



# Pinewood Lutheran Church

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Trauma causes pain and leaves scars—both physical and emotional. The physical ones heal over and eventually we appear whole once again. But what about the emotional ones? As a Christian this especially interests me.

Some venues of very modern research have determined something I've instinctively "felt" for a long time. That is, the idea that emotional trauma can imprint on a person's DNA and be transmitted to subsequent generations. Remember the conclusion of the commandments where Dr. Luther quotes God saying in Deuteronomy 5:9: "I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me..."? I think this is also an oblique reference to what I'm talking about. Emotional trauma is the result of sin—either your own or when someone else inflicts it upon you. It leaves scars inside. And perhaps those scars can be passed down to future generations because they've never been dealt with on a spiritual plane. Folks, that is a scary thought. It should give every parent pause. The question is: what can we do about it?

Now some will simply dismiss all this as fanciful thinking. I don't because I've seen evidence of it in my ministry. Others might well conclude: "Well, if it's true, than that grudge or penchant for a certain sin might have come from my distant past and so I'm not to blame for succumbing to it!" That's another variation of the old: "The devil made me do it!" But none of this lets you off the hook of responsibility. Even if you inherit certain predilections from your forebears, you are still the one that harbors them, acts on them, and lets them have control over you.

Every week at church we hear forgiveness for our sins announced to us in the absolution, preached in the sermon, and applied to our situations in various ways. NEVER TAKE THIS FOR GRANTED! Godly forgiveness is the one antidote to dealing with any and all trauma. Think of it this way: God never held a grudge against us, even though He had every right to after the fall into sin. But God handled our grudges against Him and His commandments (which our flesh truly hates because they are so restrictive to our wants and desires) by making peace with us through the message of the cross. He Forgave Us! Period. And because of that, as the Bible says: "He remembers our sins no more."

Forgiveness cauterizes any and all emotional wounds. It replaces negative emotions and their pain with the fruits of the Spirit: "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." It rises above the ashes of past hurts and sees the futility of letting emotional pain control us any longer, because forgiveness says: "God is in charge of it all, not me." It says: "My parents or grandparents were wrong, but God is

always right." And it then sees the commandments not as vindictive laws by an angry God, but as liberating guidelines for a blessed life.

Every one of us is a product of our genetic make-up and life experiences. We're not merely "blank slates" upon which the ying and yang of life inscribes its influence. We are also born with certain feelings, phobias, likes, and dislikes which our forebears passed down to us. The most dangerous of those predilections is: "hatred for the things of God." Think about that. If your parents were Christians they took you to church, and thus exposed to the power of God's Word you were baptized, born again of the Spirit, and now walk in that "newness of life." You handle pain and suffering, not with an "I'm going to get even" mentality, but with one that says: "God forgives me and has let go of my sins, so I'm going to do likewise. I'm not going to wimp out and stand for nothing. I'm not going to ignore the hurt that others caused me, or that I brought upon myself. No, I'm going to forgive others, forgive myself, and let God be God in my life." Such a faith as just described is predominated by prayer—prayers of thanks and prayers of praise. It also includes prayers for Godly help because sometimes our flesh is still weak and wants to hold on to the hurtful past. Additionally, it includes prayers for our enemies, as well.

Contrast all that with non-Christian parents, or grandparents and beyond. I think of those clan wars in Scotland where people killed each other for hundreds of years just because they were taught to do so. No one remembered the original conflict or the reasons for it. They just remembered that the Douglas' hated the Buchanan's and so they fought each other. It's so, so, sad. Without active forgiveness hate and animosity just continues to expand.

I write this because I'm really concerned what parents are passing down to their children. How many ignorant adults are dooming future generations of their progeny to hell (literally) because they either have walked away from God or paid Him only casual lip service when it was convenient for them to do so? Parents, when you ignore Sunday School or Sunday worship, what kind of an example are you imprinting on your child? Isn't it: "God isn't really all that important?" Singles, when you get serious about a spouse, does God factor into the equation first, or is He very, very far down the line? I've seen how unbelieving spouses corrupt and pull away weak-willed believers. I've seen their children walk away from God even more. And as to the grandchildren, well, do you want to see them in heaven, or not?

So, today I make this plea to all who read this: Let forgiveness dominate your life! Let it be the impetus behind all your decision-making. It was good enough for our Savior, shouldn't it be good enough for you? One last thought: how many of your progeny will come up to you in heaven and thank you for doing so? Isn't that worth it?

Pastor Thomas H. Fox