

**Series: “How? Practical Answers for Self-Care Today,” at Journey of Faith**

February 2021 – April 2021

12-Weeks

Care Tuesdays – Podcast Series



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## **WEEK #1 – Healthy Processing**

Feb 9, 2021

Topic: “How can I process this past year in quarantine in a healthy way?”

### TOPIC OUTLINE

#### Regular Disciplines of Those Who Process in a Healthy Way

1. A sense of personal control over the connection between their thoughts and their actions.

This looks like: “Let me take a pause because I feel my chest getting tight and I’m feeling anxious. Can I identify what I’m feeling right now?” Next, “What can I do differently right now to help care for these underlying emotions I’ve acknowledged?”

2. Pursuit of personally meaningful tasks. Intentionally doing something that’s meaningful isn’t about adding more tasks to our routine, as it may mean taking things out to make room.

This looks like: “What can I do later today that gives me enjoyment and is meaningful to me?”

3. Healthy lifestyle choices. This is about eating healthier, making sure we’re finding times to move and to relax, going to bed on time, taking medications if we need them. Overall however, this is about cultivating a sense of balance that can end up helping us to regulate our inner life.

This looks like: “What do I know I need to do to be healthier, but aren’t?”

4. Social support. The idea here is to create a culture of support around us. This may mean joining a group/Life Group, calling that friend more regularly, being more open with those in our family or friend inner-circle, or even making that therapist appointment.

This looks like: “What ways can I adjust my schedule to combat isolation through community?”

Reflection question: How can I use these examples to become healthier from the inside-out, knowing that these things help me combat the negative effects of this season?

## Biblical Mindfulness

Until we slow down enough to honestly feel how we are doing, we can't assess our current state and what we need. This has direct implications on our spiritual lives as well. So, biblical mindfulness is a way to help ground us as part of our daily routine. Here's one way to do it. Go through the below after turning off any distractions, and in a quiet place do each rhythm with your eyes closed.

1st rhythm: Breathing. Slowly breathe in, hold it, then slowly breathe out. Do this three times.

2nd rhythm: Acknowledgement of our competing thoughts. Acknowledge those thoughts that are coming in (tasks to get to, issues to attend to, etc.). Realize they'll still be there for you after this, so set them aside, and focus on being present.

3rd rhythm: Acknowledgement of feelings. What are you feeling right now, and can you name them? For example, are you feeling anxious, tired, lonely, etc.?

4th rhythm: Sensory awareness. We may have just brought negative feelings to the surface so let's regroup ourselves. While being still: What's your chair feel like? Feel your feet on the ground, and the clothes on your body. Can you hear anything from another room or outside? Relax your face muscles, and your body, and be present.

5th rhythm: Focusing on God's presence. Be aware now that God is with you right now. The God who spoke to Elijah in a whisper, raised Christ from the dead, and has complete control over everything in the universe. Focus now on being still, realizing He's with you right now, and listen to His presence from your heart.

6th rhythm: Surrendering. Remember now the competing thoughts and emotions you brought into this exercise, and how you were just reminded that God is with you. In humility, and realizing that He is God and we're not, surrender all those thoughts and emotions over to Him. Lay them at the cross, and let the God of everything care for you right now as you surrender.

7th rhythm: Give Him thanks.

8th rhythm: Breathing. Slowly breathe in, hold it, then slowly breathe out. Do this three times.

## Summary

- Make it a regular practice to identify the feelings behind your actions.
- Pursue personally meaningful tasks.
- Make healthy lifestyle choices.
- Cultivate social support: friends, open up to select family members, join a small group/Life Group to open up Scripture together regularly, see a therapist if needed. Overall: Let others in, and join you along your journey.
- Then, practice regular times of biblical mindfulness like what we just did together.

## WEEK #2 – Asking for Help

Feb 16, 2021

Topic: “Asking for Help: How can I ask for help when I need it, and what steps that are involved?”

### TOPIC OUTLINE

#### 1. Acknowledge Negative Psychological Voices:

- Take a moment and think back to how you were raised. What did those who raised you tell you about asking others for help? And then, how did they MODEL it for you?
- Now take a moment to think about what they told you about what true strength is, and also how they modeled it for you.

