

# Getting Real

by Janet Wheeler

Brokenness and wounds manifest themselves in many ways in our lives . . . anger, bitterness, self-pity, blame, low self-esteem, an inability to get close to people, feeling the need to be perfect, as well as excesses and addictions of various kinds.

Often we have been led to believe that these “flaws” are just the way we were made. We think that they are simply our personal thorns in the flesh—the handicaps we are doomed to carry around with us for the rest of our lives. These thoughts leave us with a sense of resignation and hopelessness.

If we could roll back time, however, we would realize that we weren't always like this. When we were first born we were open and free and transparent. We were able to ask for what we needed, we gave love with no strings attached, we trusted without reservation. We were whole, healthy and completely OK just being ourselves.

But as disappointments, trauma or misunderstandings came into our lives, we made the decision, consciously or unconsciously, that it wasn't safe to be that vulnerable. We realized that we could (and did) get hurt, so we began walling off and protecting parts of ourselves. Somewhere inside us, we believed that if we could just hide our vulnerable areas and the parts we deemed unacceptable, we could somehow keep from ever being hurt again.

In your own life you may have experienced a single traumatic event that was so intense, and at such a young age that you totally closed off and denied a part of yourself—like your feelings, your needs, or your gender identity. Or there may have been a series of events that slowly changed you bit by bit. No matter how it played out for you, the end result was still the same. To survive and feel safe you, like everyone else, had to find a way to escape the pain that life dealt you.

Scared and ashamed that we allowed ourselves to be so vulnerable, we learn to hide our wounds, and the keys to freedom and healing that they hold, deep within ourselves. We often isolate ourselves from people or even fear them. Sometimes we succumb to co-dependent or addictive behaviors. Most of the time we aren't even aware of what we're doing. Our initial issues quickly become so compounded by our hurt and hiding that it becomes impossible to even name the original source of our wounds

## **Retracing our steps**

The protections we put into place eventually begin to get in the way of living a satisfying life. We end up driven and alone. We yearn to know the freedom that others seem to be enjoying, but we're afraid or unsure of just how to get there.

The idea of having to change is scary in itself, but when the pain of staying where we are becomes greater than the pain we believe will come from changing, we often begin to search for the reasons for our behavior and beliefs. The answers seldom come instantaneously, but most often through a series of awarenesses from God. Each new awareness brings us a bit closer to being able to name the true source of our pain.



When we ask God to reveal the key to restoring our true selves—the one that could trust and love and express our needs freely—he speaks to us in a variety of ways

that may include:

- Other people's struggles and victories
- His Word and other books, songs, & teachings
- Our own thoughts/experiences
- The support & encouragement of safe people

Eventually, if we are persistent, this process will lead us to the key to our healing. When we can finally name the source of our original pain, we are well on our way.

## **Experiencing true freedom**

It is important to realize that these awarenesses are not the end of our journey. Cognitive understanding, behavior modification or willpower are never effective solutions for the long haul. It's only when we bring the wounds we have uncovered to Jesus and ask Him to cleanse them with His living water that we can become free of the infection that has been festering within us and keeping us from enjoying the freedom that God desires for each of one of us.

*Courtesy of Life More Abundant Network, a Christ-centered ministry based in Bellingham, WA ministering to individuals and families struggling with compulsive sexual behaviors.*

*For more information about Life More Abundant Network, visit our website at [www.lifemoreabundant.net](http://www.lifemoreabundant.net)*

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***Only God can heal  
our deepest wounds and  
restore our true selves.***

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