is not proof of safe character. The same standards of honesty and accountability apply there.

Education and work require an available next step

You may regret leaving school. Ask what learning is realistically available now: returning to formal study, an apprenticeship, recognised vocational training or a manageable course. Investigate the costs, language, entry requirements and recognition before committing. One useful skill can be a sound beginning.

Access to education is unequal. Fees, displacement, caregiving, disability, unsafe conditions and a lack of connectivity can interrupt learning. A child should not be blamed for barriers adults or institutions failed to remove. As adults, we can explore opportunities that become available while also asking families and communities to help remove the obstacles that remain.

For a worker abroad, a decision may concern wages, savings or a partner's request for a transfer. Ask whether the request is clear, affordable and independently verifiable. Do not hand over control of your documents or all your resources because someone promises marriage. Love can coexist with prudent records and appropriate advice.

In my recruitment work, I have seen why these decisions matter for mothers supporting children. A partner's renewed attention can feel like the reconciliation someone has long hoped for. Hope should be accompanied by evidence of responsibility. A father should not use a mother's overseas employment as an excuse to abandon his own duties. Choosing to protect a household's resources is a responsible act of care.

Feelings need care as well as direction

You cannot always choose the feeling that arrives. Sadness, fear, attraction, anger and grief may come before you have time to think. Your response can sometimes be influenced through practice, support and treatment where needed. Progress may be gradual.

Depression is not a decision to be unhappy. A person cannot be ordered to replace it with happiness, and ongoing symptoms do not prove a refusal to try. The guidance in Chapter 4 still stands. Seeking professional care, accepting help and describing symptoms honestly can be important choices within recovery; inability to act easily can itself be part of the difficulty. [1, 2]

Anger after betrayal does not require you to pursue revenge. You can work towards refusing hateful conduct without pretending that painful feelings have vanished. Missing someone does not require renewed contact. Feeling hopeless does not establish that the future is hopeless. A pause and a supportive conversation can help you decide what to do without demanding that every feeling first disappear.

For someone experiencing abuse, change may begin with confidential advice rather than a direct confrontation or immediate departure. A safe option may need to be created with practical help. Respect the person's pace and circumstances. The responsibility to stop abuse belongs to the person committing it, and communities have duties to protect and assist.

Temptation does not cancel responsibility

Read James 1:13-15. The passage directs attention to the role of desire in temptation and rejects blaming God for evil. Christian responsibility includes examining what we nurture, excuse and act upon. We should not attribute every deliberate wrong to the devil as though our own conduct no longer mattered.

The question "Who tempted the tempter?" can challenge an endless chain of excuses, but Scripture does not give us a complete account of every circumstance surrounding the first evil desire. We should not invent one. We have enough instruction to address the conduct before us: tell the truth, refuse exploitation, seek help and turn from wrongdoing.

An unwanted thought, a traumatic reaction or an intrusive image is not automatically a deliberate moral choice. Do not confuse being distressed by a thought with consenting to act on it. Where symptoms trouble you, obtain qualified support rather than interpreting every mental experience as proof of spiritual failure.

Repentance means turning towards God with honesty and a changed direction. It can include apology, appropriate restitution, accepting consequences and learning a different practice. A person who has caused harm should not use the language of forgiveness to demand immediate trust. Change should become visible in behaviour.

A public testimony of faith and rebuilding

Annie Lobert has publicly described surviving sexual exploitation and abuse. The published introduction to her I Am Second film, Little Girl Lost, recounts a period of exploitation and addiction and her appeal to God in a dangerous moment. It presents her Christian faith as central to the hope that followed. This is an attributed account of her testimony, not an invented illustration. [12]

In her recorded interview with Vegas PBS, Lobert describes surrendering her life to God and committing herself to helping other women leave exploitation. She also discusses practical support, including housing, and explains that participation in religious practice is not a condition of receiving help in the programme she describes. [11]

Her account offers a useful example for this chapter: a personal response can become part of a changed direction and a commitment to help others. It must not be used to suggest that people who remain trapped simply failed to choose freedom. Exploitation restricts options; safety, housing and support can help make options real. One person's testimony is encouragement, not a guarantee about another person's recovery or a substitute for care.

