

HEALING THE WOUNDS OF TRAUMA - WORKING WITH CHURCH LEADERS

Judy Hill

Summary

This seminar will explain the growth and development of a trauma healing ministry in Africa. Over the last 5 years, church leaders from 14 countries have come to central workshops where they have been exposed to good mental health principles within a Biblical framework. The participants have studied a specially prepared manual and translated it into various African languages, while also having some of their own trauma healed. They have then returned home to run local courses. This seminar will explain what happens during the training, and also discuss some possible future developments of the work.

Outline of session using PowerPoint

1. Reasons for a translation organization getting involved in a trauma healing ministry
2. Description of the workshops to include
 - a. Content of the manual
 - b. Translation into African languages
 - c. Evening sharing sessions
 - d. Use of music and creation of laments
 - e. Ceremonies used
3. Stories and descriptions of the local seminars held by the church leaders
4. Plans for the future – healing the community
5. Questions

Countries and languages involved so far

DRC:	Lingala, Hema, Ndurma, Congo Swahili
Sudan:	Nuer, Moru,
CAR:	Sango
Chad :	Mango, Kim, Chadian Arabic
Congo Brazzaville:	Munukutuba, Lingala
Nigeria:	Hausa, Berom, Tarok, Izere
Sierra Leone:	Krio
Liberia:	Gbandi, Gola, Klao, Kpelle, Kuwaa, Lorma
Ivory Coast:	Kouya, Dan, Bete, Nyabwa, Wobe
Ghana:	Dagamba and Nkonya
Uganda:	Acholi
Burundi:	KiBrurundi
Togo/Ghana	Ewe

Plus, English, French, Indonesian and PNG pidgin

Some quotes from participants on the trauma healing seminars:

“This workshop on trauma has gone a long way to give me more hope and to remind me that God remains God. The need to forgive has also been impressed on my mind, and I think God has used the loss to give me a ministry – that of reconciliation... The seminar has changed me. My anger and sadness have nearly gone. I am going back to Nigeria happier than when I came.” Nigeria

*“When I was an adolescent, I received blows during the traditional initiation. I saw Christians who were buried alive because of their faith in Christ. Now my colleagues persecute me because of my reputation as a Christian. These two situations have traumatized me. Indeed, I tried several times to forget and forgive, but the wounds paralyze my mind when I think about these things or when I meet these people. Praise the Lord because this workshop helped me to know my illnesses and myself. This workshop helped me to bring my pain, my wounds to the cross of Jesus and be released totally. I can go back after this workshop with my soul appeased and my heart healed.” **Chad***

*“Now I understand why I was often angry. Also now I see how to help others who have been traumatized. I now have freedom from anger and deep hate. ” **Cote d’Ivoire***

*“I was able to forgive my brother that I had been angry with a long time.” **Liberia***

One of the most powerful exercises was the time when the participants first studied Biblical laments and then wrote their own. Here is a lament written by a woman from Ivory Coast.

Lucy’s Lament

Eternal, see what has happened to me
My soul is beaten down inside me
And I don’t know what to do
I cry about our situation because I am in distress
All that I build during the years is destroyed
Everything is destroyed, as simply as if someone turned over a glass of water on the ground.
I don’t know if we will can rebuild all that.
Come to my rescue, Lord. Come and deliver us.
Look at these evil doers who are enjoying our goods.
They looted our house, they took all our goods, they have destroyed all our souvenirs.
My throat is tight
My heart bleeds, when I see our situation
I am miserable and I suffer.
I don’t understand myself why in one wink
I lost everything.
Look, Lord, at all the evil that is killing me
When I cry to you, I notice that you don’t react
That you don’t say anything about my misery
How long will you leave me in this situation
I still know, even if suffering makes me let words come out of my heart

An excerpt from the manual

Lesson 3

What Happens When Someone is Grieving?

The Story of Pastor Peter

In the Boka district of Bingola, there had been fierce fighting. Many people had been killed, women and children as well as the men actually involved in the fighting. Peter was the pastor of a large church in the main town of the area. As the situation in the area got worse, more and more of his church members were killed and those who remained were hiding in their houses.

Finally, one week almost all the people in the town fled from the fighting into the bush. Pastor Peter went with a group of 100 people, and they decided together to walk into the next country where they thought they would be safe. On the way, Pastor Peter's wife fell sick and because they had no way to get medicine, she died. Because of the danger, they buried her very quickly in the bush and then continued the journey. It took them three weeks to walk through the bush to safety. As they walked, more people became sick, particularly the small children and the old people. Six more people died before they arrived safely in the next country.

They were able to find a place to stay provided by a large church there, and they began to find ways of finding food and making some money. Soon more of the church members arrived to join them, and after a few weeks Pastor Peter had over half of his church members there with him. They still came to Peter for help and each day, and especially on Sundays, they met together to pray and read God's Word.

Peter soon became very concerned about the state of some of the Christians. Some of the adults who had lost family members were very sad and wouldn't try to find work, or even help to find food. They seemed to have lost interest in life in general. One man kept saying over and over again, "If only I had thought to take some medicine with us, my wife would be alive today!" One of the woman who had lost her husband was repeatedly telling everyone that she could hear her husband speaking to her. Another woman insisted that her son had not died even though everyone had seen his dead body. She kept expecting him to arrive with the next group of refugees.

Often Peter himself had really bad nightmares and woke up crying out for his wife. He was also angry inside though he knew he shouldn't show this. He was angry with God, and even with his wife for dying and leaving him. He was also very angry with the rebels who had caused the war. Because he couldn't show this anger openly, it was burning him inside and giving him bad headaches and stomach aches.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is wrong with Peter?
2. Have you ever felt like Peter?
3. How can Peter be helped?

Training courses for trainers

Dallas November 6-10th 06

Nairobi, at the Tumaini Centre, February 5-6th 07

For details, write to Margaret Hill at margaret_hill@sil.org

June 18-24, 2006, Goudini Spa, South Africa