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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK-

Each lesson provides the trainer with the activities and concepts to cover as well as questions to facilitate discussion within the group. To view and download the entire package of Renew Health Promotion booklets and training materials, go to: renewoutreach.org/health

INTRODUCTION

"A man's spirit will endure sickness; but a broken spirit who can bear?"

Proverbs 18:14

OVERVIEW

God knows that if our spirit is broken, it can be unbearable. He has made provision in Jesus Christ for our total restoration, including the healing of our broken spirits and emotional wounds. But how does one access God's heart healing? How can we help one another access this emotional healing?

This booklet introduces us to the topic of emotional healing from a Biblical perspective. This booklet is essentially a Bible study. It is not intended to be a substitute for therapy or professional counseling.

GOAL

The goal of this booklet is to develop further appreciation that Jesus came to restore health in every area of our lives. We will develop understanding and skills on how to access God's help for emotional pain and how to help one another.

METHODS

This booklet uses learning activities and Biblical discussions of heart wounds, grief, trauma, and forgiveness. It may be helpful to repeat the stories twice; first, read them through and then act them out. This will ensure that everyone is familiar with the story so that they can discuss it better.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The lessons in this booklet should be co-facilitated, preferably by trained facilitators. Facilitators should follow through as needed by comforting and addressing emotionally painful issues that may have arisen during the lessons.

Resources for further emotional support and/or professional help should be available and set up beforehand in the event they are needed.

Further training to address emotional healing is available through the curriculum of the Trauma Healing Institute. This international organization offers healing groups and facilitator training in many countries and languages. For more information, visit *traumahealinginstitute.org*.

HEART WOUNDS

GOAL

Understand emotional wounds and learn what the Bible says about them.

DISCUSSION

ASK: What kind of physical injuries do you experience in your community? *(machete cuts, snake bites, etc.)*

We have all been injured physically. We have also had injuries to our hearts by bad things that have happened to us. Our hearts have been wounded by crisis, loss, unkindness, and even trauma. Our emotions and our thoughts can be wounded and hurt. Emotional injuries are called *heart wounds*.

ASK: In Western culture, we use the phrase "have a broken heart" to describe someone who is very sad. Do you have any phrases to describe heart wounds in your culture and language?

ACTIVITY: COMPARISON CHART -

How do physical wounds and heart wounds compare? Make a comparative chart like the one below and fill it in together.

PHYSICAL WOUNDS	HEART WOUNDS
Painful	Is a heart wound painful? How?
Visible	Is a heart wound visible? How?
If the wound is ignored, it can get worse	What happens if a heart wound is ignored and not talked about?
If the surface heals but there is inner infection, the wound can get worse instead of healing.	If a person looks happy on the outside, but is hurt in the heart does healing happen?
If not treated, it attracts flies and smells bad.	If a heart wound is not carefully taken care of, what can happen? (Bitterness and anger can grow)

Continued on the next page

Scar or disability can occur	Can heart wounds leave scars? Heart wounds can heal, but when they are deep, they remain with us, even if they are not physically visible.
God heals our wounds and people can help	How does God heal our hearts? Can other people help us?
Brainstorm other characteristics about physical wounds.	How do these compare to emotional wounds?

- BIBLE STUDY -

What does your culture say about expressing feelings? What does the Bible tell us about expressing our feelings? Read each passage twice. Use the question to spark discussion, or break into groups and have each group pick a passage to read.

John 11:33-36

What was Jesus's response to seeing the emotional pain of his friend Mary?

Matthew 26:69-75

What was Peter's response when he realized he betrayed Jesus?

Psalm 55:4-6

How did David express his feelings?

Ionah 4:1-3

How did Jonah express his feelings?

Discuss these four passages and the question in small groups; share with the whole group what you discussed.

CONCLUSION

God invites us to honestly express what we are experiencing with him. Read Isaiah 53:4-5 together. This passage in Isaiah talks about Jesus taking on both our sickness and our grief, our physical pain and the emotional effects of sin. He came to bring healing to our bodies (sickness, pain) and to our hearts (griefs, sorrows). Jesus came to make us whole in every way.

It can also be healing to share our feelings with people we can trust and pray with them. We pray that we will all experience the full healing Jesus provides for us, including healing for wounds of the heart. When we share with trusted people, we can pray together. This can help heal our heart wounds. Pray that we all would experience the full healing that Jesus offers us in every way, including in our hearts.

THE GRIEF JOURNEY

GOAL

Understand grief and demonstrate the grief journey.

