

Overcoming the Traumatic Emotional Pain of Divorce

In the book *Sacred Thirst*, the author writes:

The bride and groom are standing in front of everyone, looking better than they are ever going to look again, getting so much attention and affirmation. Everybody even stands when they walk in so it's easy to think this marriage, at least, is about them. It's not. Just look at the worn-out parents sitting in the first pew—they understand this. The only reason these parents are still married is because long ago they learned how to handle the hurt they caused each other. They know that the last thing you ever want to do with hurt is to let it define you.

This last statement offers one of the most profound points I've read on brokenness. Those who do not allow hurt to entrap them can turn brokenness into an unbreakable force, but those shackled by past pain are truly imprisoned by it. The walls we build to protect may eventually imprison.

How can we undo the emotional pain we experience from failed relationships? First, we must understand that our mind is where battles are won or lost. Those who do not forgive or release bitterness, anger and hurt, never experience freedom, happiness or true restoration.

It all starts here.

Eph. 4:32 says to "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, outbursts, and blasphemies, with all malice, be taken away from you. And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you." Simply stated, if you fail to forgive, bitterness and anger, though skillfully masked, can and will tarnish relationships. Married, divorced, separated or single, God can turn brokenness into an unbreakable force, but it is imperative that your mind is renewed by applying biblical principles,

beginning with forgiveness.

Regardless of what you have endured, God can deliver you from the emotional scares and feelings of abandonment and break the walls that imprison. But in order for change to occur on the outside it must first occur on the inside. Strongholds include bitterness, pride, lust, selfishness, substance abuse, toxic relationships, anger and physical abuse, to name a few. These destructive influences hinder the healing and rebuilding process. Healing begins with a commitment to work on those areas known to be detrimental to your spiritual health and the health of the relationship.

Our attitude should be one in which we surrender our entire lifestyle to God. I've spoken with many who admitted that alcohol or substance abuse ruined their relationship, but instead of surrendering the problem to God and breaking the addiction, they simply found someone else to tolerate their habit. Unfortunately, the problem soon resurfaced.

It's little wonder that many go through life-changing partners, careers or residency searching for someone or something that can never be found apart from the wholeness a personal relationship with Christ brings. If this is you, I encourage you to stop wandering from relationship to relationship and allow God to rebuild and restore: "Therefore repent and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

Do you desire peace and joy again? Simply return to God: "You shall seek Me and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13). Full surrender provides fertile ground for joy and peace.

If you're like me, you may realize that many years of

“wandering” could have been avoided. Many, no doubt, had direction for their marriage, but because of selfishness, disobedience, disregard or a deaf ear to God’s direction, it ended in divorce. But God can rebuild and redeem.

Don’t allow past brokenness to cause future pain. Regret and failure will linger as long as we let them. Scripture is very clear: We are to forget those things that are behind us and focus on those things ahead. You can’t change where you’ve been, but you can change where you’re going.

I learned that shepherds, from time to time, broke the leg of a lamb that continually wandered from the flock and, thus, the shepherd’s protection. The shepherd would then splint the broken leg and carry the lamb on his shoulders for weeks until the leg healed. As painful as this was for the lamb, it was necessary to protect it from being ravished by wolves or other predators.

In time, through the broken and dependent relationship, the lamb learned to walk and to remain in the protective presence of his shepherd. This concept was well stated by David in Ps. 51:8, “That the bones that You have broken may rejoice.” And Isaiah reminds us, “All we like sheep have gone astray” (53:6). Ironically, many thank the Lord for using their divorce to bring them back to the Good Shepherd.

What will it take to bring you back? A deliberate decision to stay close to Him can avoid unneeded pain and provide safety and protection; it’s the first step in the rebuilding process.

Watch the sermon “Hope for the Hurting” here. {eoa}