**A World of Hurt: A 13-Part Series on Leveraging Our Hurts for Good**

Archimedes (287-212 BC), one of the greatest mathematicians who ever lived, invented many helpful machines. Though he did not invent the lever, he explained the principle of how it works. He is attributed as saying “If you give me a place to stand, a fulcrum, and a lever long enough, I could move the world.”



**The Archimedes Metaphor:**

A place to stand = grace and truth

A fulcrum = the hurt/suffering

The lever = faith

**Introducing A World of Hurt Training Series**

This world is hurting. You are hurting. I am hurting. Your next-door neighbor is hurting. A little child on the other side of the world is hurting. Hurt is common to man. It comes in all shapes and sizes. It can be a 1 on the scale or a 10. It drives people to self-medicate, to spend thousands on doctors and therapists, to pray for relief, and in some cases to commit suicide. It is physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. It scars, tortures, bothers, nags, interferes, interrupts, stabs, and often prevents life from being lived to the fullest. We call hurt by the names of pain, suffering, misery, agony, and trouble. Its cousin is stress, or as I learned years ago more precisely “distress.” It weighs us down. It cripples. It causes tears and sleepless nights. We cry for relief. We do strange things to get others to notice our pain. We sometimes deny it, or avoid it, or take it out on others. Often hurt people hurt people. It can be passed on from one generation to another. It can be group hurt or a very private hurt deep within your soul. Some want to fix it. Others just wish it would go away. Others offer platitudes like “Be tough” or “Suck it up” or “Nobody wants to hear it.” Children can’t describe it. Old people merely accept it. But, most of us would love to understand it and find some meaning and purpose in it. Archimedes said, “If you give me a place to stand, a fulcrum, and a lever long enough I could move the world.” In this series you will learn to stand in grace and truth, use the fulcrum of your hurt along with the lever of faith, to move your world of hurt and make a difference in your life and the lives of many others. Jesus will show us how God can leverage hurt so that something good will result. Won’t you join us for this training?

**Introduction: Three Kinds of Hurt**

It was the summer of 1951 in the little town of Cicero, IL. just west of Chicago that an African-American couple by the name of Clark with their two small children saw an opportunity to get out of their cramped living conditions and move to the suburbs. The neighborhood was made up of immigrant families from Eastern Europe fleeing from the oppression of the communist Soviet Union. The Clarks were not prepared for the reception they received. They too were fleeing the oppression of the Jim Crow South. On July 11, 1951, 4000 whites surrounded their apartment complex, entering the dwelling of the Clarks, throwing out all their possessions included a piano they had scrimped and saved to give their daughter, burning all of these on the front lawn, and then setting the apartment building on fire displacing all the residents. Governor Stevens had to send in the National Guard who brought the riots to an end on July 14. How could those who knew oppression in Eastern Europe come to America and oppress their fellow human beings who themselves were fleeing oppression? This injustice is one kind of hurt we see in this cruel world of hurt.

The kinds of hurt in this world of hurt take on different forms and have different causes. We look for causes. Who is at fault? The possibilities include pain by accident or disease, or by God, or by the devil, or by others, or self-inflicted hurt. We won’t be spending time on the BIG Question: Why does an all-powerful good God allow pain to exist. Rather our focus will be on the fact that hurt does exist, we have to deal with it, and whether we can find some purpose in it. The three kinds of pain we will look at are the hurts caused by our personal sin; the hurts caused by the injustices of men on other men; and the hurt of unrequited sacrificial love. If we can find a place to stand, a lever long enough, and pinpoint the fulcrum of hurt in our lives, we can move this world of hurt.

**Hurt Caused by My Own Actions**

Someone always comes along to remind us that we are our own worst enemy. Another phrase has surfaced these days: self-sabotage. The apostle Paul simply said over 2000 years ago, “The wages of sin is death.” (Rom.6:23) How much of our world of hurt is created by our own foolish decisions? Willful pride and stubbornness get us into a heap of trouble. A husband decides to cheat on his wife, and not only loses his wife, but perhaps the respect of his children, co-workers, and friends. Even if repentant, it may take years to win others back. A decision to drink and drive can have dire consequences. This is typical: *AUSTIN, Texas--(*[*BUSINESS WIRE*](https://www.businesswire.com/)*)--Sean Carter’s ability to speak was taken from him more than 15 years ago when he was a college junior and went out drinking with friends. He knew he was in no condition to drive home — but neither was the buddy who gave him a ride. Without a plan for a sober ride, the drunk driver crashed the truck, leaving Sean with a traumatic brain injury and unable to walk or talk.* How many live with the regrets of promises made and not kept, good intentions not followed through on, and failures to live up to what they know is right? Too many say, “If I only could go back and do it all over…” Untold hurt was unleased into this world by the first sin and its offspring. Like dropping a stone in a pond, the ripple-effect produces many waves of sin and its consequences. The apostle Paul is the poster child for hurt caused by his own action. He says he is not fit to be called an apostle because he persecuted the church. He says he is the chief of sinners. Surely an exaggeration, but typical of the hurt we feel when we realize our sins have not only impacted our lives but the lives of so many others. So we say, “I have no one to blame but myself.” But what of redemption, second chances, new beginnings, and forgiveness? Yes, these are the levers of hurt in the hands of God who can turn our mourning into joy, and our despair into hope.

