

This Seemingly Harmless Detour Can Hinder Your Calling

Our attitudes often make us vulnerable to failure. But you don't have to become a casualty in spiritual warfare.

So many things in life can take our attention away from what God wants for us—busy schedules, difficult people, financial problems, the threat of terrorism and war, and let's not forget our personal drama of the week! But it's life's internal distractions—envy, loneliness, anger, bitterness, fear and rejection, among others—that can destroy us, if we allow them to.

It all boils down to this disturbing reality: Our fatal distractions come from within ourselves. It may very well be that the main distraction holding you back is you.

The apostle Paul described this problem when he wrote: "I love to do God's will, so far as my new nature is concerned; but there is something else deep within me, in my lower nature, that is at war with my mind and wins the fight and makes me a slave to the sin that is still within will free me from my slavery to this deadly lower nature? Thank God it has been done by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7:22-25, The Living Bible).

Self-destructive behaviors and habits can make you your own worst enemy. So can focusing so much on the lives of other people that you have no time to develop your own life.

This is like sitting in the bleachers instead of getting out on the field with the team. In the process, your life will waste away.

Paul issued this indictment against people who focused too much on what other people were doing: "For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding" (2 Cor. 10:12, NASB). That means we are dumb!

Paul certainly seemed to understand human nature. He was saying that when we compare ourselves with others and think we're better than someone else, we are "without understanding."

Not only do we need to get over other people, but we also need to get over ourselves. We need to stop worrying about others and get a life!

God made this clear. He tells us: "Choose life" (Deut. 30:19).

This means we have a decision to make. It is entirely up to us.

My grandmother, "Big Mama," would often say that we won't get to heaven by accident—we have to purpose to live right so we can get there. We all need to get a life, and we can choose a life that is free from the distractions that hinder our destiny.

CHOOSING OBEDIENCE Often when people buy a puppy, they send it to obedience school so it can learn how to obey its new master. In much the same way, God sends us to His "school of obedience" (see Heb. 5:7-9). Even Jesus learned about obedience in this school.

Though we understand what a school is, we may have trouble with the definition of obedience. To obey means to "follow the commands or guidance of; to conform to or comply with; to behave obediently."

The school where we learn obedience is not a natural school

but a spiritual one. God determines when you go to this school and what classes you take when He sends you there. This is the school where the diploma you get is a real testimony, and the degree you earn is an in-depth experience with God.

In God's school of obedience, He "prunes your branches." You learn to put away your mind-set, your ideas and your way, and you learn to truthfully say, "Lord, what would You have me do?"

When we are going through the school of obedience, one of the promises we can stand on is Jeremiah 33:3, "'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know'" (NKJV).

You have a need for instruction, and God is ready, willing and able to give it to you. When you say you want God to speak to you, He will. But if you demand that He speak a certain way, you may not hear what He has to say.

God may be speaking to you through your pastor on Sunday morning or when you're at Bible study on Wednesday night. God may use a conference speaker or your teenage son. He may even speak to you through the lives and examples of fellow believers.

If you are going to learn to deal effectively with the internal issues of self, you are going to have to pass through this school of obedience.

PROBLEM-SOLVING BY THE SPIRIT No matter how serious your problems are, the most important thing is the way you handle them. There are ways in which we deal with problems that can actually make matters worse. For example, when Jesus was confronted in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter responded in an inappropriate way by using his sword to cut off a soldier's ear (see Matt. 26:51).

Jesus told Peter, “‘Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword’” (v. 52). Peter dealt with the problem the only way he knew how—in the flesh.

One of the reasons Peter may have been ill-equipped to deal with the problem was that he had not yet received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, he resorted to using a physical, carnal weapon against those who were opposing Jesus.

Many of us today have an advantage in that we have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. However, if we are not controlled by the Spirit, we will resort to using carnal weapons as well.

In 2 Corinthians 10:3-4, Paul declared: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.”

Whatever problems you are facing, you can rejoice because the spiritual weapons of your warfare are mighty. And when you learn to put aside the internal distractions, you can use those powerful weapons more effectively for the kingdom of God.

Begin today to grow in the knowledge of God and who you are in Him. Like the caterpillar that emerges as a beautiful butterfly, let God work a divine metamorphosis in you.

When this happens inside you, you will no longer be your own worst enemy. And the attributes that God desires to manifest in your life will come to fruition.

