

## Unhindered: Heart Shapers & Sore Spots

09.18.2022

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So many people today

Inside and outside the church

Are hindered... by life

They have habits and behaviors

History and wounds

That keep them from experiencing the life God wants for them

From experiencing the life that they want

This week

*In your reading and in your groups*

You'll be covering chapter 2

"Heart shapers and sore spots"

Events and moments in your life have shaped your heart

And created wounds

Sore spots

That affect you today whether you realize it or not

If you've not been with us

We're augmenting this series

*With this devotional*

If you don't have one

I think we have a couple copies at the information table

Or you can pick one up wherever you buy books

By the way

This is not a repeat of Sunday morning

I had someone this week say

Why would we read that and talk about it in group

If we just heard you say it

Which I appreciate the honesty

It's not a repeat

It's a chance to discuss it further

And the readings are the same basic topics

But they come at it from different angles

Today's message, for example

Comes out of 2 Chronicles 20

And you won't read one single reference to 2 Chronicles

In this week's devotions

If you want to follow along

You can turn to 2 Chronicles 20

But you don't need to

Because I'm going to bounce around

*So, I'm putting it up on the screen*

**2 Chronicles 20:1 - After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to wage war against Jehoshaphat.**

Jehoshaphat was a great king

He was a great leader

He had faced many battles before

But this was different

And this is a picture

Of what has troubled many of us... today

He was facing a battle

Against multiple enemies

At the same time

You'd be fine

If you're enemies lined up

Single file

One at a time

You're fine with the deadline at work

But then the car breaks down

And that makes the money tight

So, then you're fighting with your wife about that

And then that tension makes the kids act out

And all the sudden

You're a mess

We can face one enemy at a time

Honestly, we can probably face 4 or 5 enemies at a time

We're pretty resilient

But there does come a limit

There does come a point when there are too many things

Coming at us

All at once

It's the different between weight

**And pressure**

Weight is 3 different enemies

One at a time

Pressure is 3 different enemies

All at once

Carrying weight makes us strong

Carrying pressure makes us anxious

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I was watching a teaching

From Craig Groeschel

I want to give him some credit

For the inspiration for this message

But he cited a study

And he didn't tell where it came from

So, I couldn't find it

But the 2019 study

**Reported that 2 out of 3 Americans self-identified as anxious or extremely anxious**

2 out of 3!

*That means if this is not you*

The people on either side of you

Are probably anxious or extremely anxious

And that was in 2019

2019

How many think those numbers

Are probably higher today?!?

And studies consistently show

That those numbers are higher  
In the younger generations

Groeschel cited another study

**That said 91% of high school and college aged students report consistent and significant levels of anxiety**

91%!!!

If this is you

I want you to know that you are not alone

Consistent and significant levels of anxiety

Is exhausting

We'd love to walk along with you

And help support you

As you carry that weight

Would you please come talk to me

Or one of our pastors

Today

That's the first step

Parents

If you have a high school or college aged student

Who does not feel consistent and significant levels of anxiety

*They are the extreme minority*

You should probably assume that they do

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It's important that you know

That the Bible does not specify anxiety as a sin

It tells us not to dwell in our anxiety

But it views anxiety less as a sin

And more as a symptom

Jehoshaphat was anxious

3 armies were coming at him all at once

Lots of people in the Bible were anxious

The Gospels report that the night before Jesus was arrested

**He was so "anguished and distressed." (Matthew 26:37b NLT)**

That He actually had blood

Oozing out of His pores in His sweat

That's a bad night

And if Jesus was distressed like that

Then feelings of anxiety can't be sinful  
But rather a sign  
Or a signal that something's wrong

It's a warning light  
To look under the hood  
And see what's got you redlined

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Let me say it this way:

If you get a check engine light on in your car  
You've not necessarily done something wrong  
But if you've had a check engine light on in your car for months  
And you've not bothered to figure out why

Now you've done something wrong

Philippians 4 says it this way:

**Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Phil 4:6)**

When the warning light comes on

Pray

That's what Jehoshaphat's did

When the pressure rises



## Pray

That's just what he did:

**2 Chronicles 20:3-4 - Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek Him.**

And notice

He didn't just pray

It was a big problem

So, he got a big... prayer... response

Now, you can't call people from every town to pray for a hangnail

Or a homework assignment that you don't want to do

But the bigger the problem

The bigger the response should be

In prayer

Look at the next verse:

**2 Chronicles 20:5-6 - Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the Lord in the front of the new courtyard and said: "Lord, the God of our ancestors, are You not the God who is in Heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in Your hand, and no one can withstand You.**

Jehoshaphat takes his burden

He was the leader

People were looking to him for answers

He was feeling all of this pressure

So, he takes his burden

And he makes it God's burden

He's like, God, I've got a problem

And when I say, I've got a problem

I mean, we've got a problem

And when I say, we've got a problem

I mean, you've got a problem

So, God, how are you going to fix your problem

I mean, think about it this way:

God's biggest obstacle in this moment

Wasn't the Ammonites

It wasn't the Moabites

It wasn't the Meunites

God's biggest potential obstacle in this moment

Was a faithless people

Or a proud leader

So, Jehoshaphat clears up both of those

By fasting and praying

And calling the people to fast and pray

He ends his prayer this way:

**2 Chronicles 20:12 - Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You.**

Prayer mobilizes the power of God

Prayer takes our burden

And makes it God's burden

Prayer mobilizes the power of God

But prayer also marshals the peace of His people

Jehoshaphat took this burden

Off his shoulders

A pressure he was unable to carry

And he gave it to the Lord

A pressure God is more than able to carry

Three armies are coming at him

He feels the warning bell going off

Anxiety!

He doesn't dwell on those thoughts

He doesn't ruminate on those worries

He turns them over to God

And scientists have discovered

In recent years

That prayer marshals the peace of God's people

They may not believe that prayer accesses His power

But brain scans prove that prayer provides peace

Scientifically speaking

Prayer not only brings spiritual benefits

Prayer provides biological benefits

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Dr. Caroline Leaf is a best-selling author

She's a communication pathologist

And a cognitive neuroscientist

I'm not even sure what I just said

I think it means she's really smart

And she studies the brain

Look what she said:

**“It has been found that 12 minutes of daily focused prayer over an 8-week period can change the brain to such an extent that it can be measured on a brain scan.” – Dr. Caroline Leaf**

Our brain is not static!

It's called neuro plasticity

God designed our brain

To constantly be developing

So, we can ruminate on worries

And make our brain more and more anxious

Or we can meditate on God

And make our brains more and more at peace

God says do not be anxious about anything

Because He knows the impact on our brains

He knows the impact on our bodies

He designed them!

Look what Jehoshaphat does next:

**2 Chronicles 20:13 - All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the Lord.**

I'm a pretty action-oriented guy

Let's fix this

Let's solve the problem

Give me the bottom line

What's it gonna cost?

What's it gonna take?

But Jehoshaphat prays

**And then he pauses**

He waits

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Waiting on the Lord

Is an oft-quoted

And oft-ignored

Part of Scripture

Sometimes we need to pray

Then move

Other times, we need to pray

And then be content... to wait

...

What if we used the waiting

To help re-write our brain

Away from worry and anxiety  
And towards the ways of God  
With the words of God

*We're going to talk this week*

In our readings and group discussions

**About the six major pain points:**

Shame, fear, insecurity, rejection, (feeling) unvalued, and pride

What if we used the waiting

To re-write our brain

With the words of God

You can jot down these references

Or you may want to snap a picture

{SLOW!!}

**Romans 8:1 – Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**

**Psalm 16:8 – I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With Him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.**

**2 Corinthians 3:5 - Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.**

**1 Peter 2:9-10 (MSG) - But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work... to tell others of the night-and-day difference He made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.**

**John 1:12-13 - Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.**

**James 4:6b - God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.**

Sometimes, prayer will prompt us to action

Sometimes, prayer should prompt us

To wait

Look at these words from David

**Psalm 27:14 - Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.**

That's a great passage

True, and yet also very poetic

Wait for the Lord



Be strong and take heart  
And then, after you've done that  
Wait for the Lord some more

But notice the context of this Psalm  
The context of this moment  
Just like Jehoshaphat  
David is under intense pressure

*This is verse 14*

The end of the Psalm  
But look at the situation David is describing  
The moment that David is in

**Psalm 27:3 - Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident.**

This week  
When you feel the pressure rising  
And your anxiety warning light is going off  
Pray

This week  
When you feel a war breaking out against you  
And enemies & obstacles seem to be lining up  
Pray

And then take a moment to wait

*Reread Psalm 27:14*

...

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We don't know how long Jehoshaphat and the people waited

In my mind, it was about 35 seconds...

But that's probably not true

Was it a few minutes?

A few hours?

We don't know

All we know

Is that they waited

And then God inspired a prophet

To give Jehoshaphat the next steps:

**2 Chronicles 20:15b-17 - "Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the Lord says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged**

**because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow march down against them... You will not have to fight this battle.**

**Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you.”**

They faced what was coming against them

I don't you to miss this

They faced it

They didn't ignore it

They didn't act like it wasn't real

They didn't distract themselves with busy-ness or Netflix or social media

They faced it

Many of us

Have things we need to face

But because we think its our battle

We don't feel strong enough to do it

Or more likely

Because we're fighting it alone

With no people

And without God

We're too exhausted to try

But God had them face it

Now I've got a problem

**"Face" doesn't work**

Right?

**I thought about this? {"Phace"}**

But that didn't seem right either

**So, I decided to go with this {"oPpose"}**

This is why they put me up here!

Don't miss that last line

**Do you see it?**

"Go out and face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you."

God's presence was felt

As they faced their opposition

And God will be with us

In a real & tangible way  
When we face  
The enemy coming at us

If you drink too much  
Or watch streaming content you shouldn't watch  
Or binge a ridiculous amount of time on social media  
Or work too much trying to salve an insecurity  
Or look at pornography on your phone  
Or worry constantly about money

You've got to face it

Pray about it  
Get some other people to pray *with you* about it  
Rewire your brain through prayer and His word

But then face it

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Look what happens next:

Jehoshaphat did something really unusual  
He made it clear  
To himself  
To the people around him  
To God Himself

That the crux of this battle

Was spiritual

Not physical

He made it clear

That this was not *his* burden to carry

But God's

So instead of sending out the warriors

He sent out the worship leaders

He replaced the camo and ak-47's

With skinny jeans and acoustic guitars

I know, weird

He sent the worship leaders out in front of the people

And verse 22 says:

**As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.**

Now, why is this important?

#1 – it's a cool detail

A neat visual to picture

I mean, can you picture it?!?

**You're an army sneakin' up thru the woods**

And you run into a worship team?

It's the weirdest thing!

So that's #1

## **But #2 – there's power in praising God**

Our worship time

Is not just the warmup for the message

Our worship time

Is not just a buffer period so we can get in here if we're running late or need some more coffee

Our worship time

Is a powerful opportunity to connect with the Living God

Psalm 22 says this:

**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest. {Ps 22:1-2}**

This is the verse that Jesus quoted

From the cross

And it captures the heart of someone

Crying out to God

In their distress

Feeling alone

Feeling anxious

Facing depression

I cry out

But You don't answer

I cry out

But find no rest

*That's verse 1 & 2*

But look at the next verse - verse 3

**Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel**

Let me give you a spiritual life-hack

Especially if you're struggling with depression or anxiety or worry or  
insecurity

Understand your battle is not against flesh & blood

And also understand there is great power

In declaring the spiritual realities all around us

For me, I took an all of the above approach

I found a counselor

I talked to my doctor

I tried to make lifestyle changes

But I also found great power

In reading the Psalms

I also found great comfort

In worship music



Even when I didn't *feel like* listening to it  
Or singing it

We are spiritual beings  
And something powerful happens

When we make it clear  
To ourselves  
To the people around us  
To God Himself

That the crux of this battle  
Is spiritual  
Not physical

And when we make it clear  
That this is not our burden to carry

*God, You are holy... enthroned... on... my... praises*

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Let pressure be a warning light for you  
That's a part of guarding your heart  
When you feel anxiety rising  
Try to pray... right then  
In that moment  
This doesn't need to be a 20 minute prayer  
This is bringing God into the moment  
And bringing the moment to God

There are very few times

When you feel stress rising in you

That you can't take literally 5 seconds

And bring God into the moment

And bring the moment to God

Pray

Then pause – if you're able

If you're stressed because your toddler is playing on Duplex

You can't pause

But normally

Normally

You can pause

Then with the wisdom that God provides

Face it

If it's an addiction or a habit or a wound from the past

Face it

And make the worship of God

A more regular part of your life

Worship God on your commute

Worship God when you're getting ready in the morning

Make the worship of God

A more regular part of your life

Because He's holy

He deserves it

And He inhabits the praises

Of His people

Praying to God

And worshipping God

Brings God into your life

And brings your life to God

Some of us don't have God in our life

{atheist / practical atheist}