

Help for Those Who Hurt
November 8/9, 2014 - Gary Post

I. The Problem of Pain

- A. Christina's Story
- B. A Culture of Despair
- C. Role of loneliness and isolation
- D. The God of Hope

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.

I Thessalonians 4:13 (NIV)

II. How the "God of Hope" Uses Our Suffering for His Eternal Purposes

- A. God recycles our suffering into hope for others (II Cor. 1:3-11)

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13 (NIV)

- B. God uses our suffering to bring out the character of Christ in us

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. Romans 8:28-29 (NIV)

God can bring character development and personal growth out of any situation. Whether he does so is conditional on people's willingness to submit to his will throughout the process. God is sovereign over every life, but those who yield their will to him will be shaped according to his purposes. When the Lord is developing someone, all of life is a school. No experience, good or bad, is wasted (Romans 8:28). God doesn't squander people's time. He doesn't ignore their pain. He brings not only healing, but growth out of even the worst experiences. Every relationship can be God's instrument to fashion a person's character. At times, through our most painful experiences, God does his greatest work."

Henry and Richard Blackaby, Spiritual Leadership

- C. God uses our suffering to remind us of our dependence on Him

For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. II Cor. 1:8-10

- D. God uses our suffering to prepare us to receive eternal rewards

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal... for we walk by faith, not by sight. II Corinthians 4:16-18; 5:7

- E. God uses our suffering to bring Himself glory, draw people to His Son

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. II Corinthians 4:7-11

III. What Is the Hope We Have to Offer?

- A. We have been declared "not guilty" and guaranteed eternal life

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified [declared not guilty] by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. Titus 3:4-7 (NIV)

- B. God is all-powerful, on our side, and always with us

Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you. Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10 (NASB)

- C. God has promised to free us from fear and worry

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

- D. God has promised to empower us to live out Christ's life & character

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20

- E. God has promised to supply all our needs

And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19

- F. God has promised to answer our prayers

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. John 15:17

IV. Being Jesus Christ to Those Who Are Hurting

- A. Where's Titus when we need him? II Cor. 7:6

But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus.

- B. Stay in touch with God on a daily basis

- C. Start with prayer for wisdom and empowerment

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. James 1:5

For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

Phil 2:13

- D. Do no harm (What NOT to say)
1. To a person suffering from major depression
 - Just snap out of it
 - If you really wanted to stop being depressed, you could
 - Stop feeling sorry for yourself
 - What do you have to be depressed about? A lot of people have it worse than you
 - Quit wasting time and get back in the game
 - If you were a stronger person, you wouldn't be depressed
 - You must have unconfessed sin in your life or you wouldn't be depressed
 - If you would just read your Bible and pray more you wouldn't be depressed
 - If you had enough faith, you wouldn't be depressed
 - If you had more will power, you could lift yourself out of this depression
 - You're just sad over losing _____. You'll get over it
 2. To a person grieving a loss (loved one, job, relationship, etc.)
 - I know how you feel
 - It's for the best
 - You shouldn't feel that way
 - You need to start looking to the future, quit holding onto the past
 - Every cloud has a silver lining
 - At least (he didn't suffer, you had 20 years, he "went quick", etc.)
 - Everything happens for a reason, God must have a purpose in it
 - God doesn't give you any more than you can handle
 - Even when we don't understand, we shouldn't question God's will
 - Try not to think about it
 - Time heals all wounds
 - Everything will be all right
- E. What to say after "Hello" to someone who is grieving
1. "It's good to see you. I'm so sorry for your loss."
 2. Give a hug or touch on the shoulder (if appropriate).
 3. "Tell me about what's happened and how you're holding up."
 4. Listen and reflect and validate their feelings.
 5. Ask how you can help and/or how you can pray.
 6. Pray with them (if appropriate in that context).
- F. How to help those who are grieving
1. The ministry of your presence
 2. Listen much, talk little, be OK with silence
 3. Make it safe for them to share their raw emotions

4. Help them work through the grieving process (repeat as necessary)
5. Laugh and cry with them—let them lead
6. Pray with and for your friend
7. Use Scripture When Appropriate (Phil. 4:6-7; Romans 15:13, Psalm 34)
8. Make sure they are "safe" (
9. Demonstrate the love of Christ by meeting an immediate need

- G. How to help those who are depressed
1. The ministry of your presence (be there for them)
 2. Begin with love, acceptance and understanding
 3. Listen and try to understand
 4. Educate yourself so you can intelligently support and encourage
 5. Pray with and for them
 6. Make sure they are safe
 7. Help them get professional help (counseling and/or medication)
 8. Agree on expectations during recovery

- H. Opportunities to make a difference
1. Stephen Ministry: Informational Meeting 12/1/14, 7:00 pm
 2. Compassion International

Recommended for Further Reading

Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering	Timothy Keller
Spiritual Leadership	Henry and Richard Blackaby
Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart*	Kenneth Haugk
Christian Caregiving: A Way of Life*	Kenneth Haugk
A Place of Healing	Joni Erickson Tada
The Problem of Pain	C. S. Lewis
A Grief Observed	C. S. Lewis
New Light on Depression	David Biebel and Harold Koenig
The Depression Cure	Stephen Ilardi
The Mindful Way Through Depression	Mark Williams & John Teasdale
The Cognitive Behavioral Workbook for Depression	William Knaus

*Available at www.stephenministries.org

"Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty." Mother Teresa

"To please God... to be a real ingredient in the divine happiness... to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son- it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is."

C.S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory