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Dearest friend,

Whoever or whatever has hurt you, God loves you and longs to comfort you in your pain. It is my prayer that the pages that follow will point you to him.

ROMANS 8:35-39 Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or are hungry or cold or in danger or threatened with death? . . . No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels can't, and the demons can't. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away. Whether we are high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3 All praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the source of every mercy and the God who comforts us.

—RHONDA K. O'BRIEN

*This book is dedicated to my mother,
Alice Bryant, who pointed me to Jesus.
She met him face-to-face this year—at home
at last, where there is no more hurt.*

PREFACE

Psalm 119:111, 162 Your decrees are my treasure; they are truly my heart's delight. . . . I rejoice in your word like one who finds a great treasure.

Psalm 119:91, 160 Your laws remain true today, for everything serves your plans. . . . All your words are true; all your just laws will stand forever.

Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.

What a treasure we have in God's Word! The Holy Bible is relevant to today's issues and gives solid guidance for daily living.

In this book you will find more than 100 topics that deal with hurts in our lives and how to overcome them and what the Bible says about each one. Each topic is listed alphabetically, with several questions, Scripture passages, and comments addressing each topic. In the index at the back of this book, you will find a complete listing of all the topics for quick reference. You can read

through this book page by page or use it as a reference guide for topics of particular interest to you.

Although we could not cover all topics, questions, and Scriptures related to the subject of this book, our prayer is that you will continue to deliberately search God's Word. May you find God's answers as he longs to be your daily Guide. Enjoy your treasure hunt!

—THE EDITORS

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. It is God's way of preparing us in every way, fully equipped for every good thing God wants us to do.*

Abandonment

(see also Loneliness, Neglect)

Does my suffering mean that God has abandoned me?

1 Peter 5:10 After you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation.

Rather than abandoning us when we suffer, God moves in to help us and comfort us with his presence. You may feel alone in your suffering, but God has compassion on you and promises an eternal reward waiting for you.

Will God abandon me during my difficult times?

Psalms 27:10 Even if my father and mother abandon me, the Lord will hold me close.

2 Corinthians 4:9 We are hunted down, but God never abandons us. We get knocked down, but we get up again and keep going.

Psalm 9:10 Those who know your name trust in you, for you, O Lord, have never abandoned anyone who searches for you.

Even if those on whom you most rely desert or neglect you during difficult times, God never will. In fact, your difficulties can become the means to experience God's presence even more intimately. When you face difficult times, you can trust that God has not abandoned you. Instead, he holds you close.

PROMISES FROM GOD

John 14:16 I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, who will never leave you.

Hebrews 13:5 I will never fail you. I will never forsake you.

Abortion

Did God really want me to be born? Does he have a plan for me?

Psalm 139:13-16 You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—and how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born.

Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed. God not only knew all about you before you were born, he wanted you to be born and he has a plan for your life.

Don't I have the final say over what happens to my body?

1 CORINTHIANS 6:12-13 You may say, "I am allowed to do anything." But I reply, "Not everything is good for you." And even though "I am allowed to do anything," I must not become a slave to anything, . . . But our bodies were not made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:16-17 Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you? God will bring ruin upon anyone who ruins this temple. For God's temple is holy, and you Christians are that temple. Your body is God's temple; his Spirit lives within you. Body, mind, and heart must do what is honoring and pleasing to him. Society says you have a choice; God says you should choose life.

Can God forgive me for having an abortion?

PSALM 51:3, 10, 12 I recognize my shameful deeds—they haunt me day and night. . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God. . . . Restore to me again the joy of your salvation.

Just as King David experienced the joy of total forgiveness after committing adultery and murder, so you can know God's forgiveness—for any sin—if you confess that sin to him.

I s a i a h 1 : 1 8 No matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can remove it. I can make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you as white as wool.

1 J o h n 1 : 9 But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong.

E p h e s i a n s 3 : 1 8 And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love really is. God can cleanse and heal you from any and all sin, no matter how big or terrible it might be. No sin is beyond God's forgiveness; no matter how great your sin, God's forgiveness is greater. No matter what you may have done in the past, let God restore you to wholeness through his amazing, boundless love for you.

P R O M I S E F R O M G O D

J e r e m i a h 1 : 5 I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb.

Abuse

(see also Anger, Used/Using Others/Feeling Used, Violence)

How do I heal the wounds of abuse?

Ephesians 4:31 *Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of malicious behavior.*

Recognize that resentment, bitterness, and desire for revenge will only poison your own soul. Your hurt is real, but you must leave it with God. He will bring justice in his way and in his time.

Colossians 3:13 *Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.*

This is difficult, but important. If you refuse to forgive, you will only be hurting yourself. Forgiveness is the only way to purge your soul of the toxin of bitterness and a vengeful spirit. Remember that you did not deserve forgiveness for your sins, but Jesus forgave you by grace; likewise, an abuser does not deserve your forgiveness, but you can choose to forgive anyway. When you forgive, you are *not* saying the hurt isn't real, or that the event didn't matter, or that you will put yourself in a position where you might be harmed again. The person who hurt you doesn't need to be asked or told. The act of forgiveness can occur between you and God. All it means is that you

refuse to let the abuser have any more control in your life. Leave your hurt with God and allow him to comfort you and heal you.

Philippians 4:8 Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

As you fill your mind with thoughts about God, there is less room to dwell on the past. Focus on the future and on all God's promises to you.

Is physical discipline of my child considered abuse?

Proverbs 29:15, 17 To discipline and reprimand a child produces wisdom, but a mother is disgraced by an undisciplined child. . . . Discipline your children, and they will give you happiness and peace of mind.

Proverbs 13:24 If you refuse to discipline your children, it proves you don't love them; if you love your children, you will be prompt to discipline them.

The Bible clearly advocates discipline of children, even physical discipline. But such disciplines must be done in love. Discipline that comes from unchecked anger can lead to abuse and violence, so we must be careful.

What is the best way to prevent abuse?

Romans 13:10 Love does no wrong to anyone.

Love restrains us from abusing a loved one—

physically or in any other way. This is not a roller-coaster love based on feelings, but a rock-solid commitment to protect and nurture regardless of the way we feel at a particular moment. Violence or abuse against a loved one is a warning signal that our love for that person is questionable. If you are concerned that you are sometimes abusive toward those you love, you should seek help to handle your anger. If you are in a situation where you are being abused, your best prevention is to talk to someone who can help you.

PROMISE FROM GOD

Psalm 34:18 The Lord is close to the broken-hearted; he rescues those who are crushed in spirit.

Addiction

(see also Temptation)

How can God break the power of addiction in my life?

Galatians 5:22-23 When the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Romans 8:5-8 Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who

are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. . . . That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

God can break the power of addiction in your life when you give him control. He will come into your life and change your heart and your desires. Surrender to the Holy Spirit, and God will replace addictive drives with life-affirming desires.

ROMANS 6:16 *Don't you realize that whatever you choose to obey becomes your master? You can choose sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God and receive his approval.*

Submission is a choice. Every day you stand at the crossroads, choosing sinful ways or God's way. The choice is yours.

EPHESIANS 5:18 *Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, let the Holy Spirit fill and control you.*

It is imperative to admit your addiction and acknowledge its destructiveness. You must also recognize that you cannot overcome addiction without God's help.

LUKE 1:37 *For nothing is impossible with God.* In order to overcome your addiction, you must believe it is possible. You will have this confidence when you recognize the greatness of God's power at work in you and for you.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, 12 Two people can accomplish more than . . . one; they get a better return for their labor. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble. . . . A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken. It is almost impossible to overcome addiction by yourself. You need the consistent support of other people who love you, tell you the truth, and hold you accountable. Participating in some sort of addiction recovery support group is important, perhaps even essential, in order to overcome an addiction.

Romans 12:2 Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing his will really is.

1 John 4:4 You belong to God, my dear children. You have already won your fight, . . . because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world.

1 John 5:4-5 Every child of God defeats this evil world by trusting Christ to give the victory. And the ones who win this battle against the world are the ones who believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

Freedom from addiction comes as you change your focus and your mind. You do this by trusting in Christ as your Savior and Lord and experiencing the power he brings into your life.

P R O M I S E F R O M G O D

John 8:36 So if the Son sets you free, you will indeed be free.

Adultery

What is God's definition of adultery?

Hebrews 13:4 Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery.

Adultery is being unfaithful to one's spouse. Normally, this involves forming a sexual relationship with someone else, but even an intimate emotional relationship with another can become adulterous if it leads a person away from his or her spouse. Similarly, in the spiritual realm, we commit adultery against God when we are unfaithful to him by worshiping anything or anyone except him.

Mark 10:11 He told them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery against her."

The commitment to remain faithful “until death do us part” is a serious commitment and should not be taken lightly. Breaking the marriage vow and joining with another is adultery.

Matthew 5:28 *Anyone who even looks at a woman with lust in his eye has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

When we look at another with lust, we are being unfaithful to our spouse.

Why is it important for me not to get involved in adultery?

Proverbs 6:32 *But the man who commits adultery is an utter fool, for he destroys his own soul.* Like most sin, adultery is a momentary act of pleasure that has dire consequences—a lifetime of regret and pain. The consequences of adultery are severe and lasting.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 *Don't you know that those who do wrong will have no share in the Kingdom of God? . . . Those who indulge in sexual sin, who are . . . adulterers . . . none of these will have a share in the Kingdom of God.*

Even if we are not caught in our sin during our lifetime, we won't get away with it forever.

How do I protect myself from the hurt of getting into an adulterous relationship?

Proverbs 2:16 *Wisdom will save you from the immoral woman, from the flattery of the adulterous woman.*

God promises wisdom to those who ask him for it (see James 1:5). When you have wisdom, you will have the discernment to know how to avoid adultery. You still must make the choice to avoid adulterous relationships, but wisdom helps you recognize the early warning signs that you are moving in the wrong direction.

Proverbs 4:25-27 *Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you. Mark out a straight path for your feet; then stick to the path and stay safe. Don't get sidetracked; keep your feet from following evil.*

If looking can lead into adultery, then *not* looking will help you avoid it. It can be challenging to have "faithful eyes," but it is a key to your success in avoiding adultery.

Proverbs 5:3-9 *The lips of an immoral woman are as sweet as honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil. But the result is as bitter as poison, sharp as a double-edged sword. . . . So now, my sons, listen to me. Never stray from what I am about to say: Run from her! Don't go near the door of her house! If you do, you will lose your honor and hand over to merciless people everything you have achieved in life.*

When faced with temptation, you might be tempted to think that you can "handle it," but

the best course is to run away and not look back (see Genesis 39:1-20).

Proverbs 5:15, 18 Drink water from your own well—share your love only with your wife. . . . Let your wife be a fountain of blessing for you. Rejoice in the wife of your youth.

Adultery is more likely if you allow discontentment to creep into your heart. Ask God to help you be content and satisfied with your mate. Then work on being the type of husband or wife that your mate can be satisfied with as well!

P R O M I S E F R O M G O D

Proverbs 6:24 These commands and this teaching will keep you from the immoral woman, from the smooth tongue of an adulterous woman.

A n g e r

(see also Violence)

What are the effects of anger?

Genesis 27:41-43 Esau hated Jacob because he had stolen his blessing, and he said to himself, . . . "I will kill Jacob." But someone got wind of what Esau was planning and reported it to Rebekah. She sent for Jacob and told him, ". . . Flee to your uncle Laban in Haran."

Anger isolates us from others.

Proverbs 22:24 *Keep away from angry, short-tempered people.*

Anger leads to conflict and arguments.

Psalms 37:8 *Stop your anger! . . . Do not envy others—it only leads to harm.*

James 1:20 *Your anger can never make things right in God's sight.*

Anger produces ungodliness and evil motives in us.

1 Samuel 20:30-31 *Saul boiled with rage at Jonathan. . . . "As long as that son of Jesse is alive, you'll never be king. Now go and get him so I can kill him!"*

Saul's jealous anger blinded him to the fact that God had already chosen David to be the next king because of his godly character. Saul's anger was so intense that he plotted to murder David. Anger blinds us to what is really good and right.

How should I deal with my own anger in relationships?

Ephesians 4:26 *And don't sin by letting anger gain control over you. Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry.*

Ephesians 4:31-32 *Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of malicious behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.*

Proverbs 19:11 *People with good sense restrain their anger; they earn esteem by overlooking wrongs. Anger must be dealt with quickly before it becomes bitterness, hatred, or revenge. As hard as it sounds, kindness and forgiveness melt anger away.*

What is the best way to deal with an angry person?

Proverbs 29:8 *Mockers can get a whole town agitated, but those who are wise will calm anger.*

Proverbs 15:1 *A gentle answer turns away wrath, but harsh words stir up anger.*

Proverbs 22:24-25 *Keep away from angry, short-tempered people, or you will learn to be like them and endanger your soul.*

Reacting to anger with anger almost always intensifies the problem. Wisdom and gentleness almost always calm the angry person.

P R O M I S E F R O M G O D

Psalms 103:8 *The Lord is merciful and gracious; he is slow to get angry and full of unfailing love.*

A p a t h y

What causes apathy?

Proverbs 29:7 *The godly know the rights of the poor; the wicked don't care to know.*

Ephesians 4:19 They don't care anymore about right and wrong, and they have given themselves over to immoral ways. Their lives are filled with all kinds of impurity and greed.

Sinful living causes apathy. Sin turns the spotlight on self and selfishness, so that care for others fades into darkness. When we focus only on ourselves, we become apathetic about anyone else's needs.

