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podcast

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Lysa:

Welcome to another episode of *Therapy and Theology*. I'm Lysa TerKeurst joined today by Dr. Joel Muddamalle and licensed professional counselor, Jim Cress. Thank you guys so much. I'm so excited about our topic today. We're talking about moving through the impact of trauma. Here's something I want you to keep in mind. Every time we experience a wounding or a betrayal or a trauma, traumatic event in our life, there's two parts. There's the fact of what happened. That's the initial hurt that you've experienced or the initial rejection that you've experienced. So there's the fact, then there's also the impact.

Lysa:

So the fact happens, but the impact you're going to have to move through, and it could leak into your life for quite a while. So today we want to talk about what are those stages, just like we've heard there's stages to grief. And oftentimes moving through the impact of trauma, moving through the impact of the grief, that comes from a loss either because of death or because of someone walking away or an ending of a relationship.

Lysa:

Those things mirror each other — the grief from a loss and the grief of a trauma. And sometimes the trauma is because of loss in our life. So today I want to talk about these stages because I've been through some significant trauma. If you've been watching *Therapy and Theology* for a while, I've been very upfront and honest. Sometimes I feel like Joel is here to bring the theological depth, and Jim is here to bring the therapeutic wisdom and I'm here to bring the issues. So we just make a really good team here, but I've been through significant trauma and loss. And we've worked together so much. Jim is my personal counselor. And then Joel is my personal theologian, really. Joel and I work together every day. And he does the theological research and study.

Lysa:

And we spend many, many hours studying the Bible together, but both of you are familiar, very, very familiar with what I've walked through. And Jim, you've called divorce before: The death of a marriage. And I do feel like I've not only walked through the traumatic events surrounding what caused the death of this marriage, but also having to learn to accept it and move on. And the grief, has at times, been pretty intense because it is a loss. So whatever the impact is that you're processing or you're walking through, most of us have some kind of hurt, wounding, possibly even trauma, that we are facing in front of us.

Lysa:

And even if you haven't had something dramatic happen in your life, I would suspect you are grieving something, or you're trying to move through something that maybe you had an expectation of a certain relationship and that relationship isn't playing out like you thought it would, or maybe you thought you'd be at a certain point in your life right now. And maybe you haven't hit what you feel like is that place that you thought you would be when you're 25, 35, 45, 55, whatever it is, or maybe life just has not turned out like you thought it would. You thought $A + B$ should equal C and you did A and you did B and then C doesn't at all look like you thought it would.

Lysa:

So whatever the fact of the grief that you're carrying or the fact of the hurt or pain is, I think we all share that in common. So what can be disillusioning sometimes is where the feelings ... The impact has hit us of what we're walking through and the feelings feel so overwhelming. It just feels like an ocean that we're having to wade through. And unless we can see some mile markers, it's easy to sort of get stuck. It's easy to get lost, or it's easy to get hopeless because we just don't know how to do this or what to look for.

Lysa:

We don't have these mile markers to indicate like what we're moving through. And I think the question I can find myself asking is, is this normal? Is this normal? Is this normal? I think so many times, Jim, I show up and I just want to say, "OK, this is what I'm feeling right now, is this normal?" And I sort of brace for Jim to say, "No, that's actually psychologically awful," but he's never said that. You're very patient in helping me move through. And that is what we're doing here. We can't just get over it.

Jim:

Yeah. Prepositions matter.

Lysa:

Yes.

Jim:

We've talked about that offset here that prepositions matter.

Lysa:

That's right. So instead of trying to get over it or fast track it or get around it, we're going to have to walk through it. And as we walk through it, what are the stages that we're going to experience? So that's what I want to talk about today. You guys good for that? I hope so.

Jim:

[inaudible 00:05:28]. And by the way, normal seriously is just a setting on your washer, dryer or dishwasher.

Lysa:

Thank you.

Jim:

It's like what is normal? There is a reality, I think, of a healthy normal, and at times maybe an unhealthy normal, that maybe you've been in relationships like that or in one now. And there's a new normal that I get to literally create a cooperation with God and in community with other people who are healthy to create, this is my new normal. And I want to, as we always do, offer hope that you get to create a new normal and walk in it.

Lysa:

I like that because it indicates that we're moving forward not backward, because sometimes I can find myself just so resistant, like I don't want all these changes. I want to go back to what was normal. And yet, when you have walked through significant trauma, you really don't want to go back. What you really want is to move forward. And so I like defining it as we're moving toward a new normal, not returning to what was normal.

Jim:

And the beauty of, through, in that preposition that we've talked so much about again, off air here. But what we've talked about is through, is always implying, going through something forward ultimately. When you think the average person that thinks, think of the preposition through they're thinking move forward, not going backwards. It might feel like at times that you're taking three steps forward and two back, but overall we are moving through, there is a forward progress.

