

Simple Steps to a Healthy, Whole Soul—God's Way

For many years, I was really messed up in my soul because of terrible things that had happened to me. Many days I felt miserable, like I was down in a pit, mentally and emotionally. I would just sit and mull over all the things in my life that weren't fair—all the people who had hurt me. It was a place of bitterness, unforgiveness, anger and self-pity.

I believe many people have some kind of pit in their lives. The pain of injustice and abuse they've suffered has left them filled with the same destructive attitudes I once lived with much of the time.

But God showed me in His Word that He wanted to lift me out of the pit and heal my wounded soul. He wanted to take away the shame and guilt from the past and restore me, making me even better than I was before it all happened.

Isaiah 61:7 (AMP) says: "Instead of your [former] shame you will have a double portion; and instead of humiliation your people will shout for joy over their portion. Therefore in their land they will possess double [what they had forfeited]; everlasting joy will be theirs."

God wanted to give me double for my trouble! And His promise filled me with a determination to do whatever I had to do to let Him heal me from the inside out and restore everything that had been stolen from me.

The process took time, and it wasn't easy, but I discovered that if we will trust God and refuse to park at the point of our pain, we can get victory over the pain we've experienced. We can become better, rather than remain bitter. We can be "more than conquerors and gain an overwhelming victory through Him who loved us [so much that He died for us]" (Rom. 8:37).

Steps in the Process

There are several steps I had to take with God to experience freedom from my past. As I studied God's Word and pursued a personal relationship with Him in prayer, He revealed truths that literally transformed my life. I want to share a few of them with you.

- You must receive God's unconditional, perfect love for you.

God's love is the greatest gift we can ever receive! But we have to understand that we must freely receive it, because we can't earn it or do enough good things to deserve it. God is love—it's who He is and what He does. And there's nothing we can do to keep Him from loving us. But we have to believe He loves us and choose to receive it if we want to experience it.

I love the apostle Paul's prayer for the Ephesians, where he says he wants them "to know [practically, through personal experience] the love of Christ which far surpasses [mere] knowledge [without experience]..." (Eph. 3:19).

If you need a deeper revelation of God's love for you, I encourage you to pray this scripture over and over every day until you get it. Because knowing God loves you unconditionally is the first step to living with confidence in who you are in Christ.

- Receive God's forgiveness—and forgive yourself.

When you pray for God to forgive your sins and then receive His forgiveness, that means you sincerely repent and let go of them. You also let go of the guilt, shame and condemnation caused by them, and pursue godly wisdom to make better choices.

Doing this gives you the ability to forgive yourself and move

on. You don't sit around, thinking about everything you've done wrong. Instead, you thank God for His love and forgiveness, and take another step in the right direction. Don't park at the point of your pain!

- Forgive everyone who has hurt you.

As I've traveled around the world, speaking at conferences and teaching God's Word, I've encountered many Christians who are angry and hurting because they refuse to forgive the people who have mistreated them.

I know from personal experience how hard it can be to completely forgive someone who has hurt you; it wasn't easy forgiving my father for sexually abusing me for almost 15 years. But when I realized that refusing to forgive was poisoning my soul and keeping me imprisoned in bitterness and self-pity, I made a decision to forgive him—by God's grace.

God tells us in His Word to pray for our enemies ... to bless them, not curse them ... to completely forgive them. Don't stay mad at people and live with anger; that only hurts you, not them.

- Get over self-pity.

This requires determination to renew your mind with God's Word and refuse to constantly think about the wrong things that have been done to you. But I promise that if you will put your trust in God and meditate on the truth of Scripture, you'll eventually find you don't want to focus on negative, critical, judgmental thoughts about others.

Instead, you'll enjoy genuine peace of mind, knowing God loves you, He's forgiven you of your sin, and He wants to put His love in your heart for others. He wants you to share your testimony with people who are hurting and hopeless, so they can be healed too.