

BREAKING THE SHACKLES OF THE PAST

*“Our past will remind us but will not define us.
Because of Jesus we are not condemned!”*

- Andy Stanley.

Most of us carry some degree of emotional scarring or baggage.

- Emotionally **scarred** by **reliving offences** over in our minds.
- Emotionally **bruised** by **allowing hurt** to turn into self-pity.
- Emotionally **withdrawn under** the **weight** of guilt and shame.

Our past will remind us but because of Jesus our past will not define us!

We **will not** experience a better future if we are constantly making decisions that are influenced by the negatives from our past.

***Philippians 3:13-14** (tlb) No, dear brothers, I am still not all I should be, but I am bringing all my energies to bear on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God is calling us up to heaven because of what Christ Jesus did for us.*

Isaiah 43:18 Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.

We can move on from our past by doing three things:

1. DON'T ALLOW RESENTMENT TO BREATHE

Ephesians 4:31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

Resentment hurts the carrier more than the person it is held against!

Job 18:4a You tear yourself to pieces in your anger....

Remaining resentful toward people who have hurt us will not change the past.

Job 5:2 (gnb) To worry yourself to death with resentment would be a foolish, senseless thing to do.

Bitterness never **resolves** a problem; it only makes it **worse**!

We will struggle to build lasting, fulfilling relationships, if we allow unresolved issues and attitudes to live in our current relationships.

We **can** let go of our offences '**IF**' we choose to forgive those who have wronged us **just as God has forgiven us!**

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

C.S. Lewis: “We all agree that forgiveness is a beautiful idea until we have to practice it.”

- Forgiveness is not an **emotion**; it is a **decision** of the will!
- Forgiveness is not an **occasional act**; rather a **permanent attitude**!

Matthew 18:21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” 22: Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”

The issue is **not** if we get hurt, rather, **will** we forgive?

Jesus wants us to **develop** the **habit** of forgiveness.

2. IT IS OK TO MOURN BUT DON'T MOAN

Grieving is a **natural process** in life.

Matthew 5:4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

God will **comfort** us in our grief if we **allow** Him to do so.

Psalm 34:18 The Lord is close to the broken hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

We need to **express** our feelings and don't **suppress** them.

Psalm 62:8 Trust in Him at all times...pour out your hearts to Him...God is our refuge.

To **constantly** moan can lead into **self-pity**.

- Self-pity can **block out** those who want to help us!
- Self-pity **feeds** our pain rather than **relieves** our pain!
- Faith is **not pretending** everything is ok in our lives when it isn't!
- Faith is **facing the facts**, and not getting discouraged whilst trusting in God!

One key to **peace of mind** is accepting what cannot be changed!

Focus on what is left – not what is lost!

Old saying; *“I complained I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet.”*

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (tlb) Always be joyful. Always keep on praying. No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

As hard as it is, we need to choose to focus on God's goodness for a brighter future.

3. BREAK THE SHACKLES OF GUILT AND SHAME

People struggle to accept God's forgiveness because of guilt and shame that imprisons them emotionally.

Two of Jesus' disciples Peter and Judas dealt with their guilt differently. The night before Jesus was taken into custody, both Peter and Judas denied Him.

Judas dealt with his guilty conscience with **self condemnation and committed suicide**.

Matthew 27:3-5

Peter had the same remorse as Judas did but dealt with his guilt by **confessing and repenting of his wrongdoing**. *Matthew 26:75*

Deal with guilt and shame by confessing it and giving it over to God!

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Don't beg God. *God wants to forgive us more than we want to be forgiven.*

Don't bargain with God. *Forgiveness is not based on what we do but on what Jesus has done!*

Don't blame other people. *We need to take responsibility for our own decisions.*

- Are you holding a grudge against someone?
- Have you built a wall around yourself?
- Have you accepted what cannot be changed?
- Are you carrying emotional baggage from the past into your current relationships?

Our past does not need to influence our future - but the choice is ours!

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are past-away, behold all things are become new.

The moment we commit our life to Jesus, our **slate is clean.**