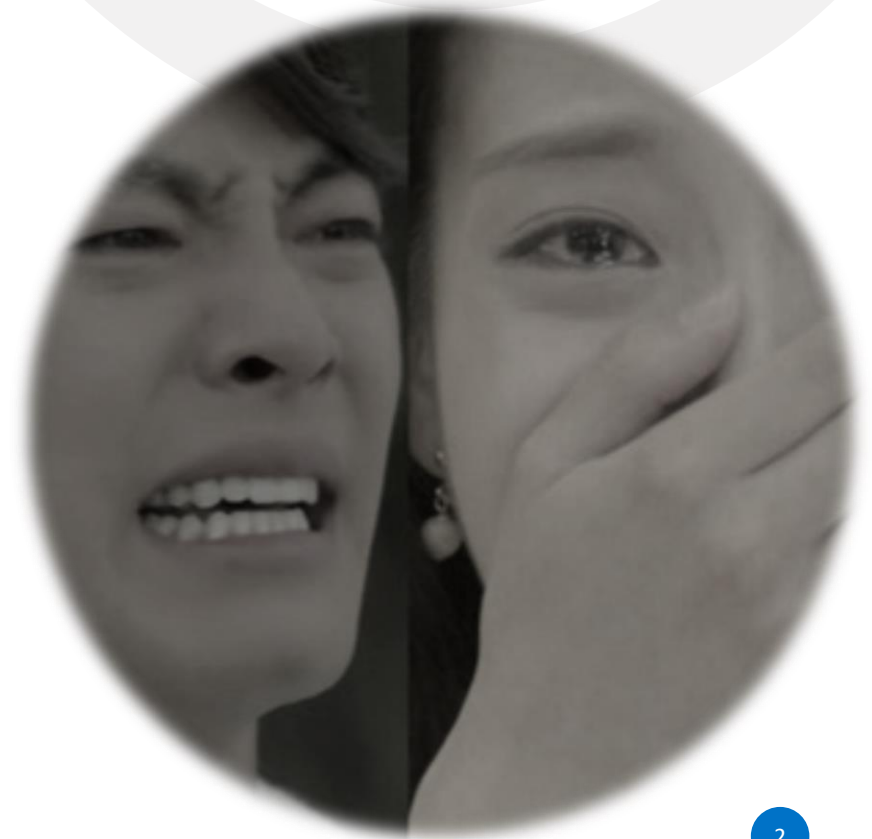


# **SPIRITUAL RESOURCES IN DEALING WITH TRAUMA**

FRAUKE SCHAEFER, MD  
CHARLIE SCHAEFER, PHD

# SEVERE TRAUMA AND ITS IMPACT ON THE MISSION FIELD

1. Missionaries often are exposed to more traumatic events on the field than back home.
2. Missionaries will be impacted by trauma; up to every third missionary could be affected in their ability to serve, depending on the environment and type of trauma.
3. Women tend to be more affected than men.
4. We need a strategy to build resilience, and to care well.



# SHORT INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

Have you encountered a Korean missionary affected by trauma?

Please make a brief note about her/him and lift her/him up before the Lord.

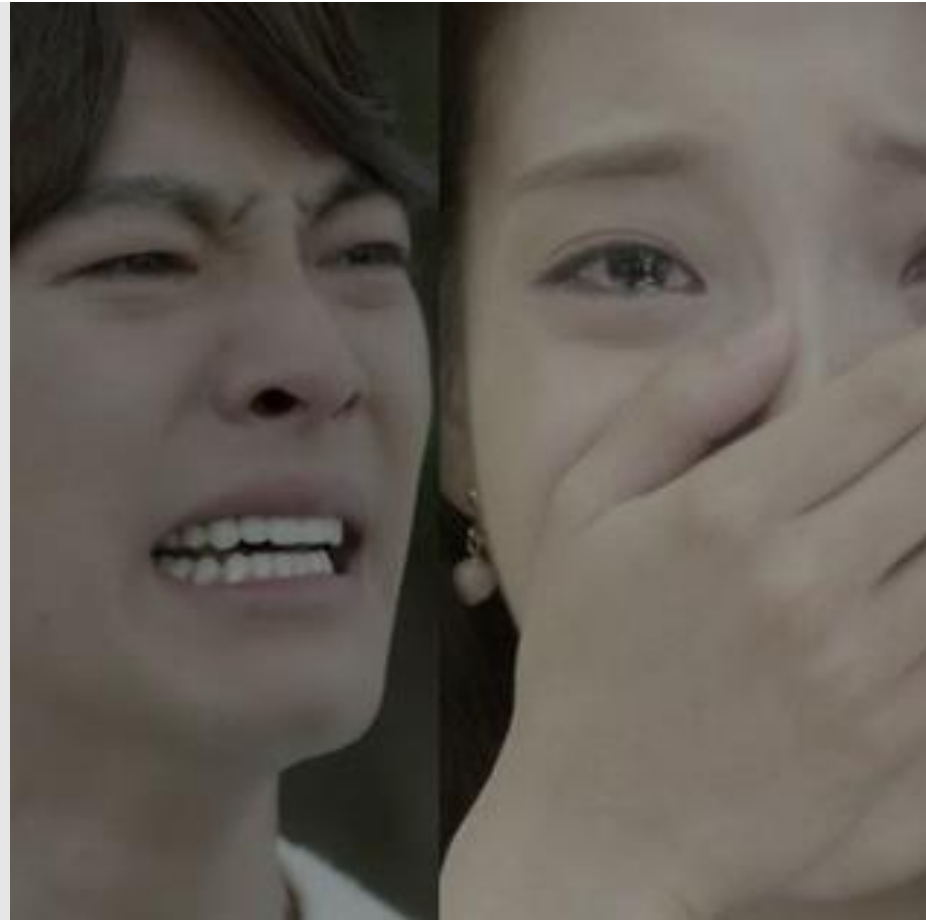


# EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL IMPACT



## EMOTIONAL IMPACT

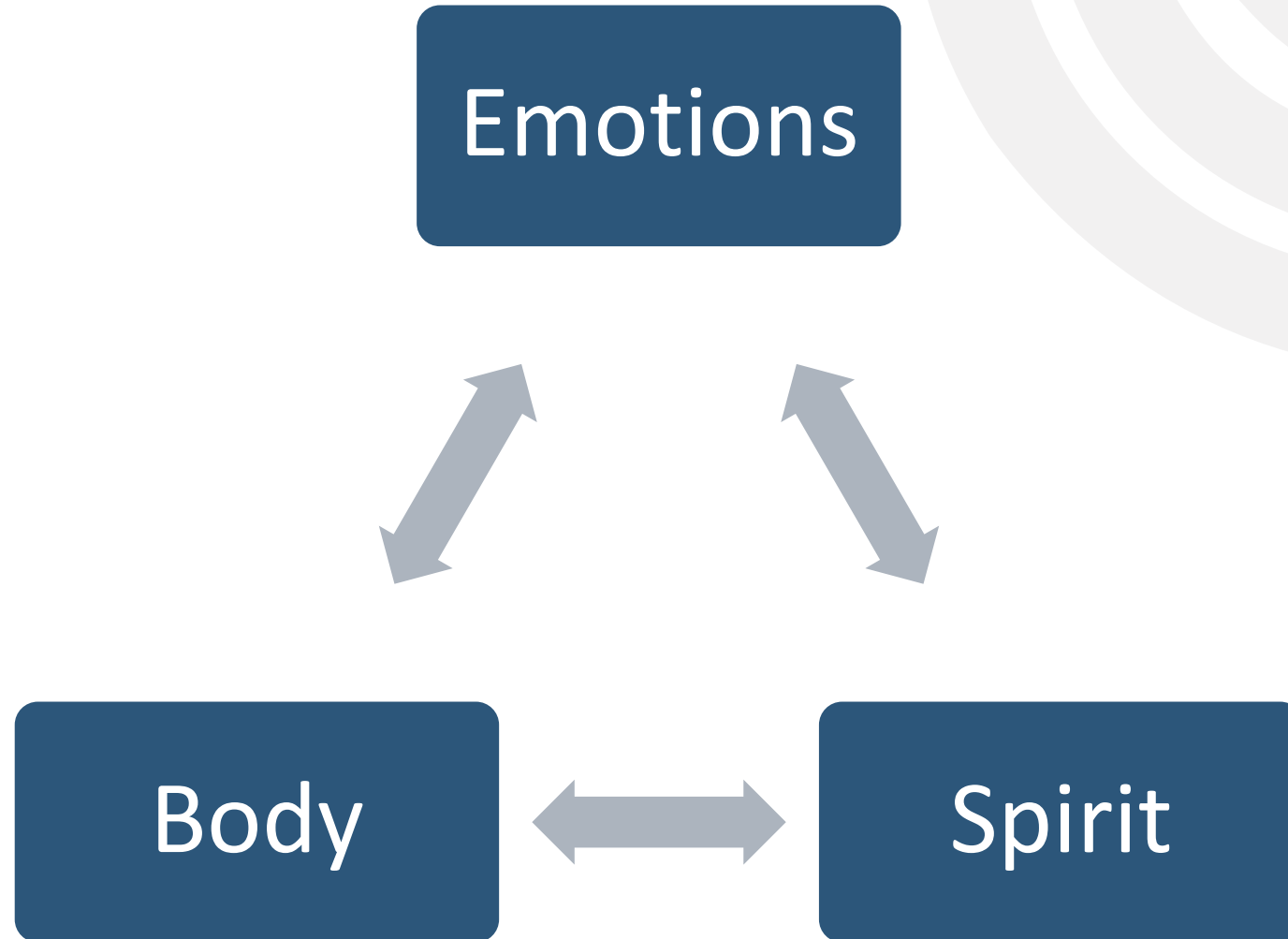
Nightmares, Flashbacks  
Trigger Reactions  
Numbed Emotions  
Gap in Memory, Avoidance  
Difficulties Sleeping  
Irritability, Anger  
Tension, Unable to Relax



