CHRIST- CENTERED HEALING

of POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

for FIRST RESPONDERS

by

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

During 2011, one hundred sixty-four law enforcement officers (LEO) died in the line of duty nationwide. A breakdown shows that 65 were murdered with a firearm, forty-seven died in on duty vehicle accidents, thirteen died while being assaulted with the vehicle, and seven were struck by vehicles considered accidental.[[1]](#footnote-1) Police experts will examine these numbers and evaluate each incident, piece by piece utilizing hundreds of hours of investigative work to determine the cause, fault, and to determine whether a change in policy or procedure could have prevented each death.

During the same time period, there were one hundred twenty-six police officers that committed suicide.[[2]](#footnote-2) These suicides were also investigated to check determine if there was foul play involved they were classified as suicides; the investigation is over. No answers to questions “why?” No analysis will be done and no change in policy will be considered. No hero funeral will be planned. The family will be left wondering quotation mark “why?”

Police agencies must consider that for every LEO suicide, there are 1000 other LEO’s out there still on duty and suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); some have been diagnosed, others have not. Of those who do not suffer from PTSD; many have other emotional issues brought by job stress and emotional trauma. For example, many suffer from depression, anxiety, marital problems, sexual issues, and alcohol and drug abuse problems. According to PoliceSuicideStudy.com, “By the most conservative studies out there, we are now talking a total of 216,000 officers [out of 875,000 nationwide] either suffer from PTSD or some other form of emotional stress that is significant enough to alter and disturb their lives.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

In today’s society, promoting a LEO’s “mental well-being” over their bullet proof vest is not popular. In the police culture and LEO (as well as a firefighter) is thought to be fearless unemotional mythical warrior; anything less is a sign of weakness. If and LEO shows any sign of weakness or even just an air of “being human,” the officer will be ostracized by his coworkers. Other officers will refuse to work with a seemingly weak officer, or an officer who shows too much emotion. This attitude is promoted by the agencies who are contributing to the emotional trauma by downplaying it, ignoring it, or even outright denying it.

PTSD can result from any psychological shock or traumatic event that could have led to serious bodily injury or death; or at least the perception of injury or death. The LEO, firefighter, as well as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) are exposed to stressful traumatic events on a daily basis. Incidents include child abuse, children’s deaths, drownings, rapes, shooting victims, elder abuse, serious vehicle accidents, burn victims, suicide and murder scenes. All of these causes a wounding of the heart. Someone heal rapidly, some can last a life-time without ever healing. This thesis will focus on spiritual healing a first responder suffering from PTSD. This is a Biblical worldview solution to an ever-growing problem that secular counseling, as well as standard Christian counseling has yet to cure. I will show real-life examples of God’s healing of individuals with PTSD.

God created man in His own image (Gen. 1:26). We were created with a body, soul, and spirit. Our body is flesh, our soul consists of our heart, mind, free will, and emotions. Our spirit interacts with our soul, God, and our body (1 Th. 5:23). For our purpose when I refer to the heart I am speaking of the spirit, heart, and soul as one.

Wounds to the heart caused by trauma are invisible (Prv. 15:13 and 17:22). These wounds are difficult to heal, especially for a LEO with a warrior mentality. This trauma to our inner man must heal from the inside out. Secular psychological counseling methods have limitations. The main problem is that there is no spiritual component in secular psychology. The reason that there are limited results is that the primary focus is on changing lives through behavior modifications and coping mechanisms; only God can heal. Amazing things can happen we bring God into our pain. When we ask for healing, He hears us; God did not cause the hurt, but He heals us by giving us a new heart, spirit, and a renewed mind (Rom. 12:2). We have a rebirth, a new beginning (Rom.6:6 and 2 Cor. 5:17).

We can identify a wounded person by the fruit they produce (Mt. 7:17 – 20). There is always a reason why people do the things they do. act or react in certain ways. If an individual displays anger, hate, or unforgiveness, there is bitter fruit in their sinful behavior. A traumatic event is a seed that is left to grow, becomes a bitter root. A bitter root produces bad fruit (Heb.12:15). This bitter root can be a sinful judgment or expectancy that developed from a wounding.

An example of this is suppose a young LEO that takes a report of a young molestation. A four-year-old girl is reporting that she was molested by her sixteen-year-old babysitter. This is a difficult crime to investigate; this would cause a normal person to become enraged. This young LEO is no different. This type of call may cause a bitter root judgment of the perpetrator. He may judge the babysitter as a “scumbag” and that he should rot in prison for what he did to the innocent four-year-old girl. This judgment will fertilize the bitter root. This LEO may develop an expectancy that all teenage boys are child molesting scum. This is obviously a sinful judgment (Mk. 11:25, Lk.6:37, Mt. 18:21-2, and Eph. 4:32). He then may make himself an inner vow that his daughter will never date a boy. All these sinful responses come from one wound. If left unattended, this bitter root will end up defiling many others (Heb. 12:15); unless he seeks God’s help to heal him of this wounding.

All Christians must understand the important principles of sowing and reaping (Gal. 6:7). If the LEO continues to sow the sinful judgment in unforgiveness, he will reap judgment on himself (Mt. 7:1-2, 2 Cor. 9:6, and Lk. 6:37-38). If the LEO does not confess and repent these sins, he will be stuck in a cycle of sinful behavior. If this officer were to seek counseling for his anger, a secular counselor or psychologist would attempt to determine the root cause through long hours upon hours of discussion that may take years to determine a solution. Christian counselors also use the secular method of counseling; the majority of Christian counselors use psychiatric viewpoints and techniques and adapt them to their Christian-based counseling. This is a Freudian base method that encourages a counselee to discuss anything that comes to mind without reservation. The counselor does not direct the conversation and suggests a victim mentality.

The Christ-Centered healing method described in this thesis has roots with the techniques taught by John and Paula Sanford in their book series called “The Transformation Series.” This method requires a counselee to be interviewed to determine the bad fruit in their lives. Then determining the sinful responses, and confession and repentance. Next is prayer for healing trauma. I believe that for true healing, one should know who they are according to God’s word. The counselee is taught Bible scripture and draws on the wisdom of God to show the counselee’s God’s moral standards for living. After Bible study and interview, the counselee is led in prayer we ask God to give the counselee a new life and walk in the Holy Spirit. Everything in this method is scriptural. Repentance, forgiveness and prayer are essential to healing. We all have wounds of the past that can ultimately only be resolved by God. Only God can set a captive free and feel the brokenhearted (Is. 61:1). The prayer minister will explain that Christ endured horrific trauma on the cross as payment for our sins. He bore our diseases, our sorrows, our pain, and our sins so that we would be forgiven and healed (Is. 53:3-5 and 1 Pt. 2:24). We now have victory over grief, sorrow, illness, and mental illness (Is. 53:4-5). The counselee is taught that they are a new creation through Christ’s work on the cross (2 Cor. 5:17). They are a new creation with a renewed mind (Rom. 12:2).

The prayer minister will explain the importance of forgiveness (Mt. 6:15-15). Not only forgiving those who we perceive harmed us, but also ourselves, and if necessary; God. The sin of unforgiveness opens the door and give Satan the authority to gain a foothold in our life (Eph. 4:26-27).

When the counselee understands these principles, the prayer minister interviews the counselee to get an idea of the type of fruit produced and the issues and root causes of bad character traits and/or behavior. If confession and repentance is necessary due to sinful reactions from the trauma and the bitter roots they produce, the prayer minister will leave them through the confession and repentance of sin (1 Jn. 1:9 and Jas. 5:13-16). Often those who are wounded have bitter root expectancies and make sinful inner vows in an attempt to prevent any further wounding. These expectancies and inner vows must be renounced in order to close doors open to Satan and to initiate the healing process.

Through prayer we ask our Heavenly Father to remove the pain associated with the specific trauma (Jas. 5:16). God will not remove the memory of the events, but he will heal the trauma by placing the cross between the counselee and their sinful behavior.

Most of the time a wound or pain from a trauma will be healed in one session. However, sometimes prayers will have to be repeated to heal the wound(s). LEO’s often have many bitter roots that require confession and repentance. These wounds must be healed one at a time in order to close all doors left open for oppression. Wounds are healed layer by layer. As the layers of trauma are healed, the LEO will see peace and joy return to their heart as they begin their new walk in the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16-25). This method will work with any trauma. This is because it is God’s will to heal the broken hearted (Ps. 34:18 and 147:3).

This Christ-Centered Healing ministry should be an integral part of every Bible based church. This thesis is specific to first responders; however, it is God’s will to heal all Christians. Many people, even Christians are trapped in a cycle of sinful behavior due to bitter roots and unhealed trauma. The cycle may be of child abuse, spousal abuse, alcoholism, drug abuse, or adultery. Christ-Centered healing will stop the cycle and promote healing in families. When applied to LEOs, we can expect healthier officers, less sick leave use and abuse, positive citizen contacts, higher morale, and a substantial cost savings to police/fire departments, and ultimately the tax payer. The saving could be in the multiple millions of dollars. Exact costs are unknown because statistics are not kept on LEOs that develop PTSD and seek counseling. The U.S. Military spends hundreds of millions of dollars on PTSD related treatment and research. Law enforcement agencies measure the cost of doing business in dollars and cents. All things are based on statistical crime information. Very rarely do they consider the cost of injury to their officers. Most agencies have a long list of potential new recruits; thus, officers are expendable. The truth is that PTSD is one of the most-costly results of modern policing in human terms. If we accept that a civilized society requires a police force, we must recognize and accept that society must develop a system that allows LEOs to survive a career without ill effects. The church needs to be an integral part of the community where these officers work. Churches historically have been a place for care and healing, they should be again.

Finally, if this Christ-Centered Healing ministry is taught to first responders, we will also be fulfilling the Great Commission (Acts 1:8) because those who are healed will follow Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER TWO

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

The word “trauma” is derived from a Greek word meaning “wound.” An individual who is put through a traumatic experience becomes wounded. Just as a physical injury, such as a deep cut to the skin, internal wounds need time to heal. Just as a cut can become infected or scar, wounds to the heart, if not treated, can become infected and cause bitter roots to form. Psychic trauma causes additional stress and discomfort resulting from the memory of a traumatic event and its bitter roots; this causes our defense mechanisms to break down making it difficult for use to function normally and be all that God designed us to be.

When we are emotionally hurt or physically injured, raped, victim of a crime, molested, or feeling debilitating illness; we feel pain. Every person expresses their feelings and emotions differently. Some display their emotions without regret, while others cannot or will not show any emotion no matter what. It is extremely unhealthy to refuse to show emotion and keep it pushed down and hidden within. God created us with emotions. We must use them as the Holy Spirit instructs.

Those who will not or cannot show emotion may outwardly appear healthy, but inwardly they are unable to move past the traumatic event. This person is in bondage. They are just waiting for a psychic explosion. This explosion will occur at some point, it may take days, weeks, or even years; but we know there will be a dramatic snap. This delayed response is PTSD.

PTSD was once thought to be only a result of war. However, PTSD is common in victims of child abuse, sexual abuse, rape, natural disasters, or car crashes; any incident where serious bodily injury or death is perceived by the victim. PTSD does not limit itself to only victims, but those who witness life and death events will be victims. This is why PTSD is prevalent in emergency first responders who witness life and death daily. Researchers from the fire department of the City of New York’s Bureau of Health Services found that emergency medical workers (EMT), who responded and worked Ground Zero after the World Trade Center attack in 2001, are suffering from unusually high number of health problems compared with EMT workers who did not respond to the World Trade Center. The EMT workers are seven times more likely to have certain medical conditions including depression.

Michael Crane, the director of the World Trade Center Health Program Clinical Center at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York said, “It’s easy to see why ambulance crews working at Ground Zero would suffer depression, given the carnage they witnessed.” He added, “The mental health impact was extraordinary and remains extraordinary.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

There are two types of stress disorders: Acute Stress Disorder (ASD) and Chronic or Complex PTSD. ASD is commonly exposure to a single traumatic event where symptoms develop within days or weeks of the event.

Chronic of Complex PTSD is a result of several traumatic events or cumulative events which over a 20+ year career of the LEO; and symptoms at least six months (or more) after the event.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) describes PTSD,

“The automatic dysphoric cognitive essential feature is the development of characteristic symptoms following a psychological traumatic event that is generally outside the range of the usual human experience. The characteristic symptoms involve re-experiencing the traumatic event; numbing the responsiveness to, or reduced involvement with, the external world; and a variety of symptoms.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

Description of PTSD adapted from DSM-IV

“1. Exposure to a traumatic event in which both of the following were present:

* 1. Experienced or witnessed an event or events that involved actual threatened death or serious injury to a person.
  2. Response to this event involved fear, helplessness, or horror, or the perception of event led to these emotions.

2. You re-experience the event in one or more of the following ways:

1. Recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts, or perceptions.
2. Have recurrent, distressing dreams of the event.
3. Feeling as if the traumatic event was recurring, and you may have a sense of reliving the experience through illusions, hallucinations, and active flashbacks.
4. Experience of intense psychological distress or bodily reactions when exposed to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event (e.g. sights, sounds, smells); these are also known as triggers.

3. Persistently avoid things of even(s) associated with the trauma and numb response using three or more of the following:

1. You make a great effort to avoid thoughts, feelings, or conversations associated with the trauma or to avoid activities, places, or people that would cause you to remember the trauma.
2. Unable to recall the trauma.
3. Less interest in participation of activities once enjoyed.
4. Feeling of being distracted from others.
5. The ability to feel emotion is restricted.
6. A sense of a foreshortened future.

4. Persistent symptoms of increased physical arousal that was not present prior to the incident, as indicated by two or more of the following:

1. Difficult falling or staying asleep
2. Irritability or outbursts of anger
3. Difficulty concentrating
4. Hypervigilance
5. Exaggerated startle response

5. All of these symptoms have lasted more than one month.

6. Because of these symptoms, you are significantly distressed or impaired in social, occupational, or some other important areas of functions.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

SYMPTOMS

A LEO can work every day without knowing they have PTSD. Symptoms of stress or depression can be mild. As time progresses symptoms will increase. With me, I suffered from severe depression, anxiety attacks, and nightmares for over three years before a wide variety of symptoms emerged. They appeared to be a worsening of a debilitating non-curable disease. The stress of the disease brought on flashbacks and suicidal thoughts along with panic attacks and hypervigilance.

PTSD symptoms include:

* Re- experiencing the incident
* Avoiding things related to the incident
* Depression
* Uncontrolled emotions
* Hypervigilance
* Irritability
* Nightmares
* Anxiety or panic attacks
* Sleep difficulties
* Not being able to concentrate
* Constant worry or feeling ill
* Unexplained anger
* Self-isolation / withdrawal
* Suicidal thoughts

An individual can re-experience trauma in vivid detail, flashbacks and nightmares can be re-lived in graphic detail. Mine were so severe that I was afraid to go to sleep at night. I was sleep deprived daily. I took Ambien to sleep and caffeine pills during the day. I look large amounts of Vicodin in an attempt to reduce anxiety attacks.

These symptoms can make one feel hopeless. I thought I was going crazy. I had to put on a mask to prevent anyone from discovering my secret. When you do a good job, no one knows. This is a double-edged sword, if no one knows; you believe no one cares. However, most victims do not do such a good job of concealment. One combat veteran, I read about said, “I sometimes wish I had lost an arm or leg during combat so people could see my injury, maybe then they would understand what I’m going though.” PTSD is a wounding of the heart, it is an invisible injury.

There will be no argument that First Responders have a very stressful job. Constant job stress will cause trauma. Often the symptoms of stress are similar to those of PTSD. T.H. Holmes in his book, “Stressful Life Events” tells us that the author developed what is known as the “Holmes Stress Scale,” Holmes found in his studies that a collection of stressors over time such as experienced by an LEO amounts to a high degree of trauma. Each stressor in and of itself is not traumatic, but repeated exposure to one stressor after another rates high on the stress scale. [[7]](#footnote-7)

Trauma causes us to be broken and in bondage. We are not in bondage due to our past traumas, we are in bondage to our sinful responses and the lies we believe as a result of this trauma. We are blessed to have a healer who was afflicted with our sorrow, sins and afflictions. Through Christ’s work on the cross, we are healed.

CHAPTER THREE

PHYSIOLOGICAL REACTIONS TO TRAUMA

When God designed mankind, he created us to survive and defend ourselves in a variety of dangerous situations. Trauma overstimulates the nervous system. When overstimulation occurs, arousal levels are chronically high. This arousal can have a serious impact on the human body. This includes anger, sleep issues, hypervigilance, guilt, detachment, isolation, shame, terror and depression.

A normal brain has two halves. The left side is analytical. It is logical and rational, it gives us the ability to read, write, speak and think analytically. The lower brain controls all automatic life functions, such as breathing, heartbeat, and the digestion of food.

The right side is like a photo album. It is emotional, intuitive, artistic, and spontaneous. The right side allows us to dream, but most importantly, it is the alarm side of the brain. During a traumatic event where death is possible, the body will dump hormones throughout the body. These hormones cause our heart to beat faster and our lungs to pump harder getting ready to fight or flee. This is commonly known as the fight or flight reaction. Along with this response the brain takes over. The right-brain alarm goes off and begins to heighten our senses. Our right-brain takes in memory in vivid detail. The entire event is being burned into the memory so that we will know how to react in the event that a similar traumatic event was to occur in the future. God has designed us with these built-in survival techniques.

New technology allows scientists to visualize the effect of trauma on the brain. Three-dimensional brain scans such as the Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography (SPECT) shows increased brain activity in specific areas of the brain in persons diagnosed with PTSD. A 2007 study reports,

“Extended exposure to trauma creates abnormalities in the hippocampus, which is also in the temporal lobe of the brain, and is associated with motivation and emotion. When trauma occurs, our fight or flight response is activated by a gland in the brain called amygdale, which modulates feelings, expressions, emotional memory, and recognition of emotion in others. The amygdale is ‘fired up’ when individuals are in threatening situations. Continued over-activation of the amygdale, as is extended or recurrent traumatic events, can result in persistent heightened arousal, anxiety and hypervigilance as seen in PTSD, even when the threat no longer exists.

Individuals with PTSD often have flashbacks, nightmares and altered sleep cycles because the thalamus is activated, which is responsible for sensory perception and sleep wake cycles. Each PTSD symptom is linked to an anatomical area of the brain. A bone that has been broken takes time to heal; the brain is no different. Areas of our brain responsible for movement and learning are also affected by traumatic events. The basal ganglia is associated with these tasks, as well as executive functioning. Executive functioning involves decision making, troubleshooting, managing new or difficult situations, and dealing with habits and temptations. When this part of the brain is malfunctioning individuals are disorganized, feel helplessness, and easily surrender to their temptations.

Lastly, the anterior cingulated plays an important part in regulating the heart, lungs, sweat glands, kidneys, digestion, and reproductive organs. This region is also associated with decision-making, emotional response modulation, as well as rational cognitive and emotional functioning. When this area of the brain is over-activated, the trauma creates symptoms seen in PTSD such as emotional numbing, denial, disorganization, and the inability to problem-solve.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

We also know that trauma not only affects the brain but the body as well. People who suffer from PTSD are at a greater risk of physical illness. Studies have shown that during stress and trauma there is a slight increase in the excretion of cortisol. Cortisol increases blood sugar, suppresses the immune system, and is responsible for the digestion of proteins, fats, and carbohydrates. This change in cortisol levels, as well as other associated hormones, causes a weak immune system. This puts the individual at risk of developing illness such as autoimmune disease, diabetes, multiple sclerosis or arthritis. [[9]](#footnote-9)

N. Duncan Sinclair, in his book Horrific Traumatic: A Pastoral Response to the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, tells us,

“PTSD creates havoc at all levels of who we are. Chronic fatigue, sleeplessness, gastric disturbances, uncontrolled blood pressure are all exacerbated by the spiritual disturbances of PTSD. When we speak of the loss of hope, we are speaking of a diseased heart. When we speak of the loss of intimacy, we are speaking of chronic pain. When we speak of the loss of peacefulness, we are speaking of chronic hyperalertness. It is within this framework that we talk of PTSD as basically a spiritual dysfunction. PTSD is a spiritual disorder not because the ‘person is not right with God’ or that ‘God is not right with the person.’ It is a spiritual disorder because the person who experiences that full impact of PTSD has been impoverished by the loss of a series of vital spiritual attributes that are essential to living a full life.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

EPIGENETICS

Epigenetic literally means “in addition to changes in genetic sequence.” This is a story of how our DNA can be affected by life experiences. Scientists have discovered the biochemical process that occurs during a gestation and throughout our lives. Our genes are able to switch themselves on or off. The results of this alters our physical as well as our mental health. Researchers believe that trauma, such as trauma that causes PTSD, can also be passed on to our descendants through our DNA. According to Robert Feinberg, Director of John Hopkins University’s Epigenetics Center, the role of epigenetics in cancer is “absolutely rock solid.”[[11]](#footnote-11) It can be assumed that if cancer can be passed on to descendants, so can PTSD.

Auturas Petronis, head of Kremil Family Epigenetics Laboratory at the Centre of Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto is among the first to study links between epigenetics and psychiatry. He suggests more study is required in the process in diseases such as schizophrenia, asthma, and diabetes.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Stress can alter epigenetic tags. A study found that pregnant women who were traumatized during the World Trade Center Attack on 09/11/2001 were most likely to have children with unusual levels of fear and stress when faced with loud noises, new foods, or unfamiliar people.[[13]](#footnote-13) These genetic alterations are known as epigenetic change; chemical differences that don’t mutate the DNA itself but affect how actively and efficiently the genes are made into proteins. By either silencing or activating genes, epigenetic changes can influence everything from brain development and functioning to risk of certain diseases. While not necessarily permanent, some of these changes can last a lifetime and some can even be passed on to the next generation.[[14]](#footnote-14)

A PTSD study at Washington University found that Vietnam veterans with a family history of depression were 69% more likely to develop PTSD than those who did not have a history of depression.

Due to a high number of veterans with PTSD, the Army, in collaboration with the National Institute of Mental Health, has begun an epigenetic study.

This $65 million study is collecting blood samples and surveys from the more than 100,000 current soldiers and new recruits in an effort to identify risk factors for PTSD and suicide. This study is on-going. [[15]](#footnote-15)

For currently deployed Army soldiers, the Army has a $125 million program designed to fight PTSD, seeking not to treat PTSD but to prevent it. This program is designed to integrate all aspects of a soldier’s life. This includes the soldier’s social life, physical fitness, emotional well-being, and spiritual health.[[16]](#footnote-16) How much more taxpayer money will we spend on secular attempts to heal individuals with PTSD? Christians already know how to heal PTSD- through our Heavenly Father.

CHAPTER FOUR

LAW ENFORCEMENT CULTURE

Police officers and the people who love them make up a unique subculture. Firefighters, Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT), and emergency room medical personnel can be grouped with the law enforcement officer (LEO). Some cities have public safety departments where employees rotate six months as a police officer and six months as a firefighter. All have similar personality traits and fall under the same subculture.

LEOs are required to perform dangerous, time urgent, and extremely physical duties. They are aggressive type “A.” take charge risk seekers. Their lives alternate between boredom and all-out adrenaline pumping life-and-death excitement. Both groups will give their lives to protect their communities they serve. LEOs do what most people would never do. When gunshots are fired, LEOs run toward where the shots are being fired from; risking their own lives to protect people they do not know and might not like.

Dr. Joel Fay, a wise retired LEO who became a noted psychologist and respected in the treatment of PTSD, wrote that the policing profession is difficult and very complex requiring the counseling skills of a psychologist, the patience of a pastor, the physical ability of an athlete, the knowledge of a team of lawyers, the courage of a lion, and the prudence of a judge.

LEOs live their lives in a fishbowl. They wear distinctive uniforms and drive brightly marked vehicles. Society expects a great deal from their LEOs, they give so much to serve their communities but it often cost them and their families much more than they could have imagined. In Philip Bonifacio’s book “The Psychological Effects of Police Work,” Bonifacio tells is readers,

“If we civilians are to see the police man [sic] as a human being rather than as the embodiment of virtue or evil, we must recognize and understand those forces in us that make us see him as either Superman or less than human. If police officers are to view themselves as a human rather than super-heroes or society’s victims, they must also recognize and understand those same forces that make them see themselves as different from everyone else.”[[17]](#footnote-17)

LEOs are type “A” personality, action-oriented people who enjoy the variety and excitement of not knowing what is going to happen next. They are decision-makers, seemingly fearless, aggressive, and willing to take control. LEOs must take control of situations, people, and emotions. They are expected to take control; without hesitation, they expect compliance from those who they give instruction and often must resort to verbal or physical force to complete their task. Failure to take control my cost in life. If an office worker or auto mechanic makes a mistake, it will cost their boss some money. If an LEO makes a mistake, someone may die.

Unfortunately, violent behavior sometimes manifests itself off- duty. It is not uncommon for LEOs to commit spousal abuse or get into bar fights. A must-have attribute is self- control, especially emotional self-control. Emotions must be shut off. A great deal of job stress comes from efforts to hide their emotions from coworkers and themselves. LEOs must be a witness to gruesome unimaginable events. These events include bloody crime scenes, murder scenes, suicide scenes, brutal injuries to people, and fatality vehicle accidents. LEOs cannot allow their emotions to surface because emotions interfere with the required work at hand. This results in the LEO becoming socially distant to protect themselves from despair. Emotions are considered a sign of weakness. In the law enforcement culture, showing any sign of weakness is a career death sentence. If coworkers sense their partner is weak, no one will work with them. They will be ostracized. No one will trust them, no one will protect them. The fear is that the weak cannot adequately protect their coworkers in dangerous life-threatening situations. Some officers who struggle with the emotions themselves may lash out and shun the weaker officer so they do not have to face their own weakness. This forces and unrealistic expectation that LEOs need to be superhuman; thus, they often take unnecessary risks to prove their bravado. It is considered an admission of failure to be emotionally weak. Often this vulnerability is addressed by working harder and faster, driving themselves to be perfectionists, and intolerant of mistakes. Communities will not accept mistakes from their LEOs, the stakes are too high.

Young adults will join the police or fire department with the best of intentions. They want to help people, to keep our children safe and to make their communities a better place to live. They are never told of the price they will have to pay for doing good; PTSD, stress, and depression are not in the recruiting brochure. LEOs undergo a rigorous recruitment process and background investigation. A polygraph for truthfulness and psychological testing to determine stability. The police academy is designed to be “high stress” to weed out the emotionally weak. LEOs then received thousands of hours of training continuing throughout their careers. Training on how to handle stress is normally a four-hour block on proper nutrition and exercise to reduce stress. Neither recruits nor veteran officers are taught how to manage a 25 or 30-year career in law enforcement or fire departments where they are exposed to stress as well as physical injury, emotional trauma, internal affair investigations, and criticism from press and the public. Police and fire departments refused to acknowledge any negative effects on their officers.

After completing about six months of a police academy training, the rookie officer will hit the streets with a training officer. For many it will be their first exposure to the evil side of society that is often hidden from the general public. Most recruits would never have expected to see a woman hospitalized after a near death beating from her husband, starving young children, the death of infants and children, or even a homeless family sleeping under a dirty cold bridge on Christmas. Rookies learn early how to control (shut down) their emotions. They will see that the LEO who is recognized and awarded is often the officer who can control his emotions the best, not knowing at the time that this may be a detriment to himself in the future.

During the rookie’s first decade of service, he will often seek out all sorts of dangerous assignments such as narcotics or SWAT. He will sign up for all the overtime that he can get for two reasons first is his love and devotion to the job, second, he is probably overspending as most LEOs do because of their excess personality. This devotion to the job and love of money, both considered idolatry, causes him to miss family birthdays and holidays. This becomes challenging for the spouses and families. He is a police officer, this is not just a job or career, it is his whole identity. He often will bring this cop attitude home. He may find that it is difficult to “turn off” the cop attitude. Spouses and children are often treated as suspects. He sees everything in black and white; there is no gray area, not even at home. It is either right or wrong, no in-between, he is judge and jury. He may become overprotective, witnessing life, death, and evil on a daily basis leaves indelible scars on his heart and soul.

After the first decade of service, the LEO’s perspective on life has drastically changed, he no longer sees any good in anyone, everyone is evil. He now has a cop worldview; his mentality is us (cops) versus them (society). He may no longer socialize with civilians; he will only socialize with other cops. He cannot connect with non- law enforcement. He believes that no one understands him. He may only fill comfortable with other LEOs. He has more invested emotionally with work than at home. He will spend more time with other LEOs that his family, he is no longer a husband and a father, he is a cop. He is no longer in neighbor; he is the cop next door. His identity as a man, child of God has slipped away. The identity of being a cop is everything. This can become a problem for many officers, this mental inflexibility triggers some to seek escape through alcohol, drugs, adultery, or other self-destructive behavior. All in a useless attempt to block their emotions.

If and when they reach veteran status of 20 years and over brings disillusion and cynicism. This is especially true if he has been divorced, filed for bankruptcy, or turned down for promotion. Most departments have a limited number of supervisory positions available, only few get promoted, those who do not often become disappointed and jealous and bitter of those who did get promoted. He may become angry at the world. By this time in his career, he has probably suffered an on-the-job injury and has at least one divorce under his belt. As he gets older and his back begins to give him problems from the weight of the equipment on his belt and the poor ergonomic and broken vehicle seats, he may require opioid pain medication to dull the pain, this may lead to abuse. Poor eating habits of police officers cause them to gain weight, he may be later diagnosed with heart disease, chronic stress, and sleep deprivation. Premature death is more than likely.

