

Spirit-Filled Pastor: You Hurt Me! Now What?

Of all the tricks of the enemy, of all the things that knock us off course, of all the things that cause division among Christians, being hurt by others is at the top of the list. It's also the primary reason behind most of the violence in our world.

The pain we cause each other is one of the enemy's primary weapons.

If you're a leader, being hurt by others (and hurting others), can be a weekly if not daily struggle. Of the times I've considered quitting the pastorate, it was always because people hurt me. (For more, listen to my podcast, "If You're Not Hurting-You're Not Leading").

How much easier it would be to live a quiet life void of conflict. But, as we have heard before, "Ships are safest in the harbor but they are not made for the harbor." The old adage also rings true: "To avoid criticism, say nothing, do nothing, be nothing." There is no way around it. Conflict is an inescapable part of life.

Increasing Your Spiritual Pain Threshold

The Bible is filled with people being hurt by each other. In Genesis 25, for example, Jacob took advantage of Esau's appetite and obtained his birthright. Talk about friction in the home!

In Genesis 26:35, when Esau was forty years old, he took two wives who made life difficult for his parents, Isaac and Rebekah. Maybe this is when jokes about mother and father-in-laws began?

We can't shape character simply by praying for it; forging comes directly from conflict. And the anvil that God uses is often other people.

The key is to allow storms to strengthen your faith, and deepen your walk with God as you lean on Him. The more pain you can handle, the more responsibility God may give you. Listed below are ways to increase your spiritual pain threshold:

Use the Hammer of Humility: God encourages us to humble ourselves and use gentle words to turn away wrath (Prov. 15:1). In doing so, we receive God's grace rather than His resistance (James 4:6).

Humility via pain is hard but it's also very powerful. I don't know about you, but I'm not good at humbling myself. God often has to help me with the process, and nine times out of ten, it involves emotional pain. Pride has to be crushed with a sledgehammer, not caressed with a feather.

Stop the Stinkin' Thinkin': Second Corinthians 10:4-5 reminds us that we have a rebel living within us. Many of our thoughts are not good, and definitely not godly. The enemy can also shoot fiery darts into our mind. This is why Paul said that we must take our thoughts captive every day—sometimes every *second*.

In these key moments, ask yourself, "Is what I'm thinking true and godly (Phil. 4:8)? Am I letting anger and pride influence me? What does the Bible say about this situation, and how I should handle it from a biblical perspective?" Taking thoughts captive and bringing them into obedience to Christ and His Word is a key aspect of resolving conflict.

Embrace the Gift of Grace: When possible, err on the side of grace and seek reconciliation and forgiveness if warranted. This is the heart of God. But seeking forgiveness doesn't necessarily mean you're wrong and the other person is in the

right. It often means that you no longer want unforgiveness to create a painful wedge between you and the other person. Forgiveness removes the burden you've been carrying.

When we err on the side of grace, things like "preference" don't bother us as much as they once did. As a pastor, I've heard and seen it all—from people arguing over parking spots, potlucks and décor, to the style of worship and the atmosphere in the church.

We all have preferences such as: Why are they raising their hands during worship? Why are they at the altar? Why are they dressed up? Why aren't they dressed up? Why aren't we singing more hymns? Why aren't we singing more contemporary songs?

? Preference, preference, preference. Get used to preference. Get used to being different. God designed all of us with unique gifting's and callings. Appreciate that and err on the side of grace.

Seek Peace not Capitulation: Romans 12:18 says, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." Our mindset should be: "I will pursue peace as much as I can. I will lay down my pride and pursue reconciliation". But sometimes, it's not possible to pursue peace if the other person isn't reciprocating it.

It's also not possible to pursue peace if we have to negotiate the absolute truth of God's Word. We are to be peacemakers, not capitulators.

The Wisdom of Using Wisdom: Proverbs 4:7 says that wisdom is the main thing we need to consider when making decisions. For instance, it's very wise to take the spiritual condition of the person you have a conflict with into consideration. How we approach a solid, mature believer may be different than how we approach an immature or pride-filled person.

We must also use wisdom when it comes to discerning the best

time to address the conflict. For instance, if someone is going through a difficult season, lovingly confronting them may not be the best decision. It's also not a good idea to approach conflict resolution when irritated or angry.

I also find it very difficult to address conflict after consuming caffeine. Since caffeine is a stimulant, it puts my body in a tense state of fight-or-flight. That's great if I'm running from a lion, but terrible when I need to be loving, calm and gentle (read more here).

In some cases, the best plan may be to take it to prayer for a season and wait for better timing before confronting the person. We also must *respond* to situations versus *reacting* to them.

When we react in anger we often regret how we handled the situation. But when we respond in love and humility, we fulfill the biblical command to be eager to listen and slow to speak (James 1:19).

You Can't Change Them, But ...

To recap, remove pride and judgmentalism by humbling yourself (Matt. 7:5). Pride says, "The faults in others I can easily see, but praise God there's none in me." Ask, "Is this really something I need to address, or am I mad because my pride has been hurt?"

Next, take your thoughts captive and err on the side of grace as you apply wisdom to the situation. Although not every conflict will be resolved, these biblical principles will tilt the odds in your favor.

Be encouraged: God sees your heart and will reward you based on your actions, not the actions of the other person. You can't change them, but you can change yourself.

The preceding is an excerpt from Shane Idleman's sermon, *You*

Hurt Me! Now What? {eoa}

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