



HEALING MEMORIES WITH A LABEL MAKER

The identification of past hurts coupled with a graphic enactment of Jesus' love has been around for a while in the counseling arena. Prayer and imagination exercises are used as the counselee "re-lives" the past event with Jesus present in it. Joy and release occur when the memory is healed through the power of the Holy Spirit. To varying extents champions of this method rely heavily on Freud, Jung, Kubler-Ross and others.

Without going into a lengthy critique, the basic problem with this approach is that sin is an attempt to cover up the insecurity I suffered with my hurt...to the degree that I love or hate myself; I will love or hate God and vice-versa. Sin thus becomes a violation of my wholeness – not God's law. Any fallacy with sin will lead to a fallacy with the atonement.

How Should We Deal With the Past?

1. We Must Have a Biblical View of Levels of Consciousness
 - A. Awareness refers to the fact that at any given moment there is a division in the levels of stimuli acting upon us. God gave us sleep to have periods of "rest." In His mercy, there is a time to lie down and a time to rise up (Proverbs 3:22-24).
 - B. Time in the Bible is a linear concept in which we are moving forward toward a goal. While the Bible deals with the past events that are painful, memory and remembrance are primarily used for enthusiasm for the old pointing in the direction of the future
 - C. The relationship between awareness and memory points us to Ecclesiastes 3:11: "He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work that God has done from the beginning to the end."
 - D. In Philippians 3:13-14 Paul says, *Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*
- John Calvin: "Should anyone remark, by way of objection, that the remembrance of our past life is of use for stirring us up, both because the favors that have been already conferred upon us give us encouragement to entertain hope, and because we are admonished by our sins to amend our course of life, I answer, that thoughts of this nature do not turn away our view from what is before us to what is behind, but rather*

help our vision; so that we may discern more distinctly the goal.”

E. Self-Examination – Romans 5:4, I Corinthians 11:28, 2 Corinthians 13:5; 2 Peter 1:10 all encourage us to examine our hearts (Psalm 26:2, 139:23, 24).

2. The Blessing of Forgetting

Arthur Custance comments on man’s need for such forgetting. “The truth is that man needs not merely forgiveness of the sins he can recall and feel sorry about – though he most certainly does need this. What he really needs, to restore peace and health to his soul, is a washing away, a cleansing, a total removal of the burden of the accumulated sins which he has carried with him in the depths. Of his unconsciousness – that cesspool of wickedness, great and small – which he cannot voluntarily recall because he has “forgotten” them, but which are filed away nevertheless in some part of his being which for all his hiddenness is still a vital part of his real self.”

3. The Connection Between Past and Present Behavior

Suppose you have had a traumatic experience. How should it be dealt with in a Biblical fashion? The Biblical view is Re-Labeling the past.

A. Luke 24:13-35 On the road to Emmaus Jesus appeared to two downtrodden disciples. In verses 19-24, He began to instruct them correctly on what had taken place. As a result, their “hearts burned within them.”

B. 2 Samuel 12:1ff In this example Nathan confronts David with his sin. The method is the same as Luke 24 but the manner is different. Nathan re-labels David’s sin which eventually led David to Psalm 51.

C. In re-labeling, central is the encounter with the Word of God.

-God is Sovereign over all

-God understands our disappointment and hurt

-Nursing old wounds is not helpful and is not God’s response to pain (1 Peter 2:21-24)

-We are not captive to the past 1 Peter 1:18

-We live in a fallen, sinful world

-Any and all good that happens to us is a gift of God’s undeserved grace

-The bad things we go through can make us more sensitive to sin and better able to help others

-God calls us to concentrate on our present behavior (Philippians 3:13, 14)

DEALING WITH THE PAST – TWO VIEWS

1. Why do we act wrongly?	Hurt from Past	Offend God and others due to sin
2. What should be the focus?	The Past	Present
3. How do we change?	Heal memories	Learn proper responses which lead to changed feelings
4. What is the role of the counselor?	Architect of new Past	Teacher-Trainer for new present
5. What is the relationship between doctrine/life?	Life outweighs Doctrine	Doctrine is the foundation of life