

Dealing With Hurt Biblically

I wonder if one could find a person on this earth who has never been hurt. Impossible, I think. Hurt is a part of our fallen world. Sin has brought pain into our lives. Today, hurt is part and parcel of our lives. How do we deal with hurt biblically? We've been looking at dealing with various issues in our lives: anger, depression, worry, and we've been seeing that the Bible's way of dealing with them is quite different from the world's and modern psychology's.

Many people get upset when they hear plain Biblical advice on dealing with issues such as these. "You're speaking like a 19th century preacher! We have many new methods now! We're a lot more advanced in our understanding of the human mind than we were in those days! Your methods are childish and simplistic. Stop telling people to read their Bibles and pray! It's not a quick-fix!"

First, we've never said any of these things was a quick-fix. Furthermore, we have never said anything like "Read your Bible and your problems will disappear" As to the advice being old fashioned, that may be so. I think old-fashioned is often good. You do it your way, then. If you can see that using the world's psychology has healed the souls of the people you counsel, then so be it. Frankly, though, why use the Bible then? Just use Freud, Jung, Rogers, Maslow and solve people's problems using their philosophy. As for me, I'd like to go to what the Bible says first. Call me ignorant of modern methods. Call me an uneducated fool who speaks on issues without having studied psychology. The only thing that will concern me is if you say I am unbiblical, then let's go to the Word and you show me chapter and verse where I misquoted, misinterpreted or misapplied it. Ultimately, people get angry when they hear that God's methods for dealing with issues like this are simple and sometimes difficult.

It's not enough, we say! We want a quick-fix, a short-cut, or better, someone else must heal us. Really, what many Christians and even pastors are saying is, "The Bible is not enough! There is more to it than what the Bible gives!" But 2 Pet 1:3 says: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:" When we hear God's methods involve meditation on the Scriptures, prayer, obedience, we simply cannot accept it. When we hear that the problem might be sin in my life, or a problem within me, then we react in anger. I agree that there is nothing worse than giving people trite, spiritual clichés. Or telling people, "Look, just go read your Bible and it will all go away!" But I don't believe that is what we have said in this series. We have simply said that God does have the answers in His Word, we must find them, believe them, meditate on them and practice them. The same is true when we deal with hurt.

The world speaks of often 'getting it all out of you' whether in anger or revenge. Some say, lie on this couch, descend into hypnosis, and there heal what is damaged. Still others recommend that you numb the hurt by just thinking about other things, by moving forward -- just don't cry over spilt milk. Some say, "Time heals all wounds! Just give it time!" Hurt doesn't heal with time. Hurt is damage to our very souls, and hurt does not disappear by leaving it alone. Is this the Bible's method for dealing with hurt? Once again, Jim Berg's book, *Changed Into His Image*, by BJU Press, has provided much of what we will look at now. Please understand, that these principles

are just a start, just a basic foundation for understanding how to deal with hurt. There is no way we could adequately tackle the complex issues that might be associated with recovering from sexual or emotional abuse in the time we have now. But these principles will be a start.

1) Hurt will either drive you from God or toward God.

That might seem like a very obvious statement, but please think it over for a moment. When you experience any kind of pain, you immediately seek relief. That's natural, for no one enjoys hurting. Physical pain causes us to seek some form of relief, be it in some form of medical attention or otherwise. In the same way, when we are hurt, we seek relief from the hurt, often in the quickest, easiest way. Often, that means drawing away from God into things to dull the pain. Food, sex, entertainment in TV, movies or books, sport, music, all there to, as the saying goes, 'drown our sorrows'. But to do these things is to draw away from God. It is to seek the quickest, easiest relief. It is to seek relief that is in itself, painless. After all, who wants more pain?

But consider this simple illustration. When you fell and cut yourself as a child, what did your mother do? Did she give you a sucker to take your mind off the pain? No, she applied some nasty disinfectant that made the cut burn worse than before. In the same way, really dealing with hurt often involves applying some remedies which will initially increase the pain. To draw nigh to God when we are hurting often seems, like the disinfectant, to make the hurt worse. Drawing near to God when we are hurting means we will have to do some painful self-examination. We will have to look at the pain, we will have to think about what it is that has hurt us, when in reality all we want to do is forget about it. It will mean sometimes just even facing the awful reality that we are hurt, acknowledging the hurt inside us. Consider that if you left that cut without cleaning it, it might close up, but it may get infected and cause you further pain. The pain you experience when the disinfectant is applied is intense, but far less than the ongoing pain of infection. So with emotional hurt. The intense hurt you experience as you relive your pain and deal with it God's way hurts badly. But it is still less than the ongoing ache in your soul of unresolved hurt which is never dealt with, and robs you of real happiness, vitality and joy for years, some for a lifetime.

