

Don't Let the Past Paralyze You

✖ So many people allow negative experiences and broken dreams to stop them. Yet God has the power to propel you beyond your disappointments.

Have you ever heard the statement, “Experience is the best teacher”? It’s true. The problem is that experience can teach you the wrong things as well as the right ones.

A person who is severely bitten by a dog, for example, generally has a lifelong dislike—and often fear—of dogs. People can have all sorts of fears and phobias because of one bad dream, accident or tragic event in their lives.

When we experience a major trauma or disappointment or live under a particular negative circumstance for a long time, we tend to become hindered in some area of our lives. We find ourselves changing the truth of the Bible, God’s Word, and His ways to match up with our personal experiences. We come under a spirit of captivity because our culture or experience has taught us something that is completely different from the ways of the Spirit of God.

Once a spirit of captivity has taken root in your life, you will start to lose your sense of purpose—perhaps not your entire life’s purpose, but some aspect of it. You may be bound by a fear of flying, for example, or by a pattern of persistent anger and abuse.

Though you love God with all your heart, your past may have been so dysfunctional and full of hurt that now you cannot seem to break out of horrible habits developed long ago. Even after evil spirits are cast out of you, your mind must be renewed. In other words, you have to learn a new way of living

that is according to God's ways.

For example, if your pattern growing up was that your father could never seem to keep a good job or provide a stable income, then without your realizing it, those years in "Babylon" can lead to similar inconsistency in you. You find yourself going through the years not being able to get ahead in life and thus feeling like a failure without any solid goals.

This is how a spirit of captivity tries to destroy your purpose. You have learned something that is not in line with godliness. The demons may have come and gone, but they have left a permanent imprint on you.

Romans 12:1-2 gives us insight into this revelation and provides some hands-on ways we can change wrong mindsets: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And 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" (NKJV).

First, Paul pleads with us to keep our flesh pure. Whatever your flesh has been used to doing, you must take charge and tell it, "No." You could be engaging in a serious addiction or a bad habit of gossip. You might have an excessive need for attention or bad spending habits.

Verse 2 offers further help. It tells us not to be conformed to the world. That means you decide not to play the world's game. You realize that God has a different pattern and that you need to learn how to live by it. That is what it means to be transformed.

Your mind must change what it has felt secure believing and gravitating toward. The New Living Translation says it this way: *"Let God transform you into a new person by changing the*

way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect" (v. 2, emphasis added). You must go through a process of renewing your mind and relearn how to live after you have been captive to something.

You may need to attend the "school of the Spirit" for a season, learning new mindsets in one area or another because your mind must be rehabilitated. If all you ever knew growing up was drug and alcohol abuse, when you come out of that abusive lifestyle you are required to form a new pattern. Then the next time you are pressed with a trial or the devil beats you down, you won't revert back into the captivity of addiction.

Instead, you will be armed with a new and tested source of dependency—God's will and His ways. Your mind has new "experiences" that it can refer to that have replaced your previous ones. These become dependable weapons during times when your life gets tampered with by the devil.

Effects of Captivity

The Bible says the enemy comes to steal, kill and destroy. He uses the spirit of captivity to steal your:

Identity. Captivity keeps you from feeling as if you fit in with the rest of the family of God and being able to see yourself as having an integral part in the kingdom.

Anointing. Captivity causes you to stop sensing God's presence. You lose your ability to worship freely and intimately. When you attempt to worship, you feel empty and dry, and your mind goes back to your problem.

Vision. Captivity takes away your sense of purpose in life. You find yourself wandering from one thing to another, trying to find satisfaction. You don't have any long-term goals, vision or confidence in your talents. You quit using your

talents to do anything significant, and your struggles become larger than your goals.

Authority. Captivity neutralizes your warfare. You become paralyzed by certain events and reminded of the times you have failed before. You determine there is no point in trying to overcome the problematic issue in your life because you will probably fail again. You see yourself as an inadequate warrior with little anointing to stand victorious against evil forces.

Confidence. Captivity undermines your confidence. You feel as if you can't finish anything. You become apologetic and unsure of yourself. Even when you venture into something new, you have no fruit to show for it.

