



Episode 4-7: Understanding Trauma Biblically

Resources:

Books

[Abuse Finding Hope in Christ - John Henderson](#)

Conference

[More Than Conquerors - Faith Preconference](#)

Website

[Vision of Hope](#)

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: Welcome back. I am here again with Jocelyn, my cohost.

Jocelyn: Hey friends.

Janet: But with us we have a special guest that is very special to Jocelyn and I.

Jocelyn: Yes. We are really glad to have him here today.

Janet: Yes. So more of the mystery a couple of years ago now, I think it is.

Jocelyn: Yeah. Several years.

Janet: When we were both overwhelmed with how to help people who were struggling with some more severe issues. We found, and I think Jocelyn found it.

Jocelyn: Yeah, that's what I did. I googled trauma counseling biblical counseling, and I found this class and I was like, Janet, there is a class that we have to go to. I was like, if only we could sneak in and listen. And she was like we could always ask to audit it like normal people.



Janet: Or we could sneak in with funny glasses, but, so I talked to Brent.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Who said, make it happen. So he sent us away for a week and we got to learn from Dr. John Henderson and his whole class on crisis and trauma counseling. So for those of you listening, thinking, I don't need that, just listen to the podcast. All of us in some ways are impacted by this subject. So we are so grateful that you took the time to learn about it. And to share it with us and that you're here today. But can you start with just Dr. Henderson sharing just a little bit about your background and why you ended up speaking and teaching on this subject?

John: Yeah. It's, I'll try to make it as short as I can. Studied psychology during my undergraduate years.

Janet: Yes.

John: Started in engineering thought. I'm gonna spend a lot of time into my life alone, if I keep doing this.

Janet: Most engineers are going yes!

Jocelyn: That's true.

John: And so I thought, and probably in a proud, arrogant kind of way I don't think I want to operate or fix machines. Maybe people 'cause in many ways in my own ignorance and selfishness didn't understand what it would really take.

Janet: Yeah.

John: And who really changes people. But went on to graduate school in Counseling Psychology. Received a master's and a PhD in Counseling Psychology from the University of North Texas. And really in the very early months and years of that doctoral work through just personal crisis with depression, anxiety, anger, and seeking all kinds of help from professors, from therapists even did psychoanalysis.

Janet: Wow.

John: And found, I kept being led down the same streets of you think too poorly of yourself. You need to think more highly of yourself.

Janet: Yes.



John: You need higher self-esteem. It was in the age, in the early nineties of the self-esteem boom. And you need to self-care and self-ownership and self-everything. And even then knew, okay, I don't think I need help with that.

Janet: I got enough of that. Thanks.

John: I'm pretty sure. But even just sincere dear friends and professors trying to help me think more logically, behave more practically, and yet every nothing seemed to cut deep. And in that same time the Lord led me to a church where a couple of the pastors just really were generous with their time and their gifting and with the gospel and with the word of God, and began to minister to me from God's words and began to grapple with grace, mercy, God's peace, God's love, the life, death and resurrection of Christ applied to life and just began to see lights coming on and again, not immediate fixes, just a slow, gradual transformation from less despair, more joy, less anxiety, more peace, less selfishness, more service and less entanglement to sin, more freedom. And so just got to taste and see that the Lord was good and personal and near and active. And so this created these two parallel worlds. We're on the one side, I'm continuing doctoral work and on the other side, receiving biblical counseling care, gospel ministry, and just seeing some pretty stark differences into how deeply and clearly and powerfully and truthfully words change and help. And so continued to be faithful to my studies and apply myself to that. But then on finishing up my doctoral work, just thought, I can't be a psychologist. I think I have to be a pastor. I didn't know what that meant.

Jocelyn: What a bridge.

John: Yeah. Didn't know that was gonna be how I was gonna be involved, but in many ways, because I had been under the word of God and under gospel-centered care from people and really received of that kindness from the Lord and wanted to learn how to do that and help others. And so that began a whole journey into Biblical Counseling that I didn't know how to get there or what it was, but good friends began to hand me books and articles and from, yeah, all authors you would all know from Paul Tripp to David Powlison to Ed Welch, and.

Janet: Yes.

John: Mike Imlett and Jay Adams works and then even just pastors, John Piper, Sinclair Ferguson, John MacArthur, others that they and their friends were writing just practical theological works, connecting Bible to life. And so then that, that has, yeah, the Lord has used that to shape and affect me personally and ministerially as a pastor and really seeing the importance of the personal ministry of the word, not just through publicly through preaching, not just privately through individual reading and study, but personally through conversation. And so that's, yeah, how that I got there. Took a long time. Trauma in particular wasn't chosen. It was simply unavoidable.



Janet: Yes.

John: Because that's pastoral work. That's ministry work. That's if you're involved in the kinds of churches that I've been privileged to be involved in, where you're hopefully inviting, transparency, inviting, humility, inviting, sharing of life, inviting, bearing of burdens, and hopefully ministering and preaching the gospel in such a way that stirs the heart.

Janet: Yes.

John: To want to deal with life honestly and grow. People are gonna start being honest and sharing. And yeah, very early, twenty-five years ago just began to be confronted with situation after situation, person after person of really dark at times, indescribable affliction and mistreatment and abuse. And in many ways having to learn the hard way. Like how to care.

Janet: Yeah.

John: And listen well and love well under those circumstances. And then dig into scripture and go, I'm pretty sure this is a book about human life. And God's words to illumine what seems very dark. And so just went, started gonna the Bible with all those questions.

Janet: Love it.

Jocelyn: That resonates with me so much because I would've never, ever chosen trauma counseling. Like I came into trauma counseling through eating disorders and self-harm and addictions. No one does those things for fun, and when you peel that back and you're like, so had this get started, it's 'cause it's a really handy tool to cover thinking up. And to not have to think about nightmares and all the things. And so like I remember the first person that said, I'm coming to talk to you about trauma. I was like, okay, let's do it.

John: Yeah.

Janet: You don't probably say that now.

Jocelyn: Not the same way.

Janet: Not that way.

Jocelyn: The concept of trauma is being discussed much more broadly now in previous times. How do you think that might be helpful and what dangers are there in discussing trauma?

John: Yeah. I always think there is a good, and there is something helpful in human beings talking about what matters most about human life.

Janet: The real stuff.



John: The real stuff. That when conversations about suffering, about anguish, about mistreatment, about anxiety, about peace, about despair, about hope, about insecurity and loneliness, and how do you grow in security and in reconciliation of relationships, like that's meaningful. And so if there's more talk as a whole in the world about those kinds of realities of human life. I find the bridge to the gospel is much shorter than if we're talking about Super Bowls.

Jocelyn: Absolutely.

John: Or any number of other things that, again, it's not that they don't matter, who cares? It's just more they seem further away from life on the street and in reality even. I was thinking about Ecclesiastes 7:2 that says it's better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart. And so I think when there's conversation about just human suffering and anguish and misery, there's, it's all life in the shadow of death. And if that helps the living lay it to heart. If it helps the living start to ask better questions about what the point of life is who we're gonna answer to in the end, what happens in death and on the other side of death, what you do with mistreatment and broken relationships. Then I think there's just all kinds of opportunities for the gospel, just all kinds of ways in which Christ delivers the best goods for those troubles and trials and the word of God is the one that really both comprehends and gives hope to those kinds of questions. I think if there's a danger I think in the popularization of trauma conversation is there's always the danger of trivializing it.

Janet: Yes.

John: There's always the danger of it distilling and diluting down to just everything becomes trauma.

Janet: It's traumatic that Starbucks got my order wrong.

John: Yes. And then if everything's trauma, then nothing's trauma.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

John: And you really lose the clarity of the words. Trauma can also become a tool that we use in a negative way in relationships to others. It can become a means of manipulating relationship.

Jocelyn: Totally.

John: It can become a means of.

Janet: Yeah.



John: Creating leverage in relationships. It can become a way in which we interpret the whole world, like trauma can become so popularized that I interpret everything through the lens of trauma and so that's a danger that I don't think we want to embrace because there's so much more to life than trauma.

Janet: Yeah.

John: And it's certainly not a way to see the world.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

John: That is wise or sustainable or even true.

Jocelyn: And it's just leads to such bitterness and a jadedness, I think.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And when you see the world that way through, through trauma.

Janet: Which leads then to maybe it would help, this is something Jocelyn and I try to do on a lot of our podcasts is define our terms. How would we define trauma so that we're not trivializing it, we're not ignoring it, but we're not saying everything is trauma? So how do you define trauma, and then how do you think it differs if it does from a crisis?

John: Yeah. Yeah. I tend to define trauma as a whole being response of an image bearer of God to the threat of destruction. And I think the likelihood of developing a traumatic response is gonna go up if we experience that threat of destruction outside the loving presence of God.

Janet: Yes.

John: Where we don't truly know, feel, experience the presence of God near to us in the midst of that threat of destruction. Or there's not an opportunity to escape into the loving presence of God and there's not an opportunity to recover in the loving presence of God. And I tend to define it that way because I think being an image bearer of God matters. That's part of why we experience trauma as trauma is because it's something that assaults the dignity of being made in the image of God that is very unique and very evil. And so it's experienced as such. But then there's also a degree to which when it's felt. That God isn't near. He's far.

Janet: Yes.

John: He doesn't care. He's aloof or we don't, or we're trapped in it. We don't have opportunity to escape it feels like into His presence, or recover in some way and settle at a heart level and find rest and peace in the presence of God. Then the likelihood of trauma and traumatic response I think goes up.



Janet: Yeah.

