



It's Okay To Not Be Okay

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Group Leader Notes

We're continuing our series, *Under Pressure: Faith in an Anxious Age*. Each week we're looking at a different pressure we experience in our modern world. Last week, we talked about the pressure our screens put on us. Today we're talking about our mental health, anxiety, and overcoming loneliness and isolation.

Questions: How are you, *really*?

Bottom Line: It's okay to not be okay, but that's not the end because there is a God who knows you, loves you, and who is always by your side.

Take Home Message: We often have oversimplified and opposing views about mental health. As Christians, we'll sometimes say you need to trust Jesus. If you just had enough faith, you wouldn't be anxious or depressed. The flip side is that sometimes we believe too strongly in science, that modern medicine can fix everything. God isn't a part of it. The truth is in the middle, we need both.

Main Scripture Reading: Matthew 6:25-31

²⁵ "That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? ²⁷ Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

²⁸ "And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, ²⁹ yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. ³⁰ And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

³¹ "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?'

Other Scripture References

Philippians 4:6a

Matthew 25:40

Matthew 26:36-39

Psalm 139:5, 7-10

Teaching Points:

- The most common mental health diagnoses are anxiety, depression, and PTSD, making up 30% of all diagnoses in the US.
- Anxiety comes from the Latin word *ANGERE*, meaning to press down, to tighten, or like the feeling of choking.
- Practical ways we can practice healthy mental health and engage our faith:
 - Look outside yourself: literally, look outside (change your surroundings).
 - Pray: prayer gives you the strength to keep going ahead.
 - Bring your friends along: don't do it alone; reach out to a friend, therapist, or pastor.
- When speaking with others about mental health issues, avoid these unhelpful platitudes:
 - You should trust God more.
 - You don't have enough faith.
 - You should stop taking medications and pray more.
 - It could be worse.
 - You have to be strong and deal with it.
 - You can beat it if you try harder.
 - Snap out of it.
 - You might have brought this on yourself. What did you do?
- We need a community of support, love, and care.

Group Discussion

Begin in prayer before reading and discussing the text.

1. Pastor Joshua began the sermon with the simple question, "How are you?" We often reply with, "I'm fine" or "I'm good" when we're really not. What's holding us back from telling others how we are really feeling?
2. Pastor Joshua asked us to fill in the blank. I'm not okay, I'm _____. Naturally, some of us wrote something down while some of us did not have a word yet. Today, what comes to mind upon hearing, "I'm not okay, I'm _____."
3. As Christ followers, we draw strength from our relationship with God through prayer. How would you describe your prayer life? Ask your group to share tips on how they pray.
4. For those feeling overwhelmed with anxiety, depression, or other mental health issues, it's important to encourage one another to "don't go it alone." For some of us, we are to serve more as a support role (while perhaps even going through our own anxiety) while others can turn to support from families, friends, colleagues, brothers, or sisters in Christ. How have you found helpful ways to either show support or seek support?

5. Pastor Sunny gave some examples of what not to say in personal discussions about mental health. What are some helpful and supportive things that you could say to someone who is struggling?

Let's Pray: Psalm 139:5, 7-10

You surround me—front and back. You put your hand on me. Where could I go to get away from your spirit? Where could I go to escape your presence? If I went up to heaven, you would be there. If I went down to the grave, you would be there too! If I could fly on the wings of dawn, stopping to rest only on the far side of the ocean—even there your hand would guide me; even there your strong hand would hold me tight!