The author has not presented Lobert as his counselling client or as an endorser of this book. Readers can consult the cited public accounts for her own fuller telling. The brief summary here avoids graphic details so that the emphasis remains on dignity, faith and practical rebuilding.

A way to make a careful decision

First, name the decision. "I want a better life" is a worthy desire, but "Should I transfer these savings?" or "What course can I realistically begin?" gives you something concrete to examine. Notice whether somebody is making a decision feel more urgent than it is.

Second, gather reliable information. Identify what you know, what you have only been told and what remains unverified. Check matters that require professional or official information through an appropriate source. Do not treat a persuasive message as the whole evidence.

Third, interpret the information. Look at patterns and context. Ask what each option may mean for safety, conscience, responsibilities, dependants and resources. Consider the possibility that the answer you most want may not be supported by what you know.

Fourth, examine your motives without humiliating yourself. Are loneliness, fear of missing out, pressure to please, revenge or a desire to appear successful driving the urgency? A strong emotion deserves attention, but it does not have to make the final decision.

Fifth, pray and seek appropriate counsel. A trusted elder may offer perspective, while a health professional, lawyer or safeguarding specialist may be needed for a particular issue. Choose advisers who explain their reasoning and respect your freedom. Do not outsource every decision to the loudest person.

Sixth, choose an action that fits your present situation. It may be to proceed, pause, decline, obtain more information or ask for practical help. When safety is involved, seek specialist support before announcing a boundary or a departure. A wise pause can be a decision rather than a failure to decide.

Seventh, make the action manageable. Decide what you will do, what support or resource it requires and when you can review it. Replace an unlimited promise with a specific step: arrange an appointment, verify a document or investigate one training option.

Finally, review honestly. New information may justify a different course. A mistake can call for repair; a barrier may call for support; a wise decision may still lead through disappointment. Learn without pretending that you control every result. Read Galatians 6:7-10 as an encouragement towards faithful conduct and perseverance, not a formula for blaming every loss on the person who suffered it.

Choosing Christ and living what you believe

This book's Christian perspective reaches beyond career, romance and material success. The gospel calls us to turn towards Jesus Christ. Read John 3:16-21, Romans 10:8-13 and Ephesians 2:8-10. Christian salvation rests on God's grace, received through faith. It is not earned by accumulating enough successful decisions.

Belief in the heart and confession of Jesus as Lord belong together in Romans 10. A declaration should express sincere trust rather than words supplied to satisfy a group. You can ask questions and seek careful teaching. Parents, pastors and friends can accompany you, but they cannot believe on your behalf or make a coerced profession sincere.

Jesus speaks of a way leading to life and a way leading to destruction in Matthew 7:13-14. Christian teaching therefore treats our response to God as eternally serious. Heaven and hell are not merely images of financial success and failure in this life. The invitation is to receive Christ and live in response to his grace, not to purchase a place with God through marriage, work or respectability.

Read Philippians 2:12-13 together. Paul calls believers to live out their salvation with seriousness while recognising God's work in their willing and doing. Human responsibility and dependence on God belong together here. We do not need to turn one verse into self-salvation or use the next verse as an excuse for passivity.

A Christian decision grows into discipleship: prayer, Scripture, fellowship, repentance, truthful conduct and care for others. It includes seeking help when you need it. A renewed commitment does not guarantee instant relief from illness or remove the need to address debts, legal matters or the effects of harm.

Make one honest response

Look back across the book and identify where a choice now needs attention. It may concern receiving care, ending revenge, protecting a child's wellbeing, examining a partner's conduct, checking an overseas offer, learning a skill or responding to Jesus. You do not have to settle every area today.

Write, think or speak privately: "The decision before me is ... The information I still need is ... The help I need is ... My next responsible step is ..." Choose a review point that fits your situation. If you cannot act safely alone, asking for help is a meaningful response.

In Luke 15:11-24, Jesus tells of a son who recognises his situation and returns, and a father who receives him with compassion. The turning is real,

and the welcome is grace. Read the whole chapter, including the older brother, rather than reducing the story to a promise of wealth after a change of attitude.

You cannot rewrite the place where your story began. You can give serious attention to the choices available now and seek help to widen them. Do not surrender your judgment to a painful past or a persuasive promise. Receive truth, grow in understanding and practise wisdom. Where a faithful step is possible, take it.

Your beginning was not entirely in your hands. Your next choice still matters. By God's grace, choose life, take responsibility for what is yours, and arise again.

YOUR NEXT CHAPTER

The final chapter has invited you to choose a direction and take a responsible next step. You may have a plan or still feel uncertain. You can act on what you now understand without demanding that your pain first disappear. Seek support for what you cannot manage alone.

A future need not resemble the one you lost to be worth living. It may include marriage, friendship, children, service, study or work. You can welcome hope without predicting every outcome.

Christian hope rests in God's faithfulness, not in a promise that every financial loss will be repaid or every relationship restored. Read Isaiah 43:14-21 in its message to Israel of God's deliverance, and Joel 2:12-27 in its setting of communal repentance and restoration. Their biblical contexts matter. We can learn about God's mercy without using them as guarantees of a particular personal result.

For today, consider what is within reach. Perhaps it is an appointment, a safe place to sleep, a revised budget, a skill to investigate or a boundary that needs support. If the step feels too large, ask whether someone can help make it smaller.

You can receive care while you grow. Your life matters now, including its unfinished parts.

A declaration you may adapt

My worth is greater than what happened to me.

I can tell the truth about harm without making it my identity.

I can seek knowledge, grow in understanding and practise wisdom.

I can ask for help and take one manageable step.

I can keep boundaries and consider forgiveness without surrendering safety.

I can build a meaningful future through faith, learning, work and healthy relationships.

Whether I marry or remain single, whether I have children or not, my life has value.

By God's grace, I can choose a faithful next step and arise again.

A prayer for the journey

Lord Jesus, meet me in the truth of my situation. Give me courage to seek help, wisdom for the decisions before me and patience with what takes time. Help me recognise people who care well and act responsibly towards others. Where I have done wrong, guide me towards honest change. Where I have been harmed, keep me from believing that the harm defines me. Teach me to walk forward with hope. Amen.

A FLEXIBLE REBUILDING PLAN

This planning aid is not a treatment programme or a healing timetable. Repeat or reorder stages as needed. Obtain appropriate help first for danger, severe distress or urgent health concerns.

First stage Establish support

Identify one safe person and, where needed, a qualified professional. Decide what kind of help you need. Review urgent practical matters such as shelter, food, healthcare and the care of children. If keeping written information could expose you, seek confidential advice about a safer approach.

Optional action: Arrange one conversation or appointment. You can say, "I need help with a specific problem, and I would like to discuss privacy before I explain."

Second stage Understand your position

Gather the information you need about income, commitments, documents and any disputed money. Separate known facts from assumptions. Do not confront an unsafe person to complete this exercise. Ask an appropriate adviser which records matter and how to obtain them lawfully and safely.

Optional action: List available resources and questions needing advice.

Third stage Rebuild one routine or skill

Choose one manageable activity that serves your future. It may be returning to study, exploring training, improving a work skill, renewing a supportive friendship or planning rest. Avoid buying an expensive course simply to feel that you have begun.

Optional action: Check one option's requirements and costs before committing.

Fourth stage Review without punishment

Ask what helped and what remained difficult. Adjust your goals to your health, work and care responsibilities. A missed step is information about the plan, not proof that you cannot change. You may need more support rather than more self-criticism.

Optional action: Choose one next step and review date. Seek professional help if symptoms or safety concerns worsen.

Questions to return to

What needs protection now? What is within my control? Who can help? What information is missing? What decision can wait? What would make the next step manageable?

PRACTICAL CONVERSATION TOOLS

Use these optional scripts only where speaking is safe. They cannot guarantee a reaction or replace specialist help.

Asking for support

"I am having a difficult time. I would like someone to listen without sharing my story. Can we discuss what you can keep private and what you might need to report?"

"I do not need you to solve everything. Could you help me arrange an appointment or accompany me?"

Responding to pressure

"I will not make a financial decision tonight. I need time and independent information."

"Accepting help does not mean I agree to intimacy. I am not comfortable with what you are asking."

"I am not ready to discuss every detail. This is the part I need help with now."

