

RECOVERING FROM OUR WOUNDS

By Terry Jones, October 5, 2008

Christ's Church at Tiffin, Ohio

2 Corinthians 1:3-7

CENTRAL SERMON THEME – God is the source of our recovery when we are wounded.

INTRO. - When Alexis and I moved to Tiffin we were emotionally wounded. A portion of this wound could not be avoided because we were leaving a church family we had loved for twenty years. Leaving those people was a heart break. We left people we had grown to love over the years. We had been with these families through the victories of marriage, children, graduations, careers, and conversions to Christ. We also were there through sicknesses, divorces, conflicts, financial struggles, tragedies, and death. We also left our children and extended family members to move here. Everyone who relocates a long distance will feel wounded from leaving family and friends.

Our most painful wound came from the rejection we felt as we left. I had concluded a minister who faithfully preaches the Bible, works selflessly, and is faithful to his wife and family, would never be rejected. During the time of our struggles God opened the door for us to move here. Shortly after we moved to Tiffin I learned many of you had also been wounded. I was praying one morning, "God, why did you send such a wounded minister to a wounded church?" The answer appeared immediately, "Both of you can heal together. Terry, you're first."

A Christian friend and minister informed me his recovery from a similar situation required two years for healing. Taking his advice seriously I immediately started a plan to heal. I once said during a Sunday morning worship service that you could check on me after two years. It's time for a checkup. Since I believe God wants us to recover together I want to show you what God is doing with us. I hope my story will help you. The first step to recovery is:

I. ADMIT THE MISTAKES WE HAVE MADE

A. I want to confess to you these mistakes:

1. I spent too much time thinking and talking about the problem.
 - a. Our problems can overwhelm us until we are focused on them.
 - b. Every conversation I had turned toward the problem.
 - c. My problems awoke me at night causing me to toss and turn for hours when I needed the sleep to handle the stress.

- d. Counselors tell us to talk about our anxieties and problems but eventually the unending repetition makes it worse.
- e. Ex. - Do you ever hear a song which stays with you? You hear it over and over until you are tired of it. Our problems do something similar to us making us fret and obsess over them.
- 2. I should have turned my supporters into prayer partners.
 - a. Our sense of justice causes us to defend people we believe are treated unfairly.
 - b. Supporters in any form seem to help us so we cater to them.
 - c. Sadly supporters often become protestors and prayer partners are better than protestors.
- 3. I rejoiced over the former church's problems.
 - a. Problems linger after a long term minister leaves even under the best of circumstances.
 - b. My attitude was, "I do not wish harm on anyone but if God's justice is at work, I want to see it."
- 4. I was disappointed when the former church had victories.
 - a. When things go well for someone we do not like, we can be disappointed.
 - b. God is supposed to punish them not reward them.
 - c. I know the Bible says in Rom. 12 rejoice with those who rejoice.
- 5. I had moments when I was very angry.
 - a. It's easy to hate people who hurt you.
 - b. Insults and abusive language linger in the memory and will resurface at any time.
 - c. I confess I was angry with God for letting these things happen to us. I quoted Psa. 22 - My God, why have You forsaken me?

B. Applic. - The path to recovery includes admitting our mistakes.

II. AMEND OUR LIVES DURING THE PAIN

- A. I started praying in a new way.
 - 1. Once I prayed for an entire night.
 - 2. Those are soul searching times that make us grow.
 - 3. God comes near us in such distress.
 - 4. I am a man who likes to fix things myself making surrendering to God very difficult or nearly impossible at times.
- B. I learned to appreciate my wife and family more.

1. My wife suffered with me.
2. We decided we could face anything together.
3. Illus. - One of our children and I were having lunch together one day during the turmoil I am discussing. She spoke some very needed but painful words to me, "Dad, we are not going to let you become bitter!" At that time, I wanted to be bitter. I had a list of people I would hate if hating ever became right. We need support during these difficult times.

C. I learned my anger did not move God to work.

1. James 1 - The anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.
2. Anger attracts the devil to us.
3. Illus. - Dogs live in the world of smell. Our mutt has a great sense of smell which makes her hard to walk at times. The Devil has a great sense of smell for human anger. He follows the trail of anger because he knows even good anger can be easily corrupted. The Holy Spirit has never used my anger to glorify and honor God.

D. I experienced the God's goodness in our lives.

1. We cannot see beyond our present struggles but God is at work.
2. His good will come.
3. People comfort us when we did not know they cared.

E. I pray everyday for God to give me the grace to forgive again.

1. What has been done cannot be changed.
2. Human forgiveness is not instant but it means the anger shrinks a little each day until the memories no longer cripple us.
3. I read about different people who had forgiven more than I needed to forgive.
 - a. Ex. - Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for eighteen years on Robben Island for opposing the white regime in South Africa. Upon his release he forgave his captors and led a reconciliation of his fellow countrymen. He forgave more than I could forgive.
 - b. Ex. - Jesus was dying on the cross being totally innocent of wrongdoing and sin. He prayed for His tormentors, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." In Acts 2, God forgave some of these same people who repented and were baptized.

F. I communicated with that church I am ready to be reconciled.

1. My goal was to be ready to be reconciled after two years.
2. Reconciliation means we admit our mistakes and forgive each other.

3. I am waiting for that church to respond to my offer, if they never respond I have fulfilled my responsibility.

III. ALLOW GOD TO COMFORT OTHERS THROUGH US

A. Paul gives praise to God for His mercies and comfort.

1. Mercy is God's gifts to us we do not deserve.
2. Comfort is God's help when we are troubled.
3. Therefore, God is good.

