

# WHAT IS REAL LOVE REALLY?

Relationships are some of the hardest journeys we will ever take but the most rewarding adventures we will ever have!

WRITTEN BY  
**JAMIE WOOD**

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By

**JAMIE WOOD**

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## Acknowledgements / Dedication

*This book is dedicated and devoted to my Lord God, Our Abba Father, and my Savior Jesus (the lover of my soul and my life), my gifts from the Lord which are my three precious treasures on this earth and in heaven my children from my womb, my legacy: Christopher, Cassondra, and Jesse.*

*Then my daughter in laws Tiffany and Megan, son in law Terrance, granddaughter Serenity, grandson Makai, my precious parents Jim and Doris, married 63 years, now in heaven, and my sisters Denise and Cathy and their families, along with my cherished friends, colleagues, and Bible study buddies.*

*Thank you all from the depths of my heart! The Lord bless you and protect and keep you; may His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you; and give you much peace! I pray real love to always be in your life! May each of you give real love and be recipients of real love!*

*Love and hugs, **Jamie***



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*“We were made for relationships; we were made to be together; we were made to be a part of more than just our self.”*

## Foreword

“Jamie Wood’s book, **“What is Real Love, Really?”** is a profound work that was born from heartache, disappointment, love, and compassion that most individuals would never have been able to endure. Jamie has loved and lost, loved and won, and she continues to love, completely and unconditionally, in spite of her heart being torn out by relationships in her past.

Jamie Wood is the most caring and loving person I have ever met! She LIVES her life, every day, modeling the theme of her book, “What is REAL LOVE, Really?” Her Christian heritage and parent’s example of decades of “REAL LOVE, REALLY” by her parents have given her a unique understanding and perspective on the topic of love.

As a Therapist and Teacher, she blends together the “do’s and do not’s” and “ins and outs” of relationships to fine-tune her ability love and be loved. Jamie holds workshops and seminar’s that have made a huge impact on my life and many other’s lives.

The lessons learned and the journey to REAL LOVE that she writes about and teaches is worth a lifetime of work and money. Why? She deals with matters of the heart and soul and unashamedly looks at her past mistakes and past victories that have taught her the most fleeting yet enduring question of all time, and that question is, “What is Real Love, Really?”

LOVE. Stories, songs, books, eulogies, movies, etc. have all been written, read, and reviewed by millions of people since the beginning of the human race. The hauntingly evasive question remains a mystery to so many people around the world today. “What is REAL LOVE, really?”

Jamie Wood has answered the question and she is uniquely qualified to author the book with the question as the title. “What is REAL LOVE, really?” The book will guide you in taking a close look at yourself and who YOU think you are and explores YOUR LOVE FOR YOURSELF, first as GOD intended love to be.

WIRLR is a woven tapestry; a masterpiece of detailed day-by-day practical exploration and examination, by going deep within yourself to ask and the answers to the questions we long to know the answer to. This book will teach you how to see yourself in a realistic yet loving manner. You will begin to not focus on your flaws but to recognize and address your flaws as you work to improve and correct your temperament weaknesses.

As you proceed through her book, your opinion of yourself will grow from concern into a deep appreciation of who God has created you to be. Once you come to terms with who YOU are, only then can she guide you to learning to accept and love who other people are as well!

Jamie Wood is a maestro, orchestrating the scriptures, coupled with practical spiritual and relationship advice to give you guidelines and guardrails to help you learn to love in a smooth and rewarding manner that improves the lives of every person in your Circle of Influence!

Learning how to forgive yourself and others while accepting yourself and others opens the door to incredible relationship “confidence” that will help pull you out of destructive patterns and helps you build a strong foundation of truth and love in your life.

While Jamie Wood's book, to me, is quite hefty in terms of volume and ideas and personal examination, she formatted her book in a way that makes it easy to begin to understand relationships and how to analyze and correct unhealthy, destructive patterns so you can get on with the business of life and love."

***"What is Real Love, Really! is a gift you should buy for yourself first, and anyone in your life who struggles with finding REAL LOVE."***

Anthony Stowe  
Founder/President, Applied Wisdom Ministries, Inc.  
Author of **"Miracle Baby-Minister Man"**

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"I finally got a chance to read your book! Oh my God, what an awesome revelation of what love really means! Truly, you had to be inspired by the Holy Spirit to write this book.

Your personal experiences were heart wrenching. . . and to know that God is able to bring you out to a mighty place . . . where He has placed you! This book helps families learn how to love the way God perceives love.

It should be used as a counseling tool for couples before they get married and as a study guide for all Christians to truly understand what love is and how to love.

It should also be used as a counseling tool for dysfunctional family relationships, those considering marriage, and finally, married couples.

In this book, you find the essence of God's love for mankind and His instructions on how to embrace His love for us, how to return that love to Him and how to love each other.

An added favor of this book is the riveting personal experiences that are shared by Jamie as she opens up her soul and shares 'What is 'real' love, really?'

I offer my congratulations to Jamie on obeying the voice of God and writing such an exceptional explanation of the Real 'love' of God."

