

## **FIGHTING FOR YOUR FAMILY\_7**

### **The Hurt and Healing of Abuse**

He is charming, helpful, appears to be generous, willing to commit himself, the kind of man that many people think that you ought to marry. You do notice that sometimes he does things for you that make you feel uncomfortable but after all you are thankful for the attention, such as it is. And furthermore, as you stop to think about it and you begin to reflect, you do notice that he is somewhat controlling, but it's nice to be loved by a man who seems to take charge. That's a welcome relief. The problem is that as time goes on you begin to discover that he's very controlling and your opinion doesn't matter that much because he always knows what is best and he knows what should be done.

There's something else that gives you a bit of pause and that is the fact that he speaks disparagingly of his own parents and you notice that everybody seems to have wronged him. And then you notice that he even speaks disparagingly of your own family, and that becomes very important and will be important after you are married because he's going to want to separate you from your family. But he tells you that you alone understand him. You are not like everybody

else out there. And so it is he perhaps pressures you sexually, but you begin to think that all men are like that. Well, by the way, all men aren't like that, but you begin to think that that's maybe somewhat normal, and so you commit and you marry him. And what you don't understand is that he's not interested in a partner. He's interested in someone who he can control, someone who he can possess. That's really what he's interested in.

And then you see his dark side. First of all it's his verbal put-downs as he tries to minimize you, as he tries to criticize you and make sure that you know that he is so much more superior and you are so foolish and maybe even stupid. And then he begins to tell you that you are just like the rest of them after all. "You are not the woman that I thought you were going to be."

And then perhaps his temper gets the best of him and you begin to notice that it is physical abuse. He slaps you and you hope that it will be the only time, and he may actually ask forgiveness. Of course he will remind you that "You made me slap you." So the good news is he might ask forgiveness, and when he does he is genuinely sorry. The bad news is it won't change anything. He will do it again.

And then when you have children perhaps he will abuse them physically, verbally, maybe even sexually. Welcome to the world of abuse.

And of course, you as a wife don't know what to do. Who do you tell? All of your friends think that he's such a nice man, but if you were to indicate what's going on at home they'd either call you a liar - A, or else B, they'd say, "What kind of a horrible woman are you anyway to make such a nice man act that way?" because remember his reputation in the neighborhood and in the church is still great. It's not necessary for him to be good, but it's very necessary for him to appear good. So you don't know whom to tell. You don't know who will even believe you. Just for the sake of the record, here at the Moody Church if you come to us and tell us that you have been abused or you are being abused, we will believe you. Keep that in mind.

Well, what I'd like to do today, as you know, is to speak about this very difficult topic, and I have a few words by way of introduction. First of all, even though I am going to be speaking about men primarily as the abusers, of course there are women who also abuse their husbands oftentimes because they are very passive-aggressive, or in

other ways, and of course, there are mothers who abuse their children. But during this message I can't continually refer to that and remind you of that, even though it will become apparent as the message continues.

Furthermore, this message is not only for the abused but the abusers. When I was a young pastor I would speak to all those who were abused, and forget about the abusers. If it is true that one in four girls will be sexually molested or in some way disparaged by the time she becomes a teenager or older, I used to think to myself, "Now who is doing all this?" And then I realized that in a congregation like this and in the wider audience that we have well beyond the walls of Moody Church there are plenty of people who are abusers.

And I want to speak to you abusers now, as I will later, and tell you that first of all I care about you. You too are human beings, and my desire is that you will be in heaven redeemed by God along with those whom you have abused as a testimony of God's amazing incredible grace. So I care about you as individuals.

Let me tell you about the prayer meeting we had on Wednesday. We were praying about this particular message and this day and I asked if there were any women present who had been abused, and we were willing to pray for them. And one dear sister began to just pour out her soul so I invited other women to come around and to pray for her, and about 15 or 20 perhaps gathered around. And then when we were finished praying for her I asked for other women who had been abused to indicate their desire for prayer, and it was so wonderful to see in the midst of all of this confession these women rally around one another and pray for each other.

