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HYPERVIGILANCE

Millie's life was going very well. She had graduated from University, got a good job in the city, and rented a nice apartment. It was her first time away from her parents, but she had a good relationship with them and they lived only a few hours away. She talked to her mother on the phone every day.

One of the trainers at her health club started asking her for a date. He was a good looking guy with a nice personality, and she finally agreed to go with him to dinner and a movie. After the movie, he asked her to come by his apartment for a few minutes of conversation. She felt uneasy about doing that but finally agreed.

In the apartment his attitude changed. He became aggressive and immediately started pressuring her to have sex. When she refused he slapped her and physically forced her.

Millie's life changed dramatically. She was a different person before and after that experience. She did not tell the police or anyone about what had happened because of her shame and fear about what this revelation would do to her parents and how it might affect her job.

Millie no longer had a twinkle in her eye. Now she was depressed, withdrawn, and distrustful of men. She felt guilty and ashamed, as if that experience had been her fault. She questioned her own wisdom and started thinking of herself as gullible and naive. She didn't sleep well, had nightmares, and woke up feeling fearful and anxious. She developed intestinal problems.

Millie had been raised in church and had always trusted that God would protect her. She no longer believed that, and started questioning everything she had been taught in church.

Millie had become "hypervigilant," which is defined as, "The elevated state of constantly

assessing potential threats around you, often as a result of a trauma." Following are some of the attitudes of those who are hypervigilant:

- anxious, never able to relax
- elevated, inappropriate emotions
- disturbed sleep, with nightmares and flashbacks
- social anxiety
- depression
- weight gain or loss

TRAUMA

Hypervigilance is only one of the many ways that different people react to trauma. I started learning about trauma some 45 years ago as I started ministering to more and more wounded people. Then some good friends sent me some teaching tapes that really opened my eyes about this subject.

People, including you and me, are fragile. We are easily broken physically and emotionally. Jesus came to save our souls but also to heal us in every way we need. In Luke 4:18, Jesus says that he came "to heal the brokenhearted." The word heart in Hebrew includes the intellect, inner feelings and self-awareness. The Hebrews perceived that the heart, the center of the person, was located in the belly. The word broken in Greek is *suntribo* and means "to break in pieces, to trample, to shatter." Millie, in the story above, had a shattering experience.

One evening I taught about trauma at a small house group in Fruita. A lady shared her experience that had happened five years earlier. She said that one evening she received a call from a policeman. He asked if she was the mother of a 15-year old boy named Charles. She became very anxious and said yes. He said "I'm sorry to tell you that there's been a terrible wreck and your son died in the accident."

She said the moment she heard those words it felt like a big fist had hit her in the stomach, she doubled over in pain, fell to the floor in a fetal

position, and started weeping. Her life had been shattered. We gathered around and prayed for Karen, asking the Lord to heal her broken heart.

I gently led Karen to forgive everyone involved in that accident - the teen-aged driver of the car, the policeman who told her the terrible news in such a cold and blunt manner, the EMT's who were not able to save him. I led her to forgive God and then ask forgiveness for blaming him. I led her to forgive herself for allowing her son to go on that trip. I then led her to place Charles in the hands of the Lord and trust Him with the soul of her precious son. Some of those gathered around Karen had prophetic, encouraging words for her, but mostly we just quietly loved her and prayed for her.

A doctor in a large hospital shared a report that was published in a national journal. He said that when he was an ER doctor, he kept track of 47 women who had been raped when they were girls ten years old or younger.

Thirty years later he was able to contact 43 of those women. He said that not one of them remembered that experience. Two of them vaguely remembered going to the hospital but couldn't remember why. They had all "stuffed" that awful experience as a way of coping with it. The problem is that although traumas can be repressed from our conscious minds, they are still hidden in our hearts and able to cause problems with our health and relationships. **(Click on my Video Indexes Nos. 25-27 for further teaching about trauma.)**

Traumatic experiences can cause dysfunction and sickness in people - spiritual, emotional, and physical. Traumas can be: the death of a loved one, a divorce, an automobile accident, physical or sexual abuse, a war, an earthquake, fire or flood. Of course, we are familiar with PTSD. I have known several veterans who were incapacitated because of their experiences in wars. We can hardly imagine the consequences to men, women, boys and girls of the wars right now in Ukraine, Israel and Gaza.

Dr Francisco Contreras, director of a cancer hospital, said that it was common for cancer to develop within three years of a major trauma, especially the death of a loved one, a divorce, or the loss of a job.

Psalm 18:17 says: "God rescued me from my powerful enemies, from those who hated me and were too strong for me. They attacked me at a

moment when I was in distress, but the Lord led me to a place of safety."

I don't claim to understand how these spiritual forces work, but I know that Satan is our enemy and attacks us when we are most vulnerable.

The Bible doesn't specifically talk about trauma and hypervigilance since these are modern, psychological terms. But Jesus healed "all" who came to him, and I have seen him heal all kinds of sicknesses - physical, emotional, mental and spiritual.

If this little teaching has stirred up some things within you and you recognize that a trauma in your life has never been dealt with, let me encourage you to pursue counseling and prayer. I pray that Jesus will bring healing to all your wounds.

MORAL INJURY

I have ministered to a number of people who have suffered with what the psychologists call "moral injury". Moral injury is when a person does something, or was present when something was done, that violates his own conscience, values and principles.

This can happen during the violence of a war - when a soldier kills enemy soldiers; or drops bombs on a village or city; or sees someone torturing or raping one of the "enemy;" or is ordered to send his troops against an entrenched position when he knows it will result in the death of many of his men.

It can happen during the course of an "ordinary" life. Examples would be a child that sees his little sister being physically or sexually abused and is helpless to intervene; or when a man abandons his pregnant girlfriend; or when a man or woman abandons their spouse and children; or when a woman has an abortion.

These kinds of deep wounds require healing of the soul or heart, and I recommend personal ministry and prayer by a qualified counselor or therapist.

Be careful about going to a pastor or Christian leader who is not trained and sensitive. Would you trust your body to a Christian surgeon who had never been to medical school?

GOD'S REST

A pastor related the following: A young woman in his church had been born with an extreme facial disfigurement. All through her life she dreamed of meeting a man who would love her despite her handicap. She longed to have children. She prayed and prayed, but nothing changed.

After many years passed, the young woman met with her pastor. She brought him some keepsakes like baby clothes. She handed them to the pastor and said, "I don't need these anymore. I've surrendered my life to the Lord now. Jesus fills my life and I have found in him what no husband could give me. The kids you see flocking to me in church are the children he has given me. I feel that God has blessed me." The pastor said, "This dear woman has become the most loving person in our church."

Then the pastor confessed that he also was changing: "I've surrendered my dream of having a large church. My congregation was not growing as I thought it should. I wanted to see more fruit from my ministry, and that desire caused me to strive to succeed in other's eyes. But I only want one thing now, and that is a church that loves. I want to shepherd people who care for each other, a loving family of believers. It doesn't matter how large or small we are. When I stand before the lord, I want to know that I taught my people to love as Jesus loved."

This man has come into God's rest.

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QUOTES AND REFLECTIONS

* Don't panic! Events are coming on the earth that will cause widespread panic. That's what Jesus said in Matthew 24 and 25, in the book of Revelation, and in many other books of the Bible

The word panic is from the Greek meaning: "Of or from Pan, a half-goat, half-man, usually depicted with horns and hooves." When the enemy launches his panic attacks, we must remember that Jesus is Lord over every situation, and he told us not to fear. Don't act like goats, act like sheep and follow the Shepherd that will lead us to still waters.

* In John 18:10 Peter drew his sword and struck Malchus, the high priest's slave, cutting off his right ear. When men strike out to avenge themselves, or

their nation, or their God, they usually hurt the innocent. Malchus did not have anything to do with the arrest of Jesus, he was only a slave.

Think of all the innocent people killed and injured in World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Etc. I am not a pacifist and understand the necessity of soldiers, of policemen, and of defending ourselves. But why can't we spend money and energy blessing other nations, feeding them, healing them, instead of inventing more efficient ways to kill them?

If we don't find ways to obey Jesus' teaching to love one another, we are going to destroy one another.

* If somebody calls you a do-gooder, you should say, "Oh, thank you!" We are supposed to find ways to do good. Right?

* It doesn't matter whether Daddy is at the bar or at the office, if he's not there for the children he's not there for the children! It doesn't matter whether Mom passes out on the couch from an overdose of valium or from exhaustion, her children are emotional orphans. The symptoms seen in the children of workaholics are indistinguishable from those seen in the children of alcoholics. In fact, the children of workaholics are harder to treat than the children of alcoholics.

(From my ancient files)

"Passing Into Immortality"

That was the caption over a photograph of John Elway in the Denver papers on the occasion of his induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, and it really messed up my theology.

I'm a Little Overweight

At this time, March of 2024, I, Glenn, am about 15 lbs overweight. Maybe 20 lbs. I wish I weighed 185 lbs but I weigh 205 lbs. Wishing is not going to cause fat to flee, and I am not willing to restrict my diet in order to weigh 15 or 20 pounds less. I am glad that I can afford to eat well and even go to a restaurant with one of my children once a week. (My children are grandparents.)

I can't do a lot of things that I enjoy: preach to great multitudes, travel, fish, golf, hike, etc., but I can still eat. 0 A little too much.

If you are overweight or have another addiction like: smartphone, alcohol, smoking, drugs, gambling, pornography, and so forth, you are not an innocent victim, you choose to do what you want to do. If you really wanted to be free or thin, you would take the painful steps to get there. True or false?

But then again:

It's not simply a matter of willpower.

Jesus said that we can be "enslaved to sin," (John 8:34) That means we can become enslaved to our addictions and destructive habits and attitudes, and will power is not enough to get us free. Could the Hebrews free themselves from bondage in Egypt? God sent Moses to Egypt, and he sent Jesus to us.

One of my favorite verses is Philippians 2:13 (NLT) that says that God can give us "the desire and the power to do his will." Wow! What a promise! I know that if it were a matter of life and death or of right and wrong then I could pray to the Lord and he would give me the desire and the ability to lose some weight..... just as he enabled me to overcome many other addictions in my life that were destroying me.

He is a good God, a good Savior, and he loves us.

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GOD'S PERSONALITY

(From my ancient files)

I attended a missions conference at Good Shepherd Church in Loveland, where I formerly pastored. Abraham Isaac, one of the missionaries they support, shared the following story:

Several years ago he felt that God wanted him to start holding big crusades in various areas of Malaysia. Those crusades have been very effective in spreading the gospel in Muslim lands, especially when the people see "signs and wonders" that demonstrate the power of God.

At his first big meeting in an outdoor area, he prayed that there would be some big miracles, but every night the only people who came forward to be prayed for had colds and headaches. He complained to God: "Lord, nobody is going to be impressed with your power if people are only healed of colds and headaches."

On the final night there was a big crowd and suddenly the crowd parted, and a horribly disfigured old woman limped forward. A man on the platform told Abraham that this woman was the village leper who lived in a hut outside of town. Her face and body were rotting away, and she had lost two fingers on each hand. Abraham was paralyzed with fear. He cried out silently, "God what am I going to do?" The Lord spoke to him: "Isn't this what you have been praying for?" He went down and hugged the poor woman and prayed for her, but nothing happened, and she limped back out of the crowd. Abraham was very puzzled as he concluded the meeting.

Just at daylight the next morning someone pounded on the door of Abraham's room. "Come quick, you have to see this!" He went outside and heard the story. The leprous woman woke up early and felt different. She felt her face and body and realized that the sores and scars were all gone, and she felt new, smooth skin. She looked at her hands and realized that she had all of her fingers! She started screaming, running through the village banging on doors, and the whole village was awake and in an uproar.

God had given a little impetus to get Abraham's crusade ministry off the ground.

(And I think that if anything illustrates God's power and also his sense of humor, it's this story.)

God bless,

Glenn