

Surviving Life's Sucker Punches

Max Lucado writes the following

" Chippie the parakeet never saw it coming. One second he was peacefully perched in his cage. The next he was sucked in, washed up, and blown over. The problems began when Chippie's owner decided to clean Chippie's cage with a vacuum cleaner. She removed the attachment from the end of the hose and stuck it in the cage. The phone rang, and she turned to pick it up. She'd barely said "hello" when "ssssopp!" Chippie got sucked in.

The bird owner gasped, put down the phone, turned off the vacuum, and opened the bag. There was Chippie -- still alive, but stunned.

Since the bird was covered with dust and soot, she grabbed him and raced to the bathroom, turned on the faucet, and held Chippie under the running water. Then, realizing that Chippie was soaked and shivering, she did what any compassionate bird owner would do . . . she reached for the hair dryer and blasted the pet with hot air.

Poor Chippie never knew what hit him. A few days after the trauma, the reporter who'd initially written about the event contacted Chippie's owner to see how the bird was recovering. "Well," she replied, "Chippie doesn't sing much anymore -- he just sits and stares."

Note: It's not hard to see why. Sucked in, washed up, and blown over . . . That's enough to steal the song from the stoutest heart. " How does a person handle life when you get hit right square in the jaw and you, like Chippie, never saw it coming. That is what a sucker punch is. It is an unexpected something that hits you when or where you weren't expecting it. For example

In politics, the sucker punch might refer to text buried deep in a proposed law that would actually negate the value of the law. In law, a sucker punch might be the introduction of a surprise witness or surprise testimony.

A sucker punch might also be used in everyday situations. For example, someone takes a friend out to lunch and is then rewarded with excessive criticism by the person they buy lunch for. Alternately, a girlfriend breaks up with her boyfriend on the night he plans to propose marriage. Like we saw with Chippie, a sucker punch could even be a vacuum cleaner

The fact is: Life is not all fun and games. We all have problems and difficulties. And they come at us like sucker punches. Jesus even warned that *"In the world you will have*

tribulation." Nobody's exempt. Lets look at an overview of hurt today and try to glean some applications for our lives

I. HOW DO PEOPLE HURT?

We hurt **physically**. We have cuts, scratches, bumps and bruises. Some people live in constant pain. We hurt **emotionally**. This is a little more hidden and often harder to deal with than physical pain. Fear, worry, anger, guilt, grief, depression. How do you get relief from those things? We hurt **relationally**. It is a fact of life you will be hurt by other people. Misunderstanding, conflict, loneliness, rejection, and criticism.

Have you ever been hurt by another person in any of these ways? Ever been blind sided? Have you ever sucker punched another person? **Maybe not physically but verbally**. When talking about life's hurts we need to go to the book of Psalms because they touch every gamut of emotions expressed.

In Psalm 109:22,23 *For I am poor and needy, and my heart is full of pain. I am fading like a shadow at dusk; I am falling like a grasshopper that is brushed aside. My knees are weak from fasting, and I am skin and bones. I am an object of mockery to people everywhere; when they see me, they shake their heads.*

David just lays it all out and says "This is the way I feel!" David reminds us in Psalm 34:18, *"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."* God says you are never closer to Him than when you are hurting. David knew that from personal experience. The bottom line. *God is close when I'm hurting.*

II. SIX REMEDIES FOR HURT THAT DON'T WORK

It is funny, these don't work but they are the very ones we most often use to try to deal with it

(These verses are from the Good News Translation) First,

A. Don't ignore it.

Don't say grin and bear it or just ignore it. Out of sight, out of mind. Maybe it will go away. I'll suffer in silence. Psalm 32:3 says *"There was a time I wouldn't admit my sin but my dishonesty made me miserable and filled my days with frustration."*

What hurt or what punch in the nose am I simply trying to ignore? Maybe its a child on drugs, a marriage is dying, a job that is unsteady or whatever, and you're pretending that it's not happening. Why do we pretend? Because we think, maybe it will go away if we ignore it. Yet David says, *when I don't admit my hurt, or I've blown it, when I don't admit my sin, it makes me miserable and frustrated.*

How do you know when you're trying to ignore a problem? We procrastinate. *We say "One of these days... I'm going to go to the dentist."* We always postpone what we perceive may be painful. It's a fact of human nature. We try to ignore it by postponing it. Yet notice what happens. The fact is, procrastination turns minor problems into major ones. Now A simple filling has become a visit to the oral surgeon and a tooth missing. Time often festers a problem and makes it worse and it becomes infected so don't ignore it.

