

COPING MECHANISMS

At A Glance

- Subject - Healthy or unhealthy responses to life
- Proposition - Christians don't have to respond like everyone else
- Objective Sentence - God is the only way to cope or deal effectively
- Are you responding alone or in partnership w/God
- We are not held captive by what is done to us, we are held captive by our response to what is done to us. Heath Adams
- Transitional Sentence - There will always be difficulties the question is, how will we respond?
- Key Text
 - *John 6:66 From that time, many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. 67 Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" 68 But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*

1. Overview

- a. It's not a question of if we will face difficulty, it's how we face life's difficulties.
 - i. *1 Peter 4:12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you*
 - 1. Most of the time we are surprised that another difficulty has come but as believers God has called us to mature not simply exist. WE mature as believers when we learn to live a life of dependence on God in the midst of life's difficulties.
 - ii. Everyone goes through loneliness, anger, resentment, jealousy, fear, loss but do you go through it alone or do you walk through it with God?
 - 1. *Psalm 23:4 Even though I walk through the [sunless] [a]valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod [to protect] and Your staff [to guide], they comfort and console me.*
- b. Coping means to deal with difficulty and be successful
 - i. Do you and I respond to difficulty in ways that are successful?

- ii. Or do we turn to unhealthy attempts to cope or deal w/problems?
1. *John 6:66 From that time, many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. 67 Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" 68 But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*
 2. To what do you run to? What do you turn to when things get difficult or you're overwhelmed?
 3. Excessive screen time, substance abuse, overeating, undereating, isolation, people-pleasing, self-harm, anger, overspending, avoidance, overworking, gossiping, denial, perfectionism, risky behaviors, excessive daydreaming.
 - a. Does the way we respond to life's difficulties look different than the unbeliever?

2. Unhealthy / Flesh

- a. Aaron and the Golden Calf (Exodus 32:1-6) – The Israelites, anxious during Moses' absence, turned to idolatry instead of trusting God.
- b. Miriam and Aaron opposing Moses (Numbers 12:1-15) – Jealousy and complaining were unhealthy ways of coping with leadership struggles.
- c. King Saul's fear and paranoia (1 Samuel 18:8-12; 19:9-10) – Saul coped with insecurity by obsessively plotting against David rather than trusting God or turning to mentors.
- d. David and Bathsheba affair (2 Samuel 11) – David responded to temptation and stress by sinning and covering it up instead of repenting and seeking God.
- e. Israel's reliance on foreign alliances (Judges 8:33; 2 Kings 17:7-18) – Repeatedly turning to other nations or idols for security instead of God.
- f. Jonah running from God's call (Jonah 1:1-3) – Jonah avoided his responsibility and fled, trying to escape his problem instead of facing it through obedience.

3. Healthy / Spirit

- a. Hannah praying for a child (1 Samuel 1:9-20) – Instead of despairing over her barrenness, Hannah turned to God in prayer, trusting Him with her deepest desire.
- b. Joseph trusting God through hardship (Genesis 39:1-23; 50:20) – Even when betrayed and imprisoned, Joseph chose to stay faithful and allow God to work through his circumstances. His coping mechanism was to trust the character of God, to know that God can be trusted.

- c. Daniel praying under pressure (Daniel 6:10-23) – Rather than hiding or compromising, Daniel maintained his spiritual disciplines and trusted God to deliver him.
- d. Nehemiah fasting and praying before rebuilding Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:4-11) – Nehemiah faced a daunting task by seeking God first, relying on Him for wisdom and courage. He could have let the stress/anxiety of the moment rule him with fear, he sought the lord
- e. Elijah resting and listening to God after burnout (1 Kings 19:4-8) – he tried to isolate from his servant and walk away from responsibility but through personal encounter with God he found the strength to run to his challenges instead of running from them, Elijah rested, prayed, and renewed his strength through God's provision.

