

Obedience

“Although he was a son, [Jesus] learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.” —Hebrews 5:8-9 (ESV)

Obedience is a tough word for anyone affected by trauma. Abusive relationships often demand obedience. Great physical, psychological, and relational harm has been done under the guise of obedience. So what do we make of passages like this one from the book of Hebrews?

The connection between suffering and obedience in the context of Jesus’ perfection as our Savior is a delicate subject, so the desire to simply avoid it is understandable. However, a trauma-informed approach to ministry doesn’t shy away from the hard things—those topics that might trigger a strong emotional or physical response from those who are trauma-affected. A trauma-informed approach instead recognizes the responses that the trauma-affected might have to subjects like obedience and suffering and works to avoid retraumatization.

Prayerfully preparing for teaching, preaching, or discussing these subjects with humility is a necessary first step. In addition, when we understand that certain difficult subjects trigger us on a neurological, emotional, and physical level, we can reframe the interpretation of behaviors we might otherwise perceive as impulsive, reactionary, or suggestive of moral failing. Knowing our predisposition to react in a certain way to subjects like “obedience” equips us to respond differently.

When we understand our triggers, we gain the ability to choose a different reaction through careful practice in a safe and supportive environment. This knowledge is empowering and allows us to gain a sense of agency. We can have conversations around hard teachings of scripture without shutting down or withdrawing, and the Spirit can bring healing and wholeness.

Intermountain’s developmental-relational method of healing through healthy relationships is reflected in trauma-informed principles such as these. If you are interested in the intersection between the science of ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences), trauma, and faith, make sure you and your congregation are receiving Intermountain’s monthly emails to our ministry partners—“Intermountain Moments”—and reach out to 406-442-7920 to support this vital ministry.

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