Just as your body goes to work repairing physical hurt, so you will have to put your heart to work in repairing emotional hurt. You will automatically drift toward things like withdrawal, anger, bitterness, numbness, substitutes, the key is to not just go with the flow, but to actively put your heart to work in dealing with hurt God's way.

Now, since I am choosing not to draw away from God, but to very painfully draw near to Him, what will that entail? As we said, this is but the starting point, but it is very crucial to dealing with hurt.

1) Buckle Your Seatbelt

What does that mean? Well, when you get in a car and buckle your seatbelt, you are saying to the driver, you're in control. You're the driver, you control the car, you know where you're going. I'm in your hands. I'm putting on my seatbelt. I trust you. Now, you don't formally say that to drivers; they'll probably think you're quite strange if you do, but your actions reflect that. A friend of mine often comments on how when driving the car, his daughter would sleep on a long distance trip. He felt it was such a picture of trust, absolute trust in the driver, to the point where you can fall asleep in the car.

On the other hand, if you cling to the door handle, keep screaming instructions, are ready to jump out of the car at any moment, you are not displaying trust in the driver.

When we are hurt, the first thing we do, is ask “God, why did you allow this?” Nothing wrong with asking that question. But, pretty soon, if we meditate on the wrong thoughts, we begin to lose trust in Him as the driver of our lives. We begin to say, “Following God has not brought me any less pain! God, what are you doing?” We are beginning to reject Him as our ruler, as the wise controller of our lives. Now, I know, when you are hurting, you don’t want to hear some Christian with a pious smile on their face say, “God’s got it in control!” But truthfully, that is exactly what you have to wrestle yourself back into believing. Because when hurt, we begin to say, “God, why? Are you there? Why didn’t you stop it? Why didn’t you intervene?” Often, the answers are not going to come, even in this life. God has sovereignly chosen not to give us all the answers, but He has chosen to keep reassuring us in the Word that He is in control. When in that car, do you need to know why the driver is slowing down, why he turned left here, why he changed gears in order to get to your destination? No, but you do need to trust him long enough to stay in the car. You cannot deal with your hurt from a position of unbelief. You can never apply real healing until you have faith that God is in control again.

Please remember, God never promised a life without pain. That is not to rub salt into the wound, but there are too many people who think that Christianity is an aspirin for life’s troubles. No, Jesus in fact promised, “In this life, you shall have tribulation”. But then He added, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” See, when we are hurt, we can blame God, and distance ourselves from Him, but we are only complicating our lives. We are only prolonging dealing with the pain.

But to come back to God is to start by getting back to a place where we truly say, “God is in control”. It takes faith to say that when you are hurting. Let me add , that faith isn’t faith until it’s tested. You’ll never have to really struggle to have faith until God seems silent. You’ll never really build your trust until it seems like God doesn’t know what He’s doing. You’ll never really grow and strengthen your hope until you face situations which batter and blow against hope. And when you are hurting, more than anything, you need to start with faith , that God is in control.

How do I get faith? Romans 10:17 says: “So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Your trust in God grows as you take in the Word. Meditating on Scripture verses is to roll them over and over in your mind, looking at them from every angle, until by God’s grace you begin to say, I’ll trust God. Remember, faith is taking a step, trusting a person in the circumstances, though the circumstances seem discouraging. God will never give you some pre-faith confirmation that trusting Him will be good for you. He has done more than enough in sending Jesus Christ to show us that He does love us and ultimately wants our best. However, when we take a step of faith and trust Him, He often then confirms our step by blessing us. Peter didn’t get vision of a bridge over the water before he walked out to meet the Lord on the water; he just trusted in Jesus. It seemed ridiculous a) to want to walk on water b) to do so during a storm. But as long as Peter kept his eyes on Jesus, God enabled Him. He fell when he started to doubt. Buckling your seat belt will mean meditating on Scriptures that encourage trust in the driver. Read Romans 8:18. Romans 8:18-26

Then read 2 Corinthians 4:7-9; 16-18. Turn these over in your mind till it becomes clear that God is a wise driver.

