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DRAMA



CHAPTER 3 | DRAMA

Introduction

Let's be honest: city living contributes to stressful situations, and some days, anything and everything seems to want to get in the way of our joy. Crowded train rides to work, traffic on the expressway, and noisy neighbors that don't let you sleep can leave you feeling irritable and vulnerable. The biggest hurdles involve everyday relationships—such as with a family member, a friend, a boss, or a church leader. Any interaction involving a misunderstanding or perceived as offensive behavior can aggravate a heart stressed with worry, concern, or pain.

Inner city living is intense, and many who live there must deal with constant drama. We all have had to deal with the drama of life on different fronts, whether in our family, health, finances, or work. These fronts play a significant role in our spiritual and emotional well-being. Life in the city seems to intensify dramatic storms of controversy, opposition, and conflict. Some use drama to get attention or to manipulate outcomes. Drama can eventually become addictive, feeding the need for attention. This type of behavior leads to anxiety, relational conflict, and chaos.

When drama results from a need for attention or a desire to manipulate others, we are, in essence, looking inward rather than upward for answers to our situations and solutions to our problems. The Lord says in Exodus 20:5 that He is a jealous God. He wants to be the One we look to when we feel the pressures of life closing in. He desires to be our solace when we are troubled. He doesn't want us looking elsewhere for answers, even if it's inside ourselves.

*"Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me."
(Psalm 51:10).*

A clean heart and a loyal spirit will not react to stressful situations and conflict with drama. Instead of feeling the need to react in a manner that draws unnecessary attention or manipulates, we will seek the face of God and find our strength and comfort from Him. Instead of throwing stones, we will show grace and mercy.

We won't yield to the temptation to stir up trouble for others. When we live with a clean heart, we treat others as we want to be treated, as taught in Matthew 7:12.

"A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart." (Luke 6:45)

Drama is a heart response. Everyone has made the mistake of overreacting, exaggerating, or being overly emotional in response to stressful situations. The key is not allowing it to become habitual.

When we allow our emotions to react to a situation rather than taking time to see how the Holy Spirit would lead us, we open ourselves to reap a harvest of the flesh rather than one of the Spirit.

"Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. Those who live only to satisfy their sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit." (Galatians 6:7-8)

It's a vicious cycle and a plot of the enemy for our spiritual demise. The more we do what feels good at the moment and satisfies our flesh, the more we will find ourselves in misery. After the fleeting moments of self-gratification are over, Satan is right there condemning us for doing what he enticed us to do in the first place.

The more we react with drama to life's curveballs, stressful relationships, and insecurities, the more drama we need to cover our tracks. It's a never-ending cycle; the only way out is to "have the mind of Christ." 1 Corinthians 2:16.

In our study today, we should ask: What is going on in my heart that makes me want to resort to drama?

In this study, we will learn how to dethrone drama and move into the place of God's peace.

There is a place of freedom from worry, liberty from fear, and peace beyond human explanation.

*"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. Then, you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.
(Philippians 4:6-7).*

With peace like that, we don't need drama from within, and we don't react to drama from the outside world.

Let's see how to find such a place of rest.

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DRAMA part 1

A Reflection of Your Heart

Defining Drama

“Drama Queen” is a popular phrase in our culture that describes someone dramatic or overly emotional. In Humboldt Park, Chicago, where I am from, we like to say, “She is extra,” or a “Diva,” or “She’s too much.” These descriptions are often used playfully, but sometimes they contain a bit of truth. If we are not careful, drama can become habitual—a way of life. The reality is that drama is a condition of the heart. The good news is that the Holy Spirit is available and willing to help us correct this behavior.

The word drama, as we will use it in this study, refers to our tendency (learned behavior) to overinflate situations by taking matters into our own hands. Drama is an overly emotional response involving exaggeration, manipulation, and attention-getting behavior. It is an overindulgent behavior that places the self at the center.

Spiritually, drama signals a lack of trust in God’s provision. Drama reflects what is going on in our hearts, and what is in our heart matters.

Drama also tends to embrace offense (“Who does she think she is? I take offense to that!”), reflecting a victim mentality that rejects redemption (“I will never forgive him for what he did to me”). However, through the love and power of Jesus, problems need not be exaggerated; they can be turned into an opportunity for redemption.

No one wants to admit they may be dramatic, and most people are unaware of it. However, the Holy Spirit reveals our dramatic tendencies as He heals us from our past. Before diving into our topic today, take a moment to reflect on the following questions, which will help you check your heart.

Write your responses in a journal or notebook:

Recall a time you thought you were treated unfairly.

- *How would you describe your initial response? Was it vindictive?*
- *Was your response to call a friend to share?*
- *Were you pleased with your response?*
- *Is there a sense that you could have responded differently/better? If so, how?*

Take a moment to pray about your responses or borrow this prayer, if you prefer:

Father, I thank you for your consistent love and care. I am grateful for the life you give. Thank you for your son, Jesus, and for forgiving my sins. I invite the presence of the Holy Spirit to search my heart and consider my ways. Today, as I contemplate such a great, great God, I surrender my love, time, and attention to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Out of the Heart

*"As a face is reflected in water, so the heart reflects the real person."
(Proverbs 27:19)*

When you investigate your reflection in the mirror, you see what you see. It is difficult to lie to the mirror. This passage tells us that our lives—how we behave, make choices, and respond—reflect our hearts. We shouldn't ignore what is in our hearts.

Write your responses in a journal or notebook:

- *What does this verse mean in your own words?*

The heart is the wellspring of life—everything flows from it. What is in your heart determines the direction of your life. Understanding what is going on in the heart is important because we can only be destroyed from within, not by what comes from without.

Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life. (Proverbs 4:23)

In psychology, the Attachment Theory developed by John Bowlby, he explains how earliest attachments leave a significant mark on our lives. For survival, babies must bond with their caregiver in order to know that they are not alone and that their basic needs will be met. When a baby cries out, the baby is practicing basic survival skills. Bowlby even concluded that babies are born with the innate drive to form an attachment. This theory is not a surprise because we know that we are created to be in relationship with God and with each other. God created the brain, which observes its environment and wires itself accordingly to survive. Newborns depend on getting their mother's attention for survival. The more their needs are neglected during early development, the more the child equates getting attention with survival and safety.⁴

This psychological theory helps explain the need to feel loved, belong, relate, and connect. When these needs have been trampled on or ignored, the heart cries out, grieves, and tries to find ways to get what is missing. This search for help sometimes creates drama.

As you've probably noticed by now, we are wrestling with two types of drama: the drama that comes at us and the drama that comes out of us.

Drama Gets Attention

Some examples of drama or storms that come at us are the death of a loved one, loss of a relationship, divorce, illness, job loss, financial hardship, and so on. Examples of the storms that come from within include insecurity, a need for attention, fear, pride, victim mentality, jealousy, or superiority complex, among others.

Sometimes, inner conflict can lead you to believe that a storm is coming from the outside when it is really an inner conflict trying to find healing.

Drama gets attention. That sounds negative, but it can serve us. Drama can be a way to get to the heart of the matter. When storms of life come at us, or storms rage within us, they can expose the heart. And that is when we must pay attention.

⁴ Psychology Today, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/obesely-speaking/201411/excessive-attention-seeking-and-drama-addiction#>

Here are examples of dramatic behavior that are initiated from a storm within:

- *Excessive worrying (about everything and needing to talk about it to everyone).*
- *I am rushing to gossip and slander to validate my side of the story and get people to agree with me.*
- *Constantly playing the victim, blaming everyone and everything else.*
- *Taking offense quickly, being oversensitive.*
- *Using exaggeration to get sympathy.*
- *Jumping to conclusions about a person or a situation without any proof.*
- *Judging harshly without knowing the facts.*
- *Demanding and insisting on individual rights in every situation.*
- *Manipulating situations and people for personal cause or gain.*
- *Resorting to loud and abusive language during a disagreement.*
- *Imposing the silent treatment during a disagreement.*
- *Consistently overreacting by being overwhelmed and self-absorbed.*

A Cry of the Heart:

All this behavior is a cry of the heart that results in selfish, sinful behavior. This behavior not only hurts relationships but can also lead to depression, anxiety, and other mental illnesses. Because this behavior gets almost immediate attention and temporary satisfaction, it can become dangerously addictive, but just like with every other addictive behavior, healing is available. Jesus' death on the cross provides for the forgiveness of sin, deliverance from bondage, and healing of all addictions, afflictions, and illnesses.

Dig Deeper:

- *Are there times when I use drama for attention or manipulation?*
- *What triggers cause me to react with a selfish and sinful response?*

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DRAMA part 2

The Throne of Your Heart

Hidden Drama

Not all drama is loud or visible. A lot of drama festers quietly. I am thinking about all the drama in my head in the middle of a silent treatment.

