

Week Beginning: 17th November 2019

Worship Series: #3 in series

Shhh.

WE DON'T
TALK ABOUT...

living sharing growing

Theme Verse

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Remember This Week

The pain of mental illness is real. But there is hope for the helpless, rest for the weary, and love for the broken heart. There is grace and forgiveness, mercy and healing in Jesus. He will meet you, wherever you are.



lifegroups
live life abundantly



You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.

Psalm 63:1-3

Loving and Merciful Father, we live in a world that seeks to hurt and wound us. We come before you today bearing the burdens of life in a broken and hurting world. As we gather to receive comfort and healing from your word, empower us by the Holy Spirit to love and care for each other with the compassion and comfort you have first given us in Jesus. Amen



1. *Share your highs and lows since you last met with one another.*
2. *Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?*
3. *What is the craziest thing you have ever done?*
4. *What is one thing that always causes you to lose your cool?*
5. *What is one thing you think you already know about mental illness?*

Have you ever felt paralysed by anxiety or experienced the depths of despair? Or maybe you know someone else who has? Mental illness can be a very lonely, isolating experience, both for those who are going through it, and loved ones who see them suffering. Despite all the advances in treatment, despite all the ways in which our culture has become more enlightened and compassionate, somehow mental illness remains in a category of its own, regarded as some sort of peculiar affliction that is best dealt with by toughing it out, picking themselves up and getting out of it, or pretending that everything is ok. Many are embarrassed to speak about it, especially in the Church, where for too long we have been silent about mental illness. We have let people suffer in silence, and alone without the support of the community to get alongside, support and encourage them in the deep places of the soul. It's time for that to change. Join us today as we encounter a God who will never abandon us in suffering but love us with an everlasting love and draws us up out of a desolate pit.



Read 1 Kings 19:1-9

6. *What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?*
7. *What is Elijah afraid of?*
8. *Elijah demonstrates some deep despair? How do you think you would react to a visit from an angel? Why do you think Elijah needs two visits?*

One of the issues many people face when they are dealing with a mental health disorder is the assumption that only those who have a 'lack of faith' experience such conditions. What we see in this passage is a man so deeply depressed and worn out and anxious that he wants God to end his life. Yet he is considered one of the greatest prophets of ancient Israel.



A faithful servant of God. We can see Psalms of great despair that come from the hand of King David, who trusted God to lead him to victory over Goliath. We can identify the anxiety of Jonah to address the wicked people of Nineveh, the despair of Job. All people who struggled within themselves, despite being recognised as people of great faith. Clearly, faith is not the issue here.

Read Luke 22:39-44 and Hebrews 2:14-18

9. *What does it mean to you that Jesus was 'like a man in every way'?*

10. *In what ways do you think Jesus struggled with anxiety or depression?*

While praying in the Garden, Luke tells us that Jesus sweat blood as he prayed. This may not just be a figure of speech. *Hematidrosis* is the medical name for the condition in which someone sweats blood. There have been a number of reported cases apart from Jesus in medical history and all have occurred while the patient was experiencing extreme physical or emotional stress.

11. *What difference do you think it might make if we really believe that God knows what we are going through because he has allowed himself to go through it?*

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

It can be a great comfort to know that, in the midst of our suffering, Jesus is with us and knows what we are experiencing. He has walked the paths of the valley of the shadow of death and come through the other side. He knows the way out, he is our way out. But in the midst of severe depression or anxiety or other mental health conditions, we can lose sight of that fact.

12. *How does the comfort we receive from knowing Jesus, help us to comfort others?*

13. *Sometimes there is little we can do to help in the midst of a mental health crisis. What might we do in the 'good' times that might help prevent or ward off mental health conditions like loneliness, anxiety and depression?*

14. *Have you ever known someone who suffered a period of mental health problems? What things did they/you find helpful?*

Sometimes, there may be little we can physically do for someone experiencing severe mental health problems apart from getting them connected to appropriate professional care. The people who we most often can support and comfort are the friends and families of those suffering.

15. *What are some things we can do as a church community and as individuals that might make our churches places where people feel safe to share the struggles they are experiencing and confidently ask for help and support?*



Mental health problems come in all shapes and sizes. They affect every person differently and they can be difficult to understand. One of the things people with mental health conditions often report is a feeling or sense of disconnection with the world and with reality. One way we can combat this is to forge deep and meaningful connections with those in our community.

16. *What is one thing you will do this week to intentionally deepen your relationships?*

17. *RUOK? Day (Are you okay? day) is a suicide prevention initiative. A day on which we are encouraged to ask our friends, 'Are you okay?' Who are three friends you could check in with this week and ask, 'Are you okay?'*



- * Praise God for entering our humanity and experiencing all that we experience. Thank him for the comfort we now have through Jesus. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you be the presence of Jesus to those who are struggling
- * Pray for those who struggle with mental health disorders and for those who care for them.
- * Pray for each other - for healthy, significant relationships and connections that bring comfort and support in times of need.

Turn to the person next to you and make the sign of the cross on the palm of their hand or forehead as you say:

*Name, Jesus will never abandon you.
In the darkest moments, he is there with you. Amen.*

