

3 Keys to Freedom from Past Abuse, Addictions

I grew up around a lot of **negative** lifestyles. For years as a child, I experienced **grief, abandonment, abuse** and **homelessness**. Some people think that if you ignore **past hurts**, they will just go away. But the **anger** and the core feelings that are born in an abusive environment can strangle an individual's **emotional** and **developmental** growth.

Many women have had to deal with the kind of mistreatment that was intended to control and subjugate them. **Abuse** of any kind breeds **fear** and damages the **soul**, made up of the mind, will and emotions. Ill-treatment devalues a woman and wears down her self-respect.

Too many women who are believers in Jesus Christ are still unable to walk in authority and dominion. Instead they are struggling with **depression**, identity issues and diminished self-esteem.

God has predetermined that you and I are to be conformed to the image of His Son. We must receive our true identity from Christ.

The adjustments and changes that constitute your spiritual growth won't come about easily. But the more you affirm who you are in Him, the more your behavior will begin to reflect your true nature and identity.

Your self-image is made up of what you think about your life—how you perceive your intellectual ability, emotional stability, temperament and ability to love. It includes your powerful imagination, reasoning skills and level of confidence in your ability to influence others.

A damaged self-image can set up a person to accept and expect

abusive treatment from others. But this does not need to happen. The damaged soul can be repaired.

We can learn to take responsibility for dealing with the self-defeating habits, addictions and behaviors in our lives. These things do not have to stunt our psychological growth, arrest our personal development and sabotage our ability to successfully manage our lives as adults.

The Starting Point

The psalmist David wrote: "He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake" (Ps. 23:3). Deliverance from the power of darkness and the dominion of sin begins the restoration process. Reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ imparts to us forgiveness and freedom from guilt.

It was my relationship with God that opened the door for radical change in my life and in my understanding of the meaning of life itself. But choosing to take this first step and trust God was difficult for me. Before I discovered that I needed to deal with me first, I was looking for answers and seeking to understand what was wrong with everyone else.

I recognize the temptation to attribute every bad situation to demonic activity. But we have all had supernatural attacks against us that exploited our weaknesses. In my life, years of religious and emotional abuse eventually escalated to domestic violence.

Unfortunately, I made the mistake of not discussing the abuse with anyone. Demonic forces target our secrets. I had to admit there was a problem before God could break this cycle in my life. I chose to walk in His truth and made my emotional health a priority.

When we experience God's merciful forgiveness toward us, it demands that we forgive others. I had to forgive the hurtful people in my life. When I forgave them, I was released from

their mental control. Then I became empowered to begin the process of confronting the lingering effects of abuse on my own emotions.

Blaming others for the problems we face won't resolve them. Neither will making light of them nor denying their existence. In order to cut to the core of your troubling situations, you must be equipped by the Holy Spirit to function with accurate and balanced discernment as you exercise your spiritual authority.

The things that happened to me were real. Yet, because of the reality of redemption, neither the sins that were committed against me nor the sins I've committed have any legal right to make demands on my mind, my will or my emotions today.

Take Thoughts Captive

Women are most often considered to be highly intuitive and emotional. The adversary will use these attributes, along with everything else in his arsenal, to hinder you from coming into the full power of God.

Because your thoughts can be easily influenced, you must be discerning as to the source of them. Once thoughts are conceived, they can take on a life of their own.

Through Christ, we come to know the power of God and are able to begin using our spiritual authority to break the bondages over our souls. You and I have the responsibility and power to process our painful memories, control our emotions and purify our thoughts.

As the apostle Paul wrote: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of

Christ" (2 Cor. 10:3-5, KJV).

We need only to reflect on the scene between Eve and the serpent in the garden in order to see how important it is to gain control over your thought life (see Gen. 3:1-24). Thinking precedes and determines conduct. Therefore, controlling your thinking is a choice you must make.

It is the power to choose that will keep us on course as individuals. The ability to make wise and proper choices requires prayer, reasoning and experience. Our rational, human nature includes our ability to judge, to deliberate and exercise our free will. But if the will is controlled by anyone other than the Holy Spirit, it is not free.

An intimate, ongoing relationship with the great Shepherd is vital to achieving restoration. To be restored requires faith and the willingness to act on God's Word. And it results in rest and refreshment for your mind and your body.

Some people think faith, wishing and hoping are all the same. But with this concept, we would be expected to muster up enough mental power to achieve the things we desire.

But true faith means faith in God. Since God is unlimited in His power, it eliminates our need to compromise or make excuses. Our faith is based on God's character and His truth not on our emotions or ourselves.

Nevertheless, you must be an active participant in your spiritual recovery. Since prayer is the expression of your faith, a committed prayer life is essential. Preparation for the warfare of life requires that you make a conscious decision to deal with self. Spiritual change will also require repentance and a continual renewing of the mind by the Word of God (see Rom. 12:2) and commitment to a consecrated lifestyle.

