



Saundra Dalton-Smith Transcript

Episode: 46

Announcer

Welcome to the post COVID church podcast with your host, Stuart Kellogg.

Stuart Kellogg

Welcome. Today we're going to be talking about how if the post COVID Church is to share more of the good news, the members can't be physically and emotionally out of shape, and how to heal from the trauma of this past year.

My guest, Dr. Saundra, Dalton-Smith, an internal medicine physician who focuses on treating the whole person. She teaches and writes. Her most recent book, "Sacred rest: recover your life, renew your energy, restore your sanity." She's married, and she and her husband have two young men at home. Welcome, Dr. Dalton Smith.

You put it very frankly, saying most of suffered trauma this last year? That's a loaded term. Can you explain it? And how to heal from it?

Saundra 1:07

Yeah. So I think for the most part, when we think about trauma, many of us automatically think about the event. And you know, what's it about? Was it violent? Was it a natural disaster? Was it abuse? So we we've lumped trauma up to only focus, focus on the events that happened, and not really focus on how it affected us, which really is at the core of our trauma response.

So trauma is not simply the event is what happened after an event. How did it affect your perspective on God, your safety or your ability to move forward, because that's what we're experiencing now coming out of COVID. Just like with 911. If I say those words, automatically, most people have a thought they remember where they were at what they were doing, how they felt when those first towers went down?

Well, from this point forward, when we say 2020, people are going to have a thought they're going to remember things that happened during that here that were that impressed kind of their memories, which for a lot of people are not positive things. They're thinking about the masks, they're thinking about people that they lost. They're thinking about jobs that they may have lost. A lot of traumatic things happened in 2020. And we just need to recognize that and understand that a lot of people right now are going through a trauma recovery response. They're working through those stages of trauma recovery, and really having to get back to a stable place in their mind, body and their spirit.

Stuart 2:32

How should the church be helping people get through this trauma?

Saundra 2:37

Well, I think the church, one of the main positionings should be in a place of helping people not feel shame, about having to walk through that process. I think there's a lot of people in the world who are trauma shaming others: "Oh, you should just get over it. Oh, let's just get back to normal." And we're not really taking it a compassionate approach toward how deeply some people were affected by this past season. And understanding that trauma, shaming people, shame never heals. It never moves anybody to a good place, that we need to actually start extending grace in the healing process. As every person kind of goes through that process at their own pace, no different than grief shaming, and the time it takes for one person to start moving toward healing and recovery is complete, maybe completely different from someone else, even if they experienced the exact same thing.

Stuart 3:29

So for a senior pastor or lay leader listening, what can the church do to best help not only the people inside the church, but those outside?

Sandra 3:39

Yeah, so a big part of that is learning how to have really effective communication with people having a place where people are able to experience what I call emotional rest, where they're able to share their fears, their anxieties, whatever it is that they may be walking through, as they move through the stages of trauma, and not feel like by sharing those feelings by mourning the losses that they may have experienced, that they are in some way lesser of a Christian, that their faith walk may in some way be less because they are kind of processing through the grief of that loss . You know, oftentimes to use for comparison, the Psalms. You know, we look at David as a worshiper and someone who's always praising that the majority of the songs are actually lamenting songs, because sometimes faith looks like lamenting, that's, that's what faith is, when you're hurting. you're communicating with God, your pain. And the fact that you're even talking to him says that you believe that he is and that he cares about what you're going through. So we have to get to a place where we don't have people who feel like they can't lament, especially within the church because sometimes those are the people who really understand the struggle that you're dealing with as you're walking through a difficult season.

Stuart 4:57

So rather than saying, "We'll have a special meeting on Wednesday for those in trauma." The church should assume everyone is suffering from trauma and make it part of the whole church effort.

Sandra 5:12

Yes, and start helping people walk through it, to understand that you're not lesser of a Christian, if you're if you're walking through this process, post COVID. And that being able to share how you're feeling with others, and have community and be able to heal together. I think that process of healing together of understanding that communication, of being able to share how you're feeling, being able to be effective listeners, you know, so often we are ready to jump in with our part of the conversation that we actually aren't very good listeners. And so rather than having a solution for everybody's problems, Jesus is the solution for everybody's problem, most of us really need to become better listeners, so that we can actually help people see that we care about them, that we're not just trying to get our two cents in and share what we think. But we're willing to listen and let them be able to have a place a safe place to release their pain and release what they're going through.

Stuart 6:09

So this would really be a great opportunity for the church to reach outside its walls, to help those who are also suffering trauma.

Saundra 6:18

Absolutely, this is that this is the is a prime ground really for outreach, because people are hurting, people are hurting, they have difficulty understanding, they don't really know many people don't really know the character of God. And so they are applying God to everything that happens in the world, good or bad. And they because they don't know him personally, that what happens with trauma, it actually skews who God is in their eyes, because they don't know him, they don't have a personal relationship. And so it's helpful for at this time when there's so many people who are emotionally and spiritually open, because they do have so many questions, to be able to start allowing them to have a safe place within the church, even if they don't believe everything we believe, to be able to start understanding who God is being able to see things in a different way.