So I am going to let you know that at the end of this message I'm going to give an invitation. Rebecca and I are going to be up here to welcome you. We have prayer partners - more prayer partners than usual - because what we'd like to do is for you to be able to experience the same grace, the same outpouring of love and the same prayer support as we had at prayer meeting this past Wednesday.

People say to me, "Is it difficult for you to preach a message like this?" and my response is, "No, not really," and I'll tell you why. I am so excited about the

possibility that there are people listening to this message who are going to be helped. I believe that lives are going to be changed forever as a result of what we are going to share today, and that excites me.

I have four or five books on abuse and I've read only one, and that was plenty. My heart was absolutely broken as I began to see what happens behind closed doors, and I began to think of all of the pain that is out there that most of us know nothing about. So today it is from my heart to your heart that I speak, and I care about you - abused and abusers. All of us stand in need of God's marvelous grace.

I'm going to ask you to take your Bibles for a moment and turn to Psalm 147. I want to leave you with this promise. In the book of Psalms we have these words. I'm going to pick it up in verse 2 of Psalm 147. It says, "The Lord builds up Jerusalem. He gathers the outcasts of Israel." Of course the Psalm begins by inviting praise to God because He is good but He gathers the outcasts of Israel. "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his

understanding is beyond measure. The Lord lifts up the humble; he casts the wicked to the ground.”

So there you have it. God binds up the brokenhearted. If you are here today and you are brokenhearted God stands ready to bind you up, but His grace does not enter into closed doors. You must let Him heal you, and that’s what we are praying toward in this message.

Well, before we get to the healing part I want us to think briefly about a quintessential example of an abuser in the Bible, and that is King Saul. King Saul is very interesting and you may not have time to turn to this passage because I’m going to look at it very quickly. Saul was an amazing man because he had these advantages, these strong points. Saul was anointed by God in 1 Samuel 1:10. Samuel anointed him and said, “The Lord is anointing you to be king.” Wouldn’t you like to be anointed as king? Wow!

Saul furthermore had the gift of prophecy. “The Spirit of the Lord will rush upon you,” said Samuel, “and you will prophesy, and you’ll be turned into another man.” And then Saul begins to prophesy under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and the people even ask if Saul also is among the

prophets and the answer is, "Yes, listen to him prophesy."  
This is all in 1 Samuel 10.

He appeared to be humble. Later on in the chapter they are having a coronation. Samuel gathers the whole crowd to a place called Mizpah and he said, "We're going to crown our king." And lo and behold Saul is chosen to be the one crowned and they can't find him. The Bible says he was hiding behind the baggage. That appears to be humility. And then when he was brought before the people the Bible says that he was taller than anyone else and he was impressive in appearance. And you know that tall people do have a great advantage over the rest of us. They are impressive oftentimes in appearance. Saul had all of that.

And then you go to chapter 11 and what do you discover about Saul? He won a great victory for Israel. How would you like to have a king like that, anointed and gifted by God? But there was another part to King Saul. There was some darkness in his life and we discover this as we look at the Scripture now in 1 Samuel 18. I know I'm hurrying today but keep in mind that all of this is in the text and you can find it yourself. It says in 1 Samuel 18, picking it up in verse 6, "And as they were coming home when David



returned from striking down the Philistine, the women came out of the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul with tambourines, with songs of joy and with musical instruments. And the women sang to one another as they celebrated, 'Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands.'"

Oh brother! Saul was very angry and the saying displeased him. He said, "They have ascribed to me thousands (He liked that part of the song.), but to David tens of thousands." And so this man, anointed by God, called of God and gifted by God, tries to kill David. The very next verse says, "A harmful spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he raved within his house while David was playing the lyre, as he did day by day. Saul had his spear in his hand. And Saul hurled the spear, for he thought, 'I will pin David to the wall.' But David evaded him twice."

And so there you have the two sides of human nature - gifted and anointed (the kind of man that any woman would want to marry) and an abuser. Even here we learn a couple of things about abuse that might be helpful. How did David handle it? First of all he decided to run. He didn't say to

himself, "Well I'm going to stay here and be a martyr." No, when the spear came at him he dodged it and then he left. And when you get to an abuser, oftentimes - almost every time the best thing to do is to leave and put physical distance between you and your abuser because remember that we're not dealing here with people who are rational.