Deuteronomy 6:11-12 The houses will be richly stocked with goods you did not produce. You will draw water from cisterns you did not dig, and you will eat from vineyards and olive trees you did not plant. When you have eaten your fill in this land, be careful not to forget the Lord, who rescued you from slavery in the land of Egypt.

Nehemiah 9:28 But when all was going well, your people turned to sin again, and once more you let their enemies conquer them.

Success and complacency can lead to apathy. Preoccupation with material things leads to apathy because eventually we get tired of the things we have. The more we focus our affection on this world, the more apathetic we will become. The antidote for apathy is loving concern for others because godly relationships go on forever.

What can I do when I am feeling apathetic?

Isaiah 32:10 In a short time—in just a little more than a year—you careless ones will suddenly

begin to care. For your fruit crop will fail, and the harvest will never take place.

Proverbs 20:13 If you love sleep, you will end in poverty. Keep your eyes open, and there will be plenty to eat!

Understand the negative consequences of apathy. This can help to motivate you to action.

Psalms 119:83 I am shriveled like a wineskin in smoke, exhausted with waiting. But I cling to your principles and obey them.

Obey God's commands even when you don't feel like it—in fact, even when you don't feel like doing anything. Such obedience keeps you close to God and prevents apathy from wreaking havoc in your life.

Proverbs 13:4 Lazy people want much but get little, but those who work hard will prosper and be satisfied.

Romans 12:11 Never be lazy in your work, but serve the Lord enthusiastically.

2 Thessalonians 3:11 Yet we hear that some of you are living idle lives, refusing to work and wasting time meddling in other people's business.

2 John 1:8 Watch out, so that you do not lose the prize for which we have been working so hard. Be diligent so that you will receive your full reward.

Revelation 3:19 *I am the one who corrects and disciplines everyone I love. Be diligent and turn from your indifference.*

Get to work! One of the best cures for apathy is diligent, enthusiastic, hard work! The more you do productive work for God, the more energy you have from seeing God's power working through you in miraculous ways.

What happens if apathy is allowed to grow in my life?

Revelation 3:15-16 *I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish you were one or the other! But since you are like lukewarm water, I will spit you out of my mouth!*

Hebrews 2:3 *What makes us think that we can escape if we are indifferent to this great salvation that was announced by the Lord Jesus himself? It was passed on to us by those who heard him speak.*

If you are feeling apathetic in your relationship with God, remember that it is only through him that you have purpose and eternal life. Ask God to renew your love for him.

Jeremiah 12:11 *They have made it an empty wasteland; I hear its mournful cry. The whole land is desolate, and no one even cares.*

Apathy often leads to destruction. Apathy is not a passive force that lulls you to sleep, but an aggres-

sive force that tries to prevent you from doing anything meaningful for God.

Ezekiel 12:2 Son of man, you live among rebels who could see the truth if they wanted to, but they don't want to. They could hear me if they would listen, but they won't listen because they are rebellious.

Jeremiah 7:26 But my people have not listened to me or even tried to hear. They have been stubborn and sinful—even worse than their ancestors.

Apathy can also lead to a life of rebellion. If you don't care about life or what God wants to do in your life, why be concerned about what God thinks?

P R O M I S E F R O M G O D

Ezekiel 11:19 And I will give them singleness of heart and put a new spirit within them. I will take away their hearts of stone and give them tender hearts instead,

A s h a m e d

What can cause people to feel ashamed?

Genesis 2:25; 3:7 Now, although Adam and his wife were both naked, neither of them felt any shame. . . . At that moment, their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So

they strung fig leaves together around their hips to cover themselves.

Ezra 9:6 I prayed, "O my God, I am utterly ashamed; I blush to lift up my face to you. For our sins are piled higher than our heads, and our guilt has reached to the heavens."

Our sin can cause us to feel ashamed. If we think about our sin, we can't help but be ashamed of it. So instead of hiding it, we can ask God to forgive us.

Ezra 8:22-23 For I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to accompany us and protect us from enemies along the way. After all, we had told the king, "Our God protects all those who worship him, but his fierce anger rages against those who abandon him." So we fasted and earnestly prayed that our God would take care of us, and he heard our prayer.

We can feel ashamed and embarrassed when what we say we believe does not correlate with the way we live.

2 Samuel 10:4-5 So Hanun seized David's ambassadors and shaved off half of each man's beard, cut off their robes at the buttocks, and sent them back to David in shame. When David heard what had happened, he sent messengers to tell the men to stay at Jericho until their beards grew out, for they were very embarrassed by their appearance.

Being mistreated can cause us to feel ashamed.

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