

Heart and Home Harmony

Aiming for hearts, homes, and lives in harmony with:
God and His Church, and the rest of His creation through the Holy Spirit.

Vol. 2 Number 4

Winter 2003

✧ Learning How to Love... ✧

...the mentally ill.

To All Who Are Mentally Ill or Mentally Well

I would like to give brief testimonies of some experiences.

When I was 12, I accepted Christ into my heart, after reading about another girl's experience. I felt great peace and joy. I wanted to share the wonderful news with others but since no one around me ever talked about the Savior in such a personal way, I thought no one would understand what I was talking about. Not knowing how to, or that I must confess Him, I tried to live a Christian life alone. After repeatedly falling to temptation, I became discouraged and, going partly by signs, I became convinced I had sinned the unforgivable sin, because I knew better. After a lot of coaxing, my parents got me to admit what was bothering me and I was put in a mental hospital for a time. Nothing was resolved there. I was too ashamed to tell the staff, or anybody, about my struggles, be-

cause I was sure no one else had such temptations or fell because of such little things as their thoughts.

After several years of miserable existence, I met my future husband. Through him, I came to see that there is hope for me.

God was always faithful in helping me overcome temptations; nevertheless, I repeatedly struggled with getting angry with my children when they disobeyed. And so often, I was plagued with feelings of inferiority, worthlessness, and self-hatred – especially when I thought someone disapproved of me.

After many years of slowly growing and learning, one day my daughter gave me some literature about sexual abuse. At first, I scoffed at the idea that abuse causes angry and worthless feelings – because I *have such struggles too*. Then it dawned on

me – *but I was sexually abused.*

It had not occurred to me that it affected me. When I'd hear of someone being raped, or sexually abused by a parent, I'd think, *how terrible.* Years ago I had refused to tell my doctor about my abuse because I convinced myself that it was irrelevant.

With the help of **Beauty for Ashes**, Biblical Help for the Sexually Abused, by John Coblenz (Christian Light Publications.) and the understanding support of my loving husband, I began to clearly see the connection between what happened and my struggles since. I followed the steps for healing and bringing closure to the deeply buried, soundly denied, feelings of being dirty, damaged, different, and dumb that unknowingly had me bound for so long. I felt a deep joy after I faced my abusers and expressed forgiveness to them.

An incident in our family, over the course of a year or so, recently opened our eyes. Our adolescent son began to doubt his salvation, had crying spells, unreasonable fears and confusion. We tried to encourage him, give him more structure and a change of pace, and spend more time with him. It seemed to help for a while. Then the struggles and doubts only worsened. He thought he sinned the unforgiv-

able sin. He would overcome but be right back in the same rut. Over and over we'd tell him to just believe. He would try to have faith but still he felt bad. "Doubting is sin, but God will help you have faith. It only takes faith like a grain of mustard seed. You have that much. It will grow."

"Yes, I believe – but..." Around and around we went, his condition worsening until we knew we needed to get help. "O Lord, you how little confidence we have in psychiatrists and the drugs they prescribe. Those drugs mask the symptoms and may appear to help, but I fear they hinder a real cure. We know You have the answers. You promised in the Bible: **For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.** (2 Timothy 1:7) Please – give us wisdom," I prayed, and thought. Soon I had an idea.

I went to my son and asked him if he can remember anything that happened to him that made

Heart and Home Harmony

156 Newton Rd
Potsdam, N.Y. 13676

Editors: Luke and Rachel Martin
Parishville Christian Church

Heart and Home Harmony along with *The Boys Bugle* is published quarterly or as the Lord leads. Subscriptions free. Your input is welcome.

him feel sad, unloved, or afraid. He said when he was younger, one time while working together, he didn't know what he did wrong, but Daddy spanked him and threw him in the mud. I went to my husband and related what our son said. He did not remember it and said, "I wouldn't have done anything like that. It must have been an accident and misunderstanding."

I told him, "Yes, but you know when we get frustrated we sometimes exaggerate. The recipient of our anger takes us serious. Anyway, regardless of what actually happened, what he thought you did caused damage. Nothing of value would we throw in the mud." Daddy thoroughly apologized and assured him of his love. Since that he is doing fine.

We wanted to be perfect parents. We look back and realize how ignorant we were. Life can be so frustrating and at the time, our anger may seem justified. The reaction seemed so automatic — as if there was no other way to relate. We did not realize the damage our anger was doing. Let this be a warning to us and to all.

Thank God for His great mercy — which extends even to abusers.

