

FOREWORD BY CHRISTINE CAINE

RESET  
RESET  
RESET

POWERFUL HABITS TO OWN YOUR THOUGHTS,  
UNDERSTAND YOUR FEELINGS, & CHANGE YOUR LIFE

**DEBRA FILETA**

M.A., LPC

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## Reset

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*This book is dedicated to my best friend, forever partner,  
and legit number one fan: my husband, John.*

*Thank you for so steadily walking this journey with me, in sync,  
step-by-step, and side-by-side. Being married to this therapist  
is no small feat, but you've embraced it like no one else could!*

*What a beautiful 15 years it has been,  
and here's to many, many more.*

*I love you, always and forever.*



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# FOREWORD

BY CHRISTINE CAINE

It is not often that you meet someone and click from the first moment, but that is exactly what happened when I met Debra. Yes, we are both fiery Mediterranean women with a passion for Jesus and human flourishing, but it was Debra's wisdom, insight, compassion, humor, transparency, and humility that sealed it for me. You too will discover this for yourself within the pages of this powerful book.

When I became a follower of Jesus, I was desperate to live a life that was pleasing to God and to fulfill my purpose on this earth, all for God's glory. But as well intentioned as I was—and believe me, I was as sincere as I knew how to be—I kept cycling in and out of seasons of defeat. No matter how hard I tried—and believe me, I tried—I could not seem to stop. Having been left in a hospital unnamed and unwanted when I was born, a victim of childhood sexual abuse, marginalized because of my ethnicity and gender, I brought a lot of baggage into my relationship with Jesus and with everyone else.

No matter how hard I prayed, or how often I fasted, or how frequently I went to church or read the Bible, I could not seem to find freedom or healing. I could not break my patterns of destructive behavior. I had no idea that I had the power to control my thoughts and not



yield to the demands of my feelings. I was left thinking that I would be stuck in these patterns forever.

Finally, I got desperate enough to talk to a spiritual director who told me that the reason I did not seem to be making progress was because I was trying to modify my behavior from the outside in, rather than from the inside out. She explained to me that with the help of the Holy Spirit living in me, my history did not have to define my destiny. I could reset the trajectory of my life. That conversation changed everything for me and started me on a journey to health—body, soul, and spirit—that has lasted for 35 years so far.

In Matthew 22:37-39, Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself” (HCSB). Did you notice that we are to love God from the inside out? Jesus focused on our hearts, our souls, and our minds, because that is where true transformation happens. We can try to modify our behavior, but it usually will not last because nothing has changed in our hearts, souls, and minds, which are the control centers of our lives. If our hearts are broken, our souls wounded, and our minds tormented, we will not fulfill the greatest and most important commandment. Moreover, we will end up loving our neighbors just like we love ourselves, and by that I mean not very well. Can you see how vital it is that we understand the importance of having a constant reset?

I wish I had the book you are holding in your hands now back then. I cannot stress enough the importance of the 31 practices that Debra has unpacked for us. I found myself *Amen*-ing aloud every time Debra introduced us to a new habit with a short lesson and a practical activity, because after all these decades of following Jesus, I truly believe that the only difference between those who walk in the freedom and wholeness that Jesus has made available for us, and those who do not, is our willingness to actually practice these practices. Daily. There are no shortcuts, no quick-fix solutions, and I am grateful for a therapist who has not overpromised and underdelivered. Debra equips and empowers us to go deeper in order to truly change patterns, break habits, and find

healing and wholeness. Enjoy the journey, and keep practicing until the practice forms a new you.

With love,  
Christine Caine  
Founder, A21 and Propel Women



# START HERE

## IT'S TIME FOR A RESET

**T**here's probably something in your life you want to change. You wouldn't be here if there wasn't. The very fact that a person like you would pick up a book like this tells me, whether small or significant, there's an area of your life where you want to see growth, or healing, or perspective, or motivation. Some sort of progress. Some sort of change. Stop for a moment and think of what that thing might be. Hold it in your mind and in your heart as you read the next few pages. In fact, take it a step further and take a moment to write it out. Get a piece of paper and jot it down or pull up a note in your phone and type it out. Better yet, grab a pen and write it here in this book:

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Whatever it is, be aware of it. Tune into it for a few moments.

