

CHAPTER 4. THE HEALING CONTINUES

When I originally penned this chapter, I started by saying, "At the time of this writing, not all of my hurt is healed, yet I can say by faith that healing is available in Christ for all of our hurts." Years later, I testify that God has borne witness to what I wrote then, even though at the time, my faith resembled a drunk man stumbling home after too many drinks. We must not be too prideful to bring to God things that seem small. Yes, God cares about us when we get dumped. He is interested in us when we hurt emotionally. He loves us so much that he will give himself to us because he knows that's ultimately what we need. He will get glory even in our pain, and he will work it for our good (Romans 8:28).

Joy in the Journey

Christ offers us peace in life despite pain's presence. I probably wouldn't believe this if Jesus hadn't said it himself to his weary disciples. In John 16:32-33, Jesus said, "But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

The pain we face over a break-up is important to God, but the pain serves as a reminder that this world drips with sorrow, but a greater joy awaits us. Jesus forewarned us of the hurt, and he wants us to spread the good news about him, especially in our pain. He wants us to live for him, even when people persecute us for our faith.

Satan sows havoc in the world through persecution and other types of suffering, but be of good cheer. Christ has overcome the world (1 John 4:4). His love pushes fear from our lives (1 John 4:18). The fear of being alone can be crippling and God knows it, but he wants us, married or single, to find security in his love.

We can experience joy when we obey God. Jesus said, "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete" (John 15:10-11). It's hard to contemplate joy when a break-up has just slung us overboard and we're barely treading water. But Jesus promises joy as we swim in the rough waters of life.

Despite the hurt, those who walk with Christ can live joyfully (Galatians 5:22). James said that we can have joy during our trials (1:2). Psalm 5:11-12 puts it this way, "But let all who take refuge in you [God] be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you. For surely, O LORD, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield."

Honestly, I'm not the most joyful Christian that ever lived. I can, so I'm told, be plain irritable sometimes, especially when I'm hurting. After my break-up, I walked into a small shop in my assigned country and asked for something in the local language. The shop owner looked puzzled, obviously not understanding what I wanted. I'd lived there nearly two years, and my language was OK (or so I thought). It especially angered me when people didn't understand what I was saying. Out of pride, I yelled at the storeowner, in his mother tongue, "What's the matter, don't you understand this language?" It wasn't one of my better moments. I was doing all the culturally insensitive

things I'd been trained not to do. Again, I had to talk to God, "*Lord, I confess that joy is not something I can muster up from within. It must come from your Spirit. I'm often tempted to believe the lies Satan tells me--that I'll never be good for anything, that joy isn't possible--but, by your Son's work, I live in the fullness of Christ and accept your identity of me rather than listening to Satan's lies about me.*"

June 22: God, let me proceed in confidence today, not falling back on old and torn memories, but on your plan for a better day.

July 13: I feel like I need to share something great that has been going on lately, 40 days after our break-up. I asked for joy three days ago, and the Father gave it. I feel like in these last three or four days, I've turned a corner in my recovery from my break-up. I feel like I'm dwelling on it less and less; I'm living in the here and now with hope for the future, and much of the pain is gone.

It's not all gone, but it's not as deep, intense, or long in duration. I don't want to fool myself by saying, "There now, that wasn't so bad, was it?" Because it was bad. Nor do I want to tell myself that I'm over her. But I do want to give God the glory. Glory and praise to him!

I feel that in the last month, I've had plenty of time to grieve, mull over, and replay many events. Now, I give myself very little time to rehash events or torn dreams. I don't want to be too hasty and say that I must never think about the break-up. But at some point I have to set boundaries and stop entertaining these old and harmful thoughts.

July 17: Now, I'm missing her and struggling with my self-image.

July 27: Today, I thanked God for breaking us up. I'm not glad that we broke up, but wanted to thank him even though I can't yet see the good in it.

Validation from God

I'm learning to identify myself through God's eyes. Shortly after my break-up, a friend told me that I should keep in mind that God validates me, not Barbara. This was refreshing. Barbara meant a lot to me, but I was idolizing her when I sought true validation and fulfillment from her instead of God.

Our hearts ache, but we can't let our weeping hearts tell us who we are. We must not let our circumstances identify us. We need to let the triune God himself tell us who we are, otherwise we'll either think too much, or too little, of ourselves. We must guard against seeing only ourselves and missing the majesty of God.

When we're feeling battered by the world and crippled by the lies from the evil one, we can go to the Bible, like Ephesians 1, and read what it says about who we are in Christ. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in

the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight" What wonderful truth.

I remember several years ago, before I met Barbara, reeling from emotional pain over a woman who wasn't interested in me, when I was unable to think of anything else. Satan was telling me my life would be worthless without her. Then God called my attention to Psalm 46:1-3: "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging." My soul found peace in God that night, and I went right to sleep.

Psalm 34:4 says, "I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears." Verse 8 declares, "Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him." If we ever doubt God's goodness, we can "taste it for ourselves." God is good, even when we hurt. He deserves praise. Verse 18 goes on to say, "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

If we're his children, the Lord is not angry at us for our brokenness. He cares for us and calls us to trust him through our sorrow. We can belt out a prayer to God. We can weep if we must. Nonetheless, he remains our stronghold and fortress.

Christ so cares about the glory of God the Father that he died to honor him. And, in his dying, Jesus has done what the elect needed most--brought us to God. "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit . . ." (1 Peter 3:18).

For all who call upon him in faith, God brought himself glory by dealing with our sin, through Christ, and then by bringing us to himself. God could do nothing greater for us than to share his life with us. And if we have trusted Christ, then he has given himself to us. Ultimately what we need is not a spouse or a boyfriend, but God. We were dead without him and headed for hell. Out of his mercy he gave us life in Christ (Ephesians 2).

August 11: Today, I've felt so discouraged. I woke up angry at the world. When I wasn't feeling anger, I was apathetic.

I spent a lot of time, numbing the pain, in front of the TV . . . Oh, the ache still lurks in my heart. Every time I tell myself I'm healed, I have a setback and bleed internally, emotionally.

After church, I had a morbid prayer time in which I asked God to lift my burden of loneliness. I tell you, this singleness is next to maddening at times. I have all these desires that I can't legitimately fulfill right now. And that causes as much anger in my heart as it causes passion. I lie to myself and say that marriage will make things right, straighten out my crooks and smooth out my edges. In the realistic picture, that's probably not true, at least not entirely. Surely, though, it would help me in some ways.

I begged God not to leave me in my singleness, to let me know the joy, the oneness, the failures even, of love

and marriage. I want to know and to be known. Doesn't every human cry out and hunger for this very thing? Isn't this why we were made? To know you, God, and others? Oh Lord, withhold it no longer from your servant.

Cherishing God's Goodness

We must learn to appreciate God in his goodness regardless of our situations. This doesn't call for stoic denial of reality. If we hurt, we hurt. But it means we need to keep in mind who God is at all times.

"Surely [Jesus] took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted" (Isaiah 53:4). As a Father, God knows the depth of our sins and has dealt with them in Christ. He is also aware of our pain, having borne it, too. We have a God who cares for us, and who made his mercies available to us.

As was quoted earlier, King David cried out in Psalm 13 and spoke very pointed words to God. David felt alone and was full of sorrow. Yet at the end of this dreary Psalm, in verses 5-6 he declared, "But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, for he has been good to me." We don't know how much time, if any, transpired between the woe of verses 1-4 and the praise of verses 5-6. We don't know if his circumstances changed or if David changed. But we do know that his gloom was turned to praise. This is not to say that we have to fake our way through our problems, always smiling and never showing our pain. And David's words don't mean that every situation in life has a happy ending. But this passage does show that God works in us to bring forth praise for his name, even in sorrow. Yes, especially in sorrow, God is still worthy of praise. That's how good he is.

Although Job had many great things to say in the book that bears his name, at the end of it, he sits speechless before God's awesome power. In 42:2-6, Job spoke again, but this time with all of his sufferings placed in the light of God's good plan:

I know that you [God] can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. [You asked,] "Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?" Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. [You said,] "Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me." My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.

God humbled Job. This suffering man saw God's glory and worshipped him. Often we say more than we should when we hurt. When we see our pain in the light of God's providence, we will join Job in praising God. We, too, will repent for our selfishness.

June 29: Lord, I'm prone to ask you to give me each day with no suffering. But the path you've called me to follow is one of suffering. Let the pain that I encounter today be because I have lived faithfully for you.

I ask for your protection but will relinquish myself to suffer if it can better serve your glory. Honor your name through me, either by comfort or sorrow, laughter or weeping, delight or distress. March across the land and

make a great name for yourself. Trample down your enemy and push back the darkness. Do that with me in your hands.

Only you could beat back your foe with a cracked vessel. Only you could make your impure bride, the church, spotless. Only you could use a grave to bring forth glory. Light me ablaze, even if by suffering, and cause your enemy to tremble.

July 23: There is something that we should ask ourselves through every trial: Is this calamity a mercy of God? Is it possible that while severe, painful, tragic, and maybe unspeakable, that this could be God working his mysterious love in our hearts? We easily look at a new house, a new-born baby, a positive physical exam, or a new girlfriend, and chalk them up to God's good graces. But what about life's sorrows? Is God's grace not at work there too? Are his blessings not also intermingled?

It's a different sort of cup and a different sort of drink, this cup of sorrows, this drink of tears. But they also contain the severe mercies of God. So drink up. It's in this kind of communion that we come to know Christ in his suffering.

I must interject this quote: "[God] is faithful not only to give us what he knows we desire at the deepest core of our heart, but to do so in a way that is tailor-fit for the breaking of our evil, arrogant, and simple ways" (Allender, *Bold Love*, 309).

Here and Now

Praising God doesn't mean that we have to ignore our pain or play down its affects. Rather it means we can acknowledge our pain while at the same time confessing who we are in Christ--*saints who still sin, people who are sinned against, new creatures headed for heaven, joint heirs with Christ, weak vessels, children of God.*

I'm often tempted to see my pain as a parenthesis in God's plan. Or, I view my present experience, even if it's good, as a parenthetical clause. I may have a good computer now, but I keep dreaming about buying a faster one. Or I may get a job that I like, but wish it paid more or gave me more power. God is teaching me how to exist in the here and now. Yes, my heart was made to crave eternity in the uninhibited presence of God, but too often I don't crave God in heaven as much as I crave a better situation here on earth.

I don't have to wait until all of my sorrows go away before I can be content. Suffering will never disappear this side of heaven. Hurt and joy will have to walk beside each other in this life.

As one of my friends has said,

We are called to hold the pain and struggle of life alongside our hope. The pain and struggle will never go away; we can't deny it, but we need to learn to hold them side by side yielding our hurts up. I know I have lived a lot of my life hoping and waiting for the pain to stop so I can enjoy life. What a fantasy that was.

Contentment

There are many biblical passages that teach us about being content (Philippians 4:11, 2 Timothy 6:6-8, Hebrews 13:5). Since Christ dwells in us, we should be content financially and be satisfied in God's work in our lives. Nor should we wish away our present situation.

Just as married people need to learn contentment regarding their mate, so single adults need to learn contentment regarding their unmarried status. Although we don't have to be perfect before God brings the right person into our lives, the saying rings true that if we're not happy as a single person, then we probably won't be happy as a married person.

That other person will not (actually cannot) make us happy. He or she doesn't have the ability. The other person is, after all, only human, just as we are. We can't make anybody happy, either. If we can't ultimately fill up that void in our own lives, how can we do it for someone else? Only God can fill the void in our lives.

Another prayer, *"God, acknowledging your sufficiency isn't cheap talk. I have to live this too, and it's not a smooth process for me, as I write recently after my break-up with Barbara. Even though I use Scripture to encourage myself, I still feel much pain from the break-up. There's a lot of mystery in my future. But the truth is, that mystery will not go away when I get married. I still won't know what the future holds. I will still be required to walk by faith. So know that I don't quote these spiritual things tritely. I speak them in my own weakness, holding on to your faithfulness."*

But is it wrong to want something more, something better in this life?

We can legitimately long for something better; after all, we do live in a fallen world, so there must be something better. But we must guard against thinking that we can only be joyful when we're married. We're being discontent when we think that someone or something will be the final ingredient, the ultimate answer, to our deepest longings--*"This is all I need, and then I'll be happy."* Such thinking is idolatrous. Idolatry may involve longing for anything from a new computer program, a book, or a CD, to a girlfriend or husband.

Discontentment says, "I can only be happy if I have . . . [fill in the blank]." Living discontentedly means being dissatisfied with what we have, thinking that we'd be happier if we could change our situation, rather than looking to God as our sustainer. The thought--"God owes me something"--often accompanies dissatisfaction.

A proper longing for, say, a better circumstance, can be consistent with contentment, because there *is* something better out there. Yet we must realize that anything obtained in this world will not bring the fulfillment that heaven will.

God doesn't require that we stop longing for things or relationships, just that we long for them appropriately. There is nothing wrong with looking forward to a future event, like a date. We encounter problems when don't look far enough to what really satisfies--heaven (See Allender, *Bold Love*, 288).

Again, I prayed, *"Lord, what do I want more than anything else? It will do me no good to pretend here. You know my heart and you know the answer is a wife. Too often I've viewed a wife as the final component for happiness, and I know that such is wrong. Yet this is where I am, guilty, caught in the act of loving something or someone more than I love you. I confess this to you. Please forgive my idolatry. By your grace, I repent."*

June 20: I have awakened today with a resolution to meet my ever longing and memory of Barbara with a cry for God to satisfy my soul with himself. Every pang will be an opportunity to look to God and declare by faith that only he satisfies. In him, I can be content. Every time my heart longs for love, or lusts for something else, I must ask God to fill me with himself. God has more for me than what I can see at this moment.

July 25: I keep wondering, what is Barbara doing now? Does she ever think about me? Does she ever miss me? Does she ever wonder if she made a mistake?

She comes and goes in passing thoughts throughout the day. It's at night when she most lingers. Maybe it's because all the thoughts accumulate throughout the day so that I have this big deposit at night. Maybe it's also partly due to the quietness that ensues at night. And of course, the magnified sense of being alone. All is hushed, the lights go out, the loneliness increases. Sometimes I wonder what horrible thing in me drove her away. Could she see something in me that I just refused to see? Am I just badgering myself by thinking like this?

Did she have some deep dark secret that sent her away? Was she unstable?

Before I go to bed most nights, she's already been on my mind for a while. Songs throughout the day, smells, people's expression, movies--they all trigger my thoughts of her. Although I am learning to get along without her, she is always just a thought or two away. Though I try to muster a non-concern for her, I still care so much for her. I want to un-do all the last 2 months and have my girlfriend back again. To have a girlfriend at a distance is still better than not having one at all. At least I knew that there was one lady out there besides my Mom who truly cared about me, how I felt, where I went, and what I ate.

There is something so amazing, let me say divine, about a woman's love. Her stares into your eyes, her touch, her words, her aroma, the beauty of her movements, her body. God has just heaped blessing upon blessing by giving us this man-woman love. It's better than life itself.

And with these blessings, he has also intermingled sorrow. For the sin in my heart keeps me from loving perfectly, and at times provokes me to run from a perfect love.

Sometimes I'm baffled that our love ruptured on the rocks of disagreement. That's what posses to nag me most. It's the thought that just a couple of months ago, I had a girlfriend who loved me, felt loved by me, sent me packages, emailed and called me. She was grateful for me, and I took many occasions to tell her of my gratitude for

her. Yet today, it is no more. What once was love, is now a wound. Where I felt secure and whole, I now feel abandoned and foolish. How can love go so wild, to such extremes? How can it give life, then turn around and take life?

