

*HEALING FROM THE PAIN  
OF SEXUAL ABUSE...  
ONE STONE AT A TIME*



*by Dr. Alaine Pakkala*

## *INTRODUCTION*

Well hello there, I'm so glad you are here. I'm Dr. Elaine and I am looking forward to our time together. This is a safe and quiet space to begin or to continue healing from the pain of sexual abuse.

Sometimes, the weight of our abuse can feel like a pile of stones - maybe a pile that has been crushing our heart, mind and body for a very long time. It is heavy, but the thought of trying to move it is just overwhelming.

We don't want the pile of stones there, but we've learned to live with them. Sometimes, the stones may shift around inside of us, moving unexpectedly and creating new pain. Each one has its own weight and shape and edges and impact.

*What if we had the opportunity to take the stones away from the pile, just one at a time? How would that feel?*

Each of the stones we talk about here will represent one aspect of our healing. You might not need to address each stone - remember, this is your story and you can choose.

Let's begin by inviting the Good Shepherd to show us what issues are most important for us to look at. Why would we do that? Because He is the only one who is big enough to carry our pain for us. When He is here with us, we can experience His incredible comfort. *When we cry, he cries with us.*

We may need to ask the Lord to separate the pieces of this pain and show us which piece He wants us to focus on first. Why don't you take a moment to talk with Him and tell him anything you want him to know...

## *THE STONE OF SECRECY*

Don't you hate having to whisper? In most cases, our voice was robbed from us. Before we can look at any of our other stones, we need to realize that the fear of saying anything still may be a powerful silencer in our lives.

One of the clearest things in the Bible is the contrast between the real God, the Good Shepherd, and the false god, satan, - the biggest difference is in how they work ... satan does things in secret and God does things out in the open, in the light. Actually, one of satans' tools or weapons is in the hiding of things, the covering over of things, the hiding of the pain.

*1 John 1:5-6 "This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all."*

*Acts 26:18 ". . .to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of satan to God."*

We don't have to keep the secret anymore - by God's power, we can bring it out into the light in appropriate ways. Let's break the silence by saying "I don't have to keep the secret anymore" – can you say that out loud right now?

Yay – you did it!

For some of us, we might need to just repeat that truth to ourselves when we feel like we'll be hurt if we tell; "It's different now! I don't have to keep the secret anymore!"

## *THE STONE OF SHAME*

Sometimes we carry lots of shame. How much shame do you live with? What is shame anyway?

Shame is like a blanket covering over the whole event. Shame, just like ice cream, comes in many flavors; it can be disgrace, embarrassment, humiliation, self-consciousness, uncomfortableness.

One of the words that is involved in this stone of our pain is the word nakedness. For some of us, that word might be its own powerful, sharp stone of pain. You probably know that Christ Himself experienced nakedness on the cross. That's why it says in Hebrews 12: 2-3

*“fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”*

Let's pause now and write a list starting with *“I am ashamed that. . .”*

One of the things that I like to do when I make a list like this, is to hold it up to God, and to ask Him “look, what do you think about this?” Shall we do that now?

## *THE STONE OF GUILT*

Usually, shame grows out of the soil of guilt; that's our next rock. This aspect of how our abuse scarred us is one of the most confusing because we were made to feel that everything that was happening was our fault.

That idea, that we were responsible, is what I call false guilt. I also use the word embedded guilt because of how deep guilt goes down into the very middle of us. It is very, very common for our perpetrators to tell us it was our fault, or to make up some twisted reason for why they had to abuse us.

One of the things about guilt is that it likes to hide. We don't realize that we are pushing a wheelbarrow full of guilt that affects many things in our life.

A good indicator that we are operating based on guilt is that later in our lives we begin to become overly responsible, not only for ourselves but also for those around us. This might also show up in a real fear or maybe even terror of making a mistake – needing to be perfect at everything. If we find that happening, we may want to ask the Good Shepherd if there is false guilt driving our super sense of responsibility or perfectionism.

One of the names of satan is the accuser. He is very good at taking places of pain in us whether they are places of false guilt or other stones, and constantly running sentences through our mind, like “this is your fault, you are to blame, you made a mistake, you are guilty.”

What should we do when that happens? I like to visualize holding a mirror up in front of me and I reflect the accusations up to the Lord - so He sees them. Then I tell satan, “You'll have to talk to the Good Shepherd about that. It's already been settled!” That usually helps me shut down the accuser.