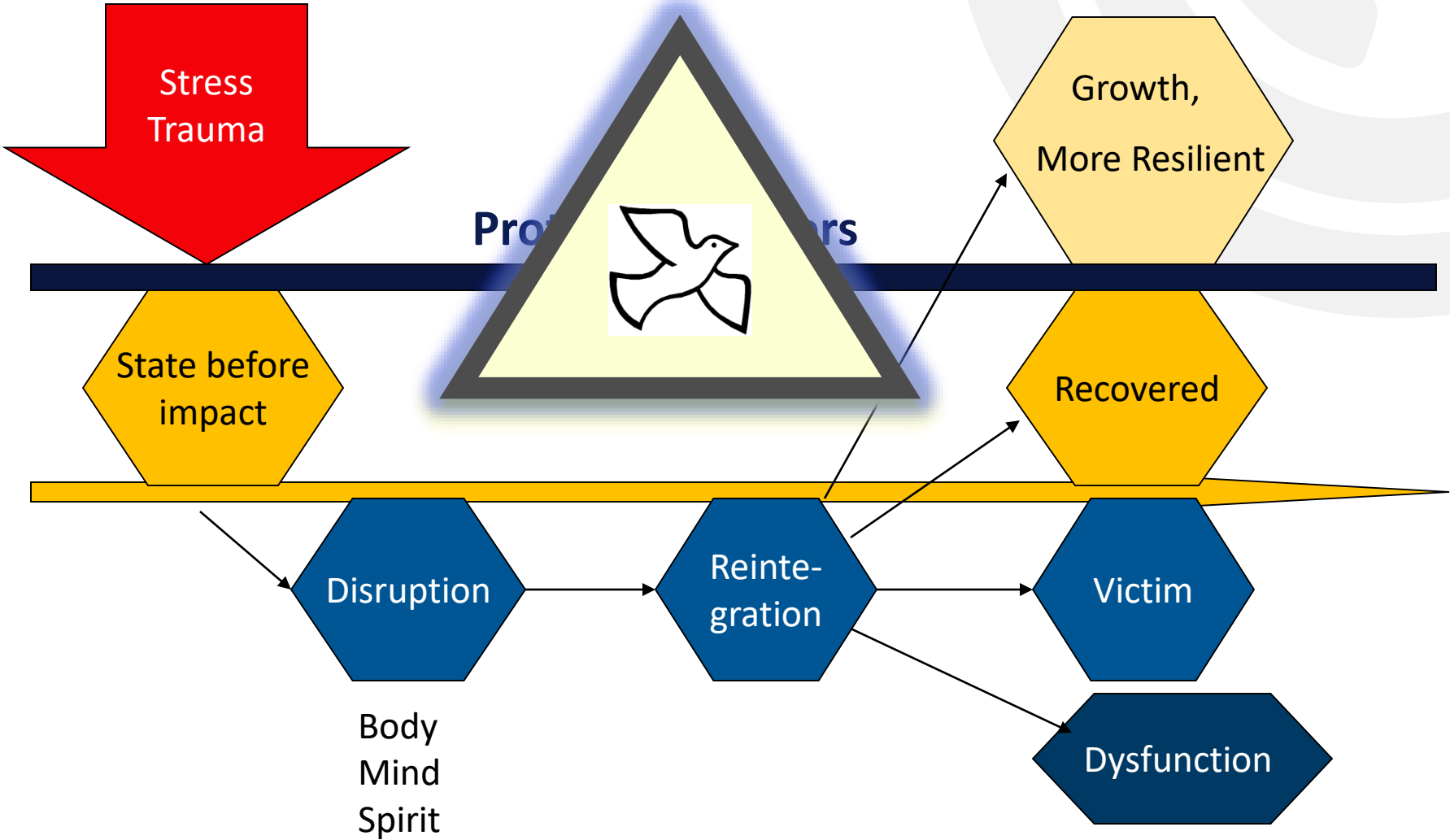
## SPIRITUAL IMPACT

Feeling Disconnected (God), Alone  
Upset; Angry  
Pain  
Shame  
Guilt  
Fearful  
How does this make sense with  
what I believe?

# SPIRIT & EMOTIONS & BODY INTERACTION



# RESILIENCE MODEL



# SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN PLACES OF MISERY

Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs.

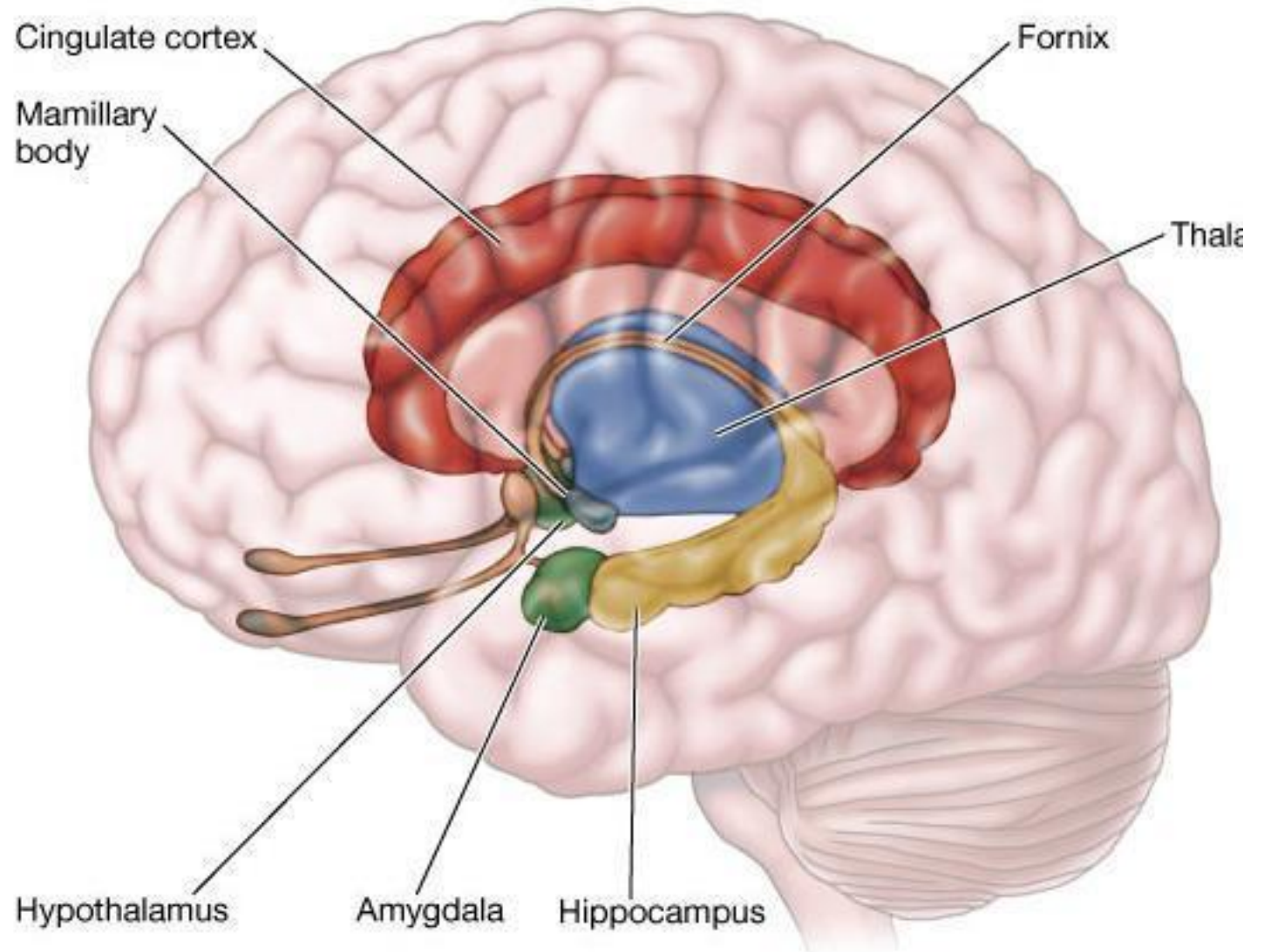
(Ps 84:5–6)

Valley of Baca = A Place of Sorrow and Pain



# NEUROBIOLOGY AND TRAUMA

- Limbic system gets overactive - anxiety, irritability, insomnia, hard times controlling emotions
- Frontal Lobe = Executive Brain – less active, decreased control



# NEUROBIOLOGY AND TRAUMA

## What helps the brain?

- Connecting (others, God), love
- Calming, Grounding
- Spiritual Resources



# SPIRITUAL RESOURCES

- **Loving Community** -  
when alone & afraid
- **Grace and Humbleness** -  
when vulnerable & weak
- **Lament** –  
when upset & in pain
- **Reconnecting with God** –  
when feeling disconnected
- **Remembering God's Truth** –  
when confused about God
- **Real Forgiving** –  
when bitter and vengeful





# LOVING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

## Building a Bridge To His Presence

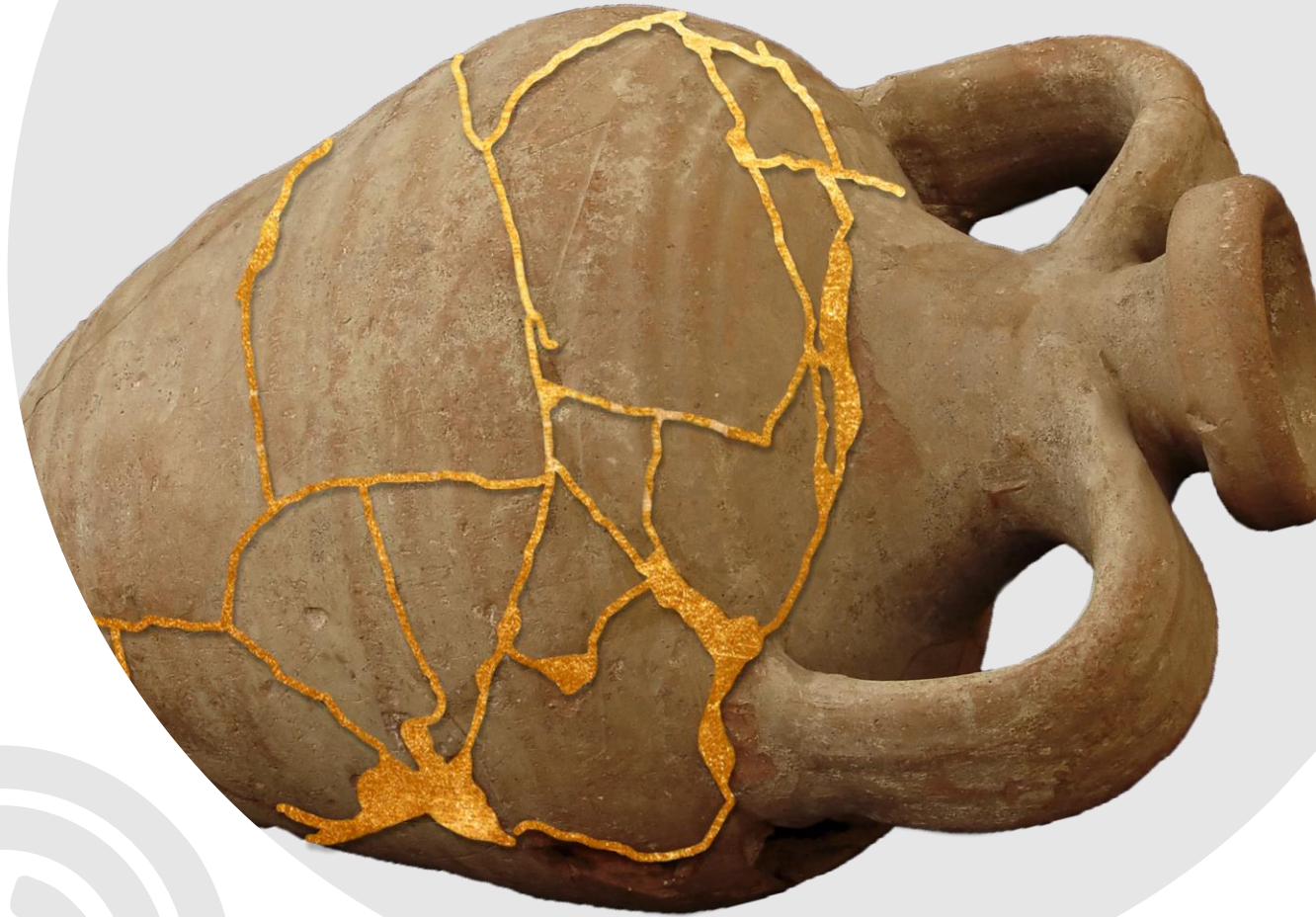
- Practical support (Safety, Water, Food, Shelter, Medical)
- Presence (Listening, Accepting)
- Prayer, songs, comforting Bible verses, shared times of worship and devotion

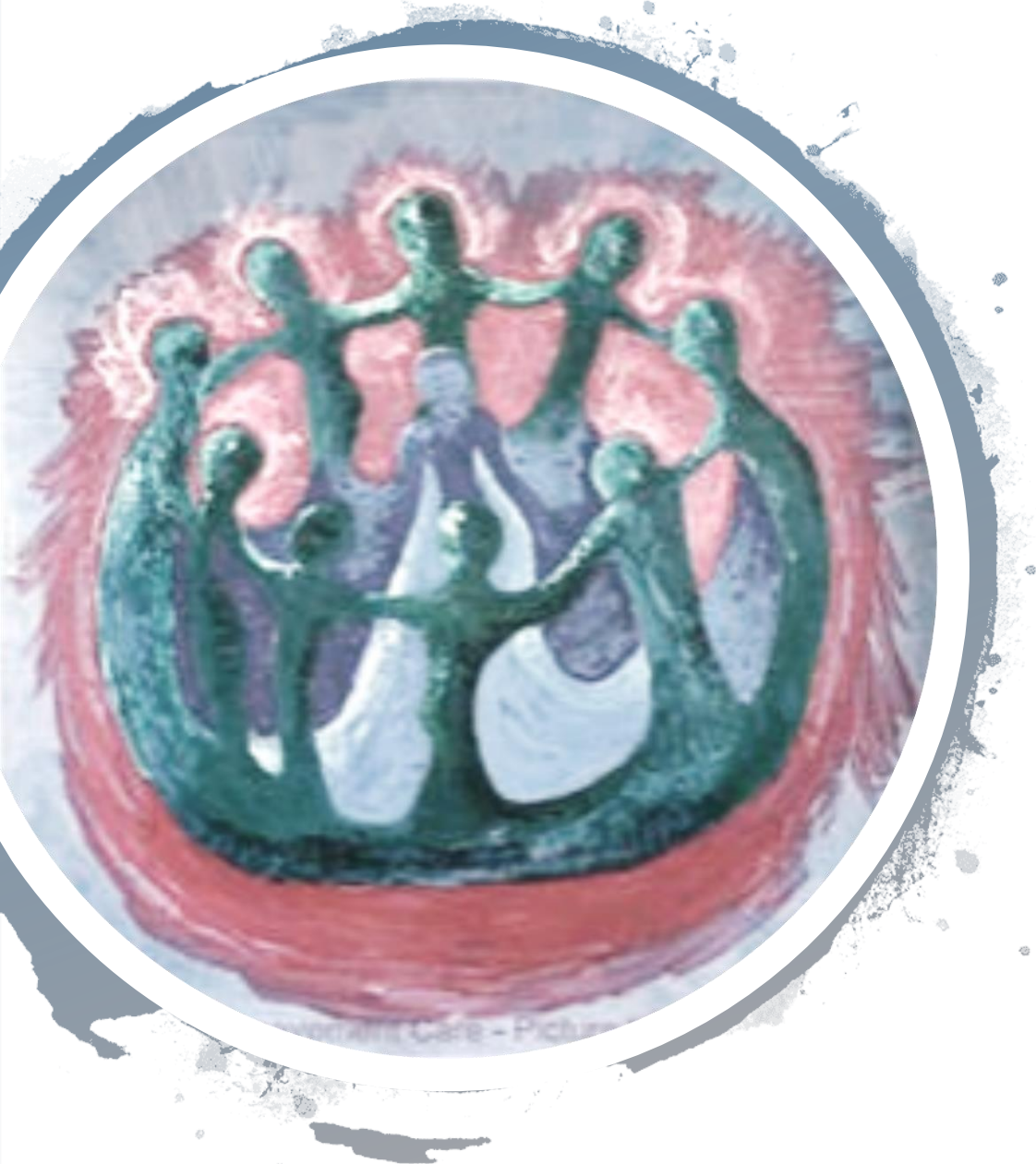
# GRACE AND HUMBLENESS

Who likes to feel vulnerable and weak?  
Shame and isolation can occur

However:

- In our weakness, His strength comes to completion
  - “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” James 4:6
- The Divine Design: Jars of Clay (2 Cor. 4:7)





# GROUP ACTIVITY

- How do Koreans offer practical help without unintentionally shaming the person?
- How do we create a loving community among Korean missionaries?

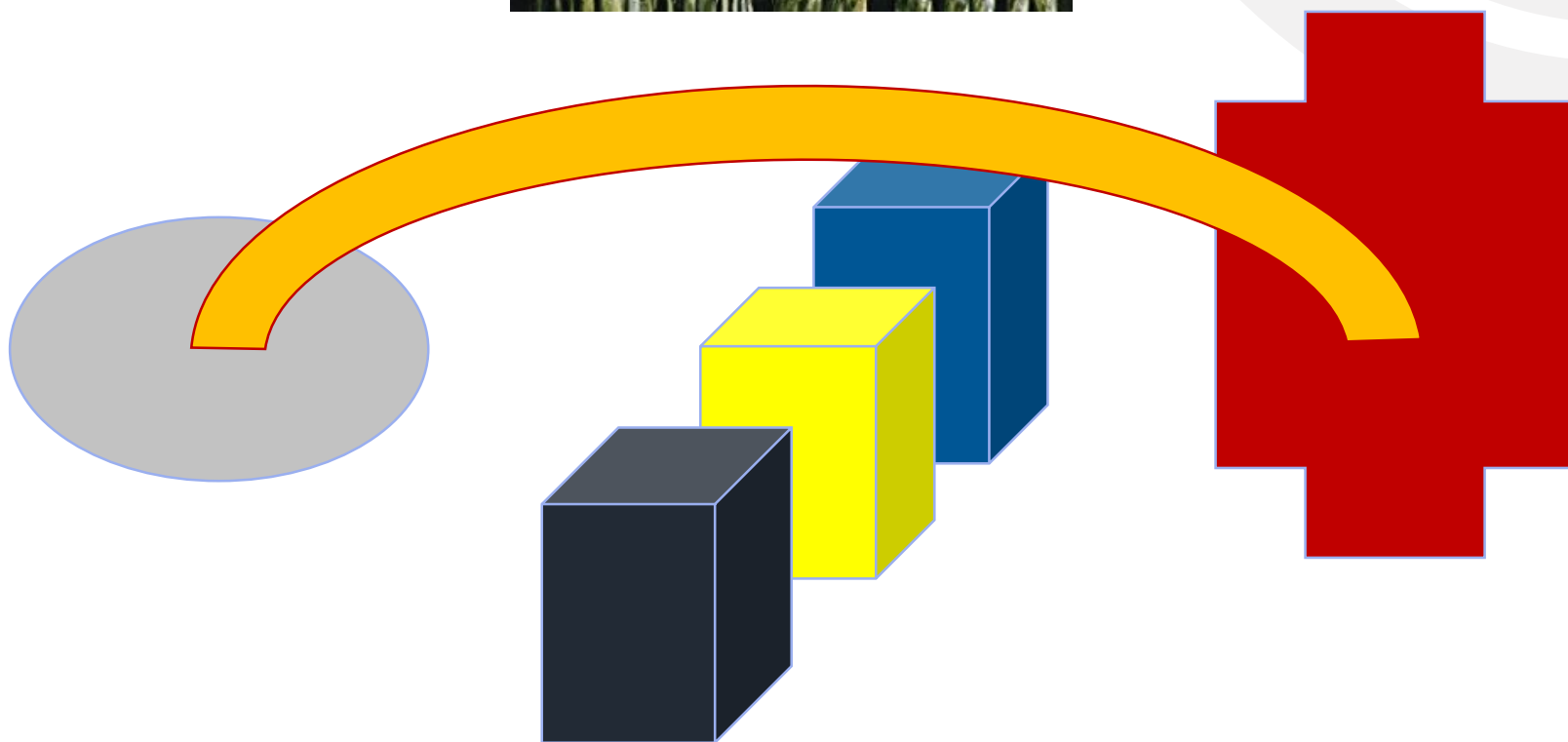


# ORGANIZATIONAL & LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

## Being Graceful toward Distress

- Allow room to accept, adapt, and respond to distress in a visible and social manner
- Provide information about normal responses to trauma
- Take initiative and provide resources to respond to need
- Leaders are present, supportive, listen well, and remind staff of God's big picture
- Hearing testimonies from others who have survived trauma
- Faith: Accepts that healthy, faithful, God-loving people can be affected by stress and trauma

# LAMENT



# LARGE GROUP ACTIVITY

- What makes lament difficult?
- How is lament expressed in Korean culture and churches?
- How do we encourage others to lament?



# RECONNECTING WITH GOD

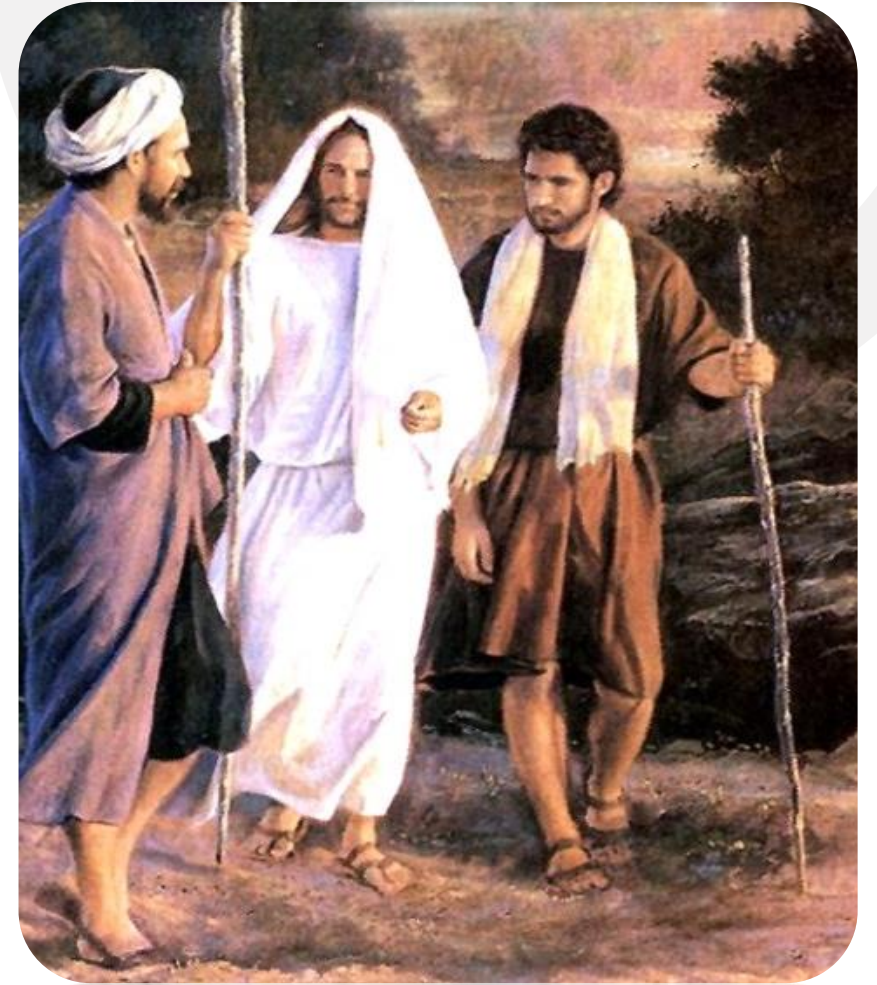
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- When numbed and depressed
- Learning from Jesus on the road to Emmaus: Emotionally connecting with God with the help of the senses



# LARGE GROUP ACTIVITY

- Connecting with God through our five senses in Korean culture: What practical ways come to mind?



