

Child Shaming

I remember the first time I saw this. A father discovered that his daughter, using profanity, said something very mean about him on her Facebook account. He took her laptop and recorded a message to her Facebook friends, after which he took a gun and shot the computer.

It went viral.

And like many others, I thought to myself “Right on! That’ll teach her!”

Soon afterward, I would often see pictures appear in my feed depicting children being **punished** by being made to hold signs – sometimes on street corners – broadcasting the nature of their crime.

That is when it occurred to me that this kind of **punishment** (which should not be mistaken for **discipline**) doesn’t teach them what I had originally thought it would.

Oh – it teaches them some things.

It teaches them what bitterness tastes like.

It teaches them that their actions are more important than the character from which their actions grow.

It teaches them to suppress the motivation behind their actions.

But is that truly what we want our children to learn?

Child shaming doesn’t teach a child to evaluate why he steals, lies, cheats, uses profanity, skips school, or any of the other myriad of things that earned him a mean sign, a street corner and a viral picture on Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest.

For a child to learn to evaluate the nature of his actions, his parents must have to want to engage in the process of

teaching him, training him, and spending the time and energy necessary to enter his world if they will hope to understand that these actions are merely symptoms of a deeper problem.

It does your child no favors to resolve stealing if he still has a heart that is filled with envy. He will not learn to stop lying if never learns to deal with his pride. He will not learn to stop using profanity if he never learns to confront the root of his anger or rebellion.

This is true **discipline**. **Discipline** teaches and trains a child that it is what is in their heart that matters most. For if they are to be the spiritual and moral leaders of their generation, they must first have a heart full of God's Word and desire good **character**.

Oh yes, we can mold and modify behavior. But if proper behavior doesn't stem from a heart that is right with God, we have only raised puppets destined for hell!

Is this the picture of our Heavenly Father?

Does He shame us? Even when we willfully sin?

Does He make a spectacle and open shame of us?

Is not the purpose of true discipline to lovingly guide our children to repentance and a change of heart?

Does not the Word say that it is His kindness that leads us to repentance?

Are we not the first picture of God they have in their little lives? Is this not how they will relate to Him as adults?

But why have parents resorted to such extreme measures of punishment? Are they desperate? Do they feel they have exhausted every other form of punishment and see this as their last resort?

Perhaps.

But from my vantage point it simply appears that they are narcissists looking for a bunch of likes, shares, and comments applauding them for their “Extreme Punishment”.

For why else would a loving parent heap shame upon their dear child, photograph it, and then plaster it all over the Internet where it is forever embedded to hound them for the rest of their days.

It grieves me that we are raising a generation of children who are being taught that the consequences given them from the ones who ought to love them most are nothing but shame and mockery.

Rosilind Jukic is an American girl married to a Bosnian guy who lives in a small village just outside of Zagreb. They have two crazy boys 3 and under who are as opposite as boys can be. When Rosilind isn't writing, she is dreaming up recipes and searching for ways to organize her home better. You can find her at [A Little R & R](#), where she writes about missions, marriage and family, toddler activities, and her recipes.

The One Bible Verse That Terrifies Me

My husband and I tell the story differently.

He claims he had just ridden his bicycle home from a friend's house. The garage door was closed, so he propped the bike against the wall of the house. The bike slipped, so he bent over to pick it up.

I claim I was talking on the phone when I heard a mysterious scratching against the outside of the house. It was scary, and I didn't know what it was. I went to the window to look, and

all of a sudden a man's face popped up and stared at me through the window. Only my worst fear—a man looking at me through the window when I'm in the house alone.

We agree on the part where I screamed bloody murder and yelled at him in scared anger for the next 10 minutes and where he yelled back that he was only propping up his bike, for Pete's sake.

Great moments in marriage. Mark it down.

There's a verse in Scripture that brings up a similar skin-crawling fear in me.

Cain has offered an unfavorable sacrifice to God and now is angry at God. God sees Cain's downcast face and says to him:

"If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it" (Gen. 4:7, NIV).

Maybe this verse is only terrifying for girls who fear what could be outside in the dark. (Do you run and close all the curtains like I do when your husband is out of town?)

If I do not do what is right, sin is crouching at my door.

Makes the hairs on the back of my neck stand up.

Are you in grave danger of doing the wrong thing?

