



## Stand Alone Message

Tony Ferraro - "Let It Go (Our Past)"

Small Group Material

July 16th, 2017

Leader Guide

**Bottom Line:** *We are free from trying to change our past when we understand His promise to redeem it.*

**Study Verses:** *2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 2:4-5, James 5:16, John 4:1-42*

**Define The Win:** *Participants would expose the scars from their past and be open about their brokenness. This transparency and vulnerability would be met with love, hope and forgiveness. Group members would pinpoint how their past is influencing their present and future. They would trust in God's promise to redeem their brokenness and figure out ways they can turn their scars into stories of hope that point others towards Christ.*

### Key Points

- *Our past can infiltrate our present and influence our future.*
- *Past experiences can get in the way of what God intended: change.*
- *We hide from our past because of shame, judgment and disappointment.*
- *For God to transform our character He must have access to "all of us", including our past and our future.*
- *We must learn from our past...not be defined by it.*
- *If we allow our past experiences to define our future, our future will look no different than our past.*

- *We must review our past experiences looking for God's presence instead of using it to build a case for not moving forward.*
- *God uses us as instruments in the lives of others. God chooses us despite our past.*
- *God can take any brokenness and turn it into a perfect picture of His love.*

### **ENCOUNTER**

- **God can take any brokenness and turn it into a perfect picture of His love. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? What makes you answer in the way that you do? How does your answer influence what you do with your own brokenness?**
- **Over the years, how have you lived your life in the rear view mirror? In what ways has your past influenced your present and future?**
- **What does it mean that God redeems our past? What do we get wrong when it comes to understanding redemption?**

### **FORMATION**

- **Read John 4:1-42. What can we learn about God's heart and concern for our past by the way Jesus interacts with the Samaritan woman? Why do you believe God choose this woman to make a difference in her own community?**
- **Read James 5:16. What role does community play in helping to heal and process our brokenness and the scars of the past?**
- **Read Ephesians 2:4-5 and 2 Corinthians 5:17. What happens to our identity, as well as our past, when we encounter and accept Christ's love? What freedom does Christ provide in dealing with the scars of our past?**

### **EXPRESSION**

- **What scars of the past still sting and are holding you back from walking in freedom? What makes them so painful? How have you allowed these scars to define you?**
- **What would it look like for God to free you from your past?**
- **How can your past empower God's story and give other people hope? How can you turn your scars into stories of hope and redemption?**

**LEADER INSIGHT:** *Even though it is in the past, many of our wounds still feel fresh. When someone gets too close and touches them, we cringe and recoil. They hurt too much. They remind us of things we wish we could forget. But, the pain brings those events back to the surface. We relive the hurt all over again.*

*Sometimes these wounds come at the hands of others. It might have been harsh words, inconsiderate actions or unspeakable events. Other times, these wounds are a result of our own heart making an appearance in a not so nice way. Broken promises, lies, addictions, bad behavior or exchanging our integrity for some immediate need.*

*Regardless of how these wounds and scars became a part of us, our reaction to them is the same. We hide from our past because of shame, judgment, and disappointment. We cover up our scars from God and others. We keep everyone at a safe distance.*

*Our scars become our identity. Anytime we look in the mirror, the only reflection we see staring back at us is our hurt and shame. Without even knowing it, our past can infiltrate our present and influence our future. We walk into the future looking backwards. Rather than seeing what is ahead, we spend our days captivated by the rear view mirror.*

*Something must change. If we allow our past experiences to define our future, our future will look no different than our past. For God to transform our character He must have access to "all of us," including our past and our future. We need to learn from our past, not be defined by it. We must review our past experiences looking for God's presence instead of using it to build a case for not moving forward.*

*Jesus shows us His scars to remind us that He cares about our own. He meets our shame with forgiveness. We might see brokenness, but Christ sees beauty. From our limited perspective, we convince ourselves that due to our past there is no way God can use us to make a difference in this world. Yet, God uses us as instruments in the lives of others. God chooses us despite our past. We are free from trying to change our past when we understand His promise to redeem it. God can take any brokenness and turn it into a perfect picture of His love. So, what would it look like to turn your scars into a beautiful story of redemption?*