#### 2. Acknowledge Negative Emotional Voices:

- Take a moment to think about your current perceptions of emotions in general. Are we the types of person who idolizes an emotional expression of happiness even when we suffer from human and we have low points – like David in the Psalms had, or even Jesus Himself?
- Are you the type of person who avoids your emotions all together and focuses more on the tasks at hand?
- Are you the type of person that lives in a perpetual state of sorrow, and finds little hope in any action step, let alone asking for help? Think about it. Search yourself for a moment.
- Check your emotional measuring rod. Is it accurate?
- Does it keep you from asking for help, does it keep you from being real with those you trust?

#### 3. Acknowledge Negative Theological Voices:

- Is your current view of God one that’s defined by the previous two points.. how you were conditioned with all those competing voices and experiences, or how you currently view emotional honesty with yourself and others – even with God Himself?
- Read: 1 Pet. 5:6-7

4. Now that we have looked at acknowledging our negative psychological voices, emotional voices, and even our theological voices. Please ask yourself the following questions:

- What challenges you the most about any of this?

- Does any of this confront you with your ingrained definition of what strength means?
- What benefit do you see about exploring these things within yourself?

5. Action steps to ask for help:

- Check your spirit.
- Ask for help from those you trust.
- Be specific.
- Lean on God through it all.

6. Closing Questions:

- What are your thoughts about those helpful steps?
- What comes to your mind that you would add to that list?
- What are some examples that come to your mind of various things you would need help with, and what steps would you take after hearing tonight's helpful reminders?
- What is the link between asking for help, and our spiritual progress?

## WEEK #3 – Forgiving Others

Feb 23, 2021

Topic: Forgiving Others: How can I forgive those who've hurt me so I can find healing today?

### TOPIC OUTLINE

Health Benefits of forgiving others:

- Healthier relationships
- Improve mental health
- Less anxiety, stress and hostility
- Lower blood pressure
- Fewer symptoms or depression
- A stronger immune system
- Improved heart health
- Improved self esteem

Spiritual Benefits of forgiving others:

- Being able to better see others as God sees them
- Our compassion will grow
- Patience will increase
- Our inner life will be less chaotic, and calmer, so we can experience God better
- We will be able to listen to others better
- We will see past their words into their heart
- We will become more sensitive to the feelings of others

Verses

Eph. 4:32, Mt. 6:14, Mk. 11:25, Col. 3:13 all have in common: “Forgive as God forgave you.”

Remember how you have been forgiven. But we need to note here: The level to which we forgive others, will show the level to which we've truly internalized how much God has forgiven us.

Ps. 103:10-14: “He has not punished us as we deserve for all our sins, for his mercy toward those who fear and honor him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our sins as far away from us as the east is from the west. He is like a father to us, tender and sympathetic to those who reverence him. For he knows we are but dust.”

Those verses touch on reminding us that God has forgiven us to a great extent, more than we deserve. Then, reminds us that our lives are brief – the great context of our lives, so let's get real with this while we have today and remember this.

Luke 23:34 – As he hung on the cross – And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

WHILE He was being persecuted, and not just hurled insults at, not just when someone pulling in front of Him on the freeway, not just when someone had a different political view than him, but literally as they were killing Him. That's taking forgiveness to a whole other level, and it's our measuring rod. (Martyrs embraced this – Coliseum, 17th century Japan, etc.)

Paul learned from this and taught Ephesians 4:31-32 – “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” How to Forgive Someone Who Deeply Hurt You – Linked Website.

Jesus summarized His teachings on loving those who are difficult with this: Lk. 6:36 “Be merciful as your Father is merciful...

Reading Assingment:

The book of 1 John

Modeling God's love has nothing to do with holding onto grudges with self-righteous justification.

Everett Worthington who's a clinical psychologist and professor of psychology, came up with the acronym REACH to describe a general model to follow when beginning the journey of learning to forgive those who've hurt us.

Click the link to see REACH: <http://www.evworthington-forgiveness.com/reach-forgiveness-of-others>



## Summary:

- Forgiving someone doesn't mean to put ourselves in a position to keep getting victimized.
- Forgiving doesn't mean to just move on. When done right, we're changed because of the whole process of going through our hurt emotions, learning the other person's context, and choosing the higher road. When done right, forgiving others should change you for the better, and form your heart into greater Christlikeness.
- Forgiving someone who's hurt us is sometimes a long road, so manage expectations that it'll be a formulaic 1, 2, 3, and then I'm over it, type of thing. This is a journey, but it's a journey toward maturation and psychological and spiritual health. So just as God shows you patience, have patience with yourself through this process. We're not going to do this perfectly because we're not God. So, just focus on the next one step in front of you and give yourself some grace. This is a learning process and is part of our ongoing spiritual formation.

## **WEEK #4 – Healthy Communication**

Mar 2, 2021

Topic: Healthy Communication: How can I practice healthy communication as part of my own self-care?

### TOPIC OUTLINE

Have you ever heard these phrases?

“It’s not what you said, it’s how you said it.”

“If that’s what you wanted why didn’t you just come right out and say it?”

“I’m trying to have a conversation with you, but you keep interrupting!”

Communication hinderances:

#### 1. One-Way Communication

You know you are doing this when you are talking too much. This leaves no space for input and no space for listening.

Changing this looks like: being mindful of how much you are saying in the conversation. Basic psychology shows us that if you want people to get to like you, cultivate conversations where the other person is speaking more. This tells them, “Hey, they actually care about what I have to say.”

#### 2. “You” Directives

How much of your communication begins with “you”? (you should, you need to, etc.)  
Changing this looks like: instead of saying, “You need to come into work tomorrow on time,” say “Hey, I noticed you’ve been coming into work later than usual. Is there something I can help you with that may be contributing to this? I’m here if you want to brainstorm together.”

#### 3. Using Only Negatives

When ideas, topics or strategies come up in conversations in your work or relationships, is your first instinct to be negative about it? This can even just be an internal thing that hinders our outward communication: Do you automatically tense up and think negatively before exploring it more? If so, you may be the “No” coworker or friend, and your communication is hindered.

Changing this looks like: instead of feeling or saying, “No, I don’t like that” right off the bat, say things like, “Help me understand this from your perspective, because I think I’m missing something.” or “I want to find a solution to this, let’s work on this together.”

#### 4. Getting Personal

We will know we do this when we make a problem about the other person. Instead of it being a larger social issue, it’s all about that person we know who we call an “idiot”. Or, instead of it being a family problem that needs to get worked out, we cast all the blame on people rather than the larger issue that all have a part to play in. Changing this looks like: instead of quickly casting blame on another person, focus on the larger issue. This takes intentionality because our emotions will tell us to make it personal. But this is a great hindrance to any productive dialogue. Instead of blame, focus on solutions, and bring the other person or people into the dialogue so it will communicate that we are really doing this together. It also shows you are teachable... often we are not, but that is the goal for basic psychological human progress in our life, as well as growth in the spiritual life.

#### 5. Disregarding or Invalidating Feelings

Things that come to mind: “I don’t care if you’re upset about this, but...” or on the flip side, “I don’t care if you’re excited about this, because there’s XY and Z to worry about...”

Changing this looks like: instead of shooting down other people’s feelings, validate them, even if you are on a whole other plane of existence. Few people will be open to constructive criticism, or having a relationship with you, if they do not feel heard, seen, and validated. If you do not understand their emotions, then ask: “Help me understand why you’re feeling this way.”

Here is a short video that touches on this and shows us what disregarding or validating feelings looks like. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4EDhdAHRog>

#### 6. Passive Aggressive Sarcasm

Do you find yourself belittling others, or having a condescending spirit, and then justify it because you think you are the only one who is absolutely right?

Changing this looks like: Instead of replying sarcastically to something that you see as a problem, be earnest about what you believe the issue to be and present

straightforward and honest possible solutions. Using sarcasm or passive-aggression is often seen as a personal attack and can escalate an already tricky conflict-resolution scenario.

Here is another video – warning its cheesy but it works with our topic.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cY9Ofvr2ouw&t=187s>

## 4 Tips

### **1. Become an Engaged Listener**

- Focus fully on the speaker
- Avoid interrupting or trying to redirect the conversation to your concerns.
- (Active listening: we're talking with the other person, not talking to)
- Show your interest in what's being said.
- Try to set aside judgment.
- Provide feedback. "What I'm hearing is.. am I hearing that right?"

### **2. Pay Attention to Non-verbal Signals**

- (These tell us more than words)
- Be aware of individual differences.
- Look at nonverbal communication signals as a group. – look at all signals together
- Use nonverbal signals that match up with your words
- Adjust your nonverbal signals according to the context. – tone, how you sit, etc.
- Avoid negative body language. – crossing arms, tensing face, etc.