The Truth Shall Set You Free

Secular, humanistic psychology that ignores God can cause much harm. But, psychology that acknowledges truth is a powerful tool for good. Guilt causes much anguish. In truth, we all must acknowledge our guilt before God and accept Christ's sacrifice as the remedy for our guilt. However, many people, including some Christians, are unknowingly suffering from shame caused by someone else's guilt.

Yes, mental illness is largely caused by sin; often someone else's sin planted the root that is causing trouble. Sexual, physical, verbal, and emotional abuses are destructive at any age, but children are especially vulnerable. They believe what they are told. The more sensitive their nature, the deeper and more lasting is the impression that abuse leaves on their soul.

When children cannot handle the pain and confusion caused by abuse, they may bury the memory in the back of their minds. Like a weed, the fears and feelings keep sprouting, bearing bitter fruit for years. They do not realize there is a root, and try to deal with what they see on the surface. They grow up, living behind a mask, afraid to have anyone see inside of them. Some act inferior; others act superior to

hide the buried shame they feel. They do not see themselves, so they often blame their negative reactions on the people around them.

Abuse can be so traumatic that a child will lose conscious memory of it, until such a time that he is ready to deal with it. Fears can be rooted in happenings in infancy that we have no conscious memory of. Maybe many different “little” incidents of abuse add up or a “small” forgotten incident has snowballed to cause a big problem. Finding the cause of bad feelings greatly helps us overcome them, but whatever our situation, Christ heals the brokenhearted.

The stress from abuse can affect the chemistry of the brain and the development of a child in various areas. To quote a researcher, Dr. Martin Teicher: “The differences in the brain (of people that were sexually abused as a child) can be as significant as between normal people and those with schizophrenia.”

In dealing with our past and present, we must take into account our own guilt. Regardless of what anyone else did to us, we are 100% responsible for what we do. Our guilt must be given to Christ. Wrongs done to us must be faced and forgiven if we are to be healed from the effects of it. All bitter roots must be extracted

and cast away. Healing depends on us (by God’s help), not on the repentance of the abuser. Unless we deal with our own guilt and forgive others, we are not in the Truth that sets us free. (John 8:32-36)

There may be other factors involved in a person’s mental breakdown. Some claim there can be a genetic weakness to it. A lack of B vitamins is known to affect our minds and moods. How many other needed nutrients have been refined from our food or are lacking because of depleted soils. Food additives can be toxic or allergenic. Only God knows what factors combine to affect our brain chemistry. I am sure the causes can be very varied and complex.

I am also sure there is a cure in finding truth. Christ is the Truth. We need to know Him first; also, find the truth about ourselves. **Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom. (Psalms 51:6)**

If we want to help another who is struggling, we also must deal in truth – with understanding and compassion, not with preachy, self-righteous, condemnation (knowingly or not) – especially if the truth is that we helped cause their problem.

Lord, help us see ourselves.

Healing

By Patrick McMahon

Psalm 42. “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?...

Have you ever felt an absence from God? Have you ever wondered why God lets you feel empty, hurt, angry, fearful, abandoned? Have you ever searched for God through tears of pain and distress? “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...” God created us with emotions. They are very real. We cannot ignore the fact that emotions make up a very important part of our beings. We experience emotion many times each day. The Bible tells of many instances where Jesus became emotional. For some reason emotions are often overlooked or frequently downplayed as unimportant or just plain wrong.

What happens when a person

experiences deep emotional trauma through offenses committed by others or even committed by themselves? Many people go through their lives with deep emotional wounds that fester and cause continual pain, and suffering because they have never healed after traumatic events. Such wounds often-times become an infection spreading to people that the wounded come into contact with, manifesting itself in all forms of damaging behavior. We must realize that emotions are much like our physical bodies. Our wounds must receive attention if we are to remain viable. What is emotional healing? How do we find it? Who can help?

Luke 4:18. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them, that are bruised...” Jesus

Examples of emotional events are difficult to find in the scriptures. Specific instructions concerning emotions are rarely given. Let us examine two accounts in the Old Testament where emotional trauma has occurred. In one account, healing was achieved. In the other, an emotional wound contin-

ued to bleed hard feelings indefinitely.

Let us first examine an emotional series of events where the end result appeared to be a healing of wounds. Read Genesis 37:12-35 and 43:15-45:7. The first part is the wounding of emotion. The second part is the end result. Take notice of chapter 43:30-31. Upon having to face his offenders and seeing a little brother that he knew was innocent, Joseph sought solitude to shed tears. He was likely recalling memories and events that caused pain to the point of tears. His wounds were yet causing pain. Joseph was testing the trustworthiness of his brothers to determine whether it would be wise to reveal his secret. Finally, in chapter 45, evidence of healing can be seen. He directly faced his offenders, emptied his emotions, and forgave them for their offenses.

It seems that for quite some time Joseph lived with the pain that was caused from this series of events in his life. He was thrown into a pit by people he should have been able to trust the most. Then he was forced to be separated from his family and anything familiar. He was subjected to temptations from Potiphar's wife. He was falsely accused and imprisoned. Such shocking experiences seem trivial when simply reading the account, but if we could place ourselves in a real life scenario like this we could understand the agony that Joseph must have been dealing

with inside. He eventually found healing and release.

Now let us examine the second case in 2 Samuel 13:1-20. Please read the account and understand what happened before reading on.

Essentially Tamar was raped by her brother. She pleaded with Amnon not to force himself upon her, but he succeeded in sexually, morally, and emotionally violating her, or worse yet, we could say he devastated her. Imagine the emotional wounds created here—emotions that have the potential to bleed for a lifetime. In verse 20, the Bible states that Tamar was forced to lock away her feelings by putting away communication of the matter. Someday such feelings surface in other relationships. The Bible also states that she “remained desolate.” A dictionary definition for desolate is this: abandoned, wretched, miserable, without hope. The account never tells us that there was an end to this. Such an event apparently left Tamar without hope indefinitely. She wasn't healed. Another life ended in despair.

Emotional trauma can be likened to our physical bodies. When our bodies are wounded, we bleed, we are in pain, and we need help to heal the wound. The goal of healing is a scar, a healed wound. We likely can't be the same, but the scar doesn't hurt even though the memory of the injury remains. Let me provide an example. When I

was twelve years old, I fell from a tree injuring my right arm with a compound elbow fracture. I spent two weeks in the hospital, two days in ICU, and received six months of physical therapy. This was the most painful thing in my life, and I don't believe it can ever be duplicated. Today, I have full use of that arm with only one drawback that does not affect its use. After two surgeries at the time, I was left with a large scar the length of my arm. I no longer feel the pain, but the scar remains a reminder of that event twenty-two years ago. So should be the goal with emotional wounds. An emotional scar is the memory of a traumatic event that is no longer painful. If recalling the memory causes pain, tears, or turmoil, then an open wound still exists- bleeding emotions and oozing the pus of internal infection. Such was the case of Tamar. Let me provide another personal example. Some years ago, my Dad was killed in an horrific car accident. Aside from the pain associated with the loss of a loved one, I have had to deal with a sense of loss or disappointment, or maybe an opportunity lost because of one thing: I remember telling my mother that I never even got to say "good-bye". To this day, when I talk of Dad's death and mention this fact, it sometimes brings tears to my eyes. It still causes pain. How is the wound healed? How can normal function be restored?

It seems that the best medicine for the emotions is communication of all sorts. The more I talk about the event previously described, the less tears come about. I think that communication of my feelings to others has helped the healing process. Here are some observations and ideas that might prove helpful to someone bleeding internally with emotional pain.

John 8:32. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"-Jesus

First, realize your wounded state. Do not "stuff" emotions away. Don't deny the fact that you have been hurt. Do not suppress memories. In order to ever heal, one must first be able to admit that something is wrong. This is all important. If we can't face ourselves and what ails us we will never be able to have restored emotional health.

Second, define the goal. Our goal is that emotional scar which indicates the healed wound; the memory of an event where there is no more pain. Pain is never really good. Pain is almost always an indication that something is wrong. With emotions, I believe it is safe to say that everyone desires to be healed internally.

Third, realize that deep inner feelings need to be brought to the surface. Suppressing feelings and memories is an unhealthy, damaging, and potentially catastrophic practice. Don't be afraid to open the closets of past emotions.

Fourth, don't allow suppressed emotions to become a ticking time bomb waiting to explode on the most unlikely person someday, possibly even yourself. Years of hidden emotions cannot be contained indefinitely. They will surface sometime, maybe at once, or maybe a little at a time. Share your feelings honestly. Our deepest feelings have a way of slipping past our guarded personalities. Whether or not we realize it, emotions kept behind closed doors find other ways to escape, manifesting themselves in some other aspect of our lives, usually in our relationships with others, and especially with those who are close to us. We can be short-tempered, withdrawn, afraid of others, contentious, or overbearing as examples of how our deep feelings are unknowingly injected into our relationships.

John. 14:6. "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." -Jesus

Fifth, find someone trustworthy to share your feelings with. Believe me, it is much easier said than done, but it is key to your ability to communicate effectively. Many people have been hurt and rendered ineffective emotionally through some breach of trust in their past experiences. So learning to trust seems almost impossible to some. Many understand that when we trust in others we are often disappointed, used, hurt, and rejected. Quite often, the information we shared with another became a

weapon to hurt us. After enough of these negative experiences it seems only one answer remains: no one can be trusted. True friends, those who can be trusted without a doubt, are few and far between in this life. If we desire to be a friend, then let's be a friend of truth.

Step six begins communication. Covered feeling may be ejected through numerous forms of communication. Writing, talking, and remembering are effective ways to communicate. Many people have written books about their experiences, only to realize that it became an exercise in healing for them. One preacher advised writing down events or people and the feelings associated with each one on small pieces of paper. He gave instruction to pile these papers and burn them to visualize the purging of destructive feelings. Communication of some sort is absolutely essential for the healing process. Without communication, we continually face the danger of hiding our lives behind closed doors in fear of the world.

The seventh step is to pour out feelings as needed. The hidden closets of emotion must be opened and the "stuff" pressing against the doors must be allowed to fall to the floor. I remember a friendship from childhood which is still viable in the present where a friend and myself were able to tell each other anything and know that it was held in confidence, not always

to solve each other's problems, but maybe unknowingly to manage by pouring out our feelings to someone we each trusted. As with physical injuries much treatment and much time is sometimes needed to completely heal a wound. One excellent example is the book: "Weeping May Endure For A Night" by Phillip Cohen, Harbor Lights Publishing, Summersville, MO. Brother Cohen empties the closets of his life to the reader. If the book is read honestly, it is likely that each one of us will see our self somewhere within its pages. The traumatic life of one person, revealed, is a wonderful testimony and a tool used by God for the healing of His people.

Matthew 6:14. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." - Jesus

The final step is to seek to forgive or to be forgiven if we have wronged another. We must communicate with the offender or the offended as difficult as it may be. This step is very important although one must be well on the road to recovery before venturing into this potentially damaging area. Search out the offender. Express how you have been hurt. Be forgiving. Sometimes we may need to forgive ourselves, and this is acceptable.

The hopeful end result is an emotional scar. This means the recollection of an event or events where pain is no longer experi-

enced. The memory is acceptable because our Great God uses this to help others. When we can become the helper rather than the "helpee" we are healed. Let our goal be to serve God without reserve, come what may. Praise be to God!

Psalm 25:1-5. "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me. Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day."

This topic is much too involved to provide a complete understanding in just a few short pages. Enough can be said about these emotional issues to cover an entire book. This is just scratching the surface. Emotions were not given to us to be disregarded or omitted from our lives. If we fail to acknowledge our wounds, we possibly face a lifetime of handicapped relationships. We must not let emotions become a controlling factor or the center of our life. Look to Jesus. He wants to be the center of our live. Remember, He came to "heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." May God bless you! □

Most of the time we hardly see mice in the house, but the other day we had

By Joy and Rachel Martin

A Mouse War!



Busy with our daily work,
We were in our house.
Running from the cupboard door,
Mother saw a mouse.

“Oh! A mouse!” Mom did exclaim.
It ran across the floor.
Larisa quickly stomped on it.
Thus began our war.

Jonny gathered up his traps,
To finish off this war.
Mice were seen in other rooms;
We knew that there were more.



He set the traps beneath the sink,
With peanut butter bait.
About our work we calmly went,
We had not long to wait.

For very soon, we heard a snap.
The mouse the cats did eat.
Once again, we heard a snap.
All these mice we'll beat.



As the trap went snap again,
Jonny grabbed a light.
“There are THREE!” he yelled surprised.
We ran to see the sight.

Three small mice caught in one trap!
Oh, what a crazy thing!
In a perfect row lined up.
A camera we must bring.



Jonny scarce could eat his lunch.
He scurried busily.
One more mouse, then two he caught.
How many can there be?

In the cupboard was a hole.
We could see them there.
Two mice came out and licked the bait.
Snap! We caught the pair!



Our heads together as we watched,
With flashlight shining in.
As two more quickly lost their lives.
This war, oh, we shall win!



Fifteen mice had lost their lives
As one hour passed by.
And still more mice peeped from their hole.
More mice will need to die.

By the time we went to bed,
Thirty-seven was the count.
One trap conquered thirty-one.
Can you beat that amount?

Twice had three at once been caught,
And eight times, there were two!
Next morning we had caught four more.
We hope our war is through.



You may think this is a fib.
I tell you it is true.
And I'll tell you when it was.
December 2, '02.



Let's make a likeness from this tale.
Sin we cannot hide
In secret chambers of our heart
For it has multiplied.

It robs our beauty and our peace.
And dirties up our soul.
It eats our dreams and leaves a mess
And shreds each hope and goal.



So, be alert, the corners search
For sin that has crept in.
The One to clean our heart is Christ,
The Victor over sin. □



Our family at Daniel and Mendy's wedding.



Three generations of Martins