That's one of the steps or the stages rather, of trauma recovery, is actually not remembering the good. And so if you don't know that God is good, and you don't know the character of God, then you have a hard time kind of extrapolating that from the world. And so I think it's a prime opportunity for really, for those who are in kind of outreach ministry is to look at what are ways we can start healing some of this pain that people are walking through, and doing so in a way that it shows that you care, because that's really what people are connecting with, is that is someone willing to listen to me without judgment, you know, without shaming, allowing me just to express where I'm at, and then letting the love of Christ that comes through that interaction, be part of that healing process for people.

Stuart 8:00

My guest, Dr. Sandra Dalton-Smith, a physician focusing on the importance of Christians being physically and emotionally fit, and author of "Sacred rest, recover your life, renew your energy, restore your sanity." Now, let's talk about rest. Studies show that Americans have never gotten less sleep have never been more distracted. Can you please explain the types of rest?

Saundra 8:26

Yes, so you're absolutely right, we are a burned out culture, we have learned how to multitask with the best of them. And what that has done is it's developed a lot of people who are very skilled at producing and have no idea actually how to restore and recover into to rest. And that's really where the seven types of breath came from looking at what are the ways that our bodies, our mind, our spirit all need to be restored, so that we're not always pouring out from our places of emptiness.

But we get to a place where we are pouring out from a fullness, where we are staying at a level of productivity that is not just from exhaustion, but it's from actually filling poured into empowered and strengthened. And so those seven types include physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, social, sensory, and creative. And as a physician, I oftentimes will have people, you know, say to me, I'm exhausted, I'm tired. And I'd be like, okay, you need to go get sleep, right. If you get eight hours of sleep, you should be good. And then I had a lot of people that then would come back and say, "Well, I got eight, nine hours of sleep, and I'm still exhausted." And we do the lab work, the blood test, everything's normal. And what we were seeing was that when people say they're tired, we use that term, so kind of generalized, that we don't specify, specify what kind of tired we actually are.

And so they're trying to get any rest and thinking it's going to actually solve the place that they are having an actual rest deficit. And what we noticed is that when people are able to identify the area of their rest deficit, that one of those seven places where they are actually tired, then they're able to be very intentional about getting rest in the place where they're depleted. And that's when we start noticing a change. That's when we start seeing people actually feeling revived and regenerated and renewed, because they were pouring back into the bucket that was had to actually become empty.

Stuart 10:27

How do you determine which of the seven areas of rest you need to focus on?

Sandra 10:32

Yeah, so in my book, "Sacred Rest", that's kind of the breakdown of the entire book. I walk you through each of the seven types of rest and looking at specifically, you know, how do you tell if you have a rest deficit in this area, I then came up with a quiz at:

<https://www.restquiz.com/quiz/rest-quiz-test/>

It is a free assessment to help people be able to identify which of the seven types of rest are deficient, then it really boils down to looking at, where are the places you're pouring out most in your life. If you're, let's say, a pastor, and so you're pouring out every week creatively in that you're taking scripture, you're using that information, you're then presenting it to different people in a way that's that flows that keeps them you know, connected, that keeps them engaged. So you're having to use some creativity there to be able to present that that talk. So when you look at all of these different places that you're pouring out, you then have to turn around and say, if this is where I pour out throughout my week, what are the things I do to actually fill those places back up? What are the creative restful activities, those restorative processes I do to improve my creativity, or to help my brain get to a quiet place and get mental rest.

So we have to just be aware of that and with spiritual rest, to make sure that you're not always going to the scripture as a textbook, to extrapolate information, but that you're actually staying in close intimate relationship with the author of the book, so that you get the spiritual rest that's needed. And not just the edification of the truth and the word because both are equally important.

Stuart 12:10

Okay, here's another loaded term: Sabbath. The idea of a day of rest is quaint and mostly ignored. You say the term when it's properly understood, means activity. Can you explain?

Sandra 12:25

Yes, well, that's the thing. When we take a look at Sabbath, you know, when we look at it through the Jewish culture, what we see most often is we'll see them talk about, they're not cooking, they're not doing work, they're doing all these other activities that they're not doing. But then when you take a look at what they do do during that time, they're spending time with family and friends. That's social and emotional rest. They're spending time with God, sometimes out in nature.

So nature and being around what we call natural creativity is creative rest. They're spending time with God in communion with God, that spiritual rest, they're doing these, these restorative activities that are pouring back into their lives. They're not doing the normal day to day work,

but they're also not laying in bed all day. Because when we think of Sabbath, so a lot of us kind of have this mindset that, oh, we're just gonna lay in the bed all day long. And that's rest, stopping the cessation of activity is the all there is to rest. And it isn't. Rest is a restorative processes. How do you pour back in? And so this type of concept for many, if I told you to take a day off and practice Sabbath, in the way that most Jewish cultures do, most people would have a very hard time doing that for an entire day. Because we don't do it for small parts of each day. We have to start somewhere. So and part of that is really identifying what are some ways I can start incorporating Sabbath back into my day to day, so that I can build up a lifestyle of learning how to rest well, because when that happens, you'll develop a hunger to be able to have a time of Sabbath, a period within each week where you actually can focus on those restorative activities. Because you know, it actually allows you to be strengthened in a way that only can be done when we allow ourselves to go into deep breath.

Stuart 14:19

So, you're really talking about a spiritual discipline.

Sandra 14:22

Absolutely. And like I said, it's a matter of starting. If I have someone, I'm discipling, and they don't read the Bible at all, I don't say well, though, read the whole thing. We may start with just a couple of Bible verses that are specific to the area that they need to know God can speak into. So I'm starting where they're at, in a way that's feeding them in the moment. And what that does is that creates a hunger, a desire, and then that hunger and desire will grow to wanting more is the very same thing with rest.

Start with something small. I often tell people don't start with all seven. Pick the one rest deficit that's most affecting your life. Focus on that whether you take the quiz or however you determine which one that is, focus on getting rest in that area, doing the restorative activities that fill back up that one area. And then what happens is as you start feeling better in that area, you then want to see, well, what happens if I restore this other area, and it grows from there. Same thing with Sabbath, the more you start practicing it, the more you will have a desire for it, it'll become more of a data of week to week activity for you that you can do naturally,

Stuart 15:29

As believers face a more strident culture, one that is not as welcoming to the basic biblical Christian faith, how do you recommend that believers prepare emotionally and mentally for more hostility?

Sandra 15:43

Well, I think that's a huge part of it. Because right now, if we look at just how most people respond to any type of conflict or any type of disagreement, most of the time we respond out of our own kind of depleted states. So we're quick to take off, we're quick to go to anger, we're quick to lash back. And to not do that require someone who is in an emotionally healthy place, where they're able to see that that person may be lashing out to them because of their own pain, or that person may be lashing out because they don't know God. So they don't even have a framework with which how to, to have these type of discussions without going to a negative place.

And so I think it's important to realize that to be able to grow, to expand to bring in people who are of different beliefs of ours, and to help them be able to see as we see, and to follow Christ, we hope that all people will, requires us to be able to not be emotional, to not be at a point

where if someone pushes our buttons, we're going to start acting just like, we're gonna, we're not going to have any fruit of the Spirit present. Because we're too exhausted, to even get into the place of deep intimacy with Holy Spirit to be able to even move within the fruit of the Spirit. So I think it's important to recognize that if you're someone who feels like your call to missions, or your call to outreach, you're going to want to make sure that emotionally, you're in a good place before you start doing that.

Stuart:

Are you hopeful?

Sandra:

I am absolutely hopeful. I feel like COVID for a lot of people, really kind of it made people really have to start evaluating, well, what's working and what's not working in my life. And I, you know, a lot of people initially before all of this started, have gotten into a place where they felt like there wasn't much hope in the church for expansion for outreach for you know, the world was, you know, going in a very negative cycle. And the world hasn't necessarily changed that negative cycle, but people's hearts are now open. People are now in a place where they've, they've experienced something on a global scale, every country, every continent, experienced it at some level. So people, regardless of your financial background, regardless of your education, regardless of where you live in the US, everybody has experienced COVID on some level. So now we have this conversation, that whether you believe in Jesus or you don't, we have a common area where we can actually have a conversation about something that's affected us all. And sometimes that's the groundwork that we have to have to begin this process on. some commonality where we break down our walls, we break down our barriers, we're willing to be vulnerable and truthful about what we're dealing with and experiencing. And then in those moments, we can invite the presence of God and to do what only He can do.

Stuart:

Can you tell the folks how to find your most recent book?

Sandra:

The book "Sacred rest, recover your life, renew your energy restore your sanity" is available at all bookstores, or they can learn more at I choose my best life.com

Stuart 18:53

Thank you Dr. Dalton Smith for being part of the post COVID church podcast.

Sandra:

Thank you. It's my pleasure.

Stuart:

And thank you so much for listening to the post COVID church podcast our mission helping the church share more of the good news in the face of persecution, hostility and disinterest. If you go to the website, www.thepostcovidchurch.com you can find transcripts of the most recent podcasts, just click the title. And you'll go to the page that has the transcript.

Also, I'd love it. If you would join the post COVID church family you'll see a link on the website for how to do that. And if you do so, you're going to get a free ebook. I'd love to hear your thoughts and ideas. Just send me an email to stuart@thepostcovidchurch.org. Thank you for listening. I'm Stuart Kellogg.

Announcer 19:53

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