**ABC National Conference 2024**

*Trauma – Session Outlines*

SESSION 1 – A BIBLICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF TRAUMA

1. **Elements that Contribute to Trauma**

1. **God’s Original Design for Humanity**
2. Self—Inner Man
3. Self—Outer Man Physically Embodied
4. Creation Embedded
5. Socially Encountered
6. Spiritually Engaged
7. God is Man’s Ultimate Environment
8. Relational
9. Exist in Time
10. **Wholistic Impact of Trauma**
11. Outer-Man
12. Inner-Man
13. Relational
14. **Post Traumatic Sanctification and Resilience**
15. Somatic Well Being
16. Nutrition
17. Movement
18. Rest
19. Spiritual Health
20. Lament
21. Sorting Out Sin
22. Social Support
23. Family
24. Friends
25. Faith Community

SESSION 2 – DEFINING THE NATURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF TRAUMA

Introduction

* Psalm 55:1-8

1. **The Description of Trauma**

***Trauma*** *is experiencing the threat of destruction without opportunity for escape or the resources to recover and restore*

***Trauma*** *is an image bearer of God experiencing the threat of destruction outside the loving presence of God, without opportunity for escape into the loving presence of God, without the active resources of God’s grace to recover in the loving presence of God.*

1. **The Dimensions of Trauma**
2. Dimension 1:Magnitude of the danger
3. Dimension 2:Powerlessness of the person

* 2 Corinthians 1:8-11

1. Dimension 3:Resources for restoration
2. **The Development of Trauma**

1. Inner Person Response to Terrors and Horrors

1. Weakness and helplessness (Psalm 88:15)

1. Vulnerability and shame (Psalm 22:6; Job 12:4)

1. Danger and anxiety (2 Corinthians 7:5)

1. Intrusion and insecurity (Psalm 31:13)
2. Betrayal and distrust (Psalm 116:10-11)
3. Injustice and anger (Psalm 82:1-4)
4. Sin and blame (Job 6:28-30; Jeremiah 12:1)

1. Loss and mourning (Job 3:20-26)
2. Oppression and despair (Psalm 55:1-3)

1. Destruction and disintegration (Numbers 17:12-13)

*Depersonalization*

*Dissociation*

*Fragmentation*

1. Outer Person Response to Terrors and Horrors
2. Hemispheric Response
3. Limbic System Response
4. Endocrine System Response
5. Frontal Cortex Response

1. Visual Cortex Response
2. Cardiovascular Response

1. Interpersonal Response to Terrors and Horrors
2. People

* *Untrustworthy*
* *Unreliable*
* *Shaming*
* *Unjust*
* *Dishonorable*
* *Dangerous*
* *Hateful*

1. God

* *Real or Imagined*
* *Truthful or False*
* *Good or Evil*
* *Near or Far*
* *For or Against*
* *Sovereign or Aloof*
* *Powerful or Weak*
* *Life-preserving or life-destroying*

SESSION 3 – DESCRIBING THE EXPERIENCE AND EXPRESSION OF TRAUMA

*Darby Strickland, CCEF*

1. **What is it like to live with a body and soul in anguish?**
   1. Susan
   2. Stan
   3. We break the experience down in ways that describe that particular person’s distress
      1. Unspeakable
      2. Grief, loss, fear, anxiety, terror, confusion, shame, avoidance, guilt, isolation, torturous, stress, hopelessness…
   4. What we see
2. **Lamentations**
   1. Trauma stories sound like Lamentations- victims feel hunted, trapped, destroyed, lost, drowning, and alone. God feels far off, and like he is the author of desolation.
   2. We, as people who walk with those devastated by the evil acts of another, cannot minimize what they do *or the impact they have.*
   3. Lamentations captures the isolation and desolation that accompany trauma, but it also speaks to the experience of being robbed of joys, the lack of comforters, the numerous violations and varied afflictions that accompany trauma-*Very Vividly*
   4. The problem with trauma is that the images and horrors stick. They are not easily overcome. They ask a crucial question:

**How can this be?**

Cries in Lamentations:

* *lonely – chapter 1*
* *groaning – chapter 1*
* *angry – chapter 2*
* *broken – chapter 3*
* *weeping – chapter 3*
* *desperate – chapter 4*
* *anguished – chapter 4*
* *weary – chapter 5*
* *pleading – chapter 5*

Cries of those who belong to the Lord. We grieve and work to remember that

* *God sees us! –* [*Lamentations 1:20-22*](https://bible.faithlife.com/bible/Lam%201.20-22)
* *God looks at us! –* [*Lamentations 2:20-22*](https://bible.faithlife.com/bible/Lam%202.20-22)
* *God judges our enemies! –* [*Lamentations 3:55-66*](https://bible.faithlife.com/bible/Lam%203.55-66)
* *God avenges us! –* [*Lamentations 4:20*](https://bible.faithlife.com/bible/Lam%204.20)
* *God restores us! –* [*Lamentations 5:21*](https://bible.faithlife.com/bible/Lam%205.21)
  1. Cries of lamentations are borrowed words- quotes from Psalms. The psalmists who wrote laments spoke to the Lord, fighting for hope, rest, peace, justice, and protection. They are the words of desperation and fill the pages of Lamentations.
  2. We want the people we speak with about trauma to find their words in Scripture.

Laments help sufferers shape how they speak of their desolation.

1. **Psalm 42 -** A picture of an anguished body and soul crying out to the Lord in distress. There are moments he affirms and sees God, and other moments in his pain and anguish, he does not experience the Lord as tending to him.
   1. The lamenter’s faith v.1-2
   2. He sees God’s character v.8
   3. Anguish remains
   4. Turmoil and Hope- living with those two competing realities is a high calling- usually one is louder than the other, but never the less they are two extremes- fighting to own truth and space in a heart.
   5. Trauma and the Cross
2. **Psalm 69 -** An exercise in connecting the experience of trauma to Scripture

How trauma affects the body (Underline)

How trauma affects the soul. (Dashed underline)

How the sufferer asks for help. (Shade)

Who the Lord is when facing Trauma (Circle)

Psalm 69

Save me, O God!  
    For the waters have come up to my neck. 2 I sink in deep mire,  
    where there is no foothold;  
I have come into deep waters,  
    and the flood sweeps over me.  
3 I am weary with my crying out;  
    my throat is parched.  
My eyes grow dim  
    with waiting for my God.

4 More in number than the hairs of my head  
    are those who hate me without cause;  
mighty are those who would destroy me,  
    those who attack me with lies.  
What I did not steal  
    must I now restore?

5 O God, you know my folly;  
    the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.

6 Let not those who hope in you be put to shame through me,  
    O Lord God of hosts;  
let not those who seek you be brought to dishonor through me,  
    O God of Israel.

7 For it is for your sake that I have borne reproach,  
    that dishonor has covered my face.

8 I have become a stranger to my brothers,  
    an alien to my mother's sons.

9 For zeal for your house has consumed me,  
    and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.

10 When I wept and humbled my soul with fasting,  
    it became my reproach.

11 When I made sackcloth my clothing,  
    I became a byword to them.

12 I am the talk of those who sit in the gate,  
    and the drunkards make songs about me.

13 But as for me, my prayer is to you, O Lord.  
    At an acceptable time, O God,  
    in the abundance of your steadfast love answer me in your saving faithfulness.

14 Deliver me  
    from sinking in the mire;  
let me be delivered from my enemies  
    and from the deep waters.

15 Let not the flood sweep over me,  
    or the deep swallow me up,  
    or the pit close its mouth over me.

16 Answer me, O Lord, for your steadfast love is good;  
    according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.

17 Hide not your face from your servant,  
    for I am in distress; make haste to answer me.

18 Draw near to my soul, redeem me;  
    ransom me because of my enemies!

19 You know my reproach,  
    and my shame and my dishonor;  
    my foes are all known to you.

20 Reproaches have broken my heart,  
    so that I am in despair.  
I looked for pity, but there was none,  
    and for comforters, but I found none.

21 They gave me poison for food,  
    and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.

22 Let their own table before them become a snare;  
    and when they are at peace, let it become a trap.[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2069&version=ESV#fen-ESV-14958c)]

23 Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see,  
    and make their loins tremble continually.

