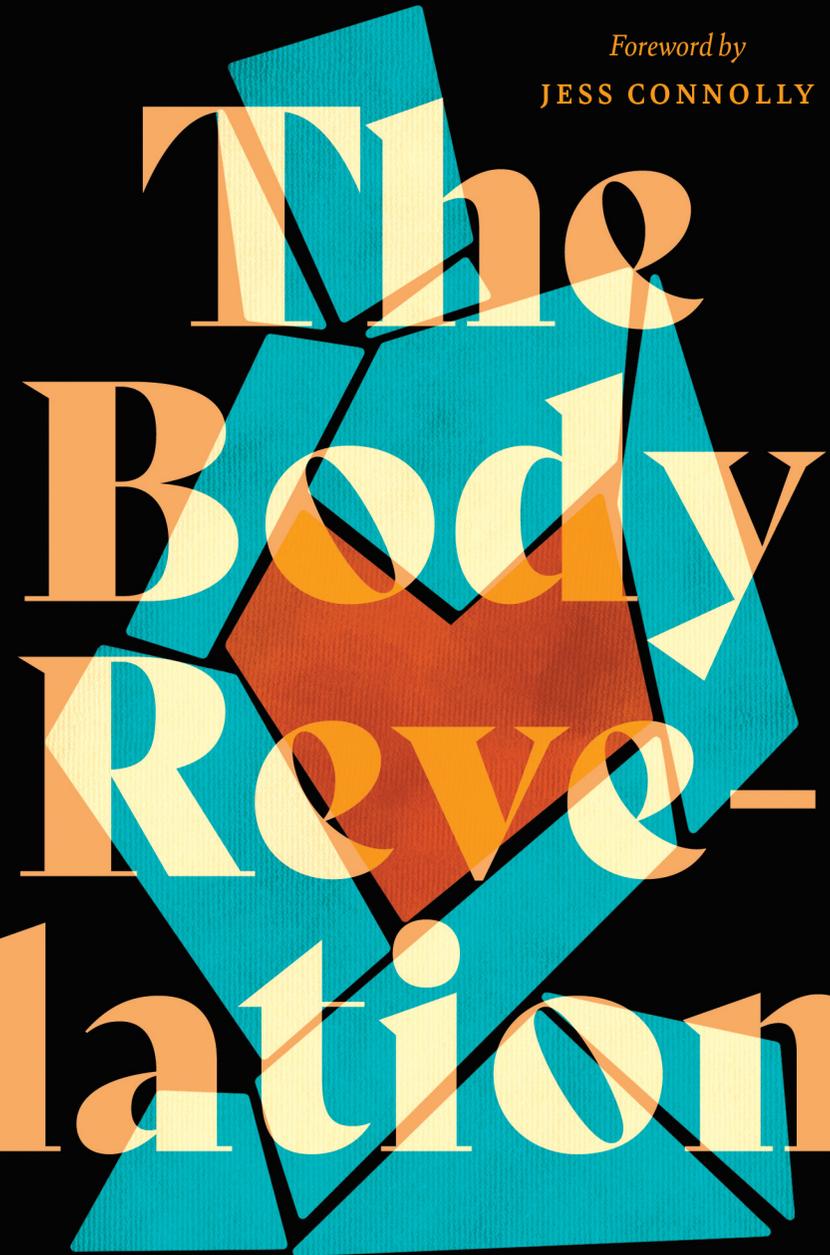


*Physical and Spiritual Practices to Metabolize Pain,
Banish Shame, and Connect to God with Your Whole Self*

Foreword by
JESS CONNOLLY



The
Body
Reve-
lation

ALISA KEETON

FOUNDER OF REVELATION WELLNESS™

Throw out the negative programming from culture about weight loss, body shaming, and career dieting. *The Body Revelation* brings the true transformation we need. I trust no one more than Alisa Keeton to bring this solid word and get us moving in the right direction.

LISA WHITTLE, bestselling author, speaker, and podcast host

Only Alisa could take the topic of pain and turn it into a triumphant message of motivation and movement—in every sense of the word. Inside these pages, you'll be moved by both her love for the Lord and her insight into how God designed our bodies. This isn't just a book to read; it's a book to practice.

MICHELLE MYERS, cofounder of She Works His Way and author of the Conversational Commentary series

Ever wondered why you can't "just do it" when it comes to a healthy lifestyle? Or why your hard-fought results don't seem to last? Alisa Keeton knows exactly how you feel—and in *The Body Revelation*, she serves up proven solutions. With a motivating blend of scientific research, biblical wisdom, and true-life stories (plus super practical action steps at the end of each chapter), *The Body Revelation* is not just a good book to read. It actually has the power to be the best book you will ever *do*.

