

RECOVERY FROM SPIRITUAL ABUSE

By Jeff Rath 7-99

Introduction

God promises to heal the brokenhearted. One of the ways someone can get their heart broken is to be spiritually abused. But healing is available. It is available to get your relationship back with God Almighty, Jesus Christ, and have fellowship with your fellow Christian believers. I intend to show you some simple truths by which people can recover the sweetness and fellowship that was stolen from them by spiritual abusers.

Psalm 147:3 He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.

Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

Acts 10:38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

2 Timothy 2:26 And *that* they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

God is a god of recovery, and it is His will that abuse victims recover from abuse. There is a wonderful Christian hymn “He’s The Healer Of Broken Hearts” that expresses the healing intentions of God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son of God.

HE’S THE HEALER OF BROKEN HEARTS

He’s the healer of broken hearts;
He’ll mend your shattered dreams;
He’ll pick up the threads of your broken hearts,
And mend them together again.
To your soul he’ll bring peace and joy;
Your friend indeed he’ll be.
He’s the healer of broken hearts,
This Jesus of blue Galilee.

Abuse is defined as: to maltreat, to misuse, to use with bad motives or to wrong purposes, to deceive, to pervert the meaning of, to misapply, improper treatment, application to a wrong purpose, a corrupt practice or custom. Many Christians have been either deliberately or unintentionally abused. Some abuse is accidental and no one is really hurt but some abuse is massive to the point that lives are in ruin. But God can heal the brokenhearted and abused.

It’s Not Your Fault

One of the great keys to healing from spiritual abuse is to realize that it wasn’t your fault. God

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did not punish you for your faults and shortcomings. Quite often when people are physically, mentally, sexually abused they will be overwhelmed with the guilt that the abuse was somehow their fault. For instance a rape victim may feel that they are to be blamed for the rape along with the attacker. The victim often thinks that they did something to lead on the attacker or to deserve the abuse. You **CANNOT** entertain these thoughts if you want deliverance. If you were abused then someone else took advantage of you. The abuser is in the wrong not the victim.

Romans 8:1 *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

We cannot condemn ourselves if we want deliverance. We cannot wallow in guilt. We have a personal adversary who wants to condemn us and put us in guilt. Satan, the devil, is our adversary. He wants to hinder us, attack us, and abuse us whenever he gets the chance. Abuse is the devil's fault not the victim's.

Galations 5:7 *Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?*

Galations 5:8 *This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.*

1 Peter 5:8 *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*

John 10:10a *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy:*

Our adversary has a full time job which is: stealing, killing, and destroying. He is the one responsible for the spiritual abuse that occurs in Christian's lives. Once the victim realizes that the abuse is not from God and the abuse is not the victim's fault, but that the abuse is the adversary's fault, then the victim has taken the first step towards healing, deliverance and recovery.

Stop the abusive influences

I like to call this key "Stop the mouth of the abuser" or "Separating yourself from the abuse" This means that you have to get to the point that what the abuser says no longer has an influence on you. So if the abuser's words still have an influence on you then you must get away from the abuse. In physical abuse situations the victims will be removed to a "safe house" for a while. You may have to get rid of books, tapes, and magazines that are from the abusive organization. You must remove yourself from the abusive influence for a while. This may take days or years depending on how bad you were abused.

Titus 1:10 *For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision:*

1:11 *Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.*

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The abuser's mouth must be stopped. However quite often we can't actually get the spiritual abuser to shut up, but we can remove ourselves from the abuser so that we no longer hear and are influenced by the abuser. Once the victim has been separated from the abuser then the healing process can begin. When the victim is separated from the abuser then the process of stopping the mouth of the abuser has begun for that victim. The process is complete when the abuser has no influence over the victim at all. Then for the victim the abuser's mouth has been stopped, even though the abuser may still be talking. Eventually when you are healed the words of the abuser will no longer hurt you.

2 Corinthians 11:12 But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.

11:13 For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

11:14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

11:15 Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

Whether the abuser is a truly evil false prophet or a good man making bad mistakes. You must cut off the influence of the abuser.

