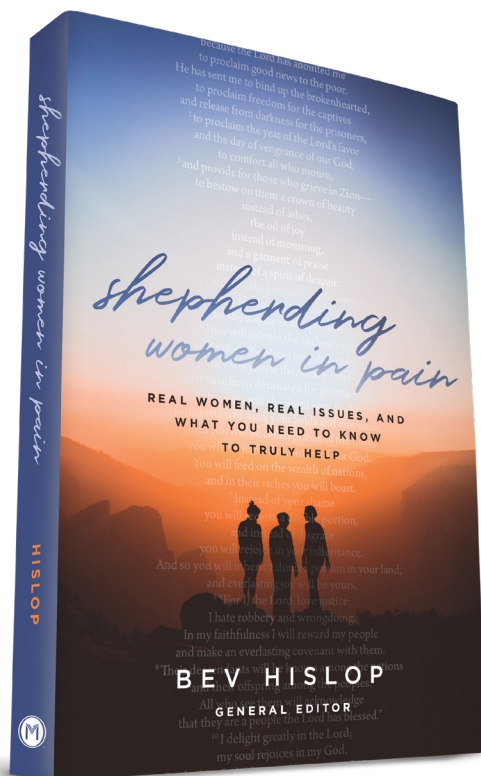




Infertility, divorce, domestic violence, and eating disorders are just some of the painful experiences many women face. Yet, pastors and caregivers are often unprepared to help women through these experiences. This book will equip leaders with greater understanding, insights, and resources so that they can shepherd the women in their lives who need it most.

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Chapter 1

How Can I Stop the Pain?

Lindsey married her high school sweetheart, Brandon. A few months after their honeymoon, Brandon was accepted into the navy and eventually was assigned to submarine duty. He served six months out at sea and six months in port. The first six months of separation were very difficult, but both survived and felt their relationship was stronger than before the separation. Two years later, Brandon returned home and announced to Lindsey that he needed a little space in their relationship to determine whether he had “it” with other women. Brandon said they had married young, so he had not dated much prior to their marriage. Now Brandon wanted to stay married while dating other women.

Lindsey was devastated. Brandon had promised fidelity on their wedding day. Lindsey’s love for Brandon had only grown deeper over the three years of their marriage. And now this? Lindsey was devastated to think she was not enough for Brandon. What had she neglected? In

what way should she have given him more? She began to blame herself. The thought of other women in his life was more than she could bear. The pain became so intense. At times she did not think she could draw her next breath.

Lindsey's words awkwardly tumbled out intermittently between heavy sobs and a flood of tears as she worked to tell me her story. As each sentence seemed to intensify her feelings of emotional pain, she came to the conclusion that somehow she had to find a way to stop the pain. She hurt so much! What could she do to stop the pain? Direct questions exposed thoughts of suicide and even murder. Lindsey did not remember ever feeling this much emotional pain in her life. She quickly remembered her grandfather's suicide as a means of ending his pain when his wife left him.

Lindsey clearly felt out of control. Although thoughts of committing suicide might bring a feeling of control in the immediate, the intensely negative outcome needed to be brought into perspective. Reframing her current situation with expressions of hope would prove to be life-giving. Involving family and close friends was an appropriate next step.

The immediate responses to Lindsey's outbursts included determining whether immediate intervention was needed. Contact information for local crisis intervention resources was close at hand. Listening well—without judgmental responses—was critical. Maintaining a calm demeanor without minimizing Lindsey's emotional pain allowed her to freely express what she was really feeling. Communication with Lindsey needed to be simple and directive. It was helpful to remember that Lindsey's ability to think and plan was likely to be inhibited in the immediate crisis.

Lindsey needed the ongoing support and understanding of those who would provide the safe environment in which she could be honest about her feelings. This in turn would likely enable her to begin the journey of facing the pain in a way that would enhance her ability to understand her own responses and realize this present distress was not endless.

Several issues interplayed with Lindsey's ability to process the emotional pain and eventually move into a place of healing. The essential

human need to be loved and accepted had been violated. The level of pain was particularly deep because that violation occurred by someone who not only promised to be loyal, but who expressed love and understanding to her on a very intimate level. It was the first time in her adult life that she had received such understanding and expression of love.

Secondly, the number of losses Lindsey would experience was great. Not only would she lose the love of her husband and identity as a wife, but her future life as a mother and grandmother as well. The death of a marriage and the sting of divorce were deeply felt by Lindsey. The loss of a home, a house, vacations, anniversary celebrations, family life—her entire future seemed in peril. Asking Lindsey to list her losses was the beginning of a process of grief and recovery.

Grief is the normal reaction to loss of any kind. The feelings associated with the loss are also normal. The tension lies in the fact that we have been socialized to believe these feelings are abnormal. The feelings associated with loss are some of the most neglected and misunderstood emotions.¹ All relationships are unique. No one can assume they know how another feels, even if they have experienced some aspect of a similar grief.

Yet, can pain be accurately measured or compared? Many would think the grief of losing a mother, wife, and daughter to death in one vehicle accident would be the “worst.” Although that horrific experience was Jerry Sittser’s, he writes that the grief an individual bears is the “worst” to her or him.² Pain, agony, and anguish are defined by the one experiencing the loss. How can one say because you lost only one loved one to death, your pain is less than the pain of one who lost three? Sittser would conclude experiences of severe loss cannot be quantified or compared.

Loss is loss, whatever the circumstances. All losses are bad, only bad in different ways. No two losses are ever the same. Each loss stands on its own and inflicts a unique kind of pain. What makes each loss so catastrophic is its devastating, cumulative, and irreversible nature.³

Losses—such as moving, starting school, graduation, health changes,

financial changes, or empty nest—may result in emotional pain. Grief is the conflicting feelings caused by the end of or change in a familiar pattern of behavior.⁴ Some losses, like graduation, may bring a positive feeling. At the same time, the graduate may realize she will no longer share experiences with classmates and friends at the school from which she is graduating. The uncertainty of her next step in life might add further anxiety and intensify the emotional feelings surrounding graduation. These are conflicted feelings, feeling both positive and negative feelings simultaneously.

A woman who has been physically abused by her father may have feelings of relief at his death. These positive feelings may generate feelings of guilt because she is feeling positive at a time when others are mourning a loss. Often the negative feelings overtake the positive feelings and the pressing question becomes, “How can I stop the pain?”

Typically the intensely painful feelings override clear thinking in the immediate. Too often a woman in pain may focus on immediate relief of her emotional pain instead of short- and long-term processing that leads to healing. Addictive behaviors may be a default response. Quick and seemingly easy relief is sought. Numbness and altered thinking may skew her reality. It is clear that her *perception* of her reality will be what triggers her emotional response. Her perception is her reality.

A caregiver can begin to enter her perceived reality by encouraging the woman to talk about the situation, about her thoughts and feelings. The memory will linger, but the painful impact may eventually lessen by knowing someone is traveling alongside the woman in pain and is willing to listen to her expressions of excruciating confusion and emotional agony. A caregiver who will be directive when intervention is needed, empathetic when listening is required, and understanding in the journey toward recovery will bring hope in the midst of pain. The care receiver may begin to see that this level of pain is not endless and that she is not powerless in her circumstances. She does have choices and recovery will begin with a series of very small but critical decisions.

Some people tend to avoid the reality of the problem and thus hope

to avoid pain. Part of our task is to help them face the pain, but this must be done gradually so they are not overwhelmed. We can create an environment in which they feel safe and comfortable enough to face their situation fully.⁵

Too often well-meaning people or ill-prepared shepherds may hinder this process by giving a woman in pain comments that may be intellectually accurate but do not bring healing to a broken heart. For example, a woman, who after miscarrying a much-wanted baby may be physically able to get pregnant again, is not comforted by the words, “Don’t feel bad, you’re young. You can have another child.” Neither is a woman whose husband has just walked out on her comforted by hearing, “Don’t worry, you’ll find a better man next time.” Shepherds who realize “Grief is about a broken heart, not a broken brain”⁶ will more likely respond with words that bring healing to a broken heart.

The caregiver who understands that God’s purpose may unfold in the midst of painful situations will be challenged to communicate this truth appropriately. Although the woman may ask, “How can I stop the pain?” this may not be the most pressing issue. An effective shepherd will have looked deeper into the purpose of pain.

Gabby was born with a rare disorder. She has no ability to feel physical pain. On the surface we may all wish for this. However, the reality is that this inability to experience pain is incredibly destructive to one who feels no consequences of harm done to her body. Young Gabby would bite her tongue and fingers until they bled and “looked like hamburger.” She unknowingly tried to destroy her own eyes before the intervention of doctors to sew her eyelids shut and later her parents insisting she wear eye goggles. Her mother had to check her feet several times a day to see if thorns, glass, or stones may have imbedded themselves and infection might have set in. Gabby could not tell from “feeling pain” whether she had injured her body. So even though her parents tried to watch her every move, little Gabby was literally demolishing her own body.⁷

The result of not feeling physical pain can be self-destruction. Pain is really a gift that no one wants, but none of us can do without. The ability

to feel physical pain actually is a God-given means of preserving life.

Because we were created in the image of God we are pro-life—meaning pro my life. When we sense a threat to our existence and well-being, we spontaneously act to protect and preserve our lives . . . we normally adopt defensive, self-protective thinking and behavior patterns when we feel emotionally or relationally threatened and wounded. Emotional pain, like physical pain, draws attention to the fact that something needs to change.⁸

Touching a hot stove sends the message to the brain that says, “Stop! Remove finger from stove immediately.” In a similar way, emotional pain alerts a woman to the fact that she should seek relief. Relief is seldom as simple or easy as removing one’s finger from a stove top. A woman in emotional pain is alerted to finding the source of the pain and, like cutting an onion, peeling away the layers of thinking and behavior patterns she has acquired through her lifetime that intensify the painful responses to her immediate circumstances.

Perhaps the caregiver’s job is to help women understand the message or purpose of pain. Too often the shepherd herself feels a discomfort with the pain of another and instinctively joins the help-seeker in finding ways to cover up the sensation. This is more likely to occur if the shepherd’s pattern of dealing with her own pain is to simply find quick relief.

Pain may send a message that life, as it is, is not working. The status quo has become painful enough to reconsider. It is the continual uninterrupted pain that comes as a consequence of an alcoholic’s decision to medicate his pain through drinking that breaks through his *modus operandi*. Family and friends clearly communicate the pain they have experienced as a consequence of his decision to drink. If the alcoholic hears their pain and the pain he feels as a result is *greater* than the pain that precipitates his *modus operandi*, then he is likely to stop and reconsider his choices. This opens the door to make life work better.

Pain also tells a woman that she is not as much in control as she had

thought. Pain that is not easily dismissed or relieved sends a message that it is bigger than the person bearing the pain. Once she sees that her attempts to relieve the pain are futile, she may be tempted to think less of herself or even shame herself. The next step of asking someone to help is prefaced by her own admission that *she needs help* and is inadequate in her independence. Some stay stuck in this stage until the pain becomes so intolerable that they are finally willing to give up their fierce self-sufficiency for the sake of relief.

Pain takes on a lot of faces. Antonyms for *pain*⁹ are joy and delight.¹⁰ This is quite telling. Often when loved family members or friends experience emotional pain, those observing spontaneously attempt to change their emotional suffering to joy or delight. Additional efforts may include changing the subject, telling a joke, or suggesting a trip to the mall. Our human instincts—unless trained otherwise—tend to trigger such responses.

