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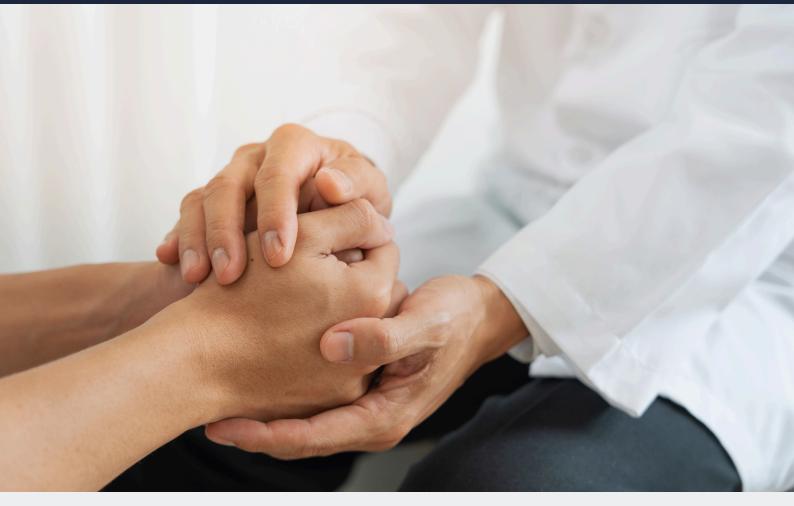
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A REFLECTION ON FAITH AND MENTAL HEALTH

PRAYER SPOTLIGHT

PRAY FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND THE CHURCH





A REFLECTION ON FAITH AND MENTAL HEALTH

In recent years, conversations about mental health have moved from the margins to the mainstream. Once whispered about in private, topics like depression, addictions, trauma, and neurodivergence are now openly discussed on social media, in schools, at work, and

increasingly, in churches. Public figures, athletes, and even pastors have begun to share their struggles, and the stigma surrounding mental illness, while not gone, is being challenged in powerful ways.









This shift toward public discourse has happened for many reasons: a rise in global stress and isolation (especially during the COVID-19 pandemic), increased to access psychological education and support, and growing awareness that mental wellness is deeply connected to every area of life. Anecdotally, $\circ f$ the more common one questions I get as a psychologist is, why do mental health problems seem to be on the rise? The of fundamental premise question is supported by various statistics, including a 2025 report by the WHO indicating there are over 1 billion people living with mental health disorders.

For Christians, this raises several important questions: How should our faith shape the way we think and talk about mental health? Is it a sign of spiritual weakness when a believer struggles mentally or emotionally? What does Scripture really say?



SCRIPTURE IS HONEST ABOUT STRUGGLE

Many Christians often feel they need to "have it all together" to prove their faith is strong. The Bible, however, is refreshingly honest about the human condition. It doesn't present sanitized stories of perfect people with unshakable faith. Instead, it gives us real people who are deeply faithful, deeply flawed, and deeply human.

King David, known as a man after God's own heart, wrote many psalms in deep distress. In addition to prayers of praise and supplication, his psalms are littered with laments of anguish, fear, and sorrow. In fact, professed state of frequently overlapped with clinical health symptomatology, mental including persistent sadness, fatique, somatic pains, restless agitation, loss appetite and weight, palpitations, guilt, hopelessness, difficulties, concentration anxiety, and traumatic stress (see Psalms 6:2-3, 6-7; 38:3-10, 13-14, 17; 55:2-5, 88:15-18; 102:4-5).

Another prime example is Elijah. After a supernatural victory on Mount Carmel, he fled to the wilderness, collapsed under a tree, and cried out to God to take his life while confessing he was no better than his ancestors (1 Kings 19:4). Elijah was burned out, despairing, and perhaps to the point of passive suicidal ideation despite having recently witnessed God's miraculous power. Yet God didn't rebuke him, but provided him with rest, nourishment, and a renewed calling.

Throughout history, the people of God knew what it was to feel afraid, exhausted, discouraged, or overwhelmed. Their circumstances were different, but their inner battle was similar. Peter was an emotionally reactive blurter whose actions did not always match up to his words of bravado. Job profound loss endured and trauma, oscillating between resilience and despair. Moses struggled with public speaking and self-doubt despite his calling to leadership from a burning bush. Jacob was a schemer who strove through manipulation until his wrestling with God established his identity. Martha was distracted anxious in her service, worrying over less consequential things.

MENTAL HEALTH STRUGGLES ARE NOT A SIGN OF WEAK FAITH

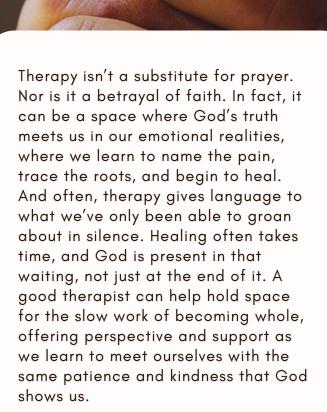
There's often a quiet discomfort in admitting that, even as believers, we can struggle deeply in our thoughts and emotions. Mental health is complex. Our psychological makeup is affected by many things: trauma, loss, brain chemistry, stress, isolation, genetics, and more. Just like our bodies, our minds can experience pain and brokenness. But the truth is that it is okay to be broken. In fact, we all are, in different ways. And that brokenness doesn't disqualify us from God's grace; it is precisely what makes us need it more.

It's a mistake to think that if we "just prayed more" or "trusted God more," all our mental health issues would go away. Prayer is powerful, but it is not a magic formula with a confirmed auto-heal function. Sometimes healing comes through prayer and Scripture; other times, it comes through the presence of a safe friend, a church community, or grounded professional care. Sadly, there are people in the church who suffer in silence. They fear being judged if they admit they're seeing a therapist, taking medication, or simply not feeling okay. They worry others will auestion their faith.

But the church should not be a place where people feel they have to wear a mask. It is meant to be a hospital for the hurting. Sometimes, without meaning to, church cultures can prioritize spiritual performance over honest vulnerability. This is why I am personally inspired by preachers who share their own stories of struggle and grace. They make room for honest conversations in church, and exude a depth of relationship with God. They help us to understand that faith isn't merely an intellectual endeavour. rather it is an active commitment involving an exercise of one's beliefs, particularly during hardship.

FINAL THOUGHTS: RECONCILING FAITH AND TALK THERAPY

Another often-asked question that I get is, why should I go to therapy? I don't know that I can really convince anyone of the benefits of seeing a therapist if they are already dead set against it. There is something powerful placebo and about nocebo effects, something akin to the of the unbelief people Nazareth that limited Jesus' ability to perform miracles there (Mark 6:5). From my experience, patients who felt coerced into therapy (by their spouses, parents, or court judges) tended to have poorer treatment outcomes unless their skepticism is overcome.





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PRAYER FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND THE CHURCH

- Pray for those struggling with depression, anxiety, trauma, addiction, and other mental health challenges

 that they would experience God's comfort, healing, and the courage to seek help.
- Pray for the church to grow in compassion to take action and support those struggling with mental health challenges. Grant us wisdom to listen with our hearts, to offer comfort without false cheerfulness and to speak words of healing.
- **Pray** for our elders, pastors, and leaders to lead in dismantling the stigma through both their words and actions, leading by example in faith and openness. Help us initiate conversations about mental well-being.
- **Pray** for wisdom for caregivers, counselors, and mental health professionals, that they would bring compassion and skill in walking with those who are suffering.