



Season 3 | Episode 22

Clinging To Jesus When You're In Pain

Heather Hart

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Crystal Keating:

I'm Crystal Keating. And this is the Joni and Friends Ministry Podcast. Each week, we're bringing you real conversations about disability and finding hope through hardship and sharing practical ways that you can include people living with disability in your church and community. Be sure to subscribe wherever you listen to [podcasts](#) or find us at joniandfriends.org/podcast.

Returning to the podcast is Heather Hart, a wife, a mother of five teenagers, a lover of Christ and the author of *Clinging to Jesus: Praying & Meditating on God's Word When You're In Pain*. Welcome back to the podcast, Heather, it's so nice to speak with you again.

Heather Hart:

Thanks for having me. I'm glad to be here.

Crystal Keating:

Well, we're glad to have you again. And in our last episode, you shared openly about your own story and the life-changing migraines you now live with on a daily basis. And in this conversation, I'd love to begin by asking about some practical ways you've managed your pain. So Heather, do you have a daily routine or steps you take each day to manage pain and the rhythms of your life as a mother to five teenagers? Oh, my goodness.

Heather Hart:

I do have a bit of a routine, but it really is kind of an ebb and flow based on how bad my head is hurting on any given day. I spend a lot of time, when I have to lay down, I listen to my audio Bible. I've got a reading plan that I'm going through and it's on YouVersion. And you can just select the day that you're on and push the play button. It'll play through the entire section for that day. So that's one of the things I do every day is that I lay down to help my head stop hurting and I listen through the Bible.

And then I've also had to recognize my limitations. Knowing I need someone else to drive my kids to and from school was a huge step I had to take, knowing that I have that support system and who I can call when I need someone to pick my kids up. So, if my son has to work and he can't do it, then one of my neighbors can or one of my daughter's friends can. So, I've got that list. And even if I need something from the pharmacy, I have to know who can go get that for me, because I'm not going to be able to do it myself. So that's part of my routine every day is looking at who do I need to ask to do what today, if I can't do it. And then my husband buys a lot of frozen dinners. So, on the days that I can't cook, our children can.



Crystal Keating:

That's great. That's great. A family and community effort to come around each of you and your children and allow them to fulfill the responsibilities that they have. That's great. Well, Heather, I'm curious, are you in pain right now?

Heather Hart:

I'm in very minimal pain right now. I woke up with a horrible migraine today, so bad that I was actually in the ER this morning, but between the shots they gave me there and the pill I took when I got home, I'm pretty okay right now.

Crystal Keating:

Well, you sound very confident and clear, and I just want to thank you so much for taking time to talk with us today. You are the author of *Clinging to Jesus*. And I found it interesting that you wrote clinging to Jesus isn't about how to overcome pain and regain the life you had before. Actually, in our last conversation, you talked a little bit about the losses that you had to really come to accept. And so, as you're writing, you're saying it's not about regaining the life we had before. That's an unrealistic expectation. Clinging to Jesus is about how to cling to Jesus when you're in pain. The pain might not go away. We might have to learn to adapt, as you have, to change our definition of normal. However, in the midst of our pain, we can still keep our eyes on Christ. And I love this part. He could renew our faith every morning and help us get through the pain.

So, in your book, you highlight 10 ways God can use pain to draw you closer to himself. What are some of those and how have you seen God draw you close in your own life, especially when pain tends to make one feel so isolated and lonely?

Heather Hart:

Well, the first one I want to share is praise and worship music, because that is so huge to me as I go through my own journey with pain. There are times where I really can't think clearly, and I've created a playlist of songs that I can listen to when I'm in pain that remind me that God is bigger. He's there in the valleys. And he's there when you're on the mountain tops. There's just so many songs that talk about how faithful God is. That's a huge part. When my head hurts so bad, I can't do anything else, hearing those reminders, helps draw me back to Jesus.

And then I also have what I call my mustard seeds of faith. They're Bible verses that remind me that no matter what I'm going through, there's the promise from God. So, I talked in the last episode about 1st Thessalonians, 5:24: "He who has called you is faithful and he will do it." So, if I feel called to do something, I don't have to doubt that my migraines are going to make it impossible. I can trust that Jesus will make it happen. Another one is Romans 8:1, so that no matter how bad my head hurts and no matter what I can't do, there's no condemnation for me because I belong to Jesus. And there's just lots of little verses like that, that I cling to that I have to remind myself of every single day.



Crystal Keating:

Well, I think that's so important. I mean, we talked about worship in the last episode, but I can't tell you enough, even in my own life, how music has a way of drawing me outside of my own thoughts. And they really draw me to the truth of God, which is reality, even though it's unseen. And I think that's so important, especially for you who deal with ongoing pain. And I've heard from those in pain that fear, and discouragement can often overwhelm and dampen a hopeful faith in God.

So, would you like to share some encouragement for those who may be facing those difficult and very real emotions in their pain or difficult diagnosis or challenging circumstance that feeling like, oh my goodness, what am I going to do if this never ends? And what if it gets worse?

Heather Hart:

Well, the first thing for me that I always have to remember is that there is no promise that it's going to end until you get to the Book of Revelations. And then it says, "There will come a day with no more tears-

Crystal Keating:

Amen.

Heather Hart:

"With no more pain." And so even if my head hurts the entire time that I'm on earth, someday, I'm going to get to Heaven with Jesus and it's not going to hurt anymore. And that's something that I cling to a lot because there may never be an end to my headaches. And I also remember that Romans 8:28 says that God can use all things for good, for his glory. So, I've started looking for those things. My head hurts really bad, but how has God used this, or how can God use this for his glory? And that, it just kind of shifts the perspective.

So, like in Philippians 4:8, where it tells us to focus on what is good and what is noble, if we're constantly thinking about how bad it hurts, and I'm 100% honest, I think about how bad it hurts a lot. And I think it's natural that when you're in pain, the first thing is, oh my goodness, that hurts.

Crystal Keating:

Right.

Heather Hart:

But you can shift your thinking to better things like counting your blessings or looking for ways, for the silver lining of how God can use that for his glory. I'm often reminded of when Peter walked on water and he started to think because he started focusing on all the waves. And it's so easy for me to start sinking if all I think about is how bad it hurts. I can't imagine it getting worse, but if it did get worse, that's an easy way to just start sinking and letting it start overtaking my thoughts. I have to remind myself to keep my focus on Jesus and what he can do or is doing through my pain.



Crystal Keating:

That is so good. And that really takes discipline and it takes focus that often I would say people with pain have a very limited amount of. And so, I think one of your other disciplines of 10 ways that God can use you to draw you to himself through pain is through that prayer, even writing out your prayers. So Heather, as we close our time together, you've shared some awesome promises of God that really have sustained you. Do have any other favorite promises or words of scripture that you just go back to time and again, that sustain and comfort you when pain is particularly distracting or wearisome?

Heather Hart:

Psalm 34 verses 23 through 24, I use it as a prayer and I say, even when I struggle, God has me in his hand because I know that my pain does overtake me, but I can trust that even when it does, God is still there.

Crystal Keating:

That's right. And I bring up this, I think probably every other podcast, but one of my favorite truths is that he will never leave us or forsake us and that no one can snatch us out of his hand. And that in the midst of our struggle, he is truly with us. So, what a great reminder. Heather, thank you again for coming and sharing some practical tips on how to cling to Christ through pain and how to really meditate and honor God through difficult circumstances. We really appreciate your time.

Heather Hart:

Yeah. Thanks for having me. It was good to be here.

Crystal Keating:

Thank you for listening today. If you've been inspired, please send me a message or leave a five-star review on your favorite app. That's a great way to help other people find encouragement from these conversations. And to get our next episode automatically, subscribe wherever you listen to podcasts. I'm Crystal Keating and thank you for listening to the Joni and Friends Ministry Podcast.

Episode link: <https://www.joniandfriends.org/clinging-to-jesus-when-youre-in-pain>

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