Years ago, this was my struggle. I was easily offended; I judged; I believed I was the victim, and I was the queen of the silent treatment. All this inner behavior led to addictive, sinful habits. No one would ever say that I was a diva, extra loud, or manipulative, but inside, I dealt with so much noise. I was unaware of my addiction because I felt I deserved those moments. They comforted me. My silence was other people's punishment. I was selfish and wanted my way. I put my offenses on a pedestal. I put my resentment and agenda on a throne; I had myself on the throne of my heart.

Then, I had an encounter with the Holy Spirit that completely changed me. It wasn't overnight (I was stubborn), but it was a dramatic change, nonetheless. I am still learning and growing. The most beautiful thing about our relationship with God is that He is never offended. We are never too much, and He takes time to show, teach, and grow us. Being a Christ follower is like a new adventure every day.

Let's look at a biblical example of drama:

"While they were at Hazeroth, Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses because he had married a Cushite woman. They said, 'Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? Hasn't he spoken through us, too?' But the Lord heard them." (Numbers 12:1-2).

Journal your thoughts about these verses.

Miriam and Aaron began to talk against their brother Moses. Talk about drama! This story includes family drama, racial drama, and church drama! When I studied this story, I had to ask, "Why did Miriam get punished and not Aaron?" The conclusion I came to was that Miriam was the one who led the opposition. This would explain why her name is listed before Aaron's.

The bottom line is that they were gossiping about their brother. Why? Maybe they felt envious of Moses because they were prophets, too. Why did they talk against his wife? Was it racism? The passage does mention that Moses married a Cushite. Maybe Miriam felt that Moses' wife threatened her position of authority as the major female figure in Israel's leadership.⁵ Or it could have been both. In either case, God hears it and is not pleased.

Here, you see how drama promises something. It promises to recover what was lost. Drama always over-promises and under-delivers. Somehow, Miriam believed that she was losing her authority, so she created drama to redeem it for herself.

I like to imagine how this bad talking started. Miriam approaches her brother to "share her heart," "to vent," or to explain it by saying, "I'm just keeping it real!" Isn't this the way we explain our behavior? No one would ever call it gossip, but this is how gossip always begins, as a "sharing-my-heart" moment.

I have noticed that gossip tends to give people a false feeling of having had their needs met—their need for community, relationship, affirmation, and purpose—because talking about someone else promises to make you feel better about yourself, but it never does. And beware of those who come gossiping to you about someone else, especially under the umbrella of "let's pray for our sister." If they gossip to you, they will gossip about you.

Who Sits on the Throne of Your Heart?

I once heard a friend call drama the "high of life." I laughed, but it's true. As we've already seen, if left unchecked, drama could become a cycle of addictive behavior that affects all your relationships.

A drama addiction works to remove God from His throne as the authority of your life. Drama provides instant gratification and replaces God's authority with the authority of self. It puts self on the throne and says, "I need to take matters into my own hands." This is nothing new. Human nature always fights for the right to the throne, going all the way back to Genesis.

⁵ Psychology Today, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/obesely-speaking/201411/excessive-attention-seeking-and-drama-addiction#>

"God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil." (Genesis 3:5).

Wanting to "be like God" is not always easy to spot. Still, you can be sure that every time you ignore the gentle reminders of the Holy Spirit, you are taking a seat on the throne of your life and creating a chain of events that will impact your future, just like Adam and Eve in the Garden.

Thankfully, Moses interceded and prayed for his sister Miriam. Although she had to be removed from the camp for seven days, she was healed and restored. Moses could have responded differently; he could have allowed bitterness or anger to sit on the throne of his heart, but instead, he gave a seat to forgiveness and mercy. This scenario demonstrates God's redemptive plan for his people.

"Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose." (Philippians 2:1-4).

Dig Deeper

From this passage, write in a notebook or journal what you need to work on to remove yourself from the throne of your heart.

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DRAMA

part 3

A Safe Heart

Weathering Life's Storms

Today, our country is experiencing turbulent, chaotic, and uncertain times. For many people, it does not feel safe. The COVID-19 pandemic changed everything. It affected how we interact with one another, how we shop and eat, and even how we go to church. And then there's the social unrest. Politics and civil unrest increase the sense of uncertainty.

But God sits on his throne. And we are safe. And if you allow God to sit on the throne of your heart, you will be safe, too.

"In peace, I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, O Lord, will keep me safe." (Psalm 4:8)

Write your responses in a journal or notebook:

- *What does that mean to you that the Lord can help you dwell in safety?*

The Storm of Anxiety and Worry

You should know that it is normal to feel anxiety. Everyone feels anxious now and then, but excessive worry is unhealthy. For example, you may worry when faced with a problem at work or before making an important decision. However, excessive anxiety can make you avoid work, school, family get-togethers, and other social situations, and then this anxiety can lead to depression.⁶

If worry has an overwhelming hold on your life, you can choose to release it in prayer. As I always say, "Make your list of worries your prayer list." If you're going to worry, you might as well pray about it and leave your worries with God.

⁶ [//www.webmd.com/anxiety-panic/guide/anxiety-disorders#1](https://www.webmd.com/anxiety-panic/guide/anxiety-disorders#1)

Storms of Life

Throughout this study, I have compared drama to a storm. Jesus never avoids the storms of life.

"I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth, you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world." (John 16:33).

Jesus acknowledges and accepts the struggle, the storm, and the drama. He says you will have trouble, but he also offers a healthy response: take heart and have courage. You can have courage because you have peace.

Note to Self:

Jesus is our Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). He carried peace with Him on earth and died so we could have it. Because Jesus overcame death on the cross, we can be sure to overcome chaos and every form of darkness that assaults us in this world.

"For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith."

(1 John 5:4).

In a journal or notebook, list some areas of your life where the world's chaos can easily overcome your peace. Make these areas a matter of prayer.

Jesus Asleep on a Boat

Jesus acknowledges and accepts the struggle, the storm, and the drama. He says you will have trouble, but he also offers a healthy response: take heart and have courage. You can have courage because you have peace.

Sometimes, we don't realize who we have in Jesus. This storm allowed the disciples to see Jesus for who He is. According to Colossians 1:16, 17, Jesus is the image of the invisible God, through and for whom all things are created, the one who holds all things together.

An Opportunity for Peace

Storms of life present an opportunity for peace.

When you are in a storm, you have a choice to make. Do I trust Jesus, who is in my boat, to take care of this? Or do I lose sleep, worry, complain, get loud, get quiet? Do I choose to overreact or feel overwhelmed? Or do I choose to pray, trust, and obey? Storms give us a rare opportunity to reflect, to be quiet, and to learn.

"But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and remind you of everything I have told you. 'I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid.'" (John 14:26-27).

Write your responses in a journal or notebook:

- *What is Jesus saying to the disciples in this passage?*

Here, Jesus was saying goodbye. In the middle of the storm, the disciples could not see how things could be different. They still could not understand the redemption God had planned for them.

As He was saying goodbye, He gave them the Holy Spirit. Sometimes, what you gain after the storm is much better than what you had before. Sometimes, life is so much richer, so much more fruitful, and so much more meaningful than you ever could imagine. This storm, they did not want, allowed them to have peace they never thought they could have.

In the New Testament, the customary way to say goodbye was **Peace (Shalom)**. Peace refers to their wholeness in relationship with God .” When Jesus used this word, He was not only saying His goodbyes but also making them a solemn promise that now they, through the Holy Spirit, have a way to reach God.

Be still and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world.” (Psalm 46:10).

“Surrender your anxiety! Be silent and stop your striving, and you will see that I am God. I am the God above all the nations, and I will be exalted throughout the whole earth.” (Psalm 46:10, The Passion Translation).

Write a few words in a notebook or journal about the difference between living in the storm of drama and living in the peace of Christ.

The phrase, be silent and stop, is also translated be still and know. This phrasing in Hebrew can also be used to describe the words be weak and fail. In your weakness, He is strong. In your failures, He is strong. God is accomplishing something with your storms that drama cannot. ⁸

Dig Deeper:

- *When storms arise, what is my initial response?*
- *Is this in keeping with God’s Word?*
- *What are some of the storms in my life in which I need to surrender my anxiety and receive the peace of God?*

Elizabeth De Jesús served as a worship pastor and women’s ministry director at New Life Covenant Church in Chicago, where she and her husband pastored for nineteen years. Of all her ministry victories, she is most grateful for a strong marriage and a family that loves each other well. Today, Elizabeth and her husband live in Springfield, MO where He serves as the Director of AG US Missions. Elizabeth, continues to be passionate about loving God, loving people, and building up the church while she studies for her doctorate.

7 Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). Faithlife Study Bible (Jn 14:27). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

8 Charry, Ellen T. "On Knowing God." The Asbury Journal 58, no. 2 (2019): 2.