

# Why You Build Walls Around Your Heart

A bridge is an interesting thing. It is a pathway connecting two places, often over an obstacle or tumultuous area. In many cases we would never be able to cross wide gaps in the terrain while travelling without the assistance of bridges. When you are standing at the edge of a thorny embankment looking down at the raging waters below, dreaming about the inviting gardens on the other side can seem like a lost cause unless there is a bridge to join where you are presently with where you desire to be.

Just as a structural bridge is needed to transverse natural ravines, mental bridges are needed to transverse spiritual ravines. When deep pain enters your life it can cut into your emotions, into your faith, and into your ability to trust God, creating a deep spiritual valley. A valley so expansive and so consuming that it can become a hiding place. It can become a place to which you retreat for fear of being hurt again. I call this place The Valley of the Wounded and spent much of my childhood wandering around exploring what little it had to offer. I must admit it did offer protection, because my pain was a barrier to building relationship with others who could potentially cause me future pain. It offered safety, since few were willing to come visit me in my place of discontentment. And it offered the needed motivation to exceed and excel at being self-sufficient and self-serving. Ultimately, its offerings failed to meet what my heart and soul truly craved.

What it did not offer was love and the blessed hope needed to fully live. There was no promise of ever feeling whole or at peace within myself or with God. Every painful experience stood at the door of my heart defying entry to anyone and everyone. Every injury to my soul was daring God to even try to make an attempt at being Lord of my life. My mind lied that

I needed no one while my heart cried for someone to hear my screams. I felt alone and abandoned. If I could turn back time and speak to my younger self, I would have told her, "You are not alone, but pain has blinded your ability to see God. Stop running from the pain and look for the bridges connecting your deepest pain with His deep love for you." I pray she would have listened to my plea.

One day I eventually stopped running and found myself looking deep into the valley of my past pain. God used many healing bridges to draw me back to Him. Every time I wanted to flee, God would hold my attention by revealing something about himself through the most unusual circumstances, people, events, or books. Each encounter became a mental bridge reconnecting me back to the heart of God and to a new place of wholeness. Eventually, I started seeking out these mental bridges. These bridges changed how I viewed God, how I perceived my pain, and created a desire to be finally free from emotional and spiritual bondage.

Each bridge revealed a different aspect of who God is and how He intersects our pain. These bridges were healing every place I hurt, one unknown step at a time. Through His love, God places these healing bridges before each of us in the midst of our deepest pain. We can choose to cross over, or we can choose to walk away. The choice is ours, and if we choose courageously we can walk into a life we love with a God who loves us, healed and set free from the limitations of our wounds.

I don't know what pain has entered your life, but I do know that God is available to heal your heart if you will entrust your pain to him. Will you take the first step in faith? You don't have to see the whole bridge to take the first step.

I have come across many bridges in my life and each has led me closer to the place I call home. Each has led me to a deeper place of surrender and intimacy. Some bridges have been

people, some have come in the form of books I've read, and other bridges have been experiences. Each bridge has helped connect the places in my life where God appeared to be missing, to the part of my heart that needed his touch. They were bridges over the gapping wounds of my past, laying down a path back to God's plan for an abundant life. Each bringing me back to a life full of hope and expectancy built upon a solid foundation of his love.

What pain is currently affecting your life? Look for the bridges available to help you overcome your pain and embrace healing now.

**Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith** is a Board Certified internal medicine physician. She often speaks on the topics of eliminating limiting emotions, finding grace in difficult places, and experiencing personal renewal by drawing near to God. Dr. Dalton-Smith is a media resource on the mind, body, spirit connection and has been featured in numerous national and international publications. Her latest book is *Come Empty: Pour Out Life's Hurts and Receive God's Healing Love*.