

The Effects of Trauma and Violence

So I spent the first session outlining what professional secular therapists and the general world says about violence and trauma. In this session, I'd like to develop the topic but now include how a biblical counselor and disciple of Jesus Christ might interact with those who have been traumatized.

I'll do that by weaving in the life stories of several of the girls who were served during my years at Vision of Hope, all of whose names and identifying information has been changed for confidentiality and whose stories are shared with permission.

This session I'm going to share my observations about helping those who have experienced extreme trauma and I'm also going to share at the end of this session the beginning of some ways to help biblically.

Session three will further develop how to serve someone who has suffered trauma by sharing several specific biblical counseling tools that you could use to reorient the counselee to their Creator. The third session will close with some specific recommendations and warnings for the biblical counselor working with victims of trauma gained from several years of wisdom working especially with those who fit the Complex PTSD set of symptoms.

Disclaimers

For 6 ½ years (before retiring in 2013 to stay home and serve my family full-time) I worked with Vision of Hope Residential Treatment Center, which is a ministry for girls between the ages of 14-28 owned and operated by Faith Church in Lafayette, IN.

- That ministry is designed to work with girls who have eating disorders, habits of self-harm, drug and alcohol addictions, and unplanned pregnancies.
- For a period of two years during my time there it pleased God to bring us many girls who presented with the kinds of problems we normally treat, but through the course of counseling both the girls and their counselors came to realize that their eating disorders, drug or alcohol addictions, habits of self-harm, etc were actually tied to unresolved trauma from their past.
- In each case, the girls had faced extremely distressing traumatic conditions that they did not know how to deal with. The habits of sin they had developed were simply their best attempts to make it through the events safely and have some semblance of a normal life after the trauma.

There were times during this period of helping this group of girls that staff literally did not know how to help, what to do, what scripture passages to use, what to believe, or how to help the girls.

- We were daily and hourly on our faces before God begging Him to help us know how to serve these girls.
- For many, Vision of Hope is the last step before suicide, because they have literally tried every other treatment option already.
- We were not going to allow them to believe that God did not have answers for dealing with the long-term effects of the extreme life-threatening trauma on their life.
- So we started researching, and reading, and studying to figure out how to help these girls. This session is a short and very incomplete summary of some of the things we learned from that time.

This session will not be exhaustive. This could be considered Counseling Through Trauma 101 applied.

- There are tons of resources that need to be studied, so much of the Bible to understand, and so much about how the human body responds to trauma and shock that we just don't have the time to talk about today.
- There is some especially interesting research that is coming out about how our brains neurologically receive sensory input and process information that I feel is extremely pertinent to this topic, but that I have not had the chance to research very much yet.
- We hope this session whets your appetites to begin your studies on helping people deal with trauma if you have not yet started.

Stories

Bridget Introduction: Hi, my name is Bridget. The trauma I encountered was domestic violence that included multiple acts of sexual abuse. I didn't acknowledge that this happened until I started having nightmares and flashbacks that were later worked through with my counselor. I worked in counseling for 13 months with the focus on trauma for 10 months.

Genevieve Introduction: My name is Genevieve Lynn. The trauma I experienced was physical, mental, and emotional abuse and neglect from my family as well as several rapes. I acknowledged the abuse happened, but I refused to call the abuse for what it actually was and think about it. I worked through my trauma in counseling for about a year.

Jade Introduction: Hi, my name is Jade and the trauma I experienced was multiple times of sexual abuse. I never acknowledged that any of this happened. I just told myself it was all another little girl, until years later when I kept reliving these experiences in terrifying nightmares. I was in counseling for 8 months.

Marla Introduction: My name is Marla. My trauma I am working through is mental, physical, and sexual enslavement as well as childhood prostitution and occult abuse. I have been in counseling for about 3 years and have been focused on counseling through trauma for about 10 months.

Shelly Introduction: My name is Shelly. The trauma I experienced was a near drowning incident while surfing with a friend. I acknowledged that it happened, but I never acknowledged how serious and near to death I was and refused to think about it. I was in counseling for 6 months.

