
HEALING of the MEMORIES

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true,
whosoever things are honest, whatsoever
things are just, . . . think on these things.

- Philippians 4:8

Lester Sumrall

Healing of the Memories

*by
Lester Sumrall*

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Healing of the Memories

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Thinking of You

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Healing of the Memories

You have a three-pound, jelly-like mound tucked beneath your skull that is one of the most remarkable parts of your entire body. Actually, it directs every part of your body, and if it isn't functioning properly, you and everyone else soon knows it. Of course, I am referring to your brain. Your memory is a part of this complex mass in your head. It serves as a kind of news system for the brain, a think bank containing millions of details of what has transpired throughout your lifetime, and accumulating more on a daily basis. It stores feelings, impressions, experiences, and things seen, heard, and felt.

I meet people all the time, and so do you, no doubt, who suffer as a result of bad experiences that have created havoc in their lives. They haven't learned that our memories weren't given to us as a means of haunting or hurting us. God doesn't want us to hold onto the past experiences that have been damaging. Some people feel they can never get over something that's happened to them, perhaps something that occurred a long time ago. They live in the past. They haven't learned the grace of forgiveness. They can't forget an injustice.

God has always been in the restoration business. It has always been His intent to help His children by restoring them to a right relationship with Himself and others. We are not meant to be burdened with painful memories, memories that hinder our daily walk with God and from experiencing His joy and peace.

Your Inner Child of the Past

Many dark memories are often related to one's childhood. The mind of a child is delicate and impressionable. Many children are deprived of that most basic of all needs—love—a need that remains constant throughout life. To be deprived of it during childhood can be devastating.

Some adults were over-disciplined or over-indulged when they were children. Others were subjected to common parental attitudes that pose various problems for them now as adults. They act out old fears, old habits, old angers, and confusions. They may be unable to relate to people, are oversensitive or overcritical of others.

Our attitudes toward ourselves are largely formed by the emotional atmosphere of our childhood. We carry with us into adulthood what is now commonly referred to as our "inner child of the past"—these feelings and attitudes picked up during childhood.

More and more we are learning about adults who were objects of sexual victimization and harassment when they were young. The trauma inflicted upon them has had terrible ongoing consequences. Their emotional stability often hangs by a thread.

Many children are forced to grow up too soon. Adults who were hurried through childhood may now feel incomplete and maladjusted.

Many of the most important threads that form the tapestry of the lives of adults were introduced in childhood, especially in the parent-child relationships. Oftentimes parental modeling was poor, leaving a child timid, distrustful, fearful, self-despising, defeated, hurt, and sad. A pattern of response is initiated in childhood that far too often gets carried over into adulthood. Captives of our childhood, we grow up marred.

Business and Work-related Memories

I find many business people suffering from lingering bruises that have come out of work-related encounters. This is very real. To be the victim of someone's tongue-lashing when you are in no position to defend yourself because you are in a subservient situation can be extremely difficult. Sometimes people even lose their jobs as a result of circumstances. Depression can set in and the resulting stigma and embarrassment can cause much mental anguish.

Friendships Gone Awry

Deep grievances between friends can cause tormenting memories and the "if only" mindset. Arguments and misunderstandings which remain unresolved bring on much hurt. An attitude of defeat and negative thinking can result. The tension that accompanies painful memories is enervating.

Submerged Emotions that Wreak Havoc

A person's attitude, reactions, outlook, and behavior are all colored, more or less, by our ability to deal with events of the past. Where there are many submerged emotions as a result of painful memories, they can rise up and express themselves in feelings of deep depression, rage, uncontrollable lust, inferiority, fear, loneliness, and hate.

In time, unless and until one comes to terms with the unresolved tensions of painful memories, he can become a prime candidate for an emotional crisis, or he will go through life miserable and very often friendless.

The storeroom of the human mind is both wonderful and terrible. Is there a way to clean out the storeroom so that what remains can be a creative force for good in one's life?

