



Lysa:

Hi. Welcome to another episode of *Therapy & Theology*. I'm Lysa TerKeurst with Dr. Joel Muddamalle, right?

Joel:

That's right.

Lysa:

Doctor now. This is a new title that you worked for, for a long time.

Joel:

A long time.

Lysa:

So it's exciting to say it.

Joel:

Truly.

Lysa:

And of course we have Jim Cress. He is a professional licensed counselor, and he happens to be my counselor. And I'm so thankful for both of you and the influence you have in my life. You know, sometimes when we experience physical trauma or a physical wounding, when we ask the question, "How do I know if I'm healing?" the physical healing is a lot more apparent. It seems to be that we can see the scab. We can see maybe that we're putting medicine on it. We can go to the doctor. And there's just a very visible reality that you know when it's healing and when it's not. Emotional wounding, emotional trauma is a lot more mysterious.

Lysa:

And so today we're answering the question: How do I know if I'm healing? So Jim, I know that over the years you have done a lot of work with people who have been through pretty significant emotional trauma. And so, you've developed some mile-markers that we can look for when it comes to healing. Now, in a previous episode, we talked about the stages of the impact of a trauma hitting us. We talked

about, kind of like, moving through the stages of grief, moving through those stages of the impact from a trauma. But today we want to talk about mile-markers of healing. How do I know if I'm healing?

Jim:

So, quote that I've used here before on these *Therapy & Theology* programs, videos, podcast, I'll use again. It is from Brené Brown and it says that "you either walk inside your story, all of it ..." And that means your new story of the relational trauma that you've gone through — the relational pain — you either walk inside all of it ... When we tend to want to orphan off parts like, "I don't want to talk about that part." So you either walk inside your story, all of it, and embrace it, deal with it, deal with the facts and the impact of it, or you'll spend your life walking outside your story — numbed out, disconnected, whatever, and hustle for your worthiness. Just wonder, "Can I be worthy with God or a new person in a relationship?" So doing that necessary story work, especially coming out of relational trauma, is to stop, pause, hopefully be with a good friend — maybe a therapist, a pastor, someone who can walk with you — and to say, "Here again are the facts and the impact."

Jim:

I do FIT, F-I-T. Facts, this happened to me. Impact, what did it do to me? And what track, T, what track do I want to take going forward in these mile-markers? And I can share them if you want to right now.

Lysa:

Yes.

Jim:

I've got about 10 of them here. And you can rewind the, either audio podcast or the video podcast and write these down if you want. Not necessarily in this order, but these are some of the ones that I've seen in working with people. And quite frankly, in my own life as a client. I've been in therapy for years myself, working on my life. Again, one, I'll put down: address the facts and the impact of what went on. Take a good look at it. Not a superficial look. Number two: identify what am I truly willing — willingness is huge — to let go of? Maybe even deeper, what is God asking me to let go of here? And what will I need to release? That's all through Scripture. The rich young ruler at one level, "I want to follow you. I want to work your plan." God says, "Here's what it will cost you." There's always a cost to being able to let things go in my life.

Lysa:

OK. So I want to touch on this one.

Jim:

Please. Let's hear it.

Lysa:

So you're saying this is a sign of healing, that you get to the point where you're willing to release. Now, what are we releasing?

Jim:

Well, let's release the impact of what went on.

Lysa:

OK.

Jim:

That would be one. And the other is let's release control. Another program coming up, we've done before, we'll do again, on codependency. I want to release the idea that they got by with it. That person was able to hurt me. I have to say they did. Yeah.

Lysa:

I've been doing some theological work around this one, the releasing. Because with *Therapy & Theology*, Joel brings the theology, Jim brings the therapy. They both actually bring a combination of both of those. And then I bring the issues, right? And so I'm going to bring some issues.

Jim:

Now, you bring a lot more than the issues.

Lysa:

Thank you.

Jim:

Sometimes you bring the tissues, too. Not just the issues.

Lysa:

Oh, thank you.

Joel:

I know what it is. Actually, I figured out there's a discipline in the theological world called practical theology. And you are our practical theologian.

Jim:

There you go.

Lysa:

And therapist, maybe.

Joel:

And —

Lysa:

Even though I have no qualifications.

Jim:

Yes, you do. Come on. Come on.

Joel:

Can you offer like an honorary degree?

Jim:

Yeah. Right. I'll get your certificate later.

Joel:

Like right here at the end of this, we'll do it.

Lysa:

Wow. My whole life just changed.

Jim:

Right here live.

Lysa:

OK. But for right now, I'm going to bring some more issues, OK? I've been working a lot around this concept of release. And it's not as simple as just sitting down and saying, "I'm choosing to release this person." It really has to be a paradigm shift of acceptance. Like I'm accepting that I am releasing this person. That's really hard when somebody has caused you a tremendous amount of pain. And when somebody has done something to you that altered your life, like it's not even possible now for life to go back to the way it was, you've got to learn to move forward into a new normal, a new reality. But this releasing is complicated.

Jim:

Very much.

Lysa:

One thing that's helped me from a theological standpoint is realizing that I'm not releasing this person as in saying, "It doesn't matter what happened." That's not what I'm saying, because it very much mattered. I'm not releasing this person saying that, "OK, what you did wasn't so bad," because in a lot of cases, it was really bad, right? But what I'm learning to do is release this person to God, because God says that vengeance is His. And part of my resistance to releasing is that I want to know, is this person ever going to realize the impact that they created? Is this person ever going to realize that their actions didn't just affect themselves but it had a tremendous effect on all the people around them trying to do life with them?

Lysa:

And so when I started to pursue, "OK, this release for me is going to be me releasing this person to God," it wasn't even so much that I want God to take vengeance on them. It was that I want them to realize, I want them to have that moment of sorrow, that what they did was wrong and that they shouldn't have done it. And it's hard for me to release until I feel like some justice is there. And what God has been teaching me is when someone else sins against us, no matter if we ever see it or not, sin always comes as a package deal with consequences. If we go all the way back to Genesis, it's very apparent that when Adam and Eve sinned, consequences were naturally unleashed in their life, because

sin has two parts to it. It has what enticed you in the first place, which looks like, "Wow, this is going to be fun. This is going to be new. This is going to be whatever. This is going to —"

Jim:

Is enjoyable for a season. The Bible says that. Little party action.

Lysa:

So it's got that part to it, but we have to remember it also comes with a package deal with consequences. And so I don't have to see the other person's consequences to know that they existed. And the consequences are for the purpose of bringing them to natural repentance and sorrow. They may never get to the repentance and sorrow. Maybe you're dealing with someone who is absolutely refusing to learn from what they did. But they will absolutely suffer the consequences of their choices because that consequence was built into the sin. That has helped me release. That has helped me to feel like there is some sort of justice here. I don't have to go after it. I don't have to peel back the curtain and see it for myself. I just can stand confidently and quietly knowing that, that person chose to do something sinful and there were consequences built in. And that has made it easier for me to release them to the Lord.

Joel:

That's so good.

Jim:

At the risk of being a little clever here ... And this just came to me. It's how my brain works. I like that you're in a season of release because some of us who know you, every now and then we won't say Lysa, we'll say Lys. And you're re-Lys, your name, reclaiming your life as Lysa going forward in a new normal. And then the idea of — I'm going to borrow another one — of releasing like you're leasing a part of your life. You're leasing the next part of your life. And I'm redoing that to claim and re-lease, re-own where I'm going from.

Jim:

A lot of us have given up ownership in toxic relationships, which is another program we're going to do. And I've lost myself. We've said codependent people often don't have a me that they know of. I'm so managing everybody else and all that, but to be able to sit and say, "I want to release that and let it go and re-dash-lease this new part of my life and take ownership to go forward." It's a new day and you don't need anybody else to cosign that. You can have advisors around you, trusted friends who say, "This is what I've got to do."

Jim:

Mile-markers here for these signs or road signs, like going up an interstate of healing: Am I still obsessing over the trauma done to me? It's the right word, just playing it over and over. Remember neurochemically in your brain, that's going to fire dopamine. That's going to feel really good to obsess and it's going to be numbing and medicating it. Sometimes, again, we referred to this last time as I could be shopping for pain. Don't make that innocuous. Because again, I'm firing a lot of numbing chemicals in my brain or searching for safety.

Jim:

And sometimes I say it this way — it's just the way I do it — if you try to make sanity out of another person's insanity, you'll go insane. But you try to name it and say, "But look what they did. And somehow I got to figure it out." No, it is what it is. It's insane. It's unhealthy. It's sin. How did Solomon at the end of his life in 1 Kings 9, 10, 11, do the stuff he did? It's all been done before, right? So the idea is saying, "I don't want to try to make sanity out of a person's insanity."

