

Why All Churches Should Address Depression and Anxiety

It's no secret my past was riddled with mental health issues—ones that kept me from wanting to live for much of my teenage life. I'm very vocal about this truth, and I will continue to be as long as my story may have an impact on others who need to hear it.

And while I do believe today's church is doing better at addressing the issue that is mental health, I believe there can be so much more done than what is currently taking place in regards to depression and anxiety. *Let me explain.*

I never tried to take my own life in my younger years, but I frequently found myself googling *painless ways to commit suicide*, and really had no remorse once finding what I was looking for. It was a sad state to hold myself. The reality is that my life was infected with the burden of depression and anxiety, and the only places I could find reliable information from were not churches in my local area.

Why? It's because mental illness wasn't really talked about much.

I felt as if all the “*Christian*” resources were outdated, and really didn't address the fact that taking medication was okay in the eyes of God. There really wasn't much information at all. It was as if all the answers I was finding were suggesting that I just needed more faith.

Seriously? The last thing someone contemplating suicide wants to hear is, “*Just have faith.*” I understand that Jesus has the power to conquer anything that comes in my way, but please don't throw Christians clichés at me. I wanted real, authentic

and practical information, and I assume there are millions in this world who would want the same. It's what Jesus would have done.

I really wanted to find help in the church, but there were no ministries or non-profits working within the walls of local congregations that I could reach. All the counseling and help I received came years after I actually needed it, and it was found in the secrecy of a local medical facility, not a church—where it should have been all along.

Mind you, the church has come a long way since my teen years in regards to helping those with mental illness, but I believe we can still do a lot more.

Some Statistics

1. It is reported that 1 in 10 Americans are affected by **depression**.
2. Over 80 percent of people who are **clinically depressed** are not receiving treatment.
3. The number of people diagnosed with depression increases **by 30 percent every year**.
4. An estimated **121 million** people around the world suffer from depression.
5. In 2013 41,149 suicides were reported, making suicide the **10th leading cause** of death for Americans.
6. In 2013, someone died by suicide every **12.8 minutes**.

We Need The Church

“Cast all your care on Him, because he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7, MEV).

Here's the thing. I understand that there is importance to seeing what many would call a “professional” in the field of

mental health issues, but this doesn't mean that the local church shouldn't be prioritizing leadership roles and ministry efforts to help those who deal with these issues. I understand that not all churches lack in this area, but I bet there are more who do than don't.

My wife and I have met with and counseled dozens of young people over the past year. All shared with us the brutal battle that is taking place within their souls. Suicide attempts, cutting, depression, and anxiety are just the beginning of what these young people were facing.

We NEED the church to step up in its efforts to be more vocal in regards to mental illness. Whether that is through a sermon series, free resources, creating non-profits or even a cultivating a designated year-long ministry. Regardless, the church should be on the front lines of this battle. People need a safe place where they can be honest and transparent with what they are going through.

There is nothing wrong with admitting you are depressed, cutting, have attempted suicide or are even contemplating it. There is nothing wrong with seeking medical attention and being prescribed medication to help you along the journey. And, there is nothing wrong with admitting you need help.

A Few Resources

1. **Heart Support.**
2. **My Broken Palace.**
3. **To Write Love On Her Arms.**
4. **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.**

If you or someone you know is struggling with depression, anxiety or has even thought of suicide, please give them the resources above and do not wait another minute.

What are your thoughts? Leave a comment below. {eoa}

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