

Women's Bible Study - Women in Transition

The Bleeding Woman: Touched by Jesus

Dealing with Physical Pain in a Godly Way

Teacher: Jann Wright

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The dynamics of organizations and the inner workings of teams have always held a special fascination for me. I thought this morning/evening I would begin by giving you a little window into the inner workings of your team of teaching leaders: Gretchen, Lorie, Michelle, and myself. Each semester before we begin the actual preparation of specific teaching lessons we meet to decide which teacher will teach which lesson.

In this initial round of discussions usually each teacher has chosen one lesson that they really want to teach. Perhaps it is a favorite character or topic for which they have particular insight or passion. Surprisingly we have never had two teachers request the same topic in this phase. For example, none of us wrestled Gretchen when she requested to teach on the life of Tamar.

We continue selecting topics until we are left with the final four teaching lessons. This round is usually a little more difficult. Sometimes at this point we decide to combine ideas or even eliminate some topics. Sometimes we must choose between remaining topics that are unfamiliar or uncomfortable. Sometimes we have to point out an area of strength that one of our fellow teachers doesn't recognize.

This fall as we were in this final round of discussions, it seemed that the topic of suffering just by process of elimination would be assigned to me. Finally, as I felt the intensity increase, I blurted out, "O.K, I can, I will teach on suffering; but what do I know about suffering? To me having a root canal is a traumatic experience". Gretchen looked at me and said in a quiet kind voice, "But, Jann both of your parents suffered and died from cancer before you were 38 years old." I guess I had tucked that detail so far in a tender part of my heart, that even I had missed the connection.

That was how I began with the topic of suffering. I agreed to teach it. I thought maybe I had a little personal experience to bring to the topic. But, honestly I didn't have a clue how I was going to teach this lesson.

I read the Bible passage on the Bleeding Woman a couple of times. I think each time remarking to the Lord, "I have no idea how you want me to teach this; and by the way I still think you have the wrong teacher for this assignment". I did

not realize that even at that point God was preparing my heart for some very special instruction.

As I shared in September, but will briefly recap here: my in-laws came for what was to be a short visit in August; but within a brief span of just a few hours life changed dramatically for all of us. My mother-in-law was diagnosed with lung cancer. It was completely unexpected. She was the caregiver for my father-in-law and was here for his medical appointments. Surgery to remove her lung was scheduled the next business day.

She is currently living with our family and is in week two of a five week set of radiation treatments. She attends our morning Women's Bible Study and is very kind to let me share her story. My father-in-law is now in a nursing home here in town. Suffering is not an experience observed years ago; but a visible part of every day.

On the morning of her surgery, and I do mean morning we had to report to the hospital at 5:30 a.m., my mother-in-law, told me that she had something she wanted to share with me. She said, "The other evening when I was over at your house, and you were occupied with the children I picked up one of your books to flip through it. My dear mother-in-law who is always careful not to offend added, I didn't loose your place and you have told me before that books in the family room are public and are fair game". The book was Praying the Names of Jesus. She said, "I just let the pages fall open where they would and this is the passage that opened for me. It brought me great comfort and I wanted to share it with you". This was the passage:

And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped. "Who touched me?" Jesus asked.

When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you." But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me."¹(Luke 8:43-46)

That is the passage on the Bleeding Woman; the text for today's lecture. We had not even discussed the general theme for the fall series, and I had never discussed which lectures I would be teaching. Ladies, that is one of those divine appointments, when it feels like God is tapping you on the shoulder, saying, "Are you listening? I am speaking. Are you listening?"

Well, if I hadn't been listening intently before, I certainly was now. I began to shift my focus from what experience can I personally bring to this topic, to Lord what are you communicating that I need to hear? So this morning/evening I lay

¹ Spangler, Ann. Praying the Names of Jesus. 2006 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Page 73.

before you some of the lessons I have been learning regarding physical suffering.

Scripture Passage and Context

The story of the Bleeding Woman is told in three of the four gospels. Before we read the scripture passage for today I want to place it in context. Jesus has been in the country of the Gadarenes. This was Gentile territory and is located along the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Here he had cast out demons. The demons had received permission from Jesus to enter a large herd of swine. As a result the swine ran violently down a steep cliff into the sea and perished. The people then begged Jesus to leave their region.

So he got into a boat, crossed over the sea and comes to the other side. A great multitude meets him. One of the rulers of the synagogue emerges from the crowd. His name was Jairus. When he saw Jesus he fell at his feet and begged Him to come saying, "My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live." Jesus goes with him surrounded by a great multitude including the disciples.

It is at this point that we encounter the bleeding woman. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke record her story. I want to read all three passages that describe her interaction with Jesus because the three authors each provide a little different angle of her story. As we put those various snapshots together we get a rather detailed picture of this woman and her Lord. I am reading from the New King James Version.

Matthew 9:20-22

²⁰ And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment. ²¹ For she said to herself, "If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well." ²² But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, "Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well." And the woman was made well from that hour.

Mark 5:25-34

²⁵ Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, ²⁶ and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷ When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. ²⁸ For she said, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well." ²⁹ Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction. ³⁰ And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My clothes?" ³¹ But His disciples said to Him, "You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, Who touched Me?" ³² And He looked around to see her who had done this thing. ³³ But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. ³⁴ And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction."

Luke 8:43-46

⁴³ Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any, ⁴⁴ came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped. ⁴⁵ And Jesus said, "Who touched Me?" When all denied it, Peter and those with him said, "Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" ⁴⁶ But Jesus said, "Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me." ⁴⁷ Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before Him, she declared to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately. ⁴⁸ And He said to her, "Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace."

The story of the Bleeding Woman is sandwiched in the middle of the healing of Jairus' daughter. This provides us with several very interesting contrasts. Jairus, obviously male, was a respected leader in the synagogue. In fact, from the Greek words used in the passage we learn that he was actually the chief official of the synagogue. That made him the highest ranking religious official in Capernaum.² He was important, well-known, and respected.

In contrast the Bleeding Woman, is somewhat anonymous. We never even learn her name. She holds no rank in the community, but is instead an outcast. Commentator John MacArthur notes regarding her bleeding condition that, "such an affliction was not uncommon, and the Jewish Talmud prescribed eleven different cures for it. Among the remedies, most of them superstitious, was that of carrying the ashes of an ostrich egg in a linen bag in the summer and in a cotton bag in the winter."³

Can you imagine the humiliation and the ridicule? In addition she would have been excluded from many everyday interactions with others. Leviticus 15:19-20 says, "If a woman has a discharge, and the discharge from her body is blood, she shall be set apart seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening. ²⁰Everything that she lies on during her impurity shall be unclean; also everything that she sits on shall be unclean". Everything and everyone that she touched would have been rendered unclean. She had suffered from this condition which was probably caused by a tumor or other disease of the uterus and the resulting ceremonial uncleanness for twelve years.

Jairus was likely rich or at least financially well off. He had a large household with servants. She was poor. We are told that she had spent all that she had on physicians and was no better for it. Jairus approaches Jesus openly. She is allowed to approach no one openly. She comes to Jesus in secret.

There are great contrasts between Jairus and the Bleeding Woman; but they do have a few things in common. They are both in desperate need. They are both

² MacArthur, John. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Matthew 8-15. page 76.

³ MacArthur, John. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Matthew 8-15. page 80.

at the end of their resources. Both come humbly to Jesus and expect him to do something.

Jesus was accessible to both of them. Even though they were viewed very differently in the eyes of the people of their day. Jesus was available and willing to help them. He went with Jairus to see his young daughter and heal her, and He healed the bleeding woman. We also note in this interaction the power to heal comes directly from Jesus. The Bleeding Woman is healed not because of the magical properties of Jesus' robe but because of his divine power.

God's Nature is to Heal and Make Whole

What can we learn from this passage that is applicable today? The first thing we learn is something about the nature of God. God's nature is composed of many different attributes. It is almost as though we are looking at a magnificent one of a kind gem with such intricate cuts and angles that each one provides a dazzling point of light that makes the whole even more spectacular. God is love. God is faithful. God is just. God is merciful. God disciplines. God judges. God displays wrath. All of these and many others compose the nature of God.

I have been reading the Bible through this year, using a plan that placed the gospels on the schedule to be read during the summer. As I began reading the gospels I was struck by the fact that, at least in the middle portions of each gospel, Jesus seemed to be healing all of the time.

Matthew 8. I am reading selected verses from this chapter.

When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. ²And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." ³Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

⁵Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, ⁶saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented." ⁷And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." ¹⁴Now when Jesus had come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever. ¹⁵So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them. ¹⁶When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick . . .

That is just one chapter in Matthew, Mark 6:56 Wherever He entered, into villages, cities, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well.

Luke 7:12-14, And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And

He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother.

John 9:1-3 "Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. ²And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in Him. (Verse 6) When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed they eyes of the blind man with the clay. ⁷And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam. So he went and washed, and came back seeing.

As I read all of those chapters I thought, my goodness, it seems He is healing all the time, almost as though it just flows from his nature. As though his desire to heal is so near the surface that it just pours out of him as He encounters suffering people. My conclusion was that it is **God's Nature to Heal and to Make Whole.**

I realize an immediate objection to that conclusion is, "Why isn't He healing and making whole all those who now suffer"? I can't answer that completely; but let us consider the fact that we do not see the full and complete revelation of many of God's attributes now. We do not see the full demonstration of His power. We see glimpses of it. We do not see the full and complete revelation of His authority; but we see glimpses of it. We do not see the full and complete revelation of His wrath; but we see glimpses of it. Perhaps it is the same with Healing; we do not see the full and complete revelation of His Healing; but we see glimpses of it.

And all of these glimpses point us to a sure and certain reality that will come. He has provided us with enough evidence to know that He does have full and complete authority over physical suffering and healing. He healed the lame, made the blind see, healed the sick, and even raised the dead. One day we will see the full and complete revelation of His Healing.

Getting Through the Suffering

It is helpful to remind ourselves of God's nature and to further clarify it by looking at the life of Jesus; but how are we going to get through physical suffering on a moment by moment day by day experience. I want to stop for just a moment and speak directly to those of you who are right now in the midst of incredible physical suffering. It has been my experience that when you are in the midst of great suffering it is very difficult for you to feel that the person teaching the Bible lesson really understands the depth of your suffering. Sometimes, applications can sound as though the teacher has a pat easy answer for everything. It is not my intent to convey that. I have prayed that it will not be my words or my voice that you hear; but that the voice you hear will be the whisper of Christ who always says just the right things, at just that right time, in just the right way. Physical suffering takes many forms; but the key is how do

we get through our physical suffering small or great with a Godly attitude. How can we do that?

Praise

First, we begin with Praise. When we are in the middle of physical suffering that can be very difficult. Praise is usually not one of our first responses. We have to make a conscious decision to offer the sacrifice of praise.

Psalm 42 says,² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?³ My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"⁴ These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng.⁵ Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and⁶ my God. (NIV)

Offer a sacrifice of praise to God. In the midst of your suffering look for the provision of God; it will be there. Perhaps in the midst of terrible physical suffering God has provided skilled physicians, adequate medical coverage, family to care for you, friends to pray with you. Perhaps he has given you a sense of peace and security. Praise Him for these gifts.

Praise Him for who He is. He is holy, merciful, faithful, patient, forgiving, and loving. God is our atoning sacrifice. God is our deliverer. God is our Healer. God is our provider. God is our Peace. God is our Comforter. We can praise Him for all of these attributes.

When you stumble for words, Praise Him with scripture. The psalms are particularly helpful. Try Psalm 103: Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!²Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: ³Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, ⁴Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.

Praise Him with Songs. There are many hymns that are wonderful prayers of praise: Great is Thy Faithfulness; Holy, Holy, Holy; a Mighty Fortress is our God, and many others. Praise Him. It will help you gain perspective and it is a wonderful antidote for depression.

Pray

Secondly, pray, or as a favorite Kathy Troccoli song says, Talk to Jesus. Just as Jesus was accessible and available for the woman in this story, He is accessible and available to you. You can talk to him anytime. You don't have to push your way through a crowd, or compete with others' needs to talk to Him. You can talk to him anytime. It is your schedule and priorities that will keep you from accessing Him.

Jesus uniquely understands suffering. He walked the earth 2,000 years ago and saw up close hurting and suffering people. He uniquely can understand the destruction sin has wrought on man.

