

Don't Waste Your Crisis: How to Recover from a Self-Inflicted Wound

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[0 : 00] Hey, how's it going? This has been on my mind for quite some time. I wanted to try to help you with something,!

Don't Waste Your Cancer. And the burden of the peace was simple. Suffering does not automatically sanctify you. You can go through a severe mercy and come out the other side either worse or unchanged.

And I think that's just really important to understand. Suffering does not always make a person better.

We hear those stories and we assume that's the case, but that's not always the case. At least not in the short term. And so I want to borrow Piper's framing and widen it a bit.

I don't mainly want to talk about cancer, but as you can see here, I want to talk about crisis. Crisis. Specifically the kind of crisis that you sowed yourself.

[1 : 26] The kind where the seeds were put in the ground either actively through sins of commission or passively through sins of omission.

And you sowed these seeds yourself and now you're in a situation that's not great. And how do you respond to this? The word crisis really does mean decision or judgment or turning point.

The older medical term or the older medical usage of this. I think I remember this from like MASH and Quincy. By the way, if you ever wonder why I'm so interested in medicine, you know, we didn't have cable growing up.

We had, you know, broadcast TV and these shows, these medical shows were the thing that was on. I remember MASH was on every single day at, I want to say 4.30, something like that.

Anyway, so yeah, I watched all these medical shows. That's how the term was used years ago. The crisis was this patient is in a particular moment.

[2 : 34] It could go either way. Something big is going to happen, a massive recovery or death or whatever. And so I thought I would talk about how to not waste those particular moments when you have done the damage and you're in a crisis because of the damage that you've done.

You know, we think of the word crisis or scandal and we think about, you know, important people and big deal stuff. But that's not, that's not like everybody has crisis.

Everybody has moments that are just, this may not go well for me. Cancer is one kind of crisis. Financial collapse, exposure, your sins being found out, moral failure.

These self-made crisis. I want to talk about, okay, you're in this situation. What do you do? Well, you know, the reason why I'm sharing this with you is because God has just not let me not do this. I have been thinking about this for weeks. And every time I'm doing something that doesn't require my brain to be active, like this morning I got up and mowed the lawn. What am I thinking about?

[3 : 53] I'm thinking about this. And so I think I've been delaying it in large part because I think it's so important. And I don't know that I'll do a very competent job. But I'm going to try to, this is really coming from my heart.

I think it's coming from God's heart. God is with the brokenhearted. He's with the people who are fed up with themselves, disappointed with themselves.

That's the kind of person he prefers, to be honest. And yeah, he just, he wants me to share this with you and I'm going to try to do my best.

So some people are in crisis that are, you know, one, you know, maybe two or three dumb decisions. And now, boom, you know, it just takes one dumb decision to mess up everything.

And then there are other people who went on forever in a particular pattern of behavior. And now they're paying the price. And so what do we do about this?

[4 : 58] Well, first thing, don't miss what I said at the beginning. And that is, you know, you can waste this. You absolutely can waste this. You could do, you could, you could do nothing.

You could do something dumber in response to your crisis. Like there's a lot of possibilities of screwing this up. So, uh, you know, what pain feels like right now and it's not fun.

Well, let's not make it worse. And also the truth is, is that this can produce a sweet harvest in the end. You know, Hebrews says that God disciplines those whom he loves and that no discipline seems pleasant at the time, but in the end yields a fruitful, pleasant harvest.

And the reality is, is that plenty of people get away with stuff all the way through to their grave. And so one of the things I'd encourage you on is if you're experiencing a crisis, you know, it didn't have to be exposed.

It didn't have to come to come to the light. It didn't have to show up. And the fact that it has is, I think, a sign very often that the Lord is, is yours and that he is, he's working in your life and is trying to grow you and so forth.

[6 : 23] So, you know, be hopeful throughout this. But again, be, be fearful also, because like I said, there, there are absolutely ways that you can, that you can ruin this.

