

- We are in a message series called Peace of Mind talking about mental health. Next week we're gonna talk about burnout. Many of you right now feel like you're on the edge and like you can't take anymore, we're gonna talk about that next week. Today, we're gonna talk about trauma-

- [Congregant] Let's go.

- Which is probably the most difficult of all the subjects that we've talked about in the previous and upcoming weeks. It's a subject that quite honestly, you may not hear about frequently in churches, but we're gonna talk about it today. Many of you, unfortunately, in fact, probably the majority of you at some point in your life you've endured something severe, some kind of trial, some kind of abuse, some kind of heartbreak. And so, it's with a lot of help from experts that I've been studying God's Word and getting advice from people who help others heal for a living and with a very heavy heart that I've been praying all week long that the presence of God would do something in the lives of so many of you who need hope that you can heal. So many people think trauma, what is it? What is trauma? A lot of people think that it's the event, it's the injury, it's the abuse, but technically speaking, trauma is actually the response to what happens in an event. A good definition of trauma would be this, trauma is a response to a deeply disturbing or distressing event. Some think of trauma as physical, kind of like a traumatic injury, a physical injury, but the truth of the matter is that while trauma can be physical and it often is, it also can be emotional, it can be mental, it can even be spiritual abuse or spiritual trauma. And that's why it's so important to remember that the wounds you can't see can hurt as much as the ones that you can see, and sometimes they even take longer to heal. And so it's with a very real awareness that many of you have been hurt and deeply wounded and been through horrible experiences that I wanna share God's Word today. Because when you walk into maybe church or in your LifeGroup and you're in pain and you wanna talk about what you've been through, inevitably some happy Christian-

- Yes.

- Some very happy feely, good Christian, with very good intentions quote Romans 8:28 in the middle of your pain. "And we know that in all things," they tell you with a very good heart, "That God works them together for good to those who love Him, who He called according to His purpose.

- [Congregant] Come on.

- A powerful truth, a life changing truth, an important truth, is always true, but maybe doesn't always feel helpful-

- [Congregant] That's right.

- When you still feel like you're in shock or maybe denial, or maybe you feel moody because of what happened and you don't know why you can't control your emotions, or you feel overwhelmed with anxiety, or you feel numb completely. Or even though what happened to you may not have been your fault, you feel guilt and shame for something that someone else did to you. So today we walk into it prayerfully. The title of today's message is 3 Ways to Seek Healing From Trauma, and I would love it if my amazing church family would pray together with me. God, thank you for your presence and for

your goodness and for the healing work we can find through Jesus that by His stripes we can be healed. We pray for you to work through your Word and by your Spirit to transform lives. We asked this in the name of Jesus and everybody said-

- Amen.

- Amen and amen. All right, some of you grew up around the time I did, and I'm not proud to tell you this, but I was from the generation when someone said, "I experienced trauma," I was kinda like, "Trauma Schmama," kinda like, "Get over it, it couldn't be that bad." I grew up and when we got hurt my dad said, "Rub a little dirt on it, get back on the field." Any of you grow up like that at all, anyone? Couple of you. Maybe my life was different than I thought it was, okay? I don't know, but I kind of just grew up with a, hey, just kind of get over it mindset. And what I've grown to learn is that you don't just get over trauma, you don't just move past it, you actually have to heal from it. And so what I wanna do today is I wanna try to build a foundational understanding of what trauma is and then I wanna show you in Scripture how we pursue healing and seek God for what only He can do. And we'll start with three different types of trauma just to build a foundational understanding. The three different types of trauma, there's acute trauma, there's chronic trauma and there's complex trauma, three different types of trauma. What is acute trauma? Acute trauma is a response from a one-time traumatic event. Maybe you were in a horrible car accident or you survived a natural disaster. For those of you in Oklahoma it was a tornado, for those of you in Southern Florida it was a hurricane, whatever it was, but it was dangerous and you survived, and it was very traumatic, your response was. It might have been a complicated birth. One of my daughters went through an indescribably complicated birth, for others of you it might have been losing your business in the middle of COVID, or for some of you, unfortunately in college, you might have been date raped. It was a one time event, it was horrible, and the response to it was traumatic. Then the second type is chronic trauma, and that is a long term response from prolonged or repeated events. It's not a one-time event, but it's a long term event. For example, some of you may have been bullied all the way through junior high, or others of you experienced racism for most of your life. It might have been that you were very, very young, five, six years old, you came across pornography for the very first time and you looked at porn six years old, seven year olds, eight year old, nine year old, and you've been looking at it for years and it's a very traumatic experience for you. Some of you, you were raised in a home where there was alcohol or there was drug abuse and you lived in an environment that never ever felt safe to you. Others of you, you were sexually abused, not one time, but multiple times and often by somebody that should have been protecting you instead of harming you. There's chronic abuse. And the third type is called complex trauma, and that's a response to multiple and ongoing events. This is when you're raised in a home or you're married to someone and you see some combination of all the things that we talked about. There's chemical abuse, there's emotional abuse, there's physical abuse, there might be sexual abuse and the list could go on and on. And no matter what you've been through or at what level, trauma changes you and it changes your perspective, it can change how you see people, it can change how you see God, it can change your outlook on life. I'll give you an example of something that's not nearly as severe as what many who have been through, but as my counselor says, "You don't compare trauma, you just seek God for healing."

- That's right.

- I went through a kind of an unusual series of events when I was a kid, I was in multiple car accidents in the passenger side of the vehicle. Now, again, for those of you who around my age, I grew up in the era where we didn't wear seat belts. Does anybody remember that era, no seat belts at all? We would even lay up in the back of a car in the window and take naps as a kid for hours upon hours. This was the era when you would put an entire junior high baseball team in the back of a pickup truck, drive 70 miles hour down the highway and think you were smart. It was a very fun era and by the grace of God we lived through this dumb era, but that's when I grew up. Those of you online, you can type in the chat if you were there, "I was there," you did that as well. And so I was in a passenger seat of a car when I got in another accident. I had just turned 16 and my friend had turned 16, we were in his pickup truck and we were driving down a side road pulling up to a four lane highway. And he leaned over to me in his truck and he had this crazy look in his eye, I'll never forget it, he leaned over and he said, "What's this?" And he drove straight through the stop sign straight across the four lane highway. I looked up, and you could see the timing was gonna be just perfect for all the wrong reasons, there was another vehicle coming probably 70 miles an hour straight at me. I got no seatbelt, I'm in the passenger side looking up, looking up, bracing, bracing, bracing, bracing, bracing, bracing, and his car came right toward my door and by the grace of God just missed me, hit the back of the truck, spun it around three and a half times, ambulances, hospitals and the story goes on and on and I am terrified to ride with any of you. Any of you, I don't care how good your driving is, I mean, there's no offense, you're driving and I'm reaching over there, I can barely take it. My flight instructor said I fly like a fighter pilot, just think Tom Cruise. But I fly like a maniac, I drive like a grandpa driver. And you say, "You are a grandpa," and that's true, but I've been driving like a grandpa driver since before I had kids. I am in my mid fifties and have never had a speeding ticket, never had an accident, traumatized, it changed me. For you, it might be that someone hurts you and you don't know how to trust people, it might be that you find it difficult to trust God, it might be that you grew up with no money, and so you got these really dysfunctional views and fear of not having enough no matter what, it might be that someone did something to you and so you are traumatized worrying that one day they'll do the same thing to one of your children. How do we heal from trauma? But we will look today at God's Word and we're actually gonna look at someone that you probably wouldn't guess experienced trauma. I've been all the way through seminary with a master's divinity, studied Scripture for years, and it wasn't until I dug into this person this week that I realized the apostle Paul, the person that most of us would never think was traumatized, the guy who wrote two thirds of the New Testament, the guy who said, "To live is Christ, to die is gain", he experienced acute, chronic and complex trauma. And I wanna show you and I want you to see it and I want you to watch what God did to bring healing and how God brought him to a stronger place based on what he'd been through. You go all the way through to his conversion. If you don't know, he was the guy that was killing Christians, he was not a Christian, and his conversion was traumatic. My conversion was like a Christian Hallmark commercial. I felt bad for my son, went and kneeled down in a softball field at night, the sun was setting, the birds were chirping, there was a Michael W. Smith song playing somewhere in the background, "Friends are friends forever if the Lord's the Lord to them." I stood up, new creation in Christ, saved by the grace of God, it was an amazing, peaceful experience. The apostle Paul was killing Christians and in Acts 9 you can read about it. A light from heaven knocked him into the ground. We don't know for sure what light knocks people to the ground, but based on my fifth grade science class, that was probably lightning, possibly struck by lightning. And then a voice from heaven speaks, and the voice doesn't say, "Hello, my servant, I have chosen thou." The voice says, "Why you persecuting me,

Saul?" God knocks him down and ask him a in your face question. Then, Paul is blind, three days, and God doesn't say, "Don't worry three days from now I'm gonna send this guy, he's gonna come pray for you and you're gonna be healed." God doesn't do that. He's just blind, he's knocked down by lightning, a voice from heaven is not particularly generous, and then he is blind for three days, and then he is healed and this Christian killer becomes a killer Christian preacher-

- Come on.

- He preaches the gospel. And so the good news is that God rewarded him with a six figure salary, with great benefits and lots of babes.

- [Congregant] No.

- No, no, no, no, no, no. For the rest of his life he endured prolific abuse, running for his life. In fact, I wanna show you just on the screen a map of just according to the Bible, just the verses that we have, in every city we see, he had to run out of town trying to escape to save his life. I had someone kind of rude to me at a restaurant recently, and I decided to walk out. Here's my story. Paul exited city after city, after city, after city, after city because people were trying to kill him and take his life. He endured ongoing severe trauma and he healed from it. And I wanna show you three things in Scripture that we can do that we can learn from God's Word to pursue healing with God. The first thing that we learn is this as we look at Paul and something we need to do, is we process the pain of our trauma. Now, as a side note, in order to process it, you gotta acknowledge it. And I wanna start here and say, some of you have been through something and you're trying to put it aside and try not to act like it ever happened. You don't heal when you ignore the wound-

- That's right.

- You don't heal when you suppress the wound, you don't heal when you try to forget the wound, you start to heal when you take it to God and start to process it. And so some of you, what you have to say, you have to acknowledge it, "I was abused." Now, there's some people today that think everything's abuse. Just 'cause someone disagrees with you doesn't mean you're abused, just because someone corrects you, just because someone believes something different than you, that's not the same, but some of you need to just acknowledge, "I was abused" or "I was raped," you need to say it. "I was abandoned, I was mistreated." And the reason that we don't wanna say this, one, is we just like to shut it out because we feel vulnerable, we feel helpless, we feel like it's better to ignore it than to process it. And what happens is, according to the experts I've worked with, instead of seeking connection, we prioritize protection.

- Wow.

- Yeah.

- Instead of taking our pain to trusted people, we often push trusted people away. And the problem is that we don't heal in isolation. How do we heal? We heal in communities.

- That's right.

- We heal together with the people of God. And that's one of the reasons we talk often about LifeGroups. It's not because we want you to do something else in your already busy life, it's because we're better together, because iron sharpens iron, because we confess our faults to one another and we pray for each other Scripture says that we may be healed.

- Yes, sir.