4. Conclusion

a. Personal

- i. When we run to things, people or isolate and avoid our problems it reveals something about our faith.
 - 1. It can reveal a false idol that we worship
 - 2. It can reveal areas of our lives that we have yet to surrender to God.
- ii. *2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.*
 - 1. Life's difficulties reveal our maturity in Christ
 - 2. How do we respond to life? Unhealthy / flesh or do we respond in a healthy way, in the spirit.
 - 3. There's only flesh and spirit, Our way, God's way.
- iii. When we feel lonely, do we scroll endlessly through social media looking for connection, or do we open God's Word and remind ourselves of His presence?
- iv. When we are hurt by someone we love, do we immediately gossip and vent to others, or do we pray and ask God to help us forgive?
- v. When we feel overwhelmed with responsibilities, do we shut down and avoid what needs to be done, or do we ask the Lord for strength and wisdom?
- vi. When we feel tempted, do we rationalize and give in, or do we submit to God and begin asking him for help?

- vii. When we're discouraged because plans didn't work out, do we get bitter and complain, or do we ask God what He's trying to teach us?
- viii. When we're afraid of the future, do we obsess over "what ifs," or do we remind ourselves of God's promises and choose trust?
- ix. When we're wronged, do we plot ways to get even, or do we pray for our enemies and release them to God?
- x. When we're restless or dissatisfied, do we chase after more things to buy or achieve, or do we find contentment in Christ?
- xi. *2 Corinthians 2:5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,*
- b. But Paul exhorts us to "take captive every thought" we have. The Greek word there actually means to "lead away captive." So in essence, we are to bind, gag, and lead these unproductive, acetic thoughts away from us. Rather than be held captive by our thoughts, we are to take them captive.
 - 1. Jesus who said:
 - 2. "Don't worry."
 - 3. "Take heart."
 - 4. "Have faith."
 - 5. "Follow Me."
 - 6. "Trust Me."
 - 7. When we give our lives to Jesus he breaks sins control on us, but our lives have to be transformed over time by spending time with him, his word and other believers
 - 8. We don't just accidentally figure out how to do these things
- c. How do we develop healthy biblical coping skills?
 - i. Community
 - 1. *Galatians 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, Ecclesiastes 4:9 2 are better than one, if they fall one will lift up the other. When someone falls alone there is no one to lift them up.*
 - a. We develop new habits and skills best by doing it with others
 - b. Running to community, not from community, Serving others

- c. Together we can change our church's normal and our individual normal
 - d. Instead of running from difficulty, together we can face it with courage and hope
- ii. Living a spirit led life
 - 1. *Galatians 5:16 But I say, walk habitually in the [Holy] Spirit [seek Him and be responsive to His guidance], and then you will certainly not carry out the desire of the [a]sinful nature [which responds impulsively without regard for God and His precepts].*
 - 2. *Philippians 2:13 For it is [not your strength, but it is] [a]God who is effectively at work in you, both to will and to work [that is, strengthening, energizing, and creating in you the longing and the ability to fulfill your purpose] for His good pleasure.*
- iii. Prayer
 - 1. *1 Peter 5:6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God [set aside self-righteous pride], so that He may exalt you [to a place of honor in His service] at the appropriate time, 7 casting all your cares [all your anxieties, all your worries, and all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares about you [with deepest affection, and watches over you very carefully].*
- iv. Worship
 - 1. *Psalm 16:11 "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."*
- d. King Solomon
 - i. He tried coping with life in every way possible.
 - ii. Gaining wisdom and knowledge
 - iii. Trying to find love through relationships with the opposite sex
 - iv. Drinking, building well, gaining esteem
 - v. In the end, he concluded in
 - 1. *Ecclesiastes 12:13 - "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."*
- e. Flesh or spirit
 - i. Do you respond in faith or do you respond in fear or do you refuse to respond at all..hoping to avoid it?
 - ii. We are not held captive by what happens to us but we are held captive by our response" is attributed to psychotherapist and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl.

f. Things to remember

- i. Your struggle doesn't define you
- ii. Your unhealthy coping mechanism reveals your need for more of God
- iii. God is not trying to beat you up by pointing out your weaknesses

5. When life Gets hard

- a. what do you turn to,
- b. to who do you turn to?
- c. Do you turn to this world's failing coping mechanisms? Or do you turn to the one who has the words of eternal life
- d. *John 6:66 From that time many of His disciples went ⁶⁶back and walked with Him no more. ⁶⁷ Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" ⁶⁸ But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ Also we have come to believe and know that You are the ⁶⁹Christ, the Son of the living God."*