Besides stealing from you, the spirit of captivity leaves you feeling:

Surrounded. Have you ever felt as if you couldn't see a way out because there were too many problems to handle? When captivity tries to take all that God has imparted into your life, you feel surrounded and overwhelmed by your circumstances.

Empty. You feel as if you cannot get a fresh word or direction from the Lord. It is almost as if there is some sort of blinder over your spiritual insight. You don't know what Scripture to read or even how to begin in prayer. You become desperate for a word, prophecy, dream or Scripture that will speak to you.

Intimidated. You run from your problems because you are too intimidated to address them.

Confused. Because you don't have a plan for your life, you become confused. Confused people are also divisive and disagreeable. They can't seem to get along with anything or anyone because they don't know where they are headed in life.

Blind. Spiritual blindness prevents you from seeing God's fresh move and purpose. Then you become bound by formula and religion. You can no longer accurately discern the way of God and thus begin to adopt strange ideas and doctrines.

Getting Free

If you can identify the effects of captivity in your life, don't despair. It is possible to get free from this spirit and its results.

When we become Christians and turn our lives over to Jesus, He sets us free from the power of a "Nebuchadnezzar" or captivity spirit so we can rebuild our lives as the temples of the living God. However, many believers don't let go of the influence of "Babylon" because they feel it's not their fault that they were taken there.

Maybe your parents didn't take proper responsibility for raising you. You could use that as an excuse to remain in Babylon for the rest of your life. But to truly be free after your life has been tampered with, you must let go of the excuses.

A friend of ours once told us about a time when she was trying to overcome a spirit of anger. She admitted that she had a temper and was feeling bad after having blown up at someone. Immediately she said: "Well, Lord, I'm sorry. I just can't help it because I'm French, and French people have tempers."

She said she heard the Lord loudly reply inside her, "Well, I'm not French!" In other words, the Holy Spirit in you is not focused on why you are a captive. He is interested in bringing you out of the captivity!

Someone may have horribly hurt you and left you broken and bruised in life. But God wants you to get past that hurt so it doesn't keep you in bondage, doing things you hate for the remainder of your life. While in captivity, the children of

Israel had to take responsibility for their state even though some of them had no part in committing the sins that caused them to be taken to Babylon.

You are the temple of the Lord that Jesus wants to rebuild, and He is there to help separate you from the memories and influences of your past to make it happen. He has come to live inside you to force every bad habit, every bad attitude and every feeling of failure out of your life.

Second Corinthians 6:16-17 says, "And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.' Therefore 'Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.'"

That is what God is looking for with you. He wants the spirit of captivity removed so there is more room for Him in your life. The next verse goes on to say, "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty'" (v. 18). Regardless of the habits and lifestyles you have become accustomed to, you will find them losing their influence on you when you see God as your Father.

When you know your heavenly Father, you become unfamiliar with any other "family." Your Father wants to be your greatest source of influence and to replace what you once knew. You can ask the Lord to reveal Himself to you as your Father. For many whose lives have been tampered with, this is difficult to do because so many people didn't have a positive fatherly influence in their lives.

Ask the Lord to help you receive Him as the good Father that He is. You don't always have to understand how He will do it because the Lord is supernatural. He can impart miracles that will shake you and change your entire outlook on life in one moment of time.

Here are some positive steps you can take to remove captivity from your life:

Expose the captivity. Acknowledge what is holding you captive. It may be a type of fear, an attitude, your words or an addiction. Be willing to see these areas and call them what they are in your life—captivity and bondage. Exposing the root will prevent it from growing back. Face it and then start a new life with a new direction.

Let go of excuses. Take responsibility for living as a captive. How or why you were invaded by the devil can no longer be your focus. Repent now and get your own actions right before the Lord so you can move on to reclaim your real purpose in life.

Separate from Babylon. Decide you do not want the spirit of captivity in your life, and be willing to detach from it. The children of Israel had to make the decision to come out of captivity and change their habits. They could not keep going back to what had become familiar. They had to learn a whole new way of living.

Run to your heavenly Father. When you decide to see God as your Father, all the other control figures in your life will start to weaken as the culture of your new family takes over.

If you allow Him to, the Lord will deliver you from any type of past culture this spirit of captivity has imparted to you. That is what Jesus came for—to set you free—and He is an expert at doing it.

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LEARN TO LET GO

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