- Community matters so much. And the challenge is, if you ignore the pain, the wound is still there. What happens is you go somewhere else to cope. You go to drugs or you go to alcohol or you go to sex or you use food as a coping mechanism, or you do what I do and that is you just work, you just work. Paul actually processed his trauma. And I'm gonna show you on the back wall a big portion of Scripture and he's writing about this, and yes, he's telling them what he's been through, but the reality of what he is doing is, he is processing his pain. And you can read this whole text in 2 Corinthians 11 starting in verse 23 if you want to, I'll just give you the high points. Essentially it says, he was in prison too many times to count, five times, he was beaten with 39 lashes. Now, why 39 lashes? Because you could actually die from 39 lashes. But if you died from 39 lashes, in court they would say you died from a beating. If you died from 40 lashes, that would be murder, so they would just beat you 39 times and see if you lived. Five times, he was lashed 39 times, three times, he was beaten with rods, he was stoned, and I feel like in this day and age I need to say that's not recreationally speaking, just based on where we are in the world today just thought I would say that. He was shipwrecked, he almost starved to death, he froze, he was in danger everywhere that he went, and this is what he said in 2 Corinthians 1:9, this is the apostle Paul. He said, "We were under great pressure," watch this, "Far beyond our ability to endure so that we despised of life itself." I wanna pause for a moment and tell you, if you've ever hurt so deeply that you didn't know if you wanted to go on, the guy who wrote two thirds of the New Testament had been there as well, "The despair of life itself." And what did he do? He's talking about it, he's writing about it. he's processing it. And I wanna encourage you to find a safe place, the right place with the right people to process the pain of your trauma. And that very well could be for many of you, your LifeGroup, your trusted, spiritual friends, it could be your local campus pastor, it could be a Christian counselor who's trained to help, but we don't heal when we ignore it, we have to acknowledge it and we process it with trusted people. The second thing that we do is we prayerfully press into God with our trauma. We take it to God, we cry out to God, we talk to God, we might even complain to God about it, and this is what Paul did in 2 Corinthians 12. If you don't know the context of this chapter, he had something that he called a thorn and we don't know what the thorn was, scholars guess all these different things, but it was a thorn that was tormenting him. It seems to me that almost everybody has a thorn. Raise your hand if you have a thorn, raise your hand if you have a thorn, type online if you have a thorn, some of you, yes, type online. "I have a thorn," type online "I have a thorn." Some of you right now you have a thorn, some of you you're sitting by your thorn, don't elbow your thorn right now, that would not be polite to do in church. But it seems like all of us have that something that we wish we didn't have in life. And Scripture says Paul did this, he said, "Three times I pleaded with the Lord, I begged Him to take it away from me." Most scholars would say this wasn't like just three little prayers, it was very likely three seasons of ongoing prayer. But notice that he didn't blame God for the thorn, but he took his thorn to God and he prayed and he pleaded and he begged in the very same way you can take your hurt to God, and you can take it to Him again, and you can take it to Him a third time, and you can unload on Him and say, "God, I don't

understand, why did this happen? Why did you let this happen when you could have perhaps stopped it?" You can tell Him, "It's not my fault. I don't know what to do, God, I don't even know how to heal." You can totally and completely be honest with Him, don't hold back, He can handle it. Scripture says, "Cast your cares upon Him because He cares for you." You take your burdens, you give it all. You give Him your praise, you give Him your thanksgiving, and you give Him your hurt from your heart. God, please take it away. Three times he pleaded with the Lord and God responded to him. "And God said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you. For my power,'" God says, "'Is perfect in your weakness.'" "In the thing that you hate the most, you'll best discover my power and presence." And Paul says something that would be just almost weird in any other circumstance, he says, "That's why for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses and insults and hardships and persecutions and difficulties. For when I am weak," he says, "Then I'm strong."

- Amen.

- That only comes from the presence of God. You take it to God, you take it to God, you take it to God, you take it to God. And even if God doesn't take it away, he says, "My grace is what you need, this is what you need." And I hope that you'll understand, and this is for somebody here, let it sink in your soul, nothing can change your past, but God can heal your broken heart.

- That's right.

- God can heal your broken heart. And Scripture that may be for you is this, "That the Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." We process the pain of our trauma with trusted people, we prayerfully press in to God, we take it to God, we take it to God, we take it to God. And then the third thing I'm gonna tell you is gonna make some of you mad because you're not ready for it yet. If you're not ready for it yet, just pretend like this is for later. But number three is, we pursue purpose in our trauma, we pursue purpose. And again, I'm hesitant to say this right now because I know if you're hurting right now, you're like, you don't like me because you're not ready for that. It's too soon, it's too soon, but there will be some point that if you process it and if you take it to God, you may say exactly what or something similar to what Paul said. And this is Paul who had been beaten, shipwrecked, stoned, left for dead, whipped too many times to count, and he says this, "Praise be to the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort who comforts us in all our troubles." Why? For a purpose, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. Praise be to the God of all comfort-

- That's so good.

- Who comforts us with all compassion so we can have a purpose in our pain-

- That's right.

- And one day comfort others. Now, this is the point where I tell you a story, and I got a million I could tell you about someone who was abused, sought God, found healing, and now does ministry, hundred of stories. But what I wanna do instead of tell you a story is I wanna just step off of the platform and go to my seat and sit amongst my people because I am not just a pastor, I am also a people, and I wanna just tell you that I've

been hurt too, and the people all around me that I'm sitting with, many of them they're hurting right now, and my heart as your pastor is heavier than I can describe because I know right now there are so many of you that are just, just not okay, you're not okay, your responses to what's going on, it's not normal. You're frustrated more easily, angry more easily, you're more critical, you're more dissatisfied, you're hurting more. It's not you, it's, something's not right.

- That's good.

- And what I wanna say to you is if you're not okay, it's because you're not okay, meaning something happened. And I talked to my counselor in detail about this, and we went through the list of all that the last few years has done to disrupt what is normal and inflict people, many people with untold levels of pain, lost of loved ones, loss of fellowship, loss of freedom, loss of trust, loss of relationships. Like, how many of you guys disagree on one thing and so, bah! We don't like each other anymore? And so my counselor got onto me. I sent him my notes, he said, "Hey, these are really good. Thank you, you helped me with 'em." And he said, "Don't just tell 'em that they can be healed." That's what most people thought. "Tell 'em they can be way, way stronger"

- [Congregant] Come on.

- "On the backside." And then he said, "What I want you to know is you are communicating it from the strength of Jesus inside of you."

- Come on.

- Yes.

- And that's what I'm doing. Because what I want you to know is, yeah, I've been hurt too, and I don't want you to read into it, I'm not gonna tell any kind of stories, but I'm gonna tell you I've had to recover from some stuff. And I process it and I pray with my best friend and we stand together-

- Come on.

- And we pursue Jesus and pursue Jesus, and we pursue Jesus, and I'm not just healed, but I'm stronger.

- Come on.

- Stronger, closer to God, closer to God, closer to God, closer to God, stronger, stronger. And that's why I would tell you this, not in a easy Christian cliché way, but I want you to know and I want you to feel it, I want you to feel it. And we know what Scripture says, we know that in all things, in all things, even our most painful and broken moments, in all things, our God works together for good to those who love him who are pursuing him and need him and are called according to His purpose, purpose.

- Purpose.

- So I'm gonna push you a little bit. What's a pastor's job? You comfort the afflicted and you afflict the comfortable, right? So I'm gonna push you a little bit. I wanna tell you

right now, I want you to hear me, is that your trauma may or may not have been your fault, but pursuing God for healing is your responsibility. You gotta do it, you gotta do it. No more victim. We've been hurt, we could heal because we have a good God.

- That's right.

- We have a good God. And so I want you to have hope. I hurt with you, I love you more than I can tell you, and I love you enough to push you a little bit towards Jesus because there's healing and there's hope, and you can be stronger with Christ. So why don't we pray together? God, thank you for our amazing church community and for your amazing grace. Thank you that you are the Father of all compassion, who comforts us with comfort from heaven so that one day we can comfort others with the same comfort that you've given to us. So today, wherever you're watching from, those of you online, those of you at a Life.Church location, I'm just gonna ask that you would lift up your heads, open your eyes right now and look around the room at a bunch of people that are not okay. And they're not okay 'cause they're not good people, they're not okay 'cause they're living in a broken world. And what I want you to do is publicly, for just a moment, I'm gonna push you a little bit, is if you're not really doing great right now, I want you to go ahead and lift up your hand and say, "I need help from Jesus." Would you do that? Just lift up your hands right now, just lift up your hand right now, just lift up your hands right now, lift up your hands right now. What I want the rest of you to do is I want you all to clap right now because we have some honest people, there's healing from God. And those of you online you can type in the comment section, "I'm not okay right now." And if you're okay with this, if you're not okay, well, you weren't okay when you walked in here. So I'm gonna just ask you maybe if there was someone near you that you might just put your hand on their shoulder right now if they're close enough and pray, if you're sitting next to someone you know well and they're family, you might even hold their hand. And God in, in this moment as a church, we come before you and we ask for your presence to do what only you can do. God, would you give us the courage to start by just admitting, acknowledging if we've been hurt and wounded. And it may have been abuse, we may have trauma, we may not know how to label it, God, but we know we need your help. And so, God, give us a safe community and a LifeGroup with a pastor with a trusted Christian counselor just to take our pain and process it. And we give it to you, God, our hurt, our confusion, our anger, our guilt, our shame, our doubts, our rage, our unstable, we just take it all to you, God, we cast our cares on you. And somehow, God, we have the faith to believe that you could take the worst pain we've experienced and somehow make us stronger, closer to you one day to help others with the same comfort that you've given to us. We pray this in Jesus' name. Everybody say, in Jesus' name.

- In Jesus' name.

- We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Keep praying today if you will, keep praying today. This time, nobody looking around, there are those of you that you don't know God intimately. And about right now you may know that, "I really don't know God intimately." Let me tell you about the goodness of God. God loves you more than I can describe, so much that He sent His one and only Son, Jesus, the Son of God, perfect in every way. And Jesus was abused, He was mistreated, He was beaten, He was punished because He was the innocent lamb of God who died in our place as the perfect sacrifice. He took the punishment that we deserved and He died for the forgiveness of our sins, and the goodness of God raised Him back to life, why? So that anyone, you want some

encouraging news today? Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord, Jesus, your sins, your brokenness, your pain would be washed away, all of your sins forgiven and you become new. Wherever you're watching from today, those of you that know, "I'm really not in a relationship with God." God is a relational God, He doesn't want you just to serve Him, He wants you to know Him, to be loved by Him. You step away from your heart, you step away from your sin, you step towards Jesus, you come to Him. As you cry out to Him, He'll hear your prayer, forgive your sin and make you brand new. Wherever you're watching from today, those who say, "I need Jesus, I need Jesus, today, I surrender my life to Jesus," that's your prayer, lift your hands now all over the place and say, "Yes, that's my prayer right here." Praise God for you and you as well, others today saying, "Yes, Jesus, I need you, I surrender to you." Those of you online just type it in the comment section, "I'm surrendering my life to Jesus" and together as one church family, we pray. Pray, Heavenly Father-

- [Congregation] Heavenly Father.
- I need you,
- I need you.
- Your grace.
- Your grace.
- Your love.
- Your love.
- Your forgiveness.
- Your forgiveness.
- Your salvation.
- Your salvation.
- Jesus save me, heal me,
- Jesus save me, heal me.
- Forgive me.
- Forgive me.
- Fill me with your Spirit so I could know you and follow you.
- And follow you.
- My life is not my own.
- My life is not my own.

- I give it all to you. Thank you for new life, now you have mine. In Jesus name I pray.
'Cause somebody praise to God who is worthy of all praise.