

GROWTHguide

Starting September 14, 2014

"Free from Hurt"



Day 1: Read Romans 12:9-21, Psalm 30:1-5, and 1 Peter 5:7

God never promises to remove us from our struggles. He does promise, however, to change the way we look at them. The apostle Paul dedicates a paragraph to listing trash bags: troubles, problem, suffering, hunger, nakedness, danger, and violent death. These are the very Dumpsters of difficulty to we hope to escape. Paul, however, states their value. "In all these things we have full victory through God" (Romans 8:35-37). We'd prefer another preposition. We'd opt for "apart from all these things," or "away from all these things," or even, "without all these things." But Paul says, "in" all these things. The solution is not to avoid trouble but to change the way we see our troubles. God can correct your vision.

--Max Lucado, *Just Like Jesus*

- Max Lucado asks, "[Has there been a time when] you found good in the bad, purpose in the pain. Did you have this attitude while you were going through the difficulty, or did these insights come later?"
- Do you hold on to the hurt and the pain from your troubles instead of seeing the good? Why? Ask God to help you see your hurts as Jesus sees them: that there is "good in the bad and purpose in the pain." Remember that we can have hope because Jesus has conquered death and overcome our sin, our hurts and our pain.
- Ponder the scripture and ask yourself the question: do you pay back evil with evil or with good? It can be easy to respond to those who hurt us with the intent of hurting them back, but God has called us to be "at peace with all men."

Day 2: Read Romans 12:14, Colossians 2:13-14, and Philippians 4:8-9

If today's thoughts are tomorrow's actions, what happens when we fill our minds with thoughts of God's love? Will standing beneath the downpour of his grace change the way we feel about others? Paul says absolutely! It's not enough to keep the bad stuff out to we've got to let the good stuff in. It's not enough to keep no list of wrongs. We have to cultivate a list of blessings. . . . You want to make a list? Then list [Christ's] mercies. List the times God has forgiven you. Stand face to feet with the form of your crucified Savior and pray, "Jesus, if you can forgive me for hurting you, then I can forgive them for hurting me." You didn't deserve to be hurt by them. But neither did you deserve to be forgiven by him.

--Max Lucado, *A Love Worth Giving*

- Have you chosen to hold on to past hurts, do you make mental lists of the negative things others have done to you? If so, why?
- Ponder the scripture and the quote. Make a physical list of God's mercies toward you, when He has forgiven you.
- Pray and ask God to forgive you for holding on to grudges and allowing bitterness to separate you from Him. Dwell on the things of God, fill your mind and heart with God's Word, and allow His peace to reign in your heart.

Day 3: Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, James 3:17-18, and Matthew 6:15

[If] we choose to hold on to our hurt, it can feel like a dry wasteland has taken up residence in our hearts. It roots its way into our thought process, and in the way we view life or people. It may make us feel strong as we hold on to a grudge or build a wall to protect ourselves, when in actuality we have only hemmed ourselves in from all that God wants us to experience. . . . We are meant to live free. Totally free. This is what we discover when we start to live a forgiving lifestyle. Not hindered or encumbered in any way. . . . Living life as a forgiver is one of those acts of faith that may seem impossible, especially when another has caused you pain. But forgiving leads you from a place of hurting to healing, it clears away past baggage that weighs you down, and offers a new identity based on who you are to God, rather than what someone did. . . . Forgiving offers a fresh slate. Forgiving allows us to discover new depths and facets of our faith. Forgiving leads to deeper relationship with God as we live out this word daily, even when it is difficult. For we aren't alone in this journey, and God has more for us as we follow where He leads.

--Suzie Eller, in her article, *God Wants to Set You Free*

- We have been immersed in God's grace and love, forgiven for the times when we have sinned and hurt Him. Even when we continue to sin and hurt God, He still loves us and forgives us. Since Christ has forgiven us of so much, we can then forgive others of the things they have done to hurt us.
- Pray that God would help you to forgive others for their transgressions against you and make you a peacemaker who sows "in peace" in order to "reap a harvest of righteousness."