John: Quite a bit. And I think crisis, it has to be related because I think crisis is certainly the experience of all is lost. And so when we, I think read Isaiah 6 where he says, woe is me, I'm undone. I think those are the words of crisis. Where all is lost. Where the disciples in the boat, Jesus is asleep, the storm is hitting, waves are crashing in, it's beginning to sink, and they're gonna go shake Jesus and say, don't you care? We're perishing. In that statement, we are perishing. Those are words of crisis. But I will say we tend to, I tend to, think about crisis as something that is more short-term and acute, where trauma is gonna be more long term and chronic. That crisis tends to represent the experience of significant trouble. Something that, again, compels us to say, woe is me. I'm undone. But then trauma tends to represent the lasting effects of that, especially if that kind of crisis is repeated. I tend to think of crisis as an experience of threats and dangers, but then trauma as the whole being re-experienced of those threats and dangers, there's something.

Janet: Even after it's over.

John: Yes. That I think, some argue that, the essence of trauma is dissociation, which is a word that we can get to where you start just compartmentalizing off the painful experiences and tucking them away in places. But then I think also the essence of trauma is reliving. It's re-experiencing. It's both the whole being the whole person, soul and body. Just going through it again.

Janet: And not knowing how to stop.

John: And not knowing how to stop it.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And not seeing Christ in the middle of it. Not knowing how to process where He was at the time, where He is now, and I'm re-experiencing it. Yeah. My brother was in an Elite Division of the Armed Forces and was on deployment and experienced a horribly trauma traumatizing event. And I was talking to him afterwards about whether he had nightmares and whether he was re-experiencing and all that kind of stuff. And he was like, I, by the grace of God, haven't because in the moment, I did not, I was not able to survive it without the presence of God. And so when I saw my buddy be shot and die next to me and my world started blacking out and closing in. I knew if I blacked out, I would be next. And I cried out to Jesus save me, and He opened up my vision miraculously. And so I experienced the crisis with Christ in the crisis with me. And I've been able to think about it without having to relive it, but it's just it was a crisis that didn't lead to trauma.



John: Yeah. And that gives, I think, so much hope to all of us and even, and hopefully those who would experience similar circumstances and experience then the effects of trauma after, don't hear that as, okay, they did something wrong. As much as you see there is a way forward that Christ can be seen in the middle of all that retrospectively. Like you can look back and now start to reinterpret right. In ways that your brother interpreted in the moment. In moment, which is what we're praying for.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

John: That's something that the Lord prepares us for, trains us for, equips us for, and hopefully conforms us to be ready for. And that's, I think that's what we see in here when we see and hear David and the Apostle Paul and so many of the saints of old facing. David's gonna say, Lord, it's You that trained my hands for war. It's, you're the one who goes with me before me, helps me. And that worldview, that God-centered worldview, affects how you experience life and trouble for sure.

Janet: And I would say most of us don't do that.

Jocelyn: No.

Janet: So of the lives of the people listening, most of us don't do that. And as you said we had a pre-conference recently where you went in more depth in some of this and you made the comment, I may be paraphrasing it badly, but that because we're all in a process and in and on a journey of trusting God more, we're all vulnerable to traumatic responses.

Jocelyn: Totally.

John: Yeah. Yeah. Because at any given moment, I could be thrust into a situation that I. Have never faced, never seen, never felt, and am not prepared. And my faith is tested.

Janet: Yeah.

John: To limits that it's never been tested. And in that testing, weakness of faith, frailty of faith is exposed.

Janet: And that's okay.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

John: Yeah. That's part of how He changes us.

Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: Yes.



John: That's part of Jesus' point. Remember the disciples in the boat where He is gonna get up. He's gonna calm the winds and the waves. He's gonna see why did you fear, you have little faith, and why don't you just jump 'em overboard and start over? Because that, this was part of the point. And by the end of it, they're gonna be saying, who is this?

Janet: Yeah.

John: But even the winds and the waves of obey Him. That's the point. That's the growth moment where the weakness of their faith is exposed, but it's making them ask better questions. Who is this guy that even the winds and the waves of obey Him? Now they're gonna go out another time in a boat, in a storm, and Jesus is gonna walk and meet them out there, and by the end of that whole encounter, they're gonna be saying, surely this is the son of God.

Janet: Wow.

John: And so you see, even in Jesus leading these disciples and in those years, which you just look at some of the days they went through following Him, you're like, okay, that's, there's some raw material there that without Christ, yeah, it's gonna be traumatizing. But the way He's so perfectly in carefully is growing them, developing them, training them so that by the end they're not the same as when He found them three, three and a half years before.

Jocelyn: That's actually a screensaver on my phone that I added during class. It's a picture of Peter falling into the water and Jesus holding his hand out with a quote that you said in class about how Peter will never look back on that day and the events of that day with regret because it led Him to where God wanted Him. Like where Peter was then turned into the Peter that wrote 1 and 2 Peter and led the church.

John: Yeah.

Jocelyn: Those events made him who he ended up being.

John: Yeah. And no, none of, and when Peter and Jesus get back on the boat, nobody's looking at Peter. Like, nobody's going, ah, Peter, it really blew that water-walking thing. And Jesus isn't looking at all them going, all right, who's next? Let's as if it's a water-walking training hour. No. They're like, no, surely this is the son of God.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And that was the point.

John: That's the point.

Jocelyn: That was the point.



John: Lesson learned.

Jocelyn: So as I started working on counseling through trauma. I struggled because I didn't find the word trauma in the scriptures. I found a lot of terrible trouble, but I didn't find the word trauma. So how does the Bible address traumatic events?

John: Yeah. The work of the ministry of the word, the work of biblical counseling is always is, always has been, always will be a work of translation and interpretation. Not just of Hebrew and Greek into English, but into the Hebrew, Greek, English words of scripture to the language of the times, and so a lot of what we do is translation. So with the one hand, getting behind the labels, the concepts, the taxonomies of any given age of human history in order to understand, okay, the meaning of the words that are being used and the realities of life that they're trying to capture. And so when words like trauma, traumatic, triggered manifestations of trauma, all these things are used. We can sit slow down, ask questions, and really hear what's behind those words. What is being expressed? What reality of life are they talking about? But then with the other hand, I think digging into the words of scripture in order to understand the realities of God, humanity, life being revealed by the one who made everything, by the one who sustains everything, by the one who sees clearly and knows all things, then we bring those two worlds together using the words of God to now see and understand and interpret all those other words. And so I think this kind of ministry we're a part of is a never-ending work like that. Taking the words, the labels. And that's why, whether it's a phrase like trauma-informed, like we should never be intimidated by new phrases and words and ideas. No, let's, okay, what are we talking about? What do you mean? What are you describing? And once you get behind those words, you go, okay, now let's go to scripture. And also really understand what God is saying. What is He revealing about Himself, about life, about people, about trouble, about pain? And then you bring those two worlds together. And what I find every time is the real stuff that trauma is about is the stuff the Bible's about. The things that human beings are facing and feeling, experiencing in this day and age. Are the very things that Paul faced that David faced, that Samuel faced, that Adam and Eve and all the way down. And except with the advantage of the story being told under the inspiration of the Spirit of God and from God's point of view in such a way that the words we have here are truthful words, reliable words, powerful words. And so rather than running to your concordance in your Bible and looking for the word trauma, it's really unpacking that word in our day and age and what are all the other words that are connected to it? What do we really mean by that? And then we go to the word of God, we go, okay. It's there. And so just even taking Psalm 55 as an example. Where this is David in a maskel. Saying in verse one, give ear to my prayer, oh God. And hide not yourself from my plea for mercy. He's pleading for God to intervene in mercy. Attend to me, answer me. Why? He says, I'm restless in my complaint and I moan. And so whatever he is facing, whatever he is feeling, it's compelling. Moaning.

Janet: Yeah.



John: He can't rest. He's restless. Here's why verse three, because of the noise of the enemy. Because of the oppression of the wicked For they drop trouble upon me and in anger, they bear a grudge against me. So that's what's going on around him. There's the noise of the enemy, people who want to kill him, people who are pursuing him, after him. People who do not intend to rest until they've harmed him and harmed him as much as they can until they kill him. And that's the oppression of the wicked. It's just he feels under it. He feels trapped in it. And without warning that sense of they drop trouble upon him, he doesn't deserve it. He didn't ask for it. He's not provoking it, they just drop it on him. And what bears that? What compels it is just anger toward him. These enemies are angry and they bear grudges. Here's the effect on him. Verse four, my heart is in anguish within me. The terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me and that if anything, describe, that's the raw material that for so many leads to trauma. The overwhelming effects of horror, just the constant re-experiencing of anguish, terrors of death, just threat of destruction. That just always seems near so much that David's gonna say in verse six, oh, that I had wings like a dove. I would fly away and be at rest. All you can think of, I'd rather be a bird right now because at least then I could fly away.

Janet: Yeah.

John: Find a nest somewhere in the mountains. Now there's other predators out there for the bird, but we don't think about that. We're just thinking, how do I get outta here? He says, yes. I would wander far away. I would lodge in the wilderness. I would hurry to find shelter. From what he calls the raging wind in tempest. That's what life feels like to him. It's a raging wind, it's a tempest. And so what I tend to even argue from this passage is that David is facing and feeling and underneath the worst kind of suffering and anguish that's taking him right to the brink of the grave and having taking the maximum toll upon him. And yet there's gonna be a reason why we don't hear this or see this taking a turn or a road that we would call traumatizing for him. And it's because of all the verses after is he's gonna talk in the verses after about where his hope is, where his trust is. Verse 16. But I call to God and the Lord will save me. So there's your brother's testimony, right? Of just that instinct to I call to God. 17, evening and morning, and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and there's that faith and He hears my voice. Evening, morning, noon, just all through the day, He redeems my soul. Verse 18, and safety from the battle that I wage for many are arrayed against me. So very honest about what's going on around him. Many are his enemies, and yet the Lord redeems him. He trusts that God will give ear and humble them. He who is enthroned from old, totally in control. Totally sovereign over this because they do not change and do not fear God. My companion stretched out his hand against its friends. He violated his covenant. His speech was smooth as butter. And again, he is just gonna describe some of the men, manipulative, deceitful, scheming, works of his enemy. But then he says in verse twenty-two, cast your burden on the Lord and he will sustain you. He will never permit the righteous to be moved. So what's so fascinating is that he would say he has anguish of heart, horror overwhelms him, terrors everywhere, and yet he's not moved because the Lord holds him.



And won't let him be moved, but yo God will cast them down, those enemies into the pit of destruction. And so he even hopes, and there's a day coming of justice, there's a day of reckoning. There's a day where God will set everything straight. In verse twenty-three, but I will trust in you. And we go to a Psalm like that, and there's many others we could go to that just when we're really get into the words and construct the picture that David is describing, we go, oh, this is the stuff that leads to trauma. And yet by God's grace, he shows us a way out. He shows us a way forward, not just for someone who's about to face it, that they can have, they can be equipped in this, but someone who maybe what they endured was. Years ago as children or as youth, or in a time when their heart wasn't here. And in a time when they didn't have this faith they didn't know God this way. They didn't have the benefit of God's word abiding in them in this way. The good news is you can, He can still lead you out this way.

Janet: Yes.

John: He can still take you where you are now. And if where you are now is verse 14 and 15, He can still get you to 16 to twenty-three.

Jocelyn: That's such a comfort.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: It's such a comfort because, Janet, you and I are often dealing with people who are stuck, the early part of that Psalm, and it's so reassuring to know it didn't have to have worked in a nice, tidy way for you to come to good terms at the end of it.

Janet: Praise God!

Jocelyn: To come to the place where you say, and I will trust in God.

Janet: Yes. And it may be that just like for Peter, the fact that he didn't respond perfectly initially is part of his story now and shows the power of God in a unique way to change him and maybe some of these people who are precious sisters who are really looking back on a traumatic event that has traumatized them, the power of God to redeem that now will show His glory in unique ways.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

John: Yeah. Because all of us will be testimonies of God bringing us to the same ultimate end in glory through 10 billion different roads.

Janet: Yes.

John: And that'll only magnify His glory.



Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And when our goal is His glory. Then we don't need to either get in despair or be envious that somebody's road to that is different than ours.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

John: Yeah, that's right.

Janet: Why didn't I know this back when it was happening? Or why? Because I do hear that.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And I understand the pain behind that when somebody's saying, why didn't I hear this 20 years ago? And there's real pain there to lament that we talk about, but to also know because this is your path to bringing God glory.

John: Yeah.

Janet: So I love that, you've basically shown us by example, the difference between a traumatic event and a trauma response 'cause I think you would say what you just described in David's life, those were traumatic types of events, but they didn't result in David being traumatized.

John: Yeah. And this is in some ways it may feel like semantics. But I tend to think of trauma response is what makes the event traumatic.

Janet: Oh, okay. Okay.

John: Not the other way around.

Janet: So it's a crisis?

John: Yeah. Yeah. Maybe you could call it, yeah. Horror, terror anguish, all kinds of words. I think scripture gives, this is what that event is. Painful.

Janet: Yes.

John: But I think what makes that event traumatic is actually the response.

Janet: Okay.

John: And so that's why we all respond so differently. And that's why. I tend not to refer to traumatic events unless I'm referring to an event in someone's life that for them was traumatizing.



Jocelyn: Oh, interesting. Okay.

John: There's something about the relationship between the person and the event. And the circumstances and details and everything that are going into that, which is why you can have four different people under the same kinds of circumstances and see four very different kinds of responses.

Janet: Yes.

John: And you ask 10 different people, what's your greatest nightmare? You'll probably get 10 different things.

Janet: Yes.

John: So what if person number one gets their greatest nightmare? Person number two gets person number one's greatest nightmare.

Janet: Yes.

John: But not their own.

Janet: And doesn't think it's a big deal.

John: It doesn't think it's as scary or frighten.

Jocelyn: It just shows how much the heart that you bring into a situation matters. Like what's going on inside of you really is a predictor of how things are gonna go.

John: And this is part of what makes the conversation both exciting and hard is we just wanna make everything one thing.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

John: It's the congruent. It's bringing together all these multiple variables. The situation itself, but also the person, their history, their story, where they're at with the Lord. Are they in Christ? Are they not in Christ? Are they mature in the Lord? Are they grown? Are they near to people who help them or to people who are actually turning against them and hurting them? Are the things they're facing of great magnitude in terms of danger and terror? Or are they of a smaller magnitude? Do they last a long time or a short time? Do they feel really powerless in the situation? Like I find that really self-absorbed, proud people at times are harder to traumatize because they have an over realized sense of their own power.

Jocelyn: They're pretty sure they can take care of it.



John: So they're in all kinds of situations that they feel perfectly comfortable.

Jocelyn: They should be a little bit more scared.

John: I'm like you probably ought to be more afraid than that. And and so even that it, it doesn't, and in other words, just because you didn't respond in a traumatized way doesn't mean you're mature.

Jocelyn: That's true.

John: It may mean you're clueless. It may mean you have an over-realized sense of your own ability to handle things, and so it didn't leave a mark. And the same way as someone who's maybe more sober-minded, someone who is more, and I think we've probably all been in situations where it was maybe days later where we're sharing the story and somebody looks and goes, do you realize you could have died?

Janet: Yeah.

John: Or like what? Yeah. That here's what that was, here's what that meant, and we were so oblivious.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

John: That it didn't. And so that's where defined, I find that trauma is the intersection of all those pieces. And so it's harder than to call just an event traumatic.

Janet: And that's so helpful to me because what I realize, even in using that phrase, I've determined from whatever is the confluence of things in my own life, what I believe would be traumatic.

John: Yes.

Janet: So that's a traumatic event.

John: Yes.

Janet: But maybe not. And so I really need to know the other person and ask a lot of questions.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And not assume, oh, if that happened to you, you can't be okay. There's gotta be I can't do that.

Jocelyn: Yeah.



Janet: I have to know the other person.

Jocelyn: I've also been thinking a lot in the last couple months too I can't assume the way that I helped one person is gonna be helpful for another person. And I've been finding myself getting impatient and dealing with people like, okay, here's the Bible answer for that. This is how we apply that and to realize every single person is a different person and brings a different heart and different motives and different conditions.

Janet: Experiences.

Jocelyn: Yeah. Into their situation. And I need to learn the person that I'm helping and not just make gross generalizations or assumptions.

John: Yeah. Because even back to Psalm 55, like David's gonna say in verse 12, for it is not an enemy who taunts me, then I could bear it. It is not an adversary who deals insolently with me, then I could hide from him. But it is you a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. And so for David, that was a big factor. This is betrayal. This is a friend who's turned on him and that. Makes a different impression on him. Some may not feel that piece as strongly. Others really will and so there's for some, and therefore sexual abuse as an example. If it's a family member that is perpetrating that abuse, they will feel it differently.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Totally.

John: Than if it's a stranger. Others who, if it's a stranger, will feel it more strongly.

Janet: Wow.

John: Because that feels more random and out of control and it could happen just any time. And so again, like you said, you have to ask the questions. You have to get to know that person. And as I've said before, if you've met with one traumatized person you've met one traumatized person.

Jocelyn: Right.

John: And then you sit with another and there's gonna be commonalities. There's gonna be similarities. There's gonna be certain themes that are very common, but then they'll always be their version of it. And so taking that time to learn their version of it.

Jocelyn: We were just reflecting, like we've served a variety of people who have had trauma in their past, and so we served them in our home. And the variety of what we serve to eat really changes depending on the person who is in our home because different things are difficult for people.



Janet: Yeah.

John: There's different meaning attached.

Jocelyn: Yeah. Yeah. And you just have to learn where they're coming from. So how does God's word give hope to those who are experiencing a variety of symptoms from traumatic events?

John: This is part of why it's helpful to know how long this podcast is.

Janet: You have two minutes.

John: Yeah, two minutes. One of those questions that you go for days. But praise God we can go for days.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

John: On this.

Jocelyn: Yes.

John: That's the first.

Janet: And not days because there's so many symptoms but days.

Jocelyn: Because there's so much hope.

John: There's so much hope.

Janet: I love that.

John: Yeah. There's so much God says to people and who have suffered, who are suffering, who, who will suffer. And so yeah, even Ephesians 3:18. Just Paul's gonna pray that we would comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. And so even just that promise of God's work in us, that work of the gospel, that Paul's even praying for, how quickly are we gonna finish that? Like, when do we get to the bottom of the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge?

Janet: Yeah, we don't.

John: We don't. How do we come to appreciate and apply even just the promises of the gospel, like Romans 8, knowing that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, we'll be able to separate us from the love of God and Christ Jesus our Lord. And so the scripture often talks in



those kinds of terms, that God's grace, God's mercy, God's love. The Pacific Ocean is a small illustration of the depth and how long will it take us to cover every square foot. And so that's what God in Christ through His word is offering. So just a few things though to say in that light, God's word gives us the glory of Jesus Christ to fix our eyes upon. And there's something about that is a healing, restoring, freeing gift that we get. We see Him suffer for our salvation, and we find strength to suffer.

