

Season 2 | Episode 30

## How Does Fear Affect Your Body?

Dr. Sam Kojoglanian

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SEPTEMBER 3, 2020

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 welcome and include people impacted by disability in your community. Be sure to subscribe wherever you listen to [podcasts](#) so you don't miss any of our encouraging conversations. You can also find all of the helpful resources that we've talked about at [joniandfriends.org/podcast](http://joniandfriends.org/podcast).

Today, I'm talking with Dr. Sam Kojoglanian, an interventional cardiologist who is known for healing and rehabilitating those with serious heart conditions. He also dedicates time providing medical care and sharing the redemptive work of Jesus Christ to people around the world through his Beacon Of Hearts Ministry. Listen in and be inspired by his contagious joy.

Dr. Sam, you've been named a mender of hearts as you use your God-given skills to practice cardiology with passion, heal with compassion, and inspire your patients to live healthier and stronger lives. And you've been a cardiologist for many years now, and I'm really interested to know what are some of the most notable changes you've seen in the past month working with your patients through this COVID-19 pandemic? As a physician, what are you seeing day-to-day as you care for people in your clinics?

Dr. Sam Kojoglanian:

Yeah, nobody actually had put this COVID-19 on their calendars. It just showed up, and it just tripped out the whole entire world as we speak. And I see what I haven't seen in the past. I see tremendous amount of distress, and distress can take us in two ways. It can lead us to discouragement, and it actually ultimately could lead to despair. But also, if you look at it in God's view, in Jesus' view, it can give you actually a new focus and give you new innovations and it gives you new hope. And for me just to start from there, because I don't want to start from the wrong place, I transport myself to Psalm 121, where it says, "I lift up my eyes to the hills, where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth." And if my God created the heavens and the earth, and he did, maybe he could take care of this situation.



So that's how I want to see it. I could either look at it through the lenses of fear and distress, or I could look at it through the lens of my God and my Lord and my Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. One of the things that has totally changed, Crystal, when I'm doing things here, is doing tele-medicine, a lot of my patients are our quarantined and it's such a comfort, for I said I'd never do tele-medicine in my whole entire life.

Crystal Keating:

Right, you're a face-to-face kind of guy.

Dr. Sam Kojoglanian:

Yeah. I want to touch people's hands, their shoulders. I just want to love them. But in the quarantine, it's new innovations, right? You've got to step out of your little box and out of the routine and do things that can help others. And it brings such comfort to my patients as we're talking face-to-face if you will on Zoom and we laugh. And we want to forget hardships. We don't focus on hardships 24/7. I think the hardest thing I've ever seen, Crystal, during this time is when I put in the stent in one of my patients, because they were having a heart attack or they're hurting, or they ultimately have to get a bypass. Their families cannot... They're not allowed to come to the hospital. They're not allowed to come into the room. They're not allowed to touch each other, love each other, talk to each other face to face. And that hurts me. I see a lot of my patients cry.

So, God has called me at this time for a special reason. They know my face. We're familiar. I'm like their family, if you will. And I hold their hands and I pray with them, and I encourage them and I tell them, "Let's thank God for life. I want to focus on your life. You were having a heart attack. You could have died. You almost died, or you actually died on my table. God's grace, we brought you back to life. Let's focus on life. Let's focus on God's goodness. Let's focus on the fact that you are sitting here. You're not even thinking about this, but baby, you're breathing right now. And your heartbeat is beating and you're not even telling your heartbeat to beat, because that's the grace of God."

In Romans 12:2, it tells us don't be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. And we either look at it from distress or we look at it through the lens of an eye of God and Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Crystal Keating:

What a great platform you have when people are already feeling distressed because of their physical ailments. And now they're without family, but you're there. You're giving them life promoting words. You're giving them words of hope. You're taking their distress and focusing it back on God, who's so trustworthy. And the more we talk about things like distress and fear, and we don't know what's going on, I think that has an effect on our bodies. How do fear and panic impact us physiologically? What was God up to when he created us? Can you, as a physician, speak into the deep connection between our body, our spirit and our mind and our mouths?



