

This Spiritual Exercise Can Help Obliterate the Pain in Your Soul

In over 30 years of counseling, I have developed and used some tools in my practice to help my clients find healing in relationships and past hurts. In this article, I want to tell you about the exercise I like to call “Cleansing the temple.”

This exercise can remove a lot of the pain that you may carry in your soul. This pain may be from your family of origin or childhood and caused by neglect, abuse or abandonment. Also, some pain carried in your soul is from your spouse. In some marriages, spouses traumatize each other or deprive each other to such a degree that their anger seems overwhelming.

Anger can build up in your soul until the size of your wound makes intimacy extremely difficult. Even though you did not cause the wounds, you are now responsible to receive healing for them. Similar to walking outside and getting shot by a sniper, you are 100% responsible to receive healing for your wounds, even though the sniper is 100% responsible for causing the wound.

This “cleansing the temple” exercise is based on the biblical account of Jesus cleansing the temple. The account of this is found in each Gospel. (See Matt. 21, Mark 11, Luke 19 and John 2.) Let’s review the four major principles from John 2:13-22, and then we will walk through the practical application.

Biblical Principles

Principle 1 – Jesus knew the temple needed to be cleansed. In the first three accounts of Jesus cleansing the temple, the temple refers to physical building in Jerusalem. But in John’s account, Jesus refers to His body (John 2:18-21). Jesus was

changing the dwelling place of God from the physical temple to the temple of a human being. Paul develops this thought a little later when he records that Christian believers are God's temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

God's plan all along was to dwell inside of us. We are His holy temple. This being true, temples can become defiled through many avenues, including manipulation, abuse and neglect from others. When we get defiled through life, our temple gets defiled also and needs to get cleaned out.

Principle 2 – Jesus identified the sin that caused the defilement. Jesus made it very clear to them why He was cleansing the temple (John 2:16). They were taking something holy and misusing it to profit themselves. Most of the people who have hurt you have no concept of your holiness or preciousness. You have felt used or abused during the incidents in which you were wounded. You will need to identify the sin or damage that has been done to you by those who have defiled your temple.

Principle 3 – Jesus focused His anger at the injustice. Jesus wasn't merely having a bad day. This was an act of His will. It was a well-thought-out act of obedience. This is an important point to understand, because it will take an act of your will to clean your temple.

Jesus intentionally planned to upset the normal course of events in His temple. John's account says, "He found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So He made a whip out of cords" (John 2:14-15). This passage gives us the sense that Jesus was looking around and witnessing the peoples' mistreatments of His holy temple. Then, in verse 15, He gets a bunch of cords and takes the time to make a whip. He had already decided to use that whip when He entered His temple to cleanse it.

As we proceed with this exercise, you will need to make

choices to prioritize your time to prepare for cleansing your temple. Those who go about this intentionally and purposefully have received great breakthroughs in their lives.

Principle 4 – The temple was restored to its original order.

Why do we just treat trauma cognitively and expect people to heal? If the trauma affects all three dimensions of a person, doesn't it make sense that the healing of trauma involves all three aspects—spirit, soul and body—as well?

I share the same logic with you. People may have hurt you significantly. You may have presumed to forgive them, and you have done so. Nevertheless, the bullet is still inside. The muck and defilement are still surrounding it. That doesn't necessarily mean you didn't forgive them—it just means that you haven't cleansed your temple yet.

My experience with cleansing the temple has been nothing short of miraculous. Sexual abuse survivors heal very quickly after this exercise. People who have been betrayed by their spouses move through the stages of grief and forgiveness much more quickly than those who refuse to cleanse their temple.

The “Cleanse The Temple” Exercise

Write an anger letter. The first step in cleansing your temple is to write an anger letter to the person who has hurt you (but don't send it). You can say whatever you need to say to him or her in this letter. This is not a letter to suppress your feelings, but rather, to vent all the thoughts and feelings of hate, disgust and anguish that have been robbing your soul. Neither is this an “I forgive you” letter. This is the place where you rid yourself of the anger that has been part of your soul.

Get warmed up. In Jesus' situation He made a whip for Himself. I don't recommend whips, but a padded baseball bat or tennis racket could be helpful. First, warm up your body. Take your bat and hit a mattress or pillow with small hits. Then use

medium, large and extra large hits. Do this three times. Warm up your voice as well. Shout “no” each time you hit the pillow. Use small, medium, large and extra large “no’s” with your voice. This may feel awkward, but removing this buildup of pain from your soul and spirit feels almost like having a baby. That is why it’s important to be physically warmed up.

While you’re warming up, make sure you are home alone. Disconnect the phone so that you are not disturbed.

Note: Before doing this, if you have a heart condition or other medical condition that warrants talking to your medical doctor first, please do so.

Read your letter aloud. After your physical warm-up, take the letter you wrote to your offender and read it aloud. If your offender’s name is Toby, then you would read as follows: “Toby, how could you have done this to me? I trusted you!”

Of course, Toby is nowhere around. You certainly don’t need to do this with him or her around. You are simply in a room alone, just reading the letter aloud.

Engage your anger physically and verbally. After reading your letter, pick up your bat. Hit the bed or pillow and symbolically let “Toby” have it. You can yell, scream and cry, but release the infection that has been robbing you. You can symbolically tell him that his secrets are not controlling you anymore. He was to blame! You have no limits as to what you can say to your offender. For once, let go of all the emotional control that is keeping this wound infected. Let it out!

This can last from 15 minutes to an hour. Your body will let you know when you have completely put this behind you—spiritually, emotionally and physically.

Someone has given you something toxic, and you have been unhealthy ever since. After you remove it from you, you will

feel so much better. You're worth getting it all out!

Comments

When you do this cleansing exercise, only work on one offender at a time. If three different people have offended you, then you will need to complete three different sessions. Don't try to do multiple offenders in one exercise.

If you're going through this exercise as a couple, you don't need to discuss with each other to whom you will write a letter. But do take a moment to discuss when you can be home alone to do your own cleansing of the temple exercises. By making a commitment to set aside the time to do this work, you will be much more likely to follow through with it. The sooner this takes place, the better it will be for both of you.

If you are struggling with someone who has offended you in the past, this exercise can be very helpful in setting you free from that offense. Your perpetrator is 100% responsible for what they did to you, but you are 100% responsible for finding your own healing from it. Use this exercise to heal yourself.
{eoa}

Doug Weiss, Ph.D., is a nationally known author, speaker and licensed psychologist. He is the executive director of Heart to Heart Counseling Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and the author of several books, including 30 Day Marriage Makeover. You may contact Dr. Weiss via his website, , on his Facebook, by phone at 719-278-3708 or through email at heart2heart@.