



Wednesday Prayer

5th Sunday in Lent – The language of religion

Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Psalm 51:9-12

How do we, as Christians, choose healing words to speak to young people whose most basic and intimate identities have been flayed open by cruel adults who have sexually abused them? As I read Psalm 51, I see words I would not want to readily share with someone who had such a traumatic experience. The full Psalm is King David's plea to God to show him mercy for his sins after being confronted by Nathan "Why have you despised the LORD's word by doing what is evil in his eyes? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and taken his wife as your own." (2 Samuel 12:9) David pleads for God's everlasting forgiveness and grace. But for someone so deeply harmed by others, they might ask, "Why would your 'loving' God hide His face from me? And why do I need to have Him 'create in me a pure heart' when I had one of those and it was ripped out and replaced with only fear, hatred, and shame?" These are hard questions which those who have been sexually abused or trafficked have every right to ask. So how does the church respond?

We can start with something called "Trauma Informed Response." We can tell the individual that we honor their needs: sit, stand, or leave at any time, and say if they are feeling uncomfortable. Know that memory of trauma is not linear; it is fragmented and is literally carried in one's mind *and* body. Assure the trauma survivor of our intention to develop a trusting and reliable relationship with them. Healthy human relationships model the healing value of a relationship with God. And even then, we must remain committed to sharing God's Word in ways that affirm rather than condemn. Time does not heal trauma the same way it may heal other psychic wounds: we must often walk with a survivor back through their pain over and over until they believe they are truly on a path to healing.

The way we respond to people in crisis matters. David's story may seem like a universal Christian message because we "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). For trauma survivors, we must be sure to share the next part of the message, that "all are justified freely by His grace" (v.24). God's grace and abundant love will never leave us.

Healing and Redeeming Lord, grant that we may make a way where there seems no way forward for survivors of sexual violence. May your gentleness and grace permeate our work to end these egregious crimes and heal all who have been victimized by them. In Your Holy Name we pray, Amen.

Written by Meg Corrigan, Christian author, speaker and survivor. Visit www.MegCorrigan.com or email her at MegCorrigan@comcast.net to learn more.

Learn about Trauma-Informed Congregations: [Trauma and Resilience - Faith Health Transformation](#)
[Link to Cherish All Children Lenten Prayers to Prevent Child Sexual Exploitation.](#)