Janet: Yes.

John: With Him. We see Him rise from the grave. And know that we're gonna be raised with Him.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

John: And so that's that certainty that we're gonna be raised with him, that we're united to him is hope for the experience of suffering, pain, trauma. God's word gives us a means by which we look back upon the eternity of the entirety of our lives and every detail of our lives and reinterpret it. Start to realize, oh wow, we've been chosen from before the foundation of the world. We've been knit together by God in our mother's womb. He authored days for us before there were any. He's guided and helped and so there's something about those kinds of promises and truths and realities that help us reinterpret our lives.

Janet: Yes.

John: And what we've faced and experienced. And that's some of even what we're looking at in Psalm 55. God's word helps us know that He is for us, not against us. That He's not far from us, that He is near to us, that He never leaves or forsakes us. And so even those kinds of comforts cannot be too often repeated. And they have immediate relevance to this conversation. Because there's so many questions about where is God? Where is God?

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

John: And how can God be near to me if this dangerous is so near to me? How can he be for me if all of this has happened to me? And those are not quickly answered questions. Those are long, careful, biblically-rooted conversations that. We were hopefully having with people and it takes the whole church ministering to the whole church with these kinds of words over time. I think God's word shows us the smallness of our enemies next to the grandeur of our Savior.

Jocelyn: That's so beautiful.



John: Scripture in so many different ways makes that point. That God is big, that people are small. That enemies are fleeting, that He is eternal. And when is it the prophet Elisha that's sitting on the wall to mess with his servant and the enemy armies are surrounding and the servant just says him, what are we gonna do?

Janet: Yes.

John: We're surrounded. And he just prays the Lord to open the eyes of his servant. Opens his eyes. He just sees the mountains covered and angelic beings, this heavenly host there. And it's, those are stories that scripture gives us just to alert us to. That's always true. There's always the invisible, both invisible demonic forces. But invisible forces for good and angels who are ministering spirits that work on our behalf, but especially a God who governs all those things. And so scripture gives us that kind of perspective that lifts our eyes just from the trench and onto the mountains. God's word reminds us that this life is not all there is. This present life is passing away. Because there's so much pain that can be baked into this present life that it, we have to be reminded that this isn't it. That this isn't where the story ends. Yeah, just with Paul, that we, over time we can find the sufferings of this present life less worth comparing to the glory that is to be revealed in us. Just that he would say that in Romans 8, that I don't consider the sufferings of this life worth comparing. To the glory that is to be revealed in us. We're not gonna know how to do that unless we spend a lot of time thinking about the glory that's gonna be revealed in us. That, that has to get bigger. And I think God's word helps that get bigger.

Janet: Yeah.

John: God's word points our gaze to the resurrection. This is certainly something, the thief on the cross, I think, models for us that there he is. Everything tells us he didn't live a particularly productive life to that point, a fruitful life to that point.

Janet: He said he deserved to be where he was.

John: He deserved to be where he was. This is the fitting end, but, and yet he can look at Jesus and just say, Lord, remember me when you come in your kingdom. And what's so much is packed into that statement. Number one, he's gonna declare I'm guilty and the other criminal, you're guilty. He's innocent. So he has some understanding that whoever this is, He's innocent. He has some understanding that whoever this is gonna die and then be raised.

Janet: Because He has a kingdom.

John: He's got a kingdom, He is gonna come back. And then he has some understanding that, and He's not just gonna be raised, He's gonna come back and rule.

Janet: Yeah.



John: Like He's gonna inherit all this. He's gonna, and so remember me when you come into your kingdom. Where'd he get all that? And just the Lord gave him that kind of sight, that kind of understanding. And so he could be crucified, but so long as he was next to Him and with Him, and then Jesus says to him, truly today you'll be with me in paradise. And I'm convinced that's all that guy needed to hear. I'm convinced that, I'd love to see the look on his face after that moment where he was given that assurance and that promise. And yeah, God's word points our gaze into eternity that we will be like Him because we'll see Him face to face. 1 John 3, we'll dwell in His house forever. Psalm 23. And those are just what, 6, 7, 8 examples of ways that God's word specifically gives hope.

Janet: Yes.

John: Where we look forward to everything that God has promised and said in light of everything that he has done and proven and can actually feel real hope in the moment.

Janet: Is. In what ways have you seen that God's words better than what the world has to offer? Because I do think the world believes what they're offering is better. So how is what the word of God says better for those who've experienced just trauma from their past.

John: Yeah, and I appreciate the word better because I think the world's doing the best they can with what they have.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Yeah, totally.

Janet: Yes.

John: And there's a lot of men and women who are giving their lives to helping suffering people.

Jocelyn: Yes.

John: And giving everything they have.

Janet: And I'm grateful.

John: To do that. And it's just, the word better is right. And what we have to offer is better in the way that Jesus is better than every other person. And so just the book of Hebrews even uses that word.

Janet: Yes.

John: He's better. A better high priest. He's a better sacrifice, he's a better word. He's a better covenant. He's a better mediator of a new covenant. And so in the same way that Jesus is better



than everything else. He's better than any of us in whatever wisdom we have to offer. And so that's, I think the first thing worth saying about the gospel and about the word of God brought to bear on the experience of trauma is that what it offers is a person not a system. Not a program, not a formula, but God in three persons, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. And I didn't what in the world competes with that? That offers God as your help. God as your comforter. God as your wisdom. God as your strength. God as your salvation. God as your fill-in-the-blank. And there's another one of those questions we go all day. And so what the word of God and what God himself offers, not a better version of yourself, but a whole new you and conformed to the image of Christ over time. I think God's word also offers a comprehensive worldview, like a truthful way of seeing all of life, not just a particular thing that happened to you. And so this is where I think the gospel in the word of God aims at the foundation of life, not symptoms in the same way. And so that's one of the, I think things that are better is this isn't just about symptom alleviation. This is about heart change, heart transformation, a new way of seeing, a new way of hearing, a new way of relating to God, self, others suffering. That actually puts you on a stronger foundation to face everything. No matter what it is, it better equips you to also face success, which can also be just as dangerous as suffering.

Janet: Yes.

John: Is to most of us think we can't handle suffering, but we can handle success. And usually it's the other way. Most of us destroy our lives much more quickly when it goes well. And but I think God's word is He's not just focused on a symptom, but on a on changing us, transforming us, conforming us to His image. I think God's word even announces ultimate victory over evil. That Christ.

Janet: Which our heart cries for.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

John: Yes. Yeah. Just that like at any, just merely human system can't promise that.

Janet: Yeah.

John: Can't promise a new heavens and a new earth. Can't promise the defeat of evil. And I don't mean just the defeat future, but at the resurrection Christ defeated sin and at the cross and resurrection and Satan and evil and so that's that. The battle's actually done. It's won. It's just yet to be fully realized and fully consummated. But all the points already on the board, the votes are already tallied. And so we get to now walk in both the joy, the freedom of that victory that Christ is purchased and ultimately won. I think God's word offers news of salvation in His name, which means real change. Like real freedom, real transformation, real purpose, real hope. In other words, that it's not, He's not just promising that we're gonna cope or survive.



Jocelyn: Yes.

John: So much of the world systems, I think offer that's the best you can look for. If you've really suffered grossly, if you've really been mistreated deeply, if most of your life you've known pain and darkness, you've grown up and war-torn countries of the world that seem to have no hope in their future, then the best you can hope for is to cope. To get through it. And just praise God that what God offers is not so low. It's something much higher. It's reconciliation to Him. It's life with Him. It's a reconciliation to brothers and sisters in Christ. It's His care, His provision, His joy, His everything else. And that it, and that this life is as bad as we'll know, and we'll be raised and we'll see Him face to face and spend eternity. Amen.

Jocelyn: It's been so helpful to learn about all this over the last several years because the world is just full of trouble.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And it affects the people that we love in terrible ways. And so it's so good to have answers from scripture to share with people that we love.

Janet: Yeah. For anybody listening that's thinking this is nice, but I have a lot of questions and I want to know a lot more. The first thing you have to do is pray that Dr. Henderson gets the time to write a book because we're all begging. But in the meantime, he does have a booklet out on abuse that we will have a link in our show notes. And we recently had a pre-conference on hope for survivors of severe childhood abuse. I think I got the title right.

Jocelyn: More Than Conquerors.

Janet: More than Conquerors.

Jocelyn; Yep.

Janet: And we're gonna have a link to that now that has a price to it. But if you want that, you would be able to rent it for a month and watch that full day of teaching and get a lot more in depth to what we've just talked about. I highly commend that.

Jocelyn: Yeah, it was a great conference.

Janet: It was. I know I'll be going back to it, so I would highly encourage that as well. But I think that's probably all we're gonna be able to do for today. So thank you Dr. Henderson for being willing to come.

John: Yep. My joy.



To keep from missing any future episodes, please sign up for our newsletter on our webpage joyfuljourneypod.com. From there you can also subscribe to this podcast on Apple, Google, or Spotify. You can also visit us on our Facebook page or Instagram at Joyful Journey Podcast. If you have questions or comments for us, you can email us at joyfuljourneyquestions@outlook.com. Joyful Journey Podcast is a ministry of Faith Bible Seminary. All proceeds go to offset costs of this podcast and toward scholarships for women to receive their [MABC through Faith Bible Seminary](#).

Host Janet and her husband, Brent, also speak at a variety of conferences as a way to raise money for the seminary. If you want to look at what they offer or book them for a conference, [go to their website](#).