

Introduction

Your Achin', Breakin' Heart



“Will this ache in my heart ever go away?”

As a professional counselor, I've been asked that question a hundred times in dozens of ways. If you are reading this book, chances are that you (or someone you love) have been asking this question, too. When a romantic relationship ends, the confluence of potentially depressing emotions can wreak havoc in the lives of those involved. This is especially true for the person who didn't want the relationship to end. But for the Christian, there is a very good answer to this oft-asked question.

Yes! Your pain will go away *in time*.

For a Christian who knows and is willing to do what the Bible says, the heartache will be healed. And the more of God's Word a person implements, the sooner the anguish will stop. If you are the one who is hurting, there are specific things you can do to ease the pain and help yourself get back to the way you were before the breakup.

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the best place to begin this process is with prayer. You can pray that God will change your heart. Your prayer may include confession of any self-centeredness or failure to love God, thanksgiving to God for His attributes, and a request that He give you a greater desire to please Him than to get over your sorrow. You can continue to pray this way until you have the assurance that the Lord has answered your prayers. You will know He has done so when you find in your heart a willingness to endure this trial for as long as it takes to produce genuine godliness in your life.

You may have already noticed that this book contains thirty-one very short chapters. After reading it through in its entirety, you may use it as a devotional guide—reading one chapter a day for a month (perhaps the chapter that best relates to whatever issue you were struggling with the day before). Depending on your unique situation and your individual strengths and weaknesses, it may take several months before you can tell that the ache in your heart is starting to diminish. Reading through this book devotionally (every day) for at least two or three months will keep before you those things you can do (as well as those things you should not do) to help you lose those lamentable “lovin’ feelings” as quickly and righteously as possible.

“Righteously?”

That’s right! You could battle your sorrow in sinful ways (such as constantly reminding yourself what a “turkey” your former sweetheart is),¹ but you would only end up in more misery and displease God in the process. You see, sin, which is thinking or acting independently of God, results in both temporal and eternal *misery*. You may feel pretty miserable right now, but if you don’t respond biblically to the breakup, you will face another kind of misery later in life. If you do this God’s way, you won’t have to resort to methods that are displeasing to God. If you are a Christian, you can do it. The

INTRODUCTION

Bible will show you how, the Holy Spirit will lead you, and this book will encourage you along the way.

You will learn in the pages ahead how to deal with the residual romantic feelings you may be carrying as a result of the breakup as well as other painful emotions that may be preventing you from getting on with your life. May God bless you as you respond to your trial by depending on His Spirit and His Word.

Special Instructions

If you are reading this book to help overcome romantic feelings for someone to whom you were married, or from whom you are presently separated, please turn immediately to Appendix A to receive some special instructions and guidelines for using this book.

If you are reading this book because you are attempting to overcome romantic feelings for someone with whom you've had an adulterous affair, please turn to Appendix B to receive special instructions and guidelines for using this book.

1

How Can I Mend My Broken Heart?

*The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways.
—Proverbs 14:14*



Charlie's radio alarm clock went off at 6:00 A.M. The easy-listening station began playing a series of love songs. As was his habit, Charlie stayed in bed for 30 minutes or so, allowing the elevator music to slowly awaken him. But today something was different. For one thing, he couldn't help but notice how so many of the songs were about the breakup of relationships. He also noticed how many of his favorite songs had lyrics promoting selfish, feeling-oriented, idolatrous views of love.¹ The longer he lay in bed, the more depressed he became. You see, Brenda, the girl Charlie deeply loved, had dumped him the night before. She gave no reason for the breakup other than telling him that her feelings had been slowly diminishing over the past several weeks.

Charlie was devastated. "But I love her," he reminded himself as the music played. "I was going to ask her to marry me. How

could she do this to me? How will I ever get along without her? How will I ever get over her?”

These mornings of misery continued for days. Sometimes Charlie stayed in bed for over an hour, tormenting himself with songs that reminded him of Brenda. Finally, he realized that the sooner he got out of bed and began putting his mind on other things, the faster his daybreak depression would subside. Small as it seemed, this was the first big step in Charlie’s walk from sorrow to freedom.

