



WEEKLY STUDY

WEEK 1

We began a new series that seeks to answer the question, “What does the Bible say about mental health?” We live in a time of increased awareness of the challenges related to mental health. The last few years have created an environment where people are more willing to bring into the light those topics that used to be unapproachable. For others, it may still be taboo or a sign of weakness to share about our struggles, but Jesus invites us to bring all of it into the light. In him there is no darkness.

Peace of Christ,
Dr. Mark Youngman
Pastor of Discipleship

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture and follow the daily prayer prompt.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: JOHN 12.44-46

Then Jesus cried out, “Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me.”⁴⁵ The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me.⁴⁶ I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

- There is power when things in darkness are brought into the light. Jesus makes a connection between belief in him and living in the light. When followers of Jesus continue to hold on to the darkness, we are not fully living into our belief that he is who he says he is. The light of Jesus exposes our brokenness, but it also reveals the God we may have trouble seeing. In the light of Jesus there is forgiveness and healing. **In what seasons of your life have you been most vulnerable to hiding in the shadow of darkness? Do you have any examples of a time when bringing something into the light brought healing?**
- *Jesus, shine your light on me today. May my faith in you increase as I see God more and more clearly. Amen.*

TUESDAY: 2 SAMUEL 12.18-20

On the seventh day the child died. David's attendants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they thought, "While the child was still living, he wouldn't listen to us when we spoke to him. How can we now tell him the child is dead? He may do something desperate."

¹⁹ *David noticed that his attendants were whispering among themselves, and he realized the child was dead. "Is the child dead?" he asked.*

"Yes," they replied, "he is dead."

²⁰ *Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate.*

- Struggles with mental health are real. David was experiencing grief over a death that was clearly connected to his own actions. The attendants who were tasked with telling him of the death of Bathsheba's son were worried about David's mental state. If we read David's words from Psalm 51, it is clear that he was wrestling with his own sin. Here in 2 Samuel 12 it also seems clear that he is coming to terms with God's will and direction for his life. That is reflected in his ability to worship and to eat (signs of moving forward). We are prone to get stuck in our misery and grief, but David models the potential to live and worship out of humility and forgiveness. **What has your experience of grief taught you about God?**
- *Lord, meet me in my struggles and draw me into worship. You have forgiven and redeemed me. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: 1 KINGS 19.1-5

Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword.² So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them."

³ *Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there,⁴ 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."⁵ Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.*

All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat."

- Elijah had just experienced a moment of great success born out of faithfulness. The next thing he knew, he was being threatened so severely that it caused him to run for his life. He ran to the point of exhaustion. Spiritually and mentally, he was toast. He felt that he was all on his own. He was beyond discouraged. Exhaustion plus isolation equals discouragement. So he prayed to die. Pastor Jacob shared in this week's message that instead of praying to die, we ought to pray for protection. It turned out he was not alone. An angel of the Lord prepared him bread and water and invited him to eat. It's different than David's meal in Tuesday's reading, but it is the same pattern. God will provide for you when you walk faithfully through your grief and depression. **When has a meal seemed like a wonderful gift during a rough time?**
- *God, send your angels to me and provide me with what I need. May I respond by getting up and receiving what you have given me. Amen.*

THURSDAY: JOB 3.23-26

*Why is life given to a man
whose way is hidden,
whom God has hedged in?*

²⁴*For sighing has become my daily food;
my groans pour out like water.*

²⁵*What I feared has come upon me;
what I dreaded has happened to me.*

²⁶*I have no peace, no quietness;
I have no rest, but only turmoil.”*

- Job had recently and very suddenly lost everything except his life. His family, his wealth, his health were all gone. If we can even begin to imagine what that might feel like, we might understand his words here. “Why would you give me life when it has become so miserable?” It sounds like the grumbling of the Israelites as they wandered around through the wilderness. But God never wastes our pain. Pastor Jacob said, “Instead of doing everything you can to get away from God, pray for God’s presence.” That’s where Job’s only hope for salvation came from—the presence of a God who would allow him to cry out, but would also respond to his pain. **Do you know what it feels like to be hedged in and full of dread?**
- *God, I may not have lost everything like Job, but I understand his despair. Hear my groans and restore my life. Amen.*

FRIDAY: ISAIAH 53.2-4

*He grew up before him like a tender shoot,
and like a root out of dry ground.*

*He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.*

³*He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.*

*Like one from whom people hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.*

⁴*Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.*

- This passage is often connected with the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who would come to earth hundreds of years later. The One who bore our suffering and took our pain was despised and rejected. The image of Jesus being flogged and forced to carry a cross is difficult to imagine, but it gives deep meaning to the prophet’s words in Isaiah 53. He knows what it feels like to be seen as unattractive. He knows what rejection feels like—to have no one hold you in high regard. And he carried all of it to the cross so that we might have life in the light. **What affliction from your life can you imagine Jesus carrying to the cross?**
- *Jesus, help me, help me, help me. Thank you, thank you, thank you. You have experienced my pain and worse. Lead me to life in the light. Amen.*

SATURDAY: MARK 14.34-38

“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” he said to them. “Stay here and keep watch.”

³⁵ *Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him.* ³⁶ *“Abba, Father,” he said, “everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”*

³⁷ *Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Simon,” he said to Peter, “are you asleep? Couldn’t you keep watch for one hour?”* ³⁸ *Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*

- Jesus was not immune to emotional and mental anguish. In a moment of wrestling, Jesus cried out to the Father. His soul was overwhelmed with sorrow. He needed to stay in the wrestling because through it, his purpose was lived out. We are not Jesus. Pastor Jacob said, “Instead of leaving our friends behind in our moments of greatest pain, pray for companionship.” **Who do you trust to stand watch with you as you go through difficult times?**
- *Lord, open my eyes to my tendency to hide or run from others when I am struggling. I pray for companionship on the journey. Amen.*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

- Make a list of things we don’t typically talk about in mixed company (or at all) and why you think we don’t talk about them. Does Mental Health make your list?

1. Why Not?
2. Why Not?
3. Why Not?
4. Why Not?
5. Why Not?

- Are there certain topics that are better left in the dark? Explain.
- What are some of the potential risks of bringing difficult things into the light?
- Talk about your experience with issues of mental health. In what ways did this week’s message speak to those issues?
- Which passages of scripture from this week’s study speak most clearly to your experience (first or secondhand) with mental illness?