



Let the Past Be the Past

Past and future veil God from our sight; let them both be burned up with fire.—Rumi, 13th Century Persian Poet

Life can give us such precious moments—a wedding day, closing on a first-home purchase, the birth of a child, a high school or college graduation—all of these events can remain with us as some of the best memories we experience in life.

Life can also present us with such difficulty and heartache at times—a bitter and contentious divorce, a financial mishap, parenting missteps which may have led to strained relationships with our children, health challenges and accidents—these types of events can reside with us, as well, and do so as some of the most difficult situations we may be forced to face.

I'm thinking of my dear friend, Pete. Pete fell in love with and married a great gal from his Midwestern hometown and began a family not long thereafter. Pete and Emily (I've changed their names for the sake of privacy) raised two children through both a high school and a college graduation. Pete and Emily "married both children off" to spouses from families they knew well, and became grandparents within a few years. While one of their children thrived in both personal and professional life, the other child battled with years of drug addiction and an eventual drug overdose.

As one might imagine, Pete and Emily struggled greatly with what had happened to their second child. An endless torrent of regrets,

soul-searching, second-guessing, torturous *if only* and *should-a, could-a, would-a* scenarios haunted them continually. *Where did we go wrong? What should we have done differently?* they often asked themselves. One child had done extremely well within the love and support of their family, home environment and parenting style. The other child had not. Pete and Emily were at a total loss.

Letting the past be the past means we exercise a choice. We can choose to remember... our losses without remaining stuck in the pain of them.

Recovery begins the second we let go of all hopes for a better past.
—12-Step Teaching and Practice

How many of us have faced one, if not more of life's most challenging events/circumstances? How many of us have felt stuck in the pain of our past? If we've lived long enough, we all have.

As it turns out, Pete and Emily learned firsthand that they were not alone in the pain of their loss. Within the community of a local support group, Pete and Emily learned how to work through the pain of their loss.

They saw how the endless cycles of soul-searching, second-guessing, regret and *if only* thought processes only made their recovery more difficult. One day at a time, Pete and Emily experienced how to feel their loss fully, without remaining stuck in it—they discovered how to *let the past be the past*.

No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.
—Luke 9:62, NIV

Jesus gives us perspective on how the past can impact our lives. As I read his words in this passage, I don't read them as saying that we shouldn't remember our past or the losses and difficulties therein. Of course, we should and we do. It's only human to do so, and even to memorialize some of our losses. Rather, I read Jesus' words as helpful advice. I read his words as guidance not to live continually with a *looking back* focus, staying painfully stuck in the challenges we've faced.

As we know, life is just life. What happens, happens. Sadly, we don't have as much control over our lives as we'd like to believe we do.

Letting the past be the past means we exercise a choice. We can choose to remember, to honor and even memorialize our losses, without remaining stuck in the pain of them.

Despite the difficulties of our past, Jesus is our present comfort. He is our present and future hope. Although a preoccupation with the past, *looking back*, can sometimes veil us from what Christ in us is doing in our lives, we can be assured.

Christ lives his resurrection life within us and helps us to *let the past be the past*. Christ gives us the courage to look forward, to look to him. When we do stay in touch and keep up with what is happening around us, we can do so from our rest in him. □

—Ed Dunn