**Changed Into His Image**

***Lesson Sixteen: Basics for Hurting Believers – 1 Pet. 3:13-17***

**Introduction**: Peter wrote to believers who were suffering. Their faith in Christ brought the trials of persecution. While we have not faced the same intensity of persecution as these early believers, we have all experienced hurt in one form or another. It may be that you have experienced pain related to your health. It may be that you have experienced pain in a relationship. Regardless of the source of pain and suffering, God’s Word provides the insight you need.

1. **God's Lasting Solution**
   1. Time doesn’t heal all wounds.
   2. Your heart can be stabilized by allowing God to change you through the renewing of your mind. (Rom. 12:2)
   3. Whenever we are hurt by something or someone, we have the tendency to draw away from God, His people, and His Word.

“An injured body is more susceptible to infection, so a hurting heart is more likely to experience temptations toward bitterness, anger and fear.” (Berg 334).

* 1. In the midst of suffering, it is essential to be clear-headed. (1 Pet. 1:13). We need God’s perspective regarding that which we are experiencing.
  2. As we embrace God's perspective about these issues, we experience spiritual growth. It is this spiritual growth that is God's lasting solution to our hurt. (1 Pet. 2:1-3; 2 Pet. 3:18).

1. **We Need Clear-Headed Thinking About Our Own Heart**
   1. When Peter taught hurting Christians how to respond biblically to their hurt, he said, “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.” (I Pet. 3:15)
      1. Sanctify means, “to set apart for something special”.
      2. Peter is saying, “When you are hurting, set apart Christ as Lord (the Ruler) in your heart.”
   2. Why would Peter need to remind us to give special consideration to God during our times of pain?
      1. We have the tendency to forget God; lean on our own understanding (Prov. 3:5); trust our own heart (Prov. 28:26). Our nature today still tends to leave God out of our thinking.
      2. We have the tendency to fight God. We are tempted to question God and wonder how a good God can allow bad things to happen to me.
   3. Our problem is that we don’t think as God thinks.
      1. We forget that suffering isn’t our greatest enemy: an evil heart is.
      2. Nothing will hinder growth more than a stubborn heart that refuses to recognize Christ as Lord.
2. **We Need Clear-Headed Thinking About Our Hope**
   1. Biblical hope is not a mere anticipation of relief from the problem, but is a confident expectation that God is accomplishing good through the trial.
   2. A working knowledge of the Bible is a primary source of hope for the Christian life. (Rom. 15:4)
   3. Anything that replaces God as the primary source of comfort in our lives becomes an idol. (Jer. 2:13)
   4. Solutions that leave God out may give temporary relief, but they can never fully satisfy.
   5. In the midst of suffering it is most helpful to return to the basic truths of the Bible.
      1. God’s love for you does not change. (Rom. 8:31-39)
      2. God’s purpose for you is Christlikeness. (Rom. 8:28-29)
      3. God’s Word to you is the final right answer. (2 Tim. 3:15-17)
      4. God’s grace is sufficient for you. (2 Cor. 12:9).
3. **We Need Clear-Headed Thinking About Our Responses**
   1. A godly response is necessary for a good conscience. (1 Pet. 3:16)
   2. A godly response is always necessary for us to grow as a result of the trial and for God to be able to use our testimony during our trial.
   3. The right response is especially critical when our suffering comes from someone who is intentionally trying to hurt us.
      1. Joseph was betrayed by his brothers but was not bitter.
      2. David had to dodge the spears of King Saul, but he did not pick up the spears and throw them back.
      3. Job suffered much, but "sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." (Job 1:22)
      4. Consider our Lord's example. (1 Pe. 2:20-24)
4. **We Need Clear-Headed Thinking While We Hurt**
   1. You must have a surrendered heart toward God.
   2. You must have a confident expectation that God is accomplishing something good through your trial.
   3. You must have a good conscience arising from good responses in the midst of our trial.
   4. Most people are trying to escape their problems, but God is looking for people who will go through each problem to grow in Christlikeness.