

# Dealing With The Past

In this message, Don will discuss the following in dealing with your past:

1. Problems Are Common
2. Panic is Counter-Productive
3. Persist in Communication
4. Purpose in Cleansing (Forgiveness is a must)
5. Providence in Circumstances (Trust God to Vindicate)
6. Praise Instead of Complaining
7. Pursue in Calamity

Your memory is one of the very remarkable parts of your complex being. It serves as a news system for the brain, it is like the brain's history book. It is a think bank containing millions, perhaps billions of memoranda. It stores feelings and impressions, experiences, things seen, things heard and things felt.

It is amazing that our memory can recall so many things, just at the impulse of desiring to recall a past event. We are able to dwell on that happening and bring to our memory even more details by willing to...unfortunately, the memory can serve us or enslave us. A choice that each individual makes. For in each person's memory bank is both positive and negative events. I can recall whichever I choose. I can make them dominant parts of my memory by dwelling on them more often than others.

There are multitudes of people who feel they can never survive the hurts of the past. They think there are things they can never get over. They think and speak of them constantly, which tends to reinforce the negative feelings. They say there is someone they can never forgive for a hurt or horror brought into their life. Many of these "dark" memories come out of our youth, when we were delicate and impressionable. A sorrow that so crushed us we feel we can never turn it loose. Many feel they can never forgive someone who mistreated them. These "dark" memories cause an individual to grow up maladjusted.

Lingering bruises may come from the work place or with associates. Perhaps you feel you were cheated or wronged in a way that you feel justified in holding to anger and unforgiveness. "Dark" memories from painful experiences in your marriage or relationship with the opposite sex. The source of painful memories is limitless.

The bottom line is, It is not what happened to you, it is how you responded to what happened! You can be humiliated, lied against, deceived, betrayed, can even suffer bodily harm and still you can get over it. Your response to the problem, determines the magnitude of the problem.

## **Problems Are Common**

"There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it." I Corinthians 10:13 The problems you have experienced in life are no different than what others have experienced. That is, others have had bitter, unpleasant experiences as well. Though they may be very different in nature than yours, perhaps not as severe as yours. Everyone has had problems that have left scars and painful memories. You must continually be aware that you have not been singled out for suffering, and that in this world problems are normal.

In prison ministry we meet the extreme cases of "painful pasts" but the problem is not the painful past, it is the way the individual chose to deal with the problem. Some have sought to justify their wrong actions because of wrong done to them in the past.

You must know, you must come to grips with the FACT that crisis is normal, problems are common, unpleasant memories of the past are in everyone's life...not just yours. How you handle the past will depend pretty much on how you handled yourself while you were in the problem. Crisis is normal to the growth process, it is necessary for maturity to happen.

In God's program the way of escape is not "escaping from" but "escaping to"... The first step in dealing with the past is acknowledging that PROBLEMS ARE COMMON. They come to everyone and are a necessary part of life. What you do with the problems will determine their ultimate effect on you. Unfortunately, for many, yesterdays control todays...and for some, tomorrows. Don't fall in the trap of thinking your past is the Problem. Your Response to your Past is the Problem.

## **Panic is Counter-Productive**

Painful memories can cause panic when the memories seemingly won't go away.

In spiritual life panic blinds the eyes to being receptive to God's Word, it depresses the spirit, robs the prayer life, impairs faith and it inhibits the receipt of God's answers. When memories bring panic to your spirit you can be sure that it is from the enemy of your soul. Panic and depression are brother and sister. Often panic from the pain of the past comes when you are awakened in the early morning hours, unable to sleep, fearful, mentally searching for answers but in vain. You are tempted to quit...even to quit from life, thoughts of suicide and total despair overwhelm you.

David called this the "terror by night". Sometimes sleeplessness is a very real attack of the enemy of our soul. This terror is from a demonic being or presence of darkness that will try to scare you. It will put a thought into your mind that will jar you from sleep, or speak discouraging thoughts to you in your drowsiness that you begin to accept and believe. Psychologists who specialize in sleep disorders recognize "night terror" as a real phenomenon. But they don't know what causes it and they don't know the cure.

The Proverbs says, "A relaxed attitude lengthens a man's life." David said, "You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor the arrows that flies by day...because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your habitation, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling."

