



PEACE OF MIND

STARTS NOV 19

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

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SMALL GROUP TIPS

- 1. START & FINISH ON TIME.** Doing this will show your small group that you value their time.
- 2. BE COMFORTABLE WITH SILENCE.** Uncomfortable silences are bound to happen. It's okay! A long pause during a group discussion can be powerful. A *pause* gives space for quieter people to break into the conversation; silence allows people to figure out exactly what they would like to say.
- 3. CONFIDENTIALITY IS IMPORTANT.** Confidentiality is the key to building trust in relationships. Here are a few mottos to remember to be confidential: "What is said in small group, stays in small group." **Nothing, nobody, never...** "*Share nothing, to nobody, never*" outside of the group.
- 4. MAKE GROUP A PRIORITY.** Communicate in advance when you will be unable to attend by either calling and/or texting your host or responding to the zoom email invitation by accepting or declining. This will help your host to plan accordingly and especially if it is an in person small group gathering.
- 5. LISTEN WITHOUT FIXING AND TEACHING.** People desperately need a safe place to share their thoughts and be real with others. Give people space to talk without trying to fix them, correct their thoughts, or teach. Choose the relationship over the desire to cast judgement or prove your point over theirs, to be "right".
- 6. ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION.** While not everyone will be ready or willing to help lead or answer questions, participating and reading God's word with others will help build confidence in each member and the group. Encourage all members to read sections and/or scriptures aloud for the group.
- 7. ASK FOR HELP.** The Small Group Ministry is here to help. Email smallgroups@nhww.org to ask any questions, request training or other assistance for your small group.

Mental Health Disclaimer

This Christian small group material is intended to provide spiritual advisement and encouragement. The hosts and participants in your group are not mental health specialists, and the content shared should not be considered a substitute for professional mental health advice, diagnosis, or treatment. If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, we strongly encourage you to seek assistance from a qualified mental health professional or healthcare provider.

The discussions, prayers, and reflections within this small group are centered on faith-based perspectives and the understanding of the Scriptures. It is crucial to recognize that everyone's mental health journey is unique, and what works for one person may not work for another. The hosts of this small group are not equipped to provide clinical assessments or therapeutic interventions.

Please be mindful of your personal boundaries and the boundaries of others in the group. If at any point you feel the need for additional support, we encourage you to reach out to mental health professionals, counselors, or pastors who can offer specialized assistance.

Remember that seeking help is a sign of strength, and we value your well-being. Let us join together in prayer, support, and the shared journey of faith, recognizing the importance of seeking appropriate mental health care when needed. Saying that "I need help" doesn't make you weak, it makes you wise.

If you are in crisis or experiencing an emergency, please call your local emergency number or a mental health crisis hotline. On Oahu call 808- 832-3100. On the neighbor islands, call toll-free at 1-800-753-6879. Or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).

New Hope Windward will receive prayer requests (email prayer@nhww.org) and offers a list of counselors for church members (email smallgroups@nhww.org or stop by Guest Services to get a copy of the list). The holidays are known for being a tough mental health season. Please check on group members and loved ones, pointing them to Jesus for hope, healing and inspiration in getting help.

Take care and God Bless,
New Hope Windward Team



CHRISTMAS

AT NEW HOPE WINDWARD

DECEMBER 16 & 17

DEC 16 (SAT)

ANCHOR CHURCH KANEOHE | **6:30 PM**
(TICKET NOT REQUIRED)

DEC 17 (SUN)

REGAL CINEMAS KANEOHE | **7AM** | **8:30 AM** | **10AM**
(TICKET REQUIRED)



SCAN FOR TICKETS

ADULT SERVICES

TICKET REQUIRED FOR SUNDAY ONLY
FREE TICKETS @ NHWW.ORG

KID ZONE & YOUTH SERVICES

AT EVERY CHRISTMAS SERVICE
NO TICKET REQUIRED

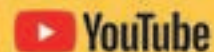
CHRISTMAS ONLINE SERVICES



NHWW.ORG

SUN, DEC 17: 8:30AM | 10:30AM

ON DEMAND



SUNDAY TICKETS



PEACE OF MIND

TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

CONFIDENTIALITY IS IMPORTANT. Confidentiality is the key to building trust in relationships. Here are a few mottos to remember to be confidential: “What is said in small group, stays in small group.” **Nothing, nobody, never...** *“Share nothing, to nobody, never”* outside of the group.

Week 1: Mind Your Peace (Myths Of Mental Health)

ICEBREAKER

What is one myth or stereotype that you once believed and now you don't?

INTRODUCTION

As Christians, we can sometimes have the misconception that just because we are saved and no longer slaves to sin (*Romans 6*), that Jesus will instantly fix everything that is "wrong" with us. Then when things aren't fixed, we start to think that there is something wrong with us. This can be especially true with mental health and the stigma (negative belief) about those who suffer from anxiety, depression, PTSD, OCD or other mental illness. This week we will be discussing two myths of mental health in Christianity and ways you can mind your peace to find peace of mind.

READ |

When it comes to mental health, we are talking about three important factors; your emotional, your psychological, and your social wellbeing. In other words, your mental health impacts how you think, how you feel, how you act and how you treat others. Caring for our mental health requires us to balance these three factors in the face of the disappointments, disasters and depressions that life in this fallen world can bring.

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. -1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 (NIV)

In the bible, the balance of mental health is best described as peace. As we go through this series and boldly touch on some real, important but sometimes scary topics, it is important that we keep close to the God of peace. Lean on God in prayer and ask him to sanctify you by shining a light on your mental health as you seek His peace.

Discuss one thing you hope to get out of this "Peace of Mind" series. How balanced do you feel heading into this series and what is one factor you can improve on? (Examples: Controlling emotions, positive thinking, better relationships, etc.)

READ |

The first myth many Christians believe is that they shouldn't struggle with mental health. Because we are justified by faith, saved from sin and filled with the Holy Spirit we might think we shouldn't have to battle with anxiety, depression or burnout. That it is our fault if we struggle and that if we just prayed more or had more faith, we wouldn't have any of these issues. However, even the most faithful struggled with their mental health.

"Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. 'I have had enough, Lord,' he said. 'Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.'" -1 Kings 19:3-4 (NIV)

Elijah called down fire and rain through his faith (1 Kings 18), yet moments later he is afraid, isolated and suicidal. The point is that you can struggle with mental health regardless of how much you read the bible or go to church. You are not less of a Christian because you struggle. God is often working through our struggles as He was with Elijah. If we let our shame, guilt or pride about mental health keep us from being accountable, honest and making changes; we may never find God's peace.

How does it feel knowing that faith filled Bible profits struggled with mental health? What are some changes you can make to be more accountable to your mental health? (Ex: Better friend groups, change in diet/exercise, seeing a therapist, ect.)

READ |

Another dangerous myth about mental health in Christianity is that God doesn't care. "He doesn't really care about that." "He's too busy." "He's got bigger problems." When we are riddled with anxiety or struggling with discouragement and depression, it can be easy to trick ourselves into thinking that God isn't thinking about us. Luckily, we have the book of Psalms to turn to and remind us just how much he cares:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want... Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."
-Psalm 23:1&4 (ESV)

"You have searched me, Lord, and you know me... Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?"
-Psalm 139:1&7 (NIV)

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."
-Psalm 34:18 (NIV)

The Psalms above come from David, a man after God's own heart, who served as a model of devotion, trust, humility, and reliance on God's grace. Yet, at times, he deeply struggled with doubt and despair toward whether God cared (*Psalms 6, 13, 22*). The Psalms are a reminder that God always cares but also that we should always seek Him openly and honestly.

What is your go to scripture when you are struggling mentally (or choose from the ones above)? How can you be more diligent in seeking God when you're doubting, depressed, lonely or anxious? (Ex. pray, read scriptures, worship, vent with God)

READ |

Things don't have to be that bad for us to be in need of God's peace of mind. We can be visibly healthy, spiritually healthy and relationally healthy yet still be mentally worn down and anxious. Here's how we can experience God's peace.

You, Lord, give perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm and put their trust in you.
-Isaiah 26:3 (GNT)

When you are thinking and worrying about too many things, each one takes up a piece of your mind until it becomes too much and takes your peace of mind. God's perfect peace puts all the pieces together when we shift our focus off our problems and place our trust in the one who has and will help us with our problems.

What are some things that are taking your peace of mind (worries)? How can you trust God more with these things to get His help and receive His perfect peace?

READ |

While God is the architect and provider of all things, that doesn't mean we are called to do life alone with Him. When things are getting heavy and we are in need, getting help isn't a sign of weakness; It's a sign of wisdom. Pride will often keep us struggling alone when God is asking us to humble ourselves and get help.

For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”
-Luke 14:11 (NIV)

The antidote to pride is humility. Making a habit of being humble requires training our minds to see things from other perspectives, not just our own. One way to do this is by **Asking for help from others.** Two other ways to train our brains to be more humble are:

Practicing gratitude daily. *Philippians 4:8-10 says "if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things...and the God of peace will be with you."* Gratitude humbles us by shifting our focus off of our desires and problems onto God's peace.

Meditating on God's Word. *Joshua 1:8* tells us to keep God's Word on our lips and meditate on it day and night to experience prosperity and success. When we meditate on God's Word daily it humbles our heart in readiness to submit to God's Will and ways.

Do you struggle with pride when it comes to asking for help? How has humbling yourself by asking for help, practicing gratitude or meditating on a bible verse helped you experience Gods help and/or His peace? Which of these three can you focus on doing this week?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

This week, begin building towards experiencing peace of mind. Find balance in your emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing by making the God of peace your main focus and source of strength. Break the myths of mental health by openly addressing your struggles with another Christian. Practice humbling yourself by asking for help, practicing gratitude, and/or meditating on God's word. Read some Psalms or Proverbs.

- Optional: Read the SCRIPTURES on the next page for you to do your daily devotions.

CLOSE IN PRAYER:

God, thank You for creating my mind perfectly in your image and design. Guide me in Your power to balance my mental health. I want to experience your peace. Give me the strength and courage to openly and humbly address any struggles I am facing or will face, with You and another trusted individual. Help me to shift my focus to you and to choose to trust you. Reveal to me how much You care and overflow in me a peace of mind that allows me to take on any challenge with You, my Prince of Peace. Amen.



Make Time to be in God's WORD

Reading God's Word daily re-patterns the way you think & transforms your mind. Doing your daily devotions is an excellent way to record, process, & share what God is teaching you on a personal level. We do this using S.O.A.P.

S - Scripture

O - Observation

A - Application

P - Prayer

Here's an example:

S: *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "*

--Matthew 4:4 (NIV)

O: Jesus said that we can't live on food alone. Our life is sustained through His Word.

A: Just as food is important to me, God's Word is even more because it will sustain me and give me the strength to live out my life.

P: Jesus, thank You for reminding me that I need Your Word to give me the wisdom & strength to follow You. Help me to make time to spend with You daily. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

Day 1:

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

--Matthew 22:37 (NIV)

Day 2:

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,

--2 Peter 1:3 (ESV)

Day 3:

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

--John 14:27 NIV

Day 4:

How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?

--Psalm 13:1-2 (NIV)

Day 5:

"But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: 'God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.'"

--James 4:6 (NIV)

PEACE OF MIND

TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

LISTEN WITHOUT FIXING AND TEACHING. People desperately need a safe place to share their thoughts and be real with others. Give people space to talk without trying to fix them, correct their thoughts or teach. Choose the relationship over the desire to cast judgement or prove your point over theirs, to be "right".

Week 2: Silencing Your Negative Thoughts

ICEBREAKER

What is one thing you are hoping to receive or achieve this year (or next year)?

INTRODUCTION

"Above all, be careful what you think because your thoughts control your life." -Proverbs 4:23 (ERV). Our Mental health is dominated and often defined by what we think. When we are thinking hopefully and optimistically about our relationships and circumstances then it becomes easier to feel good, do good and be good. However, when we are thinking negatively it can make us feel and act in unhealthy ways. This week, we will discuss some biblical teachings that help us silence the negative thoughts that want to control your life so you can find more peace of mind.