Dr. Sam Kojoglanian:

Yes, yes, yes, yes. We are fearfully and wonderfully made according to Psalm 119. And the more I think about that is, Crystal, when he made us, and it says we were knitted in our mama's womb, it was God. He knew from the beginning who we were, he knew us before eternity. And so, it's just fascinating that we are split into three, the physical, the mind, the will, the emotions, which is the soul and the spirit, which is what in the Greek, it's the [pneumo 00:06:22]. It's the noblest part of man. And this fear and the COVID-19 and all this stuff, I think plays a havoc on all three. The body, when we are under stress, the second wave is coming and prepare yourself, because it's going to be the worst ever. And we're going to have influenza and we're going to have COVID-19, and we're going to see much more deaths. And you listen to this-

Crystal Keating:

So overwhelming.

Dr. Sam Kojoglanian:

And you start tripping out. And you know what this fear is doing to us, Crystal? We're sitting here and going, oh my gosh, oh my goodness, what's going to happen to me? All of a sudden. You're not pushing a button. You're not telling yourself, your pituitary gland or your mind or your adrenal glands to work. But all of a sudden, because of what we said, what our mouths just said, all of a sudden, the adrenal gland produces this hormone called cortisol. And it also produces another stress hormone called adrenaline, which is epinephrin. And these things bump up the glucose in our body, the sugar, and all of a sudden, the muscles need energy. And then it tells the pancreas to shut down a little bit. Don't secrete insulin. This person needs glucose. And all of a sudden, our arteries are constricted. Our heart rate goes up, our blood pressure goes up and all this stuff that's happening all over.

We didn't push a button, but we just spoke a word. That word is so important, how we speak and what we say. As a man thinks and then as a man speaks, so is he. That's in Proverbs 23:7, and all of a sudden, if this continues in this mode, which 24/7, the TV, the newspapers are screaming at us and going, "You're going to die. You might die. And if you ended up in the hospital, what's going to happen to you." And on and on, oh my gosh, what's going to happen?

And all this adrenaline is going on and on. All of a sudden, the blood sugars are going up. People's immune systems are going down, we're more susceptible to colds. Our heart rate has gone up. Our blood pressure has gone up. Palpitations has gone up. There's more chance of getting irritable bowel syndrome. We're more susceptible to get contagious diseases like COVID, even cancer or auto immune diseases. And this is what adrenaline and cortisol is doing.

You think, Oh no, I'm chilling. I'm okay. I'm going to sit here and watch the news over and over again. It's not affecting me. No, it's affecting your whole entire body. And the mind is taking this, the mind, which is our soul, which is our emotion, it's beating up our body and then we're shutting God out. I'm thinking, oh, this is a time when I got to get into the word, I got to get into the word. I got to dive into the word. The joy of the Lord is my strength according to Nehemiah 8:10. I need strength. I don't need weakness. I don't need my immune system to go down. I need the Lord. And so, the Spirit is crying out things, please, please come to me, saturate yourself in me. I am the way the truth and the life, no one is coming to the Father, but by me, the way, the truth and the life. And so, the Spirit, if the Spirit is crying out during this time, Crystal, if we dip ourselves into the word of God and meditate on his word, day and night, then we'll be prosperous and successful in whatever we do.



Crystal Keating:  
That is a promise.

Dr. Sam Kojoglanian:

And it will bring healing. Psalm 107:20. And he sent forth his word and it brought healing to them. That's what we got to do. So, the body and the mind are fighting the Spirit and our spirits dipping into the Lord. It redirects the mind. It redirects the body and all of a sudden there's calmness and goodness and peace and even health into our soul, spirit and bodies. And that's how the whole thing interacts.

Crystal Keating:

I love that. God's word really has a healing nature to it. It is powerful. It's active. It's alive. And it brings us right into an alignment with who God is, which is right where we need to be. This world is scary. It's unpredictable, but God is sovereign. And he loves us so much. Are you seeing patients that are actually coming in because they're overwhelmed by fear, so much so that they, God forbid, are having a heart attack or heart issues? You're a cardiologist. Are you seeing that fear is actually driving them to your office?

Dr. Sam Kojoglanian:

Yes. A lot of people who were happy go lucky campers, actually, there were doing just fine and dandy, peachy. All of a sudden, this fear, this resentment, this quarantine, this absence of people that touch, families staying distant, a lot of people are having chest pain and pressure and tightness. And some of it, Crystal, is musculoskeletal. And they're coming to me and saying, "Please figure this out." And of course, we do stress tests and we get it done. But I had one patient, Crystal, just recently. She's the epitome of taking care of herself. She eats right. She is slim. She walked five miles a day for the past 15 years. Every single day she had written us a letter here in the office, thanking my manager, thanking me for taking care of her. But saying, "This COVID-19 is really depressing me. And it's really making me anxious." And she's a good Christian lady. You must understand this. "And I'm watching television and it's really getting to me."

