

Episode 3-10: The Mind of Christ in an Abnormal World

Resources:

Books

[The Christian Counselor's Medical Desk Reference 2nd edition - Charles Hodges](#)

[The Enemy Within - Kris Lundgaard](#)

Podcast

[Biblical Counseling in Action](#)

Transcript:

Jocelyn: I don't just need to feel better. I need the truth. And ultimately that will make me better.

Janet: I just want to make it as totally simple as possible for ladies to see that the Bible is really applicable to their everyday life.

Jocelyn: When they understand theology, the application flows out of it quickly with joy.

Janet: It is a journey, but even the journey itself is joyful when I'm doing it, holding the hand of my savior and trusting him all along the way. This is the joyful journey podcast, a podcast to inspire and equip women to passionately pursue beautiful biblical truth on their journey as women of God. When you choose truth, you're choosing joy.

Janet: Okay, welcome back. This is Janet once again with my co-host, Jocelyn.

Jocelyn: Hey, friends.

Janet: And today we get the privilege of hearing from Dale Johnson, who's the Executive Director of the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors and a variety of other things I'm gonna have him tell you, but I've asked him to come on today. We wanted to hear him share with us a topic that he recently gave at our Biblical Counseling Training Conference here in Lafayette, Indiana. So if we can, just to get started, Dale, can you give us a little bit about your background and your ministry?

Dale: Yeah. Happy to do it. Thanks for having me. It's always fun to talk with other folks who love biblical counseling.

Janet: Yes.

Dale: And who love the word of God. And that's such a blessing to me to be around other folks like that. As you mentioned, I get to serve as the Executive Director with ACBC. I'm also a Professor of Biblical Counseling and Director of Counseling programs at Midwestern Baptist



Theological Seminary in Kansas City. And outside of that, I love serving my local church, Mission Road Bible Church, there in Kansas City as well. I have a family, my wife of 20, now two years, and we have six children, three boys and three girls. And yeah, that's a little bit about me and background. I did my doctoral work in Counseling as well. I wrote on the issue of the professionalization of pastoral care, and I tell a little bit about the history and story of how really counseling ministry became professionalized and moved away from the church. So a little bit about my background there.

Jocelyn: Awesome.

Janet: Excellent.

Jocelyn: So the title of one of the sessions that you shared at the Biblical Counseling Training Conference at Faith Church was The Mind of Christ in an Abnormal World. What do you mean by that?

Dale: Yeah, it's a good question. I try to set up the idea of recognizing how the culture understands what is abnormal and what's normal, what's healthy, and what's unhealthy. And I start by describing really the mental health constructs of what they describe to be abnormal. And I try to help people to see that they really have no standard of what is normal. They have a thousand page book with nearly 500 diagnoses, and they never describe what is normal.

Janet: Fascinating.

Jocelyn: That is fascinating.

Dale: It's all a book that describes the abnormalities of humanity. But if you don't have a measuring stick, it becomes very subjective.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Dale: And that's exactly what the secular profession is realizing now. It's not reliable. It is subjective. It's not repeatable. Often you can qualify for lots of different diagnoses, and that sort of thing. So in that regard, it just demonstrates that we live in a world that describes lots of abnormalities, but yet we have no idea what a standard of normal is. That's not the case in the church. It's not the case in the scripture. We have a definition, a description, an example of what is normal, and I would say that that normal is Christ. That Christ lived the way that humanity was intended to live. And so the way I would say it is He is the true human. He lived in relation to the Father the way we were intended to, to reflect the image, the character, and the nature of the glory of God. And so by that standard, then we can begin to see what's broken in our world and what's abnormal. And so that's really the premise behind the topic so.



Janet: That's interesting because I think a lot of us are intimidated by those titles and all of that thousand pages and all the diagnoses. And so to hear you saying, we don't really need to be intimidated by that is what I'm hearing because they don't really know.

Dale: Yeah, they don't know. And I tell you, I was in school the first time. That's sad to say I've been to school a lot of different times, but the school, the first time, and actually it was Doc Smith's book, *The Christian Counselor's Medical Desk Reference*. And I remember sort of being timid and afraid, but what about this whole other area?

Janet: Right.

Dale: And it sparked an interest in my wanting to read secular literature in psychiatry and psychology and understand its history and the way Doc Smith described some of those criteria and said, he described it as the Bible speaks to these issues. It really helped to release my timidity. And so now that I understand those labels and how they arrive at those labels. It's less fearful to me because the way the common culture thinks about all of those labels is radically different. We think about it in terms of it's this, you know, radical scientific discovery that they've come together and because of all this data, they've made some decisions. It's really not created like that at all. And so I think that hindrance keeps people blinded from the beauty of the riches of the wisdom of God in the scriptures and the dynamic way that He describes our human experience, not just our human experience in terms of joy and happiness and peace, but in terms of the effects of human depravity and how difficult how much of a struggle our life can be at times, emotional, ups and downs and behavioral problems. All those things can be described in the scripture, and I think the Bible does it better.

Jocelyn: That's probably a, maybe, a novel concept for some of our listeners that a diagnosis was not reached through some scientific method that's really trustworthy. Can you maybe speak to that a little bit? So how are those scientific diagnoses arranged and come to?

Dale: Yeah, let me do that through an example. I think it would be helpful as we ease into this a little bit. So for example, if I were to ask a question, what does it mean to be normal? What does it mean to be healthy? Immediately all of us start thinking about vital signs and we start thinking about, you know, how far can you run? I don't pass that test super well, but we start thinking about things like that that are physical understanding of how we measure health. I had an aunt who passed away at the age of 53 with bile duct cancer, a believer, unbelievably solid, served in the background of the church, benevolent ministry. Somebody passed away or had a need. She was the meal train before meal train was meal train, right.

Janet: Cute.

Dale: And served the Lord. She passed away. I remember visiting her on her deathbed she looked very unhealthy. Now let's compare her for a second to a 25 year old. Here, close to Purdue, who



just graduated from Purdue with a substantial degree. He's making a lot of money. He can run 5-10 miles a day. If you were to compare the two and ask somebody the question, what does it mean to be healthy or who's more healthy? You would automatically, with natural eyes say he is for sure.

Janet: Yes.

Dale: But he's an unbeliever and she's a believer. Now if we ask the question based on the way the scripture asks the question, we see it very differently.

Janet: Fascinating.

Dale: Like depression. They're describing criteria. There are nine criteria in major depressive disorder. And if you have five of the nine criteria over a period of two weeks then you can be diagnosed clinically depressed. And there's no blood test that goes along with it. There's neurological scans. There are no physiological testing that demonstrates you have something. It is a label. It's called a syndrome. It's a construct. Syndrome is a collection of symptoms together. And all they're doing is with the natural eye, they're seeing symptoms and so they're putting together that idea as a construct. And then based on a philosophy, whatever your philosophy is, in how you approach helping a person or why you think it's broken, you devise a treatment plan.

Janet: Right.

Dale: So for psychiatrists that would be medical treatment plan because there's this underlying assumption in the lens by which they see is there's this underlying assumption that there has to be something naturally wrong with him, physiologically wrong. And so medicine seems to make sense or we think it would be helpful. And then a psychologist would say, well, we think this is a distinction in psychologically how they think maybe there was environmental issues in the past that have caused 'em to struggle or whatever. So we're gonna do some talk therapy with different methods to try and help them overcome this. And that's why the approach is okay from psychology or psychiatry. It leaves the freedom for them to choose an approach as they want. The danger for us as biblical counselors, I think is to say are we misunderstanding the label? And if we misunderstand the label, there's a principle that I describe a lot is whatever you say is the cause of a problem, it narrows the field you're searching for, for remedy.

Janet: Oh, wow.

Dale: And if we label these things in a secular way then we're naturally, our face is gonna be hidden toward the things of God in its description and depth of understanding of why we experience things the way we do as humanity. And that's the danger my view of how we latch onto the abnormalities that the world describes. And it's not saying things like depression don't exist. It's not saying anxiety doesn't exist. Those are real human experiences, but we have to set



those within the lens of the Bible so that we see it full orbed and we're searching in the right places to help seek remedy.

Jocelyn: I think that's an important answer because in my experience with counseling, there's this, almost this validation that comes with a clinical depression diagnosis. Like it's not just sadness, it's clinical depression. So I think it's important for people who might receive that diagnosis to understand sometimes where that comes from. The organization of the diagnosis is not some foolproof method that is quantifiable.

Dale: Well, so let me, I'll describe it like this even in more detail, talking about clinical depression or major depressive disorder as it's called. When you think of that diagnosis and the criteria that I mentioned. You have to have five of the nine of those for a two week period. The man who wrote some of that primary diagnostic criteria, his name is Alan Francis. He was a prominent psychiatrist in the United States for more than 20 years. He was asked, Alan, you know, and the reporter is thinking there's gonna be some amazing scientific expression. He's like, Alan, why did you guys choose two weeks and not three weeks? And he gave a one word answer and he said it was arbitrary because we had to come up with something. And the idea behind that shows you that the way in which those diagnoses are given.

Janet: Yeah.

Dale: The term clinical is a semantic, rhetorical sort of quest to give substantiality to the idea. Now again, when people hear me say something like that, they tend to say, well, you're minimizing the idea that I'm sad. No, I'm not at all. That is a real, genuine experience

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Dale: That we find in the Bible, and what I would say is that the Bible actually goes so far as to say whether our sad feelings are healthy, good, and righteous or whether they're not. It sort of gives dynamic to that.

Jocelyn: I think being able to differentiate where the diagnosis comes from and what the solution is hopeful. Because if someone only has a psychiatric diagnosis and psychiatric treatment plan, there is not a lot of hope, but the Bible offers so much hope for something that is a true, honest, difficult condition.

Dale: Yeah. So think about it like this. If a person is diagnosed with major depressive disorder, one of the things that we know is they have low mood all day, or most of the day. They have trouble sleeping. They have trouble with diet or appetite. They may have suicidal ideation, those sorts of things. Well, the reality is they believe a certain thing to be true about themselves, and it's often they have a low view of themselves. They think other people, you know, wish that they were dead or they're not significant. They don't have meaning, they don't have purpose. If that's a



true thing, is there emotional response in depressive feelings? Is that broken? I would argue that's not broken. That's actually very consistent. Your emotions are acting very consistent with what you believe to be true.

Jocelyn: With your reality. Yeah.

Dale: And the Bible helps to diagnose the process of thinking. To say whether the reality that you see is true. In this case, we would say, yeah, that secular way is very unhopeful because that's not true about you at all. The Bible says you're creating the image of God, that you have genuine dignity and being made in the image of God, you have value, meaning, and purpose, and that's non-negotiable as a human being. And so the Bible corrects the reality, not the emotional response. The emotional response flows out of us changing our thinking and changing the reality, seeing it according to God's perspective. That's an example.

Jocelyn: That is so hopeful.

Janet: It is. And I think that's really important cuz as you're talking, I'm sitting here imagining listeners, who have a variety of different labels already. They're hearing this and so I, and I want you to be able to speak to that you are not saying, and you've said that those symptoms are not real, pain is not real, but I would ask you to think about, cuz for some of 'em, it's first time they've heard this. This is what they think they need to do.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: And it's not just major depressive disorder. There may be a lot of things that they believe they need and they've been given labels that they believe describe them. So even with the symptoms being true, what would you say to them if they're saying, but I have these labels and I need that. That's what gives me hope. What are you offering them that's better?

Dale: Yeah, that's really good. So I would say be careful that the label doesn't become your identity. But they are things that you are experiencing. They are not talking about your essence. They're not talking about your being. They're talking about things that come from you. Okay? And so that's a huge distinction because we have a tendency then to live according to that label, and that becomes determinative over us. We weren't made to live according to those labels. We were made to live in the identity that God gives to us. And as we, if we live as someone who is in Christ, those things are always true about us. And now Paul tells us now just walk consistent with those things. And that notice I've not said anything about positive emotions or negative emotions because as a believer, living in the cursed world, sometimes it's absolutely righteous to be sorrowful over something.

Janet: Yep.

Jocelyn: Absolutely.



Dale: The problem.

Janet: There's a lot to be sad about.

Dale: Yeah. Absolutely. There's a lot of brokenness in the world, and the Bible explains why that is because of the curse of sin. And so the Bible explains reality a lot better. So what I would do is I would say, okay, nobody's dismissing the experience that you have, but is it possible, and I love the way David Powlison used to describe this, is it possible that we take our experiences knowing that they're genuine, knowing that they're real, and we just take those experiences back to the Bible and see if the Bible explains why we have these experiences or why we feel this way better than another system would.

Janet: I love that.

Dale: And what we'll find out is that because Christ is the aim of our hope, and the writer of Hebrew says it like this, the confession of Christ, that He is the anchor of our soul, meaning that He anchors us to promises that God has given through the curse of the world through the difficulty, through the strife, through the sadness, and sorrow and anxiety and all the rest of it. That's what anchors our soul. It helps to keep us stable as opposed to finding our hope in a system or finding our hope in a label or something like that.

Jocelyn: Or a diagnosis or even a treatment. Yeah.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: That's excellent.

Janet: You said that when we compare with Christ, what we see in the world, that the world is abnormal. Tell me what you mean by that. What is the problem?

Dale: Yeah, one of the things that Paul Tripp said that I think is absolutely brilliant is that we are Revelation receivers. What he means by that is that, we are always interpreting the things around us. God created us to observe and see the things around us, to make sense of it, and then respond to what we believe to be true in that moment. And what happens is, as the culture is seeing the data, they're paying attention, right? And they're trying to put it together like we would put a piece of a puzzle together and trying to make sense of it. The problem is that verse Corinthians 2:14 says that the natural man cannot discern the things of the spirit. And so if we take just what the natural world describes about some of these realities, particularly as it relates to humanity, then what we see are missing pieces of the puzzle. We're seeing partial realities, but we're not seeing the whole reality. And so what that leads to is us responding inappropriately to half truths, to half observed ideas because it's not bringing to bear the spiritual reality that God has given. So the way I describe it is we have to understand what the theological ideal is. Basically what I mean by that is what was God's intention for humanity? When we understand God's



intention for humanity is to live in relation to Him, knowing that we can never understand ourself fully until we understand ourself in relation to Him first , and then we can learn to live in the natural world, that there's a spiritual reality to living in a natural world, then everything else that we see really is an abnormal expression of that. And so what we start to imbibe thinking it normal the world the Bible calls that actually abnormal because it's living according to the blindness and the curse of sin. And we have a tendency to imbibe that to some degree. When the economy of God, the kingdom of God, is thinking with new eyes, it's thinking with different eyes. And that's how we can begin to see what the culture calls normal, the Bible actually describes as being abnormal.

Jocelyn: That is so helpful.

Janet: So it makes me think, cuz I'm thinking, okay, those who are listening. What would be a practical example of that? So correct me if I'm wrong, what it sounds like you're saying is we value things even completely wrongly , like I look at what the world says is valuable , and I think, oh, okay, that's what I'm supposed to value.

Jocelyn: That's normal. Right.

Janet: And then God says, actually, it's the opposite of that. So now, I just have to really reorient how I see things.

Dale: So let me give you an example, and this will be a scriptural example. So I think it'll make sense. And I think it's one of the best places to see what I'm describing here. So we all know the story of Adam and Eve in the very beginning. Eve is deceived. She eats of the fruit. The Bible says that he gives it to her husband who was with her. He did not protect her. Well, immediately the Bible says that their eyes were open, and now they understood good and evil and the way the Bible describes that good and evil from an earthly perspective. That's a wisdom. It's a way of approaching life that's different from God's wisdom, from His perspective. From that point on, what you see is a division that works throughout the whole of the Bible, that anytime worldly earthly wisdom is implemented, it leads to death and destruction. Death and destruction.

Janet: Just as it did with them.

Dale: Just as it did with them. It leads to shame, leads to guilt. All right. All those things are true. Every time you see the wisdom of God, it leads to life and restoration. Life and restoration. As they ran away and hid and God pursues them, the Bible describes that they took fig leaves. They took something from the natural world, right. That I would call superficial.

Janet: Yep.

Dale: Because as soon as you take fig leaves off of a living tree, it starts to die.



Jocelyn: Starts to die.

Dale: It covers themselves up as they cover themselves up. Was it effective? Okay, if you and I were watching that unfold on like live tv, like reality tv, we would say, okay, they're no longer naked and ashamed, right? But in the eyes of God, how were they seen?

Janet: Yeah.

Dale: They were naked. How do we know that? Because God brought a sacrifice to cover them. And now what we're seeing is the secular world sees problems just like we would see problems. They recognize people hurting and they want to help.

Janet: Yes.

Dale: But what they're doing is grabbing fig leaves that are insufficient to cover. True nakedness and true shame and true guilt. And so those fig leaves die and they need to be replaced. And so it's never enough in the therapeutic cycle. It's always chasing after something else to try and get rid of your guilt. Try and get rid of your shame. The only thing that genuinely satisfies is the clothing of Christ, is what covers us, covers our guilt and shame truly. Guilt and shame is the enemy of the secular therapeutic world, but guilt and shame, God built it in us to diagnose our hearts appropriately. That when we feel those things doesn't mean we're condemned. It's actually a call of the grace of God to come to Him. To be covered by Him. And that's radically different than the way we see life often. Yet we say, well, we'll use this methodology, or we'll use this type of counseling approach, or we'll try this, you know, thing to get rid of my problems. And it's superficial. Does it help any imminent? We might say yes, I feel a little bit better, but the reality is are how is that seen before God? And is, do I really live with a pure conscience in this moment? No. You feel like when you when you're pursuing the ways of the world, they are superficial and it's always takes more and more to cover up what's burdening your conscience. And the way you have true soul freedom, the law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul. Jesus says Matthew 11, come to me all you who are we in heavy laden. Do you see how He says it? . He doesn't say run from Him, which is our natural disposition to sinful people.

Janet: Yes.

Dale: We wanna run to something else. Cover because we're so ashamed. He says, come to me all you who are weary, heavy, laden, and I will give you rest. Come and learn from me. My yoke is easy, my burden is light. And you will find what everybody's looking for in therapy.

Janet: Yes.

Dale: They're looking for rest for their soul. And that source is Christ demonstrated in the scripture. So we find ourselves satisfied by lesser things. And that's what we run to consistently. And we spiritualize it in that sort of thing, and we feel better about it. But in reality, we have to



see through the lens of God, how does He see us? And then He's offering remedy that will truly satisfy and that's the difference.

Jocelyn: Wow.

Janet: And I love how patient He is while we keep seeking those other things, even once we know the Lord.

Dale: Yes.

Janet: That we keep doing that. And how, as you were describing that, I'm thinking, man, we all do that. And He is so patient when He has something better to offer.

Dale: Yes.

Janet: And He's patient and keeps drawing us back.

Jocelyn: So how do we go from being people who look at this abnormal world and think of it as normal to transitioning, to becoming what God says is normal? How do we make that change?

Dale: Yeah, I think the best way for us to think about it is I'll give a description and then I'll flesh that. Is really to see the scriptures that God has given more as a lens. The Bible says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. So the fear of the Lord is the lens by which we see. But I would call that a principle of man, it's a principle of the way we were made, so whatever it is that we fear, right? The fear of whatever. Whatever you put in that blank. People. My job. Loss of my job. Security. That becomes the way in which you then see the world. In the culture that we live in, they have a distinct way. Jesus says, you have eyes but do not see. You have ears but do not hear. They're seeing real and true things, but not the fullness of those true things. So if we see with the lens of the culture, it makes sense. I tell people all the time modern psychology in the way it constructs problems in living makes total sense, if God's not real.

Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: Yes.

Dale: It makes total sense.

Jocelyn: Yeah, it does.

Dale: They're observing true things.

Janet: Yep.

Dale: And they're offering the best that we can offer.



Jocelyn: Yeah.

Dale: Without God in the system. Okay. And that's a lens. Because the fool is said in his heart, there is no God.

Jocelyn: Right.

Dale: So you begin in that place, you're looking at life with no fear of God, but fear of other things, even desiring right things, and we will use it in our own way. Solomon talks about that in Ecclesiastes. He's pursuing all kinds of good things, but in his own strength. And he says it's vanity. Meaninglessness. Right. And so for us, we have to learn to fear the Lord and put on the mind of Christ. And as we put on the mind of Christ, the Bible says, the law of the Lord is perfect. It restores the soul. James 1 says that this word is a perfect law of liberty, and when we look into it, then we see the type of person that we really are. And so for us to see well, to see more appropriately, it is God's remedy, which is to conform us to His image. And so now we're seeing this whole thing come full circle. It starts to make sense that we don't just take the Bible and it's sufficient for salvation. And that's something other than all the rest of my problems. No. Sanctification is the Bible is sufficient for sanctification, which God conforming me to His image. What's the benefit of that? Well, the crucifying of sin helping me to see what really is true in the natural world so that I respond rightly to God and then therefore respond rightly to others. And I manage, I'm self controlled. All those things begin to change because now my mind is becoming more clear thinking like Christ, living the way that I was designed, which automatically glorifies the Lord by the way that I live. And I walk at peace full of the spirit with love, joy, peace, patience, you know, all the rest of the fruit of the spirit. We see that begin to change. And so now our mind, what we consider to be normal is the primary meaning and purpose for which humanity exists, and that is the honor, the glory of God. And now we have unbelievable value, unbelievable meaning, unbelievable purpose through difficulty in life.

Jocelyn: That's what I was just thinking. All of that is still in the same context of this messed up world. , like, it's not like disease ended or disaster stopped. But you view that through different eyes with different understandings.

Dale: Well, in our current way of thinking about it, all of those things that you just mentioned, the circumstances, the diseases, the trials, the difficulty we find ourselves in the current world at their mercy. If that narrative is true.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Yes.

Dale: Like I can never have full hope until this changes.

Jocelyn: Yeah.



Dale: I can never have full hope until I respond differently to this. I can never have. And so we put ourself at the mercy of those circumstances or the mercy at of the next trial that's happening, or the mercy of, you know, this disease that I'm about to get diagnosed with, but the Bible says we're not at the mercy of those things, we're at the mercy of Christ. And He never changes from day to day. And through those trials, through those difficulties, despite those things, we have a living hope that is as sure as anything, and it's those types of promises that anchor us through those difficulties. Notice the way Jesus prayed with His disciples. He didn't pray, Lord, save 'em and then get 'em out of this place, it's terrible, right? How did He do? He said Lord walk with them, sanctify them by Your truth, and He's asking them to be with them through it.

Jocelyn: Through it. In it. Yeah.

Dale: Through this, in it now. That's why the Holy Spirit was to be sent to walk with him through it. So we can see that's a call for us as well. And it helps us, I think it empowers us by the spirit and the word to not be tossed to and fro by circumstances, you know, which jade our thinking, but to walk according to the scripture.

Jocelyn: That's awesome.

Janet: I love that because as you were saying that, I'm thinking, you know, we know we've talked about on the podcast before, what is our purpose? And why are we here? And to think God could have, it made me think of it when you said this, God could have said, now that they know me, get rid of, get 'em out of this mess. But He left us here and as we learn to see differently, we will look and live and be different. And that's what God is using to draw other people to be able to see. And I think, wow, what a privilege that as we learn to see differently. Cuz you know, we worked with the college ministry and I can remember people, the kids talking about how are we supposed to be different? How are we supposed to be different? It's like, well if you live this way, you just are. You don't have to try to be different. You don't have to try to dress different than your, the students in your class. You don't have to try to listen to different music. You're different, if you see life through a different lens and you're not tossed to and fro with your circumstances and just how attractive that is to a world that doesn't yet know God. And is trying all these other things.

Dale: Yeah because according to God, I look at James 1:8 that in the context of trial where he's saying to count it all joy when you encounter various trials. As you follow that passage out, he tells us all the benefits of trials and perseverance and long suffering and patience and that He would grow us to be in the image of Christ. And then in verse five, he asks a question, which I think is a really odd way for that narrative to go where he says, if any of you lacks wisdom, you see what a trial reveals is the wisdom that you trust in. And so this is a diagnostic. This is diagnostic language from James, where he is saying, if you're walking through trial and you're not considering it, joy. Don't be condemned. Be aware of where your heart is trusting in. And so it's a call of correction. If you lack wisdom, which is revealed by the trial that you're in, the call



is not to go find a different wisdom. The call is to ask from God wisdom, who will give to all men liberally, and then he warns us. If you don't, you'll be like the person who's tossed to and fro. And then he goes on to describe in verse eight, and this is a really important word, where he says, you'll be a double-minded man. That's a compound Greek word, dipsuchos, which means double soul man. And then the next word is unstable. That word it, it could easily be translated disorder. It's only used two times in the Greek New Testament that I'm aware of in James 1:8, in James 3:16. And that this disorder comes from being double souled, wanting to have a foot in the world and a foot with God, but Jesus tells us you can't serve two masters. So the way to stability in life is not managing your circumstances. It's being fully committed to the wisdom of God and trusting Him no matter what, and that He will help us to walk at peace. Because even as you mentioned the idea of walking at peace and doing things that are pleasing to God, our primary duty as a believer is to submit to the Spirit.

Janet: Yeah.

Dale: Right? It's not to you need to achieve peace ; you need to achieve patience. All those things are a product of the Spirit. Galatians 5:16, walked by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. And then later what comes is the fruit of the Spirit. He produces that in us. And that's a life that's stable because it's not controlled by things outside of us. God changes us from within. While those things are blowing all over the place because of the curse of the world, we can walk stable as we're anchored in Christ. That makes a huge difference.

Jocelyn: That's awesome.

Janet: That is beautiful. I'm just picturing cuz as you're saying that as my soul goes, oh, I want that , and I hope that's what our listeners are thinking is that's what I want. We're really able to do that even if the circumstances all around us don't change.

Dale: Now, nobody's acting like that simple. Okay?

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Dale: That is not easy. So it's easy for us to talk about, and I think the Bible has given us that forwardly. But the daily Christian life is so difficult.

Janet: Right.

Dale: It is so hard. It's not for for the faint of heart because you have to come face to face with your own weaknesses. The way that Christ is demonstrated in us is not by ourselves growing stronger. It's by us recognizing our weakness and glorying in those weaknesses so that the power of Christ can be seen in us. Because we want people to be able to say, as Paul said, I don't want them to boast in me and my strategy. I want them to boast in Christ so that they know that the power of change in me is not because of some human strategy, it's because of the power of God



as He says in 1 Corinthians 2:5. And so that's really critical for us is to recognize, you know what? Oh, I got this formula and we're just gonna like implement that today. And it's like, it's the two, two week program and then we're all gonna be good. That's just not how this thing works. Is the Spirit is given to us to endure, to work through this life, and we will be forever being changed until the Lord returns.

Janet: Yeah.

Dale: And we are in process of doing that all the time. And so we have to take when weakness is revealed in us, to be honest and run to the Lord. To be honest and run to the Lord. And it's okay when that happens. And we need to learn to embrace that weakness and run to the Lord to give us strength.

Janet: Well then, for now, knowing that we're called to live in this world, how is it that we're supposed to, or can we be interacting with an abnormal world?

Dale: Yeah, that's really important. And this is the way, one of the ways that we're gonna be seen as being very different in the world in which we live. We don't live according to the same set of values. We don't live according to the same rules and constructs as the world. I think as the world grows darker and darker, it's very, it's much more easy for us to see a distinct way of living for Christ.

Janet: Yeah.

Dale: Right? Especially in the world that we live in right now that's I embracing all sorts of immoral attitudes and placing pressure on believers, not just to simply tolerate something, but to approve it.

Jocelyn: Yes.

Dale: And we're feeling that pressure all over the place. So I think it's becoming more clear when the Bible talks about what it means to be set apart. Oh yeah, this is what it means right now.

Janet: I'm feeling set apart right now.

Dale: We're feeling really set apart. Right. So we're gonna begin to see that byproduct because, you know, in our context, in the western world it's been much more moral up until the last generation or so. And so you don't really feel that much of a distinction. It's becoming very clear now.

Jocelyn: Yeah.



Janet: Yeah.

Dale: And in lots of places in the world, it's already clear.

Janet: Yes.

Dale: So for them to make a public confession of Christ and to live anything like pursuing Christ, it looks radically different than the rest of the world. That's a part of what Jesus was saying, I think in John 13, where He tells us that all those out there will know that you're my disciples by the way in which you love one another. And so when we think about the change that Christ makes in us and the way in which we interact with one another that already looks radically different based on the things that we value, the way that we care for one another. Philippians 2, where we're told to have the mind of Christ. What is that mind of Christ like? It's that we prefer other people, that we defer to them, that we love them more than we love ourselves. It's not driven by selfish ambition. Christ came to free us from that. So what does that mean? The rest of the world, what's normal to them is to pursue the self, to pursue what makes the self happy, to pursue what pleases them. Even if it means I lose some people around me, I'm still getting what I want. It's to use other people just to get selfish gain. That is not the way that we learn Christ. That's not the way Christ calls us to live. And so as we see the world pursuing a much more selfish disposition, seeing the fruit of their sinful nature. If we're pursuing Christ and we're trying to mortify the flesh and die to the self and have the mind of Christ where we prefer other people and we are devoted to the Lord, we're gonna see we're very different than them. But that's normal according to scripture. One of the dangers I think in the church is we act like that devotion to Christ, that level of devotion to Christ is weird or abnormal.

Jocelyn: That's so true.

Dale: But it's very normal. That's very normal according to Christ. It's not legalism to call ourselves to do what Christ calls us to do. Now, legalism is adding to what Christ calls us to do, and we're good at that too, okay? We shouldn't be adding to what God calls us to do in the scriptures. We should do the things He calls us to. But doing those things is not abnormality. That's normal. And if we live just that way, having that mind in Christ where we love God, with all our hearts on mind strength, and then we learn to love others as ourselves, we will look radically different in the world and it will become abnormal to us.

Jocelyn: That is so encouraging.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Because my kids and I, and my family and I talk about this concept all the time because sometimes we feel like freaks. Like we're the only people that in our little circles of influence that live the way that we do. And we, even within believers, like we really strive to live for



Christ and obey His word and make His values, our values, and it, we feel like weirdos sometimes. And it's been helpful in our family to say, no, this is the normal way to live, this is the right way to live. This is biblical and if anyone draws attention to the way that we live, we are not doing anything more than what Jesus requires of all of His followers. So it's been encouraging as our family to be, especially to fight against pride, we're not doing anything special. This is what Jesus commanded everybody. But I think that language is really helpful. Like, especially like in Sunday School and in youth group, like we're not asking our children to live any special way. We're just asking them to do what Jesus said is normal. This is what it looks like to be a Christian.

Dale: And in the world we live in, that's very abnormal.

Jocelyn: Well, we've discovered that when my husband goes to work and tells his friends about our life, they're like, whoa, you know, it really sticks out.

Dale: Yep.

Jocelyn: It's very different.

Dale: Yeah. It sounds very radical. It feels like the twilight zone, honestly, you're like, man, am I weird? What's wrong with me?

Janet: Yes.

Dale: But it's among the people of God, these things ought to be normal.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Dale: We shouldn't be lulled to sleep and think our righteousness should be measured over and against the culture. It's not. Right? It should be measured over and against the call of Christ.

Jocelyn: That's so encouraging.

Janet: It is, especially because, I mean, it can seem like I'm really living for the Lord if I'm just a little different from the world. And then again, my standard is the world. Instead of my standard being what's normal.

Jocelyn: Is Jesus.

Janet: Is Christ.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And anything that's not is abnormal. That's a totally reorienting way to use those words.



Jocelyn: Absolutely. Yeah.

Dale: So you should probably rewind the last 30 seconds and listen to what she just said. Again, that was really important distinction of what you just described because it is our measuring stick. Ephesians 5:13-14 our measuring stick is Christ.

Janet: Yeah.

Dale: It's not the world.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Dale: And we have a tendency to get that messed up.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: So what's the role of trials in light of all of this?

Dale: Man, that's a really good question and a very worthy question. When we have trials, the Bible describes that we walk through the difficulty of trials. I think it's God's kindness to us, to help us to see the things that we're trusting in that are not Him. It's God's way of helping us to see the things that we're leaning on that aren't worthy of our trust.

Jocelyn: Oh, that's good.

Dale: Think about it like this, it's really God's grace in our life to expose the things that aren't worthy of our hope. Another way to think about it is like this, the things in life that we're trusting in, that are sinful and that are killing us, God and His kindness is willing to expose them so that we can remove them, to see a better hope. A new and living way is the writer of Hebrews describes it. So back to the topic of James, or you could go to 1 Peter, for example, 1 Peter 2, where we see writings about these issues of trials and trials are intended to grow our character. Romans 5:1 and following, that these idea of trials are intended to produce character, to produce endurance, to produce perseverance, to produce hope. So, that character, that hope will not put us to shame in relation to God. Now think about this in contrast, when we're living in life and we think, you know, a trial comes and we feel ashamed of ourself. It's because we're hoping in something that isn't sturdy enough to hold our hope, but God is willing to allow us to go through trials so that those weaknesses are exposed so that we run back to Him in our trust and as we do that, now our focus is in hope on Him. That's what He says will remove what we all don't want, which is shame because that hope will not put us to shame. So a part of the purpose of trials is it's diagnostic. It lets us know where our heart really is. Is our heart trusting truly in the wisdom of God? And I don't have to feel condemned or separated from God. That's the reason I could



count it, joy, is when my heart is exposed that, you know what? When somebody did something to me and I got really frustrated about it, I don't have to go live in a pity party and thinking about how awful I am. If I know what the Bible says about me, I already know that.

Janet: This is not news.

Dale: This is not news. Right? I know I'm wicked and I know I need to change. And so when I see that coming out, it's a reminder I can't open my chest up and see what's in my heart. God is using that trial through my behavior, through my attitude, through my actions to see, you know, that my heart right now is not loving God. And if it's not loving God well, I'm loving myself well, and I'm not loving other people well. And when I see that, I think repentance is driven by humility that God would help me to see what's broken in my heart at that moment. Our key is to deal with it. We've gotta learn to deal with it instead of run from it.

Janet: Yeah.

Dale: Instead of hide. We've gotta learn in that moment. Don't throw a pity party. Don't feel overwhelmed with condemnation. Like this is the 100th time that you've done this in a row and 100 days in a row. Why can't you get this figured out? We have a tendency to do that. That's the spirit of the evil one where he comes to condemn the brethren and that's not the spirit of Christ. It's to help us to see what's going on in our heart so that we would respond appropriately to Him so that we would then see our character built and hope built in the right direction and that kind of hope in Christ will not put us to shame.

Jocelyn: So trials essentially are pointing out ways that we are functioning abnormally and an opportunity to have that taken care of.

Dale: Absolutely. Yeah. It helps us to see the ways in which we are participating in the loves, passions, and desires of the world.

Janet: And then He offers us.

Jocelyn: Something better. So much Better.

Janet: That's what I love. He doesn't just say, look at you.

Dale: Right.

Janet: He's offering us something better.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Dale: Remember that's not a casting out into outer darkness. It's a call, Matthew 11. It's a call to come to me.



Janet: Yeah.

Dale: When you're weary and heavy laden.

Jocelyn: That is so helpful.

Janet: Yeah. Yeah. So, how can we grow in having this peace and having more the mind of Christ?

Dale: Well, I think this is really important because you know, we have a tendency to think of peace or anything that's opposite of peace, you know, and we want, man, we just want peace. If I'm anxious, I just want peace. If I'm depressed, I just don't want that anymore. I just want peace. We have a tendency to think peace in our modern culture is more like a feeling.

Janet: Yeah.

Dale: And so when I feel at peace or I feel at peace in this way, or when I do these things then I feel at peace. And we have a tendency to build ourself up thinking that if we pursue doing good things that will help us to feel at peace. That's not the way the Bible describes peace. Peace is not found in a feeling. Peace is found in a person. In fact, we're for Jesus is foretold to be not just to give peace. He Himself is peace.

