

Week Five Daily Training Tips: Healing Old Wounds

personal / group study for use with the message on February 13th and 14th, 2010

“Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. Make level paths for your feet,” so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed” (Hebrews 12:12-13).

Introduction.

Physical therapists and trainers will tell you that old injuries, left untreated, will hinder your ability to make progress in your training. We need to go back in order to go forward. We need to take time to do some healing.

Read.

Day 1. Read Psalm 139.

Note how God is with us everywhere, and how we cannot escape His presence. More specifically, note how the psalm emphasizes that God *knows everything about us, even the deep and hidden things that no-one else is aware of*. How does this make you feel to know that God knows thoroughly and exactly everything about your inner person?

Note the prayer at the end, the same one we used to close our service this weekend. Use that prayer often as your own way of asking God to bring deep and hidden things to the surface. Remember, the literal reading is . . . *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there be any way of pain in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”* What a great prayer! It would be worth memorizing it.

Note: If you want to do an Emotional Health self-assessment, go to www.emotionallyhealthy.org and download their free assessment.

Day 2. Read 1 Samuel 10.

Why do you think Saul was hiding in the baggage department? After all, he was *physically* head and shoulders above everyone else. Why would a big man hide like this?

Paul Tournier in his book, *The Person Reborn* gives the following parable. He says that a Christian experience is like a revolution. A new prince has taken over a country by means of a coup d'état. Among the crowd that acclaims him are the followers of the fallen monarch who is now powerless. For the moment they seem to be the most zealous partisans of the new ruler. But their change of heart is not sincere, for they are the enemy who will secretly scheme the gradual undermining of the new regime. If the reigning prince wins some triumph they bow down and pretend to submit, only to raise their heads once again at the first opportunity to undermine his power.

Tournier says that this is what happens in the case of some of the deeply submerged elements in our mental make-up. They hide themselves and share in the victory we feel. But they have not capitulated and they may later succeed in sabotaging those victories if we do not unmask them. The process of unmasking them, he says, is a slow one and may require help . . .

This is an effective illustration of how a person can be a very genuine Christian and still have certain emotional conflicts and complexes which need the gradual healing and Christianizing work of the Holy Spirit.

Day 3. Read Genesis 45:1-15

Joseph had a lot of buried emotions as a result of wounds inflicted on him from the past. Who inflicted those wounds on him? (See ch.37.) How did he deal with them; with himself? What can you learn from Joseph's processing of his own pain/wounds? What wounds have been inflicted on you in the past, wounds that are so deep and so hurtful that they really do need special healing? Have you healed from these deep wounds?

ThinkAboutIt...

Day 4.

Pastor Peter Scazzero in his book *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, identifies what he sees as “the top ten symptoms of emotionally *unhealthy* spirituality. Take an honest look at your own life. Do you see any of these symptoms at work in you? (See his book for further detail and descriptions/examples of these symptoms.)

1. Using God to run from God.

Doing a lot of spiritual activity, but hiding from the light that God is trying to shine into the dark places in your own heart. Covering it all with a lot of activity.

2. Ignoring the emotions of anger, sadness, and fear.

You have these strong emotions, but you keep ignoring them even though they have become patterns in your life. You have been trying to deal with these through spiritual disciplines (Bible study, prayer, etc.) but have had no success overcoming these feelings.

3. Dying to the wrong things.

We were called by God to ‘die’ to the sinful parts of who we are, but we were never called to die to ‘good’ parts – the healthy desires and pleasures of life – to friendships, joy, art, music, beauty, recreation, laughter, and nature. Often, we feel ‘guilty’ about unwrapping and enjoying these gifts from God.

4. Denying the past’s impact on the present.

We often assume that becoming a Christian simply erases the past. While it is true that forgiveness erases the *penalty* of the past, it does not necessarily erase the *impact* of the past on our heart and mind. Have you minimized the impact of the past on your life?

5. Dividing our lives into ‘secular’ and ‘sacred’ compartments.

It is easy to compartmentalize God. We can act very spiritual when we are in spiritual settings, or doing ‘spiritual’ activities; but then we can be a very different person at work, or at school. Our life with God is not bleeding over into everything we are and do.

6. Doing for God instead of being with God.

Substituting activity for meditative contemplation. In fact, we are far more comfortable ‘doing’ because we are afraid to think too much about our ‘being.’

7. Spiritualizing away conflict.

Denying the regularity and depth of conflict in our relationships, and what that means in terms of emotional immaturity. Using hasty apologies to cover over conflict in relationships.

8. Covering over brokenness, weakness, and failure.

It becomes really important to us to ‘maintain an image’ instead of being authentic. We begin to present to people a “Super Me” instead of the “Real Me.” We fear that if people know the “Real Me” they would not like me anymore. On goes the ‘mask’.

9. Living without limits.

We are so driven to please others and, thus, to ‘self-verify’ that we cannot seem to set healthy limits and ‘boundaries’ for our lives. We try to do too much, please too many people. We are driven to define ourselves by what we achieve, rather than who we really are.

10. Judging other people’s spiritual journey.

We have no trouble seeing the speck in our brother’s eye. But we do have a problem seeing the log in our own eye. We tend to be very critical of others.

ReflectOnIt...

Day 5. Read James 5:16.

The books written by counselors on Emotional Maturity emphasize the fact that these sorts of issues need to be ‘brought out into the open’ so that they can be dealt with. The hurt parts of our being will not heal if these ‘go into hiding.’ All emotional wounds are healed in the context of safe relationships. Especially helpful here is John Townsend’s book, *Hiding From Love*. Larry Crabb also deals with this in many of his books, including *Soul Talk*. This is a constant theme in Crabb’s approach to emotional healing in the context of healthy local church relationships.

Who is the ‘safe person’ in your life to whom you can give permission to hear and speak into your life on these deeper issues? Who can you have true ‘soul talk’ with?

Before this week ends, you might want to journal a bit. Take an honest look at your “allergic reactions.” An allergic reaction happens because an allergy is already present. What emotional allergies are already deeply imbedded in your life, as evidence by your regular “allergic reactions?” What causes you to react? What are the specific reactions.

RespondTolt...

The process of emotional healing is basically to identify and deal with these reactions. Once again, here are the steps recommended by David Seamands:

Healing Old Wounds: Action Steps. (From pp.18-20 of Seamands' book.)

1. Face your emotional wounds squarely.
2. Accept your responsibility to deal with these wounds.
3. Ask yourself if you truly want to be healed.
4. Forgive everyone who is involved in your problem.
5. Forgive yourself.
6. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what your real problem is, and how you need to move forward.

Finally, I list here again the books and resources that have helped Shirley and me on our journey.

Books and Resources on Emotionally Healthy Spirituality

Assessment Tool:

Inventory of Emotional/Spiritual Maturity: Go to www.emotionallyhealthy.org and download their free emotional health assessment tool. Very helpful!

Books:

1. Peter Scazzero: *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* (Nelson: 2006). Workbook available.
2. Dr. John Townsend: *Hiding From Love: How to Change the Withdrawal Patterns that Isolate and Imprison You* (Zondervan: 1991,96). Workbook available.
3. Dr. Henry Cloud: *Changes that Heal: How to Understand Your Past to Ensure a Healthier Future* (Zondervan: 1992). Workbook available.
4. Dr. Paul Hegstrom: *Broken Children, Grown-up Pain: Understanding the Effects of Your Wounded Past* (Beacon Hill: 2001,2006).
5. David Seamands: *Healing Your Heart of Painful Emotions* (Inspirational Press: 1993). A collection of four books by Seamands on various aspects of Emotional Health.