Important Concepts

Trauma - The person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened **death** or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others

Processing of the Trauma –

- What to **call** this incident,
- who you are as a **response** to this incident,
- who **God** is as a response to this incident

Resolution of the Traumatic Incident

- Positive Resolution - Biblical Resolution
- "Neutral" resolution
- Negative Resolution – up to and including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (DSM-V TR) –
 - Formerly listed as an Anxiety Disorder and now listed as a Trauma and Stress disorder,
 - The person's response to trauma involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror that **cripples** them.

Negative Symptoms You May Face with Your Counselors with Negative Resolution

HOW WE GOT THIS LIST OF SYMPTOMS....

Physical

- Feeling as if the event is **recurring** in the body (reliving the experience, illusions, hallucinations, flashbacks, body memories)

One person My experience of body memories was that though the actual act was no longer happening, the intense pain from the memory of the torture; both physical and sexual, was reenacting itself inside of my body every second of every day.

- Physiological reactivity on exposure to external or internal cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event.

Genevieve When I think I'm in trouble or someone in authority is mad at me, I cower and flinch against any movement thinking I'm going to receive a beating as punishment for my failure. I also respond to my authority as if I were speaking to my dad and repeating phrases such as, "I didn't mean to. I'll do whatever you want. I'll do whatever you say. Tell me what to do. I'll do better next time. I didn't mean to make you mad. I'm sorry."

- Efforts to **avoid** activities, places, or people that arouse recollections of the trauma

Shelly I would avoid songs about floods, raging seas, and waves; any pictures that represented those things; the sound of running water; and movies that depicted other people drowning. Any of these things would make me panic, feel terror, feel like I was the one drowning, and remember the incident.

- Symptoms of increased arousal / heightened senses:
 - Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep
 - Irritability or outbursts of anger
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Hyper vigilance
 - Exaggerated startle reflex

Marla Because of the trauma, I had to be keenly aware of my surroundings for protection, therefore all of my senses are heightened. For example, it is overwhelming to walk into a room and smell everyone's deodorant and perfume as well as their shampoo and natural odors. I am also very sensitive to movement in my peripheral it causes anxiety and dizziness.

Relational

- Efforts to **avoid** conversations / relationships associated with the trauma

Jade: An example in my story is – I would avoid my abuser at all cost, which was difficult because he was a member of my immediate family. I was terrified to be alone with him, and hated when he was placed in authority over me. I never allowed him to be close to me or for us to develop any kind of real relationship. I didn't know why I avoided him I just knew he wasn't safe.

- Markedly diminished **interest** or participation in significant activities (Closed off)

BRIDGET: I would avoid all activities that had anything to do with men. This included small instances such as, eye contact or accidental physical touch. I didn't know why I avoided men, I really just knew that they were not safe.

- Feelings of **detachment** or estrangement from others (Stares into the distance, not engaging)

Genevieve I felt damaged and defective from the rest of society, because of the abuse from my family and several rapes. In order to become invisible, hide, and protect myself from anyone knowing the real “Genevieve,” I would wear baseball hats pulled down covering my face without eye contact with others for fear of visibility and exposure.

Emotional

- Intense **distress** to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event (Terror, fear, panic, shame, guilt,)

One person The intense shame I felt caused me to constantly have a sense of a layer of silicone covering my entire body that everyone could see. If only I could cut it off I would be shameless and pure.

- Efforts to **avoid** feelings associated with the trauma
- Restricted range of **affect**
- Sense of foreshortened **future** (do not expect to have a career, marriage, children, or a normal life span)

Genevieve I did not imagine or expect to live past the age of sixteen. I also refused and continue to struggle with making realistic plans of graduation from college, marriage, and a family of my own. I do not make future statements envisioning individuals in my present life into my future. On the other hand, I would create unrealistic and outrageous dreams of becoming the invincible, powerhouse Editor-in-Chief of Vogue in complete self-sufficiency.

- **Emotional** flashbacks

Marla There are times even now that I would have unexplained emotions or feelings. For example, I may be going through my day normal and feel like I am going to get punished or I may feel like I need to cut for no reason at all. After I check these feelings out and thought through them they are usually connected to a memory or anniversary of a traumatic event.

Mental

- **Recurrent** or intrusive distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts, perceptions, or dreams
- Intrusive Memories (flashbacks, nightmares)

Shelly Water, salt, bubbles, green nothingness, my friend floating away, dragged away by the sea, helpless, bobbing head, wave, big. It’s like a game of dodge ball with mental images, emotions, and video clips of what happened.

- **Disconnected** from reality, alternate realities, alternate personalities

Marla One way that my mind dealt with the trauma as a child was to create other personalities that could “take over” my body and take on the abuse. I also created other rooms that I could go to in my mind so that I was somewhere else while my body was being tortured.

- Telling self the event was not **true**, you were not the victim, that was somebody else

Jade The only way I knew how to keep functioning was to tell myself that those things didn’t happen to me. All of it was a lie I had made up in my head, a horrible nightmare. I wasn’t the girl that was raped over and over, it was another little girl.

- Effort to avoid **thoughts** associated with the trauma

Genevieve In order to avoid the reality of the story God ordained for me, I attempted to rewrite my story by distancing myself completely from the past events and any indicators of its occurrence. When I could not uphold the new story, as

pieces of the real “Genevieve” and story were evident to others, I bolted and ran away to a different state or city with hopes of a fresh beginning. The vicious cycle continued over and over again for years.

- Inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma

Marla Inability to Recall: I was enslaved for 18 years straight and then further abused after that, therefore, my mind blocked out many parts of the trauma. My body held a lot of the memories that in counseling I had to connect what was going on in my body to the memories in my head. Because of the longevity of the abuse I also had to connect the specific events to a timeline to help make sense of the things.

- Feeling **crazy** / insane

Jade I would try to live a normal life and many times certain smells, objects, and men would trigger intense feelings and thoughts. I could see pictures as if they were playing on a video in my head but I couldn't connect them to anything. I had no clue what was happening and all of this made me think I was going insane.

- Scattered thinking

Shelly I was so distractible that I couldn't keep track of my thoughts, especially when dealing with intrusive memories, but also in day to day life trying just to have conversations, read, or pay attention in class.

- **Shutting** Down = the freeze

Genevieve When an authority figure corrects me or I feel confused and cannot make sense of words spoken to me, my brain shuts down functioning robotically and my body freezes with no movement as well as a facial expression of pure fear. This is how I learned to respond to my dad and sexual abusers during acts of abuse, in order to appease my abusers and prevent further harm.

Spiritual

- **Distance** from God

One person I couldn't put God and the situation in the same memory at the same time. It either had to be God was there and not good or God wasn't there at all, it couldn't be both.

- Misunderstanding of the character and work of God
- Anger at God

One person Thoughts of “You never really loved me” and “why do I deserve this kind of punishment?” tormented my mind as I tried to make sense of the anger I felt towards a God whose ways I did not like or understand.

- Loss of faith
- Hindered ability to **comprehend** / total wrong understanding of spiritual truths
- Wasting of precious life lessons / opportunities for growth
- Don't know how to be a **human** being

BRIDGET-Don't know how to be human: I didn't know how to function as a person, didn't know how to think through things, how to act around other people or how to communicate my needs. As a child I never learned how to function in real life situations. I drew inside myself and never gave myself a chance to be around real people in order to keep myself safe.

- Victimization

- **Self-Pity**
- Self-Sufficiency

One person For example, in my case I decided I didn't want or need anyone's help. I made sure to achieve my goal by being completely independent and detached emotionally from everyone and anything that they were willing to provide for me.

- OCD

One person In order to try to have some control over my life I kept developing new rules to keep my life from spiraling out of control, when things just kept falling apart, rules kept stacking. Break the rules and my life falls apart...again. Don't write past the red line, write past the red line and the result: Another piece to the shattered life added. Broken rules equal a broken life. A life managed by rules and rituals, not God.

- **Perfectionism**

Shelly Surfing and catching the perfect ride became an angry obsession. I could rarely enjoy my favorite sport at all and frequently resigned myself to water sports closer to shore that I could enjoy without perfectionism or anger.

- Bitterness
- **Fear**

Shelly Fear of large surf and stormy waters prevented me from succeeding or improving as I would frequently avoid the large surf while at the same time trying to force myself to face it in order to catch the perfect ride.

- Anxiety / Worry

BRIDGET I didn't trust anyone to take care of me, I believed I was independent and could take care of myself. I worried about how I would accomplish this and how I would keep myself safe in the meantime. As I began to realize how much I worried, it came out to be almost the entire day.

- Heightened **Vulnerability**

Genevieve After I would tell my counselor about a memory, I would be freaked out and scared that she would think I was dirty and disgusting or mad at me. I thought that everyone else thought about me the way I thought about myself. There are times I would ask "Are you mad at me?" or be avoidant.

- Sense of worthlessness, being ruined, unclean

Genevieve. The acts of several rapes caused me to feel dirty, disgusting, and ruined for the rest of my life, especially when I experienced flashbacks. I could not handle the feelings of being completely used and worthless. Sometimes after a flashback, I would take a shower and later discover I had scrubbed my skin raw trying to remove the dirt and disgust from my body. I began writing the word "clean" on my hand as a reminder that God had cleansed me from the sin against me and I could not clean myself by scrubbing my skin.

- **Identity** Issues

BRIDGET Because I wanted to please everyone around me in order to keep myself safe, I created what seemed like multiple personalities. My goal was to please everyone all the time. I became whatever anyone needed me to be at that specific time.

- Fear of exposure / Self – protection

Genevieve No one could ever know how terrible, dirty, and disgusting I was. I did everything in my power to never let anyone know who I was or what had happened. I would not even allow myself to think about it. If anyone ever did know about me, I had to terminate the relationship. It was not okay for anyone to ever know the real me, because I couldn't handle anyone else knowing how damaged I was. If they did know they could use that against me to hurt me or stop loving me.

- Being told to “Forget the past” b/c “it wasn’t a big deal”

Marla: At my past church I was told the way to handle my past was to forget it. It was of non-importance because it could not be changed.

- Wrong view of love

Jade All of the abuse made me conclude that love is pain. Loving means I WILL be hurt beyond words. When someone is supposed to protect me it really means they will use me for their pleasure. Love means being used.

Complicating Factors or Secondary Diagnosis

None of the girls who came to VOH to get help with these traumas listed trauma resolution on their application. If they did, we would not have accepted them. As we unraveled their life story through biblical counseling, we uncovered that their life-dominating sin was their best attempt to deal with trauma.

Control Pain – Eating Disorders, Self-Harm, etc

Numb Pain - Drugs, Alcohol, Relationships, etc

Biblical Sufferology – How to process through suffering or trauma¹

The points will be explained by the girls we’ve already been hearing from

Hurting

1. **Candor** – Courageous truth telling to myself about life in which I come face to face with the reality of my external and internal suffering.
 - In candor, I admit what is happening to me and I feel what is going on inside of me.

THIS IS NOT ABOUT BLAMING ANYONE OR JUSTIFYING OR CALLING IT ANYTHING OTHER THAN WHAT IT IS.

GOD IS A GOD WHO VALUES TRUTH, WHO IS KNOWN AS THE TRUTH.....HE WANTS HIS PEOPLE TO BE KNOWN AS TRUTH TELLERS TOO, NOT AVOIDERS, NOT JUSTIFIERS, NOT BLAMESHIFTERS. TRUTH TELLERS.

Flashbacks are often God’s way of pointing out that you have not been living in truth and your body can only try to live a lie so long before it just can’t function without congruency any longer. Explain neurological facts about flashbacks.

BRIDGET Candor: I used to tell myself that I just had a bad childhood, but in reality I was sold to men for my parents profit. This led to a lack of trust in people, but especially men.

