

## **Healing from Betrayal**

**Regina Boyd**

Hi, I'm Regina Boyd, a Licensed Mental Health Counselor, and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. And today we're going to talk about betrayal and particularly how to heal from it. So, let's open with a prayer.

### **Opening Prayer**

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, amen. Holy spirit we acknowledge your presence with us here today. Thank you for being with us. We open our hearts to you. because we know you love us, and we know that we can entrust ourselves to you. Please bless everyone here for this retreat and listening to this talk that they can find healing and peace. We ask all of this through Christ our Lord, Amen. In the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.*

### **The Lord Desires to Heal Us**

So, what I want to talk about today is betrayal. It is a heartbreaking experience for so many, and there are so many ways that we can feel hurt by others. But the first thing I want to share is that the Lord desires to heal and transform any past wounds that we have experienced. How do I know this?

Well, when I think of an example from my own life, when my husband and I first met and were dating, we had a period of time where we broke up. And to be honest, he broke up with me. And I at that point really felt like I was in love with him, that I had opened my heart to him. And for that time, he felt called to discern seminary. And so, we split ways for a time. And eventually the Lord brought us back together in such a unique and kind of dramatic way if you will, a very soap opera type of way. Lots of highs and lows in the midst of that friendship that developed.

But, when we were reinitiating our friendship and engaging in dialogue again, there was a deep wound in my heart from that breakup. And it was very difficult for me to open up to him to feel vulnerable and safe with him because in a way I had felt really betrayed. I trusted him and I trusted our relationship and in a moment, it was gone. And it took a lot of prayer and healing, even retreats from my heart to get into a place where I felt like I could take that next step with him and actually pursue a relationship again. And eventually thanks be to God, we become engaged and now we're married to this day.

### **Healing is Not Far off**

And so, the reason I share that with you is, I can look back on that moment now, years in the past much distanced away, and I can see how the Lord used that moment and transformed it for good. So in the midst it was very painful, but there was something he did in that healing process that I use now, whether it be in my friendships, in my work, in just ministering to others, that I have

experienced to draw off of and share with other people because of that transformation that I experienced in a unique and personal way, that was unique only to me and to my life.

And so, what I want to say is that healing is not far off from you. It might feel far away. It might feel impossible, depending on the betrayal you've experienced, depending on the situation, but we have a Lord who has resurrected, who has glorified wounds. He exists today in heaven with a body, with wounds and scars. And there can be real transformation in those bumps and bruises and those scars that we've received along the way. He is going to bring good out of this. He wants to heal it because He has been healed Himself.

## **A Form of Trauma**

And I'm going to do what I can to help you now with some practical ways of how to find the beginnings of the taste of that healing now in your day-to-day life. So, what is betrayal? Betrayal is a form of trauma, really. When we think about different types of betrayal, whether it be infidelity in a relationship, in a marital relationship, infertility to our bodies, maybe serious health issues like cancer or some other type of chronic illness, divorce.

All of these types of issues can become traumatic in each of those situations. And what is interesting about them, what they all have in common is that there's a trust that's been broken in either a relationship, a trust in your own self-image about your body and how it should work. And we become wounded. We react in fear. We have a fear response to whatever that stressor or that situation is.

A lot of times, depending on the situation, people can have a PTSD response. So, PTSD, meaning post-traumatic stress disorder. There can be symptoms that are very similar to PTSD in a lot of these betrayal situations, including infidelity. Many couples that I've seen who display those symptoms when there's been an infidelity. Infertility can be very traumatic. Again, thinking about how my body should work and seeing that it's not working in a particular way and having to go through medical treatments, chronic illness is the same thing, the medical treatments.

And so, all of these things I think are really important to view betrayal through that lens. Because we oftentimes think about the pain, but we don't think about the reality of what we're experiencing mentally, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. And why do we feel this way? Because we know that we were made for love and for love, when we love others, it requires vulnerability. It requires trust.

## **He Knows the Experience of Betrayal**

And so, I want to read some scripture to you today. We all know this passage. We're pretty familiar with it, John chapter 18. We're going to read verses 15 through 18 and 25 through 27.

*"Simon Peter followed Jesus. And so did another disciple. As this disciple was known to the high priest, he entered the court of the high priest along with Jesus while Peter stood outside at the door. So, the other disciple who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the maid who kept the door and brought Peter in. The maid who kept the door said to Peter, 'Are*

*not you also one of this man's disciples?' He said, 'I am not.' Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire because it was cold. And they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them standing and warming himself. Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself, they said to him, 'Are not you also one of his disciples?' He denied it and said, 'I am not.' One of the servants of the high priest, a kinsmen of the man whose ear Peter had cut off asked, 'Did I not see you in the garden with him?' Peter again, denied it. And at once the cock crowed."*

In a very real way, our Lord knows the experience of betrayal. By His closest friends, He experienced this in a concrete way. And yet He was able to transform that moment into something not only for Peter's good, but for our good as well, for everyone's good. And so, He is very close to us in the pain, in the midst of that confusion and hurt. He has lived it and He knows exactly what it was like. And He knows what it's like to be on the other side of that.