Linda Motley (now in heaven)  
Minister and Adult Recruitment Coordinator for the University of Akron

“One of the most mysterious things to me about God is how He gives us so many blessings, even when we veer off the path, He’s chosen for us. Meeting Jamie was one of these blessings He so lovingly saw fit to give me. In 2017, my husband and father of our 5 children, one of whom was still in my womb at the time, chose to end his life. Out of the pain, hurt, confusion, loneliness, misery, and heartbreak, I made a reckless decision to marry a man I barely knew and move my family away to live with him. It was through these circumstances that the Lord brought Jamie into my life. I can still feel the love and joy with which Jamie greeted me when I think back on the day we met. It was a beautiful day, our home church group gathered outside to fellowship, and Jamie came right up to me, wrapped her arms around me, and was so excited to meet me! She shared in my joys and has carried my burdens equally well, for when that marriage ended, she was right there at my side, becoming more than a friend and sister in the Lord, but a mentor to me as well. She knew all too well the pain I was going through as she had experienced similar circumstances in her own life, and she didn’t want me to go through it alone. I asked her for a copy of this book, and we worked through it together. I didn’t know what to expect but it has been instrumental in my healing and in pointing me to Truth, Life and “Real Love.” The Lord knew I needed Jamie, and her book, “for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14).

Jesus would often say to his audience, “Whoever has ears, let him hear!” (See Matthew 11:15, 13:9, Mark 4:9, Luke 8:8, etc.). It became a sort of catch phrase for Him and here I invite you to take a pause to reflect, to open your spiritual ears in order to hear the Shepherd’s voice. You have before you not just a book but what will become a journey for you, if you have eyes to see and ears to hear. This journey will lead you closer to the Father, as you become more aware of, and accepting of, His deep and unending love for you! This journey will lead you to love others more because of the love that will radiate from you as you bask in the Father’s love. If you have eyes to see and ears to hear, this journey can take you from a place of lukewarm faith to a place where all you want to do is sit at Jesus’ feet and soak up the warmth of His loving presence, and then go out and share His love with the world.

The two main assignments that have been given to humanity, the greatest of all commandments, Jesus tells us in Matthew 22:37-39 are “to love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all of your soul and with all of your strength” and “to love your neighbor as yourself.” In the world to come, when faith and hope are obsolete, it is love that will remain. God Himself is described continually throughout Scripture as being “slow to anger and abounding in loving-kindness” (see Exodus 34:6-7, Numbers 14:18, Psalm 86:15, 103:8, etc.). The most famous of love chapters in the Bible, 1 Corinthians 13, warns us of the futility of a life lived without love being the primary motivator for everything that we do.

Before moving forward, take a moment to close your physical eyes and ask the Father to open your spiritual eyes and ears. Ask Him to go with you on this journey. Ask Him for an understanding heart, a heart that’s moldable in His hands. Ask Him to remove the blinders from your eyes, so that you may see clearly how to live as an ambassador of His love in a world full of darkness and hate. Ask Him to forgive you for any areas where you have fallen short of loving Him with all of your heart, soul and strength or for times where you have not loved your neighbor as yourself. Prepare yourself to dig into God’s Word, the final authority on “what is real love, really,” to discover more fully how to really love God, others, and yourself.

Jamie is a personal hero of mine for writing this book and for seeing that God, in His goodness, brought her through so much trauma and pain, so that she could minister to others going through trauma and pain as well, and point them to the God who not only sees them, but loves them as well! Yes, she is a teacher, counselor and trained social worker, which more than qualifies her to write a book on relation-

ships, but it is the wisdom gained through her faith and her own life experiences that are the real treasures of this book.

Her life, and this book, are a testament to the redeeming, creative, loving power at work through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Instead of shutting out God and the world when times were hard and the pain was more than she could bear, she pressed into God, she poured herself out in loving service to others and she found herself secure in the Father's love for her. It transformed her and she faithfully shares her journey in hopes of meeting others along the way who are also in need of healing and transformation from pain, brokenness, betrayal, feelings of shame and loneliness. Her's is a story of love triumphing over darkness. Journey with her, take the path she has taken, and witness the power of 'real love' transform your life, just as it has for Jamie and myself.

My hope and prayer for you as you read this book, whether you're married or single, widowed or divorced, young or old, is that you will know more than ever just how much God REALLY loves you and that His love would shine through you to your family, friends, and the world around you.

John 13:34-35 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Grace and Shalom in Jesus,

Kimberly House  
Widowed, Divorced, Single Mother of 6 children  
Bachelor's Degree in General Studies, Sociology & Psychology

## Preface

*From the beginning of time (reading in Genesis, the very first book in the Bible) God created the heavens and the earth and He created man and woman. God planned for us to be in relationship with Him and with one another.*

*God gave man and woman the gift of having children so that pieces and parts of their self, along with living for God, would continue. Thus, we have populated the earth and there have been legacies and stories carried on through each person that has lived and persons that are now living. Therefore, we are very dynamic and intricate; each one of us unique to how we were created (Psalm 139) and wonderfully woven together with a purpose and a plan specifically designed to us, one another, and to God's glory! Unfortunately, not all persons that have lived, or are currently living, truly have realized this fact.*