This is what I can't fathom. Does she like someone else now?

Sometimes I can't sleep. These occasions provide too many opportunities for my wondering mind to dwell on a old love, to live in the past, and wish to relive those moments with her again.

Oh, if I spoke my soul now, I'd just have to say that I want to spend the rest of my life with her. So much for recovery.

August 14: Today I was struck with a thought: What if I stopped thinking so much about loneliness and self-fulfillment and started thinking about fulfilling the needs of others?

Community

As has been said already, we must not forget others in our pain. We are called to minister to people around us (1 Peter 4:11). God is glorifying himself as we use the gifts he's given us to serve others. Consider what 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 says about our troubles, Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

God knows how to use the hurt in our lives to minister to others, just as others have ministered to us through their pain. A good friend comes to mind. He broke up with his fiancée a few years back, an extremely painful ordeal. But instead of growing bitter, he learned compassion. He listened, like a trained counselor, during my own break-up and prayed with extra sympathy. The Lord blessed me through him.

I prayed once more, *"Lord, you want to bless others through my pain, too. There are people you want me to touch. I may not see all of it now, but you will use my troubles to speak peace into the lives of others. Knowing this doesn't take away all of my pain, but it does reassure me that you are using me in the lives of others."*

Truly the Lord uses his redeemed community to shine his glory throughout the world (Isaiah 49:6). The church is his bride and he's perfecting her. We can't survive the Christian walk if we aren't regularly in communion with other believers of like faith. We need to hear each other's victories and struggles. We need to confess our sins to one another and pray for each other.

Also, we need to confess our devotion to God in the presence of others. We weep when they weep and rejoice when they rejoice (Romans 12:15). This is community and part of our ministry among the saints--to live together and struggle toward God side by side.

God heals our souls when we, as the confessing community--the church, gather to declare God's worth, sing his praise, hear his word, and partake of the Lord's table.

There is something God-like when we make ourselves vulnerable among a group of believers who view God's glory as all supreme. God ministers to us by teaching others not to give up on us in our sin and by teaching us not to give up on them in their sin. We keep loving, keep disciplining, keep repenting, keep restoring, keep correcting, keep forgiving, and keep hoping for our promised redemption. God's Spirit working among us in the community of faith, the church, teaches us about loving our creator and loving others. There is something beautiful about learning to love again, especially when there are risks. And the church plays a big role in helping us love again.

Faith to Love Again

Somewhere along the way, those of us who have had break-ups must love again. It may be a while before we feel ready to start looking for another potential mate. But during the whole process, God gives us chances to love again. We have friends and family who are always in need of love. And eventually, we will likely be given the opportunity to love someone of the opposite sex in a way that may cause us the same kind of pain that we just recovered from. Loving others makes us vulnerable.

C. S. Lewis, in *The Four Loves* has some famous words on taking risks:

Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket--safe, dark, motionless, airless--it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.

We all have fears of rejection, and we're going to face some type of rejection as long as we live. Yet it should not keep us from loving, because God gets glory by using us to love others in the face of pain.

Dan Allender says it like this,

Whenever someone strives to love with the love of God, they enter into an endeavor that has more possibility of failure than any other enterprise in life. Simply said, God's standards of love are always higher than ours; therefore, all efforts to love biblically will inevitably lead to a sense of our incompleteness and self-centeredness. (*Bold Love*, 138)

I often respond out of my fears, trying to protect myself from hurt and shame. I cried out to God again, "*I want the perfect girlfriend, one who won't ever leave me, one who'll be the perfect wife, one who will make me happy. I know that is impossible, but I still sometimes pursue this fantasy.*"

Don't we all live in such ways to protect ourselves? "I'll never be hurt again. I will never love again; you just can't trust people."