How would you like to be able to reason with King Saul, this great man who was obsessed with demonic jealousy? You can't reason with people like that. I have a friend who says that you should never wrestle with a pig. First of all, the pig is going to enjoy it. Secondly, you will get dirty. And third, the pig might win because he plays by a different set of rules.

Saul played by a different set of rules. He put out all of the witches from the land but when he was in desperation he went to the one witch that was still in existence. In other words, what applies to you does not apply to me. You can't reason with people like that. And so what David did was run. And by the way, did any benefit come out of that - David being pursued by Saul for ten long years? The answer is yes.

There's a book that's been written entitled *The Tale of Three Kings* that explains that God used this time to take the Saul out of David's heart because David had the potential of being another Saul. And so God worked in David's life and as a result we have some Psalms that we would never have had if David had not been running from Saul. For example, Psalm 34 that says, "I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth. Many shall hear it in fear. I sought the Lord and He answered me and heard me and delivered me out of all of my troubles." We'd have never had those Psalms, or at least a half dozen of them, written by David as he was fleeing from Saul. God wanted to do something good out of something very evil.

Well, the question is how do we begin the healing process as I speak to you? And as I to speak to you today if you want to cry, and some of you may do that, I want you to know that you are welcome to do that. And the people next to you will understand, and if they don't it is their problem and not yours. All right, remember that.

Some of you may be tempted to leave. I've had that happen when I've spoken on this before and I prefer you not do that, but if you feel that have to, why then indeed do so.

I think that it would be very appropriate before we get into the steps toward healing if we were to bow our heads and pray one more time that this might be a moment of deliverance for many people who have never faced these issues in their lives before. Would you join me as we pray?

Father, as I have sought Your face regarding this message, I pray today that it may go directly to the heart. We are counting on Your promise that You heal the brokenhearted. Do that today, Father. And we ask that even though there may be pain, we thank You that the purpose of pain is for healing. Bring that about for Your glory, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Number one, what you need to do is to face reality. You know, abusers live in denial, and so do the abused. I told you that this message was for both, so first of all I want to say a word to the abusers. If there's anything about people who abuse others it is this. They are keenly aware of the hurts that are done to them. In facts those hurts

are revisited over and over and over again, but they are insensitive to the hurt that they are doing to others. In fact, if they were abused perhaps in their minds they are saying, "Because it happened to me I have every right to do it to you," and they are destroying their children and they are destroying their wives and families, and really, down deep don't care. Verbally sometimes! I'm thinking of a father, and a little child who said this to one of our daughters, "I wish I were a dog because my dad loves dogs. He's left the family, but if I were a dog he would love me."

Listen, I am speaking to you very directly right now because I want you to be in heaven, but I want you to face reality. All right? This is what Jesus said. He said, "If any of you cause one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble it would have been better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea."

I plead with you today. Do you understand what you are doing to your wife because of your verbal putdowns and what you are doing to your children because you slap them and you speak disparagingly of them, and you criticize them

without lifting them up, honoring them, praying for them, encouraging them? Do you understand that? You must face reality.

You know, the Bible says in Psalm 139, "Search me, oh God, and know my heart and try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting." I am interested in human nature and I know something about it living with myself. I'll tell you this though. I have long ago learned that there are things about us that we will never admit to unless God shows them to us. Would you, in this moment of honesty, see what you need to admit to? God will show you what it is that you need to admit to.

And of course, you also, as someone who is abused, must face reality. You must recognize that indeed abuse has happened. And there may be some of you listening here who have never been able to say that about your parents, about your environment. Eighty percent of all abuse, by the way, takes place either within the home or among relatives of the home, and you've never been able to admit to it. And so, as a result, this festers within you, and I'm saying to you today what you need to do is to look at reality, and

mourn the loss, yes, but face it and don't pretend that it didn't happen because believe me, it may have. And if you are listening as a child, would you go for help? Would you speak to a teacher, to a Sunday school worker, to someone, because we have to face this and not pretend that it's not here? So first of all what we need to do is to move from denial to reality.

