

# Marriage: Hope for the Hurting

by Shane Idleman

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*Don't let hurt define you; instead, find hope for the hurting through the power of God's word and obedience to His standard.*

**Duration:** 1:00:00

**Scripture:** Psalm 139:7-10, Isaiah 40:31, Philippians 3:8-10, James 1:22

**Topics:** "Marriage Restoration", "Spiritual Freedom"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of waiting upon the Lord, trusting in His strength and guidance. It delves into the power of brokenness, highlighting the need for genuine repentance, forgiveness, and obedience to experience true freedom and restoration. The message encourages releasing bitterness, jealousy, and past hurts, while focusing on serving and loving God while waiting for His direction.

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## Transcript

The marriage series is actually coming to an end tonight, a little sad about that. It's been eight weeks. I think we've exhausted pretty much every topic that we could on that.

Of course, I could keep speaking on it, but with Easter coming up and different things. So tonight is the last night on the marriage series. And if you didn't get last week's message, it's online now.

But the title of it was sex, believe it or not. Is it good? Is it gross? Or is it God in your life? And those are the three things you will follow under one of those umbrellas. It's either gross.

It's good. Has God ordained it and created it? Or it's God in your life? And the topic I'm going to talk about tonight is hope for the hurting. And as I was preparing for this, it became crystal clear to me that the reason many people are hurting is because of last week's topic.

Sexual immorality or adultery or something, some type of perverting of the sexual union has been broken. And people are going from relationship, relationship or divorce or separation. And they're hurting.

They're carrying all this baggage into either an upcoming marriage or they're going through divorce and separation. We never really talked about this topic. And I could have unpacked 1 Corinthians 7, there's a lot in there about a wife should not leave her husband, a husband should not leave his wife.

But if they do, if an unbelieving spouse departs, they're not under bondage in such cases. There's a lot to unpack right there. You could do a whole series on remarriage and divorce and spend some time there in the scriptures on what does God's word say.

And we might do that. I haven't ruled that out yet, but it hasn't been on my heart as much as some of these other topics. So I'm going to pray about that and see where God wants to take us.

We are going to start. It looks like something for the men. Monday nights, we've got the sanctuary and I think Jeff's going to help out and Mark and Russell and Matt.

As of now, we're just going to do something for the men every Monday from 6 to 8. And we have got the sanctuary. We don't know when it's going to start yet, probably within a month or so. And we're excited about that because we want to start working with the men, equipping them, helping them, training them, motivating them, and then kind of, you know, take it from there and see what develops and mentoring and different things.

So we are finally going to start that. We've got the facility, more nights, and we're excited for that. But on to this topic, hope for the hurting.

Now let me put a big disclaimer out there. I'm going to talk about a lot of things and people probably say, yeah, but you don't know what I went through, what I'm going through. And you're right.

I don't want to discount the deep emotional pain that people are experiencing. I don't want to discount that. But I do want to remind everybody in this room that God makes provision for us in His Word.

See, it's not like somebody who's going through depression, you say, oh, just get over it. You can't just get over it. Somebody who's hurting because of a failed relationship, you can't just get over it.

You've been dwelling on this too long, just snap out of it. You can't. You can't in many cases.

Now granted, God's Word provides healing and direction and restoration. So I don't want to discount the deep emotional pain that many go through. But at the same time, I can't ignore God's Word.

If you've been here any length of time, you know that I cannot do that. This is the standard on which our lives are built. This is the foundation.

This is the solid rock upon which our lives are built. We must look to the scriptures and trust them to bring clarity to our lives, to bring wholeness. And after many, many counseling appointments and speaking at men's conferences for years and talking to people, I came to the conclusion that a lot of people know what this says, but they don't want to obey it.

And as we go through scriptures on healing and restoration, the Bible says, let this mind be in you. Make no provision for the flesh. Put away bitterness and anger.

There's commands to do these things. So a lot of times we believe, I know what they say, but I'm not going to do them. So we don't walk in victory.

Because the power is in the obedience, not in the knowing. That's the difference between knowledge and wisdom. I know we've talked about this before, but it bears repeating.

Knowledge is, I know what this says. Do you know that the devil has knowledge of this? The Bible says that even the demons believe in Jesus Christ and they tremble. It's not the belief that we have where you put your trust and faith and hope in Christ.

They believe intellectual knowledge, they have to. They know the spiritual realm. Even the demons believe and tremble.

And many people know the word of God, but the power comes in obeying it. And I talk to people all the time. Yeah, I know Jesus died on the cross, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

I know all this. I know all this. And there's people going to spend eternity in hell because they know, but they did not apply.

They did not repent. They did not believe. They did not trust.

The Bible is a Bible of action words. Do this. Turn and you will live.

Obey and you will live. Do these things. And then you get into the big debate on free will.

You know, does man really have this free will that he can choose or does God choose certain people? You know, to me, when the Bible says to do something, it implies that we can do it. Or it wouldn't say to do these things, repent, believe, trust, have faith if we weren't able to perform what's being asked. So with that, I'm going to tread into this topic of hope for the hurting because I've seen God deliver people out of sheer darkness.

I've seen him deliver people out of depression and anxiety and fear. Not like every time it's overnight, you wake up, you're a whole different person. But through his word and applying his word and the power in his word, lives are radically changed.

And you guys remember, maybe six months ago, I played my in-laws, or actually, she's my Morgan sister. And please pray for Morgan. She's in with the children's ministry tonight.

It's her night. So she's got all the little ones. Can't wait to hear about that when I get home.

But her sister, and she shared a quick testimony from Arizona on video, was on, I think, ten different pills and drinking and all this stuff, and just couldn't get through Isaiah, or Jeremiah, and one of the prophets, and just trembling, and the word was breaking her and restoring her, and just cold turkey, anxiety, depression, all these things. So see, that's the fine line we walk on. We can't just say, get over it, you should never be depressed, you should never do this.

Paul was the spirit of life. So we're going to go through things, but we also can't ignore the radical power, the transforming power of God's word. If it was not for that, I wouldn't be up here today.

So when we talk about healing those hurts, God's word does do that. For some people it might be a journey, for some it could be overnight, for others it could be a breakthrough, others it could be this bitterness, and resentment, and unforgiveness we're holding on to. There's a lot of things, if we begin to obey God's word, husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church, your home life would turn upside down.

Arguments would cease, for the most part. Wise, respect your husbands, just show them the due honor. Men will be radically changed in that.

So once we begin obeying the word of God, and it's not the hard obedience, you've got to do this, you've got to do that, but it's loving obedience. And I've talked to before, as men serve Christ and serve their spouse, then a wife wants to come underneath that covering and that shelter. Not some man who's stomping his foot and pounding the pulpit and yelling, nobody wants to, and God's not saying that, he's saying husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church.

That's the example, that's a hard example. So we talked about all these things, and then we come into this topic, hope for the hurting, and I want to just read a brief excerpt from a book that has really stood out in my mind for the last ten years, once I came across this excerpt, and I've written about it, I've put it in the paper, I've put it in a few of my books, but it comes from the book *The Sacred Thirst*. The author writes, the bride and the groom are standing in front of everyone, looking better than they're ever going to look again, getting so much attention and affirmation, everyone even stands when they walk in.

So they think that this marriage, at least, is about them. It's not. Just look at the worn out parents sitting in the first pew.

They understand this. The only reason these parents are still married is because long ago, they learned how to handle the hurt they caused each other. They know that the last thing you ever want to do with hurt is to let it define you.

And that's what's happening. If you talk to young adults who are cutting, suicide, killing each other in the streets, they're letting the hurt of their life define who they are. They're looking to Hollywood, not the Holy Spirit, for direction.

They're being let down. That's where cutting comes from. I don't like myself.

I am hurt at life, or people going through life. I'm hurt. This hurt now has defined me.

This is who I am. People go through divorce, feel like they've got a big D right here. Have you been married before? Yeah, I just, you know, I'll tell you about it later.

What happened to your ex-spouse? What's going on? You carry around this weight of a divorce, and people who haven't been there can't relate to you. They don't understand the pain and the shame, but that should not define you. See, we go through life and hurt, and we bring hurt and baggage and all these things, but it is not who you are.

When we are in Christ, we are a new creation. The old things have passed away. These things aren't meant to carry with us.

Yes, there's circumstances. Now, we're a certain way, but we build these walls to protect us, and they end up imprisoning us. These walls.

He's not going to do that to me again. I'm not going to go through that again. I went through my last relationship, and we have these walls now that are built to protect, but the protection becomes an imprisonment.

And hurt defines us. The hurt, now this is who I am. See all these hurts? See what people have done to me? This has defined me.

And that's why when God says, let not man put asunder what God brings together. So when marriages come apart, that's why there's so much pain, because it wasn't meant to happen. It's like taking this paper here and just ripping it apart.

It'll never be restored. It will never be restored. That's why divorce is so detrimental.

That's why we fight for it. That's why we pray for it, because it shatters and it breaks lives. And then the person walks around like this, the limp that won't leave.

You know, the thorn in the flesh. This is who I am now, and they become defined by this hurt in their lives. So God's word says, do not let hurt define you.

It's not supposed to define us. Young adults, can you imagine if they would get into the Word of God, they would be built up by people and encouraged by people and show them who they are in Christ. God created them, not looking at TV saying, I'm 20 pounds overweight, or I don't look this, I don't match this, I don't look up to this.

And they're constantly being fed by the media, by Facebook, you know, that paints this picture of our lives that is not true. Don't get jealous of Facebook. The people are posting those things to look better.

They're always on vacation. They're always having a latte. They're always at the gym, or they're always laying out by the pool.

That's not life. And we have this fake, don't get me started on that thing. But what happens is we look, oh, wasn't that my life? Why haven't I lost 25 pounds in 25 days? Why didn't I do this? Why isn't my husband bringing me roses and chocolate and sweeping me off my feet and taking me on a date? Why, why, why? And the young adults, look what they're watching, MTV and all these things.

Yeah, well, let's have tons of sex and partners, and then they wonder why they wake up depressed the next morning, despaired of life. Because those things are not who you are, and then you're hurt. The young adults are carrying more pain into their marriage than we've ever had to deal with when we were older.

They're carrying years of scarred relationships because hurt is defining them. So we've got to point them to the Word of God. That's why our culture is in desperate need for this.

You'll read it and say, you're more than a conqueror. You're the head and not the tail. You've been given, you are in the royal priesthood.

You are one of God's children. If you trust in Him, that's who you are. Not who friends or the media or anybody else says you are, because they will try to destroy you.

The enemy comes, but what? To steal, to kill, to steal, and to destroy. That's his job. And he will destroy you by brokenness.

Because what happens from brokenness? Bitterness, resentment, unforgiveness, gossip, jealousy, anger. All these things come from hurt. You don't see a thankful, hurtful person unless they've been broken and

humbled.

Usually those people hurt by life, and they haven't brought it to the cross, are very, very bitter, upset people. I know, I used to be one. I can preach this.

Again, as you know, my sermons are always pointing back at me. I'm not up here saying, how could you? I'm saying, guys, we're all in this together. Hurt cannot define us.

Now on that note, let's talk about the first point. When it talks about hope for the hurting, and you might say, well, this doesn't really apply to me right now. Life's going great.