JODIE BERNDT, bestselling author of *Praying the Scriptures for Your Life*

I've said for a long time that what happens in our souls, happens in our cells. We're fearfully and wonderfully made by the God who loves us! If you're ready to dig in, face your fears, and activate your faith, you're ready for *The Body Revelation*. Renewal and restoration await those who read slowly and prayerfully and are willing to apply what they've learned. Alisa Keeton is far more than a fitness expert; she's a healing and wholeness expert, biblically grounded and profoundly insightful. Having worked in the fitness industry for over a decade, I must say that she's one of the most balanced and biblical leaders out there. I loved this book.

SUSIE LARSON, bestselling author, talk radio host, and national speaker

This book! Oh, the convergence of heart, soul, and body—in the form of a sage friend to hold our hand and speak into the things that lie underneath our skin and yet have so much power over our walk with God and the way we see the world. In this satisfying read, Alisa Keeton is our sage friend, gently inviting us into a new way of seeing God’s heart and our bodies, and how they intersect. I’m so grateful for this message that Alisa carries with such passion.

SARA HAGERTY, bestselling author of *Unseen* and *Adore*

With so many bad messages about our good bodies floating around, I’m grateful for Alisa’s voice in the world. *The Body Revelation* is informative, practical, and a huge source of encouragement. You can almost audibly hear her cheering you on through every page.

JJ HELLER, singer-songwriter

As a psychotherapist, I am captivated by the mind-heart-body connection. As Alisa brilliantly articulates, it’s not simply diet and exercise that lead to health and healing. It’s understanding how your story has shaped your wounds and led you to protect yourself in understandable yet unhelpful ways. *The Body Revelation* contains a wealth of wisdom, grounded in spiritual truth, that informs principles and practices that will not simply change your body but change your life. This is not a book to simply read. This is a book to practice—because it’s in the practice that we are changed. I am personally grateful for Alisa’s courage, vulnerability, and leadership. I know you will be too.

NICOLE ZASOWSKI, licensed marriage and family therapist and author of *What If It’s Wonderful?*

The Body Revelation looks like a book, but it feels like a workout—a really good workout. This book is not hard to read, but it will be hard to forget. Alisa blends and stirs together a rich combination of stories, insights, information, and application. This book is a good meal and a great workout. It will stir your desire, your appetite, and your hope for things that are deep, real, and good in your heart, mind, and body. This kind of

transformation is what people are seeking, searching for in therapy. We have seen, firsthand, the trajectory of people's lives changed. She writes like a good but dangerous friend. She extends a compelling and disruptive invitation to work out and work through our personal history, our real hurts, and our best hopes. It is a beautiful invitation.

DR. DON AND RENEE WORCESTER, therapist and spiritual coach, speakers, and ministry leaders

