

SHE IS BRAVE

LIVING ENCOURAGED MINISTRIES

Authentic
& BEAUTIFUL

LIVING YOUR
BEST LIFE YET



THINK YOUR WAY
TO HAPPINESS
OVERCOMING THE SILENT
BATTLE

THE POWER OF PRAYER
& MEDITATION
20 MINUTE DAILY ROUTINE TO
TRANSFORM YOUR THOUGHTS

SHE IS BRAVE
GIVEAWAY
FIND OUT HOW TO ENTER

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Hello Beautiful One,

The month of May was filled with so much excitement buzzing around here at Living Encouraged. I joined forces with a few of my BRAVE entrepreneur girlfriends and collaborated to put together our very first SHE IS BRAVE GIVEAWAY.

In the midst of so much uncertainty and turmoil, we collaborated to share some joy with all you ladies. Sometimes we need to steer our focus from the stressors in life and seek out hope and joy to refill our empty tanks.

This month's issue I wanted to focus on how we see ourselves. Being authentic in a way where we no longer strive to try and fit into what society says about who we should be, but instead take hold of who God says we are.

There's beauty in authenticity. A beauty that allows us to truly take hold of the woman God created us to be and live our best lives yet.

Let's jump into this new season with a heart of self-acceptance and self-adoration. Let's think our way to our happiness and refill our empty tanks with joyfulness and self-love.

I want you to know just how utterly amazing you are, just the way you are.

XOXO... *Ileen*



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Beautiful

YOU ARE ALTOGETHER BEAUTIFUL, MY
DARLING; THERE IS NO FLAW IN YOU.

Song of Songs 4:7



Authentic & Beautiful

LIVING YOUR BEST LIFE YET

What does your best life look like to you?

Is it living life authentically and being the best version of yourself? Or is it living life by the standards someone else has set in place and striving to be who others expect you to be?

In today's world, life is lived through a screenshot of images we have displayed as being our true authentic selves. But often times in reality, what is perceived on screen isn't truly what is reality. We become less of the version God intended for us to be and instead aim for the

version we think everyone else is expecting of us.

I remember my first Facebook Live Bible study. I was so nervous. All I kept thinking about was what everyone else was seeing on camera. The perception people would have of who I was. Was I thin enough, was my hair voluminous enough, was my makeup on point and what about my lashes? I couldn't for the life of me get the falsies on.

Lashes never made it on screen and my makeup was now all dewy due to the heat, since everything was held outdoors.



Beauty in authenticity

"The beauty of being authentic is that we are striving to be the best version of ourselves."

Was I up to par for social media?

I remember all the feels from that day. Feeling completely out of my realm. This was totally out of my comfort zone. Being on camera was far from what I had in mind when I said YES to God's call. But for this journey I was on, social media would soon be my primary platform to reaching and encouraging women globally.

Was I up to par for social media? Not by social media's standards. And that was okay. I realized something extremely important. In order to be authentic in my teachings, I had to be authentic with myself.

The beauty of being authentic is that we are striving to be the best version of ourselves. Not by anyone else's standards. But if anything, by embracing who God created us to be.

I remember back in my high school years. I felt so out of place. Although I had many friends and was part of several social groups, I always felt like I was trying to find myself. Maybe I wasn't cool enough. I didn't dress in the latest trends. My hair wasn't poofy enough. Yes, I said poofy. I'm talking late 80's early 90's, Pretty In Pink years.

When I started seeing myself all uncomfortable in my own skin, I realized I wasn't being ME. I was more concerned with what others would think that I stopped being authentically me.

Sometimes life may feel like a high school popularity contest. Always trying to keep up with the latest trends, meeting the new latest standards for what someone has now determined to be the "In Look". When in reality, life is about striving to be our very best in every scenario. And this starts with self-acceptance.



up to us to see our gifts and talents as blessings that are leading us to successfully achieve our goals and dreams.

We don't have to constantly create a persona that fits the molds created by man. Instead, we should love and accept the masterpiece God created us to be. Unique. One of a kind.

It's when we embrace self-acceptance that we can truly find peace and joy in our lives. Today I'll find myself hopping on Facebook Live without makeup in a ball cap sharing what's on my heart. Don't get me wrong, I'm still fighting with the falsies.

But falsies and contouring don't define me and definitely don't enhance my teachings.

The Importance of Self-Acceptance

Self-Acceptance is saying, I think you are great just the way you are. But when we deem ourselves not good enough, not pretty enough, not up to par, we are diminishing ourselves to a standard set by someone other than God.

God created you perfectly in His eyes, yet we take the word of someone else as truth over God's truths spoken over us. Scripture tells us in Ephesians 2:10, "For we are God's masterpiece."

Like an artist, God takes pride in His works of art. And you are a precious work of art He spent time creating. But it is up to us to see ourselves how God see us. It's primarily

Living Life According To Your Values

Actions will always speak volumes over words. Being truly authentic with ourselves means that what we say we will do is aligned with our actions. What our beliefs are, are not swayed by others opinions. Being authentic is standing behind your values and beliefs.

Standing firm on your core beliefs and values is how you walk in being the best version of yourself. You don't allow yourself to be easily swayed into a "people pleasing" mode.

Who doesn't love a good filter and brightening, but in real life, there's no editing. We can simply choose to live our best lives yet by being authentic and true to ourselves and others.

Once I learned to let go of all the insecurities and constantly trying to fit in, I was able to follow my passions without reservations. I had to take a hard look at who I was becoming and check myself.

Is this who I want to be? Is this who I truly am? Is this who God created me to be? Or am I being a version of someone else's idea of who I should be.

I began living my best life doing what I loved doing. No need for waiting on acceptance. I was finally enjoying my life how I deemed fit. No longer making the constant effort to please everyone else.

My oldest son once told me, "**We only get one chance at this life God has given us. This is not a dress rehearsal.**" He was right. We get once chance to live our best lives yet.

living your
best life yet!

BE KIND TO
yourself



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The Brave Collection

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Thank You

TO ALL OUR HEALTHCARE ANGELS,
WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR LOVE
AND SACRIFICE DURING THIS
UNPRECEDENTED CRISIS.



THINK YOUR WAY TO HAPPINESS

BY OVERCOMING THE SILENT BATTLE IN YOUR MIND



Transforming Your Mind

CAN WHAT YOU THINK REALLY AFFECT YOUR LIFE?

"It is the mind that maketh good or ill, that maketh wretch or happy, rich or poor"

~ Edmund Spenser

I remember feeling so horrible. I had been upset and here my phone was ringing and it was my dad. I honestly was not up for taking calls, especially in the state I was in. I had been in tears curled up on my bed. Feeling sorry for myself.

I'll never forget this call. I cried myself away while dad sat on the other side of this painful call. Everything I was feeling I just poured out to my dad. He reassured me

everything was going to be alright. And just as he was about to hang up he said, *"Hey, go drink you a 7-UP and you'll be ok."* And he hung up.

Wiping away my tears, I just stared at my phone in confusion. What did that mean? Was this an old remedy I didn't know about? How was 7-UP going to make it all better?

Later that week I saw dad and asked him about the 7-UP. He asked me if I had stopped crying. I responded telling him yes. He then said, *"Telling you to drink a 7-UP distracted you. You stopped thinking of*



"The moment we steer our focus away from the negative, we then can allow ourselves to focus on the good things happening in our lives."

why you were crying, and sat there wondering why I told you to drink a 7-UP. It made everything better." Dad had used a mind trick on me to take my focus away from what I had been crying about.

The moment we steer our focus away from the negative, we then can allow ourselves to focus on the good things happening in our lives. I have found that if I keep my mind focused on that boiling pot of negativity, I'm going to remain steamed up in that boiling pot and I'm going to have an emotional overflow of frustration, worry, fear, anxiety, and hurt. All this can eventually lead to depression, panic or worse.

Redirecting Our Thoughts

During this pandemic, we have seen countless healthcare professionals coming out and talking about the emotional toll they have endured from being there at the frontlines of COVID-19.

We have seen their tears and heard their cries from the mental anguish they have endured.

My heart aches to know that as they sacrifice their lives and put their hearts out there to serve, they undergo a trauma that many of us won't understand. They serve with full hearts giving their all to take care of those battling with illness every single day. And amidst all this, they know that going home would require a distancing from their loved ones to protect them from contracting this horrific virus.

Suffering from traumas is hard. My family and I underwent a trauma last year and today continue to fight the mental anguish we suffered. But one thing I learned along the way was that I had to take control over my thoughts. It's so much easier to dwell on the hurt and remain laser focused on what we have seen or experienced.

Proverbs 12:25 reminds us that *"Anxiety weights down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up."*

Remaining focused on the painful experiences keeps us from living with a joyful heart. As difficult as it can seem, allowing ourselves to steer from our focus on the pain to the Healer, we can

restore joy and peace within our hearts.

"You can choose beliefs that limit you, or you can choose beliefs that support you."

TONY ROBBINS

Limitless Thinking

Tony Robbins is the nation's #1 life and business strategist, an entrepreneur, #1 NY Times best-selling author and philanthropist. When I first discovered his book *Unlimited Power*, I saw an immediate shift in my thought process. His teachings are to get us focused on our thoughts. What we fill our mind with.

He says, *"You can choose beliefs that limit you, or you can choose beliefs that support you. The trick is to choose the beliefs that are conducive to success and the results you want to discard the ones that hold you back."*

I have experienced first hand what it means to choose our beliefs to get successful results. I've learned that in order for me to reach my goals I have to first believe that I can, then believe in my goal and walk in my faith. And maintaining a limitless mindset allows me to get the results I want.



Overcoming The Silent Battle

Having limitless thinking is believing for the impossible and having an unshakeable faith to attain it. But often times that silent battle going on in our minds is what's keeping us from having a mindset that says, "Yes I can." It's what's hindering us from going after our goals and dreams.

But if we control our thoughts, and simmer down and control what we are thinking, how we are thinking, the thoughts we are taking hold of and what we are doing with those thoughts, we literally can transform our day, our week, heck even our lives.

Tony Robbins says, *"The first step to excellence is to find the beliefs that*

guide us toward the outcomes we want." If we focus on what will go wrong, chances are the results will follow in suite. However, when we focus on the possibilities, the positive outcomes, the successful results, we have a greater chance at achieving that success.

I fought that silent battle for years. That battle that waged war in my mind. Every thought was riddled with negativity. I wasn't good enough. No one would care. I didn't matter. I wasn't loved. I'll never make it in life. I'll always struggle. I won't ever become a published author. There's no way I can afford working from home. The negativity went on and on. Until one day God showed me the limitations I had imposed on myself I had also imposed on Him. OUCH!

"One day God showed me the limitations I had imposed on myself I had also imposed on Him.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Colossians 3:2 says, *"Set your minds on things above, not on things that are on earth."* In order to remove those self imposed limitations, I had to transform my mind in order to see transformation in my life. I needed to stop complaining about where I wasn't and start focusing on what it was going to take to get to where I needed to be. The goals that were nudging at my heart.

Not always will we be where we hope to be, nor will our circumstances look like we hoped they would, but that doesn't mean it's our final chapter. It's up to us to determine what we will focus on and how we will overcome the silent battle in our mind.

We have the power to choose whether we will have a mentality of defeat or a mentality of victory. It's up to us to decide if we want to remain focused on the here and now or look towards the visions God has given us. Looking forward with eyes of hope and a heart of determination.

By cultivating a positive attitude, you are taking yourself beyond the not good enough and saying to yourself, "I don't have time for not good enough, I'm more than enough". It's this way of thinking that allows transformation in your mind from a not good enough and an I can't mentality to one that says and believes without doubt, *"I can do ALL things through Christ who strengthens me."* Philippians 4:13.



The background is a watercolor wash in shades of orange, peach, and light pink, with a soft, textured appearance. The colors blend together, creating a warm and gentle atmosphere. The text is centered and overlaid on this background.

SET YOUR
minds

ON THINGS ABOVE,
NOT ON THINGS
THAT ARE ON
EARTH.

