

Testimony - 'Sven'

by Gareth Evans

Sven's journey from loneliness and emotional wounds to freedom and community illustrates the power of forgiveness and love in healing.

Scripture: Psalm 27:10, Matthew 11:28, Romans 8:1, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 5:1, Ephesians 4:32

Topics: "Emotional Healing", "Forgiveness Freedom"

Description

Gareth Evans preaches about the impact of childhood wounds on our relationships and self-worth, using the analogy of bruises caused by constant criticism and high expectations. Sven, a missionary, struggled with feeling unworthy of friendship due to his upbringing in a legalistic and critical environment. Through understanding the source of his pain and forgiving his parents, Sven experiences freedom, healing, and a renewed sense of self-worth, leading him to find joy and genuine friendships in his Christian ministry back in Sweden.

Transcript

Sven is from Sweden. He is a quiet giant, but was anything but strong when he sat alongside my desk asking my counsel. He told me how he had had few friends during his youth but had managed to develop good relationships with three colleagues in the two years he had served with this missions organisation.

Now, all three of his friends had left the work to return home and Sven had acted in a very strange way when he heard of their plans.

"I had just returned from my holidays at home and was feeling so good at seeing my friends again, until each one told me of his plans. I then borrowed John's camera and deliberately broke it. Now John has left without speaking a word to me. I have lost his friendship! I said some very unkind things to Alan and Peter and now they want nothing more to do with me. I have no more friends and am so lonely again. Pastor Gareth, why do I do such stupid things?"

We began to talk of his childhood, how he became a believer and how he had come to this mission. I can only describe his home as one of strict legalism, where he was always watched by his parents to see that he did nothing they might consider 'unchristian'. He had no friends as their small church had no other youth attending, and all other boys were too worldly for him to associate with them.

They questioned him, "Have you read your Bible today?" "Have you prayed today?" "Have you spoken to anyone about Jesus lately?", continually making him feel guilty if he didn't live up to their high expectations. They sent him to Bible School when old enough and then told him they expected him to serve the Lord as a missionary. He had dutifully obeyed.

As Sven spoke, I leaned over and punched him on his bulging bicep muscle. "Did that hurt?" I asked. "Of course not!" he replied with a look of surprise. "Sven, if you had fallen over while working on the mission tractor this morning, and had bruised your arm badly, and I had then punched you on the bruise, would that have hurt?" He nodded.

"So what causes the hurt, the punch or the bruise?" "The bruise", he replied.

I then described how I saw him as a large bruise, a wound caused by his parent's constant 'punching' attack and questions. As he had been away from home for two years the bruises of his childhood had gone and he was able to make relationships without feeling guilt and condemnation. However, during his months at home, the attack had recommenced and he had returned to the mission once again bruised.

"When your friends announced their plans to leave, you immediately felt punches on the bruise, believing yourself unworthy of their friendship. It was as though they were leaving because of you - so you had to prove your unworthiness by reacting in the way you did."

Sven fell forward onto my desk and began to weep. "That's exactly how I feel," he said, "just like a great big bruise!"

I explained how his parents had failed to pour love into their only son. They had not given him security, identity, self confidence, though I am sure they thought they were doing the best for him. He understood and, after listening to my teaching on Release, prayed forgiveness and release upon his parents for their 'sins of omission'.

Sven left that mission a short time later to return to Sweden and to enrol in a Christian ministry of his own choosing. I next saw him a year later when, with several members of his former mission, on a visit to Stockholm. To our happy surprise, he was in the welcoming party.

We all looked at one another. Could this enthusiastic, bubbling giant be the same man who had struggled in our work? It was, as Sven so gladly testified.

"Pastor Gareth," he said, "I have been set free! There are no more bruises, no more condemnation. Satan has lost me and I am at home in a fellowship of wonderful friends. Praise the Lord!" My heart could only agree!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/gareth-evans/testimony-sven/>

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