If we don't actually say things like this, we live like it. There's nothing wrong with trying to avoid pain, but we're never going to experience a painless world until heaven. Yet some of us withhold our love from others out of fear that we will be hurt again.

I've met men and women so afraid of commitment that they wanted their dating partner to be perfect (or wouldn't go on a date because they required perfection). There's nothing wrong with wanting to marry a compatible person, but we sin when we live in a way that only takes into account our interests and not the interests of others.

Many single people have a tendency to keep their options open for someone better. Yet they don't realize they're acting out of fear instead of faith, trying to control the future rather than trusting God with it.

Several years ago, I met a young lady who had trouble loving again because years earlier she'd been in a dating relationship that fell apart after three years. It had been at least two years since her break-up, but she was still using her past hurt as an excuse to keep from getting involved with anyone else. Although she admittedly wanted to be married, she wasn't willing to take a chance on loving someone else. Somewhere along the way, she must give up her struggle to protect herself, or else be fearful and lonely forever.

We, too, will have to take a chance at loving again. There's no rush to enter into another romantic relationship after a major break-up. But we still need to love and be vulnerable. That's faith at work--that's God getting glory. If God can give us love for our enemies, then surely we can forgive those who wronged us and be open to the next person whom God might bring our way.

We need not punish new people in our lives and deprive them of love just because we've been hurt. God may be sending them into our life as a blessing.

June 17: It's hard to come to terms with a love so strong going so wrong. I feel helpless, like I'm out of control. And I don't like feeling this way. Yet, I'm never really in control, in spite of what I think, even when things go my way. Again, my heart wants to see the future, because of fear rather than faith.

If my relationship with Barbara could go wrong, then there's no guarantee that such pain won't happen again. This frightens me. I want an assurance of the future, especially an assurance that a break-up won't happen again.

What shall I do about this uncertainty, this lack of control?

What I'm always called to do--*believe*. Live by faith and not by sight. Love again, take chances, believe that I will know affection once more, and trust that there is an ultimate place in my future where pain will end--heaven (Isaiah 35:10).

I should see my pain and broken relationship in light of God's call to worship him. I must offer the broken pieces to him.

Time and Healing

I'm sure we've heard that *time heals all wounds*. Although this statement holds some truth, it's better to say that *God heals and uses time to do it*. We've all met people who have harbored bitterness for decades. Time without divinity doesn't heal our wounds. Only God can heal our hurts. Time won't do it if we refuse to forgive. But when we're trying to forgive, through God's grace, time sure helps.

If we profess Christ, we must forgive. It's not optional. There's hell to pay if we don't (Matthew 5:44-48; 6:15; 18:21-35). We lift our wounds to God and ask him to heal them. We need to talk to God, and most likely another believer too, about our hurts.

God is spreading his glory throughout our lives like jelly on a slice of bread, and part of that glory he displays in the lives of believers who have been healed of wrongs, great and small. God is preparing us for a life with him, in a world in which our pains will be sent away forever. And he uses time as part of the process.

June 23: Today I wanted to search for a special someone, although no one in particular I don't feel I'm healed enough to look yet, although my heart is already searching. More healing is needed.

June 27: These days, I'm doing better, feeling more adjusted to the idea of our break-up. Although, there are continually new aspects that have to be dealt with along the way, like when I recently met someone who knew Barbara's family. These things surfaced more pain that I need to lift up to the Father. I'm adjusting, but this full healing process can't be rushed. It will take a while.

August 4: Today marks the second month anniversary of our break-up. I've tried not to ponder things too much. Really, it's been a good day. I've been mindful of the break-up, but not obsessed about it.

I feel that most of my heart has healed. But every once in a while I get the fleeting hope that there might still be a chance for reconciliation.

August 28: Today I asked the Lord to reconcile me and her. I wept over the loss. I then felt exceedingly light-filled and joy-filled. Then sad again. What a roller-coaster.

