

Finding Renewal in the Love of God

Unit 3: Discovering Renewal in the Presence of the Spirit

Experience 3: “Parts”

In 1990, I found myself swallowed by a past I had worked diligently and seemingly successfully to overcome. Yet in the space of one short hour, my house of cards came tumbling down with such force that I and everyone near me could only look on in awe. Even now it seems impossible that so many components—scenes, smells, faces, even the time of year—could come together so quickly to create such a volcanic eruption of memory. My experience would throw me headlong into abuses suffered as a child and long forgotten—or so I thought. Extreme fear, panic attacks, paranoia, self-doubt, depression...you name it; I think I suffered it. Already a veteran in women’s ministry, the teacher at dozens of retreats and ladies days, and even more Bible classes, I found myself almost defeated by the reality of my own vulnerability. How could this happen? Everyone, especially me, wanted to know. How? Why? To what end?

*When I began preparing for this class, I dug through journal writings, timelines, and notes, all written during therapy that fall. I reread almost 100 cards and letters from Christian friends. Additionally, I found one other sheet of paper—a typed list of every positive thought I could wrestle regarding the blessings of hard times. A therapist had asked me to create the list, and though some might think of it as positive thinking psychobabble, it was really an exercise in **truth telling**—getting on the same page with God, you might say. Overcoming had become my **personal** goal. Thus, every tiny error only served to announce my further failure, and the problem with failure is that it represents an unsuccessful **end**. There isn’t much positive one can tell oneself when focused on failure. However, when one rests in the sovereignty of God, **His** purpose, and **His** plan in **His** time, blessings occur—even abound—in the most desperate experiences. Thus the creation of such a list represents an exercise of integrity—it’s only telling the Truth.*

*Today, I wonder at how my life changed after my experience in 1990. I am a different woman today because of the Truth I learned to tell myself then. Where would I be? ... **Who** would I be? ...if not for lessons learned that fall as I trudged through the slimy sidewalks of my past, declaring that no situation was so far removed from God’s vision as to destroy one of His children. Now, that’s the Truth; in fact, it’s my story—and I’m sticking to it!*

Exercises:

1. Fill a page with every positive Truth (including favorite sayings) you can call to mind regarding hard times. Read it every day this week and add to it as you can. Put it in a place you can remember and read it often it! Remember, the stars are *always the brightest* where the night is the darkest!

2. Psychiatrists tell us that our minds remember our every thought. Hypnosis can be used to help people remember details they think are long forgotten or even thoughts they think they never committed to memory. Psychological trainers will tell you that if a person thinks to himself, “I am going to trip when I go to the front,” that person is more likely to trip. She is actually *coaching* herself with her thoughts. We must not let unanswered lies and accusations to continue to play in our minds. Thus, Paul writes, “We take every thought captive.” He means that Christians do not let their minds run freely (2 Cor. 10.5). Rather, the people of God discipline their every thought for the sake of Jesus. Jesus demonstrates the value He places on truthful thoughts on the mount of Transfiguration. He has just told His disciples that He must die when Peter rebukes Him—“Surely not!” Surely Peter thought that such a statement was inappropriate for the Messiah, the King of the Jews. It’s understandable. But Jesus doesn’t wink at the error. More forcefully than to any other, Jesus rebukes Peter. “Get behind me, Satan,” He tells Peter. *Don’t tempt me with lies about who I am! If you do, you are on Satan’s team; you are my opponent; get out of my way; I am coming through!* With what words do you speak the lies of Satan to yourself?
 - a. Sit down with a pad and pen. Divide a piece of paper into two halves. On one side, write the heading “Lies;” on the other side write “Truth.”
 - b. Make a list of every negative thing you say to yourself on the “lie” side of the page. Write them as fast as you think of them. Don’t mince words; write them as you hear them; this paper is for you alone.
 - c. After you have exhausted the list of accusations, examine each charge—one at a time.
 - d. Is this accusation 100 percent true? Consider the Jesus who told the woman caught in adultery, “Go, and sin no more.” Would he use these exact words to correct you? Put yourself in the position of this child’s mother. Would you allow someone to say this to your child? Why not?
 - e. They say there is a *grain* of truth in every criticism. What is the truth here? Write a truthful, redemptive response, opposite each lie on the right side of the paper. **Ex.** For the lie, “You are a big, fat pig,” you might write, “I may be gaining weight, but I am not a pig, and furthermore, I will *never* be a pig.” ☺
 - f. For the rest of this week, every time you say something mean to yourself, respond to it—literally! Tell the Truth out loud—or at least out loud in your mind. If you will do this religiously, you will train yourself to *never* speak the lies of Satan into your life. Rather, you will instruct yourself in Him.