All right. Well, let's see. What do we talk about here? Well, for one thing, you know, Piper talks about wasting his cancer. And I think it's true of any kind of terrible thing, scandal, collapse, exposure, discipline.

And you could, these are all things that you can waste. And reality is, is that cancer is kind of, you know, not as embarrassing as some of the other things that you go through.

So how do we handle this? Well, let's go through. I listed, I listed like 10 things that were kind of coming to mind about ways that I've been tempted to waste my crisis over the years.

And yeah, let's talk about these. So the first one is just to see this terrible calamity as something other than God at work.

[7 : 36] You will waste your crisis if you do not understand that this all came from God's hand. It's he who allows certain seeds to grow into fruit bearing trees and certain seeds not to.

It's God's decision when he allows someone to reap what they will sow and when they reap what they sow. And so one of the things that you need to make sure you're not doing is this needs to be a very personal between you and God.

This needs to be a season where you understand, as C.S. Lewis said, pain is God's megaphone to a deaf world. You need to understand that God is trying to do business with you.

You know, I was in Isaiah for a while, personally, not too long ago. I've talked about this before. You know, the Lord is personally engaged with those people.

He's personally giving them difficulties. He's personally saying, come now, let us reason together. He's personally saying, why do you spend money on that which does not satisfy, you know?

[8 : 44] So first thing is like, and I'm going to end on this one here a little bit. But the first thing, don't waste your crisis by thinking that this is somehow, oh, just a bad turn of events or whatever.

Or, you know, it could have gone so many different ways. Yeah, it could have. Exactly. And this is, make sure that you understand God is doing business with you.

That's what this season is. It is God doing business with you. He's setting you down. He's saying, we're going to deal with this in his personal way. Number two, you will waste your crisis if you see it as a pure curse and not as a severe mercy.

If you see only judgment without grace, punishment without purpose, you miss the mercy that is sometimes clothed in severity. In other words, yes, God's doing business with you, but he's not punishing you exactly.

He's trying to wake you up. He's trying to get you back to himself. The father who wounds in order to heal is the good father. That's what a good father does.

[9 : 55] He strips away in order to restore and so on and so forth. For the Christian, discipline is not God settling the score. It's God refusing you to leave, refusing to leave you to the illusions that you were already engaged in.

And I'm going to talk about what is the heart of that illusion here in a minute. Number three, you will waste your crisis if the cross does not become more glorious and necessary in your heart.

Boy, this one. And this comes down to you being able to see that you're mostly here because you sinned. And then to see that God has allowed you to be in this position, Romans 8, 1 position, where there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

That doesn't mean there aren't consequences. That doesn't mean there aren't lessons to be learned. But the very same God who struck you with this severe mercy, he's not mad at you. He has been satisfied fully by the death of Jesus Christ as the real, more than sufficient payment for your sins.

[11 : 14] And so you don't start this situation with a God who was out to get you. If you're a Christian, you start in your crisis from the position that a child starts with a loving, great, perfect father.

It's rough. It's rough. He is a father. And he is going to have his time with you. He is going to do his business with you. But, man, you are not in danger of being destroyed by God. He has already destroyed your sin on his son, putting his son to death. So if the cross doesn't stand out to you as a remarkable miracle, as an absolute necessary, where would you be without it kind of thing, in the middle of your crisis, I don't think you understand your crisis.

I don't think you understand what caused it. You need to be able to say, I've messed up, but thank God that Jesus Christ died a terrible death to pay for my screw-up.

Again, the cross doesn't eliminate consequences in terms of this world, but it absolutely changes the game.

[12 : 49] You are not under condemnation. You now have a good, faithful, perfect father working with you, not against you. Number four, you will waste your crisis if you don't see it fundamentally as wandering away from the Lord.

Whatever behaviors got you into this position are a consequence, came about because you were not with the Lord. And, you know, one of the great concerns of every crisis is it just, it springs up and affects everything in your life.

And it's like, okay, I got to go get to work to all these things, like fixing all these things, handling all these things. It's like, yeah, I mean, you have a lot of work to do, but the one thing that got you here is you were not actively walking with God.

I can promise you that. I can promise you that the way that people get into these self-made crises is that they start wandering away from God.

Or they never walk with God to begin with. So, you will absolutely waste your crisis if you do not draw near to the heart of God and, like a deer panteth, so my soul longeth after thee, you know, if you don't get back to actually desiring God in a real meaningful way, yeah, this crisis will probably be wasted because what's going to happen is you'll endure all the hardships.

[14 : 26] Whatever's going to be is going to be. The consequences are going to be what the consequences are. And you're just on the other side, an empty, disconnected, hollow, not filled with the Spirit, not close to God, not praying through the day, not enjoying fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

Like, you know, it's not really going to change anything. That's the worst possible way to waste all this pain is to not change anything about your actual relationship with God.

Number five, you will waste your crisis if you think beating it means getting your old life back instead of gaining Christ. Can I say that again?

You will waste your crisis if you think beating it means getting your old life back instead of gaining Christ. The goal is not the restoration of your reputation or of normalcy or of calm.

The goal is to get more of Christ. Your call returning to the baseline is not, you're not trying to recover. You're trying to repent and you're trying to get back and get more of Christ.

[15 : 31] You're starting, you're trying to come out of this a more loving and godly person who loves God and enjoys him more and feels dependent on him and so forth.

Number six, you will waste your crisis if you let embarrassment or letting others down become the main cost in your mind. If you start fearing the room more than you fear God, that's, that's, you're going to waste it.

If you think of the primary pain that you're managing is your reputation of what others think. You don't yet have your eyes fixed on Jesus.

You're not abiding in Jesus. You know, Jesus didn't entrust himself to man because he knew what was in man. And one of the clearest evidences of a person who's close to Jesus is that that starts to be their posture to the world.

You know, I used to struggle with this greatly. Thankfully, I was at a very young age, but I struggled with this greatly. And I, I, I would say like, I think I'm kind of known for this being this guy.

[16:47] And I don't, I don't think I'm as free of the fear of man as people think I am. But to the extent that I am, friends, it comes when you are abiding in Christ and Christ is abiding in you.

Christ is not afraid of man. He's the only one. Christ is not afraid of man. So if you see your crisis as, you know, the embarrassment factor, if that's the thing you focus on, friends, you should be embarrassed before God that you've let him down, that you failed him, that you haven't been obedient, that you haven't enjoyed him and walked with him.

All this other people, who cares? They're going to be dead just as soon as you are. You're going to stand before the one who matters. Number seven, you will waste your crisis if isolation happens instead of a deeper love.

If you fold inward, start hiding, especially if people don't treat you well, instead of being softened toward others, that's a major concern.

Don't let this isolate you. Don't let this cause you to hide. Walk into the room. That's the guy who crapped the bed. Say, I crapped the bed.

[18:06] That's what I did. You know, and just own the mistakes. Walk in as the girl who just screwed it up and say, this is who I am.

All I have is Christ. You'll be the richest person in the room. You'll be the person, the healthiest person in the room. If you get to the point where you think, all I have is Christ. And that's one of the things that I would really want to communicate.

There is going to be, if you handle this well, if you respond to your crisis well, there's going to be a season where you are actually the healthiest and happiest person in the world.

And you look miserable. Like, not miserable. Pathetic. Because all of these consequences, they're still coming.

You're still pulling the weeds of your old sin. Like, you're in a rough spot. But you have the joy of the Lord. And you're actually pretty happy. So, that's just a part of this deal.

[19:14] When God punches your ticket and he says, you're going to, we're going to talk. Here's the crisis. Well, there's going to be, if you turn to the Lord with all of your heart and lean down on your understanding, if you really turn to him, you're going to have this disparity.

