

Jacob's Well**Lesson Title:** Mental Health—Depression

Key Concept: Brokenness is the reason for many mental health struggles that we were not created to deal with. Depression and mental illness may break our spirits, but God is near the brokenhearted, and he wants us to be well.

**Scriptures:**

When Jesus heard this, he said, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do.”

(Matthew 9:12 *New Living Translation*)

The Lord is near the brokenhearted; he delivers those who are discouraged.

(Psalm 34:18 *New English Translation*)

Context Scriptures: Zechariah 4:6; Romans 8:28; Matthew 14:14; 2 Timothy 4:20; 2 Corinthians 12:7–10

**Lesson Thoughts:**

Mental health is a challenge for Christians. In our broken world, we must build faith, hope, and love into our minds, because our actions are not enough. So how can we do anything when our mind, the place where we feel these things, struggles? Often, we bury the struggle. We ignore the problems we face, because we think we must be mentally strong in order to follow God.

But Jesus had a principle that we should remember. He drew a comparison between physical health and spiritual health by saying, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do.” And yet, the “healthy” people he was speaking to were as spiritually sick as anyone else. Ignoring our sickness doesn’t mean the sickness stops; it just means we can’t get help.

An example of mental sickness is depression. Depression is a strong loss of hope and motivation. When you are depressed, nothing seems worth it, everything

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seems to go wrong, and the world is a dark place. Depression has no easy answers. No breathing exercises, positive thoughts, or strong-willed effort can fix depression. The only recommended solution is therapy or medicine. But if we don't admit we're depressed, we won't seek out help, and we won't get better. The world will stay dark.

Mental illness is a challenge to Christians because it can make us feel like we're failing. We lose our faith, our hope, and our love. We lose what's supposed to set us apart. But God is near the brokenhearted. God loves those without hope. He does not think we are worse because we struggle; instead, he wants us to be well.

Sometimes God acts directly, healing bodies and minds. Other times, God leaves us with our challenges. And just like we shouldn't ignore a broken leg and say "God will fix it," we shouldn't ignore a wounded mind and say "God will get me through." God is faithful and powerful, but he also uses humans. Just like a doctor sets the leg and prescribes painkillers, so a therapist helps the mind and prescribes antidepressants.

When we face mental illness, we must remember that we are not defined by our struggles. We are defined by God. We may lose our hope or battle depression, but God's opinion does not change. He paid the price to buy us, and he does not regret that decision.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Since God is a healer, why do we use medicines or go to see doctors?
- 2) Why do you think we're reluctant to admit when our minds are struggling?
- 3) Is there a difference between mental and physical health? If so, what is it?
- 4) If you've had depression, share your experience. If not, share what you think it would be like to lose hope and not be able to get it back.
- 5) What does it say about God when we don't get better from our physical or mental diseases?

Next Lesson: Anxiety

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Notes and Reflections

- 1) Look at the list of symptoms of depression, according to the World Health Organization (WHO): <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/depression>. If you think you might have depression, get tested for it and go to therapy. Let yourself be healed.
- 2) If you're reluctant to take medications for depression or mental health, consider: the brain is a body part, the same way our stomach or liver is. Why should we be willing to take medicine for some body parts, but not others?
- 3) Read Romans 8:28. What good has God achieved using your flaws or sicknesses? What good could he achieve in the future?
- 4) Some people say that depression is an evil spirit: "the spirit of depression." Search the bible for the phrase "spirit of depression." It's not there. So, according to God, the only source of truth, is depression actually a spirit?

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Notes and Reflections, cont.