

## Interacting with Trauma, Part 3

The Psalmist of Psalm 105 makes some insightful observations about Joseph's life and the trauma he endured. This Psalm is also a beacon of hope for every man who loves God and has gone through some very painful times in his life.

*He sent a man ahead of them. He sent Joseph, who was sold as a slave.  
They hurt his feet with shackles, and cut into his neck with an iron collar.  
The LORD'S promise tested him through fiery trials until his prediction came true.  
The king sent someone to release him. The ruler of nations set him free.  
He made Joseph the master of his palace and the ruler of all his possessions.  
Joseph trained the king's officers the way he wanted  
and taught his respected leaders wisdom.*

*Psalm 105:17-22 (GW)*

The troubling but hopeful insight this Psalm gives us with respect to the traumas we have experienced in life is ...

**God will make sure that the more you are pressured the more you will grow.**

That truth is troubling in the fact we can't escape pressure in life; the good news, the great news, is that the pressure and pain in our lives is never wasted in the hands of God. The Israelites cried out to God when Pharaoh took away the straw for them to make bricks. God didn't answer their prayers to have the pressure stop. He allowed the pressure because he wanted them to discover their victory wasn't found in the straw.

We can find ourselves crying out to God for more straw, "Lord, I just want some more straw, more money, or a better job, or whatever! Lord, just make this pain go away."

When we respond to the pressures of life in a similar fashion it's always an indication that our vision is too small. The simple reason: **We are just praying to become a better slave. All the while, God is trying to take us to a whole new place**, a place where the straw will not matter, whatever our straw may be.

The straw was a matter of life or death in the Israelites' minds. From their perception it was critical because of the trauma Pharaoh had brought into their lives. The challenge for them was to face their fears and pain from the past and not be controlled by it. This is our test as we walk through the PTSD. The challenge is believing that God has something far better for us than the situation we have been struggling with for so many years. For most men their PTSD scores are a bit of a surprise to them. They have lived with the pain within for so long they no longer consciously recognize it. At a subconscious level the pain has never really subsided, instead they have just learned to medicate it through their sexual addiction.

The devil is kind of dumb at times. If he had any sense he wouldn't put pressure on me like he does. He keeps trying to put some "iron collar" around my neck like he did to Joseph, as described in Psalm 105:18. *But I have read the entire Psalm! I know it is just God testing His word in me, preparing me for the future authority He has set aside for me.* That is why I can get a little wild at times in worship when I am going through a pressure situation. I am anticipating what God is going to do.

Because I have come to a place in my life where I hear from God, I realize I need revelation. I need a breakthrough. I choose not to be controlled by the fears and pain of my past. I choose not to allow the present pressures in my life to be a repetition of the traumas of my past. I will not let the pain of my past control me at the conscious or subconscious level. I serve a Lord who went through a time of intense pressing, the Garden of Gethsemane. (The name means a place of crushing.) I am convinced that Jesus declared to hell on Easter morning after his experience in the Garden:

**“You can press me down on Friday;  
You can press me down on Saturday;  
But come Sunday morning I am coming up and right through you!”**

When God gets ready to bring you out of something, there is no devil in hell, no wound or injustice of the past, that can keep you down! God could have delivered Israel from Egypt without their cooperation. He could have miraculously pulled them out of Goshen and planted them in the Promise Land. But that is never God’s way. Like he did with Joseph, **the Lord’s promise will test us**. God uses problems in our lives to develop greatness in us for the next level. For example, Israel had gone into Egypt as a family but God’s plan was to bring them out as a great nation. Thus he allowed the pressures of the plagues and Pharaoh’s opposition to develop them.

The PTISI evaluation can bring to the surface some painful struggles you may have pushed down for years. It is not a comfortable process looking at your specific scores. But much like Joseph we truly begin to reign in the place uniquely set aside for us as we face our pain. We need to place the pain within the context of God’s sovereign touch on our lives.

The book of Genesis devotes nearly ten chapters to this process in Joseph’s life (Genesis 40-50). He wrestles with the ongoing injustice of his situation without letting it control him. Then he is suddenly catapulted into a position of incredible prominence; it appears as if God’s promise to him has finally come true. But it is not fulfilled until Joseph faces the deep wounds of his past with his family. Repeatedly Joseph is emotionally troubled to the point of tears in the process. A man of unlimited power and prestige brought back to his childhood wounds. Once Joseph’s brothers realize the second in command in the most powerful nation in the world is the little brother whom they attempted to kill, they are terrified. Joseph allows the hand of God to wipe his PTISI scores clean when he declares.

*Joseph replied, “Don’t be afraid. Do I act for God? Don’t you see, you planned evil against me but God used those same plans for my good, as you see all around you right now – life for many people. Easy now, you have nothing to fear; I’ll take care of you and your children.” He reassured them, speaking with them heart-to-heart.*

*Genesis 50:19-21 (MsgB)*

These words of Joseph are golden and are the doorway to your freedom from the wounds of your past. There are four parameters of emotional freedom from our past that we must grasp.

### **#1 Your trouble will stop when it has accomplished God’s purpose in your life.**

Israel walked into Egypt as an extended family of 70. Over the years of enslavement they hadn’t even noticed that they had grown to millions. They had gradually turned into a nation. The trouble your PTISI scores represent are difficulties that have been Father-filtered in your life. The devil has never pulled something over on God in your life or mine. Everything that has happened in your life can be used by the hand of God if you let it. Only a sovereign God can pull that off, a truth Joseph understood deeply.

Take some time to pray and ask God what purpose He is trying to accomplish in your life at the moment. Write down any reflections you have.

## **#2 Don't deny your wounds and points of betrayal.**

Joseph was crystal clear, "You planned evil against me." He didn't excuse the behavior of his brothers or tell himself to just "suck it up and go on." He grieved his loss and acknowledged what had been taken from him. Going through the evaluation you may have to stop at some point and grieve.

What is a wound from your past (that has been coming to mind as you do these lessons)?

How did you feel emotionally when it happened?

What did you lose as a result of the wound? What lies did it teach you?

How do you feel emotionally now about the wound, results, and lies?

Take some time to pray and listen for God's perspective on the wound, results, and lies. Write down any reflections below.

### #3 Acknowledge the Trump Card of God's grace.

You can grieve and let go of the past when you realize, as Joseph did, that it was all part of God's promotional plan for you. Please notice his perspective of success. It wasn't about position or power; it was about a unique ability to help others. At the bare minimum, out of your pain you have learned to empathize with other men in your group. You understand how it feels to grow up packing a huge wound. You "get it" as to why others act out in self-destructive ways. You don't see them as some sort of pervert but as precious men of God who have been trapped into medicating pain within.

Where do you see God's grace at work in the wounding you experienced?

### #4 Learn to live "heart-to-heart."

I love that phrase in Genesis 50:21, "He assured them, speaking with them heart-to-heart." He didn't speak "to them" but "with them." Every man I have ever led through the process of facing his wounds revealed by the PTSI has become a "heart-to-heart" man. That is a critical turning point in breaking the addictive cycle because as I have said many times, **"Sexual addiction is an intimacy and attachment disorder."**

In what relationship in your life is God asking you to live more heart-to-heart (authenticity and communicating on an emotional level)?

What is a practical step you can take to connect more heart-to-heart?

Who will you have hold you accountable to take this step?

## Reflection & Journaling

- Read *Pure Desire* Chapter 15
- Meditate on Isaiah 61 (below) and Psalm 107 (next page) and write your reflections in the space provided.

*The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.*

*They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations. Strangers will shepherd your flocks; foreigners will work your fields and vineyards. And you will be called priests of the Lord, you will be named ministers of our God. You will feed on the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast.*

*Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours.*

*Isaiah 61:1-7 (NIV)*

*Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle. They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away.*

*Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle.*

*Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.*

*Some sat in darkness, in utter darkness, prisoners suffering in iron chains, because they rebelled against God's commands and despised the plans of the Most High. So he subjected them to bitter labor; they stumbled, and there was no one to help.*

*Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness, the utter darkness, and broke away their chains.*

*Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind, for he breaks down gates of bronze and cuts through bars of iron.*

*Psalm 107:4-16 (NIV)*