Lysa:

I think when you talk about obsessing over something, for some people, myself included, it is trying to figure out why this happens so that it won't happen again.

Jim:

Notice the control, the prediction of the future: so that it won't happen again.

Lysa:

But I wonder if really a stage of healing is choosing, instead of trying to figure out what happened so it won't happen again, instead me turning that energy of my thoughts around, "What now?" What do I need to know now to make better choices or to engage with better relationships in the future, or to use this as an opportunity to do some self-reflection and become a healthier version of me. So what you're saying is the releasing is, you can know that you're healing when you're releasing and you can know that you're healing when instead of obsessing about what happened, maybe you're progressing —

Jim:

Good word.

Lysa:

... towards something better.

Jim:

And thinking about, appropriately, yourself and what do I need to do? What would God not ... What's God trying to teach me? Think about what is God wanting to do in me during this time? C.S. Lewis would say in Narnia, "He would want to take you further up and further in." God, what are you wanting to do with me and in me during this time? Now I'm focused on me and what God is wanting to do in me versus what that other person did. And why was I back there? It's all this stuff back in the ... The past is over.

Joel:

So good.

Jim:

It's over.

Joel:

So two footnotes. The academic says the footnotes analogy. One is, Lysa, when you were talking about the release, really another word for that is forgiveness. That is exactly what we're talking about. And you wrote a book about it, an entire biblical theology, *Forgiving What You Can't Forget*. And the two words there in Greek are [Greek 00:12:44], which is a forensic release. It's a canceling of the debt. But the

other one is very unique and it's Paul's word that he uses. And Paul's known for making words up. He's a man after my own heart in that sense. And he's got a word called [Greek 00:12:58]. It comes from two Greek words, [Greek 00:13:00], which means grace, and [Greek 00:13:01], which is a compound word that leads to forgiveness. It is a gracious forgiveness. Now, here's the issue. That rubs me the wrong way. And I think any justice seekers out there, it's going to rub them the wrong way, because what that means is there's no conditional clause.

Joel:

A [Greek 00:13:20] type of forgiveness doesn't come with a condition clause of, "Well, they ask for repentance. Well, they've done all the right things." No, because why? If you don't do the gracious release that's required of us, we're bound in the prison of our own pain. And that is an unfair added trauma. We talked about it in the last episode. An unfair trauma to put ourselves in. The second thing that you've just talked about here, and Paul's language ... This is Romans 8. It's setting our mind, not on things of the flesh but on things of the spirit. Now, what happens when we set our mind on things of the spirit? This is the end of verse seven.

Lysa:

And where are you at, Joel? Give the reference.

Joel:

Romans 8.

Lysa:

Romans 8.

Joel:

Verse six. It says, "*For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.*"

Jim:

Love it.

Joel:

And that phrase, "set your mind" it's talking about having a guardrail for your mind. It's about not letting it run rampant, but setting up guardrails to guide you and to direct you in the way that you're supposed to go. And that's —

Lysa:

It's kind of like when ... I love to take kids bowling because they put up those guardrails —

Joel:

That's right.

Jim:

The bumpers. Yeah.

Lysa:

... so you cannot get into the gutter. That is such a fun way to bowl.

Joel:

That is.

Lysa:

Right? And so, Joel, how do we set up guardrails? Because basically what that means is our thoughts are coming down just like the ball comes down toward the pins, right? And so our thoughts are coming down. What are some examples ... And Jim, I'd love your thoughts, too. What are some examples of guardrails to help us do that so that we really can, not set our mind on things of the flesh that lead to death, but set our minds on things above and on things of Christ that then can help us find that path of life and peace? Because I can find my thoughts running rampant when I am in the process of healing.

Joel:

Yeah. I would reverse engineer this and start with, "Well, what is the outcome of setting your mind on the Spirit?" The word there is "life and peace." And so we had a Bible study, Lysa and I. We get to do a Bible study on Wednesdays. One of my favorite early morning Bible studies that we get to do. And one of the sessions we talked about was when you walk into a conversation. If you walk into a conversation with a friend and you walk in with peace, but you leave without peace, well, some guardrails need to go up.

Lysa:

Wow. OK.

Joel:

Some conversations need to be had because you entered in a posture of shalom, peace, and you left in a posture of chaos. And so one of the first things I think that we need to ask ourselves are, how do we set our minds? Well, what are the things in our life that establish peace in our lives? What are the relationships that pursue peace in our lives? And what are those things that don't? So this is again ... And we're going to talk about this later on with boundaries, but sometimes it means that we're going to say yes to some relationships and some relationships we have to say no to. And so setting our mind is not just framing, but doing, and having that ability to do. The other thing I think of is the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness ... I mean, all of us in Bible school and vocation Bible school, we memorize that. Do we enter in and leave our relationships with those things?

Joel:

I think about this in my family and my relationship with my kids. How do I set up systems and structures in the morning? Because I'm not a morning person. You need to know this right off the bat. The most amazing theologians all get up at like 3:00 AM. Joel ain't getting up at 3:00 AM unless I —

Jim:

You're not even going to bed by 3:00 AM, right?

Joel:

I'm probably still reading at 3:00 AM. You know? And so I have had to think about very like, "OK, what are the systems that need to be set up in order to show love to my children in the morning, kindness, compassion, all of those types of things?" And it's simple. It's simple things like, "Hey, boys. At night, it's really, really important that your bag is put together at night so we're not scrambling in the morning." This is a type of guardrail that we're putting up that is saving our sanity and our peace.

Lysa:

And I think for me, I have to be careful, not just the people and the boundaries that we may need to set in order to set the stage for peace. I also have to make personal choices of what is affecting my thought life. And so if I'm watching something and it makes me suddenly feel like it intensifies my loneliness, well then that's probably not the wisest thing for me to watch.

Jim:

Pretty simple.

Lysa:

Or even social media. If I find myself saying, "Wow. When I engage with this first thing in the morning, then that's consuming my thoughts," that's probably not the wisest way to spend my first thoughts in the morning. And I know from doing research on the brain that when we wake up in the morning, that whatever we put our mind to first will often saturate us so deeply and often start to dictate how we perceive everything through that day.

Jim:

And cortisol levels — the stress hormone — are highest in the morning. So people have this morning anxiety and if you exacerbate that by doing what you just said, biologically we've slept, the cortisol levels are highest in the morning, the stress hormone. So feed that, you've already got the body. You need to — when you wake up — get up, when you get up, wake up, you need blanket victory, like get out of the bed. People are scrolling, not realizing that that's a bad time and place to be doing things that are not healthy if you're shopping for pain.

Joel:

So Jim, what I'm hearing you say is that I'm no longer supposed to wake up in the morning with my kids.

Jim:

Yeah.

Joel:

For my cortisone levels. Can you write that down so I can take that home with me?

Lysa:

I think you are supposed to wake up with your kids. You're supposed to get plenty of sleep the night before.

Joel:

Oh, OK.

Lysa:

That needs to be a guardrail so that when you wake up with your kids in the morning, the backpacks are set and you reduce the stress and you're kind.

Joel:

That's right.

Jim:

You set yourself up for that. I didn't even say a peep. She took over and said, "Listen."

Joel:

There you go. She earned her —

Lysa:

But it reminds me a little bit of Philippians 4, starting in verse eight, "*Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable— if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things*"(NIV). And so I think those are some good guardrails as well. OK. So we've only gotten through two of yours, so let's keep going. So —

Jim:

But this is so much fun.

Lysa:

It is.

Jim:

And I think it is ... I hope it's encouraging for you. Any area of healing, it doesn't have to be just betrayal, trauma or just trauma itself. It's the idea of saying some pain, some wound, something, and you're trying to release your life and say, "I want to go forward." Here's some of the signs you can look for. There may be many more. These are just some of them. Am I stuck? When we talk about the stages of grief or the stages of trauma, am I stuck in any stage of grief? You'll know it because you will cycle. You'll feel like you're in a cul-de-sac. Jeez, I keep going around and around and around. Or I keep going forward, I get boom, right back, like gravity. I tell people that gravity is like depravity, they both pull you down, right? So it's like, I keep coming back. I keep coming back. OK? So notice that.

Jim:

Am I struggling with ... The Scripture talks about a root of bitterness. Am I struggling with bitterness or unforgiveness toward the person who traumatized me, bitterness toward or unforgiveness toward God? Like, "God, you ..." Or even toward myself. Am I holding myself in a sense of contempt? And by the way, part of that is that goes on, is again, back to the brain that if I am just bitter and unforgiving ... And I didn't say go to quick forgiveness, fake forgiveness. But I'm doing that. I'm literally rewiring my brain

away from Philippians 4:8, way away from that. And my brain after a while, I can become literally, and as the old-timer said, "I'll get bitter, not better." I will stop and just stop on the side of the road.

Lysa:

I think this is a really important one to stop on again, because we're talking about the stages of healing. If I'm stuck in bitterness, then I'm not healing. What would be the example, the flip example? If instead of being stuck in bitterness, we're moving forward in forgiveness, we're moving forward in what? And we already talked about releasing. So that's part of it. But what is the opposite side?

Jim:

Well, not quite reverse engineering it, but I've done a lot of experiential counseling. And what I mean with that is anything you can tell me, you can show me. So here's a quick one: Interview bitterness. I'll do that with people and say, "You play bitterness. What's bitterness trying to say?" Bitterness will answer, "It's wrong that they got by with that. They should pay for that. They've moved on to a whole new relationship. And so God's not even judging them. It's like, 'You reap what you sow,' says God, but they're not reaping." So that idea is the injustice of it and the bitterness. And I'll feel it inside, the old line that I will drink poison expecting the other person to get sick. So I think the opposite of that is saying you want to get back to the whole understanding of grief and trauma and moving forward.

Jim:

Resiliency is the word, is to say, "You know what, Lord? Your Word is true. Lysa has taught us from the Word that we may not see the reaping of what they've sowed, but God was faithful, this will not be my God. I turn that person over to you. Take them off my hook of injustice and put them on your hook." And it might be a daily ... It might be 90 days' worth of prayer. "God, I release that person to you." We have 2 Corinthians 10:5. How about verse four? We demolish strongholds in our lives by what? Taking every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ.

Jim:

Martin Luther, the great hymn writer and theologian, said it this way. "Well, I can't keep those thought birds from flying over my head, but I can keep them from making a nest in my hair." So that idea is a daily ongoing inventory and say, "Lord ..." I didn't mean you, "You want me to pray for my abuser?" That's a different story. I'm saying, say, "Lord, I give that person over to you. I take that thought captive and make it obedient to Christ." It's a very important practice.

Lysa:

It really is. And I like to think of it as ... I'm going to play a little bit of devil's advocate here —

Jim:

Please.

Lysa:

... with the term bitterness. I think that bitterness does not necessarily want to just visit us. I don't think bitterness just wants to be a feeling. I think bitterness wants to become our only feeling. So that's part of the danger here. But playing devil's advocate, sometimes we can really just look down like, "Oh, that person's so bitter," or "Oh, just bitterness is consuming me." And I think we need to remember that

bitterness doesn't often visit cold-hearted people. Bitterness often wants to visit people who dared to throw their arms open wide and love deep so they got hurt deep. And it's in that space of emptiness that's created now because of the loss that we have to decide, what are we going to fill that space of loss with?

Lysa:

Because loss is a hunger. It's like a black hole that wants to pull something in to fill it. And it's our choice to fill it with bitterness. Right? Or we can fill it with things that will lead us on to becoming better, not bitter, and toward healing. Some of the verses that I've been studying lately, just to remind myself, this isn't just a feeling. It might actually be a scheme of the enemy. And so as I go through the Bible and I look at when are times where people were feeling bitter, or they just couldn't release the anger over a situation or unforgiveness, I'm just going to read a couple verses and I want you to watch what's always paired with this verse.

Lysa:

In Genesis 4, when we see the first sibling rivalry between Cain and Abel, Abel brings an offering that was pleasing to the Lord and Cain brings an offering that was not pleasing to the Lord. And eventually what happens is Cain lets his anger overtake him and he kills his brother. In between Cain getting angry and then reacting from his anger and killing his brother, the Lord actually comes and has a conversation with Cain. And it says it in Genesis 4:6, *"The LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.'"* (NIV) So we see those feelings of unresolved anger, those feelings of bitterness, this isn't right that the Lord accepted his and not mine. And that it's like blood in the water that draws sharks near.