You're not alone in having something in your life you want to shift. In fact, that's a really good sign. I'd be more concerned if you couldn't think of anything. Wanting to change something in your life is evidence of humility and strength, of maturity and growth. It tells me that you see weak spots in your life and want to get better, stronger, healthier. You want a reset.

It's why, at the beginning of every New Year, so many people come up with a list of things they want to change. Areas in which they want to get better, stronger, healthier. Some of the most common resolutions are things like exercising more, saving money, losing weight, paying off debt, traveling, and spending more time with family. You might resonate with some of those goals, but yours might even run a little deeper: wasting less time, kicking a porn habit, being less distracted and more present, having less conflict in your relationships, eating less sugar, avoiding toxic relationships, spending less money, getting more involved in church, reading more books, or something else unique to you.

The problem with trying to change is that we often approach it in the wrong way. We try to adjust or tweak a few external behaviors—waking up earlier, eating fewer calories, going to the gym, buying more books—and hope they trigger some sort of long-term effect. But a few months into the new behavior, we almost inevitably find ourselves defaulting back to old habits. It doesn't matter how old you are, your occupation or career, your socioeconomic status, race, gender, or even how long you've been a Christian. We all have old patterns we can find ourselves returning to.

The apostle Paul himself struggled with this same behavior modification problem when he said, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do" (Romans 7:15 NKJV). We're not alone in the struggle. Repeating the same patterns. Drawn back into the same old cycles. Paul said it this way, "I do not understand what I do." Take note of that little phrase. Because when we don't understand *why* we do what we do, we'll find ourselves doing the same things again and again. Understanding why we do what we do, learning to dig a little deeper, is paramount to changing our behavior. There's no way around it.

In my work as a licensed professional counselor, working with thousands of clients in my years of practice, it has become overwhelmingly clear that the people who end up having the most success in their attempts to change and grow are the ones who have an awareness of what's going on deep down inside, underneath the surface. When we

can understand why we do what we do, we can finally begin to break free of patterns, habits, and behaviors that have been holding us back.

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We all have old patterns that we can find ourselves returning to.

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## **WHY WE DO IT**

When I was in college, I owned a lemon of a car. It was a dark green Volkswagen Jetta, and I loved it so much I even named it (and no, I'm not telling you the name...because it's dorky enough to name a car, much less speak aloud its name). But the funkiest things would happen as I was driving this car. The turn signals would switch on suddenly, or the windshield wipers would start wiping, or the emergency lights would start blinking. It was quite a doozy.

One freezing cold December morning, I was in a rush to get to finals. I had hit the snooze button one too many times and was a little late getting ready that morning. I ran down the stairs and out of the building to the parking lot, pulled out my car key, and frantically put it into the door lock. As I turned the key, the windows of my car suddenly rolled down and the car alarm started blaring loudly. To make matters worse, when I pulled the keys out of the lock, the entire lock cylinder came out of the car door and was stuck to my key! Now you know how serious I was when I said I owned a lemon of a car.

There I was, in the middle of a freezing cold parking lot, trying to get the lock cylinder off my key so I could start the car and drive to my final exams. Needless to say, I ended up driving to my finals that morning in 16-degree weather with all four windows rolled down, and my car alarm blaring the whole way there. The whole situation was a hot (actually, freezing cold) mess.

But here's the thing about my lemon of a car. I was smart enough to know that duct-taping the windows, supergluing the windshield wipers, and muffling the car alarm wouldn't be the ultimate fix my car

needed. Superficially changing those external issues wouldn't get to the root of the problem. I had to figure out what was going on underneath the surface if I actually wanted to turn my lemon into lemonade.