And it's going to look a lot like, you know what it's going to look a lot like? It's going to look a lot like a martyr or, yeah, like a martyr or even just Jesus throughout his life.

Like, here's a person who has nothing. Why are they so happy? Because they have the Lord.

Number eight. You're going to waste your crisis if you start grieving as though, oh, it's all ruined.

I've ruined it all and so forth. No, you haven't ruined it all. You're going to be fine. God, your life is, you know, there's a lot of story left to live. And no, you're going to be totally fine.

You're going to be more than fine. So, stop thinking that your life's over and so forth. It's not. You'll be okay. I promise. Just don't waste your crisis.

[20:26] Turn to the Lord. Number nine. If you treat your old sin to sins as casually as you did before, you're going to have a problem.

And around the, you know, you're going to be a period of time where you're so broken and so devastated that you're going to really try. And you're going to do well for a while. And then that self-will battery wears down usually, you know, 60 to 90 days.

And those old sins will start to appear less gross than they did before. Just, you know, 30 days before. You got to watch for that.

This is actually not, it's one of the easier issues to deal with, but you need to understand it's coming.

It's, you know, Peter tells us to abstain from youthful passions which wage war against our souls.

Like, just know this is coming to take all the work, all the spiritual work you've done in this crisis.

There's a moment coming that's going to take all that away by making your old sins seem like not such a big deal.

[21:30] And that honestly, everybody does it and people were overreacting and, well, I know Sally or this or that. It's like, stop, stop. And then finally, number 10, you're going to waste your crisis.

If you ignore the doors, it opens to bear witness to Christ. What I'm saying here is, is that there's only, of all the people in the world, there's a very small number of people who have been broken and healed by Christ.

And they're very special people. And that's what God's doing here. Broken and healed. And beauty for ashes, right? Isaiah again.

And so, if you, you need to understand that that's coming for you, you need, that's one of the reasons why you need to stop being embarrassed.

Because the position, the time is coming when you will be more used to others than many other people would be. Because you've gone through it. Okay.

[22 : 35] But that's all kind of like, I would say that was two weeks ago. I was thinking about things. And none of it's wrong. But I think there is a deeper question.

And that is just like, where are you with God? The warnings are all kind of out here.

You know, they're all sort of the life that you've messed up because of your choices. It's all out here. But I just want to tell you, like, you absolutely have to see this as fundamentally about you and the Lord.

David says, against you, it's on 51 after his crisis with Bathsheba. Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.

Why only God? I mean, it's obvious. It doesn't mean that David hadn't harmed anyone else. He had. Bathsheba was sinned against. Uriah was sinned against.

[23 : 43] Israel, his nation that was depending on him, was sinned against. But David is going underneath all the horizontal wreckage to the deepest center of the matter.

All sin is finally against God, and it starts firstly against God. All sin is firstly against God and finally against God. When all of the debts are paid to your fellow man, if they ever can be, the reality is that your sin started with God and it will end with God.

It is rebellion against his rule, contempt for his word, and frankly, a wandering away from his love.

One of the things I would tell you is that you've got to be super careful not to depersonalize this into, I made bad choices, now I need to make better choices.

Don't pragmatize this where I was doing X, it didn't work out well, I should have done Y. No, this is all personal. There is a God who made you, who shed his own son's blood to be your friend.

He wants to meet with you. He wants to meet with you. He wants you to talk to him. He wants you to love him. And we're in the spot we're in with this crisis because you stopped doing that, or you weren't doing that.

[25 : 16] That's what I mean when I say all sin starts with God and it ends with God. Like, this all starts with you not talking to him.

I believe that the best barometer for your daily spiritual health is, are you talking to him throughout the day?

And I harp on that constantly. It's one of my main application points in my preaching. Talk to God throughout the day. Why?

Because it is the most, because I'm a big Genesis 1 through 3 guy, that's why, it is the most fundamental function of a human being to walk with God in the cool of the day.

So, really, fundamentally, you'll waste your crisis if you don't become close to God.

[26 : 13] Not obedient, not better off, not making better choices. You will waste your crisis if you do not see that all of this is about God bringing you back to himself and saying, Hey, you and I should talk.

You and I should be together. That's how you not waste your crisis. That's how you don't waste your crisis. You turn back to the Lord.

And David, you know, he says, like, clean my heart. He says, restore to me the joy of my salvation. Restore to me the joy of my salvation. Elsewhere, the psalm says, In Psalm 119, David says, It is good that you afflicted me.

For now I walk with you. It is good that you afflicted me. It is good that you dealt harshly with me. I think another psalm says, For now I'm walking with you. That's the fruitful harvest that Hebrews is talking about.

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but in the end yields a fruitful, pleasant harvest. What's the pleasant harvest? It's being on good terms with your maker.

[27 : 38] The one who made you, who loves you, who knows every cell in your body, who has your life in the palm of his hand, who gives you good food and good love and people and beauty and all these things.

The God who made you, who sent his son to die for you. That's who is behind all of this. He's going to use your sin to turn you back to him. And so if you will just do that, I can't promise you how your consequences will play out for your crisis, but if you'll just start loving the Lord with a pure heart, if you'll start prioritizing that of drawing near to him, I promise you, that's why all this is happening, is to get you back to that spot.

And listen, if you've never been in that spot, I will just tell you point blank. In the Southern Baptist world, we used to have the prayer of salvation and the prayer of rededication.

And I, you know, I just grew up in that world. I heard both those prayers. And at some point in my early 20s, it dawned on me, these prayers are saying the exact same thing.

They're just, I have sinned. I need you to forgive me. Jesus, be my Lord and Savior. And give me the relationship, the power to have a relationship with you that I need.

[29 : 15] So what I would just tell you is, is that, you know, what you need to do is you need to go to the Lord. Stop holding. Some of you might be doing this.

Stop trying to discern. Am I saved? Am I not saved? If be saved today. How about that? Today is a day of salvation. What you should do is call upon the name of the Lord and be changed.

Repent. Say, I've neglected you. I haven't lived for you. You've been a tool, an instrument for me to accomplish various things in my life.

I've used your wisdom. I've used your people. I've used your church, whatever. But I want to be your friend. I want to walk with you in the cool of the day.

And I know that Jesus did come in the flesh. And that he did die on a cross for my sins, including the sins that I've committed against you that have led me to this spot.

[30 : 16] So, Lord, I want to be yours. I want to be yours. Whatever that means, whatever has to happen, whether I have to get saved or whether I have to get brought back, just ask the Lord, give me what I need to be your friend.

And then the next day and the day after that and the day after that, just prioritize talking to him. Prioritize talking to him. Prioritize asking him for a new heart. Prioritize asking him for the joy of your salvation. Start meditating every day on the reality is that you got into the situation because you ignored him.

In meaningful ways, you ignored him. You didn't ignore ideas, principles. You ignored a person. The person. From whom all persons come. And just try to stir up in your heart like this sense of, I am actually a man or a woman who has neglected the one person I should never have neglected.

And seek to resolve that. And you would be shocked just by insisting on that and pursuing that, seeking that, that you will, you will really be shocked by how sweet your heart is, even if your life is hard for a season.

[31 : 48] I would just point you to Psalm 51, but specifically to Psalm 51 in the sense of, it is a place for a person in a crisis to go to reconnect with the person who allowed the crisis to, you know, bloom.

That is God, who has been, who has had a plan for a very long time to get you to this spot. Not so that you can scramble around and try to manage situations and manage opinions.

And not lose everything and so forth. He's brought you to this spot to sober you up and say, we need to talk. And so I would just encourage you to not waste your crisis and definitely to talk.

You'll find there on the other side of this whole thing, a God who is really, really a joy to know, to walk with and to listen to.