And, you know, I know some of you, it is going good, and people are getting married, and this and that. But trust me, you'll need this message someday. Because life chews you up, it spits you out, and that's why young adults, I think, have this season of rebellion, 18, 19, 20.

I'm out from under my parents' wings now. Now they're going to tell me what to do. Now I can go out and do all this, and then life just gives you a right hook and a left hook and uppercuts and throws you down and spits you out, and then you come out in your 20s going, holy cow, what was that? That was life.

Go through life, and you will need this message. Because you'll get some raw deals. You'll get people to trespass on you and just upset you and let you down, and life just destroys you if you're not grounded.

Because it's hard enough as it is. That's why Jesus Himself said, build on the rock. Build on the foundation, because when the rains descend and the flood comes and the wind blows, it will come.

Is your house founded upon the rock? He didn't say it's going to be a nice beach in Hawaii, no wind, no this. He said build on the rock because the storm is coming. The storm is coming.

And it's the man who did what? Built his house on the sand, on the sinking philosophy of man's philosophy, on relativism in our culture today. Can we really know truth as God's Word? Truth? No, we don't know truth. Let's build our house upon the sand of man's thinking, and it all comes crumbling down.

So the first point is it's an internal battle. The battlefield is here. Shane, you said that before.

Yeah, and I'm going to say it again until you get it in your minds and I get it in my minds. Right here is where the battle is won or lost. When it comes for rebuilding after brokenness and hope for the hurting, yeah, it's right here.

Because as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. Look at what Ephesians says, for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. What does that mean? Well, Paul's basically saying we don't fight against things that we can see.

The weapons of our warfare are not carnal. We don't use swords. We don't use billy clubs.

We don't use bats. We don't fight the enemy like that. Our enemy goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour in the spiritual realm.

Oh, Shane, now you're getting way out there. Well, I'm just telling you, there's the earth where we live and there's a spiritual realm. There's demonic influences.

Just as Jesus said, God is spirit. Those who worship him must worship him in spirit. There is that spiritual realm.

That's why Paul goes into Ephesians saying, we don't wrestle against flesh and blood. So get that out of your mind. Your battle's not right here.

It'll be manifested here. We'll go through things here. But our battle is against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this age, and against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

That's where our battle is. It's in the mind, the mindset. The enemy plants a lot of times thoughts, or our own thoughts, our own flesh, draws us away.

And Paul will go on to say, for we wrestle not against flesh and blood. And he goes on to say, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. Our weapons are not carnal.

Sometimes if I could just get enough stock, if I could just get enough 401k, if I could get enough real estate, if I could get enough gold, if I could just do this and have this and put an alarm system on my house. The weapons are not carnal. These things are not going to work coming against the enemy.

The enemy can bypass all of these things. And he writes in 2 Corinthians 10, memorize this verse, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments at every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. You control your thought life.

I control my thought life. Paul is saying, cast down every argument. That is something that goes against, argues against God's standard, whether it's his standard of morality, of purity, of righteousness.

Cast down those arguments that come against it. The addict is going to hear, oh, you can just have one drink, don't worry, you can start over tomorrow, you can have just one, try it again. That is an argument coming against what you know to be true, and they fall back in their own pattern because of that argument.

Somebody cheating on their spouse, oh, they just don't love me, they don't respect me. The thought life's going, boy, look at how they're appreciating me at work. The thought life's going, cast down that argument, bring your thoughts under obedience of Christ.

You know what is right. I know what is right. Our thought life, right here, this is what is destroying us.

Paul lays it out perfectly. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, who, in God, for the pulling down of strongholds. Now, Paul is assuming that people are getting into the word of God, they're feeding their mind with the things of God.

If you could come in our culture today, he would say, no wonder there's so much disunity. No wonder people are rejecting Christ. No wonder marriages are falling apart.

Your mind is a cesspool. My mind can be a cesspool of pollutants. The weapons of our warfare are in our mind, bringing thoughts to the obedience of Christ.

If our mind is lusting and fighting and bickering, everything, the mind, we're losing the battle right here. So we go and we pop pills. We go and we take drinks.

We go from relationship, relationship, when the battle's right here and nothing changes. People go from relationship to relationship to relationship. Hence the word promiscuous, promiscuity.

Validate me. Validate me. Now they're rejected.

Now the relationship's over. Would you validate me? Now they validate them. Now this is over in a few months, and now they're destroyed, and now they've got four or five relationships they're pulling around.

Will you validate? Promiscuous. Going from relationship to relationship when the battlefield is right here. You don't need a man or a woman to validate you.

God validates you. It's who you are. And then you live from that standpoint.

So if you want to prevent hurt, you want to restore and be rebuilt and come against brokenness, it starts right here, the eternal battle. This is why most people are bitter at God. Most people, I've noticed, that are bitter at God is because they're losing the battle up here and they blame Him.

They blame Him. He's doing this. He's caused this.

He's done this. No, take your thoughts captive. Be thankful.

We talked about this before. Bitterness and all these things can't dwell in a thankful heart. A thankful heart cannot be bitter and angry and upset.

They cannot coexist. And people become bitter at God. How could He put me through this? How could He do this? And they walk away.

No more quiet time. No more prayer time. Yeah, they'll come to church now and then, but they start to drift because they're bitter.

They're mad. They're upset. The enemy uses that pain and brokenness to draw people away from God when it should draw us to Him because He's the great shepherd.

He's the healer. He's the redeemer. And we get upset at Him because we're losing in our thought life.

And this isn't just about the power of positive thinking. I mean, I don't talk on those things. I mean, there's some truth in being positive.

I mean, you want to say, you know, I love my wife. I love my kids. Thank God.

I mean, you want to think positive, but the power comes in that prayer closet. We've talked about before the internal battle right here. Hurt is diminished, diminished in the prayer closet.

