

The Heart of Healing: Relationship with Self and Others

Elizabeth Leon - 2025-03-20

INTRODUCTION: We welcomed back Elizabeth Leon as she gave her third talk in our Lenten Series on healing. Once again, we will make use of her beautiful slides which can be found [HERE](#). Elizabeth reminded us again of our goal: to have a firm and renewed conviction that healing is not just possible, it is the promise. As the Lord's beloved, there is nothing He wants more for us than our freedom and our flourishing. Last week, we identified two of the obstacles to the experience of freedom and flourishing in the world: Trauma and the enemy. We focused on trauma last week, and this week we will focus on the enemy, and how he has such a significant role in our relationship with ourselves and others.

THE ENEMY: The enemy is going to use all of the heartache and the harm that we have experienced in our lives to wreak havoc on our relationships. He does anything he can to distort and disrupt our identity as beloved daughters of the King. Without even knowing it, we begin to engage with the world from this distorted lens, it becomes our "new normal." The enemy works hard to make sure that all the hurts and frustrations of our lives lead us to doubt the promises of God. Elizabeth reminded us of Peter's words of warning to us: "Be sober and vigilant. Your opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). The enemy comes into our trauma, sees those moments of wounding and sprinkles his seed of lies and doubt into the wound, because he wants to do everything he can to keep that wound from being healed.

ANATOMY OF THE WOUND: Slide 4 presents the anatomy of a wound. At the center is the actual wound. Left unhealed, the enemy is going to put lies into our wound, and those lies are going to turn into beliefs, and those beliefs are going to become inner vows, and then the vows shape our behavior in negative and destructive ways. The lies, the beliefs, and the vows keep the Lord from coming in when we most need Him to offer us healing and His grace. In theory, the role of the vow is to protect ourselves, but it has the unintended effect of telling God we do not need Him. We unintentionally become our own saviors. The vows we make shape us in ways we may not even recognize.

SHAME: Shame is the feeling not that we DID something wrong, but that we ARE wrong. We need to learn how our bodies experience shame. Shame says we are too much, we will never be enough, we have to hide, we cannot let people see us. We need a growing understanding of what shame looks like in our lives. We all have moments of shame. The enemy is not clever, he has only one play in his playbook and it is shame. He is going to use that same play over and over to convince us that we are not who God says we are. Shame can show up as control, self-protection, unholy self-reliance, self-rejection, self-contempt, self-judgment, self-criticism. When we are looking into our own ugliness, we are not looking up at God. Scripture commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Where is the love for ourselves, the compassion, the understanding, the kindness, the gentleness, the forgiveness? Why is it so hard to let ourselves be loved? This is where Jesus sees us in our wounding. He wants us to let Him in and speak the Truth to us. Jesus is the antidote to shame, wounds, lies & vows, but we have to be willing to tell Him the truth. We have to be willing to acknowledge the shame, look at the shame, expose the shame and allow His mercy and grace to transform, restore and redeem us. Our Lord and our Lady have already crushed the serpent in battle. The Battle is won. We need to recognize that we are in the battle, and so we have to have acknowledge the lies we have believed about ourselves, & how those lies created beliefs that shaped us and how we live in the world.

THREE WAYS WE CAN BE PART OF OUR HEALING JOURNEY: Elizabeth gave us three things we can do to help counteract the enemy and facilitate healing in relationships, first in our relationship with ourselves, and then in our relationships with others:

1) **In Christ, we have authority** - "I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy: nothing will harm you" (Luke 10:19). We have authority through the grace and sanctification of our baptism, and all the sacraments. We have authority and power and dominion over our bodies, and our minds, and our thoughts. We can reclaim any territory that we conceded to the enemy either knowingly or unknowingly, especially in the area of our identities. Elizabeth spoke of the work of "Unbound Ministry." (Reference Matt Lozano's TASTE talk [HERE](#)). It is a process of recognizing when the enemy is at work, and taking action against him. We start by praying to the Holy Spirit to reveal the lies. What do we believe about ourselves that is not of God? What did others teach us about ourselves that is not of God? This part could take years. Once we have some sense of these beliefs, then we can use the authority we have in Christ to renounce them. Renouncing is a formal declaration and rejection through the power and authority of Christ. We, as beloved daughters of Christ, have the power and authority to reject any lie, any unholy thought, any enemy spirit. When we make the renunciation, we replace it with Truth. We declare Truth over and over again. Elizabeth recommended that we each find four or five short scripture passages that we memorize and have at the ready to confront the enemy - he flees at the word of God. He flees from the Rosary, the love of our Blessed Mother, sacramentals, holy oil and holy water. We have things that we can do! By renouncing the lies, and by proclaiming the word of God, we are replacing lies with the powerful, living word of God, rewiring our brains and our bodies in the healing gaze of Jesus all while we are rejecting the enemy. Are we willing to use our authority to reject the enemy and step into the Truth as we let ourselves be loved and to live in the freedom of that love?

2) **Grow in self support.** We can increase the self-supportive relationship we have with ourselves. It is important to have a supportive, loving, accepting relationship with ourselves as opposed to a critical, self-rejecting relationship. Letting ourselves be loved begins with acceptance, not only of who God is, but of who He says we are, and who He made us to be. We are always with ourselves, we cannot get away from ourselves! We have to learn to be a kind and loving companion to ourselves. If we are in an interior conflict within, peace cannot exist there. On slide 8, we see an iceberg, where the small, visible part represents our exterior action: what we say, what we do, how we interface with others. It is what others see about us. However, most of the iceberg below the surface is our interior world, our thoughts, feelings, movement of our heart, relationship with the Lord, our suffering and so much more. Our interior part, beneath the surface, is supporting and forming the foundation for what happens exteriorly. There are two relationships in the interior part that support the exterior expression: our relationship with the Lord, and our relationship with ourselves. We all agree the relationship with the Lord is the most important, but our relationship with ourselves has a dramatic impact on our relationship with God. If we have an unhealthy relationship with ourselves, it can limit how we let the Lord love us. How open are we to receive Truth, to receive grace? How willing are we to believe the promises of God? We can limit God's work in our lives through our unbelief and unwillingness and self-rejection. We need to take stock of our inner world. We need to get honest about how we are relating to ourselves. With all the negative voices in our heads, there is no space to hear God's still small voice. We generally say much kinder things to others than we

say to ourselves, and there are things we say to ourselves that we would never say to others! We need to do what we can to have a more supportive relationship with ourselves. What are the words we most need to hear today? Can we say them to ourselves? If we can be supportive of ourselves, if we can be life-giving to ourselves, if we can offer kindness to ourselves, then the negative narrative within gets paused. Then there is a small opening within us that is ready to receive the goodness that the Lord wants to offer us. And we become more ready to receive what others are offering us too. The self-critical, self-rejecting narrative is also rejecting Jesus, so we must do whatever we can to make the shift to become more united to the Truth of how the Lord loves us, and do everything we can to offer ourselves that love. We do not need to believe it or feel it for it to be true, we can just believe the promise of God, and make a commitment to NOT say to ourselves those things we do not need to hear, that we would not say to others.

3) **Forgiveness.** “Receiving forgiveness means we have to live in the reality of our sin.” Forgiveness is not optional, it is critical in any healing journey. Elizabeth focused on forgiveness in relationship: Forgiveness of ourselves, and then forgiveness of others. Part of the work of healing is not just reckoning with how we have been harmed, but also how we have harmed others, including ourselves. There is deep grief in these places. When we have fresh eyes to see, we are going to see the places where we have hurt people, even when we were doing the best that we could at the time. The invitation is not just to ask forgiveness from others, we need to be willing to offer the forgiveness to ourselves, for our perfectionism, self-loathing, self-contempt, all the ways we have been cruel to our bodies, judged our needs and ourselves. Self-condemnation is in many ways less painful than the grief of how we hurt people because we were hurt. We need to remember that the only difference between Peter and Judas was that Judas was unwilling to receive the Lord’s forgiveness and mercy due to his self-condemnation. We want to be Peter. “The Truth will set you free” (John 8:31). The truth is we need forgiveness, not just forgiving others, but we need to be forgiven and we need to forgive ourselves. “Hurt people, hurt people” “Trauma that is not transformed is transmitted.” We have harmed others, not maliciously, not intentionally, not deliberately, but we have done it. It takes courage to look at the places where we failed ourselves and others. This is the heart of healing, letting Jesus love us where we feel most unlovable. Jesus is already there, in our worst moment, we need to not minimize it, we need to not hide it, justify it, excuse it. The Truth of it is what will set us free and receive His forgiveness. And we grieve with Him. We need to have the courage to name the grief over the hurt, and then receive forgiveness for the hurt we caused, especially for ourselves. We have to be like Peter and receive the Lord’s grace and mercy and forgiveness. If we can step into our calling with freedom, we are not afraid of any place we may go on our relationships.

AUTHENTIC HEALING WITH OTHERS: For authentic healing with others, everything else must come first: Knowing how precious we are to the Lord, claiming our identities as God’s beloved daughters, reckoning with the trauma in our bodies, in our minds, in our spirits, having the courage to face our own stories with honesty and humility so the Truth can set us free, asking Jesus to show us how we harmed others and harmed ourselves, living in the freedom of forgiveness and grace — all these things must come first. We are not going to do it perfectly or completely on this side of heaven. In order to heal in relationship with others, this is the path we have to be on. Slide 12 lists four key points to help us be better equipped to heal in relationships with others.

1) **Let ourselves be loved.** If we can accept God’s love for us and live in the freedom of that love, we can arrive into every relationship already loved and deeply free. We do not need others to validate us, we do not need to worry about faults others will find in us, because we already know them, and have worked on them with Jesus. So many conflicts happen when we give others power over our identities, power to define us or judge us. Conflicts come when we do not let ourselves be human and think we have to be perfect. Conflicts come when we need others to make us feel valuable and important. When we allow ourselves to be loved by God, we are free. And we can offer unconditional love even in the face of bad treatment from others because we know God’s love is in us.

2) **The landscape of our minds, bodies, heart and spirit.** We have to know ourselves. We need to be curious, kind, courageous, and do the work of our own healing journey. We need to have that honesty and humility so we are not surprised by our own failings. We need to get familiar with all the places inside us, pay attention to our bodies and the triggers that will come, so we are not surprised by them. We bring everything inside us into every relationship we have, and it is always influencing the dynamic between us and the other person. The more familiar we are with our own landscape, the more we will be able to keep the harm done to us from becoming harm that we do to others. We can take responsibility for how we feel and how we act and not blame someone else.

3) **Repair, repair, repair.** The healing we do was never meant for us alone, and as we allow the Lord to love us, it will impact those around us who are close to us. We become softer. When we are less afraid, we interact with the world differently. We know some people who are easy to be around — they have done the work, and they are calm and welcoming. Then we know some people who are difficult to be around. We can be that person of calm and rest for other people and then, it gives us the grace to have humility to ask for forgiveness. It is never too late to go to a person in our lives, and seek forgiveness. Many of us also have relationships that are not what we wish they were. There is not a quick and easy fix, but part of repairing a broken relationship is owning our part of the story. We do our own work, letting the Lord love and heal us, so when the other person is ready, we are in a good place to receive them. We can reach out to them, and let them know we are ready.

4) **Forgiveness and the sacrament of reconciliation.** We ask and offer forgiveness with vulnerability and humility, and then we surrender knowing all we can do is our part. We can do everything, but for people who come to this work at different times in their journey, it can be painful. If someone in our life is stuck in shame and blame, all we can do is stay humble and love them, pray and sacrifice for them, and set healthy boundaries. We can do everything we can do, and it is still only half of the relationship. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a core part of healing. Jesus is always the Healer. We need to make confession our regular habit. As we make our examination of conscience, we need to ask the Holy Spirit to fill us with humility, give us fresh eyes to see how we have harmed others, and harmed ourselves. Forgiveness in relationship is not the same as reconciliation. There may be people in our lives that we cannot reconcile with — we need to be kind, but we can choose not to be in relationship with them. Forgiveness is between us and Jesus. We do not need the other person to be involved.

CONCLUSION: Elizabeth gave us Mary Magdalene as a beautiful role model of someone who went through the journey of the beloved from brokenness and shame to freedom and flourishing. She received forgiveness from Jesus, she lived in His mercy, and she claimed her new identity. She knew her healing was deeply united with the heart of her Savior. The goal of the journey of the beloved is always **Shalom** restored, that perfect peace, perfect communion, perfect union with God. That Shalom was shattered and then we spend our entire lives trying to restore it in healthy and unhealthy ways. And the Lord continues to offer His Heart of healing to each one of us on the journey of the beloved. Wherever we are on the journey, the Lord goes with us. It is a journey so worth undertaking, and we are worth living in freedom and flourishing.