Joel:

All right. I can't help myself. You guys keep jumping through with the prepositions and all this. Let me just do a little bit of background work. And I want to ask a question, what kind of people are we going to be? Are we going to be an ek type of people or dia type of people? And before you get lost —

Lysa:

OK, you know you're going to have to spell this, right?

Joel:

Yap. Ek is the Greek preposition, E-K. And it means out of or from.

Lysa:

OK.

Joel:

And I think when it comes to trauma, when it comes to hurt, when it comes to pain, we all want to move out of and from that into something else. And that's great. Now, here's what I'm worried about, and I think this is the background of our conversation is at what cost, and by what means are we going to do this? And so throughout the New Testament, one of the most important prepositions is the preposition dia. And so ek comes after, dia comes before. And dia is the preposition through. So the Old Testament was translated in Hebrew originally and then it was translated, written in Hebrew. And then it was translated into Greek. And that's known as ... Lysa?

Lysa:

Septuagint.

Joel:

The Septuagint. Now, here's what's so incredible. The preposition that is present almost everywhere, I mean, we could do an entire study on this by itself, is *dia*, the preposition through. The people of Israel have to move through the wilderness in order to get to the promised land. The people of Israel have to move through the Red Sea to escape the tyranny of Pharaoh. You see, Jesus has to go through Samaria in the New Testament in order to get to the well in John 4 so He can have this catalytic moment with the Samaritan woman who is hated by society, but becomes the first evangelist of the gospel. And so never do we find ... Anytime the Israelites try to go around what God has in store for them, actually more trauma is awaiting them. And so I think it's really important that we want to, yes, be an *ek* people, but we can't get out of or from, unless we do the hard work of going through.

Lysa:

I think in some of my prayers early on it was God deliver me from. Like, I want a miraculous, like I'm in this extreme pain. And so God, in order to deliver me from, I want it immediate. I want the big miracle. I want you to take this away. I want you to change that person in an instant. I want you to make the circumstances better. I want you to bring me to a place where things feel level and not so hard. But so many times when I read the stories of the Bible, there are those miraculous, instantaneous miracles that we see. But what I see more often, instead of delivering from — like a miracle in an instant — it's a walking with through. And what God has really been showing me is, Lysa, I want to walk with you through this and it's step by step and it's day by day. But a big benefit of that is there's a deepening in my relationship with the Lord even.

Joel:

Yes.

Jim:

Yeah.

Lysa:

And there's a new found dependence on Him. I didn't need Him to be my husband until I had no husband. I didn't need Him to be my closest companion until I realized I need Him to be my closest companion. And it's not that I didn't need Him before like that, it's that I didn't realize the depth of my need. And that doesn't make it any easier. Sometimes I still like, just take it away, please just take away this pain, but I'm discovering what God has been doing with me is walking with me through. So let's get to some of these stages or these mile markers.

Lysa:

So when ... And I'm going to have to put on my glasses because you know, old eyes. OK. So when trauma happens, like I said, there's the fact of what happens and then there's this impact that is going to occur to us. We're going to feel the impact, but then there's going to be stages as it unfolds in our life. And we want to know that we're moving toward healing, and that we really are moving through this to a place of even greater hope and maybe even purpose in all this pain that we're walking through. And so, I felt like it was good — and we prepared in advance — to give these mile markers. Now this isn't an exclusive

exhaustive list, but it is a good list. And I feel like I personally experienced it and you guys have added to it. And I think it's just going to be super helpful.

Lysa:

So at first we're going to experience the sense of loss. Life was this way and now it is no longer this way. Or it could be like for me, I had what I felt like was a solid family unit of a husband and a wife and the children lived within that. And that felt so good and right and safe to me. And then when I had to finally accept that this marriage had died and that there were certain realities that made it unsustainable for me to stay, and obviously unbiblical for me to stay, there was such a deep loss. I mean, it was just overwhelming to me. And certainly, if you've experienced ... I know you experienced the death of your cousin through an extreme tragedy of, she was brutally murdered, and the extreme loss of that. But like I said, it could also be the loss of expectations, the loss of where you thought you would be. So that's the first. It's like this feeling of hurt and realization of loss. After that, at first the first mile marker is shock. Like it's just hard to believe.

Joel:

I think that's really good. Let me just really quick locate this first situational of loss theologically to Genesis 3. And I know Jim and I, we were talking earlier about this. Genesis 3, there's a theologian. His last name is Plantinga and he describes that the trauma of Genesis 3 as being at one point, the presence of thousands of strands that connected creation and humanity to the person of Christ, like we're all connected to the life of Christ. And then when sin hits, it's almost like a ... Have you ever had a rubber band, and you've taken your band, you've stretched it out? And then you know there's this tension point that if you go any further, it's going to snap and it's going to stink somebody.

Jim:

Yeah.

Joel:

That's what happened at the fall. These thousands of connected realities into the life of Jesus were stripped in a second and snapped that caused trauma. It caused trauma emotionally. It caused trauma physically and it caused trauma spiritually. And so in that very first moment in Eden, we actually find an incredible amount of loss. And often, Lysa and Jim, what I think we don't do is we think about it from the human perspective of what Adam and Eve lost. I wonder for a second, just humanize and just go back to, well, God is a good Father who loves His people. Can we just talk about the loss that Yahweh had of walking into the garden and not having Adam and Eve there, the silence of a conversation that used to be there that is no longer; the presence of footprints and walking and working in Eden that is now still and absent. And so here, right away, we find the presence of this very first loss. And that is a shocking reality.

Lysa:

It is. And so that loss is shock. It's just like, either I didn't see it coming or I don't know what to do with this feeling. And so that's the shock, which often can also hold hands with either the intensity of the shock and just the feeling of overwhelming emotion, or it can play out on the other side and absolute numbness of just like no emotion at all. And almost feeling like I'm going to resist feeling one feeling cause if I feel one feeling, it may open me up to feeling all of the feelings. So it could be that the loss triggers a numbness or it could be an overwhelming sense of emotion. But regardless there sometimes, a

lot of times, is this denial. This denial, like, I can't believe this is happening or I can't accept the emotions around this. I just don't even know what to do with it. And Jim, I know you often, anytime I say the word can't, you sometimes add in what?

Jim:

Won't. It's the can't, won't principle. I say can't, but I mean, won't often. And with this, you've alluded to it that the denial that we all will have from time to time in our lives, if you look at it, it's pretty easy to see you're not really denying the vent. Because it's hard even with the death, of death of a relationship or relationship ending at any level, friendship, any level at all, marriage included, or someone literally dies. You know somewhere in your mind, they died or this relationship ended, or this person did this to me that hurt, is the denial of the emotion of what does it mean, back to impact? What is the impact on me just to say this happened? That's where we do fact impact. In fact I just got to say, and we've said it many times here, that mental health and spiritual health that we all want is a commitment to reality at all cost.

Jim:

It is not just a commitment to reality. What will it cost me? So again, the denial is really denying some of the emotions and thoughts around it because I just don't want to face it. And you've alluded to, I can numb out. You'll only be able to numb out ... There's only so much soul anesthesia. You can only numb out so long and eventually something will awaken you. You can go right back to numbing or go back to sleep again. But numbing is very hard to stay numb, minus a lot of drugs and alcohol and acting out. It's very hard to stay numb.

Lysa:

And I think there's a big difference between acknowledging what happened. Like you can acknowledge the fact of it. There's a huge difference between acknowledging and accepting.

Joel:

That's right.

Lysa:

So accepting is going to come much later in our mile markers. So we acknowledge that this loss, this shock, the numbness, maybe even the denial, we acknowledge the event, but we're sort of in denial. Like I can't believe this is happening. I can't feel all this emotion. And so that's [inaudible 00:17:52].

Jim:

And if you could by the way, it would be overwhelming. If it could ... Paul talked about it, for sure you're going to the third heaven. And it's like, there's a sense of going, I just soon peace out and get out of here. But God wants me to stay here. There's a sense "if I could be" in human growth and development, anybody knows it. It's studied even in psych 101 course in college, is Piaget and Erikson and others who did this in Kohlberg. There are these stages of growth and development that every human on any continent goes through. And so the stages of grief that these mirror so much like from Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and others have done work. They mirror this because if I could be fully immersed, and I'm not talking about baptism, doctor, but if fully immersed in this, it would be overwhelming and I don't know that I could sustain living.

Jim:

So there is these stages that are really, we've named what God invented in these stages of trauma, stages of grief. But if I could fully get it on that day, I think I would be overwhelmed.

Lysa:

Yeah. In other words, we experienced the fact of what happened but it's actually part of God's mercy that the impact leaks into our life over time, because if the full impact of trauma would've hit us all at once, it may have killed us.

Jim:

Yeah, true.

Lysa:

Or overwhelmed us to the point where we couldn't be resilient and come back from it.

Joel:

Let's connect this to the reality of Jesus on the cross. Why is it though that happens to Christ on the cross is so epic of epic proportions that had the ability to wipe out sin and death as strongholds over our life? Because Jesus does on the cross, what you and I in our human limitations could never have done. He experienced the overwhelming full impact of the trauma of sin on the sign of pure evil, which is the cross. And He overcame it, so that we have the kindness of God. We have the mercy of God, that, that thing can be kind of by His grace taken over time.

Lysa:

That's so good, Joel. So that's that first stage: It's the loss, the hurt, the shock, the numbness, the denial. OK, now typically what's going to happen next is some anger. It's not, I can't believe this is happening, but I'm so angry that this is happening. And I didn't want this. I didn't ask for this. Many times I didn't cause this. And yet it is coming at me. It's happening to me. And that anger can either be turned outward or be turned inward. And so Jim, talk a little bit about that. What is anger turned outward and what is anger turned inward?

Jim:

Well, anger turned outward can look like a lot of things. It can be blaming, and blame is usually an attempt to discharge pain when you blame people, it can be sensed that, just saying, and we see David and maybe a little bit of the imprecatory Psalms or others saying, God what are you doing here? God there were other people you could have taken out of my life, or a famous author and friend of mine wrote a book called *It's Not Supposed To Be This Way*. Even to God to go, "This is not how it should have been." I could almost hear God saying, "You're right. We're not in Eden anymore." So that's anger turned outward, and it could be at one level against the person who's harm me, the system, God, whoever, whatever you want to call it.

Jim:

Anger turned inward is in the stages of grief what we typically call depression. It's literally pressing down the anger, like on my soul and I'm stuffing it, and beach balls in my office. I have a little beach ball and I have a hand grenade in my office. It's a gutted one. I do.

Joel:

It's an important detail, Jim.

Jim:

It's very important to announce that. But if you hold a beach ball underwater long enough, it'll become like a grenade. And suddenly that's anger turned inward. You can't afford it. And what it does, and we know scientifically and medically, what it does to my soul and then to my body because the body keeps the score. So I'm stuck in a stage of grief and healing. I'm just stuck there. And the longer that depression goes on there, anger turned inward, the neuro pathways of the brain can say, "Well, this is my new norm, and a little rut go on your brain that's gonna take a lot of antidepressants to get that brain functioning again, very dangerous.

Lysa:

Hmm. And I think you've also said many times what we don't work out, we act out. And so we're talking about not just moving through but working through these stages.

Jim:

An active program, it's not just coasting. Yeah.

Lysa:

But I think we've got to understand the anger is ... I know the Bible makes it very clear. It's not the feeling of anger that is the sin. It is what we do as a result of that anger.

Jim:

Be angry and do not sin.

Lysa:

Yes. So this is part of it. And I don't think that we need to beat ourselves up. Like, why am I feeling angry? Because for me, I'm a pretty peaceful person. And when I get angry, I really beat myself up. And then of course, I call Jim, set up an appointment and I'll say, "Is this normal? I feel like this is so not normal." And Jim, you've been so gracious at times to explain, "You're right. What you are walking through is not the normal that you thought" —

Jim:

It is an injustice and God Himself would speak to it; this is an injustice.

Lysa:

And it's not wrong to feel angry that this has happened or this has been taken or this has been done to you. Or even that God allowed this. The reality is it's an injustice. So of course, there's going to be some anger around it. So then right off of that, we can find some fear. We can find panic. And then this one's really interesting, Jim, shopping for pain or searching for safety. And you explained to me one time that our brain is wired for safety.

Jim:

For confidence in knowing. It's going to want to say — and this is next — yes, wired for safety. But the brain like wheel of fortune is going out automatically and autonomically to fill in the gaps. And I bet this may happen next or this may not. The brain's always searching for what's going to happen next.

Lysa:

And I think that's so fascinating because what happens in my brain is sometimes when I'm searching for what happens next, I run ahead and I write a script of what a good God should surely do. Then I want to hold God accountable to outcomes of my own making. And that can lead right into the disorientation that's also part of this stage.

Jim:

And that's, by the way, where I say, it all not to be cute seriously, but G-O-D in this on demand society, the doggone Internet's slow, or the lady at some restaurant's slow, but she's a lot faster than you, God. G-O-D does not stand for God on demand. And that's that theology of not, may I say sometimes idolatrous thing of, enough of this, God. You need to come now. And if you don't — and I've written the script, so make sure the script gets enacted by you, God, for you won't say this. But for if I were running the universe, if I were God, so G-O-D is not God on demand. And I have to say, how do I go and have, and not to sidebar it too much, and that is to feel [foreign language 00:25:07], my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And then Lord, if there's any way, three times, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but Yours be done.

Jim:

But there's a sense that I get to say, God, would you take me out of this pain? Would you let this cup pass from me? Is there a way? And then that surrender that says, "God, not my will, but Yours be done." There's a humility and a surrender. But guess what? I get to say, "Could you take the cup away?" I mean, theologically, I don't think I've made any errors here.

Joel:

Now I call it the genie in a bottle theology. We got three, three ... And it's almost like, this is how I rationalize it in my mind. I've got three wishes and I'm not wasting it on the frivolous stuff, but this is one of my major wishes in God. Like aren't you my genie in a bottle? I've lived a good life. I've been pretty moral. Yeah. Why can't you just pull through on this one? And so what I think Jim, you just described so eloquently is a shift that has to take place in our perspective of God as a genie in a bottle versus God who sits as King over the universe. And God's kindness to us is that we're His children. So He invites us just, like any good children, He invites us to plead and to ask, right? But there is this assurance, this comfort of knowing that because God is kind, what He gives is a blessing. But what He doesn't give is actually a form of protection, which I know is what you've taught often, Lysa.

Lysa:

Yeah. And that's hard.

Joel:

That's hard.