We live in a world that glorifies romance more than it glorifies the God who created man and woman with the capacity to enjoy romantic relationships. This worshiping the creature rather than the Creator produces misery. Of course, not all sorrow is the result of our sin. Grief and other emotions commonly associated with a breakup, however, can become overly intense if we do not worship God as the Bible says we should.

Scripture has much to say about emotions such as grief, loneliness, rejection, anger, bitterness, guilt, and jealousy. It reveals what it takes to change these feelings, what you can do to keep them from paralyzing you, and how you can turn them around in the days ahead. The most direct way to do this is to learn how to control your thoughts and behavior.

Proverbs 14:14 warns us of the danger associated with allowing our hearts to draw back from God’s resources. “The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways.” If you allow yourself to be consoled with unbiblical thoughts, you will be filled with your own ways—that is, your misery will increase. You must depend on God’s solutions (and resources) to get you through this trial. Look at the counsel given in Isaiah 55:6–9.

Seek the LORD while He may be found,
Call upon Him while He is near.
Let the wicked forsake his way,
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;
Let him return to the LORD,

HOW CAN I MEND MY BROKEN HEART?

And He will have mercy on him;
And to our God,
For He will abundantly pardon.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD.
“For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.”

Your ways and your *thoughts* must become God’s ways and God’s thoughts. In order to respond to this situation in godly ways, you need to examine your thoughts and motives so that you can be “transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2).

The problem with most of us is that we listen to ourselves rather than talk to ourselves. When we go through trials, it is easier to just put our minds in neutral and listen passively to our hearts. How about you? Are you a listener or a talker? Here is a little test you can take to help answer that question.

Listed below are twenty statements representing thought patterns that are bound to produce misery in the life of someone who is experiencing the hurts of a broken relationship. After each sentence, write the number that best corresponds to how frequently the statement is true of you.

ROMANTIC THOUGHT PATTERN INVENTORY

RATING SCALE	POINTS
Never (or Hardly Ever)	5
Seldom	4
Sometimes	3
Frequently	2
Always (or Almost Always)	1

HOW CAN I MEND MY BROKEN HEART?

1. When thinking about the future, I imagine how miserable I will be without the companionship of my ex² rather than imagining how God is going to cause all things to work together for my good. _____
2. I allow myself to fantasize about things I know will probably never materialize. _____
3. I spend more time thinking about my ex than about God, His Word, or delights of eternal significance. _____
4. I dwell on or exaggerate the shortcomings of my ex to remind myself of how glad I should be that I am rid of him. _____
5. I give in to depression rather than trying to fight it. _____
6. I put the worst possible interpretation on the actions of my ex. _____
7. I struggle with vain regrets (looking at the past in such a way that it keeps me from living biblically, responsively, and productively in the present). _____
8. I wish I were someone else or someplace else. _____
9. I feel guilty because I know I've not acknowledged or sought forgiveness for my own sins that contributed to the breakdown of the relationship. _____

I have thought or said the following:

10. "It will be a long time before I can forgive my ex." _____
11. "I hope someday somebody does to her what she did to me." _____
12. "I can't adjust to being single again." _____

HOW CAN I MEND MY BROKEN HEART?

- 13. "I'm a total failure." _____
- 14. "The loneliness is more than I can stand." _____
- 15. "The embarrassment is more than I can stand." _____
- 16. "The rejection is more than I can stand." _____
- 17. "All men (women) are alike." _____
- 18. "I can't believe God is doing this to me again!" _____
- 19. "Life isn't worth living anymore." _____
- 20. "I'll never be able to face my family and
friends again." _____

Total Points _____

How did you do? The closer your score is to 100, the more you are thinking biblically about the breakup of your relationship. Let me suggest that you take this test every thirty days over the next few months to monitor your progress. If you scored lower than 75, you may want to read one chapter of this book daily for several months until you can raise your score to at least that level.

So what are you doing with your thought life these days? Are you spending too much time allowing your mind to dwell on the past or worrying about the future rather than focusing your thoughts on what God has given you to do today? Are you listening to the lies that your flesh tempts you to believe, or do you speak the truth in your heart, knowing that God has given you all the resources necessary to "fall out of love" biblically? If you do the former, you are in for extended periods of unnecessary heartache. If you do the latter, you can be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

You will find in the pages ahead practical biblical insight that will not only help you improve your test score but, more importantly, draw you closer to God as you deal with the hurt of your broken relationship.