### **3. Keep Stress in Check**

- We know that our emotions can sometimes get the better of us, which can lead to regret, or relational fracturing. Sometimes the best thing we can do is to approach a conversation once we've calmed down enough to remain in control, level headed, able to truly hear the other person, and, if the situation calls for it, to change our mind once we truly hear the other person.

### **4. Assert Yourself**

- This takes knowing our own needs and wants (so, element of self-awareness here)
- Express negative thoughts in a respectful way. "This makes me feel a bit tense inside because I'm wondering how the project is going to get done," or "I'm feeling like you're not fully understanding what I'm

wrestling with, so let me reframe this for both of us to help us out while we talk about this.." etc.

- Also, something they call: Empathetic assertion conveys sensitivity to the other person. First, recognize the other person's situation or feelings, then state your needs or opinion. "I know you've been very busy at work, but I want you to make time for us as well. I care about you and wish we could spend more time together."

### Verse References

Ephesians 4:32; Matthew 5:23-24; Matthew 11:29; Philippians 2:3; 1 Peter 3:10; Romans 14:19; Romans 12:18

### Summary

- We are all made in God's image.
- We are all hurting in different ways, have a history that has marred us, and carry into our interactions with others much more than we are even conscious of.
- God see all our own dysfunction and loves us still. Then, we are told, "Love others the way God has loved you." That is a tall order, because it is an inside-out type of thing.
- Our lives here are what Solomon said in Ecclesiastes "dust in the wind." We are brief, and we have a short time to make a difference, promote peace and healing, and show God's heart to a hurting world.
- If we want to learn healthy communication through the lens of the Bible, we must first get over ourselves, and make the conscious effort to try and see others around us as God sees them. Internalize that, and we will find that all the various strategies for effective communication will be a natural result, as opposed to just actions that are disconnected from the source of true caring.

## WEEK #5 – Finding Meaning

Mar 9, 2021

Topic: “Finding Meaning: How can I find meaning in my life when I feel hopeless?”

### TOPIC OUTLINE

Mindset and Action Steps to Pursue Hope (7 Things to Consider)

1. Name your feelings – this is usually best if you can go to a quiet place by yourself.

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2. Consider that your inner voice may be lying to you.

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3. Self-talk truth, even if your emotions and thoughts say otherwise.

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4. Consider what you can gain by cultivating a hopeful outlook.

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5. Bring others into your fight corner and prioritize those relationships.

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6. Focus on the step in-front of you on the staircase.

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## 7. Show yourself some grace.

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“However long the night, the dawn will break.” ~African Proverb

(Take a moment to meditate on this).

Sophie Scholl

1942: She organized a group of like-minded students, calling themselves the White Rose, as a symbol of beauty, innocence, and purity in the face of the monstrous evil that was Hitler’s fascism. The ideology of the group was one of passive resistance to Hitler’s regime.

1943: found guilty of treason and sentenced to be executed by guillotine. At 5pm on 02/22, her last words were, “The sun still shines.” Even what many would call a hopeless situation while her head was in a guillotine, she chose to have hope, and so she did. And her words have challenged people ever since. ...

Scripture Readings:

- Deuteronomy 31:8
- Isaiah 41:10
- Psalm 40:1-3
- Psalm 3:3
- Psalm 34:18-19
- Isaiah 40:31
- Romans 8:38-39
- Psalm 42:11
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

## WEEK #6 – Overcoming Triggers

Mar 16, 2021

Topic: OVERCOMING TRIGGERS: How can I identify things that trigger me and then find freedom from them?

### TOPIC OUTLINE

Triggers Are the places we go behind the scenes in our minds that become activated by someone else’s words or behaviors. Like stepping on a tripwire that sets off a bomb, triggers can cause us to become super reactive. Someone can say something or do something, but we end up reacting based on a behind-the-scenes experience or thought.

#### Nine Common Categories of Triggers

1. Feeling self-conscious, such as when we’re alone in a group or comparing ourselves.
  2. Being discounted, such as when someone stands us up or ignores our calls.
  3. Feeling we are controlled, such as when someone is making decisions for us or is telling us what to do or feel.
  4. Feeling taken advantage of, such as when someone fails to pay us back on a loan.
  5. Feeling vulnerable, such as when we’re in a situation in which we feel exposed.
  6. Relationship experiences, such as when we’re lonely or feeling smothered.
  7. Boundary concerns, such as when someone is coming at us while drunk or disrespecting our space.
  8. Feeling uncomfortable about what is happening, such as when we witness someone being hurt or when someone’s words or actions disagree with our values.
  9. Fearing what might happen, such as when a threat appears imminent.
- When thinking about these examples and looking at yourself do you identify with anything in particular?
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#### Managing Our Triggers and Finding Healing Tools

1. Practice self-reflection and awareness.
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2. Be aware of your projection.

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3. Note what's happening in your body.

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4. Practice expressing how you feel.

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5. Get professional help if you need it.

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What's impacted you the most about all we have covered?

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### Scripture

Psalm 40:1-3

God IS good: "As for you, O Lord, you will not restrain your mercy from me; your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me!"

God IS present: "As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!"

God IS working: "He inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction...He put a new song in my mouth!"

## WEEK #7 – Practicing Presence

Mar 23, 2021

Topic: Practicing Presence: How can I be more present with others to help nurture healthy boundaries?

### TOPIC OUTLINE

Practicing Presence:

Imagine a time when someone was talking to you, but your mind was somewhere else. Someone is opening-up to us or sharing something, and we're thinking about that thing we need to get to, or we may be even thinking about how we're going to respond to them once they're done talking, so much so, that we're not even really there with them.

Boundaries:

When we think of boundaries, we think of a healthy fence between us and others. However, in this aspect we should be thinking of boundaries between us and our wondering thoughts.

These are inward boundaries we set up within ourselves to take control of our own thoughts, be present with others in conversation and relationship, and then ultimately helping us to better enjoy the day that God's given us.

What does it look like for you when you find you're not being as present with others like you know you should be?

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### 10 Tips to being Present with Others:

1. Turn off or set aside your phone.
2. Slow down
3. Acknowledge competing thoughts and set them aside.
4. Repeat in your head what they just said.
5. Listen with your eyes
6. Pay attention to their tone.
7. Seek understanding.
8. Make the conversation other-focused.

- 9. Ask intentional questions.
- 10. Allow yourself to feel what they are saying.

Questions, things that stood out, other tips you think may be helpful?

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The biblical foundation for learning to be present with others is loving them more than ourselves Phil. 2:3.

Love was the basis of Jesus' relational life and He challenged the disciples to have the same love in their relationships.

Jn. 13:34-35

Let us go back a little more...

As a boy, Jesus took the opportunity of being in Jerusalem to sit with the teachers in the temple. Luke tells us Jesus both listened to the teachers and asked them questions. (Luke 2:49).

God expects us to sit down, listen, and ask questions. God also desires us to teach others. Being present with others is not just about listening, it is about speaking, and guiding too. (Luke 2:47)

What are your thoughts?

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What would you say is the link between our spiritual progress and leaning to be present with others?

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What do you find most challenging about all of this?

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What is one thing you are going to focus on this next week?

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## WEEK #8 – Enjoying Today

Mar 30, 2021

Topic: 03/30/21 – Enjoying Today: How can I better enjoy today while busy and juggling responsibilities?

### TOPIC OUTLINE

We are in the middle of a busy day, checking off our lists and then suddenly, we are just going through the motions and we are not enjoying being alive that day.

What does this feeling look like for you? What does it look like or feel like when you realize you are so busy that your enjoyment is a little bit lacking?

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Tools to take back control of our enjoyment:

1. Set times aside throughout the day that are non-screen time.
2. Practice Gratitude
3. Spread your prayer-life throughout the day.
4. Find a creative hobby.
5. Mindfulness
6. Write down what you think you need to get done... then ask yourself what really NEEDS to get done.
7. Be kind to yourself.
8. Make time each day and do NOTHING.
9. Get social.
10. Take a class at the local club or community college.
11. Go to the doctor and get a full blood panel completed and a full checkup.
12. Celebrate the small stuff.

What is the one thing for you that you can celebrate?

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Do you need to reassess you daily rhythm?

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Scripture Reading:

Luke 10: 38-42

Are you a Mary or a Martha?

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Questions for this week

How can I slow down this week?

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How can I recalibrate my sense of worth and pace with Gods?

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How much do you trust God?

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How much time are you spending with God?

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What is the foundation of your thought life?

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## WEEK #9 – God in the Hardships

Apr 6, 2021

Topic: GOD IN THE HARDSHIPS: How can I go through life's tough times in a way that draws me closer to God?