Colossians 3:2



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The Power of Prayer & Meditation



20 MINUTE DAILY ROUTINE TO
TRANSFORM YOUR THOUGHTS

The 20 Minute Meditation Retreat

A Meditation Retreat is often thought of as an oasis away from all the chaos. A place where we take a journey inward, into our spirit and soul. Where we can develop a more calm and tranquil mind and spirit. Meditation retreats are often known as a place that offers full-immersion courses where one can learn to apply a variety of exercises to create inner calmness.

Inner core focus is essential in building inner strength. It's focusing on the core of our thoughts. Through these meditation retreats we learn to focus on controlling our breathing and most importantly our thoughts.



I've learned the importance of meditation. Meditation is a key factor when we are building up our spiritual strength. Through creating a more calm tranquil mindset, we are better equipped to handle the difficulties in life that may arise.

In order to do this, we must meditate on God's Word. Spend time in prayer and meditation. We must go into our Meditation Retreat and spend that time with God. Studying His Word. Spending that time in communion with God. In a tranquil setting...our own private oasis of meditation and serenity.

In Joshua 1:8 God spoke to Joshua and told him of the importance of meditating on His Word. He says, *"Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips, meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it."* It was important for Joshua to build up his spiritual core in order for him to be better equipped and knowledgeable to handle those challenging moments.

Meditation takes discipline. The discipline to work at it continuously. By taking just 20 minutes a day, we are nourishing our mind with the Word of God and essentially building up our core for whatever challenges may arise. In addition, this results in the strengthening of our faith muscles. You're creating a positive upbeat mindset.

Part of meditation is about staying focused and silencing all the noise and chaos around. When we stay focused on God's Word, we are silencing everything around us and focusing our

heart and mind on those words of encouragement and assurance from God. We soak in His peace and that peace transcends to everyone and everything around us.

With a 20 minute daily routine of meditation and prayer, we can transform our thoughts and create a positive mindset. Combining the two, (1) meditation on the Word and (2) meditation in prayer, allows us to grow a more intimate relationship with God. We are spending time in communion with Him. Creating a place of intimacy where it's just you and Him.

What I love about this time of meditation and prayer, is that feeling of release. I exhale all the stresses and discouraging thoughts and feels, and inhale all God's goodness, positivity, and encouragement.

Get ready to transform your mind into a happy place in as little as 20 minutes a day. Break free from every negative discouraging thought and start your day on a positive note.

"IN THE MOURNING LORD,
YOU HEAR MY VOICE; IN THE
MORNING I LAY MY REQUESTS
BEFORE YOU AND WAIT
EXPECTANTLY.

Psalms 5:3



20 MINUTES TO TRANSFORM YOUR THOUGHTS

20 minutes in your own personal Meditation Retreat is all it takes to reprogram your mind and create a positive mindset to start your day.

1 CHOOSE A QUIET PLACE

Choose a place of tranquility, removing yourself from all distractions for 20 minutes.

2 SET ASIDE TIME

Give yourself 20 minutes from your day without rushing through this time. Remember this is a time to release and clear your mind of any clutter and or discouragement. A time to spend with God going all in.

3 RELAX

Allow yourself to relax your mind and clear out any distracting thoughts.

4 CHOOSE SOOTHING BACKGROUND MUSIC

I have found instrumental worship music and piano music soothing when I'm in prayer and meditation. I call it my Spiritual Playlist. Find what relaxes your mind and body. (optional)

5 PREPARE YOUR SCRIPTURES AHEAD OF TIME

Have the scriptures you want to focus on written down on a card or notebook or have your Bible turned to the page your scripture is on.

6 CHOOSE YOUR FOCAL POINT

Reflect on your focus of the day. If there is something specific you want to pray over or a concern of your heart, reflect on that.

7 BE CONSISTENT

Be consistent with your meditation and prayer time. If you choose to do this 3-4 a week, that's okay too. Create a schedule that works best for you.



She Is Brave

GIVEAWAY



ENTER TO WIN

- 1) Following Ileen on Instagram @theileenbocanegra and on Facebook @LivingEncouraged
- 2) LIKE her post with Contest Announcement
- 3) Tag 3 friends
- 4) Comment on post and use hashtag #sheisbravegiveaway



grow where you're planted

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