

15 Traits of Wounded Warriors

It is an old adage that says “hurt people hurt people.”

It is well-known that those who have been emotionally damaged tend to inflict their hurt and pain on other people. For example, a large percentage of those who have been sexually abused become the abusers of others; those who suffered under an alcoholic parent often themselves cause their future family to suffer because of their drunken stupors. Until we as a church deal with the whole person as shown in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, our congregations will be filled with people who are spiritually gifted but act like emotional infants. In other words, the church must deal with emotional health and not just spiritual health and power.

The following are common traits hurt people display in their interactions with others.

1. Hurt people often transfer their inner anger onto their family and close friends

Often those around them become the recipients of harsh tones and fits of rage because they have unknowingly become the vicarious recipients of transferred rage.

2. Hurt people interpret every word spoken to them through the prism of their pain

Because of their pain, ordinary words are often misinterpreted to mean something negative towards them.

Because of this, they are extremely sensitive and act out of pain instead of reality.

3. Hurt people interpret every action through the prism of their pain

Their emotional pain causes them to suspect wrong motives or

evil intent behind other people's actions towards them.

4. Hurt people often portray themselves as victims and carry a "victim spirit"

Often hurt people can cry "racism," "sexism" and "homophobia," or they often use the words "unjust" or "unfair" to describe the way they are being treated, even if there is no truth to this. (That is not to say that sometimes there really is racism or sexism in some instances; this is just used as an example.)

Hurt people have a hard time entering into a trusting relationship.

Hurt people often carry around a suspicious spirit.

5. Hurt people often alienate others and wonder why no one is there for them

They often continually hurt the ones they love and need the most with their self-destructive behavior.

6. Hurt people have the emotional maturity of the age they received their (un-dealt with) hurt

For example, if a girl was raped by a man when she was 12 years old, unless she forgives that man and allows Christ to heal her heart and allay her fears, in that particular area of her life (sexuality with a man) her emotional growth will stop; even when she reaches her later years she may still have the emotional maturity of a 12-year-old.

7. Hurt people are often frustrated and depressed because past pain continually spills over into their present consciousness

In many instances, they may not even be aware of why they are continually frustrated or depressed because they have coped with pain by compartmentalizing it or layering it over with other things over time.

8. Hurt people often erupt with inappropriate emotion because particular words, actions or circumstances “touch” and “trigger” past woundedness

I have been in situations with people in which there was a gross overreaction to a word I spoke or an action that was taken. Although I was shocked and thought this reaction came “out of left field” it was really the person responding to an accumulation of years of hurt and pain that could not help but spill over in various situations.

I myself have been in situations where I felt hurt, troubled or overreacted to something because it touched a nerve with what I was still dealing with due to a wound I received in the past. In these situations I have attempted to reason through the situation as objectively as I can with much prayer and introspection so I would not say or do anything damaging to another person or myself.

9. Hurt people often occupy themselves with busyness, work, performance and/or accomplishments as a way of compensating for low self-esteem

Often ministers are not motivated by a love for Jesus but a drive to accomplish.

It is important that pastors and ministers be led by the Spirit instead of being driven to succeed.

A minister should not preoccupy himself with making things happen. He or she should walk in integrity and humility and allow God to open up doors and provide a ministerial platform according to their assignment for their life and ministry.

10. Hurt people often attempt to medicate themselves with excessive entertainment, drugs, alcohol, pornography, sexual relationships or hobbies as a way to forget their pain and run from reality

Until the church learns to deal with and emphasize the emotional life and health of the believer, the church will be filled with “half-Christians” who pray and read the Bible but find no victory because they do not face the woundedness in their souls.

11. Hurt people have learned to accommodate their private “false self” or “dark side” which causes them to be duplicitous and lack integrity

Often their private life is different from their public life, which causes hypocrisy and compounds feelings of guilt, condemnation and depression.

12. Hurt people are often self-absorbed with their own pain and are unaware that they are hurting other people

They are often insensitive to other people because their emotional pain limits their capacity for empathy and their capacity for self-awareness.

I have been in numerous situations when someone hurt me and kept on going in the relationship without ever apologizing because they had no clue what they were doing.

13. Hurt people are susceptible to demonic deception

I am convinced that most of the divisions in the church are caused by saints who lack emotional health and project their pain onto others.

Satan works in darkness and deception, and stays away from the light. Hurt people often have destructive habit-patterns that are practiced in the dark. Hence, their mind becomes a breeding ground for satanic infiltration and deception.

If the church would deal more with the emotional health of the individual, there would be less of a foothold for demonic infiltration. Also, there would be stronger relationships,

stronger marriages, healthier children, and a more balanced approach to ministry with less of a chance of pastoral and congregational burnout.

14. God often purposely surfaces pain so hurt people can face reality

Whether it is because of a marriage problem or continual personal conflicts on the job, God often allows conflict and spillover because he wants the infection to stop spreading and the person to be healed.

Often Christians are fighting the devil and blaming him for conflict when in essence God often allows conflict so that people would be motivated to dig deeper into their lives to deal with root causes of destructive thought and habit patterns.

God's purpose for us is that we would all be conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). This does not just happen with Bible studies, prayer, and times of glory but also in painful situations when we have to face what has been hurting us for many years.

I have noticed that these periods of surfacing woundedness often take place when people transition into the mid-life years of their upper 30s and later. Perhaps this is because by then they are old enough to understand by experience that there is something wrong and also that it is not too late to redeem their pain and restore relationships and maximize their purpose. Rarely is a person able or even willing to deal with and face pain when they hit their senior years (in their 60s or older). Most at this age have already become cynical, hard-hearted, or become so depressed they have become hopeless, even though God is able to help them at any age.

15. Hurt people need to forgive to be released and restored to freedom

The Gospel of St. John 20:23 says that we have to release the sins of others if we are going to be released. This means that if we do not forgive others then the very thing we have become victimized with will become a part of our life. For example, alcoholic fathers breed alcoholic sons if their sons do not forgive and release their fathers.

The good news is that, through the efficacious blood of Christ, we can all be healed and set free from all past hurts so we can comfort others with the same comfort we ourselves have received from God (2 Cor. 1:4).

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