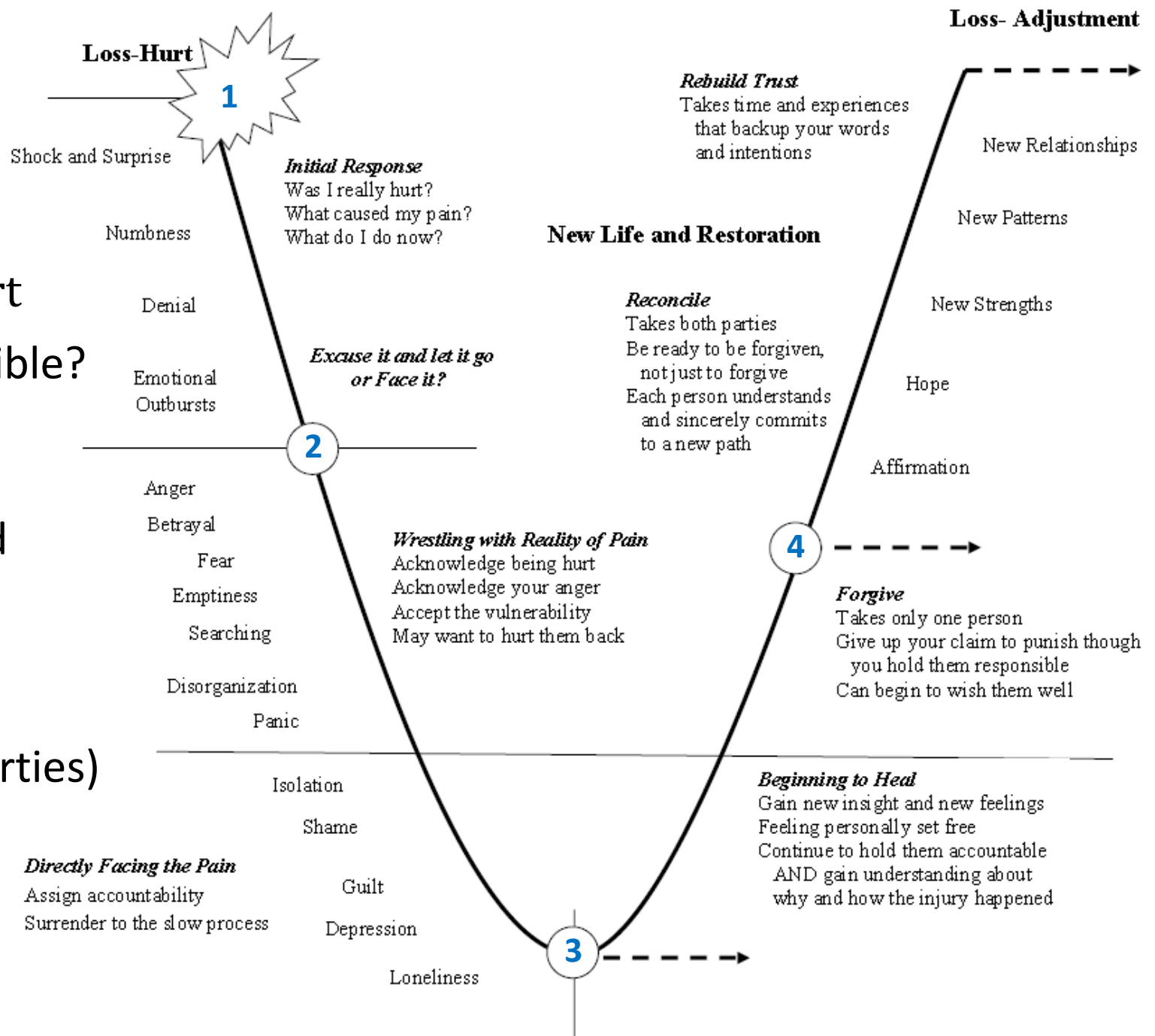
# **FORGIVING**

**when hurt and betrayed,  
is not easy.**



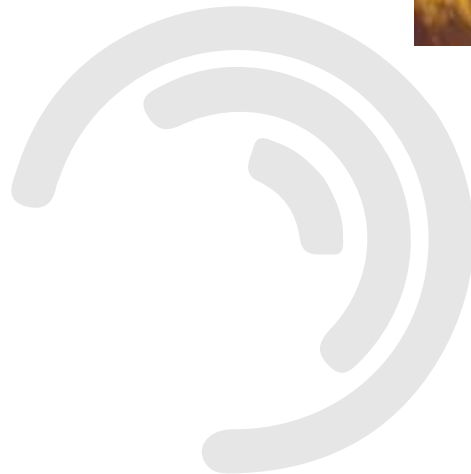
# FORGIVENESS

1. Accept and feel the hurt
2. Who or what is responsible?  
Consider and try to understand
3. Let go of your anger and desire to punish
4. Rebuild stronger (self, relationships) Possibly reconcile (takes both parties)  
Rebuild trust and safety



# GROUP DISCUSSION

- Traumatized Christians sometimes blame God (neglect, unfairness). How can we help them?



# REMEMBERING GOD'S TRUTH

- When feeling punished due to wondering “WHY”
- When feeling abandoned due to emotional disconnect
- All missionaries should study and wrestle with the theology of suffering



# THEOLOGY OF SUFFERING

- Discrepancy between prior beliefs and perception of the traumatic event increase distress
  - Are “good” or religious people better protected from suffering?
  - Where is God, when it hurts?
  - WHY?
- A personal reflection on a biblical theology of suffering will be protective



# HIGHLIGHTS OF SPIRITUAL RESTORATION

<b>Distress</b>	<b>God's response</b>
Fear	Love
Shame	Humbleness and Grace
Guilt	Forgiveness
Pain and hurt	Lament and Forgiveness
Confusion	Theologies of risk and suffering



# APPLICATIONS FOR WORKERS IN HIGH STRESS ENVIRONMENTS

## Preparation & Training

- Teach and personally grapple with a theology of suffering
- Foster awareness of God's love, presence, and plans
- Awareness of the forgiveness process; every-day practice
- Establish and support social support networks in teams
- Establish crisis care procedures

## Post-trauma Support

- Care team; leader support
- Practical support
- Presence, listening, praying – NOT fixing – God may be working
- Allow and support authentic expression of feelings, lamenting
- Gently address inappropriate sense of guilt, shame, or abandonment
- Support forgiving



# PLAN

Write down steps you will take to increase the spiritual resilience of your organization, team, family or yourself?

