

# WHEN LIFE HURTS

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## Text: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

You probably all remember the classic movie, *The Wizard of Oz*. In it, you'll remember, the Tin Man wanted a heart. He got his heart, but do you remember what the wizard told him? The wizard said to the Tin Man, ■ **“Hearts will never be practical until they are made unbreakable.”** We know that quite the opposite is true. It is the fact that hearts are fragile that makes them practical. 1

The fact that our hearts do break is what makes us human—but it is also what makes us hurt. And sometimes the pain can be excruciating.

What is it about life that sometimes causes us so much pain? Are we to blame or is someone else? Is life more unfair to Christians than non-Christians?

Let's look at this objectively and consider some of the contributing factors to life's painful moments.

## I. ***RELATIONSHIPS CAN CAUSE US PAIN.***

### A. **Sometimes we choose to associate with the wrong person or persons and we pay the price.**

■ 1 Corinthians 15:33 says, “Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits.”

Young Christians often do not realize that by keeping the same relationships they had before conversion; they are constantly exposing themselves to the old way of life. If you can win your lost friends, then do so. But do not allow your way of life to be lost.

**What if we can't escape them?**

**B. We must remember that those unpleasant relationships do not have to destroy us.**

In the northeastern United States codfish are a big commercial business. Note the following facts: There is a market for eastern cod all over, especially in sections farthest removed from the northeast coastline. But the public demand posed a problem to the shippers. At first they froze the cod, then shipped them elsewhere, but the freeze took away much of the flavor. So they experimented with shipping them alive, in tanks of seawater, but that proved even worse. Not only was it more expensive, the cod still lost its flavor and, in addition, became soft and mushy. The texture was seriously affected.

Finally, some creative person solved the problem in a most innovative manner. The codfish were placed in the tank of water along with their natural enemy--the catfish. From the time the cod left the East Coast until it arrived at its westernmost destination, those ornery catfish chased the cod all over the tank. And, you guessed it, when the cod arrived at the market, they were as fresh as when they were first caught. There was no loss of flavor nor was the texture affected. If anything, it was better than before.

Each one of us is in a tank of particular and inescapable circumstances. It is painful enough to stay in the tank. But in addition to our situation, there are God-appointed "catfish" to bring sufficient tension that keeps us alive, alert, fresh and growing. It's all part of God's project to shape our character so we will be more like his Son. Understand why the catfish are in your tank. Understand they are part of God's method of producing character in your life and mine. 2

--Charles Swindoll

**II. DECISIONS THAT WE MAKE CAN CAUSE US PAIN.**

**A. Rushing into decisions is dangerous.**

Not everyone makes mistakes as big as the fellow I read about. But his story goes to show what can happen when we make a decision too fast—we find ourselves in a mess. His name was Charles Robertson.

Cash-strapped Robertson, nineteen, went to Jefferson State Bank on a Wednesday afternoon, filled out a loan application, and left. Apparently he changed his mind about the loan and opted for a quicker plan. He returned within a couple of hours with a pistol, a bag and a note demanding money. The teller complied, and all of a sudden Robertson was holding a sack of loot.

Figuring the police were fast on their way, he dashed out the front door. He was halfway to the car when he realized that he'd left the note. Fearing it could be used as evidence against him, he ran back into the bank and snatched it from the teller. Now holding the note and the money, he ran a block to his parked car. That's when he realized he'd left his keys on the counter when he'd returned for the note.

“At this point,” one detective chuckled, “total panic set in.”

Robertson ducked into the restroom of a fast-food restaurant. He dislodged a ceiling tile and hid the money and the .25 caliber handgun. Scampering through alleys and creeping behind cars, he finally reached his apartment where his roommate, who knew nothing of the robbery, greeted him with the words, “I need my car.”

You see, Robertson's getaway vehicle was a loaner. Rather than confess the crime and admit the bungle, Robertson shoveled yet another spade of dirt deeper into the hole. “Uh, uh, your car was stolen,” he lied.

While Robertson watched in panic, the roommate called the police to inform them of the stolen vehicle. About twenty minutes later an officer spotted the “stolen” car a block from the recently robbed bank. Word was already on the police radio that the robber had forgotten his keys. The officer put two and two together and tried the keys on the car. They worked.

