

Why You Shouldn't Lose Hope When Dealing With Mental Illness

If your child or loved one has been diagnosed with a mental illness, you've probably experienced a host of negative situations related to their struggle. And you're not alone. According to statistics from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), in January of 2016, one out of every 18, the percentage is even higher at 21.4. I find those numbers staggering.

Have you felt supported or shunned by your Christian friends? Your church leadership? Have you wondered why the church has failed to understand or minister well to those who suffer with a mental illness? I have.

Each day, men and women diagnosed with mental disorders are told they need to pray more and turn from their sin.

Weak Faith or Sin?

Mental illness is equated with demonic possession, weak faith and generational sin. As both a church leader and a professor of psychology and behavioral sciences, Matthew S. Stanford has seen far too many mentally ill brothers and sisters damaged by well-meaning believers who respond to them out of fear or misinformation rather than grace. Has this happened to you? To your loved one? If it has, I am so sorry. I know this only compounds your heartache and encourages you to isolate, which makes things worse for everyone.

A Helpful Resource

Stanford wrote a book called *Grace for the Afflicted* to educate Christians about mental illness from both biblical and

scientific perspectives. (He also wrote *The Biology of Sin: Grace, Hope and Healing for Those Who Feel Trapped*). He presents insights into our physical and spiritual nature and discusses the appropriate role of psychology and psychiatry in the life of the believer. Describing common mental disorders, Stanford probes what science says and what the Bible says about each illness. I'm thrilled he wrote this book. It is so needed! You may want to purchase a copy for your pastor or clergy.

His book covers:

- bipolar disorders
- trauma- and stressor-related disorders
- dementia
- cerebrovascular accidents (stroke)
- traumatic brain injury
- suicide
- a holistic approach to recovery
- mental health and the church

A Trustworthy Endorsement

"I wholeheartedly recommend *Grace for the Afflicted* to any pastor or church leader who is looking for a reliable resource on understanding mental illness and treatment from a biblical perspective." –Kay Warren, author, speaker and wife of Saddleback Church pastor Rick Warren

Hope and Healing

Stanford's website is Hope and Healing Center Ministry. The ministry's mission is "Transforming Lives, Restoring Hope." Hope and Healing Center Ministry seeks to minister to those broken by life's circumstances in a direct response to the compassionate Great Commission of Jesus. Located in Houston, Texas, it offers a wide variety of help and information including support groups and healing prayer at its Houston center.

Don't Give Up

Mental health needs to be approached holistically, taking into account all aspects of a person's being: mental, physical, emotional and spiritual. Hopeless people give up, but in God, we always have hope. As long as we have hope, we can keep moving forward. We have direction.

Prayer: *God, give renewed hopes to these dear moms and dads today. Our children are a blessing from You, but with this blessing can come struggle. Hope guides us and leads us forward. It helps us transcend adversity. May You comfort us and lead us to what we need next.*

This Scripture verse is one of my favorites on hope:

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:13). {eoa}

Dena Yohe is the author of *You Are Not Alone: Hope for Hurting Parents of Troubled Kids* (2017). Co-founder of *Hope for Hurting Parents*, she is a blogger, former pastor's wife and CRU affiliate staff. She and her husband, Tom, have been guests on "Family Talk With Dr. James Dobson," "Family Life" with Dennis Rainey" and "Focus on the Family" with Jim Daly. A proud mom of three adult children, she loves being Mimi to her grandchildren. Find out more at .

This article originally appeared at .