

# The Spiritual Key to Healing From Your Emotional Trauma

In 2006, just before the surge, Norman, a stoic Army staff sergeant, returned home from Iraq a changed man. He had killed 36 Iraqi civilians and witnessed several friends killed in combat. He went about his fatherly duties without emotion and could no longer relate to his family or have intimacy with his wife. Struggling, he came to see me. Tears rolled down his face as he shared his sense of grief, loss and guilt. Wrestling with the loss of friends he had tried to protect and who had protected him in battle, and the guilt of having killed civilians, he had lost faith in God and man, and, as a result, struggled to find meaning in life.

Norman's case illustrates that due to their experiences, military personnel sometimes do not return with the same emotional, spiritual, physical or mental dispositions with which they deployed. Losing faith can be a way of blaming God for the suffering and evil they have witnessed. After all, people naturally ask why God allows suffering and evil if He is all-powerful and loving. They may be tempted to think that God obviously is not all-powerful and loving since He did not prevent the tragedy that befell them or their loved ones. So how do we understand the suffering we experience in the world?

Evil came as a result of sin. People's decision to sin impacts us and usually results in suffering. But God is all-powerful and loving and promises to eradicate suffering and evil when He returns. "The Lord is not slow concerning His promise, as some count slowness. But He is patient with us, because He does not want any to perish, but all to come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). This means that God's delay in righting wrongs is actually an act of grace so that more people might have a chance to repent of their evil choices. God will one day judge the evil of this world after mankind has had enough time to

repent. "But, according to His promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pet 3:13). At that time there will be no more suffering, for " 'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. There shall be no more death.' Neither shall there be any more sorrow nor crying nor pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4). While we do not always understand the why of suffering and evil, we can know that God desires that we turn to Him in our grief. Job experienced this and discovered that a relationship with God was enough, even without all the answers (Job 42:5-6).

So, how can we help soldiers who are struggling with their experiences of sin and evil? Listening, being calm and present, being sensitive in granting space, praying for patience and insight, channeling God's unconditional love, and praying for healing for your soldier are steps in the right direction. But that likely will not be enough. Requesting counseling from a professional will be invaluable. We cannot do it all. Allowing God to work in our situation or in the lives of our loved ones should be the first step.

Paul stated, "No temptation has taken you except what is common to man. God is faithful, and He will not permit you to be tempted above what you can endure, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13). I shared this and several other Scriptures with Norman. I listened intently to him and prayed with him. But I had to realize that I was powerless to help him. Accepting one's own inadequacies and realizing that only the power of God can heal the soul of man is crucial. Providing an atmosphere of unconditional acceptance, listening and relating with understanding, sharing hope, and praying helped Norman begin to regain faith in God and meaning in life.

Unconditional love, the essence of God, is the answer to suffering and evil. God's love provides healing and strength

in our quest for meaning in life, and it restores faith in God and man. He is indeed always present during our journey, so that we can begin to heal from the wounds that suffering and evil has had on our lives and in the lives of our loved ones. Suffering and evil will one day be no more. God's love is eternal. {eoa}

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