

Published based on [Why You Must Go Back](#)

Why You Must Go Back



God's ways are mysterious, beyond my understanding and often seem downright contradictory. While in my humanity, I prefer to think in straight lines which lend themselves to defining a goal as completed, a task marked off, I find that God's ways are usually not pictured best by straight lines. They are paths which appear, at times, intertwined, difficult to map out, going forward, then backward, orbiting around a center, and often perplexing my human mind. The longer I walk with God, the more clearly I see that He is truly not confined to my limited understanding. He is working, often His deepest purposes in me, when I am clueless.

This week, I was meditating on two of the seemingly contradictory ways of God. In the next few days, I want to explore these two thoughts:

- 1. You must go back.**
- 2. You can never go back.**

Huh? Sounds confusing? I hope you are intrigued sufficiently to continue reading for both statements are true and I am not being ambivalent. There are times in life when you must absolutely go back. You must go back, as it were, in your mind, your emotions, your relationships, to moments of the past and experience the moments again. There are some very important reasons for us to go back. And in other ways, we must never go back and in fact, cannot do so, but that is for another day this week.

We are the sum total of our life story. Often we are not really happy about that. We all wish we could erase or at least, rewrite, pages, even entire chapters, of our story. I personally love the undo key on my computer. If only life were so simple! Surely it would be better if we could just get rid of the painful parts of our story! Yet with God, there is a sense in which we become better, stronger, more complete, because of those very parts of our story.

You might say, "How can I embrace the darkest days of my life? How can I accept the darkest parts of my story?" I can only share what I have experienced.

My life story has had many pages, even chapters, of failure, pain, and disappointment. For most of my life, I've done my "dead level best" to avoid thinking of those days. I tried my best to forget the painful chapters. Many times I've ripped up a photo if it made me think of something painful as if ripping it up would make its reality disappear. I learned to be quite an avoider of painful memories. Then my life fell, what appeared at the time to be, completely apart. Humpty Dumpty, who had a great fall, looked to be in great shape afterwards compared to me. But enter the mystery of God...

I've found that God's deepest work in me often happens during days of my personal suffering. Certainly as Christ suffered on the cross, the greatest work of God was happening in and through the suffering. Suffering changes the human heart. It can transform us into strong, beautiful people who can walk in the contradictions of God's ways or it can turn us into weak, bitter people who shake their fist at God and anyone else who would get too close to our wounds.

When I found myself in deep brokenness, I could no longer keep my painful memories stuffed inside their deep grave. They sprang forward for they were not dead and I found myself face to face, for the first time, with my story. Like a jack-in-a box, I tried to stuff the story back in but to no avail. Initially, I could only barely stand to take a quick peek at the previous chapters of my life, but I have learned to allow my heart to re-experience my story.

And I found this amazing mystery. It is my story that equips me. It is my story that connects me to humanity. It is my story that offers hope to others. It is my story that makes me accessible, approachable.

So today, I want to encourage you to go back. When the things of your past are still controlling who you are in the

present, go back. When the things of your past are still influencing you in unhealthy ways, go back for you must go back in order to go forward. Here are some of the reasons you should go back:

1. To find healing. If a memory is still painful to see, to think about, to reflect upon, perhaps you need another level of healing in that place. God is not confined to time as we are. He can transport you, as it were, to those places where He longs to meet you to bring healing to you.
2. To gain understanding and perspective. When we are able to view our story with Christ, we can often find that it was not exactly what we had believed. Lies can be dismantled.
3. To find God. Going back can allow us to discover where God was in our story.
4. To grieve loss. If we haven't truly grieved over a loss in our life, then we need to go back and experience that. God's Word says there is a time to mourn.
5. To break the power of shame, guilt, and pain. Allowing the power of the cross to wash away the power of shame, guilt, and pain can bring deep healing to our souls.
6. To find compassion for your own heart. Many of you need to ask God to show you how to have compassion on your own heart. Self-hatred is a tool of the enemy.
7. To find the common themes of your story. These can help you find your purpose in life.
8. To find hope for the future.
9. To discover keys to helping others.

So today, I want to say, "You must go back!" If part of your story is buried alive, if you have ignored, denied, or avoided your story, it's time to go back. Redemptively. Just as William Paul Young describes how Mack in *The Shack* has to go back to a painful time in his life to find restoration and healing, we must do the same. The beauty of going back is the mystery of how the going back becomes the key to going forward.

Perhaps your "going back" should be done in the presence of a spiritual director, a counselor, or a very trusted friend. Certainly, it should always be done with the leading of God's Spirit for he is THE COUNSELOR. He knows when and how we should address our past. Our part is to cooperate with his work when he is leading us in the paths of redemption. Nothing is wasted with God. As Richard Rohr says, "In God's reign, "everything belongs," even the broken and poor parts."

May God's grace lead you in paths of healing as you continue to learn more about His mysterious ways.

You can also find this article published on [Why You Must Go Back](#), and on the tag pages [Ecclesiastes 3](#), [Emotional Healing](#), [Everything Belongs](#), [God's ways](#), [grief](#), [Hope](#), [inner healing](#), [life story](#), [redemption](#), [Richard Rohr](#), [The Shack](#), [William Paul Young](#).