

How to Get Unstuck (and Why You May Need to)

Some people get stuck in the past. They respond as though the trauma or other challenge they experienced decades ago just happened yesterday. Some people focus on today; “If it feels good, do it!” And some people are always worrying about or planning for tomorrow, never enjoying today. So which do you spend most effort on between past, present and future?

Unless you’re 100% satisfied with how your life is today, something will need to change. So, do you sign up for counseling to dig into your past? Do you get laser-focused on your present circumstances? Or do you look primarily at your goals for the future?

As with most things in our human lives, it’s “all of the above.”

Like Ebenezer Scrooge in “A Christmas Carol,” you can gain lasting life change from taking into account your past, your present and your need to understand where all three aspects come into play.

1. Where have you come from?

Peter Scazzero of *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* says, “Jesus may be in your heart, but Grandpa’s in your bones.”

It’s a biblical principle as well: “The Lord shall count when He registers the people, ‘This one was born there.’ Selah” (Ps. 87:6).

You cannot escape the impact of your history until and unless you own it. Your family of origin has indelibly imprinted itself in your DNA—and in your responses to stress, your beliefs about the world and about God, how you relate to

people and a whole lot more.

And life circumstances have lasting impact too; trauma, abuse, poverty (or not), opportunities (or not) and much more. Your mother's triangulation and enmeshment with you hampered your ability to grow up and develop a healthy marriage. Your family's history of divorce or bad financial decisions set up default beliefs about yourself and your own future. The way you were first exposed to sex and sexuality colors how you handle your own sexuality today.

Examining where you came from doesn't excuse any of your behavior. But that examination can provide a level of compassion, understanding and wisdom you can't get any other way.

You can't truly move forward until and unless you examine where you came from. But don't stay there! This examination is important because it shows you what you need to do next.

2. Where are you now?

If you want to stay stuck, ignore the truth.

Honesty is hard. We usually don't like to see the truth about ourselves or our circumstances. It's easier to blame others, to distract ourselves or to minimize the real issues.

For honesty to be helpful, it needs to come from a foundation of love. Jesus never ignored the truth. To the woman at the well, He said, "You have had five husbands" (John 4:18a). To Peter, He said, "You will deny Me" (Matt. 26:75b). Shining the light of honesty on where you are now may feel uncomfortable, but it makes the next step possible.

So, yes, your spouse drinks too much. You're deep in debt to the IRS. Your anger is out of control. Pornography has made you its slave. Your job is a dead end. The friends you have are unhealthy. You don't know what a healthy marriage would

even look like. You've never really forgiven those who hurt you.

There are a million variations of where you might be right now.

And like a physician making a diagnosis before suggesting treatment, you need some sense of your present reality before you can continue the journey.

The wonderful news is that Jesus doesn't leave you where He finds you. He makes it possible for you to get from where you truly are now to where He created you to be.

3. Where do you want to go?

If your life continues on its current trajectory, where will you be in a year? Five years? Ten years? What will your physical health be like? How healthy will your mind be? What kind of marriage will you have? What will your relationship with God look like? Do you like what you see?

This is not about imagining some "pie in the sky" future of being rich and famous, and only God knows exactly what will happen. But looking to the future is absolutely necessary if you want that future to be any different than your life is right now.

Even Jesus had to keep His eyes on the future. "Let us look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2).

If Jesus had to keep His eyes on the future in order to make it through the humiliation of the cross, you and I will need to keep our eyes on the future too.

God has given you imagination. He has also planted gifts, dreams and hopes within you—for a reason. He saves, heals and

delivers you not only *from* something, but *for* something. Your DNA, your life experiences, your personality, your brokenness and your experience of God's restoration are all for the future.

That future is both *here* and *now*, and in eternity. God is not primarily concerned with you feeling better; He wants you to *be* better. And that starts right now.

What has He planted in your heart? What makes you feel fully alive? Whose pain would you give anything to help? What change in the world would you gladly invest your life to make happen? Those are some of the questions that can help you imagine the future for which God has created you.

Past. Present. Future. All three are important.

Now, what are you going to do about it?

Your Turn: Which among these three aspects—past, present and future—is the most challenging for you to wrestle with? Which needs your attention right now? Leave a comment below. {eoa}

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