

Deja Vu All Over Again

Carpal tunnel syndrome of the soul. I came up with the phrase in conversation with a pastor friend who confessed that his current fatigue arises from having to solve the same set of problems over and over. His congregation lives a limited life within a closed loop. The pastor's solutions work almost every time, but only for a time, then the cycle repeats. "My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you." Calluses on the birth canal; no sooner remove the sutures from the last Caesarian section than they slice you open again.

Carpal tunnel is a repetitive stress syndrome caused by constant use of the hands in a single activity. The flexor tendons swell and put pressure on the median nerve. This traffic jam in the tunnel leads to a tingling sensation in the fingers, numbness and weakness. Grip decreases and tools slip as paresthesia progresses. The specific activity is irrelevant: CTS runs the gamut from jack-hammer operators to computer programmers, from meat packers to musicians. To Christians.

When the same hands give the same care to the same people over a long time, attitudes and emotions can thicken like over-worked tendons. Compassion grows numb, care becomes clumsy, the tools of the trade – the word of God and the words of prayer and the loving presence of Christ – slip from the grip of afflicted servants and clatter to the floor in noisy failure. Carpal tunnel syndrome of the soul.

Physicians treat CTS using a variety of surgical techniques. Carpal tunnel release surgery can be open or endoscopic, but both approaches have this in common: they require an incision in the wrist or palm, and they leave a cosmetically insignificant scar.

CTS of the soul also requires surgery, performed by the Great Physician. He adapts his technique to each individual, but all of his operations have a couple of things in common: an incision in the wrist or palm, and a cosmetically significant scar. The mark of a caring Christian most often takes the form of soul-stigmata, nail prints in the palms of the heart, a white welt where love cut deep. These nail prints free hands to feel the flow of the Savior's blood. Numbness recedes and ministry resumes.

Carpal tunnel syndrome of the soul. It is not caused by failure, but is instead a sign of caring. It is curable, but only by application of blunt iron nails in place of a scalpel.

Get A Grip!
Doug