

Reset Your Life: Forgive Yourself Study Guide

I'm being reflective today. I'm thinking back over the last year, but also back over my life. It's a process I go through every once in awhile especially around the end of the year. In essence I allow God to help me reset my life in any way He wishes.

Evaluation is good. It helps us to put the past where it belongs. In the past. The past has lots of lessons for us, though, and helps us on our journey. So even though, God is showing me that the past is gone and I don't need to stay in a perpetual state of despair over what feels like many wasted years of my life, the past holds keys to why I react in certain ways when various situations come up in my life.

I don't have to beat myself up over my reactions, such as running to food when I get stressed, overwhelmed or just downright mad at myself, situations or others. I just need to ask God why have I reacted this way? When is the first time I learned to react this way? And then forgive the person involved in that situation, renounce the lie that God will treat me that way and hear His truth.

However, one big thing I've learned on my journey is that in many cases the person I need to forgive is myself. I have been and still can be my own worst enemy. Forgiving myself is MUCH harder than forgiving others.

I am much more able to forgive others than I am myself. I understand that many times how I perceive things is not what they meant at all. I especially am aware of this now.

When I was extremely large I was very angry with myself. I angry with myself for letting me get to the shape I was in. I was angry with myself for being what I considered a fat blob. My weight felt like this huge, looming monster in my life. If my weight was under control I was sure everything would be perfect in my life.

I was mad at me and I figured everyone else must be too. So anytime I felt the least bit of what I thought was someone turning their back on me, I was sure it was because I was fat. Fat defined me. When I thought about who I was, the only adjective I could come up with was FAT! So I figured that's what others thought about me too.

Who is Teresa? She is the fat lady that sits on the back row of the church, that tries to blend it and not call attention to herself.

I am reminded every Christmas of how I approached the most glorious season of the year. I tried to buy everyone's affection and when I didn't get the same back in return, I felt it was because I was fat and they didn't love me and it would make me angry, so angry I'd want to go eat something.

The problem was not with them, it was with me. This year I have been working on turning a corner about that. I decided I didn't care if I got gifts that I wanted or not, I would appreciate everything and anything I got.

I also know a lot of my feelings regarding Christmas, or any holiday and birthdays, are carryovers from being extremely large. The tagline on Sweet Grace is how I lost 250 Pounds and stopped trying to earn God's favor. I should add and everyone else's, too.

When I weighed 430 pounds, I felt I was not enough. So, I tried to buy love and affection by gifts I gave, foods I made, deeds I did for everyone. I tried to earn God's favor by volunteering everywhere, writing stories, editing publications, doing everything I could with my gifts of writing, design and publications. I did it because I felt in and of myself I was not worth anything. So I had to do these things to matter.

I'm sensing some of you are feeling the same thing. You feel you aren't worth anything. You feel you have to be always giving and have a hard time receiving even when people give you things. And when people do give you things you are miffed that they don't know you well enough to give something that matters.

You are always trying to appear to be more than your weight. You are trying to make up for what you feel is an obvious flaw to everyone around you.

Let me just encourage you today. God says you are enough, just like you are.

God knew you before you were born. He actually planned out who you are today.

Psalm 139:13-16 NLT—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—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.

And if He made you, who are you to scream against what HE created! I love this passage from Romans 9 that says that very thing. I have felt especially in the past that I am always questioning God about why He made me the way I am.

Romans 9:20-24 NLT— “Who are you, a mere human being, to argue with God? Should the thing that was created say to the one who created it, “Why have you made me like this?” When a potter makes jars out of clay, doesn't he have a right to use the same lump of clay to make one jar for decoration and another to throw garbage into? In the same way, even though God has the right to show his anger and his power, he is very patient with those on whom his anger falls, who are destined for destruction. He does this to make the riches of his glory shine even

brighter on those to whom he shows mercy, who were prepared in advance for glory. And we are among those whom he selected, both from the Jews and from the Gentiles.”

Friends, here’s the beauty of that passage. We are the jars destined to be decorated! We are the ones in whom His glory will shine even brighter!

Think about this, we have to be broken for the light to shine. IF we were ordinary, it would not be apparent that His light is shining through us. We have a broken metabolism, right? That means it gives God even more of a chance to shine through us.

So when people ask you how you lost weight you can say I did it with the strength and power of God working through my broken vessel.

God loves to put us on display. Not for our aggrandizement as a display of what His grace-power can do working through brokenness.

Ephesians 2:7 TPT—“Throughout the coming ages we will be the visible display of the infinite, limitless riches of His grace and kindness which was showered upon us in Jesus Christ.”

The truth is we are powerless within ourselves, but powerful when we allow His grace-strength to operate through us. Two I am statements which seem contradictory, but both are true. In our human frailty we are weak. But plug us into the Power Source and we can do anything.

2 Cor. 12:9 MSG—“My grace is enough. It’s all you need. My strength comes into its own in your weakness.

Phil 4:13 TPT—“I find the strength of Christ’s explosive power infuses me to conquer ANY difficulty.”

