

Healing the Healers: Vicarious Trauma and Self Knowledge informed Self- Care

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Objectives

- Increase knowledge of vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, burnout, self-knowledge, and self-care
- Increase understanding and application of culturally specific philosophy, theory, and approach
- Increase self-awareness and knowledge of self through experiential exercises

Training Outline

- **What are my personal challenges?**
- **What are my stress and coping resources?**
- **How am I impacted by both my own and others traumatic experiences?**
 - **Vicarious Trauma/Compassion Fatigue**
- **How has my experience(s) been with grief/loss?**
- **How is my self-care informed by self-knowledge?**
- **What's my self-care approach and application process?**

Personal Challenges



How do you feel you and your peers manage challenges related to stress and coping?

What are my stress & coping
resources within 3 broad
categories: intrapersonal,
family, and community?

Divine Assignments with Unique Challenges

- Studies help distinguish between intrapersonal, family, and community forms of care.
- Pastors rely heavily on intrapersonal forms of coping such as spiritual devotion, hobbies, exercise, and taking time away from work. The marriage relationship is also quite important for most clergy and spouses. Relationships outside the immediate family are not commonly identified as coping resources
- Much of the psychological research on clergy has been focused on impairment, burnout, and misconduct, the reality is that most clergy function day after day in a relatively stressful occupation, and find ways to adapt and even thrive in their work.

Divine Assignments with Unique Challenges

- Stressors facing clergy include role conflicts, increased activities, discrepancy between amount of time in administrative duties versus pastoral duties, spiritual dryness, perfectionism, no time for study or to be alone, failure of dreams, unwelcome surprise, frustration, feelings of inadequacy, fear of failure, loneliness/isolation, and unrealistic expectations of oneself, the senior pastor, one's congregation, and of one's denomination
- Possessing a low self-concept could be a source of stress for ministers who feel they must constantly prove their worth, with the result of placing unrealistic demands on themselves.

Intrapersonal Resources

- Positive factors existing within a person's environment that are not directly experienced as relationships with other humans.
- For example, previous research has indicated that emotional wellbeing in clergy is enhanced by having multiple staff members and adequate pay, coping effectively with idealism and high expectations associated with their work, managing surprise well, having a healthy self-concept, experiencing satisfaction with their relationship with God, and having low levels of self-criticism, loneliness, and shyness (Hall, 1997).
- Meek and her colleagues (2003) found that intentionality was essential in dealing with stress: resilient clergy had a commitment to maintain healthy interpersonal boundaries and a vital connection to God, by having a sense of calling, engaging in spiritual disciplines, and cultivating an awareness of God's love and grace in conjunction with knowledge of self (strengths and limitations).

Family Resources

- Clergy with healthy marriages tend to handle the pressure of time and implement effective boundaries, prioritize time with their families, not move frequently, have spouses who are also employed, avoid the “fishbowl” experience by refusing to accept expectations of a perfect family, manage stress well, and have a strong social support network (Hall, 1997).
- Managing family roles is no easy task for clergy and their spouses. Heavy work responsibilities have family implications for most clergy.
- Family cohesion is often demonstrated by the presence (or absence) of boundaries, differentiation, marital and parent/child coalitions, and mutuality.
- Family adaptability is manifested in role relationships, negotiation styles, rules, and the power structure of the family.
- Research suggests that more than the normative group clergy parents and children reported a desire to have more cohesive and emotionally connected families. One of the hindrances to cohesiveness in clergy families is boundary ambiguity, which makes it difficult to distinguish one system from another

Community Coping Resources

- Extent to which clergy and their spouses cope through healthy relationships outside their immediate families.
- Based on the literature, these community resources appear to be sparse for many clergy. Though clergy desire and need friendships, many have difficulty forming close relationships outside their immediate family because they perceive themselves to be “put on a pedestal” (viewed as paragons of Christian virtue) and “boxed in” by parishioners’ expectations of ways pastors should behave . These expectations can have an isolating effect.
- For example, a pastor having a difficult day may be expected to pray about it, whereas a surgeon may have a drink or two with his coworkers.
- Moreover, parishioners may disapprove of pastors who form exclusionary or special relationships with congregation members
- As a result, clergy sometimes experience relationships that lack depth and intimacy

How am I impacted by
traumatic experience both
my own and others?

Trauma

- Deeply painful event and can be the body’s response to a long sequence of “smaller” wounds
- Can be the response to anything that the body experiences as
 - *too much*
 - *too soon*
 - *too fast*
- Deep and persistent
- Uniquely personal
- Manifests differently
- It affects the mind and body. Brain scans show it physically changes our brains. It changes nervous system responses
- Contributes to PTSD, learning disabilities, depression and anxiety, diabetes, high blood pressure, and other physical and emotional ailments.

How are oppression and trauma in relationship?

- African Americans account for approximately 13% of the U.S population, however African Americans are dying at a disproportionate rate
 - AA have a life expectancy rate that is five to seven years less than that of Whites
 - Infant mortality rates are over twice that of whites
 - AA per capita, lead the country in the number of deaths caused by heart disease, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, hypertension, homicide, influenza, and pneumonia.
 - Obesity
 - Substance use
 - Poverty
 - Community violence and crime
 - Experience serious disparities in medial and mental health, education, earnings, and employment compared with Whites

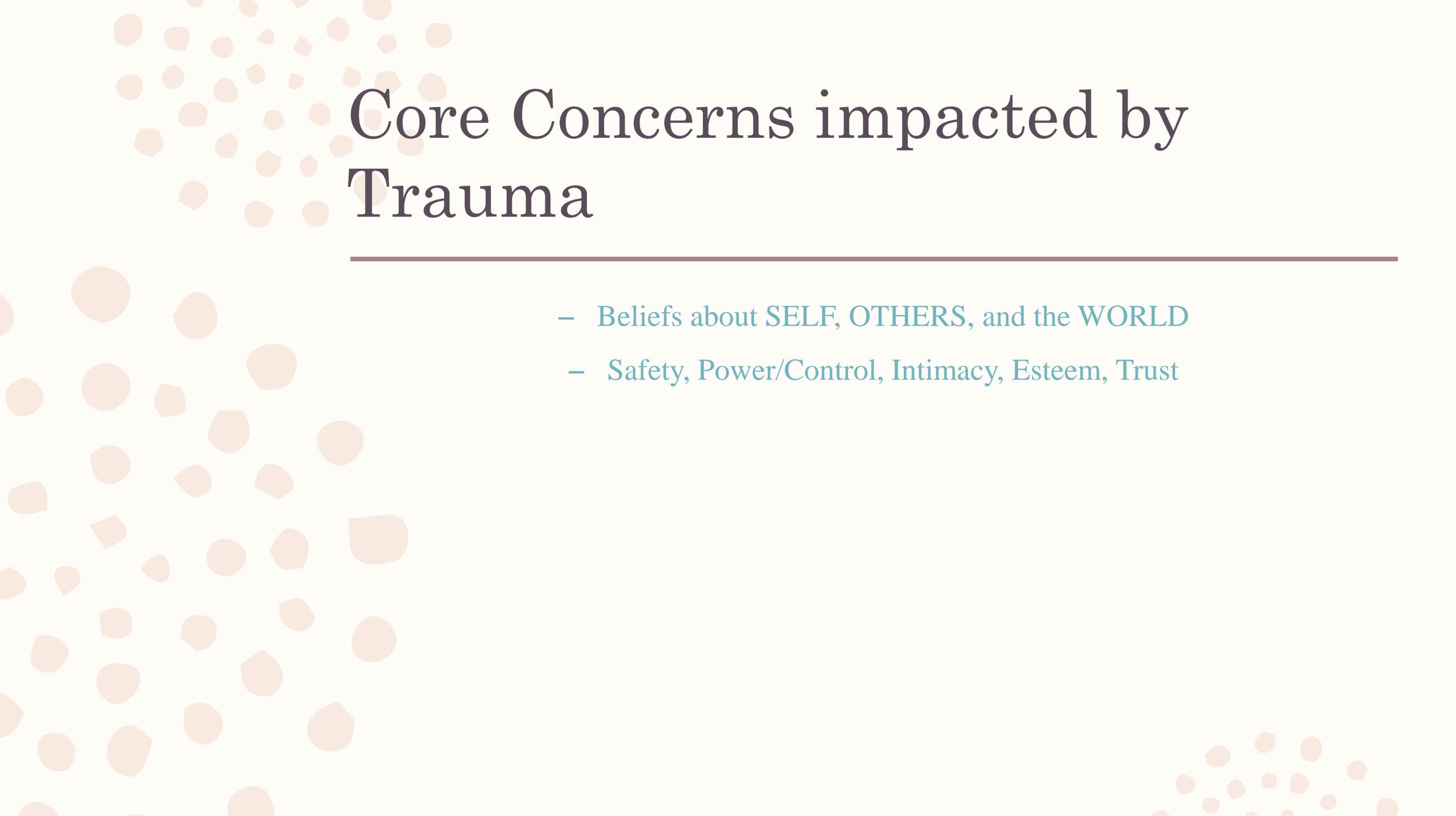
Posttraumatic Slave Syndrome-Persistent

- Historical trauma resulting from slavery
- Persistent societal oppression
 - Historical and current racism underlie current barriers to healthy living for African Americans
 - Negative outcomes for African Americans lies in individual and structural barriers
 - When individuals lack cultural knowledge, self-appreciation, and positive racial identity but internalize negative views, myths, and stereotypes they become engaged in a constellation of coping responses that are not self-enhancing

The African-American experience has been continuously and largely impacted by historical injuries which has resulted in systematic, organized, and consistent oppression and racism.

BIG 3: Trauma Responses and Impact

- Re-experiencing the trauma through intrusive distressing recollections of the event, flashbacks, and nightmares.
- Emotional numbness and avoidance of places, people, and activities that are reminders of the trauma.
 - Memory difficulties, persistent and exaggerated negative beliefs or expectations about oneself, others, or the world (e.g., “I am bad,” “No one can be trusted,” “The world is completely dangerous”), persistent, distorted blame of self or others about the cause or consequences of the traumatic events, persistent fear, horror, anger, guilt, or shame, markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities, feelings of detachment or estrangement from others, persistent inability to experience positive emotions
- Increased arousal such as difficulty sleeping and concentrating, feeling jumpy, and being easily irritated and angered.
 - irritable or aggressive behavior, reckless or self-destructive behavior, hypervigilance, exaggerated startle response, problems with concentration, difficulty falling or staying asleep or restless sleep



Core Concerns impacted by Trauma

- Beliefs about SELF, OTHERS, and the WORLD
- Safety, Power/Control, Intimacy, Esteem, Trust

Vicarious Trauma and Compassion Fatigue

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by His wounds we are healed” – Isaiah 53:5

Cast all your anxiety upon him, because he cares for you”-1 Peter 5:7

- Vicarious trauma is the emotional residue of exposure that counselors have from working with people as they are hearing their trauma stories and become witnesses to the pain, fear, and terror that trauma survivors have endured.
- The term vicarious trauma (Perlman & Saakvitne, 1995), sometimes also called compassion fatigue, is the latest term
- that describes the phenomenon generally associated with the “cost of caring” for others (Figley, 1982). Other terms used for compassion fatigue are:
 - secondary traumatic stress (Stemm, 1995, 1997)
 - secondary victimization (Figley, 1982)

Signs/ Symptoms of Vicarious Trauma

- Blaming others
- having difficulty talking about my feelings
- free floating anger and/or irritation
- startle effect/being jumpy
- over-eating or under-eating
- difficulty falling asleep and/or staying asleep
- losing sleep over people's concerns
- worried that I am not doing enough
- dreaming about other people's trauma
- feeling trapped by my work
- diminished feelings of satisfaction and personal accomplishment
- dealing with intrusive thoughts of others
- feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, worthlessness
- Diminished joy

How Trauma CAN Bring Transformation

- Pushes us to awaken to our inner emotional world
- Brings us to search for deeper meaning in life
- Awakens us to our highest self, beyond our subconscious conditioning
- Teaches humility, grace, and empathy
- Teaches the value of “negative” emotions
- Forces us to respect the reality that things are beyond our control and understanding
- Post-traumatic growth=empowerment
- Trauma is path to purpose

What are you grieving?
What and how have you/
haven't you grieved?

Grief/ Loss

- Clergy experience and walk alongside with individuals, families, and the community who experience a massive amount of grief yet it is seldom discussed and addressed. Grief is the result of many types of loss including death but also loss of loved ones, relationships, homes, health, employment, finances, and faith.
- Community violence is high and includes racism as cause of death including death by racist assignment of hazardous work, medical racism, and death by poverty.
- There is a correlation between grief and mental health symptoms, health outcomes and unhealthy behaviors.

How have I felt the
impact of burnout?

Burnout Statistics

- 1,500 pastors leave the ministry each month due to moral failure, spiritual burnout, or contention in their churches
- 80% of pastors and 84% of their spouses feel unqualified and discouraged in their role as pastors
- 50% are so discouraged that they would leave the ministry if they could, but have no other way of making a living
- 70% said the only time they spend studying the Word is when they are preparing their sermons
- Almost 40% polled said they have had an extra-marital affair since beginning their ministry
- 80% of seminary and Bible school graduates who enter the ministry will leave the ministry within the first five years
- 90% of pastors said their seminary or Bible school training did only a fair to poor job preparing them for ministry
- Pastors are 35% more likely to be terminated if they work less than 50 hours weekly
- 80% of pastors believe their ministry negatively affects their families
- 80% of pastors say they do not have sufficient time to spend with their spouse
- 55% of pastors receive support and accountability from a small group
- 45.5% of pastors have experienced burnout/depression and had to take a break from ministry
- 57% of pastors do not have a regularly scheduled and implemented exercise routine

Burnout

- Happens over time
- Perception changes
- **HIGH EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION AND LOW MINISTRY SATISFACTION**
- Context: Nonstop Needs, Unmatched Pay, Expectations, Appreciation
- 4 personality dimensions that can impact experience or lack thereof related to burnout
 - Desire to please others
 - Guilt or Shame Proneness
 - **Self-Compassion**
 - Differentiation of self from role

Signs of Burnout

- Stress
- Depression
- Insufficient sleep and rest
- Spiritual dryness
- Loss of motivation for ministry
- Feelings of isolation
- Susceptibility to temptation
- Disengaged and a lack of love with those you serve

Burnout

-
- Physical burnout can be triggered by a lack of exercise, physical effects of stress and sleeplessness. The overloaded schedule and stressful lives of many pastors drive them to forget exercise, eat unhealthy foods, and sleep less. Physical burnout can cause a weakened immune system, aches and pains, a change in appetite, and feeling tired all the time.
 - Relational burnout is related to emotional burnout and can be caused by strained relationships. Day-after-day interactions with energy draining people make the role of a pastor or ministry leader unusually susceptible for this type of burnout. Physical exhaustion and drama between church members can make pastors isolate themselves to get a break from relationships that drain their energy.
 - Emotional burnout can be felt when a shepherd feels that they have no one to shepherd them. This type of burnout can wreak havoc on a minister's marriage family life due to the feelings of isolation common in ministry. Emotional burnout can numb your ability have normal emotions and have a sense of failure and self-doubt.
 - Spiritual burnout felt when pastors neglect their own spiritual lives while trying to pour into the lives of others. Many pastors do not have anybody pouring into their lives.

What is my experience
with Self-Care? How is it
informed by Self-
Knowledge?

Does my intent match the
impact ?

Self-Knowledge informed Self-Care

- Self-knowledge is defined as the process of determining one's own reality through filtering all information within. It is a deep understanding of self and identity in connection to one's history and purpose.
- Self-Care refers to actions and attitudes which contribute to the maintenance of well-being and personal health and promote human development.

“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”- Mark 1:35

Self-Care: Intent vs. Impact

– Questions for consideration

“Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, He said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’ so they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.”- Mark 6:31-32

Know Thyself: Self- Knowledge

- Beyond your work and into the SOUL
 - Questions for consideration
- Impact of authenticity
 - Questions for consideration

What's my self-care
approach and application
process?

Application Process: Healing the Healer(s)

- Step 1: Awareness and Assessment
- Step 2: Conceptualization
- Step 3: Diagnosis
- Step 4: Self-Care Treatment/Intervention

Approach

-
- 4 questions

6 Doctors

Fresh Air/Nature

Nutrition

Water

Rest

Sunlight

Exercise

Considering the Basics

Barriers to Healing

-
- Barriers to Accessing or Engaging in Care
 - Cultural Mistrust

Approach

- *Skills are driven by a deep understanding and self-practice of African-centered values. A natural process of modeling and education unfolds between providers and recipients due to the level of internalization and modeling of African-centered values and principles.*

Values

- Spiritual Development
- Self-Knowledge
- Intrinsic Self Knowledge
- Extended Self- Identity
- Diunital Logic
- Holistic Worldview

Be Disruptive in your Self-Care

Although...

Valley Times

Vicarious Trauma

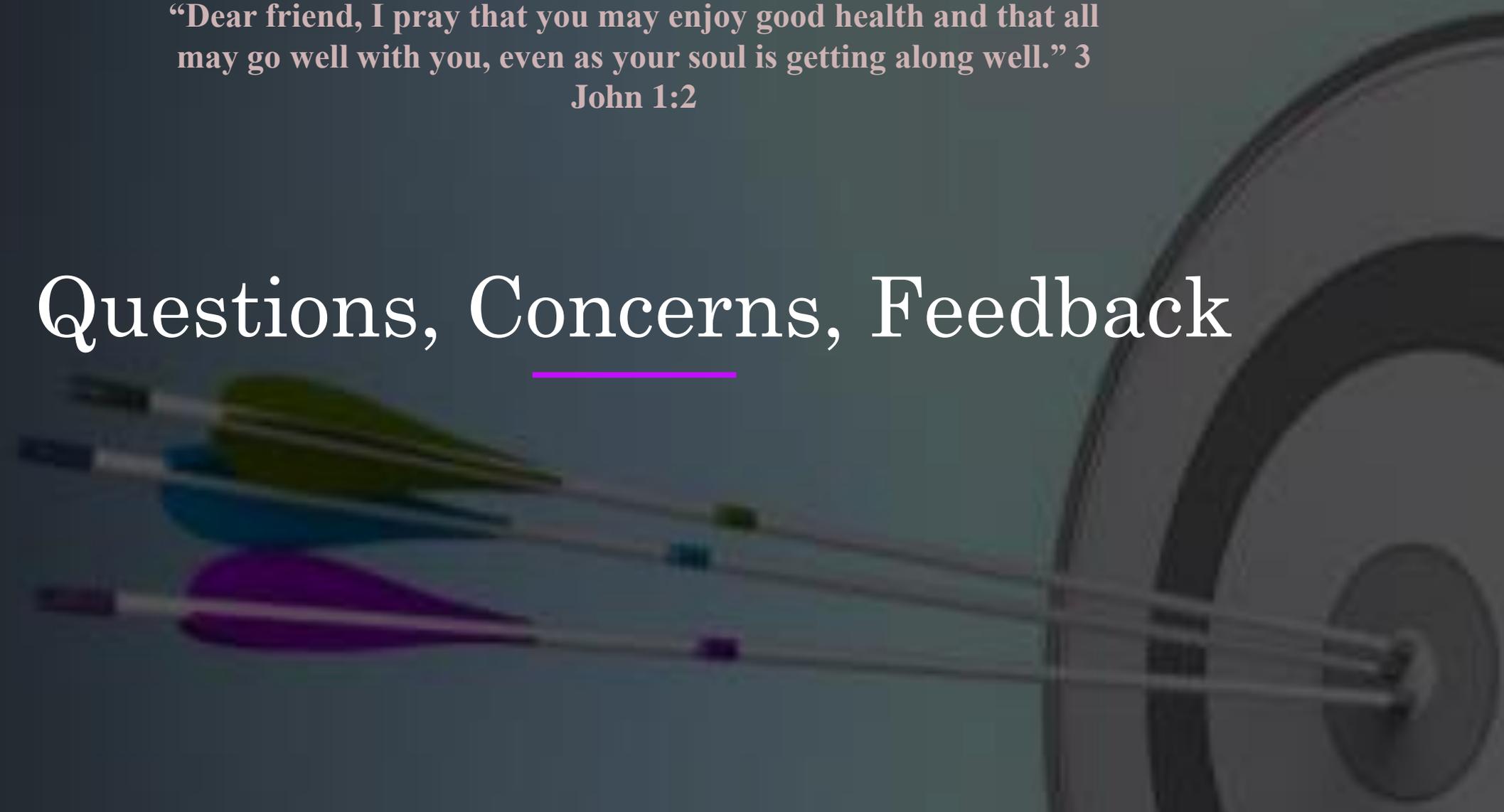
Vicious Attacks

We can have...

Victorious Triumphs

“Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.” 3
John 1:2

Questions, Concerns, Feedback

A target with three arrows hitting the bullseye. The target is on the right side of the image, and the arrows are on the left side, pointing towards the target. The arrows are colored green, blue, and purple. The target has a bullseye in the center, surrounded by concentric rings. The background is a dark, muted blue.