

How God Heals Your Hidden Wounds

Isaiah 53:3-5

“He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him, surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.”

How many of you have ever had a broken bone? More than one broken bone at one time? **How many of you have ever had stitches?** More than thirty stitches? **How many of you have ever had a surgery of any kind?** How many of you have ever had a knife wound? In the kitchen or a dark alley? **How many of you have ever had a gunshot wound?** How many of you have ever been wounded in a war?

Tonight, I want to talk with you about How God Heals Your Hidden Wounds. Not the *physical*, but the *hidden wounds*. Hidden wounds are the memories that still hurt, those recollections from your past that when you think about those things they still cause pain in your life. **Memories of abandonment.** Some of you have memories of *abuse*. Some of you have memories of *ridicule*, severe criticism or *hatred* or *prejudice* or *criticism* that just tore you down – *physical* abuse, *spiritual*, *sexual* abuse, *emotional* abuse.

Where do you get the hidden wounds of life? They come from just about everywhere. From our *family*: parents, from kids, from brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles. **You can get them in the work place.** You can certainly get them on the *schoolyard* from mean children. Hidden wounds come from everywhere.

I have been a pastor for a long time and I have talked to people and I have learned two truths about life. One is *everybody has a hidden wound*. You may be masking it but everybody has a hidden wound. At least *one*. An emotional scar from somebody in the past who hurt you in some serious way. The other thing I have learned is that *emotional scars take longer to heal than physical wounds*. Our bodies usually heal from physical wounds in a matter of days or weeks, but sometimes it would take years and years to get over the emotional scars.

The good news is this: *Jesus Christ wants to heal your hidden wounds*. You can start on that process tonight.

Last week I told you about how, in the Bible, God gives Himself different Hebrew names describing the benefits to us. One of them in Exodus 15, He says, “I am Jehovah Rapha,” which means “I am the God who heals.” The Bible says this in Psalm 147, “God heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds.” You say, “How does He do that? I would like to have my hidden wounds healed – those hurts and recollections of the past, memories.” In this segment we are going to look at the steps in God’s healing process.

When you look at the life of Jesus, you see He healed a lot of people - *physically and emotionally*. There are certain *patterns* and *principles* that come up over and over again in the way He dealt with people. They don’t always go in this order, but you can find these five principles in God’s process of healing of memories.

1. *The first step begins when I reveal my hurt*. You are never going to get well until you face your feelings straight on. The Bible talks about the problem of stuffing it down inside and not talking about it in 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.” He is saying holding on to hurts is like carrying hot coals in your heart – you are the one who is going to get burned. Hidden wounds,

when you try to stuff them down and cover them over, do not heal. They feaster. And pushing a hurt aside does not get rid of it. It just makes it worse.

Some of you are tired all the time. One of the causes (not all of them) of constant fatigue is because you are using up emotional energy on resentments, grudges, guilts and griefs of your past. You use so much energy dealing with those things; you have no energy left to enjoy life. So you are tired all the time.

The Bible says this, “When I kept things to myself, I felt weak deep inside me and I moaned all day long.” He is saying it is emotionally draining.

Because we live in a sinful world, people abuse other people. I have no doubt that many of you here tonight have been abused in some fashion by someone else. It is amazing how people respond to abuse in different ways.

Some people try to respond to abuse by just forgetting it. They think, “I will just put it out of sight, out of mind, and pretend it never happened.” That is impossible to do.

Some people try to run from it. There are many ways to escape – get drunk, do drugs, go to bed with people you don’t even know, get involved in work.

Some people try to just ignore it. This is different from forgetting it, in that they just “sweep it under the rug.”

Some people try to pass it off on somebody else, blame others. It is true that abuse is not your fault, but constantly blaming someone else opens the door for unforgiveness and bitterness.

Some people try to cover up their abuse. One of the great paradoxes found in abuse is that the *victim usually feels a great burden of guilt.* We think it is our own fault. We do not want anybody to know what happened, so we push it down. But when you suppress those feelings of guilt, and, and bitterness, your life is like a coke bottle that you have shaken up. It is about ready to explode. One day the top is going to come off.

Therefore, step one is to be honest about your pain, about your fear, about your anger, about your resentment and bitterness over what people did to you, about the way you felt when you were abandoned or abused, ridiculed, the shame that maybe you felt. You have got to start by *revealing your hurts.* You have got to be honest.