A large number of LEOs have PTSD and do not know it. The cumulative effects of critical incidents, the death and destruction witnessed have taken their toll. We all look forward to retirement. However, some are forced to retire prematurely due to on-the-job injuries; both physical and emotional. Some working officers are no longer fit for duty but lie to themselves and others in an attempt to work just a few more years. Those who are forced to retire feel abandoned by their agency and coworkers. He feels that he gave them his all during his career and then they just forced him out. The transition from cop to civilian is very difficult for most. Their entire identity was being a cop, he was a cop 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, now he is not. According to the website [www.badgeoflife.org](http://www.badgeoflife.org), the article “*Police Retirement: The Final Trauma*” tells us that the police retirees are more likely to commit suicide than active officers.[[18]](#footnote-18) All these issues make veteran cops bitter. They believe that their employers see them just as a number or a tool, not a valued employee. In the book, “*Counseling Cops*” there is a great quote by an officer that sums it all up, “It’s cheaper to bury a cop than to train one; cheaper still to throw a cop to the wolves than defend one.”[[19]](#footnote-19)

As anyone can see the culture and stressors of first responders are very unique. Counseling an LEO is problematic due to lack of trust of all people. LEOs fear a counselor telling his bosses his inner most secrets and the possibility that he is not fit for duty.

Based on my experience as an LEO, I know there are a great number of LEOs who are not Christians. The Christian community is a natural haven for victims of trauma. At this time the church’s response is inadequate. Pastors, Pastoral Counselors, and Chaplains should all be trained in the Christ- Centered Healing method for the treatment for PTSD. First responder agencies need a greater awareness and a well-organized plan of attack. The Christian church is a sanctuary of human brokenness; this is a perfect place to receive the glorious healing of God.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Police officers worldwide have endured great physical and psychological trauma and horror in order to provide safety within the communities. A day in the life of an LEO may be uneventful, but that could change at any minute with a call of a shooting or a robbery. There are approximately 815,000 LEOs in the United States. From 2008 to 2011 there was an average of 150 LEOs that were killed in the line of duty each year.[[20]](#footnote-20) Of these 150 LEOs, about seventy-five were killed in on-duty vehicle accidents and the other seventy-five killed at the hand of another.

When we look at suicide, law enforcement has one of the highest suicide rates. The general population has a suicide rate of 11.3 suicides per 100,000 people. The police suicide rate is 18 per 100,000.[[21]](#footnote-21) As a profession we need to determine what would make a LEO take his own life. Trauma can occur from any call for service. To be considered traumatic, the individual must have a perception of severe danger, injury, or death. Each person’s perception is different from another’s, especially those with a “warrior” mentality. We must also consider the types of calls that could be a “trigger” for an officer. A domestic violence or child abuse call could be a trigger that connects an officer’s own childhood trauma to a memory, this experience can be considered traumatic on its own. On-duty injuries are common in this profession; fights or struggles during an arrest can cause bodily injuries like a shoulder or back injury. Vehicle accidents are also common and can cause similar injuries. These incidents can be traumatic because the officer may have thought he was invincible; he may now realize he is not superhuman. Some officers are never the same after returning to work. LEOs must witness serious injury or death to both adults and children. This can be difficult to reconcile, especially if the officer has children or siblings the same age as the victim. Although rare, mass causalities do occur; earthquakes, multiple death vehicle accidents, plane crashes, or mass shootings occur once in every LEO’s career. These types of calls are very traumatic.

A suicide of a coworker or family member is difficult to comprehend; it often opens one’s eyes to the reality of the dangers of police work. The stress of working in special unit such as a gang unit, homicide, or narcotics places added pressure on an officer, especially one who is having problems expressing his emotions.

Officer Involved Shootings (OIS) are equal to in the line of duty death incidents top the traumatic scale. Even officers who are not present during the shooting may develop survivor’s guilt. This brings them to realize that death can occur, even to cops. LEOs must make split-second decisions, a decision that can result in the death of a citizen, suspect, or officer. A wrong decision may result in a death bringing charges to an officer. Even if no charges are filed, the LEO’s career may be ruined. An example of this occurred on November 2, 2012 in West Valley City, Utah. According to a USA Today report, Detective Shaun Cowley, 34, a nine-year veteran and his partner Kevin Salmon were assigned to the narcotic division investigating a white supremacist group selling heroin. After witnessing a suspected drug deal, the two detectives approached a vehicle in a parking lot driven by a female. As they approach the parked vehicle, Cowley saw the woman put something in her mouth. He suspected that she was swallowing drug evidence, the detectives ordered her out of her car, she refused. They tried to break a window to get into the vehicle to arrest her, but could not. Cowley went to his vehicle to get a crowbar to break her window. As he did, the female accelerated her vehicle in reverse. Cowley said, “I see her flying at me in reverse. I thought she already struck Salmon. I think he is dead, my brain is going, ‘You’re going to die, she’s coming at you fast’.” Cowley does not remember drawing his weapon or shooting, he did shoot. The driver was pronounced dead on scene.

The time it took Cowley to assess the threat, make a decision on what to do and then carry out that decision was 2.5 seconds. Two and a half seconds that changed two lives. Cowley was placed on leave, after a nine-month OIS investigation by the Salt Lake City District Attorney’s office, Cowley was fired. After another ten months, Cowley was charged with manslaughter. During the 2014 preliminary hearing, the judge dismissed all charges indicating a lack of evidence that Cowley acted recklessly. A wrongful death as it was filed, the city settled for $1.4 million. Cowley is no longer a police officer. His wife divorced him. Cowley said of the instinctive reaction that led to criminal charges and financial ruin, “The shooting cost me everything, you make a split-second decision about whether you go home that day and someone else does not, that’s a heavy burden.”[[22]](#footnote-22) This article did not mention PTSD; however, one can imagine the stress this officer endured during and after this traumatic incident. One decision to react to a threat (right or wrong is not debated here), cost the life of a 21-year-old woman who left a grieving family. Additionally, an officer’s career, marriage, reputation, and financial security were lost. A decision not to react could have caused his life or his partner’s life, all this for doing his job.

Other officers have lost their lives just because they were cops. On December 20, 2014, two New York City police officers were shot and killed while sitting in their patrol car. Officers Rafael Ramos, 40, and Wenjian Liu, 28, were executed while sitting in their patrol car, they were killed by Ismaatyl Brinsley, 28. According to a USA Today report, murders of police officers are up 58% and unwarranted ambushes of LEOs are up 30%.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Officer Ramos’s son Jaden, 13, a week earlier, posted a Happy Birthday message to his father on Facebook, “We have so many good times it’s not funny. I love you so much.” The day after his father’s murder Jaden posted, “Today I had to say goodbye to my father…It’s horrible that someone get shot dead just for being a police officer. Everyone hates cops but they are the people they call for help, I will never forget you. RIP Dad.”[[24]](#footnote-24)

José Ortiz, a friend of Ramos said, “He wanted to be a different kind of cop. He wanted to talk about God. Put God on the street; bring more to the uniform.”[[25]](#footnote-25) Brinsley shot and killed these innocent officers as revenge for the deaths of young males who were killed by other police officers, Brinsley committed suicide after the murders. The entire NYPD, 35,000 officers mourned these two heroes. One can imagine the stress and hypervigilance of the entire NYPD, as well as LEOs nationwide, expecting the next ambush.

When an LEO is forced to shoot his duty weapon there are psychological consequences resulting from the shooting and/or killing another human being. In the book “*Counseling Cops*,” co-written by Dr. Joel Fay, we are told,

“What is universal about an OIS is that most officers have to make life and death decisions in a split second, with little or no information, often in the dark. They have to control the responses and think clearly under an avalanche of stress hormones involuntary activated by the human response to threats against survival. A result of the storm of hormones is that officers experience a range of cognitive and perpetual changes or distortions as well as a degradation of memory. Without proper understanding, these involuntary changes to the brain and body can be misinterpreted by others as deception and the part of the officer. The officer may feel as though they are going crazy.”[[26]](#footnote-26)

These stress hormones brought on by the fight or flight response brings changes that can later cause nightmares, flashbacks, and hypervigilance-- PTSD. When an in the line of duty death of an officer occurs, many LEOs are affected, even officers across the country who do not know the victim grieve. Death of another officer is a reminder that the job is very dangerous and the reality is that an officer will go to work but never know if he will go home that day. The LEO’s family is greatly impacted by an officer’s death for the same reason. For the officers who were at the scene of the death, whether to be accidental or murder, the trauma is great. Today, almost all police and fire agencies conduct a debriefing after a shooting with a psychologist an attorney present. LEOs can discuss what occurred and fill in any gaps in memory. This allows the surviving officers to obtain the complete picture of what happened and allows them to grieve. This was not done 10 years ago. Their grief and unanswered questions can cause extreme stress. Everyone’s grieving process is different, if grief is not processed correctly, officers may seek out negative ways to cope such as alcohol, drugs, pornography, or adultery. All are self-destructive and fuels the downward spiral.

If an officer has not been diagnosed with PTSD after a critical incident, he can rely on the cumulative stress of the exposure to these critical incidents throughout a long career to cause PTSD. LEOs are subjected to the worst that Satan has to give, the cumulative stress of these events rarely leaves anyone unscathed.

We must not forget the families of LEOs who are in danger of vicarious trauma. I can relate to stories relating to familial stress. I was a supervisor of a multi-jurisdictional narcotic task force that served 5 to 10 search warrants per week. Search warrant service is one of the most dangerous activities in policing. One morning my team was confronted by a suspect, a struggle ensued and the officer was forced to shoot the suspect. The suspect was pronounced dead at the scene; no officers were physically injured. The media had heard the police radio broadcasts and were on scene in minutes. Because I was a supervisor, I had many duties to complete and did not have time to call my wife to let her know that I was alright. Media reports broke into local programming and televised the incident. This led to a chain of phone calls, one was to my wife. With no information on my well-being, she panicked for some time before I was able to call her myself and tell her I was safe.

On another occasion I team and I were on surveillance in an area with no cell phone service. I was gone all day, normally my wife and I text or call each other at least once a day. Most police agencies require their officers to choose who they want to notify family in case of an emergency, I chose my best friend who works for another police department. On that day while I was unable to get cell service, he came to my house to visit, when my wife saw him at the front door, she panicked believing that he was there to bring a death notification. It took a while for her to believe he was there just to visit. We made a new rule that he was to call first before any visits. These incidents can win the hearts of LEO families, especially for children who worry about their parents.

This book refers to LEOs, however, as stated earlier except for OIS, most of these scenarios can apply to firefighters, EMTs, dispatchers, and hospital trauma workers. It is very common for police officers and firefighters to marry dispatchers or nurses. All these first responders must endure similar trauma, thus, susceptible to PTSD.

Dispatchers are unique, they do not face physical danger, but some consider their job more stressful than those who work in the field. Dispatchers must answer telephone calls from hysterical citizens reporting events from the mundane to the horrific. They must remain calm, obtain required information not only to protect and save lives in the field, but also protect the responding officers from potential threats. They provide life-saving instruction over the phone while at the same time dispatching necessary first responders. Just imagine being a dispatcher and answering a call from a hysterical female who is reporting a burglary and process in her house, you are trying to send police officers to the scene when you hear gunshots fired over the phone, then silence. The burglar has just shot and killed the woman. Imagine the trauma this could cause.

A patrol officer once told me that while recovering from an on-duty injury, he was asked to assist the dispatchers. One night in emergency call came in of a man with a gun in a store. This call requires the response of several officers, as the officers arrived on scene, the radio went silent. This is a bad sign. He told me that his heart was beating so hard he felt it would jump out of his chest. He told me this caused him more stress than if he were involved in a gun battle.

Dispatchers are responsible for obtaining accurate information; LEOs rely on information as a drive to an incident. If the information is not correct, it may cost a life. Years ago, I was dispatched to an armed robbery in progress at a bank. The bank was located at a large intersection. There were two banks, one across the street from the other. Relying on the information supplied to me, I drove into the parking lot of the bank that was not being robbed. I intended to get a view of the bank across the street to watch perimeter. The dispatcher sent me to the wrong bank. As I drove my patrol car into the wrong parking lot, two armed robbers exited the bank that I was now in front of. Both were armed with handguns. They were about six feet from me, they pointed their guns at me, I thought that this was my day to die. By God’s grace they did not shoot. They ran into a residential area where I was able to catch one and other officers caught the other. The dispatcher was later fired for sending me to the wrong location.

The pressure on dispatchers is enormous. This stress, if not properly dealt with, will cause PTSD to develop. There appears to be only one study on PTSD and tele-communicators. In a study in the Journal of Traumatic Stress, researchers found that the exposure to traumatic events was made worse due to lack of control over in-field situations that causes feelings of helplessness. Not being able to see what is going on and not knowing what is happening is the biggest stressor. Dispatchers can often be neglected because they are out of sight and not normally considered as part of the team.[[27]](#footnote-27)

There are many types and categories of traumatic incidents. It is the individual’s perception that makes it dramatic. If LEOs do not seek out help soon after the event, they often are at risk of maladaptive coping mechanisms such as drugs or alcohol. Lastly LEOs and their families must be aware and be vigilant of cumulative stress symptoms. A quote from the opening page of the website [www.BadgeofLife.com](http://www.BadgeofLife.com) says, “Critical incidents are like Mack trucks: big, catastrophic events… cumulative [stress] is like one bee sting after another… These are the incidents that are missed by everyone, even the officers… the shame, the mistakes, the ‘routine’ horrors, the betrayals, abuses, and the dark fears… we call them ‘soul’ woundings.[[28]](#footnote-28)

ALCOHOLISM

LEOs use poor coping skills when wounded, peer pressure and the LEO culture of machismo causes some to self-medicate. The simplest legal method is to “drown their sorrows in alcohol.” In recent years the trend is to use opioid pain medication to self-medicate.

From experience, I know that in years past teams of officers who worked together, often met after work at a police friendly bar or the house of an officer. This used to be called “Choir Practice.” Both male and female officers met for what can be considered ritual drinking. Often to the point of being drunk. This was done on all shifts, even if it ended at 5:00 AM. Good arrests were celebrated, but more often than not this time would be used to complain about all aspects of work including the bosses and administration. After a period of drinking all with say that they felt better by talking it out.

Since alcohol is a social lubricant, it is an accepted method to escape from the horrors of police work (at least for a few hours). These get-togethers acted as a glue to bond officers who work closely together as a team.

Most LEOs know who the binge drinkers and alcoholics are. In previous years these officers were protected. This is no longer true today. Too many officers have been arrested for being drunk in public or driving while intoxicated. Choir Practice still occurs but much less than in past years.

Studies differ on the prevalence of alcohol abuse in the law enforcement community. One study says LEOs have higher rates of alcohol abuse than the general public. Two other studies refute that claim. Based on my 25 years in law enforcement, I believe the LEOs do have a higher rate of alcohol abuse than the general public. I believe these studies are using false information supplied by the LEO. If an LEO has an alcohol issue, I do not know of any that would admit it in a study, even under anonymity. LEOs are not trusting of researchers.

Police and fire departments have developed policies and procedures preventing any alcohol in the blood during work shifts, as well as policies against alcoholic beverages on work property. This did little to stop the social drinking after work hours at fire stations or police employee parking lots.

A 2007 research study of PTSD and first responders, discovered that self-medication with alcohol and/or drugs can help reduce the symptoms of PTSD. However, the continued use of these substances over-time actually increased the symptoms of depression for those who suffer with PTSD. As a result, there is a much higher rate of suicide among substance abusers; 50 to 70% higher than those who do not use abuse alcohol and/or drugs.[[29]](#footnote-29)

OTHER ADDICTIONS

There are LEOs who do not drink alcohol, but they still could exhibit addictive behavior to cope with the effects of PTSD stress. Some addictions include:

PAIN MEDICATIONS

As stated earlier, LEOs often suffer on-the-job injuries. In order to get back to work, they use prescription pain medication often in excess of its prescribed dosages. These injuries are often so severe to force an LEO to retire. Many doctors over prescribe painkillers to their patients. These opioid-based painkillers can provide a euphoric effect on the user. The effects can take one’s mind off their problems, be enjoyable but also dangerously addictive. Addiction causes dependence, which requires more pills to get the desired effects. This dependence will cause withdrawal symptoms if discontinued. Individuals who are addicted to pain medications often get into trouble while shopping different doctors, steal pills, or go to a street dealer to get more pills. Painkiller addiction will bring down many officers.

Marijuana is now widely accepted as a medicine and in some states, it is legal for personal use. Some officers use marijuana as one would drink alcohol -- a coping mechanism. As with pain medications, once the LEO is dependent on marijuana, the more he needs. Purchasing it from street dealers or stealing it from evidence will bring their downfall. At this time all departments prohibit the use of marijuana by their employees, even with a doctor’s prescription.

SEXUAL ADDICTION

Sexual addiction is prevalent in LEOs. Pornography, compulsive masturbation, casual sex, or sex with prostitutes can be used to combat the symptoms of PTSD. The depressive state with PTSD results in feelings of hopelessness. These macho narcissistic men often falsely equate sex as an ego booster. LEOs are exposed to many willing partners both inside the agency and outside with groupies. The need for risky behavior may make the use of prostitutes enticing. This ego boost is often short-lived. This tends to bring on feelings of guilt and shame. This may begin a cycle where the LEO cannot get out of. This can cause a withdrawal from the normal world and now living in a fantasy world. This is not a proper coping mechanism.

GAMBLING

Gambling is an activity most people partake of. Most of us play the lottery or invest in the stock market or commodities. Gambling can cause a rush or high, these emotions will overshadow the negative emotions of PTSD. Compulsive gamblers enjoy the “high” of a big win. They like to repeat that feeling over and over again. This is rarely the case. If they are losing, they still fill a rush of anticipation of hitting the big score. Gambling addiction as one of the most dangerous for the LEO. Not only is the risk of losing big and falling into debt, but like marijuana, the temptation to steal is too great. LEOs come across large amounts of cash; this would be very tempting for anyone. The theft of cash can be rationalized by telling themselves that this is illegal cash so it’s okay to take it. Criminals will not complain. This leads to more theft and eventually prison.

Addictions can take your mind off your problems or reduce the symptoms of PTSD for a short time. But when LEOs utilize their addictions more than as a coping method, the addiction becomes stronger. Second Peter 2:19 says, “for whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.” When we walk in the flesh, we bear bad fruit. What we do produce is sexual immorality, jealousy, envy, strife, and drunkenness (Gal 5:19 – 21).

The Christ-Centered Healing method will teach LEOs to focus on Jesus Christ. If the counselee walks in the spirit, he will no longer need any coping strategy. Walking in the spirit will produce good fruit. Fruit of the Spirit produces love, patience, peace (of mind), and self-control (Gal 5:22 – 24). A new walk, along God’s healing power of prayer will overcome (Jn. 16:33, and 1 Jn. 5:4).

SUICIDES

“At my worst, I could tell you what my pistol tasted like after firing a test round into the dirt. I truly believe without a shadow of a doubt that I was weak and going crazy. I thought that absolutely no one could begin to comprehend what I had seen. I thought that I was alone, because I was alone, I thought that asking someone, anyone, for help would be as effective as yelling for help into a jet engine.”[[30]](#footnote-30)

* + - Unknown police officer

LEOs solve problems for a living; they are decision-makers. They are the last line of defense between good and evil. It is hard to imagine why a hyper-macho warrior could become so overwhelmed with emotional problems and helplessness that he could consider suicide as an option. As unknown officers quote above indicates, the feelings of weakness and emotional inability, in addition to the ingrained stigma of asking for help is overwhelming. Statistical information regarding LEO suicide is inconsistent. Most reliable number for LEOs is that they commit suicide at a rate of 18 suicides per 100,000 people.[[31]](#footnote-31) The rate for the general public is 12 per hundred thousand. However, some studies go as low as 5.8 per 100,000. A study of New York police officer suicide resulted in 29 suicides per 100,000.[[32]](#footnote-32) A Wyoming study found that officers in the state committed suicide 203.7 per 100,000.[[33]](#footnote-33) Another study of retired LEOs show a rate of 334 retired officers commit suicide per 100,000[[34]](#footnote-34) and disabled retirees at a rate of 2,616 per 100,000.[[35]](#footnote-35) A 2014 survey by the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation found that firefighters are three times more likely to commit suicide in any given year and then die in the line of duty.

These high variances show flaws in the studies. In my opinion the flaws are from incorrect data provided to the researchers. Law enforcement and fire departments have a twofold reason for falsifying suicide statistics. The first is self-serving. Agencies do not want to admit the negative effects of policing and firefighting, and secondly, if any LEO commits suicide, his family is left without benefits, not to mention the damage to the reputation of the officer and the department. If the death is in the line of duty, the family receives benefits that allow the family financial security. No matter the fluctuation of statistics, the fact remains that what is constant is a rate of suicide in the LEO community is 2 to 3 times more than the number of officers killed by a suspect.

“I grew up in church. Suicide was never an option. But after a while, I got tired of fighting, tired of the symptoms, tired of trying. The unthinkable began to be thinkable. Suicide began to make sense.”[[36]](#footnote-36)

There are many stressors that drive LEOs to suicide. Some have already been discussed such as alcohol and/or drug abuse, depression, poor coping skills, marriage problems, financial problems, illness or physical problems, family sickness, shame, guilt, feelings of failure at work or at home, feelings of helplessness, and forced retirement from fit-for-duty issues to disciplinary action. Shame or guilt from adultery or illegal behavior, survivor’s guilt, and forced retirement are reasons for severe depression and feelings of hopelessness leads to suicide. Fear of losing one’s job either by disciplinary action (fired) or from being unfit for duty (this could be from an on-the-job injury, off-duty injury, illness such as cancer, or even severe PTSD) is often overwhelming. As stated earlier, a police officer is identity not a job. When an office manager retires, he is a retired office manager. When a cop retires, he is no longer a cop-no longer a member of an elite group of warriors.

Guilt, shame, and depression develop from officers involved in some type of scandal. Scandals in law enforcement and fire departments are always newsworthy. If media is involved, few coworkers will provide support and the agency will order personnel not to contact that officer in question. This alienation can trigger for suicide.

“’PTSD, depression, substance abuse, and suicide are common problems for firefighters. Firefighters often don’t talk about emotions of the job because they don’t want to show weakness,’ said Jeff Dill, founder of the Firefighters Behavioral Health Alliance. ‘We try to handle it ourselves, and unfortunately that’s where the problems come in…’”[[37]](#footnote-37)

Prayer ministers trained in the Christ-Centered Healing will show the counselee that their identity should be *in Christ*. Sometimes this requires a complete paradigm shift – a humbling. The LEO is shown how to come out of the darkness and enter into the light. In the light we walk with God and through Jesus Christ our sins are cleansed and we are spiritually healed. (1 Jn. 1:5-7).

CHAPTER 5

CHRIST-CENTERED HEALING OF TRAUMA

Christ-Centered Healing of TRAUMA is a name for counsel and prayer for continued sanctification and transformation. A Christ-Centered approach is a tool in the Lord’s toolbox that God uses to restore wounded and hurting people. Jesus Himself tells us what his mission on earth was, “He [God] sent me [Jesus] to proclaim liberty, to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed…” (Luke 4:18). Jesus is telling us that one of his purposes is to free those oppressed by the evil of this world and evil spirits. Through Christ’s death and resurrection, we are dead to our sins and previous bad habits and practices. We are resurrected with Christ, therefore, we are now “*in Christ*.” If we are *in Christ*, we are a totally new creation, our old self has passed away and the new person is alive (2 Cor. 5:17).

Christ-Centered Healing of Trauma is a continual application of this principle of death and resurrection through Christ and the knowledge of belief that Christ’s blood on the cross cleanses us. Through this cleansing we are sanctified (set apart for God). Prayer ministers look at the counselee’s character structures to find what practices in our old selfish ways that we have not yet fully yielded and put to death on the cross at a rebirth. Prayer ministers also seek out strongholds of Satan. They seek out habitual sin that leaves the door open for demonic inhabitation. They then assist in dismantling the stronghold through confession, repentance, and if necessary, forgiveness.

Healing relies on the prayer minister’s counsel and prayer for continual sanctification and transformation of our lives and character. Christ-Centered Healing will not erase the memory of a traumatic event. When we are healed and transformed, we can look at our wounding and see God’s providence in our life. God writes eternal life lessons onto our hearts and prepares us to minister to others who will endure similar incidents, see 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 and Hebrews 2:18.

Healing begins when a prayer minister meets with a counselee. During the interview, the prayer minister will often recognize poor fruit or negative character traits that have not yet been nailed to the cross. Many persons require forgiveness of others who, in their view, harmed them as a child or as an adult; unforgiveness, bitterness, and anger cause bitter roots (discussed later) to form, causing them to defile themselves and others (Heb. 12:15). Hurt, anger, and bitterness can cause inner vows (discussed later) to be made. These formations cause us to sin and to deploy poor coping skills and maladaptive behavior such as alcohol or drug abuse.

A trained prayer minister will often see these structures during nan interview. The counselee is led through confession, repentance and, if necessary, forgiveness. Prayer is then used to bring the structures to death on the cross.

A major part of the Christ-Centered Healing process is the need for a Bible study. The person seeking healing must understand and know who they are *in Christ*. They must also know the Biblical laws and principles. The first is God’s law of honoring one’s parents. This is one of God’s Ten Commandments, see Exodus 20:12. Deuteronomy 5:16 warns us again to honor our parents, “…that your days may be long, and it may go well with you…” Parents are not always honorable, but it is God’s commandment that we love, respect, obey, and forgive them. Parents rarely get it right 100% of the time. It is so very important to let go and forgive them. Everyone must confess and repent for dishonoring their parents.

The second law is judging others. Matthew 7:1-2 says, “Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standards of measure, it will be measured to you.” The word judge used here should be condemn. Do not condemn others. Romans 2:1 says, “… for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself because you, the judge, practice the very same things.” When we judge and condemn others, it comes from a bitter and impure heart. This is a sin. This is true even when we judge a parent for how they raised us, it comes from an impure heart. Here both laws are activated. The scripture could be interpreted as when we judge others for their behavior, social status, or anything else, we condemn ourselves to do or be the very same way. We all have the same propensities to sin within each and every one of us. An example of this would be a young boy sees his father get drunk on a regular basis and then beat his mother. The boy loves his mother. He hated and judged his father. When this boy grew up to be a man, he became an alcoholic and beat his wife. He had become what he hated. He knew it was wrong, but he could not stop. The Apostle Paul said the same thing in Romans 7:19, “for I do not do the good, I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep doing.” This man disrespected his father, judged him, and hated him. This man would need to repent for these sins before God could heal him. So, when we judge people; we doom ourselves to do the same thing.

This leads into another spiritual law. The law of sowing and reaping. Galatians 6:7 says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man sows, he will reap,” and Galatians 6:8 goes on to say, “for the one who sows to his own flesh will from his flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the spirit will reap eternal life.” What this says is if you do evil (hate, judge, steal, commit, adultery, and more) you will reap evil; or evil will return to you. But, if you sow good (kindness, love, good deeds) God will bless you. We normally do not reap at the time we sow. Reaping can come months or years later. Our God is a patient long-suffering God. He is waiting for the person who sows evil to repent. If they do not, they will reap evil. We can even reap evil from the sins of our parents, see Exodus 20:5-6, Deuteronomy 4:40, 28:58-61, and 30: 19-20. If the scriptures repeat some principle more than once then you know it is important to God. This may go against some people’s view of God. God is love, but He hates sin. He cannot allow sin. He has a plan of salvation and healing -- His son Jesus Christ.

Another law associated with sowing and reaping is the law of increase. Hosea 8:7 says, “They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind” and Deuteronomy 30:15-18, God says,

“See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you today, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in His ways, by keeping his commandments and His statutes and His rules, then you shall live and multiple, and the Lord your God will bless you…”

Second Corinthians 9:6 tells us that if we sow a little, we will reap a little, but if we sow bountifully, we will reap bountifully.

These spiritual laws must be followed to ensure blessing and healing. We have no need to stress about failing and sinning once in a while. God allows us to fail, He expects us to fail. That is why He sent His son to take on our sins, past present and future. We only need to confess our mistake and repent. Repent means to turn away from the sin. Each time we sin, we need to repent so that we can stop these spiritual laws from going into effect.

The last law is that we are commanded to forgive others. There are at least five scriptures that command us to forgive others. Matthew 6:14-15 warns us that if we do not forgive those who harmed us, God will not forgive our sins. In Matthew 18:21-22 Jesus tells Peter to forgive someone seventy times seven. Luke chapters six and seven mention forgiving and in Colossians 3:13 says, “… if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” Forgiveness must come from the heart. When we forgive, we are not letting the offender off the hook for what they have done. We are letting ourselves off the hook from bitterness, resentment, and thoughts of vengeance so that we are freed from these sins that bind us in our own prison. We don’t have to tell the offender; we just need to truly mean it in our heart. We cannot heal without forgiveness. It is not easy, but God will help at every step; remember this is a command, not a request.

