

Crisis, Chaos, or Christ

Marti Wibbels, MS, LMHC

We are heartbroken by what's happening in our nation and world. Still staggering from ramifications of COVID-19, the world watched in horror as George Floyd was cruelly murdered on May 25. That eight minutes and forty-six seconds became the match that lit a fire under a cauldron of smoldering social unrest. The escalating violence and civil unrest is being described by mental health professionals as a global amygdala hijacking—with thousands being controlled by trauma stored in their brains' amygdalae rather than by logical thought. When activated by any of our five senses, the amygdala releases neurochemicals, an internal “fire alarm” initiating a complex stress reaction. In less than 1/12 of a second, an amygdala “hijacking” moves us into the **Five Fs of Fight, Flight, Freeze, Fornicate, or Feed**. But we can move back into the brain's CEO, the prefrontal cortex, as rapidly as we left it by utilizing **Mental, Soothing or Physical Grounding**.



Mental Grounding includes applying God's Word to our concerns. In Matthew 11:28 (AMP), Jesus said, *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden and overburdened, and I will cause you to rest. [I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls.]* We can come to Him for peace when the world is in chaos. We can *take every thought captive to obey Christ* (2 Corinthians 10:5b, ESV). Mental grounding repeatedly moves our thinking into the present. Mental grounding can also include noticing shapes and colors, doing math problems, remembering favorite pets, sports teams, etc.

Soothing Grounding applies Ephesians 4:15, *speaking the truth in love*, even in how we talk to ourselves. Instead of focusing on crisis, we choose to follow God's directive in Philippians 4:8: *whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things*. We consistently train our minds to think biblically instead of fearfully, asking God to show us what we can do to make a difference instead of focusing on people's evil actions.

Physical Grounding includes applying Proverbs 14:30 *a heart at peace gives life to the body*, choosing to breathe deeply, relaxing physically in God's loving care. It can include intentionally living as Christ's ambassadors, imploring people to be reconciled to God (see 2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

Moving beyond the Five Fs: instead of Fighting, **we can pray**. *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective* (James 5:16, NIV). Tennyson said, "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of... For what are men better than sheep or goats that nourish a blind life within the brain, if, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer both for themselves and those who call them friend?"

Instead of running away (flight), **we can love**. *There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen* (1 John 4:18-20, NIV). In Christ's strength and love, we can build bridges of reconciliation.

Instead of Freezing, **we can listen and forgive**. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love." *And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God* (Micah 6:8). When we trust in Christ, our lives aren't defined by the world but by His unfailing love, a love we're called to share with a world that desperately needs it.

For additional help, you can work through *Core Healing from Trauma*, a biblical counseling workbook I wrote for individuals or groups, available on Amazon. To reduce the impact of trauma, you can also watch "Strengthening Your Core," my 12 - video series on YouTube at <https://cutt.ly/Or6EiiW>. You can subscribe to my blog at <https://corehealingfromtrauma.com/>.