

## Nursing the Wound

It is said that a soldier's deepest wounds are the ones that are not seen. Emotional scars can far outlast physical injuries or a war. While we are not all soldiers, all humans are made up of emotions and minds that can become wounded by events and circumstances. The wounds that no one can see may not just go away; sometimes they need our attention and healing.

The story is told of two sons who were raised by an abusive and chronically absent alcoholic father. One of them became a successful businessman while the other followed much the same path as his father. Someone asked each of them why they became what they were in life. They both answered, "With a father like mine, how else could I have turned out?" I realize that this may be oversimplified, but one nursed his wounds; never rising above his environment, while the other used them as a launching pad to greater things.

Before we get into this too far, I acknowledge that my thoughts on this topic may not fit everyone. At times for Christians, the lines between emotional distress and spiritual problems get blurry. We sincerely believe that Jesus is the answer to all life's problems including mental health, yet it will take a compassionate understanding heart enlightened by the Holy Spirit to properly understand.

We all have wounds; if we do not have them, we will get them. Some of them may be deep soul wounds that will carry a lifetime of repercussions similar to our story; others will be superficial and not that deep. Some individuals will face abuse and neglect, while others will experience physical suffering that may leave them unable to function like their peers around them. This world is full of broken hearts, broken homes, broken lives, and death. Disappointments will happen; our family or church brothers and sisters may not understand us. Some may lose their job or their reputation. People are afflicted with as many different types of wounds as you can imagine. The bottom line is if we are a living, breathing human being we will get injured in life. There is no shame in getting emotionally wounded, however what we do with those injuries can determine life and eternity.

Truth is we all need healing or our wounds will fester and cause infection to spread to other parts of our lives. I am not suggesting we are at fault and should not get hurt or that there is a quick fix. However, what we do with those injuries becomes our responsibility. For example: If someone rams into our car because they were not paying attention, it was not our fault. They may be ever so apologetic, they may even pay for the damage, but it still is our car that is damaged. We can drive it around like that and tell people how this inattentive person damaged our car and now it looks terrible, or we can take it to the body shop and get it repaired; it is our choice.

Sometimes we become offended. We may feel like our struggle was not validated or like we were betrayed. We may have reached out for help, only to feel like we were misunderstood. This can happen to anyone, but it is more apt to happen when we already carry around emotional injuries or offense. This may cause us extreme emotional pain, stress, and turmoil, resulting in an endless cycle of self-scrutiny. Believe me, I have been there. The bottom line we are wounded deep down inside. We may try to put on a good front and carry on. We may try to swallow our hurt and say it does not

matter; others have suffered far worse things. We may lose sleep over it, yet it does not go away. Soon it becomes all-consuming and hardly a moment of the day goes by without us thinking about it. We become isolated and alone with it, and it may affect our sleep and our health. It may not all be our fault, and we may not be offended. The truth is that the original wound may not have been our fault at all, yet we are left with the aftermath of the injury.

I am not offering a simple solution; that would not be fair. We need to identify those wounds and sometimes for our emotional and spiritual health, place the responsibility where it belongs. It is not our job to punish someone who has wounded or wronged us, that is God's problem. The individual may not need to know, and we do not need to judge them, but this step may be necessary to help remove the shame and self-incrimination. It also allows us to forgive them and set them and us free. *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do... Luke 23:34* Yet we need more than that. We need the power of God to help us, which to me is a requisite for proper healing. We can do therapy, which may be helpful in dealing with the trauma, but it is incomplete without the healing hand of God. Ultimately God is the healer; no one else can help us let go, forgive, and move on to healing. He was there when the wound happened, and understands it better than we do, because He created us with the ability to get hurt. He does not expect us to heal alone. He expects us to need Him, but we will have to let go.

People carry childhood wounds and bitterness all their lives. They may not see it, but it can be observed by the tone of their voice, their outlook on life, and in their relationships with others. They may not even know that they need healing. They need the old wound cleansed and stitched up by the power and love of the great physician. There is power, there is grace, there is understanding and mercy. The first step will be to admit they have a problem and become willing for whatever it takes to become free. That will not be an easy thing to do, and they likely will need someone to walk alongside them on that journey.

Sometimes old wounds can be like favorite pets. We may coddle them and talk about how they affect us; without us realizing they have become front and center of our lives. Moreover, they can become our identity. We can learn and gain a lot through counseling and therapy yet never become fully healed. While education and therapy may help us deal with traumatized emotions, it cannot redeem the heart and soul or give us the true healing which can only come through the power of God.

I am not minimizing anyone's struggle from the past. I can hear some saying, "You do not understand." I readily agree with that. I do not understand what you have been through. But I understand the power of God. I understand that Jesus's suffering was no fault of His own. He was put to death for sins he did not commit. He was accused of things He did not do. He was our perfect example of injury and trauma, yet He went through it and conquered death so you and I can be delivered of our sin and shame. Jesus's example has often been a comfort to me. At times, I have wished that He would appear in person and heal my wounds. So far that has not happened, yet many, many times I have found Him in prayer, and experienced the peace and freedom He offers.

I can hear you say, "But that would never work for me." I disagree. Often when we are carrying wounds, we also are a bit blind. Perhaps this is because we are all consumed by what has happened to us. Perhaps it is because we do not know anything different. I have found when I bring my wounds to Jesus in prayer, He changes the way I see things. What I thought was a death sentence, so to speak, becomes a steppingstone of deeper understanding and grace. I cannot explain it, but He can take the feeling of pain and impossibility and change it and heal it. We have to want it and be willing to surrender it. He truly is the healer of broken hearts.

Does He take away what happened? No. Does He immediately restore broken trust? Not always. But when He is leading us on a healing journey He is always there whenever we need Him. He may ask us to forgive, but He will help us. He may ask us to step out of our comfort zone and do some very difficult things, but we do not have to do it alone. Our healing may not be overnight, or even in a month. It may be a lifelong journey of walking hand in hand with Him, as we conquer our past injuries and fears.

Healing the mind can be a lot like healing the body. A broken bone may be set by the doctor, but it still takes time to heal. We can have surgery to fix a torn ligament, and it will take time to heal. Someone with severe injuries may have to learn to walk again and their life may be forever altered because of it. Why should we expect emotional healing to be any different?

Some injuries must be cleaned to remove infection, which may be a painful process, but very necessary to promote true healing. This also is comparable to our emotional and spiritual lives. Our injuries can become infected with offense and bitterness. As long as those are present, true healing cannot happen. We may not even know they are there. This may be evident by tenderness around the wound and some pain and anger when that area gets bumped. These may be signs telling us that we need to do something with that wound. The deceptive thing about offense is that we cannot see it on our own. It will come between us and God no matter what church you attend and often God will use others to reveal it to us. We cannot retain unforgiveness, which in reality is what offense is, and maintain peace with God. That is not the way it works. Jesus says if we cannot forgive others, then we cannot be forgiven. It is not related to the church you attend but is a heart matter that will separate you from God. It puts on a counterfeit cloak of righteousness that gives the appearance of true righteousness but lacks the true power of Christ and justifies personal rights. It is known for its placing blame on others and its unforgiveness.

I have heard it said that unforgiveness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. That seems a little extreme, but it brings out a truth. I believe that the need to forgive others and or ourselves will be somewhere in all our healing journeys. *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matthew 6:14-15*

Not all emotional struggles are because of a spiritual lack or result in offense and unforgiveness. Sometimes medication is needed to correct an imbalance or to help one cope and heal. It is also

possible that a spiritual lack can cause or worsen an emotional condition. No matter the problem, Jesus wants to be a part of that healing journey.

Our first step to freedom, is to take our broken hearts and parts to Jesus. No pretense and no fancy words; just simple and honest admittance that we need help. We need healing and we need help to let go and forgive. We may not even know where the pain comes from; it may have radiated through our whole life. There is no need to be afraid, because He already knows our inner struggles. He already knows all about our troubles. He has been waiting for us to bring them to Him so He can deliver us and set us free. More than that, He delights in us coming to Him for healing and He will answer our prayers. On our own, our mind, our reasoning, and Satan will always win; we desperately need Him for everything.

We do not need to live our lives crippled by hurt, pain, and offense. Jesus the great physician is waiting with enough medicine to heal not only us, but the whole world. We need not fear to go to Him. If He asks something of us, He will go with us to do it. He never asks us to do something that is beyond our reach to do. He does not expect us to go in our own strength.

Jesus not only wants to heal us emotionally and spiritually, but He also wants to restore us. He does not heal us to leave us out in the cold, but to bring us out of ourselves into friendship and fellowship with others; especially the family of God. We may still have a limp, so to speak, but He gives us grace to accept that weakness and to walk confidently in His grace. *He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Psalms 23:3*

At times someone in deep emotional distress or grief may temporarily lose their ability to cope with life and to pray. Not because of a lack of desire, but because the mind has become overwhelmed by mental and emotional turmoil. In this we can be confident, that God knows the heart of His child and will carry them through. His tender loving heart hears the silent cry of grief and pain, and one day they will pray again. The Bible says the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us. *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. Romans 8:26-27*

Last but not least, I have found the Bible, God's word to give me strength, courage, and direction. Ask the Lord to speak to you through it. Often as I have opened the Bible and there right in front of my eyes is a little something to give me courage for the day or for the struggle. It may not happen every time, but many times He has used His word to speak to me and to give me comfort and hope. Do not neglect it, prayerfully read it. Literally hold it close to your heart when you feel like the waves of Satan want to overwhelm your soul. Let it be the source of your hope and strength. Believe its promises and take courage from the stories of Jesus and other Bible characters. It is just as alive and real today as it was the day it was written.

Today Jesus stands ready and waiting to help us deal with our wounded hearts. *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30*

*I am by no means an “authority” on this topic. As always, I am open to others’ thoughts and views on what I write.*

*Jeff Goertzen*