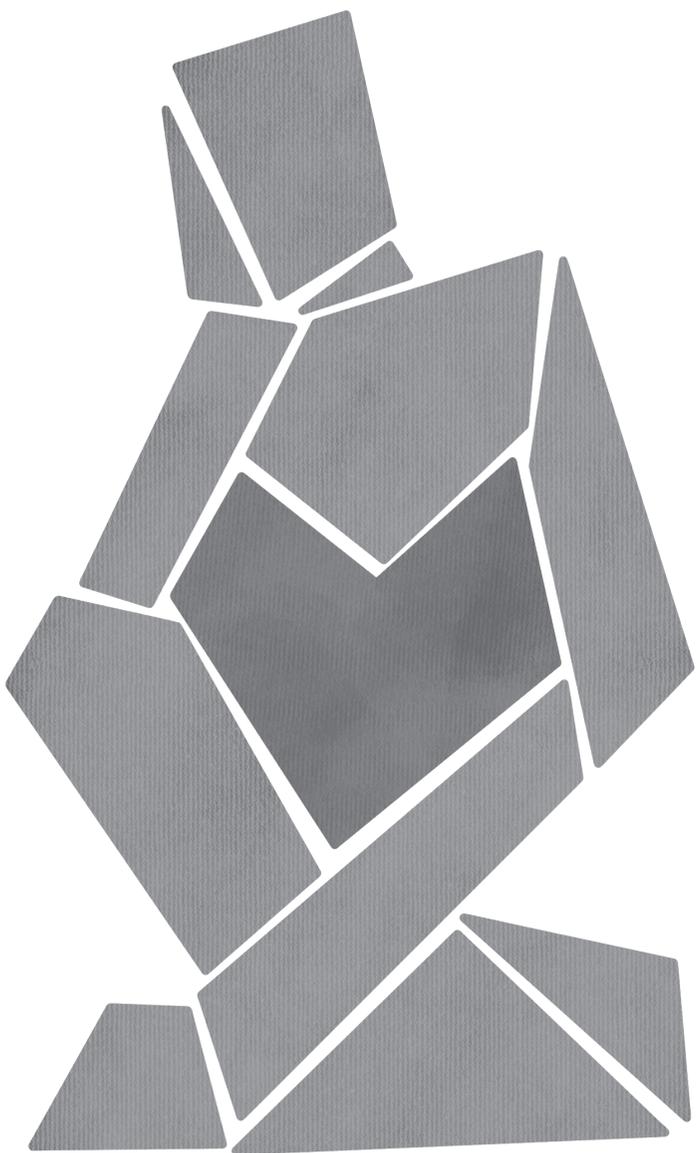
Alisa Keeton is a gift to this generation and a much-needed voice to the church. For too long in the West we have separated the heart and mind from the body, and it has caused us to miss out on the healing and deep intimacy the Lord has for us. This book is a game changer with deep insight and vulnerable stories. This is not a “feel good in your body” book but rather a liturgy of how we can grow deeper with Jesus by welcoming our bodies into the story. There's something about moving our bodies while rehearsing the truth of God's Word that transforms us. Alisa goes before us and walks with us as a teacher, preacher, and trainer in becoming formed more into the image of God.

ALYSSA BETHKE, author of *Satisfied*

No one in my life has encouraged me more in my journey with my body than Alisa. She has continually pointed me to the things that are true about my body and the One who created it. She has helped me see that God created me as a whole person—body, mind, spirit—and that all three need my attention. This book is one you will want to pass around to all your friends. Take in each chapter slowly and allow your thoughts to marinate in it. New patterns will develop. New kind words will be said to yourself by yourself! New mindsets will be created. I want this book to get into the hands of every woman who has ever—or will ever—think her body is bad.

JAMIE IVEY, bestselling author and host of *The Happy Hour with Jamie Ivey* podcast

The Body Revelation



ALISA KEETON

The Body Revelation

*Physical and Spiritual Practices to Metabolize Pain,
Banish Shame, and Connect to God with Your Whole Self*



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The Body Revelation: Physical and Spiritual Practices to Metabolize Pain, Banish Shame, and Connect to God with Your Whole Self

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The stories in this book are about real people and real events, but names have been changed and some details changed to protect the privacy of people involved.

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To my mama: A woman who lived with so much pain while here on earth but who now dances with Jesus and moves freely. Because of your story and love for Jesus, others will read this book and be set free.

To my dad: A complicated man whose need for Jesus led our family to Jesus and whose prayers I know I stand on today.

You both now live a life in heaven that your pain made hard to live on earth.

This book is for you.



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FOREWORD

MY STORY WITH ALISA IS ONE FOR THE AGES.

I've played it back a million times to make sure I'm not exaggerating, and here are the broad strokes:

I was a woman who desperately needed wisdom about my body. What I thought I wanted was to lose weight; what I needed was truth and healing. I thought I wanted to change my life by changing my body; Jesus wanted to redeem my life by mending my relationship with my body. And in a move that I can only imagine was led by the Holy Spirit, I sent Alisa (who was no more than an acquaintance at the time) an email in the middle of the night asking for help. She responded the next day.

Alisa immediately informed me that while she would not promise to give me what I wanted, she'd be faithful to walk with me as God gave me what I needed. And the rest is history.

She coached me, corrected me, taught me, challenged me—all with large doses of love and compassion. And there was no going backward after that: The freedom train was rolling, the Spirit of God took over, and before I knew it, I loved my body more, I loved God more, and I was more keenly aware of just how loved I was.

I don't know why you picked up this book. Maybe you want to lose weight, maybe you are sick of being sick. Perhaps the persistent pain in your life has you at the breaking point, or you may just be curious about the intersection of faith and your body.

Here's my warning: Buckle up. Stay present. Keep going. You are safe, even if you feel that your shame and pain are very much in danger of defeating you.

