

The Pain of Others, and Your Own: Facing Trauma in Ministry

Research in neuro-psychology and physical medicine tells us that traumatic events cause changes to our brain and to our body; they also affect our soul. Yet too many whose ministries deal with suffering, traumatic injury, or death neglect their own mental, physical, and spiritual health. They bear the burden of things that can wear them down. In this session we will explore some of the research on trauma, its effects on responders, and the scriptural approaches to helping ourselves as healers who seek to sustain their hands of help over the long term.

Michael Longinow is a senior faculty member in Biola University's Department of Media, Journalism and Public Relations. He earned a BA in political science at Wheaton College (IL), an MS in news-editorial journalism at the University of Illinois (Champaign-Urbana), and a PhD in educational policy studies at the University of Kentucky. He has contributed chapters to numerous anthologies on the history of evangelical Christianity and the intersection of media, faith and culture. Longinow is active in the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) and was a founding adviser member of the Advisers of Christian Collegiate Media (ACCM). He is a frequent workshop presenter and panelist at national conventions of the Evangelical Press Association, Associated Collegiate Press, and College Media Advisers (CMA/ACP). Longinow has three grown children and two grandchildren. He and his wife Robin are active in Chino Valley Community Church in Chino Hills, CA. They live in Yorba Linda.

- I. Introduction: Trauma's Denial, Recovery and the Laments of Ministry

- II. Clinical definition of trauma with examples in literature
 - A. Trauma and Neuropsychology
 - B. Trauma and Links between Mind and Body
 - C. Trauma and the Soul: Theology and the Lament of Life in the "Not Yet"

- III. Practical Realities: Trauma effects are downplayed in ministry subculture
 - A. Subcultures of ministry and mission emphasize perseverance, neglecting health
 - B. Misinterpretation of Scripture suggests God rewards lack of self-care
 - C. Trauma as a constant in ministry: like blunt trauma to the head (CTE parallel)
 - D. Psychological harm, mental illness get too little attention among ministry leaders

- IV. The Way Back: Steps to Healing and Sustainable Progress

- A. Admit it's part of your life, stop denying it, know its effects
- B. Rethink how trauma enters your life, your ministry, your perspective
- C. Be aware of desensitization: expertise not a guard against pain, ongoing effects
- D. Look objectively at your own need for self-care; get it, cultivate it
- E. Set up care avenues for our self and others (places to stop and get care)

Suggested Readings: