



Trauma

HEALING THE WOUNDS THAT BIND YOU

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(Psalm 18:2-6, 25-30)

Some events in life cause pain that goes deeper and lasts longer. We all have met people who have experienced a horrible loss or survived a great difficulty. Counselors call such an experience "trauma." As these people go through life, they may not be aware of or remember the original damage. But at times, trauma can influence their reactions in certain unhealthy ways or cause them to make unhealthy decisions. Those whose traumas don't get healed may grow up to damage others, even their own families.

WHAT CAUSES TRAUMA?

Most experts divide trauma into two major categories. The first is *invasion* trauma. Something happens to a person that creates damage. The second is *abandonment* trauma. Something did *not* happen to a person (such as not feeling loved, protected, or nurtured) that creates damage. This second kind of trauma can be harder to recognize because the person doesn't know what they are missing, never having had it.

These two kinds of trauma affect the four aspects of people's lives: emotional, physical, sexual, spiritual.

ASPECTS OF INVASION TRAUMA

Emotional invasion occurs when people feel criticized, shamed, or blamed, either verbally or nonverbally. For example, sighs that express anger or displeasure can be taken as criticism. It occurs when people are talked out of their feelings with statements such as "Big girls don't cry," or "Christians don't feel that way." It also occurs when an adult or authority figure reverses roles and expects a child to be the caregiver—giving emotional care instead of receiving it.

Physical invasion occurs when a person is physically abused. This form of

trauma may create permanent physical damage. The emotional effect of this can also be experienced if a person lives in a home in which someone else is being physically harmed.

Sexual invasion happens when a person is penetrated or touched in sexual areas outside the mutual relationship of marriage. This is a very broad definition because even consenting sexual relationships between people who are not married *can* have a traumatizing effect because it is outside of God's plan. This type of invasion can also happen when people are teased or criticized about their bodies.

Spiritual invasion takes place when people are led to believe that they are unworthy of God's love and grace. Often rigid, fear-based religious teaching, even if it is well intended, can have this effect. This results in shame that people can't seem to shake.

ASPECTS OF ABANDONMENT TRAUMA

Emotional abandonment occurs when love, attention, care, nurture, and affirmation are not given. This results in profound loneliness.

Physical abandonment happens when people's basic needs for food, shelter, and

clothing are not met. People who are touched or abused will experience deprivation. Many people are not good models for their children.

Sexual

parents are often unable to educate children about sexuality. Many people have deviated from the path of righteousness.

Spiritual

healthy spiritual lives are not available to many people.

The

Damage in the home can have an effect on the form of trauma. A form of a religious trauma is profound suffering.

THE EFFECTS

Symptoms of trauma include anxiety and anger, loneliness, and addiction. Flashbacks, nightmares, and stress disorders are also common.

Stress Disorders

Trauma can be remembered as a variety of experiences, consciously or unconsciously, in their adult lives. They may consult or try to find the perpetrator else. This is a trauma survivor with people who go the other way, any person who has experienced the trauma.

HEALING

The path to healing is a series of steps.

To Learn More, visit our website at www.healingtrauma.com. We also have a personal coaching program.

clothing aren't met. People who aren't touched enough—with hugs or cuddles—will experience a form of this called “touch deprivation.” Another form occurs when people aren't getting enough information or modeling on physical self-care.

Sexual abandonment occurs when parents and other responsible adults don't educate children about and model healthy sexuality. Lack of correct information can have devastating results.

Spiritual abandonment happens when healthy spiritual teaching and modeling is not available.

The above categories can overlap. Damage in one aspect of a person's life can have an effect in another. For example, any form of trauma that happens at the hands of a religious authority figure can create profound spiritual damage.

THE EFFECTS OF TRAUMA

Symptoms of unhealed trauma can include anxiety and panic disorders, depression, anger, loneliness, attachment disorders, and addictions of all kinds. Panic, anxiety, flashbacks, and anger sometimes are labeled under the diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Trauma survivors may cope with the remembered or not remembered trauma in a variety of ways. Some, almost unconsciously, may seek to repeat the trauma in their adult lives, hoping for a different result or trying to be in control by becoming the perpetrator of the trauma on someone else. This is called “trauma repetition.” Trauma survivors may create relationships with people who treat them poorly, or they go the other direction entirely by avoiding any person or event that triggers memories of the trauma.

HEALING TRAUMA

The path to recovery includes a number of steps. Trauma survivors need:

> to be educated about the nature of trauma. Any denial may need to be confronted. Sometimes it is helpful to do this in groups of other survivors.

> comforting, accepting, and nonjudgmental listeners who believe them and offer them hope.

> help in expressing their anger about their trauma. This includes anger at the perpetrators, but may not necessarily mean confronting them. There are symbolic ways, such as writing letters to perpetrators that won't necessarily be sent, which can be just as powerful. Opportunities to be angry with God may also be needed. Discussions about how a loving God would allow trauma to happen may be helpful.

> instruction in the process of grieving the losses that the trauma has caused in their lives.

> to know that they didn't deserve their hurts and didn't cause them.

> help in structuring boundaries so that they will not be harmed again by old, current, or new relationships.

> to see the positive strengths that can result from the healing of their trauma.

> to be able, eventually, to forgive. This is the ultimate spiritual victory.

Caregivers should be aware that working with trauma survivors can bring up one's own issues of trauma. If this interferes with working with them, it will be necessary to refer them to someone else. This possible dynamic points to the fact that we all need to be in the journey. Getting our own hurts healed can make us effective in healing.

FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of trauma include:

> Psalms 27:10; 34:18; 46:1-11; 107:20; 147:2, 3

> Proverbs 3:5-8

> Isaiah 53:1-12; 61:1-3

> 2 Corinthians 1:8-11

To Learn More: Turn to the key passage note on trauma at Lamentations 1:10-21 on page 1035. See also the personality profile of Jonah on page 1163.

JERUSALEM IN AFFLICTION

- 1** How lonely sits the city
That was full of people!
How like a widow is she,
Who was great among the nations!
The princess among the provinces
Has become a slave!
- 2** She weeps bitterly in the night,
Her tears are on her cheeks;
Among all her lovers
She has none to comfort her.
All her friends have dealt treacherously
with her;
They have become her enemies.
- 3** Judah has gone into captivity,
Under affliction and hard servitude;
She dwells among the nations,
She finds no rest;
All her persecutors overtake her in dire
straits.
- 4** The roads to Zion mourn
Because no one comes to the set
feasts.
All her gates are desolate;
Her priests sigh,
Her virgins are afflicted,
And she is in bitterness.
- 5** Her adversaries have become the master,
Her enemies prosper;
For the LORD has afflicted her
Because of the multitude of her
transgressions.
Her children have gone into captivity
before the enemy.
- 6** And from the daughter of Zion
All her splendor has departed.
Her princes have become like deer
That find no pasture,
That flee without strength
Before the pursuer.
- 7** In the days of her affliction and roaming,
Jerusalem remembers all her pleasant
things
That she had in the days of old.
When her people fell into the hand of
the enemy,
With no one to help her,
The adversaries saw her
And mocked at her downfall.^a
- 8** Jerusalem has sinned gravely,
Therefore she has become vile.^c

1:7 ^aVulgate reads *her Sabbaths*. 1:8 ^aSeptuagint and Vulgate read *moved or removed*.

KEY PASSAGE



Trauma

INTO THE VALLEY

(1:10-21)

Being a Christian does not guarantee a pain-free existence. In fact, our faith exposes us to difficulties and struggles that we may not otherwise have experienced. Here's what believers need to know about life's traumas:

- > Suffering is not always punishment. God does allow people to face the miserable consequences of their sinful choices, but it doesn't mean that every suffering person in the world is being punished. Sometimes God allows people to suffer in order to strengthen their resolve, to shake them out of their complacency, or to help them empathize with other suffering people.
- > God does not leave our side when we suffer (Ps. 23:4-6).
- > God will reward us for the suffering we endure for His sake (Matt. 5:10).

When we trust in God, we can change our perspective on life's traumas from "Why me?" to "How can I grow from this?"

To Learn More: Turn to the article about trauma on pages 690, 691. See also the personality profile of Jonah on page 1163.

- 57 From my sighing, from my cry for help.”³ 3 Even the jackals present their breasts
You drew near on the day I called on To nurse their young;
You, *But* the daughter of my people *is* cruel,
And said, “Do not fear!” Like ostriches in the wilderness.
- 58 O Lord, You have pleaded the case for 4 The tongue of the infant clings
my soul; To the roof of its mouth for thirst;
You have redeemed my life. The young children ask for bread,
59 O LORD, You have seen *how* I am *But* no one breaks *it* for them.
wronged; Judge my case. 5 Those who ate delicacies
60 You have seen all their vengeance; Are desolate in the streets;
All their schemes against me. Those who were brought up in scarlet
Embrace ash heaps.
- 61 You have heard their reproach, O LORD, 6 The punishment of the iniquity of the
All their schemes against me, daughter of my people
62 The lips of my enemies Is greater than the punishment of the sin
And their whispering against me all the of Sodom,
day. Which was overthrown in a moment,
63 Look at their sitting down and their With no hand to help her!
rising up; I *am* their taunting song.
- 64 Repay them, O LORD, 7 Her Nazirites^a were brighter than snow
According to the work of their hands; And whiter than milk;
65 Give them a veiled^a heart; They were more ruddy in body than
Your curse *be* upon them! rubies,
66 In Your anger, Like sapphire in their appearance.
- Pursue and destroy them 8 Now their appearance is blacker than
From under the heavens of the LORD. soot;
They go unrecognized in the streets;
Their skin clings to their bones,
It has become as dry as wood.
- 9 Those slain by the sword are better off 9
Than *those* who die of hunger; For these pine away,
Stricken *for lack* of the fruits of the
field.
- 2 The precious sons of Zion, 3:65 ^aA Jewish tradition reads *sorrow of*.
Valuable as fine gold, 4:7 ^aOr *nobles*
How they are regarded as clay pots,
The work of the hands of the potter!

THE DEGRADATION OF ZION

4 How the gold has become dim!
How changed the fine gold!
The stones of the sanctuary are
scattered
At the head of every street.

2 The precious sons of Zion,
Valuable as fine gold,
How they are regarded as clay pots,
The work of the hands of the potter!

SOUL NOTE



In the Trenches (3:55–57) Soldiers speak reverently of the relationships that are forged in the heat of battle. People who struggle together through dire circumstances form a lifelong bond deeper and more intense than that of other relationships. This same kind of bond is created when we turn to God during the battles of our lives. The next time you find yourself “in the trenches,” don’t lose sight of the One standing right beside you. Jeremiah didn’t: “I called on Your name, O LORD, from the lowest pit. . . . You drew near. . . . and said, ‘Do not fear!’” **Topic: Trauma**

JONAH'S DISOBEDIENCE

1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ²"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me." ³But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

THE STORM AT SEA

⁴But the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up.

⁵Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the

load.^a But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.

⁶So the captain came to him, and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish."

⁷And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble *has come* upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. ⁸Then they said to him, "Please tell us! For whose cause *is* this trouble upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?"

⁹So he said to them, "I *am* a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry *land*."

1:5 ^aLiterally *from upon them*

PERSONALITY PROFILE



Trauma

JONAH: RUNNING FROM GOD

(JONAH 1:12)

Difficult experiences come in many degrees. A trauma would be considered a situation far beyond control, one that shakes a person to the core. A trauma can lead to mental disorders or to suicide. Recovery is often slow; flashbacks are common. As difficult as traumatic experiences are, however, they can also lead a person to God.

Jonah had been called to go east to Nineveh; instead, he jumped on a ship and went west. Although he was acting in direct disobedience to God, he fell sound asleep on the ship. His conscience may not have bothered him, but God soon did. God knew that His reluctant prophet would need a traumatic experience or two to turn him around—literally. When a fierce storm tossed the ship and threatened to kill all on board, Jonah knew the reason for the storm and the solution: "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me" (1:12), he told the crew . . . and reluctantly they complied.

Immediately, a great fish swallowed Jonah. God spared his life because He still had work for Jonah to do. Trauma upon trauma eventually caused Jonah to pray: "I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, and He answered me" (Jon. 2:2). And this conversation with God led Jonah to a promise to obey, "I will pay what I have vowed" (Jon. 2:9). Then God rescued Jonah and gave him the opportunity to fulfill his promise.

Traumatic experiences can drive people away from God or to Him. In both cases, a person may ask, "Why would God do this to me?" Those who turn *from* God ask the question in anger and accusation. Those who turn *toward* God ask the question in order to learn His lesson for their lives. When traumatic experiences come, turn to God, not away. As Jonah learned: "When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; and my prayer went up to You, into Your holy temple" (Jon. 2:7).

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city, a three-day journey^a *in extent*. ⁴And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

THE PEOPLE OF NINEVEH BELIEVE

⁵So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. ⁶Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat in ashes. ⁷And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying,

Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. ⁸But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. ⁹Who can tell *if* God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?

¹⁰Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented

from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

JONAH'S ANGER AND GOD'S KINDNESS

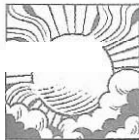
4 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and ¹he became angry. ²So he prayed to the LORD, and said, "Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You *are* a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. ³Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for *it is* better for me to die than to live!"

⁴Then the LORD said, "*Is it right for you to be angry?*"

⁵So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city. ⁶And the LORD God prepared a plant^a and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant.

^{3:3} ^aExact meaning unknown ^{4:6} ^aHebrew *kikayon*, exact identity unknown

SOUL NOTE



Traumatic Change (3:1-3) Trauma changes people. Jonah had nearly died in the ocean—he couldn't help but be changed. While in the belly of a huge fish, Jonah recognized the hand of God in his circumstances. And when all hope was lost, God was there (2:7). When Jonah found himself alive on a beach, he praised God who had given him another chance. This time when God called, Jonah obeyed. Trauma changes us—whether the change is good or bad often depends on how we respond. God uses our troubles as tools to shape our souls. **Topic: Trauma**

SOUL NOTE



Pouting Prophet (4:9) When Jonah learned that God would spare the Ninevites, he became angry. Perhaps he was concerned that his reputation was at stake if his prediction of the city's destruction didn't come true. Perhaps he wanted a front-row seat for Nineveh's destruction—after all, Assyria was Israel's enemy. Instead of rejoicing in the repentance of wicked people, Jonah became angry. His anger at Nineveh's sinfulness was correct; his selfish anger at God's mercy on them was wrong. When we feel angry, we must honestly consider why we are angry. Anger for God's causes can be helpful; selfish anger is not. **Topic: Anger**

of God. ³But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. ⁵For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. ⁶For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

CAST DOWN BUT UNCONQUERED

⁷But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. ⁸We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—¹⁰always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. ¹¹For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹²So then death is working in us, but life in you.

¹³And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "*I believed and therefore I spoke,*"^a we also believe and therefore speak, ¹⁴knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. ¹⁵For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

SEEING THE INVISIBLE

¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

¹⁷For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

ASSURANCE OF THE RESURRECTION

⁵For we know that if our earthly house, *this tent*, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ²For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, ³if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. ⁴For we who are in *this tent* groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. ⁵Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

⁶So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. ⁷For we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

⁹Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. ¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. ¹¹Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

4:13 ^aPsalm 116:10

SOUL NOTE



Light in the Darkness (4:8, 9) Paul did not have an easy life—exciting perhaps—but not easy. The words “hard-pressed . . . perplexed . . . persecuted . . . struck down” reveal pain and suffering. We may feel this way as we attempt to live out our faith in an unbelieving world. Like Paul, however, we can take comfort in God’s provision in times of trauma. No matter what the difficulty, we are “not crushed, not in despair, not forsaken, not destroyed.” We must keep our perspective in times of great difficulty, knowing that through us, “the life of Jesus also may be manifested” (4:10). His light can shine out from any darkness. **Topic: Trauma**