Honest with whom? There are at least two people that we must be honest with:

First you have to be honest with yourself. You have to own up to “This hurts! I am still feeling the pain or I am still hoarding anger and resentment over this thing.”

Second you have got to be honest to God. You need to say, “God, this is how I feel!” You just need to get alone with God and vent it all out. God can handle that. God already knows how you hurt because He saw it when you were hurt. And He hurt with you and He grieved with you. It is not going to surprise God when you are honest with Him about the pain in your life and the shame in your life. He already knows. He already cares. He already loves you. He just wants you to be honest with Him. Being honest with God is for your own benefit. The main thing is to get it off your chest, let God know how you feel.

2. Step two is to release those who have hurt me. Listen very carefully to this statement - you cannot get well as long as you harbor resentment. For your own sake, you have got to let go of the right to get even. The fact is, you only have “X” amount of emotional

energy and you are going to spend it in some way. One of the most difficult decisions you have got to decide in life is “Do I want to get well or do I want to get even?” You cannot do both. You are going to have to decide that. Do you want to get well? Or do you want to get even? You do not have enough emotional energy to do both.

Getting even will not take away your pain. Some of you have tried that. You have been able to get back at the person who hurt you. You know it did not solve the problem. You still feel the pain. There is only one way to get rid of hurt in your heart, when somebody has hurt you. There is only one way.

Forgiveness. You say, “But they do not deserve to be forgiven!” I didn’t say they did. You are right, they probably don’t. Neither do you deserve to be forgiven, but God has forgiven. I am not saying forgive them because they deserve it. I am saying forgive them for your own sake. You cannot get on with your life as long as you are stuck in the past. As long as you hold onto resentment, you are stuck. That person is still controlling your life in the present even though they may have been out of your life for many years.

There was an article in *Time* magazine titled, “Should all be forgiven?” The headlines read: “Giving up that grudge can be good for your health. Researches are pioneering a new science of redemption based on the old form of grace.” Well... duh! Scientists are finally figuring out what the Bible has been teaching for 2000 years. You cannot hold onto a hurt and enjoy life. You have got to let it go. You have got to give up your right to get even. Not because they deserve it but because you want to get on with your life.

Romans 12:17-19 says, “Never pay back evil for evil. Never avenge yourself. Leave that to God. For He has said that He will repay those that deserve it.” The reason why we get in such a mess is we forget this. We forget that God saw all the hurt that was done to us. When we forget that God saw that hurt, then we think that we have to take

matters into our own hands and it is our duty to settle the score. **It isn't.** It is not your duty to settle the score. God says, "I will settle the score." **Trust God to balance the books.** He saw what was happening. He saw the hurt. **He is going to justify and mete out justice at the appropriate time.** Either you can spend the rest of your life trying to do it or you can let God do it.

Psalm 56:8 says, "You, God, have kept a record of all my tears." **Did you know that God has kept a record of every one of your tears, the times that you have been abused, the times that you have felt injustice, or if you have experienced prejudice or you have experienced hurt or rejection?** God has kept a record of your tears. He is going to settle the score one day because He is a God of justice. **Nothing has ever slipped His watchful eye.** No hurt at all.

The reason why you hold on to your resentment is subconsciously you think, "I have to remember this because if I forget it they are going to get away with it." **You think by holding on to it, somehow you are hurting them.** Well, you're not. You are only hurting yourself. **You think you have got to hold on to it so it will never be forgotten because if it is forgotten, they will get away with it.** It is not going to be forgotten. God is going to remember it. And if God is going to remember all the hurts that have been done to you, then you can stop rehearsing it in your mind and wasting emotional energy on it.

Jesus certainly understands abuse. He was abused. I suggest you do what Jesus did. The Bible says, "When Jesus suffered, He did not threaten to get even. He left His case in the hands of God." **Jesus had six wounds right before He died.** A *head wound*, a *face wound*, the *back wound* from the whipping they gave Him, the *hand wounds*, the *feet wounds* and the *side wound* where they stuck a spear in His side. But the deepest wounds in Jesus' life were the hidden wounds. **Because He knew betrayal.** He knew *abuse*. He knew *rejection*. **He knew hatred.** He knew *injustice*. Jesus could have blown them all away in an

instant. **Instead, He stretched out His hands and said, “Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing.”**

Why should I forgive those who hurt me? One, God’s forgiven you. Two, you are going to need more forgiveness in the future. Three, it is the only way you are going to get well. There is no other way. You have got to release your right to get even.