When you feel overcome by Panic of memories from the past, or panic in any form. Turn on some praise music, tapes of Bible reading, praise God from your spirit...do not turn on the television, don't pollute your mind further with junk from unsanctified minds and talents. This is the time to renew your mind with the washing of the water of the Word! "Studies show that television causes greater depression and loneliness, even though those watching it believe it will relax their depression and loneliness." (Ed Cole).

Don't panic. Keep productive. Panic is a tool of Satan and he uses it to bring about defeat and destruction. When these feeling approach you rebuke them in the Name of Jesus! Absolutely refuse to submit to the negative thoughts and depressive feelings that come as old painful memories are aroused. Learn to reject them and identify them as from Satan with intentions of destroying you!

## **Persist in Communication**

Don't stop communicating with people or with God. Don't cut yourself off by isolating yourself!

Loneliness and isolation will only pervert your thinking. Keep your balance by continuing to interact normally even though you feel weighted down with your past. Don't give place to the devil. Godly counsel is one of the ways God has of speaking to us. If you seek counsel or advice, make sure you are seeking it from godly people. Not necessarily a paid counselor, but if you feel the need to talk about what you are feeling, make certain you speak to people who know God intimately and will give you godly counsel. Good advice is not the same as godly counsel. The gospel is the Good news, not good advice. Everyone is willing to pass along good advice, but when it is not godly counsel it only confuses the issues and clouds the mind! Often it will cause you to make a wrong decision!

## **Tell God about your situation - not men!**

Outside of confidential meetings with trusted, godly people, keep your conversation positive! No one needs to know the negatives of your situation. Though you may be going through emotional turmoil or suffering mental anguish, no one else needs to know the details. We deceive ourselves, and the enemy of our souls takes the advantage, when we think we must share everything...that's just not true.

Your children do not need to know of your anger, tension and anxiety. Do not communicate to your children, small or grown, the poverty attitude of your feelings. While for you it IS a passing crisis, it can become a lifetime of pain for them to overcome. With knowledge of a situation comes responsibility. Your children do not need to be responsible for the knowledge of what you are going through! What you share with your children is what you should want them to dwell upon and become, because that is what will happen. Don't pass the plague of your painful past on to others. Tell it to God - not men, especially not your children.

Don't be ashamed to tell God the truth and to tell Him everything that your heart is feeling. Get rid of all the negative feeling by pouring your heart out in confession. The negative confession and the negative feelings must be communicated and they must be communicated to God. He can heal them.

## **You are committed to what you confess**

Say again. Explain. You are committed to what you confess. What you confess, what you say is what you believe, what you believe is what you will do. Negative confession produces negative feelings and a negative lifestyle. It opens to Satan, closes to God. Confess the positive promises of God's Word. Believe them to materialize in your life, to become reality in your own life and you will commit yourself to them. Build faith. Don't allow negative confessions to destroy your building. Build your faith through Prayer, God's Word, godly counsel, godly books, tapes, praise music and an attitude of praise from your heart. Listen: Faith attracts the positive, fear attracts the negative. Give God the negatives. Refuse to dwell on them. When you feel inclined to complain about someone, about an injustice or trauma that was apparently caused by another person take it up with the Lord out on a mountain top or in the desert...don't take your murmurings to another person, and don't allow them to live inside of you! Confess sin, confess your and what others have sinned against you, asked to be cleansed! Admit what your conscience convicts you about; don't cover it up. The Holy Spirit will be truthful, when you are convicted, confess it!

Base your conversation on your trust in God, not your trust in your feelings. Remember this, God always builds on a positive, never on a negative. God will use your own words to create a new life for you. God inhabits the praise of His people...not the complaints and criticisms. He inhabits our praise. Begin to make positive communication, persist in communication that is positive.

Before we begin the next session, look at the diagram. Picture yourself in a room with two doors one door is always open, the other is always closed...by your choice. At one door stands God, at the other stands Satan...only you can open the door. When one is open the other is closed!

## **Purpose in Cleansing**

The Lord Jesus is our pattern for "opening" and "closing". Forgiveness opens-unforgiveness closes!

The Lord Jesus Christ is the pattern for going and coming, entering and leaving, opening and closing. This does not make sense to you? Coming from the past, leaving the past...The forgiveness of Jesus Christ from the cross opened heaven for everyone.

Forgiveness opens. Unforgiveness would have barred us all from ever entering heaven. Memorize this simple truth: Forgiveness opens, unforgiveness closes.

Life is lived based on relationships, so opening or closing the doors of relationship is vital. It is also always a choice. You can keep your spirit closed and you will suffer. You can choose to open your spirit and forgive, that is a choice. When you make that choice you have opened heaven to smile on your relationship. Unforgiveness will shut down friendships, associations and opportunities. It is an acid that ultimately destroys it's own container. This is a vital area in dealing with your past and there will be a session devoted totally to forgiveness. Suffice it to say now, if you choose to not forgive you are choosing to have your painful past destroy you.

Marriage is an example of how unforgiveness closes a relationship. Entering marriage means leaving the single life and family. If a man takes his single ways into marriage, he will ruin the marriage. When two people marry they are leaving one area of life and entering another. If the woman takes her "parents" into the marriage she will ruin the marriage. It is a new and different relationship. Please read carefully the following comment from Ed Cole: "Spouses who do not forgive their parents eventually find their unforgiveness spoiling their marriage." It does not matter how unpleasant the experience nor how justified one may feel in not forgiving, if you choose to be unforgiving you will ruin your relationship. Holding grudges and letting prejudices spoil intimacy is no way to live! The spirit of unforgiveness is communicated from one person's spirit to others and it closes them off!

Forgiveness is a gift. It can never be earned, it can only be given as is God's forgiveness to us. Please, please, do not sow the seeds of the past in the fields of relationship. You will ruin the relationship. When you harbor unforgiveness toward others it will show up in virtually every area of your life. It closes you off to ministry. You will never be able to minister to the one for whom you hold a grudge. First, you must forgive.

Meditate on these words from VOLTAIRE. "Life is thickly sown with thorns, and I know no other remedy than to pass quickly through them. The longer we dwell on our misfortunes, the greater is their power to harm us."

Admit it and quit it! Drop it and stop it! Move out, move on, move up! MOVE. "IF YOU FORGIVE OTHERS THEIR TRESPASSES, YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER WILL ALSO FORGIVE YOU YOURS." Luke 6:14

## **Providence in Circumstances**

"Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

Trust God to vindicate you, if you feel you must know vindication. If you feel you have been dealt with unjustly don't return evil for evil. Rather, the scriptural way to deal with this area of your past is to pray for those who mistreat you. Leave the rest to God. You can NEVER, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER undo the past. But it can undo you!

Part of the problem of dealing with the past and the pain of it is that you know you can never go back and do it over. You are stuck with the events of yesterday. Everyone is. Sometimes you feel that life is unfair, it is not unfair it is just life in a sinful world. Don't complain about life, be thankful for it. Don't dwell on past failures or bruises that others caused. God has always been in control and was in control when the unpleasant pain first came. Trust it to Him and go on. He will vindicate for wrong doing. It's not your job, it's His.

If you feel you can never be satisfied until the person who wronged you is punished then YOU have a bigger problem. Why do you want someone else to hurt when you know how painful it is? You call it justice? Do you really want justice. Have you ever wronged anyone? Justice is not what I think we cry for when we are hurt, we just want the pain of the past to go away. Somehow we feel that if the perpetrator is punished we will feel better. That's not the way it works. However, if that feeling dwells in you, you must remember. Vengeance belongs to God. Revenge is not our friend! It is, instead, a great enemy and tool for Satan to use for further destruction. Trust God to vindicate you. See Him involved in all of your circumstances, past, present and future.!

## **Praise Instead of Complaining**

"Let all the people praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise Thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase and God, even our own God shall bless us." (Psa 67:5-6) Many times you have heard or seen the phrase, PRAYER CHANGES THINGS...and for sure it does. Do you also know that many times when you pray the enemy does not yield one inch of ground though you have prayed for days and months. The stronghold remains though you have persisted in prayer. In times of great pressure, often prayer alone is not enough. Jesus once said, "This kind cometh out but by prayer and fasting" Sometimes it

requires prayer and...!

For the stronghold of the past, the grip of a grudge, the anvil of anger...it requires prayer and PRAISE! Praise is a statement to God and Satan. After you pray praise God with THANKSGIVING. "And let them sacrifice the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing." Psalms 107:22 Praise when the heart is bleeding and torn? Praise when the pressure is so great? Praise when walking through the valley of the shadow of death? Should I not weep instead? Well, those are our natural feelings and they must not only be suppressed, they must be replaced! Replace them with praise. The SACRIFICE of thanksgiving...sacrifice is an offering to God. Give Him the sacrifice of PRAISE.