Alisa is still the kind, wise, compassionate guide that she was for me. Maybe you've tried—maybe you've even had some success at—making healthier choices but still feel stuck. Alisa will show you how to partner with your body to begin processing the pain that has kept you trapped. She will teach you how to move your body and quiet your mind in ways that will bring lasting healing and better health. God *is* going to use this book to change your life.

Alisa has structured *The Body Revelation* around the typical parts of a Revelation Wellness training session. Come curious for the warm-up, enjoy going all in during the workout, and then watch God seal in life change during the cooldown. You're never going to be the same again, though it might not be in the ways you expect.

Your body is a revelation of Kingdom proportion, and God is going to reveal Himself to you right where you're at . . . in the good body you're in.

Trust me, this book is for you. It's for me too.

Your friend in the fight,

JESS CONNOLLY

*Author of *Breaking Free from
Body Shame* and *You Are
the Girl for the Job**



INTRODUCTION

Moving the Bad Out of Your Good Body

SOME NIGHTS MY FATHER DIDN'T COME HOME.

The next evening, dinner would be tense. For long minutes, the scratching of metal forks and knives against porcelain plates was the only sound. I kept my head down, feeling the icy chill from the cold shoulder my mom was giving my dad.

He was determined to pretend that all was well. “Hey, honey, did I tell you I’m going to have to travel again next week for work?”

I slunk in my chair, seething with quiet rage. I would eat a hunk of Mom’s casserole as fast as possible so I could run out the door and hop on the banana seat of my sunflower yellow, one-speed bike.

When I was a child, the sense of feeling small, unheard, and unseen in my family always seemed to dissipate when I went outside and moved my body. Moving made me feel big, free, and full of possibilities. It also allowed me to forget about how much my parents fought. I would pop wheelies on my bike or roller-skate like a disco queen, and somehow that just made me feel better.

By the time I was a teenager, any illusion I had of coming from a happy home with two parents who madly loved each other and laughed with their children at dinnertime was disappearing. When I needed a hug, I received a lecture. When I needed to be heard, I was asked to do the dishes. When I needed to be celebrated just for being me, I was told to clean my room.

Disappointment, loneliness, and sadness burned deep inside me like a fire, and angry outbursts were my only release. Some people choose to keep their feelings swept under the rug, and some people, like me, choose to light the rug on fire.

Then at fourteen, I attended my first group aerobics class with my friend Julie. I laced up a pair of white Keds, threw on my favorite T-shirt and some stinky gym shorts, and headed for Fitness Source, the gym at a nearby strip mall.

That initial workout seemed like choreographed chaos to me, but during cooldown I lay very still on the brown carpet as an incredibly warm feeling of comfort and peace washed over me. I had never felt this feeling before. Not with this intensity. It went beyond the feeling of freedom I had when I rode my bike or skated through the neighborhood. My eyes pooled with tears as I lay there gently stretching and wondered, *What just happened?* Perhaps it was the endorphin rush after shimmying and shaking for an hour in a crowd of middle-aged moms, or maybe it was simply pent-up teenage energy looking for a release. But whatever it was, at that moment I had the profound sense of hope dislodging my anger and sadness. I could feel it in my bones. It was as if something deep inside my body was telling me everything was going to be all right.

Whatever brought it on, I was hooked. With money from babysitting, I purchased my first pair of Reebok aerobic high-tops, bought the hot pink spandex leotard with matching belt (which I never understood, since it's not as if a tight leotard has a fighting chance of falling down), and paid the monthly dues to secure my place on a 1,500-square-foot of brown carpet with a record player in the corner. For just an hour a week, in a room filled with moms sporting colorful 80s makeup and crimped hair in scrunchies, I found a place I could call my own. For a teenage girl trying to figure out who she was, what she wanted, and where she was going, it was there I first felt safe to work these things out. It was there I began to experience a deeper connection between my heartache and my moving body. It was there I felt empowered in my own skin. I learned how to harness the fire of my teenage angst with a good calorie burn while feeling a sense of belonging. Instead of trying to tiptoe on eggshells around my mom's emotional outbursts and parents' exacting standards, here I could

fumble freely, fall, or even step out of sync with the others and not be scolded. Mistakes were expected and trying again was celebrated.

My passion for learning how to move my body and gain strength—while feeling a sense of emotional relief—continued to grow. As a college sophomore, I spotted a flyer in the student union about a class on becoming a group fitness instructor. If I could help other people feel as safe and empowered in relationship to their bodies through fitness as I had become, I knew I had found my calling. By the time I graduated from college, I had a waiting list of clients who wanted to work with me. And because of that, I felt “loved,” sought out, and wanted. I was truly living my dream. I was sure I’d moved far, far away from my dysfunctional home life—plus I was helping others!

When a fitness trainer I worked with told me she thought I’d be a real contender in fitness shows, I began bodybuilding, hoping I’d finally discovered the key to filling the void inside me. Before long, I was bringing home trophies. On the outside, I appeared to have it all together—more money than my fellow graduates who hustled in their nine-to-five, plenty of recognition and awards for a killer physique. But deep inside, my dissatisfaction continued to build.

Despite my parents’ poor track record, I thought a romantic relationship might heal my aching heart. Yet almost every one of my boyfriends came and went, telling me “I just don’t think I can give you what you want” as they broke things off. Then at twenty-six, I got married. I covered my pain in a white wedding dress and walked down the aisle and into the arms of an unsuspecting man.

I married Simon expecting that the love and commitment of one person would heal my hurts and quench the fire that burned within me. Instead, I quickly realized that nothing exposed my chronic dissatisfaction more than marriage. My husband’s desire to climb the corporate ladder kicked into overdrive right after our wedding. Instead of candlelight dinners followed by snuggling with him while watching movies on the couch, I was home alone. And when he was home, Simon was a man of few words or—more accurately—a man of no words who had nothing left to give me after a long day at work. My growing discontentment fueled my expectations even more. And like a woman going to an empty well, I kept demanding

more from Simon than he was able to give. My irrational emotional outbursts and my tendency to give my husband the cold shoulder in our warm bed was starting to feel painfully familiar. Turns out, the pain of my childhood—feeling unwanted by an unfaithful father, unseen by a mother with fragile emotions, and unheard in a household with no room for my voice—threatened my longing for the family of my dreams.

The family I never had.

And there was no way I was going to fail at that like my parents did.

As a fitness professional in pursuit of good health, I knew something deep inside me was sick and needed help. My soul was crying out for the unconditional love and attention I lacked in my youth. For years I had done everything I could think of to push past the pain I'd grown up with. I'd tried to sweat it out, romance it out, and reason it out. Nothing worked.

Getting Unstuck: Moving from the Inside Out

Then God showed up—or rather I did. I'd heard about Him, of course, but I hadn't given Him much thought until my friend Shawn challenged me to attend the church where she'd recently met God. After some resistance, I went. I was so desperate and my heart so brittle and broken that I allowed Jesus, the Living Water, to seep in. He was coming to me in my pain but had no intention of leaving me there. God was about to turn everything I knew about fitness upside down and inside out. He understood that I needed more than simply changing the shape of my body or taking another lap around the gym. He knew a daily walk of faith with Him would restore my heart.

But He wasn't going to toss my love for movement aside. I had no idea that when I placed my trust in Jesus, I gave Him not only my heart, but my mind and body too. My first book, *The Wellness Revelation*, taught people how to look at their pursuit of good health holistically with God at the center. Readers were encouraged to consider how their relationship with God affected their relationship to themselves, other people, and other created things—like food.

After that book came out, I had conversations with many community

and faith leaders. As a way of affirming my message that in Christ we are able to live a healthy and whole life, some well-intentioned people quoted 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” While I love this passage, I noticed that it was often stated like a Christian version of the Nike slogan “Just do it!” with little love or understanding for those who habitually struggle to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Yes, it’s true; we are called to honor God with our bodies. But wouldn’t we agree that if people could “just do it,” they would have done it by now? It’s not as if anybody wants to stay sick or stuck in a cycle of trying and failing. Heavy expectations are the last thing people need when they know they are falling short.

While *The Wellness Revelation* helped many people, it made me aware that it is possible to believe in God and either do all the right things or not do any of them and still feel stuck. The root cause of such disintegrated living needs to be identified and dealt with. I suggest that the absence of change and distance from God may not be due to a lack of willpower or love for Him but to our lack of awareness of how pain has disrupted our body-brain connection.

Years ago God let me in on a secret—how the bodies He’s given us are useful for metabolizing, not just food, but also mental and emotional pain. God’s view of health and fitness includes partnering with the natural healing processes of our body, activated through physical activity, God’s Word, and spiritual practices, to metabolize pain. In *The Body Revelation*, we’ll discover how to harness our bodies’ natural healing properties and access tools to help us overcome rather than be overwhelmed by adversity. By maintaining a strong body-brain connection during adverse moments, the hurtful experiences of the past and the challenging moments in our future can be used as actual fuel—the energy we need—to live the lives God destined for us.