Restoration confronts your fears and feelings of inadequacy and insecurity. "Casting down imaginations" means invalidating

those negative thoughts, images and disqualifying statements about yourself that are inconsistent with the Word of God—with who God says you are. In the process of restoration you learn to follow the Holy Spirit's direction and cooperate with Him.

When memories surface that may have caused you incredible emotional or physical damage, you can set boundaries that will enable you to maintain a sense of your true identity, which God has defined.

Desire the Word

To have dominion over your mind requires unrelenting warfare. But you alone are responsible for your actions. I have made it a personal goal to challenge my mind, to continually learn new things and exercise discipline over my mind, will and emotions.

The apostle Peter tells us: "Desire the pure milk of the word that you may grow (1 Pet. 2:2, NKJV). Perpetual spiritual infancy is unnatural. But infancy must pass on into maturity by means of orderly development.

Renewing the mind by the Word is a spiritual discipline which, when practiced consistently, produces a certain mental attitude where the mind begins to rid itself of negative thinking patterns. Unless your mind is continually being renewed by the Word, your soul remains hostile to God, challenging His authority and engaging in open warfare against Him.

The battle for your mind, will and emotions is won by the Word of God. The extraordinary experience of revelation knowledge happens when the mind apprehends the will of God and allows the impartation of new spiritual principles, thereby, encouraging new desires, inspiring new hopes and establishing new goals.

God wants to demonstrate His power and presence in and through your life. With a mind renewed by the Word, you can learn how

to release greater spiritual authority in the face of opposition.

A renewed mind is a major part of the soul's prosperity (see 3 John 2). God imparts His truth to us through His eternal decrees and brings to maturity the many components of the soul's expression under the authority of His Word.

Rediscover You

Isaiah characterizes a person who rightly exercises righteous authority as "the repairer of the breach" and "the restorer of paths to dwell in" (Is. 58:12, KJV). Taking back control means redefining and rebuilding your relationship with God so that your thoughts and beliefs are no longer being dominated by the memory of a traumatic event, by societal restraints or religious pressures.

It is always possible for a damaged life to become productive again. God is able to meet your needs and support you through your trials.

Don't be deceived about your dominion and authority in the spirit realm. Remember, God can take a woman with the worst possible background and use her for His glory. You have a battle to fight and a work to do in raising up the foundations for the generations to come.

God expects you to actively work toward your restoration, then work to rebuild the old waste places and bring others to a state of soundness as well. If you put off action, you will delay your progress.

This is your time to rediscover the real you. You are not a fabrication of someone else's reality. You are an authentic worshiper, a woman who is able to enter into the secret place of God's eternal counsel, where He will make known to you His prophetic purpose (see Ps. 91:1-16).

Speaking to His disciples, Jesus said: “‘I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly’”(John 10:10, NKJV).

Anything that devalues a woman's worth impairs her soul. Unlike true, godly authority, which is protective, empowering and liberating, abusive authority is exploitative, manipulative and destructive.

What you accept is up to you. But negative consequences are not expressions of the God kind of life.

Attune your mind to think God's thoughts and speak His words. Negative thought patterns are the power base of demonic strongholds. Behind every stronghold is demonic oppression and corrupt thinking habits.

But change is possible. With practice, bad habits can give way to good ones. Paul wrote: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2).

“Transformation” means to change in form, appearance or structure; to change in condition, nature or character. The conversion experience is the beginning of learning to discern God's will over and against any opposing or imposing mind-set. This renovation takes place at the very center of our being.

Luke wrote: “By your patience possess your souls” (Luke 21:19). Make excellence your standard and take responsibility for the development of your soul in line with who God says you are. Seek the Lord. Cooperate with Him and train yourself to act on the truth of His Word.

Make No Excuses

The application of the reality of redemption is part of the healing, the restoration, the growth process itself. Redemption reverses our alienation and isolation from God.

When we are active in our own spiritual growth, it increases our confidence level. We can take ownership of our spiritual lives and responsibility for our relationships with God. The reward for our growth is first the joy of obedience. When we know we are pleasing God and that our lives are in sync with Him, we can anticipate the release of great potential.

We have to be willing to radically obey God and leave the outcome to Him. In the Scriptures, Queen Esther remained teachable and respectful to her uncle Mordecai.

She was courageous in the face of fear and destruction, and driven to action by love for her people and a passion for their freedom. Through Esther's radical decision to go before the king, with the support of a national fast, the people of God were preserved and brought to the revelation and completion of their purpose (see Esth. 4:15-16).

Like Esther, we must be sober and alert. We also have the capacity to supernaturally bring forth the fruit of change in our own lives and in the lives of others.

Know that you are in a battle for your soul. But you are in God's hands, and the battle is His. The Word of God tells us He has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him (see 2 Pet. 1:3).

It's time for redeemed women to confront the challenges of the human condition. We make no apologies for our femininity because we are His workmanship (see Eph. 2:10). We make no excuses because we have His Word and His Spirit. Restoration is God's desire for everyone. Because of His sufficient grace, not one of us is damaged beyond repair.

Read a companion devotional.

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