24 Pour out your indignation upon them,  
    and let your burning anger overtake them.

25 May their camp be a desolation;  
    let no one dwell in their tents.

26 For they persecute him whom you have struck down,  
    and they recount the pain of those you have wounded.

27 Add to them punishment upon punishment;  
    may they have no acquittal from you

28 Let them be blotted out of the book of the living;  
    let them not be enrolled among the righteous.

29 But I am afflicted and in pain;  
    let your salvation, O God, set me on high!

30 I will praise the name of God with a song;  
    I will magnify him with thanksgiving.

31 This will please the Lord more than an ox  
    or a bull with horns and hoofs.

32 When the humble see it they will be glad;  
    you who seek God, let your hearts revive.

33 For the Lord hears the needy  
    and does not despise his own people who are prisoners.

34 Let heaven and earth praise him,  
    the seas and everything that moves in them.

35 For God will save Zion  
    and build up the cities of Judah,  
and people shall dwell there and possess it;

36 the offspring of his servants shall inherit it,  
    and those who love his name shall dwell in it.

SESSION 4 – ENTERING THEIR WORLD MARKED BY TRAUMA

*Darby Strickland, CCEF*

1. **Our Hearts**

*We have talked about how trauma changes a sufferer, but how should other people’s trauma change us?*

What are we willing to see?

What are we willing to believe?

What are we willing to imagine?

1. **Our Words Shape Other People’s Suffering (Job)**
2. The rape of Tamar (2 Sam 13)
3. Levite and Concubine (Judges 19)
4. Why we are tempted to blame sufferers
5. **We Ask. With the Lord’s help, we can change our hearts and questions:**

**“What has happened to you?”**

1. What: Becoming a student of someone’s story- listening to their heart and experiences should change and move us.  (Rom 12:15)
2. How: (*Is it Abuse*? P&R)

* Patient: Disorganized storytellers
* Willing to enter into the hard details and hear their profound sufferings- (contamination)
* Jesus’ compassion always caused him to act:
  + Made himself little
  + Came near to the broken
  + He was wounded

1. **Process of Trauma Care** (*Trauma: Caring for Survivors,* P&R)
2. Slow and Deliberate: Trauma needs to be dealt with a spoonful at a time when someone is safe, and sometimes it is not yet time to face the pain.
3. How do we think about Trauma Informed Care Biblically?
   * + - knowing the person in front of us
       - learning their story
       - carefully mining the Scriptures to speak to their situation and condition
       - acknowledging that we are embodied souls, and our bodies may need support as we suffer
       - understanding that community plays a vital role in healing
       - understanding that the human heart actively interprets the world and its experiences
       - believing that God’s people need to speak into one another’s lives to foster growth
       - imaging God’s unique pursuit of each person so our care is not formulaic but highly personal
       - addressing the many faith questions that arise in a season of suffering.
4. Unique Challenges of Trauma Care

* *Victims of trauma often struggle to remain in the present moment.*
* *Our attempts to instill hope often add pain instead of lifting it.*
* *Remembering and speaking about trauma causes distress*.
* *Compassionate trauma care is excruciatingly slow.*

1. **Aspects of Foundational Trauma Care** 
   * 1. Discover the scope of the trauma and its impacts- *CliffsNotes* Version

* How has this event impacted your daily functioning? Your sleep?
* What do you sense its impact has been on you?
* What symptoms do you find intolerable to live with?
* Do you want to tell me more about what happened?
* Where would you like to start?
* Can you tell me what you fear about X?
* Do you have someone who is supporting you well?
* If so, what has been helpful? If not, what has been challenging about how others care for you?
* How has your body responded to this trauma?
* How has this event impacted your faith?
  + 1. Assess and establish safety and stability

1. Assess if their environment is safe. DA, Child,
2. Tend to the person’s injuries.
3. Work toward physiological stability
4. Determine relational stability.
5. Assess spiritual stability.
6. Screen for self-harm and suicide risk. Do not be afraid to ask- people usually reveal what they are thinking. Do they have a plan, means or picked a time?
7. Establish a plan of response. Unstable to unsafe- coping/meds?
   * 1. Build trust as their guide.

* A guide knows their role
* A guide knows where they are headed
* A good guide knows they might be unable to address everything that arises and seek to consult with others.
* No two people or situations are the same- adapt if possible

1. **Connecting Suffers to Scripture**

Jesus is really honest in his agony and that is what God invites us to do, to be the kind of people who tell God what it is that we’re feeling, quoting the Scriptures that fit with the difficulties within our soul.

* 1. Jesus found words in Scripture to express his heart-  (Ps 22 & 31)
  2. So how can we find our words in scripture?

**Scripture**

* + Names evil
  + Embraces expression
  + Invites our questions
    - * “How could the Lord let this happen to me?” (Ps 44:9)
      * “Does he see my anguish?” (Ps 44:24)
      * “I have been faithful so why is this happening to me?” (Ps 44:17–19)
      * “Will the Lord help me?” (Ps 44:23)
  + Calls us to remember

1. **The Trajectory of Lament**

Psalms do not always resolve- but there is this trajectory- It is the same trajectory we take with victims.

* Help them find words to speak about their experiences and fears
* Give them a way to turn to God
* Fostering their ability to see God as their helper

**But the Psalms also foster our ability to participate in the suffering of others**

* + - Psalms help me understand that experience of other
    - We see a joining participation in the many communal psalms of Lament (ex Ps 44)
    - The Psalms of Ascent 120–134 Psalms are way we participate in the pain of others.

These are psalms the community would sing together, communal liturgy. Pilgrims sang these prayers on their way up to Jerusalem as they traveled to the Temple in celebration of the three main festivals: Passover, Pentecost, and Booths (Exodus 23:14-17).  As they traveled, they sang to remind themselves that they were heading somewhere and there was purpose in their journey. They are making a purposeful pilgrimage under the watchful care of their Shepherd.

As believers, we are **on the way o**f growth, daily becoming more like Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, **and inviting others** into that same sanctification journey with Jesus.

* + Our Laments- should eventually help other sufferers- - their suffering should move them to see others' suffering clearer and the hardship of others better- they know what it is like.
  + Sufferers will experience God’s help- they will then be able to proclaim what they have seen the Lord do or his faithfulness to another-
  + What they learn they share for the benefit of other sufferers God places on their path.
  + This helps us keep victims out of the ditches where their suffering becomes self-centered and entitled.
  + Keep an eye out for how the Lord uses sufferers in beautiful ways. They heal, they move toward other broken sufferers- learn their stories, sit in ash heaps, and speak sweet truths.

SESSION 5 – REMEMBERING, RELIVING, RETELLING, AND REINTERPRETING

Introduction

1. **Remembering**
2. **Reliving**

* + - 1. “Triggers”

Cues

Parallels

* + - 1. “Manifestations”

Nightmares

Flashbacks

* + - 1. “Reactions”

Emotional

Physiological

Behavioral

* + - 1. “Intrusions”
      2. “Escapisms”

1. **Retelling**
2. **Reinterpreting**
3. Providence (Psalm 139)
4. The Lord Knows You, Personally (Psalm 139:1-6)
5. The Lord Walks with You, Personally (Psalm 139:7-12)
6. The Lord Formed You, Personally ((Psalm 139:13-15)
7. The Lord Authored Your Life, Personally (Psalm 139:16-18)
8. The Lord Gives You Justice, Personally (Psalm 139:19-22)
9. The Lord Leads and Redeems You, Personally (Psalm 139:23-24)

1. Power
2. Divine Power (Psalm 62:9-12)

1. Demonic Power (Job 1 – 2; Ephesians 6:10-20; Revelation 12:10)

1. Human Power (John 19:10-11)

SESSION 6 – GRIEF, LAMENT, AND THE MERCIES OF GOD IN CHRIST

Stages of Grieving[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. **Candor: Honesty with Myself**

*Courageous truth telling to myself about life in which I come face-to-face with the reality of my external and internal suffering*

Psalm 42:3-5

Psalm 73

Psalm 88

Job 3:25-26

1 Thessalonians 4:13

1. **Complaint: Honesty with God**

*Vulnerable frankness about life to God in which I express my pain and confusion over how a good God allows evil and suffering.*

Psalm 62:8

Psalm 73

Isaiah 49:14

Jeremiah 20:7

Lamentations 5:20

Job 3, 42:7-8

*The key aspect of lamenting that sets it apart from mere complaint or self-pity is the direction of the heart. When we lament, we don’t simply declare our complaints and we don’t weaponize our feelings against those who inflicted the harm. Instead, we take all our sadness and loss to God and seek to honor him through it all.[[2]](#footnote-2)*

1. **Cry: Asking God for Help**

*A faith-based plea for mobilization in which I humbly ask God for help based upon my admission that I can’t survive without Him.*

Psalm 56:8

Psalm 71:12

Psalm 34

1. **Comfort: Receiving God’s Help**

*Experiences the presence of God in the presence of suffering—a presence that empowers me to survive scars and plants the seed of hope that I will yet thrive.*

Psalm 73

Isaiah 63:9

Hebrews 4:15-5:12

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

1. **Waiting: Trusting with Faith**

*Trusting God’s future provision without working to provide for oneself. Refusing to take over while refusing to give up.*

*Refusing to demand heaven now.*

2 Corinthians 1:8-10

Romans 5

James 1

1 Peter 1-2

Hebrews 11

1. **Wailing Groaning with Hope**

*Longing fervently for heaven and living passionately for God and others while on earth.*

Philippians 1:23-25

Romans 8:18-25

Romans 8:28-29

1. **Weaving: Perceiving with Grace**

*Entrusting myself to God’s larger purposes, good plans, and eternal perspective.*

Genesis 50

John 14

Romans 8

Ephesians 3

Colossians 3

Hebrews 11

Revelation 19-22

1. **Worshiping: engaging with Love**

*Wanting God more than wanting relief. Finding God even when you don’t find answers.*

Psalm 73

Psalm 42

Philippians 3:8-10

1 Peter 1:22

SESSION 7 – GUILT, SHAME, AND THE COVERING OF GOD IN CHRIST

*Darby Strickland, CCEF*

1. Trauma & Guilt
   1. False Guilt (Heb 8:12)
   2. Real Guilt (1 John 1:9)
   3. Imposed Guilt (Rom 10:9-11)
      1. culpable for your abuse
      2. failure to trust
      3. your suffering is a judgment
   4. Jesus and our Guilt
      1. propitiation- wrath-removing sacrifice
      2. learning to delight in our forgiveness, his care, and our ability to draw near
2. Trauma & Shame
   1. Shame is about defilement. Shame is sticky, it carries a large indictment- it says you are wrong (Ed Welch, *Shame Interrupted*)
      1. something you have done
      2. something is done to you
      3. people turn away from you
      4. worthlessness
      5. weak and broken
      6. contaminating information
      7. contaminating relationships
   2. Engaging Shame-filled people
      1. how we counsel
      2. persistence in counseling
      3. restoring relationships with God and others

III. Christ as Our Covering (Gal 3:26-27)

1. Who does the Bible say God’s children are? (Eph 1)
2. Why do we fail to live out of that identity?
   1. Cynicism
   2. Detached legalism
   3. We measure God’s love by how things are going for us
3. Knowing and teaching *Whose* you are?
   1. implicitly
   2. explicitly
4. Creative ways to engage counselees

“We don’t just need a perspective or a strategy.

We need a Savior, right here, right now.”

David A. Powlison

SESSION 8 – CONCLUSION

* 2 Corinthians 6:3-10

1. **Knowing Who We Are in Christ – “As”**
2. Servants of God (v. 4)
3. Treated as Imposters, Yet True (v. 8)
4. Unknown, Yet Well Known (v. 9)
5. Dying, Yet We Live (v. 9)
6. Punished, Yet Not Killed (v. 9)
7. Sorrowful, Yet Always Rejoicing (v. 10)
8. Poor, Yet Making Many Rich (v. 10)
9. Having Nothing, Yet Possessing Everything (v. 10)
10. **Enduring What God Appoints – “In” and “Through”**
11. Afflictions (v. 4)
12. Hardships (v. 4)
13. Calamities (v. 4)
14. Beatings (v. 5)
15. Imprisonments (v. 5)
16. Riots (v. 5)
17. Labors (v. 5)
18. Sleepless Nights (v. 5)
19. Hunger (v. 5)
20. Honor and Dishonor (v. 8)
21. Slander and Praise (v. 8)
22. **Walking in What God Provides – “By”**
23. Great Endurance (v. 4)
24. Purity (v. 6)
25. Knowledge (v. 6)
26. Patience (v. 6)
27. Kindness (v. 6)
28. The Holy Spirit (v. 6)
29. Genuine Love (v. 6)
30. Truthful Speech (v. 7)
31. The Power of God (v. 7)
32. Weapons of Righteousness (v. 7)

1. The following outline is largely from Robert W. Kellemen, *God’s Healing for Life’s Losses: How to Find Hope When You’re Hurting* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Curtis Solomon, *I Have PTSD: Reorienting after Trauma*, Ask the Christian Counselor (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2023), 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)