Some folks find themselves stuck in a certain stage, unable to get past the pain. What should we do if we're unable to move on and heal? Wright gives ten helpful suggestions that I've summarized:

1. Try to identify what it is that doesn't make sense to you about your break-up.
2. Identify the emotions you feel during each day.
3. Identify the steps or actions you are taking to help you move ahead and overcome this break-up.
4. Be sure you are sharing your loss and grief with others who can listen to you and support you during this time.

5. Find a person who has experienced a similar loss.
6. Identify the positive characteristics and strengths of your life that have helped you before.
7. Spend time reading the Psalms.
8. When you pray, share your confusion, your feelings, and your hopes with God.
9. Think about where you want to be in your life two years from now.
10. Remember that understanding your grief intellectually is not sufficient (*Let's Just be Friends*, 121-22).

While these principles can help, you shouldn't hesitate to talk with a mature believer--who loves God's word--to help you through this grieving process. I talked with several close friends, and a couple of Christian counselors to help me work through my break-up. There's no shame in asking for help. In fact, it takes more courage for us to ask for help than to deny our need for it.

Our Ultimate Hope

The windows of our future destination easily fog when someone we love has left us. But Scripture tells us that if we trust Christ, we have a future hope (1 John 3:2). One day we will see God and he will wipe away our pain forever (Revelation 21:4). It's important to think about heaven now, because God wants our mind on heaven (Colossians 3:2). He knows that we will lose our identity if we lose sight of our real home in heaven with him.

Satan wants us to live only for this life. He desires to make our pain appear endless. He can cripple us with his lies if we don't believe God's word. If we're followers of Jesus, we have a home in heaven based on the work of Christ. Therefore, we can forgive and love in a world full of hate and pain.

If we're hurting now because someone has rejected us with painful words, or abandoned us without saying a word, we might find solace in reflecting on the greater reality. If we are followers of Christ, there is a world that awaits us in which God's glory will be seen, acknowledged, and worshipped by all believers. We won't hurt others, nor will they hurt us. (See Randy Alcorn's, *Heaven*.)

"But I'm not in heaven yet," some reader may say. "I'm on earth and I want to be with the one who broke up with me. I don't want heaven, I want my girlfriend to come back." Our heavenly Father longs for us to cry out to him. If our hearts agonize, then he wants us to call out to him. He hears and cares. But we may not get what we're wanting. He will, nonetheless, reach out to us. And somewhere along the way, we'll need to cast our eyes heavenward and live on a (redeemed) world much better than this the present one. At some point in the healing process, this does offer hope for believers.

This present world is not the end. It's not our final destination, and if we don't keep that in mind, we'll believe the lies of the devil, who tells us that life never gets any better than this world. Satan says that break-ups and weeping are all we'll ever know. But we can't listen to his deception.

As Allender says, "If I do not anticipate the regularity and tragedy of sin, I unavoidably come to believe this world is my home" (*Bold Love*, 140). When we know heaven and the beauty of God awaits us, we can live a holy and reckless life (See Piper,

Future Grace, 341-350). Our worst fear of death will be met with the hope of meeting the Son of God himself.

We can savor some of God's presence now, but it's just a foretaste of what lies ahead. God will one day unleash his majesty in such a way that all evil will forever be locked in hell, and all goodness will permeate us so that we ourselves will not be able to sin. A break-up may ravage our heart, but God will not leave us broken hearted. He can heal us while we're on earth and bring a mate into our lives. But if we never know marriage this side of heaven, he has promised us the ultimate encounter with love once we see him.

Imagine that. One day, we'll be so overjoyed with God that we will not sin. All glory to God for his triumph over evil!

If we're aware of what awaits us in heaven, we'll have clarity about who we are now. We're God's children. Just think how this sets us free to live holy, reckless lives. If heaven is our destination, then we're not afraid to go to the un-reached people of the world and share God's love with them. If heaven is our destination, we are unleashed to love the homeless man as God loves him. This includes loving those who have not loved us as they should have. It gives us incentive to forgive, to live in the present with hope for the future--our wedding with God himself, the ultimate lover. Mere earthly love will always disappoint, but God's love will one day heal our battered souls.