After having had enough of these funky incidents, I ended up taking my car to the shop. Turns out, my car wasn't born a lemon. Some crossed electrical wires were causing all the mishaps. You see, a few months before that, I'd asked a friend of mine to install a new stereo system for me, and it turned out he didn't really know what he was doing. He crossed some wires in the process, which eventually led to all the crazy malfunctions.

I don't know about you, but I can relate to some of that in my own life. Have you ever just tried, and tried, and tried to change—to do something different, to get something right, to do something better—and you just couldn't seem to do it? After a while, you start to think you're the problem—you're the lemon. You start wondering if there is something seriously wrong with you. Why can't you just do this one thing? Why do you feel so stuck?

Maybe there's a reason. Maybe, underneath the surface, we'll find that there are some wires crossed. I don't mean literal wires, or brain chemistry, or anything like that.<sup>1</sup> What I mean is this: *Somewhere along the way, what you believe got misconstrued and what you feel got misunderstood and what you did became misdirected.* And that, my friend, makes all the difference.

## THOUGHTS TO FEELINGS TO BEHAVIORS

Most people go about their lives unaware of this life-changing truth: thoughts lead to feelings, and feelings lead to behaviors. That's what's going on underneath the surface, in a split second, often before you're even aware of it. This is why trying to change your life starting with external behaviors alone will usually lead you to a dead end—because you're actually starting at the end! It's trying to set boundaries without getting to the root of why you tend to say yes to everything, trying to lose weight without getting to the root of your emotional eating, or trying to stop addictively binge-watching Netflix without getting to

the root of what's causing your underlying stress. Starting with external behaviors is like duct-taping the windows of my struggling Volkswagen instead of getting to the faulty wiring underneath the surface. Your thoughts are like that underlying wiring because they affect so many other parts of your body. What's happening in your mind is so key to the process of transformation and change, and knowledge of it (or lack thereof) ultimately leads to why some people succeed and others fail.

*What you think leads to how you feel.* Dwell in negative thinking long enough, and you'll start to feel negative. Feel negative long enough, and you'll start to default to negative behaviors. This is why so much of change happens by going underneath the surface. Getting to the roots, owning your thoughts, and understanding your feelings is what eventually leads to modifying your behaviors and ultimately changing your life. We can say it like this: thought change leads to life change.

## **IT'S TIME FOR A RESET**

Throughout the pages of this book, we're going to go on a life-changing journey. And I mean that literally. We're going to get comfortable with going under the surface—owning our thoughts, understanding our feelings, and changing our behaviors. We're going to stop doing things the way we've done them in the past and try something new. The word *reset* means to do something differently, and that's exactly what we're going to do. We're shutting down the factory settings, the autopilot, the default mode that we've been trained to live out of for so long, and we'll replace those with something new, something better, something healthier.

Each day, you'll be introduced to a new powerful habit—a practice that offers you a short lesson and practical activity to help you shift your perspective and reset the way you've done things in the past. Each of these practices will be a life-changing psychological principle rooted in God's life-giving truths. Let me assure you right up front: these habits won't be a once-and-done thing. In fact, some of them might be ones you have to come back to for a few days, repeat a few times, and revisit in different seasons of your life. You might even find this book



of practices is one you have to go through again and again throughout the ebb and flow of your life. It might even find a permanent place on your nightstand for when you need a quick refresher, you're feeling stuck, or something new pops up that you want to heal, deal with, or change. Because it's not the power of your will but the power of your practices that leads to the biggest changes in your life.

These practices are not the typical habits that you're used to, because they take you much deeper than basic external behavioral change. Some of these lessons will help you focus on owning your thoughts and beliefs, others on understanding and identifying your feelings, and others still on tuning in to why you behave the way you do. Because when your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are in sync, working together, you'll find that change is finally attainable, growth is actually possible, and healing is truly reachable.