Talking about a relationship

"I want to understand how we would handle money, work, children and disagreements before we decide about marriage."

"I can hear an apology without agreeing to meet or restart the relationship."

"We seem to want different things. I am allowed to decide that this relationship is not right for me."

Supporting a friend

"Thank you for telling me. What would help you feel supported now?"

"You do not deserve to be threatened. We can look for appropriate help without asking you to confront the person first."

"I will not forward the image or tell others your story as an example. Let us consider a safe reporting route."

Checking a training opportunity

Ask about recognised qualifications, total costs, practical experience and verifiable placement claims. Read the terms before paying. Pause if basic information is withheld.

Checking a shared financial plan

Ask about contributions, names on ownership documents, obligations if the relationship ends and independent advice. Good intentions do not settle legal ownership.

FOR MENTORS AND YOUTH GROUP LEADERS

This book can support conversation, but a group is not a counselling clinic or a court. The person leading it should know the limits of their role and the safeguarding arrangements that apply to their organisation and location.

Invite discussion of general principles and practical questions rather than requiring personal testimony. Make clear that anyone may pass on a question, leave briefly or speak privately to an appropriate helper. Do not ask readers to name an abuser, disclose sexual experiences or describe a pregnancy in front of others.

Before starting, explain privacy expectations and any limits involving safeguarding or immediate danger. Do not promise absolute secrecy. Identify a responsible safeguarding contact and an appropriate professional referral route. If your organisation has no process, establish one before using sensitive material in a group.

Choose the material to fit the audience's age. Minors need age-appropriate teaching about dignity, consent, safe adults and reporting concerns. Adult marriage and financial planning exercises should not be used to pressure young people towards adult commitments.

When someone discloses harm, listen without blame and explain the next appropriate step. Avoid pressing for unnecessary details or conducting your own investigation. Follow applicable safeguarding requirements and seek qualified advice. Where immediate danger or a medical emergency exists, urgent help comes first.

Prayer should be offered respectfully and never made the condition for practical help. Avoid public declarations that someone is healed, demands for instant forgiveness, or pressure to meet the person who harmed them. Spiritual care can accompany healthcare, legal advice and specialist support.

For a simple discussion, consider what support is needed, what information is missing, which action is safe and who is qualified to help. Finish with a manageable voluntary step, not a public pledge. Ask participants whether the material was understandable and what topics need clearer treatment.

FINDING SUITABLE SUPPORT

The right source of support depends on the issue and your location. A trusted friend or faith leader may listen and offer practical help. A qualified health professional can assess medical or mental-health concerns. A specialist domestic-abuse or safeguarding service can help consider risk and options. A qualified local legal adviser can explain rights and procedures. For overseas workers, an official labour authority or embassy or consulate may be relevant.

Verify a service through an official website or recognised professional body. Check its location, eligibility, languages, costs, opening arrangements and approach to confidentiality. A listing in this book's references is not a promise that an organisation will provide individual services in your country.

Ask a provider what qualifications they hold and what they are able to offer. A suitable professional should explain the service and its limits rather than promise guaranteed healing, a marriage outcome, a visa or repayment of money. Do not send passports, bank credentials or intimate images to an unverified contact.

If you are under eighteen and a parent or relative is unsafe, consider another appropriate adult such as a teacher, safeguarding professional or health worker. You deserve a response that takes your concern seriously.

If you are in immediate danger, have seriously harmed yourself or think you may act on thoughts of suicide, contact local emergency services or go to the nearest emergency department. If possible, tell a trusted person and ask them to stay with you while you obtain help. Do not wait for the author to reply.

Feedback about the book

For comments about the book, general recruitment orientation or pastoral conversation, write to ronald@theostransformingministries.org. You may describe an issue without including names or identifying details about other people. Please do not send intimate images, banking credentials or confidential case records.

This address is for correspondence and general orientation. It does not provide emergency response, clinical care, visa guarantees or a substitute for qualified individual legal or employment advice. A response time is not guaranteed.

SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

Selected public resources and the author's supplied experience used for this revision on 23 October 2026. They support the factual passages marked with numbered references. The practical exercises are the author's teaching material, not validated treatment tools. Permission for the two counselling accounts is confirmed by the author; private recordings are not reproduced. Check current local procedures before relying on a reporting or legal route.

1. World Health Organization. Depressive disorder depression. Symptoms, assessment and treatment overview. Used in Chapter 4 and the introductory definition.

Online source: www.who.int

2. National Institute of Mental Health. Depression. General information and pathways to help. Used in Chapter 4. Country-specific crisis numbers on the source are not reproduced as worldwide contacts.

Online source: www.nimh.nih.gov

3. World Health Organization. Violence against women. Definitions and forms of intimate partner violence. Used in Chapter 5.

Online source: www.who.int

4. eSafety Commissioner. Report image based abuse. Guidance on threats, blackmail and reporting. Used in Chapter 7. Australian service and legal scope; local reporting arrangements differ.

Online source: www.esafety.gov.au

5. eSafety Commissioner. Guide to responding to image based abuse involving AI deepfakes. Australian school guidance used for the general discussion of synthetic imagery and victim support in Chapter 7, not as a statement of law elsewhere.

Online source: www.esafety.gov.au

6. International Labour Organization. ILO's 2016 General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment. Summary published 17 February 2019. Used in Chapter 10. These non-binding international principles are distinguished from national law.

Online source: www.ilo.org

7. World Health Organization. Abortion care guideline, service delivery recommendation 5, provision of counselling. Used in Chapter 3 for voluntary, respectful counselling, not for procedural instructions or country-specific law.

Online source: srhr.org

8. East London NHS Foundation Trust. Domestic Abuse and Harmful Practices Policy. July 2023, printed page 36. Used in Chapter 14 for the caution against joint counselling or mediation in abusive relationships. It is a professional policy source, not a statement of Ugandan or Gulf law.

Online source: www.elft.nhs.uk

9. Federal Trade Commission. Looking for love Watch out for scammers. February 2025. Used in Chapter 7 for romance-fraud warnings. United States reporting arrangements are not assumed to apply worldwide.

Online source: consumer.ftc.gov

10. UNICEF Europe and Central Asia. Eleven tips for communicating with your teen. Used in Chapter 15 for active listening and supportive conversation.

Online source: www.unicef.org

11. Vegas PBS. Nevada Week In Person, Annie Lobert, season 2, episode 1. Recorded interview and published transcript. Used in Chapter 16 as an attributed public account of faith, rebuilding and support for survivors; not independent verification of every autobiographical detail or a claim of endorsement. Consulted 23 October 2026.

Online source: www.pbs.org

12. I Am Second. Annie Lobert, Little Girl Lost. Published introduction to the recorded White Chair Film. Used in Chapter 16 for a brief attributed summary of her public testimony. No claim is made that the author interviewed or counselled her. Consulted 23 October 2026.

Online source: www.iamsecond.com

13. Ssentaba Ronald Salongo. Personal recruitment experience supplied for this manuscript on 23 October 2026. The author confirms fifteen years assisting workers from Uganda with domestic work and household management opportunities in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates including Dubai, and Oman. Observations about family support and reported financial betrayal are personal field experience, not a representative survey or adjudicated findings. No population percentage is asserted.

14. Ssentaba Ronald Salongo. Two anonymised pastoral counselling accounts originally supplied for this book. On 23 October 2026 the author confirmed that the accounts are true, were recorded and were authorised for publication by those concerned. Names and unnecessary identifying details have been withheld. These private accounts are distinguished from the attributed public testimony of Annie Lobert; the private recordings are not reproduced.

15. World Health Organization. Child maltreatment. Updated 8 May 2026. Definitions, prevention and support for children and families. Consulted 23 October 2026.

Online source: www.who.int

16. NSPCC. Talk PANTS and help keep children safe. Age-appropriate body safety conversations. UK resources; local reporting procedures differ. Consulted 23 October 2026.

Online source: www.nspcc.org.uk

17. Betty Casey. Sexual Predators What You Need to Know to Prevent Your Child Becoming a Victim. TulsaKids, 12 September 2022. Interview with Christine Marsh of Family and Children's Services. Supplied as background reading for Josephine's chapter; the interview is attributed to its original writer and interviewee, not presented as an interview conducted by either co-author. Its US service contact is not reproduced as a worldwide referral.

