**How to Overcome Past Pain and Let Hope into Your Life**

***Editor's Note:*** *The following is a report on the practical applications of Pete Wilson's new book,* [Let Hope In: 4 Choices That Will Change Your Life Forever](http://www.christianbookstore.net/let-hope-in-4-choices-that-will/catalog-5982353/) (W Publishing, 2013).

Each new day of your life is a gift from God that He wants you to live fully. But if the pain you’ve suffered in your past is still impacting your life now, you can’t fully embrace the new life God offers you because you’ll be stuck in a frustrating cycle of brokenness that leaves you feeling hopeless.

The key to overcoming your past pain is making choices that invite God’s hope into your life. Here are some choices you can make to heal from your past and enjoy hope from now on:

**Transform your pain instead of transferring it**. If you don’t find ways to learn from your past pain, you’ll likely be doomed to repeat the mistakes you made in the past and transfer your pain to everyone with whom you interact – from your friends and [family](http://www.crosswalk.com/family/) members to your coworkers and neighbors. So ask God to break the hold that your past has over you and show you what useful lessons you can learn from it so you can begin moving forward. God is much more powerful than your history, and when you trust Him, God will start to transform your pain into healing and wisdom in your life.

**Leave shame behind.** Silence the voice of shame in your life so it won’t block the healing that God wants to give you. Listen to the Holy Spirit’s voice telling you that God loves you completely and unconditionally, regardless of what has happened in your past. Even though God knows the worst about you, He wants to redeem you anyway. Let go of shame and accept God’s invitation to healing.

**Overcome your regrets**. Holding onto regrets from your past will only lead to more regrets unless you break the unhealthy cycle by releasing your regrets to God. Realize that it’s pointless to dwell on your regrets, since you can’t go back and change your past – all you can do is keep moving forward. Pray specifically about each of your regrets while envisioning Jesus on the Cross. Leave every one of your regrets at the foot of the Cross as a symbolic way of entrusting them to God’s power to redeem them for good purposes.

**Confess that you’re not okay.** Don’t waste any more time or energy pretending to be fine when you’re really hurting, lonely, confused, or frightened because of your past pain. If your pain was caused by some sin of yours in the past, confess that to God, repent from the sin, and ask Him to forgive you. If your pain was caused by someone else sinning against you, admit to God that you need to forgive the person who hurt you, and ask God to empower you to do so. Ask God and some fellow believers you can trust to help you start the healing process.

**Pursue healing**. Turn to the ultimate Healer, Jesus Christ, to help you heal. Seek Jesus’ guidance for every step of your healing journey, knowing that He specializes in taking what’s broken and restoring it to how it should be.

**Embrace your past.** Accept the reality of what happened in your past that has caused you pain, without denying it or minimizing its effect on your life. Let go of your desire to have life go the way you’d planned it. Surrender your past to God, so He will take it and use it for good purposes. Talk openly about your past with other people who are struggling with similar types of pain, if you sense God leading you to share what you’ve learned with them. Doing so can usher hope into their lives as well as your own.

**Choose trusting God over pleasing God.** Instead of trying to make up for your past failures by working hard with religious rituals you hope will please God, choose to trust God’s promise that He loves and accepts you unconditionally. Rather than trying to reach God through your own efforts, trust in His grace.

**Accept God’s surprising gift of radical grace, and be graceful with others**. Unlike the limited, strings-attached grace that other people (even those in church) offer you, God Himself wants to give you completely unconditional grace – grace you can count on, no matter what you’ve done in the past. That grace is surprising, yet real. God sees past your past sin when He looks at you; He focuses on the fact that you’re one of His beloved children. No matter how others may label you as a second-class person due to your past mistakes, God always sees you as a first-class person. Express your gratitude to God by following His command to forgive the people who have hurt you in the past – relying on God’s help to do so.

**Discover the true meaning of God’s will for you**. You can free yourself from the burden of worrying about aligning your decisions with God’s will when you realize that knowing God’s will is simple. God’s will isn’t about figuring out specific details about your circumstances, such as which job you should pursue or where you should live. Instead, God’s will is simply about giving your best effort to loving God and loving people in any circumstances. Recognize that God has given you the freedom to make your own decisions about specifics in your life, as long as you follow the basic principle of God’s will, which is to choose the most loving course of action while trusting God. Don’t worry that poor decisions you made in the past may have caused you to miss out on God’s will for your life. You can always get back in line with God’s will for your life when you trust God to redeem your mistakes and try to make loving decisions from now on.

**Be grateful**. Choose to be grateful for all the good gifts that God constantly pours into your life. The more you choose gratitude, the less power your painful past will have over you.

**Overcome fear.** You can move past your fear of the unknown and into a hopeful future when you ask the Holy Spirit to renew your mind each day. Then you’ll be able to approach any situation from a faithful perspective. Focus on God’s love, which drives out all fear, and you’ll experience more hope in your life.

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