Detectives went to the address of the person who'd reported the missing car. There they found Robertson. He confessed, was charged with robbery, and put in jail. No bail. No loan. No kidding. 3

## **B. Going against our better judgment or the leading of the Spirit is dangerous.**

Prior to making a bad decision we often feel a sense of uneasiness for a reason.

- The Spirit wants to stop us from giving into temptation.
- He wants us to listen to Him.
- He wants us stop us from saying things that we shouldn't.
- He wants us to make a course correction before it's too late.

### **III. MISFORTUNE CAN CAUSE US PAIN.**

#### **A. No one has immunity against misfortune—not even a Christian.**

It may be finical problems, sickness, and the loss of a job through no fault of our own. A house can burn or a car accident can happen. But at no time do these things mean that God has forsaken us or that we cannot triumph over them.

No where in the Bible does the scripture say that everything that happens to us will be good. But notice what it does say.

Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” (NIV)

#### **B. No one can predict or control misfortune.**

However, we can still see the hand of God at work in our lives.

A man by the name of “Rufus Jones lost a son of eleven years who was all the world to him. He wrote many years later about the experience, concluding with this luminous parable of how his own heart was opened to God's love:

“When my sorrow was at its most acute I was walking along a great city highway, when suddenly I saw a little child come out of a great gate, which swung to and fastened behind her. She wanted to go to her home behind the gate, but it would not open. She pounded in vain with her little fist. She rattled the gate. Then she wailed as though her

heart would break. The cry brought the mother. She caught the child in her arms and kissed away the tears. ***“Didn't you know I would come? It's all right now.”*** All of a sudden I saw with my spirit that there was love behind my shut gate.

If you suffer with God you will find love behind your shut gate, a love that can lead you through the gate to be at home with all the children of God.” 4

## CONCLUSION

God will come to us in our time of need and He will see us through, but we cannot give up. Giving up will destroy us. Let me read you the heartbreaking story of someone who just “gave up” in a time of pain.

One evening in 1954, Billie Sicard resigned from life. No official announcement was made, and no papers were signed. But still she resigned. For all practical purposes, Billie decided to live no longer. Her spirit died in 1954; her body died in 1979.

On that evening in 1954, Billie's only reason to live left her. Her twelve-year-old son, George, died of a brain tumor. Little George's death left Billie imprisoned inside a vacuum. She had been thirty-four when she had born him. After her husband left, little George became her life. When he died, his death became hers.

She was well-to-do. Billie had lived on the exclusive Sunset Island in Miami since 1937. After her death the house went at an auctioned price of \$226,000. Yet all this was immaterial to Billie. Her life had been her child.

They say that after George died in a New York City hospital, the body was brought to her home for a wake. After displaying the body for a day in the home of Mrs. Sicard, the funeral director came to remove it. She refused to let him. For several days she mourned behind locked doors before she gave the body up.

It was nothing for Billie to go on a shopping spree and spend a hundred dollars on toys for George. In 1979 when her body was found, so were the toys, exactly as her son had left them. Nothing was packed, nothing moved. For twenty-five years Billie had roamed in a house full of toys, with a heart full of memories. When the house was sold after her death, little George's Cub Scout uniform was still hanging in the downstairs coat closet. On the wall was a child's sketch of a choo-choo train drawn in red crayon. She had never washed it off. His Mickey Mouse slippers sat in

the corner of his bedroom. In the garage sat a 1941 Packard, a gift she had given to little George on his tenth birthday.

When Billie resigned from life, she became a social recluse. Her yard became a jungle. Her home became a source of ghost stories and old wives' tales. She overate. She withdrew. She didn't care.

Billie resigned.” 5

When we feel the pain of heartbreak and the blows of life, we can withdraw—we can give up—we can resign, but it will only destroy us. **We must remember that the things of this world—the things that we can see—are temporal and that includes pain and heartache. But don't forget the things that cannot be seen—hope, faith, love—these are eternal.**

Whatever *factors* may contribute to the pain that we encounter in life we know that ***God will see us through—all the way through eternity.***

#### Reference

- 1 --Robert C. Shannon, 1000 Windows, (Cincinnati, Ohio: Standard Publishing Company, 1997).
- 2 --James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988) p. 14.
- 3 (Lucado, 119-120)
- 4 --James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988) p. 17.
- 5 (Lucado, 13-14)

Lucado, Max (1985). *On the anvil*. Wheaton, ILL: Tyndale House.

Lucado, Max (1996). *In the grip of grace*. Dallas TX: Word Publishing.