How does this metamorphosis take place in our lives today? It happens as we behold the glory of the Lord! Consider the words of Paul: “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

We are being transformed into God's image. His divine metamorphosis changes us. It drives out all the undesirable elements of our personalities and replaces them with the attributes of God.

No one can spend quality time in the presence of God and not be changed. We can't experience genuine fellowship in His presence and then immediately turn around and lie to one another or speak harsh, ungodly words to one another (see James 3:10-12).

Our time with Him will be reflected in our becoming more like Him. When we experience a divine metamorphosis, we will experience change on the inside.

External change is like rearranging furniture in a room. You may get new drapes or change the color of the carpet, but it's still the same room.

Make sure your personal metamorphosis is internal, where it really matters, where it really counts. Look at your internal distractions realistically. Don't sugarcoat anything the Holy Spirit reveals to you.

Let this be a defining moment in your life—a moment in time when something profound, earth-shattering, even life-changing occurs. You will never be the same again.

NO TIME FOR DIVERSIONS We are living in the last days of God's timetable for the world. We have no time to waste on any distractions, fatal or otherwise.

Women have too vital a part to play in God's plan of salvation. We have too great a part to play in the deliverance of our families. We have too vital a role to play in ministry to other women and to the entire body of Christ.

The apostle Peter proclaimed on the Day of Pentecost, "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall

come to pass in the last days,' says God, 'That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy'" (Acts 2:16-17).

Women can't afford to be delayed, detoured or distracted from fulfilling their destinies. Even a short delay can be fatal to those following us, as well as to the generations at risk that will be impacted by our ministries.

The world declares, "Knowledge is power." That is true in the spiritual realm as well.

Satan wants to keep his subtle devices hidden. But the apostle Paul wrote, "We are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11).

Sometimes the enemy's devices are external, but these are not usually fatal to us. It is not our failing marriages or the heartbreak of being unequally yoked that will deter us from our destinies. Nor is it being unloved or in an abusive relationship.

It is not our work, our health or our commitment to elderly parents that can stress us to the point of missing God's purpose for our lives. No, the distractions that truly circumvent our futures come from within ourselves.

If you are facing any of the fatal internal distractions I mentioned, come before God in prayer right now, while the waters of your spirit are troubled. Call out the names of your distractions. Release them and align your life with the future God has promised you in Jeremiah 29:11.

In the name of Jesus, I pray that every distraction will be canceled by the power of the Holy Spirit. I declare healing and wholeness for your life.

You will be a person of purpose. You will retain your godly focus and operate in the gifts and callings the Lord has

placed on your life. The Spirit of God will stir up the gifts that He has given you, and you will go forth in the great army of women doing God's will and God's work for the kingdom.

Make your confession that you will not be distracted. See yourself with a glorious future, full of purpose and power.

You are a woman of destiny and an ambassador for Christ. You need not be distracted anymore!

Read a companion devotional.

Joyce L. Rodgers is an evangelist, conference speaker and the author of *Fatal Distractions* (Charisma House), from which this article is adapted.

Only One Thing Can Repair Your Broken Marriage

Whoever finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor of the Lord (Prov. 18:22, MEV).

My father once received a handsome Swiss watch from some good friends. After he had worn it for a while, the watch stopped working. When my mother took it to the local jewelry store, the repairman said he was very sorry, but he could not fix it. So Mother took it to another repairman and another. They all

said it was beyond mending.

Not too long after that, my mother happened to be going to Switzerland, so she tucked the broken watch into her bag. When she arrived, she arranged for the watch to be sent to the company that had made it, explaining that it had broken and no one could fix it.

Within a short period of time, she received the watch in the mail, running like new. The company that had crafted it had no trouble at all in making it work again.

Marriage is God's idea. He "crafted" it. If your marriage is broken, all the "repairmen" or counselors you take it to will be unable to fix it. Take it to the Creator who made it in the first place. He can make it work again.

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Walking in Holy Spirit Healing From Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse

Everyone wants the fairy tale, but fairy tales don't come easily when the marriage is battling to overcome the nightmare of past shame and betrayal. I know this firsthand. Early in my marriage, Neal and I faced struggles, including how to overcome sexual intimacy issues. There were abusive behaviors

that carried over into our parenting as well as the imminent threat of an extramarital affair and possibly divorce.

My self-destructive behavior stemmed from both the shame of being abused by a family member and being raped by a friend. My journey to healing and restored faith has been hard. I experienced severe difficulty accepting love, experiencing intimacy and feeling worthy. I also struggled in accepting forgiveness. Yet God is still a good Father. He had incredible gifts waiting for me, but it took faith and courage to trust God when my spirit had been so deeply wounded by so many in the past.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. I think we all know someone, a victim of abuse who needs a helping hand along with a word of encouragement. It takes amazing courage but survivors, like me, can step out of the shadows of their hurtful pasts and bring their stories to light. No part of this is easy. But God is faithful and He is always near to the brokenhearted.

Few problems are so pervasive yet shrouded in secrecy as domestic violence and sexual abuse. The statistics are staggering. Shockingly, nearly one in every four women is beaten or raped by a partner during adulthood. One in every four girls and nearly one in every six boys will be sexually abused before the age of 18. Until recent years, these widespread problems were rarely discussed in public.

I believe that survivors need to be empowered to give a healing voice to their hurtful pasts. For me, that healing began when I came to recognize the abuse I had suffered and was willing to face the hard truth. I had to understand that I was not alone and that my past abuse does not define me. I overcame being a victim, and now I'm in the process of realizing the full potential of God's providential and gracious hand on my life. With this understanding, I can now move forward with healing and hope.

When I created the I Have A Voice project video series, I relived the heartrending memories and feelings related to the abuse I endured by my grandfather. By allowing myself to be vulnerable and honest during the filming, I believe that others may be stirred to open up about their own "secret" and move past feelings of victimization to focus on the things gained through adversity. Abuse changes things forever, but healing is possible if the choice is made to overcome the victim mentality and work hard to become a survivor.

Earlier this year, through Hopeful Hearts Ministry, I conducted an online survey that revealed some alarming information regarding domestic abuse survivors. About 98 percent of survivors polled indicated that they had suffered abuse by a family member during childhood.

I found that women who have suffered through domestic violence in past relationships have lost nearly all sense of identity and the natural boundaries that come with simple dignity and self-respect. They suffered mental and psychological abuse before the abuse ever turned physical. The abuse is subtle, mental, verbal, emotional, slowly chipping away at self-confidence. It causes the victim to feel inferior, and the victim often questions their rights and boundaries. When someone chooses to step forward out of the shameful shadows of the past and stand up for themselves, it often turns physical for the perpetrator to obtain the upper hand and authority. This is typically when abuse turns physical, and then the victim realizes the true danger they are in.

Many survivors of domestic violence also suffered some form of mental and emotional abuse or neglect during their childhood. Support groups and self-defense courses can help empower survivors on their journey to healing.

One survivor I know recently shared with me: "Although I had finally walked out of the abusive relationship, I still carried the shame that is reinforced by the common

misconception that the victim is partly to blame for having stayed in the relationship. By talking about it and also filming the *I Have a Voice* video I walked out of the shame of the abuse.”

I am so proud of Jose and her new outlook on life. She has faced the pain of her past, and now she is moving forward. She has enrolled in graduate school to pursue a long time dream and has been an example of hope to everyone around her including her daughter.

The prevalence and the insidious nature of abuse are overwhelming. Most people don't realize that domestic violence rarely begins with actual violence. More often, it starts with emotional and verbal abuse. Ultimately, this dominance turns to violence when the victim begins to show signs of defiance. However, there is hope. You can be a bridge to hope for those facing the scourge of domestic violence by not only being aware of the plight they face, but sharing resources available to help. {eoa}

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Tearing Down Your Jericho Starts by Embracing This Truth

We are way too religious in our thinking.

Somehow as Christians we have decided if we run up against an obstacle that must mean God doesn't want us to go forward with what we *know* He's already told us. We don't take into consideration that we do have an enemy and it isn't God.

Keep Going

God will not close the door to whatever He has shown us to do. The enemy, though, loves to deceive us and make us think it's God who has put an obstacle in our paths. I want to submit that maybe God wants you to use a new strategy to defeat your enemy. Maybe He just wants you to continue walking around your Jericho until the walls fall down.