*You are here because a man and a woman were endowed by our creator God to give you birth; so imagine yourself as an amazing gift from God in the form of a puzzle; you are full of pieces uniquely designed for an overall picture/display/purpose. Now when you look at someone else think of them in that very same way; a gift from God as a puzzle with many pieces created by our creator God for an overall picture/display/purpose --- His grand design; His masterpiece!*

*When your puzzle pieces relate with another puzzle and all of their pieces, your pieces and their pieces can get mixed up. If they do, it takes time sorting out the pieces in order to find where the pieces should go and where the pieces fit. Sometimes, because it takes too much time to sort out the pieces, the puzzle is thrown away, or it is put in a box, put on a shelf, and forgotten. Often times, because puzzles take time, we choose not to involve our self and complicate our life with a puzzle. We avoid puzzles.*

*If we do choose to take the time to do a puzzle and we continue on the journey of putting the pieces of that puzzle together, we find the end result, when we see the whole picture, the composite of the pieces, a thrilling and rewarding experience even though it may have been very hard, time consuming, and challenging to complete, its completion brings satisfaction, accomplishment, pride, reward, beauty, and joy.*

*With such a positive experience and outlook from the outcome of our persistence, we are ready to share our puzzle with others and possibly venture on to experience another puzzle and maybe even explore a puzzle with yet more pieces and perhaps a puzzle even more challenging. Yet, the opposite can be true as well. If our experience is negative, the puzzle never gets completed and the picture/display/purpose -- grand design -- never gets fulfilled.*

*In our many types of relationships that are intimate and non-intimate, work-related, school-related, family-related, group-related, church-related, etc. we see some type of puzzle connection. Again,*



*we were made male and female --- not all males and not all females. Again, we have to marvel at God's awesome plan and His creativity of man and woman. With using the analogy of a puzzle, how do we fit together? How do we connect? How are we similar? How are we different? How do we compare? How can we connect? How do we help one another? How do we complement one another? How do we become whole? How do we become complete?*

*When we have a broken puzzle piece or a missing puzzle piece, we can find it hard to justify completing our puzzle, but we have choices. We can choose to find ways to continue our journey in completing the puzzle and choose not to get discouraged or throw the whole puzzle away. We can choose to tape or glue the broken piece back together, even though the tear in the original design and its mending may not blend right in and may be noticeable to us; yet to others it may be hard to observe unless it is pointed out as the mended piece. In other words, how much will we be willing to reveal or share about the missing and broken pieces in our life?*

*Missing and broken puzzle pieces can stop the completion of a puzzle because of finding it less than perfect. The frustration of trying to find the missing puzzle piece, or look at a broken puzzle piece, can make one choose to either throw the puzzle away, put the puzzle back in the box, put the puzzle back on a shelf, and/or even give the puzzle away to another who is unsuspecting of its complications and frailties.*

*On the other hand, perhaps another way to look at a missing puzzle piece, or broken puzzle piece, is to embrace the challenge of still putting the puzzle together and to find or create a solution for the spot where the missing or broken puzzle piece should belong and in that whether the spot is filled or not, or the broken piece visible or not, the puzzle can still be completed and appreciated for what it is, even with its missing or broken puzzle piece.*

*It is up to the eyes of the one viewing a puzzle as to how they see and react to the puzzle that is not completely whole, a puzzle that has mended pieces, or a puzzle that has a missing piece; or a broken piece; thus, and so, are the eyes of each of one of us as we look at one another.*

*With this mindset, God put a passion on my heart and a vision in my mind's eye for 'real' love to be realized in every type of relationship. Relationships are complicated and yet filled with wonder and delight, like a puzzle, many parts to the whole! Each puzzle unique, special, purposeful, and with a story to tell.*

*I have personally walked a hard relationship journey in my own personal and intimate life and I also, as a professional in my career as a counselor and educator, have seen negative human characteristics in situations where love, grace, justice, compassion, forgiveness, and mercy should have been shown in various relationships.*

*I know if I had not walked that journey's walk and not have examined my own puzzle pieces in relationship to God's grand design, with eyes of wonder, desperation, and question, I would not have gathered the knowledge and direction from God's Holy word and acquired the unquenchable inspiration to share with you, my readers, the answers to the question, "What is 'real' love, really?"*

*In my workbook, you will explore the many parts (puzzle pieces) of you, others, and us together! You will discover how your journey in life with relationships has affected who you are now and who you have yet to become.*

*You can do this workbook alone, with another person, or in a group. This reflective and revealing workbook will challenge you to work on you and the relationships in your life! You will gather Biblical/scriptural strength and self-discovery tools that can help you evaluate your thinking and develop a 'real' love mindset. This workbook also gives you space to write your prayers and record your thoughts.*

*I am blessed and honored to know that many people who have read this book along with God's awesome words of wisdom and/or have attended my 'What is 'real' love, really?' workshops have reported renewed, restored, revitalized, revived, and reconciled relationships at many different levels! Praise the Lord!*

*Remember you are a masterpiece, a puzzle, and so are others in your life, so be persistent in your journey and do not give up; it is worth your time and effort --puzzles take time, but the end result is a grand, beautiful, and fulfilled design and only when it is done with the realization of what real love is really!*

*"We were made for relationships; we were made to be together; we were made to be a part of more than just our self."*

*"Relationships are some of the hardest journeys we will ever take but the most rewarding adventures we will ever have!"*

*Now get your Bible and a pen and let's get started on our journey together. This book is like reading ten separate books in one volume. There is so much to explore and discover about relationships as we gather to complete our puzzle and find the answers to...*

***'What is 'real' love, really?'***

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“For we are God’s masterpiece . . .”

