

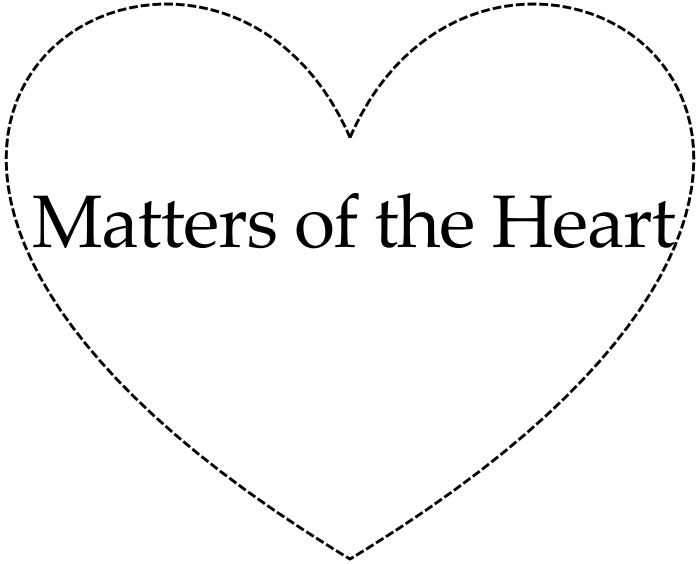
Matters of the

A large, textured wooden heart is the central focus. It is wrapped with several strands of dark, twisted barbed wire. The heart has a natural wood grain and is set against a soft, glowing red and pink circular background. The word 'heart' is written in white, lowercase, sans-serif font across the middle of the heart.

heart

ESSIE N SIBANDA

Matters of the Heart



Essie N Sibanda

Matters of the Heart

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Dedication

Matters of the Heart is dedicated to all the Barahope people who are change makers and world shapers. They are out seeking understanding and wisdom to foster meaningful relationships. I remember the first thing I was taught by my father was: “It does not change you to love people from where they are. As you find them, get down with them.

If they roll down in dust, get you chitenje, wrap yourself around in it and join them down in the dust”. The message to me was simple, do not be judgmental of any. Put yourself in other people’s shoes and love them from their point of view - this, in a nutshell, is what *Matters of the Heart* is about.

Matters of the Heart

This book is dedicated to mothers, Faustina Ndebvu Kanjipiti, and Neglector Ndlovu Sibanda; fathers Jefinati Pondapo Chatayika Kanjipiti and the late Timothy Hlasela Sibanda. These are what I call the roots that bring light into the branches and their shoots that set dreams ablaze. The Bible speaks about “David the man after God’s heart” and then I realised that, in most instances, we don’t notice the gifts within us. The heart which made me realise that matters of the heart are important to dissect is my husband, Maxwell Sibanda, a man with an “unchanging heart”.

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Introduction

Like an engine is to a car or the kitchen to a restaurant, so is the heart to a person's life – it is vital. The heart is the source of humanity's life issues and the writer in the book of Proverbs implores us to *“Keep our hear heart with all diligence, for out of it springs the issues of life.”* (Prov.4:23 (NKJV)).

We ought to, rightfully so, because often our life actions and behaviours are merely the manifestations of the heart and, as such, matters of the heart can never be ignored or underestimated. That is why when someone acts inhumane towards others, we often say that

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person has an evil heart, and when someone cares for others, we say they have a good heart or a heart of gold.

What this simply implies is that the heart is the engine to this so-called car of life. Like a restaurant, those on their seats wait to enjoy a good meal after all the hard work and braving the heat behind the scenes in the kitchen. It doesn't matter how cosy and welcoming the restaurant is, if the food coming out of the kitchen is not delicious, it's a matter of time before it goes out of business. There are so many things we can fake in life but eventually what is in the heart of a human being will eventually find its way to the surface and be manifested through our actions and behaviours.

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Matters of the Heart is a well thought out, heartfelt, rich, and free offering to the world. The book is brief and unravels some areas to which we ought to pay attention as individuals aiming to live our lives to the fullest. We cannot afford to ignore the heart because as one Bible writer so aptly puts it: '*As in water face reflects face, So a man's heart reveals the man.*' (Prov. 27:19)

Chapter 1 My Heartache

Isn't it amazing that one can fall in love? It's truly a paradox that one's heart can be attracted to another. Matters of the heart are very difficult to understand. Only the person who opens their heart to another understands this and can tell you which emotions are stimulated. Often, our hearts are open for love, and we fall in love. Our hearts have a natural inclination toward love and joy, yet in so doing, they become vulnerable and open to hurt. The heart is likely to hurt the most when it has fallen in love and is open to love.

