

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

I'M NOT OK, AND THAT'S OK | WEEDS IN MY GARDEN

AARON BROCKETT | APRIL 7, 2024

Alright. Well good morning. I want to welcome everybody across all of our locations and those of you joining us online. Today we're beginning a new series of messages and we're going to jump into that in just a moment.

But, before we do that, I wanted to come out here and take just a few moments to honor my predecessor, the man who served as our lead pastor for over 24 years, Howard Brammer.

I want to honor him today because a little over a week ago, right before Easter, Howard went home to be with the Lord. He had a long, extended battle with Parkinson's Disease so now he is pain free with the Lord today. And we just want to take a moment to honor and remember Howard.

I know that for many of you he needs no introduction. He left an undeniable mark upon your life. Others of you, maybe this is the first time you're hearing that name. But I want you to know that if you enjoy, or if you have been the recipient of a healthy culture around here—our church is really impacting you in big ways—I want you to know that Howard's DNA and fingerprints are all over and continue to be all over our church. He served our church from 1983 to 2007 as lead pastor. He and his wife, Martha, both were so involved around here. And Howard was the epitome of a pastor. When I think about an encyclopedia if there is the word pastor it would have a picture of Howard Brammer.

He was steady. He had a certain kind of charisma, a kind of smoothness about him. But he was humble. He always made you feel like you were the most important person in the room when he spoke to you.

His wife, Martha, who is living in Cincinnati now, is flamboyant and artistic. In fact, she had an art studio in her home when they lived here in Indy and she taught my son art lessons when he was in elementary school. They just loved our family so well.

My first introduction to Howard... We didn't get to work with each other—he had retired in June of 2007 and I came in November. The first time I met him I was already pretty far along in my interviews with the elders. And they said, "You may want to go to Cincinnati and meet with Howard."



So I went to Cincinnati and we sat down on a park bench and he talked for about two hours. I remember his words, he said, "This feels a little weird. It feels like I'm interviewing a new husband for my wife." I was like, "Howard, you are right. That is kind of a weird analogy." But it felt very similar to that.

Man, right from the beginning Howard was my biggest cheerleader, my biggest encourager. I would hear from him often. Any time he was in town he would make his way back to my office and he'd just be beaming. He was like, "I can't believe what God is doing in our church." And I just appreciated his encouragement and his belief so much. If he ever had a different opinion than I did, which happened on a few different occasions, he'd just come talk to me directly and respectfully. And publicly, he'd be supportive. And it just meant so much. I told him over and over again, "Man, I'm standing on your shoulders."

So, I just want you to know we have a healthy church largely, in part, due to Howard. He is the longest tenured pastor in our nearly 200 year history. So, I just want to honor him and thank him for all that he has done. He's in heaven right now celebrating with us. This last Tuesday... Our staff gets together every Tuesday and prays together and one of our long-time staff members, Sherry Follet, stood up and she reminded us of something that Howard used to do all of the time in his teaching when he was up front. He loved to sing and he would oftentimes just break out into song and lead our church in song acapella.

I don't know if you've noticed, but it's not really my thing. Maybe it should be. I don't know. But his favorite song was a song that we sang last week at Easter, We Exalt Thee. So here's what I want to do to honor Howard. Can I just lead us acapella in two refrains of that song, We Exalt Thee? If you're at one of our campuses, I just want to ask you to join in with us. Don't just watch. Let's just lift our voices and sing.

We exalt Thee, we exalt Thee
We exalt Thee, O Lord
We exalt Thee, we exalt Thee
We exalt Thee, O Lord
We exalt Thee, we exalt Thee
We exalt Thee, O Lord
We exalt Thee, we exalt Thee
We exalt Thee, O Lord

Video of Howard Brammer

Let's be a church that is known by its convictions. That church has great values and they are uncompromising in biblical truth. But at the same time, my friends, members of



Traders Point church, we should be the kindest, the most cheerful, the most winsome people that anybody ever runs into.

So, as we launch into our exciting future, as we begin to fulfill the vision, we just don't ignore culture, we don't just sit back and criticize culture, we don't allow culture to suck us into its values, but we engage it, we transform it. We can do that if we will use strength and beauty, zeal and knowledge, grace and truth.

End Video

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 2 Timothy 4:7 (NIV) Howard R. Brammer 1942-2024

Song Honest by Kyndal Inskeep
Every time I walk out of the house
Put on another face
Just to blend in with the crowd
So nobody sees me
You would never believe me
I tell you that I'm whole, but I'm still healing
I tell you that I'm happy, but I'm grieving
Thought I was a fighter
I'm still in the fire
But if I'm being honest
I'm not being honest
I'll give you roses just hopin' you don't see the weeds in my garden
If I'm being honest
I'm at my darkest
I'm sitting here waitin' and prayin' for someone to show me what love is
I'm just being honest
I'm just being honest
Every time I'm past the hardest part
Here comes another ghost just to pull me to the dark
I thought it was over
God, let this be over
Cause if I'm being honest
I'm not being honest
I'll give you roses just hopin' you don't see the weeds in my garden
If I'm being honest
I'm at my darkest
I'm sitting here waitin' and prayin' for someone to show me what love is
I'm just being honest



I'm just being honest
I tell you that I'm whole, but I'm still healing
I tell you that I'm happy, but I'm grieving
Thought I was a fighter
(Thought I was a fighter)
I'm still in the fire
Cause if I'm being honest
I'm not being honest
I'll give you roses just hopin' you don't see the weeds in my garden
(Don't see it, don't see it, no)
If I'm being honest
I'm at my darkest
(I'm at my darkest)
I'm sitting here waitin' and prayin' for someone to show me what love is
I'm just being honest
End Song

Aaron

Well, today we're beginning a five-week series of messages and the title of this series comes directly out of a lyric of that song Weeds in My Garden.

And what we're going to be talking about in the next five weeks is a subject that every single one of us listening to the sound of my voice right now has either gone through, are going through, or we know somebody who is close to us, who we care about very much who is struggling, and it's the subject of mental health and anxiety.

Now, the first time that I did a series on this subject in particular (I've preached on it a lot since then) but the first time I did a concentrated series on this was about six years ago. And we called that series On Edge. And the response to that was overwhelming.

We unpacked some biblical principles around this subject of anxiety and some practical help as best as we knew how to do. And I think that, at the time, I was maybe a little bit more nervous about that series than most just because I know how heavy this topic is and the amount of pain that surrounds this. It's almost like that board game Operation. It's just really easy to bump up against somebody's wounds.

So, we walked through that series and I think that the reason why the response was so huge at that time was that many sociologists will tell us that we entered into what is known as an age of anxiety somewhere around 2015.



Now, mental health and anxiety have been an issue much, much longer than that, but right around that time is when a lot of the statistics jumped. And we'll look at a number of reasons for that here in just a bit and throughout this series.

A lot of the aspects that we covered then, in that series, have, unfortunately, kind of become the norm for us today. Like I said, all of us have either gone through, are going through, or we know somebody who is, right now, struggling with some aspect of their mental health.

Now, when I finished that series back in 2018, I remember getting done with it and just feeling pretty good about it. We'd unpacked a lot of biblical concepts. We offered some practical help.

Here's what I felt going out of that series. I felt like I went into it not knowing as much as I should and came out of it knowing more than I did. And I thought, "You know. I think if anybody that I know goes through something with their mental health or if I might go through something..."

In that series, if you were here for it, I actually got really vulnerable with you and shared with you about a season of my life where I really struggled with my mental health. The worst year of my life, up to that point, was 2005. And there are a lot of different reasons for that. I almost got out of ministry a couple of different times. It was a rough, rough year.

And I thought, "You know what? Coming out of that series back in 2018, I got a better handle on this than I'd ever had. I think I'm prepared for the future. Then 2020 happened. And all of us know... All of us, I think every single one of us struggled with our mental health that year, maybe in different ways and for different reasons, but we all likely have our story.

I certainly have mine—2020 replaced 2005 as the worst year of my life. And I can actually even pinpoint it. June of 2020 was the worst month of my life in the worst year of my life. The second week of June was the worst week of my life within the worst month within the worst year. And Tuesday was the worst day of my life within the worst week, within the worst month, within the worst year. It was just a dumpster fire that month.

Some of you remember it. There were a lot of different reasons for that. There were riots going on in every major city including Indy. Racial tensions were high. There were all kinds of opinions around the pandemic. Should we open? Should we not? Should we wear masks? Should we not? All of these kind of issues that divided us, made us angry and anxious.



During that time... As I look back over 2020 there are a lot of things that I would have done differently as I kind of reverse diagnose it. But I was trying my best, primarily to just pastor our church through the storm.

And it was extremely difficult because it didn't matter what I said or did, it was usually wrong to about half of you. So, if I said something that was the wrong thing. If I didn't say something I should have said something. If I said something and I said it too passionately, or I should have said it more passionately. So, I kind of got to this place where in June of 2020 it was all building.

And every year for the past decade in June I go out with a group of about 15 to 20 pastors and leaders from around the country to Montana to this retreat called The Refuge. It's five days where we literally get off of the grid.

We go to Montana. Our cell phones do not work. We pulled up to the driveway. They stopped working. There is no Wi-Fi. It is glorious. For five whole days we're off grid. I just shut my phone off. It didn't even work.

We fish and we sit around campfires and we have table talk for about two hours after dinner every night. I've done this every year for about the last 10 years. And it is one of the things that I would attribute to just keeping me emotionally and spiritually healthy—this thing that I do every year at The Refuge.

Well, June of 2020. It's time to go to The Refuge and The Refuge that year was anything but. Everything felt like it was coming apart at the seams. We're ready to go to The Refuge. And I kind of wondered, "Should I go? Should I not? Should I stay?"

The state of Montana got shut down so we literally couldn't even get into the state. So we switched The Refuge retreat to Topeka, Kansas, which is a lot like Montana except that it is not. So, I leave and I'm wondering, "Should I leave?" And I got there.

Here's the thing. I'm one of the organizers of the group. In other words, I usually send out the invites. So, if I meet a pastor or a leader during the year and he is doing a good job but he's lonely, he needs community, he needs people around him I'll usually invite him to The Refuge.

I'm kind of one of the ones who sets the tone for the week. Usually a lot of the guys are kind of looking to me to set the tone. And I go to The Refuge in Topeka, Kansas in June of 2020 and when I rolled in there, I was not doing well at all.

I remember it came to a head one day when my phone was constantly buzzing with one crisis after another. And it got to the point where I was scared to look at it because it



was usually a comment or an email that was coming in like a hand grenade. I'm trying to put out all of these fires and deal with stuff and it felt like I was completely inadequate at all of it.

Then, I'm also the chairman of a board of a church planning organization. So, I get a phone call from the president. We were out fishing. And he says, "Hey, we've got a crisis." I'm like, "Wow. Okay. Tell me something that I don't know." And then he says this. He says, "We just had a board member resign due to something that another board member tweeted. What do you want to do?"

At that point I just wanted to throw my phone into the water. And I'm just going to tell you guys this. I lost it. I don't know about you, if you've ever had a panic or an anxiety attack—I've had a couple of them—I get all of this pressure in my neck right behind my ears. And it felt like somebody had strapped a one thousand pound weight on me. It just felt crushing and I about melted down.

I'm with this group of guys, it was a beautiful day, I remember, the sun was shining but it was not shining in me. And I remember a number of them kept looking at me. I must have had this look on my face, I did not look good. And they said, "Aaron, are you okay?" I got that question a dozen times that day and I lied every single time. I was like, "Yep, I'm fine. I'm fine. I'm fine. I'm fine. I'm fine." Until I wasn't. That night at dinner we were all sitting around this big table and it was table talk time.

And it gets around to me and I completely lost it. Broke down. Weeping. Like ugly crying, with a group of about 20 guys who just sat there in silence listening to me weep. I was ready to tap out. I was already putting together my resignation letter on my drive back to Indy, "I'm ready to be done." Now, that's my story. What's yours?

What I want you to know is that if you feel alone in your struggle with mental health, whatever it is, I want you to know that you are not alone. And I want you to know that it's okay to not be okay. And the only thing that is not okay is to stay not okay. Okay? So the idea is that we want to meet you in that space. Listen to the words of that song. We oftentimes want to just kind of present roses when there are weeds in our garden. And it's okay to have some weeds in our garden. What we want to do is we want to just be very real about that.

And, as Christians, I think that in the past, perhaps—I don't want to throw everybody into one, big giant category—but we've meant well but we haven't always dealt with this subject in ways that were super helpful.

There are a number of different reasons for that. What we want to do is... No immediate answers, no silver bullets, no quick fixes, no, "Yeah, but," no, "Have you prayed about



it?” Just sit in it. Just go, “Oh, man, I’ve been there.” And it’s okay to not be okay. Because we’ve all been through it or are in it right now. And we need to throw each other some life lines.

I love how pastor Ben Cachiaras says this. He says:

We have a problem. Emotional well-being is in serious decline. It’s a palpable crisis that was bad before the pandemic. The isolation, social upheaval, polarization, and massive changes with work, school, and life have exacerbated the crisis, creating an extended ambiguity and heightened stress that’s a perfect cocktail for burnout and emotional struggle.

No wonder the World Health Organization’s recent scientific brief states that the global prevalence of anxiety and depression has increased 25 percent since the pandemic’s arrival in early 2020. Recent surveys reveal that there is a radical downturn in attitudes and soaring levels of anxiety and worry on all fronts.

So, if you just look at the national stats, anxiety is now the number one issue for women. It is the number two issue for men, right behind drugs and alcohol, which I suspect anxiety is number one for men also, it’s just that we are masking it with drugs and alcohol to the point that they have become the greater problem.

Mental health disorders are the leading cause of disability worldwide, affecting one in five adults and the percentage is growing. Generation Z, those born between 1999 and 2015, is the most stressed out generation ever.

In recent years, the share of high school students who say that they experience “persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness” has risen from 26 percent to 44 percent—the highest levels of sadness ever recorded. That should break our hearts. Fifty percent of parents say that they have noticed an increase in sadness, anxiety, and depression in their teens since the pandemic. Many children and young adults are fearful, sad, hopeless, and struggling with life.

As a result, suicide has become epidemic. It is now the second leading cause of death for young people ages 10 to 24. And because of that we’re going to take a week and we’re going to address that subject in particular here in a couple of weeks.

Now, those are the national statistics. Here’s the question that I had as we were prepping for the series. I just wondered how closely those are reflected in our own church family. So, several weeks ago we surveyed about 5,000 of you across all of our locations and online and here are the results. This is us.

4972 surveys completed

- Women: 2,968 surveys

- Men: 2,004 surveys



For respondents 30 or younger: 94% know someone struggling. This age range was also the most likely to identify suicide/self-harm as a struggle (primarily mid-20s and late teens)

So, 5,000 surveyed. Nearly 5,000 surveys were completed. Almost 3,000 were women, 2,000 were men. Can I just say to the guys, way to go. Seriously. Most surveys where men and women are surveyed it's the women who participate way more than the men. I was actually pretty pleased with that. So, guys, thank you for coming and playing ball. Alright?

Average age of responder

- Women: 37.6

- Men: 38.6

The average age of the responder is in the late 30s.

Go to the next one here:

92% responded that they knew someone struggling with mental health

Ninety-two percent of us say we know someone struggling with mental health—92 percent.

Only 9% responded that they had no personal struggles

72% expressed struggles with anxiety/worry

Seventy-two percent say it's struggles with anxiety and worry.

(80% women identified this as top struggle)

Eighty percent of our women in our church identified this as their top struggle.

71.6% with burnout/stress (68% men identified this as top struggle)

About 72 percent of men total, 68 percent say that it's burnout and stress.

We go to the next slide, these are respondents from 30 and under, ages 18 to 24 are the most likely to identify suicide and self-harm as something that they struggle with and 94 percent know somebody who is struggling with their mental health.

Only 5% of women responded that they have experienced no personal struggles

Guys, that's us. When we first got these stats back somebody from our team when we were looking at this just kind of casually... This comment spilled out of him. He said, "It's amazing all of the things that we can keep hidden."

In other words, we present roses hoping you won't see the weeds in our garden. And we need to be honest that we're not always honest. Just like the lyric in that song that we heard a little bit earlier.

Now maybe that's the first time you heard that song. The artist, her name is Kyndal Inskeep, is a believer. She lives in Nashville. And she actually recorded her testimony



around how and why she wrote that song. And I want you to hear it directly from Kyndal in this video.

Kyndal Inskeep Video

I live in Nashville, Tennessee. And I'm a singer/songwriter for Warner Chappel and Cornman Music.

There is a lot of hurt, a lot of pain that is deep rooted in my story. I ended up kind of rebelling when I was a late teenager. I was so angry at God. I knew that He was there, but I'd never had a relationship with Him.

I was at the point in my life where I did not want to be here anymore. My family—I hadn't talked to them in probably a year. And they were like, "Okay. You need help." So, I went to a facility for two months and I started journalling to Jesus. And I had read this journal entry to one of my friends. I read her this journal entry and we prayed about it. We asked Jesus to just remove this guilt. And I felt this overwhelming peace and joy. That is the day that Jesus met me where I was.

Song House is this collaborative workshop for Tik Tok, Instagram, and social media platforms. The founder is Tyler Woods. We all go into this loft on Wednesdays and Saturdays. We are paired into random groups and we have 30 minutes to write a pre chorus and a chorus.

The day we wrote Honest I was just getting out of a really bad funk and my passions and my desire to do the things that I love just kind of depleted. I felt defeated. So I called Tyler that day and I was like, "I'm not coming in. I'm not going to write anything good." Just totally allowing the enemy to get to me.

He was like, "Kyndal, you're going to put two feet on the ground, you're going to get your butt up, and you're going to come into Song House today. So, I got there. We had a round or whatever. I asked him to leave again. I'm crying every 10 seconds. I'm just a mess. But messes become messages. He's like, "No, you're staying."

And then we get into the room and we're all going through the same thing in different ways. And the concept was honesty. And we're like, "What if we're being honest about not being honest with ourselves?"

And it was like, boom. And we wrote this song in like—I'm not even kidding, probably 15 minutes. That raw emotion that you might see in the video, that was exactly how I was feeling that day. It turns out a lot of other people were feeling that way too.



I think one of the lines that everybody tends to go to is the, "I'll give you roses just hoping you don't see the weeds in my garden." It made me stop in my tracks because it was like, "If you can't even be honest with yourself, how are you going to be honest with the Lord?"

So, "That's not very authentic to our relationship. And how are you going to be able to fix me if I don't even give You those pieces?" And so, it was a moment of surrender. To anybody going through a season of defeat, allow yourself to feel it but do not allow that specific pain or suffering to determine your future. Your pain will be turned into something beautiful. Your weeds will be turned into roses at some point. So keep faith in that and know that because she or he who believes that the Lord will fulfill His promises is blessed.
End video

Aaron
Well said. Well said.

So, here's where we are going. This is the introductory message for the next four weeks together. What I want to do in the remainder of our time is I just want to lay out some working principles that are going to undergird our time together in this very heavy, weighty topic.

This is not an exhaustive list of principles by any stretch of the imagination. I'm sure I could probably list a bunch more. But here are maybe the top three that come to mind. If you're taking notes, jot these down.

Here's principle number one as we, as a church family, want to think about this complicated issue:

Principle #1 - To address a problem, we need to widen our perspective
To address a complicated problem, we need to widen our perspective. And I think it's really common to want to reduce a complex problem to a narrow solution, like a one size fits all, silver bullet kind of a thing.

Mental health is a very complex issue and it's composed of what we could say are four primary buckets or categories. So let me list them and then I'll actually unpack and explain what I mean here in just a few minutes.

Situational
Clinical
Medical
Spiritual



All of them require a different approach to address them. And Jesus actually touched on all four in various ways throughout the gospels and the collective of His teaching. In Luke, chapter 4, we can just start here. Jesus described what it is that He had come to do in verses 18 and 19. It says:

“The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring,” here it is, “Good News,” so what Jesus brings is Good News, “to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the LORD’s favor has come.” Luke 4:18-19 (NLT)

So, Jesus brings Good News not just for an eternal destiny one day when you die, but Good News for the here and now. In fact, In John 10:10 Jesus said, “I’ve come to give you life and life to the fullest.” And this is not some sort of, “I’m just going to sweep it under the rug and pretend like everything is okay.” But, it’s experiencing peace (as we’re going to look at in another passage here in a minute) that just surpasses all understanding.

Jesus desires to give us fullness of life. He desires to bring healing to body, soul, and mind. In fact, in Mark, chapter five there is a guy who is possessed by a demon. He’s known as the Gerasene Demoniac and he was out of control, he was hopeless, and he was self-harming. All are symptoms very similar to people who are in emotional distress today. And it says in that passage that Jesus restored him to peace of mind.

When Jesus taught the Sermon on the Mount (which is the longest sermon that He ever taught) we take a look at that mountain sermon and we see that Jesus was concerned with many of the things that we label under mental health today.

The Sermon on the Mount included themes on anxiety, prayer, forgiveness, and inner authenticity, showing us that Jesus’ teaching on the Kingdom of God was very much concerned about our mental health. In other words, good mental health is a trait of life in the Kingdom of God—redeemed men and women.

Proverbs, chapter 23 says, “As you think so you are.” It’s this battleground of the mind. That action started in your mind. Disposition started in your mind.

If you remember, a few weeks ago, we talked about the Holy Spirit. We said the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. The Holy Spirit is telling you truth and rehearsing truth to you. You’ve got the Word of God that is there. When you read the Word of God under the filling and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that’s what brings that Word of God to life for your specific situation.

So, if the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, then there are unholy spirits that are lying to you. Satan is the father of lies. He is an accuser and a deceiver and it starts in your

mind. So, you've got to ask yourself, "What voice, what spirit, am I listening to in my mind?"

And it's clear that Jesus' ministry extended beyond just trying to get souls into heaven, He was concerned about the whole person, bringing the Kingdom of God and kingdom living to the here and the now.

Matthew summarizes Jesus' focus this way in chapter 4. It says:

"Jesus traveled throughout the region of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and announcing," here's this term again, "the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness."

Every kind. So, it doesn't say He only healed physically lame people. He would take that to include that He also healed people who were struggling in their mental health. Verse 24:

"News about him spread as far as Syria, and people soon began bringing to him all who were sick. And whatever their sickness or disease, or if they were demon-possessed or epileptic or paralyzed—he healed them all." Matthew 4:23-24 (NLT)

I just want you to see that people were drawn to Jesus. They were pursuing Him. Now, in Matthew, chapter 9, here is Jesus' disposition toward all of us:

"When he saw the crowds,"

He didn't shame them, He didn't judge them, He didn't bemoan them. No, what did He do?

"he had compassion on them," Why? "because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." Matthew 9:36 (NLT)

That is the heart of God. And if you want to know what God is like, you look to Jesus because Jesus was fully God in a body. God in body. And He's showing us that He has compassion upon us. And people were drawn to Him. And when they came, He healed them.

So, if our mission as a church is to remove unnecessary barriers that keep people from Jesus, because people are naturally being drawn to Jesus, and we're just trying to remove all of the unnecessary obstacles that would stand in their way, then speaking to the subject of mental health, offering tangible hope and help, not just simplistic or overly spiritualized answers, should be part of our mission as well.

Situational

Medical

Clinical

Spiritual



Here's what I mean by those terms. Some mental health issues that all of us walk through, you and me together, are caused by the unique situation that you or somebody that you know and love may be currently traveling through.

Situational

Here's what I mean. Some seasons of life are more stressful and anxiety inducing than others. That can mean that right now you're a high school student getting ready to graduate. You don't know what you are going to do next year.

You're a college student and you just graduated. You're trying to get your feet underneath you. You're trying to afford a house. You're trying to get a job. All of that kind of transitional change.

Maybe right now a relationship is falling apart. A marriage has ended. There is a national crisis or a personal crisis that has blown a storm into your life disorienting you. Situational stress.

And what I would simply say is... I remember talking to my grandma on the phone during the pandemic. She has since gone on to be with the Lord, but I'll never forget what she said to me one afternoon as we were talking on the phone. She said, "Aaron, this too shall pass."

What a great phrase. This too shall pass. It's understanding that the situation blew in, give it some time, it's going to blow out. And I would simply...

Somebody needs to hear this today because right now your pain is at a fever pitch. And I just want to look at you and say, "Hold on. This too shall pass. Don't make permanent decisions based on temporary feelings and emotions."

So, some of it is situational.

Clinical & Medical

Here is the next thing. And that is clinical. Some mental health issues are due to just the biological or chemical way that we are wired up. And it is the result of being in a fallen world.

Let me explain it this way. Our feelings, biology, chemistry have been affected by a fallen world, just like your physical body has. I'm not going to ask you to identify it or raise your hand, but I would imagine that every single one of you has some sort of physical feature about yourself that you're not all that excited about. Am I right? No?

I look in the mirror all of the time and immediately I go to the negative. I think my ears stick out too much. I don't like my legs. Stop looking at them. I know you are. Stop. Stop diagnosing me. I don't need any of that pressure.

So we all have some things about us, physically, that are just the result of a fallen world. I'm so looking forward to having a new body and a new heaven and a new earth. Same thing is true chemically. Same thing is true biologically. You might need some temporary help. You might need some professionals to come in. There is no shame in any of that. Some of our mental health issues are due to some of that.

Now, others (and this is kind of the last thing that we had mentioned) are the result of maybe wrestling with spiritual issues. Maybe they are connected to sin or faith issues. Now, when we, as believers, get too narrow in our thinking around what mental health is and how to address it, then the negative affects of that can be incredibly damaging. Here's what I mean. When we make an issue spiritual, when it's actually situational or medical, or when somebody comes to us and they are coming undone with their mental health and that makes us uncomfortable because it's brushing up our own wounding or our own shame, we don't really know how to deal with it. So, it's just like, "Stop it." Or, we're just trying to fix it too easily. And that ends up impacting and doing a lot of damage.

When it's not about a lack of faith, it's not necessarily about a lack of unconfessed sin, but maybe it's chemical wiring, you would never look at a person who is struggling with kidney failure and suggest that that is due to a sin issue. No. You would say, "Go get dialysis.

See, think of mental health issues like waves on a lake. Let's just say that you are at the lake. Lord willing that will be very, very soon. Can I get a good amen? "We're going to be at the lake. It's going to be warm soon enough."

So, you're at the lake, you're by the bank. Maybe you're on a raft. You're just trying to enjoy the calm water at the lake. It's a gorgeous day. And all of a sudden waves start coming in. And I would say that that is like the waves of mental health. Now, not all waves are created by the same source. Some of those waves are due to the effects of others. Somebody else's decision. That thing that somebody else did to hurt you.

So, if you're at the lake, maybe the waves are coming in because some people are on wave-runners and they are creating waves.

Some waves are just because the wind has picked up. You can't do anything about that. That's sort of like life. So, now you've got some white caps that are rolling in because the wind has picked up.

Some waves are maybe due to, "I took some rocks and I threw them into the water and they created some waves."

So, not all of the waves are from the same source. A complicated problem requires us to widen our perspective. Principle 1.

Here's principle 2:

Principle #2 - Meaningful relationships are critical for mental health

This one is really, really tricky because quite possibly the cause of your poor mental health is due to someone else. Relationships are like everything else in this fallen world, they are fallen. And people have the tremendous capability of helping you, they also have the tremendous capability of hurting you. That's really, really unfortunate.

All of us have been helped by people—we are not self-made men and women. If I were to say, "Hey, give me the names of some people who believed in you, gave you an opportunity, led you to Christ, gave you hope," you'd probably be able to rattle off a couple of names. Or, if I say, "Give me the names of some people who hurt you, set you back, have wounded you, scarred you," you'd probably be able to rattle off some names. Oftentimes what we do... It's a natural human reaction, if you touch a hot stove you pull back. That's a natural human reaction and it is warranted. Just don't stay pulled back. Some of us have kind of pulled back from relationships and we are isolated and we're alone. We live in a society right now where we've become so busy that we don't have time to invest in meaningful relationships and it's having a massive impact on our mental health, especially men.

One in seven men right now say that they have no close friends. That's a five-fold increase since 1990. Twenty percent of single men say they don't have a single close friend.

Some of us have maybe pulled back. Some of us, we communicate purely over keyboards and devices and we need the interaction of other human beings in our life. We've got to invest in relationships.

When I look at Jesus, the most stressful moment of His life, arguably, could be the Garden of Gethsemane the night before His crucifixion. And it says there that He was filled with such anguish that He was sweating drops of sweat and blood mixed together. That's how much anguish and anxiety he was under.

And what did He want? He wanted community. He wanted relationships. He was asking the disciples to pray with Him. And if Jesus needed that, then you and I need that as well.

Ecclesiastes, chapter 4 says:

"Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help." Now listen to this last sentence. "But someone who falls alone is in real trouble." Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (NLT)



So if you've pulled back, isolated, I get it. I understand. I want to just, on your timetable, invite you back into community.

So, that's principle number 2. Here's the third principle:

Principle #3 - Think about what you think about

We've got to think about what we think about. We've got to recognize that not every thought, even though every thought might be real, might be what we're feeling, not every thought is true.

So, a thought may come into your mind, but you need to tell that thought where to go if it is not helpful or of the Lord. We've got to watch what we think about.

Now, I think this is one of the reasons, statistically, why this issue has blown up in recent years. I'm not down on screens, online, or cell phones, but what they've done is they have isolated us from people.

Have you noticed this? People will say far meaner things to other people online than they would face to face. And we've all got these screens in our back pockets or in our purses that are constantly doing this, "Look at me. Look at me. Look at me. Hear me. Listen to me."

And what it is is all of these mixed messages. They know that the only way to get your attention is fear, anger, and anxiety, "So, let me just tell you something that is going to stir you up."

And just a constant barrage of that just gets you all worked up. Especially, once again, in this year where we've got a contentious, divisive presidential election coming in November. It's just going to continue to get ramped up.

And so, this is where we've got to really stop and pay attention to watching what we watch and watching what we allow into our minds.

Let me just say this. Keeping up with the news and world events is not a bad thing to do. In fact, I would say, as Christ followers we should do that. The Old Testament says that the men of Issachar understood the times in which they lived, therefore they knew what to do. You don't just run and stick your head in the sand.

However, you can do that in about five to seven minutes a day. You don't need to have the channel on all day long with the talking heads stirring up anxiety, fear, and anger. It's not helpful.



Maybe the most spiritual thing you could do is take your phone and put on do not disturb or just shut it off and just say, "Everybody shut up but Jesus. I need to take some time to just watch what I think about and ask myself, 'Is this of God or is this not?'" Now, I think that part of the reason why Paul wrote to the Philippian church was because they were a church dealing with their mental health. That term is not mentioned in the passage, but it's there. And listen to what Paul writes in verses 6 and 7. He says to them, and he could easily be saying this to you and me today: "Don't worry about anything;"

Yeah, right. He doesn't say never worry, he says, "Don't worry." And notice what he says next:

"instead, pray about everything."

And I love that because prayer is worry directed to God. Worry is prayer directed to you. It's you talking to yourself about problems.

Every now and then I'll have people come up to me and they are like, "I really want to enhance my prayer life, but I don't really know what to pray." And I'm like, "Are you worried about anything?"

"Yeah."

I'm like, "Man, you've got lots of material. Just take that and direct that toward God." That's what Paul says. And then he says this:

"Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done."

Is it just me? I have the first part of that down, but I forget the next part. I'm constantly telling God what I need, and to my shame, I very rarely thank Him for all that He has done. And then in verse 7 it says:

"Then you will experience..."

He didn't say know. He said, "You'll experience God's" what? His Peace, which you cannot explain. It surpasses anything you can understand. And:

"His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT)

That is so practical. The way to guard our hearts and our minds is to fill our thoughts and our minds with what God says is true. In Romans, chapter 12, it says, "Be renewed by the transforming of your mind." This is a work that God does. This is so practical. Scientists actually talk about this. It's like reshaping your neurological pathways. And you can do that. That's the plasticity of your mind. So, when a thought enters your mind, you stop, you're like, "Nope, that is not of the Spirit of God and I'm going to tell it where to go."

Now, I know you can do this. It may seem like you can't. I know you can. If you've ever potty trained a toddler or house trained a puppy, you can train your thoughts. Because

when a puppy makes a mess in the kitchen, what do you do? You clean it up and then you train. Same thing is true with your thoughts.

I want to end with this visual illustration.

[A vase filled with black ping pong balls and an empty glass cylinder representing our minds].

Paul goes on in that passage to say, “Whatever is true, honorable, right, admirable, praise worthy, think about those things. Dwell on those things.”

These black ping pong balls maybe represent anxious thoughts, worries, concerns—oops, one almost got away from me—fears.

[Aaron is adding ping pong balls to the cylinder]

I’m sure you could probably name a number of these right now. Maybe right now, for you, it’s an economic thing. Maybe it’s your marriage. Your kids. Maybe it’s a health thing. Maybe it’s the eclipse that has you a little uneasy, you know—we’ll throw that in there. The presidential election coming up. Maybe it’s this new bird flu thing going around. All the headlines.

All these thoughts that are getting away from you. You’ve just got all of these negative thoughts. They are just filling your mind all of the time, every time you turn on the TV or your phone.

Now, here’s what Paul says. Paul doesn’t just say, “Stop it.” He says, “Fill your minds with whatever is true, whatever is pure, whatever is admirable, whatever is worthy of praise.”

[Aaron begins to pour water into the cylinder overflowing with ping pong balls]

Now, I don’t know if you notice this as I’m pouring this in. Nothing seems to be moving. For some of you, you’re like, “Aaron, I’ve done that.” Or, “I did that.” “I checked that box.” “I went through Rooted.” “I got baptized last week at Easter.” “I think I’ve been doing this. Nothing seems to be changing. My mental health isn’t changing.”

I would just simply say, “Man, keep going.” Whatever is true. Whatever is admirable. Whatever is worthy of praise. Think about these things and you begin to watch as God begins to push out some of these thoughts that are not of the Spirit of God.

[The water begins to push the ping pong balls out of the cylinder]

It’s a process as you begin to retrain your mind and to fill your mind. The negative thoughts that are left over, you just tell them where to go. Get them out of there. Alright?

Now, I just want to invite you back. This is not like a quick fix, trying to fix you, solve all of your problems. This is just an honest conversation. Man, it’s okay not to be okay.

We’ve all got weeds in our garden.

We want to come before God just as we are and allow Him to transform our minds. Because you're a whole person. You're not just an eternal soul. You're a body and you're a mind. And Jesus is concerned about all of that.

So, let's just go to Him in prayer as we kick off this series.

Father, we come to You right now. I know that this is a big issue. I know that it is heavy. I know that it is painful. I know somebody right now is maybe right in the thick of things. And I just pray that they would know that they are seen, that they are loved just as they are. And that they might have an encounter with You in the midst of this series as, together, we seek the wisdom of Your Word on this subject.

There isn't anybody who knows more about this than You. So, Father, I just pray that you would bring some real tangible help and some hope to those, and to those who we know and love, who are struggling with their mental health because we know that You are the Great Physician and that You can bring healing and that You look upon each one of us with compassion. So, we devote this time to You. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