James 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

1 Peter 5:5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all *of you* be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

5:6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

We submit to God and we submit to other believers, but we do not submit to spiritual abusers. We resist the abusers by submitting to God.

Sonship versus discipleship

Acts 21:16 There went with us also *certain* of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.

This verse of Scripture has a unique significance. It is the last occurrence of the word disciple in the Bible. From Romans through Revelation the word disciple does not occur. God refers to the Christian with several terms such as sons, soldiers, ambassadors, etc. but not disciples.

1 John 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we

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know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

2 Timothy 2:3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

2:4 No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

2 Corinthians 5:20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

The Apostle Paul when referring to himself said that he was a servant and an apostle. He could have opened the book of Romans with "Paul a disciple of Jesus Christ," but he didn't. Paul emphasized his ministry of an apostle and his service.

Romans 1:1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

Quite often well meaning ministers and ministries wanting to teach and practice Christianity will teach their followers about discipleship. But the problem is the more they focus on discipleship the more they open the door for abuse. When we focus on discipleship, we try to improve our faults and shortcomings. But when we focus on sonship then we see that we can not improve on what God has done for us in Christ. As a disciple we work to measure up to the standard of the Word. As a son of God we already measure up to the standard of the Word. Our flesh is so bad that there is no good work that we can do to make it worthy of eternal life. Our spirit is so perfect that there is nothing that we can do that is bad enough to corrupt it. When we focus on being a disciple then we focus on ourselves. But when we focus on sonship then we focus on what God has done for us in Christ.

Now I am not saying that there is no place for discipleship in the New Testament. Surely there are many good things that can come from a Christian disciplining himself to better serve the Word of God to others. But if the main emphasis is on the discipleship and not on the sonship then the stage is set for abuse to creep in. Then a leader can say to a disciple "You only studied the Bible for half an hour today, you need to do better than that if you want to live sanctified." The poor abused Christian often accepts this even though there is no scripture that commands us that we have to read a certain amount of Bible verses each day. The poor Christian is coerced into doing something to earn what God has already freely given him. The really sad part is that before the Christian enjoyed reading his Bible but now he does it out of either fear or obligation. Abusive discipleship relationships can destroy the joy and love in a Christian's heart. We need to motivate people from the inside with love, not with discipleship forced upon them from the outside.

Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

When we get too much into discipleship then we are thinking more highly of ourselves than we

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ought to think. But God has given each one of us the same measure of faith when we get born again of God's spirit. We all have the same measure. Nobody can get any more for being a good disciple, and you won't get any less for being a bad disciple. It is SONSHIP! We got it by grace.

Romans 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Galations 3:3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

An over-emphasis on discipleship is like the foolishness of beginning in the spirit and then trying to please God by perfecting the flesh.

Know who you are in Christ

To gain deliverance we must know who we are in Christ. We must also forget what the abuser said about us. We reach forward for deliverance and forget the things of abuse that are behind us.

Philippians 3:13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting t

The word "forgetting" in this verse is not the word for forgetting and never remembering again. It means that we disregard, pay no attention to, ignore, overlook, and put it out of our minds for a while and think on something else. We don't dwell on the abuse and allow it to fester into bitterness and revenge.

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.

12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Jesus Christ suffered and died for us so that we could live for God. We don't have to suffer, die or be abused for God. Our job is to be a living sacrifice. When we renew our minds to the Word of God then we can get over spiritual abuse.

Philippians 3:9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

1 Corinthians 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

Romans 4:25 Who [Jesus Christ] was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

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

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5:18 And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

5:19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

5:20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

5:21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

1 John 4:17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

We must know who we are in Christ and not let any spiritual abuser talk us out of our righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and justification. These cannot be earned they are already ours. We are ambassadors for Christ and we can operate the ministry of reconciliation. As Jesus Christ is now so are we in this world. Therefore we must know who we are in Christ to overcome spiritual abuse.

Fellowship with believers

One of the great keys to deliverance from spiritual abuse is fellowship with your brothers and sisters in Christ. God did not design for us to go through life isolated and controlled.

Hebrews 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Proverbs 11:14 Where no counsel *is*, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors *there is* safety.

Proverbs 24:6 For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors *there is* safety.

God does not desire us to be off by ourselves without the council, advice, love, and support of our fellow believers trying vainly to figure things out. God will always make available for us to fellowship with other believers. God will never leave us alone. It is up to us to utilize this great resource available to us.

1 John 1:3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

1:4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

1:5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is

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light, and in him is no darkness at all.

God desires that we have fellowship with other believers and when we fellowship then our joy can be full. Remember that God is light, He is NEVER the source of any darkness. So if we ever get abused in any Christian fellowship or ministry we must remember that the abuse is not from God. The way to deliverance is to fellowship with loving Christians, and leave behind the spiritual abusers.

God's Love

The Love of God is very healing. It will energize your believing. It will cast out your fear. It will motivate you to be the Christian that you really want to be. It will heal the wounds of Spiritual abuse. That is why fellowship is important because we must put ourselves in a place to be around those who live and manifest the love of God.

Galations 5:6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh [is energized by] by love.

1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

4:9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

4:10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

4:12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

1 John 4:17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

4:19 We love him, because he first loved us.

4:20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

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4:21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

God's love energizes our believing. God's love casts out our fear. This topic is closely tied with the fellowship topic because you really see God's love manifested in groups of fellowshiping believers. God commands us to love our brother also. The best way to do that is to have some sort of fellowship with him. Then when we are walking in the love of God we can help others who need healing from spiritual abuse by fellowshiping with them and showing them the love of God.

Forgiveness

Job 42:10 And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.

When Job finally realized that the miserable comforters/spiritual abusers were worse off than he was he prayed for them. Job quit looking at himself and he began to look at the needs of others, then he gained deliverance. He got rid of his fear and regained his trust and believing in God.

Matthew 18:21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

18:22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

Ephesians 4:31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

When we get to the place that we can forgive the spiritual abusers and get rid of the bitterness and hatred towards them then we also can recover what was stolen from us. Now by forgiving I don't mean that you have to get to be good friends with the abusers and put yourself right back into an abusive situation. What I mean is that you can get rid of the venomous and vicious hatred for those who are spiritual abusers. You can move on and regain the sweetness in your fellowship with God and His Son Jesus Christ and your fellow believers. If someone is continuing to spiritually abuse Christians then there is no way that you should fellowship with or support them in any way. But you don't have to carry a vendetta and try to get even. God keeps the score and God will carry through justice.

Conclusion

Spiritual abuse is NOT from God. It is God's desire that you be healed. We must go to the Word of God and see who we are in Christ. Then we can cut off the abusive influences and stop dwelling on the abuse that was heaped upon us, and instead reach forward to God's deliverance. We must continue to focus on our sonship and what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. We must avoid over emphasizing discipleship, and thereby focus on what we do instead of what God has done. We can't

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earn what God has already freely given us, and we must never compel others to try to earn what they already have. We must seek out the fellowship of loving Christians and never let ourselves be too far removed from their healing presence. We must learn to forgive the spiritual abusers. We can then let go of bitterness and hatred.

In John 9 Jesus Christ healed a man that was born blind. This man was then excommunicated and marked and avoided by the Pharisees because of their hatred for Jesus Christ. But Jesus Christ went and found the man who had been abused and mistreated by the Pharisees for having the courage to tell the truth about his healing, and Jesus Christ taught him the Word. This teaching goes on into John 10, and many of us are familiar with verse 10:

John 10:10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.

This context of this verse is the continuation of teaching the man who was spiritually abused by the Pharisees. Jesus Christ has come that we might have life and have it more abundantly. This includes recovery from spiritual abuse. There was a whole group listening to Jesus Christ teach and some believed and some didn't. The choice is yours . . . you can choose stealing, killing, and destroying or you can choose the more abundant life that Jesus Christ came to make available.

For further study see: "Legalism Versus Grace" by Jeff Rath

"Owe No Man Anything" by Jeff Rath

"Spiritual Abuse" by Jeff Rath

The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse by David Johnson & Jeff VanVonderen

Twisted Scriptures A Path to Freedom From Abusive Churches by Mary Alice Chrnalogar

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