B. God comforts us in all our afflictions.

1. Paul had left Corinth after being in conflict with the church.
2. The comfort that Paul has in mind is not some tranquilizing dose of grace that only dulls pains but a stiffening agent that fortifies one in heart, mind, and soul.
 - a. Comfort relates to encouragement and help.
 - b. God's comfort strengthens weak knees and sustains sagging spirits so that we face the troubles of life with unending assurance.
 - c. God can deliver us "*out of* affliction" or encourage us "*in* affliction" so that we can endure it.
3. Paul is now being reconciled as he speaks of God's comfort.

C. Once we are comforted God plans for us to comfort others.

1. God will use our pain to help others.
2. Illus. - One day a Deacon in the church called me from the hospital saying he was having surgery the next day. He was an emotional mess. He expected to die shortly after the surgery and leave his family and wife. I went to the hospital immediately. When I entered his room I pulled up a chair close to his bed. He started telling his sad story. I listened for about 30 minutes while he spoke of his belief he had lost his health and eventually his life. About 10:00 that night I received a call from his wife. She is so excited after visiting her husband in the hospital. She asked me, "What did you say to him? I could not cheer him. The doctor and the nurses could not help. What did you say?" I said, "I told him he could live with one kidney because I am living proof." He needed to hear a story of recovery. She could not thank me enough. Are you divorced and recovered? Have you been abused and recovered? Have you recovered from an abortion? Have you been accused unfairly and recovered? Have you ever been bankrupt and recovered? Have you ever

lost a spouse or a child or a parent and recovered? Are you a cancer survivor? Have you suffered from depression but have overcome? Find someone who needs your assurance and comfort.

3. Comfort never ends with us, it passes through us to others.

D. Illus. - Douglas Maurer was 15 when doctors in St. Louis diagnosed him as having leukemia. The doctors told him in frank terms about his disease. For the next three years, he would undergo chemotherapy. He would go bald and his body would most likely bloat. He sank into a deep depression. An aunt called a floral shop to send Douglas an arrangement of flowers. She told the clerk that it was for her teenage nephew who has leukemia. When the flowers arrived at the hospital, Douglas read the card from his aunt. Then he saw a second card. It said: "Douglas--I took your order. I work at Brix Florist. I had leukemia when I was 7 years old. I'm 22 years old now. Good luck. My heart goes out to you. Sincerely, Laura Bradley." His face lit up. Douglas Maurer was in a hospital filled with millions of dollars of the most sophisticated medical equipment. He was being treated by expert doctors and nurses with medical training. But it was a salesclerk in a flower shop, who--gave Douglas hope and the will to carry on. Bob Greene, "From One Sufferer To Another", Chicago Tribune, August, 1987.

IV. ANTICIPATE THAT GOD'S COMFORT OUTWEIGHS OUR AFFLICTIONS

A. V. 5 - Just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

1. The language here is borrowed from the commercial world.
2. Two balance sheets are side by side for comparison.
3. One sheet shows the afflictions we suffer in life, which are numerous.
4. The other sheet shows the comfort we have in Christ, which is larger than the balance sheet of afflictions.
5. Paul and the early Christians were afflicted and comforted for our comfort and salvation.

B. Applic. - Do not get bitter for God will exceed your sorrows and troubles with His comfort.

C. Poem - Live On

I've dreamed many dreams that never came true.

I've seen them vanish at dawn,
But I've realized enough of my dreams, thank God
To make me want to dream on.

I've prayed many prayers when no answer came
Through I've waited patient and long,
But answers have come to enough of my prayers
To keep me praying on.

I've trusted some friends who failed me
And left me to weep alone.
But I've found friends enough who are loyal and true
To make me keep trusting on.

I've sown many seeds that fell by the way
For the birds to feed upon,
But I've held enough results in my hand
To make me keep sowing on.

I've drained the cup of disappointment and pain
And gone some days without a song,
But I've sipped enough sweetness from the roses of life,
To make me want to live on.

CONCLUSION - Jungle Aviation and Radio Service, the flying department of Wycliffe Bible Translators, had flown thousands of hours over a 25 year span without one fatal accident. But on April 7, 1972, a Piper Aztec lost its right engine and crashed in Papua New Guinea, killing all seven persons aboard. The Aztec had just rolled out of the Wycliffe maintenance hangar the day before following a 100 hour inspection. The chief mechanic was stunned when he heard the news of the crash.

Reviewing in his mind each step he had performed in inspecting that right engine, he suddenly recoiled in horror. He remembered that he had been interrupted while tightening a fuel line and had never returned to finish the job! That faulty connection had allowed fuel to spray out and catch fire while the Aztec was in flight. The mechanic's guilt at being responsible for the deaths of his companions crushed him. For days he did not know what to do. The other mechanics tried to help him, as did his own family.

But when the family of Doug Hunt, the pilot who was killed in the accident, was preparing to return to their home in New Zealand, the mechanic knew he had

to see them, talk with them and beg their forgiveness. He could barely get out the words as he sobbed in their presence. "That hand there," he said, looking at his right hand, "took Doug's life." Glennis Hunt, Doug's widow, embraced him. The mechanic wrote, "Glennis sat by me and held the hand that took her husband's life, and another pilot sat on my other side with a demonstration of love, comfort, and forgiveness. That was the most significant first step in the healing process." Max Lucado, *God Came Near*, Multnomah Press, 1987, p. 101.

Jesus is the source of comfort through forgiveness. Jesus said as an example for us while He is suffering for our sins, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." I realize now my sins against God are greater than every wrong I have endured from others. If God can forgive us, we can forgive others so we all can be healed.