Secondly what we need to do is to go from hiding in the shadows to seeking help in the sunlight. Now if point number one is to admit to reality, point number two is to go for help. Point number two is to simply say that it must be brought into the light because if it is not brought into the light it is the devil that works in darkness. And some of you mothers know that abuse is going on in your home but you say to yourself, "I'm not going to confess to it, I'm not going to go for help because of the consequences of going to the authorities (or wherever you must go - to a counselor) to admit what's happening." May I simply remind you that the consequences of remaining silent in the presence of abuse are far greater than the consequences of finally exposing it and facing the reality? Please keep that in mind. So what we need to do is to come from the shadows and go to the sunlight.

And again as I've mentioned, if you are here today as a child, and you are listening to this message you must go for help too.

You know, when we were kids we used to run under street lamps. I was born six miles from a town that had one street lamp. It had about 75 people and one street lamp, and as kids we used to run and see how long our shadows would become until the shadows were way out there, and then there were times when we would stand directly under the light. And when we were directly under the light our shadows were very small in bits and pieces.

I urge you today to come to the light. It is the light that heals. The Bible says in James 5, "Confess your faults one to another that you may be healed," and so the Scripture is very clear that it's not enough to try to deal with this on your own. You've already tried that, haven't you? No matter where you are on the continuum, whether as abused or abuser, light has power to heal. Come to the light.

Let me say also that we must move from self-justification to forgiveness, and this is absolutely critical. I want you to take your Bibles and turn now to the book of Ephesians,



chapter 4. It's a familiar passage but I want you to see it in your own Bible so that you remember where it is and how clear the Scriptures really are.

I'm going to pick it up at verse 29 of Ephesians 4. "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths but only as is good for building up, as fits the occasion (By the way, does that verse rule in your home?), that it may give grace to those who hear, and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness (Does that characterize you possibly?), wrath, anger, clamor, and slander be put away from you along with all malice."

Now the Bible wouldn't ask us to put it away if we couldn't put it away because we can. And I think the next verse tells us how. "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you."

I told you today that I want both abusers and abused to be in heaven together to rejoice in God's grace. And may I tell you today that when Jesus Christ died on the cross His death was such a sufficient sacrifice for sin that as we

sometimes sing, "Even the vilest of sinners who truly believes that moment from Jesus a pardon receives." Isn't that good news for sinners? (applause) Now if you're not a sinner you didn't have to clap.

And so Jesus Christ invites us today to receive forgiveness, and someone has well said that forgiveness first of all is the key to God and me, forgiveness is the key between you and me, and between me and me. You can't go on in life and be able to function properly as long as there is long-standing bitterness in your heart that you will not give up. And what the Bible is saying is that just as Jesus has forgiven us and cleansed us, and we receive it, in the same way we offer forgiveness to people even if there is no possibility of reconciliation. Your abuser may be dead. Your abuser may not be interested in any kind of reconciliation because he's denying the abuse, as most abusers do.

Someone has said this. "The man I hate may be many miles from my bedroom, but more cruel than any slave driver, he whips my thoughts into such a frenzy that my inner spring mattress becomes a rack of torture. The lowliest of serfs can sleep but not I. I really must acknowledge the fact

that I am a slave to every man on whom I pour the vials of my wrath.”

God says to you and to me that what we need to do is to give it up and to recognize that giving up our anger is something that is difficult, but it is a choice we must make. If we want to accept the promise that God has given to us in His Word that He heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds, part of that healing has to do with forgiveness. So what we do is we ask the Lord to forgive us, and if you have not come to Jesus Christ, again I invite you to do that. We invite God to come into our lives and then what we do is we choose to forgive and to leave it all behind. And then what we have to do is we have to accept God's forgiveness.

Always remember this. The issue is never the greatness of our sin. The issue is the wonder of the righteousness that God applies to any one of us, whether abused or abusers. It is the righteousness of Jesus Christ that is applied to us. And as we begin to open our lives to the Lord that healing ministry begins.

