

CHAPTER 1

What Is Work Hurt?

How we carry past Work Hurts into new jobs

There's a kind of pain we don't talk about enough.

It doesn't leave visible scars. It doesn't always have a name that we can give it. But it affects almost every aspect of our life.

How we think. How we trust. How we respond. Even how we love.

And it happens in a place where most of us desire to be a healthy and whole person.

A place where we desire to be productive and appreciated.

That place is work.

Work Hurt is real. It often goes unrecognized because we've been taught to keep going. Stay productive. Push through. Smile and get the job done.

But beneath that surface, something's happening. Our jobs, the very places we go to provide for our families, to contribute, to grow, can sometimes become the very places where we're overlooked, mistreated, used, or worn down.

Work is where we spend most of our waking hours. It's where we give our energy, our creativity, our strength.

For many of us, it's not just how we pay the bills. It's a place where we hope to find purpose, dignity, and even some sense of identity.

And when that space becomes toxic, abusive, disappointing, or dishonoring... it leaves marks. And just like other pains, Work Hurt can wound the soul as well.

With almost 25 years of management experience and over 17 years of ministry experience, I've counseled many people through difficult or challenging job situations. And a common thread runs through nearly every conversation: *previous work wounds are shaping their current work life.*

It shows up in how they treat coworkers. How they respond to authority. Even how they view the company they work for now.

I'm not downplaying anyone's pain in another area of life. But the longer I live, the more convinced I become: ***Work Hurt is real and it's affecting more people than we think.***

Work Hurt can take many forms.

Sometimes it's broken promises.

Sometimes it's a toxic boss, sudden leadership changes, or a company that once felt stable but shifted overnight.

Sometimes it's financial. Money that was promised but never delivered... or money that was earned through hard work, only to have the rug pulled out from under us.

The causes are endless. External forces can leave deep internal wounds.

But not all Work Hurt comes from outside sources.

We're all human. We carry insecurities, fears, doubts, unhealthy habits, and emotional baggage.

And they affect the way we interact with other people.

As I continued to speak with people, I began to gain more insight into the pattern I mentioned earlier: *unhealed Work Hurt seemed to keep people locked in a continuous cycle of poor decision-making.*

And seeing that in other people made me realize something about myself in the process: I had Work Hurt too.

I had trauma I was carrying from one job to the next. I had pain that was shaping my perspective, even in places that didn't deserve it.

Work Hurt builds walls. Hardened red lines we draw in the sand to protect ourselves. Walls that end up limiting us more than protecting us. And those walls don't stay behind when we leave one job for another. They follow us.

From one coworker to the next.

From one supervisor to the next.

From one company to the next.

Looking back, I can say it plainly: I've held new employers accountable for old pain.

I built walls to protect myself. But they ended up boxing me in.

I expected harm, so I stayed guarded.

And I projected past hurt onto people who had no part in it. Good people, doing their best.

And in doing so, I stunted my own growth.

As we move forward, I want to encourage you. Don't just read this book with your eyes. Read it with your heart.

Let these chapters sit with you. Reflect. Pause. Pray. Ask honest questions and invite the Holy Spirit to show you things that may have been buried under years of stress, disappointment, or striving.

This book is laid out to walk you through a process of growth and healing.

It begins by helping you name the Work Hurt. *Both the wounds that were done to you and the ones that may have come through you.*

From there, we step into spiritual renewal, scriptural truth, and practical tools that support real change. You'll learn how to renew your thinking, build healthy boundaries, walk in grace, and align your work with God's design instead of your past pain.

This isn't just about feeling better. It's about getting well.

It's about moving from survival mode into healing. From old cycles into new patterns. From isolation into healthy connection.

The goal isn't just a better job experience. It's about a better you being effective and helpful to the job God has called you to.

And ultimately, it's about becoming the kind of person others can follow. A true servant leader.

Someone who carries healed strength. Someone who brings peace into broken workplaces. Someone who leads with humility, clarity, and compassion because they've let God do the deep work within.

Some chapters may hit hard. Others may give language to things you've felt, but never said.

By the time you finish this book, my prayer is that you'll not only be more aware of the wounds. You'll be more aware of the God who heals them.

But before we dive into the details of what went wrong at work, we need to first return to what went right at the beginning.

You were created with purpose. On purpose. And with great promise.

So in Chapter 2, we're going to pause the pain and go back to the start.

We're going to explain what it really means to be made in the image of God. And then step into what He promises to help those who are willing to heal and be made whole.