

# GOD'S ANTIDOTE TO YOUR HURT

## Stressbusters - Part 6 Psalm 23:5

February 15, 2009

Because we live in an imperfect world, we will be hurt by accidents, illnesses, and often, by other people. In fact, relationships are the greatest source of stress in our lives. They are also the greatest blessing and the greatest joy. But people do hurt us, intentionally or unintentionally; accidentally or on purpose. The hurts and the pains are going to come. The question is, how are we going to react to them? And often, our reactions are not helpful. So just like a child needs to learn what not to do before they learn what to do, let us look at some things that we shouldn't do when we hurt. These are things that cause problems in our life:

### WHAT NOT TO DO WHEN YOU HURT

#### 1. DON'T IGNORE IT

The John Wayne approach to pain. Suffer in silence. Bite the bullet. Macho man. Pretend it doesn't exist. Hope it will go away. We often try to cope with our hurt by pretending it doesn't exist. There are several ways to do that, like, 1) Flat out denial: "I don't have a problem; I'm not hurting." We deny how we really feel. People hurt us and we say, "That didn't hurt." 2) Minimizing it: "It was no big deal. It didn't hurt me that bad." 3) Procrastinate. We postpone doing anything about it. Just sweep it under the rug. We say, "One of these days I'm gonna ...." But we just keep putting it off, because we always try to postpone the unpleasant.

Ignoring our hurt never heals it. The hurt that you're trying to ignore right now won't get any better. People say, "Time heals all wounds," but sometimes time makes it worse if we keep trying to ignore our pain. Psalm 39 *"I kept very quiet... but I became even more upset. I became very angry inside, and as I thought about it, my anger burned."* Procrastination can turn minor problems into major problems. It gets worse. It festers. Like any open wound, it can get infected, and the infection can spread if we don't take actions to deal with it immediately.

#### 2. DON'T RUN FROM IT

The Don Knotts approach. Run away. Escape. Mr. Chicken crosses the road so we don't have to face anything. Psalm 55, *"I wish I had wings like a dove. Then I'd fly away and rest. I would hurry to my place of escape..."* It's human nature. When we face difficulty we run from it. In public buildings, doors open outward, and we operate them by hitting the panic bar. We panic and run. We try to get away from our pain. And there are many different ways to escape: movies, television, alcohol, drugs, divorce, Disneyland. But the problems stay put so when we come back, we still see the same problems staring at us. Nothing changes. We can't run away.

#### 3. DON'T HIDE YOUR HURT

Some people try to just keep it to themselves. They don't tell anybody. They wear a mask. Some are quite good at camouflaging their pain. They wear nice clothing, show the world a pleasant smile, but they hide the fact that deep inside, they hurt. We have all played the game, "Is something wrong?" "No, No, everything's okay." We hate to admit that we hurt. We hide and try to disguise our pain. Sometimes people cover their pain with materialism. They buy nice cars and homes and surround themselves with things. They shop til they drop. But our possessions will never cover the pain. They will not hide the hurt.

*"When I kept things to myself, I felt weak deep inside me. I moaned all day long."* Hiding a hurt only intensifies it. It only makes it worse. So in this congregation we need to continually build an atmosphere of openness, honesty and authenticity; to create a place where real people can share real problems without being judged, yet all the while being loved and accepted; so they can safely share their hurts. For there is healing when we are able to share. When we find out somebody else has the same problem we do, it makes us feel better. But we can't share unless we stop hiding.

James 5:16 *"Confess your faults one to another that you may be healed."* Revealing our feeling is the

beginning of healing. When we share our hurt, it is the first step to getting past it. As long as we hold onto it and try to hide it in our heart, we can't get well. Some of you are holding onto hurts that happened years ago. You can't get well if you're still hiding it. The best place to share is in a small group, among friends which is why we need to expand our opportunities for small groups. Because everybody hurts. There are differences from person to person, but everybody hurts. You're not alone. You're not the only one living in pain. You might think you are, but there are others that have the same hurt you do. If you could somehow find the courage to share the hurt, you would find relief and you would start on a path to healing. So don't ignore your hurt, run from it or try to hide it.

#### 4. DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT

Worry is an attempt to control the uncontrollable. We try to control something we can't control and so we worry about it. Worry is playing God. When we play God it makes us more miserable because we know that we're not God. We can't control everything. We can't change the world by ourselves. Job 5:2 *"To worry yourself to death with resentment would be a foolish, senseless thing to do."* Worry never solves problems. It never heals hurt. All worry does is increase the size of our pain. Every time we worry, it's like playing a bad video in our mind, it just keeps getting worse. It gets bigger. It exaggerates and magnifies. The more we rehearse it in our minds, the more we worry, the bigger it gets. So don't worry about it.

#### 5. DON'T RESENT IT

Resentment never helps, but we keep trying it anyway. We become bitter, angry, and cynical. We withdraw and pity ourselves. Job 18:4 *"You are only hurting yourself with your anger."* Bitterness hurts us far more than any other hurt we will ever receive. Maybe someone has done some nasty things to you, like rape, rejection, molested, maligned. But there is something worse than that. That is bitterness. Bitterness is a poison that will kill you. It eats you up on the inside because resentment perpetuates the hurt. It takes an event and keeps it going. And in the process, it just prolongs the pain. Bitterness allows the past to control our present. It allows people who have hurt us in the past to keep hurting us now. We think that by being resentful we will hurt those who have hurt or offended us. But resentment never hurts anybody but us. We can be so upset and so resentful, that it keeps us preoccupied with the hurt and they just go on their merry way. Resentment is a self defeating attitude. It doesn't work. We are hurting ourselves with our anger. We've got to let it go.

If none of these approaches will heal my hurt, what will? Turn to God, for the Lord can and will heal our hurt. In the psalm we move from fields and valleys to a banquet. And there we see what God does for us: *AYou prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows.*" What do these symbols mean?

#### 1. LET JESUS SETTLE THE SCORE

Don't try to get even. Don't seek revenge. Don't retaliate against those who hurt you. Trust God to settle the score. David says *"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies."* Sheep have many natural enemies, wolves, bears, snakes, ticks, but sheep are also very defenseless. They cannot defend themselves from anything. They don't have sharp teeth or claws. They can't kick. They can't even run very fast. They are absolutely the most defenseless animal there is. And so they can't be safe unless somebody protects them. The job of a good shepherd is to find a good mesa, which is a Spanish word for table. He will drive the enemies from that table land and give a place for sheep to be fed and dwell in safety.

God says that we can either try to avenge ourselves, or we can sit, rest, and eat in safety. How tough is that choice? Romans 12 *ANever pay back evil for evil. ... never avenge yourselves. Leave that to God, for he has said that he will repay those who deserve it.*" God knows who's hurt you. He saw it and He cares. He can and will settle the score. There will be a day of judgment. He has the wisdom and the resources to do what needs to be done. Sometimes we think we know what justice demands, but our view is always biased. God's is not. And besides, we can never recover from our hurt as long as we're seeking revenge. We've got to decide, are we going to get revenge or are we going to be healed? We can't do both.

Rather than seek revenge, I would rather release the pain. And that can only happen through forgiveness. Forgiveness is not saying it didn't hurt, nor does it deny the existence of evil in the world. Forgiveness means that I give my hurt to God and let Him deal with the issue of justice. Forgiveness means that we trust God to handle the situation. Let Him prepare a table before you in the presence of your enemies. Don't try to get even. Still we ask, "Why should I forgive?" 1) Because you have been forgiven by God, and now, He wants you to share that forgiveness with others. 2) Resentment makes you miserable. 3) You're going to need more forgiveness in the future. Matthew 5:7 "*Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*" God forgives me to the extent that I forgive others. Every week we declare the scariest line in all of scripture: "Forgive me to the extent that I am willing to forgive others. If I am not willing to forgive, then don't forgive me." What we give is what we get. The longer we try to get revenge, the longer we hurt.

## 2. LET JESUS SOOTHE MY WOUNDS.

*"You anoint my head with oil."* Shepherds put oil a sheep's head to soothe and to heal. The worst enemy of sheep is flies. They hate flies. They can't shake them off. They can't swat them away with their hooves or tails. And then the flies get up in their nose and lay eggs, the larva drives them crazy. How disgusting is that? And I'm told that sometimes you'll see a sheep banging its head against a rock because he's going crazy from the flies. And he can't do anything about it. But the shepherds can. They will mix olive oil with sulfur and anoint the head of the sheep. A natural insect repellent. The shepherd takes action to eliminate this irritation of the sheep. Oil is also used as a salve or ointment. When a sheep has an open wound the shepherd will cover it with oil to both protect them and to soothe their pain. When David says, "*You anoint my head with oil*" he is saying God is going to soothe my wounds.

Jesus does the same thing with wounds and irritations in our life. Psalm 147 *"God heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds."* He says, "If you come to Me, I can bandage your wounds. I can soothe your hurts and pains. I can restore your spirit." Understand that forgiving someone who has hurt you will not immediately eliminate the pain they have caused. That takes time. Forgiveness is instant but restoration can take weeks or months, or even years. A small cut doesn't need a bandage, but the deeper wounds, like divorce, rejection by parents, molestation, betrayal by a trusted friend or a partner, those things don't heal quickly. In 1999 I tore my Achilles tendon playing basketball. It was surgically repaired the very next day. But the restoration of my leg took 10 months. It works the same way with emotional wounds. Many Christians think that once they've forgiven a hurt, they ought to be well immediately. We're not. We've taken the first step of forgiveness. Now comes the healing where God soothes our soul, but it takes time. How does Jesus heal our hurts? What kinds of bandages does Jesus use to heal our emotional wounds?

