

It's Okay Not to Be Okay: Mental Health and Faith: Building a Supportive Church Community

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Date: 04 February 2025

[0 : 00] Talking about finding peace today, and people might have noticed there was a bit of trouble! Someone very anxious and hurting, shedding tears. These things are real, what people are going through. Finding peace is a big need for all of us really.

We can think about life in general, and we can think about the troubles people have to carry. Life in the trenches, life in the melting pot, in the crucible of pain.

How do we do life when trials come and tests in the raw times in real life? The Bible is full of emotional struggles and stories, setbacks.

Real stories, real people, real hurting. Turmoils, tests and trials. That's what we are going to touch on a little today. I came across some material from a ministry in the UK called Biblical Counselling UK.

One of the seminars they run is Mental Health in the Church. These are very real things worldwide, and we can all grapple with mental health, with struggles of anxiety in our own way.

[1 : 10] And sometimes peace can seem an elusive thing. We don't always catch it. How can we have peace? And it's been said that one in four people experience mental health issues in one year.

One in four of us. Think how many are here today. There's one in four of us go through something. An issue, a mental health challenge. And one in six people will experience it this week.

These are facts and figures that are pretty much universal. And brothers and sisters, it's a real struggle, such things. There's a lot of stress out there. I came across this just in Friday's news about a lot of stress out there.

The headlines are telling us of huge mortgage stress, rental stress, financial stress. And Aussies are struggling all across the land and in our own community. There's figures there.

Elizabeth North, I think it's 91% of people with a mortgage are under stress relating their income to their mortgage payments. And it's even worse in renting, financial stress. Aussies are struggling.

[2 : 15] That's the point. And there's a lot of trouble on the home front. The cost of living, work worries, relationships, loneliness, health worries. And there's a lot of stress going on.

A lot of people are carrying worries and we're not even aware of it ourselves at times. And it's real. It's happening all around us. And the Bible tells us about life's struggles and how we can find peace. Even when we're hurting, how we can handle that. Anxiety. Sometimes people look on anxiety as something that, well, there's something wrong with you. But no, it's not a moral failing.

We can all have anxious times. Struggles, handling hurts and what's going on for us. And it's not a moral failing. It's normal. It's normal. Christians can suffer depression.

We can relate to that. I'm sure many of us. And we're all works in progress, really, aren't we? And so what does the Bible say about such struggles and how we can know victory, how we can manage, how we can cope.

[3 : 17] And whether it's for ourselves or with others that we love, relationships with others. And look, I've got to confess this morning, I'm battling it right now. My dear wife, Julie, she's had some real rough times.

Not sleeping much last night, for example. And so it's hard on her. And she's struggling. And I know for real that it is happening. It's a real thing.

People are struggling. And from personal experience, I can tell you it's happening. And it comes very close to home, doesn't it? When your loved ones are going through something and you can't seem to overcome it.

You don't know how to get through. What does the Bible say about finding peace? I love this scripture, Isaiah 26, verse 3 to 4. It says, There's hope, there's strength.

There's a way through. And we can know that. And we're going to unpack a little some of that. Hopefully it will help me as I'm preaching it and help Julie and help others today to find that way through when we're hurting, when there's tough things going on.

[4 : 40] And how do we respond to others who are hurting? I could do better. One thing, it's easy to overlook the hurts of others, isn't it? To overlook others hurting.

And we're not always conscious of it. One in four of us. Hey, there's probably someone on your road that's going through something right now. It's real. And we don't always look out for each other that well as a church.

I love Philippians 2, verse 4 that says, Look, not every man on his own things, on his own troubles, on his own interests, but every man also on the things of others.

If we can just shift the focus from focusing on our self and our self concerns to the concerns, the needs of others. It's that mind shift, isn't it? How can we look out for one another better?

How can we best support people that we love? How can we be that kind of church? So that's the theme really today. And it's good to understand for a start, biblical anthropology. I'm going to use a big word there.

[5 : 39] Anthropology. In other words, the makeup of every one of us. We're triune. We're tripartite. It's our makeup, isn't it? As it tells us there, as Paul relates how we should be mindful, the very God of peace, he says, sanctify you, holy, the completeness of you.

And I pray you, your whole spirit and soul and body. Note those three. Be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is interested in the whole you.

Spirit, soul, body. Sometimes we put it around the other way, don't we? We generally say body, soul and spirit. But God puts the spirit first. The spirit, soul, body. And one flows into the other. We think of it, the pneuma, the spirit, as the God conscious component, isn't it? That spirit that is the spirit man. It's the real you. And we've got the soul, the psyche, the emotional, the intellectual. Then we've got the body, the physical component. Sometimes we put all our emphasis into the body, weighing ourselves every day and looking after our wonderful specimen that we are of our body.

[6 : 51] But we forget the other two, don't we? The spirit is the most important. And the soul, the emotional, intellectual. And we're talking really about that part today. The soul, the psyche.

About the soul this morning. We're going to focus on that. And the soul, when you think of it, it includes the mind, our ability to think and reason. Our will, the choices we make.

And our emotions, the feelings we have. The love, joy, sorrow, anger. God deals with the hearts of man. We know the word of God talks about the heart over and over, doesn't it?

The inner person that is a heart. That inner you. The heart is central, isn't it, to our decisions, our relationships, our actions, our worship, how we set priorities, our values.

It's where true godliness comes from, too. When your heart gets changed, everything changes, doesn't it? God says, I'll put a new heart within you, a new spirit. We get a whole new heart, a whole new start.

[7 : 52] That heart transformation that happens when you get saved. And our physical being, our brain chemistry, our mental state, our emotional well-being, it's all connected, isn't it?

It's part of our body, too, our brain. And there's this interplay between the spiritual, the psychological, the biological. We're kind of all intricately interconnected, all of those three.

The spirit, the soul, the body. And, brothers and sisters today, the reality is that we're all facing struggles. Our mind can get troubled.

Our heart can get hurt. And some of us can carry heavy emotional burdens that people around us don't even know. They're not even conscious of it. Hey, what loads of people are carrying around us.

Real people sitting here, right here amongst us. And that's our human experience, isn't it? The kind of things we might be going through. You might say, hey, one of those is what I'm going through right now.

[8 : 52] Anxiety, depression, loneliness. It's our human experience, isn't it? Not always good things. Loneliness, fear, hopelessness, sadness, grief.

Hurts. These are our human lot, aren't they? And, again, it's not that you've got a lack of faith if you've got any one of those things. Any number of those things.

Because the Bible says the rain falls on the just and the unjust, doesn't it? We all can grapple with human emotions like these. And whether you're battling yourself or people you love.

Watching loved ones struggle going through this too. So, again, there's misconceptions out there that Christians should not struggle with anxiety. It's not true.

We do struggle and we will struggle. But God will help us through. The reality is we can face struggles as Christians just like anybody else can. And the Bible talks about how we've got this stress on ourselves.

[9 : 51] It talks about for which cause we faint not. The concept is of afflictions. And it says, But though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. So, even in times of affliction, we can know a spiritual renewal on the inside of us.

God's renewing us day by day, day after day. We can get that today. I trust that God can help us through. Some look at mental health problems as if it's some kind of stigma.

Oh, there's something wrong with you. But, no, everybody faces anxiety or trauma. Anxiety is not a sign of weak faith. Don't get that, believer, today. Know that your anxiety can be a normal thing.

But God is for you. Look at some of the great hearers of the faith. They struggled with it too. David, a man after God's own heart. He suffered his own emotional struggles.

And he wrote some raw emotional psalms. He had the deep emotion of Psalm 42. Verse 5, for example. David's crying out from the depth of his soul. Why art thou cast down, O my soul?

[10 : 57] Why art thou disquieted in me? Why is this happening? Hope thou in God. Talks to his soul. I shall yet praise him for the help of his counsellors.

I shall yet praise him. Maybe you're feeling like that. You can identify with David. Cast down. Disquieted. There's this turmoil. Hope thou in God.

David says to his soul. And there's many psalms, not just David's psalms, but many psalms that show this deep mental and emotional anguish.! It's real! It's real words for real circumstances, for real emotions, for real people.

For example, Psalm 88 as an example. The psalmist says, O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee. Let my prayer come before thee.

Incline thine ear unto my cry. And through that psalm, Psalm 88, there's a lot of depression there. Deep depression. A feeling of being abandoned. There's times to pray like that.

[11 : 58] To cry out to God like that. As in Psalm 102. Psalm 102. It's called a prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed. And poureth out his complaint before the Lord.

That might be you today. Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee. So, brother, sister here today, faithful believers can experience mental health challenges.

Thank God, even so, we can know a sound mind to help us get through. As it reads of the sound mind, 2 Timothy 1 verse 7.

We can know a sound mind. We can know God's peace. When we're weak and fearful, 2 Timothy 1 verse 7, Paul tells Timothy, For God hath not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

Other Bible examples, there's many. We can think of Job. Look at Job. The grief and loss. The agony, the heartache. The questions of Job.

[13 : 02] Take a look at Elijah's despair in 1 Kings 19. He was fresh from this great spiritual victory on Mount Carmel. And then in 1 Kings 19, he's under this juniper tree.

He's taken this journey into the wilderness. He sat down under the juniper tree and he requested for himself that he might die. And said, it is enough. I've had enough. Now, O Lord, take my life.

Take away my life. For I am not better than my father's. What severe depression here of Elijah, a man of God. He's there on the verge of giving everything up.

What did God do? He gave him practical comfort, rest and food. And he gave him companionship too, Elisha. Notice God didn't rebuke Elijah for having this vent.

Emotional struggles are a part of life. And we can be real with God and let God know how we feel. And emotional struggles are not always a sign of spiritual failure.

[14 : 05] Think of Paul, the apostle. He spoke of a thorn in the flesh. This dreadful thing, this torment that he had day after day. And he cried out to God, yet he found God's grace sufficient.

And so can you. Sufficient to carry him. Paul found God's grace is sufficient even in weakness. As it reads, as God said unto Paul, my grace is sufficient for thee.

For my strength is made perfect in weakness. Paul says, most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Hey, this weakness is good because his strength is going to come. His strength is going to counteract my weakness and see me through. And sometimes God works through our difficulties rather than removing them.

Amen. Can you identify with that? We all face times of sadness, of anxiety. It's in those times we're going to grow. It's going to be a blessing. And we can find joy in Christ as we talked about in recent messages.

[15:16] Joy even in the sorrow. As Paul relates to the sorrowful, yet he's always rejoicing. Even when sorrow comes, it doesn't stop our joy, our rejoicing, because our rejoicing is not based on our feelings.

Anxiety is common. And we've got to grapple with it. So think of it, brother, sister. I'd like to unpack a little how we can corporately be that ministry to people that are hurting.

And we witnessed it just as you walked in. Some of you would have heard the shouting. And I saw the tears in the woman's eye that was out the front just before. There's drug affected.

There's substance affected people. There's people going through stress and striving and troubles and heartaches. And it's on our doorstep, literally on our doorstep. As a church, what are we going to do?

How can we respond? It's important that we be a safe and welcoming place. To be that sanctuary of healing of that Christ-centered kind of community. How can we be that?

[16:20] And now we could have, I could have put a graphic here of a church building, but no, it's you and me. It's every one of us, isn't it? Brothers and sisters together. That we can be that community of God's people.

That we can show grace and love and care. To the people that are hard to love. The people that are hard to relate to. The people that are hurting and they're shouting and swearing.

To be that people that they can know, hey, there's a refuge here. You can find hope and healing here in Christ. We can be a people who minister grace. That's what we want to be. Amen.

So let's watch our words and see how can we be such a people. Be more like that. And I know I need to do better. How can our words build up? Paul says, let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, building up, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

How can we watch our words and aim only to speak the words that build up? How easy it is to speak words that tear down or moan or whinge or murmur.

[17:28] Rather words that build up, that edify, that build, that encourage, that minister grace. How can we be that people? That's my heart for we the church to have a culture of compassion, to have understanding, practical help and spiritual support.

And sometimes the church misses that. The church doesn't always do this well. May we be that church where believers are passionate about encouraging one another.

And that's part of our reaching out to, to live for Christ, to grow in maturity. As Paul talks about speaking the truth in love. Now, sometimes there's tough love, isn't there?

We need to talk about sin. We need to talk about repentance. We need to talk about truth that it's confronting. Hey, this false doctrine. We've got to speak the truth, but it's married with love, isn't it? It's linked with love. We do it in love. We do it from love. Love is our motive. And let's be that church where we pray for each other. We turn to the scriptures.

[18:32] We open the word together. It's not just a social chit chat, but hey, a bit of spiritual chit chat would be good. I know it's good to have the welcoming time before and after church, but hey, let's share a scripture.

Let's encourage you in a spiritual way. People are struggling one in four. Friends, let's encourage one another. And let's be that church where everyone knows it's okay to be weak.

It's okay to say, hey, I've got this need. I've got this, this strife. I've got this fault. Pray for me.

Confess your faults. Where you can say, I'm broken.

I'm hurting. You know, my wife's hurting. And we can love one another. We can show truth. We can make the truth live. And a church where no one is alone when they're struggling.

But they're all part of pointing people to the Lord. As it talks about praying for one another, confessing your faults one to another, that you may be healed. There's a wonderful healing power

in sharing your struggles.

[19 : 34] And sometimes we just got to open up and bare our souls, don't we? That's good with some of these fellowship times when it's a bit more interactive, a bit more chance to chat around the table and have a cuppa and get to know one another.

And hey, sometimes, hey, I've got this problem at home. Pray for me. That's a good thing. That's what we want to be, isn't it? That we can be open. We can be real. We can care. We can share our struggles and be in a supportive community and help one another without shame.

Hey, you might say, I've got this problem. It's a bit embarrassing, but you're not ashamed of it. You say, hey, I need your prayers. I need you to pray for me. As brothers and sisters, we can do that, can't we?

We ought to do that. And it tells us, be careful for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. Let your requests be made known unto God.

So it's telling us here, don't be anxious, but pray. Present your requests unto God. And sure enough, we might pray and pray and the answer still might take a while to come.

[20 : 38] We've just got to have that patience to pray through, don't we? To trust our Lord. He's going to help us overcome anxiety. And anxiety is deep seated sometimes, isn't it? It's deep, deep-hearted.

And there's anxiety and we've just got to pour our heart out. Pour our soul out. And keep on pouring it out. And trust God. The peace of God, it tells us, is going to keep our hearts and minds.

It's going to guard us. And friends, brothers and sisters today, please know mental health challenges are real. And we need to care for those that are struggling. Have some empathy.

You know, not just look on our own things, but the things of others. Let's care about one another.

And it could be just like asking, hey, how are you? That kind of thing. Hey, how are you?

Can open the doors to people to share their burdens. And they might want to blow their, blow the steam out their ears. And say things that they probably shouldn't say.

[21 : 36] But hey, can we just be honest with each other? And just care. And be willing to listen. Healing ultimately comes from the Lord, doesn't it? We've all got needs. And the answers to human needs are in the Book of God, aren't they?

In the Creator's manual. The Maker's instructions tells us how to handle it. And we think about how can we engage with the Word of God. Numbers of the Psalms express lament and fear and ultimately trust in God.

Psalms 22, Psalm 42, Psalm 130. There's lament there. It's like people are, he's roaring with the pain. He's saying, God, I'm hurting.

That's Psalm 22, Psalm 42, Psalm 130. The Psalms of lament. It's a way to process pain. Lament. It's like crying out. Ah! Lament. You're processing your pain.

Sometimes we need to do that. To express our grief. God's there to hear. To help. To heal. There's hope in Christ. And Psalm 139 is an example of God's care.

[22 : 40] And we see in the context of Psalm 139, he's present. Ever present. He's got love, compassion, his promises. He's with us always.

Even in the midst of anxiety. Psalm 139, verse 14. He cries, I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well.

Hey, God's made me. He knows what's happening. He knows how to fix me. And God's Word shows us that every one of us, created by God, has value. So go to the Word.

If you can, go to the Word. Here's where we get a relief from our anxiety. As we bring our burdens to God. He cares so deeply for us. Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.

And you know, we can use these scriptures as glib phrases, as throwaway lines. But it's actually digging deep to the meaning of it. And confessing it.

[23 : 40] And making it your statement. Your statement of faith. That you trust in God's provision. You trust in his care. God cares for you.

For your well-being. Joseph is another example of one who kept on trusting in God's sovereign plan. We know the example there.

As he testifies, God intended for good what others meant for evil. Hey, they threw something at me. They wanted to hurt me. But actually, God brought good out of it. And we can see God's hand overarching anything that people will do to us.

He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. On Corinthians 10, 13. There hath no temptation taken you. But such as is common to man.

But God is faithful. Who will not suffer you to be tempted. Above that you are able. But will with the temptation. Also make a way to escape. He'll put the exit door for you.

[24 : 40] That you'll be able to escape. That you may be able to bear it. And we can trust God's care. His promises. His provision. He'll be determined. He'll be determined. He'll be determined. He'll be determined.

He'll be determined. He'll be determined. He'll be determined. He'll be determined. He'll be determined. He'll be determined. He'll be determined. He'll be determined. He'll be determined. He'll be determined. He'll be determined.

He'll be determined. He'll be determined. He'll be determined. He'll be determined. He'll be determined. He'll be determined. He'll be determined. He'll be determined. He'll be determined. He'll be determined. He'll be determined.

He'll be determined. He'll be determined. and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Live one day at a time. Don't worry about tomorrow, about next week, next year, about future things. Day by day, the day by day walk, seeking first the kingdom, God's kingdom, trusting in God's provision.

[25 : 42] So again, think of it as our challenge this morning. I'd like to bring it back to we, the body of Christ. As a church, how can we be that place of healing? How can we be that community that supports, that helps people connect with God's promises?

As a church, how can we have that culture of mutual support where people feel safe to share their struggles without fear of gossip or judgment? Hey, you ring the prayer line, you don't want it to be the gossip line.

No, you ring the prayer line because they want to pray for you, not gossip about what it is that you're having struggles with, all right? That's the purpose. And it's the same when you share your heart with someone, know that you can be open without it becoming some gossip circle.

No judgment. All right, Galatians 6 talks about, bear you one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. How can we be that? To carry one another's burdens. There's a lot in that, isn't there?

I know I've had a situation of late, of a need come out of the blue, and hey, who's going to respond? I know the ones who will respond. But would it be good if, hey, I could ring any one of you and say, hey, there's a need.

[26 : 56] Can you help? Bear you one another's burdens. Can we have that heart? Yeah, I want to be a burden bearer. I want to be someone the pastor can call and say, yeah, I can help, rather than just falling on the shoulders of a handful.

And the people of God, we're a community, aren't we? We ought to be. That we help one another. We foster that culture of sensitivity, of compassion.

We look out for one another. Look out for the needs of others, the things of others. Can we check in on one another, especially in difficult times? I know one of the things we're planning as a church, after the homiletics, we're going to have some session or two on the one another's.

And I know Cam's not here, is he? But Cam's going to lead that one. There's this truth of the one another's. I'm going to steal a bit of his thunder here, just touching on it. But there's over 50 one another verses.

I've got three slides of them here. 50, over 50, one another's. It's like this repeated theme. How can we check in on one another? In difficult times, there's many verses.

[28 : 08] These one another's, they emphasize loving, serving, forgiving. Here's another one. Encouraging. One another.

And hey, this is not a ministry that just falls on maybe one or two, a select few. It's one another, isn't it? That's you and me, isn't it? One another.

We can all do these one another's with one another. That's how it's meant to work. Amen? And we can all be part of this one another in ministry, where we speak the truth in love to one another.

And it's how the church can grow. And God can help us as a church to reach the hurting. Here's another slide. There's so many of them. These are just an example. How can we love one another? How can we exhort one another? How we can consider one another? And really, it's how God helps us as a church to minister, isn't it? To reach the hurting. To be that church, that gathering, that body

of people, where we grow together in Christlikeness.

[29 : 12] And we care for one another like these things, showing that mutual encouragement and support and accountability. When you think about it as a church, that the church of God, the people of God, the assembly of God's people getting together, is where transformation happens, isn't it?

In that community. It's meant to be. It's who we're meant to be as a church, isn't it? That we can have an interaction. And where we see really every interaction with other people is an opportunity for ministry.

Think of that. Every interaction that you have with another human soul is an opportunity for ministry. How can we come alongside one another? How can we help those that are struggling?

Practical help. Prayer. How can we give understanding and empathy? How can we care? And more than just a token, how are you going, but a bit deeper.

Hey, let's come alongside people. Walk alongside people. How can we help people that they'll find that hope and joy that's in Christ? That ultimate healing as they lean on Him? To listen, to care.

[30 : 22] I need to do this more. Sometimes I'm spread too thin that I'm not making much impact. Myself. I know that only too well. How can we point others to the hope and the healing that is in Christ?

It's in the gospel. It's salvation, isn't it? How can we be that really honestly helpful, genuinely helpful kind of people? We'll put ourselves out.

We'll put ourselves out. We'll go the extra mile. We'll do the hard yards. We'll crucify the flesh and help people that humanly we don't want to help. And we'll keep humble about it too.

Because really every one of us is both needy and knee-dead. All right? You might be needy and you're knee-dead by others too. No one has got it all together.

And everyone has something to offer. So I just want to challenge us as a church to get that kind of thinking. How can we really put this into action? And the word shows us how really all of us are going to suffer troubles.

[31 : 25] You know, there's that familiar example that people use of our Lord on the sea and the storm. And he rebukes the waves, the winds, and he says, peace, be still.

And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. He can speak the peace to your storm. Brother, sister, friend, if you've got anxiety today, and hey, one in four of us have.

Hey, he says, peace, be still. Doesn't he? When life hurts, God is still God. Life is painful. Due to the fall. We're all in the same boat.

We're all on this fallen planet. We're all falling humanity. Everyone experiences hurt in some way. But despite the pain, God is still God.

He is still God. He's still sovereign. He's still loving. He's still present. And he cares deeply about everyone. Consider our Lord's model.

[32 : 21] Now, I used to work in health care and disability care. And one of the things that they used to yarn on about in the health care terminology is called models of care.

Models of care. So there's a picture there on the left there. Models of care, like a worldly example. But think about it. If we go to the Bible, to the one who's the ultimate health care provider, the one who's the ultimate great physician, about his models of care.

Think about it. What is our Lord's model of care? What did he do when he walked around the crowds? What did he do? How did he care? How can we care?

Like our Lord. Scripture tells us he was moved with what? Compassion. Moved with compassion. When he sees their suffering. I love how he says that he has come to heal the brokenhearted.

It's in the King James, but some other Bibles missed that. I think it's a critical part of Luke 4.18. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted. That matters, doesn't it?

[33 : 23] That's why he's come. To heal the brokenhearted. I love that about our Lord. And he cares so deeply for the brokenhearted. Our Lord cares deeply when you're feeling brokenhearted.

When your mental and emotional well-being is in turmoil. He says, I've come to heal you. And as his church, think of it, brother, sister, today, we must learn to do the same.

The same model of care, if you like. The model of our Lord's care ought to be our model of care.

Amen? That we would do the same. Because after all, we are the body of Christ. Think of it when you take that terminology and actually think, hey, I am his body.

I am. We are his body. We are his hands. We are his feet to touch people. We are his hands and feet to our world. And how can I be the hand of Jesus to someone?

How can I be the feet of Jesus to someone? How can I be that? How can I do that? There's the truth that, in a way, someone has put it, all of our time is ministry time.

[34 : 31] You know, you're here at church and you might be feeling more especially sanctified than the other six days of the week. But all of our time is ministry time. Monday morning, you're a minister.

You're his hands, his feet. Tuesday, Wednesday, three, every day, all of our time is ministry time.

When you think of our Lord, Jesus was never off duty, was he?

Neither should we be in our care for others. Have the eyes of Jesus to see the human souls around you as people that need Jesus. They need the gospel.

People are in emotional pain. They're not saved yet, some of them. Some of them are saved and they're still in mental distress. There's still some anxiety that overwhelms. Maybe they're struggling with addiction.

They're struggling with situations, with past trauma, with hurts of long ago, long, long ago. They're still hurting from that. And that can be real, the struggles, depression.

[35 : 32] How can we be his hand extended? How can we be his voice? The voice that calls out, come unto me, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. How can we show his compassion to those around about?

Our Lord calls the weary, the burdened, and he sends to those that are struggling, come, find your rest in me. How can we show Christ's compassion?

How can we show that? So, friends, our Lord is close to the brokenhearted. It tells us that in Psalm 34. Those that are broken, or you could say crushed.

Those that are struggling in so many different ways. How can we be such a people? There it is, Psalm 34, verse 18. It says, The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saith such as be of a contrite spirit.

Those that are crushed under the weight of life's burdens. Those that are struggling with challenges. There's comfort in the scriptures, people. The Bible talks about the comfort of the scriptures.

[36 : 38] There's comfort here in the word of God for people in deep emotional pain, for trauma, for tragedies, for stress. Post-traumatic stress and such as we've had word of in recent seminar times.

There's comfort here in knowing that the word was made flesh. God came and lived human experience in a fulsome way.

Our Lord knew psychological pain. Think of it. Christ wept. It wasn't just crocodile tears. He was sorrowful, it says, unto death.

Even unto death. Christ wept. He experienced anguish. He entered into our pain. Into human pain.

You know, we have a high priest that he can be moved with the feelings of our infirmities.

Our Lord knew what it was to be. Overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. How can we have that same heart to extend his compassion to those who struggle all around us?

[37 : 44] And they're walking all around us. How can we walk alongside people however long their journey takes? And so I feel it takes a long time to walk alongside them. And I know we've got plans of having a biblical counselling seminar.

And last word from Brother Doug from the USA. He came some months back and gave us a PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder kind of seminar.

And Brother Doug Carragher has written a book now called Biblical Counselling. And in some of the things I've been reading about ministering to the brokenhearted, biblical counselling is a key.

Biblical counselling. And this is why we're holding a seminar on this subject. And Brother Doug's confirmed it now. We're just confirming the exact date. But sometime in May. Think about biblical counselling.

In other words, this is the answer for really the deepest human needs, isn't it? The Word of God.

This is the maker's instructions. And biblical counselling, hey, it's not just quoting verses glibly and just kind of as a token thing.

[38 : 49] But it's about equipping the church to speak the truth in love. It's about helping others to grow in Christ. Through the scriptures. Acknowledging life's struggles. It's about walking alongside people in their pain.

Helping them to connect with the promises of scripture in their struggles. Applying God's Word to every area of life. And brother, sister, this is where transformation happens.

It's the renewing of our mind, isn't it? It's that meditating on the Word that it changes us. It transforms us from the inside out. There's a transformation that happens when we get together and we share the Word.

What about you this morning? If you're struggling right now, you might say, Preacher, hey, the pain is real. You're not alone. You're not alone. There's many amongst us that know the same.

Or some kind of pain. Know the comfort of the scriptures today. Know the comfort of the scriptures today. It tells us that our God is our refuge and strength.

[39 : 56] A very present help in trouble. God is ever present. I love how it says he's a present help when? In trouble. So if you're in trouble, God's a very present help for you.

It's even more a truth, isn't it? He's a very present help in the trouble. Ever present. He's our refuge. He's our security, our strength.

And brother, sister, we can saturate our mind with the words of Scripture. We can saturate our mind with it. Confess the truth of it. But claim it.

God is my strength. I love these other ones here. There's a lot of personal confessions here. Not just God is our refuge and strength, but God is my strength and power. God is my defence.

The God of my mercy. The God of my salvation. The rock of my strength. My refuge. God is my salvation. The Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song.

[40 : 57] When you face these real struggles, confess these words of Scripture. God is my defence. God is my salvation. Amen? You can write these words down and read them and confess them and recite them.

When you face real struggles, brother, sister, there's hope. There's help. Know that God is with you. Know that it's okay not to be okay. It's not like God's left you.

When you're in the lion's den. When you're in the fiery furnace. When you're in the prison cell like Paul. God is with you. God is with you in the circumstance.

God is with you when you're not sure how to cope. With how to pay the rent, the mortgage. God is with you when life's hard. When troubles come. When you're hurting.

When you're feeling lonely. When there's relationship breakdowns. God is with you. It's for you. And healing is a journey. And so take those small steps.

[41 : 57] And keep trusting every step of the way. And stay connected too. A big mistake people can make is they opt out. They opt out.

Stay connected. Stay connected to God. Stay connected to fellowship. God's people. It's a resource for you. And you can be a minister to others. Even in your pain.

God can use you. Because we're both needed and needy. And as a church. How can we take some of these truths to heart? It's like a cultural shift has to happen.

Because sometimes the church isn't always caring. Some people have got the mentality that church is a museum for the saints. So you just come and go through some motions and then until the next time.

But no. The church. The family of God. We're meant to be a hospital for sinners. Think of it. How we could be a hospital for sinners. And I love how this quote says, Luke 1 Christianity has become so normal that biblical Christianity seems radical.

[43 : 05] Actually, we should be a radical people. That the gospel applies to every day of our life. And so we can be that kind of hospital for sinners. It's the biblical model for the church, isn't it?

Where people feel loved and accepted. Hey, they'll come on the doorstep and rant and swear and cry. Real tears. And they'll shout and scream.

Because they know deep down that they need God. They need God. So we need to be God's people. To be that biblical model. Where people will come and we can build this community.

This loving community. That we can foster relationships. And support networks. That's why I love some of the social things we've been doing. People might think it's not very spiritual going to visit a radio station.

Or going down to the tram museum. It's not a very spiritual thing to do. But hey, it's a social thing to do. It's getting to know one another, isn't it? Hey, it's brothers and sisters getting together. And having time together.

[44 : 04] Having smiles together. Getting to have conversations together. That's important. It's how we combat isolation. And loneliness. It's how we can emphasise hope. And refuge.

And be that transformative power of the gospel. So let's not give up on people that are battling mental illness. Hey, it's easy to write them off. I know there's people.

We've got lists of people. And there's some people I put on the list. Hey, they've got some struggles. We can give up on them. We don't want to be like that. We don't want to give up on people, alright? People that are battling.

They're the ones that need the love of Jesus, don't they? They're the ones that need Jesus' touch. The lepers of our world. There's hope. And as a church, we're meant to be the ones extending hope.

Nurturing hope. And exercising God's grace in it all. Hey, God, give me a bit more grace. That I'll be a bit more like you. In my interactions with others. I need that. We need the gospel, don't we?

[45 : 01] The gospel offers hope. Hope. And friends, brothers and sisters, as we think of it, we've been talking about finding peace. Helping others find peace. Finding hope in those times of despair.

The Bible tells us now, the God of hope. Filled you with all joy and peace in believing. That you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. Look at it there. The God of hope. That's who he is.

He's the God of hope. When everything seems hopeless, he's the one that the hopeless need. He's the one that we need when we feel hopeless. He's the God of hope. Amen.

And he can fill us with all joy and all peace in believing. How can we be that place of hope and healing?

Not the building, but the people. To show that kind of love. To walk alongside. Where people are in that journey of pain. How can we pray for people that are going through tough things?

[45 : 58] How can we help others trust the Lord? Where is hand extended? Where is feet? Where is mouthpiece? How can they hear the gospel unless we tell them, we show them, we love them?

How can we better support people? Let's exercise the one and others. Think of it. Stop living in our own little shell. Our own little cocoon.

Our own little comfort zone. And say, no, I'm going to help others. Instead of looking after my own interests. My own little pity party. My own feelings. My own hurts.

I'm going to be a part of ministry. The ministering to others. The one and others. And I'm going to exercise his heart of compassion. It's a challenge here for all of us. That we can communicate the gospel.

The hope of the gospel. Amen. Amen. And I love these scriptures here. We've been talking about finding peace. Finding peace. It's the peace of God.

[46 : 57] That's what we need, isn't it? The peace of God. It passes all understanding. It surpasses any kind of human kind of description or terminology.

The peace of God. And it says the peace of God is going to keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. And further it says, not only can we have the peace of God.

We can have the God of peace. He's the God of hope. And he's the God of peace. And it says, the God of peace shall be with you. Brother, sister, today we started with this scripture.

And know today that we can be a people who know the peace of God. And we can know the God of peace. And we can share that peace.

The peace that comes through Christ. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Hey, friends here this morning, you might say, preacher, I'm not a Christian yet. I don't think I'm going to heaven yet.

[47 : 52] I don't know for sure that I have eternal life. He says, come unto me. He says, believe, receive. Trust me. He'll take your sin. He'll pay the full pardon.

He'll grant. Because the full penalty he's paid. If you'll but receive the gift of eternal life by trusting Christ today. Trust ye in the Lord. Trust him today.

He is the peace that we need. The peace of God. And finding peace is about finding the peace of God. The God of peace. And then knowing that. Let's be that people of God.

That the peace of God. We want to share it. It's too good to keep to ourselves. That's why we care about evangelism. Peace is possible. And this captures it all. They will keep him in perfect peace.

His mind is stayed on thee. Because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever. For in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.

[48 : 49] Let us commit to being a church that truly reflects Christ's heart of compassion for the broken hearted. Let us pray. Lord we thank you that life's turmoil is common.

Many of us are struggling and will struggle. Anxiety. Burdens. Hurts. Lord we know that yet you are the healer. Pray for our loved ones on our hearts today.

That are going through stuff Lord. We pray. Help them to hang on. To hang tight. To hold on to you Lord. With their feeble strength.

Knowing that you are their strength truly. And Lord we can have that heart. To love. To minister. To care. To be your hand extended. Your feet walking. Your mouth talking.

To share the gospel of peace. With this world in such turmoil and trouble. To know that peace.

Peace that passes all understanding. Can keep our hearts and minds.

[49 : 51] Through Christ Jesus. We pray each one might have that relief from their burdens today.

Help us Lord to learn these truths of casting our care upon you. So know you care for us.

Help us to be that community that cares. We'll have that model of care which is your care. It's your compassion. Because we're meant to be the body of Christ. Help us to be that people we pray.

All for your glory and honour we ask. In Jesus name. Amen.