

# Dog Bones

## CONCEPTS

Our sins are before us, but our past is behind us. Many of us need to remind ourselves of these truths.

## PURPOSE

If we live in our past and constantly relive our sins, we haven't forgiven ourselves even though God has forgiven us. The Scripture Base tells us that is not what God wants. Satan throws our past in our faces to tear us down and make us feel unworthy. Jesus died and was raised again to free us from those chains.

## SCRIPTURE BASE

John 8:36, Romans 8:1, Titus 3:3, Romans 8:6, Philippians 4:7, John 10:9–11, John 14:27

## BACKGROUND

Each Wednesday morning, an eclectic group of men meets for prayer, devotion, breakfast, and fellowship. Our mix of devotees have been or currently are preachers, teachers, deacons, or church leaders. From that mix, we include those who are also military veterans, Christian motorcyclists, computer programmers, musicians, realtors, chemical engineers, newspaper editors, and combinations of those. This group of men's ages varies from thirty-somethings to eighty-year-olds, but each adds to the collection of stories and experiences rich with the flavor of living full Christian lives. We call ourselves the Christian Breakfast Club. The background of this Spur comes from a Wednesday devotion given by one of these men. Marty is a retired Marine from the Vietnam era who did his share of fighting while flying helicopters in battle. He is currently (at the time of this writing) the president of the Western North Carolina Chapter of the Christian Motorcycle Association (CMA) and a former pastor of a local Baptist church.

## SPUR

While sitting in our local Veteran's Affairs hospital waiting room one day, Marty overheard a conversation between two other veterans sitting behind him. One of the veterans was a younger man who had served in combat in Afghanistan and Iraq. The other was an older man who had served in combat in Vietnam. They began cordially talking about the weather and the hospital service they received, and then the younger man began to relate war stories that were haunting him for the things he had seen and done. The older man tried to interject his experience, but the young man wouldn't let him get a word in edgewise. Finally, the old man said, "Let me tell you about a dog I used to have." The young man's attention was taken, as ours was, trying to relate what this guy's dog had to do with the younger man's experiences. The older soldier told a story about how he had a big dog whom he rewarded with a meaty bone from the butcher shop. The dog chewed on the bone for a time, then buried it. After a few days, he dug up the bone, chewed it, reburied it, and left it for a few more days. The dog dug up the bone again a week later, now very rancid. He chewed on it again, but this time, he seemed happy to bury it again for the last time. Everyone got the message except, apparently, the young man.

Did you get the message from that story? Those of us who have lived any length of time have a bad memory in our past that we dig up and chew on. The older it gets, the more that specific sinful past or offense pricks our consciousness. It is best to bury it and forget about it. But some people can't do that, and it destroys them; for others, it is just a bad memory that returns in nightmares for years afterward.

As Christians, we have a Savior who died for our sins and freed us from the chains of guilt and condemnation. Whenever we (or satan) dig up that nasty bone again, we have a bar of soap that cleans that memory out of our minds and gives us a peace only God can provide. It may take years of therapy for non-Christians to forgive and forget if they live that long. I could share how thousands of war veterans have committed suicide, unable to purge the memory of things they've done, seen, or had done to them. But it is not just war victims who suffer these burdens from evil memories and how they can destroy lives. What everyone needs is Jesus. He is the balm that soothes the pain of guilt, condemnation, and unforgiveness. His sacrifice on the cross paid for all those sins. He is the one whose grace covers the pain, guilt, and shame satan holds over us. Others need to hear that. I pray for the young war victim in this story to find Christ and be healed of his burden.

As we witness to the lost and those we meet, our past is a tool to effectively remind others that we all have a sin sickness that only the Holy Spirit of God can heal. Everyone has sinned, and when reminded of it, many seek salvation. No one is

getting to heaven with sin on their ledger. As Christians, we know the One who cleans the slate. Lead others to Christ. Jesus saves.

### PRAYER

Lord, God and Father, we praise Your Holy Name above all. Remind us each day that You are good and Your gifts come in many packages. Thank You for allowing us to love and forgive ourselves because You love and have forgiven us. Lord, we pray that others will find Your love, forgiveness, and peace in You. Please help us to show others where they will find salvation from the evil that troubles their minds. Help us to show others where they can see the renewing of their minds through Christ. Amen.

### CREDITS AND/OR INSPIRATION

With his permission to relate this story, Marty O'Dell is a Marine combat veteran, my friend, and a fellow Christian Breakfast Club member.