

THE BATTLE AGAINST TRAUMATISED THOUGHTS

TALK
IT OVER

DATE: SUNDAY, 5TH OF SEPTEMBER 2021 | WINNING THE WAR IN THE MIND SERIES: PART 3

HEBREWS 12:15

See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

ROMANS 8:28

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

NOTES FOR LEADERS:

There may be someone in your group that needs help with processing trauma. They can seek help from our counselling team by calling the office or emailing counselling@cityhill.co.za.

All counselling remains confidential.

START TALKING

1. What one thing in Sunday's message stood out to you?
2. What was your biggest fear growing up?

START THINKING

1. Read Hebrews 12:15.
 - a). What does it mean to become bitter? How does bitterness impact our lives?
 - b). How does understanding God's forgiveness to us help us forgive others?
2. Think about Joseph's story and then read Romans 8:28. How can this verse help us to deal with trauma?

START SHARING

1. How do you handle hurt/trauma? Think of a time someone hurt you. What was your reaction and response to that person when you first saw them after they'd hurt you? Have you given your hurt to God? How have you managed to get rid of bitterness?
2. How have you seen God work through a traumatic event in your life?

START PRAYING

Lord God, thank you that we don't need to be trapped in the destructive loop of traumatised thoughts. Thank You that You work all things for the good of those who love You. And that through Your grace, we can find a way through the trauma to the true freedom that comes from a life surrendered to You.

START DOING

This week, read the story of Joseph in Genesis 37-50. Pray that God would minister to trauma in your life through His Word.

SUMMARY

OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

The major battlefield for the direction of our lives exists in our minds. Our thoughts determine our decisions, and our decisions determine our destiny. If we can control how we think in line with God's word, it will impact each of our destinies.

In week one, Jax spoke about winning the battle against comparison. In week two, Dusty tackled the battle against anxious thoughts. This Sunday, Steve shared a message about overcoming traumatised thoughts.

Given the last 18 months with the effects of the pandemic, and more recently, the unrest in our city and country, this is an important theme to cover.

This is not intended to be a full treatment of this subject but will cover:

1. What is trauma? (psychological and emotional)
2. What are some of the effects of trauma?
3. The Incredible story of Joseph (someone in the Bible who went through deep trauma and found healing and purpose.)

1. What is trauma?

Emotional and psychological trauma is the result of:

- extraordinarily stressful events
- that shatter your sense of security,
- making you feel helpless in a dangerous world.

The recent unrest fits into that definition - even if you were not harmed or did not lose anything.

Traumatic experiences often involve a threat to life or safety, e.g. violent crime, car accident, sexual abuse etc. Any situation that leaves you feeling overwhelmed and isolated can result in trauma - even if it doesn't involve physical harm, e.g. bullying, battling a life-threatening illness, divorce, the loss of someone close to you - are all examples that fit into the definition above.

Trauma can result from one-off events (childhood or now) or ongoing stress and pain, e.g. domestic violence, surgery, the breakup of a relationship, a deeply disappointing experience (especially if someone was deliberately cruel).

2. The Effects of Trauma

- Some effects of psychological and emotional trauma include:
- Shock, denial, or disbelief
- Confusion, difficulty concentrating
- Anger, irritability, mood swings
- Anxiety and fear
- Guilt, shame, self-blame
- Feeling sad or hopeless
- Feeling disconnected or numb
- Withdrawing from others
- Insomnia or nightmares
- Being startled easily, racing heartbeat

It's like God has given us a warning system - the light goes from green to amber and red as God's way of alerting us to the fact that it is not ALL RIGHT in our souls. In other words, "We feel it so that He can heal it."

3. The Incredible Story of Joseph

The story of Joseph is told in some detail in Genesis 37-50. Joseph was the 11th of 12 brothers. He had the misfortune of being the favourite son - the result of some of his father, Jacob's dysfunction. This resulted in Joseph's brothers hating him! Some of his brothers wanted to kill him. One wasn't as cruel, and so they ended up dumping him in a cistern (a pit in the ground). Some slave traders (human trafficking) came along, and his brothers sold Joseph to them. Imagine Joseph's psychological trauma - going from the favourite son in a wealthy family to being a slave in a different country with a different culture!

Later on, if that wasn't enough, Joseph finds himself falsely accused of rape and is

thrown in jail for this with no access to fair legal help. He may well have died there if not for divine intervention! Joseph suffered trauma at a very high level. We can only guess at what he went through internally. How would you have felt if you were Joseph?

Incredibly, through a divine act of God, Joseph is made the prime minister of Egypt - a world superpower. A number of years later, his brothers, who did this incredibly cruel thing to him, come to Egypt to buy food because there's a famine in the land. Joseph literally has the power of life and death over them because of his position. If you were Joseph, what would you have done?

And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it.

Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph! Is my father still living?' But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence. Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'Come close to me.' When they had done so, he said, 'I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no ploughing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. Genesis 45:2-7

Three lessons from Joseph's story for processing trauma:

1. He didn't become enslaved to bitterness

For many years, Joseph was a slave on the outside but he found grace to keep his heart free. Bitterness toward anyone who has caused us trauma is slavery of the soul.

See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. Hebrews 12:15

When we miss the grace of God, bitterness takes root, and we leave no space for God to work in our lives. When we realise that, by the grace of God, we've been forgiven, we learn to extend grace to others - even when they don't apologise or show remorse for their hurtful actions.

2. He expressed real, raw emotion.

He wept so loudly that everyone heard him. We also read in John 11:35 that *Jesus wept* at the tomb of Lazarus.

For many of us going through trauma, we can't move forward if we don't process those feelings. Although we are tempted to bury our emotions, there is no way around it - we have to go through it.

3. He found healing

He clearly spent time with God, thinking and processing. And the end result is not a case of him sinking further into a pit of despair - he found the grace to reframe the story by seeing things through God's eyes. He realises that God was at work through what was going on and despite what was going on.

Joseph wasn't held back because of waiting for an apology that never came - he still found a way of extending forgiveness to his brothers. He understood that despite his trauma, the Divine hand of God had been at work all along. This did not excuse what his brothers did in any way, but it gave it a new light. *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28.*