### **Four Steps in Healing**

So, let's talk about some ways of things you can do in your situation, depending on the betrayal you've experienced and how you can start taking those steps towards healing and transformation.

The first rule that I have is, you have to allow yourself to grieve. This one is really tough because it's very counterintuitive. A lot of people come in and they just want to be cured. They want to be healed. I don't want to feel this way, it's uncomfortable. And what a lot of us don't realize is that if we don't give ourselves that space and that time to grieve, then it can be all... we only prolong our healing. So, we try to stuff, we try to push it down and avoid that discomfort, but it bubbles back up, it finds its way back up. And therefore, it means we have to spend more time grappling with it.

Whereas if we just gave ourselves permission to feel what we were feeling, being in the moment, that allows the processing to begin and the healing of process to begin. So, first giving yourself that space and that time, even if you haven't already. And you might be thinking, "I'm already doing that, I feel horrible Regina." More or less just being able to say that that's okay, that you feel that way and honoring the pain and the hurt that happened in that moment, it's real.

Next, reaching out to a support network. So hopefully you have friends, family members, a faith community like you do here online through this Pray More community or anyone else, a spiritual director, a priest. Others that are willing to hear about your situation and support you in that in a positive way that you can lean on for that extra meal or that person that you can talk to is really crucial in transitioning during a time like this. So, thinking about who are those trusted supports of other people in your life.

And then I would recommend seeking out a spiritual director, a therapist, depending on the severity of what you're experiencing. Do you need time to sit down one-on-one with someone, a mentor, a guide, somebody who can talk you through and create a plan for your healing. And you can do this in a few ways. You can think about what are those things that I need in this moment

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right now. So, maybe I just need that walk by the water side. I need some fresh air, or maybe I need that extra dessert after dinner. Something to just bring a little consolation to lift the mood and to help me get through this sad moment. And how can you achieve that?

So if for example, it is walking outside, how can you make sure that you have more time throughout your day, throughout your week to take those walks, to experience the fresh air and outdoors, if you know that something that can lift your mood and your spirit? So, creating a plan of how to do that and making sure that you schedule time in and therapists are really great at helping you to be able to create that plan, or again, a spiritual director, a mentor, somebody who is willing, a coach, somebody who's willing to sit down with you and map out the particular plan for you, your unique needs and your unique schedule.

Next, to take things a little bit deeper, you could spend some time examining the relationship. If the betrayal was from a person, whether you were betrayed by a friend, a spouse, a relative, examining your relationship with that person and thinking through what are some of those red flags in the relationship that I didn't see right away or that I chose to ignore. And that can be healing in the sense of letting you know that it wasn't always completely your fault. That there were things that other people made choices and that impacted me in a painful way.

And so, sometimes it's nice to take that step back once we've spent some time grieving and are able to take that backwards view and see in retrospect, wow, this was somebody who made their own choices, have their own sense of free will. And they'll would impact me negatively. Here's where I can see where those red flags were. And then therefore helped me to recognize any red flags in any future relationships.

In an infidelity situation with couples, there's a very important process that couples need to go through to find healing. And that's an atonement phase and attunement phase, and reattachment in the relationship. And so, there needs to be a time where the betrayer is atoning for that. It doesn't mean going through severe punishments, but it means that there needs to be a re-establishment of trust in the relationship. And that can be through various actions like sharing of passwords or being very transparent with a schedule, something like that. And then attuning to their emotional needs and rebuilding that emotional connection. And then lastly, the attachment is their sexual relationship. And so, there's three very important stages that need to happen in an infidelity situation. And that can be done through therapy, through a guide and mentorship as well.

And then lastly, I would say, making sure you're connecting to those in your life, that you have healthy relationships with. The people who have been there for you throughout this whole time. The people who haven't left your side in the midst of your pain. They are in your life for a reason that God placed them in your life for a reason. And that can be a place, where you can start becoming more vulnerable and practicing taking risks and trusting again, because these are people who have shown up time and time again, who have shown you over time that they are worthy of your trust and that it's safe to risk more. And to help you work that muscle again, of learning how to trust again and be open and be vulnerable again.

## **Two Scripture Verses**

And so, I want to leave you with two scripture verses that you can reflect on during this time that connect with the pain and with the experience of transformation that the Lord can give. The first one is Psalm 88 and the second is Psalm 63. So, taking some time to read and reflect with those, to journal and see where the Holy Spirit leads you. Thank you so much for your time. And we'll close in a prayer.

## **Closing Prayer**

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. Holy spirit, we thank you so much for this time together. We ask that you enter into our hearts with your healing power, your healing love, radiate within us. Break away any fears, anxieties, any burdens. Heal our wounds. Help us to live in your light and truth. Guide us through the darkness. So that we can stand in freedom with you. Carry us Lord. We ask all of this through Christ our Lord, Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.*