

THE BIG IDEA: Jesus leads us away from fear and toward a sound mind

The Take-Off

As we begin this series connecting mental health and the gospel, I need to be honest: this one hits home and this one makes me feel very inadequate.

But let's be honest, isn't that the very reason we don't talk about certain topics?

But this one cannot be ignored. Consider these statistics from research at Johns Hopkins:

- 26% of Americans ages 18 and older suffers from a diagnosable mental disorder each year (that's 66 million, or 1 in 4) - that's just the ones who report them - could be much higher
- 9.5% of people 18 and over will suffer a major depressive illness in a year
- 2.6% suffer from bipolar and 1% from schizophrenia
- 4 times as many men than women commit suicide, but women attempt suicide more than men
- 18% of adults experience an anxiety disorder each year

And let me share what for me has become the most sobering truth: if any of us were being treated for a broken bone or a physical ailment, there would be a meal train headed to their home faster than you can say "fried chicken" - but when the suffering is mental, emotional, or even spiritual, we often find ourselves overwhelmed and suffering alone

And shame grows in the secret places

Today, we are choosing to be silent no longer

There is nothing we can face that is beyond the good news of the gospel - mental health included

1. Where Jesus leads

- Let me tell you where we're headed during this series - kind of a roadmap of sorts
- We want to lower anxiety by raising awareness
- We want to talk about what we think about
- We want to bring God into the conversation and usher shame out of the conversation
- We want to offer hope
- Remember, 1 out of 4 in this room are dealing with this issue and way more than 1 in 4 are affected by this issue - we're not content to have a faith or a church that only offers hope to 75% of the people in the room
- As Rick Warren says, this series may not solve mental illness, but it will help us serve the mentally ill.
- Again, to quote Rick Warren, not all problems are solvable, but all problems are serveable.
- This morning, my goal is simple: I want us to see **where Jesus leads us**
- Look with me at **2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV)** - this is our roadmap
- Jesus leads us away from fear and toward a sound mind**
- This doesn't mean that if we are afraid, we suddenly don't love Jesus or aren't loved by Jesus
- It means that we know without a doubt that Jesus will always lead us to a sound mind, or mental health
- Following Jesus is a journey with good and bad days, but the journey doesn't change the destination

2. The lies we believe

- The destination for all believers is mental health - that's where Jesus is leading us
- The tactic of the enemy is to use fear to get us to believe lies that will keep us from being led by Jesus
- FEAR is False Evidence Appearing Real - let's tackle a few of the false evidences - **the lies that we believe**
- Here they are, in no particular order
 - LIE #1: No one understands
 - ➔ This attacks our security
 - ➔ **Genesis 3:1 (NLT)** / "Did God **really** say?" - the foundation of our lives / trust in the Word of God
 - ➔ "What if they **really** knew me?" / trust in the people of God
 - LIE #2: I'm all alone
 - ➔ This attacks our community
 - ➔ **Deut. 31:6 (NLT)** / Moses was on the way out, Joshua on the way in / God wasn't leaving
 - ➔ **Romans 8:35-39 (NLT)** / Nothing - NO THING (even mental illness) can cut us off from God's love
 - ➔ **Psalms 46:1 (NIV)** / God is "ever-present" in our need
 - ➔ Cultivate friendships that accept you as you are and direct you to who God is
 - ➔ Too often, we only seek companionship in others who do the first without the second

- LIE #3: This will never end
 - ➔ This attacks our hope
 - ➔ Any bad circumstance that has no end also has no hope
 - ➔ The enemy wants us to believe that the mental attacks will never end
 - ➔ **2 Corinthians 4:17-18 (NLT)** / “momentary” - literally “but for a moment”
 - ➔ **Psalm 40:1-2 (NLT)** / Our God hears our cry and he acts - notice all the past tense verbs!
- LIE #4: This is who I am
 - ➔ This attacks our identity
 - ➔ I start to believe that I am depression and depression is me, that I am anxiety and anxiety is me, that I am mental illness and mental illness is me
 - ➔ But **our struggles don't define us; they refine us**
 - ➔ **Isaiah 43:1-4 (NLT)** / we are the BELOVED of God - FORMED by God - RESCUED by God - CALLED by God - PURCHASED by God - KEPT by God - CHOSEN by God - PRECIOUS to God - HONORED by God - LOVED by God
 - ➔ God doesn't love you in spite of your struggles, he loves you in your struggles

The Landing

This morning we've read quite a bit from the Bible that was written by the Holy Spirit through Paul, so let's land this teaching with some powerful commentary on another verse that Paul wrote:

Many of you know that the Apostle Paul had some kind of chronic illness that he refers to in his letters in Scripture. Some people have surmised it was epilepsy, which is a brain disorder, but we don't know because he never really talks about the symptoms, just that it is recurring and something he has had to learn to live with. Some have speculated it was recurring depression. We don't know. But in his letter to the early church in Galatia, he writes something which is a model for us in faith communities when he says: “Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself.” (Galatians 4:14)

Our desire is to start a conversation that cultivates a community that loves one another like that

And we will.

Let's pray