### TOPIC OUTLINE

Hardships are something everyone has experience in one way or another because we live in a fallen world. In Matthew 5:35 Jesus said, "God causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." This world is broken which is why Jesus came to rescue it! But how, and what does that look like? Pastor Jason recently shared a verse with the church staff that I'd like to start our discussion off with: Romans 5:1-5

When is a time that you went through hardship, and found hope when you look back on it?

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Scripture Reference:

Hebrews 4:16  
Ephesians 2:18  
James 4:8  
Philippians 4:6  
Psalm 13:1-2  
Psalm 13:3-6

With those verses we just went over, what stands out to you; what are some themes you notice here?

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God can take your rawness, your deep authentic self, and you can drop your mask that you put on for others and be real with Him when things get hard and confusing.

## 6 tips to consider when trying to draw closer to God when things get hard:

1. Turn to God and get real. Just talk to Him. Invite Him into your situation. He can handle it. (example of wife and Brooke – possible death – dream state)
2. Surround yourself with godly people who can support you. Be picky. Do not let just anyone into that inner circle. Can they be present and not try to fix a situation that can't be fixed? Can they show love and compassion, and provide support in real ways? Can they model God's heart in a positive way to you? Pick these people with a picky discernment.
3. Go back to prayer alone and get real. Whether it is on your porch, during a walk, or even in your car that you have to drive a few blocks away in and park under a tree to pray authentically. Go back continuously to prayer.
4. You have your inner circle, now who is a high-level professional you can bring into the situation: pastor, therapist, etc. Know that strength is not going through the storms alone but asking for help from those who God gave us that can help guide a through it.
5. Are you opening up to your spouse or best friend, and saying, "I'd like to share with you what I'm feeling"? God places these people in your life for a reason. So, take advantage of them.
6. When going through a hard time, are you leaning into the feelings that come with it or avoiding those feelings? We are prone to emotional avoidance because it is how our culture conditions us, which is why many of us are prone to become fixers: address a problem, quickly fix it, then move on. That is called avoidance in the therapy world, akin to removing a pressure cooker's regulator system so it does not beep anymore – but it will keep building pressure until it explodes. Leaning into our feelings can look like opening up to a close friend, journaling, praying alone, or even doing a craft or artwork that represents your true emotions. Leaning in means not avoiding. It means allowing ourselves to experience the grief, which helps us to process it. That is true strength.

## WEEK #10 – Becoming a Peacemaker

Apr 13, 2021

Topic: 04/13/21 – BECOMING A PEACEMAKER: How can I become a peacemaker when in conflicts in my job, family, or others?

### TOPIC OUTLINE

Which is your tendency: jump into confrontation too quickly, or go to a third-party person?

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When Jesus was early in his ministry work and traveling to care for people, word began to spread about him – some true and some not true things were said. Jesus set the record straight, He pulled a whole crowd of people together and laid it all out there, giving what we know as the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7).

In Jesus' day they had a very specific idea of what it meant to be blessed:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

But Jesus showed up with a completely different message that flipped everything on its head. He said it's not blessed are the winners, it's blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, those who mourn, those who hunger and thirst for God to make things right. Taking it even further, in verse 9, Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth in 2 Cor. 13:11 to "Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you," it was as difficult to do then as it is now.

So, what are peacemakers anyway?

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Three ways to be a peacemaker:

1. Pray

Pray to God that He would give you wisdom and compassion and prepare both your and the other person's heart.

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Inspiration Verses: James 3:18, Philippians 4:7, Proverbs 16:7, and Psalm 29:11

2. Take time to check yourself and feel empathy

Here we're acknowledging our biases, hurt, baggage, and negative assumptions and setting them aside to see the other person or group on their terms. This can also include checking our motivation, which could be more self-serving than we thought prior.

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Inspiration Verses: 1 John 4:20, Romans 12:5,10, and 1 Timothy 5:1-2

Homework: What other verses can you find this week?

3. Go to the person directly

We've all been there when someone has an issue with us and we find out by someone else. They've been spreading gossip or venting about you to someone else, and you're hearing from the grapevine. It hurts.

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Helpful notes to go to someone directly: Don't beat around the bush, be empathetically assertive but not aggressive and have compassion.

## Characteristics Aspiring Peacemakers Should Pursue

### 1.) Peace rules in their own heart.

Peacemakers cannot create peace among others if they do not first start with peace in their own hearts.

Philippians 4:7 says “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

### 2.) Peacemakers are active, not passive.

Actively try to see all sides and why they think/feel/believe that way. Look for overlapping views or areas where there could be a compromise. A true peacemaker would try to bring the two parties together, disarm them of their weapons, and work through the hard stuff with them to help them reconcile.

### 3.) Gentleness

A peacekeeper must be gentle or else no one is going to listen to them, go to them for advice, or reconcile with them.

### 4.) Resolute in the truth

While peacekeepers are open to hearing all sides, they are NOT willing to set aside God’s truth to appease someone else. Muting our own convictions and affirming someone else’s if it goes against ours can be just as wrong.

### 5.) Patient

James 3:18 says “harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” But if we’re patient, peacemaking can be divine work; and, we can even experience God through it in new ways.

## WEEK #11 – Forgiving Ourselves

Apr 20, 2021

Topic: FORGIVING OURSELVES: How can I learn to forgive myself for past mistakes?

### TOPIC OUTLINE

How can I learn to forgive myself for past mistakes... can anyone relate to this? Have you ever done something that to this day you just cannot stop beating yourself up about? What is the hardest part about this for you?

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1. Regret impacts our body, so explore it emotionally

Quote: "God may forgive your sins, but your nervous system won't." —Alfred Korzybski, scholar

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2. Put it in perspective of where you were at back then

Quote: "Forgiveness means letting go of the past." —Gerald Jampolsky

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3. Come to terms with the fact that you are flawed and make mistakes

Quote: "The chief trick to making good mistakes is not to hide them—especially not from yourself." —Daniel Dennett

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4. Forgive yourself as you forgive the one you love the most

Quote: "One forgives to the degree that one loves." —Francois de La Rochefoucauld

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8 helpful Bible verses to get you started:

- 1 Pt. 5:7
- 2 Cor. 5:17-18
- Ps. 103:10-11
- Rom. 8:1
- Phil. 3:12-13
- Rom. 3:23
- Ps. 32:5
- Gal. 3:26

## WEEK #12 – Back in Community

Apr 27, 2021

Topic: BACK IN COMMUNITY: How can I adjust to going back into the community in a healthy way?

### TOPIC OUTLINE

When you think of going back into community, while exciting to many of us, what other emotions or physical sensations can you identify that you're wrestling with behind the scenes: for example, is there an element of anxiety, fear, or worry; do you notice that sometimes you can't sleep because your mind is running, or anything like that?

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What is going on at the physiological level:

When we adjust to a new normal, in this case going back into community when our minds, bodies, and spirits have gotten use to a more isolated model, it can wreak havoc on us emotionally.

For example: We are in a large group of people and we haven't been used to that for over a year and we start to feel anxious – and for good reason, because it could be a super-spreader event, and lives, including your own could be at stake because of an invisible enemy. What's going on here?

The brain is perceiving a threat, then the brain alerts the body. Through the autonomic nervous system our bodies get primed for panic mode, for self-preservation mode, then the body reacts with physical and emotional symptoms that are secondary to the initial perceiving of threat.

7 helpful tools we can use as we prepare to go back into community:

- Remember any negative feelings you're having or will have are normal
- Give yourself permission to take baby steps
- Practice self-awareness and name what's going on within you
- Give yourself permission to put work on pause for a few moments
- Explore the use of a psychological anchor
- Create a buddy system
- Acknowledge you're not God, and may need short-term professional help

## Spiritual Recalibration

Isaiah 41:10, Psalm 9:9-10, Exodus 33:14, Philippians 4:6

In this time of re-acclimation to society opening back up again and restrictions gradually being lifted, are you remembering God through all of this, or are you letting your inner voices and emotions scream louder than His voice?

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1 Peter 5:7, Psalm 62

Words from Pastor Matt:

“We must always recalibrate ourselves with God’s Word, the Bible. We often don’t see things as they are; instead, we see things as we are. If we want to change who we are so we can see reality better, it’s best to go back to the One who made us in His image and gives us a kind of recalibration to realize He’s real, He’s with us, and wants us to share even our most messed up emotions with Him.”

“Remembering who God is and that He’ll be with us along the way, gives us the courage to surrender to Him even when times get tough. Then when we do that, we’ll find more strength to advance into the kind of community He created us to thrive in, even if right now it’s a bit uncomfortable. And if it is, I get that, I’m right there alongside you.”