Day 4: Read 2 Corinthians 1:1-5, Luke 10:27, and Psalm 34:17-19

Describing the disparity between the mind of humanity and the mind of God, Abraham Heschel writes, "The [human] conscience builds its confines, is subject to fatigue, longs for comfort, lulling, soothing. Yet those who are hurt, and He Who inhabits eternity, neither slumber nor sleep."(1) In other words, God never sleeps or slumbers because those who are hurting never sleep or slumber. Try as we may as caretakers we cannot be as God to the hurting. We can stay awake with them in their pain and suffering. We can care for them as neighbors. But the house in which the suffering find unfailing love is the Lord's. Like the friends of the paralytic who carried him all the way to Christ, this is the house to which we must bring them. His is the house in which we must live. . . . I am convinced that the right side of pain can only be accessed through the house of God, a house built not by human hands, but held up by the beams of the Cross. . . . God has invited us into the kingdom; the doors of a great house are opened wide. And it is a house where hospitality is not a conditional sharing of personal pains, or a self-centered preoccupation with suffering, but an extension of Christ's real invitation: Come to me, all who are weary and I will give you rest.

--Jill Carattini, in her article, *House of Pain*

- We are the hands and feet of Jesus, but we are also His voice in a hurting world. Take time today to speak God's words of love, peace, and joy to someone who is hurting. Pray that God would use you as a vessel for His righteousness, to ease the afflictions of others.
- If you are hurting, pray and ask God to send you someone to help comfort you. Reach out to a Christian friend and let them know you're hurting; ask them to pray over you.

Day 5: Read Isaiah 43:19a, James 5:11, Corinthians 13:12, and Proverbs 3:12

Not far from my home lives a young woman who was born with a very rare disease called CIPA, congenital insensitivity to pain with anhidrosis. Imagine having a body that looks normal and acts normally, except for one thing: You cannot feel physical pain. That sounds as if it would be a blessing. But the reason it's a problem is that she lives under the constant threat of injuring herself without knowing it. . . . When her family was interviewed some years ago, the line I most remember is the closing statement by her mother. She said, "I pray every night for my daughter, that God would give her a sense of pain." . . . I ask you this simple question: If, in our finitude, we can appreciate the value of pain in even one single life, is it that difficult to grant the possibility that an infinite

God can use pain to point us to a greater malady? We see through a glass darkly because all we want is to be comfortable. We cannot understand the great plan of an all-knowing God who brings us near through the value of pain—or of disappointment with pleasure. And yet the very thing that enslaves and traps us becomes the indicator of our need for God and the means to draw us to the recognition of our own finitude and to the rescuing grace of God. The pain of pain may well clasp the lifesaving hand of God and draw us into God's arms.

--Ravi Zacharias, in his article, *God and Pain*

- Ponder the scriptures and the quote. Think about your hurts, whether past or present, and consider: what character qualities have these circumstances created in you?
- God wants to change your heart and transform your life. As Max Lucado once said, “God loves you just the way you are, but he refuses to leave you there. He wants you to have a heart like his. He wants you to be just like Jesus.”—Sometimes we face hurts on the path to becoming like Jesus.
- Pray and ask God to help you see His good work in your heart, even in the midst of pain.

Day 6: Read Matthew 11:28-30, Galatians 6:1-5, and Proverbs 16:18

There are times when sin or a wrong choice or life itself simply comes in and flattens us completely. In hindsight we may be able to see the wrong turns or reckless steps that might have brought us there, or actions that might have prevented the heartache altogether. But in the midst of our brokenness, Jesus isn't the one pointing this out. To the wounded, he simply says, "Come." When we come to Christ asking for help, we are offered a person, not a list that adds insult to injury. To the wounded, he simply offers his own wounds. While Jesus indeed offered instruction that would load down the strongest among us, he was also offering himself up to help us bear the burden. In his presence the stinging may at first seem worse, but the wound, he assures us, will be healed.

--Jill Carattini, in her article, *Insult and Injury*

Have you ever had a situation when you thought you were doing the right thing but it turned out badly, and you were hurt in the process? It is easy for others to add “insult to injury” by telling us what we should have done differently, or maybe we do it to ourselves. Christ doesn't do this though. With Christ, we can go to him with our wounds and expect to be healed!

- If you are struggling with being hurt when you tried to do good, pray and ask God to heal you of that pain. Ask God to help you let go of the situation and see it through His eyes.
- Consider: has there ever been a time when *you* might have caused someone pain when their intentions were good? Maybe someone was trying to restore you gently but you let your pride and defensiveness get in the way? As Paul instructed in Galatians, “test [your] own actions” and pray that God would create in you a pure heart. If you've hurt someone, go to that person and ask for forgiveness.

Day 7

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God's voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life's demands do not squelch the whispers of God's language of love upon your heart.