

I. Introduction

My journey began in a Bible study at a church I was attending in Columbia, SC. The year was 2016. The pastor gave the congregation an assignment to write our stories. As I began to recount my early life events, I became aware that I had suffered from traumatic experiences as a result of my experiences. At that moment, I got the answer to a long-asked question: *What is wrong with me?* This was a question I whispered many times to myself and to God, knowing there had to be an answer for what I was experiencing.

My life experience has been like a journey on a long and winding road; poorly light and poorly maintained. It is overgrown with brush and trees and many stones both large and small. It is fraught with stop-and-go traffic. Sometimes speeding, sometimes stalled on the side of the road. No roadside assistance. There does not appear to be a clear way to exit. There were no clear directions, no GPS, if you will, to direct me the more attractive, planned and organized highway. Mine was a road filled with traumatic experiences.

My journey was influenced by:

Violence

Deception

Indifference

Emotional and verbal abuse

Alcoholism

Poor communication

Poor parental leadership

Which resulted in:

Confusion

Depression

Anxiety

Poor decision making

Poor choices

Unhealthy relationships

Self-doubt

Poor boundaries

I could always see, however, parallel to my road, a paved, high-speed highway running along side my road. It was well lit and well maintained. There were markers and signs directing travelers to rest areas and information.

As it turns out, therapy provided me with an exit strategy and my faith provided me with direction and protection for my soul.

Prayer for help and guidance

The goal of this Bible Study: Share my journey with others who may have suffered trauma and are interested in _____.

What has your journey been like?

II. Biblical lens of trauma

Prayer to help us understand trauma and its impact on our lives

The goal of this study: To discuss trauma and its impact on our lives. We have the word of God that helps during these difficult times and this study provides a fresh perspective on how God help specifically deal with trauma.

We take the Bible literally. This is possible as the words in the Bible come to life in our lives when applied to the issues we face. We see God move differently and we experience Him differently when we submit our wills, thoughts, and actions to His authority.

The Bible is full of examples of people who suffered from traumatic experiences. The Bible is also full of examples of God's redemption in the face of trauma. In each case, God provides a way for the traumatized to deal with and, in many cases, overcome, their situations. Listed below are some people who suffered from traumatic experiences. This is not an exhaustive list; there may be examples that resonate with you. Feel free to include those examples as well:

- Jesus Christ
- The woman with the issue of blood
- Hagar
- Sarah and Abraham
- Uriah the Hittite
- King David, however, he inflicted trauma as well
- Joseph
- Three Hebrew Boys
- Stephen
- Bathsheba
- Abel (was can traumatize when his offering was not accepted?)
- Job
- Children of Israel

Can you think of other who have suffered trauma: in the Bible? in your life?

III. Co Dependence

What is codependency? This behavior involves two people, usually in a relationship, enabling one another, whether that includes an addiction, bad behavior, or irresponsibility. Two individuals rely on one another "for approval and a sense of identity." [I]t's a very subtle dysfunction, like a low-boiling simmer that heats up our lives just enough to be uncomfortable, yet bearable. (Michele Horton: <https://www.yourtango.com/2014236619/love-10-signs-youre-in-a-codependent-relationship-or-marriage>).

"A codependent person is one who has let another person's behavior affect him or her, and who is obsessed with controlling that person's behavior," (Melody Beattie, *Codependent No More*: <https://www.yourtango.com/2014236619/love-10-signs-youre-in-a-codependent-relationship-or-marriage>).

Characteristics of the Codependent:

1. An exaggerated sense of responsibility for the actions of others
2. A tendency to confuse love and pity, with the tendency to "love" people they can pity and rescue
3. A tendency to do more than their share, all of the time
4. A tendency to become hurt when people don't recognize their efforts
5. An unhealthy dependence on relationships. The co-dependent will do anything to hold on to a relationship; to avoid the feeling of abandonment
6. An extreme need for approval and recognition
7. A sense of guilt when asserting themselves
8. A compelling need to control others
9. Lack of trust in self and/or others
10. Fear of being abandoned or alone
11. Difficulty identifying feelings
12. Rigidity/difficulty adjusting to change
13. Problems with intimacy/boundaries
14. Chronic anger
15. Lying/dishonesty
16. Poor communications
17. Difficulty making decisions (<https://www.yourtango.com/2017308680/what-codependent-relationship-why-its-bad>).

Here are 5 ways to have healthy relationships when you are codependent on your partner:

1. Practice self-care

When you are involved in a codependent relationship, you often lose sight of yourself. You spend the majority of your time and energy trying to fix the other person. To move forward and create healthier relationships, it will be important for you to take time to explore yourself. Explore your likes, dislikes, needs, desires, thoughts, and feelings. It will be detrimental if you don't take the time to understand what you need

from a relationship. If you don't take the time, you will slip back into the pattern of taking care of someone else.

2. Learn to be independent

Start doing things by yourself without feeling like you always need to be around your partner. Take yourself out to dinner, go to the movies alone, or pick up a new hobby. Typically, people who experience codependency find it very difficult to spend time by themselves. Codependent people have grown to be dependent on others for self-fulfillment. Learn to be content with being alone rather than fearing it. This is powerful in overcoming codependency.

3. Set realistic expectations

If you place unrealistic expectations on your relationships, then you will be let down. Expecting someone else to fulfill you is only setting you up for heartbreak. Learn to be happy with who you are as a person. That way, you don't have to expect someone else to be the sole provider of your happiness.

4. Practice setting boundaries

Codependency in relationships often means there are very few boundaries in place. Chances are, you have spent a lot of time worrying about other people. And, you have let go of many of the important boundaries in your life. Therefore, it is important to learn how to say "no" to people or situations that are not healthy. Saying "no" does not mean you are being selfish or disrespectful. Saying "no" means you are looking out for your well-being.

5. Deal with your past

Sometimes, your tendency to display codependent behaviors is a result of past trauma. Take a look at your family relationships, abuse, neglect, or other events that may be stopping you from being comfortable with who you are. Digging up things from your past may be painful and uncomfortable, but it is necessary to be able to move forward.

If you feel like you may have the tendency to turn towards codependency, it is important to recognize that you can break the cycle! You can have healthier relationships and work towards overcoming codependency! Break the cycles by working on your self-care and by learning how to be more independent. And, set healthy boundaries and realistic expectations in order to achieve healthy relationships. (Life Counseling Solutions: <https://www.yourtango.com/experts/janielacy/5-ways-to-have-healthy-relationships-when-you-have-codependency-issues-or-are-clingy>).

Does any of this sound familiar? Do you recognize this behavior in others? In yourself?

Are you able to establish and maintain healthy boundaries? Are boundaries different at work? At home? At church?

IV. Scripture References – Some that have helped me in my journey

Jeremiah 1: 5

I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb.

Before you were born, I set you apart
and appointed you as my prophet to the nations.

Exodus 14:14

⁴The LORD himself will fight for you. Just stay calm.

Philippians 4:6-7

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. ⁷Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 12:6-10

⁶If I wanted to boast, I would be no fool in doing so, because I would be telling the truth. But I won't do it, because I don't want anyone to give me credit beyond what they can see in my life or hear in my message, ⁷even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So, to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud.

⁸Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. ⁹Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. ¹⁰That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Psalms 23

A psalm of David.

¹The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need.

²He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams.

³He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name.

⁴Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close

beside me.

Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings.

⁶ Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the LORD forever.

Romans 8:28 (NLT)

And we know that God causes everything to work together^[a] for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

Psalm 147:3

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

What scripture to you rely upon?

V. ACEs/Generational curses

The Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) score is a numerical representation of the trauma experienced by adults as children. This means that the trauma took place during a person's childhood at the hands of someone, many times a family member or members. The phrase, 'hurt people hurt people' likely applies here. Many times, people who are hurt have been hurt previously. This is the case in families, as was with mine.

Whatever the trauma, if not dealt with, it will likely perpetuate itself and manifest in many ways, most of which are harmful and unproductive with those closest to us experiencing trauma as well. This is why the intersection between the ACE study and the biblical notion of generational curses appealed to me. As I have stated, there are many examples of trauma in the Bible, with God manifesting as the Savior and Protector that He is.

When God talks about punishments that are passed down to children to the third and fourth generation (Ex. 20:5, 34:7), this is due to the consequences of a parent's sinful behavior like rebellion, wickedness, and sin. Patterns of sin can pass down in families just as culture, gender, and ethnicity do. Children can inherit negative/sinful beliefs, traits and preferences that negatively impact them and others. In my opinion, this what a traumatic experience/generational curse looks like. As is always the case, God offers redemption and an opportunity to turn things around as in Ezekiel 18:14, God will not hold the parent' sin against the children; the Lord will forgive wickedness, rebellion, and sin (Ex 34:6); John 8:31-36 tells us that there is freedom for those who abide in Christ; there is atonement in Christ (Romans 3:23; there is righteousness and justification (Romans 5:18).

VI. We Reign/ We Suffer

This is one of the mysteries of the Christian faith: the very thing that troubles us or is the source of our suffering is the path to our healing, deliverance, and recovery. We have to trust God's process even when it is difficult and appears impossible. As we discover in 2 Timothy 2:12a (NLT): If we endure hardship, we will reign with him.

Here are 12 reasons you might be called to suffer:

- So, God may show us how much we want what He wants
James 1:3 (NLT)
For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow.
- So, God may motivate us to follow Him
Hebrews 5:8 (NLT)
Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered
- So that we might be a comfort to each other
2 Corinthians 1:6 (NLT)
Even when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your comfort and salvation! For when we ourselves are comforted, we will certainly comfort you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer.
- To keep us from doing our own thing that could hurt us
2 Corinthians 12:7 (NLT)
even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So, to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud.
- So that we might point others to God's amazingness
1 Peter 4:16 (NLT)
But it is no shame to suffer for being a Christian. Praise God for the privilege of being called by his name!
- So that we may identify with Jesus a little more
Philippians 3:10 (NLT)
I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,
- So that our faith might grow a little stronger
1 Peter 5:10 (NLT)
In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So, after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation.
- So that others would see us and be compelled to follow us to Jesus

2 Timothy 2:10 (NLT)

So, I am willing to endure anything if it will bring salvation and eternal glory in Christ Jesus to those God has chosen.

- To make us an example of what a life entrusted to God looks like
Romans 8:28 (NLT)
And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.
- To move others to pray and depend on God what only He can do
2 Corinthians 1:10-11(NLT)
And he did rescue us from mortal danger, and he will rescue us again. We have placed our confidence in him, and he will continue to rescue us.
And you are helping us by praying for us. Then many people will give thanks because God has graciously answered so many prayers for our safety.
- To train us to go to God first for help Psalms 30:6-7 (NLT)
When I was prosperous, I said, “Nothing can stop me now!”
Your favor, O LORD, made me as secure as a mountain. Then you turned away from me, and I was shattered.
- To give us a special experience of God’s presence and an amazing story to tell others
James 4:6-7 (NLT)
And he gives grace generously. As the Scriptures say, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”
So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

What role has suffering played in your journey?

VII. Rejection/Protection

For those of who suffered trauma, we do not always know or even understand what happens to us as we interact with others. Sometimes it is difficult to assess situations and motives of people. When you have been mistreated from an early age it may be unclear if: 1) this is one more person mistreating me; or 2) am I not the right fit for the job, relationship, etc.?

This is when trusting and submitting to the will of God becomes vitally important.

We do not know if we are truly experiencing rejection or are, we are being kept from something (a job, relationship, etc.) that is not good for us. Sometimes God is protecting us from others and sometimes God is protecting us from ourselves and are choices.

How have you dealt with rejection in your life? Does it now, or has it ever, seemed like protection?

VIII. Affirmations

For healing

God strengthens me and helps me. Isaiah 41:10

God heals me and saves me. I praise Him. Jeremiah 17:14

Jesus suffered for my healing. I accept it. Isaiah 53:5

I pray in faith. I am healed. All is forgiven. James 5:15

Truth resides in me. I am healthy. 3 John 1:12

I call upon all assistance to be healed. James 5:14

My mind is focused on a joyful life. It heals me. Proverbs 17:22

Jesus heals me and forgives me. 1 Peter 2:24

God heals with an abundance of peace and truth. Jeremiah 33:6

I bless God. He forgives, heals, and redeems me. He crowns me with love from above.
Psalms 103:2-4(<https://christaudio.com/blogs/christian-meditation/top-10-christian-affirmations-for-healing>)

30 Healing Affirmations to Help You Achieve Inner Peace

1. I give myself permission to heal.
2. I am willing to forgive myself.
3. I am ready to forgive anyone I feel has hurt me.
4. I let go of my perceived pain.
5. I'm willing to see things differently.
6. I let go of my need to be right.
7. I accept the lesson my pain is offering me.
8. I see my current circumstances as an opportunity to grow.
9. I allow myself to give and receive love.
10. I release the past and trust that everything is happening for my greatest good.
11. I take responsibility for the quality of my relationships.
12. I am willing to give the love I expect from others.
13. I am happy to give without expectations.
14. I am capable of unconditional love
15. I treat the people in my life with compassion and understanding.
16. I know these circumstances are a gift to help me grow.
17. I set myself and others free by choosing to forgive.
18. Everything I am going through is making me a stronger, wiser, and more compassionate person.
19. I trust that everything in my life is unfolding perfectly.

20. I create loving and healthy relationships.
21. I am willing to be at peace with myself and everyone.
22. I bless the past and embrace the present moment with an open heart.
23. I choose to forgive because it feels better to love.
24. I accept my part in everything that happens in my life.
25. I am willing to amend my own behavior.
26. I acknowledge my unresolved feelings with patience and self-reflection.
27. I respect and validate the feelings of others.
28. I allow the perspective of others to deepen my understanding and love for them.
29. I am kind to myself and others.
30. I always choose love. (<https://www.thinkup.me/healing-affirmations/>)

What affirmations do you rely upon? Will you begin to incorporate affirmations in journey?

Scripture as Affirmation

Psalm 23 – The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want

Psalm 139: 14-16 - I have been uniquely designed for a purpose

John 15:16 - I have been appointed and uniquely planted by God

Psalm 138:8 - God is continually working out His plans for my life

Jeremiah 1:5 - God had me in mind before I was born

2 Timothy 1:9 - I was saved for a purpose

1 Corinthians 2: 9 – 12 - I am confident that the Holy Spirit will reveal my purpose to me

Are there more that you can add to this list?