1) Fellowship. When we gather with other Christians, we find support. They will share our pain and offer their support. The first thing we need to do when we've been hurt, is to share it with a Christian friend. Don't isolate yourself. We need fellowship. We need to be in a support group.

2) Prayer. When we're hurt we need to talk it out. If we don't take it to God we'll take it out on our own bodies. We need to honestly and openly tell God how we feel. In the Psalms, David was very honest about his feelings. He unloaded to God. That's OK. He accepts our prayers.

3) Worship. There is healing power in praise. Have you ever come into a church service when you were down, the music started and the tears began to fall. Worship can provide an emotional healing. God uses praise and His word to build us up and bind up our wounds.

4) Ministry. That is, help others who have been hurt. When we help others who have been hurt it helps us. God set up the universe that way. Bring together people with similar experiences. Share what we've been through. In doing that we not only help others, we find healing in ourselves. We are a hospital for the hurting, for this church offers fellowship, prayer, worship and ministry.

If you are carrying a major hurt right now, try to understand two things: 1) Healing occurs in two phases - physical and emotional. First is a "be still" stage, like when we lay in bed after surgery, or when we are put in a cast so we can't move. That is the "be still" phase. And then there is the "Aget moving" stage. That's like physical therapy. We always get mad at physical therapists because they challenge us and make us do stuff we don't want to do. I know that some of you are in the midst of a healing right now. You've been still, but now it is time to get moving. God is starting to prod you and push you into ministry or service, and you're not happy about it, even one little bit. We are never going to get healed until we start helping other people. There was a time to be quiet, to be still, but now is the time for therapy - emotional therapy. We need to be actively involved in ministry. That's where the healing is going to come from.

2) Even after we've been totally healed, we're going to have a scar. There are always scars after we've been hurt. Now when we look at that scar we have a choice. We can either remember the hurt, or we can remember the Healer and the healing. That's our choice. We can remember the pain, defeat, the divorce, the failure, or we can remember the grace of God that has entered our life and healed us. Instead of focusing on the hurt, focus on the Healer.

### 3. LET JESUS SATISFY MY NEEDS

*AMy cup overflows*". An overflowing cup is a symbol for total satisfaction. It means, "I've got everything I need." In the desert when some one gives you a cup that is overflowing, it means they're wasting something. You don't waste water in the desert unless you've got more than you need. When we need to get over a hurt, we need to look to God to meet all our needs. Why? Because often we get hurt when we expect other people to meet needs only God can meet. No one can give you absolute security in life. No one can give you all the love you need. No one can make you completely happy. If we expect that from somebody, we're going to be bitterly disappointed, and we're going to be hurt. God never meant for us to have all our needs met by another human. We have needs that only God can meet. No one else can or will love us unconditionally 24/7. They can't make us secure 24/7. They can't us happy 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They can't meet all our needs because they're not God.

But our Lord, Jesus, is God, and He can meet all our needs. He never runs dry. He never has a bad mood. He never lets us down. If we look to Him our cup will overflow. Overflow with what? 1) Our cup will overflow with Hope Romans 15:13 *AGod will help you overflow with hope in him through the Holy Spirit's power within you.*" We never run out of hope because we know He's never going to let us down. 2) Our cup will overflow with love *AMay the Lord make your love to grow and overflow.*" (1 Thessalonians 3:12) And 3) Our cup will overflow with joy *"Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and your cup of joy will overflow.*" (John 16:24)

Have you ever gone to someone's house and wondered how long you were suppose to stay? Or had someone visit you and after a while you wanted to say, "You can go away now" but thought it too rude to actually say it? There is a custom in the Middle East that focuses on a filled cup. When someone comes to your house, even a total stranger, they are offered a cup of water or wine. When they drink it, it is refilled. As long as the cup is being refilled, it means that the visitor is welcome to stay. If you're visiting and your cup is empty, and the host knows it, it's time to go. But if the host decided he really liked a person and wanted them to stay a long time, he would not only fill the cup to the rim, but they would let it overflow. That overflowing cup means that we can stay as long as we want. It means that we are special. And that's the point.

We are special to God. He welcomes us into His home where He prepares a banquet for us where we are safe and secure. He anoints us so that our wounds might be soothed, bandaged and healed. And he brings us a cup overflowing with the goodness of hope, love, and joy. It is a banquet of wholeness, help, healing, and salvation. And it can be a part of our future, if we will look to God. If we will love God. If we will live in Christ. That is the promise. And in your life may it be so. Amen.