

16. This seems to be raking up all sorts of other issues in my life

Psalm 25:6-7

Remember, O LORD, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you are good, O LORD.

One of the friends from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association Rapid Response Team, which came to us in the aftermath of the shootings had recently been in Haiti. He told me about a man he had spoken to. He was left destitute after the earth quake. But within minutes of beginning to talk, he was pouring out his heart about a previous crisis that had hit his life.

I have seen a very similar reaction in West Cumbria in the past two and a half weeks. It's as if the embers from old fires have been raked up by the present crisis.

The way God has structured history demonstrates that different times and different crises are nonetheless linked. One event becomes a mirror to another. For example, as the Israelites enter the Promised Land the echoes of the Garden of Eden are unmistakable. Israel's exile in Babylon is patterned on her slavery in Egypt; her return from exile on the Exodus.

The same happens in the human soul. For example, a major rejection takes place in our lives. Thereafter, ever thing that bears any resemblance to a rejection brings us right back to the feelings involved in that first rejection.

As I understand it, the Bible doesn't encourage gazing into the past. Its vision is basically forward-looking, as we press on towards transformation from glory into glory. But when the anger, uncertainty, confusion – or whatever emotion the shootings have most stirred in you – brings to the surface a past crisis, it's a good chance to deal with it.

I appreciate the way Psalm 25:6-7 teach us to address the scars of the past. David is asking that God would view his past in a particular way, specifically, that he would look on it with mercy, forgiveness, goodness and love.

To pray like that David must realise, as we all must, that we have both sinned and been sinned against. We can't go back in time to fix what happened, but we can talk to the God who was there at the time and know his forgiveness and healing years after the event.

By faith we can come to see our past as he does: as whole, clean and healed. We can trace the history of his faithfulness in our lives and let his ever-present love reframe our auto-biography.

As past issues are raised, ask God to remember them with his mercy, forgiveness, goodness and love.