BIBLE STUDY

A prayer minister will show the counselee who they are according to the Word of God. These are only a few verses used to provide an example of a counseling session. This can be accomplished in one or two-hour long sessions. The prayer minister begins with creation of man.

Genesis 1:26-27 tells us that God created man in God’s images, “After our likeness.” This word “our” is plural referring to our triune God. God’s likeliness refers to man being created with similar attributes of God, such as intelligence, holiness, righteousness, eternal life, having fellowship with God, and spirituality. Man was given dominion over all things on Earth.

Genesis 2:7 describes that man was formed out of dirt. God breathed life into man. Man is a body of flesh, possessing a soul and a spirit (1 Thes. 5:23). God was pleased with his creation. (Gen. 1:31).

Genesis 3:1-17 recounts man’s first sin. The ramifications of this sin are that Adam’s sin affects the entire human race. We are all born in sin. Once a sin has been committed, it can never be undone. We can receive forgiveness, but history cannot be changed. We were created to be in fellowship with God. We are now in enmity with God. Adam’s sin caused God to cure the ground. Man would now have to suffer a spiritual and physical death. Additionally, Satan took dominion of the Earth. Satan is now the god of the world. (2 Cor. 4:4).

Leviticus 1:1-17 explains sacrifices to God. Due to sin, a payment was required for forgiveness. If a person sinned, they could kill a male animal unblemished as a sacrifice to atone for sin. The unblemished male animal was a substitute for the sinner. The price for sin is death. (Rom. 6:23). The shedding of blood brought forgiveness (Heb. 9:22). This atonement was only temporary and did not result in salvation.

Psalm 103:1-5 describes God’s blessing to those who obey God’s commandments. God’s blessings or benefits are His forgiveness of sins, God will heal our diseases (physical and spiritual), God delivers us from our trials, and He will show His love and mercy and He will renew our souls.

With the advent of Christ all things changed. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” This is God’s gift to mankind; Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world (1 Jn. 4:14). First John 1:9 explains that if we confess our sins, Jesus will forgive us our sins so that we will be righteous in God’s eye.

Hebrews 9:22 tell us that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. *In Christ* we have forgiveness of sin (Eph. 1:17). It is not possible for the blood of animals to take way our sins. (Heb. 10:4).

Christ died for our sins. 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 tells us that through God’s grace, the death and resurrection of Jesus made us a new creation. Our old sinful man is dead. Our new righteous man is alive *in Christ*. First John 2:2 says that Christ is the propitiation for the sins of mankind. Paul tells us in chapter five of the book of Romans that through faith in Christ we are justified. This is by the grace of God, not our own doing. Paul recaps that Adam brought sin, and by Christ’s death and resurrection we are cleansed of sin. By Adam’s sin, death came into the world. Through Christ’s death and resurrection, we have eternal life in Heaven. We are no longer sinners; we are new *in Christ*.

Romans 10:9 shows that we must confess with our mouth, that Christ is the Lord and believe in His resurrection, we will be saved. Acts 2:38 tells us that when we repent in Jesus’ name, we will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are God’s temple because the Holy Spirit dwells within us. God’s temple is holy (1 Cor. 3:16-17). The Holy Spirit of God cleanses us and renews us (Ti. 3:4-8). Romans 12:2 tells us that through this cleansing, we will be transformed by the renewal of our mind.

Galatians 2:22-25 describes the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Some of the fruit are peace, joy, and self-control. The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness (Jn. 8:26-27), and the Holy Spirit will teach us all things (Jn. 14:26).

Isaiah 53:3-5 tells us that Christ bore our griefs, sorrows, afflictions, and diseases and took them to the cross for us. Christ died in sin; we also died with Him. In His resurrection we were also resurrected. We are dead to sin and live in righteousness. And by Jesus’ wounds we are healed (1 Pt. 2:24).

Hebrews 12:7-11 reminds us that God is our Father. He disciplines us for our own good so that we may share His holiness. It may be painful but it will later yield that peaceful fruit of righteousness. He disciplines us because He loves us.

Isaiah 64:8 explains that God is like a potter and mankind His clay. Jeremiah 18:3-6 explains that God has sovereign right to remold spoiled clay into something good in God’s sight. Romans 9:22 ads that God is sovereign and has all rights over his creation. He wants us for honorable use.

The Book of Acts 10:38 tells us that God anointed Christ with the Holy Spirit, power, and the authority to do good and heal all who are oppressed. Mark 16:15 – 18 shows that Christ gave his authority to His disciples (followers) to heal the sick. In Matthew 28:18-20 we see that Jesus gave all those who believe in Him the authority to do greater works than He did.

Exodus 15:26 says, “… I am the Lord your Healer.” Jeremiah 29:11 reassures us that God’s plan for us is to prosper, have a future, and hope. Psalm 34:17-19 reminds us that God is always near the brokenhearted and He rejuvenates the crushed spirit. In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus tells us to come to Him for salvation and we will rest in our souls; *in Christ* we have rest. Psalm 147:3 tells us that God heals the brokenhearted and heals our wounds. James 5:13-16 says,

“Is there any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is there any among you sick? Let him call the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

Based on the Scriptures, we see that God loves us more than we can comprehend. God gave His only son as a gift to sinners. Jesus Christ changed the world during those days at Calvary. This event was the most important event in world history other than the actual creation of the world and mankind.

Jesus bore our sins, sorrows, grief, and diseases and sins. Christ suffered for us. He was beaten, ridiculed and put to death carrying our diseases and sins. Christ suffered for us. He was beaten and scrounged for our sins. He was beaten beyond human semblance (Is. 53:14). Through His beating, death, and resurrection we are considered righteous in God’s eyes and healed (Is. 53:5). As Christ was resurrected, we are united in His resurrection (Rom. 6:14). Thus, we are a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17 – 21). The veil to the Holy of Holies of God has now opened to all believers. We now have the same authority as Christ by being a co-heir and a child of God. We now have access to God Almighty Himself. We can now have a personal relationship with our God. This is a wonderful gift.

It is very important for a Christian to understand who they are *in Christ* in order to live a joyful life free of bondage. When we are saved, we become a new creation. We are new, never having existed before; therefore, we are no longer at enmity with God. We are not the same person we once were. Along with this free gift of new birth and indwelling of the Holy Spirit we receive eternal life in Heaven (Rom. 6:23). In God’s eyes we are cleansed, as if we never sinned.

As a believer we have God’s Holy Spirit living inside of us. Jesus Christ is in us through the Holy Spirit. True change will not manifest unless we see ourselves as God sees us. The Holy Spirit will show us what God wants us to know (Jn. 16:13-15). God’s truth will change our worldview to that of a Christian worldview. God does not want us to live defeated lives. Often our previous sins, guilt, and shame prevent us from experiencing freedom. These feelings are from Satan to keep us defeated and to draw us further away from God. But Christ was ridiculed, beaten, and murdered, and was resurrected in order to undo all that Satan and his demons have done. Christ defeated Satan at the cross and through his blood we are cleansed. Since Satan has been defeated, believers through Christ’s authority have authority over Satan. If we stay in Christ and walk in the Holy Spirit as a spiritual Christian, we have power to resist the seduction of sin. But if we allow ourselves to revert back to being a carnal Christian, we open the door and allow the enemy to steal God’s word from us as to prevent us from understanding our new identity as a righteous child of God. Satan wants you to believe you are a sinner and a failure. You are not a failure. You are a conqueror! An example of Satan’s ability to close our eyes to God is in John 8:31-33. Christ told Jewish believers that if they abide in Him they will know the truth and it shall set them free. The Jewish believers responded that they were descendants of Abraham and have never been enslaved. They were enslaved by Egypt for 400 years and Babylon and Rome ruled over Israel. Satan is good at what he does; he is able to lie to us so that we do not know that we are being lied to. We do not realize that we are enslaved to sin until it is too late. Christ tells us that whoever commits sin is a slave to that sin and it is only Christ that can set us free.

Counselees are taught that God has chosen them to complete God’s plan and purpose. They were chosen to help change the world. First Corinthians 1:26-30 tells us that God chooses sinners to complete His will in this world. Second Corinthians 1:3-7 says that we are allowed to go through storms. God comforts us, so that we will be able to comfort others who go through the same thing. And in Romans 8:28, Paul tells us that *all* things work for the good of those who love God.

BITTER ROOT JUDGMENTS

Every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor a diseased tree bear good fruit (Mt. 7:17-18). In the Bible the term “fruit” is an analogy for a person’s attributes or character traits.

If we look at a person and inspect the quality of the fruit they produce, we can see two things: if they are walking in the Holy Spirit or if they harbor any bitter roots. A person who has unconfessed bitter root judgments does not walk in the Holy Spirit; this does not produce good fruit.

Psalm 1:3 tells us that a blessed person, “He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. And all that he does, he prospers.” As a healthy tree requires fertile soil and a healthy root system, we must be rooted in Christ to produce good fruit. Colossians 2:6-7 tells us, “… As you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk with Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.”

The attributes of a person who is walking in the Holy Spirit and producing good fruit include: loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, forgiving, kind, gentle and self-control (Gal. 5:22-24). If we allow unforgiveness and bitterness into our hearts, we make judgments of others. Matthew 7:1-2 tells us, “Judge not, that you will be judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged. With the measure you use it will be measured to you.” This unforgiveness and judgment develops from a root of bitterness. Hebrews 12:15 warns us, “See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and be it many become defiled.” We see that our bitter roots and sinful reactions can hurt many. Will Bowen went said, “Hurt people, hurt people.” The bad fruit of a person with bitter root judgments includes: unforgiveness, hate, anger, shame, guilt, isolation, hopelessness, and depression.

Bitter roots could develop bitter root expectancies. This is basically a self-fulfilling prophecy. Due to wounding’s or traumatic events, we expect life to go a particular way. If we believe this prophecy, life will go the way we believe. An example is if a rookie LEO talks to a victim of a car burglary. The victim lies to the officer about what was stolen. The victim had a Rolex and a Picasso in the trunk of his GEO Metro. This young officer may now expect all victims are going to be untruthful.

To compound these things, bitter roots produce inner vows. An inner vow is a promise we make with ourselves to protect us from future pain of the bitter root. Inner vows resist change. An example of an inner vow is a boy who has a controlling mother. He may make a vow to not let any woman control him. This causes bitterness and results in the inability to have a healthy relationship with a woman. Making an inner vow is based on fear and forces our will, not God’s be done. Inner vows are only healed her forgiveness.

When we recognize bitter root judgments and/or inner vows. The prayer minister can lead the LEO to confession and repentance for their sinful responses and bring them to the cross. LEO must also forgive and accept forgiveness; this is essential. Without forgiveness, there is no healing (Mt. 6:15, Mark 11:26).

We are blessed because we have a Savior who heals us through His abundant grace. God forgives us our sins and heals are diseases (Ps. 103:3). Christ who bore our sins and afflictions was beaten and scrounged for our sins. And through His death and resurrection we are healed. God is our healer.

PRAYER

Prayer ministers lead the counselee in prayer so that our Heavenly Father can accomplish healing. Prayer ministers require no university degree, just an understanding of God’s word and laws; and who they are in Christ. Jesus mission on earth was foretold by Isaiah,

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted, He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted. To proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to grant to those who mourn in Zion, to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified” (Is. 61:1-3).

Prayer ministers direct the counselee to the truth of the Holy Spirit. They help the counselee to understand how the Holy Spirit is working in their lives. They look for patterns of unforgiveness, judgments, bitter roots, inner vows, as well as any positive attributes that need to be encouraged. Secular psychologists do the same thing. Psychologists will make an attempt to change the flesh with behavior modifications. Prayer ministers assist the counselee and prayer, then watches as Christ delivers and transforms by the power of the cross. This paper is not meant to criticize mental health professionals, some are prayer ministers; but only Jesus Christ holds the power to heal wounds by the power of the cross.

Unbelievers can benefit from the love of God even though they do not believe. Non-believers are shown the same Bible verses as believers. A few are added to clarify unbelief. Second Corinthians 4:4 tells us that Satan has blinded the minds of unbelievers to prevent them from the glory of Christ. Luke 8:12 says that Satan takes the word of God out of unbeliever’s hearts so they will not believe and not be saved. We then explain that only God can open their eyes and ears to deliver them from darkness so they will have their sins forgiven (Is. 35:5, 42:7, and Acts 26:18). Prayers are the same as for believers. Prayer ministers never require a counselee to convert; however, most you receive Christ through the ministry process.[[38]](#footnote-38)

After Bible study, the prayer ministry interviews the counselee in an attempt to recognize the wounds so they can direct the prayer. They ask basic questions like why they are seeking prayer ministry? What happened to them and describe the emotions involved? Whether or not they judged anyone including themselves as a result of the incident, any judgment on life for God determine the bitter root judgments.

Discovering the roots of the behavior is essential. To determine sinful behavior, they are asked if they are forgiven and if not, is there any anger or bitterness surrounding the event. To determine inner vows, they are asked if they made any promises to themselves to do or not to do something in response to this incident. And if the vow accomplished anything; did the vow protect them?

Depending on the situation and the counselee’s statements, they may be asked about their childhood. Do they feel like they have been victimized? Have they recognized any repeated patterns or cycles? Have they wounded anyone? How did they wound others? Based on the responses during the interview, prayer minister will have an idea what direction to go in for prayer. A prayer session begins in a safe place, preferably away from the LEO’s agency. A session should include a third person if the parties are of opposite sex. The third person should be female. She could either be a prayer partner or out of listening distance but still with a visual.[[39]](#footnote-39)

In order to fully understand the process, this is a story of an ex-LEO who wishes to remain anonymous. We will call him Tim. Tim is in prison in Texas. He is 45 years old and has 10 years of experience as an LEO. His violation is the theft of drugs from suspects. Tim has been diagnosed with PTSD. Tim is a Christian and tells us his wife and daughter complain of his controlling behavior. He is overprotective of his daughter to the point of verbal abuse. We began Bible study. Tim was familiar with the Scriptures and believes he is walking in the Holy Spirit. He told me that he was working as a patrol officer. He stopped at a bank to withdraw some cash. He was out of his patrol car in the bank when he received a radio call of an unresponsive three-year-old who was pulled from his swimming pool by her mother. The house was only two or three miles away. It took him a few minutes to return to his patrol car. He sped code – three (lights and siren) to the house. This took him about three minutes. He arrived before the fire department paramedics. The mother was holding the toddler and was hysterical. EMTs and paramedics arrived two minutes later. The girl showed no signs of life but Tim gave CPR until the EMTs relieved him. The toddler was transported to the hospital but was pronounced dead. Tim had a five-year-old daughter at that time.

