

## Tom Gilbert - Healing Human Trauma

*This transcript was generated automatically. Its accuracy may vary.*

The thoughts that I want to share with you today I have entitled Healing Human Trauma.

In recent years, there is a growing understanding that health care and other human service providers need to understand the psychological effects of the trauma people have experienced and to structure the delivery of services to them in a way that promotes healing, avoids re-traumatizing them, and helps restore to the person a sense of control and empowerment for the future. Today this is referred to as trauma informed care. This concept of care emphasizes that medical and other service providers need to provide treatment for the total impact of an injury or event that has had on the person. Physical wounds from an auto accident, an assault or being shot or stabbed, can be healed, but there are psychological impacts that can be more challenging to heal and take much longer. These impacts are very much akin to what we know as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD.

They can be life altering and lifelong leaving people mentally imprisoned by guilt and rational and irrational fears. When trauma occurs, it affects an individual's sense of self, their perspectives about others, and their beliefs about the world around them. Trauma can result in a fundamental reorganization of the way the brain manages perceptions of the world. The treatment plan for such a person has to be informed by the trauma they have experienced. A mother who has survived an auto accident that killed her two daughters can have her physical wounds treated and healed.

But the emotional trauma to her in this loss can be much more serious, especially if she believes she caused the accident or should have been able to avoid the accident.

Periodically, the media bring us stories of people who have been released from prison and even from death row after spending decades there wrongly accused and convicted of something they never did. Think about the psychological trauma and impact of having that much of your life and your relationships taken away from you when you didn't deserve it. It is surprising how many of these people testify that they are not bitter. But there is still an impact and it needs care as these individuals try to reintegrate into society. Consider the psychological trauma of those who have experienced physical assault and then be required to relive it through the telling of it again and again to investigators and courts. There are many children who have grown up witnessing or experiencing domestic violence.

What has this done to shape how they see themselves and others? How will this influence who they become? How can they view the world, human relationships, be made healthy again? How can they learn to feel safe in a home environment?

How can they be healed so that what they experience does not become a cycle of behavior that is repeated?

There have recently been burglaries of homes in our area during nighttime hours. A woman alone experienced this. She wasn't harmed in any way. She didn't even wake up. But she found what had occurred in the morning and now doesn't feel safe living there anymore.

But she has nowhere else to go. She can't sleep well and her anxiety levels are always very high. She told me about this as I drove her to her psychologist's therapy appointment.

## Tom Gilbert - Healing Human Trauma

Consider the many stories from history and the traumas associated with these events. The first parents, Adam and Eve, experienced the trauma of one of their sons, Cain, killing another son, Abel.

Israel had repeated periods of servitude to other nations. They were enslaved in Egypt. They were carried away to Babylon after a long siege of Jerusalem, and then dispersed throughout other nations after a siege by Titus and the Roman army, during which the inhabitants resorted to cannibalism. Imagine the traumas from these experiences. Jewish people have been hated and mistreated for centuries in the nations where they have been scattered, culminating perhaps in the Holocaust during World War II.

Imagine the psychological scars left by these events. We hear them because some of the survivors are still alive, and as an Aside, a new three part documentary by producer Ken Burns entitled The US and the Holocaust is premiering this month on PBS. Our local station is carrying it on. September 18, 1920 Enslavement of African and other peoples throughout history have left terrible scars on millions of lives of people who were treated like animals and never had the freedom to make their own choices in life.

The horrors of wars have left emotional scars on millions. One author estimated that there have been only 268 years of complete peace among humans in the past 3400 years of human history.

In the past few years, more and more information has come to light of the tragedy and trauma of North American Indian children who were taken from their families and sent to Indian schools in the US And Canada, and how badly they were treated and abused. COVID 19 has traumatized nearly all of us in uniquely different ways. One was the trauma of people dying alone, without family around them, who themselves were traumatized by not being able to touch and comfort their loved one, and many have been the stories of medical professionals who were traumatized by the long, long working hours with more death around them than they have ever experienced before. They saw their colleagues infected by the virus and die too.

They were in constant fear that they might bring the virus home to their own family. These traumas led not a few healthcare workers to quit and leave their chosen profession brethren. These are but a few stories that illustrate the traumas that have crushed the human spirit and led to unending suffering. Are you prepared to help heal their traumas, their pain in the Kingdom? Are you doing your best to connect with these stories and sometimes even the involved people, so that you can gain some understanding of the spiritual balm that will be needed to heal their mental and psychological wounds in the kingdom?

That balm comes in the form of unconditional love, compassion, and acceptance. Many people have had a hard time seeing any value in themselves because the society in which they lived told them that they were of little or no value. Are you ready to show your love and acceptance to those who are marginalized by the world around them?

Our Heavenly Father helps prepare us to be associated with our Lord Jesus in that work by allowing us to share in those same experiences as the world around us. The Apostle Paul explains in First Corinthians 10:13 a very familiar passage to us, and I'm going to read it from today's English version. Every test that you have experienced is the kind that normally comes to people. But God keeps His promise and he will not allow you to be tested beyond your power to remain firm at the time you are put to the test. He will give you the strength to endure it and so provide you a way out.

## Tom Gilbert - Healing Human Trauma

Paul explains that our experiences are the same as everyone else in the world. The purpose of this is to develop understanding and sympathy for those who have had similar experiences.

Consider a few modern day stories about brethren in our Fellowship. Brethren living in Germany and other places in Europe during World War II were arrested, sent to concentration camps and died there because of their support for the Jewish people and their opposition to participating in the military, the Jews wore a yellow star. Bible students wore a purple triangle.

In Eastern Europe after the war, when those countries were under Soviet control, some brethren were imprisoned for meeting and practicing their faith. Today we have brethren in Ukraine who are experiencing the ravages of war and displacement from their homes because of the war going on there.

And consider a couple of personal stories of our brethren. Consider the trauma of one of our American brethren who because of the color of his skin was deemed suspicious while looking around a small museum in a hotel where he was staying, the police were called and he was detained and interrogated by them before being released. The emotional trauma of this experience was very evident to those who have heard his testimony.

Another brother who joined our fellowship from one of the established Protestant denominations had to attend an individual counseling session with the church pastor in order to pull his membership out of that church. The pastor harshly belittled this person and told him he was being duped into becoming a Jehovah's Witness. By the time the pastor put the necessary form in front of the brother to sign, the brother was shaking terribly. He tried to sign the form, but it looked more like scribbling than his signature. From that experience, the brother developed a phobia signing his name in front of other people.

God allows us to experience these things so that we might understand what the human race has experienced during 6000 years of sin and death. But God also comforts us in these experiences so that we might have insight into how we might comfort others who are having similar experiences both now and in the future. The Apostle Paul explains this in 2nd Corinthians 1, verses 3 through 7 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer.

And our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers in our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.

Sometimes it may seem burdensome to think about the human tragedies that have left deep emotional and psychological scars on people. We might even be tempted to dismiss thinking about these things, knowing that it will all be fixed in the kingdom. But who is going to do the fixing in the kingdom? It is us, and that is why we have the experiences we do, and it is why we should not dismiss the stories of people who experience significant trauma, but rather learn from them, know and understand what people have experienced, and learn very deep sympathy and compassion for them.

## Tom Gilbert - Healing Human Trauma

It is not acceptable, for instance, to dismiss the many unnecessary deaths of unarmed minority persons by the authorities because a person may have been under the influence of drugs or had committed a minor infraction. One of these fatalities was the grandson of a brother in our fellowship who lived in Madison, Wisconsin, where I live.

These deadly incidents continue to create community wide trauma that is not being acknowledged and treated. When we see behavior by others that is harmful and unacceptable, rather than asking what is wrong with that person, we should instead ask ourselves what has happened to that person? What are they in need of? The Apostle James tells us to welcome our difficult trials and experiences. I'm reading James 1, verses 2 to 5 and 12 from the Phillips translation.

When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends. Realize that they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance is fully developed, and you will find you have become men of mature character with the right sort of independence, and if in the process, any of you does not know how to meet any particular problem, he has only to ask God, who gives generously to all men without making them feel foolish or guilty, and he may be quite sure that the necessary wisdom will be given him. The man who patiently endures the temptations and trials that come to him is the truly happy man.

For once his testing is complete, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to all who love him.

Brethren, let us do our best to welcome the experiences that God allows to come to us. Let us do our best to patiently endure these experiences. Let us recognize that we are sharing in the experiences of the world around us. May we deeply sympathize with their experiences and open our hearts to understand how trauma has affected them. May we seek opportunities to aid their healing now if possible, and earnestly look forward to providing the healing touch of the Master's hand in the kingdom of peace.

Amen.