

What Does the Bible Teach About Mental and Emotional Health?

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple sources)

INTRODUCTION:

- A. God created us in His image with the capacity to think and reason via the input of our senses, to emotionally react to our environment and relationships, and to choose thoughts, words, and actions in response to our thoughts and feelings - Gen. 1:26-28, 31; Ecc. 7:29; Col. 3:10
1. Genesis presents the three relationships that all humans have: their relationship to God, to each other, and to their environment. This is evident in God's creative acts of making humans in His image (Gen. 1:26-27), of giving them each other as companions (1:27-28), and of giving them a mandate to steward the earth (1:28-30).
 2. When sound and healthy, our thinking and feeling resembles that of God, although at a much more limited way, and is subject to fallibility due to bad input or faulty processing of input.
 3. God knows our thoughts and feelings; He experiences them in a perfect and holy manner - Isa. 55:8-9; Psalm 139:23-24
 - a. Our emotions are from God and are a good thing.
 4. As the Designer and Creator, the All-wise, and All-knowing, God knows what is best for our minds and hearts, and He has revealed and made it very clear in His word. The Bible governs all of our relationships: with God, with each other, and with the world around us.
 5. Just as our bodies can become ill and affect our ability to interact with God, humans, and the environment, so can our hearts and minds become ill, thus interfering with our ability to interrelate.
- B. Mental and emotional disorders are real illnesses with definable origins, serious symptoms, both acute and chronic effects, and often can respond to medical and psychological interventions and treatments.
1. Frequently professed persons of faith dismiss these illnesses as:
 - a. Imaginary ("It's all in your head")
 - b. Manufactured excuses for indolence
 - c. A failure to discipline one's self or a weak will
 - d. An indicator of a lack of faith, prayer, Bible study, etc.
 - e. The result of sin and guilt
 2. These illnesses, when correctly diagnosed, are genuine, disheartening, and debilitating. They cannot be feigned long term without discovery.
 3. Imagine telling someone with a heart condition: "Stop pretending to be sick and go do some hard work."
 - a. Or telling a diabetic: "You just need to pray more and start trusting in God and stop taking that insulin."
 - b. Or telling a paraplegic: "If you hadn't sinned so much, you might not be in that wheelchair."
 - c. Persons with clinical depression, or schizophrenia, or PTSD, or other mental and emotional disorders, while they can be helped by prayer and faith just like the others listed above, still need

medical intervention and our patience, understanding and love, just like the heart condition, diabetes, or severed spine.

4. "Mental illness is the most widely misunderstood illness. People are afraid of what they don't understand. While a churchgoer suffering from cancer may be embraced in a crisis, someone in depression too frequently is ignored or judged, only exacerbating sensations of shame, hopelessness, and guilt. Many Christians typically view mental illness as a spiritual problem, assuming iniquity in the person's life led to the difficulties. They don't recognize it can be a real biological illness that causes brain chemicals to be off balance." (Valerie Saviano, founder of Mental Health USA and Restoration Ministries, Bemidji, Minnesota)

C. Causes of mental and emotional disorders:

"At this time, scientists do not have a complete understanding of what causes mental illnesses. If you think about the structural and organizational complexity of the brain together with the complexity of effects that mental illnesses have on thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, it is hardly surprising that figuring out the causes of mental illnesses is a daunting task. The fields of neuroscience, psychiatry, and psychology address different aspects of the relationship between the biology of the brain and individuals' behaviors, thoughts, and feelings, and how their actions sometimes get out of control. Most scientists believe that mental illnesses result from problems with the communication between neurons in the brain (neurotransmission). For example, the level of the neurotransmitter serotonin is lower in individuals who have depression. This finding led to the development of certain medications for the illness. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) work by reducing the amount of serotonin that is taken back into the presynaptic neuron. This leads to an increase in the amount of serotonin available in the synaptic space for binding to the receptor on the postsynaptic neuron. Changes in other neurotransmitters (in addition to serotonin) may occur in depression, thus adding to the complexity of the cause underlying the disease. Scientists believe that there may be disruptions in the neurotransmitters dopamine, glutamate, and norepinephrine in individuals who have schizophrenia."

1. "Risk factors for mental and emotional illnesses: "Although scientists at this time do not know the causes of mental illnesses, they have identified factors that put individuals at risk. Some of these factors are environmental, some are genetic, and some are social. In fact, all these factors most likely combine to influence whether someone becomes mentally ill. Genetic, environmental, and social factors interact to influence whether someone becomes mentally ill. Environmental factors such as head injury, poor nutrition, and exposure to toxins (including lead and tobacco smoke) can increase the likelihood of developing a mental illness. Genes also play a role in determining whether someone develops a mental illness. The illnesses that are most likely to have a genetic component include autism, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and ADHD."

2. "Social factors also present risks and can harm an individual's, especially a child's, mental health. Social factors include prolonged: severe parental discord, death of a family member or close friend, parent's mental illness, parent's criminality, overcrowding, economic hardship, abuse, neglect, and exposure to violence." (NIH Curriculum Supplement Series, National Library of Medicine, 2007)

3. Long term self-destructive and sinful behaviors accompanied with unresolved guilt.

D. In this study, we will consider Bible characters who wrestled with their hearts and minds while living in this fallen world; we will examine how prayer and scripture will help us understand the need for compassion for those who suffer, as well as what the word of God can do to help them overcome.