This was a horrific incident. He was very upset but could not break down in front of the mother and firefighters. He refused to allow himself to feel any emotion. He completed the death investigation and then went on to the next call. No debriefing or counseling was even suggested. He forgot the incident, or so he thought. After a few years he began to feel depressed. He began to become overprotective of his now eight-year-old daughter. He tried to control her every action. This would cause arguments and rebellious behavior by his daughter. His wife was angry with him.

Tim said he believed he was responsible for the girl’s death. He felt guilt and shame. He believes because he was conducting personal business on- duty, his response was delayed. He said if he were in his vehicle his response would have been much faster and he could have saved the girl. This was a huge assumption on his part. He could not forgive himself for being “selfish”. He judged himself for being self-serving. He made a vow not to conduct any personal business on-duty. This is very unrealistic due to 12-hour work shifts. He made another inner vow to protect his children. This repressed trauma did not reveal itself until a few years later. I would guess that Tim suffered other traumatic events that triggered the sinful behavior and depression. We discussed these incidents. I explained his assumption was flawed. I believed by his sinful judgment he allowed the enemy a foothold. Satan began his lies of blame. I showed him that there must have been a time delay when the child went into the pool and the mother found her and pulled her out. Another minute or two calling 911. Another minute to dispatch the call to Tim. We are already at over four minutes. People cannot be without air for over five minutes. If he were in his car, maybe he could have shaved off two minutes. He began to see how he could not have saved the girl’s life. We discussed a spiritual judgment and his inner vows that were unrealistic. He understood that this caused his overprotectiveness.

We prayed first for repentance of his sins. He listed all of his sins in his prayer. See Appendix “B” for sample prayer. We then prayed for Christ to give him strength to forgive himself. See Appendix “C” for sample prayer.

Tim felt guilt and shame for what he thought he did. He developed a bitter root judgment that if he did something for himself, someone could die. His inner vow was that he must watch his daughter every second to protect her. His guilt turned into shame. The sinful responses to inner trauma almost led to a divorce and alienation from his daughter.

We then prayed to renounce his judgments and inner vows. See Appendix “D” for sample prayer. Then we asked Jesus to remove his guilt and shame from this event -- see Appendix “E” for sample prayer.

Finally, we prayed for Jesus to remove the trauma from the event. The prayer minister will pray this over the counselee, see Appendix “F” for sample prayer. Tim feels better and is at peace. He has received forgiveness from his wife and daughter. He no longer feels the need to control his family.

Some feel that there is no need for separate prayers. Each prayer contains specific requests that may be neglected if incorporated into one big “blanket” prayer. It is always easier to break it down to several shorter prayers. Often only two or three are utilized. In this situation prayers can be combined. These prayers are just samples. There is no set formula. Each prayer should be individualized each situation. Do not pray versus that do not apply to the individual.

A second example is an ex-LEO who was suffering from recurring nightmares. His nightmare was that he was ambushed by a group of Asian gang members. This officer is Caucasian. He was concerned that he felt he needed to be in a state of hypervigilance while in large groups of people. He feared for his safety.

He had been an LEO for 15 years. He is a Christian. He is divorced with two children in their teens. He asked not to reveal his charges or his name. I will call him Brian for purposes of this thesis. Brian worked in a medium-size department, about 120 officers. The city was large with about 100,000 people. Only six officers worked the streets during the daytime hours. One summer afternoon Brian was on a cold burglary call on his beat. He overheard an emergency call in his beat of an armed robbery at a convenience store. The dispatcher announced that the suspects were two Asian males in dark clothing with guns. The vehicle description was also announced. Brian’s best friend John (not real name) worked a different beat. John responded to the robbery. Brian and John went to the Academy together. They socialized off-duty. They had children about the same ages, and their wives were friends.

It took about five minutes for Brian to clear a call he was on. As John was enroute, he saw the suspect vehicle. John turned around to give chase. The vehicle drove into a residential area and crashed into another vehicle. By this time Brian was also on his way, as well as officers from other local agencies and a helicopter. The two males ran from the scene of the accident. John stopped to ensure that no one was injured in the crash. This allowed the suspect to get a head start. They ran into a park where there were children. John reported his location and left his vehicle to search for the suspects. John violated safety protocol by initiating a search for armed suspects without backup. The police culture believes that this is what good cops do! John was not only a good cop; he was a great cop; a warrior. After John reported his location, radio traffic went silent.

Brian arrived and parked by John’s car. When Brian entered the park to help John; he heard two gunshots. Brian looked in the direction of the shots and saw John on the ground. As Brian approached John, he saw that John was shot once in the head. Brian called out for fire department, paramedics and an ambulance. Brian became enraged at the suspects. He wanted to catch and kill them. He stayed with John who showed no signs of life. John died. He was 37 years old with a wife and two children under the age of three.

After what seemed like hours, the helicopter found the suspects; they were arrested without further incident. Investigation revealed that the two gang members had been hiding in the bushes in the park. They saw only one officer; they decided to kill John so they could escape. John had his weapon drawn, but probably never knew what happened. Brian felt guilt for not being in his beat at the time of the call. Maybe if he drove faster while enroute he could have backed up John and possibly save John’s life. This incident profoundly changed Brian. Psychologists diagnosed Brian with PTSD. They prescribed antianxiety medication. Medication did not help much.

I began with Bible study. We discussed the details of this incident. I showed Brian that there was nothing he could have done to change the outcome. He was dispatched to the first call and had no way to know what was to come. His response was that of what any good cop would have done. John placed himself in the position of disadvantage; he should never have entered the park to search for the suspects alone. This does not mean that John deserved to die, but he knew better; he knew proper tactics. We discussed that we lived in a fallen world. The enemy is a murderer. The survivor’s guilt Brian was experiencing was overwhelming. We showed Brian how he had formed a bitter root judgment that all Asians were cop killers. Brian made inner vows to get even with the responsible. Brian was not able to get revenge because the suspects were in jail. He began to hate the entire Asian race due to a few gang members. This hate is what brought him to prison. Brian saw how his bitter root judgment and expectancies, along with his sinful inner vows manifested into his unwarranted hate for a race of people. Because he felt the Asian gangs were out to kill him, he placed himself into a constant state of hypervigilance, searching for danger around every corner.

The starting prayer was not necessary. Our first prayer was for repentance for his sinful judgments, inner vows, and his desire for vengeance. Then we prayed for God to release Brian’s guilt he had put upon himself or John’s death. The next prayer with a combination of asking for strength to forgive the two suspects, forgive John for ignoring officer safety rules, and forgiving himself or his sinful responses. We combined this prayer with a prayer to renounce his bitter root judgments, expectancies, and inner vows that resulted in his sinful responses. Finally, we prayed for God to remove the trauma of this incident. We asked God to bind and rebuke the enemy that may have developed strongholds through Brian sinful behavior. We asked God to bring his guilt, shame, trauma, shock, pain, and fears to death on the cross. We asked the Holy Spirit to heal any trauma caused by this incident. We asked God to heal the fear center of the brain and turn off the alarms that trigger hypervigilance and release the trigger with godly discernment. We asked God to bring to death Brian’s old methods of responding to shock and trauma and replace them in godly structures and methods of defense based on God’s word. Lastly, we asked to bring healing, peace, and joy to the dark areas of Brian’s heart with God’s light.

Brian required three prayer sessions before he began to feel better. Brian prayed on his own every day and that helped in his healing. Brian said his symptoms have diminished. However, he has many layers of trauma from other critical incidents that need to be dealt with prior to total healing. We all can see a difference in his spirit and attitude.

In these two examples we had a starting point by knowing what the wounding incident was. There will be counselees who exhibit sinful character structures or what the Bible calls bad fruit. Often these counselees may not know the root cause (seed) that began the bitter root to grow. Thankfully we have the Holy Spirit who is the lamp of God who searches her heart and soul (Prov. 20:27). Jesus himself tells believers that the Holy Spirit of God will be with believers forever. Jesus calls the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth and our helper (John 14:16-17). In David’s Psalm 139 verses 23-24 we are told that God searches our hearts and knows our thoughts. God will see all and will lead us to healing. Job 32:8 tells us that the Holy Spirit will make us understand all things. Romans 8:26-27 tells us that the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness and searches our hearts. And in First Corinthians 2:10-11 tells us that the Holy Spirit of God reveals to us our deepest thoughts.

We can ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the trauma or heart breaks that we have either suppressed or forgotten. Through prayer, we ask that the Holy Spirit bring to memory the seed that grew the bitter root. Because it is the will of God to heal us, He will bring up the traumatic incidents that have wounded us when we are able to deal with the root cause. Once the incident is brought into the light, prayer ministers can determine the appropriate course of action such as forgiveness, confession and repentance, or renouncing inner vows.

Sometimes the counselee may not be ready for the revelation of the memory. The Holy Spirit will reveal it when the counselee is ready. God will never give us more than we can handle. We will ask Him to reveal only as much as required for healing.

The Holy Spirit will also reveal to us those we need to forgive. As we recall those who have wounded us, we must forgive them for what we perceive they have done to us.

Sometimes a counselee may have a difficult time forgiving someone or forgiving themselves. If this occurs, there may be a deeper wounding or another unresolved issue. More prayer may be required to remove the strongholds. We must make sure that forgiveness is specific to the wound. Blanket forgiveness does not work. We must forgive others, ourselves, and God, if we perceived that He hurt us. Forgiveness is a command of God (Mt. 6:14-15 and 18:21-22). Forgiveness does not mean we need to forget. However, if you forgive, the by– product is that you will, after time, forget. Forgiveness means that you will not seek vengeance from the offender. Forgiveness is for the forgiver. It releases the power the offender has over us. It sets us free from the past. We must forgive to initiate healing. Forgiveness does not have to be spoken to release their power over us.

When the prayers are all done, it is important for the counselee to understand how to be a spiritual Christian by walking in the Holy Spirit. They must walk in the spirit by studying God’s word daily, spending time in prayer, and doing good works. When we walk with Christ, our Heavenly Father will fill our hearts with love and joy; all by God’s grace. God will renew our minds, thereby discerning the will of God (Rom. 12:2).

The apostle Paul tells us that we once were foolish, we practiced envy and malice; but through God’s grace we are cleansed, regenerated and have the renewal of the Holy Spirit so that we can devote ourselves to good works that is profitable for all people (Ti. 3:3-8). When we walk in the Holy Spirit, the fruit that is produced is love, joy, peace, patience, self-control and goodness (Gal. 5:22 – 23). A counselee who walks in the spirit and receives healing prayer will realize that their life has been transformed.

Prayer sessions can be done daily. I recommend that the sessions be done once per week. The counselee needs time in Bible study and spending time in their own prayer. Once a counselee practices the prayers, they can be done on their own in private. They can then pray for healing of trauma. This method can be used by any Christian to help another Christian. Christ-Centered Healing can be taught to police and fire department chaplains. These chaplains can perform the sessions for the benefit of their officers. I believe that every Bible-based church should have at least one prayer minister for the congregation. If we can heal previous trauma we can put a stop to sinful cycles of violence, molestation, domestic abuse, and alcohol and drug abuse. We then enable people to live the life God intended us to live.

CHAPTER SIX

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

A prayer minister is just a friend who ministers.[[40]](#footnote-40) When ministering to LEOs they need to be more than just friends who minister. Prayer ministry does not require special training. Christians should minister to each other. There are certain considerations when ministering to LEOs. Some of the special considerations include the following. Due to their training and experience, LEOs have learned to not trust anyone. This is also true for counseling. LEOs will be concerned that information that is revealed during prayer sessions will make it back to their agencies. Since the LEO is held to a higher standard than the general public, the release of sensitive information may cause and LEO to be disciplined or even fired. LEOs also worry that if anyone from their agency finds that they are seeking help, they will be deemed untrustworthy, incompetent, or even worse, weak.

Those prayer ministers who would like to specialize in helping police officers, firefighters, and EMTs should learn more about these professions. They should go on ride-alongs and speak to them regarding their duties and concerns. Prayer ministers must be able to keep all information confidential. They must develop a report with the LEO. Bible study is a good time to build this report. Take time to get to know one another and build a relationship. Ask simple open-ended questions. Do not interrogate the LEO. LEOs are trained to read people for their officer safety. They will detect insincerity and untruthfulness. It is always best to be transparent. Prayer ministers must be comfortable around guns and bad language. Never ask and LEO to come to the office or church without his/her weapon. To separate a cop from his gun is to remove his identity. There are some LEOs that do not normally carry a guns off-duty, don’t expect and don’t be alarmed if they possess a gun. And finally, a prayer minister must be prepared to hear horrific stories in vivid detail; blood, guts, and all. Once a rapport is developed, LEOs will want to release their traumatic wounds. If the prayer minister appears to be shocked or disgusted, the LEO may withdraw, or feel guilt and shame which can cause greater damage.

Prayer ministers more than all other ministries wade in the sewers of human hearts.[[41]](#footnote-41) Prayer ministers must not make any judgments about what is being revealed to them, for in Christ there is no condemnation (Rom. 8:10). Prayer ministers must consider the counselee’s sin as their own. We are all sinners. Often when we hear the sins of others, we think to ourselves we are better than them. Prayer ministers must not be self-elevated; they must be humble. Prayer ministers should never rush to the healing process. The Holy Spirit will reveal His timing. Prayer ministers are like coaches, they lead and encourage, and they must allow the counselee to put themselves on the cross. Sometimes a counselee will cry; prayer ministers should allow them to express any emotion that comes upon them. If they cry, be patient, it’s okay to cry with them. Avoid the necessity to “fix them.” It is God’s job to heal them.

The key to becoming a successful prayer minister to a LEO is to build a rapport, be transparent, promise confidentiality, and show love and kindness.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

There is an ever-increasing problem in America today; Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). It is becoming a serious problem with LEOs, as well as military veterans who served in combat who have been traumatized through deployments. LEOs can be compared to veterans who have been in combat. The main difference is that veterans are deployed for short amounts of time and LEOs are deployed throughout their career. Veterans are now committing suicide more than four times the pace of combat deaths. Service members are more likely to kill themselves and be killed by the Taliban or ISIS. Out of the remainder, a high number of veterans will likely abuse alcohol or drugs, become spousal or child abusers, or are arrested for a variety of crimes from drunk in public to murder. A large number of veterans and LEOs are being incarcerated for PTSD related issues. United States Army is spending over $190 million on PTSD research. In 2008, United States Congress allocated $35 million for PTSD related research as well.[[42]](#footnote-42)

Law enforcement, firefighters, and EMT personnel are impacted by trauma as veterans are. LEOs are exposed to traumatic events more often and throughout longer period of time than soldiers. LEOs commonly work 25 to 30-year careers, soldiers may be enlisted as long, however, the time spent exposed to trauma may only be one to three years. Law enforcement agencies and fire departments do not retain data on personnel who are diagnosed with PTSD or other associated stress related problems. No records are kept or costs analyzed regarding the expenditure of public funds to treat LEOs. Based on my twenty-five-year experience as an LEO, I have witnessed the devastating effects of PTSD.

