

Single-Minded Singleness:

***Handling the Challenges and Rewards of
Being Unmarried in Ministry & Missions.***

***Seminar (1.0 Hr) Presented at the Global Missions Health Conference “GMHC”
Louisville, Kentucky, USA ~ November 09-11, 2023***

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= *Abstract* =

There are a lot of *advantages* actually for being unattached or unmarried or being closely tied to a family of relatives, when we're involved in broader work, strategic endeavors, or caring ministries.

Yet there are some *disadvantages*, challenges, and obstacles that run parallel to that living style and socio-relational status. In this seminar we will *redefine* the labels and terminologies used to describe *singleness* or *unmarried status*. We will *review* the *major frustrations, mental challenges, unpleasant experiences, emotional longings, common temptations, and unmet needs* facing us. We will *highlight* the *positive gains, leading advantages, and additional achievements* that we may possess. Finally, we'll *explore* the many ways we can manage, cope, and **thrive** in Life & Ministry.

Is it possible that we can **strive** with a *powerful mindset, constructive hope, and high resiliency?...* as we engage with multitude of other people and significant leaders, on **personal level**, and with the vast work of the Kingdom, on **global level**. It is possible that we become role-models, important influencers, and legacy-builders, capable of leaving a long-lasting impact behind us.



= Learning Objectives =

- *Identify two commonly used definitions of the terms "single" or "singleness."*
- *Describe two rewards and advantages of being an unmarried-unattached person in the helping professions.*
- *List three kinds of frustrations with which the single professionals usually struggle.*
- *Discuss three ways unmarried servants can handle potential obstacles and face anxiety, stress, and challenges, and eventually become more creative and resilient.*



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So, virtually, unmarried people like many of us, are not strange or weird, but are full human beings, with full faculties, possibilities, connections, potentials, and abilities.

We strive to live a very productive and meaningful life, regardless of our marital status, our social status, our past history, or our cultural heritage. Right?

A single person, who has never-been-married or was married before, the situation is not different.

He or she are not a foreign species or aliens coming from another planet of outer space.

So, words are powerful, labels are important, and names are significant !!

In principle, any stage or phase of our livelihood is meant to be enjoyed not only endured. ***“For Life is Meant to be Both Enjoyed and Endured.”***

And that is true of our *Spiritual Journey*, as the ultimate purpose of all Believers in Christ, as full human beings, is ***“To Glorify God and to Enjoy Him and Forever.”***

*Not all attached-married people are similar neither are of the same type or kind.
And not all the unattached-unmarried people are the same!*

Marital Status is Only One Aspect !!

Not all couples are *happily* married and not all unmarried people are *miserable* either. There are a lot of factors, dynamics, layers, faculties, personality-traits– like the emotional stability-maturity and social engagements that enter into the equation and certainly define our human Roles, Functions, Postures, and eventually our Existence.

A social person is only worth the value of his or her relationships, networks, and sense of community. We are not a *Cohesive Self* until we are a *Social Self*. Therefore, a close *Connectivity* leads to a meaningful *Productivity*, while a *Dis-Connectivity* leads to isolation, dissatisfaction, disillusionment, and ultimately to *Acute loneliness*. Actually, it is possible to feel *Lonely* and mentally-emotionally disconnected even in a crowd or within a committed relationship, like within marriage or a ministry-team.

Thus, of us are unmarried-adults by choice or by chance, by design or by default ... but we're Real People!

People exist both on individual and communal levels. All of us have *private selves* and have *public selves*. We integrate **Me** & **US**, **Individualism** & **Collectivism**. So, no one is an island in the vast ocean or a free-floating planet in the vast universe. We all run in **orbits**, we pull others toward ourselves, and we are pulled by the **gravitational** force of others. We operate in systems, we function in communities, and become integral parts of local tribes with global momentums.

So, by the way of definitions, we can add that the *Status of Single Adulthood* or *of Being Unmarried* is not a deficit, defect, devalue, desolation, disqualification, disorganization, disintegration, depreciation, disorder, or *any other "D s"* 😇

The classification and categories that is used at times in society in general and in churches in particular is not always helpful, sound, or healthy -- We should not be separating singles from the rest of population as unconventional or treating them as a *different subculture*.

Children are children regardless whether they have one or two parents. *Adults* are adults regardless if they are attached to someone specific or not, if they live alone or in a full house... as all **Humans** have the same value, possess the same **Imago Dei**, hold the same occupations, the same strengths and weaknesses, mix with the same groups, and make the same contributions.

Therefore, as singles, we are normal, regular, and balanced people, quite able and capable... Not a second class, not awkward, or lacking, or unable to attach or function or commit....! We are not outcast, unqualified, incompetent, or most importantly we are not “incomplete.”

We are free to gravitate around as many human spheres and to have as many significant others and special colleagues as we like and as much as we can manage.

Enriching and being Enriched by so many others, Nurturing and be Nurtured by

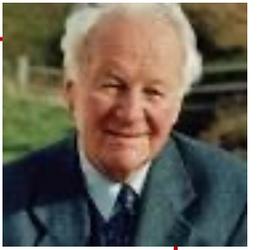
Selective others, Being Active in wide range of Circles, Bringing Mutual

Experiences, Insights, Maturity, Seasoning, and Joy to others as, in turn, we

receive Joy and Energy from them along the way.

*When we Consider the life, work, and service of a **one-Man or a one-Woman**, we think of all these details, areas, perspectives, layers, and dimensions:
“Privileges & Responsibilities”*

*Multiple Settlements & Mobility
Relation to Family, Friends, Relatives, & Society
Affiliation, Accountability, & Productivity
Unrestricted Faith & Spirituality (the sky is the limit)
Teachability & Approachability
Vulnerability, Authenticity, & Transparency
Care, Intimacy, & Sexuality
Strength, Endurance, & Resiliency
Growth in Grace, & toward Maturity
Life Journey, God’s Kingdom, & Eternity*



Adapted from Dr. Rev. John Stott

*It has been said that the **best candidate** for company or marriage is not a **frustrated** single person but a **content**, balanced, anchored, and at ease person.*

*An unmarried adult person is like a **whole institution**, a one-man or one-woman a fully function system-operation.*

*We are the **product** of so many influences and influencers along the journey, and the cumulative result of so many **mentors** who invested in us – in our lives and our character and our journey, steadily through the years.*

*So, as we benefit from other people's legacies, let us plan on leaving our own **legacy**, each **one** in his or her own **capacity** and unique ways. Let us invest well in others.*



Dr. Abraham Kuruvilla -- adapted from an article entitled:

“A Professor's Singular Focus: Choosing to Be Celibate for Christ”

A Spiritual Discipline

He defines it as *Ecclesiological Singleness* and involves four pillars that describe his vocation to serve the Lord as a single man.

Single by Choice

Remaining single has been a conscious choice, made in his mid-twenties. Unlike others who may be seeking a spouse and/or are single only due to divorce or the death of a spouse, he remains unmarried on purpose, in line with his spiritual gifting of celibacy, as his calling.

Single for Life

Just as marriage is meant to be a lifelong union, so Kuruvilla considers his singleness “for life,” opting to close the “door” in order to maintain a singular focus upon his activities in ministry.

Single unto Christ

Purposeful singleness has given Kuruvilla the freedom to expand his scholarly training, to accept a variety of preaching and teaching offers, and to explore the theology of celibacy from personal experience.

Single in Community

He purposefully seeks community among friends, colleagues, and fellow-church members. While he admits to being careful with opposite gender, he consistently lives his life with people. “He has never voiced a word of frustration or disappointment about being single,” Anderson said. “He has embraced—not tolerated—singleness fully,

<https://voice.dts.edu/article/a-professors-singular-focus-choosing-to-be-celibate-for-christ-kuruvilla/>

Now, let us turn our attention to our role as Caregivers which could imply several of the following roles

Therapist
Physician/Nurse
Shepherd
Servant Leader
Administrator
Pastor/Minister
Educator/Teacher
Parent Figure
Social Worker
Spouse/Partner
Child of Elderly Parent
Coach-Motivator

Mentor/Nurturer
Visionary/Overseer
Humanitarian Worker
Healthcare Provider
Counselor/Clinician
Psychologist
Missionary/Volunteer
Priest-Prophet
Healer/Intercessor
Spiritual Director/Guide
Agent of Reconciliation
Peace Activist

Handling Stress -- Basically, there are two Types:

Distress (negative stress)

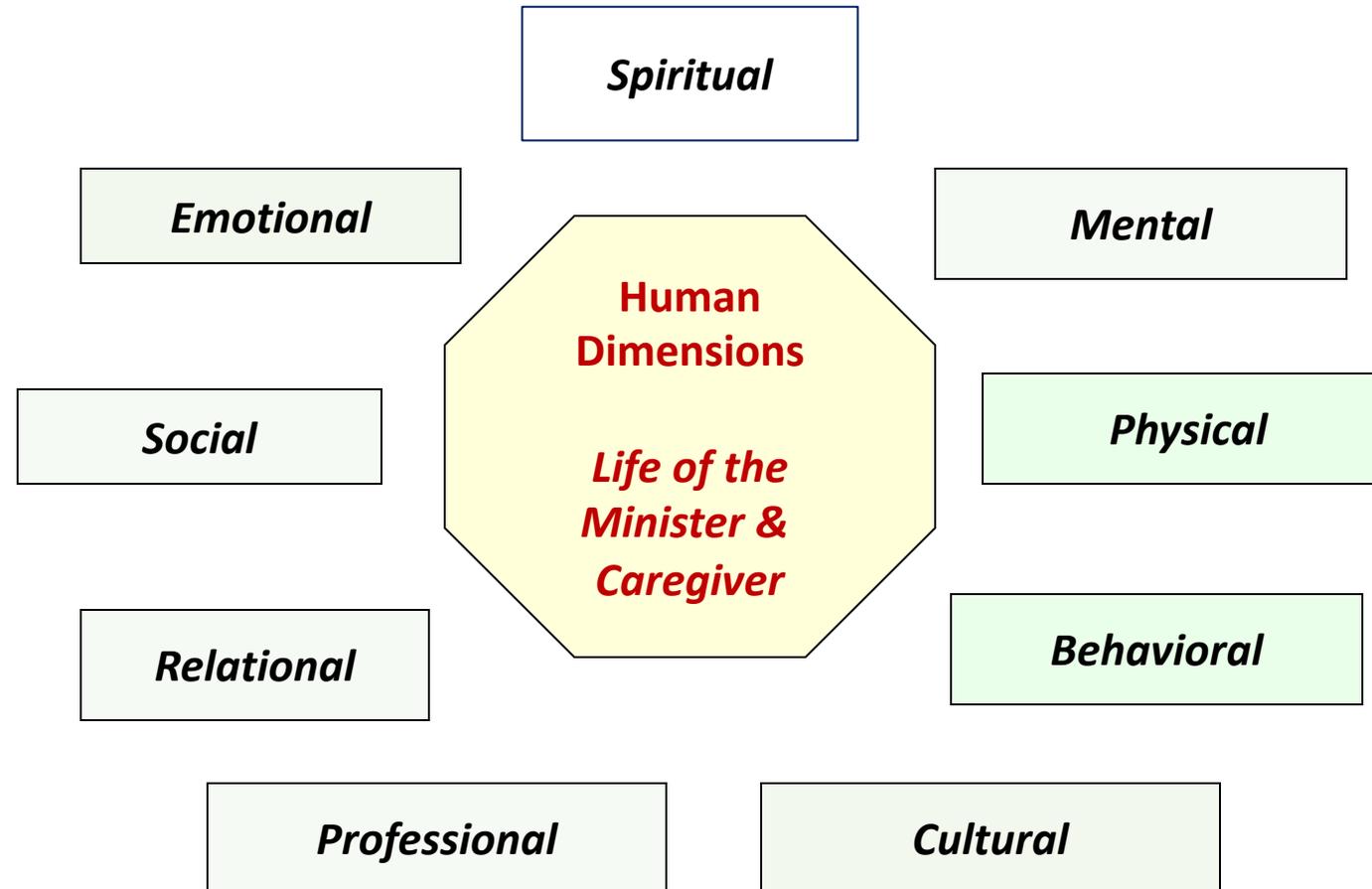
*Accident, Terminal Illness, Job Loss, Sharp Separation,
Divorce, Financial Break, Death of Loved-Ones, Disaster, etc.*

and

Eustress (positive stress)

*Moving Home, Graduation, Starting New Job, Taking Exams, Preparing for
Marriage, New Adventure, Traveling to a New Location, Learning New Skills,
Performing big Tasks, etc.*

Domains of Personality Functioning



The philosopher Socrates said:

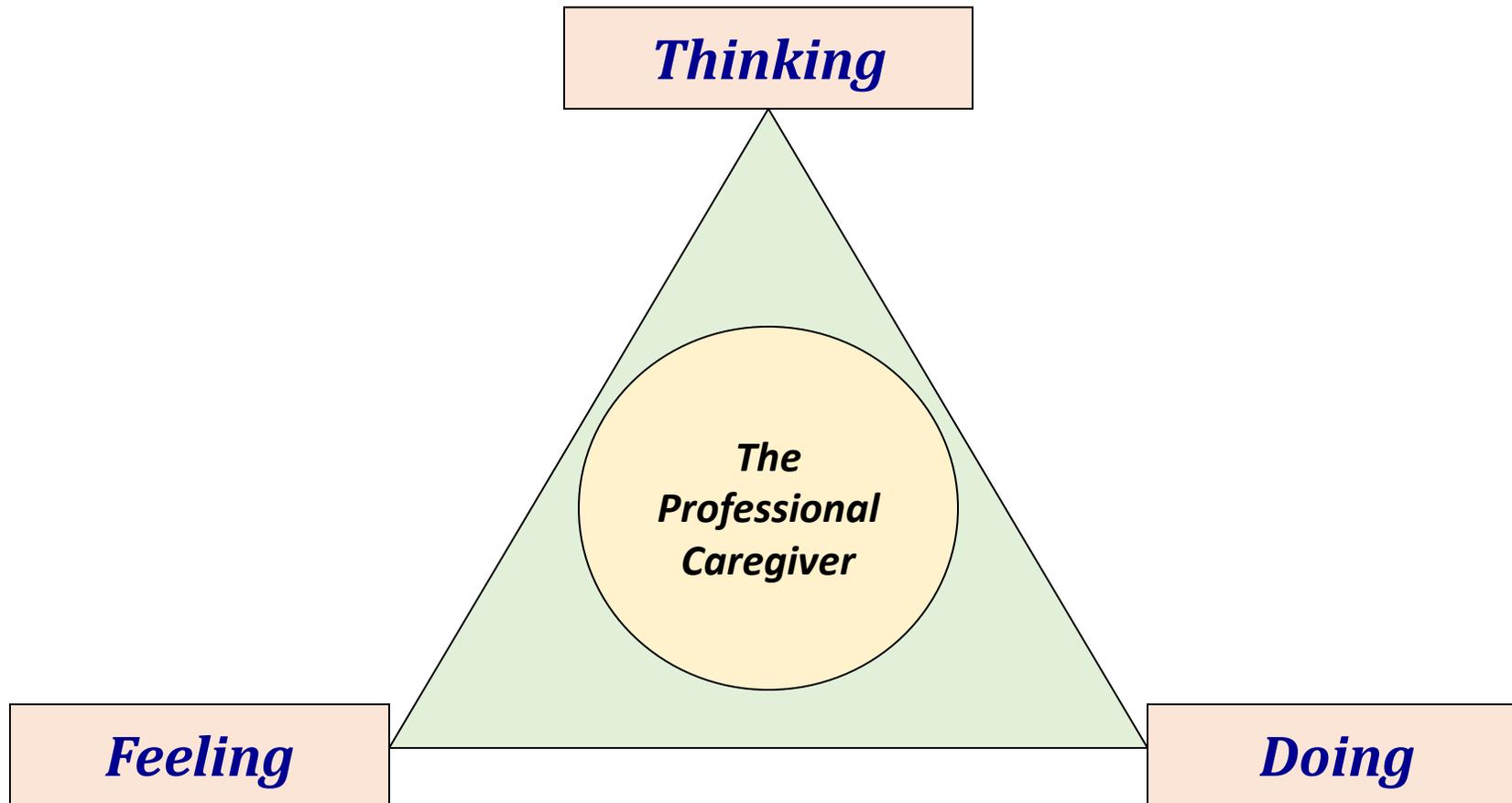
“Know Thyself”

Later, many philosophers, mentors, and religious leaders instructed their disciples to

“Pay Attention to Yourself...”