¹ God’s Healing For Life’s Losses by Robert Kellemen

Genevieve Candor I had to reach the place where I called the trauma events what they were based on how God defined it and acknowledged how it affected me. I used to tell myself that I was simply raised in a dysfunctional family with extremely strict parents, who suffered a messy divorce. In reality, I had to come to the conclusion that my parents abused me and how they parented me was not biblical, which resulted in under-development and not knowing how to function in life. I had to say, "My parents physically, mentally, and emotionally abused me. My parents neglected me. I am an orphan." I also used to tell myself that I was a scandalous woman, who set myself up in dangerous situations and believed it was my fault when men used me. I also believed I must have wanted it, because I did not fight when I was placed in compromising situations. In reality, I was targeted as a victim by men and did not know the danger signs or how to define the events I experienced. I had to say, "I was set up and used by men. I was trapped. I was raped. I was gang raped. It was not my fault. I was sinned against."

Jade Candor: Candor for me meant I had to be able to say the names of what really happened. I had to come face to face with the fact that I, Jade was the girl who was raped multiple times by someone that should have been my protector. Some of the effects this had on me was all of my relationships were screwed up. I did not know what true love was, as I said before I thought love was being used for other people pleasures.

Marla Candor: I told myself my entire life that I was loved by my guardian. For me candor meant telling myself that my abusers did not love me. They used me, enslaved me, and hated me. For me, candor meant saying that my mom sold me, my dad profited from me, and my guardian enslaved me. I was not loved. I was a means to an end from those who should have protected and loved me and nothing more.

Shelly - Candor Through writing out the event and applying words to the emotions I was feeling inside of me I honestly faced the raw truth of the situation, that I almost died and it was terrifying, but God in His sovereign power preserved me.

2. **Complaint** – Vulnerable frankness about life to God in which I express my pain and confusion over how a good God allows evil and suffering.
 - Complaint is an act of truth-telling faith, and a rehearsal of the bad allowed by the Good.
 - When we complain, we live in the real world honestly, refusing to ignore what is occurring.
 - In complaint, we hide nothing from God because we trust His good heart and because we know He knows our hearts. (Ps 62:8; 73:28)
3. **Cry** – A faith-based plea for mobilization in which I humbly ask God for help based upon my admission that I can't survive without him.
 - Cry – the shriek of a wounded animal
 - C.S. Lewis "God whispers to us in our pleasures...but shouts to us in our pains: It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."
 - The opposite of cry is arrogance...the tough, stoic, self-made lone ranger who needs no one, especially not God.

Genevieve After experiencing one flashback after another for six hours on the conference room floor, I finally reached the end of my rope in my pursuit to avoid dealing with the trauma. I began crying and screaming out to God saying "I can't survive another day of laying on the conference room floor for 6 hours. God, You win. I will deal with all of this. I can't do it without You. And I can't survive without You. I need You to help me. I'll work through it even if I have to relive every second of it. I'll work through it even though it's going to be excruciatingly painful." Crying out to God was like an animal shrieking out in agony. I needed Him and I could not survive this without His help.

4. **Comfort** – Experiencing the presence of God in the presence of suffering – a presence that empowers me to survive scars and plants the seeds of hope that I will yet thrive.
 - Faith does not demand the removal of suffering, it desires endurance in suffering, temptation, and persecution.

- Co-fortitude – being fortified by the strength of another, having been given courage.

Marla: Coming to the conclusion that God is good and works his sovereign plan for my benefit is why I go to counseling every week. I am willing to work through flashbacks, live with nightmares, and recount every memory in order work through it and find at the conclusion of every single event that God is still good. I am willing to work through all of this pain because I am convinced working through suffering God's way will result in me being a more functioning person, a more loving person, and a more committed disciple. I am comforted by the fact that I am learning to love God and other people better b/c of my suffering.

Healing

Waiting – Waiting is trusting God's future provision without working to provide for oneself. It is refusing to take over while refusing to give up. It refuses self-rescue.

- We neither numb our longings nor fulfill them illegitimately.
- Faith looks back to the past recalling God's mighty works, and hope looks ahead remembering God's coming reward.

Jade Waiting: For me waiting looked like allowing myself to feel all the hurt, knowing the effects it's still having on me. Letting the tears come if that's what God wants, but knowing I have hope. Waiting is not trying to fix my problems or pretend they aren't real but telling myself truth and fighting hard because this time Satan will NOT win God's victories.

Wailing – Longing for heaven and living passionately for God and others while still on earth.

- We are designed for paradise, but we live in the desert.
- It is about being pregnant with hope...groaning for paradise, walking with God, being naked and unashamed, and for shalom.

Marla wailing: Because of the sin done towards me I have irreversible damage and health issues with my body. My broken body will remain non-functional until the day I die and go to Heaven. For this and so many reasons I long for Heaven. But while I am here on earth I want to use what is left of my body and strength to love and serve others. I want my body to be used for God's glory

Weaving – Entrusting oneself to God's larger purposes, good plans, and eternal perspective

- We are always wondering what God might be up to in all of this.
- Present suffering plus God's character equals future glory.

Shelly – In Jeremiah 29:11 it says, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." This is why He made sure I survived, why He protected me from death, why He did not let me drown (even when surrendering to death was seemingly the most peaceful and satisfying option). God had (and has) plans for my life. If I had died I would not have been able to do the things He had planned for me, and because I was not a proclaimed believer, death would have meant Hell. God wasn't finished with me yet, and He still isn't.

Worshipping – Wanting God more than wanting relief. Finding God even if you don't find answers. Walking with God in the dark and having Him as the light of your soul.

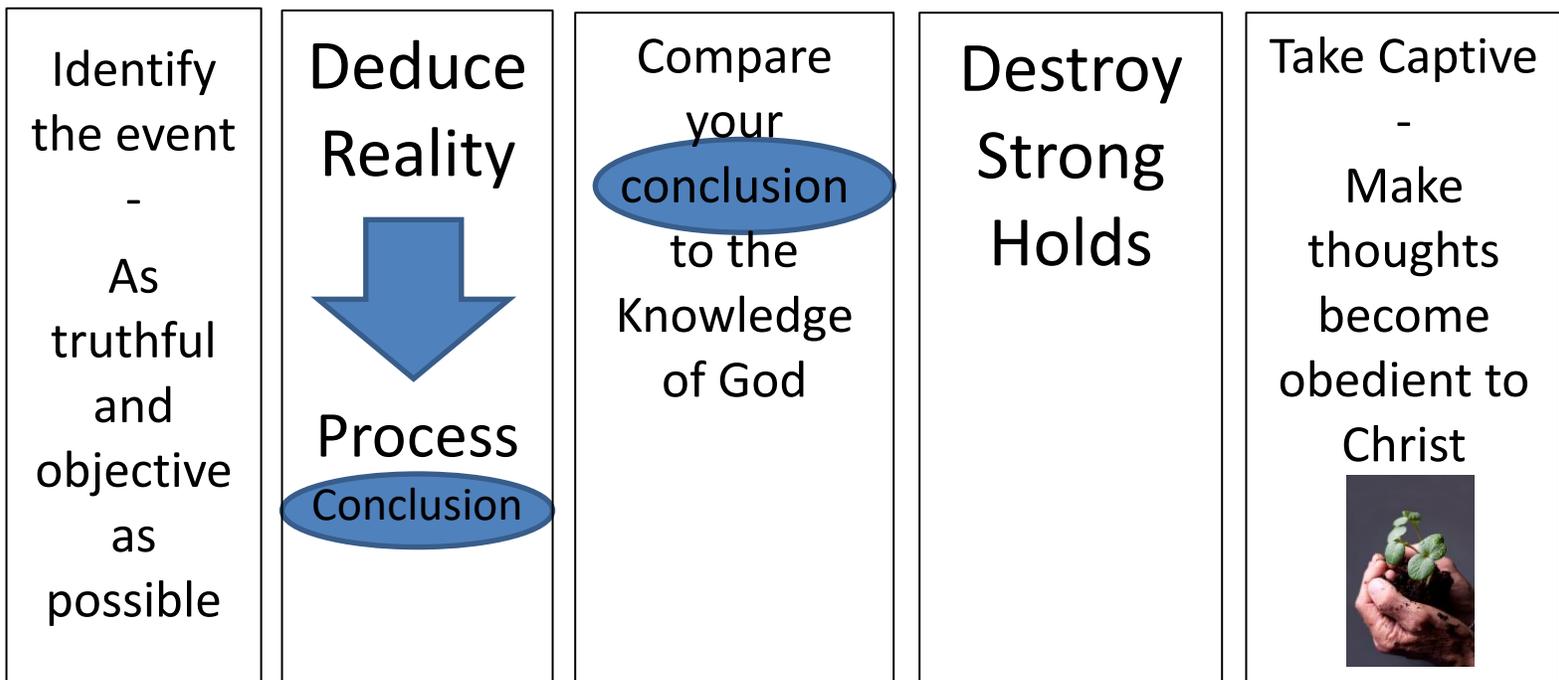
- Suffering's ultimate purpose is worship – intimate, loving engagement with God, knowing and worshipping God as our Spring of Living Water, our only satisfaction, and our only joy.

II Corinthians 10:3-5

³For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, ⁴for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. ⁵We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,

- Take “prisoner” thoughts (voema, plans, plots, and schemes);
 - 2 Cor 2:11 – Satan’s schemes, designs, and plots.
 - You don’t need God. You can make it on your own..... Which is exactly what sin is. (Kellemen, 2007)
- Demolish (means to take down by force by destroying the foundation)
 - foundational arguments,
 - arguments, and
 - pretensions.
- In 2 Sam 22:3 God claims to be our stronghold....we must rip out the foundation under anyone who lives without needing God.
- Arguments / imaginations (logismos)...
 - mental calculations,
 - adding up reality,
 - getting rid of warped or out of joint arguments that arrogantly factor God out of life (Kellemen, 2007)
- Weapons – (hopla, is an offensive weapon, a battering ram) Eph 1:18-23

Processing Suffering



Biblical Passages You Must Know

Genesis 41:52

Deut 8 and Deut 31:6; 33:26-29

Psalms 119:65-72

Exodus 2:24

II Kings 14:26-27

Lamentations 3:22-26

Exodus 3:1-9

The story of Job

Nehemiah 9:9

The story of Joseph

Many of the Psalms (6, 27, 31, 34, 41, 42, 43, 55, 73, 61, 118)

Isaiah 42:6; 53

Jeremiah 1:5

II Corinthians 1:5-7

James 1:2-5

Romans 5

II Corinthians 4:16-18

James 5:7-11

Rom 8:18-39

Philippians 2:18-25

II Thessalonians 1:3-12

Acts 10:5

Philippians 3:10

I Peter 3:8-18

I Corinthians 10:13

Colossians 1:24-29

I Peter 4:12-19

BRIDGET Bible verses: There are three verses that were extremely helpful to me while I was working through my memories. Exodus 15:3, Deuteronomy 31:6, and Deuteronomy 33:16-29. These verses reminded me of who my God is and the promises he declares. My God is a warrior fighting at my side. His arms are always around me shielding me from the enemy, and he does go before me making a pathway so I should be strong and courageous.

Genevieve Passages:

One instrumental passage was Psalm 13, where the Psalmist asked God how long he would forget him and make him live with the agony in his soul that was causing so much suffering. The Psalmist asked how long would his enemies have the upper hand on him and defeat him. At the end, the Psalmist says he trusts God's steadfast love. That Psalm was important to me, because I felt the same way as the Psalmist. I felt like my abusers were still controlling me and defeated by them. I also learned how to trust in God's unfailing, fierce love and goodness, not myself or what I could do to make the suffering end.

Romans 8:28 speaks about God working everything for the good of His people. This was helpful, because I knew that my suffering and pain would not be wasted. I also knew God was using my pain for my good and to bring Him glory.

Jade Verses for Fighting. James 1:2-5 And Psalms 119:65-68 were instrumental verses in helping me think biblically about my suffering. I have learned that suffering is really a love gift from God. He is allowing me to share in His sufferings to make me be able to shine more for Him. I would not be able to love God as much as I do now and still be growing in my love for Him if it were not for intense suffering I have gone through. I know that everything I go through is for my good and to make me look more like Jesus. My God is GOOD and does only good.

Marla Biblical Passages: For me the 2 scripture passages that have helped me the most are Psalm 119:71 and 1Cor 10:13. With every flashback, body memory, anniversary, sleepless night, and all of my body limitations I cry out to God to teach me his statutes all the while knowing He promised that this would never be too hard.

Shelly – Passages Jeremiah 29:11 is encouraging to me because it reminds me that no matter what I go through God always has a plan for my good.

Psalm 139:9b -12 so accurately depicted what I went through while drowning and facing death- it taught me that even then and there God was with me in the sea.

Conclusions

My goal as a biblical counselor is to help my counselee think, act, desire, and feel in a way that honors God and shows my deep love for him and utter dependence upon him.

- Deut 8:2-3 declares that God says it is good for us to remember the ways that he has walked us through suffering, because it forced us to come to terms that we cannot live without God.

- Every single one of these girls has independently come to the conclusion that God is good and is to be trusted, whether a traumatic experience was a part of His plan for them or not.
- They would have never come to that conclusion if they had not worked through the experience, step by step, in a biblical process, where they had to confront the pain and make sense of it.

In our counseling we loved C.S. Lewis and I thought it would be a fitting end to this session for me to read a quote that has become quite special to these girls.

It reads “If there’s anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they’re either braver than me or else just sill.’ “Then he isn’t safe?” asked Lucy. “Safe?” said Mr. Beaver “Don’t you hear what Mrs. Beaver tell you? Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”

The people you are counseling need to know that the suffering God has allowed for them is worth working through.

- The questions they have are worth asking, but they cannot be so afraid of facing fears that they settle for the safe solutions, avoiding, numbing, controlling.
- God is good.
- He doesn’t promise pain free, but he does promise that the pain will be worth it and the pain will one day make sense.

BRIDGET Through this suffering I came to the conclusion that God is good and does only good! He was affectionately sovereign in ordaining the abuse I went through in order to bring me to Himself. He had to strip me of my independence which caused me to run to Him, to be embraced in his everlasting arms. His grace is truly sufficient for every circumstance

Genevieve Conclusion: Through the suffering I experienced and the authentic wrestling matches with God, I have landed on one conclusion. God wins. God is good and only does good. I stand firm knowing God ordained my suffering for the good and benefit of my life, because it would bring Him the most glory. I may not understand my suffering or why, but I am absolutely convinced and settled on His goodness. Without His goodness, I can honestly say, “My life does not make sense.” I am desperate for My God, because I cannot live without Him and His Word directing every moment of my life. The cry of my heart is that the watching world would look at my suffering, sin, and who I am now and scream, “There must be a God” when they see the healing and transformation of my life reflecting Him.

Jade Conclusion: I can stand here today and tell you that I am glad God loved me SO much to ordain for me abuse so intense that it brought me to the end of myself to where I could only run into His arms. The only reason any of this makes sense is because I have learned that the God I serve is a GOOD and LOVING GOD.

Marla Conclusion: Working through the trauma of my past was vital to my relationship with God. With every painful thing unveiled in my life God has brought me to the conclusion that He is good. Even more important if He decided that I needed to relive the entire thing He would still be good.

Shelly Conclusion: When I was underwater, seconds away from surrendering myself over completely to death and the green darkness, God’s hand was there to guide me to the surface. Working through this event biblically made me realize how protective God really is, that He won’t take me away until He’s ready for me and finished with His work in my life.

Resources that May Be Helpful

When God Weeps by Joni Eareckson Tada

Suffering and the Sovereignty of God by John Piper et al.

Rid of My Disgrace by Justin and Lindsey Holcomb

Trusting God by Jerry Bridges

If God Is Good by Randy Alcorn

Soul Physicians by Robert Kellemen

God's Healing for Life's Losses by Robert Kellemen

Bonus Biblical Passage to Discuss

Philippians 1:9-11

⁹And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.