We must suffer while we're in this world. And we can do so knowing heaven awaits. Listen to what the Apostle Paul said regarding suffering and the hope of heaven: Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (*2 Corinthians 4:16-18*)

Paul endured severe suffering, yet when compared to the riches of heaven, he still called this world's afflictions minor. He wasn't denying pain's reality; rather he was putting it in proper focus with the splendor of heaven. Does a break-up rip into the soul? Oh yes. But believers have hope--hope that God will make things right in this world, and a promise that he'll right all wrongs in the life to come. Paul said elsewhere that he considered ". . . that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (*Romans 8:18*).

What is the glory and wonder of heaven? I suppose there are many right answers to this question, but the heart of this answer must be God himself.

Why will heaven last for all eternity? Because it will take forever for God to unveil his glory and majesty. We will never grow bored in heaven, for God himself will be pouring his beauty into us.

What do these reminders of God's larger plan have to do with the indignity of a break-up, the sorrow of parting with a loved one, the stench of sour earthly love? With each blow life gives us, Satan wants to wedge a knife of bitterness into our side, hoping the agony will cause us to see God as the enemy. We must not cast aside the larger vision of God's plan when pain dials our number. We can keep walking in faith, crawling perhaps, if we stay mindful of God's greater plan. Admittedly, this sounds superficial.

But it's the truth. We must cling to the truth if we are to survive. We must cast our eyes upon beauty, upon something far more stable than ourselves.

Think of some beauty here in the U.S.: The Grand Canyon, The Rocky Mountains, Niagara Falls, the changing leaves in Massachusetts, the winding Tennessee River, the coast line from Los Angeles to Seattle. Consider a beautiful woman or a flower. The eyes never get enough.

How much greater will God's beauty be in heaven when we can enjoy his splendor in an unhindered way? It will take all of eternity to experience God in his fullness and for him to pour out his unending love on us.

Revelation 4 paints a spectacular picture. The four living creatures are exalting Christ: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come" (v. 8). The twenty-four elders declare, "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being" (v. 11). These truths may not bring immediate relief to our wounded soul, but we must remind ourselves of the life that awaits us. If the writers of Scripture mentioned heaven to encourage believers who daily faced pain deeper than romantic disappointment--like beatings and public shame--then we do well to meditate upon the promises of heaven too.

The praise continues in Revelation 5: "You [Jesus] are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth" (vv. 9-10).

And the host of heaven says, "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise! To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever" (vv. 12-13)!

July 11: When every song you shared becomes a curse, when certain dates on the calendar open your wounds afresh, when every movie becomes a sad reminder, when the announcement of a newly engaged couple provokes tears instead of a smile, when every restaurant you dined in becomes a memorial to heartbreak, realize that you have a great opportunity to humble yourself and look heavenward.

You have a wound so deep, so internal that only God can heal it. You can become bitter and feel sorry for yourself, or you can admit your hurt and ask God to heal you. You have not only the pain of the wound, but you have the opportunity of healing.

August 21: It is the height of arrogance to think that the worst thing Barbara could have done for herself is to have given up the opportunity to spend the rest of her life with me. I must not view myself as her ultimate good, second only to heaven. In fact, maybe she should be commended for her wisdom.

September 3: At three months after our break-up, I'm still running across lost pictures and forgotten notes piled in

my room. A mixture of emotions always follows these discoveries, dislodging a host of memories--the increased heart-rate over holding hands, the smile of receiving her letters, the raised voice in an argument, the tears of that final call.

An eye fixed on heaven will give us a clear picture of our present problems. The pain is real, but so is God. Our heavenly Father is not gleeful about our suffering, but he is bringing about his own kingdom in our sinful hearts, even through our pain. God cares deeply for us and knows that the best gift he can give us is himself. So, let's look heavenward saints, our hope remains in God. He is faithful. Yes, he is faithful, especially to the brokenhearted.

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