DISCUSSION

ASK: What are some of the losses we experience in our community? (*Family, friends, function, position, reputation, identity, property, dreams...*)

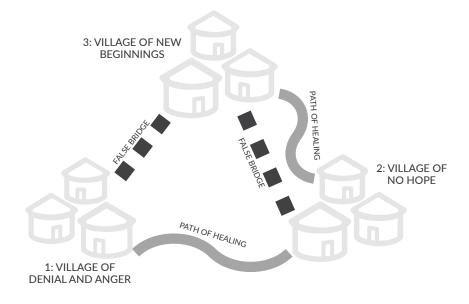
ASK: What is grief?

Grief is the sorrow from losses. The process of grieving takes time and energy. Progress to healing at times is very slow is not a straight line. There can be obstacles, and sometimes you have to go back and start again. There is no "shortcut." Grief is like a journey through different villages on the way to find healing and hope in the face of loss.

-ACTIVITY: GRIEF JOURNEY -

This is a brief adaptation of the Trauma Healing Institute's lesson on grief. This is a narrated story, acted out by the group, and done with the help of two facilitators. This can take about 1 to 2 hours.

THE GRIEF JOURNEY



ACTIVITY SETUP

First, select someone to act as the main character, Borum. Then choose a few people to act as Borum's brother, a pastor, and a neighbor. Then place a few people into three groups, which will represent three villages. Each group should act according to the characteristics of their village.

VILLAGE 1: DENIAL AND ANGER

The people in the Village of Denial and Anger are emotionally numb, unaware of what is going on, angry, bursting into tears, asking "Why?", or looking for someone to blame, thinking about revenge.

During the activity, the narrator can interview them and ask them how they are. They might say: "I am sad," "I don't feel any feelings," "Why has this happened?", "It's your fault!" or "I want revenge!"

VILLAGE 2: NO HOPE

The people in the Village of No Hope are sad, feeling hopeless, longing for the dead person to come back, lonely, suicidal, feeling guilty even without reason, seeking relief in drugs or alcohol, other.

During the activity, the narrator can interview them and ask them how they are. They might say, "I am sad," "I feel hopeless," "All I want is for this to be undone," "I feel quilty being alive," or "I want a drink."

VILLAGE 3: NEW BEGINNINGS

The people in the Village of New Beginnings are taking an interest in life, taking up old hobbies or sports, looking for a new job or returning to work, seeking to learn something new, starting new friendships or relationships. They feel sadness and loss but it is less painful and they are thinking about the future.

During the activity, the narrator can interview them and ask them how they are. They might say, "I hope I can get back to playing football again," "I am looking for a new job," or "I met a new friend today."

ACTIVITY NOTE

Although the participants are representing a specific part of Borum's journey they are also moving along in a unique journey going from village to village. Every grieving person takes their own path on this journey through grief. The grief journey starts and stops, circles back, and takes time. Some may need professional help if they get stuck or are in danger of harming themselves or someone else during the process.

THE STORY OF BORUM'S GRIEF

NARRATOR: Borum lost his wife, Sisoo, in a terrible fire that raged through his village. They had just had a fight and Borum had gone out for a walk. When he returned, their house was destroyed along with all their possessions. There was nothing left, not even her body. Only the dog remained staring mournfully at the house, occasionally whining and barking.

Borum walks to group 1, the Village of Anger and Denial.

NARRATOR: Borum couldn't believe it! He stood there silently, feeling numb, like it wasn't real. In the days that followed he would vacillate between unfeeling, sad and angry. He was angry with God, angry at his wife for leaving him, angry with the dog for not rescuing his wife, angry with himself for not being there, and angry about surviving. He was so upset he had trouble finding another a place to live, food to eat, or anything left from the fire. He wandered around needing to be re-directed. Every night he had dreams his wife was calling his name and saying "I'm sorry, I'm sorry."

Borum moves slowly toward group 2 and settles in the Village of No Hope.

NARRATOR: Over time Borum was able to find a place to live, take care of himself and return to work. But his work was suffering and he not productive. He was distracted, lonely, despairing of life, feeling guilty that he had survived, and drinking too much. Every night, he was overwhelmed with longing for his wife. He ached with the thought of their dreams and hopes they shared. He felt 'stuck' for a long time, avoiding his family and friends and anything that reminded him of her. He felt suicidal and hopeless at times.

NARRATOR: Borum had a brother who visited him often. Sometimes he was just there, not talking. Other times Borum was able to respond to his brother's gentle inquiries and express his sorrow and anger. His brother was a good listener and did not try to teach, judge, correct or rush him. His brother understood grieving takes time. He also helped Borum by organizing a gathering to remember Borum's lost wife, helping sort through the burned house, bringing him meals and taking him out for walks and fishing. Borum's brother even invited him to join the community football games on Monday nights. Borum was too sad to participate, but his brother let him know that when Borum was ready, the invitation to participate would still be open.

Borum moves slowly toward group 3, the Village of New Beginnings.

NARRATOR: Borum started to feel more hopeful over the following year. He began to enjoy the football games and hanging out with this brother and extended family. He felt he was adjusting to the "new normal."

NARRATOR: One day the dog did not come home, and Borum was suddenly so sad and lonely. He felt overwhelmed again, like he would never be well. He felt abandoned, angry, and lonely. He wondered at times if he wanted to live because he was tired of hurting.

Borum moves back toward group 2, the Village of No Hope.

NARRATOR: After a couple of hard weeks and some time with his brother he was feeling better.

Borum moves back toward group 3, the Village of New Beginnings.

NARRATOR: There were other times too when he circled around between two villages. Especially after the pastor came by and said "Buck up! Where's your faith, man? The fire was probably punishment for some secret sin you are harboring." Borum was devastated and furious! He threw the man out of his house and then stayed awake nights wondering if it was true, wondering if God was like that. Borum was angry and confused.

Borum circles a few times around group 2 and 3, and settles in group 2, the Village of No Hope again.

NARRATOR: One day his neighbor came by to tell him that he could be healed instantly if he stopped feeling sad and stop thinking about it. For a while it worked, and he felt he had "snapped out of it," until the sadness would overwhelm him and he would be back in the Village of No Hope again.

Borum walks back to group 2, the Village of No Hope. He tries to take the False Bridge to group 3, the Village of New Beginnings, but he ends up back in group 2, the Village of No Hope.

NARRATOR: Over time Borum was able to receive prayer and pray with his brother, find comfort in the truths of the Word of God and the near presence of God; he was able to find ways to bring his pain to God when it would well up. He missed his wife, still felt the pain of his trauma and cried at times. But God's word helped him recognize that Jesus, the prophets, the Psalmist all cried out to God when they had heart wounds. He had more good days than bad days, began to enjoy football, and made some new friends.

Borum walks slowly to group 3, the Village of New Beginnings.

GROUP DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION

- 1. What did you like about the journey of grief?
- 2. What was difficult about the grief journey?

If the following are not mentioned, the facilitator can ask these questions to prompt further discussion.

- 1. Is the journey of grief a direct journey, from one step to the next without going backward?
- 2. Does the False Bridge work?
- 3. What are some things that make loss and grief more difficult? (a child, no body, unresolved issues and regret, sudden trauma, violence)
- 4. How can we help another? How did the brother help? (Be there, listen, don't try to fix it, support practically, recognize grieving is a time and energy consuming process, when ready pray and share the truth of God's word, pray for the person)
- 5. When does a person show signs of needing professional help? (Their health or life is at risk, they are a danger to others, they cannot do daily necessary tasks, their emotions are out of control, they are out of touch with reality, they are using alcohol or drugs and may become addicted, other, the grief phase lasts too long and they are "stuck")

REFLECTION

Read Psalm 34:18. God is with us in our pain, he understands. Because he too has had his heart wounded, he is able to draw near to us. He walks this journey with us, and comforts and heals us. He does not overlook our sorrow but enters deeply into our experience with us.

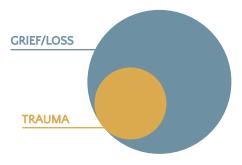
TRAUMA

GOAL

Understand and identify trauma and learn to differentiate trauma from grief.

WHAT IS TRAUMA?

- 1. Trauma is an especially painful experience with *intense* and *overwhelming fear*, *helplessness*, *and horror*.
- 2. Trauma can be a single event, prolonged or repeated events that overwhelm a person's ability to cope.
- 3. Trauma disrupts three basic principles of well-being, which are: there is predictable order in the world, there is justice for wrongs, and I am valuable to God and others.



ILLUSTRATION

This diagram demonstrates that there is grief and loss which is not trauma. Trauma has loss and grief but also is very intense. There is terror, helplessness, and horror.

ASK: What kinds of events cause trauma in your communities? (*Death, serious injury, assault, accidents, abuse*)

ASK: What can make trauma worse? (Examples: when a child is hurt; injury is ongoing and recurring; when it is sudden, intentional with malice, cruel, unexpected, involves death or injustice; when there is betrayal, especially by someone trusted or one depended on for protection.)

ASK: In your community or culture, how do people respond to emotional trauma? (*Facilitator Note:* Consider about how and when to respond to the answers to this question. This may or may not be a time for teaching; it may be a time for learning by non-judgmental listening, and waiting to address things that come up like violence or revenge, etc. in a Holy Spirit guided way.)

BIBLE STUDY

Read through 1 Samuel 30:1-8, 18-19.

This was very traumatic for everyone. It was intense. They were in terror and felt helpless. When David's men saw that their families and possessions had been taken while they were absent, the passage says they felt bitter in soul, sorrowful and angry. They were considering venting their anger by stoning David! But David, though also traumatized, "strengthened himself in the Lord" (v. 6). David wrote many Psalms during traumatic times.

Read Psalm 55 as an example.

- 1. Verses 1-8: What was David feeling and what was he doing with his emotions? (In his lament he is complaining.)
- **2.** Verses 9-11: What is David's request? (He is requesting help from his enemies.)
- **3. Verses 16–19:** What is he stating to be true in the midst of his trauma? (*He is expressing trust in a trustworthy God.*)
- 4. Verse 22: What advice is he giving to us? (Cast our burdens on God)

How do we cast our burdens on him and strengthen ourselves in the Lord? From this Psalm we see that we can come to Him in prayer and complain, request, state the truth about God, put our trust in Him, encourage ourselves and others. We can also remember God's past faithfulness and express that we will praise Him, even in our grief and sorrow.

- ACTIVITY: WRITE A LAMENT -

Though this activity works best in literate cultures, it can be adapted for preliterate cultures.

We can share our hearts and thoughts with God as David did, through prayer and lament. Many of the Psalms are laments! We can write our own laments like King David.

A lament has potentially 7 parts.

- 1. Address to God
- 2. A Complaint- a lament will always have a complaint
- 3. A Request
- 4. A remembrance of past faithfulness
- 5. Trust statement
- 6. Vow to praise.
- 7. Sometimes a truth or response from God

Psalm 13 is a great example of a lament.

Allow time for participants to write their own lament. If people are willing, time can be allotted to share their lament with another person in groups of 2, share what writing a lament was like for them with the group, and pray for one another

THE POWER OF LISTENING

GOAL

Demonstrate the healing power of listening.

OVERVIEW

One way we can heal is having trustworthy friends or family who share our laments and heart wounds. A trustworthy friend, family member, pastor will be a good listener, will keep your conversation private, will not judge you, and will not minimize your pain or tell you what to do.

When we are overwhelmed, it may be important to process heart wounds with others. In the same way that it is as necessary to seek a doctor when a physical wound is not healing or not getting better, it is sometimes necessary to seek professional help when our hearts are not healing.

We can also be a part of one another's healing. One way to help one another is by becoming good listeners when our friends and family have heart wounds.

These three simple questions help us be good listeners:

- 1. What happened?
- 2. How did you feel?
- 3. What was the worst part?

DISCUSSION

There is a tradition in Jewish culture called "Sitting Shiva," when friends come and sit with a person who is grieving for seven days. Every culture has different traditions for grieving, and different ways to express compassion and sympathy.

ASK: In your culture what is appropriative body language in listening? When you are talking with someone, how do you let the other person know you are listening? (*Lean forward, make eye contact, hold hands, etc*).

- ACTIVITY: ACT IT OUT -

The contextualized skit on the following page is designed to demonstrate examples of good listening and of poor listening.

This skit is adapted from the Trauma Healing Institute. The listening activity can be read in the language of the people or, if it is available, a video in the appropriate language can be played. The name and gender can be changed as appropriate to Michael or Mary.

TWO WAYS TO LISTEN

NARRATOR: Michael was in a bad boating accident a week ago when a larger boat hit his pequepeque and sent everyone in the water. He and his little daughter nearly drowned and his wife broke her arm. The baby survived but his wife is still very uncomfortable. The driver of the bigger boat was thrown from his boat and drowned. It was a very serious accident. His pastor has just stopped at the house to visit. The pastor finds Michael sitting outside his house.

SKIT 1

PASTOR: (rushed greeting) I came to see your family.

MICHAEL: They're sleeping just now, but I'm not doing so well.

PASTOR: (rushed) Look at the positive: you survived! Thank God!

MICHAEL: But I'm feeling confused. Could we talk?

PASTOR: (distracted) I have a meeting today down river. Let's talk as we walk to my boat.

MICHAEL: Okay (*reluctantly*). Now that my wife and daughter are okay, instead of feeling better, I'm feeling worse. I'm not sleeping and I'm avoiding going anywhere near the boats.

PASTOR: There's no reason to be afraid. Forget it. Take control. God hasn't given us a "spirit of fear."

MICHAEL: I feel guilty for not being injured. I feel guilty about feeling afraid. I feel guilty for and not having enough faith to go on another boat trip with my family. And I feel angry. I know I should feel thankful, but...

PASTOR: Yes! You should be thankful. Being thankful will wipe away all the negative feelings. This reminds me of when our church burned down. I decided to rejoice, and everything was fine.

MICHAEL: I tried, but I can't control the fear and anger. (PASTOR's phone rings)

PASTOR: (answers his phone) I'm talking with Michael. He's having a really hard time, but I'll be there as soon as I can get away.

MICHAEL: I can see you're busy, but what can I do about this fear and anger?

PASTOR: Remember Romans 8:28. Be thankful. I'll ask the church to pray for you.

MICHAEL: Oh no, PLEASE don't tell everyone! I am embarrassed to be so sad.

PASTOR: Don't worry—we're a family. There's no reason to be embarrassed. I've gotta run.

MICHAEL: (dejected)

PAUSE FOR DISCUSSION

ASK: What did you see happen in this skit? How did the pastor do at listening?

SKIT 2

PASTOR: I came to see you.

MICHAEL: Thanks! I'm not doing so well.

PASTOR: Do you want to talk somewhere private? Tell me what happened.

MICHAEL: It's a horrible scene in my head. We were in the boat and around the bend in the river came this boat going really fast. I think the driver had been drinking, he was driving so carelessly. He hit our little boat and we all were thrown into the water. I heard my wife scream. I saw the baby land in the water, but she was just a little in front of me so I could reach her right away and keep her head out of the water. My wife held onto the part of the boat that was still floating and we made it to shore.

PASTOR: It's amazing you are all doing okay. How do you feel?

MICHAEL: First I was glad we all survived. But now I have bad thoughts and feelings. I'm confused. I feel so helpless and want to kill the driver, even though he already died. I shouldn't feel this way.

PASTOR: I'd probably feel that way, too.

MICHAEL: Really? That's helpful to hear. I'm not sleeping well. I know boats are probably safe, but I'm afraid of them anyway. I'm feeling very angry for no reason. I should feel thankful my family is recovering, right?

PASTOR: Well, it's normal to have all these feelings after what you've been through. What was the hardest thing for you?

MICHAEL: The worst was hearing my wife scream as our bananas went flying in the air with our little girl.

PASTOR: Yeah. You said you felt helpless?

MICHAEL: Totally. I'm responsible to take care of my family, and I couldn't do anything.

PASTOR: What helped you cope so far?

MICHAEL: My family needs me.

PASTOR: Yeah. We love you too. We can talk again soon, okay?

MICHAEL: Thanks. It really helps to talk about it. Do you want to see my family? They're probably awake now and would like to see you.

PASTOR: Yes, let's

DISCUSSION

- 1. What were some examples you saw in the skit of good listening?
- 2. What were some examples you saw of bad listening?
- 3. In which skit did the person feel heard?
- 4. What qualities make a person a good listener? (Pays attention, doesn't try to fix things, does not assume they fully understand, does not start talking without listening first, can keep a confidence, is not critical, does not offer easy answers, does not minimize or ridicule the person's pain, takes the time to be fully present)
- 5. Did you see the Three Questions used? (*Three Questions: What happened? How did you feel? What was the worst part for you?*)

ACTIVITY: PRACTICE LISTENING _

In groups of two, share an event that happened in your life. Select an event that was not overwhelming for you, but something that can provide an opportunity to practice asking the 3 questions and listening.

Take turns sharing about an event in your life and asking these three questions:

- 1. What happened?
- 2. How did you feel?
- 3. What was the worst part?

As the other person shares, practice listening with attentive caring and respecting confidence. Avoid criticism, judgment, dismissing or minimizing the pain, fixing, or looking for a quick resolution.

- BIBLE STUDY -

We are to help shoulder one another's burdens, caring about others. One of the very practical ways we do that is by being good listeners.

In 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, it says that He is the "God of all Comfort." We can help one another. What do these other verses tell us about helping one another? Read together and discuss.

- Galatians 6:2
- Romans 12:15
- Philippians 2:3-4

FORGIVENESS

GOAL

Understand forgiveness and how to walk through the process of forgiveness to experience more freedom.

OVERVIEW

Forgiveness is necessary to heal the heart wounds that others have given us.

When we hold on to bitterness or think about revenge, we are not free, and we remain in bondage to the injury or to the person who hurt us. Someone wisely said "Bitterness or revenge is like a poison you drink, hoping that the other person will die." Forgiveness frees us from the harmful power that unforgiveness has over us, and we can be healed in our hearts.

God requires us to practice forgiveness in order to receive the forgiveness we need.

ACTIVITY: ACT IT OUT -

This drama involves abstract thinking and works best in cultures that use analogies. The facilitator can decide whether this or the alternate activity below would be best for the group.

Have the narrator read the script on the next page and have the characters act it out. Give the characters time to say their lines, repeating after the narrator.

Characters: Narrator, Weight Carrier (Cheena), Weight Giver (WG), Cousin, Uncle, Sister, Big Brother, Little Brother, Pastor

Props: backpack; something heavy like a large stone, smaller item or stone.

