

WHAT

STAYING HEALTHY AND WHOLE

ABOUT

(WHILE YOU'RE HELPING OTHERS)

ME?

RENÉE HILL CARTER

Featuring conversations with Dr. Samuel R. Chand and others

STUDY GUIDE

What About Me?
Staying Healthy and Whole (While You're Helping Others): Study Guide
by Renée Hill Carter

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*Some people build fences to keep people out, and other people build fences
to keep people in.*

—Fences, by August Wilson

FROM THE AUTHOR

How are you feeling?

How are you being?

How are you doing?

What About Me? Staying Healthy and Whole (While You're Helping Others) is a book of discussions to help you think better about yourself as you are caring for, leading, teaching, and serving others. Your feelings, your emotions, how you think, and what you do about your feelings matter. These things will either feed or starve your holistic health and wellbeing.

I talked with a group of esteemed colleagues and professionals about you. They were open and willing to speak about their own issues, struggles, and victories regarding self-care and comprehensive health and wellbeing. This “who’s who” list includes medical doctors in psychiatry and family, urban, and health disparity; chaplains and pastors; behavioral health counselors and therapists; entrepreneurs; a leadership strategist and a self-care expert. You are welcomed to this “conference in a book” of skilled, highly-regarded specialists who transparently speak from their heart, knowledge, and experience on achieving and maintaining wellbeing (see list of contributors on the back of the study guide and the book).

During our time together, we touched on a myriad of topics about self-care with a multi-dimensional approach. You might agree or disagree; you may ponder new and diverse ways of thinking about and approaching holistic health. Regardless of your faith, profession, age, gender, racial ethnicity, or background, the principles and processes espoused in *What About Me?* are widely useful and worthy of consideration and discussion.

At the end of each chapter of *What About Me?* you’ll notice an opportunity to pause before going to the next one with the following questions

WHAT ABOUT ME?

– Considerations? Confessions? Convictions? More Conversations? This study guide has been created to assist your pursuit of probing this critical topic even more. Irrespective of your profession or ministry area, this workbook has been developed primarily for those who lead, counsel, coach, care for, mentor, teach, serve and help others in any way. However, it is just as useful and beneficial for those who are on the receiving end of what they give.

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RECOMMENDED USES

This study guide exists to create a better awareness and further deliberate self-care with a longer gaze at ourselves and others outside of ourselves. To look at the heart of the matter holistically—that is, spirit, soul (mind) and body—is the focus. Improvement and change for the better is the intended outcome.

This is an ideal tool and resource of in-depth study for the following areas:

1. The Academy – An excellent educational resource and enhancement to curriculum and programs of study in Counseling, Mental Health, Psychology, Sociology, Pastoral Counseling, Health and Wellness, Religion Studies, Leadership, etc.
2. Personal and Individual Study and Development
3. Team and Staff Leadership and Ministry Development
4. Book Clubs and small group settings.
5. What will serve you best.

INTRODUCTION



Reflect and Discuss

Renée writes, “Just as the earth drowns, burns and quakes, our whole being might follow suit. Emotional upheaval has spiked throughout the world producing fears of mammoth proportion. Personal calamity lays siege on our body producing stress and dis-ease. Our desire for happiness, peace and goodwill on earth is sabotaged testing even our faith.”



Respond

Have you experienced physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual upheaval in your life recently? With which statements above can you personally identify?

Have you been acknowledging your stress and pain? Or do you tend to ignore it and push it to the background?

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Reflect and Discuss

“God created us whole and complete in His image. Our voice should reflect a desire to be conformed as such. Neglect and looking the other way are no longer viable options.”

Respond

Do you currently have an active desire to be whole and complete in Jesus Christ? If not, why do you think this may be?

In what ways do you tend to “mimic relief” from pain? Who do you first turn to for help?

What unique pressures do “soul care providers” face in tending to the souls of others?

 **Reflect and Discuss**

“Resignation is a virus designed to take us all out if we’re not care-filled not only for their souls but also for our own.”

 **Respond**

Do you find yourself feeling apathetic or resigned to the state of affairs in your life and the world? Why do you think you answered in the way that you did?

As a soul care provider, what false expectations might believers have about our lives that contribute to apathy and resignation? What does the Bible promise us in this life?

WHAT ABOUT ME?

What might be waiting for you and other soul care providers around you on the “road less traveled”? What might this journey toward joyful victory require from you?

CHAPTER 1

A HEALTHY PROFILE OF A SOUL CARE PROVIDER IN THE 21ST CENTURY CHURCH

In conversation with *Dr. Samuel R. Chand*



Big Idea

Renée discusses the profile of a soul care provider with Dr. Sam Chand. We learn that before we can assist others, we need to ensure that we're in a healthy place ourselves. Dr. Chand provides some practical advice on how to do just that.



Read: Chapter 1 in *What About Me?*



Reflect and Discuss

Dr. Chand shares, "As I understood process and people, I learned that good healing comes in the context of relationships and what that is all about. It broadened a lot of things that I had no idea about."

WHAT ABOUT ME?



Respond

Do you tend to view healing in terms of relationships? Why or why not?

How does looking at healing in terms of relationships change your perspective about what healing looks like?

Why do you think some soul care providers who are pastors don't have adequate educational background in Counseling?