*Have you been hearing some of those accusations? Would you like to take a moment now to write them down and show them to the Lord?*

## *THE STONE OF PAIN*

We may be dealing with two types of pain --one being emotional pain and the other being physical pain. Some of us might not be ready to look closely at this stone, but, let's let the Good Shepherd be in charge of where we go.

Part of the emotional pain we suffered and may be still suffering is what I call brain pain. What I mean is, that for years, we may have dissociated the memory of the awfulness that happened to us, something happened in our brain - in order to survive we tucked the pain away where we don't have to feel it or think about it.

Part of healing is giving our pain a chance to speak again. A picture that might help us is the picture of a balloon with a lot of air inside (and the air is the pain). You get to hold the balloon and let out a little air at a time – we can choose how much pain to allow ourselves to feel.

We can let that pain out and show it to the Good Shepherd and ask Him what He thinks about it. Sometimes even saying the two words to him “I hurt” can start the healing process.

There is another category of pain, and that is the actual physical pain that our abuse caused. Sometimes as we find healing for emotional pain, it can include healing in the area of physical pain as well. Sometimes we go to doctor after doctor looking for answers and finding none. Just like our emotional pain can be locked away, our physical pain can sometimes be hidden.

The first step to find help for the physical pain is also to show it to the Good Shepherd. Sometimes just lifting up a specific physical pain to him and saying, “Look.” We do have a God who heals, but sometimes we won't see that healing until we go to be with Him.

*Let's take some time now to talk to the Good Shepherd about the pain. It is okay to show Him the places that are hurting.*

## *THE STONE OF GRIEF*

Human beings are made to respond with grief when they have horrific loss. We need to grieve over so many things: grieving about a lost childhood, grieving about the fact that our parents didn't protect us, grieving for the physical pain we still carry in our bodies, grieving the loss of family relationships, grieving over our lost innocence.

For some of us, our abuse resulted in pregnancy, and for us, we experience a unique type of grief. If that is your story, please remember we have a video, titled "Welcoming the Little Ones," made just for you. Let's talk more together about this in that video.

Often we don't give ourselves a chance to grieve. At times, even those who care about us, may not see or understand our need for sadness, grief and tears. It is okay if you can't cry right now, but at the right time you will cry.

Can you ask the Good Shepherd to help you to write down a list of the losses you have experienced?

## *THE STONE OF VULNERABILITY*

Our next stone is vulnerability. It is that idea of never feeling safe. When we never feel safe, we tend to build up subtle, or not so subtle, what I call “*structures of self-protection*”.

The idea behind this might be something like “I can’t trust anyone – not even God, it is all up to me.” When we live in that idea, we become very independent and can keep people at a distance, even people that we want to be close to.

I’m not talking here about the good ways we appropriately protect ourselves in a wise way; I’m talking about the places of self-protection that have a bit of the ashes and soot of the anger associated with the feeling, “*Well, God didn’t protect me, and nobody else protected me so I’m going to do it!!*” You might call it anger with a “tude”!!

Learning how to trust God is a process and the more we move forward in that process, the less we feel we need our own weapons of self-protection. What would happen if you sat down across from the Good Shepherd – what would He say to you? What would you say back to Him?

If that idea feels too scary, maybe you can peek at Him from around the corner and start to observe what He is really like. Then, when you are ready you can come sit down together. Would you like to do that now? Let’s take a minute and connect with him...



## *THE STONE OF FEAR*

I love the verses in Rom 8:35-39 in the Living Bible version:

*“Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.*

*And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Let's talk about fear. It is very natural and normal after a traumatic situation to deal with fear. We were fearful during the events, as well as when we think about them. We can also have fears now in day to day life.

Fear is one of the laser weapons that satan uses to keep us stuck. So, how do we diminish the recurring fears?

So many times, just putting a name on our fears, or being able to tell the Good Shepherd what we are specifically afraid of, begins to take the bullets out of satan's gun in the places where he is trying to use fear to keep us in bondage.

Why don't we make a list that begins: “I was afraid that...” (talking about when it happened), “I am afraid that. . .” (related to what we're dealing with now).

If a list feels too hard, you might just write down the biggest fear and show it to the Good Shepherd.

## *THE STONE OF UNSPEAKABLE WICKEDNESS*

We just talked about the ways our trauma was so fear filled. There are some memories and events that are too difficult to even put into words. Sometimes I call this “unspeakable wickedness or UW for short.”

I think that many times, one of the reasons that this aspect of healing is hard to look at is that it includes this element of wickedness by the perpetrators that is so horrific, so like a personal holocaust, that it is hard to look at. I understand.

We don't need to relive the past, or concentrate on the specific details. Sometimes it is just enough to acknowledge the wickedness. We can do this by putting a name to it and showing it to the Good Shepherd.

Simply write down and show him the letters “UW”. Those letters can represent whatever mind pictures of unspeakable wickedness we want to show to Him. He already knows because He saw, but we can lift it up to the Good Shepherd. Shall we do that now?

I hope that was helpful to you. Once when I was telling Him that the people around me didn't understand, He asked me a question: “Is it enough that I know?” That was a powerful release of frustration for me as I realized that, yes, it was enough that He knew.

It reminds me of Job's friends, who, when they saw his situation “sat down appalled” as the Bible says. God is appalled, if we can say it that way, at what happened to us and He promises that there will be justice.

I like the phrase “no one got away with anything.” *Don't lose heart.*

## *THE STONE OF RAGE*

When we start thinking about the horrific wickedness that we experienced, one of the feelings that might come is rage. (Each of us is at a different place in our healing, and we want Him to be in charge of how fast we go as we look at these things.)

For me, the Lord separated my human, appropriate anger over what had happened, from the rage that satan had added to it. I knew the difference somehow because my emotions that came from the rage wanted to murder the people who hurt me. Have you ever thought about this before?

We can and should be as livid as God is about the evil that we suffered from. But, when we shift into thoughts of murderous revenge, it might be that, satan, who is known as the murderer, has added to our God-given emotional response.

There might be some spiritual warfare connected with this issue. The best way to separate these feelings is through prayer. Something like: *“Lord, I want to be livid about what makes you livid, but I don’t want to make room for satan’s hatred. Lord, I ask you to show me the difference. I separate the rage of the enemy from my God given anger over what was done. I embrace the anger but I refuse the rage.”*

## *THE STONE OF JUSTICE*

I like the five words in Revelation that talk about God's justice. It says "God has appointed a day." That means no one got away with anything. There are very strong words in the scripture about God's justice – He says "vengeance is mine."

Sometimes we can get stuck in our healing when we take justice into our own hands. We might want to hold onto bitterness and anger because if we let those emotions go, we feel like the person gets off scott free. Our unforgiveness and bitterness can end up holding us captive.

I wonder if we understand forgiveness? Maybe we need to take a few minutes to consider what it is and what it is not. Here are some ideas – why don't you think about whether or not you agree with these ideas...

What it *IS NOT*:

1. Not the same as forgetting--You can forgive even if you can never forget.
2. Not saying that what happened to you was OK--You don't want to soften or deny the reality of the act or the damage.
3. Not asking for retribution, restitution, or atonement--Forgiving means to let go of vengeance.
4. Not allowing repetition of the hurt--Forgiveness does not mean that you are then obligated to put yourself in the same hurtful situation.
5. Not between you and the other person--It is between you and God.
6. Not using the past against the other person--Stop punishing or judging the other.
7. Not dependent on the other person's response--Don't make forgiveness dependent on an apology or recognition from the other person that what he/she did was wrong.

What it IS:

1. Forgiveness is a choice and decision. You decide to forgive because it is the right thing to do.
2. It is an act of obedience. We are clearly called to forgive no matter how we may feel.
3. It is a spiritual event. As a result, it can also have positive psychological and physical effects.
4. It is agreeing to live with the effects of what someone else has done to you. You need to forgive even if the offense has caused you long-term or ongoing damage.
5. It is allowing justice to be handled by God. Let go of controlling the consequences to the offender.
6. It is a process that often needs to be repeated. With new memories of old offenses and renewed anger, you may have to repeat as necessary.
7. It is without limits. We are called to forgive *all* things, no matter how awful.
8. It is allowing the mercy of God to work through you. See yourself as incapable alone of having the love and grace to forgive without letting the love of God to flow through you.
9. It needs to be done with thoroughness. Forgive *all* people for *all* things.
10. Forgive transgressions whether they were intentional or not. The criterion is: did their actions result in you being hurt in some way?

I hope these ideas offer you a better understanding of forgiveness. We can trust in God's justice and give Him the job of carrying it out.

As I said in the beginning, we are *working our way through* this pile of stones. We know that finding healing from sexual abuse is hard work. It takes time and effort, but healing is possible! As a next step, maybe you can share something you discovered with a trusted friend.

Thank you for being here and for choosing to allow our Good Shepherd to care for your heart and bring deeper freedom to your life. Perhaps, as these stones are removed from your heart, they will be replaced with ten smooth “Stones of Remembrance” that tell the story of your healing.

Christ is Victor!