**Hurt Caused by Injustice**

It’s not fair. It is not my fault. Through the negligence or willful intent of another, I am suffering. Ask the driver of the pickup in Portland who was dragged from his truck and viciously assaulted during “peaceful protests.” Ask the little boy in Chicago who was shot to death while playing in his front yard. Ask the thousands of children who are sexually assaulted yearly around the world. Ask the worker in a sweatshop slaving for pennies a day just to feed their families. Hurt on top of multiplied hurt fills our world and overflows because someone just doesn’t care. Often in pursuit of greed, power, pleasure, or vengeance, innocent people get hurt. Then injustice breeds hurt, and hurt breeds resentfulness and bitterness, and many are defiled. Often a vicious cycle of hurt and revenge is set into motion like so many gang wars around the world. “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” is the law of the jungle. It comes naturally. It seems so right for us to repay evil for evil and injustice with injustice. Besides the person does not deserve anything else. Whether it is a pushing match on a playground or World War III the principle is the same. It is always disputed who started it and at some point what does it matter. Once the tit for tat begins where does it end? Ask the Hatfields and the McCoys. Man is so often caught up in the injustices here that we never see how unjust we have been toward God. Maybe we let that go because who wants to get into a pushing match with God? God knew the cycles of injustice had to be broken before everyone was blind and toothless. He had a plan. But before we see the plan, do we believe that God knows and understands injustice, that He cares about it, and that He wants to teach us how to leverage our world of hurt to make a difference in this world? Joseph in the Old Testament is a good example. He has hated by his brothers because he was favored by his father, sold into slavery, accused of a crime he didn’t commit, imprisoned and ignored after helping a fellow inmate, but then raised to power in Egypt to become God’s instrument to save the Jewish people from extinction. Through all the injustices he remained focused through faith in God’s ability to bring light out of the darkness.

**Hurt Caused by Sacrificial Service**

Though similar to the hurt of injustice, this one has an added feature. One subject to injustice may simply be minding their own business, but the one giving sacrificial service is trying to help and still gets shafted. This is the one who suffers for doing good. It is the person who steps in between the victim and the bully and gets hurt. This is the person who is in a neighborhood to deliver food to the poor and gets caught in gang crossfire. This is the person who travels to a remote part of the world to educate poor natives on how to have clean drinking water who contracts malaria. This is a person who volunteers to serve as a first responder and is targeted by someone who wants to make a political point. We say, “They were just trying to help.” It could be the person who falls in love, marries his sweetheart, works long hours to provide a home, and remains faithful to discover she is having an affair with his best friend. It may be a single mother who works two jobs to take care of her children only to find as they grow up that they are ashamed of her because of her lack of education and accomplishments. This is a flag-draped coffin. This is a civil rights leader assassinated by a lone gunman. This is a teacher who jumps in front of his students during a school shooting. This seems particularly unfair. It is made worse when the one who caused the pain does not suffer an equal amount of consequence. We might wonder why we should even bother sacrificing for others if this is how it will turn out. We might abandon our noble efforts and just stop caring. Or, we might allow God to leverage our hurt to accomplish more than we ever could alone. Jesus Himself is the one who demonstrated this kind of sacrificial service to mankind, offering Himself as payment for our sins and the sins of those who have hurt us. Through His one day of suffering, the righteous for the unrighteous, He demonstrated the eternal value of forgiveness in the face of a world of hurt.

**Principles of Leveraging Hurt**

My father used to say, “If it is hard you are doing something wrong.” I found that is not always true, but it is in many areas of life. Whether the hurt is caused by my own willful decision, or by the injustice of others, or by my sacrificial service some principles can guide our management of the hurt. It is not whether we will manage the hurt, it is how will we do it? Typically we do one of three things regarding the suffering we are experiencing. We may deny it. We may handle it poorly making matters worse. Or, we may embrace the hurt and turn it into something that can enhance our lives. We could call these “no action, reaction, and response.” “No action” occurs because we do not want to think about the causes of our pain which is often painful in itself. We also do not want to consider our responsibility in the matter, whether we were the cause or how we have contributed to making matters worse. We simply live in denial, hoping it will go away. It usually doesn’t. “Reaction” provides temporary relief because of revenge, destructive self-gratifying behaviors, or addictive drama. Once these reactive behaviors take hold, they can be extremely difficult to break. They become the fabric of one’s life. They make matters worse for us and others. “Embracing the hurt” causes us to come into the light, accept the truth, and provides time to sort out how we got to where we are. We also can see things clearly and, with counsel, see a way out, a new way to think and live. This requires bravery, discipline, and hope. So how do we leverage the hurt so that it works for us and not against us? The principles include truth, grace, love, understanding, honesty, trust, humility, repentance, and a new kind of dependence on the work of God in your life. These are not mere words. These are serious strategies that must be mastered in the journey to wellness, and in becoming a person who can use hurt as a way to minister to others. In the days ahead we will focus on three of these principles: discipline, love, and trust.

**Discipline Amid the Hurt**

Hurt disrupts life. Hurt disturbs life. Hurt destroys life. UNLESS! Hurt can be like an unbroken horse. The horse is not bad, just undisciplined. Hurt is like a bratty child. The child is not bad, just undisciplined. The book of Proverbs calls this foolishness. There is a lot of foolishness that is associated with hurt and our reactions to it. “Keeping one’s head” in times of suffering, pain, and hurt is difficult. First responders often intersect with your life on your worst day. They are trained to stay calm and do their job. You don’t want them emotionally falling apart while extricating you from a burning car. They must stay disciplined to be able to help you. But, it is equally important for you to stay under control as well. Discipline is more than simply avoiding panic. It is paying attention and learning. It is training. It is to become better able to cope with life’s problems. The person who is suffering because of poor financial decisions needs to learn from their mistakes, and change some patterns. The person who is suffering because of poor health decisions needs to learn how to take better care of themselves. The person who is suffering because of the injustice of others may need to get some new friends. Discipline means change and change can be difficult. Parents discipline children by training them to be more responsible. Some “pain” may be used to help a child avoid the pain of a different type. But, regardless of the source of the hurt, the person must be taught to stand still, listen, think, and take some new steps. Discipline also requires accountability. If you are hurting, you should not do it alone. The apostle Paul says we should weep with those who weep. We share in the sufferings of others, not only to offer comfort but to provide accountability. When someone is grieving over the loss of a loved one, they need others to make sure they eat properly, stay hydrated, and not to self-medicate. One of the worse things a hurting person can do is isolate. Isolation breeds undisciplined behaviors. But, with discipline, God can use the hurt to make you stronger and more resilient. Hurt is an opportunity to pull yourself together instead of falling apart.