Reflect and Discuss

Dr. Chand shares, "I don't think anyone is ever fully healthy. I think we all have that dysfunctional side to us and sometimes we can overcome it, but we all deal with our mess on an ongoing basis. Healthy to me means being able to help somebody and ready to do it selflessly, not selfishly or having anything to prove."



Respond

Do you agree with Dr. Chand that we're never 100% healthy on this side of heaven? Why or why not?

What selfish tendencies can creep into your service to others?

Why does "every counselor need a counselor?"

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Dr. Chand is sensitive to his own vulnerability as he prepares to counsel others. How could this principle help you as you provide soul care to others?



Reflect and Discuss

Dr. Chand shares, "It's the authentic you that's the most powerful tool in counseling...the genuine you."



Respond

How can bringing your authentic self into a counseling or assistance situation contribute to the other person's healing?

A HEALTHY PROFILE OF A SOUL CARE PROVIDER IN THE 21ST CENTURY CHURCH

What might your authenticity cost you as a soul care provider?

In what situations might you need to refer people to outside help—services that you personally cannot or should not provide?

Reflect and Discuss

Dr. Chand shares, “A healthy soul care provider is somebody who is engaged in their own health on a constant basis. You don’t have to have it together to help other people.”

WHAT ABOUT ME?



Respond

What precedent for self-soul care do we see in the Bible? How did Jesus Himself model this for us?

Health is holistic, meaning that our physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual health are all interconnected. Is there an aspect of your health that you may have neglected or overlooked? Why do you think this is?

What makes the difference between an engaging counselor and a judgmental counselor—between someone who gives hope and someone who condemns?

Suggested Resources:

Leadership Pain and Who's Holding My Ladder by Dr. Sam Chand

Visit www.samchand.com for an exhaustive list of other valuable resources.

MEDITATIONAL SOUL NOTE

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love and of a sound mind.

—2 Timothy 1:7

CHAPTER 2

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE CHURCH

In conversation with **Gina Newsome Duncan, M.D.**



Big Idea

In this chapter, Renée discusses mental health stigma with Dr. Duncan. The church, as well as specific cultural groups, struggle to acknowledge and address mental health issues. There are practical steps that each of us can take to combat this stigma.



Read: Chapter 2 in *What About Me?*



Reflect and Discuss

Dr. Duncan shares, “The greatest impact I have is in my “being” with the patient or in other words, the way I am in the room with the patient. That’s a core component of psychiatric training. It’s not just about how to prescribe medicine but the psychotherapeutic relationship...who you are with the patient and the importance of bringing your core self into those encounters.”

WHAT ABOUT ME?



Respond

As a soul care provider, have you given much thought to how you go about “being” in the room with those you care for?

What are some of the core beliefs or assumptions you bring into every encounter you have with others?

Do you think those core beliefs might make it more difficult to serve someone who doesn't hold the same beliefs? Why or why not?



Reflect and Discuss

“We must understand that we are not unique in the Black Community [or any ethnic group] when it comes to the stigma surrounding mental illness. It’s pretty ubiquitous throughout the world. There are, however, certain communities, countries, and societies where it’s dealt with differently.”



Respond

Why do you think there’s a universal stigma surrounding mental illness? Why do you think the church struggles to acknowledge and address mental health issues?

Does your cultural group or demographic have unique challenges with stigma surrounding mental illness? If so, what are they?

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Reflect and Discuss

“In psychiatry, we think in terms of a bio-psycho-social-spiritual framework; all psychiatric illness has one (if not all four) of those components to it. It is imperative that we recognize that the biological part is real.”

Respond

Of the four facets of health that Dr. Duncan presents, which do you think the church does a good job of addressing and discussing?

Which of these four facets can the church address more successfully? How do you think they can go about doing so?

Which of these facets do you feel that you should learn more about? What are some ideas for ways you could begin to educate yourself on these subjects?

 **Reflect and Discuss**

“I imagine for so many of our clergy, there can be a tension between maintaining their role as a source of strength for their congregation and community and expressing their own grief.”

 **Respond**

What unique challenges do pastors, preachers, evangelists, and other church leaders face in today’s society?

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Why do you think that many faith leaders struggle to be honest about their grief, mental health struggles, or other challenges?

What can you do to support your church leaders? If you are a church leader, what can you do practically to work towards living honestly and healthily in your leadership role?

MEDITATIONAL SOUL NOTE

The greatest treasures of wisdom and knowledge are not unearthed during our mountaintop experiences; they are found in the deepest valleys, when we walk hand in hand with the Lord. As much as we would rather avoid the kind of circumstances that take us to a low place, these experiences are essential for our spiritual growth and development. They prepare us for the work to which we are called.

—Kathy R. Green, *Meet Me in the Valley*, Introduction p. xiii

CHAPTER 3

SELF-CARE: HOW SIMPLE CAN IT BE?

In conversation with **Rita K. Garnto**



Big Idea

In this chapter, Renée explores the principle of self-care with Rita Garnto. As we seek to take care of others, one of the most fundamental disciplines we need is the ability to tend to our own overall health. This isn't optional for soul care providers—it's something that's simple and essential to integrate into our daily living.



Read: Chapter 3 in *What About Me?*



Reflect and Discuss

Rita shares, “So that it doesn't seem impossible, pick one thing. Just pick one simple health care action and make that your focus. For example, thinking that today this one thing I'm going to do it for myself—you have to decide what that one thing is going to be. I'm not going to tell you. No one can tell you. It's something that will work for you, and make you feel better, and give you that spiritual boost, a sense of control, and a sense of empowerment. Start with one thing.”