God Can Take the Sting Out of the Past

God certainly knew what He was doing when He sent the Holy Spirit to be our Comforter and to give us power. We need both comfort and power if we are to rid ourselves of memories that bind and emotional responses that cripple our relationships. It is the power of the Holy Spirit, as we call out to God for help, that can reach deep down, cleansing the subconscious mind, and get into the depths of one's heart.

It is a conscious choice we then make to respond to life's vicissitudes with an attitude that says, "I relinquish all this ugliness to You, God. Restore to me all that is needful so I can walk forward in Your power."

Peace in the Christian life comes as a result of the presence of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us, enabling us to stand fast in the Lord. The Apostle Paul talked much of this in his letters. He understood that God at work in us guards our hearts and minds through Christ. Paul said in Philippians 4:7, *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*. This is sure protection from unsettling and destructive thought patterns.

Paul said to think on things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous and praiseworthy (see Philippians 4:8). When you do that, the mind will not wander off into negative thought patterns that are damaging.

You can be humiliated, lied against, deceived, betrayed, and even suffer bodily harm; yet, you can get over it when you cultivate the mindset that says through Christ you can conquer overwhelmingly. We are told in Romans 8:37, *In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. And, Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you* (Romans 8:9).

Positive force can overcome a negative power. However, if you let the hurtful memories of the past hang over you like a cloud, you will continue to have problems. The Bible provides many examples of men and women who persevered in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds.

The Power of "I Know . . ."

When trouble comes to some people, they go to pieces. They begin to ask, "Where is God? Why me, God? God, why have you allowed this?"

Remember Job? In despair at times—he was human; he was a real person—Job still held onto his belief in God. While his "friends" attempted to convince him that his losses and suffering were deserved because of something in his past, breaking him into pieces with their words, Job held his boil-covered arm heavenward and shouted, *I know that my Redeemer liveth* (Job 19:25). Job never gave up on himself or God, and God reversed the circumstances in his life, vindicating him.

Job's memories were healed. His memory was washed clean by God's power, and the clouds of darkness were gone. His face became radiant. There was a song on his lips. A miracle of God had taken place. From that moment on, Job didn't live in the past, but in the present.

God Can Take the Sting Out of the Past

Maybe you have come through an experience that at the time caused great sorrow for you, yet you still live in the painful memories of that experience. Letting them affect you negatively, you bring the past's sorrow into your present. You may even still insist on talking about it. You say, "Let me tell you what happened to me . . .," and you rehearse the trauma or heartache.

Friend, God can take the sting out of the past. The power of those hurtful emotions surrounding your memories can be broken. They can lose their propulsive significance, made ineffective, devitalized through the power of God.

The Spirit of Jesus can heal our yesterdays.

3

The Prayer of Healing

It has been shown that if feelings of anger, rage, despair, yearning, and the many other emotions that crowd our thinking, and that have been pent up for a long time, can be fully expressed to someone who is trusted, one's personality may gain a new state of balance and eventually function properly. God should be that "someone."

The importance of being able to confide in a trusted pastor, counselor, friend, or loved one should not be minimized, but real healing of the memories comes as we entrust into God's hands our entire personality, asking Him to do for us what we are not capable of doing for ourselves. The Apostle Peter explains it like this: *Trust yourself to the God who made you, for he will never fail you* (1 Peter 4:19b, TLB).

David knew the pain of unhealed memories. To read the Psalms is to discover afresh just how much pain he experienced. David was totally ignored by his father when the prophet Samuel came to anoint one of Jesse's sons to be the next king. Can you imagine how much that must have hurt the young lad? You can read all about it in 1 Samuel 16.

David says in Psalm 27:10, *When my father and my mother forsake me, Then the Lord will take care of me* (NKJV). David understood that it is God who strengthens the heart and mind and enables a person to go on in this business of surviving in the land of the living. *I would have lost heart, David wrote, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living* (Psalm 27:13, NKJV).

So it is that we must come to the heavenly Father for healing of memories, surrendering our defenses and excuses, being open to the work of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes it helps to write out a list of areas in your life that need to be cleansed and healed. Then as you surrender these things to God, relaxing in the Spirit, begin to thank Him for every new insight, however painful, that He reveals to you. Confess to God your feelings and emotions. Let Him do a cleansing work in you. Let Him love and comfort you. You will find that His love will take the place of the hurt and the hate you have been harboring.

The Example of Joseph

When I think of someone who exemplifies what I have been talking about here, I am reminded of Joseph. Genesis 37 provides the story of how, in a vision, Joseph saw himself elevated above his brothers, his father, and his mother. He was only seventeen and quite unwise. He told everybody his dream. He would have been better off if he had kept quiet! That's what got him into trouble. His brothers hated him. They called him a dreamer (vs. 19).

One day when Joseph brought their food to the field, his brothers plotted to do away with him. They stole his coat of many colors and put him into a deep empty well. They planned to leave him there to die.

Joseph could have hated his brothers from that moment on. Some of you hate members of your family for less reason than that!

A group of Ishmaelites came by and the brothers called out, "Say, would you like to

buy a slave? We have a boy for sale. You'll have to watch him though, he's a dreamer. He doesn't like to work; he just likes to dream. We'll sell him to you for just twenty shekels of silver."

What kind of memories would you carry through life if a family member treated you that way? If your brothers or sisters conspired against you and treated you like that, what would there be in your heart?

Joseph was sold—the deal went through without a hitch. To themselves I imagine the brothers said, "Go dream in Egypt."

What memories! When he got to Egypt, Joseph was sold again and began to work hard (see Genesis 39). Soon he was promoted to a higher position in the house of Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. He was still just a young fellow, possibly around twenty years old, when his master's wife saw him one day and thought to herself, "Hmmm, what a man!" The Bible says she cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, *Lie with me* (Genesis 39:7).

Joseph refused. *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* (Genesis 39:9). Joseph is an example of a godly man.

The Bible says she taunted him day by day, but he wouldn't give in. He tried to keep out of her way as much as possible. But one day, when no one was around, she came at him, grabbing him by the sleeve and again demanding that he sleep with her. Joseph slipped out of her grasp, but in the process his jacket was left behind in her hands. She screamed for help saying that Joseph had tried to rape her, and in the scuffle he left his coat behind. She held it before the men who came running to her assistance. It was incriminating evidence. Once again Joseph found himself betrayed, and he was put in prison. He was imprisoned wrongfully.

How many of us would still love the Lord after that? How many could forget such an experience? What would that do to your emotions and your memories? You talk about problems! Joseph had them.

While imprisoned, two of Joseph's fellow-prisoners had dreams (see Genesis 40). Joseph, knowing that the interpretation of dreams belongs to God, asked the prisoners to relate the dreams to him, and then, trusting God, he was able to interpret them. Joseph asked one of the prisoners (the chief butler) to remember him and his interpretation of the dream when he was released from the dungeon. But the Bible says that the chief butler forgot Joseph (vs. 23).

Joseph was again forgotten. What memories! They could have hurt him permanently.

Pharaoh himself had a dream two years later (see Genesis 41). He searched for someone who could interpret his troubling dream. It was then that the chief butler remembered Joseph. He told the king about the young Hebrew prisoner who had interpreted his dream. This secured for Joseph a release from prison. Joseph interpreted his dream, that there would be a famine, and Pharaoh was so impressed that he elevated Joseph to the position of Prime Minister, which made him second only to Pharaoh. Joseph had not only interpreted the meaning of Pharaoh's dream, but he also advised how to plan for the years of famine ahead. Pharaoh recognized that the Spirit of God was in Joseph and said, *Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you . . .* (Genesis 41:39).

What kind of memories did Joseph carry with him? Would he sit there day after day thinking, "Wait until I find that woman . . .!" Would he think of his brothers who had

caused him so much anguish? Would he ask for a royal Egyptian expedition force to march across the desert to find them so he could get his revenge?

Forgiveness!

Then one day, while working in his office, ten of Joseph's brothers arrived in Egypt. As they were ushered in, Joseph, seated in authority as governor of Egypt, greeted them. The famine was over all the face of the earth (Genesis 41:56). It was Joseph who opened all the storehouses and was in charge of saying who could buy the grain.

Did Joseph say within himself, "Here they come, my evil brothers. They took my coat of many colors away; they threw me into a well; and they sold me into slavery... now it's my turn. I'll get even!"

Among the sweetest verses in the Bible is the one when Joseph finally told his brothers who he was, and said, *Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good...* (Genesis 50:20).

God had healed Joseph's memories.

If you can see this and trust God, your memories, too, can forever be healed. Romans 8:28 says, *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* Whatever has come to you, God allows it for your ultimate good, and for the good of others. Believing that will enable you to respond as Joseph did.

I Have Experienced the Healing of Memories

I know whereof I speak. When I was a young man, I had that dreadful sickness tuberculosis. One evening the doctor gave me only two hours to live.

Today I do not feel badly about that experience, terrible as it was. It was truly one of the greatest things that ever happened to me. It showed me the greatness of God, my healer, my deliverer, and it taught me how to sympathize with people who are suffering and near death.

God is the healer of memories. He can put a new spirit within you.

Great wrongs that have been done to you can be completely forgiven and forgotten. You can say, “Those experiences could have really harmed me emotionally, but God has turned what was meant for evil and used them for my good.”

There are people who die prematurely because they refuse to permit their memories to be healed. I beg you to allow God to heal your memories.

There have been many other hurtful experiences in my life which I could have allowed to fester and devastate me. But I haven’t done that, and neither should you. Here’s how I have learned to experience the healing of memories.

1. Come to the Lord Jesus and fully give your heart to Him. Your spirit will come alive and will begin to direct your total being. The Holy Spirit will indwell you and direct your emotions and will, and He will give you power to control ungodly and hurtful desires and thoughts. Accept Jesus into your heart today.

Psychologists can take your mind to pieces with their probing, but they cannot put it back together again. Only God can do that. Only through the power of the Holy Spirit can healing from hurtful memories take place.

2. Forgive those who have wronged you. Forgiveness is a prerequisite for the healing of memories. Joseph forgave his brothers. He was sincere about it. I am sure tears ran down his face. He gave them everything they needed. That is the way his memories were healed.

It matters not who has hurt you or even how you have been hurt. There must be forgiveness. It may be a family member, a friend, a coworker, neighbors—someone who did you wrong. The wrongs were real, not imagined; or they could be over-exaggerated in your memory as a consequence of replaying those bad emotional “tapes” in your head. Regardless—whether real or imagined—without forgiveness on your part, no lasting healing of memories will take place.

Our ultimate example in granting forgiveness is Christ. Look at how Jesus forgave Peter who denied Him three times. More importantly, look at Jesus hanging on the cross asking the Father to forgive those who had put Him there. Jesus was a forgiver.

To be forgiven by God is to experience healing and deliverance. To forgive others frees us from hurtful memories that bind. It will trigger a wonderful liberation from a defeated past and the beginning of a whole new outlook on life.

I have a friend who wrote this about forgiveness, and I like the way she expressed it:

Calvary was an infinite event; it was the ground upon which Christ secured our forgiveness. It cost Jesus His life. It was an enormous price to pay. There is no way I can withhold forgiveness to another person when I look at the forgiveness of God

in Christ. It didn't feel good for Jesus to hang on that cross, but it feels good for me when I forgive. I feel right, cleansed, made new, recreated into a relationship that will honor Him. Joy is restored, and peace. "We have forgiveness through His blood" is the scarlet thread that runs through the Bible. If I am going to be fully identified with Christ, then it means that I will forever put into practice His forgiveness.