1. “Regarding mental health specifically, the Bible contains no one word for mental illness. This is in part because Old Testament writers were inspired to use a variety of Biblical Hebrew words to express personhood. Though they lived before modern scientific understandings and psychological research, they recognized that humans are incredibly complex. For example, the Hebrew word for soul (nephesh) is also used in the Old Testament to mean an individual (Num. 31:28) or their inner being (Psalm 103:1). The Hebrew word for heart (lev) can also be translated as mind (Deut. 29:4) if the meaning is focusing less on the physical and more on the mental aspects of a person. These words are used not just to describe the condition of a person, but also the means through which they interact with God. When illness besets someone in the Old Testament, their whole person is affected, not just their mind. The Old Testament is a collection of texts shaped by pain and trauma: struggles for survival, war, slavery, exile, and political oppression are ever present, and these texts weave together accounts of personal pain and trauma. The Old Testament, therefore, is both a story of trauma, and a spiritual response to it.” Three books of the Bible give us a glimpse into Biblical writers’ struggles with psychological pain: Job details his faith in the face of extreme personal loss. The Psalms often address anxiety and reframe personal experience in light of God’s character. Jeremiah deals with the trauma of an entire nation and his personal responsibility to enter fully into it. What is the Old Testament’s response to trauma, then? The answer, rather than being contained neatly in one small segment of Scripture, is an ongoing struggle woven throughout all its books, testifying to the complex nature of human beings and painful experiences. Two themes that are consistently seen in the Old Testament relating to mental health and wholeness: 1) We need to tell the truth and be realistic about our existence: humans live with hope and frailty. 2) We need to move away from easy answers and start engaging with all the Biblical books, not just verses that make sense to us.” (The Bible and Mental Health, by Christopher C. H. Cook and Isabelle Hamley)

2. “One of the biggest myths is that salvation should somehow make us immune to the painful events that occur in a fallen world. There is no reason for people of the Word to belittle or ignore those who have mental health issues. Although prayer is an important aspect of mental health recovery, prayer shouldn't be viewed as the pat answer we give for every problem, thinking it requires no further remedy. God may choose Divine healing in response to our prayers, yet He also may heal through a medication process. Neither lets the community of believers off the hook. Believers should provide a safe space for a person who is struggling with life's difficult issues. There should be no better place than the household of God to gain healing from pain caused by dysfunctional relationships.” (Donald A. Lichi, licensed psychologist and vice president at EMERGE Counseling Services, Akron, Ohio)

3. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, three percent of adults in the United States have been diagnosed with bipolar disorder, and one in four have been or will be diagnosed with some form of mental or emotional health concern, acute or chronic, in their lifetime.
- E. The recent changing landscape in the mental health industry has led to the inclusion of the patient's personal faith in the clinical setting.
1. In the past, psychology was adversarial toward religion treating it as causal in mental and emotional disorders, and in some cases, delusional.
 2. For the past twenty years, there has been a considerable shift in the reasoning and methodologies of mental health professionals, specifically the use of the moral structures, personal disciplines, and comfort modalities of worship, meditation, and prayer.
 3. Presently, most states and insurance companies encourage faith respecting counseling services and even support faith based counseling organizations. Fully secular mental health services still exist, but they are not as numerous and dominant in the industry as they once were.
- F. What can we do?
1. Practice active listening. "When someone talks of thoughts of hopelessness or feeling worthless, the best thing we can do is take a moment, put down our phone, close our laptop, and let that person know we are listening, and they are not alone." (Saviano)
 2. Encouragement makes a difference. "For those dealing with milder forms of depression or anxiety, positive interaction is helpful. Rather than judging or criticizing, have compassion, put your arm around their shoulder, tell them you are praying for them, and that you believe in them." (Ryswyk)
 3. Be honest with and about yourself. "People can readily identify what's wrong with others, but frequently miss what is askew in their own life. We all have the potential for mental health issues." (Ryswyk)
 4. Don't hesitate to seek or recommend professional help. Anyone in the throes of depression, anxiety, chronic schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, borderline personality disorder and more need assistance from medical professionals rather than casual advice from acquaintances at church. (<https://bibleengagementproject.com/en/Blog/What-Does-the-Bible-Say/The-Bible-and-Mental-Health>)

I. DOES THE BIBLE ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES?

- A. Yes - Rom. 8:6; Gal. 6:2; Phil. 4:8; 1Peter 5:7; Col. 3:2

II. BIBLE HEROES WHO SUFFERED IN HEART AND MIND

- A. Jeremiah - Lam. 3:1-33 - Expressed his sorrow fully; talking out his sorrow and doubt helped him to get through it, and he was able to return to faith.
- B. Elijah - 1Kings 19:1-19 - God allowed him to cry out in despair several times, and when he was finished, God gave him something fulfilling to do that re-focused his faith.

- C. King Saul suffered with a “distressing spirit.” 1Sam. 18:10, 16:14, 23, 19:9, 24
- D. David was known as the man after God’s own heart, but even David struggled with issues which we would likely consider depression today - Psalm 55:1-23. God allowed him to complain about not being heard by the Lord, then God allowed him to ask the Lord to cut their tongues and kill them, and then David worked his way back to faith in God.
1. David wrestled with pride, family issues, and depression - 2Sam. 11-13
 2. He even pretended to be insane, which suggests that the ancients experienced persons afflicted with insanity - 1Sam. 21:10-15
 3. David’s story is a complex one; he goes from being the young man who kills the giant Goliath, to the prideful king who sends his mistress’s husband to be killed after he accidentally conceives a child with her. So it’s no surprise that David’s story is filled with mental anguish and struggle that stem from pride, familial issues, and regret over his sins.
 4. Psalm 38, 42
- E. Naomi and the deaths of her family and subsequent bitterness - Ruth 1-4
1. She asks people to start calling her “Mara” which means bitter. It’s as if Naomi sees her entire existence through a lens of grief and loss, unable to see the meaning in who she is or why she’s left to live out her days.
 2. Her story shows how her daughter-in-law, Ruth, chooses to love and care for Naomi, even in her darkest days. And through this love Ruth builds an even stronger relationship between herself and Naomi, eventually giving Naomi a reason to carry on.
- F. Jonah and his disappointment, failure, and stubbornness - Jonah 1-4
1. Jonah’s story ends abruptly and bitterly with Jonah’s last words expressed in contempt and anger.
 2. He doesn’t believe Nineveh deserves mercy and defies God by running.
 3. He is delivered from the great fish, but does not appear to have grown from the experience.
 4. At the end of the book, however, Jonah embraces his bitterness and contempt for the very people he is supposed to be reaching.
 5. He is angry with the penitent Ninevites, with merciful God, with the shady vine that died, and with the wind. His anger is irrational.
- G. Job and hopelessness, loss, and anguish - Job 1-42
1. He’s a man of God and possesses deep integrity. Satan wants to test these qualities of Job and see if he remains upright and blameless in his devotion to God even in the midst of terrible loss and deep sorrow. Job experiences anguish in many forms, including the death of his children and servants, loss of property, and bodily sores.
 2. Job engages in cycles of speeches with his three counselors while increasing his insistence that he is righteous and God is not fair. Job is stubbornly defiant and he questions: “What have I done? Why is God punishing me?”
 3. God answers Job with a series of blistering questions that Job can’t answer. God replaces Job’s stubbornness with humility; thus, “How can we as humans begin to explain the actions of God?”

4. It's in this sudden reply from God that Job's suffering is put into perspective: God doesn't enjoy seeing us suffer, but our suffering is not the whole story. God has plans that are bigger and go further than our anguish, and when we realize that he is the ultimate authority, it can put our suffering into perspective.
5. At the end of the account, God gives Job his health back, twice the amount of property as he had before, more children, and allows him to live a long life. But the point of Job's story isn't that God "makes up" for the pain Job suffered; it's that He has the power to give, take away, and give again, which is what Job said at the beginning of the book. "And he said: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD'" (Job 1:21).

III. IDENTIFYING STRUGGLES WITH MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

- A. Frequently and long term feelings of restlessness and agitation
- B. Sudden or lasting changes in appetite or eating habits; no appetite or excessive, compulsive overeating
- C. Withdrawing from family, friends, or church; an inexplicable desire to isolate
- D. Living a life inconsistent with one's values; noteworthy changes in moral conduct or risk taking
- E. Serious changes in sleep patterns; sleeping too much or unable to sleep
- F. Constant guilt and shame regarding past events that have been resolved or forgiven
- G. Feeling unmotivated or hopeless more often than not
- H. Loss of interest in activities that one once enjoyed
- I. Feeling forgetful or having difficulty concentrating
- J. Endlessly re-living past events either through daydreams, nightmares, or flashbacks
- K. Suicide ideation; experiencing frequent thoughts of death or suicide; imagining how, when, where one will do it and what would be the effects if one followed through with it (If you or someone you know has plans or expressed a desire to end life, please call 911).
- L. It is not necessary for one to have all of these symptoms to manifest a mental or emotional disorder; but if more than three or four are present, one should at least consult their doctor regarding it. In addition, while everyone experiences a few of these symptoms as a result of trauma or simply by living in this fallen world, it does not necessarily indicate that an illness is present.

IV. HOW TO MAINTAIN GOOD MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

- A. Spend time with God - Psalm 63:1-2, 27:4; 1Chron. 16:11
- B. Use self-examination to identify your thoughts and feelings.
 1. 1Cor. 11:28; 2Cor. 13:5; Gal. 6:4; 2Cor. 10:5
 2. It is important to identify our emotions, as well as our physical feelings. Once we have identified our feelings, we can begin working through

them and mastering our thoughts and feelings rather than be controlled by them.

- C. Spend time with spiritual and supportive people.
 - 1. 1Thes. 5:11, 14; Rom. 12:9-16
- D. Seek professional help when suffering from a mental or emotional disorder.
 - 1. Suffering from these illnesses should not be a source of shame, even if the ignorance of others intrudes on our thinking. One should be no more ashamed of contracting a mental or emotional disorder than they would be of having a heart condition, diabetes, or cancer.
 - 2. Jesus often went away from His disciples to spend time in prayer alone with God; thus He refreshed His heart and mind for the work ahead of Him. If Jesus thought it important to take care of His spirit, heart, and state of mind, then shouldn't we do the same?
 - 3. Matt. 14:23; Mark 6:46; Luke 6:12; John 15:20
 - 4. Mental and emotional health problems can be debilitating, but with the right help, one can start to feel better and become enabled to function for the Lord, for others, and for themselves - Rom. 12:2

By Faith Overcoming

(Compiled by Mark Copeland; edited and reduced by Paul Blake)

Introduction:

- 1. In his first epistle, John writes of victory in overcoming the world - 1John 5:4-5.
- 2. The world John refers to are things that would separate us from God - 1John 2:15-17
- 3. There are other things in the world which can hinder our relationship with God:
 - a. Anxiety and fear
 - b. Discontentment and Boredom
 - c. Grief and Loneliness
 - d. Depression and despair
 - e. These emotional states of mind, when not caused by a biological, organic, environmental, or genetic conditions can be the product of: sinful thinking, sinful action, the guilt of sin, or sinful habits.
- 4. Faith is the victory that overcomes the sin that brings suffering. In this series, we will examine how faith in Jesus enables one to overcome emotional illness.
 - a. While we consider how that faith vs. sin can be a factor in mental and emotional illnesses, we are not ridiculing or dismissing the faith of people who are sick.

I. ANXIETY DEFINED

- A. According to the American Heritage Dictionary: "A state of uneasiness and apprehension about future uncertainties; A state of intense apprehension, uncertainty, and fear resulting from the anticipation of a threatening event or situation, often to a degree that the normal physical and/or psychological function of the affected individual is disrupted."
 - 1. According to NIMH, there are different kinds of anxiety disorders:

- a. Panic Disorder - Repeated episodes of intense fear that strike often and without warning.
 - b. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder - Repeated, unwanted thoughts or compulsive behaviors that seem impossible to stop or control.
 - c. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder - Persistent symptoms that occur after experiencing a traumatic event such as criminal assault, war, child abuse, natural disasters or auto crashes.
 - d. Phobias, of which there are two major types:
 - 1) Specific - In which people experience extreme, disabling, and irrational fear of something that poses little or no actual danger; the fear leads to avoidance of objects or situations and can cause people to limit their lives.
 - 2) Social - In which people have an overwhelming and disabling fear of scrutiny, embarrassment, or humiliation in social situations, which leads to avoidance of many potentially pleasurable and meaningful activities.
 - e. Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) - Constant, exaggerated worrisome thoughts and tension about everyday routine life events and activities, Almost always anticipating the worst even though there is little reason to expect it.
- B. Some causes of anxiety:
- 1. A perceived threat, as to one's personal safety, self-esteem, relationship with others
 - 2. Pressures presented by conflict and choices
 - 3. Being fearful of failure, or even achieving success, rejection, intimacy, conflict, sickness, death, loneliness, the future, apparent meaninglessness in life
- C. Contemporary treatment for anxiety: medication and psychotherapy
- 1. Treating anxiety with medication relieves symptoms.
 - 2. Treating it with psychotherapy can help the patient view their anxieties in different, healthier ways and give them mental exercises to overcome them.

II. UNDERSTANDING FEAR

- A. Fear defined: According to the American Heritage dictionary: "A feeling of agitation and anxiety caused by the imminence of danger; extreme reverence or awe, as toward a supreme power."
- 1. As the above definition suggests, there are two different kinds of fear.
 - a. One is unnecessary and harmful.
 - b. The other is necessary, as stressed in the Book of Proverbs.
 - 1) The "fear of the Lord" is the beginning of knowledge - 1:7.
 - 2) The "fear of the Lord" will cause one to hate evil - 8:13.
 - 3) The "fear of the Lord" will prolong life - 10:27.
 - 4) The "fear of the Lord" provides strong confidence and is a fountain of life - 14:26-27.
 - 5) The fear of the Lord prompts one to depart from evil-16:6.

6) The "fear of the Lord" is the way to riches, honor, and life - 22:4.

c. The value of fearing God, as expressed by others:

1) "The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God, you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God, you fear everything else." (Oswald Chambers)

2) "The right fear is the fear of losing God." (Meister Eckhart)

B. Unnecessary and harmful fear:

1. Fear that is groundless: Many social and specific phobias fall into this category. Consider the most common fears, and the percentage of people who suffer with them:

1) Speaking before a group (40%)	Topophobia
2) Heights (30%)	Acrophobia
3) Insects (20%)	Entomophobia
4) Financial problems (20%)	Atephobia
5) Deep Water (20%)	Bathophobia
6) Disease (20%)	Phathophobia
7) Death (20%)	Thanatophobia
8) Flying (20%)	Aerophobia
9) Loneliness (15%)	Monophobia
10) Dogs (10%)	Cynophobia
11) Driving/riding in a car (10%)	Ochophobia
12) Dark (10%)	Nyctophobia

(Charles Givens, Super-Self, Simon & Schuster, 1993, p288)

2. Such fears are occasionally the result of misinformation

a. "FEAR is False Education Appearing Real" (Denis Waitley)

3. Fear that makes problems seem greater than they really are.

a. "Fear makes the wolf bigger than he is." (German proverb)

4. With inordinate fears of the problems we face, we think of them as overwhelming.

5. Fear that prevents us from enjoying the blessings we have.

a. "He who fears death cannot enjoy life." (Spanish proverb)

b. "Who lives in fear will never be a free man." (Horace, 65-8 B.C.)

6. Fear can hinder our ability to be of service to God

a. "Fear is the sand in the machinery of life." (E. Stanley Jones)

b. Fear of people, fear of failure, often hinder Christians in their service; e.g., personal evangelism

7. Fear can motivate some to disobey God. Fears have occasionally led young people to cheat on tests, get involved with the sinful peers, and yield to improper sexual advances.

8. Similar fears have prompted many adults to lie, cheat on the job or taxes, commit adultery, enter unscriptural marriages, etc. Fear of rejection, fear of persecution, etc., has led some Christians to denounce their faith in God.

C. However, where there is faith, fear often subsides.

1. "Feed your faith, and your fears will starve to death. Fear knocked at the door. Faith answered. No one was there. Fear and faith cannot keep house together; when one enters, the other departs." (Vern McLellan, *The Complete Book of Practical Proverbs*, Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1996)
2. Here is how Harry Emerson Fosdick contrasted fear and faith: "Fear imprisons, faith liberates; fear paralyzes, faith empowers; fear disheartens, faith encourages; fear sickens, faith heals; fear makes useless, faith makes serviceable and, most of all, fear puts hopelessness at the heart of life, while faith rejoices in its God."

III. OVERCOMING ANXIETY AND FEAR THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS

- A. Jesus helps us to deal with anxiety through His teachings.
 1. By reminding us of God's providential love and care - Matt. 6:25-32
 2. By teaching us where to place our priorities - Matt. 6:33
 - a. As Jesus said to Martha, "one thing is needed" - Luke 10:38-42
 3. By revealing our own limitations - Matt. 6:34
 - a. Don't worry about the future, we can only handle what we face today.
 - b. In keeping with what Jesus said, here are some thoughts from others:
 - 1) "Your ship is equal to the load of today; but when you are carrying yesterday's worry and tomorrow's anxiety, lighten up or you will sink." (Unknown)
 - 2) "God never built a Christian strong enough to carry today's duties and tomorrow's anxieties piled on top of them." (Theodore Ledyard Cuyler)
 - 3) "Man, like the bridge, was designed to carry the load of the moment, not the combined weight of a year at once." (William Arthur Ward)
- B. Jesus helps us to deal with anxiety through His actions.
 1. His actions in the past:
 - a. By dying on the cross, He has paid the full price for our sins.
 - 1) Any anxiety about our guilt, past actions, can be relieved through forgiveness.
 - b. By rising from the dead, He demonstrated power over death.
 - 1) Ensuring our own resurrection, of which He spoke - John 5:28-29; 11:25-27
 - 2) Freeing us from the bondage of the fear of death - Heb. 2:14-15
 2. His actions in the present:
 - a. Interceding as our High Priest
 - 1) Making it possible to find mercy and grace when needed Heb. 4:14-16
 - 2) Providing an avenue of peace to dispel our anxiety through prayer - Phil 4:6-7

- b. Reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords
 - 1) He is truly the "ruler over the kings of the earth" - Rev. 1:5
 - 2) He is the One who holds "the keys of Hades and of Death" - Rev. 1:18
 - 3) He is in ultimate control, and we are in His hands.
- 3. His actions in the future:
 - a. He has promised to never forsake us - Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5-7
 - b. He has promised to take us one day to be with Him - Joh 14:1-2

IV. OVERCOMING BOREDOM

- A. Boredom is a condition of mental weariness, listlessness, and discontent; it is the result of thinking there is nothing to do. A pre-occupation with self to the neglect of what is around us.
 - 1. "The word 'Boredom' did not even enter the English vocabulary until the Enlightenment of the 18th century, the beginning of the modern era." (Gene Edward Veith, Boredom and the Law of Diminishing Returns)
- B. Causes of boredom:
 - 1. Boredom is often the result of too much wealth, too much leisure time, and a life that demands little effort or conflict.
 - a. "By his very success in inventing labor-saving devices, modern man has manufactured an abyss of boredom that only the privileged classes in earlier civilizations have ever fathomed." (Lewis Mumford)
 - 2. "Boredom can also on occasion be traced to a lack of faith in God. When people are bored, it is primarily with their own selves." ("Boredom: the consciousness of a barren, meaningless existence.")
 - 3. Boredom has also been attributed to unchallenging jobs, unfulfilled expectations, lack of physical activity, and being too much of a spectator and too little of a participant.
- C. The danger of boredom
 - 1. When listless and discontent, persons become vulnerable to what promises excitement.
 - a. "Boredom has made more gamblers than greed, more drunkards than thirst, and perhaps as many suicides as despair." (Charles Caleb Colton)
 - 2. Boredom is the result of an obsession with self and/or material possessions.
 - 3. Yet Jesus teaches us to:
 - a. Deny self - Luke 9:23-24
 - 1) People who are obsessed with self are never happy
 - 2) People who lose themselves in service to God are never bored.
 - b. Change the object of your affections - Matt. 6:19-21
 - 1) The pleasure of earthly things is fleeting at best, followed by the inevitable letdowns - "the passing pleasures of sin" - Heb. 11:25

- 2) The only permanent possession we have is in heaven, and our affections should be placed on it.

V. OVERCOMING DISCONTENT

- A. It affects our relationship with God.
 1. When we are discontent because of covetousness, we become idolaters - Eph. 5:3-5; Col. 3:5
 2. When we are discontent because of dissatisfaction with what we have, are we not being ungrateful for what God has given us?
 - a) "Whenever you find yourself disposed to uneasiness or murmuring at anything that is the effect of God's providence, look upon yourself as denying either the wisdom or goodness of God." (William Law, 1686-1761)
 - b) "Complaining about our lot in life might seem quite innocent in itself, but God takes it personally." Erwin W. Lutzer (1941-)
- B. It hurts ourselves.
 1. Contentment is a virtue that is highly praised and valued:
 - a) "He is richest who is content with the least." (Socrates)
 - b) "He who is content can never be ruined." (Chinese proverb)
 - c) "The contented man is never poor, the discontented never rich."
 - d) "Godliness with contentment is great gain." - 1Tim. 6:6
 - e) "Those who want much are always much in need." (Horace,
 - f) "It is not the man who has too little, but the man who craves more, who is poor." (Seneca, 4 B.C. - 65 A.D.)
- C. Those who are discontented also hurt others.
 1. When we are discontent, we become grumblers and complainers.
 2. Nothing destroys a friendship and congregation quicker than the grumbling and murmuring of those discontent.
 - 1) "Grumbling is the death of love." (Marlene Dietrich)
 - 2) Which may be why such complaining is condemned in the Scriptures - 1Cor. 10:10; Phil. 2:14-15.
- D. Jesus provides contentment.
 1. Through His teachings:
 - a. By telling us what is truly important in life
 - 1) Not material abundance - Luke 12:13-15
 - 2) But being rich toward God - Luke 12:16-21
 - b. By telling us to lay up our treasure in heaven
 - 1) For earthly treasures will decay or be stolen - Matt. 6:19
 - 2) But treasures in heaven are safely guarded - Matt. 6:20

VI. OVERCOMING LONELINESS

- A. Solitude describes a situation where one is alone by choice.
- B. Loneliness is a feeling of dissatisfaction with the quality and/or quantity of one's relationships with other people; it can be broken down into two types:
 1. Social loneliness - as when a person goes to college or takes a job in a new town and are isolated from friends and family.

2. Emotional loneliness - when we feel that we have no one to talk to, no one who understands our deepest concerns and needs.
- C. Other comparisons between loneliness and solitude:
1. Where solitude enriches and energizes, loneliness detracts.
 2. Solitude can build a desire to involve one's self with society, whereas:
 - a. Loneliness often robs one of any such motivation.
 - b. Loneliness can provoke a vicious cycle of despair so that the sufferer shys away from social contact and support needed to overcome.
- D. Dangers
1. Sad passivity
 - a. This is where one continues to feel badly and does nothing to positively impact the problem.
 - b. This can lead to a downward spiral of depression, and often includes sleeping too much, overeating and self-medicating.
 - c. This, of course, is a negative reaction to loneliness.
- E. Christians need to respond positively to loneliness.
1. Being lonely may be a symptom of a more serious problem.
 - a. "Loneliness is being unaware of the One who is with us everywhere. Many Christians suffer from loneliness because they are sitting instead of serving." (Croft M. Pentz)
 2. When one walks with God, he is never truly alone - John 16:32
 - a. "The soul that has been enriched by communion with God will not be dismayed by isolation but will welcome solitude. He will seek not the crowd but the closet, and emerging will never walk alone, for he has unseen companionship." (Frances J. Roberts)
 - b. "The soul that is growing in holiness is the least lonely when it is most alone." (F. Andrew)
- F. Jesus would have us respond positively to loneliness.
1. He teaches us to pray, which builds companionship with God.
 - a. To pray always, and never lose heart - Luke 18:1.
 - b. To pray to our Father in secret, where you are one on one with Him - Matt. 6:5-6.
 2. He teaches us to serve, which builds companionship with others.
 - a. Matt. 20:25-28.
 - b. One cannot be alone when he is busy serving others.

VII. OVERCOMING GRIEF

- A. According to the American Heritage dictionary: "Deep mental anguish, as that arising from bereavement. Synonyms include: sorrow, sadness, mournfulness, gloom."
- B. Not all grief is harmful.
1. Jesus manifested grief when He saw how others were grieved over the loss of a loved one - John 11:32-35.
 2. Paul wrote of "a continual grief" that he had in his heart -

- a. Rom. 9:1-2; 10:1.
- 3. Having grief and expressing it is an important part of overcoming tragic experiences such as the loss of a loved one.
- 4. Paul and the Ephesian elders expressed their grief as they bid him a sad farewell - Acts 20:36-38.
- C. When grief becomes a problem.
 - 1. When it makes one useless for any service.
 - a. When one's grief sends him into extended isolation.
 - b. When one's grief makes him unable to comfort others.
 - 2. When it begins to produce an emotional illness.
 - a. Many physical illnesses are can be caused or made worse by emotional distress.
 - b. Grief is certainly one kind of emotional distress that can take its toll on the body.
- D. Faith in Jesus helps us to overcome grief.
 - 1. Jesus certainly understands our grief.
 - a. While in the flesh, He experienced grief - John 11:35.
 - 2. He therefore taught His disciples how to find comfort when troubled.
 - a. To believe in Him - John 14:1-3.
 - b. To keep His commandments, that we might abide in His love
 - 1) John 15:10-11.
 - c. To pray, that we may have joy and peace.
 - 1) John 16:24, 33; Phil. 4:6-7
 - 3. He also provides comfort with the promise of our resurrection.
 - a. 1Thes. 4:13-17
- E. Jesus provides a family (support network) to help bear our grief.
 - 1. Those who believe in Jesus and do His will are part of a family.
 - a. Matt. 13:46-50
 - 2. As a family, we can bear one another's grief.
 - a. By weeping with those who weep - Rom. 12:15.
 - b. By sharing in each other's sufferings - 1Cor. 12:25-26.
 - c. By comforting one another with the comfort we each receive from God - 2Cor. 1:3-5.
 - 3. Sadly, many do not take advantage of this blessing of a family.
 - a. Those who may belong to a church, but never become involved, and so when their grief comes, they must often bear it alone.

VIII. OVERCOMING DEPRESSION

- A. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH):
 - 1. During any one year period, 17.6 million people suffer from a depressive illness.
 - 2. Depressive illnesses often interfere with normal function, causing pain not only to those with the disorder, but to those who care about them.
 - 3. Serious depression can destroy family life as well as the life of the sufferer.
 - 4. Christians certainly are not immune to the problem of depression.

5. Great men of God have been known to suffer depression: Elijah, Saul, and Jeremiah.
- B. Depression defined
1. According to the American Heritage Dictionary: "A psychotic or neurotic condition characterized by an inability to concentrate, insomnia, and feelings of extreme sadness, dejection, and hopelessness."
 2. It affects the way you eat and sleep, the way you feel about yourself, and the way you think about things.
 3. It is not the same as a passing blue mood.
 4. Without genuine faith, it is not a condition that can be willed or wished away; without treatment, symptoms can last for weeks, months, years.
 5. It did not start overnight, it often will not end overnight.
 6. It is not an excuse for sin, nor is it always caused by sin; it is not a matter impossible to overcome.
- C. Symptoms of depression
- a. Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" mood
 - b. Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism, guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
 - c. Loss of interest or pleasure in ordinary activities, including sex
 - d. Insomnia, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping
 - e. Appetite and/or weight loss or overeating and weight gain
 - f. Decreased energy, fatigue, being "slowed down"
 - g. Thoughts of death or suicide; suicide attempts
 - h. Restlessness, irritability
 - i. Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
 - j. Recurring aches and pains that don't respond to treatment
- D. Causes of depression
1. Other illnesses can bring on depression (e.g., strokes, some cancers, diabetes, Parkinson's disease, hormonal disorders).
 2. Some medications cause depressive symptoms as side effects (e.g., certain drugs used to treat high blood pressure and arthritis).
 3. Genetics and family history - Depression runs in families. Some people probably have a biological make-up that makes them particularly vulnerable.
 4. Certain personalities - People with low self-esteem or who are very dependent on others seem to be vulnerable to depression.
 5. Life events, such as the death of a loved one, divorce, moving to a new place, money problems or any sort of loss can be linked to depression. People without relatives or friends to help have even more difficulty coping with their losses.
- E. Treatment for depression
1. Medication, Psychotherapy, Cognitive therapy, Interpersonal therapy, Biological treatments, and ECT
 2. Jesus stressed scriptural principles.
 - a. Reminding us of God's providential love and care - Matt. 6:25-32
 - b. Teaching us where to place our priorities in life - Matt. 6:33.

- c. Revealing our own limitations - Matt. 6:34.
- d. Pointing out the kind of selfless service can provide true joy - John 13:12-17; Acts 20:35.
- e. That God is longsuffering, willing to forgive and comfort the downhearted - Matt. 5:3-6; the parable of the Prodigal Son, Luke 15:11-32.

IX. OVERCOMING DESPAIR

- A. According to the American Heritage Dictionary: "To lose all hope; to be overcome by a sense of futility or defeat; complete loss of hope."
 - 1. Synonyms for despair include hopelessness, despondency, discouragement.
 - 2. Mark Twain described despair: "A time when one's spirit is subdued and sad, one knows not why; when the past seems a storm-swept desolation, life a vanity and a burden, and the future a way to death."
- B. The danger of despair
 - 1. Despair takes its toll on society. As reported by Reuter's Leslie Lang, children with high levels of hopelessness: tended to engage in harmful and destructive behavior to themselves and others, and tended to be defiant, refusing to obey rules, take turns, share, and often skipped school. Hopelessness may be an indicator for children and teens who are prone to act in anti-social or aggressive behavior.
 - 2. Despair takes it toll on your physical health.
 - a. It can have the same detrimental effect on the heart as smoking a pack of cigarettes, according to a study published in the August, 1997, issue of Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis, and Vascular Biology,
 - b. "A high level of hopelessness exacerbates the atherosclerotic process in middle-aged men" (Dr. Susan A. Everson).
 - c. It increases the thickness of the arterial walls.
 - 3. Despair is certainly detrimental to one's spiritual health.
 - a. To choose to remain in despair is turning away from God.
 - 1) "He that despairs degrades God." (Owen Felltham, 1602-1668)
 - 2) "When you say a situation or a person is hopeless, you are slamming the door in the face of God." (Charles L. Allen, 1913-2005).
 - 3) "It is impossible for that man to despair who remembers that his Helper is omnipotent." (Jeremy Taylor, 1613-1667)
 - b. To be in despair renders one ineffective in helping others: "He that is fallen cannot help him that is down." (unknown)
- C. Through faith in Jesus, the Christian:
 - 1. Has hope in God regarding the resurrection - Acts 24:15; 1Peter 1:3.
 - 2. Can rejoice in hope regarding the glory to come - Rom. 5:1-2.
 - 3. Use the Scriptures as a constant replenisher of hope - Rom. 15:4.

4. Has the hope of salvation as a helmet to protect our minds - 1Thes. 5:8
5. Can look forward to the "blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" - Titus 2:13-14.
6. Can overcome anything - Phil. 4:13.

X. HOW DOES ONE REGAIN THE WAY?

- A. Analyze - Luke 15:17
 1. Look at yourself and be honest. Few can. Fewer will.
- B. Admit - Luke 15:18
 1. Verbalize it, to yourself, to God, to fellow Christians who will encourage.
- C. Appeal - Luke 15:19; Matt. 26:36-46 - Jesus is our example in prayer.
 1. He faced the shock - 25:37.
 2. He defined the issue - 38.
 3. He considered the alternatives - 39.
 4. He made the decision - 42.
 5. He was strengthened to act - Luke 22:43-45
- D. Act - Luke 15:20 - How to break out of a rut - Mark 10:46-52
 1. Assume responsibility for your own life - 47.
 - a. No one is going to do it for you. No minister, doctor, spouse, friend, or government agency can do for you what you alone can do for yourself.
 2. Clarify what you really need - 51.
 - a. Need, not want.
 - b. Realistic, reachable.
 3. Believe you can change - 51.
 - a. "It will never get better." You are correct until you begin to think differently.
 4. Stop worrying about what other people will say - 48.
 5. Stop waiting for ideal circumstances - 46, 49.
 6. Decisively cast away impediments - 50.
 7. Do it now - 50.

Conclusion:

- A. Why continue to suffer from mental and emotional disorders?
 1. Inertia - do not want to expend the energy to get moving.
 2. Comfort - the mental and emotional illnesses create a life zone to which one becomes accustomed.
 3. Security - fear of leaving what one has become the sufferer's normal, afraid of life as a healthy person.
- B. Get up and go forward!
 1. "Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant never taste of death but once" (William Shakespeare, Julius Caesar, Act 2, Scene 2, line 32).

Addendum: Bible Verses about Mental and Emotional Health

(Compiled by OpenBible.Info)

- Psalm 34:19 - "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all."
- John 14:27 - "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."
- Matthew 11:28-30 - "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."
- 3John 1:2 - "Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul."
- Jonah 2:5-7 - "The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God. When my life was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple."
- 2Timothy 1:7 - "For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."
- Philippians 4:6-7 - "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
- Psalm 34:17-20 - "When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken."
- 1Peter 5:10 - "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you."
- Philippians 4:13 - "I can do all things through him who strengthens me."
- Philippians 4:8 - "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."
- Romans 8:15-16 - "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."
- 2Corinthians 10:5 - "We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ."
- 1Corinthians 10:13 - "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."
- John 10:10 - "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

- Proverbs 15:13 - "A glad heart makes a cheerful face, but by sorrow of heart the spirit is crushed."
- Psalm 42:1-11 - "As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, 'Where is your God?' These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival. Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation."
- James 5:16 - "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."
- 2Corinthians 12:9 - "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me."
- Romans 8:28 - "We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."
- Proverbs 12:25 - "Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad."
- Proverbs 3:7-8 - "Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones."
- Psalm 147:3 - "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."
- Psalm 139:14 - "I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well."
- Psalm 23:1-6 - "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever."
- Isaiah 30:15 - "For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, 'In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.' But you were unwilling."
- Proverbs 17:22 - "A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones."
- 1John 4:18 - "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love."
- 1Peter 5:7 - "Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you."
- Philippians 4:19 - "My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."
- Galatians 5:22-23 - "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

- 1Corinthians 13:1-13 - "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails..."
- Romans 8:1 - "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."
- John 14:15-21 - "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live."
- John 3:16-17 - "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."
- Matthew 8:16-17 - "That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: 'He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.'"
- Jeremiah 1:5 - "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you."
- Isaiah 26:3 - "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you."
- Proverbs 14:30 - "A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot."
- Psalm 91:1-16 - "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.' For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day."
- Psalm 34:1-22 - "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together! I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed."
- Exodus 14:14 - "The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."
- 1John 4:16 - "So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."

- 1Peter 2:24 - "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed."
- James 1:5 - "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him."
- Hebrews 12:1 - "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."
- 2Timothy 3:16-17 - "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."
- Matthew 6:34 - "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."
- Jeremiah 29:11 - "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."
- Isaiah 54:17 - "No weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and their vindication from me, declares the Lord."
- Psalm 46:1-11 - "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns."
- Psalm 30:11 - "You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness."
- Numbers 8:1-26 ESV / 2 helpful votes
- Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and say to him, When you set up the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light in front of the lampstand." And Aaron did so: he set up its lamps in front of the lampstand, as the Lord commanded Moses. And this was the workmanship of the lampstand, hammered work of gold. From its base to its flowers, it was hammered work; according to the pattern that the Lord had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand. And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ...
- Genesis 1:27 - "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."