There was no city more formidable than Jericho. "Now Jericho was tightly secured before the children of Israel. There was no one leaving or entering."¹

I can just hear the Israelites whispering among themselves. "The walls are too tall. The city is too secure. There's no way we can get in. They are too strong for us. It must mean we should leave this one."

Listen to God

It's a good thing Joshua knew to listen to the voice of God. The Lord told him, "See, I have given Jericho, its king, and mighty men of valor into your hand."²

Joshua could have taken his people and moved on, but he knew they could not leave such a strong fortified city in the land. To do so would be abdicating all God had promised them. It would be akin to becoming captive once again.

Y'all know the crazy story of how God showed the people to walk around the city once a day for six days not saying a single word.³ If they were like Christians today they would have been murmuring and complaining about this ridiculous

display, thinking they should be storming the gates. And what's with all the horn blowing anyway?⁴

Closed Doors

Talk about closed doors. Each day the Israelites marched one time around the wall. Joshua just told them what to do each day and then they'd go back to the camp and wait for the next day. The gates were still tightly shut. The walls were still enormously tall. The fortifications were still solidly in place every day for six days.

By the seventh day, I'm sure the Israelites were getting pretty tired of this show of inaction. They might have been saying, "Really, march around the wall again? When are we getting in? When are the gates going to open?"

Here's the deal, though: God didn't want the gates to just open by the force of men. He wanted a dramatic and radical showing of His power. He wanted there to be no doubt about the fact that He had delivered into their hands the most difficult city they had encountered. And He had done it simply by the sound of their voices.

"When the people heard the trumpet sound, they shouted a loud battle cry, and the wall fell down. So the people went up into the city, one man after the other, and they captured it."⁵

What Is Your Jericho?

Now, I want to ask you: What is your Jericho? What is that thing that seems tightly shut up and you can get no entrance? What thing have you come up against that the doors have seemed so closed that you have said, "Well, it must not be God's will for me to get into that group or go on that weight loss change journey. It must be a sign. I'll just do nothing."

Did you ever think about it this way? Maybe there is an obstacle in the way or a closed door that you need to ask God

to open. Maybe He wants to show His power strong on your behalf. Maybe the enemy has closed the door to make you think it won't open for you.

The Door Will Open

The last few days have been some of the strongest prayer warfare days of my life. So many technical things beyond my control have been happening to my website that it is not humorous at all. I do what I can. I pray, contact the technical people to help, and I come against whatever seems to be blocking people from getting the deliverance they need through #KickWeight.

See, #KickWeight has a proven track record of helping God's people get free of the "weight and the sin that so easily entangles us."⁶ Those in the first session lost an amazing 408 pounds. It was beyond my wildest dreams for that group.

Shout for the Lord Has Given You the City

I developed this group just for those like I was when I felt I could submit to God in every way except what and how much I ate. As Christians we tend to be pretty good at staying away from drugs, alcohol, pornography and other sexual sins, but we can eat—and boy, do we.

We eat ourselves right into an early grave. We eat ourselves right into the devil's schemes.

Jesus said, "The thief does not come, except to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."⁷

When you are trying to follow Jesus with all your heart and step into the destiny and abundance He has for you, and you run up against a closed door, do not think it is God.

Investigate the source. Knock on the door and see if it opens.

March around it six times, but don't give up then. The seventh day is coming. "Shout the battle cry, for the Lord has given you the city!"⁸

¹ Joshua 6:1 MEV

² Joshua 6:2 MEV

³ Joshua 6:10

⁴ Joshua 6:13

⁵ Joshua 6:20 MEV

⁶ Hebrews 12:1 MEV

⁷ John 10:10 MEV

⁸ Joshua 6:16 AMP

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One Thing God Says You Need to Be Healed

So often, our Lord tells people if they believe, a certain thing will happen. But then why do people get upset when they are told they need to believe?

The Old Testament prophet Elisha told Naaman to go and dip seven times in the Jordan River so that he would be healed of leprosy. At first Naaman was furious, but then he did as he was told, and he came up healed of an incurable disease after he obeyed and did what he was told to do (2 Kings 5:1-14).

What is the main requirement for us to be healed? We are told we are to believe. And this request makes many Christians mad. Like Naaman, this is a pride issue. How dare anyone suggest that we might not believe as we ought to? Well, this is the main issue that prevents healing from coming forth—a lack of faith to believe for it.