WHAT ABOUT ME?



Respond

What's one thing you can start doing today that will improve your overall health? Make a commitment to work this practice into your daily life.

What's one self-care practice that you want to learn more about before you start doing it? What's a good place to start in your education?

What's one self-care practice you do regularly right now? Why did you start this practice, and what fulfillment do you glean from it?

 **Reflect and Discuss**

“Let’s stop labeling ourselves. Rather say, this is what I do when I get stressed, but it’s not who I am.”

 **Respond**

What are patterns—mentally, emotionally, or otherwise—that you find yourself falling into when you get stressed, hurt, sad, and so on?

Try to reframe one of these behaviors in a way that doesn’t define you. For example, “When I get stressed, I exhibit irritable behaviors,” rather than, “I’m an irritable person.”

WHAT ABOUT ME?

How does knowing that you aren't defined by your behaviors make you feel?



Reflect and Discuss

"I say a prayer before every massage. I ask that whatever my client may need that it can be given through me."



Respond

How do you curate a welcoming environment when you provide soul care? What practices do you include in your process that creates a warm, safe space for those in your care? What makes you feel welcomed as a recipient of soul care?

What new ideas would you like to implement in your care practices?

 **Reflect and Discuss**

Renée writes, “We’re so programmed to ‘do’ that we forget to simply ‘be’. Just be in the moment and check in with yourself periodically.”

 **Respond**

Do you often find yourself struggling to be present in the moment? Why do you think that is?

Why do you think our Western culture is wrapped up in “doing” rather than “being”? What do other cultures that you’re familiar with have to say about the relationship between the two? What does the Bible have to say about the relationship between the two?

WHAT ABOUT ME?

How can you integrate doing and being in your life, while keeping a healthy balance between the two?

MEDITATIONAL SOUL NOTE

A healthy soul care provider is someone who does not take him or herself too seriously but takes God very seriously.

—the late Dr. Phillip M. Davis, quote from thesis, *The Biblical Counselor: A Healthy Profile of the Soul Care Provider in the 21st Century Church*, by Renée Hill Carter

CHAPTER 4

YOUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH—IT'S ALL UP TO YOU!

In conversation with *Dr. Mark Croston*



Big Idea

In this chapter, Renée and Dr. Croston discuss the nuances of emotional health—whose responsibility it is, how important it is for soul care providers, and practical tips on how to make sure your emotional health is consistently high.



Read: Chapter 4 in *What About Me?*



Reflect and Discuss

Dr. Croston reflects, “Each person has to take their own path. I don’t know that there is one way for everybody. Our makeups are different. Sometimes, we try to push everybody into one way of doing things.”

WHAT ABOUT ME?



Respond

Do you see this reflected in our society? Do we try to mandate one way of doing things—whether it be work strategy or maintaining one’s emotional health—for everybody?

What potential hazards do we warrant when we try to make everyone operate in the same way? On the other hand, what might be beneficial about uniformity in some cases?

What’s a strategy, self-care practice, or other habit that works for you, but may not work for somebody else? How did you discover it?

 **Reflect and Discuss**

“There’s no reason to feel I’m in competition because our supply is endless. If you think that way, why should we be in competition with anybody else? There are too many fish in the ocean.”

 **Respond**

Do you feel a pressure or desire to compete with other leaders in your arena? Have you struggled with this desire in the past?

Why do you think our culture has cultivated an atmosphere of competition?

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Are there any potential upsides to a limited amount of competition?



Reflect and Discuss

“Pastors are people; whether you’re working in the ministry, as a lawyer, doctor, or some other profession, you still have to carve out times and scenarios in your life that will help refresh you—maybe even more so in helping ministries and helping professions.”



Respond

How do you carve out these times of refreshment right now?

Dr. Croston talked about his ideal vacation time. What’s your ideal time period to take off, and what’s your ideal place to spend it?

Have you ever suffered from care fatigue? If so, what did that feel like?

 **Reflect and Discuss**

Healthy soul care providers, according to Dr. Croston, do three key things:

- *Stay in touch with God and themselves*
- *Recognize their own humanity*
- *Take the opportunity to receive the care that they need for themselves, and give themselves care as they give care to others*

 **Respond**

Which of these three things do you think you're doing the best at currently?

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Which of these three do you need to work on the most?

Write out a simple prayer asking God to help you steward your emotional health well, and to surround you with caring people who will help you do so.

MEDITATIONAL SOUL NOTE

Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!

—Psalm 46:10

People in a hurry never have time for recovery. Their minds have little time to meditate and pray so that problems can be put in perspective. In short, people in our age are showing signs of physiological disintegration because we are living at a pace that is too fast for our bodies.

—Archibald Hart

CHAPTER 5

WHEN SHE'S OUT FRONT

In conversation with **Mr. Gilbert and Rev. Dr. Barbara L. Peacock**



Big Idea

In this chapter, Renée talks with Barbara and Gilbert Peacock about the unique perspective of a marriage in which the wife is the one in full-time ministry. They discuss important principles that can help us rest, keep priorities straight, and support others more effectively by first making sure our own hearts are taken care of.



Read: Chapter 5 in *What About Me?*



Reflect and Discuss

“I evolved to the point that it’s bigger than me and not about me, which meant if He intends for it to work for her, He’ll move the barriers and obstacles. In my case, I didn’t want to be a barrier or obstacle and didn’t want to feel that God would have to move me in order for her to be successful.”

WHAT ABOUT ME?



Respond

Have you ever found yourself in a similar situation as Mr. Gilbert, where someone made a decision you weren't sure about at first? What did you decide to do (or not do)?

Do you agree with Mr. Gilbert, that we're products of our environments? Are there certain things about your life that seem natural to you because of your background that may not seem that way to other people?

What role do credentials, education, and hard work play in following God's calling on your life?

 **Reflect and Discuss**

Mr. Gilbert shares, “Even though I have my own interests and purpose and calling, it still is good for you to be supportive of your partner and your mate.”

 **Respond**

How do you support your spouse and/or close friends and family while still maintaining your own sense of self?

What activities, hobbies, or interests do you have that are unique to you? Do you make a point to partake in these regularly?

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Dr. Peacock mentions the umbrella diagram that helped her prioritize her life. What do you use to help you allocate your time wisely?



Reflect and Discuss

“Nobody can convince anybody of what God has called them to do or be. God has to show it to them if they don’t believe.”



Respond

Do you feel a pressure to convince someone or even a group of people that you’re called or destined to do something?

Why do you think we try to tell or convince others of our callings rather than leaving this in God’s hands?

Do you need to surrender to God's hand in this area? Are there people you simply need to serve, trusting that God will change their hearts in His timing? If so, write out a simple prayer asking for His help in this.

 **Reflect and Discuss**

“When I look for a healthy soul care provider, I look for someone who knows who they are in Christ, knows how to hear and listen to the voice of God, knows how to effectively listen to a directee or the person they are caring for, and takes the time to emotionally tend to their soul.”

 **Respond**

How does it make you feel to remember that, first and foremost, you are called to be in relationship with Jesus Christ?

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Is there any part of the above description from Dr. Peacock that resonates with you? Why do you think that is?

Dr. Peacock writes, “Not to rest is not to trust.” Do you find yourself hesitant to rest? Could it be that this reluctance is rooted in a lack of trust in God’s provision for you?

What disciplines of faith can help you protect your time with Christ, and refuel emotionally so you’re ready to continue being a soul care provider to others?

Surrender any lack of trust and listen to what the Spirit urges you to do to keep Him first in your life.

Suggested Resources:

Gilbert Peacock—www.freedomfinancialadvantage.com

Books by Dr. Barbara L. Peacock

Psalm 119 Journal

C.A.L.L.E.D. To Teach

Soul Care in African American Practice (release date May 2020)

www.barbaralpeacock.com

Dr. Peacock recommends the following books and resources:

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality by Peter Scazzero

Sacred Slow: A Holy Departure from Fast Faith by Alicia Britt Chole

Keeping the Sabbath Wholly by Marva Dawn

MEDITATIONAL SOUL NOTE

“If your heart is broken, your mind can’t think straight and your spirit cannot soar.”

—Adapted from *The Grief Recovery Method Handbook*

CHAPTER 6

EVERY SOUL CARE PROVIDER NEEDS A SOUL CARE PROVIDER

In conversation with **Natasha Stewart**



Big Idea

In this chapter, Renée and Natasha discuss the importance of depending on someone, just as we provide support and encouragement to others. A soul care provider needs at least one soul care provider in his or her life. We can only fill others up if we're first filled up ourselves.



Read: Chapter 6 in *What About Me?*



Reflect and Discuss

Natasha explains, “One of the most glaring deficits [in God’s leaders] is they don’t practice what they preach in terms of self-care and being holistic—taking care of mind, body, and spirit.”

WHAT ABOUT ME?



Respond

Why do you think holistic self-care is difficult for leaders?

Which aspect of self-care do you personally find most difficult—mind, body, or spirit? Why do you think this is?

Do you think Natasha’s statement, that leaders “sometimes feel immune to the challenges and problems of life, or maybe don’t know how to deal with them correctly,” is true? Why or why not?

 **Reflect and Discuss**

Thanks to our ministry culture, leaders often fear showing their “Clark Kent,” or weaker side lest they be judged or discounted as a leader.

 **Respond**

Do you feel a pressure to hide your weaknesses and struggles from those you lead? Where do you think that reservation started?

How could your unwillingness to be authentic with those you lead actually contribute to their inability to show their weaknesses to others?

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Natasha shares, “Life is teaching the church what it won’t listen to otherwise.” How do you see this happening in the area of self-care in your church? Do you see signs of people leaving, or discovering that the church cannot help them?

Do you see progress beginning to take place in this area in the church at large? What specifically do you see?



Reflect and Discuss

“Never put God in a box, because once you can define God, He ceases being God.”



Respond

Is there any aspect of your soul care provider journey in which you’ve begun to put God in a box? How does this limit your view of Him?

EVERY SOUL CARE PROVIDER NEEDS A SOUL CARE PROVIDER

Have traditions, habits, or societal norms contributed to this limited view of God? Has church culture?

Recall a time when you stepped out in faith and did something that expanded your view of God. It could be something out of your comfort zone, like seeing a therapist, or another voice that presented a new perspective on who God is. What did this revelation do for your walk with the Lord? What about your overall health?

WHAT ABOUT ME?



Reflect and Discuss

Natasha shares, “I have a therapist, a counselor, someone to go to when I need that safe space. I practice self-care, and I have really good boundaries. Boundaries are essential, especially when you’re dealing with everybody else’s problems. I can’t take them home with me. I can’t carry them. I can’t be bigger than God.



Respond

What self-care practices are you currently implementing in your life that help you stay healthy and close to God?

Have you heard of any practices that you haven’t yet tried but would like to explore?

EVERY SOUL CARE PROVIDER NEEDS A SOUL CARE PROVIDER

Boundaries, and learning how to set limits and say “no,” is so essential as a soul care provider. What do your current boundaries look like?

Are there any boundaries in your life that need strengthening or new limits you feel led to set?



Reflect and Discuss

“Counseling is going to cover your life—what happened in childhood...coaching is what’s going on right now and how I can help you in this moment.”



Respond

Do you currently have a therapist, or have you ever seen a therapist in the past? If so, what did this experience do for you?

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Do you have a life coach, or have you ever looked into life coaching? How did this affect your journey?

Describe in your own words the difference between a life coach and a counselor. Which category do you more closely fall into as a soul care provider?

MEDITATIONAL SOUL NOTE

If you don't handle your pain, your pain will handle you.

—Bishop Joey Johnson

CHAPTER 7

A PARADIGM SHIFT

In conversation with **Bishop Joey Johnson**



Big Idea

In this chapter, Bishop Johnson shares with Renée some valuable insights about the perspective shifts that need to take place in church circles. We've neglected grief as a topic of discussion, along with a multitude of emotional health challenges, because we're afraid of facing our own pain; however, it's only by facing our grief and pain that we'll become equipped to help others work through their own.



Read: Chapter 7 in *What About Me?*



Reflect and Discuss

Bishop Johnson explains, "Often in America, we are so intent with equipping people to help other people from an academic perspective. We often do not require those people to move towards their own health."

WHAT ABOUT ME?



Respond

As a soul care provider, do you find this statement to ring true in your own leadership? Is your shepherding of people too often focused more on intellectual growth than holistic health?

When you read Hebrews 13:7 in the light of holistic health, what responsibility do you and other soul care providers hold to promote wellbeing in a variety of areas?



Reflect and Discuss

“We spend forty to sixty percent of our time at work and five percent at corporate worship yet when I come to church, we never talk about work.”



Respond

Why do you think we neglect to speak about the tasks and responsibilities that take up a majority of our time?

What does this discrepancy do for those we lead? How will they be ill-equipped to deal with the struggles of life because of this gap in conversation?

How does the concept of “colliding covenants” affect how you minister to or care for those under your leadership?

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Reflect and Discuss

“We need to move from a production orientation to a “being” theology.”

Respond

Does this statement resonate with you? Why or why not?

Why do you think our society has moved towards the production orientation that influences so much of our sense of identity and worth?

What you do flows out of who you are; conversely, it's impossible to become someone based on what you do. How can this reminder influence the way you structure your day?

In your own words, describe the difference between reading the Bible from a rules perspective vs. from a relational perspective.

 **Reflect and Discuss**

“It’s in the dark places that God resides. But we are typically afraid of the darkness and we do everything we can to flee from it.”

 **Respond**

Have you ever encountered God in a new way during a dark time in your life? What was that experience like?

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Do you find yourself as a soul care provider for others, tending to ignore or run from the dark places in your own heart and mind?

How does it make you feel to remember, or recognize, that God grieves?

Which of the verses on page 155, about God grieving, resonates most with you? Why?

 **Reflect and Discuss**

“Unless we work with the pain of grief and bring it up, it comes out sideways.”

 **Respond**

Have you ever experienced grief manifesting itself in your life in ways you didn't expect?

Have any of those you provide soul care to experienced “sideways” grief? What did it look like in their lives?

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Have you ever tried to “rationalize your way” out of pain and grief? Or have you seen others who try to do so? What is the result?

In your own words, explain why grief isn’t something believers can simply “pray away” or be “delivered from” without processing it.



Reflect and Discuss

Bishop Johnson shares, “Suicide can be one of the most devastating things someone could do because you always ask at some point, “Why didn’t I see it?”

Why couldn't I stop it?" And underneath it is a little bit of a feeling, "I wonder if I did something to cause it?" So we must prepare ourselves to deal better with the event of suicide."



Respond

Have you ever gone through the experience of a friend or family member committing suicide? If so, reflect on what this experience was like, and anything you learned from it.

Why do you think that our church culture is so unprepared to deal with the fallout of suicide, even with the prevalence of the problem facing our society today?

What can you personally do to further educate and prepare yourself to help families who are dealing with the loss of loved ones, or individuals who might

WHAT ABOUT ME?

be fighting with suicidal thoughts?