Ephesians 2:10 (New Living Translation)

## CHAPTER 1

# WHO ARE YOU, REALLY?

Are we really God’s masterpiece as the above scripture verse reminds us? Who are we really? Who am I? Who are you? Let us go on an amazing journey together to uncover that answer because as we journey together throughout this workbook, we will be realizing that the masterpiece, the workmanship, that we were created to be, gives us a foundation of, and for, real love, and real love relationships.

**First**, to understand ‘real’ love better we need to know the person that we are today, how we came to be that person, and who we might become in the future.

**Second**, knowing and understanding who we are can help us to understand who someone else is, how they became who they are, and who they might become in the future.

**Third**, and most significantly, what we will experience all through this workbook, one chapter at a time, is the gaining of knowledge, understanding, and ultimately, wisdom. Wisdom of who God is and who we are not without Him. Wisdom that He is real love and He created us for relationships that can realize real love. Wisdom to know that He knew our birth day. Finally, may we see that the creator of the universe and mankind and womankind did not want to be alone nor us to be alone!

Thus, before we go any further, let us remember that this journey is going to take time and that we are going to go exploring – we are going on an adventure! We will not be alone! God’s going to be with us and even if you think you know all there is to know about love, God, and relationships, you will be discovering even more about love, God, relationships, others, and you! You will add even more wisdom and knowledge to what you have already obtained.

To clarify, knowledge is facts acquired through study, investigation, experience, research, or observation, whereas, wisdom is having the ability to judge or discern what parts of the knowledge acquired is right, true, enduring, relevant, and applicable to your life. Therefore, wisdom is a powerful virtue (a positive characteristic, trait, quality) that helps us make right choices in our life. Knowledge is good, but wisdom is better.

The Lord tells us to cherish getting wisdom and to pursue it with our whole heart. The book of Proverbs in the Bible, in chapters 1 through 5, gives us many directives to pursuing

wisdom and the characteristics of wisdom. Take some time to read about wisdom. Other verses of interest pertaining to wisdom include Deuteronomy 4:5-6, Psalm 19:7, 90:12, Proverbs 8:32-36, 9:10, 16:16, 18:4, 19:8, Matthew 7:24, and James 1:5.

So now, let the journey begin as we seek wisdom by learning more about who God is, who we are, who others are, and what real love is really!

First step in this journey is to take one minute to reflect on who you are and take the space that follows to write down a few of your thoughts that describe you.

Did your mind stimulate visual images to help define you? What labels did you give your self? Did you write about your hobbies, your values, your faith, your work, where you live, what you look like, etc.? Whose messages did you hear about who you are; were those messages positive or negative? Don't worry; there is no right or wrong answers to who you are – I want you to get the idea that you are dynamic! There is a lot that goes in to making you who you are and what you are about and one simple little space cannot contain all of who you are and all the things you do.

Thinking of who we are, our very unique 'self', can hardly be summed up into one neat, simple sentence or even a paragraph, just as a color snapshot taken of us cannot tell the whole story of what we were doing the day and time that snapshot was taken. It can only tell part of the story. It is only a piece to the whole. It is only one part of us.

The saying that 'a picture can paint a thousand words' forgets to say that there are more than one thousand words to every picture. What about the remaining thousands of words that are left to be said? Unless the person that took the picture, or the person who is in the picture, is available to talk about the people in the picture, about what was going on the day the picture was taken, and perhaps what events preceded or followed the picture, the observer can only surmise or judge for themselves what the picture is about. In this case, the observer only is seeing a piece to what makes up the whole!

Draw or Insert a photo of your self in this space

There are so many people that try to tell us who we are, what we are about, and why we are the way we are. There are so many times we tell ourselves, and lie about, who we are and what we are about!

Let's go to the One who knows us the best! Let's go to the One who made us! Let's go to our Creator! Let's hear what God has to say!

God's inspired word will help us find guidance, purpose, direction, and definition for who we are, what we are about, how we got to be who we are, and who we may become in the future. Please open your Bible for reference to the following scriptures.

**Genesis 1:27 says we were created in God's image.**

What does that mean to you being created in God's image?

**Psalm 17:15 says when we awake we will be satisfied with seeing God's likeness.**

What does that mean to you knowing that when you look in the mirror, upon waking, you see God's likeness in you?

**Psalm 139:13-16 says that we are fearfully and wonderfully made and that God knew us when we were being formed in our mother's womb.**

What does wonderfully made mean to you?

What does it mean to know that God knew you while you were being formed in your mother's womb?

**Ephesians 2:10 says that we are God's workmanship/masterpiece created in Christ Jesus for good works which God had prepared beforehand so that we could walk in them.**

What does workmanship or masterpiece mean to you?

How do you feel about God wanting you to do good works and that He prepared this before you even knew about them and that you would do them?

**1 Corinthians 3:16-17 says that we are God's temple and that His (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) Spirit lives in us.**

How do you feel about knowing you are God's temple (when you have trusted Jesus as your Savior and God is the Lord of your life) and that He lives in you?

**1 Thessalonians 2:13 says that we were chosen by God from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.**

How do you feel about being chosen?

What does salvation mean to you?

What does sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth mean to you?

**1 John 4:4 says that Greater is God in us.**

What does that mean to you?

How magnificent! If those verses do not jumpstart and pump up our self image of who we are and how unique we are, I don't know what else could! The Bible is full of affirmation of who we are really! Here are some more verses to look up in your Bible.

**Ephesians 1:3-14 says we have been adopted and chosen as God's children.**

(Read: 1 John 3:1-2)

**Ephesians 2:1-9 says we have salvation as a gift from God.**

It seems we forget these truths! We rely on everyone else's opinion, and perhaps our own 'false' opinions (telling ourselves we are no good, a loser, ugly, etc.) of who we are, what we are about, and who we are to become.

From our very first moment of life we have been given a destiny a purpose for being alive -- it is to glorify our Creator God and His son Jesus Christ. God loves us so much that He does not force Himself on us but allows us to choose. Will we choose Him (light and truth) or will we choose darkness and lies? Will we choose to follow the destiny God desires for us or will we choose to follow a way that gives no, or little, thought to how God would have us live?

Some of us reading this book have already chosen to live for God and listen to His truths. We have chosen to have a relationship with Him. Others reading this book are confused and not sure of this Creator God. Therefore, before we go any further I would like to give those who are confused and not sure about God and even those of us who are sure, to **reference:**

John 3:3-21, 36

John 4:23-24

John 14:6

**Take time to reflect on, meditate on, what you have just referenced in the Bible.** We will use the Bible, God's Holy Word, to explore, discover, and find answers to all kinds of various relationship concerns. My workbook, entitled 'What is real love, really?' is a book designed for singles of all ages, engaged couples, married couples, families, churches, organizations, work relationships, divorced people, broken people, all people!!

Our God and creator of this world and our life designed relationships and has a purpose for relationships! As you continue in this book, His ways, His plans, and His real love will be realized, really! There are answers and solutions for relationships that have emptiness, hurt, pain, hopelessness, confusion, fear, mistrust, misunderstanding, estrangement, etc., and for relationships that are already good, this book has answers and solutions for how those relationships can even be better!

As we progress on our journey together, this chapter will examine factors that have positively or negatively affected who you are today. Recognizing factors that have had and may still have positive and negative impacts on your self-image, self-worth, and your attitudes and behaviors, will help you to better understand who you are and then also help



you to relate to, and understand, others because of what you have learned in this process of exploring your own identity.

### **Factor #1: What is your name?**

Each of us is given a name at our birth. Every name has a story and is connected to a family, a history, and a legacy. That name has a special meaning and a reason why it was given to us. Sometimes we choose to change our name when we are older and/or add to our name through a marriage. What are your feelings about your name? Do you know how you got to have the name you have? Does your name have a meaning? Did you ever want a different name? If so, what name did you want? Did you change your name?

My first name, Jamie, comes with a story as all birth names usually do. When I was conceived my father and grandfather (who were Irish) talked about my mom having a red haired boy and to call me Jamie and since they did not do ultrasounds back then, they were fairly sure my mom was going to have a boy, but when I was born, I was a girl. My parents chose to keep my name Jamie which was bold of them since back during that time era rarely did a girl have a boy's name. Much rarer, as well, would be a boy born and then given a girl's name such as Ashley, Cassidy, etc.

My teachers, before they visually saw me, at my Elementary School, in Toronto, Canada, labeled me as a male when they saw my name on the class roster. My name on that piece of paper provided a label and an assumption. This assumption and label caused me to be shy and embarrassed about my name. Plus, the story of how I got my name, made me feel that I had disappointed my parents in being born a girl. My two sisters and I understood that my parents were very thankful for their three girls but they also wanted to have a boy. My mother did get pregnant again and was going to have a boy which she miscarried because of falling down some steps and I remember that they said the baby was a boy and my parents named him Patrick. I remember it being a very heartbreaking time in our family and we did not forget Patrick and that once upon a time we were going to have a brother.

Thus, it took a while to love my name and myself with that name (so silly now as I reflect back on this factor), but today I love who I am and what my name represents. Also, the meaning behind my name is 'truthful and honest one' which is definitely a part of who I am and I place much value on being truthful and honest.

My middle name is Aileen, which means 'bringer of light'. I like to think that my name, being a representation of me, brings the light of Jesus into the lives of all I meet.

Therefore, using my name as an example, you can notice the negative connotation that I once had and how, today, I now have a positive connotation of my name and its representation of who I am.

You may never have had this dilemma and maybe you know no one else that has had this dilemma but as a teacher of many students over the years, I have seen this same scenario play out with my students asking me to call them another name other than their

birth name recorded on my class roster.

Again, how does our given name affect who we are? Each one of us have to come to that realization and appreciation on our own.

My experiences in this area has proven that others affirming our name definitely helps one's self-image to embrace their name but even better yet, is the one that affirms this in their own heart and better yet realizes their name is a precious and beautiful name before God.

And yes, God does do name changes in the Bible which was to usually establish a new identity, which one day those of us who are welcomed into His kingdom will receive a new name (reference Revelation 2:17).

It is refreshing to have the affirmation that God knows us and He knows us by name! God says your name is precious! Cherish your name! God cares about your name. He says your name is worth more than gold, diamonds, rubies, or the finest ointments.

Please look up the following Bible verses to read what God has to say about names.

Exodus 33:17

Isaiah 43:1

Psalms 91:14

Proverbs 22:1-2

Ecclesiastes 7:1

Revelation 3:5

## **Factor #2: Define your social class from your childhood to what it is today?**

When we are born we have various resources available or not available to us usually because of where or how we live and because of circumstances in our life at that time, whether positive or negative.

Our neighborhood, our home, our living accommodations can be an assumed reflection of our identity either negatively or positively. We can receive labels of being poor, homeless, lower class, middle class, upper class, rich, famous, etc.

These labels are known as our social class. How do we look to others in society and how do we live compared to others in our society (a group of people sharing common living conditions, work environments, etc.)? What have you experienced in your life so far? Have there been times you have had plenty and times you have had lack? Are there times you envied another's life and/or times someone envied your life?

Unfortunately, things/resources/material possessions related to our social class are assumed to be equated with our worth and our future chances of success or failure.

Now reference these Bible verses of what God says.

1 Samuel 16:7

1 Timothy 6:17-18

Mark 10:23

Luke 16:13

2 Thessalonians 3:8-10

Ephesians 4:28

1 Corinthians 15:33

2 Corinthians 5:17

What did you discover after referencing these above verses? How do you think these verses relate to God's opinion of you and your social class?

**Factor #3: Role models & significant others in your life (list 2). List why they are role models and why they are significant in your life.**

A very young child does not have the ability to choose who will raise them or in what type of environment they will live. A young child is influenced by role models and significant others in their young life. These sources can direct a young child's path and, most often, determine the image they will eventually reflect. Therefore, all of us not only have been influenced but are influencers. Role models influence, teach, guide, lead, affirm, encourage, motivate, give hope, build confidence, self-worth, self-esteem, and come and go in our life, but their memory and the impact they make on, and in our life, remains forever.

As the young child grows older, the image of their 'self' begins to shape their goals and a course, or a plan, for their life. The older child does this by choosing to filter negative

and/or positive feedback they have received, and are receiving, in their life. This filtering helps them to make choices of what they should and should not believe about who they are.

Once they have chosen what to believe about themselves, the information is internalized – it becomes a part of them and what they value. Once the beliefs are a part of their value system, it is then externalized or acted upon. Attitudes = behavior and actions.

A person's behaviors, to a large degree, show and tell what they are about. Take a minute to think about a few things you show and tell. Are you a role model to someone? Are you significant to someone? Who may be watching you and listing you as their role model and significant other?

#### **Factor #4: LIFE HAPPENS!**

Most of us reading this book are now older children. We now make choices all the time. Some times we make good choices; some times we make bad choices. Some times we make no choices at all, we just let whatever happens happen!

Most times, we have found that the plans and choices we make for our life can be met with the unannounced circumstances of life. This 'life happens' philosophy brings successes, which I like to call '**gateways**', failures, which I like to call '**detours**' along life's journey, and tragedies, which I like to call '**graves**'. These gateway, detour, and tragedy experiences can mold, break, destroy, reshape, change, redefine, and/or refine our self-image.

An example of a **gateway experience** is anything positive that leads us to a positive decision in our life, such as winning a race and then because of this positive experience choosing and making plans to be a Marathon Runner one day. Another example is a student getting an A on a test because they spent time studying. This student will continue to study for tests because they know it will help them to achieve an excellent grade.

An example of a **detour experience** is anything negative that leads us to a negative result, such as surviving a severe storm that destroyed your house and, every time you hear about a severe storm approaching, you get panic attacks. Another example would be experiencing an abusive intimate relationship and then avoiding intimate relationships altogether for fear that the next relationship could be abusive also.

An example of a **grave experience** is any experience that keeps us from growing, changing, and/or wanting to live. Where with the detour experience, that person is still living, surviving, and going on, even though they may have negative opinions or reactions to their detour experience, the person affected from a grave experience has no hope or reason to live. They may have lost a loved one, gotten divorced, gotten news that they have cancer, been in a car accident and can no longer walk, been a victim of rape, been a victim of war, and the list can go on and on.

People that choose not to grow, change, or live after a tragedy, have lost hope. Tragedy experiences, such as these, can only be survived with an inner strength that is acquired with God's help. If one, who has experienced a tragedy, chooses to get help from God and others, they will then be a survivor.

A **survivor** is someone who adjusts and changes to the circumstances inflicted upon them by their grave experience and from a detour experience. They choose to live above the hurt, painful memories and/or physical pain, and limitations that they have been given. They choose to live victoriously, in victory, as Jesus did! Each day is a gift with a promise of hope. Not only are they a survivor but also an overcomer like Jesus! (John 16:33)

Take some time to reflect on the gateway, detour, and/or grave experiences that have come into your life. How have you allowed them to affect you and the choices you have made in your life?

Write down one gateway experience, detour, and grave experience that you have had and how it affected you. What does this experience show and tell about you? What labels, if any, have been given to you because of those experiences?

**Gateway, detour, and grave experiences** make an impression on our memory. How we choose to deal with gateway, detour, and grave experiences will affect the product (self) that we show and tell or choose to hide. Our frame of reference (a set of criteria, such as our values, that help us judge various situations in our life) helps to determine our choices and what we will show and tell.

For me, one grave experience was when my first husband had broken our marriage vows. He was my first love and I was his virgin bride. I had loved him since I was thirteen years old. For me the **'grave'** experience was one that nearly defeated me and took me to places and people that I thought could numb my hurt and my pain and help me forget. I was running from the pain.

Unfortunately, the pain ran with me and stayed with me, and it only got worse. I was a Social Worker at the time of my first divorce, so I threw myself into my work, working over and above my required hours, and I found that if I threw myself into working for others, I was not thinking about my own pain, and it helped a lot. Unfortunately, when I was done with work for the day and alone at night, the pain came back reminding me of my loss.

To help others is a good thing when you your self are hurting but the only problem with that is that you have to still deal with your own pain and get healing for that pain because if you do not, you will stuff it way down deep inside of you or transfer that pain onto someone or something else and it will not get resolved, and if it is not resolved and healed, that hurt and pain can continue to fester and be triggered by various experiences, situations, or people that bring to memory that pain and then that pain can be transferred to something or to someone to whom it does not belong.

It took me a long time to get out of that 'grave' experience. I finally was led to a Christian counselor where I finally experienced truth and freedom. I learned that I did not have a solid frame, and had much more to learn about a different frame of reference that would allow me to be an overcomer, a survivor, and victorious over my pain; my 'grave' experience.

Our **frame of reference** is our starting point, our base that we use to make choices, define others, our self, our life circumstances, our goals, our relationships, etc. My frame of reference for making decisions and overcoming my hurt and pain was not a healthy, solid frame!

Our frame of reference is the foundation from which we build who we are and how we relate to others. Our frame of reference is our belief system. God tells us that our frame of reference needs to be Jesus Christ; He is our cornerstone, and our foundation. When you read 1 Peter 2:4-8 it talks about Jesus being our cornerstone and we are being built into a spiritual house and those of us who trust in Him will never be put to shame.

Thus, in the pages that follow we are going to look at our frame of reference, our foundation, our building stones, and the character of our building. We will examine the pieces and parts (labels) which are our building stones and how these building stones affect our final product, the totality of us, our building -- our spiritual house. With God's truth (His word) as a chisel and a hammer, we will break apart our building stones.

We will keep our stones that are strong, fix those that are weak, and throw away defective stones that could lead to destruction. We will then fit our stones together in such a way that our building (our spiritual house) will be strong and full of character; a dwelling place that is pleasing and acceptable to the Lord, ourselves, and others!

In this first chapter we have looked at the truth of what God says about us and who we are to Him, again we are His masterpieces! We have examined the significance of our name, our living environment from yesterday and today, role models in our life, and the challenges that come into our life through gateway, detour, and grave experiences in the 'life happens' reality.

Now, in the next chapter as we journey on in understanding our frame of reference, we will gain even more wisdom that will help us understand how we choose to relate to others and how they may choose to relate to our us and how those choices affect relationships. God tells us about this very fact in Ephesians chapter 2, verses 19-22.

*“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”*

We are His building, His workmanship, His dwelling place – His Masterpiece --- how powerful and what an honor!

When we really know who we are because of God's truths, and who we are capable of becoming, then we can know the dynamics of someone else and what they, too, are capable of becoming! Both of these traits -- knowing our self and knowing others can lead us into 'real' love relationships.

My daughter coined the term, “Be mindful of your mind.” Knowledge, understanding, and wisdom are growing our mind as we journey to know what real love is really. The way we think, the way our mind perceives information and thoughts, has much to do with attitude and behavior, and matters of the heart.

In my counseling and teaching experiences, I have found that when each one of us understand more of the pieces that make us whole, as in the puzzle analogies that I gave in my preface, we can begin to understand, and then from our understanding, we gain more knowledge which can lead us to gather appropriate skills and problem solving techniques, thus giving us opportunity to heal, change if needed, polish ourselves, be enriched, and continue onward in our journey of life seeing each piece in our overall puzzle as essential and purposeful to making us who we are and yet to become.

Therefore, I ask the question again, ‘Who are you, really?’ and what does that have to do with real love and relationships?

Write a description in the space provided at the top of the next page of who you are --- considering what you have learned so far in this first chapter.

It may seem that there is a simple answer and not real complicated but remember like a puzzle each puzzle has varying pieces to it, no two puzzles are the same. They may have similarities but they also have differences, yet they are in the same category termed a 'puzzle'.

In the chapters that follow we will continue to explore the many details of the pieces that make us who we are, who others are, and who we have yet to become as we journey on to uncover the answers to 'What is 'real' love, really?'

Before we begin chapter 2 and examining our building's frame, our spiritual house, let us start with prayer:

*"Our dear heavenly Father and Savior Christ Jesus, You told us in Your most Holy word that we are fearfully and wonderfully made – that You knew us full well when You knit us together in our mother's womb. Help us now to really get to know who we are and who we are meant to be and even yet become. Let us start with faith believing that with You all things are possible. Let us be teachable and accepting of Your love and guidance. May we apply Your truths to our life and the life of others. In knowing our 'self' may we know YOU and others, better. Amen."*

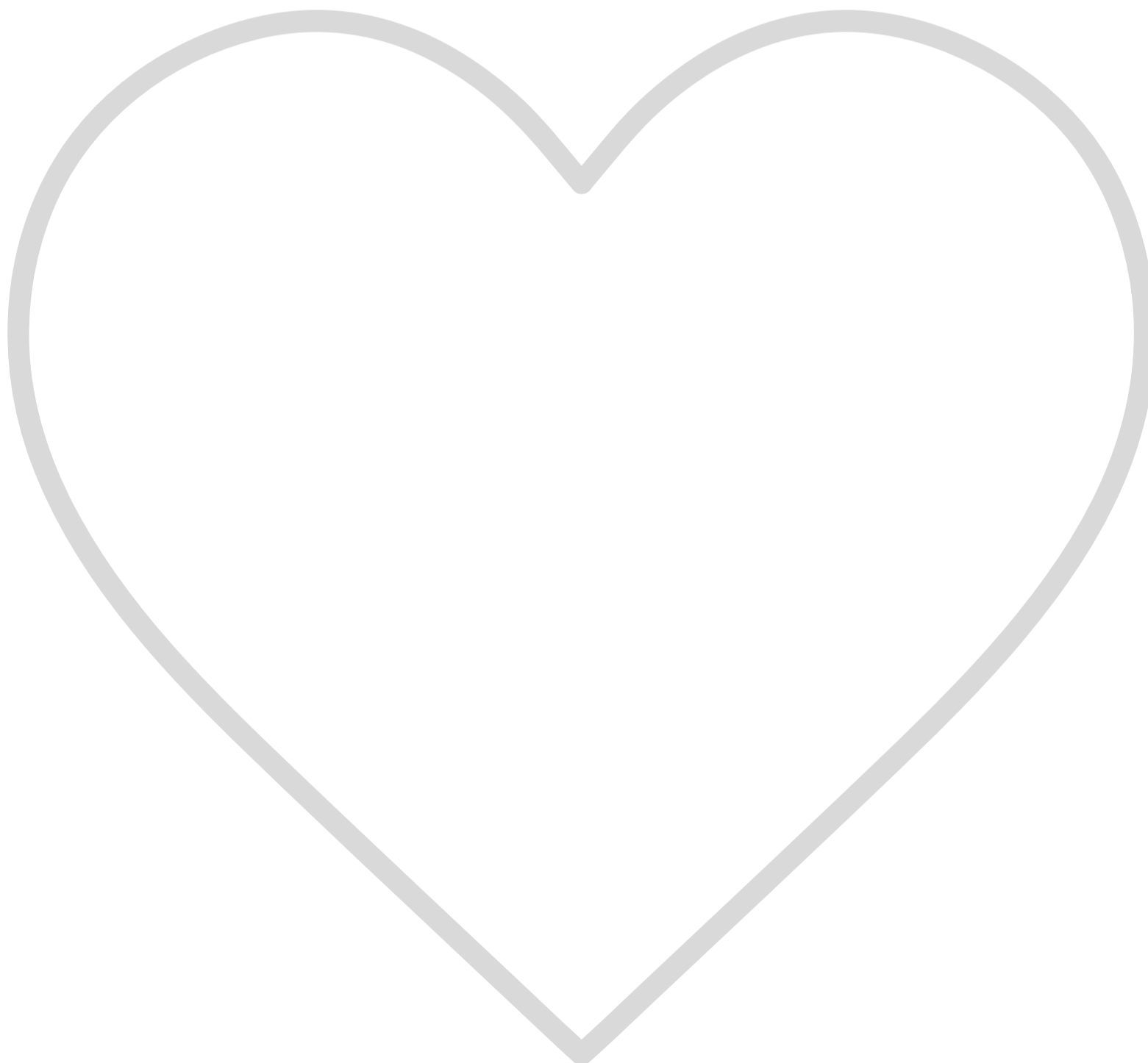


**Prayer and scripture meditation**

*“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”* Ephesians 5:1-2 NKJV

***Again, I thank you for being diligent and staying the course with working through this book, recording your thoughts, writing down your prayers, and reading the many scripture references. You are on your way to realizing ‘real’ love relationships and they start with you!***

***Record your thoughts and/or prayer requests regarding this chapter..***



Journal Entry Date \_\_\_\_\_