

Sessions – Hurting

<http://www.myfishbites.com/sessions-hurting.php>

Intro - A Testimony

A few years ago my brother was killed while working as a missionary in Congo, Africa. They had finished their year's work and were on their way to Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe for a brief holiday. The car, travelling on typical African roads, had to swerve on a corner to avoid a truck. The car plummeted off the road, threw my brother out. He was killed very quickly, painlessly and had no marks on his body amazingly! I remember I'd been out for the day, returned home and I was greeted by my family and another family close to us, who broke the news to me.

It was like I had been hit, I was so overwhelmed it's hard to explain if you haven't been through it. As time went on, numbness moved to shock, to raw emotion and tears, to thoughts of 'will he return, maybe they made a mistake' through to acceptance. This was also the day I knelt before God in tears and said, 'I need you Jesus, I can't get through this without you.' That day, Jesus came into my life in a real way and changed me forever. We had also previously lost my sister's twin just after birth when she had been starved of oxygen and died. My sister is healthy today and we're very close.

Since then I have journeyed through many situations - within my family, and within the families of other (young) people I have worked with closely. Some of these have involved considerable pain to those people. Many of them have come through very difficult situations with unbelievable courage & testimonies - and I've seen God work miraculously in & through them.

Why this testimony? Well, this session is about those who are hurting and practical ways we can help. There are many other kinds of hurt such as emotional pain, splitting up with a boyfriend / girlfriend, disappointment and more. Hopefully and prayerfully, we'll look through some of these topics and come up with some Biblical answers and help.

Advice

If you are going to do this session, be prepared for what God may do and some of the pain and hurt that may come out. Recently God has really been breaking my heart for people. May be he will do the same for you and others. So just be ready and leave space during and afterwards. Consider arranging a follow-up mid-week if you have cell groups etc. Or the following week.

Video / Powerpoint Presentation

Why not go onto the internet and find a load of images - things like homelessness, children crying, Iraq war, the Asian Tsunami, other bad events. Intermingle the images with pictures of Jesus. After 9/11, we showed a picture of Bin Laden and morphed it into the face of Jesus - our purpose was to challenge people not to hate but to love, pray for even him. If Paul the Apostle was saved by Jesus, others are not beyond his reach..

God Knows Your Pain - Intro

Where would we be today without Jesus? It is incredible to me that Jesus would voluntarily do what he did for people like you and me. There's so much to what Jesus did, but let's just think of the pain and suffering that God the Father and Jesus the Son went through. This session looks at Jesus, what he did and went through and relates that to our lives.

Read Together

Psalm 34 - This is a great Psalm and was of a lot of comfort to me during a painful situation I went through. God very specifically directed me to this Psalm and I was so glad he did as it helped and released a lot of pain deep down. I would recommend using the Youth Bible translation for this as I felt it was the most helpful and comforting version. I especially found verses 17 and 18 helpful. These verses talk about repentance, but can also be taken as God helping those with 'broken hearts' or those whose 'spirits have been crushed'. Read this Psalm out loud. The Bible has power read out loud together.

Psalm 30 - Another great and useful Psalm to read out together. Verse 5 is great, saying, *"For God's anger lasts only a moment, but his favour lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning."* Then we read in verses 10-12: *"Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me; O LORD, be my help. You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give you thanks forever. Amen."*

Jesus left the Father

In the beginning of the Bible we read: Then God said, *"Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.."* (**Genesis 1.26**). What a testimony. The Father, Son and Spirit worked in unity to create man in their own image. This explains a lot of why we are what we are as humans. But the point is that the 'Godhead' worked together. They were together, 3 in 1 and 1 in 3.

One day, this intimate relationship had to change. Parents often find it hard to 'let their children go.' This may be a first day at school, a night

out, going to university, even their child getting married. Sometimes it's hard to let go. If we know people who have suffered loss, it is hard for them to 'let go' of that other person. Some families keep lost one's bedrooms in the same state as the day they were lost. But God let Jesus go from heaven to earth. We learn in **Ephesians 1.4-5** that this was God's plan - a plan for us to be made right with God through Jesus.

So God the Father had to let go of his son. Sometimes we had to let someone go. It doesn't mean we don't think of them. But it means we release them. God and Jesus spoke, Jesus prayed and was in constant connection with his Father. But the two of them were apart in a new and unique way. Maybe today, you need to 'release' someone, to truly 'let them go' and lay the situation before God and ask him to restore you. Remember, after Jesus rose from the dead, he went back up into heaven and now sits at the right hand side of God. One day, we will be reunited with those we have lost in God's family.

Jesus experienced pain and loss

There were many different ways Jesus must have experienced pain, frustration, loss and other emotions. We'll just look at 3 situations:

1. John 11.32-38 (you can go beyond this to verse 44 if you'd like). This is a well known story about Lazarus dying and Jesus raising him from the dead. This is especially famous because of John 11.35 which simply says, '*Jesus wept*' and is the shortest verse in the Bible.

Jesus had heard that Lazarus was dead. What he did was receive the news, listen intently and then go to the place where it had happened. Sometimes we need to be there for people - to listen to them, understand them and journey with them physically, emotionally, spiritually to help them recover and resolve their pain. **How can we be there for people?** By listening, helping, being a good friend, checking up on people, giving them space, cooking them food, doing kind acts for them, being there when they phone or text and more...