Over the past 10 years there are an average of 80 officers killed each year by the hand of another. During the same time period, the number of officers who commit suicide are almost double. Police experts and researchers believe that for every LEO suicide there is another 1,000 officers suffering from the symptoms of PTSD. There are many more LEOs who suffer from emotional issues such as anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and other addictions such as gambling, pornography, sex, and overspending brought on by job stress and emotional trauma. Researchers estimate well over 216,000 officers out of 875,000 officers nationwide are suffering.

Society must acknowledge this growing problem. Police and fire departments do not admit that PTSD is a problem with their personnel. Dr. Bessel Vander Kolk, in his book “*Traumatic Stress*” tells us, “… the denial of the post-traumatic problems of victims carries the risk of perpetrating trauma related behavior, such as violence against self and others, lack of attention to tasks at hand, and poor personal and occupational functioning.”[[43]](#footnote-43)

Dr. Vander Kolk is warning that if society does not do something to help affected LEOs (and combat veterans), we can expect an increased number of suicides, verbally or physically abusive officers, and more LEOs incarcerated.

In a December 19, 2014 article in the news magazine, “*The Week*,” columnist discussed this topic. The authors name is not listed. The authors responding to a “*New York Times*” article that blames the police as the aggressors and several 2014 death of unarmed African-American males. The New York Times author accuses police of having a “hyper-aggressive mindset” that is a result of fear. The author of this article knows better. They write,

“Though critics portray cops as armed, invulnerable brutes, most are conscientious public servants doing a very dangerous and stressful job. No analysis of ‘police culture’ is complete that doesn’t take into account the effect of verbal abuse, violence, heartbreak, and trauma cops endure every day on our streets.”[[44]](#footnote-44)

The author has it right. However, the accusation of “hyperaggressive mind-set” under some circumstances can be considered true. LEOs who have bitter root expectancies of being attacked or killed, have made inner vows to not allow that to happen. These sinful judgments can cause an overaggressive attitude to form, possibly unwarranted abuse or violence. The seeds of these bitter roots are formed during calls for service that no other person would want to experience. LEOs see the worst society has to offer. They respond to and investigate horrific crimes to women and children that ordinary citizens could not comprehend. Most people do not believe this because on television or in movies, cops can kill 4 to 10 “bad guys” in an episode and never write a report or show the effects of these traumatic events. Mankind has experienced traumatic events throughout history. Many traumatic events are depicted in the Bible. We read of murder, rape, floods, wars, suicide and famine. Some characters such as King David described the symptoms of PTSD in the Psalms. A traumatic event is an experience where something so shocking happened to someone that trauma overwhelms and affects the person’s ability to function properly. This traumatic event can be a single incident or series of events over a LEO’s career. Something it’s considered traumatic when it overwhelms a person’s ability to cope with this event. This often results in physical, psychological, and spiritual wounds. These wounds affect the victim’s well-being and development. The effects of a single traumatic event can last a lifetime if not handled properly. If not properly handled, can cause the victim to become stuck in their guilt, fear, anxiety, or depression. This seat of trauma, even if it is as tiny as a mustard seed, can grow into a bitter root that will lead to a cycle of sinful behavior from expectancies, judgments, and inner vows. Most individuals will attempt to mitigate the pain with maladaptive behavior. Trauma that is properly dealt with will result in growth and maturity (Rom. 5:3-5, Jn. 16:3, and Jas. 1:2-4). In God’s divine wisdom, He uses His children who have come through trials and live through trauma to help others who are suffering (2 Cor. 1:3-7).

It is human nature to run away from problems. Those who choose to avoid and suppress their emotions are heading for disaster. Suppressing emotions like trying to push a beach ball under the water. We will only be able to keep it down so long before it pops out of the water with great force. This is a poor method for treating trauma; it works as well as taking an aspirin to treat a broken arm.

We do not deal so much with what was done to traumatize us, as with their sinful responses. It is our response that keeps us in pain. Anger, resentment, guilt, shame, and judgment that are hidden and forgotten in our hearts must go to the cross or decent responses will remain. Habitual patterns, cycles, or addictions must be transformed renewed for repentance, death and resurrection in Christ. Without repentance there is no change in behavior. Our emotions play a large role in the process of renewing our minds (Rom. 12:2). The expression of emotion is based on what we are thinking. If the thought process is not correct by failing to understand who we are in Christ, it will manifest in our emotional life. If we fail to acknowledge our emotions, we become spiritually vulnerable to the influence and lies of Satan. If we suppress our emotions too long, our feelings will dominate what drives our behaviors. Emotions will surface in unhealthy ways. Trauma wreaks havoc with our emotions due to the wounding of the heart. Psychology and Christianity both deal with the same issues of human behavior and even on how to live. But both have different views of how we do it. Neither are compatible.

Secular psychologists, even with the best of intentions, fall short of feeling the hurt and symptoms of PTSD, especially an LEOs. Psychologists rely heavily on drug therapy, human wisdom, self-help techniques, and behavior modifications. They try to change our character structures from the outside in. Even after dozens of sessions, at best, psychologists only teach victims of PTSD to cope with the disease. This is done primarily through calming breathing exercises or distraction techniques. Psychologists have yet to learn that only God can heal. God does not want us stuck in our trauma, nor stuck in guilt, shame, depression, fear and anxiety. Knowing who God is, and who we are *in Christ*, is the key to our healing. This is not a self-help program, Christ is our healer, our “wonderful counselor” (Is. 9:6), our physician, the only one who can remove us from bondage and bring healing (Luke 4:18).

The Christ-Centered Healing method works on the bitter roots that grow from the seed of the wound. Bitter roots began the process that causes the wounded to make sinful judgments. Based on the judgments we develop certain expectancies and inner vows. Once these sinful responses take over character, the principle of sowing and reaping begins. We sow sin, so shall we reap sin. Our bitterness, judgment, and unforgiveness our lives. Our fruit becomes anger, hate, violence, guilt and shame. The bitter root defiles many (Heb. 12:15). We then hurt those who are close to us. We lash out at people for little or no reason. This cycle will continue until we deal with the trauma properly.

A prayer minister will begin with what amounts to a Bible study. They will ensure that the counselee will know who they are *in Christ*. They must understand that it is God’s will to heal us. The counselee is taught how to be a spiritual Christian by walking in the spirit.

This may take two or three sessions. Once this is accomplished, the prayer minister will ask questions in an attempt to determine the seed of the initial wounding. This is often done by finding the poor fruit and working back to the root, to the seed.

Sometimes the counselee can pinpoint the initial trauma. If the counselee cannot remember the trauma seed, the prayer minister will pray with a counselee asking the Holy Spirit to search their heart to reveal the trauma, its bitter root and inner vows (Ps. 139:23-24). The Holy Spirit will bring the wound to remembrance, if not at the time of prayer, within a few days. Once a trauma has been revealed, the prayer minister will discuss the initial trauma and ask pointed questions to understand the bitter roots that had formed the counselee’s heart. The prayer minister seeks out sinful judgments, expectancies, inner vows, and any unforgiveness in order to determine if repentance is required and what types of forgiveness is to be made. Most bitterness, guilt, anger, and shame stems from resentment, and unforgiveness. In the book of Ephesians 4:31-32, the apostle Paul writes, “Let all bitterness and wrath and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgive you.”

Without forgiveness there is no healing. Forgiveness is the key to move forward. Forgiveness is not a suggestion; it is a command. Forgiveness is so important that Jesus warned his disciples that if they do not forgive others their sin, the Heavenly Father would not forgive their sins (Mt. 6:14-15). This also includes forgiving ourselves for our poor decisions and sinful behavior. If the counselee cannot remember all the people who need to be forgiven, they can ask the Holy Spirit to reveal them all. It is important for the counselee to name each person to be forgiven. A blanket forgiveness rarely works.

The prayer minister will lead the counselee into confession and repentance for sins committed or omitted from the trauma. It is only through faith and repentance that we are cleansed and provided a new heart (Ezk. 36:25-26). We become new in Christ, our old self is dead, and we are resurrected in our new self in Christ’s image. If and when necessary, the prayer minister can pray with the counselee for repentance, renounce bitter roots, ask for forgiveness, and to remove guilt and shame. Finally, the prayer minister will pray with a counselee to remove the trauma. We ask God to remove the pain associated with the trauma and all other effects resulting from the trauma.

When working with LEOs we see many layers of trauma. Each layer is separate and must be healed on its own, one layer at a time. As the layers are healed and removed, joy and peace will return to the counselee. As a walk in the spirit, all will see the fruit of the spirit abound (Gal. 5:22-25).

LEOs who were Christian prior to the critical incident may ask, “Where was God during my wounding?” The prayer minister will explain that we do not know God’s plans (Is. 55:8-9) but God is omnipresent, He was there during the incident and He has sent His own son to redeem us from the past. Christ is in the believer’s life and His desire is to set us free. This is the Gospel; the good news that Jesus Christ sets the captives free, and releases us from our bondage. With our position *in Christ*, we have the authority to bind and rebuke the enemy and tear down strongholds.

I have a vision that every first responder that has been diagnosed with PTSD, as well as any other first responder who suffers from stress related issues can contact their chaplain, and if their agency has no chaplain, go to the local Bible believing church to obtain healing. I envision a time when each church worldwide will have trained prayer ministers to do God’s will to heal God’s children and restore their lives and allow them to live a joyful life God intended. The ministry, if used properly, can be a conduit for a dynamic connection between God, the counselee, and the congregation.

Due to the unique culture of LEOs, we must understand the special connections when working with a LEO. In this culture there is a great stigma and seeking help for any issue, especially emotional issues. These brave warrior – minded men and women would rather die than to appear weak asking for help. In this culture it is a weakness to ask for help. The LEO who appears week is often alienated from others; no one will work with them. LEOs are opinionated, judgmental, and suspicious of everyone.

Herein, I have identified a three-fold problem that can be fixed in one step. The first problem is that a high percentage of LEOs have been traumatized. Due to the emotional issues discussed, these officers are not working at 100% efficiency. This should raise a red flag to administrators. The concern should be for the safety of their personnel and the public. Decision-making abilities may be impaired. A poor decision may lead to injury or death; and in all probability, civil liability. The second problem for society are the costs involved due to PTSD issues. Police and fire departments must incur the cost of the mental health treatments that can go on for years, sick leave abuse, sick leave itself due to overtime costs for fill-in officers; the cost of losing a veteran officer to early retirement is in the hundreds of thousands of dollars due to the high cost of training a new LEO to take their place. Multiply these costs by the 216,000 officers affected with emotional trauma. The third problem is how do we get these LEOs to come get help? Due to the unique culture many are reluctant to seek help fearing that they may be found out by their coworkers.

The answer to all three questions is the same. The church! The church has been and still is a place for healing. Every Christian church that teaches the truth of the Bible should have in its heart the desire to see all of its people living spiritually free and productive lives in Christ. The local church needs to step up with God’s truth and his prescription for freedom from sinful and defeated lives. Not only will the church bring healing to those needs, but it’s congregation will be brought closer together. The healing ministry will become a front-line ministry. The development of support and prayer ministry groups should become essential support systems for the trauma healing ministries. Pastors, elders, and prayer ministers who have developed the knowledge and skills of a healing ministry are in a position to bring the word of God in a highly personal and relevant manner to those who are desperate for healing. This is a unique opportunity and privilege. The church can now bring people to Christ one at a time in an individualized manner and nurture their growth. Pastors are often too busy to head up this ministry due to other church programs. However, the pastor will be able to identify spiritually mature people to become prayer ministers who can then become leaders of the ministry. This will become a popular fruit bearing ministry that will attract many qualified Christians.

Once a core group is prayerfully chosen, a reasonable amount of time must be invested to develop the skills and maturity required to be a prayer minister. The amount of time required is dependent on the amount of time in training. Best estimates if training is conducted a few hours a week, the average Christian can be ready and one or two months.

I pray for a time in the near future when every church will have a Christ-Centered Healing program. New ministers should not attempt to counsel LEOs until they have some experience with their congregation’s trauma issues. Only experienced prayer ministers should attempt to counsel LEOs due to the complexity of LEO issues. A great amount of experience can come from healing ministries in a teen program, addictive recovery, and adult programs. This will provide a skill base for the prayer minister that the Holy Spirit has called to help LEOs. Once the church has obtained the experience required and the ministry is in place, I believe this will provide a comfortable location and a safe haven for LEOs. The stigma of going to a psychologist office is no longer an issue. The loving atmosphere of the Christian church will provide a safe and relaxing environment for a stressed LEO.

This ministry will spread rapidly as LEOs are healed of trauma. LEOs are a close-knit family. Once an LEO tells another of their healing, that LEO will then tell another. LEOs will also see positive fruit appear to those who have never produced fruit due to their wounding. This is especially true when a LEO learns how to do this method by himself and receives great results. That LEO may even teach the method to others without including the church. The Holy Spirit’s divine power does not require a church or a prayer minister. This will fulfill the Great Commission. The LEO must understand the principle of bitter root judgments, expectancies, inner vows, and sowing and reaping. This understanding is then used to recognize sinful responses. They can see how the inner seed of trauma has wreaked havoc in the LEO’s life. The provided sample prayers can be modified in personalized for an individual. This will equip the LEO to deal with any new trauma that may occur. The LEO, in all probability, will recognize wounding within his family. He can then lead his family to repentance, renewal, and healing. This will heal and fortify the family unit.

The benefits of healing our LEOs is obvious. A walk in the Holy Spirit produces good fruit. LEOs are public servants. The beneficiary of the fruitfulness will be the public. When a LEO is healthy, joyful, at peace, with love, it will be difficult to exhibit racism or abuse. LEOs will use less sick leave and work longer healthier careers reducing costs to the taxpayer. As stated earlier there are no statistics kept for LEOs diagnosed with PTSD or other mental illness. No statistics are kept on how much taxpayer money is spent on endless psychologist visits, medication, excessive leave, addiction recovery, forced early retirement, and the costs of civil suit stemming from allegations of physical abuse and/or wrongful death. Based on my experience as a police administrator, these costs could well be near the $100 million mark nationwide. The cost to train a LEO is well over $100,000. This cost spread out over an average 25-year career is reasonable. But if a LEO is forced to retire after 8 to 10 years due to emotional stress, and in addition the agency must incur the cost of hiring and training a new officer, this no longer becomes cost-effective. We must not only consider financial costs, but the loss of a veteran officer can be devastating to a small agency with minimal officers. In larger cities that employ hundreds of LEOs, if 10% are forced to retire on stress related issues, the cost of losing veterans and hiring and training new officers is astronomical. A loss of one or two officers could deplete a smaller agency’s overtime budget. Nationwide the majority of first responder agencies are small, approximately 30 officers or less. These 30 officers spread across three work shifts limits the number of officers available. If an agency loses one or two, others must fill in from other shifts to fill that vacancy. That LEO will be on overtime. LEOs can only work so many hours of overtime until they become sleep deprived. Excessive overtime will cause other issues such as poor officer safety conditions, stress on the LEO and their family.