Janet: Yes.

Dale: You think of Isaiah 9. He is the the Prince of Peace. Ephesians 2:14, for example, He Himself, Paul says, is our peace. He's the one mediator between God, a man that helps to mediate our souls and give us peace that we are at peace with God. And the idea is if we're at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, we can be at peace with all men. And peace is found in a person. That's one of the most critical things. And so the thing that I tell people is the way that you walk at peace is you walk faithful to Christ. And let me explain what I mean. In Philippians 4:6, for example, be anxious for nothing, prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God and the peace of God, he says, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your heart and mind. So think about the visual language. If Jesus is our peace and we're not just talking about a feeling. The peace of God, who is Christ, will guard our heart and mind. So when I'm conformed to Christ and I, my mind is being renewed to think like Christ, right? By the word, then it is Christ in His word that is guarding my heart.

Jocelyn: That's so cool.

Dale: Against everything else. So the peace that surpasses all comprehension, is how is in the mystery of God, that God could love a sinner like me with all my failures and all my flaws, and yet still Romans 5:8 give Himself even when I was a sinner for me. And as I think about all the condemnation think about or all the sin that I've committed, and I continue to commit that's



something that's paid for by Christ because that's what the truth of the Word says. And now it becomes an issue of not managing my feelings, but do I believe the truth of what God says and not my feelings? Is my faith in what I feel or is my faith in what Christ has said to be true about me? And that based on what Paul describes in Philippians 4 is how Christ, the peace Himself guards our hearts and minds. It's guarding it in Christ, I think in the truth of Christ or in who He is, in His finished work. And so us growing in Christ, having the mind of Christ as we talk about a lot in counseling. Ephesians 4, renewing the mind. Romans 12, renewing the mind according to the ways that God has given us to think, truly think true thoughts, which He says in verse eight. Philippians 4, I think on things that are true, right, just, noble, and a good report. What we're doing when our heart and mind changes in this way is we're actually abolishing all of the ammunition of the evil one, to lure and entice our hearts to sin. To fear, to hopelessness because as we crucify those loves and desires of the world, we can see plainly, he's not deceiving us anymore. He's luring and enticing, but we're not having that today. And the reason is because we can see the Lord says, if I believe that, or if I trust in that, or if I run after that, it will not satisfy. And so he can't deceive me in that. He can't lure and entice me. So growing to have the mind of Christ is really critical for our peace. Otherwise, I don't think there's peace to be found in the world that we live.

Jocelyn: That is so cool.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: Man.

Janet: It's so much richer the way we use that passage. You know, the peace of God guarding your hearts. We think so if I feel at peace that protects my emotions. I mean that's kind of how we use it.

Jocelyn: Or it's a feeling of peace that will fall on me.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Desend on me.

Janet: Yeah. And then that's a protection of, I don't know, but what I think about what it actually means, it's far more powerful.

Jocelyn: Oh yeah. That's beautiful.

Dale: Yeah because otherwise we look at Christ as a means to get peace.

Janet: Yes.



Jocelyn: Yes. Exactly.

Dale: Not as peace itself.

Janet: Yes.

Dale: That's really important.

Jocelyn: Yes, man. Man, I feel like I'm gonna need to go back and re-listen to this episode a bunch of times just to soak it all in.

Janet: I know. We like to include if we can because we think about, okay let's introduce this topic. Hopefully the ladies are saying, how do I do that? And we've talked a little bit about that, and then we wanna leave them with, are there any resources you would recommend? And if not we won't have any, but I don't know of any about this.

Dale: Yeah, so, I think the Puritans wrote a lot about this, but I'll give you a simplified version because everybody hears Puritan works now and they're like, oh my gosh, I can't understand these. I think there are some that are very helpful. There's a man named Kris Lundgaard, who basically took some of these concepts of pursuing dying to yourself and living for the name of Christ. And it's a book called, *The Enemy Within*. I found it to be one of the most helpful, simple ways, and he gives very detailed descriptions, biblically speaking, and that are borrowed from Puritan thinking that I think are saturated biblically.

Janet: Excellent.

Dale: On how to think about the mind. He calls the mind the watchman. Right. The watchmen over our souls and the things that, the thoughts and the attitudes that we allow to come in, the things that we desire and passions. He really paints some visuals and I think it will be helpful to people to learn how to think that way and then to practice according. Because he talks very detailed about, okay, how do we take these difficult things in our own heart and start to crucify them so that we have the mind of Christ?

Janet: Oh, that's helpful.

Dale: And so it's called, *The Enemy Within*. It'll draw the battle lines in the right place. And I think it's very clarifying and very helpful. Kris Lundgaard, *The Enemy Within*.

Jocelyn: We saw that in the bookstore.

Janet: Yes, we do have that book in our bookstore and we will have a link for it.

Jocelyn: Yeah.



Janet: In our show notes.

Dale: Very cool.

Jocelyn: Awesome. Thank you so much. This has been a great conversation. I'm feeling very helped.

Janet: Yes. It's very encouraging. So I appreciate, I know it's been, you have had a very busy week, so thank you for taking the time to talk with us and I do hope that this will be an encouragement to our listeners as well.

Jocelyn: Absolutely.

Dale: My pleasure. Thanks for having me.

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