

Missing PEACE – Part 1 – Dangerous Myths About Mental Health

Let's begin today's topic with the bottomline of current research. Mental health disorders have risen in the United States. Anyone surprised by this?

What Mental Health Disorders Are on the Rise?

- Anxiety disorders
- Depressive disorders
- Obsessive-compulsive and related disorders
- Sleep-wake disorders
- Substance-related disorders

Here are some reasons given by these researchers:

1) the rise in social media in America and its impact

- Many studies have linked social media use to poorer mental health outcomes—especially among younger people.
 - Research has shown that excessive time spent using social media was associated with anxiety, depression, negative body image, and psychological distress. Some forms of social media use—particularly Facebook, Snapchat, and YouTube—were linked with higher levels of self-reported depressive symptoms.
 - Research has shown that limiting social media use reduces mental health problems. One study found that college students who limited social media use for three weeks showed significantly reduced loneliness and depression compared to those with unlimited use.

2) the pandemic and its impact

- Globally, anxiety and depression increased by 25% during the first year of the pandemic.

3. Greater Isolation and Loneliness

- This was already a rising problem before the pandemic. The pandemic made it worse. There were already trends like **decreased community involvement** and **fewer people getting married and having children**.
- It makes sense that older adults are at increased risk for loneliness... **The surprise, however, is that the research data shows that** young adults ages 16 to 24 were the loneliest group in Western countries—even lonelier than older adults. Researchers linked the prevalence of loneliness in this group partly to social media use.

4. The Substance Abuse connection

- Roughly 50 percent of individuals with *severe* mental disorders are affected by substance abuse.
- 37 percent of alcohol abusers and 53 percent of drug abusers also have at least one serious mental disorder.
- Of all people diagnosed as mentally ill, 29 percent abuse alcohol or drugs.

In this series we will cover **Anxiety, Depression, Worry, Negative Thinking, Trauma, and Burnout.**

Before we begin to grapple with these subjects, we need to address some misconceptions and myths, and lay a basic foundation for us to build from.

Myth #1: THEY have mental issues

Correction: We all have issues.

Since the fall of mankind, nobody is mentally healthy all the time.

Romans 3:23 (NIV) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...

But God has done something about every way in which we have fallen short of God's designed purpose for our lives. What God did for us makes it possible for Paul to write this.

1 Thessalonians 5:23–24 (NIV) 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. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

What is Paul trying to say to us here?

- Paul understands that we are complex beings: Spirit, Soul (Mind, Will, and Emotions), and Body. This is mysterious, and complex. We are made in God's image who is himself a mysteriously complex being.
- Since the fall, the human spirit is dead to God because of sin, but Jesus made it possible for us to be resurrected Spiritually by uniting with Jesus, in his crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.
- Once united we are saved, and placed on a journey of salvation, that will be completed when we see Jesus' return, or go to be with Jesus.
- Meanwhile, the "God of Peace" is able to "sanctify" you through and through, your whole being.

THE BEST VERSION OF OURSELVES does not happen all at once.

Lately, I have been more affected by the same stresses that society as a whole has been affected by. My life is not this constant hum of peace. It's still a battle. This isn't heaven yet.

In one day, I can feel on top of the world, functioning in the zone, Reflecting the image of God like this aluminum foil, but then something happens and I feel all conflicted inside, a wadded up mess. Hardened, conflicted, hurting, struggling, trapped in some mental loops.

I can go from... functioning in my sweet spot, and say things like, "even if I was given a million dollars and I didn't have to work, I would still want to do what I do. I love this job!!! I can go

from that high spot, to the lowest spot of the emotional rollercoaster in 1 day. It happened this week. I just wanted to quit!! I didn't stay there. But it happened. Can you relate?

But here's what God can do...

He can unwad my wadded up mess of me!!

And what does he see? Himself...dimly in the wrinkles... He begins to smooth the wrinkles out... something shifts inside when I focus on His Goodness... his character, and his gifts seep into me.

Joy is his gift. Love is his gift. Peace is his gift. It's available. But we do need to learn a few things to be able to face these battles.

I've never been quite so top of the roller coaster to bottom of the roller coaster in one day before in 40 years of ministry.

I'm discovering that I'm not alone. Other pastors are feeling that too. I'm also discovering that many of you have experienced some of the increased pressures and struggles as well.

In today's language, Paul is saying: *May the God who brings inner calm and completeness make you more and more like Him in every aspect of your life – body, soul, and spirit. May he purify you spiritually, and transform you into the best version of yourself you can possibly be. Jesus made this possible for you—count on it, look to him for it, trust him for it.*

Myth #1 THEY have mental issues (no, we all need to work at maintaining mental health)

Myth #2: Mental Illness is ALWAYS a SIN issue.

Not True:

- **We live in a fallen world.** The bible is very clear that physical maladies are not always caused by sin. There are many factors that affect mental health.
 - Mental illnesses can be caused by physical factors.
 - It can be a biological imbalance issue where medications are a helpful piece of the treatment.
 - Mental health can be affected by physical exhaustion.
 - Mental health can be affected by a traumatic experience.
 - Mental illnesses can be caused by spiritual factors.

Example: Elijah! Check his story out in 1 Kings 18-19. A fabulous story. With a bit of a surprise. He goes from Spirit Empowered HERO to totally exhausted and empty ZERO overnight!

He was utterly spent! He's done in. He's Cooked. Fearless before, he was filled with fear the next day! He just wants to die. WHAT'S UP WITH THAT! Check it out!!

HERO to ZERO in one night! What happened!?! Check it out. God was so kind and gave him what he needed.

God wants to transform you into the best version of you, through and through, Spirit, Soul, and Body.

The church can make a mistake of always seeing everything through the Spiritual lens only.

Myth #2: Mental Health is ALWAYS a SIN issue (No, sin is not always the issue).

Myth # 3: God is opposed to PSYCHOLOGICAL help

- **Correction:** God is opposed to ungodly counsel, but he is not opposed to Psychology.
- Psychology is the study of the human mind and the way our mind affects our life and well being.
- God is interested in your whole being, spirit, Soul (mind, will, and emotions) and body!
- God is all about good psychology. For example:

Romans 12:2 (NIV) Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Our mental health is not a static thing, but something that needs to be seeded, rooted, nurtured, trained, and protected.

Are you missing PEACE?

God is not opposed to you getting psychological help! Getting help is not a sign of weakness. It's a sign of wisdom!

But let's not stop short of the real help we need. Many only seek the help that the world can give. We have something far better that gets at the root causes, and the long term solutions.

John 14:27 (NIV) Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives...

And that's what this series is all about ... recovering the missing PEACE.

When Jesus said, my peace I give you, He said it on the night before his crucifixion... the night before His suffering, and he knew it was coming. He faced the worst imaginable suffering ... to be able to give us this peace he came to bring us. HIS PEACE is real peace, perfect peace, it isn't a PEACE because of the absence of problems. But the real peace found in the presence of God!

I want each of us to RECEIVE this indescribable gift of REAL PEACE, the peace found in the presence of God, that is made possible through JESUS.

NEXT STEP:

WISDOM FOR MENTAL HEALTH 5 day READING PLAN (YouVersion Bible App)

Talk It Over

MISSING PEACE

Part 1

Dangerous Myths About Mental Health

SMALL TALK

1. What do you think about when you hear the words “mental health”? How is your mental health right now?

VIEWPOINT

2. **Read Isaiah 26:3.** How can we practically apply the idea of fixing our thoughts on God as a way to combat anxiety and stress in our lives?
3. **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24.** How does seeking God's will for our mental health align with Paul's message in these verses?
4. **Read Romans 3:23.** Discuss the myth that mental health issues are solely a result of personal sin. How does this verse remind us that everyone falls short, and mental health struggles can affect anyone?
5. **Read Romans 12:2.** How does this statement debunk the myth that God isn't interested in “psychology.” How does this verse encourage us to renew our minds and thought patterns, even in the context of mental health?
6. **Read John 14:27.** Discuss the myth that seeking treatment or support for mental health contradicts relying on the peace that Jesus gives.

GETTING PERSONAL

7. What is the connection between this peace and trust? What are your challenges of maintaining inner peace in a world filled with turmoil, conflict, and stress. How do you keep your focus on Jesus' promise of peace in such circumstances?

MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

1. How will you apply Romans 12:2 this week?