

# Beyond Betrayal

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Your friend tells lies about you. Your spouse loves someone else. Your children don't remember your birthday. A boss insults you in front of your colleagues. You lose your home, your car, and your respect when a business venture fails—and your best friend tells you it's your fault. Your church leaves you out—again. Betrayal can occur in hundreds of ways and will either define the rest of life or become a superb opportunity to learn and grow. Which will you choose?

## Specific Steps to Move Forward after Betrayal

1. **Ask God for help---and keep focusing on God**, not the person, problem, or concern. *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way* (Psalm 139:23-24, NASU).
2. **Listen to your body**. When Queen Jezebel threatened to kill Elijah, he was *afraid and arose and ran for his life* (see 1 Kings 19). God provided rest, food, and peace when Elijah was so depressed he wanted to die. We, too, can pause and allow God to supply our specific needs. In *peace [and with a tranquil heart] I will both lie down and sleep, for You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety and confident trust* (Psalm 4:8, AMP).
3. Allow yourself to **feel the pain but don't let it define you—accept God's loving comfort instead**. Jesus said, *Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted* (Matthew 5:4, NIV). Set aside time to weep, to feel your loss—then immediately allow yourself to receive God's calm.
4. **Practice physical, mental, or soothing grounding exercises** to move from betrayal's trauma into the present. Grounding/anchoring exercises enable you to continually, repeatedly move your mind and body into your PNS (parasympathetic nervous system) any time you feel stressed, overwhelmed, anxious, depressed, discouraged, fearful, or angry, and consciously choose new emotions—such as peace, gratitude, hope or joy.

**Physical grounding** such as diaphragmatic breathing or pressing your feet into the floor—noticing how it feels— or “4-D grounding” [moving your body in four directions] can be repeated as often as necessary.

Using your mind via **mental grounding** helps you be fully present now instead of embroiled in past hurt. A few mental grounding exercises include counting backward by 5s from 100; noticing shapes where you are; recalling favorite vacations, sports, or pets.

**Soothing grounding** involves changing your self-talk. Instead of saying, “I can't make it,” or “I can't believe this happened,” you could remind yourself of God's promises of peace, such as Isaiah 26:3: *You will keep in perfect and constant peace the one whose mind is steadfast [that is, committed and focused on You—in both inclination and character], because he trusts and takes refuge in You [with hope and confident expectation]*. Soothing grounding can be as basic as intentionally choosing to be grateful for God's promises, new every morning. As Lamentations 3:21-23 explains, *but this I call to mind, therefore I have hope. It is because of the LORD'S lovingkindnesses that we are not consumed, because His [tender] compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great and beyond measure is Your faithfulness.*



5. Do a **reality check**. Ephesians 4:22b (NASB) says the old self is *being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit*. When anyone disappoints or betrays us, we can recognize that's how the *old self* operates. When we fail, we can recognize failure as an "event, not a person" (Zig Ziglar) and *lay aside the old self* (v. 22a) and *be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth* (v. 23-24). **Find true friends** who will stand with you and point you to Jesus amid agonizing betrayal.
6. **Forgive**: it's physiologically impossible to forget trauma, because memories associated with it are stored in both our brains and bodies. However, you can discover freedom from agonizing betrayal by taking the offender off your "hook" and putting him or her on God's "hook." Dr. Fred Luskin defines forgiveness as "the feeling of peace that emerges as you take your hurt less personally, take responsibility for how you feel, and become a hero instead of a victim in the story you tell...Forgiveness does not change the past, but it changes the present." We can forgive even when we don't feel like doing so. Jesus tells us to forgive *just as God in Christ also forgave you* (see Ephesians 4:32). Forgiveness is a transaction, not a process or a feeling; the feelings of forgiveness follow the choice to obey God.

"What plays on the screen of our mind is like a TV picture that we control with a remote...anyone can tune in to a grievance or choose to switch to the forgiveness channel. Ask yourself, 'What is playing on my set today?' Is your remote tuning in to channels that will help you feel good?" (Fred Luskin).

7. **Expect God** to give you hope, joy, and peace. Romans 15:13 says, *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope*. Jeremiah (the weeping prophet) describes God's promise: *For I know the plans that I have for you, says the LORD, thoughts and plans for welfare and peace and not for evil, to give you hope in your final outcome. Then you will call upon Me, and you will come and pray to Me, and I will hear and heed you* (Jeremiah 29:11-12, AMP). God will NEVER betray you.

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Ephesians 4:26, 27 shows us how to let go of potentially harmful emotions and continually move forward: *In your anger do not sin: do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold*. It's OK to initially become angry when we're hurt; it indicates something is wrong. However, remaining angry will damage our lives if we let it define us and become bitter, hold grudges, seek vengeance, etc.

We can trust God rather than blaming Him for what people have done. God is always faithful, true, and kind. And He desires for us *to do what is fair and just to your neighbor, be compassionate and loyal in your love, and don't take yourself too seriously—take God seriously* (Micah 6:8b, MSG).

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To discover effective tools for life and growth, read or listen to *Core Healing from Trauma*, a biblical counseling workbook for individuals or groups, available on Amazon (<https://cutt.ly/occdejH>). You can also watch "Strengthening Your Core," a 12-week video series on YouTube at <https://cutt.ly/Or6EiiW>. **For more information on what forgiveness is—and isn't**—and how it frees you to enjoy life again—please see chapters six and seven of *Core Healing from Trauma*.