Life is filled with pain. In the midst of pain is it possible to feel joy or delight? True joy and delight are found in the hope we have in the presence of Jesus—now and in eternity. Jesus endured the cross “for the joy set before him” (Hebrews 12:2). We have that same hope.

The understanding of a “present” shepherd is often what a woman in pain really needs. Pain is a part of life. For the believer in Christ the understanding that human suffering brings opportunity to become more like Christ provides a foundational strength. For the unbeliever the pain of life may be a catalyst to begin seeking God. Compassion, support, and understanding from another are among the greatest gifts a shepherd can provide. A woman in pain needs someone to walk alongside her in the pain, someone who will bring the hope of Jesus Christ.

In this chapter’s opening story, Brandon’s decision ultimately proved to be one that dissolved their marriage. Lindsey would discover that although the immediate circumstance of Brandon’s unfaithfulness was reason enough to experience myriad painful emotions, Lindsey also would uncover several other major losses in her life that had not been fully grieved. In fact, even the death of her grandfather was hushed and not

discussed in her family. The messages she received from her family were (1) Don't feel bad, (2) Don't talk about it, (3) Pretend it didn't happen, and (4) Be happy for others. As Lindsey looked back on the losses in her life, she realized this is how she approached each of them. However, no matter how hard she tried, she was not able to keep the unspoken family rules in her most recent loss. She felt horrible and could not pretend this was not happening any more than she could act happy. At times she was afraid she would never quit crying.

What Lindsey did not realize was the way in which we grieve our first loss, unless we have had intervention, will be the way we experience each subsequent loss.¹¹ The emotions Lindsey allowed herself to express were in essence a collection of feelings that she had stored away from previous losses in life. It was time to begin peeling back the layers and revisit that first experience of grief. A helpful process for Lindsey was to ask in each loss she had listed, What do I wish had been different, more, or better?¹² enabling Lindsey to communicate messages that brought completion to each loss. Lindsey came to realize that she could not change the actions of others, but she could take responsibility for her current reaction to what happened in the past. This realization opened the door for Lindsey to identify her choices and respond by making small but important decisions that eventually led her to a place of resolve and wholeness.

Lindsey would acknowledge the value of a shepherd expressing hope, especially when Lindsey saw none. Extreme and long-term pain can result in a feeling of despair. This may lead to an absence of hope. No matter the extent of the pain, hope is a key ingredient that is needed. When pain is extensive, the clear meaning can diminish or seem obscure. The purpose may be lost in the dailyness of simply trying to cope. Henri Nouwen affirms that the hope we as "wounded healers" bring is the truth that the wound "which causes us to suffer now, will be revealed to us later as the place where God intimated his new creation."¹³

Often women on painful journeys similar to Lindsey's ask, "When will life be normal again?" The next chapter will take us further in exploring this aspect of understanding a woman in pain.

Chapter 2

When Will Life Be Normal Again?

After a long day in the office, Jackie walked slowly to her car in the parking lot. Before she knew what happened, she was assaulted and robbed. Fortunately a coworker appeared and was able to get her home. How does Jackie process this heinous injustice? Although she healed physically in a few weeks, the feelings of violation, immobilization, fear, and anger began to haunt her. Conversations revealed her strong feelings of resistance. “Why should I forgive him after what he did to me? All he deserves is punishment and I hope he gets the full extent of the law and more.” Jackie could not imagine giving him compassion or forgiveness. Others in her family felt she was fully justified in her bitterness toward him.

This reaction is certainly normal and expected immediately after such a crime. Yet, when more of the story was divulged, it became clear

that Jackie was not in a good place. The attack occurred over *four years* prior to this conversation. She still thinks about him every day, and relives the humiliation she felt that night. Every time she goes out to her car—day or night—she is nervous, sometimes panic-stricken when she sees someone else in the vicinity. She relives the attack in her thoughts by day and her dreams by night. She quit the job she loved out of fear. Now she rarely goes outside, even in the daytime. The few times she allows herself to be with a man, she fears he might attack her and is unable to build a relationship of trust with him.