Jesus experienced excruciating physical suffering in his own very human body. Physical suffering produces a very special kind of empathy in us that I think we gain no other way. When we have suffered breast cancer, chemotherapy, radiation treatments, fibromyalgia, frequent headaches, or even a root canal, we are much more sensitive to others who are going through the same pain. Think how much more Jesus is able to be sensitive to our pain and suffering.

Hebrews 4:14-16 says, Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

A Caution

A caution for your conversation, be careful not to Darken His Counsel. That phrase is from Job, 38:2. Job and his friends have gone on for chapters and chapters attributing negative attributes to God's character. Finally God answers the charges which have been leveled against him. The first question He asks is, "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?"

We can certainly pour out our hearts to God. We can question why bad things happen to us and those we love. We can ask him to reveal to us the purpose behind our suffering. We can ask all of those things, and more as we seek His wisdom, and pleading for His mercy.

However, we want to be careful not to darken his counsel; by attributing wrong motives to God. The Israelites seemed almost expert in this negative behavior. Deuteronomy 1:22, and you complained in your tents, and said, "Because the LORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. Can you imagine accusing God of such ill treatment of his people when in fact he was bringing them into a glorious land with abundant resources and freedom which they had never known?"

This is darkening his counsel, throwing mud on his character. We have to be careful that we also do not accuse God of ill treatment when we do not understand all of his purposes for us. When we throw mud on God's character, we do not darken Him; we simply get our hands dirty and damage our relationship. Mind you God doesn't change his relationship with us, but by this kind of thinking and mudslinging we alter our understanding of God and take ourselves in directions that are totally unhelpful.

Scripture

Thirdly, to get through the suffering day by day, we need to seek God through His Word. Scripture will provide balm to our souls in a way no other words can. The kind words of friends spoken and written to us in heartfelt cards are a tremendous comfort; but nothing comforts like God's word.

John 14:1-3

¹Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ²In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

It is important for us each day, to seek God through His Word. During the relative seasons of calm and health in our life we can build strong spiritual foundations from the scriptures that will comfort us and sustain in times of physical suffering.

For a Season

Finally, our suffering is for a season. 1 Peter 1:3-6 says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵who are kept by the power God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,

Our suffering is for a season. From our perspective that season can feel very long because we do not know how long suffering will be required from us or what its purpose will be. We can know that the ultimate purpose is to mold us into the image of Christ and to point others to God and His glory.

Remember the story of the blind man we read earlier? The disciples asked whose sin resulted in the blindness and Jesus said, sin was not the cause of this physical suffering, but it was so that the works of God could be revealed. Suffering in a Godly way molds us into the image of Christ, reminds us of the suffering of Christ, and brings Glory to God.

We can know that our suffering has purpose. We can also know that there is a time limit. God will not let our suffering go on forever. He will either provide us a measure of healing on this earth, the grace to endure, or He will usher us into his presence in heaven. Revelation 21:4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.

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*Women in Transition: **The Bleeding Woman:** Touched by Jesus*
Transition from Pain to Deliverance
Dealing with Physical Pain in a Godly Way
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Intensive Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 9:20-22. Read Mark 5:25-34. Read Luke 8:43-48.
2. From these scripture passages write down some facts about the "Bleeding Woman" and her suffering.
3. Set a timer for 5 minutes and spend the time thinking about a time in your life that you have experienced physical suffering. (Please don't evaluate your suffering relative to others suffering. Just spend some time thinking about your own experiences.)
4. During that time of suffering how did you feel physically? Describe some of your physical symptoms.
5. During that time how did you feel emotionally?
6. How did your physical and emotional symptoms impact you spiritually?
7. God's Nature is Healing and Restoration. Can you back this statement up with scripture?
 - 2 Scriptures from the Old Testament
 - 2 Scriptures from the New Testament
8. What can we learn from Jesus' response to the woman?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Think about a time in your life that you have experienced physical suffering. (Please don't evaluate your suffering relative to others suffering. Just think about your own experiences.)

2. During that time of suffering how did you feel physically? Describe some of your physical symptoms.

3. During that time how did you feel emotionally?

4. How did your physical and emotional symptoms impact you spiritually?

5. How do you respond to the premise that God is a God of Healing and Restoration? What particular scriptures do you find compelling to understanding this aspect of God's nature.

6. What did you find helpful from the lecture to help you or others cope with physical suffering?