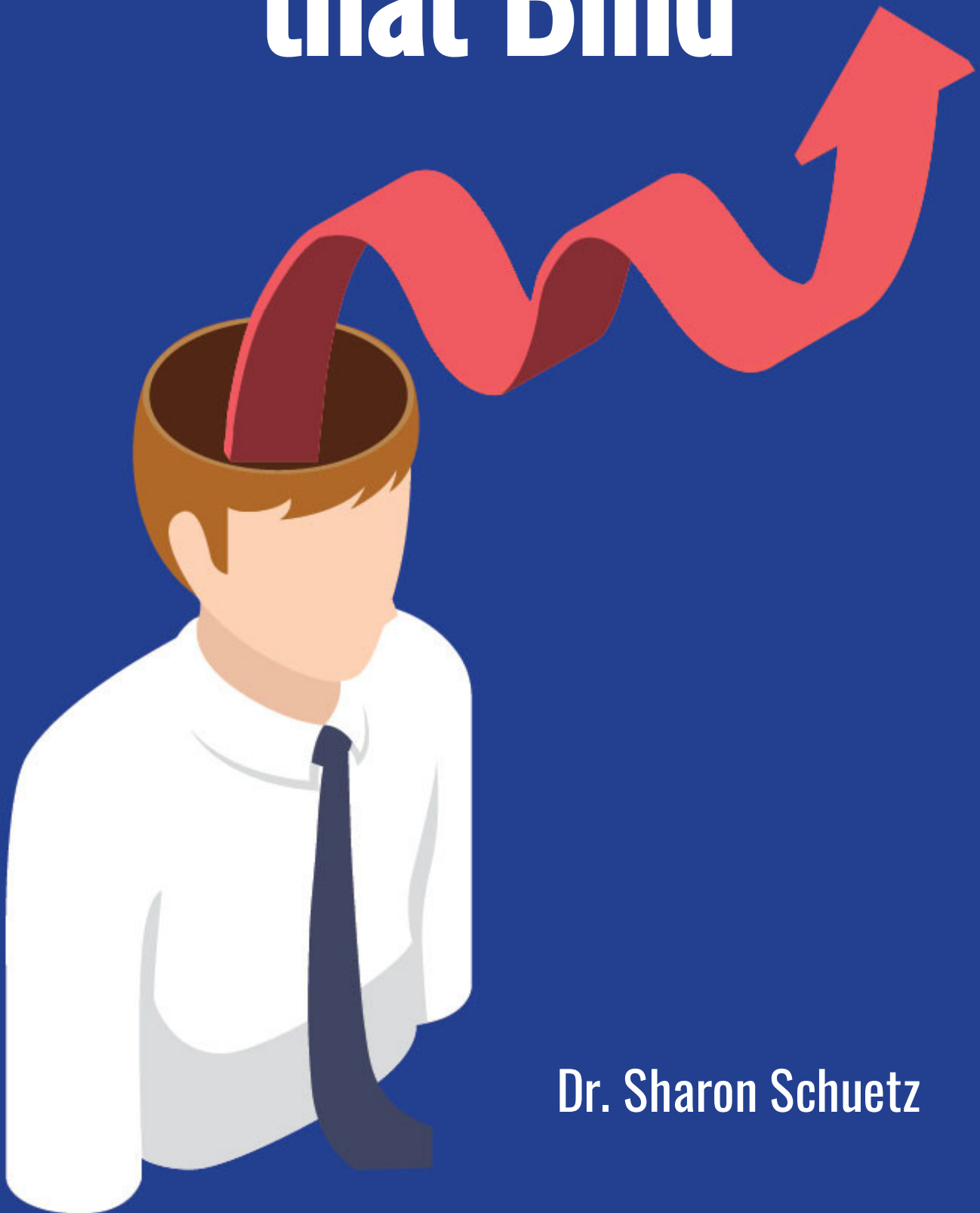


Sweet Memories that Bind



Dr. Sharon Schuetz

Many of us can look back with longing to a time when we had intimacy with God and peace blanketed every facet of our lives. While we go through seasons in our spiritual travels, memories of a sweeter time hang in the air, bringing with them feelings of guilt and disappointment. Sometimes they intimidate and mock us. We know God is still there. He is still working in and through us, but we don't know where our peace went. How did we lose it? Why can't we get it back?

We're usually unaware of our peace slipping away. The loss is gradual, usually one choice at a time. One small action leads to another, then to another and another. Until we look up toward God and realize how long it has been since we talked to Him.

With unspoken grief, we remember the process we went through to get here. God called us, wanting us to spend time with Him instead of watching TV. We promised Him we would stop and visit just as soon as the show ended. We remembered our promise at bedtime, but we're too tired to give Him any quality time. We said a quick prayer promising to slow down tomorrow. Gradually our noble intentions replaced obedience, and we found ourselves pushing thoughts of God further and further back to assuage our guilt.

"[It's]...the little foxes that spoil the vines... (Song of Solomon 2:15). One little compromise after another leads us to bigger compromises. We do this until one day we realize we walked away from God's grace into a life of trying to please Him our way. We brush off our Bibles, promising ourselves that we are going to do better. We pledge to pray and study God's word for a few days, but no matter how hard we work at it, we can't get back what we lost.

We evaluate every event against memories of what we once had with God. We question whether we will ever get that elusive peace that was once such a prominent part of our lives. Unfortunately, recent experiences never measure up; therefore, we fall back into the familiar compromise and disobedience pattern.

Until we can let go of the experience we once had with God, and realize that He wants us to go to a new level with Him, we will never get what we long for. Those past experiences were childhood. When we cried, our Father, God, was right there. He fed us when we were hungry; He cleaned us when we were dirty, and He held us when we were alone. How silly would we look if we were to crawl into a crib and cry for a bottle today? Yet spiritually, that is what we do. We must let go of the desire to go back so that we can move forw

Peace is the result of intimacy with God. It is the confidence that we can trust Him in whatever comes into our lives. Intimacy with God results from dying to self and our desires and wanting only to please Him. When all we want is to please God, we are open to new experiences and a new relationship level. Then, we are not babies; we have become friends with God.

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