You won't believe this, but while she was walking, she felt throat pain. And she's like, "What is that?" So, she's trying to cough it out, but it's there. And she dismisses it. And then the next day she has the same throat pain. Then she feels discomfort in her chest. And she's like, "Oh, that must be because I'm lifting little weights, right? I got to stop lifting weight." And then the next day she's doing this. And then not only does she get the throat pain, but the chest is covered. But then it goes to her shoulders. She's like, "This is kind of weird."

So, she calls me and she's like, "Dr. Sam, I'm getting this." I'm like, "Okay." We'll call her Jane. "Jane, you got to call 911 and go to the emergency room now." So, okay. They get to the emergency room and lo and behold, she's having a heart attack.

Crystal Keating:  
Oh no.



Dr. Sam Kojoglanian:

And it's not the type of heart attack that you have to rush in right now in this second and put in a stent. The EKG is telling now, or okay, settle down, give her blood thinners, give her aspirin, protect the heart. And the next day we'll do what we got to do. And that's what we did for her. It was a Sunday and we protected her. And then on Monday we went in, looked at her arteries. She had a 99% blockage of one of her arteries that caused the heart attack. It was so disheartening to see this epitome of health, epitome of health all of a sudden has this. And yeah. Yes, stress causes heart attacks. Yes, stress causes strokes. And even in Christian people, because you know why, Crystal? Because we're not in the word.

Well, if we don't know what to do, we can be like the King in the Old Testament. I don't know what to do, but my eyes are on you. And that was King Jehoshaphat. We don't know what to do. Well, then put your eyes on Jesus Christ. And it might sound simple, and it might sound trivial, but it's the truth. And the truth will bring healing to your body, mind, heart, and soul.

Crystal Keating:

Amen. Do you ever get to pray with your patients?

Dr. Sam Kojoglanian:

All the time. I'm like, "Can I pray with you?" I don't want to be in people's faces. That's ugly. That's not right. But I want everybody to know who my Lord is, who my God is and who has my hands. I'm in his hands. I want the people to know. And so, yes, I pray for my patients when they're in trouble or when they're coming in the office. Rarely, rarely, rarely, Crystal, would I get somebody to say "No, no, no, you're my doctor. I don't want you to be my high priest." Most of them, even if they don't know Christ, they're like, "Yes, yes. Please pray for me."

Crystal Keating:

Yeah. We need that kind of love. Well, Dr. Sam, I know you're a humble guy and you probably don't like to boast about the accolades given to you, but I have to bring this up. You received awards for outstanding leadership. You've been awarded with the most talented doctor and the doctor with the best bedside manners. You've also been recognized as a five-year honoree of the Patient's Choice Award and Most Compassionate Award. What do you think it is that sets you apart? And what is it that gives your patients such a love and a trust in you?

Dr. Sam Kojoglanian:

Wow. What sets me apart is Jesus Christ. I don't wear my name behind my back like Dr. Kojoglanian. I wear his name. I'm his boy. I'm his servant. What has got to me? There are certain verses in the Bible, Crystal, that when I read it, I'm like, oh, that's for me. That hit me upside the head, inside out. And it's changed my life. And one of those verses is in Matthew chapter nine, verse 36. And it said, when Jesus saw the crowd, he had compassion on them because they were harassed, and they were helpless, and they were like sheep without a shepherd. And when I see people, Crystal, when I see them, my soul just cries out with compassion for them. That does not come from me. Okay. It's not me. It comes from Jesus Christ. It comes from the fruit of the Spirit because the fruits of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness.



So, when I see people, because they're mostly hurting, when they come to me, they're having chest pains and other things, my heart cries for them. And I look at them in their eyes. But when I'm looking at them in their eyes, actually, I feel like they feel like I'm looking into their souls. I'm not God. I am his boy. I am his sermon. I am nothing. My God is everything. But with his love and his compassion and his goodness and his mercy, that's how I want to see people. And I'm not trying to buy their love. And I'm not trying to buy votes. I'm just trying to give the love God has given me to them, and I don't hold the door handle when I'm talking to my patients. And I don't stand up when I'm talking to my patients, I'm at their level. I'm not looking at the computer when I'm with my patients. I'm with them and they know it.

Crystal Keating:

Well, I know that laughter and your smile is what brings people such joy. I've seen your Instagram page. You even rap in some of your videos, just like we talked about the physical impact of fear. What are some of the benefits of being encouraged, hearing a good word, seeing a big smile, both for you and your patients?

Dr. Sam Kojoglanian:

Yes. A happy heart is good medicine.

Crystal Keating:

Amen.

Dr. Sam Kojoglanian:

It's the best medicine. That's Proverbs 17:22. We're in a broken world. We're in a sinful world and tragedies occur. I get all that. But what we can do in the meanwhile to say, I'm giving my heart to Jesus Christ. I'm giving my soul to my Lord God. I'm giving everything to him. And he makes your heart happy. And when you have that happiness and you have that joy, well then other people sense it. Do I have times of tears? Yes. Do I have times of depression or down-ness or I'm just not feeling well today? Yes. I have all that. I get it. That's part of life, but then I will rise. I will stand on the rock Jesus Christ. It says it in the Psalm that he turned to me and he heard my cry. He lifted me out of the pit and out of the mire and set me on the rock Jesus Christ and gave me a firm place to stand.

And when I have it in me, I want to share that with others. So, the smile, the happiness, the joy, it's contagious. You think COVID-19 is contagious? Well, the smile and the happiness and the goodness and the mercy of God is more contagious than that. And it's up to us to rise and share it with the peoples.

Crystal Keating:

That's right. And that's why patients love you. They really sense the Lord's love through you. In your many years of serving as a physician, you've probably connected with those who have disabilities, whether physical or mental. What are some of the needs that you've seen both locally here in the US and around the world? You've been overseas and you have been ministering and helping people as a physician in several different countries around the world. What are you seeing?



Dr. Sam Kojoglanian:

I see a lot of desperation. I see a lot of sadness. I see a lot of poverty. I see a lot of hopelessness, and it breaks my heart. And so, when we go to other countries, whether it's in Africa or Argentina or Armenia, it's number one, try to meet them where they are. They're hungry. So, I don't go over and go, "Jesus loves you. Hallelujah. Amen. Now convert to Christianity." That's not what Christ called me to do. It's first to feed the people with the team that's there. Second, it's to give them what they need. They don't have access to medicine. They are poor. So, we give them at least one year's worth of medication. And the thing that really hurts people, by the way, is high blood pressure and high cholesterol and diabetes. And so, we hone down on those medications, Crystal, and then we have it all stored for them. We educate them, we teach them, and then we teach them the gospel of Jesus Christ. Not just to convert people, but to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

And so, once you do that, they see an American doctor coming on their soil, where they are in despair and hopeless. And they're like, "I guess somebody actually cares for us. Somebody actually thought about us." And that's not because of me. That's because of Christ in me. I point my fingers to Christ. And so, when they see that their heart actually opened up and their heart actually says I want what he has. What does he have? Oh, he not only has the food and the medicine, but he has a message. The message is that God loves you and he'll meet you where you are and in your despair and in their hopelessness and in your tragedy, God will raise you up with his righteous right hand.

This is us reaching out through the Beacon of Hearts, my ministries, which we're small, but God don't look at you if you're small or big. Jesus says if you want to go, he said, go. And most people like that, can I sit? And I'm like, "I don't want to sit. I want to go. Use me. Father. I'm nothing, but use me anyway." And he's like, "Okay, child, come on, you get on the bus. Let's go." And off we go.

Crystal Keating:

Well how are you seeing God worked nationally and internationally during this time of uncertainty related to managing the spread of COVID-19?

Dr. Sam Kojoglanian:

Well, it's just remarkable to me. Our church says that where people are online much more than they ever, ever, ever were, because they can't go into the sanctuary. I think God's word is going out more and more. And I think people are more and more receptive to God's word. For my ministry on my Instagram @drkojoglanian, I started preaching the gospel and people by the thousands are starting to respond to it. I'm like what in the world did this come from? People are more receptive today than they ever were. So, look at, we've got jewels, we've got the cure for COVID-19. And you're like, "No, we're just going to keep it for ourselves." How can you do that? We've got the answer to the world, it's Jesus Christ. It's not food. It's not education. It's not universities. And because the problem of our world is sin. And the answer to this world and to the problem, one problem of sin is Jesus Christ and his blood. So, I see a change in people's heart the way they want to respond. That's what I'm seeing.



