



Freedom!

From Hurts, Hang-Ups, and Habits

*Notes from this study adapted from “Life’s Healing Choices” by John Baker
Leader Notes

Session 2- Pain

“Blessed Are Those Who Mourn...” -Matthew 5:4

I. Reality of Our Pain.

In the first session, we talked about the reality that we are all limited, broken, and imperfect individuals. We also talked about the reality that we try to deny or cover-up our imperfections, and try to control the uncontrollable. In the end, the consequences of all these realities leave us dealing with emotional, spiritual, and sometimes even physical pain.

In all honesty, what kind of pain have you been experiencing lately? _____

II. What We Do With Our Pain.

We deny our pain.

“Have you ever thought about how much time and effort you spend running from pain? Trying to avoid it, deny it, escape it, reduce it, or postpone it?... We’ll try almost anything to control our pain. But the real pain comes when we realize, in our quieter moments, that the pain is still there.”

The biggest lie we say to ourselves when we feel pain, “I’m fine.”

We blame our pain.

“Sometimes in our denial, we excuse ourselves and we accuse others: ‘If my wife would just get her act together, then our marriage would be just fine.’ We play the blame game.”

From the very beginning, instead of dealing with the pain of their mistake, Adam and Eve immediately blamed someone else.

We become our pain.

“When we carry a hurt for a long time, we eventually find our identity in that hurt and become a victim.”

Which way of dealing with pain can you most relate to or default to? Are there other ways that we deal with pain that have not been mentioned? _____

What consequences come from denying, blaming, or becoming our pain?

We face our pain.

There is another way. It is not easy, but it is good. While we are denying or covering up, blaming others, or identifying ourselves with our pain, God speaks a word of invitation to us. “Come with me. As I have already done for you on the cross, come with me and face your pain.”

What thoughts or feelings do you have as you reflect on Jesus facing and addressing your pain by going to the cross for you? _____

III. Facing Our Pain

“Pain is God’s way of letting us know something is seriously wrong and needs our attention. If your appendix bursts, and you felt no pain, you wouldn’t know your body needed help. The toxins from your appendix would infect your abdominal cavity and could eventually kill you. Pain alerts us to our need for help.”

“Pain is God’s fire alarm. If a fire alarm went off in your house, you wouldn’t say, ‘Oh, there goes that fire alarm again! Make it stop.’ Hopefully, you would do something about it. You would call the fire department and get some help.”

***Important Clarification:** Just because God allows pain to enter our life does not mean that He causes the pain, or enjoys seeing us in pain. Pain is often a consequence of our poor choices or the poor choices of others. God doesn’t cause the fire, but does give us the sense of pain so that we will protect ourselves from further, greater damage to our lives.

1) **We mourn.**

When we are willing to finally face our pain, the first thing we do is mourn.

We mourn our past mistakes.

When we stop denying and blaming others for our pain, the pain of accepting our past mistakes and the pain of regret fills our souls.

“I wish I hadn’t made those dumb decisions... I wish I hadn’t responded as I did... I wish I hadn’t done what I did... I wish...”

We mourn our loss of control.

“Even though we never were really in control, we thought we were. Facing up to that fact brings a sense of real loss.”

Realizing that we never really were in control, and never really can control the most important things in our lives can be very discouraging.

How have you experienced the “mourning” that comes from facing our pain?

2) We find a pathway to comfort.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”- Matthew 5:4

Now, our passage for today starts to make sense. The reason those who mourn are blessed is because those who mourn are those who are facing their pain. And those who face their pain, walk through the mourning process, and call upon God to help them, will find comfort, forgiveness, healing, and new life.

“To all who mourn in Israel, he will give beauty for ashes, joy instead of mourning, praise instead of despair.”- Isaiah 61:3

IV. Comforting Truths About God

The critical step of moving from “mourning” to calling upon God for help is aided by the knowledge of who God really is. It is one thing to believe God exists, but it is another thing to truly believe that God is someone that we can truly trust with our broken, out-of-control lives. Until we understand God’s true character, we will have a hard time completely trusting Him.

1) God knows and cares about our situation.

“Nobody knows the pain I’m going through in this marriage.” God knows.

“Nobody knows how much I’m struggling to break this habit.” God knows.

“Nobody knows the depression, fear, and anxiety I’m going through.” God knows.

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted...”- Psalm 34:18

“You know how troubled I am. You have kept a record of my tears.”- Psalm 56:8
You have never shed a tear (on the outside or inside) that God missed.

“I have loved you with an everlasting love.”- Jeremiah 31:3

“God cares about us when we serve Him and when we don’t, when we’re right and when we’re wrong.”

God’s love for us is unconditional. God’s love is not based on who we are or on our performance. God’s love is based on God’s character.

How does the reality of God’s knowledge and care for us impact you today?

2) God can change us and our situation.

“I pray that you will begin to understand the incredible greatness of his power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead.”- Ephesians 1:19-20

“If God can raise Jesus Christ from the dead, He can certainly raise a dead relationship. He can set us free from an addiction. He can take away our guilt and shame. He can help us close the door on the past so those memories stop haunting us. God has the power to change us and our situation.”

How does the reality of God’s power impact you today?

V. Comforting Gifts from God

*“The Spirit that God has given us... fills with power, love, and self-control.”
- 2 Timothy 1:7*

Power

“We need power to break habits we can’t break on our own. We need power to do what we know is right but can’t seem to do by ourselves. We need power to break free from the past and let those memories go. We need power to get on with the kind of life God wants us to live.”

Love

“We need real love. We want to be able to love people and have them love us back. We need to let go of the fear of getting hurt by the ones we love. We want the ability to establish deep, meaningful, authentic relationships rather than superficial, hurtful, selfish relationships.”

God’s love gives us the assurance and safety to love others without fear.

Self-Control

“We also need self-control, but we can’t have self-control until Christ is in control of us. When Christ is in control, we understand, perhaps for the first time, what it means to get it all together.”

God’s power, love, and control are available to us, but it does take admitting our humanity and calling upon God’s divinity, “Help, Lord! Come, Holy Spirit!”

VII. Application

Choices have consequences. Choose wisely.

At the end of every study, we will have choices to make. Choose wisely.

Write about it.

- What pain has God been using as a megaphone in your life to alert you to your need for help?
- What pain have you been denying?
- Who or what have you blamed for your problems- either partially or completely?
- In what areas do you feel stuck in the pain of your past-powerless to change?
- What area(s) of your life are you ready to allow God to start helping you?
- What are you still afraid to turn over to God?

Share about it.

Share with someone nonjudgmental, trustworthy, and willing to help you.

“As iron sharpens iron, so people can improve each other.”-Proverbs 27:17

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!.. Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”- Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, 12

Pray about it

Ask God to help you face your pain, heal you, comfort you, and use you to bring comfort for others who mourn.

Dear God, please help me not to ignore this pain You are using to alert me to my need for help. You know and care about all the pain and hurt I have in my life. Today I need Your help. I can't do it on my own.

First, I pray for Your power in my life. I need Your power to break habits I can't break. I need Your power to help me do the things that I know are right but can't seem to do on my own. I need Your power to break free from my past. I ask for Your power to get on with the plans You have for my life.

Next, I pray for love. I want real love. I pray that with Your love I can let go of past hurts and failures. God, I ask You to help me have genuine intimacy with You and others. Help me not be afraid of really loving and of really being loved.

Lastly, I pray for real self-control. Take control of my life, and give me the humility and knowledge of You to let you lead my life toward comfort, healing, and the comfort of others. I make this choice today, and pray that you would be glorified in it. In Your able name, Amen.