Life is rebuilt. Brokenness is restored in the prayer closet and reaching out, crying out to God. That's when He heals you and restores you.

We can't just get in a car for a few minutes on the way to work and think positive thoughts and it'll all work out. We've got to spend time in that prayer closet. Broken.

Anger is quenched in the prayer closet. Gossip is put to rest. That's what the prayer closet does.

It gets us in right relationship with God. You don't need a closet. I'm not talking, I'm talking metaphorically.

There needs to be a time where you cry out to God. You cleanse your heart because we take on all this filth of the world where it's like we're walking. It's like we step down into a cesspool and we walk.

That's what Christ did. When He, that's why Paul says, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God did not consider robbery to be equal with God, but He made Himself of no reputation and took on the form of sinful flesh and became obedient to the point of death, even the death on a cross. It's a sin nature.

It's so polluted. If you don't get into the Word of God and the prayer closet and ask God to restore you and rebuild you, Lord, take away these things. Take away this anger, this gossip, because it will not leave on its own.

You don't think a few positive thoughts throughout the day and hope it all ends. The battlefield is the mind. The weapon is the prayer closet, the sword of the Spirit, the breastplate of righteousness, the helm of salvation, all these things that God has given us.

But the most powerful weapon you possess is prayer. That's why many people don't do it. If we were to take a survey right now, how many of you would say, my prayer life stinks? And we wonder why we're losing the battle.

We wonder why we're losing the battle for our minds, for our marriages, for depression, for anxiety. And I've talked about this many times before. I never, people are struggling with these things.

I never want to discount the pain that they're going through. But I always go back to, are you in the Word of God like a fish lives in the sea? Are you in the prayer closet? Are you crying out to Him? Are you doing these things? Oh no, I don't really, you know, I've tried all that. No, no, no.

That's, that is the weapon of the, you've got to press in. Jesus said, keep knocking, keep asking, keep seeking God. God says, I'm a rewarder of those who diligently seek me.

The word diligence is on, it's like a drip of water coming off a roof continually. It eventually makes a dip in the concrete, in concrete. You take enough water, drip, drip, drip, it'll wear out that concrete.

That's, that's the word there. God wants him to seek, He wants us to seek Him diligently. Because you know what that shows? How bad do you want it? It's like when I was dating Morgan, you're dating whoever, you just, you call them once and leave it at that.

No, no, you sought them, you pursued them. That's when the flowers came out and the nice dinners, all these nice things. You pursue, that's what God is, diligently seek me with all of your heart.

Not with some of your heart, with all of your heart. So I would submit to you that if you, the brokenness in our mind, or actually the brokenness starts in our mind, where do our thoughts go? Where do our thoughts go? Because it's hard to be angry if you're not concentrating on being angry. It's where we let it, and he's saying bring every, well either the Bible's wrong or it's right.

Bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And this is where some people need to repent tonight. I'm going to use that word again, repentant.

But this is where many people need to repent tonight, right here in their thought life, right here in their thought life. They're holding people in mental prisons of unforgiveness and all these different things in their thought life, taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Number two, to have hope for the hurting, release must occur.

You say, well Shane, what are you talking about? Well I'm glad you asked, let me finish. Those who do not forgive or release bitterness, anger, and hurt never experience freedom, happiness, or true restoration. Let me read that again because that's powerful in and of itself.

Those who do not forgive or release bitterness, anger, and hurt never experience freedom, happiness, or true restoration. What? Yeah, if you never forgive and release those things, it's like a cancer. It just wells up inside of you.

That's why Paul says in Ephesians, let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God and Christ forgave you. I mean that's a powerful scripture that we don't want to obey.

You've got to release these things. And so if there's emotional damage, especially in divorce, I'm going to hold on to this as long as I can. I'm going to show them.

No, you're not showing them. They've moved on. It's imprisoning you.

The hurt is imprisoning you, not them. I believe that forgiveness releases us more than it releases them. God says you want to follow a spiritual principle? Forgive those who have wronged you and you'll experience true freedom.

But we say I'm not going to forgive them. That makes it sound like they were right. Oh, absolutely not.

Forgiveness does not mean the other person was right. God forgives us. Does it mean we were right? No, it means I'm releasing you.

God forgave us in Christ Jesus. I'm releasing you of the debt, of the penalty that you did, that sinful nature. I'm releasing you of that.

I forgive you. That's all forgiveness is. And then you can walk around in freedom because you're not holding on to unforgiveness.

Unforgiveness is so destructive that Paul will go on to say that all forms of malice and evilness derive from this one thing because unforgiveness is like a weed that just keeps growing and growing and other things grow from it. That's where gossip comes from. That's where hatred, that's where anger comes from.

And bitterness, unforgiving. Look at Cain slew Abel. Jealousy, it just builds up.

So that's what forgiveness does, it releases. I'm upset, I release you. I mean, I've got people in my life that upset me too.

It's difficult. But that's where true hope for the hurting comes from, releasing it. First the thought life, then releasing these things.

I don't hold you accountable anymore. I'm not going to hold you responsible. I'm not going to be upset.

I'm not always going to bring up the past. I release you. I forgive you.

And it's just freedom flows. And you start to rebuild after brokenness. That hurt starts to be banded up and restored.

Because you've released, you begin to do that. Now a lot of people are caught in the past because of their thought life. You talk to people who have been divorced years ago.

Yeah, but they did this to me and they did this. Or business deals that went sour. Or friendships.

Yeah, but they're caught in the past from years ago. That's what forgiveness does. It releases that.

I'm done thinking about it. I've learned my mistakes. And they move forward.

The next point, vitally important. Stop wandering. Stop wandering.

And this is more for those who are maybe promiscuous. Or those who are going from relationship to relationship. To truly restore, to be rebuilt and to restore the years that the enemy has taken from you.

And to rebuild and have hope for the hurting. You've got to stop wandering from relationship to relationship. Because you're looking for other people to fill that spot that only God can.

And that's why people, right when they separate. They walk out the door. They separate.

Then they meet somebody else. Dating. You go to the bar or nightclub down there.

Their friend sets them up. They're still married. They're separated.

They go from, I can't be a single for a week. Let alone a month. Oh my gosh.

No, when you're separated, you're single forever until it works out. Or something happens. Where the divorce is final.

And then even then I tell people take time, a lot of time. To make sure God isn't working on the back end. But everybody jumps right into relationships.

And I would say that is the number one reason many marriages are never restored. Ever restored. Because they meet somebody else.

While they're separated. The grass seems greener on the other side. They pursue this other person.

Divorce goes through. A year later they wake up and go, oh my God, what did I do? The grass is not greener. Hmm.

But I'm too prideful and arrogant to admit I was wrong. So they stay in this second relationship. Or third relationship.

Or fourth relationship. And it goes from person to, and I've seen it. They wander.

People with addictions. They'll switch addictions from another addiction to another addiction to another. Or they'll switch and they'll just wander.

And stop wandering. To rebuild hope. And to rebuild your life.

Go to the foot of the cross. Spend time broken. Let God rebuild you.

Because when you empty yourself, that's when the spirit comes in. The Holy Spirit is full of love, joy, peace, contentment, long-suffering, gentleness, kindness. You don't think people who hurt need that? That's why you'll find the people in life that have been the most hurt are often the most forgiving.

And they're often the most filled with the Spirit of God. Because that brokenness has emptied them of themselves. Now they're filled with the Spirit of God.

And here's some of the best preachers I love. When you hear about their life, man, they went through hell and back. God had to break them.

And that's what He does to us many times. He doesn't necessarily do it on purpose. He allows things to happen.

So you have to stop wandering. Stop trying this or trying that. A lot of people, they get hooked on the next diet or the next weight loss thing and that doesn't work.

And then they get hooked on this thing and that doesn't work. Instead of going to God, let Him just break you. Take a weekend off and seek Him and stop wandering from this thing or that thing.

Because it doesn't help. Unless God rebuilds the house, or actually unless God builds the house, they labor in vain who built it. So you can do all this stuff, but unless God's in it, you labor in vain.

I labor in vain. And that leads me right to the next point. The power of brokenness.

See, there's something I've noticed in people that are hurting. A lot of times they're not broken. And I'll just be honest with you.

They're not broken. They're still angry. They're still prideful.

They're still hurt. They're still upset. They're not broken.

And you cannot be rebuilt until you acknowledge that you're broken. Lord, I need you. I'm coming to you.

I need you. Please, restore my life. I'm coming to you.

I'm broken. I'm humble, Lord. Please.

You can look throughout the entire Bible. That one aspect of men and women filled with the Spirit of God was brokenness and full surrender. It's fertile ground for the Holy Spirit to move.

I even believe that God doesn't use a person mightily in ministry until they are completely broken. Because then you go into ministry saying, Lord, what do you want to do? It's all about you. It's all about the cross.

I just, by the grace of God, there go I. If it was not for the shed blood of Jesus Christ, I wouldn't be up here. And then you understand the correct position. The correct position is humility and serving.

So to truly be rebuilt and to have hope for the hurting, true, genuine brokenness needs to take place. And we don't like to talk about that topic. Because pride gets in the way and says, I'm not going to release them.

I'm not going to let that go. I'm going to hold on to that. Well, great.

How are you doing so far with that? It's not working. There's no brokenness taking place. God does mighty things in the lives of those who are humble and broken.

He actually gives grace to the humble. But what does He do to the proud? He resists the proud. God gives grace to the humble but resists the proud.

And the scripture I chose here was in Philippians. Paul said, Whatever gain I had, I count as loss for the sake of Christ. Now you need to understand, Paul was a Pharisee, a Pharisee of Pharisees.

I believe he was of the tribe of Benjamin. He was circumcised on the eighth day. He had the law down.

He was it in his day. But he lost everything when he denounced that legalism and Phariseeism and incorporated Christ into his life and started to preach the cross. He lost all of that.

But he said, I count it all as nothing. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus. For His sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and counted them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him.

Not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but that which comes through faith in Christ and faith in Christ alone. Let me emphasize that point. There are many Christians thinking they're so spiritual, so this by obeying and doing all these things.

They're nothing more than modern day Pharisees. They like to cause division. They like to be critical of everybody else.

They like to say, look at how much I know. Aren't I so great? And it's that Phariseeism. I do all these things.

Look at all these things I do. Paul's saying that is foolishness. If you're going to boast, boast in the cross of Christ.

That's what we're supposed to boast in. Not our own great works. Not how spiritual we are.

We're to boast in Christ and Him alone. That's why Paul can go on to say the famous verse that many of us have heard. Verse 9, Philippians 3.9. I'm going to actually skip down to 3.10. That I may know Him.

That I may know Christ and the power of His resurrection and I may share in His sufferings and become like Him in His death. I do not like that verse. That I may know Him in the fellowship of His suffering? What's he talking about? I don't want to know Him in the fellowship of His suffering.

I want to know Him in the fellowship of His blessings. Like all these guys on TV tell me. Send a thousand dollars and I'll be blessed.

Just jump up and down and praise your hands and live like hell. No. You need to know Him in His suffering because I've learned the only way to know God is to go through the challenges of life.

You guys have heard me tell this story before. It's in a famous book on the psalm about the shepherds. How sometimes they would break the lamb.

A little tiny baby lamb wandering from the flock. They would take that lamb and they would break its leg. What? That sounds ridiculous.

Yeah, but he was wandering away and became easy prey for wolves and all these... Cowardice in our day and all these things. He was wandering away so he had to break that lamb. Then what happened? Then he carried the lamb on his shoulders for weeks.

So through that broken and dependent relationship, that lamb now knew what to do. Now he knew his shepherd. He didn't know his shepherd before that.

He knew some guy telling him, don't go out beside the pen. Don't go out and do that. But it wasn't until he broke him and he had to carry him around.

Now through that broken and dependent relationship, now he can say, He is my Savior. He is my Redeemer. He is my strength.

That's why throughout the whole Old Testament you'll see Israel give God names. Jehovah Jireh. Jehovah Sikkenu.

Jehovah Nisi. My Provider. My Strength.

My Strong Tower. Because they knew Him to be their Deliverer. Their Fortress.

Their Refuge. How did they know Him? Because He had to bring them through things. If you don't go through anything, you won't know Him in the fellowship of His suffering.

That's why I can get up here because Christ has carried me. He has got me through everything. And you guys have seen that famous little poem where there's two feet, two marks in the sand, steps in the sand.

Thank you, Jeff. And then through the hardest times in his life, there's just one set of footprints. And the caption reads, of course, Where were you in these difficult times of my life? And Jesus says, I was the one carrying you.

Those are my footsteps carrying you. Listen, you learn who the Savior is through affliction, not osmosis. What I'm preaching is what I went through.

You guys heard Russell's testimony before. What he preaches is what he went through. That affliction brings you out and you come out stronger.

I can preach Christ and Him crucified because I believe it. That's why many are passionate about Christ. They don't have a relationship with Him.

They can talk more about the freaking NFL draft than Christ. They know all about all these sports teams, but nothing about Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Nothing.

Yet they name the name of Christ as if flippant or they have a cross on their neck. And it just breaks my heart because they truly don't know Him. Because as soon as something challenging comes up, oh, I'm bailing out.

You don't know Him then because things challenging are going to come up. That's why Jesus gave that parable. Seeds are thrown on the wayside, some on the stony ground, but some get caught in the rocks and they start to spring up, but there's no root so they die.

Others get choked by the cares of this world and they wither away and die, but some bear good fruit. You will only know Him through the challenges of life. And you're not supposed to get better.

You don't get bitter, you get better. How are you going to know Him as provider if He doesn't need to provide for you? Lord, I have only got one month left. You better move.

You better open up some financial door because I don't know what's going to happen, but I trust in You. Instead of not trusting Him, we get upset. We yell at our spouse.

We yell at other people. We try to manipulate. We try to maneuver.

We try to jockey at work. We try to lie on our taxes. We try to do all these things to make up for this deficit instead of trusting in Christ.

That's how you know Him as... And those who truly know Him as Savior are those who have been broken and understand redemption. See, that's why we cannot in our culture stop talking about hell, the cross, and judgment. We cannot.

Because that's why people walk around and they have no idea that they've just been set free from hell and condemnation and the judgment and wrath of God. Oh, I'm wiggling my seat. That's okay.

The Bible says it. By grace you have been saved. You understand grace when you understand hell.

If there's no hell and there's no judgment, what is grace? Grace is nothing to me. God is a cosmic ball of love up in heaven. Think about it.

That's why you have to understand the bad news to appreciate the good news of the gospel. The good news can only be appreciated with the bad news as the backdrop. If I stopped right now, we see that cross.

If I played a Passion of the Christ clip from that movie up there, unbelievable. Oh, we can't show people that. We can't talk about that.

Sure we can. That's what happened. See, that's why you appreciate and you love Him because you see what could have happened.

Had it not been for the grace of God, had it not been for the cross of Christ, humanity would have been lost. That's why Jesus said in the garden, Lord, Father, is there any other way? Take this cup, please. Take this cup, Father.

And He said, Son, there's no other way. There's no other way. You've got to go upon that cross.

You've got to die. Your blood has got to be shed for the entire world. That is the only way.

That's why Jesus can say, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man can come to the Father except through Me. There's no other way.

Not by being good, not by thinking this, not by trying to help people. No other way. That's why those who are most passionate about Christ have a true relationship with Him because He is everything to them.

The old martyrs used to say, I don't remember who it was, I don't want to misquote, but back in the early church, they would be put at the stake, hands tied behind their back, about ready to let the fire, just because they were proclaiming the truth of God's Word, just because they wanted to get this out to the people. They would say, we'll take this match away if you denounce Christ. They would say, He's been with me 85 years so far, I cannot denounce Him now.

And in singing, the flames would go up. Go read Fox's Book of Martyrs, if you want a modern day wake up call. Fox's Book of Martyrs.

Look what happened to the disciples. If this was a lie, they were hung on a cross upside down, they were pierced through, they were beheaded, all for a lie? I don't think so, folks. But you know what the difference was? They truly knew Him.

They truly knew Him in the fellowship of His suffering. And that's my concern for America. We've got a modern day, lukewarm, arrogant Christianity that bears no resemblance to Jesus' sobering call to repentance.

We get upset if we can't get His parking spot. We get upset if the service doesn't start on time. We get upset at everything.

There's people around this world, just thank God that they can even pray to Him and meet together. Because they know Him as Deliverer. They know Him as their fortress.

They know Him as their strong tower. God used to drive away armies. There would be armies coming against the nation of Israel.

What are we going to do? What are we going to do? All they could do is pray. God sent an angel and wiped out 175,000 Assyrian men in the Assyrian army in one night. One night.

Slew them. Or the Bible would say He'd bring hornets from the east and west. Can you imagine just swarms coming against? Armies would run for cover.

Gideon's 300. He would make the trees sound like the wind was blowing and armies were coming. The armies would just flee away.

And Israel would say, Well, wasn't that good? We didn't have to do anything. Because God would fight their battles for them. That's why they knew Him as Provider.

And their high tower. And that's my concern with America. We don't know Him as Provider because we've got thousands in savings.

We don't know Him as Redeemer because we professed and said a little prayer but we've never truly repented. We don't know Him as our strong tower because we get through our stuff ourselves. We don't know Him as our refuge because we go grab a pill or a bottle.

We don't know Him as anything because we supplement Him. We try to. If you want to truly restore your life and remove brokenness, you've got to understand the power of brokenness.

You don't know Christ through osmosis. It's through affliction. It's not through blessings.

It's actually through brokenness. Lord, bless me if you just bless me. No, the more blessings you have, the least you think you need Him and you get further and further and further away.

Jesus can say towards the end of His ministry how hard it's going to be for a rich man to enter heaven. Jesus said that rich young ruler, Hey, you want to follow Me? Go and sell everything and follow Me. It's not a proof text for us to sell everything.

Is a rich young ruler probably single? Christ is saying, follow Me wholeheartedly. You're going to need to get rid of all that junk. Oh, I can't.

I've got too much. In Jesus' famous words, it's hard for a rich man to enter heaven. Why? Because that becomes our idol, becomes our God.

I get out of it, I'll write a check. You don't go through anything. We don't know Him as the Bible talks about.

Do we know Him as our deliverer, our defense, our redeemer, our refuge, our shepherd? Do we truly know Him as that? You've got to go through life to know Him as that. If you look at the quote on the front bulletin, this is really our only hope. The proud, self-justifying, self-reliant, self-seeking self has to come simply as a lost, undone sinner whose only hope is a justifying Savior.

You will never hear a better quote for brokenness than that right there. Norman Grubb served time on the mission field. The proud, self-justifying, I'm right, I'm always right, yeah, but I've got this to work on, but you're this person.

I'm so great. They justify everything. Every action is justified.

They never repent. They're never sorry. They justify everything.

I had a hard life. My dad threw me across the room at 12 years old. My ex-wife left me.

I justify everything. I justify it. I'm angry.

I'm Irish. I'm half Irish and half German. Of course I'm going to pop off now and then.

I justify everything. I can justify things with more. I'm busy in ministry.

Can't you see we're building a church? Get away from me. Justify everything. Instead of coming as a lost, undone sinner whose only hope is a justifying Savior.

That's our only hope. Next point. I'm not going to get out of here in time.

This is going to be encouraging as well. Number five. You can't change where you've been.

I'm going to say that again. You can't change where you've been. Stop getting upset about it.

Stop defending it. Stop dwelling on it. You can't change where you've been.

It doesn't matter. Paul says, but I look forward. I look forward to the cross of Christ.

I look forward to ministry. I look forward to what God's going to do now in my life. I want to use that to learn from it, but I can't change what's happened to me.

I can't. The only thing you can do is what we've talked about so far. Forgive, release, repent, and obey.

I almost added that point in there again. That obedience is so important. Look at everything we've talked about.

Everything we've talked about talks about obedience. Bring every thought captive. Put on the whole armor of God.

Let all bitterness. Make no provision for the flesh. Let this mind be in you.

It goes back to obedience to the Word of God. If you want to experience true freedom, begin obeying the Word of God. Not know it.

I can quote a lot of Scripture, but there's a lot I don't want to obey. We have to obey this to experience that power. He will never leave you.

He will never forsake you. I'm going to close on that note. He will never leave you.

He will never forsake you. I think I put that verse in there. Psalm 139.

Is it in your notes? Let me say that again. He will never leave you or forsake you. Never.

Your spouse may. He or she might. People will.

He will never, ever forsake you. That's why David could say, where can I go? Where can I go to flee your presence? Where can I go? If I ascend into heaven, there you are. If I make my bed in hell, behold, you are there.

If I take up the wings of the morning and go to the uttermost parts of the sea, even you are there. Your hand will hold me. Your right hand will guide me.

He is there. He will do that. And I say, oh, that's easy for you to say.

You don't know what I went through. Do you know what David went through? Should we take your quick survey? Now, theologians are divided on when exactly this was written, but suffice it to say, he was going through a lot. He would say in another psalm, that the bones you have broken may rejoice.

Create in me a clean heart. Renew a right spirit within me. Lord, he's been broken.

David. David, who was anointed king over Israel. God said, you're anointed king.

But then he said, go back to the sheep. Go back to the goats. Go back to doing that.

You're anointed, but you're not yet appointed. There's a lot of people that are upset right now because they're not been appointed yet. You cannot promote yourself.

You cannot proclaim yourself. You cannot highlight yourself. You cannot promote.

It comes not from the east or west, but from God. David had to go back. And then when he went back, what did Saul try to do? He tried to kill him for years.

Chasing this guy all around who's supposed to be king. He tried to kill him. And then when David becomes king, we all know the story.

Bathsheba commits adultery, has her husband Uriah killed, and lives in turmoil for a year. You've ever sinned and not asked for forgiveness and tried to hide it? It just eats you up. A true believer, it eats them up.

And then Nathan came to his door. David, the man is you. He told a story about this neighbor who had one little ewe lamb.

And this neighbor had 99. He took that man's little lamb and he killed it. That's all he had.

And David said, that man should be killed. And Nathan said, the man is you. And David repented of his sin.

But the baby died seven days later. David doesn't know this psalm. Have you ever buried a child seven days old? Some have.

And David wept and he fasted. And the Bible says when he died, he went and strengthened himself. He ate and he worshiped God.

After the baby died, yeah, he said, I will see that child again. And that's one thing people use as a proof text for the age of accountability for infants and people who can't have the ability to accept Christ. David said, I'll see him again.

He said, well, David went through a lot. Well, we haven't talked about Tamar, his daughter that was raped by his half-son Amnon. David, who wrote this, where may I go? Your hand will hold me.

Then Absalom upset at David for not taking anything out on Amnon because David probably felt his own sin probably caused this. So Absalom, David's other son, kills Amnon. And then he has to flee for years.

He can't even come back to Jerusalem. David, your own son has to leave. Your daughter's been raped.

One of your sons is dead. Now this other one takes off and is an outcast. What do you do with that? And then he comes back and raises up an insurrection against his own father.

What do you do, dads, when your own son comes against you? He doesn't know this psalm? Please. That's all David can trust. And when your son is coming against you to kill you, David had two choices.

Kill his son or be killed by his son. And he doesn't understand the psalm? He either could kill his son or give up his kingdom. That's his choices.

He was depressed. When he strengthened himself, he got with the captains and his commanders. He said, we've got to come against this.

But please, Joab, please deal gently with the boy Absalom. Please. Would you please for my son's sake? It's my own son.

Would you please deal with him gently? And a lot of people know of east of the Jordan in the forest of Ephraim where Absalom gets tied up, gets stuck, and Joab comes and just pierces him through. It's another son dead. Word comes back to David in some of the most heart-wrenching texts you'll ever read in the Old Testament.

Oh, Absalom, Absalom, my son. My son, would it be to God that I was in your place? Oh, Absalom. And he can sit and he can say, where can I go and flee your presence? Where can I go? If I make my bed in hell, you are there.

If I take up the wings in the morning, you are there. Your hand will guide me. Your right hand will lead me.

That David can write that. And what's even more alarming is why was he okay with his young seven-day-old worshipping God thankful, but now he's a broken man. Absalom, Absalom.

Because Absalom, as far as we know, was on a highway to hell. And that's a very, can you imagine as a father going through all that? So don't tell me these people don't understand the Psalms. Don't tell me they haven't went through what I went through.

None of us have went through what I just described, to my knowledge. That's why we have to go back. We have to say, Lord, you will never leave me.

You will never forsake me. Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. Let me just put that in context.

Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. Isaiah's writing. The Lord is speaking through Isaiah.

To whom then will you liken me? Or to whom shall I be compared? Says the Holy One of God. Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by number, who calls them by name. Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, that my way is hidden from the Lord? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, He neither faints nor is weary.

His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak and to those who have no might. He increases their strength.

Even the youth shall faint and be weary. The young men shall utterly fall. But those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

They shall mount up wings like eagles. They shall run and not grow weary. They shall walk and not faint.

While you wait upon the Lord, that's where the strength comes from. It's in that waiting time that your strength comes back. Samson, when his eyes were plucked out, he was grinding at the mill.

It was in that waiting time that his hair grew back and the strength and the anointing where he could stand and crush the entire Colosseum. In that waiting time, David was strengthened. In the waiting time, on the back side of the desert, Moses came out and led the nation of Israel.

In that waiting time, Jesus was tempted. And then He'd come up out of the Jordan and begin His ministry. It's in the waiting time.

Now we're all too busy. They have no time to wait on the Lord. No wonder life is falling apart.

You've got to wait upon the Lord, people. That could have been the whole sermon. Those who wait upon the Lord.

Let's look at the definition of waiting. Stay where one is or delay your action until something occurs. Lord, I don't see anything happening in my spouse, but I'm going to wait on You.

I'm going to wait on You. I'm going to serve You. Lord, I'm going to love You.

I'm going to wait as You move on the back seat because we want to see something. He's working in the background, but we don't see it. That's why you wait upon the Lord and trust Him to guide you.

Trust Him to direct you. Waiting on the Lord. And I just want to focus on this waiting.

Waiting time. If there's areas you guys need to wait on, anything in your marriage, finances, separation, healing this restaurant, whatever it is. While I'm waiting.

You guys know that theme song from Fire Proof that you saw? While he was doing everything right, his wife wasn't changing. But he said, Lord, while I'm waiting on You, while I'm waiting on You, I will serve You. I will love You.

Lord, build me because that's how You rebuild by waiting on Him and serving Him. I was thinking of something back there. I want you guys to chew on this tonight.

One of the hardest groups to talk to, for me, do you believe this, is Christians who have been Christians for years and years because they'll say, I know that forgiveness is the answer. I've been hearing that for 25 years. I know I've got to release all.

I know, I know, I know. And nothing changes. I can talk to somebody who doesn't know the Word of God that well and say, I need that.

I need to change. I need to forgive. I need to.

And they do it. So I just encourage you, if you need to tonight to forgive people in this room, to forgive your spouse, to let bitterness and jealousy, let it go. Start obeying the Word of God tonight.

Don't hold on to it like I know it. I know, Shane, I've been hearing this for 25 years. Let it go and begin obeying and experiencing freedom.

A freedom that a genuine relationship in Christ brings. Let it go tonight. Let it go.

Whatever it is. God's Word does not lie. We live in deception.

What does James say? Be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. So we live in deception when we do not obey the Word of God. It's that simple.

Yeah, it's that simple. I want to give you this service tonight, dear Heavenly Father. Please continue to break hearts.

Hard hearts, Lord. Draw us back to You by Your Spirit, Lord. I pray for those here tonight, Lord, that are in despair or desperate, Lord, that You would just show them the way tonight, Lord.

As they cry out to You, as they give their life to You, as they give their situation, their circumstances to You, Lord. Let them meet You in a new way tonight, Lord. Lord, we pray that Your Word would not fall on deaf ears.

Lord, that we'd be a church that obeys Your Word. Lord, obedience brings power. Lord, give us the humility to admit that we're wrong.

Give us the strength to endure. Lord, give us the fortitude to stand strong in a culture that is rejecting You. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

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