Crystal Keating:

You've been faithful with little, and God has increased the fruitfulness of your ministry. I've been on one of those Instagram Lives and I see people commenting every second. You have lots of followers, people who are probably isolated, maybe they're not able to join with their group of normal fellowship. And you've been an encouragement to them.

Dr. Sam Kojoglanian:

Amen.

Crystal Keating:

What are some of the most interesting passages in scripture that you see through the eyes of a cardiologist?

Dr. Sam Kojoglanian:

Sometimes when I'm preaching the gospel, I kid with people. I tell them that the Lord talks about the hearts all the time. He doesn't talk about the liver. And he doesn't talk about the kidney. He talks about the heart all the time, like in John 14:27. What is that kids? What is that? My peace leaves with you. My peace I give to you. I don't give it to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled nor let it be dismayed. And there are a lot of times when I actually literally look at my heart on the left... By the way, it's on the left side of your upper chest. And I look at the heart and I say, "Heart, don't be troubled and stop being dismayed." I actually have to talk to my silly self sometimes. You know what's in Philippians 4:7? Don't be anxious for nothing. He's an all or nothing God. Don't be anxious about nothing, but in everything let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passes all, all, see there goes the word all, which passes all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. See if he can guard our hearts, he's got our whole system done.

Crystal Keating:

That is right. Well, Dr. Sam, it's been so good talking to you. As we close our time together, how can believers in Christ live a life of power, a life of peace, a life of trust and joy? How do we stay focused on the things that really matter?

Dr. Sam Kojoglanian:

Yeah, I think I'll go back to Isaiah chapter 26 and verse three I believe it is. And it says, you will keep, you being God, Jesus Christ, you will keep in perfect peace he whose mind is steadfast or he whose mind who stays on you, because he trusts in you. And I truly believe, Crystal, that this is the secret to life. I truly, truly believe it. Instead of running after riches, instead of running after material, instead of running... I want to run after Jesus Christ. And if I could just tell our listeners for one minute focus on Jesus Christ and listen to what he said to you. He will give you perfect peace. Not some peace, not gradual peace, but perfect peace. If we have our mind stayed on him. And if we have our trust in him, everything else is going to follow. We're seeking him first. We're loving him first.





And you know what that means? That means we're in his word. And I'm not giving nobody time. You spend 10 minutes in his word or 30 minutes, and you'll be good to go. No, you can read a verse and meditate on it day and night. The whole day let that verse saturate. Not only for those who don't know Jesus Christ. If they're listening to this and they don't know Jesus, he died for you. He loves you. He's not mad at you. All you have to do is say, "Father, forgive me, I'm a sinner. I come to you. I accept the blood of Jesus Christ. And I accept you as my Lord. And I know you rose from the dead and you live in my heart." That's that.

And if you are a follower of Jesus Christ and you feel like you're not in peace, and you feel like your world is falling apart, sit down and watch this. The Lord has not left you. The Lord is waiting for you. He is like the prodigal son's Papa. And he is in Luke chapter 15, verse 11, with his hands stretched out, saying, "Come to me, my son, and come to me my daughter. I love you so much. I want to spend so much time with you. I'm not mad at you. I am wanting to dance over you." And that's in Zephaniah 3:17. I will rejoice over you and I will sing over you.

Crystal Keating:

What a good God we serve. Dr. Sam Kojoglanian with Beacon of Hearts Ministries, thank you so much for being with Joni and Friends Ministry Podcast today.

Dr. Sam Kojoglanian:

Amen. It's been a pleasure. We were made to bring honor to him and let us do that hand in hand, soul to soul, and heart to heart.

Crystal Keating:

Thank you for listening today. If you've been inspired by our conversations or have a comment about something you heard, please drop me a message at [podcast@joniandfriends.org](mailto:podcast@joniandfriends.org). I would love to hear from you. You can also find all of the resources that we've mentioned at [joniandfriends.org/podcast](http://joniandfriends.org/podcast). To get our next conversation automatically, please subscribe wherever you listen to podcasts. I'm Crystal Keating and thank you for listening to the Joni and Friends Ministry Podcast.

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