Emotional trauma has been around for thousands of years. The Bible tells us of many characters who suffered grief, sorrow, shame, and depression. King David expressed these emotions in the Psalms. David describes fear (Ps. 37), depression and a trouble soul (Ps. 31). David tells us fear of the Lord will restore the soul; provide comfort, and anointing (Ps. 23). In Psalm 13 David tells us for those who love God and follow His commandments, they will receive benefits of His love. These benefits are forgiveness for our sins, healing of our diseases (emotional and spiritual), God redeems us, God shows us love and mercy, God renews us.

God did not design us to lead a defeated life; defeated by life’s traumas. God intended a world without fear and wounding. But due to Adam’s sin, we now live in a world with evil. God is sovereign, He knew what was to occur. But He was prepared with a plan of deliverance, salvation, and healing. As a gift, God sent His only Son into the world, that we might love through Him and be the propitiation for our sins. A portion of God’s plan was revealed in Isaiah 53:3-5.

“He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ***But He was wounded for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His stripes we are healed.”***

We can see that it was God’s sovereign plan to deliver and heal His beloved creation. This is all a wonderful gift from God for those who love and have faith in His son Jesus Christ.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE STARTING PRAYER

Lord, thank you for putting us together today. We know You are here with us, thank you. We know You are the one true living God of light and healing. We ask that Your Holy Spirit be with us here today as we help \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with his/her healing.

We ask your Holy Spirit to search the depths of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s heart and soul. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ has given you permission to search the dark corners of his/her heart and soul. Please shine your light to expose those areas which have been hurt or any area where the enemy has a stronghold on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Bring those wounds to memory so we can bring them to the cross.

I ask You to bind any demonic spirits that may seek revenge on us or our families. Send warring and guardian angels to protect us and our families.

We recognize that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ has fruit in his/her life that is affecting his/her relationship with you and others. This bad fruit is also affecting his/her health and ability to live the abundant life you have given him/her.

We ask You to reveal any bitter root, inner vows, and help \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to see unhealed trauma, sinful responses, or any unresolved issue in his/her heart.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ gives You permission to do deep work, and we ask that you heal him/her; spirit, soul and body. Lead him/her to genuine repentance in the areas where he/she has sinned. We know You are gentle and compassionate, loving and kind, and we know that this healing process may be painful, it will not be overwhelming.

We trust You to guide and protect \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_; allow him/her to experience and feel only that which is necessary for healing. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ opens the door to his/her heart and says, “Come Lord Jesus, come.”[[45]](#footnote-45)

In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE PRAYER OF REPETANCE

Lord, I stand before You undone by the damage I have caused (name of person).

I confess I have hurt him/her in this way: (name of sin and how it affected person).

I confess that I have also grieved Your heart by hurting Your child in this way, and I repent.

I repent for and renounce all denial, self-justification, self-defense, minimization of my sin (and minimization of how it has hurt others) and blame. I make no excuses; I take full responsibility for what I have done.

My sin has resulted in broken trust and broken friendship. Father, I am so very sorry for the pain and grief I have caused. Help me to continue feeling the pain until the cost of my sin is written deeply into my heart, so that I will not be tempted to sin in this way again.

May the strength of the experience sustain and empower me to do and say the things needed to rebuild trust and bring healing, and if possible, reconciliation. Show me that restitution needs to be made, how it is to be done and the timing involved.

Please give me patience and sensitivity to honor this person’s heart in all that I say and do. Help me give them time to process, to heal and respond. I release to you any demand that they respond to my repentance and/or restitution in a certain time frame or in a certain way.

I release to you my insecurity. My “need to be right” or my “need to look good” in the eyes of others. I repent for the ways I have placed my need to be right above relationships, and for the times I’ve allowed shame or a “desire to save face” to tempt me to hide or cover-up my sin.

Create in me a clean heart. May my motive for restitution and reconciliation be pure and for the others sake… and for Christ’s sake, not so that my life will be easier, or to escape the consequences of my sin. Fill me so full of Your love that I will be willing to lay my life down and pay the cost for relationship.

I ask You to bless and heal (the person wounded).

Pour the oil of Your Holy Spirit into the wounds I have caused. Bless him/her with your presence and bring Your perfect comfort and healing to his/her life.

In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE PRAYER RENOUNCING BITTER ROOT JUDGMENTS, EXPENCTANCIES, AND INNER VOWS

Lord, I recognized I have judged (name of person) for (name of offense) and have locked myself into that same behavior/attitude.

I choose to forgive (him/her) for hurting me, and I choose to release my “right” to hold this offense against them, knowing it is up to You alone to judge.

Please forgive me for the sinful ways in which I have done the very same to others. (Name others and detail how you hurt them.)

Forgive me for judging (name). I repent for the judgment and dishonor.

Now I see I am reaping the same pattern throughout my life. Forgive me for my part in tempting others to do the very same thing I hated, by the power of my bitter root expectancies and judgments. Place the cross between me and the sowing and reaping of my judgments, and consume on the cross everything that I am due to reap because of my sin. Thank you for replacing it with Your blessing.

I ask that You give me new ways of expecting, believing and responding that are in accordance with Your word.

Please forgive me for trying to protect my heart by making the inner vow to: (name the vow). I repent for making this vow, renounce it and ask that You break the power of it over me.

SAMPLE PRAYER RENOUNCING BITTER ROOT JUDGMENT, EXPECTANCIES, AND INNER VOWS CONTINUTED

I command my body, soul and spirit to forget the vow and I declare that I am no longer required to act, think or feel according to this inner vow. I am set free to my original design; the person You created me to be.

I repent for, and tear down the following habitual ways of acting out this vow: (name acts, in example fear, withdrawal, anger, resentment, etc.).

I bring my sin to death on the cross of Jesus Christ, and consider myself dead to those old ways. Show me how I can “pursue peace” with those whom I have wounded, and help me to restore relationship where possible. Fill me afresh and anew with Your Holy Spirit.[[46]](#footnote-46)

In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS

Lord You have told me in Your word that forgiveness is not an option. You simply said I have to choose, yet I often have difficulty even choosing to forgive. By Your grace, please do for me what I cannot do for myself! Thank you for accomplishing forgiveness in me.

As an act of my will, in obedience to Your word, I make a choice to forgive. I know that I may have to choose again and again until You make forgiveness real and complete in me. Please give me the willingness and strength to preserve in choosing until forgiveness is accomplished in me by Your power.

I choose to forgive (name person and what you are forgiving them for).

I give You any “right” that I’ve felt was mine to blame. I surrender what I felt was my “right” to be paid back for my loss; they owe me nothing. I declare my trust in You alone as the righteous judge, and release to You any anger, resentment, and bitter root that I’ve held in my heart.

Forgive me for the ways that I’ve wanted those who hurt me to hurt like I do. I wanted them to know the enormity of what they have done to me, and I wanted them to be sorry- but that is vengeance, and that is your territory. Forgive me for my desire for vengeance, and trying to take your place.

Thank you that I do not have to pretend it is all right or that it did not hurt or matter. Thank you for always listening to me, for hearing my cries and expressions of pain, and that my tears are important to You. Thank you for wiping the tears from my eyes, and for healing me and making me whole.

Forgive me for all the condemning judgments I have made. Give me a new and right spirit that will enable me to hate sin but look with Your compassion and love upon sinners. Heal the wounded heart of the child within me and pour Your love in. I know that my emotions will heal in time, and that I will be able to feel the emotion of being forgiven and extending forgiveness, but until that time, I will continue to make the right choice to forgive and continue to release this person to You. Help me to learn to forgive the way You have forgiven me. I choose to walk in Your mercy and grace.

SAMPLE PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS CONTINUED

I choose to bless (name of person), and I sincerely ask You to richly bless that as well.[[47]](#footnote-47)

In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE PRAYER TO HEAL SHAME

Jesus, it is not easy to look at and acknowledge the shameful events of my life. But I wanted to be healed, and I want to be free to live the life You have called me to. I choose to open up the door to my heart and I invite You into my memory, into the broken places in my heart. I ask that You heal the pain, draw to the cross all shock, trauma, fear, terror, and shame, and gather up all the shattered pieces of my heart, and make me whole.

Please cleanse me from the disappointment, confusion and shame, and set me free. I receive Your comfort in the places where I have refused, or been unable to receive comfort in the past.

I’ve felt that there was no place for my shame, the disgrace that I’ve felt. But now I know there is a place, and it’s on Your cross. I release the shame to You now.

In the places where my heart has been filled with shame, fear and distrust, I ask that You replace it with Your tender mercies and great abounding love. I ask that You remove my shame and reproach and restore me to honor and dignity, which is my true inheritance as a child of the most high God.

Please grant me the gift of faith to be able to believe Your promises. Enable me to step into my destiny, purpose, and all that You have planned for me.

I thank you that You are a kind, loving and gentle God. I thank you, Jesus, for dying on the cross for me, and for paying the price for my sin and shame. Lord, I confess that I need You, I need Your love, protection, power and deliverance. 1 John: 1:8 proclaims that You came to undo the devil’s work. I know that the devil’s work is to kill, steal and destroy. Shame has been a way that he has stolen from me, and has brought destruction.

But You promise to give me life, and life in abundance. So I choose this day to receive Your promise of fullness of life, and I ask that You set me free from the bondage of sin and shame. I invite You into every area of my heart, mind and spirit. Set me free from the lies that I have believed about You, others, life, myself. And let me know Your truth in my inmost being.

I receive by faith the healing balm of Your love, and thank you for restoring honor to me. May I truly live like the oak of righteousness You have created me to be: for the display of Your splendor.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

APPENDIX F

SAMPLE PRAYER TO REMOVE TRAUMA

Lord Jesus, I ask that You come as the prince of peace and bring Your peace to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Come and establish Your dominion of peace in him/her, and manifest Yourself in such a way that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ will know that You are here. Enable him/her to feel the depths of Your love.

Lord, we know this is a fallen world. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ has been part of the fight between good and evil. Being a police officer/firefighter /EMT, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ has witnessed, been involved with, and forced to do things that might have produced a trauma, bitter root judgment expectancy, or inner vow. This may have produced poor fruit resulting in bad habit or sinful reactions to life’s events.

Lord, I ask You to rebuke every force of darkness that seeks to harm \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in any way, or has tried to keep him/her locked in this prison of trauma. You have not given \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ a spirit of fear, but of love, power, and soundness of mind, and that is what I claim for him/her today. Hide him/her under the shadow of Your wings, and keep him/her safe. I break every assignment of trauma against \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and bind and send away every guard assigned to him/her.

I ask that You be like poultice, drawing the pain, trauma, shock, fear, terror, and shame from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, bringing it all to death on your cross. You suffered and died for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and we appropriate all that you have accomplished for him/her.

Pour in Your love and grace, and by the power Holy Spirit remove any trauma that has been stored in the cells of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s body. Restore the cells to perfect order.

Lord, I ask You to remove any shock, trauma, fear, terror, or shame experienced during conception, in the womb during birth. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I bless the time when you were being knit together in your mother’s womb. I bless the moment of your birth, and call you forth into the newness of life. I say that you are welcome on this earth. There is a place for you here. Your Heavenly Father has a purpose for you and a plan to give you a future and hope, to prosper you in every way.

Lord, I ask that You heal \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s DNA and remove all shock, trauma, fear, guilt, shame and terror that has come through his/her generational flow. Together we plant the cross of Jesus Christ firmly between \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and his/her generations, we ask that all iniquity be stopped at the cross of Christ. Forgive those in his/her generations who traumatized others or manipulated, dominated or controlled through fear or torment. Release Your precious blood and heal all unresolved grief and pain.

SAMPLE PRAYER TO REMOVE TRAUMA CONTINUED

I ask that You heal the “fear center” of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s brain and every place where memory is processed and stored. Remove all shock, trauma, fear, guilt, terror and shame from the conscious, unconscious, and subconscious memory, and draw from him/her all the pain that has caused so much torment. Turn off the alarms that have been ringing for so long, and replace the fear, dread and hyper-vigilance with godly discernment. Let him/her know when there is truly danger, and give wisdom to know how to respond. Bring peace and rest to the part of the heart that has always had to stand guard and be alert. Remove any pervasive low-level anxiety.

Please fill up every area of unmet need with Your love and peace. Establish new neurological connections to the joy center of the brain. Enable \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to have a full range of emotions as you have purposed for him/her.

Heavenly Father, please remove the trauma from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s eyes and ears. With the blood of Jesus Christ, wash over any images “seared” upon the soul. Remove trauma that has come from any harmful or harsh words spoken, and remove any dis-harmony, disease, or disorder that these words or images have caused. Remove any trauma associated with scent and remove any trauma from the skin. In the name of the blood of Jesus Christ, I declare order and healing to spirit, soul, and body.

Trauma has shaken \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to the very core of his/her foundation, and I ask that You heal every crack with Your love. Restore trust and grace to believe in You and receive Your promises and to trust others.

Please remove all shock, trauma, fear, guilt, terror, and shame from the will and spirit of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Restore his/her will, and strengthen it in every way.

Please remove all shock, trauma, fear, guilt, terror, and shame from the muscles, ligaments, tendons, bones, and bone marrow. Bring Your healing power to every area where \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s spirit has been crushed or broken, and restore health, vitality, and vigor. Make his/her bones and connective tissues strong. I ask that You remove all shock, trauma, feat, guilt, terror, off the organs.

Please heal the immune system and remove all toxins that remain from any chemicals or hormones that have poured through his/her body for so many years. Cancel any and all effects they have had on the spirit, soul, or body, and restore all neurochemical balance.

Please sever all fear bonds, trauma bonds, and unhealthy and unholy soul ties that have been created through reaction to trauma.

Lord Jesus, help \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ recognize and bring to death all the old ways of responding and reacting to shock, trauma, fear, guilt, terror, inner vows, and bitter root judgments and expectancies. Empower him/her with wisdom and power to dismantle the ungodly structures of defense based on scripture. Help him/her come to the understanding of his/her spiritual authority as a child of the most high God.

SAMPLE PRAYER TO REMOVE TRAUMA CONTINUED

Please fill every cell with Your peace and healing grace. Displace any darkness with your light. Keep \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in your perfect peace, especially in the night seasons, and bring Your rest. Surround him/her with your protection and love.

In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

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