

When You Are Deeply Hurt

(2 Corinthians 2:5-17)

Have you ever been deeply hurt by someone? If not, you probably will be. This passage reveals what to do when someone deeply hurts you. After explaining why he changed his plans to visit Corinth a second time, Paul addresses the specific confrontation that led to his decision to postpone his visit. Paul doesn't name the offender, but he does give instructions on what the church should do. From these instructions, we find **three** principles to use **when you are deeply hurt** by another person. First ...

Refuse to overreact (2:5-8)

Paul writes that the man who caused all the *pain* has hurt all the Corinthian believers more than he hurt Paul (2:5). A man had offended Paul during his first visit, apparently by attacking Paul's apostolic authority.

Paul is concerned about the church over-disciplining the offender. Therefore, he writes the *punishment* imposed by the majority is enough. Now, Paul writes, they should *forgive and comfort him*, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive grief or discouragement (2:6-7).

The man has apparently repented, so Paul doesn't want the church's actions to be so severe there is no room for reconciliation. It is just as serious to sever all hope of reconciliation as it is to let the offender go undisciplined. If a believer is guilty of a transgression, what are spiritual believers to do (Galatians 6:1a)?

When you are deeply hurt, it is always tempting to overreact, making restoration impossible. Don't burn relationship bridges. Therefore, Paul begs the Corinthian believers to *reaffirm* their *love* for the man (2:8). The intent of church discipline should be to facilitate repentance and reconciliation, not condemnation because the motive should always be *love*. This principle should also be true in all personal relationships.

Since the man has repented, it is time to move on. Paul has nothing in his heart but love and forgiveness for the one who offended him. Paul exemplifies what our Lord says when Peter asks Him how many times he must forgive an offender. Peter thinks he is being very generous by saying *seven* (Mt 18:21). However, what does Jesus say (18:22b)?

An unwillingness to forgive and to restore relationships results from a lack of *love*. The greatest opportunity you will ever have to show *love* is when you are deeply hurt by someone but are willing to forgive that person.

When deeply hurt, **refuse to overreact** and ...

Remember Christ is watching (2:9-11)

Paul explains he is writing for the purpose of testing their character to see if they will be *obedient in everything* (2:9). Doing as Paul requests would reveal the church accepts Paul's apostolic authority. He wants the church to discipline, forgive, and restore.

Paul continues, *Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ* (2:10). If the church is ready to reinstate the offender, Paul is satisfied. The phrase *if I have forgiven anything* suggests Paul believes he doesn't have anything to forgive. The point is the offense was against the entire church, not just Paul. So, he has no personal vendetta.

By using the phrase *in the presence of Christ*, Paul is reminding the Corinthians that, during all their deliberations and actions, Christ is present and watching. Also, though he is hundreds of miles away, Paul is making all his decisions *in the presence of Christ* in the person of the Holy Spirit. There is a wonderful promise in **Matthew 28:20b** we often use for comfort. However, we should also remember this truth when we are offended or hurt and tempted to not forgive. Personalize this verse and write it below:

Remember, when you are hurt or offended, your reactions and actions happen in the very *presence of Christ*.

Paul again stresses the purpose of discipline is always repentance and reconciliation. If that is not our desire, what will happen, according to 2:11a?

The church desired to discipline the offender who challenged Paul and the Gospel. However, Paul admonished the church to be careful not to give Satan a foothold in their church by taking advantage of the situation. Paul knows overreacting can cause discord within the church and between Paul and the church. Satan always wants our hurts to ruin relationships and to keep them that way.

Withholding forgiveness allows Satan to take advantage of the situation. That's why we can never be vindictive. An unforgiving spirit gives the devil a foothold, and he will exploit it. Therefore, what warning does God give in Ephesians 4:27? (Be sure to personalize.)

Although that verse is discussing anger, the principle also applies to when we are deeply hurt. If we refuse to forgive when we are hurt, we become resentful and hateful. That's exactly what Satan wants. So, Paul *writes, for we are not ignorant of his designs* (2:11b). Satan always wants a hurt to fester and get worse. He wants it to be the root of more hurt, gossip, and other sins because he wants to wreck God's work of reconciliation. Be aware: Satan always fans the flames of hurt to make it an inferno of resentment and bitterness.

When you are deeply hurt, you have only two choices. React as God wants or react as the devil wants. But **remember Christ is watching**.

When you are deeply hurt, **refuse to overreact, remember Christ is watching**, and ...

Resolve to prevent it from hindering your ministry (2:12-17).

Continuing to describe the grief he is experiencing, Paul writes when he *came to Troas to preach the gospel*, the Lord opened a *door* for him (2:12). Troas (in modern-day Turkey) was a large seaport city. It was on the Aegean Sea, about ten miles south of the ancient city of Troy. Troy is best known for being the focus of the Trojan War described in Homer's epic poem, *The Iliad*.

Paul had sent Titus to Corinth with his letter and planned to meet him at Troas. Paul wants to find out how the Corinthians responded to his letter. He is anxious to know how they responded to his rebuke of divisions, immorality, abuse of the Lord's Supper and their spiritual gifts, etc. However, because Titus doesn't come, Paul is burdened and restless (2:13a). Therefore, what does he do (2:13b)?

Paul is very concerned about Titus because he is carrying a love offering from Corinth for the poor believers in Jerusalem (8:6). He is anxious Titus might have been robbed by bandits. Consequently, when Titus doesn't arrive with a report from Corinth, Paul leaves Troas and goes to Macedonia, in northern Greece, to find him.

The door remains open in Troas, and on Paul's return, God will use him in a mighty way (Acts 20:5-11). However, at the present time, Paul is unable to rise to the occasion, so he leaves.

Paul is discouraged but not defeated. This is one of the most difficult times in the great apostle's life. Paul is human just like us. He is a great example of the fact that even the best of Christians get discouraged. But remember: **Discouragement is not defeated**. Defeat means you are done. Discouragement means you are down for a while. When you get discouraged, remember the truth about God recorded in Job 4:4. Write it below:

Because things seem to be getting worse instead of better, Paul is discouraged. Though greatly disappointed while in Troas and Macedonia, Paul still gives *thanks* to God (2:14a). Despite temporary setbacks, he explains his thankfulness by using a metaphor of a Roman

victory parade, which he calls a *triumphal procession* (2:14b). The Roman army would march their prisoners of war through the populated streets of Rome as fragrant aromas filled the air. At the end of the procession, many soldiers would be rewarded while many of the captives would be killed. So, to the captives, the aroma was the smell of death.

Paul sees himself and those with him as members of a victorious procession led by *Christ*. Throughout this procession, the *fragrance of the knowledge* of Christ is everywhere (2:14c).

Believers are the *aroma of Christ* rising to God. However, the aroma is perceived differently by those being saved and those who are perishing (2:15). How do the two groups smell the aroma differently (2:16a-b)?

Paul asks who is adequate for this important task (2:16c). He implies it is astounding that God appointed believers to this mission. Paul ends this section by writing he and his associates are not *peddlers* who corrupt the Word of God for profit, but sincerely *speak in Christ* before God as men sent from God (2:17). Paul is not going to let his hurt hinder his ministry.

If you are ever deeply hurt, **resolve to prevent it from hindering your ministry** because, despite any hurt in Christ, you are a member of a *triumphal procession*.

When deeply hurt, **refuse to overreact, remember Christ is watching,** and **resolve to prevent it from hindering your ministry.**