

Let It Go!

How to Gain Freedom from Your
Past and Power for Your Future



ORRIN RUDOLPH

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Part One:

*Beginning of the Road -
A Journey of Choice*

CHAPTER ONE



The Pack on the Back

“It is truly freedom when we become aware that we have the power and ability to learn new techniques and methods in our responses and not allow ourselves to become victims of our past.” Orrin Rudolph

The Amatola Mountain Range in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa is a remarkable sight. Lush forests, thundering waterfalls, and towering cliffs span its entire length. There is an aspiring Garden of Eden hidden within its depths where small antelope, monkeys, and other varied wildlife enjoy its protective habitat. I became even more aware of its beauty when three of my best friends and I headed out on a Saturday morning in the summer of 1990. We had planned this six-day five-night hiking trip for an entire year and finally, the day had arrived. Six days of nature, six days of nothing but mountains, wildlife, and panoramic views. A time to get away, enjoy nature and each other’s company without the daily

interruptions of modern life. Each of us measured our packs to perfection, nothing more and nothing less. We packed sleeping bags, food, cooking utensils and everything else we deemed essential to survive on this challenging 65-mile hike, one of the toughest in South Africa.

At 6 a.m., we were dropped off at the starting point of the trail. We slung our packs onto our backs and headed off into the unknown. We were not disappointed, the sights were truly breathtaking from the very beginning, so much so that we almost, and I repeat almost forgot about the weight of the eighty-pound packs on our backs. As the sun began to crest over the horizon, the day became warmer, and our shoulders started to sag under the weight. After about an hour of walking, we decided to take a break and found a grove of large yellowwood trees that created enough shade from the morning sun. We removed the packs and were struck immediately by the feeling of weightlessness and relief from our heavy burdens. It felt as though we could float away if we were not careful. This feeling created an experience of euphoria and relief that pointed out to us just how burdensome carrying those packs had become. After our short reprieve, we again with reluctance shouldered those cumbersome packs and continued with the day's hike.

I have never forgotten that feeling of that first day's rest stop or the feeling of slowly becoming used to those heavy packs through the next six days of hiking. What amazed me, however, was no matter how accustomed we became to those packs—even to the point where we would not even remove them during our short rest stops—that same euphoria and weightlessness would always accompany their removal. I will never forget something else that stood out to me was the more we got used to those packs

on our backs how our desire to remove them, even though we knew the euphoria we had experienced on that first day, decreased exponentially the longer we bore them.

Our bodies are amazing instruments; they are very good at adapting if given enough time, to the point where something that was annoying or even unbearable becomes normal and almost undetectable. I remember a few times on that hike where I would reach back over my shoulder just to make sure I was still carrying my pack. Now granted as the hike wore on and we ate more of the food that we carried, the packs did get lighter, but this lightening of the load was not so dramatic to offset the phenomenon of adaption taking place.

Throughout our lives, we all have been witnesses to this experience. Another example of this was when my parents and I lived in Johannesburg, South Africa. We lived in a suburb called Kempton Park. One of the features of this suburb was a large factory complex we had to drive past to get to our home. The factory manufactured a chemical that smelled incredibly bad. The first few months of passing this chemical plant would cause us to pinch our noses shut and gag, but after driving past this factory countless times, we ceased to smell the putrid stench. It was only when someone else was in the car with us would gag or grab their nose did we again become aware of the odor. The odor had not disappeared. We just became so accustomed to it, that it became part of our daily commute and therefore ceased to bother us.

One more example of this took place in the same Kempton Park neighborhood. Our home, though not close to the airport, was under the flight path that planes would take to land and take off at Jan Smuts International Airport, now called Oliver Tambo International Airport. When we first moved into our home the

sound of the planes roaring over our heads every hour or so was annoying. After a few months of this, however, the roaring began to fade into the background of our consciousness. Our guests would have to remind us by their comments as they stared at our ceiling and pointed, “Wow, those planes are loud! Doesn’t that bug you?”

Now don’t get me wrong this adaption can be a good thing, but it does not only happen to us physically, or to our senses, it can do the most significant damage emotionally. For all of us carry emotional weight, burdens, that some of us have carried since our childhood. On many occasions, people might ask the same questions we were asked, “Wow that must be hard! Doesn’t that bug you?”

Individuals, related groups of people, managerial teams, or even whole companies or organizations, can carry these emotional weights; no one is immune. These emotional weights have become part of us; we sleep, work, and conduct our daily lives with them, and never know that we are carrying something extra. Hints show up, but we do not recognize them or do not want to see the signs. Others might point them out, but we either ignore them or get angry with them for being insensitive or putting us on the spot. Therefore, we carry on with our daily rituals none the wiser that we carry something that is slowly eating away at us like cancer, sapping our energy and life force from us. We reluctantly shoulder our packs and continue our journey, telling ourselves, “This is just part of my life, something I need to bear.” We ignore it hoping it will just go away. However, there is a problem with this philosophy because choosing to ignore a problem that does not make it disappear. All ignoring it does is hide it for a time while it grows like a fungus in a dark, damp

place until it explodes. When that happens, it not only damages you but all who are within range of that explosion.

You see, it is our resistance to change, to release what we know must be released that prolongs our suffering and gets in the way of our eventual healing. We must keep getting out of our own way, and that can be difficult because our way is so familiar to us. It's been our way of life, even though it hasn't worked for us, it's very familiar. If we can give our past problems the much-needed attention they deserve, then we can move on. If we can add value to them instead of sweeping them under the rug, we can grow past the hurt and the pain that the past has dealt us. For us to do this, it's incredibly helpful to have a clear goal. If you have no goal, no vision, you're going to slip back into the way you have always done things. You will slip those packs back on your back and keep walking, just like you've always done. These goals, this vision needs to be pictured, and it needs to be specific. If you have been battling depression, cut out a picture of someone laughing, dancing, or enjoying life in some way. Pin it up and let that be the goal you aim to achieve.

We don't want to go back to familiar. The packs, though familiar, are draining our energy, our power and we need to have a method and a goal to get rid of them. We need a clear plan and vision to release us from the weights that are holding us back so that we can start grabbing our future with both hands. If one hand is on the rope of our past, it's a lot harder to grab hold (with commitment) to the rope of our future.

The ancient Roman Emperors were renowned for their ability to think up hideous forms of punishment. Most of us are familiar with the fact that crucifixion was one such form of punishment; however, there was another. In these ancient times, one of the

brutal forms of punishment used for murders was to tie the dead body of the victim to the murder's back. The murderer would have to walk and live during every activity with this dead body tied to his or her back as a reminder of the committed crime. As the body decayed and rotted, it consumed, infected, and mutilated the living person who eventually died as a result. Though this is a graphic and disturbing picture, I need you to see that when you carry around unforgiveness, this is what happens to you. We don't even realize that we are carrying around the very object that can lead to our emotional and even physical demise and that if left long enough it will rot and decay within us.