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The fact is that there will be times when our hearts are hurt and there is pain which comes from being broken or hurt. This pain can only be explained by the person who is going through it.

Life is never simple; it has challenges, and it also has happy days.

Life is like a rollercoaster with a fair share of ups and downs!

To put it better, life is

like a rollercoaster with a fair share of ups and downs. It is easier for you to believe that love will last forever when you are in a relationship with somebody. When that relationship is lost prematurely, for some people it could cause much grief for a long period, and one might even jump into a rebound relationship to quickly replace the void left by such a loss.

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For some people, these moments or heartbreak can lead to grief and a prolonged time of sorrow and depression. Grief is a result of intimacy without which there is no reason for our hearts being broken or for people to feel sorrowful when there is a loss. There are some things that will cause pain, such as abuse, disappointment, hurt and hate. All this affects our hearts causing us to have wounds which, when stirred up, might send us into a self-destruction mode because of the pain in the heart.

It can be very painful to deal with our wounds because they may affect our relationships with other people. Unless we deal with the pain properly, it accumulates within our hearts, and it can resurface when we are cornered. Keeping

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these wounds within our hearts hinders us from enjoying life to the fullest because we will be holding onto rubbish and denying the great things which are supposed to occupy our hearts. When I say holding onto rubbish, I don't mean to disrespect your open wounds which are real and should be dealt with sensitively.

We always hear that time heals everything but, broken hearts are slow to heal. People learn to live with their wounds, taking each day as it comes, and the pain is re-ignited when some issues are stirred up and bring out the hidden gremlins. I remembered the pain of losing my uncle during another death in the family which triggered those old emotions. Grief recovery is

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about putting the pain into perspective and plodding on as best as you can.

Unresolved pain compromises the way you relate and interact with other people. The accumulation of that pain can affect one's spiritual life as well whether one is a Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, or whatever your religion may be. The pain in your heart hinders your spiritual growth. We all deal with pain in some way, good or bad. I am sure you have heard of a person who tried to kill themselves because a relationship didn't work out the way they thought it would.

Some people even stop eating because they are mourning for the loss of their relationship. Loss

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presents itself in different forms, and can be due to death, a relationship breakdown, a separation or divorce, and a loss of employment or business. All these challenges affect our hearts. That is why the heart is an important organ in our body.

The heart is delicate and can be easily broken, but it is hard to heal and, as such, we ought to guard it jealously. If your heart is bleeding and hurting, I want to offer you words of comfort that it will heal, and you will be alright. You need to speak to someone about it as this is an initial step to getting help and being healed.

Chapter 2 A Heart of Love

Love is usually a person and by that, I mean it is a person who is the embodiment of love, it is a person who carries love, and it is a person who can share love with another. Love is a place of understanding where we interact in hope and foster meaningful relationships. When I struggled with infertility, I thought that my husband and I could adopt a child. However, these issues were and are still complicated in my culture. I started thinking about it again after I saw on social media a picture of a baby who was dumped in Zimbabwe. I then decided to raise the issue of adoption in the African culture and

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start the discussion going. This was against the backdrop of me launching my book, *Tears of a barren womb*, a few weeks before. During the launch, a sister had raised the issue of baby dumping and I was wondering how I could get involved and make a difference. I didn't discuss cultural adoption in my book because it was not part of it, although I might have stated it in passing.

The question posed to me on my Facebook group was, "Why is it that in our culture we don't encourage adoption?" I am unable to answer this question alone because there are so many variables which come into play in our African culture. I am also aware that some African countries are far ahead and more

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progressive than where I come from. There are issues such as blood lines and ancestral spirits which must be considered. Simple things like marrying a woman who has her own child already is frowned upon because the family clan say they don't want to look after someone else's blood.

It does not sit well with me because we are the same culture who use the idiom "kana wazvuva sanzu wazvuva ne marara aro". The literal translation is, "when you pull a tree branch you bring in all the debris that it will sweep into your premises". This infers that when you marry someone you have accepted whatever they bring with them. When I see this, I understand why it is difficult for us to bring adoption into

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the family debate. That is where I think it is a matter of the state of our hearts.

What has made us so heartless? I find myself asking that question knowing there is no one who is going to answer me. It is simply a matter of the heart. The heart is there to give love to whoever it sees fit, blood line or not. When I spoke about the struggles couples go through with infertility, I was also remembering the pain in my heart that there are so many children who would have benefitted from our parenthood. It is heart-breaking that in my Southern African culture we don't take time to go out and adopt children who need parents. When I talk about the African culture, you should note that I am speaking against a backdrop of the country I am

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familiar with bearing in mind that the African continent has over fifty-four countries, according to the United Nations.

I thought that I should bring in the issue of the effect of bloodlines on this adoption issue. We are told that you can't keep somebody when you don't know where they are from. This means you don't know their ancestral spirit, or their totem and we are also worried about the curses in their blood line to which we might be oblivious. Just imagine our always worrying about keeping them. How can we then be happy to officially adopt? I have deeply reflected on adoption and asked myself why we didn't seriously discuss the topic in depth. We have over the years looked after people who we know

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their blood lines because we believe that blood is thicker than water. Most likely, we have a lot of reasons why we would do that instead of going out to “bring in a stray cat”, as it is called.

The current problem is that babies are being dumped due to economic hardships with even those so-called blood relatives looking aside. It appears that relatives are not taking in extra baggage. There is a total shift in what our culture used to be, which is being a brother’s keeper. People are more self-centred and worried about what’s in it for them. As a culture, we have stopped doing things for others as a service. We only do good to those from whom we can benefit. ‘What do I get out of this?’ is a question on everyone’s lips. We have taken the idiom,

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“kandiro enda kandiro dzoka” literally. This idiom means you give to whoever gives you in return. Unfortunately, it means those who are unable to give will be unable to receive.

In United Kingdom, in the olden days, they used to abandon babies near churches or hospitals. They were called ‘foundlings’ by those who later found and took care of them. In Zimbabwe, baby abandonment is on the increase due to the state of the country’s economy. While it happened when we were growing up, now it is more common due to the use of social media to powerfully highlight the problem. I have not heard this being part of the debate in our country, but it is a challenge to the nation’s public health. One of my concerns is the

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existence of so many orphanages which have a lot of children who are not in loving homes.

In the western world adoption appears to be encouraged although, I think you need money to do that. People need to start searching their hearts and open them

to these little crying voices. Why don't we

look at why we are not encouraging

people to adopt? As couples one might

want to adopt and

the take a child into such an environment because there is no unity between the parents.

Each heart sees things differently and you



Why are we not
encouraging
people to
adopt?



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cannot teach a heart to open to the unknown if it was never taught to do so. Matters of the heart are what causes us to love, and adoption is just a matter of loving somebody despite where they are coming from. The heart must be willing to go the extra mile by taking a bundle of joy, nurturing it and watching that child's heart become closer to perfection each day. Love cannot be forced but must be given freely. There are children who have come from their own biological households who never experienced love enough for it to overflow sufficiently and be offered to others.

We are faced with individuals who are gifts hidden within our communities with some needing a little polishing to make them better

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people who grow up to give back something bigger than you could ever imagine. It is just because it starts from the heart and out of a good one flows great love. Admittedly, it is easier to love when your cup is overflowing with self-love.

Chapter 3 A Fountain of Love

The reason I said we should examine and discuss the heart is because of its impact on our future and that of generations to come. Some people say it is our mindset which limits what we can do, and I also say, our mindset is a matter of the heart. What we think in our hearts is what we manifest and, essentially, this is who we are. Our mindset is affected by the stories we tell ourselves. I am going to discuss what I understand as the heart as well as the obvious biological fact that the heart is the physical organ in the chests of human beings and animals.

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I believe that family has nothing to do with bloodline if the heart is open to love. Love abides in the heart of everyone who can then let it out. The problem is that we have always tended to associate love with the sexual rather than with intimate relationships. Intimate means close, cherished, dear and personal. Love is a boundary-less feeling which is warm and perfect. Human beings have caused so many hearts to break and wounds to form so much so that we now think that the word love does not exist. But how can love not exist when it is a matter of the heart? Without the heart, we cannot truly say the word love. Without a heart, then it means you cannot experience love. One of the ways love is expressed is by placing

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oneself in a position of accepting someone, a child or adult, loving and nurturing them to growth, watching them fall, helping them up and dusting them off so that they can pick up from where they fell and move forward. The heart opens to train and support those unable to support themselves physically, emotionally, or financially. For example, when you mentor people at work, you need to be committed to the task, and to do so, you should have a heart and the patience to teach others new things.

If we're going to change the cultural mindset, it must start from the home which means dealing with the family clan who is adamant not to take care of anyone who is not from their bloodline. Once the clan is convinced that this is right and

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acceptable, then the idea is likely to catch on slowly by the next village and before you know it, it will spread like wildfire. This is what real love does; it spreads. But our view of love is limited by cultural connotations and protocols. While some might take in children as relatives in the guise of keeping them, they are likely to have hidden and less than honourable motives for taking those children. In such a situation, the creation of a system to document and monitor where adopted children go and their living conditions would benefit both the parents who have given up their children for one reason or the other, and also help the children settle more comfortably into their newfound families.

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But for this to happen, there must be a big change of heart on the part of the culture which will lead people to start looking at adopting children outside of their own blood lines. The idea that getting children from outside the blood lines bring bad luck is a heartless and selfish thought which has been put in place to safeguard the clan's lineage. What I am saying is that whenever someone tells me that they are unable to adopt a child, I believe that they are just saying they don't have the kind of love in their heart to love that child. So, in my opinion, we need to evolve and change for the better in our culture. If we are failing to change, then we must examine the state of our hearts.

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I thought we should discuss this from a standpoint of someone who has experienced infertility. Obviously, I didn't get to adopt any child and that's why I wrote the book titled, *Tears of a Barren Womb*. It was an expression of love never realised. Adoption is not something which can be done by an individual in an African marriage. Our marriages are community-based where you are married into a family clan which might mean you are answerable to more than just your spouse. If you must bring someone else into their clan, they need to know, assess the situation, and approve.

It doesn't really matter that you might have a yearning and a burning desire in your heart for a child which needs to be satisfied. Dialogue

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must take place within the clan, otherwise, you might be on your own if you decide to adopt. Some women have told me that they would love to adopt a child, however, culture limits them and there is no open discussion. This is further reason why we need to be opening the debate on adoption, culture and matters of the heart so that we can change these cultural beliefs.

We also need to understand that culture is ever evolving, therefore, we can't keep on attributing things we don't do right solely to culture. This is because it involves the people in the present period, the environment, and the generation which they are living in. Therefore, we are creating culture as we go along, picking the gold out of it and refining some aspects so that we

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become better people. We cannot keep looking back at what our forefathers did and think we should continue in the same path even if it is not ideal or beneficial. It is understandable that we have stopped doing some of the traditional things because culture itself has moved us from the old and forced us adopt the new. In the context of Zimbabwe (my home country), we need to open this debate urgently because, currently, there are so many children who have and are being abandoned because women are hit hard by economic hardships.

One evening, on social media TV, I saw a married woman selling her unborn child so that they could pay for an operation for their living child. The husband was there, and said, "Things

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are tough for me also because I am unable to find work. So, I suppose what my wife has decided is what will happen". He didn't even blink when he said this. I asked my husband, "When did we come to this?" He did not respond to my question. It took me back to the issue of infertility where it seems that women are the ones often doing whatever is possible to make everything work. At least, this is my opinion. I know in my heart that adoption would have enriched my life. Therefore, we need to talk about adoption and how we can be cured from those beliefs that are limiting us as a nation as well as restricting the personal development of many children who have a lot to give to others and society in general.

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When I say we need to open a discourse, it also means we need to be truthful, authentic and hear from all sides and all ages of the society. If we open a dialogue, we're allowing the topic to get into mainstream starting from the household, extending into the public domain and, finally, into politics. The household is a system in itself, after which comes the clan with its own system, and these individual systems with their beliefs are not influenced only by what the government says. Therefore we must start with the household, especially since charity ought to begin at home. Each clan has its own norms and values peculiar to its system which means the country has various systems which might not look or sound the same, and

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individuals are strongly influenced by their family's belief systems.