Including the Apostle Paul to his Disciple Timothy!

Self-Awareness



Personal Exercise: Make Two Lists of Your ~

- Strengths
- Positive Qualities
- Gifts & Talents
- Good Skills
- Things you like about yourself and want to keep and develop further
- Weaknesses
- Negative Qualities
- Lack of Skills
- Areas need major Improvement
- Things you don't like about yourself and want to change

Check which list is longer and keep adding to them as you go along. Length will change. Some traits will fall in the middle as they qualify to be either as a strength or weakness, depending on how you use or practice them...

Positive Experiences in Helping Others Cross-Culturally

- *General Sense of Reward and Joy.*
- *Wonderful Collaboration with Locals & Nationals.*
- *Deep Peace, Fellowship, & Sense of Accomplishment.*
 - *High Motivation, Aspiration, and Enthusiasm.*
 - *Sense of Responsibility and Immediacy.*
 - *Contribution to Global Health Movement.*
 - *Good Levels of Contentment & Satisfaction.*
- *Reinforcement by Positive Feedback & Outcomes...*

Regarding Empathy:

Over Empathy approach will certainly lead to

Fusion

*results: no clear separation of minds or passions
and no clear or objective perspective*

Under Empathy approach will lead to

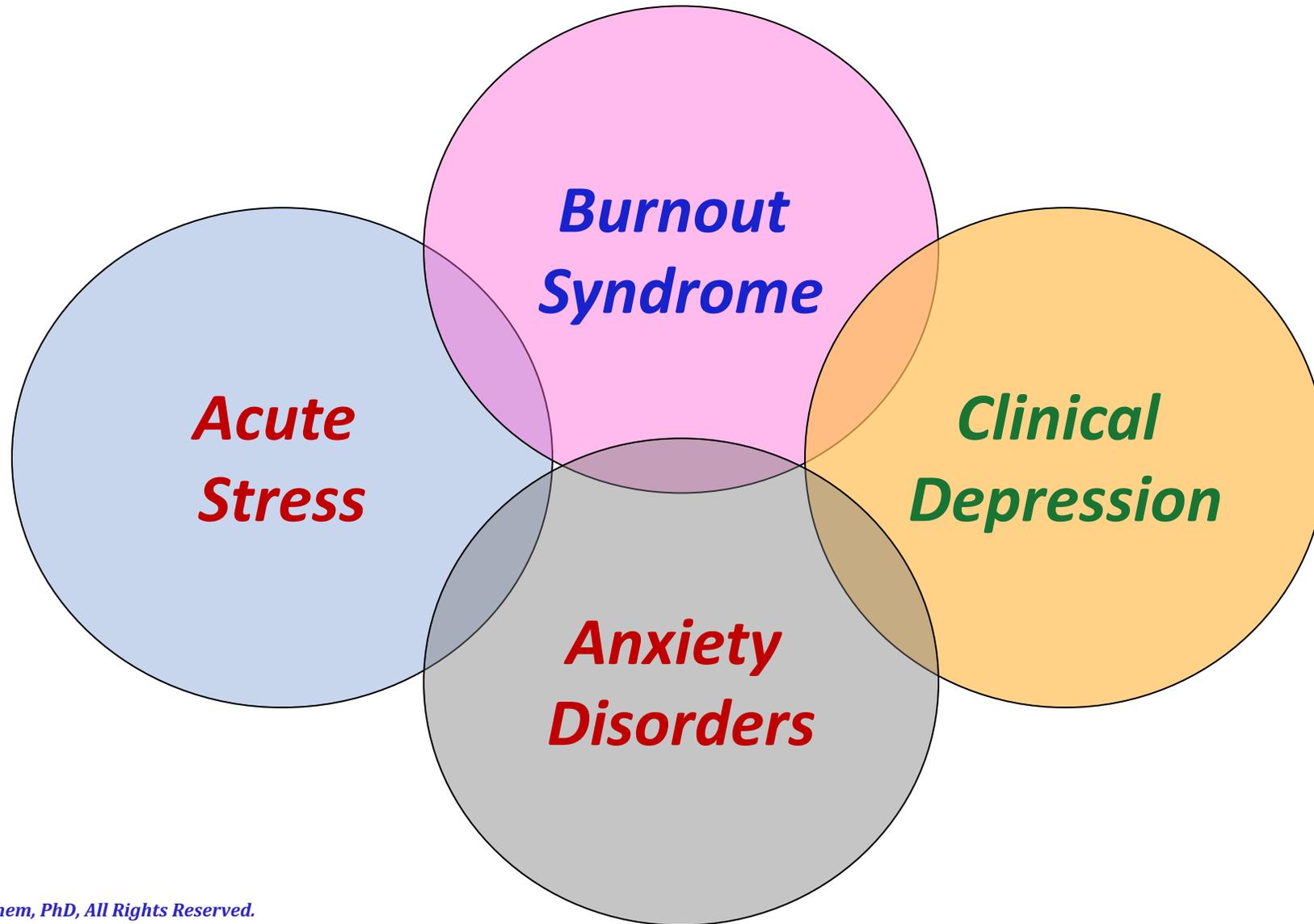
Alienation

*results: no passionate connection but rather
mechanical and robotic relations*

“Compassion Fatigue”

*Compassion Fatigue is a new emerging term in the scholarly literature. It is the condition of **emotional** and **physiological tiredness** that results when helpers are caring and giving so much of themselves and keep showing extensive **MERCY**.*

*This is similar to **Secondary Trauma effect** but is different somewhat in that **Compassion Fatigue** does not display any severe symptoms of the trauma-related event or **Acute Stress**.*



We are Called to Become Healthier & More Efficient in:

“Prevention is better than Intervention” **دِرَّهْمٌ وَقَايَةٌ**

خَيْرٌ مِنْ قِنطَارٍ عِلَاجٌ

- *Time Management*
- *Health Management* (keeping up the good & caring for the ill parts)
- *Relationship Management* (Misunderstanding, people can be demanding-draining)
- *Temptation Management* (behaviors, items, practices, dependencies)
- *Life-Details Management* (minor duties, maintenance, money, chores)
- *Distractions Management* (papers piles, people needs, monitors, audio-visual, digital)
- *Serenity Management* (existential concerns, spirituality, inner peace, prayer life)

Common Conditions and Temptations -- and the Holes in the Souls

- *Isolation by default (or) Isolating by design.*
~ Watching our tendencies ~
- *Loneliness and Disconnection ~ Transforming Loneliness to Aloneness*
- *What are our Preoccupations / Dependencies / Obsessions / Compulsions / Cravings / Destructive Habits / Addictions /
Tendencies for alcohol, drugs, over-eating, over-spending, gambling, gossiping, over-working (workaholic), over-playing, over-sexualizing, etc..*
- *List some of your own Temptations & Vulnerabilities ---*

We are Called to Become Global Citizens & an Effective Cross-Cultural Workers

- **Balanced Worldview**
 - **Increased Interpersonal Skills**
 - **Cultural Sensitivity & Humility**
 - **Lower Anxiety & Higher Hope**
- **Network of Cross-National Involvements**
 - **Multicultural or International Work**



*Here are some Practical Hints,
Recommendations, and Suggestions
to Encourage us to Form new Desirable Virtues,
Healthy Habits, Survival Skills, Positive Attitudes,
and Resiliency Practices. [See Attached Article on Resiliency]*

*We Aim to seek Help, Hope, Health, and Healing for Others,
who are in Our Care, and eventually for Ourselves as well,
as we Serve everywhere and on the Front Lines.*

- ✚ Memorize **Scriptures**/ let scriptures be First in morning and Last in evening for your eyes to see. That will leave an imprint in the brain which translates into our unconscious then to our spiritual mind, heart, and soul.
- ✚ Try to Hear part of the **Gospel** daily.
- ✚ **Sing** to the Lord when alone, even push yourself to start, then the melody will follow from your mind and lips into your heart.
- ✚ Be intentional with your **Thought-pattern** and Watch your **Mental** focus.
- ✚ **Talk** about the Lord with someone else daily.
- ✚ Decide to **be a blessing** to others, even generically.
- ✚ Do you best to put your life **in order** and in **structure** in some fashion.
- ✚ At the same time, do not wait until you put everything in order to you begin ***Living Well***.
- ✚ ***Do What You Can, with What You Have, Where You Are.***
- ✚ When you **Lament** about what you are missing or what you have lost or missed or what you do not have in life, quickly remind yourself of what you still Have. Realize you are **ahead** of millions of people around... So, begin thanking God for these gifts and abilities with a grateful heart.