B. Don't run from it.

Don't retreat, or back off. Don't say I'm not going to stay around. David says Psalm. 55:6, 8 *"I wish I had wings like a dove, I'd fly away and find some rest. I'd flee to some refuge from all this storm."*

How many have ever felt like that? It is human nature to run from difficulty. It's a fact of life. This is why by law, all doors in public buildings are to swing out. *When people panic, they run.*

There are many ways to escape today. Drugs, alcohol, shopping, eating, TV, hobbies can all be forms of escape. That's the problem, you can escape it for a while but when you come back to reality you still have the hurt. We never solve a problem by running from it. In fact, if we do, we'll just face it again only in a different setting because God wants us to grow.

If we don't grow in a particular situation, he will give us another chance later on. And if we don't learn in that one, He'll provide another one! And if the little ones don't work, He'll just give us a bigger one. David says, don't ignore it and don't run from a hurt.

C. Don't hide it.

Some people don't ignore it and they don't run from it they just say I'm not going to tell anybody else about it. I'll wear a mask. We're good at masquerading. Psalm. 32:2-3 *"I kept quiet, not saying a word, but my suffering only grew worse. I was overcome with anxiety. The more I thought, the more troubled I became."*

A couple examples of how we try to hide our hurt is might be

"You're angry."

"No, I'm not!"

"Yes, you are."

"No, I'm not!"

We probably all sometimes play the game called, "Is something wrong?"

"Is something wrong?"

"No, no, nothing's wrong."

"I can tell. Something's wrong."

"No, everything is just fine"

"I can tell something's wrong!"

We won't admit it because we would rather hide our hurts. Many people have become very good at disguising their hurt. Many often try to disguise it with things. The fact is, possessions never compensate for pain.

I know a lot of people who have everything they want and they're still hurting very, very deeply. Hiding a hurt only intensifies it. He says, as a result of hiding it, *I was overcome with anxiety and I became more troubled.*

Revealing our feelings is the beginning of healing. James 5:16 says "*confess your faults to one another.*" You can never work on a fault until you first admit it. Admit it to yourself, to God, to other trusted people. David would say, Don't ignore it, Don't run from it, Don't hide it.

D. Don't worry about it.

We love to stew and fret and get upset. Worry is an attempt to control something that is uncontrollable. It's playing God. It's assuming responsibility God never meant for me to have. **Someone noted** Troubles are a lot like people - they grow bigger if you nurse them.

Did you ever notice that when we worry about something, it never solves anything. **Thought:** God is our help in trouble; if you worry, you are on your own. Listen to the words of the Psalmist:

Psalm 55:2 "*I am worn out by my worries.*"

Psalm 77:4 "*I am so worried I cannot speak.*"

Psalm 37:8 "*Don't give in to worry or anger, it only leads to trouble.*"

Take a pencil and paper and write out the word anxiety. Next, look at it and tell me what the middle letter is. It is the letter (I) isn't it? **Think about it like this:** You cannot change the past, but you can ruin a perfectly good present by worrying over the future.

A cute story is told of a stockbroker talking to another stockbroker. He says, "I don't worry anymore."

Second one says, "You're kidding? In this tense world? How come you don't worry?"

First: "I don't worry any more, I hired a professional worrier. He does all my worrying for me. I pay him to worry for me and then I don't worry about anything."

Second: "That's incredible! How much does he cost?"

First: "A hundred thousand dollars a year."

Second: "Where are you going to get that kind of money?"

First: "That's his worry!"

So far we have seen, don't run from a hurt, don't hide from one, don't ignore one, and don't worry about one. We've all basically got two options to choose from: rehearse it or release it.

E. Don't resent your hurt.

You give into self pity. "Poor me!" You have a pity party. I don't know about you but I love pity parties especially if they are mine. But David discovered that resentment doesn't work either.

Psalm. 73:21-22 *"When my thoughts were bitter and my feelings were hurt, I did not understand you."* He says, I don't understand the situation. I don't understand what God's doing, or even what I'm doing. I don't understand anything because resentment has clouded my mind.

There is one thing more harmful than our hurt, and that is to become resentful about that hurt. Resentment is a feeling of deep and bitter anger. That resentment soon becomes a poison that prolongs the hurt and clouds the issue and keeps us from having joy.

The past can't hurt you unless you allow it to hurt you by allowing resentment to boil up in your life. The past is past and nothing is going to change it. All the resentment in the world can't touch it. As long as I'm fixing the blame, I cannot fix the problem.

We usually try these five things and when we decide that none of these work we assume that there's only one alternative left and that is throw in the towel, but

F. Don't give up.

Maybe this is the stage you're at today. Maybe you've been carrying a hurt for so long you're thinking, What is the use? Why even try? I'm at the end of my rope. I want to throw in the towel and call it quits. David knew exactly how you feel. He knew what it was like to hit bottom. Psalm. 130:1-2 *"From the depth of my despair, I call to you Lord. Hear my cry, Lord -- listen to my call for help."*

Well, just what's a person to do? If you shouldn't ignore your problem, or run from it, or try to hide it, worry about it, resent it, or give up because of it, then lets look finally at

III. What will work?

This part will be easy to understand but probably a little harder to apply although it will work if we can just learn to do it. David gives us some direction in Psalm 142:2-3, *"I bring God all my complaints, I tell Him all my troubles. When I'm ready to give up, He knows what I should do!"* He says, instead of **giving up**, the key is to **give it over**.

The first, and actually only, step that will work is to give my hurt over to God because, after all, He's the only one who can do anything about it. If you want to be free from discouragement, from hurt, free from the pain of life's sucker punches, tune in to the Lord and turn all of it over to Him

Remember this passage as you do. Ephesians 3:20,21 *Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope. **Yea (even to the relieving of our hurts and pain from the sucker punches life seems to throw at us.)** May he be given glory in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever through endless ages. Amen.*

Don't forget, there are several things about the troubles that can sucker punch us. First,

Trouble seems to be woven into the fabric of living Job 14:1 *"How frail is humanity! How short is life, and how full of trouble! Many of our distresses are caused by our own sin and foolishness Prov. 21:23 **If you keep your mouth shut, you will stay out of trouble.***

Some difficulties are created by other people Psalm 9:13 *LORD, have mercy on me. See how I suffer at the hands of those who hate me. Snatch me back from the jaws of death. We have a refuge and strong defense in the Lord Psalm 59:16 But as for me, I will sing about your power. I will shout with joy each morning because of your unfailing love. For you have been my refuge, a place of safety in the day of distress.*

He invites us to call upon Him in our distresses Psalm 50:15 *Trust me in your times of trouble, and I will rescue you, and you will give me glory.*" We can expect deliverance in keeping with His will Psalm 107:6 *"LORD, help!" they cried in their trouble, and he rescued them from their distress.* Psalm. 143:11 *For the glory of your name, O LORD, save me. In your righteousness, bring me out of this distress.*

Well we may get sucker punched in life and those sucker punches may knock us off our feet but we can deal with them. We can catch our breath and we can get back on solid footing

Did you know that the term sucker punch comes from the world of boxing. In boxing there is what is termed the corner man. The corner man gives instructions, watches for life threatening injuries, patches up cuts and stop bleeding, and most of all encourages his fighter

Life is one big fight and we may get sucker punched in the boxing ring of life, but we can survive especially when we have a corner man by the name of Jesus.

A final thought; Maybe you have had some sucker punches thrown at you and one of those is thrown at you by the one who hates you. The one who would like for you to be unconscious until you die only to find that it was too late for the corner man to come to your rescue.

If you would like to have Jesus in your corner, he would love to be there for you. To make that possible you just need to call on him and invite him to be there. To do that read these next few lines, think them through, accept what they say and follow the directions and He will keep an eye open for any sucker punches coming your way.

Realize you are a sinner Romans 3:23

Understand that the payday for sin is death or eternal conscious separation from God.
Romans 6:23a

Know that there is a way of escape for you. Romans 6:23b and John 1:12

Desire to escape and pray this or a similar prayer.

"Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I am truly sorry for my sins, and I confess them all to You [name them]. Lord Jesus, forgive all my sins and come into my heart as my Saviour and Lord. I receive You right now. Help me from this time forward to live for You. Thank You for hearing and answering my prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen."

On the _____ day of _____ I became a Christian by inviting Jesus Christ into my life to forgive my sin.

Signed: _____

If you have further questions or have chosen to do this, be sure to let us know so we can help you, pray for you and encourage you in your new life.

You can reach us at lapeerchurch@gmail.com Subject line: (Salvation)