

Healing Your Hidden Hurts

Stephen N. Rummage



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conversations together about life, those we care for, and the struggles people face have helped me to have a greater understanding of the hurts so many of us carry.

To God alone be the glory!

Stephen Rummage

The Pastor's Study
Quail Springs Baptist Church
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Introduction

Where Does it Still Hurt?

My parents still talk about it to this day. When I was a little boy, three or four years old, they would watch as I played in the backyard or ran around on our patio. On occasion, I would stumble and fall, and hit hard on the grass or the pavement with my knees. Mom and Dad say I did the same thing each time. I would get up quickly and check my kneecaps for any damage, looking for signs of blood. If I had on long pants, I would even push up my pantlegs until I could see my knees.

If no blood was showing on my kneecaps, I would return to whatever game I was playing, still happy and unbothered. If, however, the skin was broken and there was even a slight trace of bleeding on my skinned knee, I would begin crying for my mom or dad to come help. In the mind of that little boy, no blood meant the hurt wasn't serious

enough to pay attention to. Only the hurt that showed really mattered.

A few years passed and my activities in the backyard became more adventurous. One Sunday afternoon, a friend and I were climbing a tree on the edge of my parents' property. Our game was simple: We'd climb to the highest branch we could reach, and then jump off the limb onto a pile of leaves we had gathered below. In our imaginations, we were jumping for our lives from the second floor of a burning building. In reality, though, we were no more than four feet off the ground.

On one of my jumps from the tree, my foot got caught on a limb, and I wound up plunging toward the ground, headfirst. Instinctively I shot out my left arm to break my fall. When I landed, I felt a sharp pain right below my wrist. I looked down. There was no bleeding anywhere. But something had happened that I could not see. Beneath the skin, hidden, was a broken bone that began to throb and swell. Unlike a skinned knee, no blood was showing. And also, unlike a skinned knee, I wasn't in control of whether I would stop and cry or whether I would get back up and play. The unseen hurt would not go away. I couldn't keep going or stop the pain or turn off the tears. And even ten thousand kisses from my sweet mother's lips would not make it better.

Hidden hurts are often the most serious, most painful, and most lingering problems in our lives. These are very real spiritual scars we try to forget or ignore, damaged emotions we pretend are okay, inner consequences of past sins we try

to keep secret or concealed. But, just like a broken bone that causes pain and swelling beneath the skin, or, worse yet, like a hidden, cancerous tumor that grows and metastasizes, hidden hurts can cause deep damage to every part of our lives.

The beauty of our God is that He is able to heal all our hidden hurts, not only the ones that we try to conceal, but, miraculously, even the ones that remain hidden to us. Psalm 103:2–4 says this about God’s healing:

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His
benefits:
Who forgives all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases,
Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns
you with lovingkindness and tender mercies.”

God forgives sin. God heals pain. God’s love redeems our lives from destruction and crowns our heads with His mercy. A word from His lips and a touch from His hand can bring healing to our deep, unseen hurts. Psalm 147:3 bears witness to this same wonderful truth:

“He heals the brokenhearted And binds up their
wounds.”

Healing Your Hidden Hurts is a scriptural examination of some of the deepest pains we all feel, hurts such as ...

» Fears that cripple and consume us.

- » Anger that damages relationships with people we cherish.
- » Grief that holds us in its grip and robs us of joy.
- » Worry that dominates our thoughts and strangles our faith.
- » Loneliness that makes us feel abandoned and forgotten.
- » Guilt that chains us to the sins of our past.

As we examine God's Word concerning each of these areas of pain, we will discover that God offers us healing, grace, and release.

The messages in each chapter are all "life-tested." As a pastor and a preacher, I have had opportunity to share these messages from the platforms of churches across the country through my radio Bible teaching ministry, *Moving Forward*, as well as individually with people who are struggling with pain. I have found the message of *Healing Your Hidden Hurts* resonates strongly with people, not because I am the most skilled at dealing with these issues, but because these hurts are so intensely felt that people are aching for someone to simply address them.

My prayer is that God will use *Healing Your Hidden Hurts* to encourage you and to help you minister to others who are hurting. Most, though not all, of the chapters are expositions of different portions of the Book of Psalms, the section of Scripture that speaks so powerfully to our pain, our emotions, and our longing for God to meet us at our point of need.

