

3 Ways to Make Peace With Yourself

In their book, *Love Is a Choice*, Christian psychologists Hemfelt, Minirth and Meier describe the tragic life of Emilia Wesley, sister to her famous brothers, John and Charles, founders of Methodism.

Their mother, Susanna, bore nineteen children. Emilia was the oldest. Smart and pretty, she put her own life on hold for years to help her physically weak mother carry the load of housework and caring for the younger children. The family lived at poverty's door.

Emilia developed survival skills, hiding her spinster loneliness in adulthood by successfully developing her own school for girls. At the age of 44 she met Robert Harper who sought her hand in marriage. She didn't really love him, but he was attractive.

Perhaps concerned that this might be her last chance for marriage and desperately desiring to be taken care of by another, she married.

What she didn't know was that Robert wanted to marry a successful woman so he could quit working. When their baby arrived, he took Emilia's savings, leaving her with his debts. The sickly baby died.

The tragedy in her life stemmed from parents who did not pay sufficient attention to their own daughter's emotional and developmental needs. Starved for love, she reached out for nurturing from a man she did not know was incapable or unwilling to give her the tender care she sought.

It often happens that way: The undernourished person in childhood repeats in her adult life the calamity of neglect by

unwittingly duplicating the dysfunctionality of the family in which she grew up.

How about you? Is there any hope that things can be different for you, even if your circumstances aren't the same as Emilia's?

I find these 15 psalms of ascent a guide for getting on top. They're designed to move you out of life's valleys and strengthen you on the climb.

At Psalm 131, we're near the end of the long trek upward. What spiritual and emotional muscles has the Holy Spirit been developing as you've fought to recover from the distress (Ps. 120:1) which prompted you to begin the ascent toward recovery? This psalm tells us there are three.

1. I know my limits and it's OK. Can you accept that you are never going to have some things in life you want?

I have a joyful friend confined to a wheelchair because of an auto accident. She doesn't waste her life by grouching on the what-might-have-beens.

One of the hardest and most necessary things we must do sometimes is let go. What are you fiercely holding on to? You say, "I'm holding on because I have faith." Are you sure it's faith, or is it fear? Fear that if you release your grasp, nothing will be left?

The psalmist, in verse 1, has arrived at the place of inner release. He's no longer holding on to unrealistic expectations about his life. He's replaced the "What if?" with the "What now?" He's not focused on what he can't control, but the things he can.

Almost every day, I repeat this famous prayer: "Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the

difference.”

2. Weaning does not mean starving. It’s hard to be cut off from a familiar and predictable source of nourishment.

The first moments of weaning are frightful. You are used to only one means of ingesting. Now what is familiar has been removed. You’re hungry for the way things were. You think you’ll die.

But God has other food for you. Just like a baby may resist at first the healthy solid foods fed in mashed spoonfuls, so you may resist the alternative resources God has provided. He sees how upset you are. But in time you will again be calm enough to say, “Like a weaned child is my soul within me” (v. 2).

3. Help for me means hope for someone else. This brief psalm ends by giving encouragement to others.

It’s hard to shout the victory when you are in the process of recovering from loss, codependency, addiction or any form of attachment you looked to as a source of support.

But after the weaning, winnowing, weeding or widowing, you’ll have a testimony that will help others. You’ll put your arms around a soul just as frightened now as you were then and say with great confidence, “Put your hope in the Lord.”

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