Lysa:

And so when someone has traumatized us and we hold on to bitterness, what we're really doing is allowing that trauma to hurt us again and again and again, because now sin is crouching at our door and it's wanting to have us. And so the Lord is warning him, "You must rule over this." You didn't have the opportunity to prevent the original trauma from happening, but you can absolutely rule over how it affects you and not let sin overtake you. Then another example is in Matthew 6, where the Lord is teaching us to pray. It's so fascinating to me as part of the prayer in verse 12, Jesus teaches us to pray, *"... and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors."* Verse 13, "and," so it's a connection, *"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."* Again, dealing with forgiveness. And then sin is crouching at your door. Again, there's going to be a temptation there. It's like those things seem to be very closely connected.

Lysa:

Even as I turn over to Ephesians 4:26, it says, *"In your anger do not sin': Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold."* (Ephesians 4:26-27, NIV) Again, the devil is going to get a foothold if you lay in your bed and let that anger overtake you. And then the last one here is found in 2 Corinthians 2. And starting in verse 10, it says, *"Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes."* (2 Corinthians 2:10-11, NIV)

Lysa:

So I see this pattern when we are holding on to bitterness and we're just refusing to move on into the healing work of forgiveness, that it's not just about the feeling of bitterness, but it's like putting blood in the water and it just draws the sharks or the enemy close. And then what can happen is in our anger, we might start sinning. In our bitterness, it might take us to places we never intended to go. So bitter or better. And moving on ... A sign of healing is when you decide, "I'm not just having a feeling of bitterness. I feel bitterness overtaking me. And so now I've got to make the choice to rule over this. And I didn't get to choose how this other person treated me, but I absolutely get to choose where I go from here."

Jim:

And hey, we've got a good ... Etiology is a fancy counseling word, origin. Because there's old Cain, but look at his daddy. When God came to the garden and said, "What up? What's happened down here, dude? What'd you do?" And Adam said, "It's that woman." Eve blamed the devil, the serpent, at least. And then Adam said, "It's that woman that you gave me." Cain did it here. The idea of ... I believe most of the time, dare not say with Dr. Joel here, all of the time. But when I am sinning, Oswald Chambers said, "I sin because I have the suspicion that God is not good." That if I'm sinning toward a person or in bitterness, it goes right through that person. Adam, "It's that woman you gave me." And I go up and to buy one, get one free, that I'm also mad and bitter at God. Why would you allow this to happen? And get this person. Where's some justice? I mean, bring it today. In our culture today, you can't turn the TV on and we're not talking about injustice or justice.

Jim:

So that piece is from Adam on. Romans 5:12, *"[And] wherefore by one man sin entered the world and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned."*(KJV) So that whole idea is to go, it comes in as naturally ... It starts way, way back that we're mad. And I want to just honor an agreement of the thing of the only three enemies I see in the Scripture is the world, the flesh and the devil. And the idea, I take it very, very seriously, that I'm giving, back to what you did in Ephesians, the devil a foothold. I'm saying, "Come in here." You and I will almost have an agreement with what goes on and not knowing the whole time that this person perpetrated me. They've hurt me. And now I'm joining up with Satan, who is the accuser of the brothers and the sisters and he's perpetrating me.

Joel:

Yeah. Paul's language is the powers and principalities and Ephesians —

Jim:

Powerful stuff.

Joel:

... And it's interesting you say those three enemies: the world, the flesh and the devil. I would expand the devil. And I know that's what you meant to say. The evil powers at play. And interestingly —and this is all Paul's language — these evil powers at play are working in what? The flesh and the world. Right? And so we just have to be aware. The other thing that I thought of is, with the Adam story and even Cain, ultimately what we have is a deflection of responsibility.

Jim:

That's so big.

Joel:

Bitterness ultimately is a deflection of some sense of responsibility for what we can own and what we can't own. It's a walking away of honesty. And what God wanted for Cain when his face fell down ... It's a Hebrew idiom for anxiety and depression. That's what that means. When his face fell, when that happened, God actually intervenes to protect Cain from the outcome that he knows is possible. And so we will never be tempted beyond what God will step in and help us to get out of the temptation. And yet there's still human agency. There's still human responsibility that we have to act upon.

Lysa:

And we've talked about this word "justice" too. There is absolutely a place to identify this is a wrong in this world. I think we have to be careful that then in our experience with that, and even in fighting to make wrongs right, that there's a right way and a wrong way to do things. Having your energy be bitterness because of what's happened to you is trying to do something right with something wrong driving that energy. And so we want to get right outcomes, but we want to move through it in right ways, in healthy ways. And so we're not saying that we can't fight the wrongs of this world. We're saying, don't let the energy behind that or the motivation behind that to be bitterness, because that's trying to do something right with this wrong behind it.

Jim:

Yeah. And nor is it for me, being very vulnerable ... We've all been vulnerable on this program before. But there are days I clearly have bitterness, but at that moment I don't let it just linger. I say, "OK, every moment of bitterness is an opportunity to go vertical with God and say, 'God, you're God and I am not.'" So the bitterness comes. I'm not worried about total eradication of that. But when the bitterness comes, I can look and say, "Lord, once again, I surrender to you. They did get by with it, yet I know with your Truth, God, they didn't get by with it. It feels to me like it." And the more I've just watched, that's prayer. I'm talking conversationally with God.

Jim:

Suddenly I go wake up and I'm like, I don't feel so bitter. He says, "Yeah, tell me more." God says, "Bring it to me." That's back to Philippians 4 again. Your anxieties, whatever you've got, bring Him your petitions. Bring your petitions. Say, "God, this feels unfair." I see David landing in those in imprecatory psalms so many times like, "What are you doing, God?" And then at the end, "You're God and I'm not." And that piece is so ... I'm not going to eradicate all bitterness, but when I see it, I say, "Lord, that's an opportunity to go vertical with you."

Lysa:

That's so good. I think for me, too, when I feel these feelings of bitterness, I will often say to myself, "This is indication that more healing needs to happen." And so it's not wrong for the bitterness to come up in me. It's that I don't want it to go down in me and become a root of bitterness that becomes a driving force in my life.

Jim:

That's what we're calling these road signs of healing, is the bitterness comes up and I go, "OK, it's there and that's a sign I need to do some more healing," versus, "I'm going to get off the exit here at this road

sign and go over here and just pout or blame God, blame myself and whatever else, and I should have done things differently, wish vengeance on the other person." It's like, OK, you've been there a little bit. Just get up. You remember that exit at the top of the hill, over the overpass. Get back down the interstate where we get mile-markers for healing and say, "Lord, I'm kind of done. I need to get here and come out of my gourd," like Jonah or something. And say, "Lord, I come out of my gourd there and victim mentality and poor me." Not being rude to yourself and saying, "I need to get back in. Lord, let me get back on the highway and keep moving."

Jim:

Recovery, grief, all of it, whatever you want to call it, healing is always inviting us to go forward. You don't even have to do that much. The big thing is notice where you get stuck. That's why I said, "Are we stuck?" Another one: Am I connecting or reconnecting with less than safe people? Most people aren't going to therapy. If you want to, great. I believe in it. But am I connecting to safe people who will remind me of who I really am? My re-lease on life. This is who you really are. Will they say, "I hear you. I do the hub. I hear you. Hey, I understand you. And I believe you with what's gone on." Will they connect both in my pain and my healing, calling out the best parts of me?

Jim:

Maybe they've shared how they've healed. Have, again, I, if it comes to it, sought out some good therapy? You can read and all those things are good, but maybe you're at a point, I just need to get someone who's here who can help really guide me a little bit deeper down the line. A big one is, seems so simple, but: how am I doing with my own self-care? How's my sleep? Am I up on the internet 40 hours a night trying to say, "I hope that person gets paid back," or whatever? Am I neglecting my health mentally, spiritually, emotionally? That's a big part of my healing is, where are my proactive performables? Where am I showing up in the show up place to say, "Here's where I am spiritually. Emotionally, I'm doing here. Physically, radical self-care."

Lysa:

That's so good. And I think along with self-care, too, is what am I doing to move myself in the direction of healing?

Jim:

Absolutely.

Lysa:

And sometimes, like I said earlier, it's harder to see the emotional healing. So am I moving myself toward more physical healing? Am I moving myself toward more spiritual healing? Because I think those three things work together. And sometimes if I've stalled out in my emotional healing, I can look and go, "Wow. Honestly, I've kind of stalled out in my spiritual healing. I've kind of stalled out in my physical healing." So that self-care of am I drinking enough water? Am I moving my body? Am I choosing healthy things to eat? Relationally, am I choosing healthy relationships? Sometimes when you've been in a relationship where you've been traumatized, it's easy to pick a new relationship that is actually the exact same, or maybe even a little more damaging.

