

LESSON ESSENTIALS

FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION

LESSON 2: HEALING HURTS

“When soldiers with guns came into his rural village, he watched the soldiers kill his entire family, all thirteen members. He hated the soldiers and wanted revenge. He decided that he’d kill two or five or ten people for every one of his murdered family members.”

– A story from Burundi

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
(Romans 12:21)

In his culture Francois had only been taught about honour, revenge, and retaliation. He believed that these were the answers to his hurt. These were the only remedies that he knew. Until one day he learned about peace and reconciliation as expressed in the Bible.

For all of humanity much effort has gone into creating systems for caring for physical wounds. When you have an infection or a virus, there are medicines to take to deal with the sickness from the inside out. When you have a broken bone, there are splints and casts to wear to support the bone while it heals. When you have a cut or an open wound, there are ways of cleaning and covering it so that germs and dirt do not get in. There is almost always a remedy for whatever ails a person.

But what if the hurt is emotional? What is the remedy then?

Certainly, all of us at one time or another have considered revenge as the remedy that will make us feel better. In fact, some will defend their decision to 'get back' at their enemy in kind by quoting the Bible saying that their anger is just an outworking of 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'. The fact that they are using the passage out of context does not seem to sway them from their hopes of finding healing in revenge. Little do they know that self-imposed vengeance will never bring the healing and reconciliation that they so desperately desire.

François is such a man. From Burundi and living through years of civil unrest, Francois watched while his entire family was murdered. When soldiers with guns came into his rural village, he hid. There was nothing else he could do. He watched the soldiers kill his entire family, all thirteen members.

Understandably, he hated the soldiers and wanted revenge. He decided to join a rebel movement and that he'd kill two or five or ten people for every one of his murdered family members. He was expecting that this act of revenge would bring the healing and justice that he so thoroughly desired. In his culture he had only been taught about honour, revenge, and retaliation. He believed that these were the answers to his hurt. These were the only remedies that he knew.

Until one day he learned about peace and reconciliation as expressed in the Bible. He was taught about Jesus and came to trust Him as his Saviour. Through this new framework, François saw the only way to true and lasting healing. He never did join that rebel movement. He never did exact revenge against his enemies.

François realized that unless people changed their way of thinking, there would be another genocide. The generational wounds were too deep, and the people his age, and those older than him, would never change and seek a peaceful, godly path to healing. There was too much hurt and too much violence on both sides of the conflict.

The Bible speaks to this. God knew that people would be revengeful and angry and would want to take matters into their own hands. He instructs us through the Word on how to, and, just as importantly, how not to react in times of attack or confrontation with our enemies. For example, in Romans 12 we are instructed to bless those who persecute us, to live peaceably and in harmony with everyone, to care for our enemy's physical needs of hunger and thirst, and to overcome the evil they have done to us with good deeds of our own towards them (Romans 12: 14-21). This is the way to true healing and reconciliation. By pursuing godly living and right responses, and by trusting the Lord to be our vindicator (Romans 12:19) we will find peace and healing for the future.

François put this theory to the test by taking the godly teaching that he heard about peace and reconciliation and developed it for school children. François was invited into the schools, and although sharing about Jesus wasn't on the official curriculum, he continues to be welcomed in to teach children about mercy, grace, and forgiveness.

Personally, François found the peace he desired. His anger disappeared, he forgave the soldiers, and he abandoned his desire for revenge. He admits that forgiving his enemies is not something that he would have been able to do on his own. François said, "Humanly it is impossible to forgive such a thing, but through Christ all things are possible."

The truth is that François' work in the schools may not transform an entire country. There may be more fighting, more genocide. There may be more evil deeds done to François or to his friends and neighbours. But it is also true that he has now discovered the healing and freedom he needs so that he can live at peace no matter what circumstances come his way. François now knows that the Lord is his vindicator and his protector and his judge, and there is great healing in that knowledge.

What about you? What relationships do you desire to be reconciled or healed? Where would the forgiveness and peace that Jesus brings make all the difference in your life? There could be many ways that you try to fix or bring justice to a situation in your life. However, if it is not founded on the teachings of Jesus, but is founded on the traditions and wisdom of

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man, you will surely be disappointed. In John 14:27, Jesus says, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” The peace that Jesus brings is greater, more fulfilling, more enduring, and sweeter than anything the world can offer. Learn from François’ example, and pursue that healing peace through the teaching of the Bible and not through man-driven, hate-filled revenge. There is no other way to lasting reconciliation and peace, with others and within yourself.

IN REVIEW

- The Bible speaks to the tendency towards revenge that lives within each of us and teaches a better way of how to deal with our enemies.
- True peace and reconciliation only comes through Jesus Christ. Peace as the world gives only leads to troubled-hearts and fearful people.
- Even if circumstances do not improve, or even if you are hurt again, finding the ability to forgive and the ability to reconcile through Jesus’ peace will guard your heart in this difficulty now and also in future pain.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- Where are you seeking to exact revenge on someone who has hurt you or who has hurt a loved one of yours? Do you try to justify that revenge with misquoted scripture? Ask the Lord to open your eyes to the truth of His Word so that you can accurately apply His healing principles to your current circumstances.
- What has hurt you in the past enough to affect your daily life now? In what ways does it affect you? Choose today to turn to God for healing, and the ability to forgive what has happened in your past.
- Sometimes our hurts are not at the hands of others, but because of circumstances in our life. Some situations leave people angry with God! Have you ever struggled with feeling hurt by God? Write down some of your frustrations, and go to God with them today. Ask God to heal you of these hurts too, and bring you peace and understanding, then turn to His Word. God knows your heart, and circumstance. Read ([Romans 8:28](#), [James 1:2-4](#) and [2 Corinthians 1:3-5](#)). Be assured God will himself comfort you, and bring you to wholeness through this.

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