

DAY 1 - (week beginning Mon 23 Jul 2018)**Read - John 17:10-19**

"My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one." v 15

As we continue to look at 'The Way of Jesus', we come this week to difficult subject that will need us to go about it carefully – 'Wounds and Healing'.

In order for us to gain a deeper understanding of what God has to say about this, we will need to put in place some Biblical principles. We start with the need to fundamentally understand that life is tough.

Right from the beginning, in the Garden of Eden, we see tough decisions having to be made and then having to live with the consequences. We can go throughout the Bible and look at almost anyone and we will see that life has never been easy.

Part of this is because of the evil that has come into the world, but part of it is simply because life is simply tough. Even Jesus found that His time here on earth was not the proverbial 'walk in the park'. He faced resistance in so many areas, struggled with people who simply did not get what He was saying and in the end was killed for trying to make a difference.

Nowhere in the Bible is the impression created that life is easy. So, the first thing we need to get into our heads is that life is and will never be easy.

So the real challenge is not to find out how to make life easy, but rather how to deal with the difficulties that we will face.

Prayer: Father, help me see things Your way.

DAY 2**Read - John 8:34-38**

"Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin." v 34

As a result of the toughness of life, we are all wounded in some or other way – even many ways.

People get wounded by disease, frailty and physical pain; some are wounded by what others have done or said to us; some are wounded by poverty; others by separation or neglect; some by abuse; some by their own sinfulness that they are struggling with; and others by loneliness, the loss of loved ones or feeling unloved ...

The sinfulness of this world, both our own and of those around us, leaves every one of us wounded by life. We may think that some folk have it easy, but in reality, unless we have walked in their shoes, we cannot tell what their wounds are. For some the wounds are very visible, but others keep their wounds to themselves, preferring to deal with it on their own.

But since we are all sinners, we are all wounded by life here on earth. In verse 36 of our passage Jesus says: "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

There is no way to find relief from our wounds and hurts other than in Christ. He is the only one who can set us free from our bondage to these things, but even that does mean all our wounds will magically disappear.

We need though to realise that all of us have wounds that hurt us.

Prayer: Father help me in my woundedness.

DAY 3**Read - Matthew 6:12-14**

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who have sinned against us. v12

Many of the hurts and wounds we carry have been caused by what other people have said or done, and sometimes failed to do to us - hurtful words that have been said, neglect, emotional, physical and psychological abuse, betrayal. This pain can go very deep and it difficult to be free of it. So how can we find healing for these things.

Jesus spoke often about forgiving others. It was absolutely central to his teaching. Forgiveness alone can bring healing, whether it be to the human soul, or in our relationships with God and with others. Only forgiveness can heal the deep wounds and hurt that we carry in our hearts and souls. To forgive is to be able to let these things go and find release from the power that they have over us. But forgiveness is never easy or cheap. It is only God and the power of his Holy Spirit that can do this work in your soul.

The first step to find healing is to pray about these things. Bring them to God. Prayerfully make a list of the people and things that have hurt you. Then in prayer go back and visit each one of these things and ask God to heal that hurt and help you to forgive. This may take time. Talking about these things to a Christian friend, a minister, pastor or priest can be a big help. Just as "Christian", in the book "Pilgrim's Progress" saw his sin fall off his back and roll down to the foot of the cross, so see this burden you have been carrying fall away and leave it the feet of Jesus.

Make a list of the people and things that have caused pain or left wounds in your life and bring them to God in prayer

DAY 4

Read - Matthew 11:27-30

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." v 28-29

As Christians we are not exempted or removed from the toughness of life. In fact Jesus invited us to 'find rest' and peace by taking on His yoke.

C S Lewis explains this in his book *Mere Christianity: The terrible thing, the almost impossible thing, is to hand over your whole self – all your wishes and precautions – to Christ. But it is far easier than what we are all trying to do instead. For what we are trying to do is to remain what we call 'ourselves,' to keep personal happiness as our great aim in life, and yet at the same time be 'good'.*

We are all trying to let our mind and heart go their own way - centered on money or pleasure or ambition - and hoping, in spite of this, to behave honestly and chastely and humbly. And that is exactly what Christ warned us you could not do. As He said, a thistle cannot produce figs. If I am a field that contains nothing but grass-seed, I cannot produce wheat. Cutting the grass may keep it short: but I shall still produce grass and no wheat. If I want to produce wheat, the change must go deeper than the surface. I must be ploughed up and re-sown.

We can find healing and rest in this life, but to get there we need to first 'take on Jesus' yoke'. That means submitting ourselves fully to him – and that is not easy either!

Prayer: Lord please help me to submit totally to You.

DAY 5

Read - Isaiah 53:1-7

"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed." v 5

Isaiah presented this wonderful vision of Jesus – of a servant Messiah who would be rejected and would suffer much, in order that we may be healed. As we have seen, that is exactly what Jesus offers us.

But it is not as easy an offer as some would like us to believe. Jesus said we needed to take on His yoke in order to be free. As C S Lewis made clear, this involves submission and change in our lives, because we can't escape from the wounds that this life inflicts on us unless we walk the Way of Jesus.

If we want to carry on living the same way that got us wounded in the first place, doing our own thing, then we should not expect a different result. That is what Adam and Eve found in the Garden, their way led to separation and death (wounds) and every human being has faced the same issue ever since.

C S Lewis likens life to learning maths. If we don't take the effort to learn it properly early on we spend the whole year confused and stressing. However, if we make the effort up front to get it, then the year (and life) is much easier and restful.

Jesus offers us rest and healing – if we take up His Yoke. The sooner, the better.

Prayer: Father please help me understand Your Way and give me strength to walk in it.

DAY 6

Read - Rev 2:1-7

"To the one who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life." v 7

The final thing we need to say about wounds and healing is that our wounds put us in a position to be able to bring healing to others. This is not by saying that we have the same issue or problem, but rather by actually understanding their need and helping meet it.

For example, it is those who have really experienced loneliness, and found healing in God's community, who are the ones who tend to look for and reach out to those who are lonely in our midst.

Those who think they are without sin (deluded though they may be) are not in a position to minister to those who are struggling with their own sin.

We all need to focus less on our own wounds and look rather for the wounded in our midst and in this way we will all find freedom and healing. While we are consumed by our own woundedness we find it difficult to see the wounds of others.

Jesus calls us all to bind up the wounds of those around us. In some cases He will bring a miraculous result as He sees fit, but in many cases the healing will come through walking in the Way of Jesus with perseverance and through the love and ministry of fellow strugglers (i.e. us).

Real healing comes in seeking the Way of Jesus, and that always calls us to look outside ourselves – to Jesus and others who are hurting.

Prayer: Father, show me the Way of Jesus.