Sometimes I can feel it, the hot breath of sin. When I do something well—when I have a brilliant moment of success—I can see pride crouched low and leaning forward, right there on my own front porch. Waiting for me to open the door. (Cue fists pounding a driving beat on the low end of the piano keys.) It desires to have me, but I must master it.

Girls, be vigilant. Know what waits in the dark to destroy you, and throw the deadbolt.

Christy Fitzwater is the author of *A Study of Psalm 25: Seven Actions to Take When Life Gets Hard*. She is a blogger, pastor's wife and mom of two teenagers and resides in Montana. Visit ChristyFitzwater.com for more information about her ministry.

2014: The Year of God's Presence

"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20, NIV).

None of us knows what the **new year** holds. Will my daddy move to our Father's house? Will my husband get stronger or more feeble? Will the stock market crash or keep soaring? Will the Middle East erupt in a war that drags the rest of the world into it? All of the **uncertainty** can give us pause and cause us to step gingerly into the new year. Except for one fact. One certainty. One shining, undisputable truth. God is there!

This confident **hope** is eloquently expressed in the following note that was written by pastor Farshid Fathi. Pastor Farshid is incarcerated in the notorious Evin Prison in Tehran, Iran, because of "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 1:9). His thankfulness for the past, his clear vision for the future and his heartfelt joy in the present have been such a personal challenge to me that I wanted to share his words with you:

"Dear brothers and sisters,

"We are celebrating Christmas in prison with honor and unexplainable joy in Christ.

“2013 is going to end, and we are very thankful to the Lord for everything we were given this year. I had called 2013 ‘the year of revelation.’ Now I am very excited because I am calling 2014 ‘the year of God’s presence.’

“God calls us to walk before Him and be blameless, as he said to Abraham. So far, walking before Him is very sweet and so exciting. It is filled with great endurance, afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, sleepless nights, hunger, purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, truthful speech and the power of God.

“So my dear brothers and sisters, if you read this, be ready for a very exciting journey in 2014.

“Thank you so much for remembering me in your prayers after 1,100 days.

“With blessings in Christ, your brother, Farshid”

Please do not cease to pray for **Pastor Farshid, Pastor Saeed**, and others around the world who are paying a supreme price for their **devotion** and service to Jesus.

*Called “the best preacher in the family” by her father, Billy Graham, **Anne Graham Lotz** speaks around the globe with the wisdom and authority of years spent studying God’s Word.*

The New York Times named Anne one of the five most influential evangelists of her generation. She’s been profiled on 60 Minutes and has appeared on TV programs such as Larry King Live, The Today Show, and Hannity Live. Her “Just Give Me Jesus” revivals have been held in more than 30 cities in 12 different countries to hundreds of thousands of attendees.

Anne is a best-selling and award-winning author. Her most recent releases are [Wounded by God’s People](#), [Fixing My Eyes on Jesus](#), [Expecting to See Jesus](#) and her first children’s

book, [Heaven: God's Promise for Me](#). She is the President of [AnGel Ministries](#) in Raleigh, N.C.

Grabbing the One Thing That's Important to God

Editor's Note: Bo Stern's husband, Steve, has been diagnosed with ALS, an incurable degenerative disease.

This morning in my office, I'm listening to St. Matthew Passion, BWV 244 , Aria "Erbarme Dich" by Bach. It is a beautiful, haunting aria and in the voice of the soprano I hear longing and loneliness and passion and strength and weakness and so much beauty. What I don't hear is distraction. She is not singing while ironing or cooking or checking her email. She is singing as if singing this aria is the first and last thing she will ever do. She is singing like the words are her life blood and the melody her oxygen – like she was born to sing this one song at exactly this moment.

On this, my first day back to work in ten days, I am so envious of this woman I do not know. Though it's lovely, I don't long for her ability to sing. I long for her ability to focus.

I am re-entering a spinning world. I could list the things on my plate, but it would only read whiny and I know we're all busier than we'd like to be. Do you ever feel that your life is surrounded by wind chimes and one of them is always, always ringing? Just when you get them all stilled and stopped, a slight gust of wind sets them all into motion once again. That's where I'm at right now. Steve. Work. Kids. Writing. Speaking. Blogging. Creating. Building relationships. Ring, ring, ring. Sometimes I hear them in my sleep and I long to love each one separately, individually, with the time and

attention they deserve.

I want to blog more consistently. I want to have more quality coffee dates with friends I love and with friends I don't yet know. I want to write another book. I want to promote the new book coming out...tomorrow (oh. my. word!) I want to say yes to every single invitation to speak because I know that people are longing for hope in the middle of their battles.

However,

I cannot.

I must focus and focus hard on the One Thing that is set above them all right now. I know the answer here should be Jesus because it sounds good and also because He is, most certainly the ONE THING worth pursuing, but in terms of my life purpose right now, the name at the top of the list is Steve Stern. He needs me. He needs my family. He needs our focus as he enters a new stretch of road on this journey he on. This illness is an interesting thing because it is one journey that a person must and also cannot walk alone.

So, this morning as I looked at my list and heard the faint ringing of wind chimes in the background of everything else, I whispered to them the same thing Jesus has been whispering to me, "Be still." This is time we will not get back again.

This is Steve's one, true, beautiful life and I am here to witness it and to make it as beautiful as it can be. This, for now, is my life's work. My most important creative endeavor. And if the book doesn't sell and the blog gets dusty and lonely and my words all run out...I will still know that I have invested my energy in the right One Thing.

This isn't goodbye – I promise. I'm still writing and dreaming and speaking at Westside Church regularly (and I have said yes to a handful of conferences which I will post on the calendar soon!) But I am pulling in the reins on my life in an attempt to harness the notes of this aria into something that I hope will make Jesus proud and famous. My deepest desire is that in

the end it will be said of us: sickness put up an fierce fight, but love won.

[Bo Stern](#) is a blogger and author of *Beautiful Battlegrounds* (NavPress). She knows the most beautiful things can come out of the hardest times. Her Goliath came in the form of her husband's terminal illness, a battle they are still fighting with the help of their four children, a veritable army of friends, and our extraordinary God. Bo is a teaching pastor at Westside Church in Bend, Oregon.

When You Feel Weak

A friend made herself comfortable in my living room a few evenings ago, delighted to discover the loveseat she chose to sit in was actually a rocker. (I was a little worried she might still be there come morning.) The other girls filled mugs with decaf coffee, and soon we were all cozied up in the living room, talking about everything the way women do. I read a few verses of Scripture, and we focused the conversation on what it means to think of God all day long.

It was then that my friend in the rocker said she often stands in her house or at work and wonders that God has entrusted her with the responsibility of all of it. She often doesn't feel like she knows what she's doing.

Those were some of the most encouraging words I have heard in a long time.

I often feel that way, too –that I don't know what I'm doing.

I don't know how to help my lanky 16-year-old be a godly man. I don't know how to influence those 40 students to work hard and have integrity. I don't know how to communicate to my husband what a good shepherd he is to our church family. I don't know how to convince my friend how lost I would feel

without her. I don't know how I can go all day pleasing God with every decision I make and every word that comes out of my mouth.

I am weak and lacking.

Paul says, "I delight in weaknesses." (2 Corinthians 12:10 NIV)

Delight: To be pleased with something.

There are things that bring a smile to my face, like when I receive a flirty wink from my husband from across the room. I'm trying to use my imagination to picture myself smiling in that same way over my weaknesses.

Paul says, "I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." (2 Corinthians 12:10 NIV)

Ah, there is the reason to smile. There is the delight. The problem is when I only feel my weakness. The end. And I do not carry out the thought all the way, to acknowledging the power of Christ available to me.

So I pen this letter:

Dear weaknesses,

I was trying to evict you because you are making a mess of things and because I simply do not like you, but apparently Christ wants to do a remodel with you still living here. I am going to stop berating you and instead brag to my friends that you and I are roomies, but I am seriously hoping Christ knows what he's doing in letting you stay here, when he has made such grandiose promises about how faultless this place will be when he is done with it.

My friends, do you feel weak, too? Please say yes.

Christy Fitzwater is the author of *A Study of Psalm 25: Seven Actions to Take When Life Gets Hard*. She is a blogger, pastor's wife and mom of two teenagers and resides in Montana.

Visit ChristyFitzwater.com for more information about her ministry.

The Faith (and Justice) Behind Prison Reform

While funding for a new study of the federal prison system has yet to be approved, Craig DeRoche, president of the Washington, D.C.-based Justice Fellowship and former speaker of the Michigan House of Representatives, is encouraged to see a broad coalition of organizations lined up behind the proposal.

Rep. Frank Wolf, R-Va., has proposed a \$1 million appropriation to establish a nine-member task force to review challenges facing the federal corrections system, which houses more than 200,000 inmates.

“God has blessed Justice Fellowship with the ability to convene an extraordinarily diverse group of interests representing the full political spectrum,” DeRoche says. “Who would have thought Heritage Forum, the NAACP and the ACLU would all welcome a Christian perspective on prison reform?”

If approved, the task force will be named after Charles Colson, a one-time White House aide who served time for his role in the 1970s Watergate scandal. After accepting Christ in confinement, Colson organized Prison Fellowship in 1976. He set up Justice Fellowship—the reform arm of the organization that addresses injustices in the criminal justice system—in 1983. Justice Fellowship advocates for reform on such issues as sentencing, capital punishment, religious freedom and prison violence.

DeRoche says his agency has maintained a fairly low profile until recently. In the past, he says government leaders and others weren't ready for the organization's message of using biblically based principles to change the system.

"Colson was a kind of prophet," DeRoche says. "[He said] that administering criminal justice outside of values and principles rooted in Scripture would lead to failure."

Today, DeRoche says atheists, academics and other experts recognize that purely secular methods fail to change inmates' behavior—and DeRoche cites his own experience as evidence. Once the youngest statewide Republican leader ever elected in the nation, a pair of arrests over a four-month period in 2010 exposed his secret battle with alcoholism.

Born again while awaiting a court appearance, DeRoche confessed his guilt and avoided jail time.

"That's how I got out of jail—by being honest," DeRoche says. "God gave me new life in Him." —*Ken Walker*

Harry R. Jackson: I Used To Be Black

Occasionally, I like to shock a congregation by joking, "I used to be black; then I became a Christian." What I mean, of course, is not that anything about my race or ethnicity has changed, nor that I feel anything but joy in who **God** has made me. But it is my faith—not my race—that ultimately defines who I am. My **relationship with God** is the source of my **identity**.

I believe that most of the social problems we face today are

rooted in an **identity crisis**. When we don't know who we are, we can never understand what is expected of us or how we are supposed to behave. From a cultural perspective, we can see steady erosion in our understanding of what it means to be a responsible member of society that began with the Baby Boomers and has continued into the Millennial Generation. Being rebellious once meant being an outcast; now rebels are celebrated as heroes simply for failing to conform.

Our **personal identity** comes first from whom we belong to: our family and our community. Later, our **identity** may develop to include our profession, accomplishments, or even our hobbies and interests. And of course for billions like me, faith undergirds it all, giving every aspect of my identity meaning and significance. But many others, belonging to nothing, define themselves by their rebellion.

Divorce and out-of-wedlock childbearing have resulted in millions of individuals missing that crucial first step. They never experience the security that comes from belonging to a loving group larger than themselves. Over one third of American children are growing up in fatherless homes. Multiple studies (including many from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) confirm that children raised without their fathers are far more likely to drop out of school, commit crimes, abuse drugs and commit suicide.

Even two modern presidents—Bill Clinton and Barack Obama—grew up without their fathers. Writing in *Parade Magazine* on Father's Day 2009, President Obama said this:

In many ways, I came to understand the importance of fatherhood through its absence—both in my life and in the lives of others. I came to understand that the hole a man leaves when he abandons his responsibility to his children is one that no government can fill. We can do everything possible to provide good jobs and good schools and safe streets for our kids, but it will never be enough to fully make up the

difference. That is why we need fathers to step up, to realize that their job does not end at conception; that what makes you a man is not the ability to have a child but the courage to raise one.

That “hole” (or “father wound”) produces a lack of identity, but for decades it has been primarily viewed as a socio-economic issue. It is true that children growing up without their fathers are also far more likely to live in poverty than children who live with both parents. However, as President Obama pointed out, addressing poverty alone will not fill the hole left by an absent father. According to a 1990 study by the Charles F. Kettering Foundation, children from low-income, two-parent families perform better in school than children from high-income, single-parent homes. If we want to raise achievement and reduce crime and suffering, we must address the true source of these problems.

Although both boys and girls suffer when fathers abandon them, boys in particular struggle without a consistent model of who they are supposed to be. This has resulted in what many believe is a nationwide male-identity crisis. In a *Psychology Today* article entitled “Our Male Identity Crisis: What Will Happen to Men?” Ray B. Williams wrote, “In a post-modern world lacking clear-cut borders and distinctions, it has been difficult to know what it means to be a man and even harder to feel good about being one.”

Many of these young men are set adrift, looking for a purpose and settling for anything that feels like a family. We shouldn't be surprised when they become part of a peer group with self-destructive tendencies or even a member of a gang centered on criminal activity.

The good news is that there is hope, if we are willing to face the true source of the problem. To address socio-economic disparities alone will be to continue to offer a Band-Aid for a gaping wound. We must admit the central importance of

traditional marriage—the union of a father and a mother—to the stability and health of children. Only when we strengthen marriage will we be able to strengthen our communities. And we must cease the secularist hostility toward faith in God—the Heavenly Father who is the only One who can ever truly make up for the failings of an earthly one.

Harry R. Jackson Jr. is senior pastor of 3,000-member Hope Christian Church in the nation's capital. Jackson, who earned an MBA from Harvard, is a best-selling author and popular conference speaker. He leads the [High-Impact Leadership Coalition](#).

Weight Loss, Sin and the Metal Lawn Chair

One minute I am sitting in the green metal lawn chair in my uncle's front yard, talking and laughing with my aunt while cousins and our children play hide and go seek.

The next minute I feel the collapse of the rounded legs as they slowly lower me to the ground.

Even though I'm sure the sight of a 430-pound woman sitting atop a pile of metal is funny, all laughter stops. My uncle jumps to help me.

Being super morbidly obese I always try to blend into the wallpaper and not make more of a spectacle of myself than I already am.

This day, the proverbial cat has been let out of the bag.

I'm fat, really fat. I break lawn chairs like twigs. I can't be trusted to sit anywhere.

My uncle brings me a sturdy dining room chair, which I eye suspiciously. My aunt pats my arm and tells me it's fine. She never liked that old chair anyway.

I am embarrassed for the rest of the day. I don't dare eat the three platefuls I would normally eat at lunch. I take only one piece of cake though I'd love to pile my plate with the four other desserts as well.

I know I have a problem. I deny it constantly. I try to push it under the rug. This day I cannot ignore the obvious.

I am a really good Christian. I have never tasted an alcoholic beverage except that one time a "friend" put a little vodka in my orange juice just so I couldn't say I'd never drank alcohol before. I've never done drugs, smoked cigarettes, had sex before marriage, gone to an x-rated movie, watched or listened to pornography. I go to church every Sunday. I teach Sunday School and small groups. I work in ministry. And I am a glutton.

Pastors don't talk about such things because they like their sweets and breads as much as I do. Mine is the sanctified sin I don't have to worry about.

Until I begin to break chairs and the cardiac surgeon tells me my body is too big for my heart and I will be dead in five years if I don't lose a minimum of 100 pounds and keep it off.

This was my life 10 years ago. Today, I've lost more than 260 pounds.

For years when I would pray about my weight issue God would give me a plan. Stop eating sugar. Eat more lean meat, vegetables and fruit. Stop eating so much bread.

I could never get past step one. I thought I would die without sugar. Truth is, I was dying with sugar.

The light bulb moment came listening to a former alcoholic tell his story. He mentioned that alcohol is liquid sugar. Then it hit me, if an alcoholic can get free by not drinking alcohol, maybe I can get free by not eating sugar.

All my life I had wished my problem was alcohol instead of food. My reasoning was an alcoholic could stop drinking alcohol because it is not necessary to survival. However, I can't stop eating because I have to eat to survive.

Understanding that processed sugar is my nemesis gave me the final motivation to follow what God had been telling me for 30 years.

So I did. I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt I was a sugar addict. There wasn't a question in my mind.

There also was not a question as to whether this was God's direction. As I looked back through my journals, I saw the same plan. God had given it to me at least five times in three decades. I had heard God. I just hadn't followed Him.

When I began to walk out what I knew was His plan, I felt His wind at my back propelling me forward to health and wholeness. It's from this place I can minister. It's from this place I can complete my assignment here on earth. It's from this place I can live.

Although I have had situations where I have strayed, I always come back to what I know is right for me.

