

**Listening Guide for
“The Spiritual Impact of Sexual Abuse and Other Trauma”
By Dr. Diane Langberg**

Fill in the blanks as you listen to Diane’s teaching. If you miss something, the answers are at the end. As before, this is meant to provide a detailed set of notes that you can refer back to later, so go ahead and pause if you need time to write.

1. We know Christ offers hope and healing, but we can present that in ways that are hurtful or damaging or don’t work. Trauma impacts _____ things.
2. Life for a trauma survivor is disordered, chaotic, and unsafe. The little boy raised in chaos believes no one can ever be trusted. “Get what you can while you can and watch your back all the time.” Trauma shapes _____.
3. Whenever a situation is destructive to comfortable beliefs, a person’s distress level is high. It’s one we reason we don’t even want to hear about someone’s trauma. When someone’s pre-trauma beliefs are resilient and have the capacity to include _____, the ability to go through trauma without being destroyed is much higher. You can hold onto meaning.
4. Trauma assaults the _____.

What do I believe about who God is? Good? All-powerful? Safe? A refuge? He loves people? Children? He wants to bless?

When a person goes through trauma, what do those experiences teach them about God? What are they thinking?

5. Many times, a victim’s thinking is _____ in time. Trauma stops growth because it shuts people down at that developmental stage. It brings death.
6. Positive experiences post-trauma often do not seem to impact the _____ that originated in the context of the abuse. Our former creeds may not carry trauma very well, so when trauma happens later in life, we question not only our creeds, but the God behind them.

7. When abuse occurs to a child, there is even greater influence on their beliefs. Children learn _____, not abstractly. When their caretakers are repeatedly untrustworthy, the child cannot grasp how to be trustworthy.
8. Even as adults, we continue to be taught about the _____ through the _____. Look at what you can see and it will teach you about what you cannot see.
9. Trauma profoundly impacts the spiritual realm because _____ is viewed through the lens of trauma. Survivors interpret the unseen through what they have experienced.
10. A person can have the right knowledge of God but not have the _____ because they are so influenced by the perceptions that were formed in their trauma.
11. When a trauma survivor seems to know God experientially (not only with head knowledge), you will often find when you look more deeply that they haven't really _____. If they have, they're likely to have a hard time believing.
12. Like the example of the man who went into a nearby room to get away from his mother's body so he could believe she wasn't really dead (and enter his reality more slowly), trauma survivors will sometimes hold onto their belief in God because they have essentially gone into a nearby room and are living in _____. "It wasn't really abuse." "He didn't mean it."
13. Elie Wiesel tells us not to assume it is a comfort to believe that God is still alive. Rather than being the solution, saying that God is alive simply _____.
14. The reality of God and the reality of the trauma seem to cancel out the other, but neither will _____. One or the other can be managed, but not both. How can God be our refuge and protector if these horrible things happened to us?

When you work with trauma survivors, you need to think through the story of their trauma. If that was what you knew, what would that story teach you about who God is? It will teach you twisted truth and lies, but you need to understand how the person thinks about God if you're going to be able to help them.

*Trauma teaches us that:
 God isn't present
 We are insignificant
 He doesn't care
 He is cruel
 He doesn't hear*

*If He hears, He doesn't answer
He thinks people are expendable
He doesn't keep His word
He is not who He says He is
He is powerful, so the farther you can get from Him, the better*

Poem by incest victim:

*Thick black darkness swallows her;
biting, frigid air stings tender flesh.
"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."*

*Soft, desperate cries absorb into walls—
syllables, foreign words that only disappear
"Call unto me in time of trouble."*

*Cold, hard concrete presses into her body;
smooth, exposed skin searches for warmth.
"He will cover you with his wings."*

*Fast, speeding cars whiz by, never stopping;
bright flashes of light dance through the window.
"I am the light of the world."*

*Confused, terrified little girl begs for help;
exhausted, lifeless heap of flesh begins to die.
She hears "I will rescue you," but it wasn't God.*

How to respond?

15. You and I become the _____ of the true God to the victim.

16. Our work is to teach in the _____ what is really true in the _____.

Our words, tone of voice, actions, body movements, and our responses to the victims' messiness all become ways they learn about who God really is.

17. Trauma and evil teach lies about God, but they teach truths about life in a _____.

18. The _____ of God himself is at stake in our lives.

19. _____ are essentially meaningless at the beginning of a journey with someone.

“You want her to learn how much I love her? Go back in that room and love her like that.”

20. In the same way, we needed the _____ (God in the flesh) to understand what God is like.

Live out the characteristic of God that you want the trauma survivor to understand. (He is a refuge, faithful, truth... be those things.)

21. Where you are having trouble living these things out, God is working on you, too. You will become more like Him as you do this work. It’s not just about them “getting it.” It’s about you allowing God to change you into the _____ of his son so they can see what is true in the unseen.

22. When you do anything that approximates counseling, you are a representative of God in the flesh. We must speak truth, but eventually people only “go in” if you are what you _____.

Diane’s strategy: ask God for something very short from scripture to give the client. Don’t tell them what it is, just ask them to work with it each day.

We must _____ ourselves and wait. By doing so, we demonstrate how God was there in their trauma with them. You’re representing Him in the story.

Answers

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| 1. Spiritual | 13. States the problem |
| 2. Meaning | 14. Disappear |
| 3. Suffering and evil | 15. Representatives |
| 4. Self | 16. Seen, unseen |
| 5. Frozen | 17. Fallen world |
| 6. Beliefs | 18. Reputation |
| 7. Concretely | 19. Words |
| 8. Unseen, seen | 20. Incarnation |
| 9. God | 21. Likeness |
| 10. Relationship | 22. Teach |
| 11. Faced the trauma | 23. Restrain |
| 12. Self-deceit | |