Let's get this point straight: Just because we believe Jesus is our Savior doesn't automatically mean we believe Him for healing. Just like we need to be fully convinced that we need a Savior who can forgive us of our sins, we also need to be completely convinced that Jesus is our healer and He is able and willing to heal us too.

Over and over again as we read God's Word we see the same theme of faith rise up.

Romans 10:9-10 says, *"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and **believe in your heart** that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."*

Mark 16:17-18 tells us, *"**These signs will accompany those who***

believe: *In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."*

Matthew 21:22 declares, *"And whatever you ask in prayer, **if you believe, you will receive.**"*

In Luke 8:48, Jesus says to the woman with the issue of blood, *"Daughter, be of good cheer. **Your faith has made you well. Go in peace.**"*

In Luke 17:19, Jesus says to the one of the ten lepers that came back to thank Him for his healing, *"Rise, go your way. **Your faith has made you well.**"*

Again and again, we read it is our faith, our belief, that brings forth the miraculous. So let us not be offended when the Spirit of the Lord tells us that we need to have faith, or believe again.

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3 Mighty Weapons to Win the Spiritual Fight for Your Marriage

Don't you sometimes just want to *throw something*? Anything. At anybody. You know it won't fix things, but it might help you feel better!

That urge may be stronger than ever in your marriage. I get it. Your spouse doesn't meet your needs. You're frustrated. Miserable. Upset. Lonely. Maybe even angry. There's no connection happening between you. You feel as though you're sleeping with the enemy.

You struggle with blaming your spouse. If only they would care about you just a little, take a little initiative, quit nagging, or try listening for a change. And when you're not blaming your spouse, you see yourself as a complete failure. Why can't you make things work? Could there be something terribly wrong with you?

A million things could be affecting your marriage negatively: your spouse's mistakes, your own mistakes, differing personalities and expectations, lack of communication, busyness, financial or parenting hardships, sickness, extended family problems, and many more.

But none of these are the real enemy of your marriage.

And the enemy of your marriage is certainly *not* your spouse, regardless of how misguided or lazy or inconsiderate they may be.

Behind all the junk, the unrealistic media messages, the personal failings, the conflict and the busyness and the overwhelming problems life brings, there *is* someone who is out to destroy your marriage. He's behind the culture of divorce and infidelity, the addiction and abuse, and the apathy that often sets in when marriage misery takes root. **The enemy of your marriage is God's enemy—Satan and his kingdom.**

Naming the Enemy

As with our national security, so it is with your marriage—if you cannot identify and name your enemy, you cannot defeat him. As long as you focus on fighting each other or blaming

yourself, your marriage will continue to slide into further misery with each failed request for intimacy, each unmet expectation, each day spent hopelessly wishing your spouse would change.

But you can defeat the enemy of your marriage when you recognize that all the junk coming against you is coming from only one place: Satan and his kingdom.

Sure, you need to learn better communication. You need to learn how to forgive. Your spouse needs to do the same. The old baggage you're carrying through your marriage must be discarded. Sickness or money problems need to be dealt with. But when you see all these arrows as being sent from the same evil source you can fight them so much more effectively.

That does *not* mean you pray a few—or many—spiritual warfare prayers and everything magically gets better. It might! And there are many marriages where that kind of miracle does happen. But it may also mean that naming your enemy puts you, and hopefully your spouse, in a position to work together with God to build the kind of marriage that will be one of the greatest-ever arguments against the kingdom of darkness.

What About My Spouse?

Spiritual warfare in your marriage is not about praying for God to whip your spouse into shape because they have failed you! It's really not much about your spouse at all. It's about clearing the way for God to do the work He wants to do in both of you.

If your spouse is a believer, you may both be able to have this "light-bulb" moment about who your enemy really is, and align yourselves together to seek God in the process. Joining hands and fighting the enemy together—rather than directing your arrows at each other—will make a huge difference.

If your spouse is not a believer, your own spiritual warfare

can also make a difference. Whether or not your spouse changes, you can change. Your own response to your spouse can become wise, courageous, kind and loving—regardless of what they are or aren't doing. And perhaps in the process God will use you to draw your spouse closer to Himself.

How to Fight and Win

Applying spiritual warfare principles to your troubled marriage is not for the faint of heart! Remember, the enemy cares so much about your marriage because he knows how much destruction a troubled marriage can bring, and how much damage a healthy godly marriage can do to his kingdom of darkness.