What a way to live! And what a way to die! It's the only way. Believe me, **believe Him**, try it. It feels so good to forgive!¹

3. One of the greatest ways to have your memories healed is to have love in your heart. Love and hate cannot co-exist in the human heart. Either you are a person filled with love, or you are a person torn by inner strife where hate-filled thoughts and ill-will are battling with your deep-down desire to exhibit love's virtues.

My thoughts are drawn to the Apostle Paul and the power of God's love that invaded his life when he was on the way to Damascus to persecute the Christians there (see Acts 9). Once he was overcome by that love, he was a changed man. God's love for us is the same as it was for Paul. He wants to infuse His love into us so that we, too, will be changed. Then we will walk in Christ-like love toward others.

We are creatures cut out for love. God has made us that way. Jesus had much to say about love. In replying to the lawyer who asked Him which command in the Law of Moses is most important, Jesus replied, *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second most important is similar: Love your neighbor as much as you love yourself. All the other commandments and all the demands of the prophets stem from these two laws and are fulfilled if you obey them. Keep only these and you will find that you are obeying all the others* (Matthew 22:36-40, TLB).

Out from under the Shadows

Romans 8:1 teaches, *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* That is telling us that we don't have to live in the shadows of our past. You don't have to live under condemnation for things that you have done to others, nor do you have to live with hurtful memories from the past that others have brought upon you. It doesn't matter how much you have suffered. Today is a new day! Jesus can make **all** things new—if you let Him. Your life can be fresh and fulfilling, free from that which has been so damaging.

Excitement in the Now

I find life very exciting. I am more excited right now than I have ever been. More souls are coming to Christ than ever before. And I am so thrilled!

The future is before me. It's before you.

I want to love people and win souls until the day God takes me home to heaven. What somebody says or does doesn't really matter. What matters is to be right with God, to have a clean conscience before Him. The **now** is important.

David said it this way: *He 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* (Psalm 40:2). He goes on to say, *And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord* (Psalm 40:3).

Joseph could just as well have said those words. Peter or Paul could have as well.

I can say them. Can you say them?

Upon his deliverance, David said that God had put a *new song* in his mouth (vs. 3a). What was that new song? *Even praise unto our God* (vs. 3b). The result of that, David said, was that *many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord* (vs. 3c).

There would be confident reliance on the Lord as a result of the change in his life. He would experience great joy. The change in David would affect others positively by turning them to the Lord.

That can happen to you. Then, when you think of the past, you can joyfully say, “The Lord delivered me from hurtful memories and the pit of despair. He is steadying me now as I walk along.” And many will stand in awe and put their trust in Him. The promise is, *Many blessings are given to those who trust the Lord . . .* (vs. 4, TLB).

Romans 14:17 says, *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

The kingdom of God is peace and joy. **Go get it!**

¹ Helen Hosier, *It Feels Good to Forgive* (Westwood, N.J.: Barbour and Co., 1989). p. 149.

My Challenge to You

If Jesus should come today, would you be ready? If you say the following prayer from the depths of your heart and surrender to Him as the Lord of your life, He will instantly forgive you of all your sins. As you trust Him, you will be filled with the hope and peace that only Jesus can offer.

If you are ready to make this commitment, please pray out loud the following:

Dear Lord Jesus, I am a sinner. I believe that you died and rose from the dead to save me from my sins. Please forgive me for all the sins I have ever committed. I here and now open my heart to You and ask that You come into my heart. Be the Lord of my life and my personal Savior. Baptize me in your Spirit. Amen.

Now that you have given your life to Christ, it is important to pray and read the Bible on a daily basis. It also is important to attend a Bible-believing church regularly. Doing these things will help you to walk in continual fellowship with the Lord.

We would be happy to rejoice with you. Please feel free to write us at:

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