

Healing for Deep Wounds

I shared with you a couple of weeks ago that I have embarked on a different strategy for my personal devotions this year. Rather than reading a lot of Scripture every day or trying to read through the whole Bible as I have in past years, I have been meditating on smaller portions, a verse or two at the most or even a part of a verse, and asking the Lord to speak to me through these portions of His word. Another note about this is that I am not picking the verses at random but am working with a prayer journal that assigns the portions to me. That's a good thing, because it forces me to consider things I otherwise might easily skip over.

One day last week the assignment was to meditate on Jesus' words to Thomas in John 20:27, where He says, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." The way my prayer journal is constructed, the first thing I am supposed to do in each assigned verse is to write out the Lord's instructions. What is the Lord telling me to do?

The words of instruction found here are "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." The whole passage is instruction. But this is a tough assignment. How do I put my finger on Jesus' wounds? How can I see his hands or reach out my hand to put it into His side? And just as difficult, how do I stop my unbelief and truly believe? At first, it seemed like an impossible assignment. What instruction is here for me?

But then, it came to me; what I am really being invited to do here is to explore the wounds of Jesus, to think about the wounds of Jesus, to meditate on the wounds of Jesus, and to discover the truth that somehow in the midst of doing this my doubts will be addressed and my faith will grow. What I am meant to see here is that there is healing power to be discovered in the wounds of Jesus.

As I continued to meditate on these few instructions, and to wrestle with the question, how can I get in touch with the wounds of Jesus, when those wounds were inflicted on Him so many years ago, the Holy Spirit suggested a rather amazing answer: I sensed the Spirit saying to me, "His wounds are your wounds." Isaiah 53:5 says, as translated in the KJV: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our

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iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." The NIV says it a little differently: "But he was pierced for our transgressions, . . . and by his wounds we are healed." When you put the end of the NIV translation onto the beginning of the King James translation of this verse, what you have is this, "He was wounded for our transgressions and by His wounds we are healed."

Do you realize that the only wounds Jesus took upon Himself on the cross were our wounds? The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus was tempted in every way we are tempted but that He committed no sin. So none of the punishment that Jesus took on the cross was for sins that He had done; every sin He bore and every corresponding wound He suffered came from us.

Do you realize that every deep wound you carry within your heart and mind; every deep wound you carry in your soul is the result of sin, either your own sin or someone else's? If your parents failed to love you or abused you as a child, that was a wound inflicted on you by the sins of your parents. If a teacher or coach or fellow classmates ridiculed you as a teenager, those were wounds inflicted on you by the sins of others. If you were raped or molested, those wounds came from the sin of the rapist or molester. If a husband or a wife betrayed you, that wound is from their sin. Even if the wound you bear is grief from the loss of a child who died from some genetic flaw, that fatal flaw can be traced back to the sin of Adam. If you rebelled against your parents and against God and still carry the guilt of what you did at that time, the wounds you bear from that are resulting from your own sin. And I say that it doesn't matter who committed the sins against you, all deep wounds have a sin base, and Jesus took the punishment for that sin and bore those wounds upon and in Himself. So again our wounds are His wounds and when we examine our wounds in the shadow of the cross, those wounds can be healed and we can be set free from their debilitating influence in our lives. And when we experience that happening, doubt melts into faith. We come to know that Jesus is truly alive, risen from the dead, alive for us today. We will say with Thomas: "My Lord and my God!" How can we doubt the God who heals us in the midst of our wounds? **Our wounds are His wounds.**

A second thing that is very important for us to realize is that multiple wounds mean we need multiple healings. Or, to put it another way, when Jesus died for our sins and bore our wounds,

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He did not die for our sins and wounds all lumped together. Jesus was scourged with many lashings. There were multiple thorns pressed into His skull. He was beaten with rods, creating many bruises. He was pierced in both hands, both feet, and had a sword thrust into His side. And, as that sword was thrust into His side, it cut through layers of skin, muscle, bone, blood vessels and other vital organs. There were multiple wounds for our multiple sins and for our multiple wounds. Isaiah says it was by His stripes (plural) and by His wounds (plural) that we are healed.

This is crucial for us to understand, because most of us were taught to expect a complete release from sin and a complete healing for sins' wounds the moment we received Jesus into our lives as our Savior. Evangelists and preachers set us up to expect this, and when it didn't all come at once, we wondered what went wrong. We may have even wondered if we were lied to and if Jesus really is the Savior everyone claims Him to be. But here's the real deal: When we receive Jesus into our lives as our Savior, He responds by coming into our lives. The Holy Spirit does come in. A very important transaction does take place. We are at that moment forgiven and at that moment we do become children of God. We are born again. We are accepted in Christ and God looks at us with the delight of a father and mother who have just witnessed and experienced the birth of a brand new baby. We are loved at the moment of that birth and we are welcomed into God's forever family. There's a celebration in heaven held in our honor. And, it is absolutely glorious.

But this is only the beginning of a new journey just as surely as it is the end of an old one. And we begin this new life with many scars and wounds encountered in the life we lived before. And, in the infancy of our faith we even commit new sins and experience further wounding, some just as painful and perhaps even more painful than anything we knew before, because now we realize we are betraying the very one who saves us. Does anyone know what I'm talking about here? Does this connect? We have all experienced this to some extent or another, and we all have multiple wounds.

When I was at the Formational Prayer Seminar in Ashland three weeks ago, I found myself among 150 pastors, Christian Counselors, Psychologists, Seminary professors, doctoral students, and family therapists. Here were 150 people who have

dedicated their lives to God and to the ministry of helping others, and guess what we discovered? That's right. We are all wounded. Even as messed up as I know I am, I could hardly believe the intensity of the spiritual and emotional pain that surfaced among the others in that room. We all knew Christ as our Savior but very few had been taught how to access His healing for deep wounds. There are multiple wounds in us that correspond to the multiple wounds of Christ. **We all have wounds.**

What I have told you so far is that the wounds of Jesus are our wounds and that Jesus invites us to touch and to explore those wounds in Him. I have told you that there are multiple wounds subject to multiple healings and that we've all got wounds. The question that remains is how do we bring these wounds to Jesus for His healing? These are some things we need to know:

#1: I want you to know there is more. There is more healing, more freedom, more power, more excitement, more joy in and through Christ than what you have yet to experience. I guarantee that there is more. Jesus wants to give you more. In fact, He wants you to be hungry for more.

#2: Deep wounds are generally dealt with one at a time. Individual wounds need individual attention and each individual wound is a place to meet Jesus and to experience His deliverance. Someone may be thinking to himself or to herself at this point this morning: I'm the most messed up wounded person in this whole church, so much so that I don't even deserve to be here. But you don't know how much you are blessed. Every scar you wear and every wound you bear is an opportunity to meet with Jesus and experience His healing. God wants to use your life to showcase His love.

#3: Healing for deep wounds is always found in community. In some cases, it might be just in community with God, the Trinity, but usually it also involves being in community with other believers. James says, "Confess your faults one to another and pray for one another that you may be healed." Hezekiah Walker writes, "I need you. You need me. I'll pray for you. You pray for me. I need you to survive." We don't have to do this alone. We are not expected to do this alone. We journey on this road to healing for deep wounds together.

#4: Prayer is the gateway into the healing presence of Jesus Christ. The Word of God is both the scalpel used by the Holy Spirit to drain the poison from our wounds, and the bandages to bind them up for healing. The love of the Father provides the atmosphere in which deep healing can occur. This means that all the healing we experience ultimately comes from God, while we who help provide care, are there to help others come into God's healing presence. Each healing is a prayerful encounter with Jesus Christ alive from the dead.

Now what I want to do at the end of today's message is to give you some more ideas about what deep wounds look like and then give you an opportunity to begin the process of seeking God's healing for them. Deep wounds are painful memories, things done to you or words spoken to you or at you that hurt you deeply. Deep wounds are memories of hurtful things you did or said to yourself, or the shame of hurtful things you did or said to others. Deep wounds are experiences of loss and grief that continue to vacuum the joy out of your life. Deep wounds are lies you have been told and believed about yourself or others. Deep wounds are those things that erode your sense of worth and confidence as a child of God. Deep wounds are often experienced as anger, fear, emptiness, hopelessness, grudges held against others, suspicion of others, unresolved guilt, and doubts about God's love.

Take a moment right now and do something courageous. Pray to the Lord and ask Him to come close to you. And then ask Him to show you a wound in your life that He wants you to bring to Him for healing. For many of you this will take some time. But, for others, you already know what the Lord has put His finger on. For some, as soon as you ask, He'll tell you: "This is the wound I want to heal." "This is where I want to reveal my glory."

If He has already spoken to you or if He tells you what it is when you ask Him, I would invite you to do one thing more. Take a step of faith and speak to me or to someone else to whom the Lord directs you and enlist our prayers. What you say to us will be held in confidence. But if Jesus meets you with His healing you may want to shout it from the housetops! Pray now for Him to come and make His presence known to you. Ask Him to meet you in one of your wounds, and understand that He has already experienced the pain of that wound and will replace the pain you have felt there with the joy of His healing fellowship.

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Isaiah 53:1-6; John 20:27

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