You can praise your way out of anything! Even the pain of the past. While you may grow weary of hearing this, perhaps in much hearing it will sink home. It is a choice YOU must make. YOU must decide if you want to be free from the past. YOU MUST MAKE THE CHOICE. If you want healing there are some things YOU must do. Forgiveness and PRAISE are not options, they are absolutes!

Praise has wonderful lifting power. I Samuels records a time when King Saul was tormented by an evil spirit. "When David played on his harp the evil spirit left Saul and he was well." What a wonderful way to get rid of the enemy when he attacks with mental torment...PRAISE.

Praise God, praise the people you love. Never condemn or criticize, they are like boomerangs to the spirit. Martin Luther said, "When I cannot pray, I always sing!" What you focus upon will ultimately consume you. Focus on God. Try the GLANCE AND GAZE PRINCIPLE...only glance at the problem, the circumstances, gaze upon Jesus! In 2 Chronicles there is the account of Jehosaphat. He was told there was a great multitude coming against him from beyond the sea. He fully realized the difficulty and he went to the Lord with the problem that was TOO GREAT FOR HIM. "We have no might against this great company...neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee." The battle was won through praise. Word came to Jehosaphat through one of the young men: "The battle is not yours but God's...ye shall not need to fight...fear not, nor be dismayed." He appointed singers to go before the army singing, "Praise the Lord for His mercy endureth forever." Without one visible sign of victory they sang praise right in the face of the enemy! Praise God right in the face of the enemy!

"When they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children



of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir...and they were smitten. Two of the opposing armies began to fight the third, when they had demolished them, they turned on each other until the valley was filled with dead bodies of the enemy and "none escaped". Not only did the PRAISE bring victory but great reward. "Jehposaphat and his people...were three days in gathering the spoil, it was so much." They had added riches and reward they never dreamed of and "...the way of the wicked was turned upside down."

There were two songs in this great battle. A song of praise before and a song of deliverance afterwards! Remember, if you CHOOSE to deal with your pain and your past God's way...The Battle is the Lord's and you can know both victory and reward by praising Him. Pope John said, "Concern yourself not with what you have tried and failed in, but what it is possible for you to do." Move on!

## **Pursue in Calamity**

"God brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." Psalms 40:2

The past is a pit...and a horrible pit! The following verse says, "...and put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and trust in the Lord." David certainly knew calamity. He knew a painful past. Saul did not treat him very well! When someone hates you enough to try to kill you, I'd say that qualifies as a painful memory. When you are reminded by God's prophet that you have committed adultery and murder and your sin is open before all of heaven, that qualifies as mental torment. When your children refuse to serve the Lord and seek all that God has given you, that must qualify as troubling thoughts.

There was a time when David was "greatly distressed" in his early life. He led his men in battle and returned to find himself in the midst of "calamity". The people spoke of stoning him. They wept till they had no power to weep. Their wives, their children, their belongings had been taken captive. David "inquired at the Lord saying, `Shall I pursue after this troop. Shall I overtake them?" The simple answer to his simple prayer was: "Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all." (1 Samuel 30) One of the most challenging words in all of scripture is found in this situation. "...but David encouraged himself in the Lord."

Encourage yourself in the Lord. Don't wait for others, it may never come, they have

problems of their own. Likely, if you wait others won't encourage you anyway, they may criticize and condemn you. Encourage yourself in the Lord. The responsibility for recovery and healing lies in YOUR hands. In calamity-encourage yourself in the Lord-PURSUE! You take charge of your life or someone else will. You make the choice to be healed. The pain of the past is only pain because you allow it to be. PURSUE tomorrow, PURSUE today. Forget yesterday. John Hagee says; "READ MY LIPS, YESTERDAY IS GONE." Go for today, plan for tomorrow, you don't have anything else! PURSUE THE PRESENT. FACE FORWARD. PURSUE THE PRESENT! PURGE THE PAST-PURSUE THE PRESENT!

"I seek no backward voyage across the sea of time. I will ever press forward. I believe God intends the present to be better than the past, and the future to be better than the present." John Ireland