

### **13: The Daily Struggle of God & Therapy**

Hi, I'm Elisa Preston. You're listening to episode 13 of Praise Through It.

My hope for our short time together will always be to help you see an old burden in a new way, to see the praiseworthy side of your daily struggles. To see life in a way that brings hope, and in a way that shows the glimmer of light that inevitably shines, even in the daily grind. Today specifically, I'm going to talk about one of my very favorite tools in helping us to see the beauty in the mess. So, if that's something you're working on or you'd like to be a part of, listen in.

(acoustic guitar)



A person very near and dear to my heart recently asked me: Why do I need therapy if I have God?

A great question. And not the first time I've been asked it.

While everyone has a different story and the specifics of what is worked out in therapy is specific to the individual, the overarching reason for God and therapy is largely the same for everyone I've answered: you have a series of hurts you've encountered over your lifetime. None of that is your fault. Those hurts have burrowed down in your heart. Again, not your fault the way we consider fault. Aundi Kolber, author and therapist, talks about how the guilt, shame, and hurt we hold on to sometimes serves or has served a fine purpose. It has helped us survive in environments where we really needed to survive and we really couldn't control anything except for our survival. But because those hurts have burrowed down so deep, we need some help bringing them up and out so we can live our full life as our full self. The self God created to be whole in communion with him in a world that hurts and breaks our spirits on the regular.

See, there comes a point where that hurt that burrowed deep down becomes part of who we are and how we operate. And we don't even realize it because it has burrowed down so deep for so long that the operation is second-nature. Healthy or not, it's second-nature. When it becomes a part of us like that, it has literally become a part of us. Our DNA code, our neural pathways, are now wired toward hurt, fear, anger, shame, and guilt. So much so that things we're not even close to being responsible for, we somehow convince ourselves that they are our fault. We think there's so much more wrong with us than there actually is. None of us is perfect, for sure. Also,

God made us the way he made us on purpose. And sometimes we need help to learn that self more fully.

God and therapy go together like a solar- and battery-powered clock. God is the light. We stand in His light and he keeps the hands of the clock moving, so to speak. Sometimes, though, things go dark. And even though the sun is always shining--whether behind the clouds or on the other side of the sky--it's still dark to us. So God sends help in the form of batteries. In the case of our metaphor, therapy is the battery in the clock. The light has faded but we don't want to die; we want to keep going. The hands on the clock want to keep going. So when we're out of the light, we put in the batteries. Therapy is the battery. God has not gone anywhere. He hasn't stopped working. He hasn't stopped loving. Remember, the sun is always shining. But when the hardness of life, the darkness, descends, it is helpful to have some help.

Annie F. Downs said this in episode 296 of her podcast *That Sounds Fun*: In understanding how humans work... that's what counselors do. They get the keys to how humans work and they help us open doors we don't know how to open ourselves. In episode 298 of *That Sounds Fun*, Michelle Williams of the 90s group *Destiny's Child* talks about how counseling is basically an ongoing, helpful conversation between you and the therapist. And in fact, on her Instagram, on Michelle Williams' IGTV, you can watch her do therapy with Dr. Caroline Leaf. Dr. Anita Phillips, a respected therapist, says that prayer is a weapon, therapy is a strategy. In fact, you can order the t-shirt that speaks that truth. Prayer is your weapon, therapy is your strategy. Thank you, Dr. Phillips. Check her out. Episode 16 of *We're Going There* with Bianca Juarez Olthoff talks about therapy for minority communities. And I can almost guarantee that if you think of a healthy person in your life, he or she got to that point with at least some therapy.

Reading God's word is helpful because it reminds us of our true identity. Reading God's word keeps us in communion with him. It reminds us of his promises, his presence, his kind and consistent nature. And it can reveal things to us that we might eventually find out in therapy.

What it does not do is it does not have a degree in mental health services. That doesn't mean it's lacking. It means that in the grand scheme of God's beautiful love story of mankind--which includes you--he sends helpers. That's what Mr. Rogers always said right? Look for the helpers. Well, therapists are helpers. A good therapist who loves God and has a passion for his image-bearing children will help you unlock amazing, powerful, beautiful pieces of yourself you didn't even know were available to you.

If you get a cut in your finger that goes down to the bone, you go to the hospital.