Clearly this attack has affected every aspect of Jackie's life. It is obvious she is a victim and wrong was committed against her; she is justified in feeling angry about the injustice. But is she justified in her fears, anxieties, and inability to trust anyone? Would life ever be normal again? She allowed the original attack to dominate her whole existence, to define her existence. The attack had nearly destroyed her life. The effects thrive in part because Jackie had not forgiven the man who attacked her.

Jackie is a person with intrinsic value, created in the image of God. God has a purpose for her life. She is a visual example of the truth of John 10:10, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."¹

Through forgiveness the pain caused by the original wrong can be released. The victim in essence is saying the wrong caused me pain but I will not allow it to hurt me anymore. I am putting the injustice in its proper place, as one thing that happened in my past, which I have dealt with, for which I forgive you, something that is only one small part of my whole life story. If I can forgive him, then I will not be totally destroyed by his actions. I am someone over and above the harm that he has done to me. Otherwise I could not be offering him forgiveness here and now.²

Forgiveness is not as simplistic as this might imply. It is a process. Too often women assume it is a matter of just saying, "I forgive Steve," and that is all there is to it. Then she wonders why the pain never subsides, and why it actually increases each time she sees Steve. "When you can't let go of the pain, when the act of betrayal or brutality still burns in your

memory, there is some unfinished business. That business is typically guilt or resentment. They are opposite sides of the same coin. When you feel guilty, you feel you owe somebody something. When you feel resentful, you feel that somebody owes you something.”³ Both require further processing.

There are several aspects to forgiveness that will prove helpful in shepherding women in pain. Three important ones are understanding what forgiveness is *not* saying, the levels of forgiveness, and the forgiveness process.

Forgiveness Is Not

It is helpful in shepherding a woman in pain to underscore what forgiveness is *not* saying. Forgiveness is not saying:⁴

1. *It is no big deal.* It is a big deal. An offense, a sin, has been committed and needs to be addressed. Forgiveness is saying it is big enough to require a process to move forward.
2. *Now everything will be as it was before.* Just the opposite is true. The victim, the abused, the one treated unjustly will never be the same. So “everything” will never be as it was before the offense.
3. *I will never have to think about this again.* Forgiveness is not the same as forgetting or hoping I can forget the offense. Forgiving is releasing the debt.
4. *Welcome back into every area of my life.* Forgiveness should not be confused with reconciliation. Reconciliation is about a restored relationship. Forgiveness focuses on the debt, not the debtor. The integrity and sincerity of the debtor is not critical for true forgiveness to be given. Forgiveness may have no impact on the one whose debt is cleared. He may not even be aware of the forgiveness. If we look to the offender for healing, restitution, or compensation, we will continue in our bondage. The one who has caused the pain does not have the means to repay the debt or remove the pain from

us. If we look to the perpetrator to fill the void, we will always be disappointed.⁵

The forgiving victim will need to make good decisions regarding future contact with the perpetrator. Even if it is a family member and family events seem to demand attendance, the woman who has gone through the forgiveness process will set wise boundaries. She will not intentionally leave the door open for future offenses.

5. *Well, that takes care of that.* The impact—both negative and positive—will linger on. Likely shrapnel will surface at various points throughout life. Typically this may indicate yet another corner of pain, anger, or fear that needs to be brought out into the open and processed.
6. *I can do it by myself.* This is a huge misconception for a woman in pain. Although a woman familiar with the Bible may know well the biblical texts about forgiveness, the process needs to include another person. Most offenses were committed in relationship, and it is in relationship that most healing occurs—in many cases not with the same person who committed the assault but certainly with an understanding shepherd.

Three Levels of Forgiveness⁶

Jackie finally made a decision to forgive her perpetrator. She realized the potential value forgiveness might bring to her life. She was ready to make a change. She did not emotionally feel like forgiving; she felt no compassion toward her offender. She simply made a cognitive choice to forgive. She said the words to a shepherd and she said the words to God in prayer. She wrote them down as if she were saying them to the perpetrator. This was most challenging. Jackie made the decision on the cognitive level and she restated words of forgiveness as she worked through the forgiveness process.

This first level took some time to process. After significant time in this level, the forgiver will slowly begin to understand several things.

- Harm comes to everyone.
- Moral contracts cannot prevent injury.
- No one is immune from it.
- Test of character is how well one functions even when one does not understand God's plan.
- God can redeem our injuries and use them for good.⁷

Level two is emotional forgiveness. This is the level in which the victim comes to understand the above truths about life. Growth in understanding the weaknesses and life struggles of the offender is the major path that leads to emotional forgiveness. Jackie slowly began to see the man who assaulted her as Jesus Christ would see him: a person with great spiritual and personal need. This was preceded by her entry into the third level of forgiveness, the spiritual. The spiritual level is one that says, "Lord, please help me to forgive him. I want to forgive him. You have forgiven me. Please enable me to forgive him. He needs to know Your forgiveness in his own life."

Scripture clearly mandates forgiveness. Jesus told Peter to forgive seventy times seven, which essentially meant no limit should be set on how many times we need to forgive. Peter thought he was being generous suggesting seven times, for the traditional rabbinic teaching was that an offended person needed to forgive a brother only three times.⁸ Jesus tells a parable to illustrate the point that to the extent we have been forgiven, we should forgive. Unlike the first servant who was forgiven all his debt (likely several million dollars), he was not willing to forgive another servant who only owed a laborer's one day's wages—a much, much smaller amount. A follower of Jesus has been forgiven all her sins by accepting Jesus' payment for her sins. Therefore, she should be willing to forgive others (Matthew 18:21–35).

Ephesians 4:31–32 clearly says, "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, *forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you*" (emphasis added). Jesus tells us in the model prayer

of Matthew 6:9–13, “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” There is a relationship between the two.

The beautiful story in Luke 7 is worth taking the time to ponder further. The religious leaders are appalled that Jesus would allow “a woman in that town who lived a sinful life” to enter the same room with them. They assumed Jesus did not know who she was. Jesus responded by giving a parable that illustrated the one who is forgiven much, loves much. Jesus reiterated this point referring to the woman as one who was forgiven much and so loved much. Her actions were an expression of her love for Jesus, the one who had forgiven her. In case the listeners missed it, Jesus also said, “But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”⁹

Jesus Himself was able to extend forgiveness for those who abused Him when going to the cross.¹⁰ Jesus extends the limitless offer of forgiveness to us, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Forgiveness is a priceless gift we receive and we give. Scripture clearly mandates it. Often the process is assumed to be simply saying three words, “I forgive you” and it is all over. Yet we wonder why the bitterness and anger linger, along with the emotional pain.

Forgiveness does not always resolve all the emotional pain resulting from traumatic life events. However, it does bring the victim to a place of newfound freedom from being held in bondage to the victimization and the ability to move forward in life.

All hurt comes from loss, whether it is real or imagined loss: past, present, or anticipated loss. There is the loss of love or lovability when a loved one dies or a relationship ends. Betrayal or infidelity of a spouse may shatter a person’s self-esteem. One may lose control of her life or be forced to do something against her will. Perhaps the beliefs you always held dear are lost or no longer have meaning.

Perhaps it would be helpful to ask the injured person, “What loss have you incurred?” This informs the wounded of the area needing healing. When people experience a deep loss, they are forever changed. Even if they forgive, even if they rebuild the basic assumptions about life, love,

and relationships that were shattered as a result of the injury, they are different.¹¹ They must be in order to have successfully integrated what has happened to them into their lives.

Certain offenses seem more difficult to forgive because they assault people's fundamental beliefs. Three basic assumptions in life are: the world is meaningful and well, people are generally benevolent, and the self is worthy.¹² When people experience traumas, their assumptions about themselves and their world are shattered. The more damage done to a person's assumptions, the more difficult it can be to forgive.

Jackie was forced to accept that her core beliefs failed and had to begin rebuilding them. She assumed because she was a good employee and did a very conscientious job, she would be safe walking to and from her car each day. She believed people were generally good and that she was worth being treated kindly. She also thought because she was a Christian, God would protect her from things like assaults. All of these assumptions had to be reconfigured. Careful study of Scripture with a shepherd helped her in this process. She began to change her perception, behavior, values, and expectations. She realized she could be wounded again, but with the strength of this process behind her, she now knows that through God's empowering Spirit, she will not only be able to survive the woundedness but see God redeem it.

The Process of Forgiveness¹³

Forgiveness is best understood as a process, a process that takes time. The first step in the forgiveness process is to clearly identify the hurt done to you. Lily's father was abusive to all three of her siblings. Yet, Lily needed to identify the painful abuse she experienced, apart from that of her siblings, to begin her forgiveness process. She needed to admit the harm done to her, the dimensions of the injury in terms of its duration, controllability, consequence, and perhaps its cause. Lily made a list of very specific wounds inflicted by her father. She stopped trying to pretend nothing happened. She began to take ownership of the injuries and

stopped defending herself against them. She stopped rationalizing the behaviors of the offender or giving justifications for his abuse. She had to own the wounds in order to fully forgive the one who wounded.

Blaming the injurer was hard for Lily. She felt that was not a Christian thing to do. Yet, until she was able to put blame where it belonged, she could not fully forgive. The American myth of no-fault injuries does not apply in the forgiveness process. To blame the injurer is to hold them morally accountable for causing an event to happen. Blaming separates the victim from the offender, clarifying the two roles. This is the place where the victim begins to regain some ability to make choices that she felt she lost in the offense. Lily named each offense, named the injurer, and made the choice to forgive each one.

Forgiving comes from a position of strength, not weakness. It changes people from objects of other people's choices to people who create their own choices. This is a major step in the process of healing. A crime, abuse, or injustice robs the victim of choice. It disrupts the balance of personal choice. Forgiveness restores choice.

Forgiveness means you no longer expect that person who injured you to owe you anything. You forgive the debt of the offender. This includes giving up the option of blaming the injurer for personal pain or attitudes. These personal attitudes once again become the sole property of the wounded, who alone has the choice of what to do with them. Forgiveness cuts the bond that held her to the offender and chooses to look ahead, not back.

This process leads to the emergence of a new perspective. Lily became a different person through the process of forgiving her father. Granted, it took time. A shepherd assisted her in studying the Scripture to learn that unlike her earthly father, her heavenly Father valued her and would redeem her painful experiences. Jesus Christ died, was buried, and rose from the dead for the purpose of providing forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life for Lily. Lily had not only the hope of heaven when she died, but the power of the Holy Spirit in her life while on this earth. She embraced God's love but it took her a long time for her default

perspective of God to be gracious and compassionate rather than punitive. Eventually, she began to see ways she could encourage other young women who had experienced abusive pasts. She was effective because in part she understood their pain and the healing process. As a follower of Jesus Christ, Lily experienced redemption.

Neither Jackie nor Lily would ever again see what *was* their normal. Rather, both women would construct a new normal for their lives. The pain of injury and process of recovery forge new life patterns and insights. Greater understandings of the world, of faith, and of God are likely to generate a different chapter in the story of the life of a woman who experiences emotional pain. This is a gift.

“This gift of meaning is not a piece of artwork that you contemplate and enjoy. Instead, it is a gift of lumber, hammer and nails, and a saw. You must build something. Making meaning out of what happened to you is seeing the possibilities that are now open to you as a direct result of your suffering.”¹⁴

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