

## HHM - 33 Healing with Perseverance, Forgiveness, and Faith

David Sandstrom 0:00

Here's a sample of what you'll hear on today's episode of Holistic Health Matters.



Carey Portell 0:05

I feel like more the forgiveness was more for me because I just didn't want that inside of me anymore. It just let something go off of my shoulders and my heart and just brought me a peace.

David Sandstrom 0:18

Welcome to the Holistic Health Matters podcast where it's all about maximizing our health potential by aligning our lives more fully with God's design for spirit, mind and body. I'm your host, David Sandstrom, naturopathic doctor, and biblical health coach. And this is episode number 33.

Today, we have Carrie Portell on the show. And she is a drunk driving survivor with an amazing story. Carrie, welcome to the show.

Carey Portell 0:48

Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

David Sandstrom 0:50

So tell us a little bit about what happened to you.

Carey Portell 0:54

Well, my story goes back 10 years, it'll be 10 years, this December 29, that two of my children and I were hit by a drunk driver. And it was pretty severe, you know, is not at a time that usually think about being hit by a drunk driver. It was on Wednesday, at around 620 in the evening that my middle two children and I were just going into town, and I don't remember it myself that there were four vehicles involved. But there was, there was three of us in one lane, you know, following one another. And we were all hit at some point, you know, by by the drunk driver, but our car was hit the most severely.

David Sandstrom 1:35

Okay, and what happened during the accident.

Carey Portell 1:38

Actually, during the car crash there, there was a truck and a trailer in front of me. And there was a suburban that was directly behind me. And the three of us were laughing in the car, or the girls were making a joke. And I had kind of looked at both of them. And when I took my eyes back to the road in front of me, there was this truck just barreling towards us and he was on the wrong side of the highway. There's just a moment where you go, you're completely astonished. But in the next moment, you know that this is going to happen, and you're trying to search for any way possible to avoid it.

David Sandstrom 2:15

And this was just a couple days after Christmas on December 29. Correct? Yes. Wow, does that does this time of year bring back difficult memories for you?

Carey Portell 2:25

It's, you know, it's always there. My birthday is actually Christmas Eve. So we celebrated my birthday and Christmas. And then you know, you have that time where the kids are off school in between Christmas and New Year's. And it's, you know, I was so busy having surgeries, the first four years, and I always had one in December, that I really never had time to dwell on it. And I'm not really that type of person anyway, but it is just always there. It's not a looming feeling anymore. You know, we all recognize it. But we say thank God for what we have and that we're all still alive instead of the opposite and thinking negatively towards it.

David Sandstrom 3:12

Yeah. Well, you know, part of holistic health is processing our emotions properly. And I want to get into that a little later. But first, I want to clarify exactly what happened in the accident. So you hit by a truck was it like a big semis or a pickup truck or what what was it?

Carey Portell 3:25

I think it was I think they said maybe a one time GMC truck. You just a normal truck, you know, on a two lane highway

David Sandstrom 3:34

And the driver was killed the drive the drunk driver was killed instantly correct? Correct. Yeah. And what happened to you all?

Carey Portell 3:41

The girls each had moderate injuries. Our daughter who was in the front seat had a big seatbelt laceration in her abdomen and then my daughter in the

backseat broke her arm. You know, of course there was lots of bruising, glass, you know, small glass lacerations for them but me I had two points of impact. We we hit head on but then he hit the side, my driver side door so I had severe lower body damage. You know, I had so many injuries everywhere. But my three worst were my pelvis and both of my lower legs and ankles. So how long was your recovery? It was actually four years total because I was just I was nonstop surgeries trying to get my bones to be able to hold my weight and just heal correctly. Because whenever they are shattered to that severity, some of those pieces of bone The surgeon said, you know, we just we couldn't use them. They were so splintered. So they were hoping that my my bones would fill in themselves and they just didn't get to that point. So I had three bone grafts and then they had taken some of my bone marrow you know, in different surgeries to kind of fill in those spots that wouldn't heal correctly and it took four years to be able to stand on my own Without any support, but I since then many more surgeries. So to date, I've had 13 surgeries total.

David Sandstrom 5:07

Wow, that is amazing. I don't I don't want to minimize what you went through because I can't even imagine heaven 13 surgeries, but I did have a letter fall about four years ago, I fell 26 feet. And I basically piled drive my tibia, the lower leg bone through my heel bone, my calcaneus. And that bone was shattered as well. And the first surgeon I saw said that he wanted to fuse my my ankle, and it was going to lose the ability to tilt my foot. And it was pretty big deal. Because here where I live in Roswell, it's very hilly. I was planning on getting a second opinion. And the next doctor, I went to hurt him talking with some of the interns in the next room. He walks in. And after he introduced himself, he said, we've taken a look at your x rays. I've got enough bone fragment to put your heel back together, we're not even going to talk about a fusion. And I said your hired.

Carey Portell 5:59

Oh my. Yes, yes. Because that's actually what we've done. Both of my ankles are fused. And now after many surgeries that they just wouldn't hold up, you know, and they cause pain and then part of my pelvis doesn't move either.

David Sandstrom 6:13

Mm hmm. Well, I I'm very blessed. I had a great surgeon, and Don Harry at Emory University in Atlanta, and I have almost full use of my foot back. It's pretty amazing.

Carey Portell 6:24

Oh, that's wonderful.

David Sandstrom 6:25

I Thank God for how well I healed. So your your journey was a lot longer. I was out of work for seven months, but four years now that's a different story. I think that the perseverance and the mental battle that you must have been going through, it was probably very challenging for you. Am I right?

Carey Portell 6:41

Oh, is that the mental battle, that is what it is all about. I mean, the physical you can get through but having the mental tenacity to keep continuing, you know, to strive towards walking was my main goal and getting through the pain. I think that was the the biggest challenge that I faced during this whole time. And honestly, it's still the biggest challenge because my pain has not ended and then nor will it ever end, just because it's so severe. So mentally, I like every day is a mental game, like I have to say, okay, carry today is going to be a good day. And if it's not that I have to say, okay, you know, we're gonna do whatever we can today, and we're just gonna scratch it, and we're gonna wake up tomorrow and try again.

David Sandstrom 7:31

Yeah, when I when I was laid up with my surgery, that was what I spent a lot of time finishing off my book, The Christians Guide to Holistic Health. And one of the things I learned from doing that research is that mental emotional component can play a very big role in our physical health as well, because when we hold on to toxic emotions, such as bitterness, anger, rage, certainly hatred, those kinds of things, they will manifest in the physical and they would absolutely impair your healing from this kind of trauma. So talk to me a little bit about how you handled that.

Carey Portell 8:04

Yeah, I agree with that. 100% I, in my presentations, one of the biggest points that I make is that if I, if I held on to the bitterness and the frustration, and just let my attitude slip really bad, I there's no way that I would have healed to the point that I am today, because they weren't sure how well I was really going to be able to walk. And they were sure that I was going to be a full time wheelchair user, you know, pretty quickly. And wow, I really, really well for myself, and I, I think one having a phenomenal support system is essential. And then honestly, just making the choice. When you're in the moment, or in my case, every day, I have to make a choice of what my attitude is going to be if you don't do that, or don't use your support system. Your healing both, I think in all aspects, whether it's physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, it's going to have a huge impact.

David Sandstrom 9:06

Yeah, absolutely. And you know, one of the things is we have to consider is the placebo effect and the power of suggestion. When the surgeon and the white

lab coat says, You're never going to walk again, that can have a powerful impact on what your outcome actually is. So where are you at in your your journey? Are you still in a wheelchair or are you walking?

Carey Portell 9:26

Yeah, I actually I didn't use a wheelchair. Well, I should say I was in a wheelchair the first two years pretty much full time because I was having so many surgeries and my body could not hold my own weight yet. After that I slowly started walking or standing, you know, here and there. And then at that four years, I could take around 2000 No, I'm sorry. 3000 steps a day. And I did that for quite a few years and then and my injuries just really started to deteriorate. And I started going lower and lower. And now I'm somewhere around like 1700. This year, what I'm really trying to do is prioritize how I want to use my steps. When I'm in my house, I try to use my wheelchair as much as possible so that I can go like to the grocery store and walk around and just use, use my step accordingly. You know, if I want to go to an event, like a family event or something where I know, I need to use a few more steps than normal, I'll save them for that type thing. So it's definitely a lot of preparation.

David Sandstrom 10:32

Wow. I know one of the things that I would be struggling with if I were in your shoes, and that is, why me God, why did you allow this to happen to me, you're sovereign, you're in control. And yet this still happened? Have you ever asked yourself that question?

Carey Portell 10:50

I have so many people ask me that question and say, you know, if it would have been me, I'd have been so angry. I don't know if it's because I was in so much pain, and then having the constant surgeries that I just didn't feel like I even had time to ask why me, it might also be my personality, where I used to work in the healthcare field, and I would see this type of thing happen to patients all the time. I just know, it can always happen. So for me, I never asked why me. But I was really frustrated that I couldn't do the things that I used to be able to do and having four young children. That is the part that really messed with my mind was I couldn't be the mom that I knew that I should be able to be. And that was away from me. So I was really frustrated with that part. But I never really asked why me because I just, I knew that it could always happen. And I never thought it would. But I just I always had that inside of me. Well, you know, life happens. So what are we going to do now? That's the type of that's the type of ant like questions and answers that I had for myself.

David Sandstrom 12:02

Right, I get it.

David Sandstrom 12:08

So you've decided to make some improvements to your health and well being, you're listening to shows like this, where you can get information that can help take your health to the next level. The trouble is, getting educated and implementing effective strategies is time consuming, and can be expensive, not to mention, overwhelming. That's why I wrote my book, the Christians Guide to Holistic Health. In my book, I've taken 20 years of research and experience as a natural and holistic health coach, and distilled it down to what you need to know, to maximize your health potential in spirit, mind and body. It's my contention that we maximize our health potential by aligning our lives more fully with God's design for spirit, mind and body. My book, the Christians guide to holistic health will put you on the fast track to the vibrant health and vitality you've been looking for. By the way, many of my recommendations won't cost you a nickel, they're free. Because a lot of my message is simply aligning our lives more fully with the Word of God. That doesn't cost you a thing. If you'd like to avoid overwhelm and get some biblically based holistic health information that you can implement right away. Go to my website, DavidSandstrom.com forward slash book, that's D A V I, D, s, a n d, s, t, r o. m, as in mike.com, forward slash book, and you can learn more and pick up a copy today. If that doesn't work, you can go directly to Amazon. It's available there in paperback, Kindle, and audible. It let's get back to the show.

David Sandstrom 13:52

Did you come to a point where you had to forgive this drunk driver?

Carey Portell 13:57

I did. And actually it was pretty quickly it was it was within the first I would say three to four months that it really started consuming me. And it was, you know, I had all these questions for God and I really wasn't hearing an answer. And in retrospect, you know, he couldn't really ask me to do anything or give me any answers because he just needed me to heal first. Yeah. It there was a very specific point in time where I had this moment that I kept asking, you know, am I going to be okay and am I am I going to be okay? And I really didn't know what that meant. I didn't know what that meant physically. Because the emotional side was just tearing me up and that there was a moment where it's, I felt like the impaired driver kind of called out to me. Not in words, but in a feeling and he said, I'm sorry. And he's like you're going to be, you're going to be fine. And it was like such a calm, peaceful way of telling me that, that I just, I was blown away. And at that point in time, I just told him like, I forgive you, I know you didn't do this on purpose. I know you didn't intentionally set out to hurt my family, and I and I forgive you. And I was alone in my house. And it was one of the biggest moments of my entire recovery.

David Sandstrom 15:32

Wow, that's pretty powerful. I talk a lot about forgiveness in the book, and I even have a whole chapter on it, I have an exercise in there for, for people struggling to forgive. And there's a lot of misconceptions about forgiveness. And if we don't learn how to do this, right, if we don't get this right, it will lead to bitterness and resentment, and anger, you know, all kinds of toxic emotions, and we don't call those toxic emotions for nothing. There are a lot of misconceptions about forgiveness, and one is they don't deserve it. Or I'll do it when I feel like it. Well, if we wait till we feel like it, we're probably never going to get around to it. Right?

Carey Portell 16:09

You're sure. And I think some people hold on to that, because they don't know what else to hold on to.

David Sandstrom 16:14

Yeah, yeah. And then the objection of they don't deserve it. Well, forgiveness always goes to the undeserving. Always. There's never a time that it doesn't. We're always ready to receive someone's forgiveness. But when it comes to us offering it Well, that's a horse of a different color. Right?

Carey Portell 16:32

It is Yeah. And I I feel like more the the forgiveness was more for me, because I just didn't want that inside of me anymore. It just let something go off of my shoulders and my heart and just brought me a peace.

David Sandstrom 16:46

Excellent. That's that's a good word. You know, one of the things I like to say is when we fail to forgive, it's like drinking poison, and expecting the other person to die.

Carey Portell 16:58

Yes, I would agree with that wholeheartedly. That is a wonderful, wonderful way to say that. Honestly, I also feel like I didn't hold on to it, because I just didn't have the energy to I mean, it was taking all of my energy just to try to survive myself. I just didn't have the energy to hold on to any kind of hate.

David Sandstrom 17:18

Yeah, good for you for recognizing that. That's, that's an amazing inner strength you've got

Carey Portell 17:24

I wish that would come to everyone who was in a situation like that. And I don't know why it came as quickly and easily as it did for me, but I sure I'm glad it did.

David Sandstrom 17:33

Mm hmm. So talk to me a little bit more about what your your healing journey was, like, your surgeries and maintaining a positive attitude through all that.

Carey Portell 17:44

Yeah, I feel like my healing journey is never going to end with this. Because I always, even today will have moments where I feel like God kind of taps me upside the head and said, Hey, here's a lesson you need to slow down and you need to, to listen to it. But it was huge. I journaled a lot. And that was on a on a suggestion of, actually, my priest and my husband both said, you need to get some of this anxiety out of you and just journal out your thoughts. And that was the best suggestion that I had ever had.

David Sandstrom 18:15

Yeah, journaling can be very therapeutic can't it?

Carey Portell 18:17

Oh, yes. And it was writing. It's kind of like my thing anyway, of how I get things out, instead of talking. That's always been even since I was, you know, like, grade school and middle school, I would always write it out. My journal actually has become my book, which I am just finishing after all this time. But it was always a work in progress. Because every day was a new challenge. And when you're in that type of situation, the most trivial challenge becomes huge. So it didn't matter what it was. It was just one more thing I had to deal with consciously making choices and doing things to help my attitude. It was an everyday process. And sometimes it was like an every hour process.

David Sandstrom 19:04

Wow. So it doesn't come naturally. Right. You had to pursue peace.

Carey Portell 19:08

Oh, yes. I feel like I had to pursue it. I had to strive and actually make goals to heal.

David Sandstrom 19:16

Yeah. Yeah, I would imagine you had a lot of those.

Carey Portell 19:20

Yeah, over and over again. I kept thinking, Okay, I I've done this. I should be good for a while. And then here we come another one.



David Sandstrom 19:28

Yeah. And you're probably not through a fight office, my guess?

Carey Portell 19:32

No, I'm not. And it's, there's challenges I have every day. And you know, at some point, we're going to have to do something else with my ankles. You know, whether ankle replacements get good enough that they will support me or some point be you know, before that I will be in a wheelchair full time just because the pain will get too severe. So there's always going to be challenges that I'm going to have to figure out and make a choice to get over.

David Sandstrom 19:59

You know, I've got to go A friend that had a similar accident to my ladder fall, he was jumping on a motorcycle. And he landed on the wrong side of those hills that the motocross bikes jump on. And he had severe damage to both his ankles, but one in one in particular. And the surgeons who orthopedics tell him that he's probably looking at ankle replacements sometime in his future. But they're, they said, Well hold off as long as you can, because the technology is advancing rapidly. If you can hold off for a couple years, we might be able to do a better job.

Carey Portell 20:29

Yeah, that's exactly what they've been telling me. They had really just started 10 years ago, and they're like, absolutely not. Don't even think about it right now. They said give it 10 years? Well, it's been 10 years. And that's the same thing. My surgeon says. They're just not where I would like them to be for your situation. So if you've been holding off until, you know, as long as possible, it just keeps getting better.

David Sandstrom 20:53

Yeah, yeah, for sure. One of the things I heard you say is that you're almost finished with your book. And I firmly believe this, that God won't waste our pain, I'm guessing that your book is going to be a real inspiration to people. So talk to me a little bit about the book writing process, who you'd like to reach with that?

Carey Portell 21:10

Yeah, actually, my journal became my book, because I wrote about all of those moments, and all of those lessons that I have learned, you know, during those low and high points, and I just submitted it to the publisher, it's, gosh, there's so many things in there that can be learned from and, and I always tell everybody, it doesn't have to be any kind of situation or challenge that is like mine, because all pain is pain, all pain hurts. So regardless of what situation everyone else is

going through, they can totally relate to the pain, the challenges, the goal setting that you have to do to get through that challenge. So I mean, it is for anybody in everybody. But I do talk a lot about my faith in there. And God because it was a integral part in me healing emotionally.

David Sandstrom 21:58  
Good for you.

Carey Portell 21:59  
Yeah. Anybody that has any kind of challenge in their life will, I think, enjoy reading it.

David Sandstrom 22:04  
I Think you made an excellent point there that one of the things I've learned from doing marriage ministry is that when it comes to emotional pain, anger, so if we're if we've got an anger issue, dealing with the anger is just simply dealing with the symptom. And if we want to get to the root, we've got to go back to what what was the pain or the hurt, that led to this anger? Exactly. And that often might lead you into a forgiveness journey. So you know, if we really want to get over this stuff, we want to do this stuff. Well, we've got to get beneath the surface, if we want to do it. And it sounds like you've done a lot of that.

Carey Portell 22:43  
Yes, and it's hard work. I mean, that's why people don't want to do it, because it is painful. And it is hard to go through all of that and do some admitting do some acceptance. And and that's why I think people just don't, they just keep holding on to the hate instead of going that route, because it is a long road. And it's difficult,

David Sandstrom 23:01  
Right. It's so much easier to go the negative route, right? It's a slippery slope. And it feels good at the moment. But in the long haul, it's very toxic to our systems.

Carey Portell 23:12  
Absolutely.

David Sandstrom 23:14  
Carrey, let me ask you this. What are the things that I think is very applicable here and your story is the fact that we need to emphasize to young people young drivers just got their license a year or two ago, tend to be confident, you know, that's why they send young people into wars because they're invincible. Right? Right. So your our teenagers think they're invincible, but we know they're

not taught to me a little bit about the message you have for teenagers and drunk driving.

Carey Portell 23:42

The distracted driving presentation was one of my very first presentations because it was the obvious one. And whenever I'm speaking to teens, I'm able to give them a different perspective because I was not the distracted driver, I was the person doing everything that I was supposed to be doing and it still happened. So giving them the feel of what the consequences could be not only to them, but to the person that they hurt. That's like that's huge for them because they don't normally see that perspective. It's also a motivational presentation because these kids are going through things that we have no idea that they're going through and for them to be able to see that hey you know Carrie, Carrie was pretty down and out for a long time but through the help of others and just having that positive attitude she has been able to get to a point where she can handle this now so maybe that means I can handle it as well so that that's huge for me as well.

David Sandstrom 24:42

You know what I was about 18 I got a speeding ticket. It wasn't you know, careless driver or anything like that but a speeding tickets so I went to driving school to so wouldn't get points on my license. And they brought in a guest speaker and this guy was a police officer and he was in charge of traffic homicide for Broward County, which is in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, he had a pretty dramatic story. And he said, Every fatal accident in Broward County I investigate. And I want to tell you something I've done too many times, I've had to pull the wallet out of a dead body out of this pocket and find the driver's license and go to that young person's house, knock on the door at maybe two o'clock in the morning. And ask the parents, is this your son or daughter? They'd say, Yeah. Are they in trouble? Well, I reasonably if your son was killed in an auto accident tonight. And that was really powerful. It really still stuck with me about how when we get behind the wheel of a car, we have a lethal weapon in our hands, as you said a moment ago, we need to consider not only ourselves, but the people that could get hurt by our actions. We have to live with that for the rest of our lives.

Carey Portell 25:51

Yes, absolutely. And that's one of the things that when this has not happened to you, it's hard to even fathom, not only the family of the victim has to live with it, the person who did it has to live with it as well.

David Sandstrom 26:03

Right. That's that's tough thing to live with. Your story is great, Gary, I love it. You've, you've persevered, you've overcome. you've connected with God, you've processed your emotions in a healthful way. You've got mental toughness, that is very admirable. Hang in there.

Carey Portell 26:21

I appreciate that compliment.

David Sandstrom 26:24

All right. Well, thanks for being on the show. Carrie, I appreciate it.

Carey Portell 26:26

All right. Thank you.

David Sandstrom 26:28

All right. I hope you enjoyed that conversation with Carrey Portell her story really is a great one about having a physical challenge, and properly handling the mental emotional component and the spiritual component that were intimately connected to her healing in the physical realm. So I was inspired by it, I hope you were to her website, if you want to get a hold of her is [Carrieportell.com](http://Carrieportell.com). That's [c o r e y p o r t e l l .com](http://c o r e y p o r t e l l .com). And she's also a photographer, and she specializes in farmhouse photography, she's got some some great photos, you might want to check those out when you're on our website. If you're enjoying the show, I would appreciate you telling some friends about it and share would help. Another way you can help me spread the word is to go to Apple podcast and leave a review there. If you have a hard time finding that you can go to my website, [Davidsandstrom.com](http://Davidsandstrom.com). And on the podcast page, I have a link that'll take you to Apple podcasts where you can leave a rating and a review I would appreciate it. Those reviews are a real source of encouragement to me, and it does help the show get found by other people. Once again, thank you for listening. I appreciate you. I enjoyed serving you and I'll talk with you next week. Be blessed