God does not enjoy our pain. Any good parent is hurt by the hurts of their children. But parents face the reality of this world that sometimes some pain is necessary for the greater good. Parents take their children to the dentist, they take their children to doctors, and sometimes they themselves wince and shudder when they see their child hurting in the doctor or dentist's rooms. But their love for them allows it for a long-term good. So with God. We must wrestle ourselves into that place of trusting that God is likewise with us. Satan seeks to destroy us, to bring things into our lives to intentionally harm us. God on the other hand, who is totally in control, only allows what He sees will be for our long-term good.

Buckling up our seat-belt not only means we trust the driver; it logically also means we have submitted to the driver's control. In my own life, I can tell you that when hurt, I begin to want to break free of God's lordship over my life. I don't want anything to do with Bible, prayer, church and so on. It's like I am saying, "God you didn't stop me from getting hurt! Now I am angry at you!" But that reaction, as I have found, only worsens my hurt and prolongs my pain. Resisting God's lordship over you will not solve the problem or minimize the hurt. Often, when God seems to have failed us, we want to search elsewhere, in other people, or the world, or worse, ourselves. If God thought you would find healing for your hurt in your own head, He'd never have given you so much Bible. So when hurt, look out for the clenched fist of rebellion in your life toward God. Realise that to really have peace, as a believer, you can never be at war with God.

The second thing is then **Look Up and Out.**

When we looked at depression last week, we saw that a lot of depression is really caused by a loss of hope. It's one thing to feel hurt, to feel sorrow, to feel disappointment. That's natural. But it's another to begin to lose all hope. That's descending into depression. If you just look within, you are probably bound to lose hope. You will become a passenger that not only distrusts the driver, but says, "We'll never get there!" And let me say from experience, that to be hurt and to lose hope is a crippling condition. You're hurt, nothing can change that, but if you lose hope, your hurt intensifies a thousand times. Though I may cut my knee, I have hope that the pain will subside and my body will heal. Emotional issues are far more complex, but if I am hurt emotionally and conclude that God is not in control, that there will never be any justice, that my abuser got away with it, that I will never be able to forgive, then that is to sorrow without hope. You need to look up. I'm afraid the answers just aren't inside you. The answers are not even in the wisest Christian counselor on earth. You need to look up. You need to find hope in Him. Hope is not based on circumstances, otherwise the only time you can have hope is when things are going well. Hope is based on Jesus, the same yesterday, today and forever. Consider some truths.

- 1) God's Love for me is unchanging. Others hate, despise, fail, and even abuse me, but God has loved me from the womb and will love me into eternity. Read John 15:12-13; Romans 8:31-32; 35-39
- 2) God's purpose for me is Christlikeness. God is not figuring my life out as it happens. He has had a plan all along, and it is to become like His Son, He is

wisely working it out , including only what is necessary. Read Eph 4:11-13; Romans 28-29.

- 3) God's Word to me is the final answer. You might not always agree with them, or they may not even make sense. A bitter spoonful of medicine doesn't make much sense to a four year old either. But we need to believe that other people, books and so on have only a limited value. Read 2 Timothy 5-17; 2 Peter 1:3-4.
- 4) Finally, God's grace for me is sufficient. He doesn't ask me to handle the rest of my life today , He will give me grace for today. Read 2 Corinthians 12:9 Hebrews 4:15-16.

Meditate on these things. A believer who exhibits hope when hurt is a testimony to the world.

You may say, but this doesn't help me with the specifics of how to deal with my situation. It wasn't intended to. It's meant to point you back to where you will be clear-headed enough to make the right decisions about dealing with the people involved. It's meant to aid you to be back in a place where you can have peace and joy again, even though you are hurt, even though there is still much work to be done with regard forgiveness, reconciliation and so on.

A final thing **Look Out for That Weed.**

If there's one thing that will eat away at you, or destroy you, it's bitterness. Root it up. You may have to do it every day. But don't let it grow at all. Bitterness changes soft hearted people into cold, malicious evil people. Bitterness makes useful servants of Christ into washed up, brooding believers.

How do I do this? Daily prayer, confessing it as sin , and obey the advice of Romans 12:17-21. The best way of dealing with bitterness is to repay evil with good. It is impossible in your flesh; once again , it's do it my way, or do it God's way.

As we said, this is not an in-depth study in dealing with hurt. It's merely an aid to get you back on your feet, so you can deal with your personal situation Biblically. Buckle up your seatbelt, Look out and up, and root up that weed.