

The Challenge of Awakening a Numb or Checked-Out Heart

I want to take a few moments to share in response to a question I get quite often. I get this a lot—in group sessions I do, and also in teachings. It's the issue of a numb, shut-down, checked-out, disconnected kind of heart.

I run into this over and over again. It's become a primary mechanism that people are falling into and they're looking for help. We're dealing with a major subject today. We live in a society the Bible mentions, when Jesus said the love of many will grow cold. I don't think we understood what the full effects of that could look like, but we're already seeing it.

When you have a numb or a shut-down heart, you're really experiencing a response to pain. We get to the point where life has been so difficult, and we're in a day and age where people are going through deep disappointment and deep discouragement. Trials and struggles come. And we all have crazy experiences we go through. I call them the dramas and the traumas, and I don't mean that lightly.

People have gone through some heavy-duty stuff in their lives, and historically, what most people do in response to their pain is to shut down. They don't deal with it. Whenever my ancestors experienced pain in their own life, they would just turn the switch off. It seemed like a good response at the time, but in the long-term, it was deadly.

When the pain seems to overwhelm, we get worn out, we get worn down. In the book of Daniel, where the enemy comes to persecute the people of God, the word means "to wear them out," to get them to a place where they're just worn out.

We hit a tipping point, and sometimes we just need a way out, and we'll take the easy way. We hit the shut-off valve. We

pull the breaker in the heart-valve switch to the pain. We say, "Enough is enough. I can't deal with this anymore." But whenever you turn off the breaker, you turn off pain, but you also turn off your heart to everything else. You can't choose what you become numb to. People become so overwhelmed by the pain that they shut off and become numb. It becomes the best viable option they can think of, because we've not been equipped on how to deal with pain.

How many of you have you been thoroughly equipped on how to deal with pain in your life? Do you know how to nurture yourself? Do you know how to encourage yourself? Do you know how to bring yourself back to life when you're going through struggles? Do you know how to increase your self-talk to be honoring and loving and positive?

No. Most of us just fall into victim mode or self-loathing, feeling sorry for ourselves or we just numb out. We check out in Netflix, we check out in Hulu, we thumb through our Facebook feed or we just get busy and go back to life.

The majority of people I have worked and still work with have never even grieved. They've not grieved the death of loved ones, they've not grieved the loss in their life, they've not grieved things that they should have experienced but didn't. And they're now experiencing the repercussions of the lack of love they've processed through in their own life.

But we haven't been trained in the ways love comes in to nurture us. Nurture is something God deposited heavily in our mothers—our fathers also carry it, but the mothers carry it in a special way, a way that helps us to heal and process through hard times and difficult days.

Nurture is the language of "Everything is going to be okay. You're going to be all right. You're going to get through this." Nurture says it's okay to cry. It's okay to feel weak today. Instead, because of the absence of nurture in our

lives, when pain comes, we get easily overwhelmed. We don't know what to do in the times of trial, and so our traumas kick in, and then we're just checking out. We're just pulling the heart valve switch and going, "I can't take it anymore." So we shut off to pain, but what we don't realize is we're shutting off to life, we're shutting off to the life of God, we're shutting off to the life of relationships. We want to shut off to the dangerous people but then we're shut off to everything else in life.

I'd like to share a couple of ideas with you about dealing with and healing a numb, checked-out, disconnected, or shut-down kind of heart. The first thing you need is a sense of urgency. I don't mean in fear. There's no sense in fear and panic attacks over this. Instead, we need to have a sense of sobriety. I like the word "sober." The Bible uses it because it speaks of being awake, alert and aware of how things affect life. When you're sober, you're aware of how your heart affects you, how you feel, how you're thinking. You're also aware of how it affects other people.

Become sober, because you need to recognize when you pull that heart breaker and turn it off, you are hating on yourself and putting damage on yourself. We must get a sense of urgency that says, "No, it's time to love myself. It's time to love myself in the way God loves me. I can't add to the pain in my life with a greater pain of pulling the shutoff valve." We may see it as a viable option, but it's not. We need to become sober and realize this wasn't a good option. It was just the best thing we could do at the time.

Don't beat yourself up, but shutting down wasn't the best healing, fruitful, whole solution for your life and for your journey. Realize too that when you shut down, it affects others. Moms, if you shut down, you may shut off to the pain of your ex-husband or whatever hurt you, but it's going to affect you, and it's going to affect your kids. Dads, you may be able to go back to work and be numb, but you'll be

inaccessible. The first thing I tell people is to get an urgency.

