

Lifting the LID

Bible Study exploring God's heart for mental health

Session 1: VALUED

"My soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassion never fail." Lamentations 3:20-22

Session Objective: This week we are looking at one of the best known stories in the gospels to see how Jesus reacts to someone who is stigmatized by his community. We will be introducing the whole area of mental health and think about the link between our faith and mental health.

Bible study - Luke 19:1-10: ZACCHAEUS

- a. Why doesn't Zacchaeus fit into his community?
- b. What is Jesus' response?
- c. Can you think of a time when you felt like you didn't fit in, or felt like an outsider? What happened? Did things change? How?
- d. As individuals and as a church family, how could we respond?

People with mental health issues often don't feel like they fit in.

I. Learning: Introduction to mental health

What is mental health?

The World Health Organization says that mental health can be defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. Mental health affects how we think and feel about ourselves and others, how we interpret events, how we learn, how we cope with life events and how we develop and sustain relationships.

- A. Question: What are some mental health conditions that you have heard of?

Mental Health problems –

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- ✓ One in four (1 in 4) people experience a mental health problem at some point in their lifetime. This is as true for those in the church as anyone else.

Every single one of us participates in the daily activity of balancing life's stresses with the emotional resources available to us. We will usually do this unconsciously, in the same way that our bodies prompt us to replace energy lost through physical activity. We all have emotional health issues, just as we have physical health issues. Some people are largely able to take their wellbeing for granted; others will need to make particular efforts to stay well; still others may need to receive much more comprehensive care to live a full life.

- B. There are a lot of misconceptions about mental health – here are some myths and facts:

Myth
Fact

Myth
Fact

Myth
Fact

Myth
Fact

Myth
Fact

Myth
Fact

- C. Society has become increasingly conscious of promoting investment in physical wellbeing through diet and exercise, far less has been done to encourage investment into emotional and mental wellbeing. 25% of adults will suffer from a diagnosable mental health condition at some point in their life – mental health concerns are not a minority issue – they affect humanity in general. In fact, the World Health Organization, which measures the global impact of diseases, says that only one other health concern – heart disease – has a bigger impact on global social and economic life.

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As Christians, we are to be motivated to care not just for those who are currently suffering from mental illness, but to see unity in the body as a whole.

Paul reflects this unity in when he says:

“If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.” 1 Corinthians 12:26

D. The Bible says that the fruit of the Spirit includes joy and peace, so some might say that true Christians should not suffer from mental health problems.

What do you think?

We believe that being a Christian does not make a person immune to mental health problems. There are all kinds of causes of mental health problems, which we will look at in more detail next week. Just like physical injuries and diseases, mental health problems can affect anyone.

E. Having poor mental health does not mean that God cannot use you.

In fact, a number of Bible heroes may today be described as mentally unwell. A list may include the writer of many Psalms, prophets like Ezekiel and Jeremiah, not forgetting Jonah and Elijah who both prayed for death because they didn't feel they could go on. Each one was used powerfully by God despite their mental health challenges!

Christian Challenge:

How can our church remove the stigma of mental health?

How can we Christians value people, especially those who don't fit in or feel like they fit in?

What are some ways to care, value, support and love?

Prayer for the Pain: