

# 15 Necessary Choices to Break Betrayal's Cycle

The thing that makes betrayal so devastating is because someone we love and trust always perpetrates it. It could not be otherwise or it would not be betrayal. And no one can wound us like those we know and love. If you've ever been betrayed, I am sure you can identify with King David when he laments his betrayal at the hands of Ahithophel, his personal counselor and close friend.

"Yes, my own close friend, in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted up the heel against me" (Ps. 41:9).

"For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me; then I could hide from him. But it was you, my peer, my guide, and my acquaintance. We took pleasant counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company" (Ps. 55:12-14).

I need say no more. If you've been betrayed, you've already lived what David describes so graphically. You know full well what betrayal feels like. What you want to know is how to get beyond it, how to get your life back.

In my nearly 50 years of ministry, I have counseled with numerous people who have been betrayed by those they loved most. In the process, the Lord has enabled me to identify a number of choices that are necessary if we hope to move beyond betrayal to healing and restoration.

1. Immediately contact a trusted friend or pastor for counsel and prayer.
2. Consciously choose to set aside the "why" questions. Even if you could understand why things happened as they did, it

would not change one thing.

3. Choose not to question the one who betrayed you regarding the details of their betrayal. Knowing the details will only poison your heart, making it harder to forgive and move on.

4. If the betrayer is genuinely grieved by his sin Paul admonishes us to forgive and restore him. "But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but to some extent all of you, not to put it too severely. This punishment which was inflicted by many on such a man is sufficient. So on the contrary, you ought to forgive him and comfort him, lest perhaps he might be swallowed up with excessive sorrow. Therefore I ask you to confirm your love toward him. " (2 Cor. 2:5-8). By forgiving the betrayer, you refuse to allow this tragedy to destroy you or your family.

5. Realize that you cannot punish the betrayer without punishing yourself.

6. Realize you always have a choice. You can be part of the solution or you can be part of the problem. Determine early on that you are going to be part of the solution.

7. Choose not to waste your pain. Ask God to help you learn from this tragic experience.

8. Refuse to define your relationship by this one tragic event. It is a real part of your relationship, but that is all—just a part.

9. Choose to protect those you love—parents, siblings and friends—who would be hurt by this information. There is nothing to be gained by telling them so why make them suffer?

10. Recognize that grief, even depression, is an inevitable consequence of betrayal. Grief is a proper response to betrayal and only as you grieve can you be comforted and healed. Be assured that God will visit you in a special way

during the grieving process restoring your joy.

11. Even when God has intervened in a special healing way, you still have to choose to walk in your healing every day. The enemy will continue to attack your mind and emotions. With the help of the Holy Spirit discipline yourself to bring every thought into captivity to Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

12. Remain faithful to your devotional life and public worship. Jesus is the healer and spending time in His presence facilitates your healing. Just being in the presence of the Healer brings healing even if you are not consciously aware of it.

13. Refuse to define your life by this tragedy. You will never get over it—that is it will always be a part of your life experience—but you can choose, by God's grace, to get past it.

14. Determine to “forget”—that is, put this tragedy behind you without ever forgetting the tragic lessons learned.

15. By God's grace choose to forgive and live as if this tragedy never happened.

So how do we break the cycle of betrayal?

The tragic truth is that many betrayers were victims of betrayal before they became perpetrators. Because they could not, or would not, make peace with their past they condemned themselves to repeat it. I mention this because this is an important step that if you have been a victim of betrayal that you do not continue the cycle. The fact is, we will unless we choose to forgive those who have wronged us. We will become the very thing we hate. But we don't have to. With God's help, we can break the cycle of betrayal, make peace with our past and forgive those who have betrayed us. {eoa}

**Richard Exley** has been a pastor, conference and retreat speaker, as well as a radio broadcaster. In addition he has

written more than 30 books including *Authentic Living*, *The Making of a Man*, *When You Lose Someone You Love*, and *The Alabaster Cross*. He lives with Brenda Starr—his wife and childhood sweetheart—in a secluded cabin overlooking picturesque Beaver Lake. He enjoys quiet talks with old friends, kerosene lamps, good books, a warm fire when it's cold and a good cup of coffee anytime. For additional information you can contact him at: