



grow. pray. study.

January 12, 2020 “What Would Jesus Say About Mental Health?”

Scripture: Matthew 14:22-33

God cares for the brokenhearted

MONDAY 1.13.20 Isaiah 61:1-3, Psalm 147:1-5

Broken hearts may not be a precise clinical term, but it nevertheless underlies most of the mental health challenges we see. When something or someone breaks your heart (in any way), the pain’s intensity can convince you that healing will forever elude you. The prophet Isaiah wrote of a promised Messiah whose mission was to bring good news, including “to bind up the brokenhearted.” Jesus said that passage defined his mission (cf. [Luke 4:16-21](#)). Psalm 147 knew God doesn’t tell us to ignore our pain. Hearts break—but God does promise to heal the brokenhearted.

- Psalm 147:3 offered a word picture of God as a caring healer, perhaps a devoted parent, tenderly bandaging the wounds life inflicts on all of us. A bandaged physical wound sometimes leaves a scar, and so does a broken heart. When has God given you healing, either directly or through one or more of God’s faithful human servants? How has God enabled you to go on with life despite whatever scars your spirit bears?
- Jesus, in Luke 4, said Isaiah 61 defined his mission—and, by extension, his followers’ mission. Isaiah 61:3 promised that God would give those who have been broken-hearted, poor, or captives “a crown in place of ashes, oil of joy in place of mourning, a mantle of praise in place of discouragement.” That was beautifully poetic—but our world’s all-too-real losses are not beautiful. In what ways will you accept Jesus’ “job offer” and actively join in bringing beauty where sadness has left ashes?

Prayer: Healing God, when my heart breaks, you extend comfort and healing. As I meet others whose hearts are breaking, give me the courage and caring to offer them your healing. Amen.

Jesus knows what we go through

TUESDAY 1.14.20 Matthew 26:36-38, Hebrews 4:14-16

When you are hurting, it’s easy to think “no one understands how I feel.” We often extend that thought to God. How could the all-powerful ruler of the universe have any clue how powerless, how helpless, how hopeless you feel? But Jesus, as he faced the cross, experienced the depths of human darkness and helplessness fully, probably more fully (cf. [Luke 22:44](#)) than any of us. He *does* understand—he lived the experience himself.

- About Matthew’s painful portrayal of Jesus’ garden agony, scholar N. T. Wright wrote, “When we ourselves find the ground giving way beneath our feet, as sooner or later we shall, Gethsemane is where to go. That is where we find that the Lord of the world, the one to whom is now committed all authority (Matthew 28:18), has been there before us.” * In his humanity, Jesus’ feelings led him to say, “It’s as if I’m dying.” How can that help you trust that he knows firsthand whatever you are going through when the ground gives way beneath your feet?

- The letter to the Hebrews apparently spoke to people disowned by family and facing the Roman Empire's fury. The writer said Jesus "got" their pain. "When we have a sad and sorry tale to tell, when life has drenched us with tears, we do not go to a God who is incapable of understanding what has happened; we go to a God who has been there....It makes God able to help. He knows our problems because he has come through them." ** In what ways does Jesus' experience-based understanding make you more confident that he can sustain you when you hurt?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, in my dark moments, help me remember you agonizing alone in the darkness of the garden. As my heart links to yours, remind me that I am never alone in the darkness. Amen.

* N. T. Wright, *Matthew for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 16–28*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004, p. 161.

** William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Letter to the Hebrews* (Revised Edition). Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1976, p. 44.

Jesus' message: "It's me. Don't be afraid."

WEDNESDAY 1.15.20 Matthew 14:22-33, 11:27-30

The Sea of Galilee sat in a kind of geologic "bowl," and was always subject to sudden, severe storms. The strong wind and waves were frightening enough. But when the disciples saw Jesus walking to their aid on the lake, these experienced fishermen "were so frightened they screamed." Jesus said, "Don't be afraid." The reason? "It's me." "Literally, Jesus says, 'I am'; although this can mean, 'It is I,' the activity in the context supports an allusion to Jesus' deity (cf. [Ex 3:14](#), where the same Greek phrase used in the Septuagint, the pre-Christian Greek translation of the OT, is used here also)." *

- Seeing Jesus walking on the lake terrified the disciples. Their own lack of power was frightening, but the idea of a power beyond their imagining was more so. Do you ever find the idea of God actually "showing up" a bit scary? In what ways does Jesus' divine power reach beyond our usual human ideas? What gives you confidence that he always uses his power in ways that are good for you?
- Scholar N. T. Wright said that in Matthew 11, Jesus gave "the most welcoming and encouraging invitation ever offered. 'Come to me,' he said, 'and I'll give you rest.'" How does that work? "The ease and the joy, the rest and the refreshment which he offered, all spring from his own inner character, his gentleness and warmth to all who turn to him, weighed down by burdens moral, physical, emotional, financial or whatever. He is offering what he has in himself to offer." ** In what ways have you allowed Jesus to give you rest? How can you expand that to other parts of life?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I need your rest, your peace, your freedom from fear. Help me to hold firmly to your claim to be the great "I AM," who is always on my side and at work for my good. Amen.