Here's how you can make that fight successful.

1. Name your enemy.

It's easy to see your spouse as the enemy when they do—or don't do—whatever it is they do. It takes a decided effort to step outside of your immediate emotions and look behind it all to identify the problem, and the enemy himself.

Practice pausing when you find yourself getting upset at your spouse. Learn to ask yourself, "What's really going on here?" You will undoubtedly mess up and respond out of your human frustration, pain or anger. But when you do, just pause again and remember who your real enemy is—Satan and his kingdom.

2. Focus first on yourself.

Your spouse may well be a jerk, in one or many ways. That's not the point. Where have you responded poorly? Or enabled bad behavior? Or justified your own selfishness or anger because of your spouse's actions?

You know you can't change anyone but yourself. And in many ways you can't even do that. You need God's intervention in your own life right now. A friend of mine recommends asking this question: "Who is God calling you to be in your marriage

right now?" It's a good question to contemplate and pray about.

3. Pray with and for your spouse.

Prayer may not make your problem magically disappear. If it does, be grateful! But prayer is absolutely indispensable in defeating the enemy of your marriage. Remember, Jesus defeated Satan completely and for good; your role is to walk out that victory in your own circumstances.

Pray for God's direction in what He would have *you* do. Ask Him to bless your spouse. And if your spouse is willing, pray together, out loud if you can. Invite God to intervene in your marriage, and to make it the demonstration of the work only He can do in two peoples' lives.

Remember, the outcome does not only depend on you; it also depends on your spouse's response. They have free choice just as you do. But looking at your marriage problems from this perspective will be energizing and empowering, and will help you focus your energy on coming against the real enemy of your marriage rather than fighting each other.

You really can experience Christ's victory in your marriage.

Have you been fighting your spouse? Are you ready to join forces to fight the true enemy of your marriage? I'd love to hear from you if this perspective is helpful. Please let me know in the comments below.

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Why You Shouldn't Write Off the Person Who Hurt You

Like a woman cooking a large family meal, I have a pot on every burner right now. Front right is the woman who has given up on her husband. Back right is the child still going the wrong direction. Front left is the young woman who has given up on her family. Back left is the woman who sees no hope in herself.

I keep a spoon of prayer stirring in each pot where someone teeters on the edge of writing someone off.

According to the Free Dictionary by Farlex, the idiom "to write someone off" means:

- to give up on turning someone into something
- to give up on someone as a dead loss, waste of time, hopeless case, etc.

This usually comes with the phrase, *I'm done*.

I'm done with him.

I'm done with her.

Writing people off is tempting for three reasons:

- First, we are *worn out*. We are to-the-bone weary with trying to understand or help or forgive. Fatigue causes us to throw up our hands in defeat.
- Second, we have *no hope*. Nothing changed last year. Nothing has changed this year. Why in the world should we expect anything to be better next year?
- Third, we have *drifted from the gospel*. We have

forgotten that “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). We have forgotten that Christ pushed past his own weariness and pain and trudged on for the sake of love. We have forgotten that Christ held hope we could become whole and blameless.

I see you today in that difficult relationship, so weary you can hardly take a breath. So much pain has been inflicted that you feel you will never be healed. You’ve been in the middle of the relationship challenge for so long that you can’t lift your head up and imagine things could ever change. It seems impossible to you. It seems impossible to everyone else.

But there is the gospel.

As we pull up close to the gospel, we remember there is hope for every man to be transformed when the light of Christ shines into his darkness.

So what should you do with a person’s name?

If you determine not to write it off, then the alternative is to write the name on your heart. It’s a vulnerable place, the heart. But either way, there will be wounds, right?

It’s better to pull a person in close and suffer long than to shove him away.

The Surprising Question God Asks You Before He Heals You

“Do you want to be healed?” (John 5:6).

Jesus didn’t ask the man beside the pool of Bethesda, “Do you

need to be healed?” But “Do you want to be healed?” There was no preliminary introduction or social niceties or even casual conversation, just a Stranger asking a question that would seem to have had a very obvious answer. Surely, without question, anyone who was a paralytic would want to be able to walk.

But Jesus knew that it’s easy for physical weakness and mental depression and a lifetime of hopelessness to rob a man of his willingness to do anything about it. It would be less demanding in many ways for the man to be carried about by others. His paralysis absolved him from taking responsibility in life.

Jesus knows one of the greatest barriers to our faith is often our unwillingness to be made whole—our unwillingness to live without excuse for our spiritual smallness and immaturity. And so the question He asked was very relevant then and still is today: “Do you want to be healed?” {eoa}

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This Truth Can Sustain You When Your Willpower Runs Out

Transformation is this mysterious process that results in a “thorough or dynamic change in form or appearance.” Yep, I have transformed. There’s no doubt about it. But to do it, I had to admit my weakness in order to access His strength. It

was there all the time, but I had no access because I was trying to do it all!

Changing Habits

God is the author of change. If I am going to transform, I need Him. I must seek and deeply long for Him and for His strength, His power and His might. I must deeply long for His face and His presence continually (Ps. 105:4).

Changing a habit is pretty easy. We do it all the time, but transformation is a process of surrender, obedience and commitment.

Change is possible on willpower alone, for a short time. However, willpower runs out eventually even for those with the most determination. We need God's help in order for change to be lasting—in order for change to become transforming.

Transformation is a complete lifestyle change. It's not possible on self-effort alone. Most of us have been raised to pull ourselves up by the bootstraps, to make it on our own, to try harder, reach higher, fly longer. God has designed us to accomplish great and mighty things, but only if we recognize the Source of our ability to even breathe.

God's power to transform is available to all believers. It's actually a simple process, but for some it's oh so hard to step into.

I Am Weak

The Apostle Paul was pretty hard-headed, actually. I mean, God had to blind him and speak to him audibly to get him to believe. Then, later, God determined Paul needed a constant reminder of where his Source of power resided.

God told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

“For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10), but only through the strength of God. However, He won’t barge in and take over. He will patiently wait until I tell Him, “I just can’t do this. I need something only You can do, God.”

In order to be strong, I have to have Paul’s mindset. “So I take pleasure in weaknesses, in reproaches, in hardships, in persecutions, and in distresses for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10). And then my weakness becomes a portal for God’s strength! How very cool is that?

Toward Transformation

After I surrender to Him, though, there is another step. It’s not enough just to lay on the floor feeling weak. We have to seek and deeply long for His face. This is far from an idle process. It is active. It is ongoing and it is necessary to obtain total transformation.

Moses saw God’s face. When He returned from that face-to-face encounter, his face shone so brightly he had to put a veil over it (2 Cor. 3:12-15). Ah, but God tells us today that there is no veil necessary. He will be with us continually if we want Him to, if we seek Him.

Seeking Has Results

Here’s the thing about seeking God: Once we find Him, we must go with Him wherever He goes and do whatever He does. If not, we have ceased to seek Him. Seeking is not only an action in and of itself, but it results in an action.

Are you seeking? Are you deeply longing for His face? Do you really want His presence? Are you willing to do what He wants instead of demanding He do what you want?

Transformation is a process for sure. It begins with total surrender of everything, especially the things we think we

can't live without, to God. Nothing happens without surrender. If we seek Him and long deeply for Him, surrender will naturally be the next step. {eoa}

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Flip Satan's Disparaging Words Around With These Truths

When the enemy says you can't, profess that you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. When your mind thinks this is impossible, verbalize the truth that with God all things are possible. And if the medical report reveals death, with faith insist that you will not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord (Phil. 4:13; Matt. 19:26; Ps. 118:17).

You see, our enemy, Satan, and even human knowledge and reasoning is bent toward the negative and against the wisdom and promise of God. When I hear the enemy whisper negative thoughts filled with fear and failure, I know he's the one who is afraid of the success of my God in my life. And even negative human knowledge and reasoning goes against the grain of my spirit. When I hear it, it's like someone scratching their fingernails down a chalkboard. It makes me cringe, and

from deep within me faith arises, rejects the negative lies and declares the truth of God's Word that produces positive changes in every situation.

What you may not understand is that, as child of the King, you possess supernatural power to change the negative report or situation into a positive witness that glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ.

What's the first step to change the devil's negative into God's positive? Use the power of the spoken word! Speak life into death and bold success in place of fearful failure. Instead of confessing that the situation is impossible, broadcast with words of faith, "With God, everything is possible."

This is the first step to transform Satan's negative lie into Jesus' positive promise.

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