Lysa:

It is hard. But I think as we walk with God, we learn to trust Him. And one thing that I do is I like to go back. When I can't see what God is working out now and into the future, I like to go back and trace His hand of faithfulness in previous situations where God has walked me through something. And when I do that, I can stand on the faith and search for the confidence of knowing that God is good. God is good to me. And God is good at being God. And He got me from back here to now, and He's surely going to get me from now to there.

Jim:

Think of the confidence we have, Philippians 1:6, don't we? That I am confident of this. There's your confidence to tell your brain right out of the Word of God, I am confident of this. Don't understand it, but He who began a good work in me, He will continue it in me and through me, and perfect it in me until I'm in heaven.

Lysa:

Now, there's two other things that ... I can find myself getting stuck here, because remember I said, "I'm bringing the issues." So here are some issues, we skipped right over. I mentioned it, but right in the middle of the fear and the panic, there are these two things, the shopping for pain or searching for safety. We talked about the searching for safety and then the disorientation. So in the disorientation, I find myself saying, "Yeah, but what about this? But what about this? But what about this? But what about this?" And I am trying right now to tell myself that God isn't asking me to carry every day forward from here. He's only asking for me to carry today and He will help me carry it.

Lysa:

And so when I start running ahead and saying, "Yeah, but what about this and this and this and this?" I feel like I'm trying to prepare myself. Like if I can run ahead and see all the possibilities that I'm not going to be so caught off guard, and maybe there's some wisdom to that. But the danger of that is trying to carry everything into the future rather than just letting God walk with me today. And God has given me grace for today. Hope for tomorrow, but grace for today. So the what about, what about, what about? That kind of disorientation and caring too much is a struggle that I have.

Jim:

Well, that can be with the shopping for pain, I may be going out and saying, "I'll bet there's more. Let me look." And what are they doing? People do it on social media. Is there someone there? Are they talking about me? Or something like that. And it's for me to try to, who I am called, to live by faith in today, sufficient under every day. The Word of God says, "for the troubles thereof today." (Matthew 6:34) And I'm literally getting maybe ahead of God. I've done it to try to write the script and I'll bet this will be there. And I'm literally busy writing this script. What's a problem for me when I do that? It takes me out of the eternal now. Though, here the right now and being present with God, I've already left the moment and I'm disassociated out in what we call preoccupation. I'm preoccupying a future moment that I may never have. And that's time of my life I've wasted redeeming the time going forward for the days or evil that I've left the moment. That's the only moment I have to live is now.

Lysa:

So the what abouts moving forward, that can sometimes get me stuck.

Jim:

Sure.

Lysa:

And when we say shopping for pain, here's how it plays out in my life. I want to go figure out why this happened. And so shopping for pain is almost like looking, looking, looking for more and more and more. Maybe it's that we're looking at somebody's social media. Like maybe it's a friend that no longer is our friend, and then all of a sudden we want to try to figure this out. Like what happened and what were they really looking for? Or what did these other people have that I didn't have? Whatever it is. We go to their social media and we start digging and reading and all of that. And I have learned it really is not helpful.

Jim:

And what would you hope to ... I know we're on *Therapy and Theology*, not in just therapy in an office. What would you hope to get out of that? If I can go out and fill in the gap and shopping for pain, or we've said sometimes we'll call it searching for safety. I'm trying to find it all out. I want to find out why, but then I ask a deeper question, well, why would you do that? And I'm curious, not furious there. I say, "huh?" What would you hope to get out of going to try to look it around and scan everything. Your payoff might be what maybe?

Lysa:

I wrongly think that having the answers will ease the ache of my sorrow.

Jim:

There is your payoff, your desired payoff. Yeah.

Lysa:

But when I look at Mark 14, which is so eloquently quoted, in Mark 14, starting in verse 32, we get to see Jesus. He's finished the last supper and He is about to go to the cross, but He's in this garden of Gethsemane and Jesus says, "*My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.*" (Mark 14:34) And what I realized is because Jesus is full humanity and absolute divinity at the same time, that meant He was feeling the weight of that sorrow that was just overwhelming to Him. But in His divinity, He had all the answers. And when He had all the answers, it did not ease the ache of His sorrow. So me going shopping for pain, me trying to figure out why this happened. That's never going to ease the ache of my sorrow. It really is just shopping for more pain.

Joel:

Yeah. It might compound it actually. I think too, Lysa, you said Mark 14, the other one is John 12. And John, the disciple, he's referred to as the beloved, he refers himself as the beloved disciple. He's Jesus's bestie going through and through. And so he kind of gives this intimate picture. I think it's really interesting that John emphasizes the humanity of Jesus. So one of the big questions theologically we're going to ask is, was Jesus ever in moments of trauma? Do you ever experience trauma? Here are a couple thoughts. Jesus, it says in John 4:7, he needs to go to Samaria, to the well to get water. That the Greek word "need" there is not like, oh, it might be good. There's an urgency. Like Jesus as the homeboy is thirsty and He could have been passing out. So He needs to. He weeps for Lazarus in John 11.

Joel:

Talk about a trauma. He's zealous as a response at the temple, you alluded to that earlier, I think, in John 2. He has distress over His disciples, John 14. He cares for His mother on the cross. John 19 as He's dying, He looks out, talk about traumatic event, and He has distress over Judas, who is a close friend in John 13, over the outcome of Judas's life. These are traumatic events. In John 12, Jesus again is overwhelmed. And here's what I think is so interesting. Jesus asks a question and He says, "What shall I say?" And so I just want to point out, sometimes it could be like, well, questions are bad. And we've never actually got into a theological and therapeutic disagreement here. And so this might be the first one.

Jim:

Not on the set.

Joel:

Not on the set. This might be the first one, but I want to make a suggestion. Jim and Lysa, I'm curious what you guys think. I actually think the issue isn't about the question but actually it's three things. It's the substance of the question. It's who we ask the questions to. And then what do we do with these questions that we ask.

Jim:

Couldn't agree more. Well, I love that, buddy.

Joel:

And that's what Jesus does. He asks a question, but He considers what is going to be the substance of my question? Who am I going to ask the question to? Who better than the Father to ask this question? And then what is He going to do as a result of the question? He maintains faithfulness in His ministry. And just another thought, I think these questions give us three things. It gives us the opportunity to reset so we can gain stability in the midst of instability. It gives us an opportunity to redefine our current reality based on what is actually true. And it leads us to reassert what is actually truth in the midst of what is false.

Jim:

That's one of those paradigm shifts we were talking about before off the set. I think there's a sense of ... You framed that up. I love that by the way. But just that's a paradigm shift in my thinking and go, OK. And I always ask, and you know this enough from epithumia in Greek, the idea of lust or desire, is this a demand that I have of God or is it a legitimate desire? It might look like it, but am I coming saying, "Father, I love this. It's not a demand. I desire this." Yeah. I love that.

Lysa:

I like what you said about it's what we do with our questions. And I think when we get stuck in this stage and we start shopping for pain, when we are going back and asking the questions, even metaphorically, maybe we're not even having a conversation with the one who hurt us, but we're trying to figure out something to answer the question why did you hurt me? I think that's where we're asking the wrong person. It might be a right question, but we're asking the wrong person. And so instead of turning to the source of the pain, we need to turn to the Source of life.

Lysa:

OK, so that's that next stage where we can have some fears, some panic, we can find ourselves shopping for pain, searching for safety. We get in a disorientation. The what about, what about, what about. Now this next grouping, it's the loneliness, the isolation, maybe it's depression 2.0. And maybe if we had anger turned outward the first time instead of anger turned inward or anger turned inward and now we're revisiting it, and also this word — shame. What could I have done to prevent this? And boy, that's a big one.

Jim:

Well, I say as you know, shame, S-H-A-M-E is self-hatred at my expense. There's a little self-hatred in, and it cost me a lot. And the shame is maybe I was 1% to blame. When you're grounded and when you're connected to truth and to community and God, that's not, I don't want to own the other person's stuff, but I might doubt it in a moment of weakness. And I think of Nehemiah and we may use this again, but when Sanballat and Tobiah there, they came to cause confusion among God's people who are just trying to rebuild their lives. They said they came to attack them, try to kill them, but to cause confusion.

Jim:

I can do that to myself and be my own internal, like Sanballat and Tobiah from Nehemiah and cause confusion when Lysa, when we're talking, I'm grounded, I know that's not true. But some moment disconnected from community, maybe disconnected from God, I'm thinking, I don't know. Maybe there's a chance I was somewhat at fault. Disoriented thinking even right there.

Lysa:

And I think it's healthy to examine in certain situations is there a part of this I need to own? I think that's helping.

Jim:

Always. Yes.

Lysa:

But we don't want to own what is not ours to own. And I think sometimes that can be the source of our shame and it can also be the source of the depression. It's like, there was nothing I could do about this. So it can almost start to give you this sense there's nothing I can do about anything. And we can take that to an extreme. I think in this season, the loneliness ... Jim and I just did a session on this, this week. You're not outing me. I'm outing me, OK? Because he'll say I cannot confirm or deny what we talked about in our sessions.

Jim:

That's true.

Lysa:

So for me, the loneliness sometimes feels like I'm going backwards instead of moving forward, because it's almost like all these other stages, there was energy around it. And now in this stage, things seem to get a little quieter. It's like life is moving on for other people. The intensity of the trauma is no longer there. And this sense of loneliness, it's like at the end of the day, I am at the center, the epicenter of this. And other people, they felt the effects of the hurt and the pain, but I'm the one going to bed alone

every night. And so this loneliness has been something that, and for me, sometimes I do go backwards because this isn't a linear progression. It's not.

Jim:

As much as we would like it to be.

Lysa:

And [inaudible 00:39:07] check off these boxes. Sometimes the loneliness gets me all the way back into the shock, the numbness, the almost denial. Like I can't believe this.