The second thing is to begin praying and asking God to help you to turn the breaker back on. Just a simple prayer from your heart: "God, I turn the breaker back on. I turn the heart switch back on." Because there's only one. There isn't one little breaker for pain and one little breaker for sorrow and ejection. No, there's one breaker.

When you turn off that breaker, joy and peace get turned off as well too. Renounce. Say, "God, I renounce the way I turned off my heart and numbed it out." You may not even know when it happened. But ask God to turn it back on—which leads me to the next thing. I advise people of this constantly.

If you want to see healing begin to happen, you're going to have to begin to access pain in a new way rather than running from it. We spend so much of our life running from pain and toward comfort. I hate to break it to you, but you can't run from the pain. You can't run from it. It will follow you.

Whatever pain you shove down and stuff down, it's going to come up somewhere else. I encourage people to process out in a safe environment. You may need to cry the tears you've never cried. We often look at crying as though we're failures, as though it's weak to cry. But crying is amazing. It's the body's emotional detox. It gives you an opportunity to exchange with God, give Him your sorrow and allow Him to give you back joy, give you back healing, give you back your peace.

Isaiah 61 talks about this. God gives you the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, the oil of joy for sorrow, beauty for ashes. Well, how's he going to give you beauty if you don't give Him the ashes?

And how do you give Him the ashes? By making the exchange from your heart. "God, I give you this pain. I invite you into this pain." It may involve forgiving someone else. It may involve

forgiving yourself. And in that pain, not only will you find healing, but you will allow your heart to come alive, and you will find the ability to help others.

What good are you if you shut off your heart and someone else next to you is going through the very same thing as you? What can you offer them?

“Well, hey, you shut down. I’m shutting down too. Let’s all shut down and go numb together.” Today, we’re living in a generation that’s just lights are on, but nobody’s home. We try to find whatever way we can to alleviate the pain, and then we have no life, and we’re wondering why we’re so depressed, anxious and struggling to feel.

We have to stop avoiding pain and I would say it’s time to start allowing yourself to feel what you haven’t allowed yourself to feel. You know, many of you have gone through divorces, you’ve gone through loss of loved ones, you’ve gone through rejection, you’ve been in abusive relationships, you’ve gone through tragic sickness or you’ve experienced things with your children. Maybe your child’s been diagnosed with something or maybe you’ve been diagnosed with something and you’re just in a place of heartache and turmoil and you haven’t let yourself feel the pain and process through it.

I’m not talking about this lightly. You guys have been through heavy-duty stuff: heavy-duty pain, heavy-duty heartache. I think we need to allow ourselves to feel what we didn’t allow ourselves to feel before that caused us to shut off. We’re so afraid of it. Dive in, because God is good, and He wants to meet you there and heal you. He didn’t cause it, but He doesn’t want you to run from it. He’s equipped you and wants to walk with you. And in that, you’ll learn new things about God. And best of all, on the other side of it all, you’ll have an awakened heart.

I remember when my son was diagnosed on the autism spectrum.

For my wife and me, it was the most painful experience of our lives. We went through every spectrum of painful emotions in the book. But we made a decision that to go through –knowing we would have nights we had no idea how to get through, night where we couldn't see our future and what it would look like. We decided to go through the pain and in that, God has met us. He's given us strategy. He's given us ways to help ourselves help others.

When I went through my own breakdown over 13 years ago, I made a decision that whatever pain I got to face was whatever I got to get healed from. It helped bring me to the place where I was free from chronic anxiety, where I had tools to overcome depression, where I wasn't suicidal. I wasn't overtaken by the crazies in my life because I moved toward the pain.

When you move toward the pain and let God meet you in it, you develop a new response. Instead of running from pain, you lean in to, "What do I got to grow in?" You lean into becoming a warrior. You lean into becoming so much stronger. You may have some new reactions you need to have. Some of you guys, you may need to start having a new response to talking out your emotions. You weren't taught that. You don't know how to do that. You're going to have to make room for that. You're going to have to stop suppressing them and find time to have relationships with people where you can talk it out.

Whatever it takes, find avenues where you can process through the pain in your life so that you can also process through with God and begin to see some transformation happen, because how is God going to heal our heart if he doesn't have access to it? That is the mission and assignment Jesus came to bring: the heart of the Father to continually heal our hearts and set us up for transformation. {eoa}

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