**Love Covers a Multitude of Sins**

The hurts that exist in this world are filled with culpability. One of the first things we think of when we hurt is “who is to blame.” We want to fix responsibility for the hurts we are feeling. Just look at the number of personal injury lawsuits each year in this country. It is estimated that there are approximately a half-million personal injury claims made each year in the US. There is a real tension in our minds between holding someone responsible and forgiveness. We often do not know how to reconcile the two. There is actually no tension because they are not contradictory. We can acknowledge sin and injury, require the person responsible to do the right thing to make us whole, if possible, and still forgive. However, there are times when the one causing the injury or hurt cannot make us whole. If I am caused harm by an incompetent physician and left paralyzed due to medical error, no amount of money could make me whole. What, then, is my course of action? The apostle Peter who was both on the giving end and the receiving end of hurt wrote: “The end of all things us near. Therefore, be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.” (1 Peter 4:7-8) If we choose to live in “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” world, then we will find a world filled with blindness and toothlessness. The way of love is much more than simply saying, “Don’t worry about it” or “It’s okay, forget it.” The covering of love demands much of us. It cost Jesus his life on the cross. Dying to self is required of us. The giving up of our rights, the canceling of debts, the concern for the sinner, and the desire to see the best for everyone is at stake in this. The alternative is hate. We will nurse anger, bitterness, and revenge. How can hurt cause us to become more loving, more sympathetic, and gentler? How many times should I forgive my brother if he sins against me? Reacting to hurt comes naturally, but a love-response must be cultivated, and when it is, offenses will not have the same effect on us.

**Trust Wins Against All Odds**

“This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.” (1 John 5:4) Verse five explains that this faith is in Jesus who is the Son of God. Our faith in Jesus frames all of life including the hurt we carry in our body, mind, and spirit. My aunt Eloise racked by pain and suffering every day of her life on earth knew this victory that overcomes the world. Her faith in Jesus was so strong that she never wavered inside even as she stumbled through life. Her compass was set due north. Paul wrote “This is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame because I know whom I have believed and am convinced that He can guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.” (2 Tim.1:12) This kind of confidence is not in one’s circumstances, the abilities of others, or even self-confidence. It is in the one in whom I have believed. When my life is entrusted to Him, there is nothing that can separate me from His love and protection. “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus my Lord.” (Rom.8:38-39) Notice the word “convinced” in both passages. Trust wins against all odds when we are convinced of something. The problem during most pain is we lack conviction. We waver because we are not convinced that there is a purpose in the pain, there is a helper through the pain, and that there is an eternal end to the pain. We get swept up in the presence of the pain and it engulfs us and drags us under. Faith keeps its head above the waters of pain to see the shore, to breathe the comfort of the Spirit, and to grab the hand of the one who walks on water. Faith says “I can do all things through Him who gives me strength.” (Phil.4:13) It does not matter what kind of pain we are talking about, faith is what sustains us. The person without faith is like a man without a life-preserver who will quickly tire himself out trying t stay afloat. The one single thing any of us can do to prepare for the hurts of this world is to nurture our faith in the one who sustains all things by His powerful word. (Heb.1:3)

**Positive Outcomes from Leveraging the Hurts**

The lever makes moving the object possible. Without it, we merely strain against a heavy immovable object. Such activity is insane. Pushing against a building to center it on its foundation is pointless. If the building is going to move there needs to be some strategy and mechanics. How were the pyramids built? How were the Moai of Easter Island built, transported, and put in the place? It was not by brute force. It was because of the use of mechanics. Hurts are heavy. That is why we call them burdens. “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ. Each one should carry his own load.” (Gal.6:2,5) Burdens should not just sit. They are to be carried. They are to be moved. They are to be transported. It has been said that we should not waste a good problem. Or, the classic line: If the world gives you lemons (sour), then make lemonade. Or, I like the one about the mule who fell in the well, and the owner decided to bury him there. As he shoveled in the dirt, the mule merely shook it off, and eventually, the well was filled in enough that the mule simply walked out. That is leverage. Can something good come from something bad? Can light come from darkness? Can our mourning turn to rejoicing? Perhaps we need to learn to ask better questions when we are hurting. Instead of “why am I hurting” or “when will it be over” we might ask “what is God going to do for good with my hurt?” How can God bring about something from hurt for His glory? The man born blind in John 9 was an opportunity for the works of God to be displayed in his life. (John 9:3) This man suffered from blindness all of his life. Did anything good come of it? The man got a whole chapter in the Bible and a life-changing experience of faith. But, what if he had never been healed? Could he have had a positive outcome? Of course, because the most important outcomes from God leveraging our hurts are not the physical relief or emotional healing we receive but the perfecting of our character and our formation into the image of Christ.