Jim:

And that's why, Lysa, all this stuff is cyclical. If you don't hear anything else I say folks on this, is give yourself permission that it's linear sometimes. And we want it to be linear, but it's often cyclical. You're not going backwards. You're just going around the track one more time. And maybe you come out a little different, a little wiser, a little better, but it's often cyclical. And even in the cyclical, unpredictable. Now I'm going to predict and figure out the cycle. No, don't waste your time doing that.

Lysa:

I'm trying to see the loneliness as a gift.

Jim:

There you go.

Lysa:

And see it as a season of I get to, not I have to, but I get to sit with myself and I think there's some help around that of being able to sit with myself. And so many times it happens for me late at night, because it gets to be a certain hour and there isn't a friend you can call. It's just not appropriate. And I don't want to turn on the TV because I don't want to always just numb out and distract myself. So that's my sitting alone with myself time and I get to choose what I do with that time. They say time heals all wounds. I don't necessarily think that's true. I think what we plant in that time will determine if the wounds are healed or if they continue festering.

Joel:

That's good.

Lysa:

OK. So that's that. Then the next stage, it's either a resisting of life moving on or an embracing and accepting that life is moving on. Like accepting the reality life is moving on and I need to continue to progress through this. So we can sit in that resistance or we can have a certain persistence, like keep going. Life is moving on, and so do I need to?

Jim:

That's where Robert Frost, the poet said three words he's learned about life is, "Seems so simple, but it is not simplistic." He said, "What I've learned about life is it goes on." And I think there is, a matter of fact, I'm confident in my own grief and loss of parents and a sister killed in a car wreck with her three-

year-old twin daughters. I've told that story on this program before, is there's a sense, but if life really moves on and I move on with it, is there's a sense that the person who hurt me got by with it — they got by with it a long time ago. Secondly, is that I guess this is, what do I do to go on? It means there's no more just circling in grief.

Jim:

And I've got to figure out, because it's also medicating to stay, very medicating to stay in anger turned outward or inward or shopping for pain. It's very neurochemically medicating in the brain. So it goes on to say, well, then this is the next chapter of my life. And to create your world a new normal, I don't know how to do that. And there's that confusion around that.

Lysa:

And I think we have to keep our sight set on the fact that this hurt doesn't just have to be a pointless pain because there's always other humans going through this. And if we can learn to move through these, the people that are back at the beginning ... I mean, we don't have to be all the way through it, but we can speak life into the other people that are trying to move through it and we can encourage them. And that will give some purpose beyond the nothingness of this horrible pain.

Jim:

Paul addressed that directly, didn't he? That the compassion that we get during our time that we then will be able to go, and you've got street cred to go and say, "I know exactly how you feel." No matter what, you never know exactly, but I could say, "I will share." I like calm passion. Calm means with passion to suffer, to suffer with my own story. Not in a way that's futile, but to be able to say, "I've entered and I've walked. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I'll fear no evil for you are with me, God. I'm not really alone."

Jim:

And the idea of saying that I will be with others and sit with them, maybe sit shiva like the Jewish people do for a minute. But then I say, "You open to a thought of when I went through my dark valley, how I went through?" Yes. Most people were never going to a therapist. We need all kind of little [foreign language 00:43:25] in Greek, little healers, don't we?

Joel:

Yeah.

Jim:

That say you could sit and say, "Joel, how'd you get through that?"

Joel:

Yeah.

Jim:

And you say, "Well, I'll tell you."

Joel:

Yeah. And this was modeled first by Christ. Christ doesn't ever ask us to do anything that He Himself has not done. And so why is it necessary for Jesus to be our faithful High Priests in Hebrews that was tempted in every way, that suffered every week. I mean, it's not an option of His suffering. It was a necessity that He suffered.

Jim:

I like that.

Joel:

Why? I think it's for this very reason, Lysa. So that, that we have in our Messiah, the assurance that Jesus went through this. And so why is it so important that we have the presence of His Spirit now to comfort — the Holy Spirit? The [foreign language 00:44:08], the comforter. It's often in the New Testament, it's called the Spirit of Christ. Why do we have the Spirit of Christ? It's because the same pain that Jesus has gone through, that He can now be with us to comfort us as we go through. And we can be an agent of comfort unto others that will walk through similar types of pain and trauma in their lives.

Lysa:

Yeah. And I think it's crucial that we remember Jesus was sinless, but He was very much sinned against. And so, He knew the gravity and the grit of human emotion when traumas happen. OK, so then we have this resisting moving on or persisting and accepting that we're moving on. And then we have this next stage, which is re-entry and not rebound.

Joel:

Big difference.

Lysa:

So big difference, right? Rebound, Jim, is what?

Jim:

That's going to put me redoing what I've done before because what I don't work out in the previous relationship or whatever ended, I will be likely to carry that with me and act out in a new relationship, let alone attract unhealthy dynamics from another unhealthy person. So I'm just literally like that rubber band you talked about earlier, [inaudible 00:45:21], I'm rebounding in. I'm not walking circumspectly at old King James word. I'm not walking wisely. I'm just literally rebounding right back into something. And that's just like a ricochet. I don't want to do that.

Lysa:

And so for those people who have been through a trauma where a relationship has ended. A rebound would look like, I just want to find another relationship quick.

Jim:

I'm not going to stay at my house lonely and alone. Nature abhors a vacuum, so I'm going to fill it quick.

Lysa:

And you have some suggestions around that because sometimes people can say, "OK, well, how long?" And I think the question is not so much, how long do I need to wait? But it's a combination of the time plus what you're doing with that time.

Joel:

With the time, yeah.

Jim:

Read my mind. That idea is there's research that would say when a relationship ends, especially if it's a marriage relationship, take about a year. And during that time, what do you do in that time? Do some counseling. Get in and say, "Proverbs 20:5, *'The purposes of my heart are deep waters ...'*" (NIV) Go down deep and draw them out. Look at what am I carrying with me out of that relationship? What are the facts and the impact of that relationship and the relational trauma that happened? So I tell people, OK, don't worry about the research. Can you at least wait six months, not a year. It is my experience that so many Christians who I've counseled, they had a marriage breakup, a divorce, or just they're dating or something long term. And they jump right back in and they don't do the work that messy middle work to go, "Let me understand, what did I learn from this? What's the impact on me?"

Jim:

And again, it's a sense, I cannot abide being alone. Blaise Pascal, we've said before, said it this way — great philosopher and mathematician — "All of our problems," here we go, "all of them stem from the inability to sit alone with yourself quietly in a room." You talked about it redemptively to sit alone and say, "What's going on in my internal world? Nehemiah talks about this in Chapter 5. It's important. I just [inaudible 00:47:22] one verse. He said, *"And so I took counsel with myself."* (Nehemiah 5:7) You got to learn to coach yourself and say, "Hey, buddy, hey, ma'am, what's going on here? You got this. This is what's going on, Jesus, I'm with you during this time." But people will waste that time, that season to rebound and go right in. You've wasted a little bit of a wilderness experience that great things could happen in. It's great things.

Joel:

Exactly right.

Lysa:

And one of the things I think that we've got to be careful of is not going right back and choosing someone again, that maybe we wrongly chose in the first relationship, or maybe there was some behaviors that we got used to. And those traumatic behaviors somehow in our brain have become more normalized. And so we may overlook things and get into another traumatic relationship. So that for me is what I'm constantly cautioning myself, is just Lysa, you don't want to go back and choose the trauma that for a season felt more normal than it ever should have.

Jim:

Well, after we all fly and take a trip, I mean, it's simple and maybe a bit silly, but why don't you come home? I always do. Do you come home and unpack your dirty clothes? I mean, we do that. Some people, it's like being at Charlotte Douglas International Airport and you've seen every now and you've been out there and whose bag that is? It just keeps going around until the person comes and ... And it's like, unpack your baggage and sit with the person and say, "What do I need to learn? And what was my

old normal? I want to create a new normal." At least unpack your bags and go, "Yeah, that's this and that's that," right? It's a simple concept.

Joel:

I've got a bag of clothes got to unpack right now. I'm sorry, Jim. Confession.

Lysa:

I'm so glad someone else is confessing [inaudible 00:48:58].

Jim:

I didn't know that.

Joel:

I'm confessing.

Jim:

It didn't mean to get too real.

Joel:

My wife [inaudible 00:49:01] has been on me. You've got to ... And so I'm going to do that now.

Lysa:

So instead of rebounding, we want to have re-entry. And so this —

Jim:

And rebuilding.

Lysa:

And rebuilding. And so that's continuing to move on. So we're ready maybe for new friendships, maybe we're ready for new opportunities. Maybe we're ready for new experiences in our life.

Jim:

What about new boundaries?

Lysa:

And new boundaries.

Jim:

We'll do a whole nother program, I know, coming up on that to be able to say, here's my boundary. That's to keep me safe. I've learned and said, "No, you don't get to talk to me that way. Or if you do, I won't be ..." That's the beauty of ending a relationship. And so, I get a start on my own contract with myself first with God and say, "I know in a relationship, this is OK with me. Hey, this is not OK with me. And here's what I might be willing to negotiate." What a time for new wine and new wine skins and having new boundaries.

Lysa:

And eventually new relationships.

Joel:

Yeah.

Jim:

That are healthy and built on the right foundation.

Lysa:

Exactly. And then that gets us into our very last stage, which is really discovering the new you.

Jim:

We love it.

Lysa:

And finding redemption and purpose in what happened. The trauma that happened doesn't have to be pointless pain. It can absolutely be really a new thought of purpose for your life to go then and help other people who are experiencing this trauma. And like we said, these aren't boxes to check. This isn't just a linear situation. You may cycle through this, but the point is moving through it with God and with other healthy individuals. So thank you guys for helping us unpack this.

Jim:

Oh, I love it.