When Jesus arrived to where Lazarus had died, he found Mary who fell at his feet, crying. At this, Jesus was deeply upset and troubled. Sometimes when things happen to others, it also shocks us and troubles us. That is a healthy reaction as it shows we care. This is often called 'empathy' which means to share in other people's emotions and experience. We can do this, even if we haven't experienced what they have. But sometimes it helps if we've gone through something similar and come out positively on the other side.

Then we find that **Jesus cried**. When my brother died, I cried. When I lost my favourite dog I cried! When someone close lost her mum and went through a tough time I felt the pain and cried out to God for her. When I feel alone or feel the pain and injustice in the world, I cry out to

God. You may do the same. If you don't, maybe you should. Another close friend of mine revealed to me how they'd never cried for years. That person has a lot of pain inside that will one day spill out. If someone close to us loses someone, we can cry too, with them. We share in their hurt and pain, love them, care for them, show we're for them. Jesus is our witness and we can and should be like him.

A couple verses on, we still see that Jesus is troubled. The answer for Jesus was to raise the dead man to life. Maybe this is a solution, but more often than not, we have to go through something, take action in order to release the pain and come out with God's life in you, or help someone to do the same. Jesus confronted the issue. We must do the same. The pain will go - in **Jeremiah 31.13**, God says (about Israel) - *'I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow.'* The same is true for us. We may have pain and feel hurt, but God will comfort, bring the mourning (sadness) into gladness. Thank God for this great promise. His mercies and kindnesses are new each morning..

Lamentations 3.22-24: *Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him."*

2. Garden of Gethsemane, Matthew 26.36-46 - Jesus knew that his end was near and he felt the strain and the pain intensely, as any man would. He went to a place with his followers and then prayed alone. Sometimes we just need to know that there are people near us, around us. Sometimes you simply need to be near someone and let them deal with some of their problems on their own. When I say near, this can be physically, emotionally and spiritually.

We find that Jesus was sad and troubled. Again, whenever you feel this way, know that Jesus has felt deep pain and suffers with you, relates and understands more than we can ever know. Again Jesus said to his disciples, 'stay here and watch with me.' Supporting someone can mean sitting with them in silence, holding them close, giving them a hug, being there for them.

Jesus then found that his disciples kept falling asleep. Maybe we can relate to this in another way... Have there been times where you've felt let down and misunderstood, or people are unreliable, unhelpful even? I'm sure you have. How do we learn from these painful times? We learn not to be like that ourselves. The Bible tells us in **Ephesians 4.22-24** - *'..put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires... and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.'*

We also find Jesus praying an incredibly powerful prayer in **verse 42** when he says to his Father in heaven, *'I don't want to do this - but not my will, but your will be done'* (paraphrase). Here, we find a life completely submitted to God. A life that says, 'God, you know best, do whatever you want in me.' Question is - are you prepared to say that to God? Am I? The rewards will be great but it may also be a hard road. The more God wants to use you, the more he needs to chip away at your edges. Of course Jesus was perfect so didn't need this - but we do!

Secondly, in my life, like yours, there are some painful things that we'd rather not go through. But sometimes they're essential for our growth and for others around us. Jesus had to go through what he went through for the sake of humanity - for me and you. It's the way we are restored to God, if we accept Jesus in our lives. So something bad happened (and God even allowed it to happen) so that there would be a greater good. Sometimes it's the same for us, or those we're supporting. Then we can truly say like **Romans 8.28** - *'And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.'*

3. The Cross - If we move forward to **Matthew 28.45-50**, we see the death of Jesus on the Cross. Jesus was humiliated, subjected to a false trial, found guilty even though he was innocent, was tortured, abused, in incredible pain. But then in verse 46 we find Jesus cried out, 'My God, my God, why have you rejected me?' Then Jesus died, of the pain, and of a broken heart. What had happened? Well, God cannot look on sin. And we know that Jesus 'became sin' for us. **2 Corinthians 5.21** says, *'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.'* Basically Jesus took on all our sin so that we could be made right through him, before God. Jesus, for the first time, was split apart from the Father. The pain must have been intense for him, and for God the Father. But this incredible sacrifice, shows how much God loves us.

And so our final point is that God knows pain. But God loves you, loves you so much he paid the most valuable thing he had to pay for you. And that is what carries us through - God's love for us, the Holy Spirit in us, the promise of heaven, of eternity with Christ. And in the hard times, we have to live one day at a time, but with our eye on eternity. Only then will things be put right but man, what an eternity ahead of us...

Revelation 21.1-4: Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

A Prayer

Father, I thank you that you died for me. Thank you that whatever I'm going through, you understand and love me so much. I ask for your love to surround me. Lord, your Word says you are the Comforter, so please comfort me now. Lord, you know my life, my heart. I ask you to help me, to mend me, to renew me and bring me through stronger. I ask for your will to be done in my life as I know this is the best thing for my life. Lord, your Word promises that you are with me in the hard times and the fires. I ask for you to reveal yourself to me afresh. And Lord, help us to love those who are hurting. Show us practical ways we can love, help and serve them and you. Amen.