**The Outcome of Personal Victory**

You know the old saying: “You can’t keep a good man down.” We love stories of victory and success. The Christmas movie “It’s A Wonderful Life” with James Stewart is a prime example. Who wouldn’t root for the Karate Kid or Rocky? Some will do almost anything to win, even shady things. We are a very competitive society in business, sports, academics, and social settings. Coaches get fired for having a losing season. Athletes get sent back to the training camps if their averages are not good. CEO’s get canned if their bottom line is weak. Maybe that is it. We don’t like weakness. We don’t like losers. The symbols of failure are often the homeless, the drug addict, and the criminal behind bars. It has become popular in some schools not to give grades so as not to be able to tell between the winners and the losers. In most kids sports these days everyone gets a prize for merely participating. So how does this relate to a world of hurt? All of us participate in this world of hurt. There is no sideline to sit on. We are all in the game. We are playing hurt. When the four-wheel buggy comes out on the playing field and some 285-pound linebacker is taxied off the field do you ever think he’s a loser? Be honest. Do you see his injury as a defeat? Do you want to scream for the nose-bleed section of the stadium “Suck it up and play ball?” We think to ourselves: “He just couldn’t handle it, go the distance, or even I bet he’s faking.” We certainly do not want to reward fakes, lazy people, and those who simply do stupid things. We recognize that “E” for Effort is often warranted. So how should we define true victory for those who are hurting, down, or suffering, no matter whether it is because of their own sin, the sin of others, or simply because they were living sacrificially? When Paul uses the term “more than conquers” in Romans 8, there is something in me that says, “Yes, that is how I want to be remembered.” But, how does this become true for me? What feat do I have to perform on the battlefield of life to get the purple heart? The Bible gives a strange perspective as to what constitutes true victory amid the hurt. Let’s explore this matter.

**The Outcome of a Love-Vision**

I think hurt is meant to soften us up. Wait! I thought hurt was supposed to toughen us up. That is just it. In God’s view, soft is tough, and tough is soft. Once a tough kid from the streets of Washington D.C. stepped into my world and challenged me to a fight. I had no reason to fight him so I walked away. He thought, at the time, that I was soft. But later he realized I was the tough one for refusing to fight. He told me so. He became a preacher of love. Hurt changes our vision. Hurting people see the world differently because of the hurt. Lose a child and you will see hurting parents differently. Go through a divorce and you will have more empathy for a divorcee. Here the words “It is cancer” and you will see cancer patients in a new light. Those who are wounded in the battles of this life tend to see others through a different lens. But, we must confess that hurt hardens some, turns them inward, and blurs their vision to the hurts of others. Self-pity is like a cataract of the eye. But, for many others hurt opens their eyes. Those hurting because of their own sin become much more understanding and forgiving of others who sin. Those who hurt because of the sins of others become much more interested in other victims of injustice. Those who are hurt because of sacrificial love form close friendships with other wounded warriors. We sing: “Open the eyes of my heart, Lord…I want to see you….high and lifted up.” This is about seeing Jesus on the cross. This is about seeing the supreme HURT of the world suffering before our eyes, and in seeing this kind of pain, we are humbled, and the scales fall from our eyes, and we see the world in an entirely new light. Hurt is designed to make us care. It is our connection to the rest of humanity. We learn to do unto others as we want others to do unto us. And, I want others to see my hurt and care. Therefore, I see their hurt and care. Jesus came here and became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. This allowed Him to become a sympathetic and faithful high priest who is touched by our weaknesses. He leveraged His own suffering, and the suffering of the world, to give His followers a new vision of love, the most excellent way.

**The Outcome of Disciple-Making**

Hurt defines our mission. Jesus came to set the captive free, to give sight to the blind, and to preach the gospel to the poor. He came to give water to the thirsty, food to the hungry, comfort to the sick and imprisoned, and relief to the widows and the orphans. When Jesus said “For God so loved the world” He was talking about a world of hurt. Jesus saw the world as harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd, vulnerable, and unprotected. He saw the world as one big infirmary. Remember the scene in Gone with the Wind after Sherman burned his way through Atlanta? The camera zooms in on a couple of soldiers lying in a field hospital with some nurses doing their best to lessen their pain. Then, the camera begins to pan out, and you see a sea of soldiers with missing arms and legs, blood-soaked bandages, moaning in pain-acres of them with only a few exhausted physicians and nurses scurrying around trying to address their hurts. The tasks seem impossible and you know there will be a lot of burials that day in Atlanta. The physical, mental, and emotional hurts of this world demand that God’s people come to the rescue, and how much more in the case of the spiritually hurting. Only the sick need a doctor. Even those who think they are well, need a doctor. Jesus is the physician who never lost a case in the words of Marshall Keeble. Disciple-making is about bringing the sin-sick soul to the Great Physician who has the balm of Gilead to apply to our wounds. The healing power for the hurts of the world is found in the gospel, and once a person is healed, this power is to be shared with other wounded soldiers. The patient becomes the nurse for someone else. This is disciple-making. When we learn enough to be healed of the hurts we carry in life we are anxious to tell others where to find their healing. Hurt drives me to the Healer of my Soul, and when I find Him and I am made whole, hurt then drives me to others who need this same healing. This is the only way this world of hurt will find the key to living below in this old sinful world.

**Hurt: God’s Lever to Move the World**

Besides Jesus, there is no more vivid picture of hurt than Job. He was a good man. He was loved and honored by all. He was blessed beyond measure with children, wealth, prestige, respect, and fruitful ministry. It seems that life was just about perfect until God called Satan’s attention to His humble servant, Job. Everything changed that day for Job. He lost his wealth, his children, and his peace all in one day. After meeting with God the next day, Satan was allowed to attack Job’s person. He made him suffer in great agony. His wife turned against him. His friends falsely accused him. And, Job simply did not understand where his world of hurt was coming from. Through it all, he kept his faith in God, but he couldn’t help but think he was the victim of some grave injustice. He wanted a meeting with God to sort this out. When the day came and God granted him an audience, it turned into a pop quiz with question after question that Job could not answer. He failed the test. He made a flat 0 on the quiz. However, he learned something much more valuable. He learned that God is God and God knows what He is doing, even when we do not.

When we began this ‘World of Hurt’, we said that as Archimedes said, “If you give me a place to stand, a fulcrum, and a lever long enough I can move the world.” Our place to stand is on grace and truth; our fulcrum is the hurts in our lives; the lever is our faith. The greater our faith the longer our lever and the more God will move our world of hurt for our good and the good of others. Do we believe He knows what he is doing? One thing I have learned in my just-shy of seventy decades is that what Jesus said is true. “Each day has enough trouble of its own.” Some days seem to have more trouble than others. I have also learned that I have a choice as to how I am going to respond to the troubles of each day. God has placed each of us on a sea that is often angry and violent, and our boat seems much too small for the conditions, but He teaches us how to set the sail to keep the boat afloat-and even have some pretty amazing stories at the end of the voyage.

Notes:

**Introduction: Three Kinds of Hurts**

In our training it is important to understand the different kinds of hurts because there are different responses required depending on which one we are dealing with:

Hurt caused by our personal sin or decision.

Hurt caused by the sins or decisions of others.

Hurt caused by our sacrificial love for others.

Before we consider each one, there are some things we need to say:

1. We probably will be experiencing more than one kind of hurt at a time.
2. We may have trouble distinguishing one kind of hurt from the other because they tend to merge into one big hurt.
3. If we can keep them separated, then we can more effectively make decisions on how to address the hurts we face.
4. Some hurts are noisier than others and demand more immediate attention.
5. However, the noisiest hurts are not necessarily the most serious hurts.
6. Hurts require attention. Inattention and indecision exacerbate and compounds the hurt.

What are some questions we should ask ourselves about our hurts?

1. Is the hurt physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual, or a combination of these?
2. Can you identify a choice you made that led to this hurt in your life?
3. Did someone else hurt you?
	1. When?
	2. How old were you?
	3. If you were young, did someone fail to protect you?
	4. What have you done to try to address these hurts?
4. How do I currently view the purpose of these hurts? In other words, what is God wanting to accomplish in and through your hurts?
5. Are your hurts because of your living sacrificially for God or others?

Two Key Scriptures to Introduce:

1. Romans 5:1-5
2. James 1:2-8

**Hurt Caused By My Own Actions**

There are several realities we must face if this kind of hurt is leveraged by God for good. They include:

1. Responsibility
	1. “*There is no client as scary as an innocent man.*"

	J. Michael Haller, Criminal Defense Attorney, Los Angeles, 1962.”
	― **Michael Connelly,**[**The Lincoln Lawyer**](https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/1427801)
	2. Paul said, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Rom.6:23) and “There is no one righteous, no not one.” (3:10)
	3. Jesus says, “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.” (John 3:19)
	4. Ezekiel wrote: “The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son.” (Ezekiel 18:20)
2. The existence of real evil
	1. Evil is not an abstract concept. It is actionable. It is distinguishable from real good.
	2. “No one is good except God alone.” (Luke 18:19) Therefore, anything not of God is evil. “God is light; in Him, there is no darkness at all.” (1 John 1:5)
3. The definition of sin
	1. “Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.” (1 John 3:4)
	2. “Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.” (James 4:17)
4. The effects of sin on self and others
	1. Why is hurt the consequences of sin? Because sin separates us from God and others. There is pain in separation.
	2. Examples: Lying, adultery, anger, stealing
5. What is lost when we sin
	1. Purity
	2. b. Identity
	3. Purpose
	4. d. Relationships

**Hurt Caused by Injustice**

The realities we must face if we are ever going to leverage this kind of hurt include:

1. There was a song, years ago titled “I Never Promised You A Rose Garden.” After Eden, did God ever promise us a world that would be fair? Expectations of wholesale fairness are unrealistic; expectations of retail fairness are more realistic and can be managed.
2. Injustice is a threat to our well-being, and such threats are usually met with fight or flight. Since we see ourselves as innocent in the matter at hand, we don’t understand why someone is being unfair to us, and we either fight it or run from it.
3. Not everything we say is injustice. We may just not understand it. We stand in line for an hour to make a transaction, and the desk closes five minutes before I get to it. It is not fair. Or does it have anything with fairness? Perhaps the lady behind the desk got an emergency phone call that her child has been injured.
4. There are many ways we respond to an injustice that simply makes matters worse for us and everybody involved. An eye for an eye approach has a lot of drawbacks. Even grace comes with its risks. Frankly, there is no way to satisfactorily right every wrong in this life.
5. God makes it clear that He sees and understands injustice and has compassion for the one who is being treated badly. However, God does not always respond to the injustice the way we would like, or in the time we wish, or with the intensity we expect. But, He does promise that there will be a Judgment Day.
6. Look at Joseph for example. Joseph was able to see some purpose in the unjust suffering. He told his brothers: “’ Come close to me.’ When they had done so, he said, ‘I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.” (Gen.45:4-5) After Jacob died the brothers were afraid, but Joseph reassured them with these words: Read 50:15-21.

**Hurt Caused by Sacrificial Service**

Though similar to plain old injustice, this is hurt as a result of signing up. When we volunteer to step into a particular arena, like first-responders and soldiers there is an inherent risk of hurt.

* A crucial question: What are you willing to die for?
	+ When my daughter was born, I realized that if anyone tried to hurt her that I could do anything, including taking a life or giving up my life, to protect her. There was no doubt.
	+ After 9/11 the armed forces recruiting offices were overrun with young men and women wanting to volunteer for combat duty.
	+ I have been involved in planning two separate 9/11 remembrance events-and I have never seen greater expressions of patriotism than at these events.
	+ One of the most inspiring movies ever made was Hacksaw Ridge-the story of Desmond Doss, a CO, who in a battle on Okinawa rescued 75 men, lowering them down by rope one by one while injured himself.
* Tales of sacrificial love inspire us all to be better, more selfless people. But, each story comes with a great personal risk of hurt to the one making the sacrifice.
* Love for God and others, the greatest commands. Greater love has no man than to lay down their lives for their friends. But, what of one who would even lay down his life for his enemies? That is crazy sacrificial love.
* When we marry, have children, take a job that is about serving others, we open ourselves up to getting hurt.
* Jesus is the standard for this kind of hurt. He left heaven, came to this cruel world, and voluntarily went to the cross to save every person who ever lived. He endured the beating, the scorn, the embarrassment, the torture, the nails, the crown of thorns, and the weight of the sin of the entire world. Those who followed Him often shared in His suffering for His sake.
* Schindler’s List: The film follows Oskar Schindler, a German industrialist who together with his wife Emilie Schindler saved more than a thousand mostly Polish-Jewish refugees from the Holocaust by employing them in his factories during World War II. The workers give Schindler a signed statement attesting to his role in saving Jewish lives and present him with a ring engraved with a Talmudic quotation: "Whoever saves one life saves the world entire."

Schindler is touched but also ashamed, as he feels he should have done even more. He breaks down sobbing and is comforted by the workers.

**Principles of Leveraging Hurt**

Since becoming a slave to the computers in our lives we have learned a new set of languages, one word being “default.” Our computers are set up to automatically go to a particular browser or setting within a program. We can change our settings, and we will notice that our computer looks and responds differently. About a year ago I switched from one browser to another, and I cannot tell you the positive difference it made on my computer. When it comes to managing the hurts in our lives we need to change our settings.

* Optimist or pessimist? How can two people go through the same experience and one sees it positively and the other negatively? Why does one panic when faced with a problem, and another just finds a way to figure it out?
* Paralysis or Decision? Some freeze when hurt comes along. Others wisely weigh their options and make a decision.
* Fear or Faith? We can live a fear-based life or a faith-based life. Fear focuses on our insecurities and limitations while faith sees the endless possibilities of God who can do anything.
* Anger or Love? Some automatically respond in anger to life’s problems, feeling wronged or abused or oppressed, while others choose love, which sees opportunity.
* The point is that we have choices when it comes to the hurts in life. If I sprain my ankle, I not only have a choice of physical treatment but a choice of attitude as it heals. I can be a difficult patient or a cooperative one.
* Stages of grief are natural, and they are normally moved through within a reasonable amount of time. Counselors look for those who get stuck in a stage like denial or anger. It is understandable to pass through these, but not to live there.
* If God is going to be able to leverage our hurts for our good and the good of others, then we will have to cooperate with Him by learning to respond appropriately. A drowning person is often their worst enemy because they do things to hinder or prevent being saved.
* Story of the dead girl in Mark 5:21-43, Relate. Notice the reaction of the people when told she was not dead. They had already concluded that there was nothing Jesus could do-don’t bother him, laughed. They had the wrong browser.

**Discipline Amid Hurt**

In this message, we will focus on Hebrews 12:1-13. The metaphor that sets the stage for this teaching is running a race. Runners need discipline not only to last the race but to adjust to the course, conditions, and unexpected obstacles. When a runner is tired and hurting it is easy to lose focus, stray off course, or quit. So what does the Hebrew writer tell us to do?

* Fix our eyes on the lead runner, Jesus
	+ Focal Point and Pain: A focal point is just something you stare at during contractions. Sound weird, doesn’t it? But it’s like staring at a person during a work presentation, at a spot on the ceiling when working out, or at your computer background when you’re thinking.
* Keep the suffering in perspective
	+ Not to the point of death/shedding blood
	+ There are always degrees of pain. We can probably tolerate more than we think.
* Remember the context of discipline
	+ Struggle against sin
	+ Discipline is motivated by love and acceptance
* Equate hardship with discipline
	+ Hardship comes in many forms-anything that is hard to do
	+ Probably when you say, “I do not want to do such and such.”
* There are two levels of discipline: earthly and heavenly
	+ Discipline within a family (fathers-Eph.6:1-2) Respect
	+ Discipline by the heavenly Father of our spirit-He is raising us as His children-to live-for our good
		- Getting us to do what we should
		- Getting us to stop doing what we shouldn’t
* Discipline requires submission, the bending of the will
	+ Compliance
	+ Compatibility-tame our stubborn will-yield to God
* Discipline has its results and outcomes
	+ Holiness, Righteousness, and Peace
* Discipline is passive and active
	+ Passive-submit
	+ Active-strengthening exercises-get in shape/level the racecourse for running the race

**Love Covers a Multitude of Sins**

We have a choice. In the face of the hurts of life, we can choose a life of love. But, this is no wimpy, syrupy love. This is love that says, “Nothing you do will make me stop loving you.”

* The person who is hurting because of their own choices may face:
	+ The need to love themselves-personal forgiveness instead of wallowing in self-pity
	+ The need to love those who may have been hurt because of our choices making things as right as possible
	+ The need to love those who may judge, condemn, shun, isolate or try to harm you because of the choices you made remembering that they too are loved by God and are merely acting immaturely
	+ The need to love the ones who will hold you accountable for what you did to bring hurt into your life, and the life of others knowing that they are only trying to help you deal with the things that led to the hurt you caused
	+ The need to love God who will bring about the discipline needed in our lives to overcome our sins knowing that God disciplines those He loves, true sons and daughters
* The person who is hurting because of the injustices of others may face
	+ The need to love and forgive the person who hurt you
	+ The need to let go of the desire to seek revenge or harm to the person who harmed you
	+ The need to make it possible to restore the broken relationship as much as you are able
	+ The need to accept the fact that true justice is not possible in this world, and commit this matter to the Lord
	+ The need to be gracious to the person who harmed you even if they must pay for their mistake in some way (Prayer, service, good not evil)
	+ The need to accept the sorrow and repentance of the offender as genuine
	+ The need to exercise loving wisdom in the relationship going forward
* The person who is hurting because of sacrificial service may face:
	+ The need to forgive their persecutors or enemies
	+ The need to trust God in areas they do not understand
	+ The need to praise God for the opportunity to suffer for Him

**Trust Wins Against All Odds**

We must understand how our faith causes us to be able to win and succeed when we are hurting. Faith gives us buoyancy, the force that pushes us upward. It is the ability to float above the hurt or on top of the hurt instead of sinking into it and drowning. So what are the principles of faith that make this happen:

* Faith is connected to the one who is above and overall. Faith always connects upward to someone higher than we are.
* Faith is connected to the one who can do exceedingly, abundantly more than anything we can ask or imagine.
* Faith is connected to eternal truths that are not affected by the winds of change within the world.
* Faith is connected to solid historical events like fulfilled prophecy, providential leadings of God, the sinless life of Jesus, the death, burial, and resurrection.
* Faith is connected to those who have gone before us, who have won by their faith, leaving us an example of how faith works.
* Faith is connected to very specific actions that demonstrate faith, that when put into practice verify the efficacy of faith through experience.
* Faith is connected to Words of Scripture that provides a ready reference for training, a primer on faith, available for use at any time.
* Faith is connected to the group experience of a community where faith is experienced in fellowship with others.
* By contrast, unbelief has a legacy of hopelessness, despair, evil, selfish pursuits, and alternative ideologies that lead mankind further into darkness.
* By contrast, those who do not believe are destined to only accomplish what is possible in their own strength.
* Faith is the only way we can connect to an eternal future with God where all the hurt of this world will not be allowed.

**Positive Outcomes from Leveraging the Hurts**

Some people love challenges. They just like to prove they can do something that seems difficult or impossible. The hurts of life are like challenges. Can something good come from this if I find the key to leveraging the hurt? My father-in-law at one point sold produce in Miami on a wholesale basis. Once we had a truck-load of mangos from Mexico that were coming into Miami a little soft-a little past their peak. It was the trucking company’s fault. I couldn’t see any positive outcome from this. But Jimmy was excited and said we would make more on that load than on a good load. The truck line had to drastically reduce its transport fees and we found some local markets that were willing to take the produce at a reduced price. The net was higher than it would have been. The hurt was leveraged into a positive. So what kinds of attitudes do we need for this to happen:

* Wiggle room mentality. I think of spelunking through a cave and coming to a very narrow passage. The question to ask is “Is there any wiggle room?” If so, then it is possible to get through it. Is there even one positive small move I can make with God’s help that will improve my situation?
* Advice mentality. Many get stuck in their hurts simply because they do not ask for advice. They make assumptions that there is nothing I can do to change things. Maybe you just need a more objective, fresh set of eyes to give you a different perspective.
* Chess Board Master mentality. The hurting person sometimes thinks they are all out of moves. There is nothing left to do. But, rarely is there nothing left. The chess master studies the board. We sometimes fail to get a positive outcome because we simply do not study the board.
* Acceptance mentality. There are some hurts we simply cannot change. But, when we don’t and we fight against the hurts, we often end up hurting ourselves even more, fighting the same bloody battle over and over again. We can learn to live with the hurt and even embrace it.
* Advocacy mentality. Certain kinds of hurts can lead us to become advocates for others who are hurting. When we know how someone else feels because the

same thing happened to you, then you can speak up and speak out for them. Often when this happens, we begin to focus less on our hurts as we focus on the hurts of others.

* Squeezing mentality. Learning to squeeze all the good you can out of a bad situation is positive. Squeeze out learning. Squeeze out hope. Squeeze out empathy. Squeeze out an action.

**The Outcome of Personal Victory**

* Joel 3:10 says, “Let the weak say, ‘I am strong.”
* Hillsong has a song based on this:
	+ Let the weak say, "I am strong"
	Let the poor say, "I am rich"
	Let the blind say, "I can see"
	It's what the Lord has done in me
* The paradox of Scripture:
	+ James 4:10, Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will lift you up
	+ 2 Cor.12:10, For when I am weak, I am strong
	+ Acts 20:35, More blessed to give than to receive
	+ Rom.6:18, Set free from sin to become a slave to righteousness
	+ Phil.3:7-8, Gaining is losing, losing is gaining
	+ John 12:24, If a seed dies, it becomes a single seed
	+ Matt.10:39, Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it
* Hurting
	+ Reminds us of our dependence on God
	+ Reminds us of our dependence on others (no man is an island)
	+ Reminds us that we are not in control of everything
	+ Reminds us that this life is not all there is
* The hurt does not make you less or inferior to others. It is not wise to compare yourself with others.
	+ Who’s the bigger sinner?
	+ Who’s suffered more injustice?
	+ Who’s hurt more because of sacrifice?
* The victor is the one who:
	+ Does not quit
	+ Does not look back
	+ Allows God to leverage the hurt and turn it into strength.
* A Psalm of Victory: Psa.20 (Read)

**The Outcome of a Love-Vision**

* How does God turn hurt into a love-vision?
* Writing from a Roman prison, Paul penned the words of Phil.2 (Read)
	+ Look at what you have (2:1)
	+ Focus on others (2:2-4)
	+ Imitate the supreme example of the one who voluntarily took on the hurts of the world (2:5-8)
	+ Expect the same outcome of exaltation (2:9-11)
	+ Keep on working to whatever extent you can (2:12)
	+ Remember God’s at work in you (2:13)
	+ Replace grumbling with
		- Holding firmly the word of life
		- Running the race to the finish
		- Find the joy of victorious service to others
* My father was not very affectionate and demonstrative. But, I remember in the early morning hours when he returned home after my mother died, he came into my bedroom, sat on the side of the bed, hugged me, we cried, and he told me he loved me, one of the few times I heard him say that. In the hour of his deepest pain, the love I always knew he had for me came spilling out.
* I have sat with the dying on many occasions and almost without exception what is most on their minds is how they can make their family and friends know how much they love them.
* How can we see and experience the hurts of others and not convey how much we love them, and how much God loves them. Is there any greater comfort for the hurting that love?
* The person who is hurting because of their sin needs to hear that God loves them; the person who is hurting because of the injustices of life needs to hear that God loves them; and the person who is hurting because they are living sacrificially for others needs to hear that God loves them, sees their sacrifice, and will not forget it.
* Hurt opens us up to a world of love.

**The Outcome of Disciple-Making**

* As Jesus hung on the cross in exhausting pain and agony, He made a disciple,
* My aunt Eloise was racked by pain from severe arthritis never stopped telling people about Jesus and asking others if they wanted to study the Bible. She would set the studies up and then call a preacher to do the teaching.
* Paul tells about his sufferings in 2 Cor.11:21b-31 (Read)
* The 12 apostles are flogged one by one and ordering them not to speak anymore in the name of Jesus: “The apostles left the Sanhedrin rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.” (Acts 5:41-42)
* I recently read a book called **The Meanest Man in Texas** about the life of Clyde Thompson who was convicted as a teen for two murders and committed at least two more in prison. Eventually, Clyde turned his life over to Jesus, and God used him to lead hundreds of incarcerated men to Christ. His hurt was turned to disciple-making.
* Churches are filled with people who suffered the pain of addiction, of abuse, of mental illness, of physical illness, of moral failures, of social injustice, of broken homes, of abandonment, of accidents, and of criminal attack. These are the people who God uses to make disciples of all nations.
* Paul says, “But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things-and the things that are not-to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him.” (1 Cor.1:27-29)
* When God builds an army to win the victory, he often does what He did in Gideon’s day. He began with 32,000 troops but God said there were too many. 22,000 left because they were afraid. God prepared another test and reduced the army to 300 men. God did not want anyone to say, “My own strength saved me.” (Judges 7)
* So where will the world’s disciple-makers come from? From the hurting of the world. Those with heart disease, diabetes, legs in a cast; those who struggle with depression and PTSD; those who have been sexually abused and fired for no cause; those who have gone bankrupt because of the pandemic; and those who have been shunned by their friends for taking a stand against abortion; those who have lived with an abusive husband, or who have known the pain of reckless teens; those who have spent lonely nights weeping for lost love; those who have failed the test for the fifth time. These are the ones who make the best disciple-makers.

**Hurt: God’s Lever to Move the World (Conclusion)**

* Romans 5:1-5. The process and God is in control of it. Do we trust God to leverage suffering to produce perseverance, character, and hope? These are the things we must value if we are going to sail on oceans of this world of hurt.
* Sailing The Seas Of Life Poem by Kathleen Reguindin

"I am the captain of my ship and the master of my destiny! "

Where I go, how to follow the winds of life, no one can tell me

The life I make for myself is up to me.

Supported by God's disposition and clemency.

Through this vast ocean of life, I sail

My journey between destinations on winds depend

Life's ups and downs, beset with powerful gales

The turbulent ocean swells that I apprehend.

Sailing in the early years had been filled with difficulty

Fool that I was, I set off with no course in mind.

Inexperienced and full of pride, navigating pained me.

For many years, I wandered aimlessly.

Through the misery of many wet and chilly nights

The sea had turned black, I paid the price.

Unforgiving torrents of salty water and rains

My hapless body pounded as I steered through watery terrains.

Upheavals, turmoils, the strong currents of life

The push and pull of whirlpools of strife

Many times I thought I had reached my end

But my sturdy boat righted itself, such a true friend.

On many occasions, I went with no rest, no slumber

Fatigued and weary, thinking my days were numbered.

Desolate, forlorn, set apart from the rest of the world, isolated

Thoughts of an easier way out frequently crossed my mind.

But my weary soul sought consolation from the knowledge

Mother Nature's fury will eventually subside.

I steadfastly clung to this thought, it gave me courage

Faith cast all fears and doubts aside.

When blessed with serene nights and clear skies, I see a round bright sphere

Drifting across the sky, illuminating my way, giving cheer!

The water shimmers with phosphorescence, a beautiful reminder

That life and hope are constantly present, and that the sea can be kinder.

On windless days, sails fluttering, my boat bobs in the water

Ahh, my heart is content, this solitude I savor

Here, there is no need to rush, time has no meaning,

All that matters is I belong here, and I am alive and breathing!

On this life's journey, I have sought safe harbor

From turbulent waters, these havens allow me to recover

A chance to reconnect with humanity and put my floating abode to order

But it doesn't take long when the sea's voice calls me again.

At this late stage of life, the storms have become fewer in number

The revolting motions of my boat have ceased

Calmer conditions now prevail, I am a survivor

I can ask for nothing more, just peace, and a gentle breeze!

I continue to sail, wiser, albeit older, more able to tackle another adventure

Admittedly, when I feel somewhat lost in this vast watery space

I seek comfort from the dolphins that have joined me on this venture

Their laughter seems to assure me all is well, by God's grace.

Onward I go, my white sails billowing in the wind

Thousands of miles from nowhere, the past left behind.

The anxiety and fear of what is still to come, almost gone

Accepting the inevitable, that death is but our next destination.

No, I see no reason to rush, to get to where I am next going

Windward, I continue my soul-searching,

Another adventure into the unknown so exhilarating

This ocean of life is, oh, so mesmerizing!