How does this work? We have to want to throw off the bondages of our past and go forward into the future he has for us.

Galatians 5:1 TPT—“The Anointed One has set us free not partially, but wonderfully and completely free. We must always cherish this truth and stubbornly refuse to go back to the bondages of our past.”

Satan will always want to pull us back to the bondages of our past and we will always be prone to go back there because it’s what we know. It’s the rut we fall into naturally. Just like my angst over Christmas presents even though I was trying to change my habits. I was attempting to stop focusing on quantity of gifts and begin focusing on the purpose and meaning behind the gifts.

Still even in this I had programmed myself for so many years to feel that if I didn't get a lot of gifts that meant people didn't care.

I had to confront a lot of perceptions and programming from my past that said those same things to me. We all have Christmases we remember as kids where we were the center of attention. Part of me longed for that again. So I had to forgive my grandmother and mother for instilling those feelings in me. I also had to forgive myself for wanting to instill those same things in my children, who both have resisted that and have instead focused on what would really make others happy.

My daughter knows one thing that makes me happy is words of affirmation. My son and husband know that it is presents that they really put thought into.

Instead I have focused on quantity of things. That is really not what brings me happiness. I don't even know myself well enough.

God though knows us completely and chose us.

1 Thess. 1:4 MSG—"It is clear to us, friends, that God not only loves you very much but also has put his hand on you for something special."

Ephesians 2:10 TPT—"We have become His poetry, a recreated people who will fulfill the destiny He has given each of us for we are joined to Jesus, the Anointed One. Even before we were born He planned in advance our destiny and the good works we would do to fulfill it."

The truth is, though, in order to reach that destiny, as a loving father he has to prepare us to live that destiny.

Right now, that's what He's doing in our lives. He's disciplining us, Pruning us and Teaching us to be His so He can help us to stand in order step into our destiny.

Disciplines:

Hebrews 12:6-11 NLT—"For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child." As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever? For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But

afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.”

Prunes:

John 15:1-5 NLT—“I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. **For apart from me you can do nothing.**”

Teaches:

2 Timothy 3:16 NLT—“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 corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.”

Helps Us Stand

We don’t have to worry about getting everything just right though.

God is bringing us into alignment with who He is and what He wants us to be. We just need to cooperate with His work in our lives.

Jude 24-25 NLT—“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, *be* glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

From 1988 to 2001 I worked as editor and publisher of a regional Christian newspaper called Good News Journal. My friend and I made no money and worked full time making this dream a reality.

During this time God gave me a scripture I claimed as my own. I made several plaques with the scripture on it and one still hangs in my living room today. This was MY life verse for that season.

Isaiah 61:1 NIV—“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.”

I felt like God had given me this verse and told me He had anointed ME to publish the good news. One translation even uses the words “the Lord has anointed me to publish the Good News.”

Recently I was listening to a message where the speaker used this verse. As soon as the verse started to be read I thought, “there’s my verse.” The next thing I can remember is God speaking to me. It was a combination of teaching, disciplining and pruning all in one moment.

“You do know that verse is about My Son, not you, right? Through you He published the good news, that’s true. You were an instrument, but that’s not the main message I was trying to show you all those years ago. You had concentrated on what YOU were doing. I wanted you to concentrate on what I was wanting to do in you.

“You were broken. You needed me to come and fix you, bind you up. First though you needed to realize you were broken and you refused.

“You were captive. You needed to be set free. First though you needed to realize you were captive to the foods you craved, but you would not give them up.

“You were in prison. You needed to be released. First, though, you had to acknowledge the small, defined space you had made for yourself. My grace was the key to set you free. You had it all along, but you just wouldn’t use it.”

I repented of making myself into a sort of god. I looked back over my life and realized I had done that often by giving myself permission to eat whatever I wanted whenever I wanted.

I realized there is a progression to what God does in our lives. I couldn’t understand the full ramifications of that Scripture back when I edited Good News Journal. God allowed me to have partial revelation in order to continue doing the job He had called me to do then.

I couldn’t wrap my brain around being broken, captive and in prison. I thought those categories were for drug addicts, rapists and murderers.

Today I’m far enough along on my journey to understand overeating is a sin. Eating what I want when I want it, is not denying myself (Luke 9:23) but telling myself I deserve it, then putting my foot down like a stubborn 3-year old and demanding my candy. Yet I’m no longer 3. I’m 63. Such behavior is no longer endearing, it’s ridiculous.

I also understand that the same grace He gave me when I was seven years old and invited Him into my heart, is active and alive in my life today. Only it has now

grown and morphed into a powerhouse of strength in my life allowing me to conquer EVERY DIFFICULTY.

I am on a fellow sojourner on this journey of continual learning at the feet of Jesus. What about you? Where are you on the journey? What stage are you in? What is God doing in your life?

Action Steps:

Are you ready to allow God to hit reset on your life? Are you ready for Him to direct you, redirect you, guide you, prune you, discipline you, teach you? If not, what is holding you back? If yes, ask God what do you want me to do different? Focus on immediate goals right now. What stop-start is He asking you to continue or to start?