This book is less about finding the right eating plan and doing the right workout and more about doing the patient and kind work of becoming aware of the pain that disrupts a healthy body-brain connection and keeps us cycling in an unhealthy pattern of obsessing over or neglecting

our bodies. By applying God's Word to physical and spiritual practices, we can renew our minds and live fully connected to ourselves for the purpose of moving toward the promise and purpose God has for us.

Please note: *The Body Revelation* is designed to start you on a journey toward health and wholeness, but it is not intended as a substitute for medical advice. It's important to talk with your own physician if you plan to make significant changes to your diet and exercise routines. Also, if you're looking for a quick fix, this isn't the book for you. We will be patient and kind with ourselves because that's what love does. And it's the love of God that changes everything!

Working the Plan

By the end of this book, you will stop trying to change yourself into a better version of you. You will know how to partner with your body to maintain peace by staying connected to yourself and God. As you learn to metabolize your pain, using movement and gospel-centered self-care spiritual practices that incorporate and activate God's Word, you will encounter through your body the God who loves you, knows you, and wants only the best for you. His love will change you, slowly and steadily, because slow and steady is the way to all sustainable change. And when hard moments come, you will overcome rather than be overwhelmed so you can stay free to become the person God created you to be.

Slow and steady is the way to all sustainable change.

While doing this work of reintegration, it's important that you feel safe. And one way safety occurs is through a plan. Every safe and effective class works through three phases: the warm-up, the workout, and—the best part (if you ask me)—the cooldown. Each phase of our workout time together will include two goals broken into two stages, all designed to help us metabolize the pain our bodies are holding. Here's what our workout will look like:

The Warm-Up

Stage 1: Just Surviving

Stage 2: Recognizing Your Pain

The Workout

Stage 3: Expressing Your Energy

Stage 4: Humbling Yourself

The Cooldown

Stage 5: Staying the Course

Stage 6: Taking Ownership

Each stage includes four bite-sized, digestible chapters concluding with a reflective, self-care section titled “Metabolize.” Please don’t skip this section. It’s one thing to read and get useful information, but knowledge alone doesn’t change a person. It’s acting on that information that rewires a broken body-brain connection. It’s doing new things that brings about internal and external change.

Each Metabolize section includes Mind, Mouth, and Move subsections. You will be asked to use your mind to answer a few questions related to that chapter. You will then use your mouth to pray and connect to God. Finally, I will invite you to engage in some healthy habits and doable physical movement to help you connect your thoughts and feelings about the things of God with your body. These Mind, Mouth, and Move sections are very important to making real body-brain connected change.

Moving your body is a critical part of metabolizing your pain. As I’ve worked with countless students over the years, I’ve seen that when our bodies move, our minds seem to receive God’s Word with less resistance. I’ve lost count of the breakthrough aha moments that have occurred for my students while moving their bodies over the years. Here’s how I think this works: Physical exercise engages the limbic system in our brain, which is where our instinctual flight, fight, or freeze response occurs. With the limbic brain productively occupied, higher reasoning seems to occur more easily.¹ In addition, the increase in oxygenated blood flow helps us think more clearly and boosts our mood. All of this makes it easier to access and

process thoughts and feelings that have felt stuck in our body, keeping us trapped in poor habit loops.

Our bodies are how love makes its way into the world. More than building muscles and minimizing fat, we need bodies that are fit to carry love to others; for example, by carrying groceries up a flight of stairs to a single mom in need or by being rested and mentally sharp enough to patiently help our kids with their homework. In this book we will train to love God, ourselves, and others—all of which glorify God. His love holds all things together, mobilizes us to love in word and deed, and is the core strength of a healthy mind-body connection.

At its heart, this is a fitness and wellness book, written by me with guidance from the Holy Spirit, with one goal in mind: to bring freedom to captives of pain. Please don't skip the sweaty parts. Because I know that many of you will encounter a radical change in how you feel when moving your body with this new perspective, you may want more ways to move while renewing your mind with God's Word. At the back of the book you will find additional links to workouts and resources from Revelation Wellness, the nonprofit ministry I founded in 2011. Fitness and wellness are our ways of spreading the Good News of God's love to good bodies around the world. If you're looking for a coach to lead you through this book or a small group to go through the book with, be sure to check our website to find a Revelation Wellness instructor near you.

Don't just read this book. Do this book! Read, then join me in the training to metabolize your pain. I will be with you every step of the way. God has designed a wonderful life for you that lies just beyond the boundaries of your pain.

So let's train!