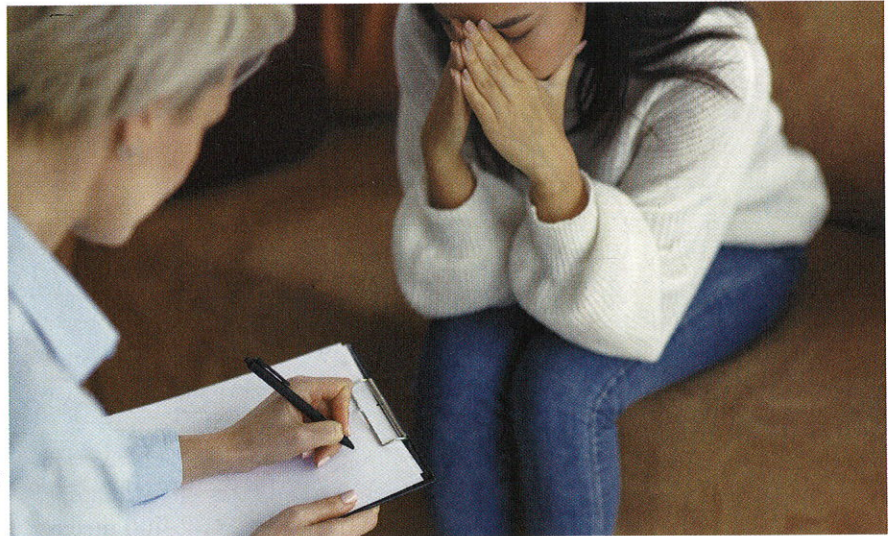


Listening to God's Voice to Silence Trauma

The burden of Habakkuk... "How long, O Lord, will I call for help, And you will not hear? I cry out to You, 'Violence!' Yet You do not save. Why do you make me see iniquity... destruction and violence are before me... justice is never upheld" (1:2-4, NASB 1995). Does this resonate with you? It is the cry of nearly 90,000 Boy Scouts abused and discarded to preserve an organization "for training boys." It is the cry of those crushed by sexual abuse, rape, and domestic violence. It is the cry of millions crushed by racism. Precious humans handknit by God in their mother's wombs and given dignity and purpose cry out "violence." Beings created in the image of our God and for whom His blood was shed say, "Justice is never upheld."

In Habakkuk's day, in order to deal with His people, God had to respond from the outside. His people, who were called by His name, did not respond with justice, care, and safety. When God's people fail to respond to the cries of the traumatized but also create and cover-up trauma, He will use other means to ensure little ones are protected, truth is exposed, and refuge is provided. It is a grievous failure of those who claim to be the people of God when they not only fail to be a sanctuary but also create the need for one.

Some years ago, I stated that "trauma is the mission field of the 21st century." I still believe that is true. However, now I also know that the voices of the traumatized are prophetic—the voice of our weeping God calling us to Christlikeness. The vulnerable, the oppressed, and the battered and abused are the call of God. However, we ignore it at our peril and seem to have lost our way.



We emphasize Christian ministry, numbers, gifting, and fame, easily confusing externals as a measure of success with God. We forget that holiness and integrity are the paths to God's work.

Nurturing a life with Christ from the inside is one that develops into manifestation and actions *from within*. Often our love and obedience to Jesus Christ are sacrificed to the work. The system of the Church has become a substitute for God Himself. And for the sake of that system, we ignore, silence, and discard the trampled and traumatized. Do we not hear the anguished and indignant voice of our God saying, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground" (Genesis 4:10, NASB 1995). When Abel could no longer cry out, our God cried out for him. We are not only silencing victims of trauma and abuse when we ignore their suffering; we are also silencing our God.

Trauma silences. The Word made flesh returns voice and calls that speak truth. Exploitation and oppression destroy relationships; however, the

God who came and lived among us restores them with dignity. Trauma crushes power in victims and feeds the powerful. Spiritually, the effects of abuse are profound. The resulting distorted image of God, coupled with a distorted image of self, creates many barriers to experiencing His love and grace. The blood of our brothers and sisters is crying out to God. We desecrate the name of our Lord and bring great damage to His well-loved creatures when we fail to bend down, listen, tend to, carry, and honor God's image-bearers.

One of the characteristics of caring for the traumatized is the repetitious nature of the work. A Bible verse does not remedy the effects of violence in someone's life. I am not sure where we got the idea that quoting a verse should make a person's struggle go away. Human beings are slow to change, partly because evil and its impact are more terrible and profound than we understand. Are the Scriptures important to healing? Absolutely. However, it takes time before Scripture's truths can work their way down into a mind that has

been devastated by the evil of abuse. *And those Scriptures first need to be incarnated by you and me. Those words need to be made flesh.* Jesus demonstrated in the flesh what a human being is to be like who bears God's image. He pursued the vulnerable, protected the little ones, and poured out compassion on the least of these. Any dismissal of abuse, any baptizing of evil, any cover-up or denial is *nothing like Him*. Any discarding of the least of these or trampling of the vulnerable is an assault on God Himself—no matter the spiritual words used as an excuse.

You see, this Jesus had a passion for redeeming. For those who have been abused and are suffering from its debilitating aftereffects, listen hard. There is hope for you—hope for healing and transformation. I know; I come to you from the frontlines and

have seen it happen countless times. It takes courage, hard work, and there is no quick fix. Such redemption was Jesus' master passion. This God came to seek and redeem what has been lost. What have you lost? Your voice? The truth, drowned out by lies? Your life and its vibrancy, its strength, its giftedness? Your hope? Not the hope that everything here will be fine... it clearly is not. It is the hope within that waits because God has said He is making all things new... and that includes you, every last one of you.

Devastation is, bit by bit, redeemable. I know. I have had a front-row seat to God's redemptive power for 47 years—and for the record, one of the people He has done redemptive work in is me. My work with victims has revealed to me who God is. Through my school and my teachers, I have come to see our God more clearly. So

evil can be transformed in the life in which it occurred. That work is also redemptive in the one who walks alongside. *Evil is then twice crushed.* May the Church of Jesus Christ repent of her pursuit of human externals and bend down, listen, and walk alongside trauma, abuse, racism, hatred, and a blind eye as did her Lord. In doing so, we will bring joy to the heart of the Father. ✠



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