

SERIES: DEALING WITH HURT

DEALING WITH HURT – PART 2

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THE BIG IDEAS:

- **As Christians, we must live life Top-down**
- **There are many simple, practical ways to deal with hurt**

Top-down vs. Bottom-up

There are two different ways to live life: Top-down or Bottom-up. These two philosophies differ considerably in both approach and outcome. It is important for us to understand these two approaches and select the proper one to live by.

Top-down Living

- This approach to life begins with an understanding of God and who He is. We then take that truth and view our life and circumstances accordingly. This approach allows our understanding of God's nature and character to remain constant, and causes us also to remain faithful in tough times.

Bottom-up Living

- This approach begins with scanning one's life and circumstances and then reflecting that back onto God, allowing it to define His character. This approach fails miserably in that God's character is not solidified but rather changes based on how good one's life is at a particular point in time.

Consider this example: perhaps your entire family dies in a tragic house fire. If you take the Top-down approach, you already know that God is good, He is in control, that He loves you, and that He will be there for you during this difficult time. As a result, you can better handle this difficult situation and will not hold anger against God.

In contrast, if you use the Bottom-up approach, you may see God as being impotent (weak), cruel, unavailable, uncaring, or non-existent. You will see His character as being different, depending on your circumstances. People who live life Bottom-up often leave the faith or become very bitter or angry against God.

Common Responses to Hurt

Listed below are three clusters of responses to hurt. However, it should be noted that usually these responses do not occur independent from one another. Rather, they often come together and lead to one another. As such, many of the coping techniques can be repeated and will be effective in various ways.

1. Anger, Resentment, Bitterness

Common signs:

- Raising your voice
- Sarcasm
- Losing your sense of humor
- Wanting to strike out verbally or physically
- Aggressive behaviour; constant irritability
- Unforgiveness

What to do:

- Learn how to practice self-control
- Practice relaxation techniques regularly
- Try to get some humor into your life
- Pinpoint your hot-buttons and avoid them
- Take sufficient breaks to clear your mind and regroup
- Reflect on the gospel and God's forgiveness to help you forgive others

2. Depression and Grief

*Only manic depression and bi-polar disorders can be genetically inherited, but usually they are not. Approximately 10% of manic or bi-polar cases are caused by other medical conditions a person is already suffering from.

Common signs:

- Constant bouts of crying; going long periods without laughing/smiling
- Disturbed thinking
- Loss of interest in activities once enjoyed
- Social withdrawal
- Increased or decreased appetite; over or under sleeping
- Thoughts of suicide or self-harm

What to do:

- Accept that you are grieving or depressed, then take action to help
- Know that grief is a process, not a state
- Take necessary time off to deal with the circumstance
- You may possibly need counseling or medical assistance
- Do not completely isolate yourself (though some time alone may be necessary)
- Keep watch over your diet and sleep

3. Worry, Anxiety

*There are times when anxiety may not be caused specifically by an event. Often, this may be the result of a physiological condition often referred to as an "anxiety disorder", which can be inherited at birth.

Common signs:

- Irrational thoughts & fears
- Obsessive behaviours, perfectionism

- Hypochondrias (health related fears)
- Need for control
- Indecisiveness
- Self-criticism
- Guilt

What to do:

- Practice relaxation techniques regularly
- Try to cut stressors out of your life
- Learn to replace negative self-talk with coping self-talk
- Avoid stimulants like caffeine and nicotine

Practical Advice for Dealing with Hurt

- Identify and accept the problem
- Be in God's Word (Psalms is a good place for this)
- Keep in good health (diet, sleep, exercise)
- Seek out a good listener and a "phone friend"
- Journal/paint/draw/create
- Try something new and inspirational (expand your horizons)
- Preserve keepsakes (when a death occurs)
- Be in nature
- Study yourself
- Avoid making important decisions
- Consider changing something visible to express the changes within you
- Seek out professional/medical help if necessary

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Do I live my life Top-down or Bottom-up?
2. What responses to hurt am I currently experiencing?
3. How can I start to overcome them?