



## **CARING FOR THE NEGLECTED PLACES IN YOUR SOUL**

Have you ever tried to hold a beach ball under the water – can't do as it keeps

popping up. It takes a lot of energy trying to keep it below the surface.

**Question:** can you think of something in your life that you have been trying to suppress (just like the beach ball)?

We would like our problems to simply go away and we can waste so much energy trying to hold them inside and this de-energises our soul. It is actually a kindness when we recognize that our losses and pains matter.

Allowing yourself to experience the uncomfortable emotions (without feeding them and making them more intense) enables the emotions to pass. At some time in our lives we will find a barrier preventing us to fulfil our dreams due to painful experiences that we hold onto. But just as the father in the parable we are about to read, God's grace can overflow from a half-broken cup.

**Read: Luke 15:11-32**

The younger son created his painful past by rebellion, and the older son by resentment. These two barriers hold back many

people from fulfilling God's dream for their life. But the father also was struggling. No mention of a wife, so he is likely a widower, having to raise two boys on his own. In the parable he represents God, and so we can assume he was a good father. He did not abuse his boys or treat them unfairly, but gave them love and all that adequate wealth could provide. But still they caused untold pain to their father.

This text is very appropriate for looking at barriers that hold us back. These can include broken or dysfunctional families; abuse; arguments; unrealistic expectations; health issues; rebellion and resentment. Many people have a painful past to overcome because of these factors in their lives. Some will break free and dream again, but others will be bound by their past. The goal is to be among those who break the barriers that hold them back and dare to dream again.

The older brother could not break free as he retained his resentment of his younger brother. He had hardened his heart with bitter resentment that his father still loved his brother. One of the reasons the Bible is full of the sins of its heroes is for this very reason - that God's people can see the past does not need to bind them.

Moses became a murderer, had to flee Egypt, but God dared him to dream again, and led him back to take his people out of Egypt.

David fell into the sin of adultery and murder, but God led him to repent and dare to dream again, and we now sing the praises of God by means of the Psalms of David.

The Prodigal is even a better example. He was a nobody; didn't have a name; wasn't a king or leader in the community; just a regular bloke. He blew it big time, but he had the good sense to dare to dream again, and he broke through the barrier of his painful past and got back into a life of pleasure with his father. He finally told himself the truth that he was loved by his father, and that he had it made at home, so he swallowed his pride and went back.

The paradox is, it is the younger son who ends up reconciled to his father, and the older son who stays home out of fellowship with the father. The bottom line is this: Get right with your father (God) and you can break through barriers. Get right with God and tell yourself the truth about how the Gospel applies to you. If the Gospel is true for you, and you are reconciled to God, then you have no business being kept in bondage to any sinful past. "If the Son shall make you free you shall be free indeed." The only thing that keeps a child of God in bondage is their own unbelief.

The Prodigal said, "I'm a child of my father. I am not worthy and I'll tell him so, but I am going home." He could have spent the rest of his life in the pig pen feeling shame and guilt, but he

didn't do it. He dared to dream again, and he left the slop behind.

***Many a child of God gets locked into a pattern of going nowhere because they won't move on.***

Feelings are wonderful, but they can also be terrible when they are under the control of a painful experience. You may be saying - I just can't get over this thing. I know God can turn everything into good, but how is He going to do that? God will work for good, but He does not make a bad thing good. The good is coming through a bad crisis and becoming a better and wiser person for it. That is where healing begins.

Once you establish who you are in God, the next step is forgiveness. This is a vital but complex step. Part of the problem is quoting texts that do not fit the situation. The Bible is loaded with the commands to forgive. So how are we to rise to a higher level and say, "Okay God, you won't do it, but here I go-I forgive the person who has wronged me, or upset me, or abused me, who told me I am not good enough.

Forgiveness means letting go of the past in the sense of relinquishing your right to revenge, retaliate, withdraw, put up barriers.

It means saying to God, "I let go of this issue and I leave it in Your hands. I'll will not grieve over this injustice but leave it to

your final judgement. I will refuse to let this issue dominate my mind or my time. I let go and move on to live my life for You and make this only a memory."

You are not saying it's okay, and I'll just forget it and never think of it again, but you are saying I am letting it go. If you hold on to it, it will dominate your life and you will be in bondage to the circumstance or issue.

If you cast your burden on Jesus, you will be free of it. Until you do you will be in bondage to your past, and not free in Christ. If you are holding on to any sort of revenge and desire to get even, you are hurting yourself, and you are still in the power of the other person or circumstance. No matter what you are a victim of you need to let go of that painful past in order to move on to dream again.

The father in the parable of the Prodigal is the ideal example of letting go. If anybody had good reason to hold on and resent the past, it was him. He had been a good father, and yet his rebel son rejected his love and guidance, and he went off to waste what the father had laboured so hard to provide. What parent would not be devastated by such rejection and rebellion? And yet, when his rebel son walked back into his life, he let go of that painful past as quickly as he would let go of a red hot iron.

The father did not say, "You hurt me so deeply son. It's going to take months of counselling and family therapy before I can accept you again." He just wrapped his arms around him and kissed him.

If he felt embarrassed because the neighbours would all be talking about his rebel son, he let it go.

If he grieved because all his love and care did not change his son's rebellion, he let it go.

If he resented being taken advantage of, and his resources being used to promote evil in the world, he let it go.

He let go all the negative and painful emotions of the past. He broke into the world of the positive immediately. It was the world of forgiveness, reconciliation, and celebration. He refused to let the painful past rob him of one more minute of his life. The father and the Prodigal both let go, and they are the heroes of the parable.

The elder brother held on to his painful past, and he made his own life miserable and added pain to the rest of the family. People who do not let go of their own painful past are the people who make life hard for others. There are many Christians in bondage to their past, and they can be difficult to deal with because of this.

That is why the first step to a victorious Christian life is to let go of your painful past and believe in God's Word and accept the completed work of Christ for yourself. Jesus died for all sin, and all sin can be forgiven and cleansed.

All of life's negative experiences can be overcome, and peace with God and everyone can be achieved.

Every Christian is either a pleasure or a pain in the body of Christ, and the key factor that makes the difference is letting go of a painful past.

**Was there anything in today's lesson that disturbed, challenged or surprised you?**

**For this next week I would encourage you to write down ONE situation/person/issue/crisis that you have been hanging on to and would like to let go of.**

**Provide as much detail as you can – when did it happen/what occurred/what was your first reaction/what was the impact on your life when it happened and what is the impact on your life now.**

**Then jot down some options that you could take with just this one situation that may assist you to let go and dream again.**