

How This Blogger Responded When Her Church Called Her 'Demon-Possessed' Because of Her Depression

Sarah Robinson, blogger at [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints](#), says she experienced a very strong stigma surrounding mental illness in her church—in fact, people even called her “demon-possessed.” She didn’t feel like church was a safe place to open up about her feelings, and it wasn’t until later that the leaders gained more knowledge about mental illness and changed their approach.

“It would not be terribly uncommon to hear things from the pulpit like, ‘God is healing people with depression, and you won’t have to take your medication anymore,’” Robinson says. “And I had one leader who I dearly love once tell me ... ‘If you can’t say anything nice, don’t say anything at all, even about yourself.’ We’re taught that as kids, which means don’t say mean things about your friends and your siblings. But in that context, the message I heard was, ‘You can’t open up about your pain, and the church is not a safe place to bring your mess.’ And so there were a lot of things like that. ... I had people tell me that I was demon-possessed because of the things I struggled with, and all sorts of stuff. ...

“But I’ve also learned that people change, people grow and people learn things they didn’t know before. And now some of those same leaders who said some of those things are the people who I can tell anything to. They’re completely trustworthy; they understand mental health issues because their lives went on, and they have some different experiences and they were exposed to some more training. And so it’s been a really healing thing for me to kind of circle back around

with some of those people who maybe early on in my faith journey said some things that were harmful, but now are some of my greatest cheerleaders and support. ...

“I think for those of us who have been hurt by the church, I just want to say there’s so much hope, and things are getting better. And sometimes you have to keep trying to find the support you need.”

According to research done by LifeWay as of 2013, many people believe prayer and Bible study alone will entirely remedy mental illness, Robinson says on the *Charisma News* podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network. But that’s a very dangerous mindset, because God does not always heal us miraculously—who’s to say He won’t use natural medicine too?

“We like to say in the charismatic movement, ‘Don’t put God in a box.’ Well, we’re just as much putting God in a box when we’re saying, ‘You have to heal,’” Robinson says. “And ‘If God doesn’t heal, there’s something wrong with us as we are.’ It just simply discounts a significant portion of Scripture.

“People like to quote, talking about Paul’s thorn in the flesh, that there was some sort of struggle Paul had, whether it was mental, emotional or physical—that he begged the Lord three times to take it away. And the Lord said, ‘My grace is all you need. You don’t need to be healed.’ ... In 1 Timothy, Paul tells his [spiritual] son, who’s having stomach problems—he doesn’t tell him to pray; he doesn’t tell him to have faith—he just gives him a recommendation for a really natural treatment.”

To hear more of Robinson’s story and encouragement for living a Christian life while battling mental illness, [click here](#).