Jim:

That's a scary thought.

Lysa:

And so it's like, is my ... You call it a picker. Is my picker or am I choosing more wisely and moving my life in the direction of wisdom and not foolishness?

Jim:

And having a few people ... Moses had Aaron and Hur. Having some people, like [inaudible 00:38:22] on the wall, that say, "OK, we'll sit down." And you get that kind of tight, personal board of directors. You get one. All of us do. And a board of directors and say, "What do you see? Here's what's going on with me. Or I'm with this new person in a relationship. This is how they're treating me." If you put your cards out on the table, which is a big theme of mine ... Literally, I have people write three by five cards and put them on a real table in my office. And have your friends vet that and who are listening to you, you'd be surprised. They'll say, "Well, we hear this thought. We hear that. That sounds like a concern. Well, he said that, but he was probably having a bad night."

Jim:

We've done this rodeo before. And you have some people. So to do this alone in the new journey, this new lease on life you're on there, do that. I'm going to say another one. Put into your vocabulary the words "of course." And what I mean by that's simple. You're going to cycle around. I'm not giving you a negative prophecy, but I'm telling you you're going to cycle around. And PTSD, if you want to know that term, there's some level of post-traumatic stress [inaudible 00:39:22]. You're going to hear about a TV show, a movie, something on the news, a friend who got betrayed, and it's going to trigger you back up. That's OK. That's OK. And to say why? Of course. I can't believe I'm here! It's like, no, your new words are, "Well, of course I'm here. Jim Cress told me on this video thing."

Jim:

We've talked about it. It's like, "Yeah, I'm back. Now, what do I want to do with it?" I got to get back in the arena and say, "What's my plan? Who are my people I need to call? What do I need to do? What do I need to ..." Hebrew here, brother, we've talked about on the show [foreign language 00:39:51]. Remember the remembering. When the Jews all know that term, I need to remember God's called me. He's called me to remember that in Passover and the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper. I need to remember and say, "What do I need to remember?" And if I forget, I'm going to call Joel and say, "Remind me." And that's in [inaudible 00:40:08]. Real quick in [inaudible 00:40:09] said, "You're going to get scared or separated on the wall." You feel lonely. Set it right there.

Jim:

You need to have a rally cry. He's got a guy with a trumpet that's going to blow it. You need to ask for your own rally cry. Call Joel and say, "Dude, remind me who I am. I know who I am, but I need to hear it from you." And you say, "Jimbo, this is who you are. This is what's true." You need a rally cry to remind you — we prepare in times of weakness — start over. We prepare in times of strength for those coming times of weakness. And if you feel this coming on and you're getting off the road of these healing pathways, call somebody and say, "Tell me who I am. Remind me."

Joel:

Yeah. So good. That brings me to obviously Genesis. Everything goes back to Genesis 1 and 2.

Jim:

Of course.

Joel:

But Adam and Eve, why was it so necessary ... We've talked about this often. Why so necessary for the one thing that was not good of all of creation, for Adam to be lonely, to not have a partner? And I think it's because of this, Jim. Because he couldn't look at the animals and see the image of God and the glory of God and the presence and promise of God. And so it was with Eve when he was able to look at her that he would see the image of God, the full image of God, the goodness of God, the glory of God, the virtue and power and presence of God that is then reflected back upon him.

Lysa:

So good. So if you have walked through significant hurts, wounding's, traumas, disappointments, in other words, if you're human, I hope today's show will help you not get lost in the disillusionment of all the many emotions that have to be processed and worked through. And you could use today's show as a helpful tool to recognize these are the mile-markers of healing. So thank you guys.

Joel:

Can I end with a verse?

Lysa:

Yes. Please do.

Joel:

Isaiah 53:3-5, because there may be some skeptics out there that are wondering, "Is it even possible to overcome my grief?" And I just want to give you a macro of why it's possible. And this is why, because, *"He [Jesus] was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief..."* You could highlight and circle that word. *"And as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds, we are healed."* The Hebrew word there for grief, it's actually talking about sickness. Sometimes I think when we talk about grief, we think about an incurable thing. But when we think about sickness and its use of sickness of mind, soul and body, this reality that it is curable and that's because ultimately what Jesus did on the cross could bring true healing to the whole body.

Jim:

Amen.

Lysa:

Amen. Thank you.

Jim:

Thank you.