

WHILE HURT REMAINS, HOPE SUSTAINS, THE HEART'S JOURNEY THROUGH SUNDAY SCHOOL

REPORTER: MICHAEL CHAN

Last Sunday School Term had a unique course, "While Hurt Remains, Hope Sustains, Faith Recovery in Trauma," which raised awareness among brothers and sisters. Today, reporter Michael invited the two teachers, Pastor Freddy and Jonathan to learn about their journey.

Michael: **First off, how did you come to the idea of a trauma-related course? Also, what is trauma to you?**

Jonathan: Initially, I intended to invite Pastor Freddy to teach a course for Sunday School. As we continued to chat, I realized that many newcomers from Hong Kong carry a lot of burdens that's been pinching their hearts, which they cannot let go of. That's when I realized that we should have a course, create an opportunity to talk about the issue and have a release.

Pastor Freddy: Pastor Freddy: Yes, the social movement in Hong Kong in 2019 created a strong social unrest. To many in Hong Kong, it was not just a political resistance, but also a traumatic memory. Many newcomers from Hong Kong felt that they did not "choose" to come but were "forced" to come to Canada. As a newcomer from Hong Kong who's been here for 2 years, whenever I meet another person from Hong Kong, we warmly greet each other. However, I also realized that we seldom talk about the why, and even if it is mentioned, it usually ends quickly with the statement, "we all know what happened in Hong Kong," before we revert to chatter about our daily lives. It's like there's an unspoken understanding to avoid the painful memories.

Michael: **What's the goal of the course?**

Pastor Freddy: I remember one time after worship, a brother asked me to go watch a documentary, "Rather be Ashes than Dust." My response without thinking was, "I am interested, but I don't think I am ready for it." That's when I realized that some of the hurt is still lingering in my heart. There are some memories that I still dare not remember. There are some wounds that I lack the courage to visit.

Jonathan: In Trauma Psychology, we use the term "avoidance" to describe that behaviour. The course aims to use biblical characters and their viewpoints to touch these wounds, explore their meaning, and learn to face our past gently. More importantly, it's for brothers and sisters with similar experiences to share and support each other.

Michael: **In terms of cooperation, any discoveries?**

Pastor Freddy: Initially, I didn't know that Jonathan was a professional psychotherapist. Meanwhile, I only took some related courses in my seminary studies. This course is a combination of theology and psychology, using "Literary Trauma Theory" to help students learn more about trauma.

Jonathan: Yes, many Chinese prefer silence and pretend there is nothing after experiencing trauma. This suppression often leads to emotional accumulation, hindering personal relationships and causing self-doubt. Through this course, we can remind everyone that there's no need to act tough.

Michael: Can we talk more about Literary Trauma Theory?

Pastor Freddy: Take the book of Jonah as an example. Often Jonah is criticized for his disobedience. However, in chapter 4, he yelled twice, "It is better for me to die than to live!" Perhaps that was not an exaggeration, but the actual pain he was facing. If Jonah is viewed through the lens of a person who experienced trauma, the initial Israelite audience (who experienced exile and returned) might be more understanding. Through Jonah's experience, they can see God's presence and comfort. This interpretation of the biblical story provides a connection to our lives today.

Michael: Finally, what suggestions do you have for anyone, or anyone who has friends who are experiencing trauma?

Jonathan: Many think that we can do something to help, but the options are very limited, even for professionals. For example, as a person who's been in Canada for over 20 years, I can never fully understand the experience of newcomers. The most important thing is to be there and listen.

Pastor Freddy: I agree. We need to provide a safe space for them to share and feel companionship. We must also remember that God is real, and the gift of hope will never diminish.

From the interview, we can see that courses are not just about learning, but it's a heartfelt journey. While the pain may still be here, but God is also here, and hope is still here.