- ✚ Avoid **Self-pity** or dwelling mainly on the **Negative...**
- ✚ Keep a **Diary** or a **Journal**. Make an entry several times a week.
- ✚ Try to **transform** any feelings or experiences of **loneliness** into **aloneness**. “I am alone with God, with my memories, my ideas, my music, my aspirations, my capital of relationships, my internal connections.
- ✚ **Obey God** and seek His Guidance to the **best of your ability**/knowledge, even if you feel uncertain or deprived, then leave all the results into His Hands, realizing there is a reward for the faithful one who display with long-obedience.
- ✚ Be an **influencer**. Speak peace, encouragement, blessing, into others daily. In person or on the phone or in writing: How is your day/life? How can I pray for you? ... We all have spheres of influence. Consider that encounter as if the last time you can impact them, as that may not repeat or come back again.
- ✚ Avoid **Temptations** and Postpone them (better than fighting them). Postpone the urge to do something unhealthy – usually urges are very short-lived. Even defocus, break the routine, leave/go for a brisk walk, change music or channel, call a friend, listen to little news, drink some juice,... **Distract** yourself...
- ✚ Be careful when **relating to the opposite sex**. Respect the norms and customs and tradition of the community you are serving. Watch and learn! Check with elders, teachers, and pastors about what is appropriate and what is not before you befriend or mix with other genders young or old. Also, learn how best to relate to the elderly with honor, respect, and dignity.
- ✚ Watch your **internet** use and your dependency on **screens**. Been too attached or **glued to devices** is unhealthy and a form of over-dependency/addiction, regardless of the sites or contents – (*news, texts, posts, social media, computer games, sentimental sites, and overt sexual content, etc.*)

- ✚ Set some short term and long terms **Goals**. The gap between setting goals and achieving them can **Huge** and unsurmountable. Start out by writing down **small steps**/goals, and what you hope to achieve. Then tell a friend or mentor about them to check on you.
- ✚ **Initiate friendships**. Avoid the pressure to have an exclusively “*dating partners*” ... Or quickly enter Courting. Better to things in groups and community. Gather around as many general and special friends.
- ✚ When down or **distressed** or tempted or desiring *sexual intimacy* or fighting mental-emotional battles... Try to do something **tangible-physical-behavioral**. Move to change your mind and mood and physiology tone.... be intentional, stretching, smiling, singing, going out for a brisk walk, drinking fluids, listening to music or Nature documentaries... Make effort to **shift paradigm**, structure, time, space, activity, input, and output.
- ✚ Use **imagination**, visualization, mental images, or recall nice memories, and then uses relaxation techniques, like deep-slow **breathing**. [4 -7- 8]
- ✚ We are people of **habits**. So, we constantly learn new habits and un-learn old habits. So, keep a healthy balance.
- ✚ Have a sponsor or a **mentor**. Adopt a few **elderly** people as “parents” for nurture, homey feeling, to enjoy a family atmosphere and safe generational connections.
- ✚ **Use Time wisely**. The years are passing by quickly. Always make lists of the important vs. the most important items/tasks/duties/projects/people. Redeem Time well without being compulsive. Life is short and uncertain, so let us build treasures in Heaven-- **for where our treasure are, there will be our heart also**.



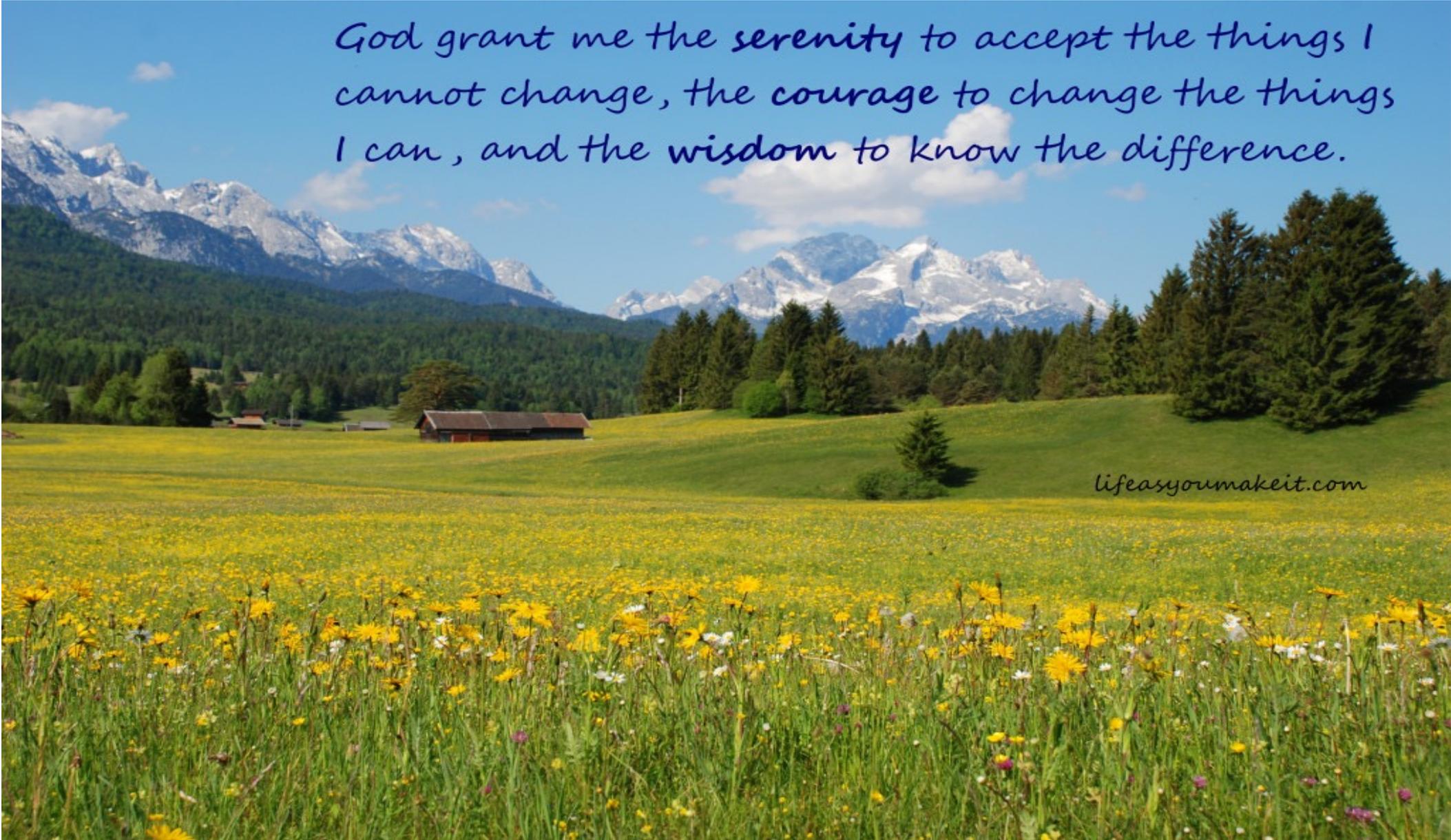
Memorize the Marvelous Psalm 16, which is very Relevant to our Study here.

***The Bible also Says:**
“The Lord Be Exalted,
Who Delights in the Wellbeing of His Servants”
Psalm 35*

and finally Let us Press On and Say with the Apostle Paul..

~ ~ ~ ~

*“I Can & We Can Do All Things Through
Christ Who Strengthens Me & Strengthens Us”*



*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I
cannot change, the courage to change the things
I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.*

lifeasyoumakeit.com

The American Philosopher and Theologian Reinhold Niebuhr 1892–1971



Global Missions
Health Conference

GMHC 2023

November 09, 2023 2:00 pm to November 11, 2023 1:30 pm

LOCATION:

**Southeast Christian Church
920 Blankenbaker Parkway
Louisville, KY 40243**

TICKET HOLDER:

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TICKET TYPE:

SPEAKER – Semiar Presenter

*Thank you for your presence and participation. I wish you well on your life and service. Let us press on with steadfastness. May your journey be always rich even though it may not be always easy.
For His Grace will be sufficient and His Strength will be manifested in our weaknesses.*

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