Online source: www.tulsakids.com

18. NSPCC Learning. Grooming recognising the signs. Patterns of manipulation, barriers to disclosure and possible indicators. Consulted 23 October 2026.

Online source: learning.nspcc.org.uk

19. UNICEF. Keeping children safe online. Technology-facilitated sexual exploitation, AI and the responsibilities of institutions and platforms. Consulted 23 October 2026.

Online source: www.unicef.org

20. UNICEF Parenting. Online privacy checklist for parents. Privacy settings, location permissions and parental controls. Consulted 23 October 2026.

Online source: www.unicef.org

21. NSPCC Learning. Recognising and responding to child abuse and neglect. Listening, recording concerns and responding to disclosures. UK professional guidance; follow the child-protection procedures applicable where the child is located. Consulted 23 October 2026.

Online source: learning.nspcc.org.uk

22. Elizabeth Melendez Fisher Good. How to Safeguard our Children from Predators. Women's eNews, 16 May 2022. Supplied background reading for the safeguarding contribution. The published writer's first-person account of abuse and anti-trafficking work is her own and is not attributed to Josephine. The chapter presents fresh pastoral discussion alongside the separately cited child-protection guidance.

Online source: womensenews.org

Reading scripture with care

Begin with the passage named in a chapter and read the surrounding section. Ask who is speaking, whom the text addresses, what situation it describes and how the application follows. Distinguish a biblical promise in its original

setting from an analogy used for personal reflection. If an interpretation is disputed, discuss it with a careful teacher rather than treating a brief reflection as the final word.

Core study passages: Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 13; Psalm 139:13-18; Proverbs 24:15-16; Matthew 11:28-30; Mark 10:13-16 and 42-45; Luke 17:3-4; Romans 8:1-4 and 12:17-21; Ephesians 4:25-32, 5:21-33 and 6:1-4.

Additional study for the chapter on choice

Genesis 2:15-17 and 3:1-13; Deuteronomy 30:11-20; Joshua 24:14-15; Proverbs 2:1-11; James 1:5 and 13-15; Matthew 7:13-14; Luke 15:11-32; John 3:16-21; Romans 10:8-13; Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 2:12-13; Galatians 6:7-10. These passages support the discussion of responsibility, grace, discernment and response. The practical knowledge-understanding-wisdom framework is a teaching aid, not a claim that Scripture defines the terms only in that way.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Ssentaba Ronald Salongo is a Ugandan Christian author, Bible teacher and minister with over ten years of active ministry in apostolic service. He holds a Bachelor of Theology B.Th. and a Master of Divinity M.Div.

Through Theos Transforming Ministries, he teaches Scripture, encourages discipleship and equips believers for Christian living and service. His writing makes biblical teaching clear and accessible to readers of different ages, helping them connect the message of Christ with everyday life.

He is a father, pastoral counsellor and trainer who cares deeply about the choices shaping the next generation. He writes with particular concern for young people, families and those rebuilding their lives after painful experiences. His counsel brings together Christian faith, the responsibilities of parenthood and lessons shared through pastoral ministry.

His books include Before You Say I Do, Romans, Christology, Pneumatology and Temperaments. Across his writing, he encourages readers to understand Scripture, grow in character and apply faith thoughtfully in daily life.

Nakasita Josephine Nalongo

Nakasita Josephine Nalongo is the co-author of Arise Again and the wife of Ssentaba Ronald Salongo. Her chapter, Safeguarding Our Children, calls parents and caregivers to listen to young people, respect their dignity and respond responsibly to concerns about abuse and exploitation. She brings a parent's concern for children's safety to the book's message of faith, wise choices and care for the next generation.

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YOUR NEXT CHOICE STILL MATTERS

A practical Christian guide to healing after betrayal, choosing relationships wisely and rebuilding life with hope.

Explore boundaries, courtship, financial independence, responsible parenting and protecting children from abuse. With pastoral insight and biblical reflection, ARISE AGAIN invites you to learn from the past and take a wise next step.

You did not choose every beginning.
Your story can still move forward.

Ssentaba Ronald Salongo
Nakasita Josephine Nalongo

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