I am advocating for adoption so that we don't lose these children because we are mandated to leave a heritage for the next generation. Our lives should be like a relay race where we pass on the baton to the next generation. They will look after the subsequent generations which come after them and work on the heritage which they're supposed to leave for them. Those are the thoughts in my open heart. Adoption has been on my mind in different forms from I was a young girl. At that time, I wanted to build schools where children could attend and be allowed to create a future for themselves. My heart bleeds because currently I am not yet able

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to respond to this challenge. I know that He who can do the impossible will make a way soon. What I am out to do first is to initiate dialogue with a view to mending people's hearts so that they can be open to love.

Love gives selflessly. It doesn't matter who you are, where you are from or what you have done, love gives. I invite you all to enter this conversation. This is how we can understand what we are supposed to do as human beings. Don't forget to seek to understand first before trying to contribute because it is only when we understand what is going on, then are we able to foster meaningful relationships.

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Chapter 4 A Heart at Peace

Dreams usually reveal what is in our subconscious minds. What you have planted in the garden of your subconscious will produce fruits of which we might be unaware. Life is such an amazing gift that we are given daily like a dose of blood pressure medication. Breath is given to us on the other side of midnight every day so that we can become vessels of service. I say the mercies of the Creator are new every morning. Daily you are loaded with goodness and allowed a chance to breathe again and restart your life. I am grateful when I get to the other side of midnight knowing that I can start

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on a new clean page with the ability to add another story for that day. You can write a lot about yesterday, but do not spend time on that because you are given another day to be of help to those who need your gift so that they can move from a place of slumber and stagnation.

If you travel through the journey of life with broken hearts of anger, bitterness, unmet goals, and unreciprocated love, this will cause you to behave in ways where even you will never understand or know. Sometimes, you are running scared because of fear. You are afraid of what you did in the past so much so that it has put a vice grip on your progress. You worry about how people will see you and what they will say. You are afraid of even those things you

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cannot understand. This is how fear holds you at ransom. At other times, you hold onto what has been said to affect the people in your family tree for generations. For example, this could be depression, anxiety, and other such things that run in my family. Who said you cannot be your own person?

What you should be sure of is that you are not guaranteed to see tomorrow because that is just the way life is. You should be ready all the time because you don't know the day you will stop your earthly journey and your soul starts its own journey. Remember that we are all sojourners here on earth. My belief is that when that day comes, I will be at a place where my head will be stroked with love and my feet will

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feel the warmth of the embrace and love which will send me to sleep peacefully. What is your belief about this?

So many have been hurt by those who proclaimed to love and want to protect them. Some of you had your hearts broken by those who told you that they would never leave you. Life will always have its fair share of challenges, struggles, delays, valleys, and mountains. Unfortunately, these all affect our heart's health as I said in the beginning of this book. Maybe, we should look at the heart and understand what it means when people say you have a good or a bad heart.

Chapter 5 What is the Heart?

As a nurse, I know that physically the heart is an organ of the body which pumps blood in humans and animals alike. The heart pumps clean blood to the body and removes dirty blood. This is the simplest way I can explain what the physical heart does for us. But the matters of the heart that I want to talk about is more about the spiritual aspects which will either make us rich in relationships or poor at fostering meaningful ones.

As people, we get consumed by failures along the way of our life's journey and this affects our

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hearts. We go through losses, and this can bring darkness into our lives. I have had my fair share of losses, and these so overwhelmed me that I was unable to function in my daily activities as the iron curtain of darkness pressed onto my weary body. I was unable to do anything about it and it appeared that I was powerless within myself. That moment brought me to believe that my life was always filled with struggles at every turn. My heart dwelt on all things which had gone wrong in my life, and I became afraid that there was never going to be light at the end of the tunnel. If you have had struggles at every turn of life, it's hard to believe that things might change for the better.

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I was frozen at the place I had encamped and dwelt in the darkness of the clouds. The spirit within me had stopped dancing and my feet were frozen in the circle of emotions. There was no life coming through the feet to thaw them and prepare them to dance in the rain and the sunshine. I said it before, that life is not a dress rehearsal, indeed, it is not. It takes time and age to gain the wisdom and understanding that life is for living which means that you are also impacting other people's lives.

Living is neither stagnation nor camping; it is constant movement like the leaves on a tree in the different weather conditions. When the rain falls, the leaves are washed and refreshed; when the wind blows, they are blown away except

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they learn to hold onto the branches for dear life so that they don't fall and get swept away. Don't forget that some of the leaves will fall despite holding on and they will get carried by the same wind to places which they never thought about. That is how I see life; at most, you don't understand how you get to where you are at.

The same leaves are scorched by the sun and some of them get renewed while others fall, become dry and lose their lives as they are swept up and treated as garbage. The difference with human life is that no matter how life has treated you, if you are still breathing and alive, you are worth it. You should not think that the things of the past define who you are because, who you are is who you were before anything happened

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to you. You are pure spirit, therefore, allow yourself to dance in the rain, storm, wind, and the sunshine. You are pure and, in all seasons, hold onto that identity of purity and you will be amazed at what comes your way.

The unfortunate truth is that what has happened in our past can leave us with injured hearts. These wounds in our hearts might become problematic when they show up in our lives. Often, we can behave out of character because we are carrying these wounds which are so painful. Thus, unawares, they might show up in most areas of our lives like at work, in personal relationships and our other interactions with life. It has been said that you cannot give what you don't have which usually refers to love in

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that you cannot give someone love if you don't have it within yourself. The converse to this statement is that you give only what you have within you. If you have anger and bitterness this is what you give out. If you have love and laughter this is what you send forth. Such is the law of nature.

Chapter 6 Search the Heart

What does it mean to search our hearts? This is an instruction to self because you cannot expect someone else to search your heart to understand it and know where your wounds are. The physical examination of your heart is usually done by a medical doctor with the result that if you have some symptoms of things hindering your heart from proper functioning, then it will need looking at. For example, your heart can be missing a beat, not because you think you are in love with someone but, because it is failing to function the way it was biologically designed to do.

It may also be beating very fast, not because your thoughts have triggered it to do so, but because you are afraid. You therefore need a doctor to examine your heart to tell you what is physically wrong. There are so many gadgets and methods of investigation which can be employed to ascertain the health of a heart. For example, there are the electrocardiogram (ECG), exercise stress tests, X-rays, echocardiogram (ECHO), blood tests, coronary angiography, radionuclide tests, and MRI scans, among others. I am not going to go into detail of explaining what these tests are because I am not writing a paper for either nursing or medicine. However, these are some of the ways for

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physically checking on the health of a person's heart.

But how do we examine our heart which is not related to the physical fleshy organ called the biological pump? I think we need to look at how we define the heart that is not physical.

When I searched *Google* for the definition of heart, I found words which encouraged me to dig deeper into what the heart is. This also gave me an understanding of the heart in a way which I thought was relevant to what I am discussing here. For those who are not keen on the Bible, please bear with me as I examine its meaning of the word 'heart', and what we are going to decipher from it because it will reveal things which you and I might not have

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considered when we discuss human interpersonal relationships.

“The heart is the centre and seat of spiritual life, “the soul or mind, as it is the fountain and seat of the thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, affections, purposes, endeavours” (so in English heart, inner man, etc.)”

If you have already read my two previous books, you will remember that the topics were grief and loss. Although the types of loss were different, the grief which I was going through affected my heart. The definition for grief shows that it means much more than just loss through death, or loss of motherhood. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines grief as “deep sadness or

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deep and poignant distress". This means that anything that can cause the heart to go into deep sadness or distress will cause grief. Grief is not a good state to be in as it weighs our hearts down.

When I examined my heart, which is the centre and seat of my spiritual life, I noted these interesting facts. The heart controls all life in human beings. This might not sound right but hear me out on it. I'm sure there are people you know in the workplace who are always at loggerheads with their colleagues. In schools in the United Kingdom, there is much bullying going on and I am sure you can remember one school mate who either bullied you or your friend.

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Within the family, you are likely to find members who want to be in control of the variables all the time. You could then ask the question: "Why am I showing up the way I am in my workplace, at school, in my family and in other relationships? In the United Kingdom, a report by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) states that in 2019/20, 51% of all work-related ill health was due to stress, depression or anxiety and the stress triggers were workload and management support.

In my opinion, management support is relationship issues and so I call these matters of the heart. I know what pain in the heart does to you and your life. I am speaking from the standpoint of someone who walked wounded

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for many years. I have been on that journey of grief stemming from many issues which I don't have time to go into right now but, I showed up in different masks depending on the trigger, including anger, sadness, bitterness, and agitation.

Chapter 7 Spirituality

When I looked deeper into the thought that the heart as the centre and seat of spiritual life, I then realised that when we speak about spirituality it means we are relating to a higher being somewhere. It does not matter which religion you follow because I know that the African ancestors had strong spiritual rituals which made them relate to a higher being. These were the times they could reflect as a community or family on how they related with their families and neighbours being guided by their ancestral spirits to lead a fulfilling spiritual life. When we discuss spirituality, there might be people who

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associate it with religion, and they are ready to tell you not to talk to them about this. I supposed at this juncture, it is the right time to define the word 'spirituality' so that we know what they say it is. Since I am not an expert on spirituality, I need to find out what others say about it.

Dr Maya Spencer, writing for the Royal college of Psychiatrist, defined spirituality as:

“Spirituality involves the recognition of a feeling or sense or belief that there is something greater than myself, something more to being human than sensory experience and that the greater whole of which we are part is cosmic or divine in nature. Spirituality means knowing that our lives have significance in a context beyond a mundane

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everyday existence at the level of biological needs that drive selfishness and aggression. It means knowing that we are a significant part of a purposeful unfolding of Life in our universe” – Maya Spencer.

So, I have just been on a learning journey realising that the heart is stated to be the centre and seat of spiritual life. It is fair for me to conclude in my mind that the heart is responsible for human emotions, will or choice, and intelligence. Emotions are strong feelings which we have as human beings, for example, we feel sad when in grief or suffering loss, and we get angry when things don't go according to plan. When we have a loving, caring, and merry heart this is a display of the emotions. We can

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become fearful when our hearts have been broken, causing us to have a heavy and anguished heart. Emotions are the language of the heart which is manifested on the outside.

We are created with a will or freedom of choice which means that we are at liberty to do what we want and be who we want to be. The desires of our hearts will be realised by what we choose to follow; and the purposes of our heart will stem from the motives that are within the heart. We also have the choice to turn our hearts to something or someone who we love or want to engage with. The will gives us the power of choice in making a decision and it also determines our attitude. When we are grieving, we might choose to stay stagnant like I did. I

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stayed in the stagnation of loss; no one was holding me there. The thoughts I told myself led to the attitude that I adopted. I had the choice to either self-destruct or pick myself up and build up.

Human intelligence is what a lot of people would describe as the knowing, the whisper or a little still voice. There are times when you know that the individual you meet is not a good person not because someone has told you but because you can feel it within yourself. My father used to do that as someone came to our house. He would just say, that is a very bad person without having met him before.

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A lot of people rely on their intuition which is more like a knowing in the heart. When we are in church, someone might say I felt it in my spirit and then say something which is accurate. Then you are left wondering how they know that. We think and ponder in our heart. At times, we are in a place where we are not allowed to do what we should, like praying. Nevertheless, we can pray in our hearts. There is a Shona proverb which says: “chinonzi regera ndechiri mumaoko chiri mumoyo unofa nacho”. This means that “what you can let go is what’s in your hands but that which is in your heart, you will take it with you to your grave”.

Our hearts hide our beliefs, our love, our hurts, and heart breaks. On the other hand, we

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meditate in our hearts, and we can choose to meditate on those things which are pure, noble, perfect so that they can be manifested in the physical. You should know that what is on our minds become thoughts, our thoughts become words, our words become our actions, our actions become our character. Our character is creative, so we need to be mindful what thoughts you entertain in your heart. Don't doubt in your heart because once this happens, a doubting heart creates nothing.

When you are hurt and take that to heart, it will stay there until you decide to move it out from there. But whatever you have stored in your heart will show up in a way you will never forget. Take care of your heart, it is important to

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know its condition so that it does not show up in a negative way when you are interacting with others. This is how we foster meaningful relationships.

About the Author

Author, and specialist public health practitioner, Essie N. Sibanda is passionate about the environment and sustainable living. Essie is a midwife, and a nurse with a vision to eradicate inequalities in children's health and education by building schools and creative HUBS, thus, opening creativity in children and youths instead of relying on academic gifting only. Essie thrives on creating environments of empowerment where people can understand that creative power is in a man's thought. With a certificate in Christian counselling, she serves as a facilitator of human interaction to foster

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meaningful social and work relationships through introspection, reflection, and an examination of thought processes. Her purpose is to work with the nurturers of children to create emotionally intelligent human beings who are going to build great social and work relationships so that they become leaders who can move nations to the liberation of the mind leading to the creation of great self-sufficient nations.

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Books by Essie

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