READ |

Peace of mind is hard to come by when we are surrounded by negative thoughts and feelings. From television to social media and the news, it seems as though negative influence in the world has never been bigger. Science tells us that this is because negativity impacts our mind more than positivity. So, as the world competes for our attention with negative influence, the bible teaches us to resist and seek Him.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
-Romans 12:2 (ESV)

This verse encourages believers to resist conforming our thoughts, values and behaviors to the sin nature and ways of the world. How? By embracing the transformative power of renewing our minds to think on God's Word and God's will.

Do you find yourself naturally drawn to negative influences? How has leaning on your faith in God empowered you to combat negativity and refocus your thoughts toward aligning with God's will?

READ |

In the next couple of sections we will be going over four of the major ways that negative thoughts and feelings can take control of your life and steal your peace. Again, negativity is natural and you are not less of a Christian if you think in any of these ways.

Cynicism. This is a mindset of distrust where you look at people as self-serving and motivated by hidden agendas that work against you and the good of others. This is a relational mindset where you are constantly looking for lies in others instead of receiving their kindness or love.

Negative filtering. When you actively or habitually seek the negative in circumstances. Our brain is made to seek patterns and when we train our brain to look for the bad, we will always find it. This mindset focuses on the worst outcomes or aspects of our relationships and experiences, overlooking anything good or right to see what is bad or wrong.

"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones."
-Proverbs 17:22 (NIV)

Have you suffered from either of the negative mindsets above? How has your faith in God helped you to become more cheerful and positive in your thinking?

READ I

Here are two more ways of negative thinking that can take from our peace of mind:

Absolute thinking. This is an all or nothing mindset. You have it all figured out, things are all good or all bad depending upon if they agree with your thoughts. "All churches are bad" because I didn't like my last church. "All _____ are bad" because of a bad experience. This polarizing worldview can cause you to "see" many enemies.

Blaming. When every situation or consequence is someone else's fault. It's all about you. You weren't given a chance and you don't have control over what's happening to you. You're just a victim of life and circumstances.

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."
-Philippians 2:3-4 (NIV)

This passage tells us to put others before ourselves. To be humble instead of being selfish or thinking too highly of ourselves. When we are considerate of others in our thoughts and actions it can help us silence our negative ways of thinking.

Have you suffered from either of the negative mindsets above? How does prioritizing the needs of others and considering their interests help to silence negative thoughts?

READ I

Negative thinking is all around us and can be quite addicting, pulling us into negative mindsets or feedback loops. This can definitely steal our joy and make it harder for us to see God's goodness and presence in our life.

"Even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning."
-Joel 2:12 (NIV)

In this verse, Joel announces a dark day coming upon his people. To turn away from the approaching negativity he calls for a return to God through fasting. Similarly, when trauma, depression or dismay are upon you, you can supercharge God's supernatural grace, mercy, peace and provision through fasting, prayer, weeping and mourning.

Christians in crisis should take a planned and purposeful fast from anything that is stealing their peace and then fill that freed time with prayer and devotion to God.

What are some negative things you can fast from? (Ex: Social Media, The News, Relationships, Gossip, etc.) How much time would this fast free up in your day to spend with God? Do you think that extra time with God would bring you more peace?

READ I

At the end of the day, your thoughts have incredible power over your life but you have incredible power over your thoughts. There is one thought that is; foundational to our faith (*Hebrews 11:1*), a source of comfort (*Romans 15:13*), a motivator for perseverance (*Romans 5:3-4*), a catalyst for our transformation (*1 Corinthians 13:13*), a unifying factor among believers (*Ephesians 4:4*), and a reflection of our confidence in God's promises (*Jeremiah 29:11*): **Hope**.

*"May the God of hope fill you with **all joy and peace** as you **trust in him**, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." -Romans 15:13 (NIV)*

Hope is an essential ingredient to silencing our negative thoughts. This prayer by Paul reminds us that when we **pray and place our trust in God**, He can fill us with his joy and peace so that we may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. So when your mental health is under attack, turn your thoughts to God and pray for His hope, peace and joy to overflow in your life.