THE STORY OF CHEENA'S FORGIVENESS

NARRATOR: Cheena and his neighbor, Weight Giver (whose nickname was WG) were friends. Cheena had a beautiful boat. He made it with his father and it was very special to him. One day Cheena's neighbor, WG, stole his boat and then carelessly lost it in an accident. His neighbor denied stealing the boat. When Cheena confronted him, WG said...

WG: "I never stole your boat!

NARRATOR: WG even falsely accused Cheena of spreading untrue rumors about him.

WG: Cheena was drunk and sunk his own boat!

NARRATOR: Cheena was hurt and angry. Every day, he caried unforgiveness and bitterness around with him for the stolen boat.

Cheena picks up a heavy item, such as a large stone, and puts it in his backpack or carries it in his arms. Cheena walks around but struggles with carrying that load.

CHEENA: I am so angry! I am hurt!

NARRATOR: His cousin said he should ignore it.

COUSIN: It will just cause trouble if you say something!

NARRATOR: His cousin thought Cheena should just forget it and pretend like it never happened. But every time Cheena tried to pretend the weight was not there, he realized that it was. It was present and heavy. His Uncle also tried to give him advice.

UNCLE: Forgive and forget!

NARRATOR: His uncle thought that Cheena should forgive WG and then forget about it. His uncle felt that if Cheena did not forget it, it was not really forgiveness. But every time Cheena tried to forget about it, he remembered he did not have his boat, and he was still angry and hurt. He felt he would never be able to forget what had happened. Cheena's sister tried to talk to him.

SISTER: Oh, look at poor WG. He's had such as hard life.

NARRATOR: His sister thought that Cheena should let it go because WG had hard problems, which made him do bad things. Cheena felt bad for WG, because he had a hard life. But every time Cheena tried to excuse WG for stealing his boat, he realized that he could not. The weight he carried still was very heavy. Cheena's mother told him how she felt.

MOTHER: I am so angry!

NARRATOR: She was angry that the neighbor stole Cheena's boat and said that she would never forgive WG until he apologized! But WG showed no signs of apologizing and avoided Cheena and his mother.

NARRATOR: His big brother thought that Cheena should just accept that his boat was lost and that WG should not have to repay Cheena for the lost boat.

BIG BROTHER: Just let it go, and move on. Don't let it ruin your friendship.

NARRATOR: His big brother said that Cheena should leave WG alone, do nothing. He said that that Cheena should stay friends with WG just like before. But every time Cheena tried to ignore the missing boat, he would remember that he could not go fishing and felt it was not right that there should be no consequences. And when Cheena heard that WG was bragging of stealing other things, he knew he could not trust him as a friend again. Cheena's younger brother had a different idea: take revenge!

YOUNGER BROTHER: Get some dynamite and blow up the boat!

NARRATOR: But Cheena knew that taking revenge was not the right thing to do. However, he still could not forgive WG for doing such an unkind thing. The stone felt very heavy, especially days when Cheena thought about his little brother's vengeful idea. In the meantime, Cheena was getting more bitter in his soul, and the stone was feeling heavier and heavier.

PAUSE FOR DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION

Forgiveness is the decision to release our right to pay back the offender. Forgiveness is hard, and it takes courage and perseverance and faith in God's justice. God gives us his power to forgive, to let go of our right, and trust him.

Forgiveness is a necessary part of the process to heal heart wounds. Bitterness can weigh us down like a stone in pack as in the story, and unforgiveness can be poison to our soul.

We receive forgiveness from God as a gift. We give it to others as a gift.

ACTIVITY: TRUE OR FALSE

- 1. Forgiveness means pretending that the offense never happened. FALSE
- 2. Forgiveness means we forget that the offense ever happened. FALSE
- 3. Forgiveness means we have to act like it was "no big deal." FALSE
- 4. Forgiveness can only happen if the offender apologizes. FALSE
- 5. We can only forgive someone after we understand why they did it. FALSE
- 6. Forgiveness takes away all consequences for the offense. FALSE
- 7. Forgiveness is a feeling. FALSE
- 8. Forgiveness means setting aside the hurt and trusting the offender. FALSE
- 9. Forgiveness means acting like nothing happened. FALSE

CONTINUE ACTING OUT

NARRATOR: One day the pastor gave Cheena a different idea.

PASTOR: Go and talk to your neighbor WG, privately.

NARRATOR: The pastor told Cheena to confront WG about the stolen boat, then ask to be repaid so that Cheena can get another boat. The pastor offered to go with him. If WG was not responsive, the pastor could help Cheena bring it to the elders, community, or authorities.

NARRATOR: Cheena decided to confront his neighbor. Cheena told WG that he knew that he had stolen the boat and lost it. Cheena needs a boat to fish, and asked WG to help him get another boat. WG said he was very sorry, that he had been drinking and careless when he took Cheena's boat and sunk it. He said he would help Cheena get another boat. Cheena was still angry nearly every day, but every day he decided to forgive WG, and lay down the heavy weight he was carrying. (Cheena takes the stone out of his backpack and lays it aside.) Sometimes, Cheena would find himself putting it back in his pack. He would have to take it out and lay it aside again. (Cheena looks at the stone and puts it back in his pack. He takes it out and puts it aside. Repeat this a few times) Each time he decided to forgive, the stone become lighter and lighter. Eventually the weight was gone and he was free.

ACTIVITY: TRUE OR FALSE

- 1. Once you decide to forgive, then all your bitterness will be gone. FALSE
- 2. Forgiveness happens after the wrong is undone. FALSE
- 3. Forgiveness is a necessary part of healing our heart wounds. TRUE
- 4. Forgiveness means you release your right to pay back the offender for the wrong they have done to you. *TRUE*
- 5. Forgiveness is a gift we receive from God, and it is a gift we can give to others. TRUE

FORGIVENESS AND TRAUMA

GOAL

Apply the concept of forgiveness to areas of trauma.

DISCUSSION

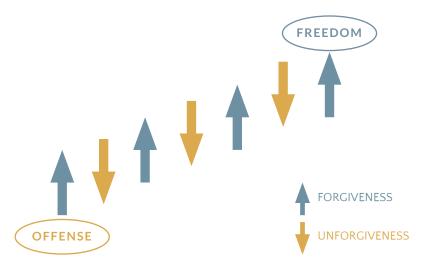
Let's review the three ideas we have about the world and ourselves that trauma affects.

ASK: What are the three things that define trauma? (*Trauma has left our world disordered, unpredictable, and unsafe; we have experienced injustice; and we have come to feel devalued by God and by others.*)

ASK: How do you think forgiveness help us address each of these three characteristics of trauma?

- 1. Trauma leaves us feeling disordered, unpredictable, and out of control: Forgiveness that comes from knowing and trusting the constancy of God helps restore our sense of order. Forgiveness gives us back control. Forgiveness provides a way to take control of our thoughts and life again, to determine our outcome, and not leave that to other people. We have a sense of our own power that comes from him, the one who forgives and empowers us to forgive.
- 2. There is no justice: Forgiveness is deciding to trust the Just God Himself to act on our behalf. Romans 12:19 says, "Justice in mine, I will repay." He has established justice as one of his core Kingdom features. He is just, He is good, and He loves us. We work for justice now and remember that He is returning to establish His just Kingdom. We can have peace because we know that He doesn't miss a thing, and the world's injustice is temporary.
- 3. We feel unvalued and unloved by God and by others: Forgiveness frees us to recognize that God showed us how valuable we are in His willingness to come to earth and die to remove the sin that separated us from him. Our value is not set by others. We are dearly loved by God, the One whose opinion matters, and nothing changes that.

THE JOURNEY TO FREEDOM



ILLUSTRATION

This illustrates the process of forgiving. We forgive the initial offense, but we will probably need to decide to forgive again and again. Over time, forgiving becomes easier. Eventually we will be free from the burden of unforgiveness.

DISCUSSION

Ephesians 4:26 says, "Be angry but sin not..." We will feel anger when someone hurts us, when we or people we love have been treated unjustly, when we have been offended against.

ASK: It is normal and right to be angry at wrong things. How does forgiveness help us to avoid sinning in our anger?

BIBLE LESSON: ACT IT OUT -

Read Matthew 18:21–35 and act it out. After reading, use these questions to guide the group discussion.

- 1. What did you like about the story?
- 2. What is hard about the story?
- 3. What does it tell us about forgiving others?
- 4. What does it tell us about being forgiven by God?

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY -

Read Romans 12:17–19. God alone gives us the power to forgive! This activity helps people walk through forgiveness by using objects to represent people they may need to forgive. Have each participant spend time thinking, praying, asking themselves and God, "Who do I need to forgive?"

Use paper or collect natural items like sticks, leaves or stones, to represent the things that need to be forgiven. Then find a way to get rid of these items, such as burning them in a small fire, throwing them in a flowing river, dissolving them in water or another way to destroy these representations of offense.

Remind them of the possible need to forgive multiple times until they are free from the bitterness.

CULTURAL NOTE: It is important that the community understands that this activity is a *representation* of forgiveness. The items used are hold no significance or special meaning, except that they *represent* the heart of mind of the person who is forgiving. This is not magic.

CONCLUSION AND PRAYER

Read Ephesians 4:31-32, Psalm 9:7-9, and Hebrews 12:14-15.

Have people listen as these are read twice and then break up into three groups. Each group will discuss an assigned verse, and share with the whole group what the Bible verses said and meant to them.

Lead the group through prayer together. Leave time for people to pray out loud or quietly to themselves. Have everybody close their eyes and take three deep breaths in and out.

First, thank God that *he can be trusted* with the wrongs others have done to us. Ask God to take care of the injustice and to work on our behalf. Then thank God for the *power* to forgive. Ask him for the *power to keep on forgiving* until we are free from bitterness and resentment.

Encourage the group to talk to a friend or leader more about forgiveness if they want to.

TAKING OUR PAIN TO JESUS

GOAL

To bring our heart wounds to Jesus so we can find healing.

DISCUSSION

"Cast all your cares on him because he cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7

ASK: What are some heavy things you have to lift in your community? (*Boats, wild game, logs, big fish*)

ASK: How do you feel after you carry very heavy things? (*Tired, sore*)

ASK: When you are lifting very heavy things, can you do other things at the same time? If you use both hands to carry a very heavy log, are you able to also scratch your nose or pick up something from the ground? (*No*)

Heavy burdens of the heart include many of the things we have talked about. The hurt and pain from trauma, loss, grief, shame, and unforgiveness are burdens of the heart that can weigh us down and make it hard to do simple things. Jesus invites us to bring those heart pains to him.

Just as it is very tiring to lift heavy physical things, it tiring to carry heavy emotional burdens of the heart.

ASK: In some cultures, there is an expression of a "heavy heart" – do you have that in your culture?

Read and act out the story of Mark 5:25-33.

ACTIVITY: ACT IT OUT

Assign different people to play the roles of Jesus, the disciples, the woman, and the crowd.

DISCUSSION

- 1. How was this woman feeling? (Ashamed, embarrassed, weary, lonely, discouraged, hopeless, angry, desperate, afraid)
- 2. How was this woman seen by the community? (Unclean, rejected, disdained, looked down upon, misjudged, bad)
- 3. What 'burdens' was she bearing? (Sickness, poverty, social isolation, rejection, disdain, being looked down upon, misjudged)
- 4. What happened when she touched Jesus? (She was physically healed)
- 5. How did she think Jesus might respond to telling him the truth? (She expected him to have the same response as the community to reject her, yell at her for breaking the law, call her unclean, scold or embarrass her. She was probably afraid to tell the truth.)
- 6. How did he respond? (He called her "Daughter," he was kind)
- 7. Why did he not just let her disappear into the crowd? How did this benefit her, the crowd, and the disciples? (Jesus publicly acknowledged so that everyone could see that she was not unclean, but well and able to return to society again. She was shown to be accepted and healed. In this way, Jesus brought healing to her physically, emotionally, and socially. The disciples saw his miracle and that his healing that was not just physical.)

ASK: Have you ever been afraid or ashamed of your story? (This does not to be shared aloud)

Just like the woman brought her pain to Jesus, so can we. As the Trauma Healing Institute says, "Jesus felt the burden of human pain and sinfulness. Jesus knows the pain in our hearts and we need to bring it to him so he can heal us."

- ACTIVITY: GIVING OUR PAIN TO JESUS.

Read Isaiah 53:3 and 5 twice.

Spend some time in a quiet place alone to think about the pain(s) you want to bring to Jesus to heal. Write them down, draw a picture, or find some objects to represent them, like rocks or sticks or something easy to find nearby. (Emphasize that these objects are not magic. The power to heal is not found in the ritual or the objects, but it is found in the Living God who hears us when we come to Him.)

OPTIONAL: If the group is willing, encourage the group to share these pains with a trusted person and pray for one another. (It is understood that what is shared will not be shared with anyone else after this time. This is called "keeping a confidence." Being able to keep a confidence and not sharing the pain that someone shared with you privately makes you a safe trustworthy person.)

Read Matthew 11:28–29 twice. This passage tells us that we can bring our pain to Jesus and He will bring healing. We may need to do this again and again until the pain is healed. Healing is a process, but God is faithful and He will bring healing to all parts of our lives as we continue to walk with him day by day and give our pain to him day by day.

Take the picture, the drawing, or objects that represent the pain and destroy them by throwing it into a fast moving river, burning it, dissolving it or some way that it cannot be retrieved. Tell Jesus that you are giving Him the pain and that you are trusting Him for the full healing which He brings to those who follow Him.

Read Isaiah 61:1-4 twice. Sing a song or pray all together. Celebrate the truth of His word that tells us that we will stand blameless and whole, healed in His presence with great joy! Read Jude 24 twice.

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Renew Health Promotion
In collaboration with Renew World Outreach
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