Hebrews 12:15 says, “A bitter spirit is not only bad in itself but can also poison the lives of many others.” **Resentment poisons everybody around you.** When you get bitter, you hurt all kinds of other innocent people and you perpetuate the pain because if you do not release that person who has offended you, you are going to resemble them in your attitude and in your relationships. I hear people say, “I will never be like...” *my dad, or mom, or whoever.* **The problem is that because of your bitterness you are focusing on what you do not want.** And what you *resist* often *persists*. And because you continue to dwell on the person, the pain, and the past, you are going to become a bitter person.

Did you know that bitterness can be passed on from generation to generation? Some of you had very *bitter parents* or a *bitter parent* and they passed on to you a *resentment* towards life, towards situations, and if you do not break the chain, you are going to pass it on to your kids. Somebody has got to stop the misery by revealing their hurt and then by releasing those who have hurt them.

3. If you want to get well you have to replace your thoughts with God’s truth. Your brain is like a giant computer bank. It has recorded every single experience your five senses have experienced – everything you have smelled, everything you have seen, everything you have ever heard, everything you have ever touched, everything you have ever tasted – its all stored in your memory bank. **Your brain is an amazing piece of work.** It has recorded it all down – good and bad, right and wrong, true and false. It is all stored up somewhere.

Here is the problem: Your brain does not distinguish between things that are true and things that are false. Particularly when you were a little kid, there were some things that were said to you that were flat-out lies but you believed them. **And if you believe them, you act on them.**

Some of you are still operating on faulty data. When you base your life on *faulty data*, then what happens is you build a *self-defeating life style*. You set yourself up for failure and pain and hurt. Some of you, when you were kids, had adults or authority figures in your life say things like “You are stupid... You are ugly ... You are never going to amount to anything ... I am embarrassed to call you my child ... You are uncoordinated ... You are dumb ... Why can't you be smart like your sister/brother...” on and on. They said things to you like – “You are worthless” – **and that went into your memory bank.** **And some of you are still struggling with stuff that you recorded in your memory bank 20 or 30 years ago.** And you are wondering why you still do things that defeat you. **Self-defeating actions and habits.** **You have got to replace those thoughts with God's truths.**

Romans 12:2 says, “Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.” **How does God change us?** How does He transform us? **By changing the way we think.**

How does a person go about changing the way we think? **First, you have to ask God to heal your memories.** When you pray say, “Father, by faith I am trusting You to heal my memories? Heal those things that hurt, those open wounds in my heart. Father, I ask you to give me the courage to take authority over my thought life, and allow the healing process to begin.”

Second, you need to fill your mind with God's word, the Bible. The more you fill your mind with God's Word, the more it will start replacing your old thoughts and putting God's truth in your mind.

You need to get into this book. That is why I am so thrilled that you have taken the time out of your busy schedule to be here on Wednesday nights. The more you study the Bible, the more you build your life on truth and the more you replace all the lies. You fill your mind with this book by memorizing and studying and reading.

Then the third thing you do is you believe the truth about you. What is the truth about you anyway? This is what the Bible says, “Through what Christ would do for us (there’s the key) God decided to make us holy in His eyes, without a single fault we stand before Him covered with His love.” Notice the words “without a single fault.” That is how God sees you once you step across the line and give your life to Christ. Without a single fault. He takes everything you have ever done wrong – the *guilt*, the *regrets*, the *shame*, and the *hurts* – and He erases it and says, “Together we are going to start over.” God sees you without a single fault. But, are we really without any fault? No. But because of what Christ has done for us on the Cross, our sin is charged to Him. And that, my friend, is good news.

Psychologists have proven over and over again that the way you see yourself – your self-esteem, your self worth, your self-concept – is largely determined by what you think the most important person in your life thinks about you. The way you see yourself tends to be based on what you think the most important person in your life thinks about you. So I want to suggest to you that you make *Jesus Christ the most important person in your life.* Because He is going to tell you the truth and everybody else is going to lie to you. So you have to decide. Are you going to listen to liars that say, “You are worthless! You are nothing!” Or am I going to listen to what Jesus Christ says? The Bible says when you are in Christ you are valuable, you are acceptable, you are lovable, you are forgivable, you are capable, you are usable by God. That is what God says about you.

So the question is: Who are you going to believe? It is your choice. You have to replace your old thoughts with God's truth. That takes a process but you need to start on it.

4. If you want to be healed from your hidden wounds you have to refocus on the future. Get your attention off your past and onto God's plan for your future. Job 11 gives us three steps to refocusing on the future, "Put your heart right, reach out to God and face the world again, firm and courageous. Then all your troubles will fade from your memory like floods that are past and remembered no more."

First this says, "Put your heart right." **That means give up your right to get even, release those who have hurt you.** Forgive them whether they deserve it or not. You do the right thing whether they did the right thing or not. You might be thinking, "I don't feel like doing that." **Do it anyway!** Because it is the right thing to do and it is the only way you are going to get well. You do the right thing, which is forgiveness.

Two it says, "reach out to God." **You need to ask Jesus Christ to come into your life and you need to ask Him to begin healing your hidden wounds and you need to ask Him to start bringing good out of the evil that has happened to you.** Here is the real issue: **Do you really want to get well?** If you do, you stop focusing on your hurt and you start focusing on your Healer. **Stop focusing and being obsessed with your hurt and the people who hurt you and start focusing on your Healer, Jesus Christ.** Jehovah Rapha – "I am the God who heals you." He is the answer. Nobody else is.

Then the third thing it says "Face the world again." **Do not withdraw from living life.** Do not pull yourself back into a shell. Stop seeing yourself as a *victim* and start looking ahead.

My past is not my future. That was then and this is now. I am not stuck in the past and I do not have to stay stuck in the past because I have the power of God in me through Christ. **What I was in the past is**

the old me, what I am today is the new me. I realize that sometimes what I used to be tries to overtake what I am now, but I stand before you to confess that I am more than a conqueror through Him that love me! My past is not my future.

You are not bound to perpetuating the past. You can break the chains of the generational pull if you choose to remove the resentment. You need to take these steps – reveal your hurt, release those who have offended you, replace your old thoughts with God's truth, refocus on the future. When you do that, you will be able to do what Proverbs 4:25 says, "Look straight ahead with honest confidence. Don't hang your head in shame."

You are never going to get well by yourself. If you could have, you would have been well by now. You need the Lord. You need the support of other people. You need a support group. And the best place to find that is in a loving church family like here at Mountain Grove.

When people hurt deeply, they will do almost anything to stop the hurt. Get stoned. Get drunk. Pop some pills. Go to bed with somebody they do not even know. They will do almost anything to stop the hurt.

How do you spell relief? Sex? Drugs? Drink? How do you spell relief?

I want to suggest you spell it, J-e-s-u-s. The world can only offer you temporary painkillers to relieve that pain. Painkillers. There are three problems with painkillers: One, they do not last. Two, they are addicting. Three, they never solve the problem. So when you come down from that experience, that high, that affair, that fling or whatever it is, you are still lonely and you still feel ashamed and you still feel bitter and angry and worthless. Stop going to quick fixes. They simply do not work. Turn to the One who says, "I am the God

who heals.” **That boyfriend is not the answer.** That *girlfriend* is not the answer. That *habit* is not the answer. The answer is found in the God who says, “I am the God who heals.”

How do you know when you have been healed? You know you have been healed when you want to start sharing the cure with everybody else.

5. Reach out to help others. If you are not there, you are not healed yet. Because that is the fifth step of God’s healing process. **You have got to redeem your pain.** You have got to use your experiences to help other people. That is called ministry. **God meant for us to help each other.** He can use your pain for good.

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 1, “God comforts us every time we have trouble so when others have trouble we can comfort them with the same comfort that God has given to us.” **This is what Dale Rich is doing when he meets with his substance abuse groups.** Have you got a major hurt in your life? In a church this size, we have some people who want to help.

Some of you have accepted Christ as your personal Savior. But you have not *revealed your hurt*, you have not released those who have offended you, you have not *replaced those old thoughts with new truth*, so you are *still living in your old life* even though God’s given you the power to have a new life. You need to appropriate that today by taking the steps of recovery.

It does not matter who you are. It does not matter where you have been. It does not matter what the scar. **It does not matter what the sin.** It does not matter how you feel. Somewhere along the way, there is healing for your life ... tonight.