Since getting healthy starts from the inside out, that's exactly where we're going to start. One step at a time, one day at a time, one practice at a time. I like the word *practice* because it's a reminder that applying these strategies takes time, effort, and intention. It's not a once-and-done thing, and neither is healing, growth, and change. The process of becoming healthy is something you have to work at—something you have to practice. You don't usually get it right the first time, but it's in the practice that you see things begin to shift.

So be patient, have grace with yourself, and get yourself ready. You're choosing to say no to the status quo, the default mode, the factory setting. You're choosing to do it differently this time around. And I'm honored to be taking this journey with you.

It's time for a *reset*.

Here we go.

# STOP BEFORE YOU START

## PAUSE

**T**here's a reason you picked up this book.

And the fact that you picked it up tells me a little something about you.

Because the kind of person who picks up a book like this is a person who's ready to do the work. A person who wants to make some changes in their life. A person who's ready for something new, something better, something different. A person who's curious, ready to learn. A person who's tired of trying and failing, who's ready for something different this time around. Something new. Something life changing.

And I want you to know that I like you already. You're my kind of person. The fact that you picked up this book shows me there's something different about you. You're here. You're motivated. You've showed up. You're ready to go.

You're on the starting line, ready to take off running. You get down low and put your hands on the pavement. You're waiting for your cue to start, and that epic song from *Chariots of Fire* starts playing in your head (or is that just me?). Which is why what I'm about to tell might throw off your game and mess with your head a little bit. But it has to be said.

*On your mark...*

*Get set...*

*Pause!*

Wait, what? Pause? Are you for real, Debra?

I know. That's not what you expected in a book where we're about to do some serious work. You're so ready to go! That intro chapter got you pumped up and ready! And just as you're about to hit Go and dive into the work of change, healing, and growth, I tell you to hit Pause.

It doesn't make sense. It seems so contradictory. Especially in our go, go, go society. "If you don't go fast and go far, you'll fall behind," they tell you. "If you stop to pause, you'll lose," they say. Pausing is so counterintuitive that we hardly do it. We see pausing as a weakness. A misstep. So, we fill our ears with noise, our minds with to-do lists, and our lives with distractions. We go, go, go—and we don't stop.

But here's what you need to understand down deep to your core before we start this whole thing: the *pause* is the start of the work. If we really want to make long-lasting changes in our lives, we have to stop before we start. We've got to take the time to hit pause, tune in. We've got to stop and listen to what God is saying, what He wants to do, and where He wants to take us. We've got to stop and make sure we're in step with Him before we go, because He knows best who we are, how we're doing, what we need, and what it looks like for us to run this race well. We have to stop so we can start well.

**TUNING OUT TO TUNE IN**

Have you ever fallen asleep to the TV playing in the background? Little by little, without you even realizing it's happening, your body becomes so accustomed to the background noise that you don't even hear it anymore. But here's the thing: the noise is still there. And your brain is still actively processing it. The background noise is actually wasting your energy and robbing you of a good night's sleep.

Something similar is happening to us even as we're wide awake. There can be so much activity in our lives that we don't even recognize it. Our bodies become numb to the noise. All the chaos around us is robbing us of our energy, focus, motivation, and attention without our even realizing it. Pausing is the way we reserve our energy, actively

blocking out the noise so we can focus on what's going on inside us and what we want to accomplish. We're tuning out what's going on around us so we can tune in to what's going on inside of us.

There are two types of noise, two types of activity, that keep you from focusing in and being attentive. The first is *outer noise*. Outer noise is simply all the external distractions that surround us: the background music as you're exercising, the pinging ring of the text message going off in your pocket as you're having a conversation, the radio blaring in the car on the drive to work, the kids laughing or fighting or playing in the background while you're making dinner, the office chatter as you're sitting in your cubicle trying to get work done. There's outer noise all around you, and taking a deliberate pause means intentionally turning off—silencing—the noises in your immediate environment. You might turn off your ringer, switch off the music or the TV, close your computer, and be intentional about getting away somewhere quiet, just to be still.

The second type of noise is *inner noise*. This is the one that's harder to control and more intrusive at times. It's the noise of your internal thoughts buzzing around in your mind. It's the to-do list you keep mentally working through, that problem at work you keep trying to solve, the conversation you keep replaying in your head, the worries and insecurities and doubts that keep interrupting your thought process. It's your mind's tendency to wander away from the moment, whether in the middle of a conversation, when you're trying to read a book, or as you're sitting down to pray, think, or even sleep.

Being deliberate to pause, to stop, to block out the noise isn't just a suggestion. It's a necessary part of healing and change.

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Pause for a moment...and listen. Hear exactly what God wants you to change in the present, understand where you've made mistakes in the past, and see what you're being called to do as you look to the future.

---

## THE POWER OF THE PAUSE

In the Bible we're introduced to Job, a man who was willing to learn, and grow, and heal. A man who was ready to rebuild his life after tragedy, loss, disappointment, and pain. And after Job had vented for a while, letting loose his own thoughts, feelings, and suggestions, God told him to "pause a moment...and listen" (Job 37:14 GNT).

Both psychology and spirituality testify to the power of the pause: the practice of stopping, of silencing the noise, of tuning in to what God is saying and what He wants to do. As one writer puts it, "Taking time to just be still and quiet gives your nervous system a chance to regain balance."<sup>1</sup> It gives your body and mind a chance to recalibrate, to literally reset. Science shows us that when you take the time to pause, to rest your brain from all the noise, your brain is doing some much-needed processing work.<sup>2</sup> It's doing some serious healing that it can't otherwise accomplish while you're in active mode. It's no wonder God specifically tells us to "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). We often read this verse as a compassionate suggestion from God, a "why don't you take a minute to relax" kind of thing. But it's not a suggestion. It's much stronger, and bolder, and more candid than that. The Hebrew word here isn't a suggestion as much as it is a command.<sup>3</sup> Stop what you're doing. Stop. Just stop.

Cease your striving. Quit going-going-going. Take the time to pause.

Because we can't start if we've never taken the time to stop. It's not only okay to pause; it's a prerequisite to change. So, pause for a moment and listen. Hear exactly what God wants you to change in the present, understand where you've made mistakes in the past, and see what you're being called to do as you look to the future. Learn to stop before you start. And give your brain the jump-start it needs to prepare for the process of healing.

Today you have one task and one task alone: take the time to pause. On your mark, get set, pause!

**VERSE FOR REFLECTION**

“Pause a moment, Job, and listen. Consider the wonderful things God does” (Job 37:14 GNT).

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**TODAY'S HABIT: PAUSE**

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1. Find a quiet room, a place with little to no background noise. Turn off your phone or leave it in another room. Sit in a comfortable chair with your feet flat on the ground.
2. Close your eyes and clear your mind. Be intentional about stilling your internal thoughts. Sit quietly for ten minutes. Deeply breathe in and out, five seconds with each inhale and exhale.
3. Pray out loud or internally: *Lord, thank You that You love and care for me and want what's best for my life! I'm so grateful that You're near, and that Your presence is right here with me on the ups and downs of the journey of healing. Speak to my heart in this moment, and show me: What do You want me to shift or change in my present life? What mistakes have I made in the past that You want me to take ownership of? What are You calling me to do in an effort to heal and grow as I look to the future?*
4. After pausing for a few moments, take the time to write down what you heard, felt, or experienced. A few things to remember: ten minutes of silence *feels* a lot longer than it sounds! For many of you, this may be your first time sitting quietly with no distractions for this long. Your mind will wander, and you'll continually have to redirect it back to a posture of pausing and listening. Tune in to how you are feeling. Do any specific words or phrases come to mind?

Any themes, ideas, or thoughts? Don't panic if you don't "hear" anything right away; your brain is still doing necessary work even in the pause. It will take practice, and you may have to repeat this practice often before you can still your wandering thoughts long enough to tune into God's Spirit. Consider taking three to five minutes to make this practice part of your weekly or even daily routine.