

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.

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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.)

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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.)

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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)

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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?

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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)