* Zondervan, *NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, eBook* (Kindle Locations 220070-220072). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

** Wright, N.T. *Matthew for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-15* (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 137). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

The God of Jacob—our place of safety

THURSDAY 1.16.20 Psalm 46:1-7, Isaiah 40:26-31

Earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes and tornados make us painfully aware that what we call "solid ground" can, in fact, fall apart. But personal and family "worlds" fall apart every day due to health problems, broken relationships, financial crises, and tragic deaths. Isaiah 40 spoke to Israelites who faced a long, hard trip on foot from Babylon to Israel after years of exile. Did God see their hardships? The psalms and prophets turned to this trust repeatedly: "God is our refuge and strength," and "those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength."

- When have you felt as if your world was falling apart? Have those times ever led you to the idea expressed in Isaiah 40:27: "My way is hidden from the Lord; my God ignores my predicament"? Is

something making you feel that way right now? How can your faith in God's caring give you a stable place to stand if everything else seems to be crumbling? If you're not in crisis, what makes it valuable to deepen your trust in God before the next time everything seems to fall apart?

- Psalm 46:4 might sound like a travel tip—but no river flows through the earthly Jerusalem. “God’s city” wasn’t one limited earthly location, but a poetic image of God’s caring for all God’s people. The river looked back to creation ([Genesis 2:10](#)) and forward to God’s ultimate victory ([Revelation 22:1-3](#)). ([Click here](#) to see the stained glass window in Resurrection’s Leawood sanctuary, where a river runs through all of earth’s sacred history). What helps you let God’s steadfast river of love pour strength and comfort into your heart?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you know firsthand about the joys and sorrows that are part of the deal of being human. Teach me how to look to you as my light and strength even at the most frightening times. Amen.

Focusing on the unseen eternal things

FRIDAY 1.17.20 2 Corinthians 4:6-9, 16-18

Paul wrote 2 Corinthians to a community of Christians many of whom had turned against him (even though he himself had won them to faith!). It was a painful disappointment, after years of struggles as he traveled and shared Jesus in the Roman world ([2 Corinthians 11:23-27](#)). Yet he trusted that, if he kept his inner spiritual focus on God’s eternal love, nothing in this world could crush or destroy him.

- Paul spoke of focusing on unseen and eternal things, not on visible things that don’t last. To another group he wrote, “Think about the things above and not things on earth. You died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:2-3). He honestly saw his life as held safely in God’s hands, untouched by any earthly loss. How much do you focus only on the “here and now”? What helps you grow toward seeing your true life as eternally safe, hidden with Christ in God?
- Paul’s description of himself as a “clay pot” (verse 7) wasn’t false modesty. It was a way to recognize the abiding truth, with which all of us must wrestle with at times, that God is God and we are not. How can learning to see yourself as a “clay pot” help put you in a better position to avoid feeling crushed by any type of human blows to your ego?

Prayer: Lord God, some days all I can see are my failures, my setbacks, and my pain. On those days especially, I really need your grace to show me life as you see it, to show me your reality. Amen.

Up or down, in light or darkness, God is with us

SATURDAY 1.18.20 Psalm 139:4-12

Have you ever feared that God had given up on you? Or maybe had a time when you tried to run away from God, either in shame or in defiance? The psalmist said that, no matter where we go, God goes there with us. But this sweeping poem didn’t merely assert God’s inescapable presence. By itself, that could be depressing! It also told believers that God’s presence is a good thing, because God’s purpose in being with us is always to guide, strengthen and support us.

- Suppose someone put all the promises in this psalm into an “infomercial” for God. Would you believe them? Would you want to have a God watch over you so faithfully and patiently? Which parts of your life, of yourself, do you keep the most hidden? God knows all about them—and sees you with compassion and love anyway. Jesus began the Lord’s Prayer (which we say each week in worship) with “Our Father who is in heaven.” “Heaven” translates the Greek word *ouranōs*, which meant, not a place far away, but “air,” “sky,” “heavens.” Jesus was not saying God is far away, but around us, above us, even within us, wherever we go—the same idea as verses 7-12 in today’s reading. What helps you experience God’s presence? What spiritual difference does that make for you?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, at my worst, I feel like hiding from you. At my best, I want you to stay with me all the time—and that's exactly what you've promised to do. Amen.

Family Activity: Playing emotion games with your little ones will help them learn about how they are feeling, be able to give the feeling a name and learn how to practice responding to those emotions. Ask your child to make faces that express different emotions; for example, a sad face, then a mad face, then happy, then worried. Now you make faces and have your child guess what emotions you are showing. Remind your child that we can pray to God about all of our emotions. God rejoices when we are happy and comforts us when we are sad. Ask your child to share something that makes them happy and pray together about it. Then ask your child to share something that makes them sad, mad or worried, and practice praying about that too.

Prayer Requests – cor.org/prayer *Prayers of peace and comfort for:*

Sunday Cavallaro and family following the death of Walter Hall (father), 12/16/2019

Lisa McCamy and family following the death of Larry Busch (father), 12/28/2019

Matt Carter and family following the death of Vera Marten (grandmother-in-law), 12/29/2019

Mary Murray and family following the death of Charles Philip Murray, Jr. (father-in-Law), 12/30/2019

Jeff Day and family following the death of Edward Day (father), 12/31/2019

Clarence Ford and family following the death of Elsie Ford (wife), 1/1/2020

Tim Sandmeyer and family following the death of Frederick Sandmeyer (father), 1/2/2020

Holly Selstad and family following the death of Todd Selstad (husband), 1/2/2020