In this place of obedience, there is freedom, real freedom. It's not just flowery words. It is real honest-to-goodness, I-feel-it-down-in-the-tips-of-my-toes freedom.

When I go to a family gathering today, I am not pulled towards the desserts. I eat fruit and salad and meat. I make sure

there are those choices because I bring them myself. Honestly, processed sugar is not something I want to eat today.

Sanctified sin enslaves the same as any other lifestyle that is contrary to God's best for us here on earth. And it certainly never tastes as good as freedom feels.

Teresa Shields Parker is an author, blogger, editor, business owner, wife and mother. Her book, *Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds and Stopped Trying to Earn God's Favor* is available on Amazon in print, Kindle and Audible [HERE](#). This story is from her blog, teresashieldsparker.com.

7 Ways to Make the Devil Flee 7 Ways

When you are living in covenant with God, you can stand on the blessings of Deuteronomy 28. One of them deals specifically with **spiritual warfare**: "The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways" (Deuteronomy 28:7).

In past columns, I've explored how to [discern demonic strategies](#) against your life, how to [break free from the enemy's stranglehold](#), [what Satan doesn't want you to know about spiritual warfare](#), why we don't really need to [scream at the devil](#), one question every believer should ask before [engaging in spiritual warfare](#), and why the [devil sometimes seemingly won't flee](#) when you resist him.

But let's go back to the covenant blessing. See, God has

promised us that He will cause our enemies who rise against us to be defeated before our faces. He declared that they shall come out against us 1 way and flee before us 7 ways. But, as you'll discover if you read any of my past columns, we can get in the way of our blessing and leave room for the enemy to stand in our faces rather than fleeing seven ways. With that in mind, here are 7 ways to make the devil flee 7 ways.

1. Diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God. In order to see this blessed promise come to pass in your life, you need to understand it in context. Deuteronomy 28:1 clearly states, "Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today..." This is your foundation. God doesn't expect us to be perfect. We cannot keep the law, that's why **Jesus** came to pay the price of our sin. But we should be seeking perfect obedience. We should diligently listen to God's voice and obey what He tells us by His Spirit and in His Word. This alone would cause many devils to run for the hills.

2. Repent before you engage in battle. We have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God (see Romans 3:23). There are sins of commission and sins of omission. Many of us think wrong thoughts, say wrong words or take wrong actions over the course of the day. That means we are not fully obeying the voice of the Lord our God. When that's the case, we need to repent so we aren't standing on common ground with the enemy. It's difficult to defeat an enemy that already has you in a corner. Repent for any known sin and run to the battle line!

3. Know that God is on your side. In Exodus 15:3, the children of Israel knew where they stood and where God stood. After the great **deliverance** from Egypt, they declared in song, "The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is His name." They knew that, "The Lord shall go forth like a mighty man; He shall stir up His zeal like a man of war. He shall cry out, yes, shout aloud; He shall prevail against His enemies" (Isaiah 42:13). They knew

that the battle belongs to the Lord (1 Sam. 17:47). They understood that they were God's battle-axe and weapons of war (see Jer. 51:20).

4. War from a position of victory. When Goliath challenged the army of Israel, the soldiers were scared witless of the Philistine champion. But David was a covenant man and he understood that victory belonged to Him in God. As believers, we war from a position of victory, knowing that God always leads us in triumph in Christ (see 2 Cor. 2:14). We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us (see Rom. 8:37). And if God is for us, then who can be against us? (see Rom. 8:31)

5. Praise your way through. In the Song of Moses in Exodus 15:2, the children of Israel sang a song to the Lord that went something like this: "The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will exalt Him." Of course, that was after Israel's **deliverance** from Egypt. If you want to make the devil flee, praise God before you engage in battle. Praise brought down the walls at Jericho (see Joshua 6) and praise gave Jehoshaphat victory in battle: "Now when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated" (2 Chron. 20:22).

6. Take up your armor. We all know God has given us His armor, as outlined in Ephesians 6. But how many of us actually put it on before running to the battle line? Get a revelation of the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the Sword of the spirit. Take some time to understand what this really means as part of your covenant with God. Satan cannot defeat the obedient soldier of God who is armored up and ready to fight. He'll likely flee toward someone who is undressed, unrepentant, or uninformed about our covenant.

7. Pray always and be watchful. At least half the battle is

being on the offense—and that demands discernment. There’s an oft-overlooked instruction in Ephesians 6 that allows your **spiritual warfare** to transcend space and time: “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints” (Eph. 6:18). The enemy is less likely to pounce on the one who is prayerful and watchful because that one is in communion with the Holy Spirit, a power which no foe can withstand.

So go forth, spiritual warrior, with praise in your heart and prayer on your lips, dressed for battle. The battle belongs to the Lord and the devil will flee seven ways.

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Saying Goodbye to Hurt, Hello to Healing: Part 1

“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins” (Mark 11:25).

Life is full of hurts, but Jesus is full of healing.

Ministers, their spouses, and families are not exempt from being hurt. As we move into a new year, now is the time to examine the hurts of your past and find freedom in forgiveness.

How does hurt come?

Identifying the Sources of Our Hurts

Who hurt you? Was it a parent, family member, spouse, children, friend, fellow minister, board member, or congregants? The closer the relationship, the deeper the hurt.

The wife of Leo Tolstoy, the great Russian writer, said concerning her husband: "His biographers will tell of how he helped the laborers carry buckets of water, but no one will ever know that he never gave his wife a rest and never – in all these 32 years – gave his child a drink of water or spent 5 minutes by his bedside to give me a chance to rest a little from all my labors."

Ministers are not immune to hurts caused by others. And some spouses, even of ministers, might identify with the remarks of Mrs. Tolstoy.

Pastors can also hurt themselves.

Many years ago I stood at the rim of the Grand Canyon. About two or three feet from the ledge a rock island rose from the canyon floor. Its flat surface was level with the ground I stood on. Over time, people had tossed coins onto this island. Suddenly, a 6-year-old child ran from the crowd, jumped over to this rock island, and started scooping up the coins. Along with others, I watched paralyzed with fear for this child's safety. His mother screamed, "Johnny, get back here." With his pockets full of coins, and without hesitation, he immediately leapt back to our side.

I thought later, What if he had missed on the return jump? Would his mother ever be able to forgive herself for her instinctive reaction and for not waiting for expert help to arrive to extract her son from that place of danger?

Forgiving others may be easier than forgiving ourselves.

We may also feel God has caused or permitted some of our hurts.

Early in David Wilkerson's ministry a pastor friend was backing his car out of the driveway and ran over his toddler. David Wilkerson wrestled with how God could have permitted this to happen to his friend, and his despair almost drove him from the ministry and effective service to Christ.

The Price of Unforgiveness

Seldom do we discuss the high price for unforgiveness, but consider the consequences for harboring grievances:

- The fruit of the Spirit ebbs away.
- Indifference or hatred displaces love.
- Bitterness or depression displaces joy.
- Anxiety displaces peace.
- Short-temperedness displaces patience.
- Hard-heartedness or indifference displaces kindness.
- Meanness or a get-even attitude displaces goodness.
- A demanding nature displaces gentleness.
- Resignation from responsibility displaces self-control.
- When we do not forgive, we can easily blame someone else for our condition.

When we do, we forsake our responsibility to control our own responses. Basilea Schlink, founder of the charismatic Lutheran community of the Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary in Darmstadt, Germany, tells the story of Plumb Orchard in her book, *Realities*. The Sisterhood needed the property next to their community to expand their ministry, but the owner refused to sell. The sister who tried to negotiate never made it past this woman's front door.

One day, the woman's great nephew met the sister at the door and let her in. In his great-aunt's room she understood why they were having problems purchasing the property. The room was crowded with inherited furniture – enough to fill a house

– and most of it was dilapidated. One room had 13 mattresses stacked one on top of another – a stepladder was required to reach the top.

As the sisters began to pray, the Lord began to deal with them about inviting Him to judge their own lives in relationship to what they saw in another's. They had no estate to manage, but they did have secret attachments – a pretty picture postcard, a certain personal necessity, a little wooden cross. "Oh, I hope the day will never come when God will ask this of me," each said.

But the Spirit impressed them to have a surrender week. Each one was to let loose of her secret attachment. After that week they visited the woman. She had changed her heart.

Basilea Schlink said that experience taught them the power of empathetic forgiveness, and that people cannot make progress when they blame someone else. People must deal with their own attitudes first.

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