Share a time when you prayed and placed your trust in God and felt more calm and filled with renewed hope. How has hope been helpful in quieting your negative thoughts during times of anxiety, struggles, or trials in your life?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

This week, be mindful of the negative patterns of thinking that can occur in your mind by replacing them with prayer, God's word and focusing on the interests of others.

Fast social media, news, gossiping, complaining and/or being around people that feed negative thinking so you can make more time to be with God. Pray and place your trust in God.

- Read additional scriptures and feed your mind, heart and soul with God's word. We have provided SCRIPTURES on the next page for you to do your daily devotions.

CLOSE IN PRAYER:

Dear Father, thank You for giving me the power through your Holy Spirit to control my thoughts. Give me the strength and courage to take on my negative thinking and mindsets with Your mighty power. Be with me as I look to turn away from the things in my life that cause me to think negatively and steal my joy and peace. Infuse my life with Your supernatural hope and help me to place my trust in you with the problems and issues I'm experiencing. Help me overcome any obstacles that may be standing between the peace and joy You have planned. In Jesus' name, amen.



Make Time to be in God's WORD

Reading God's Word daily re-patterns the way you think & transforms your mind. Doing your daily devotions is an excellent way to record, process, & share what God is teaching you on a personal level. We do this using S.O.A.P.

- S - Scripture**
- O - Observation**
- A - Application**
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Here's an example:

S: *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "*

--Matthew 4:4 (NIV)

O: Jesus said that we can't live on food alone. Our life is sustained through His Word.

A: Just as food is important to me, God's Word is even more because it will sustain me and give me the strength to live out my life.

P: Jesus, thank You for reminding me that I need Your Word to give me the wisdom & strength to follow You. Help me to make time to spend with You daily. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

Day 1:

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

--Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

Day 2:

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,

--Romans 5:3-4 (ESV)

Day 3:

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

--Romans 8:24-25 (NASB1995)

Day 4:

Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.

--1 Corinthians 13:13 (NLT)

Day 5:

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called;

--Ephesians 4:4 (NIV)

PEACE OF MIND

TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

BE COMFORTABLE WITH SILENCE. Uncomfortable silences are bound to happen. It's okay! A long pause during a group discussion can be powerful..... A *pause* gives space for quieter people to break into the conversation; silence allows people to figure out exactly what they would like to say.

Week 3: Ways to Overcome Your Worries

ICEBREAKER

What was one recent worry you overcame? (Ex. uncertainty, failure, health, etc.)

INTRODUCTION

The bible tells us to "Rejoice in the Lord always.... Don't be anxious about anything" (*Philippians 4:4&6*) but how realistic is that in the world today? According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA), 37% Americans rated their mental health as fair or poor to heading into 2023. 90% of Americans believe that we are in a mental health crisis and you only have to go to the grocery store and look at the prices to face very real and practical anxiety. This week, we will look at anxiety and the three things it is telling you to do as you seek God's help to overcome your worries and find peace of mind.

READ |

One reason to celebrate Jesus Christ as your Lord and savior is the fact He lived without sin his entire life. Then, facing death on the cross, He took on all our sins; past, present and future so we could be forgiven. When Jesus was awaiting His arrest and crucifixion in the Garden of Gethsemane, He was full of fear, anxiety and worry but He did not sin.

*And being in agony he (Jesus) **prayed more earnestly**; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. -Luke 22:44 (ESV)*

So, anxiety is not a sin, it is a signal, warning and alarm that something is not right and that you need to address an issue. When the alarm goes off it is telling us to take the problem to God. Biologically, it sends us into a "fight or flight" mode where our body and mind are prepared to react and save our life. The problem comes when we don't go to God, and stay in our worries instead of praying for help to address whatever we're worried about. So, Just like Jesus, when the alarm goes off, we need to go to God and turn our worries into prayers.

How does it feel to know that anxiety is not a sin and that even Jesus dealt with worry? Discuss a time your anxiety about a situation was worse than the outcome. Do you think that you would have had more peace if you prayed and trusted God?

READ |

Our worry warning is telling us to do three things. The first is always prayer. Talk to the Prince of Peace about what's worrying you. Go to Him in prayer first because prayer is supernatural and breaks the chains and cycles of our worries. Then stay in prayer because it rewires our brain to better focus, trust and depend on Him.

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened." -Luke 11:9-10 (NIV)

God wants us cast our anxieties onto Him because he cares about us. When we choose to pray to Him in our worry and distress it touches His heart and shows our love for Him. When we are aligned with God in prayer, our faith can break the chains of anxiety.

God designed your brain to seek out patterns, so when you continue to pray in faith, it actually changes the chemistry of your brain to better seek and find the patterns of God in your life. Dr. Caroline Leaf, author of the book "Switch on Your Brain" found that 12 minutes of focused daily prayer over an 8-week period will distinctly change your brain.

Discuss any situations or issues that are causing anxiety in your life. Do you believe that focused daily prayer over those things for 8 weeks can overcome your worries?

READ |

The next thing your anxiety alarm is alerting you to do *is pause and wait on Him*. We are called to do this by placing our hope and trust in him.

"The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord." -Lamentations 3:25-26 (NIV)

The weeping prophet Jeremiah was no stranger to mental and emotional challenges as he struggled under the weight of the suffering that came from his prophetic calling. He understood, as we should try to understand, that sometimes we are called to endure our struggles and afflictions patiently and wait hopefully before the Lord for our salvation.

In our faith, we wait (place our hope and trust in him), even when we can't see Him. We wait because we know He cares about us and is working in all things for our good. He is refining us while we obediently obey Him and place our faith, hope and trust in Him.

Do you find it easy to place your hope and trust in God while you wait on Him to provide? Why or why not? What are some things you can do to focus on God while you wait for Him to provide? (Ex. Fast, daily devotions, fellowship, consume more christian media, etc.)

READ |

The final thing to do when stress signals your need to check in with God is to *praise Him*. We praise Him for the victories He has already provided and for the battles He is fighting for us now. So, first you *pray for Him* to break the chains of your worry, then you *wait for Him*, as scripture teaches *"The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still"* (Exodus 14:14). Finally, *praise Him* in faith for His victory in overcoming your worry.

"The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him." -Exodus 15:2 (NIV)

The Song of Moses (Exodus 15:1-18) is a great example of praise in gratitude for the victories God had provided and in faith for victories He had yet to bring. Similarly, when you praise God and claim victory over the worries that are stealing your peace of mind, you can receive the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, and guards your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7).

Do you think praising God for how He has helped you in the past and will help you in the future will calm your worries? Think about how God has helped you through a problem in the past and share with the group. (Ex. He helped you with a previous work, financial, health, or relational problem that had you worried)

READ I

As Christmas approaches, it is the perfect time to check in with friends and family who are far from God and desperately need the peace of mind that God provides. The sad truth is they may never experience God's peace unless they are invited to get to know the Prince of Peace. Even if you are working through your own struggles, you can still be a beacon of hope to help bring more people to Christ. God doesn't need us to be in perfect peace to use us for His perfect plans and purposes. He just needs us to be willing vessels to share the gospel by inviting them to church.

"How can they believe in him if they have not heard his message? How can they hear if no one tells them the Good News?"
--Romans 10:14 (NIV)

God instructs us to lead others to hear the Good News. In a world filled with bad news, people need the Good News more than ever. Invite people you know to hear the Good News at our Christmas services. Let Him stretch your faith as you rely on His strength to prayerfully invite, purposefully pause and powerfully praise God for working through your worry to bring those He has called through you to meet Christ this Christmas.

Discuss who you will prayerfully invite this Christmas season. What can you apply from this weeks lesson to help you overcome any worry about your invitations?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

This week, look honestly at the stress and anxiety levels in your life to see if there are any worry warnings you need to bring to God. If so, it is time to **pray**, it is time to **pause** (put your hope and trust in God), and it is time to **praise God** for helping you through your struggles. Think about friends, family and coworkers who need Jesus. Pray for them and invite them to attend a Christmas service with you. Overcome any worry associated with your invitations by applying your takeaways from this lesson.

- Read additional scriptures and feed your mind, heart and soul with God's word. We have provided SCRIPTURES on the next page for you to do your daily devotions.

CLOSE IN PRAYER:

Almighty God, thank You for giving me Your son Jesus to show me the path of righteousness and the truth that my anxiety and worry is not a sin but a signal from my brain, telling me that I need to pray, pause and praise you. Guide me in my struggles to go to You first in prayer. Allow my prayers to break the cycles of doubt, discouragement or despair. Let me pause in Your presence and trust that You are fighting my battles for me. Hear me praise Your name, Your power and Your glory as I proclaim Your victory over my worry. Move mightily through me this season to invite and inspire others to come to You for help, hope and healing this Christmas. In Jesus' name, amen.



Make Time to be in God's WORD

Reading God's Word daily re-patterns the way you think & transforms your mind. Doing your daily devotions is an excellent way to record, process, & share what God is teaching you on a personal level. We do this using S.O.A.P.

- S - Scripture**
- O - Observation**
- A - Application**
- P - Prayer**

Here's an example:

S: *Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "*
--Matthew 4:4 (NIV)

O: Jesus said that we can't live on food alone. Our life is sustained through His Word.

A: Just as food is important to me, God's Word is even more because it will sustain me and give me the strength to live out my life.

P: Jesus, thank You for reminding me that I need Your Word to give me the wisdom & strength to follow You. Help me to make time to spend with You daily. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

Day 1:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
--Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)

Day 2:

He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."
--Luke 22:41-42 (NIV)

Day 3:

"but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."
--Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)

Day 4:

"Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him."
--Psalm 62:5 (NIV)

Day 5:

"I love you, Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."
--Psalm 18:1-2 (NIV)

PEACE OF MIND

TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL GROUP

ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION. While not everyone will be ready or willing to help lead or answer questions, participating and reading God's word with others will help build confidence in each member and the group. Encourage all members to read sections and/or scriptures aloud for the group.

Week 4: Battling Depression & Discouragement

ICEBREAKER

Who is one person you turn to when you need advice or accountability?

INTRODUCTION

The church should be one of the safest place to talk about your struggles with depression, but it often isn't. We may not want to share the burden of our struggles, so we pretend to be okay on Sunday and smile through the pain at church. Discouragement and depression are more common that we would like to admit and cause us to lose our joy and peace of mind. This week, our focus will be on shedding light on depression and exploring strategies to navigate and battle through periods of discouragement and depression.

READ |

Depression is an ugly tree that grows in our hearts and minds. As the enemy waters it with lies, it grows bigger and starts to block out the light of God that grows good things in our life. This is how depression is used by the enemy to steal, kill and destroy your joy, peace of mind and mental health. Here are four main roots of this destructive tree:

Biological. Maybe you didn't get enough sleep, didn't exercise or eat right. Maybe it is hormones, chronic pain or an imbalance of neurotransmitters. Our body is the temple of God (*1 Corinthians 6:19*) and that temple might be under attack by unseen forces.

Relational. Maybe you are having problems with your kids, or your marriage or your friendships. Maybe you are lonely, withdrawn and craving connection with other believers to feel the presence of God once again (*Matthew 18:20*).

Circumstantial. Maybe you lost your job. Maybe you lost a loved one or an opportunity or your sense of purpose. It could be trauma or disappointment but either way things may be happening to you that make you want cry out to the Lord (*Psalms 13&22*).

Spiritual. Maybe it's a demon. Sometimes the battle in our mind is caused by the enemy. Maybe you are getting too strong in the Lord and the enemy is afraid so he is sending evil to try and stop your good. Often this root goes unrecognized by the world but Paul teaches us that many of our battles will be unseen spiritual ones.

"For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places."
-Ephesians 6:12 (NLT)

How does looking at the four root causes of a complex issue like depression help you to see it differently? Is there one cause that resonates with you the most in this season? How could you start addressing that issue?

READ |

The Good News of Jesus Christ is that we are no longer slave to sin or under law but saved through His sacrifice on the cross. We are forgiven to live in the loving light of God's grace. When darkness starts to grow and take shape in your feelings and emotions, bring them to light!

Start by naming your emotions because that opens the door to changing your emotions. Your feelings are real but they aren't always true. Our feelings often lie to us.

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?
-Jeremiah 17:9 (NIV)

Because the heart and the enemy are both deceitful, we must realize that our thoughts and feelings can lie to us. Instead of following them, recognize them and name them but do not be ruled by them. When the enemy whispers "quit," "run away," "withdraw," or "don't follow God and His word", it may feel true but remember, your heart and the enemy will deceive you. So shine a light on the lies, and turn to God to change your emotions.

Take a moment to name an emotion that is stealing your peace. I feel " _____" (EX. "angry," "hurt," "ticked off at the world," "betrayed," "unforgiven," etc.)

READ |

Your situation may feel hopeless, but with God, there is always hope. The bible is full of stories where there seemed to be no way out but God still came through. This doesn't mean that we won't ever suffer, but that even in the midst of suffering, our faith in God can help us plant a seed of hope in the darkness of our despair. The key is to keep watering the seeds of hope with God's word and connection with God's people.

*"There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off."
-Proverbs 23:18 (NIV)*

The verse encourages perseverance and faith, suggesting that those who maintain their hope in God will not be disappointed or abandoned.

Whatever the temptations, di[] culties, problems or pressures you go through, God has a positive future for you. But we have to walk into it with hope and trust in Him. So start small: call a friend, rearrange your room, go to the gym, change your diet. Choose to trust Him regardless of your doubts and circumstances. Move in hope that God is going to move alongside you greatly, to get you through the depression and into His peace.

What do you do when things start to get negative in your life? What is a small change you will attempt to do to stay in your faith and place your hope and trust in God, the next time you are feeling discouraged or depressed?

READ |

Life can be hard. Depression is not fair. We can often feel disengaged, deflated and defeated, but listen to this; never give up because God is never going to give up on you.

*"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."
-Deuteronomy 31:6 (NIV)*

He is present and He is faithful. He wants to heal you, lift you and carry you into a new season with Him. So, give it to God and then get help, get accountability, get fellowship. Go back to church, go to counseling, go to His Word daily, go to the gym, start a hobby. Do it, don't give up, the best is yet to come.

What is something you do or say to yourself that helps you to keep going when you feel like giving up? What is one thing you can do to get more help or support for your mental health in this season?

READ |

Just as God will never give up on us, let us never give up on others. While we cannot fix them or heal their mental health struggles, we can be used by God as a source of hope and a listening ear when they are struggling. This Christmas season, take joy in the peace of mind we can receive from the Prince of Peace. Jesus has already declared victory over the troubles of the world. Now, we need to share the Good News.

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." -John 16:33 (NIV)

There are many people who need God's peace. Our Prince of Peace wants to replace our pressures with His peace and welcome those we invite into His Kingdom.

Who can you invite to our Christmas services so they can meet this Prince of Peace?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

This week, bring to God and to others you trust, any emotions or other symptoms of discouragement and depression you might be experiencing this season. Your emotions are temporary but God's hope for you is eternal. Never give up, be hopeful in small changes and have faith they will grow into great relief as you place your hope, trust and faith in Him. Prayerfully invite a friend, family member or coworker to come to our Christmas services with you at New Hope Windward to meet the Prince of Peace.

- Optional: Read the SCRIPTURES on the next page for you to do your daily devotions.

CLOSE IN PRAYER:

Dear God, thank You for being a constant source of hope in this fallen world. Thank you for never leaving or forsaking me, even when I feel isolated in my depression and anxiety. Give me wisdom, strength and discernment to not be fooled by the enemy or my own heart and to seek the light of your hope in all my circumstances. Bless my mess as I bring it all to you trusting that you will open a door and make a way to a better future. God go before my invitations and prepare the hearts of those I invite to receive your Good News and begin a relationship with you this Christmas. In Jesus' name, amen.



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SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

Day 1:

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;

--1 Corinthians 6:19 (NIV)

Day 2:

"Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

--1 Corinthians 15:58 (NIV)

Day 3:

For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

--Matthew 18:20 (NIV)

Day 4:

"for though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes."

--Proverbs 24:16 (NIV)

Day 5:

"I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

--Philippians 3:14 (NIV)



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