Suggested Resources:

Grief—A Biblical Pathway to God, The God Who Grieves, and Family Mess by Bishop Joey Johnson

Kids Who Carry Our Pain—Breaking the Cycle of Codependency for the Next Generation by Dr. Robert Hemfelt and Dr. Paul Warren

Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing by Dr. Joy DeGruy

The Grief Recovery Method Handbook by John W. James and Russell Friedman

Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes—Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible by E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien

MEDITATIONAL SOUL NOTE

Dirge of Grief

*Maybe if I hold my breath and refuse to breathe,
It will unlock me from its grip so I can run away.
They yell at me, “breathe, c’mon now, breathe” as if giving birth,
only this thing is death delivered.
I’d much rather be somewhere else, anywhere else but here.
Even if I escape and run until I’m out of breath, I’ll be found.
They say it will have its way with me until it’s done.
It masquerades to seem complete, then sorely winks that it’s not.
So have your way for now. Run. Sit. Lay down with me.
Make your way to that once forbidden place
where it’s dark, dank and quietly loud.
Where other pains of loss slept fitfully undisturbed until now.
I’ll follow if I must, trowel in hand for this merciless dig.
Deep into the bowels of my earth, cutting, scooping up what’s been waiting.
It’s where WHY lives.
I may choose to join them, kick at them, prodding my discovery.
Breathe into them so we can talk.
Stay as long as I want.
When it’s time to go, I will ask them to walk up with me
into the light for a breath of fresh air.
And then send them on their way.*

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CHAPTER 8

SOUL CARE FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Forgiveness—An Open Door to Emotional Health

In conversation with **Dr. Romona Joseph, B.S., B.A., M.A.T.S., D.Min.**



Big Idea

In this chapter, Dr. Joseph and Renée explore the principles of relying on God in our soul care responsibilities, embracing forgiveness, and discovering our unique makeup. All of these steps are crucial if we hope to maximize our intimacy with God and our potential as soul care providers.



Read: Chapter 8 in *What About Me?*



Reflect and Discuss

Dr. Joseph shares, “The greatest pastoral ministry is the one God gives you to facilitate, whether with a congregation of many parishioners or in a chaplain-counseling session with one patient.”

WHAT ABOUT ME?



Respond

Does this quote shift your perspective on the meaning behind the work you do? If so, how?

How do you personally rely on God in your soul care responsibilities, depending on Him for strength instead of yourself?

Do you currently have a person whom you go to for regular self-care conversations? If so, who is this person for you, and how did you choose them? If not, who are a couple of people you could seek out for this opportunity?

 **Reflect and Discuss**

“Daily, we say and do things, not intentionally, that cause pain and anguish. To sincerely seek forgiveness opens doors to remove any and all unforgiveness.”

 **Respond**

We cannot lead others into a place of healing and forgiveness if we haven't dealt with our own heart. Do you have things you need to ask forgiveness for? Do you need to forgive someone else for something they've done against you?

How about yourself? Do you need to forgive yourself for anything? Remember, 1 John 1:9 says that, if you've called upon Jesus as Savior and Lord, God has cleansed you of all unrighteousness!

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Do you see a correlation between the abuse of any substance and the issue of unforgiveness? If you have personally struggled with any type of substance abuse at any time, is there a need to forgive yourself of something or forgive others for what they may have done to you?

Write out a sincere prayer asking God to forgive you, and asking for His help in forgiving others. Thank Him for His amazing gift of forgiveness for every single one of your sins.



Reflect and Discuss

“The more we know who we are, the more we will know how to be healthy, first for ourselves and then for others we serve.”



Respond

How does your unique makeup—your calling, skills, talents, gifts, and interests—influence the kind of soul care you provide?

Do you take steps to stay healthy that are unique to you? Maybe you enjoy a certain recreational activity, or listen to a certain genre of music to unwind?

MEDITATIONAL SOUL NOTE

A spiritually rooted disease is a result of separation from God, separation from yourself and separation from others. The beginning of all healing of spiritually rooted diseases is:

- *Reconciliation with God and His Love, receiving His love, reconciliation with Him as your Father, and making your peace with Him;*
- *Reconciliation of you with yourself; and*
- *Reconciliation with others*

—A More Excellent Way—Be In Health by Dr. Henry W. Wright (pp. 216-217)

*“A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones”
—Proverbs 14:30*

“A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones” —Proverbs 17:22

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love” —1 John 4:18

CHAPTER 9

ALL OF ME—BODY, MIND, SPIRIT

In conversation with *Dr. Rob and Dr. Karla Robinson*



Big Idea

In this chapter Renée, Dr. Karla and Dr. Rob discuss what it means to partner with your church in promoting holistic health and wellness. Healing happens not only at the altar on Sundays, but in the wellness clinic on Mondays. There are untapped people and resources in every church, just waiting to be used for this purpose.



Read: Chapter 9 in *What About Me?*



Reflect and Discuss

Dr. Karla reminds us that “we are a three part or triune being, spirit, soul, and body. We are interconnected; we can’t separate the three. If one area is unhealthy, so the other areas will suffer.”



Respond

Which of these three does the church generally tend to neglect? Why do you

WHAT ABOUT ME?

think that is?

Which of these three do you tend to neglect? Why do you think that is?

Have you ever experienced a time where you were trying to do God's work, but, as Dr. Karla puts it, an area of your life was "suffering and unhealthy"? What was the result?



Reflect and Discuss

Dr. Rob shares, “We’re of the belief that every resource that God’s people need is truly in the House of God.”



Respond

Might there be professionals, resources, and tools in your church that you and your leadership haven’t tapped into yet? What might some of those be? Who might be some of the individuals your church could partner with to promote holistic wellness in your congregation?

Why do you think the church tends to emphasize the “altar,” but not the “wellness center”? Why do we limit ourselves by emphasizing healing on Sunday, but not as much on Monday?

WHAT ABOUT ME?



Reflect and Discuss

Dr. Karla explains the importance of identifying and being honest about generational behaviors: “We see generational issues. We can talk about it from the spiritual and the natural. We see cycles being repeated of spiritual, emotional, physical attacks.”