As you read, I would encourage you to do several things:

First, open your own Bible and read the portion of God's Word presented in each chapter. The content and context of the Bible passage itself will speak to you far more powerfully than anything I present in this book. There also may be verses that you will want to mark in your Bible to help remind you of the truths *Healing Your Hidden Hurts* presents.

Second, when you finish reading each chapter, spend some time in prayer asking God: "Father, is there hurt in my life that remains hidden? Give me your grace to uncover that hurt and bring it to you so that You can heal and strengthen me." This book cannot heal your hurts, but it can help direct you to the only One who heals, our God. You will find Him in His Word and through prayer.

Third, as you are praying, ask for the Lord to show you people in your life who may be struggling with these and other hidden hurts. Ask for God to give you wisdom and courage to share His love and mercy with them.

God is so good! He sees what we cannot see. He loves in ways we could never love. He heals perfectly as we bring our hurts to Him. Sometimes that healing comes instantly. More often, I have found that His healing for hidden hurts comes day by day as we trust Him and seek Him with our hearts.

Chapter 1

Facing Your Fears

Psalm 56

*“Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up;
Fighting all day he oppresses me.
My enemies would hound me all day, For there are many
who fight against me, O Most High.
Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.
In God (I will praise His word),
In God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh
do to me?
All day they twist my words;
All their thoughts are against me for evil.
They gather together,
They hide, they mark my steps,
When they lie in wait for my life.
Shall they escape by iniquity?”*

*In anger cast down the peoples, O God!
 You number my wanderings; Put my tears into Your bottle;
 Are they not in Your book?
 When I cry out to You, Then my enemies will turn back;
 This I know, because God is for me.
 In God (I will praise His word),
 In the Lord (I will praise His word),
 In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid.
 What can man do to me?
 Vows made to You are binding upon me, O God; I will
 render praises to You, For You have delivered my soul
 from death.
 Have You not kept my feet from falling,
 That I may walk before God
 In the light of the living?"*

When I travel for a preaching or other ministry en-
 gagement, this would not be an unusual day for me:

I wake up around 4:00 a.m. and walk into the bath-
 room. I'm surprised and a little bothered to see a spider in
 the corner, looking for his breakfast. So, I use a wad of tissue
 to grab the spider, and thank the Lord out loud that I didn't
 miss.

After I've showered and dressed, I kiss Michele good-
 bye and head through the traffic for the airport, where I
 wait among hundreds of strangers for my flight. When it's
 time, I board and settle in with a plane full of other passen-

gers seated shoulder to shoulder. Then, in just a few minutes I'm miles above the earth, trying not to think about the bad weather that's making the plane bump like the atmosphere is full of potholes.

When we finally land, I grab a rental car. Two bridges and a tunnel later, I arrive at my hotel and check in. Door key in hand, I push the button for the elevator. When the elevator door opens, there are five expressionless people already on board, headed to their rooms. I step in, sheepishly make my way to the back of the elevator, and am slowly shuttled to the twelfth floor, where I disembark and head down the hallway to my room to freshen up before my meeting. Then I run over my notes one last time before departing for a conference where I'm one of the scheduled speakers. All the way there, I'm praying that the group of people I'll be speaking to will be gracious if I make a mess out of my words.

Now, a day like that almost always ends up just fine. But the interesting thing is that from the time I wake up that day until that day is done, I will have faced these nine most common phobias listed by Americans:

Bugs, mice, snakes and bats (that's just one category)

Heights

Water

Public transportation and flying

Storms

Tight spaces

Tunnels or bridges

Crowds

Public speaking

You may be afraid of all of those things; you may not fear any of them. But everyone fears something.

Truth is, fear can be your friend. Fear is a protective response that God has designed to assist us when we are endangered. Our bodies release adrenaline when we face danger to help us move more quickly and with greater strength in perilous situations.

But fear can also be one of your greatest enemies. Fear has the ability to paralyze you, making you incapable of acting. Fear can dominate your life, consume your thoughts, and distract your attention. Fear can even kill you.

Dr. Robert Kloner at the Good Samaritan Hospital in Los Angeles studied the rates of heart attacks on the day of the 1994 earthquakes in that city. He found that there were five times the number of heart attacks reported than there were on the same day in other years. Dr. Kloner said that about a hundred Californians died that day because of fear. Fear released chemicals into their bodies, triggering such a severe contraction of the heart that it never relaxed.¹

Most people don't literally die from fear, but many are crippled by it. God wants to strengthen you to walk in victory over your fears, whatever they are. As we look at Psalm 56, we can see three principles from God's Word that will

1 <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/02/15/us/jump-in-fatal-heart-attacks-is-tied-to-quake.html>, Warren E Leary, February 15, 1996

help you step out in faith to do what God has called you to do, even when you face great fear.

First, God wants you to come to grips with the *reality of fear* in your life. Next, God calls you to a *reaction of faith* when your fears are raging. Finally, God reminds you of the *requirement of following* Him through your fears. Let's consider each of those principles as we examine this portion of God's Word.

THE REALITY OF FEAR

"Fighting all day he oppresses me.

My enemies would hound me all day,

For there are many who fight against me, O Most High."

Psalm 56:1-2

Every person is, at one time or another, confronted by things that make us afraid. David was. In the Bible we see that David cried out many times to God for grace and mercy because of fear. He asked for God to listen to him and to see him. And he asked God to reach down to him and do something in his life.

David asked this question: What can flesh do to me? What can man do to me?

Of course, men (and women, for that matter) can do a lot of things to make us afraid. Some of our biggest fears are not airplanes, earthquakes, spiders, or bugs, but the hurts caused by other people.

David found himself being pursued by enemies who were trying to hurt him. The Scripture says David's enemies wanted to *swallow him up*. That means they wouldn't give up until they got him. His opponents were relentless. They intended to *oppress him* – to press him down until he was crushed. The language David uses paints a picture of a pack of merciless hyenas after a gazelle. The predators will not give up the hunt, and their intent is nothing short of destruction.

David had first-hand experience with this kind of assault. The ancient superscription to this Psalm, as ancient as the Psalm itself, tells us that David wrote these words when he had been captured by the Philistines in Gath, the hometown of Goliath, the giant whom David had conquered and killed years before. Goliath was no longer a problem, but the king of Israel, Saul, was. Saul and his men were in hot pursuit of David, but not because David had done anything wrong. To the contrary, he had done everything right and had become increasingly popular in the eyes of the people of Israel. King Saul became a mad man, driven to a jealousy-fueled hatred of David.

As he fled from Saul, David ran to a priest named Ahimelech and begged for food and protection. Ahimelech was of little help to David, but he gave him all that he had: the sword of Goliath and the bread devoted to the Lord's service in the tabernacle.

David probably didn't look like much of a threat as he dragged Goliath's huge sword through the streets of Gath. But he was under constant threat from his enemies. So, he

devised a plan: he would feign insanity. David thought, “If I act crazy, they’ll leave me alone.”

But David’s plan actually brought him more trouble. The king of Gath said something like this: “Look, I’ve got enough crazy people to deal with already. Somebody get rid of this guy!” Now David was running from multiple pursuers: the men of Gath, as well as Saul and his men.

There was nothing easy about David’s situation. He describes what he was experiencing in Psalm 56:5–6:

“All day they twist my words;
All their thoughts are against me for evil.
They gather together,
They hide, they mark my steps,
When they lie in wait for my life.”

David was alone, under attack, vulnerable, panicked, and afraid. His situation was dire and the threats against him were very real.

David was probably a wreck: heart pounding; dry mouth; tense muscles; nerves on edge; a queasy stomach; profuse sweat. Fear produces a real, visceral response. Fear can make you physically sick and exhaust you.

Now, here’s what may surprise you: As far as we can tell, David was right in the center of God’s will. Yes, David was under attack. He was alone and he was scared – and right where he was supposed to be.

Fear is a fact of life, and it pops up when you least expect it. We try many strategies to deal with fear: We may

try to ignore it, or adopt an I–don’t–care attitude. Sometimes we try to paint a brave face on our fear, or maintain a false show of confidence.

But God always knows – and you know – when you are afraid.



A mother tucked her little boy into bed one windy, stormy night. Lightning flashed and thunder boomed just outside the window. He was very scared.

He said to his mother, “Mommy, can you please stay in my room and sleep with me tonight?” She said, “No honey, I have to go and sleep in Daddy’s room tonight.” There was a long pause. The boy lowered his eyes, crossed his arms, and said, “That big chicken.”

Sometimes, you’re going to be afraid, even when you’re in exactly the right place, at the right time, doing the right thing. So, the question is not “*Will I be afraid?*” The question is “*What will I do when I am afraid?*”

Not long ago, I faced a situation where I was extremely fearful. I was unsure about how people would treat me and uncertain about my future. In those moments and days, a piece of simple advice that a wise, older Christian man gave me proved powerful and comforting in my life. My friend told me: “Put this in the Lord’s hands. Let Him take care of it.” That simple word of encouragement helped me to move from the reality of my fear into a reaction of faith.

THE REACTION OF FAITH

Psalm 56:3–4 records this faith response of David:

“Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.
In God (I will praise His word),
In God I have put my trust;
I will not fear.”

In spite of David’s fear, he made a conscious decision to trust God. Instead of letting fear rule his life, David chose to hold tightly to God and not let go. Why could he do that? Verse 4 tells us David trusted God’s character and God’s Word:

“In God (I will praise His Word), in God I have put
my trust.”

In effect, David was saying, “I know God’s Word is true. He’s spoken to me in His Word and told me not to be afraid, so that’s what I’m going to do: I’m going to not be afraid.” The decision was just as simple as that.

Another reason David refused to fear is found in Psalm 56:7. About his enemies David says,

“Shall they escape by iniquity?
In anger cast down the peoples, O God!”

David had total confidence that God would take care of the people who were trying to hurt him. He knew that God's righteous anger would deal with those who were trying to harm him, and that God had the supernatural ability to remove David's enemies from before him.

David also knew that God was watching his every step. In Psalm 56:8, David creates this striking word picture of God's care:

“You number my wanderings; Put my tears into Your
bottle.
Are they not in Your book?”

God even saved every tear that David shed, like entries in a memory book.

Sometimes our fears become so great and consuming that we start to feel that the best way to deal with them is simply to forget. We push the bad times and the tears we shed into the far recesses of our memories and promise ourselves never even to think about them again. God's love for us is so great, though, that He never forgets. He numbers our days of fearful wandering, and even keeps every tear we shed in His bottle of remembrance.

If you've wept because of your fears, God has saved your tears in a bottle with your name on it. Your tears are precious to Him. He cares that tenderly for you.

David knew that because of God's tender love for Him, God was in His corner! In Psalm 56:9, he writes,

“When I cry out to You,
Then my enemies will turn back.
This I know, because God is for me.”

David was certain that God heard his prayers. He was sure that God would rout even the fiercest of his enemies. Above all, David knew that God was for him.

Never forget that God is for you! You may feel that everyone is against you, even those closest to you. But God is for you. And because of that, you can say with David,

“In God (I will praise His word), in the Lord (I will
praise His word),
In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid.”

PSALM 56:10–11

The acronym “FEAR” has been used by many people to stand for “False Evidence Appearing Real.” But sometimes the evidence isn’t false; it’s very real!

Here’s what I think “FEAR” stands for:

Forgetting Everything’s All Right!

That is so easy for us to do when we become afraid. We forget who God is. We forget where God is. We forget what God has promised. In short, we forget that – because we belong to God – everything really is all right.



Several years ago, our family went to Carowinds amusement park in North Carolina. Michele's parents and sister joined us, and we had a great day together. By late afternoon, I think I had ridden every ride in that park, including all the roller coasters, except one.

A Star Trek-themed coaster called "The Borg Assimilator" was the only roller coaster I had not ridden. And I just didn't think God was calling me at that moment to get "assimilated," or to "boldly go where no man has gone before," even though I saw lots of men, women, and eight-year-old kids waiting in line for the ride!

I had watched hundreds of people get onboard the Assimilator. All the riders were loaded onto the roller coaster lying on their backs, with their heads pointed toward the front of the ride. When the ride started it took them slowly up the first hill backward: *katunk, katunk, katunk*.

Then at the top of that hill, the Assimilator flipped the riders over like a pancake, and for the rest of the ride they were suspended by a harness, and flying through every twist and turn of that roller coaster, face down. A net under the Assimilator caught things that fell: glasses, hats, wallets. I thought to myself, "I don't want to end up in that net. I'm not riding the Borg Assimilator."