If you get a cut on your forehead that won't stop gushing blood, you go to the hospital.

If you have a cough that won't let up, you go to the doctor.

If you have a persistent stomach-ache that doesn't let up no matter the gas-x or Tums you take, you go to the doctor.

Yes?

Every one of those ailments is something we can see and feel and hear and definitely not ignore. And they are hurts that you can directly tie to an accident or a kid's museum if you, like me,

think that's where scientists go to study the spread of the flu. I can remember the moment I could tell my body caught something in a kids museum.

We can tie those ailments to a specific moment or a specific cause.

Hurts of the heart are not so simple to diagnose and they are so very easily ignored. So very easily ignored. Because we do not immediately tie our physical ailments or our character manifestations to these heart hurts and to what they've done to our brains and our bodies, we stuff them somewhere--a closet or under a rug--and just go about our business. But when those heart hurts are ignored for so long, not only does that closet implode or that rug become too lumpy to live on, but the unhealth manifests itself in various ways. Anxiety. Over- or under-eating. Perfectionism. Unresolved conflict. Constant blaming of self and/or others. Isolation. Withdrawing. Constant miscommunication. And so much more. Maybe those aren't character flaws that you quote-unquote "caused" - maybe they are a byproduct of a hurt that has lived on your heart for too long.

God can help with all of that. He can redeem and deliver you from every one of those unhealthy habits. Also -- we are not meant to live and do our work on our own. Again, God sends helpers for that. Sometimes he helps you find those answers with a friend, sometimes a coach, and sometimes with a therapist.

One of my favorite shows ever is seasons 1-4 of The West Wing. In an episode called Take This Sabbath Day, one of the characters tells a beautiful parable that I know has shown up in many other places, but this is where I heard it so this is the voice that's always in my head as I tell the story:

You remind me of the man that lived by the river. He heard a radio report that the river was going to rush up and flood the town, and that all the residents should evacuate their homes. But the man said, "I'm religious. I pray. God loves me. God will save me." The waters rose up. A guy in a rowboat came along and he shouted, "Hey, hey you, you in there. The town is flooding. Let me take you to safety." But the man shouted back, "I'm religious. I pray. God loves me. God will save me." A helicopter was hovering overhead and a guy with a megaphone shouted, "Hey you, you down there. The town is flooding. Let me drop this ladder and I'll take you to safety." But the man shouted back that he was religious, that he prayed, that God loved him and that God will take him to safety. Well... the man drowned. And standing at the gates of St. Peter he demanded an audience with God. "Lord," he said, "I'm a religious man, I pray, I thought you loved me. Why did this happen?" God said, "I sent you a radio report, a helicopter and a guy in a rowboat. What are you doing here?"



Therapy can be the radio report, the boat, and the helicopter. Therapy can bring someone who loves God just like you and knows things about the heart, the brain, and the body that can help you. The therapist takes what he or she has learned--what God has shown them about the brain, the heart, and the body--and uses that to help you learn more about yourself, more about your story, and more about how to healthfully live out the beautiful human God created you as.

Therapy can work to heal hurt in a way that almost nothing else can. Some hurts do not heal until they are literally expressed from your body. Your prayers about taking away the hurt and the unforgiveness are powerful. They also might not touch the whole of the story because you're not sure of the whole story. So sometimes the only way to express something from your body is to work it out in therapy. You find the origin of the hurt, the fear, the anger, the defensiveness, the anxiety, the [insert your feelings here]. When the origin is worked out, the rest can fall away like a landslide. And then all of a sudden you are free and clear. Limits you didn't even realize you had wrapped around you suddenly vanish. God has still done the redemption and the healing because he is the ultimate healer. He's just used one of his expert teachers to move the process along.

You don't know where to start? I get it. First, find a therapist. Google on your own or go to PsychologyToday.com & at the top is a Find a Therapist box based on city, state, and insurance. There are online options, BetterHelp.com & TalkSpace.com. And I'll link everything I've talked about today in the show notes.

Now, if I've convinced you, now you're in the office--or in the digital space because it's 2021--and now what do you do? One of my favorite therapists I've ever had started every session - every single one - with the words, Tell me about you today. Sometimes I knew exactly where to start and I would have verbal diarrhea and spill all the beans, every one of them. Sometimes I had no idea where to start and I would just talk about my day. What a therapist can do is he or she listens, then hears things that you don't hear when you talk. He or she pulls the thread and helps you re-weave it into a beautiful tapestry of health, confidence, beauty, and self-acceptance.

You still don't know what to say when you get in there? Tell them I sent you. Say, I listened to this podcast and she said it would be a good idea to come. The therapist will ask, Tell me about this podcast, and you'll tell the therapist about it. And from there, you will start a journey that has incredible power to set you free.

This does not mean that you don't love Jesus. It doesn't mean that you don't need God. It means that God sends helpers in the form of people who know the heart, the body, the mind, and the brain and they are experts at integrating it all together to help us live healthy, abundant lives as we are called to and made for.

If I may offer you another analogy: think of eating at a nice restaurant. You've had dinner and the pastry chef comes out with delicious looking desserts. You choose one because it's part of the experience. Choosing the pastry that looks delicious improves the entire experience. It does not mean you didn't enjoy the main meal. It doesn't mean the chef didn't do her job. It doesn't mean you don't appreciate the chef. It means that the chef has purposefully employed a pastry chef to help make the full dining experience next level. Therapy is that next-level. God sends the helpers to make our earthly experience more bearable, more enjoyable, more abundant.


Now, every therapist will not be for you. Finding a therapist that you feel safe with is essential for good help and good soul care. Don't be afraid to say, we don't match, and try again. I've done that twice and didn't regret it. And in fact that therapist has an ethical obligation to let you

go when that's the case. But then you try again. Like a deep cut on the finger; if the first doctor brings out her three year old daughter's sewing kit meant for her plastic dolls, you go to a different doctor. You don't decide you'll fix it yourself at home. It's the same with a therapist.

Therapy is a gift to yourself and your people. It is a way to walk more fully in the you God has made you to be. It is a way to show gratitude for all God has placed inside you. All that greatness can get pretty muddled after wading through a broken world for so many years.

Therapy can be a helper.

So, I hope I've made a good case for God and Therapy and how they can go together. Everything and everyone I've mentioned for resources will be in the show notes so you can click right to where you want to learn more. I care about you, listeners and readers, because you matter. People are God's love language, so you matter. Through and through, you matter. And because you matter, I love to see you healthy and thriving. Here is your greatest encouragement from this side of the mic to marry your faith and your mental health, and work through God's story for your heart.

(acoustic guitar) 

That's it for today, and actually, that's it for this first set of episodes for Praise Through It. This summer we'll be doing Monday Blessings and Praise Through It Together, a community extension of what I've done solo here since January. We kick off our series with speaker and coach Jenn Whitmer. She talks us through the shift in the location of conflict and conflict resolution over the last 12ish months. And if there is one old burden I always appreciate looking at in a new way, it is conflict resolution. It's fun and encouraging and a great way to kick off the series! Look for the video of the interview on Instagram next Tuesday, and the audio on this podcast feed next Thursday, July 1st. Gracious, how are we already almost in July?!

As always I love to connect with you! Find me on Instagram - elisapreston - super simple. Make sure you're following there and here so you don't miss any of our summer interviews!

I want to leave you today with a prayer for your heart and a blessing for your life:

Lord, you made our hearts. You know it inside and out. Direct us to the places and spaces where that full heart can come to shine in all its glory. Help us remember that you send helpers, and that when we can't do it alone, there are people you made specifically to help us.

May we know through and through that God made all of humanity to shine his light.  
May we know that we have his light inside of us to shine.  
And may the courage arise within us to walk the path of letting that light so shine before mankind that every human in our path sees the glory of God and His love.

**Show notes:**

[That Sounds Fun episode 298 with Michelle Williams](#)

[Aundi Kolber, author & therapist](#)

[That Sounds Fun episode 296 with Thad Cockrell](#)

[You Asked! About Therapy on In the Light podcast with Dr. Anita Phillips](#)

[PsychologyToday.com to Find a Therapist](#)

[West Wing episode with boat parable](#)

[We're Going There with Bianca Juarez Olthoff: Episode 16 with Lecrae: Deconstructing to](#)

[Reconstructing Faith](#)

[BetterHelp.com](#)

[TalkSpace.com](#)

[Dr. Anita Phillips](#)

[Dr. Caroline Leaf](#)