

Helping Hurting People Around Us

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of sympathy (pity and mercy) and the God [Who is the Source] of every comfort (consolation and encouragement),

Who comforts (consoles and encourages) us in every trouble (calamity and affliction), so that we may also be able to comfort (console and encourage) those who are in any kind of trouble or distress, with the comfort (consolation and encouragement) with which we ourselves are comforted (consoled and encouraged) by God.

For just as Christ's [own] sufferings fall to our lot [as they overflow upon His disciples, and we share and experience them] abundantly, so through Christ comfort (consolation and encouragement) is also [shared and experienced] abundantly by us.

But if we are troubled (afflicted and distressed), it is for your comfort (consolation and encouragement) and [for your] salvation; and if we are comforted (consoled and encouraged), it is for your comfort (consolation and encouragement), which works [in you] when you patiently endure the same evils (misfortunes and calamities) that we also suffer and undergo.

And our hope for you [our joyful and confident expectation of good for you] is ever unwavering (assured and unshaken); for we know that just as you share and are partners in [our] sufferings and calamities, you also share and are partners in [our] comfort (consolation and encouragement). (Amplified)

Where do we go for understanding about hurts?

We hear many voices on the subject of hurts and abuses today. Politicians and news pundits try to make it sound like they have the true understanding on hurts. There are doctorate degrees given and entire careers built around people learning how to solve the problem of human hurts.

As Christians, we turn to the Bible. God's Word gives us the background story of how human experience has gotten as mixed up as it is. It then records words like "sorrow", "travail", "suffering" and "affliction" many times in human experience. In fact the New Testament Greek words for "comfort" and its forms occur 42 times, for "suffer" is also 42 times, and for "affliction" is 45 times. The Bible also gives us God's answer for human hurts. We will raise some very common questions about "hurts" and "hurting people" and seek Bible solutions so we know we see the problem and the solution from God's perspective.

Why do we as people have hurts?

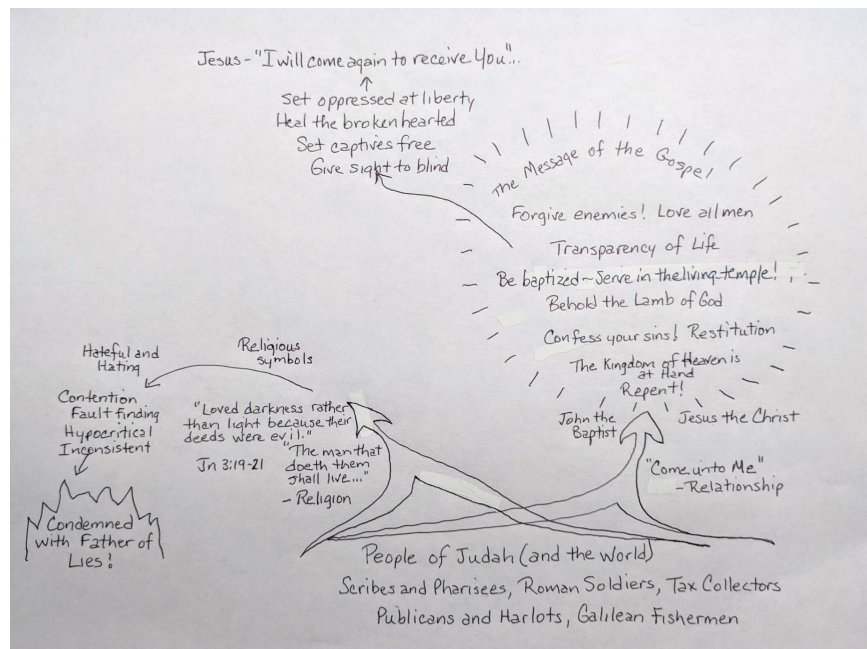
There are a number of reasons why people hurt. The first we will consider is that *mankind is created in the image of God*. We share similar emotions. The Bible speaks about God's love, but it also references His anger and His jealousy. He laughs at the foolishness of the wicked (Psalm 2) and sings for joy over the righteous (Zeph 3:17). It even says, "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." (Genesis 6:6.) Our God suffers, He understands us when we suffer.

We also suffer because our parents chose to sin. In Genesis 3, in the same context came to relate to fallen man, God calls out the sorrow and the extra suffering that would be man's lot because of listening to Satan. We know the "whole creation groaneth" (Rom 8:22) because of this "fall". Our own choices of sin only add to that misery.

But God offers comfort to our misery. Jesus said, "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,*" (Luke 4:18). We believe this will be done more completely in the future at "the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Acts 3:21

How can we find healing for our hurts?

Why then doesn't all mankind experience this healing of broken-heartedness? John 3:19-21 gives the explanation. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." There is no Gospel healing in one's heart or in relationships if man is not willing to face his sin, yes, naming specific sins he has been involved in. (See **Illustration 1** for the comparison of the paths chosen in Jesus' day.)



I asked one of my friends whether it is true what Jesus said about "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden". Is it true we can find all we need by coming to Christ with our hurt. His answer? "That is only part of the answer."

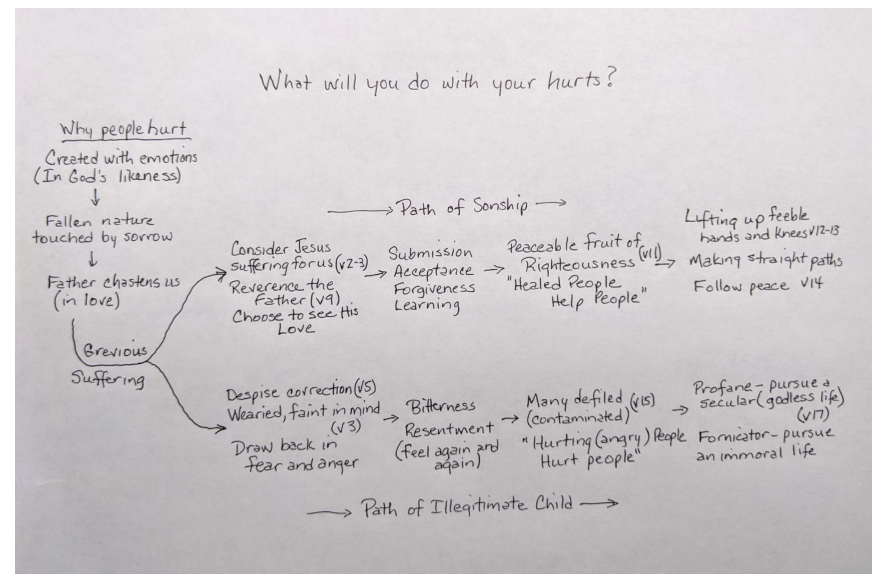
That led me to query what he meant by that.

He went on to explain that the church is now Christ's body on earth. God intends in part to meet the pain needs in human hearts through the church. This is shown by how the early church cared for each other.

The person who embraces the gospel message embraces humility and transparency. A person who comes to Christ shares his struggle and walks in the light, eschewing all former addictions and fleshly choices. He also embraces forgiveness. In forgiving others, releasing them from consequences or revenge from their wrongs, he frees himself to receive Holy Spirit comfort.

A church member who pretends to be a part of a fellowship but refuses (like the Pharisees) to disclose his heart struggles will never know the joy of healing in Christ's body, the church. His pride will prevent his healing.

There is another reason why we as mankind have hurts. That is because God has to chasten us for our sins, or because we need to be humbled to keep us from sin. The Bible explains that even as a loving father chastises his son, our Father in heaven lovingly chastens us. If we respond by pulling away from God in resentment or if we become alienated from Him, our hurt will turn into bitterness. When we become bitter, it takes very little to hurt us again. In fact, people will hurt us even when they don't intend to, or don't mean to. (Study **Illustration 2** for this diagram of the two options people have when they are "hurt" by their Heavenly Father.)



Do "Hurting people hurt people?"

You may have heard the adage that "Hurting people hurt people." This statement is true in some situations, but it does not tell the entire story.

Study the verses at the beginning of this treatise. Paul explains that when he was hurt very badly, that was what opened his heart to receive God's comfort. He implies that had he not had that hurt, then he would not know comfort to the degree he did. And if he did not know God's comfort, then he would not be able to relate to hurting people. In fact he insists that it was pain that brought him to experience Christ's comfort and it was Christ's comfort that enabled him to relate to others in any kind of trouble.

I asked an acquaintance if it is true that "hurting people hurt people"? His answer was "No, it's angry people who hurt people." When people brood over their hurts and become angry, then their anger will spill out and offend persons.

In fact, a person who is hurting often understands other hurting people more completely. They can not only sympathize with them (give them pity) they can empathize with them, (show them by their actions that they feel their hurt with them.) If you have had a similar pain in your life and have found your way, you likely won't have to say a lot. Your presence will bring comfort.

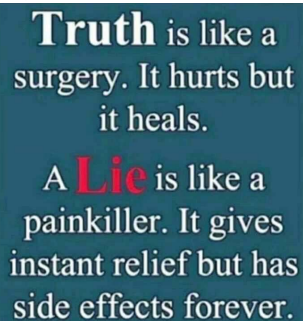
What are some wrong ways to relate to hurting people?

One of the little sayings my wife recently shared with me is this little figure.

We all would like to be thought of as being nice. There are times when we are tempted to skirt the truth and color it just a bit when we believe we understand a situation. That is when we are tempted to give a "white lie".

Telling the person what he wants to hear may help him feel better temporarily but it will not help him in the long run.

There is another lesson to ponder about relating to hurting people. Recently a father told me about a wayward child who is looking for help. His dreams about living the life of sin simply are not working out well. Money has run out and it is becoming more and more difficult to "sponge" off of other people. A family member was asking if he should give this prodigal a home for a while? As my friend and his family member discussed the situation, the wisdom of the prodigal son's father became clear. He went running for the son when he was done with the pig pen, but he didn't rescue him before he got to that point.



Truth is like a surgery. It hurts but it heals.
A Lie is like a painkiller. It gives instant relief but has side effects forever.

If we help someone in their sinful lifestyle, we may actually hinder them coming to repentance and God's answer. As one counselor has advised, "Don't short-circuit the misery factor. The misery factor has to outweigh the pleasure factor."

How do we help hurting people find salvation?

One of the key things to remember in practicing personal evangelism is that every person has something they are struggling with in their life. It may be physical or material, social or emotional, but the struggle is real.

Sometimes you will see that in the anger and abusiveness of the person you are relating to. When I come upon an angry and hurtful person it reminds me of a situation I came upon years ago. As I pulled up to the intersection, I saw a lady overwhelmed by grief at having hit a cute white dog with her car. The dog was spinning in circles and the lady was bending over, holding her hands together and crying for her part in creating the dog's obvious pain.

Then she took the next step. She bent over and petted the dog on the back, in an effort to comfort him. Immediately the dog lunged toward the woman and latched on to her hand. When she jerked her hand back, the dog came along. Soon the lady was hurting and crying out for pain.

If a person quickly turns to anger or abuse in your relationship, it is a sign of a hurting, unforgiving person. In a case like this, beseech God for wisdom, and then ask him a question. You may say something like, "It appears to me that you may have a lot of pain in your life. Is this something we can talk about?"

For others who are good at masking their hurts, you will not see anything obvious. But just because their pain is not obvious to you at first glance doesn't mean it isn't there. Here's where you may need to draw them out.

People can soon sense if you are a sensitive, sensible listener. That is what it takes. Only if you have tasted of the pain of life can you really care about others. And your caring heart will come through in many ways. If you really care about the people God sends into your heart you will have been praying that God would lead you to some seeking soul, even before you go on that trip or open your doors for business. And then when your paths cross, you will go beyond the surface in relationships, you'll want to know the person's heart. By careful responses you will build trust and many people will open up. Sometimes strangers are easier to be real with than people they think they will meet again. Many people like to open up

and dump out their troubles, but they want a careful listener.

But letting people “*see our good works*” is only part of Christ’s command. The other part is for us to “*let our light so shine before men*”. That means when we have been careful and considerate of the hurts when our acquaintance is angry or when they have patched everything over carefully our duty is to explain how Christ is the One who has met the needs of our hearts. If we are “very good people” but never give credit to Christ, they will “glorify man” as in “You are really good people”, but they will not glorify Christ.

Part of that might be that you will offer to pray for them, right there and then. Sometimes this is done better off to the side, or it might be right there in a busy airport concourse. There is no wrong place to cry out to your Heavenly Father for endeavoring to help someone. Offer to pray, and then pray for your friend in his need. Also give him a promise from the Bible. Maybe you will need to write the Bible verse on a piece of paper, but put his name on the paper so he has something to take along with him. God will use the seed you have planted. He wants to be in holy partnership with you in your caring for souls.

How do we help hurting people in the body?

“Brethren... Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden.” (Galatians 6:2-5)

The latter part of this verse brings out our responsibility to walk the path our Father has chosen for us. But the first part brings out the fact that we should enter into the suffering, into the burden our brother is bearing. Life is not just about us. Its about Christ’s body, and in whatever way we help our brother carry his load, we do this for Christ. We will be given our reward.

This will even affect our giving. When we truly care about our brother and see him in light of eternity, we will understand how much more his soul is worth than our own financial standing.

Hurts? We will never get beyond them in this life. In fact, we are not supposed to. Hurts are part of God’s plan to help prepare us for the world beyond.

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