That was my final decision, until Michele said, "Stephen, ride that with my daddy."

Michele's dad, Aubrey Henderson, was about seventy-two years old at the time. I dearly love my father-in-law,

and I love my wife even more. So, I got in line with him, right behind a little girl about nine years old. Aubrey was so excited, and that little girl was also excited. Everyone in the line was excited but me. I spent forty-five anxiety-laced minutes in that line trying to remember that everything would be all right.

When our turn to ride finally came, Aubrey and I were buckled into our harnesses, side by side. As we were ascending the first hill, he yelled at me: “Stephen, you’re not looking! Look around! You can see all kinds of things!” I wasn’t looking. My eyes were squeezed shut in fear. I said, “Aren’t you scared?” He said, “I’m not scared of one ride in this park!”

I was thinking about my harness breaking, and falling into that net, and being out of control. I had forgotten that everything was all right. In the end, I was assimilated that day and came out no worse for the wear. The harness held, and I survived.

Everything was all right.

In a much deeper way, when life turns everything upside down, we may fear for our future and well being. However, when we face our fears, whether they are great or small, we are reminded, once again, that Jesus makes everything all right.

At the cross of Calvary, Jesus faced our biggest fears and defeated them all. As a result, everything is all right. Jesus defeated His earthly enemies, so everything’s all right! He defeated Satan; everything’s all right! He defeated death,

so everything's all right! He defeated sin, so everything's all right! He defeated hell, so everything's all right!

When you wonder how things are going to turn out in your situation, you can cry out to God in faith: "Lord, in the middle of this fear, I'm going to cling to You. I trust You. I'm not letting go of You, and I know You won't let go of me. So, everything is all right."

THE REQUIREMENT OF FOLLOWING

At the end of this Psalm, David expressed his intention to keep following the Lord, even after his fears had been defeated. He wrote in Psalm 56:12– 13:

"Vows made to You are binding upon me, O God; I
will render praises to You, For You have delivered
my soul from death.

Have You not kept my feet from falling,
That I may walk before God
In the light of the living?"

David made promises, or vows, to God when he was fearful. Sometimes we call those kinds of promises "foxhole prayers." They usually go something like this: *God, if you'll _____ for me, then I'll _____ for you.* You can fill in the blanks.

Now that the danger had passed, David determined to keep his vows to God. He declared they were binding upon

him. No matter what happened in the future, David promised to live his life praising God, and keeping the promises he made when he was afraid.

Have you made vows to God when you were afraid? When you were in the hospital and didn't think you were going to come out? Or when you wept over the bed of a loved one you feared losing? What have you promised God when you faced a financial crisis that you feared you could not overcome? Or when you were threatened on your job?

Too often after rescue has come and danger has passed, we leave our promises by the wayside. The old saying is sadly true: "Danger gone; God forgotten."

David didn't forget God after the danger had passed. He kept his vows made during danger. He spent his life praising God and following Him. Was he perfect? No, not by a long stretch! But he was faithful to his promise to follow God, to praise Him, and to walk with the Lord for the rest of his life.

Can the same be said of you?



A man spent several days and nights on the Texas prairie with a shepherd who was managing a flock of about two thousand sheep. He watched the shepherd work hard to care for the sheep under the hot sun. As darkness descended, the entire flock gathered around the shepherd and lay down to rest. The shepherd had built a fire for warmth and light in the center of where his flock lay. Everyone was at rest after a long day.

Then the sheep dogs became restless. They patrolled among the sheep and began to growl as the unmistakable wails of coyotes pierced the peace of the prairie. The unseen enemy posed a real threat to the flock.

The shepherd sprang into action. He tossed more wood onto the fire, which blazed brighter and higher. As the light from the fire grew, the man looked into the night, where he saw thousands of tiny lights encircling their camp. He realized that what he was seeing was the firelight being reflected in the eyes of the two thousand sheep, who were looking, not into the darkness, but toward their shepherd.

The secret to successfully facing your fears is realizing that Jesus Christ has already faced them all for you. Your Good Shepherd will protect you. So, when doubts arise and fears dismay, look to Jesus and to His cross. He has promised to deliver you from whatever makes you afraid.