I opened this message by telling you about a prayer meeting that we had last Wednesday, and what we want to do is to give you an opportunity to do that today because at the end of this message I'm going to be giving an invitation as I mentioned. And Rebecca and I will be here and we're going to have counselors because I want you to experience the kind of freedom and the kind of prayers that enable you to pray with someone else to find God's grace and God's healing in your life.

You know the Bible says regarding Jesus, "He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed" because he was wounded for **our** transgressions. He was bruised for **our** iniquities. The chastisement of our peace ~~with~~ was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed.

Now many people interpret that to be physical healing. Of course there is healing in the atonement in the sense that eventually when we are redeemed we are going to be fully healed, and won't that be a wonderful day when finally the healing is complete? But at the same time it definitely involves spiritual healing because the Bible particularly

in the Psalms talks about the Lord healing my soul. So I want you to realize today that God is available for your soul to be healed, and He can do that in your life.

In one of the things I wrote I said this. In a seminary classroom a professor whom we will call Brother Smith was known for his elaborate object lessons. This day was no exception. On the wall he placed a big target and on a nearby table were many darts. Brother Smith told the students to draw a picture of someone they disliked, or someone they actually hated. Then he allowed them to throw darts at that person's picture. One lady drew a picture of a girl who had stolen her boyfriend. Another drew a picture of a man who had mistreated her and lied to her. All the students found someone they hated and did so very quickly. For some the challenge was to choose just one among many? Who shall I draw?

The class lined up and began throwing darts with much laughter and hilarity. Some of the students threw their darts with such force that their targets were being ripped apart, and ripping the target apart. Just then Brother Smith interrupted the students and removed the target from the wall, and underneath the target was a picture of Jesus.

A hush fell over the room as each student viewed the mangled picture of Jesus. Holes and jagged marks covered His face. His eyes were pierced out. Brother Smith said simply, "Inasmuch as you have done it to the least of these, My brethren, you have done it to Me." No other words were necessary as tears filled the eyes of the students. They could not take their eyes off the picture of Jesus. Even after the bell rang they sat in their seats until one slowly left, and then another, because every dart you throw at your wife, your husband, a friend, an abuser, lands in the heart of Jesus. We will never deal with the roots of rage unless we know the meaning of forgiveness, and we will never deal with those roots until we know the meaning of acceptance. And we will never be free until we know the wonder of Jesus.

You say, "Well, Pastor Lutzer, how do I know that I am healed?" That's a very good question. You know that you are healed or in the process of being healed when you begin to see that God has a purpose even in your abuse though it doesn't justify the abuser. God will deal with him, but God begins to use it in our lives, and it begins to work for us rather than against us. I've met many people who, because

of their experience, are able to connect with people in ways that I can't because I was brought up, thankfully, in a non-abusive home, but God is able to use even that evil for good.

He used evil for good in the case of Jesus. He was abused, shamefully abused because He was perfect, and in the midst of all of that abuse He dies on the cross and purchases redemption as a reminder of the fact that for the believer who opens his life to God, no part of our past experience is ever lost. Do you believe that? Can you trust God for that?

I'm saying this as clearly as I can. Whatever we do not forgive we transmit. We pass it on. And if you do not allow God to transform you, you will indeed transmit whatever issue there is in your life, and that's why I invite you today to respond to an invitation for special prayer.

In a moment we are going to be singing together and when that happens you can stand up and you can come. As I mentioned Rebecca and I are going to be here. We have more prayer partners today. I don't know how many we will use. Our intention is to pray for you. These prayer partners are

not specific counselors. They are prayer partners. If you need further help they can perhaps connect you with other ministries and other opportunities, but we're only here to lift one another up in prayer. We're just a family saying, "Who is hurting?"

Come and receive prayer today because these prayer partners would love to meet you and connect with you and lift you to the throne of God. We have prayed that this would be a healing moment for many people, and however imperfectly the message went forth today, I believe that God is working in your life.

Would you join me as we pray together?

Father, we still cleave to the promise that says "He heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds." Today, Father, I pray that as many wounds that would be opened that You might heal them all through Your grace, through Your power, and through the prayers of Your people. Help this to be an important moment for many who say, "I need special prayer," that they might be healed. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.