Respond

Why do you think many families are reluctant to speak about generational behaviors and issues, especially to someone outside the family?

Have you experienced a situation where you had to discuss challenges in your family to someone outside the family? How did you feel about trusting that person?

Do you agree with Drs. Robinson, that identifying generational behaviors and preventing a continuation of them is worth trusting a safe person outside the family? Why or why not?

 **Reflect and Discuss**

Dr. Karla reminds soul care providers, “You’re to give from a place of overflow. It’s critical that we’re constantly feeding ourselves, mind, body, and spirit: that we’re tending to our own needs and health.”

 **Respond**

If you’re honest with yourself, does it currently feel like you’re able to give from a place of overflow?

WHAT ABOUT ME?

What's one main thing standing in the way of you being able to give from a place of overflow?

What resources—relationships, books, podcasts, and other content—can you access to help you tend to your own needs and health? If needed, do an internet search and write down some promising leads.

Suggested Resources:

In Sickness & In Health, by Robert C Robinson III, M.D., and Karla L. Robinson, M.D.

MEDITATIONAL SOUL NOTE

Depression comes when we have compressed our view of God's ability and desire to help us, suppressed the memory of God's faithfulness to us in the past, and repressed our reverence, adoration and praise to God. Therefore, we continually express our dissatisfaction with life. We now must confess to God that our walk with him has been out of focus.

"Why are thou cast down, O my soul? is the question David asked. In verses 1 and 2 he says the same way the deer is thirsty for water, I'm thirsty for God! Yet despite his hunger, David confesses in verse 3, that all he'd been eating was tears. Thirsty, wanting more of the fresh living water of God, but dieting on salt water tears. David's words were focused, but not his actions. David threw a party but only invited his tears. Have you ever thrown a party like that? But in verse 4 David says, "This party is over!" David says two key words that indicated that the dark cloud was lifting—"I Remember!" Part of our definition of depression is suppressing the memory of the goodness of God in times past. Suppression leads to depression. So to beat depression we have to remember."

—R. Carnell Jones, *Tekel Emotions in the Balance*, p. 109

PSALM 42:1-5

As the deer pants for the water brooks,

So pants my soul for You, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

When shall I come and appear before God?

My tears have been my food day and night.

While they continually say to me, "Where is your God?"

When I remember these things, I pour out my soul within me.

For I used to go with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God,

With the voice of joy and praise,

With a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast.

Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me?

Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him. For the help of His countenance.

CHAPTER 10

THE PASTOR'S WIFE—HER FEELINGS MATTER TOO!

In conversation with *Renita K. Hopkins*



Big Idea

In this chapter, Renita and Renée discuss the unique challenges and opportunities that come with being the spouse of a pastor or church leader. Regardless of our role in the church, we have a responsibility to support our leadership, and be a voice for positive change in our congregations.



Read: Chapter 10 in *What About Me?*



Reflect and Discuss

Renita shares, “This was not just a sole call for Gary into the ministry, but a call upon us both.”



Respond

Spouses of pastors and other leaders in the church have a unique calling. How

WHAT ABOUT ME?

have you seen husbands or wives of ministry leaders live out a calling both tied to, and unique from, that of their spouses?

If you are a ministry spouse, how has your spouse's calling directly impacted your own?



Reflect and Discuss

Renita explains, "My 'total' acceptance of being in the ministry was indeed a process. The calling on my husband's life did affect me. Even though I knew what God was asking of him and we're walking in this ministry together, it was still a transition for both of us."



Respond

What transitional challenges might a pastor's spouse face if their partner joined the ministry after they were already married?

What challenges might a pastor's spouse face if their partner was already part of the ministry and they've just gotten married?

What are some of the challenges associated with pastors and their spouses being so accessible to the congregation? Is there a point where this accessibility may go too far?

WHAT ABOUT ME?

If you're a ministry spouse, how have you seen God pair your unique talents and giftings with the calling He's placed on your spouse?



Reflect and Discuss

Renita reflects on how church leadership can address mental health with their congregation: "Most importantly, the church leadership has to be open and willing to address their congregation holistically. If a mental health issue arises within the church, and it will, don't dismiss it."



Respond

Have you seen your church, or other churches around you, neglect the mental health crisis in conversation or action? How so?

THE PASTOR'S WIFE—HER FEELINGS MATTER TOO!

Based on Renita's suggestions, what do you and your church need to implement, or promote, in order to better serve your congregation in this area?

How can you and your church leadership work to create a secure environment, in which your congregation feels safe enough to open up to trusted individuals and professionals?

Are there any pieces of Renita's story that resonate with you—especially if you're the spouse of a pastor or other church leader?

MEDITATIONAL SOUL NOTE

*Oh Lord! I lift my heart,
In gratitude, to Thee,
For blessings, manifold,
Thou hast bestowed on me.
When conflicts raged within,
Too blinding too express,
Thou pitied my still tongue,
And soothed my heart to rest.
Keep me within thy care;
Compel me, to the right;
'Tis sweet to walk with Thee,
In darkness or in light.*

—“A Prayer” (1907) by Priscilla Jane Thompson from *Conversations with God—Two Centuries of Prayers by African Americans*, James Melvin Washington, Ph.D., Editor

CHAPTER 11

THE BATTLE FOR A BETTER LOVE

Featuring excerpts from *A Different Kind of Happiness—Discovering the JOY That Comes from Sacrificial LOVE*, by Dr. Larry Crabb



Big Idea

In this chapter, excerpts from Dr. Crabb’s book help us explore what sacrificial love truly means, and the fulfillment that comes with it. Only when we fix our eyes on things “above the sun” can we walk forward boldly into what God has next for us.



