

How to Overcome the Pain of Regret

Many of us can look back on our lives and regret the damage done through bad choices. For most, we didn't see it coming.

For example, the enemy doesn't show a couple the pain and anguish and the years of regret that adultery brings; he deceives them with the temporary enjoyment of sex and a false sense of freedom from responsibility. If the full story was known beforehand, no doubt different choices might have been made. We often overlook the pain of sin because we're enticed by the temporary pleasure of it.

In life, we experience either the pain of discipline or the pain of regret. There are countless examples: a young parent loses visitation rights because of an addiction to pain pills, or a family is destroyed because of drug or alcohol abuse—situations vary but the outcome doesn't. Sin promises pleasure and escape but only brings regret and imprisonment. The enemy doesn't show a person the pain and anguish and the years of regret that addiction brings, he deceives them with temporary enjoyment. We're led down one step at a time, one compromise at a time; one wrong choice at a time.

Regret often leads us back into addiction and the vicious cycle continues. Our private sin will eventually become public disgrace. But there is tremendous hope if we turn to God and encounter the pain of discipline over the pain of regret. The pain of discipline produces joy—the pain of regret produces anguish. The pain of discipline produces peace—the pain of regret produces fear. The pain of discipline produces assurance—the pain of regret produces confusion.

Psalms 107:10 opens with a true portrayal of sin's bondage, "Those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, bound

in affliction and irons.” Have you ever been there? Those held captive by sin can no doubt relate—darkness and depression overshadow everything.

The wisdom in Psalm 107 continues to expose the root of bondage, “Because they rebelled against the words of God, and despised the counsel of the Most High, therefore He brought down their heart with labor; they fell down, and there was none to help” (vs. 11-12). The imagery denotes a person stumbling through life or locked in a prison where no one can help. The heart is heavy and burdened as the result of despising God and rejecting His truth.

God often allows trials so we turn to Him. The only one who can truly help is the One who created us. But we must cry “out to the Lord” in our trouble and He will save us out of our distress (vs. 13). That promise will not fail. He will bring us “out of darkness and the shadow of death” ... He will break our chains in pieces (vs. 14).

What a wonderful God we serve. He warns us about wandering from Him, but when we do wander and experience the anguish of regret, He invites us back. But the invitation is conditional—we must come with a broken and contrite heart. We must cry out to Him in full surrender, “Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He has broken the gates of bronze, and cut the bars of iron in two” (vs. 15-16).

Bronze and iron are very strong materials. God can break any addiction, any bondage, and any sin if we turn everything over to Him. Your first and most profound choice is to say “no,” and let God handle the rest. There may be withdrawals, consequences, and pain as we heal, but again, it’s better to experience the pain of discipline rather than the pain of regret. Jesus speaks out against those who continually return and enjoy wallowing in sin, but His love and mercy reaches out to those who regret and hate their condition. Do you enjoy

sin, or cry out for help? That's the difference maker.

Be encouraged, regret can redirect a person back to God's will. Psalm 51:17 (NIV) says, "My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise." Regret, when used as a stepping stone rather than a stumbling block, can rebuild marriages, families, and lives. Don't let it continue to drive you down; let it build you up.

Regret can also lead to salvation: 2 Corinthians 7:10 (MEV) says, "Godly sorrow produces repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but the sorrow of the world produces death."

You may be in your fifth recovery home, on your third marriage, or living in the twilight years with a past full of regret, but God can rebuild and restore. He can bring peace in the midst of pain and joy in the midst of regret if we call on Him. Regret, pain, depression, fear, and anxiety are often the result of wandering from God, much like a ship that has drifted off course. But as soon as the correct course is set, hope, peace, and joy return. He will bring "them out of darkness and the shadow of death"... He will break their chains in pieces (vs. 14).

Don't let discouragement and failure define you or stand in your way. I could write an entire book on my failures, but instead I try to follow the apostle Paul's advice, and I encourage you to do the same: "Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead" (Phil. 3:13). Forget your past mistakes, but remember the lessons learned because of them. We overcome the pain of regret by allowing God to rebuild our life.

Watch the entire sermon [here](#).

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