Read: Chapter 11 in *What About Me?*



Reflect and Discuss

Renée writes, “Winding down this leg of the journey, we are encouraged to shift our view of life from where we are right now—under the sun, to where we should be, confident that God is taking us above the sun.”



Respond

In what ways might you need to shift your focus from where you are to where you’re going? What might this look like practically?

WHAT ABOUT ME?

In your own words, explain the difference between “love” and the “better love” that Dr. Crabb explores in his book.

Do you tend to focus on things “under the sun” or “above the sun”? Why do you think this is?

THE BATTLE FOR A BETTER LOVE

How can you fix your eyes on things above, and on what God has next for you in your life?

MEDITATIONAL SOUL NOTE

Life is a short and fevered rehearsal for a concert we cannot stay to give. Just when we appear to have attained some proficiency we are forced to lay our instruments down. There is simply not time enough to think, to become, to perform what the constitution of our natures indicates we are capable of. How completely satisfying to turn from our limitations to a God who has none. Eternal years lie in His heart. For Him time does not pass, it remains, and those who are in Christ share with Him all the riches of limitless time and endless years. God never hurries. There are no deadlines against which He must work. Only to know this is to quiet our spirits and relax our nerves.

–“God’s Infinitude,” from *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A. W. Toz-
er pp.46-47

CHAPTER 12

JESUS THE WONDERFUL SOUL CARE PROVIDER AND LOVER OF MY SOUL



Big Idea

In this chapter, Renée closes our exploration of the soul care provider in an excerpt from her thesis, “The Biblical Counselor: A Healthy Profile of the Soul Care Provider in the 21st Century Church.”



Read: Chapter 12 in *What About Me?*



Reflect and Discuss

Renée writes, “A healthy leader realizes his or her responsibility to the role of leadership and the fact that leadership is influence.”

WHAT ABOUT ME?



Respond

Now that you've reached the end of this book, what are some of your favorite insights and takeaways from the leaders you've heard from?

Are there any specific action steps you feel convicted to make as you step forward in your role of soul care provider?

What Scriptures has God showed you that demonstrate the love He has for you, and the love He calls you to have for yourself?

JESUS THE WONDERFUL SOUL CARE PROVIDER AND LOVER OF MY SOUL

How can you practically take care of yourself and demonstrate the self-love that will allow you to continue serving others?

What aspects of Jesus's character inspire and encourage you? How is He YOUR perfect soul care provider?

MEDITATIONAL SOUL NOTE

The Love of God is one of the great realities of the universe, a pillar upon which the hope of the world rests. But it is a personal, intimate thing, too. God does not love populations, He loves people. He loves not masses, but men. He loves us all with a mighty love that has no beginning and can have no end.

—“The Love of God,” *The Knowledge of the Holy*,
A.W. Tozer, p.102

DARE TO LOVE...DARE TO LIVE

*A multitude of experiences, deeds, good and not so.
Thoughts, fleeting and staged.
Heights, depths.*

*A series of heart rhythms
So painful at times
So joyful at times
So tumultuous as needing a steady hand to still the discord so
much a part of it being realized.*

*A dance of pleasure no one could define but God.
A dance of death to old things whose demise must be celebrated
in order to live again.*

*An orchestra of symphonic booms of unrelated events that
somehow manage to meet at the same place, at the same time*

*that only the Conductor could have known
That only the Composer could have written
That only Maestro God could blend to such an ecstasy of Truth.*

*And you think you understand Love.
Love is unrelenting.
Love is unforgiving in its pursuit of itself.*

*Of its need to be fulfilled and grow eternally.
Of its destiny found only in the eyes of God.*

*It doesn't quite look like what I was told.
It doesn't quite feel like what I felt at first.
It contains sorrows
It contains the reality of certain truths that one thought could never be.*

*It takes from you...it must so that it can be free to have room to
show the truth of itself.*

*It's possible that it can't be defined.
It's probable that it can only be lived to be discovered bit by bit.
And then we'll know.*

Dare to love...Dare to live.

—“A Good Work Begun,” by Renee Hill Carter, Copyright © 2012

THE BENEDICTION

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you faithful, who also will do it.

—1 Thess. 5:23-24

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CLOSING THOUGHTS

What is your self-care health diagnosis? In what areas can you improve - your spirit, your soul (mind) or body? What is your understanding of the interconnectedness of you as a three part being?

Is there a demographic that you identify with that warrants more discussion of holistic care that is unique to that group? What can you do to make that happen?

Many topics and their impact on the human condition were discussed in What About Me? such as grief and loss, suicide, life balance, debilitating stressors, mental illness, escalating violence, natural disasters, hatred and racially

WHAT ABOUT ME?

charged crimes. Name one or two topics that glaringly stood out to you. What will you do to foster a discussion on this topic?

Was there a Meditational Soul Note that struck a chord with you? Which one and why?

Write your definition of a healthy soul care provider.

YOUR FEEDBACK

I'd like to know how you used this Study Guide. Your honest and critical feedback and recommendations on its usefulness and benefit to you personally and to your group are welcomed.

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