

Charismatic Pastor, Therapist Says the Church Is Greatly Mishandling Mental Illness

Fred Antonelli has seen it before, all too often. The way the church treats the issue of mental illness and depression—especially within the charismatic church—must change, he says.

A Spirit-filled and board-certified family temperament therapist as well as a pastor for more than 23 years, Antonelli, who also has a family history of depression, has seen many in the church mishandle the issue of mental illness simply with misguided words.

The suicides of pastors like Jarrid Wilson and Andrew Stoecklein within the past year, Antonelli says, have unfortunately thrust the issue of mental illness within the church into the spotlight.

“Some people within the church might say, especially in a charismatic setting, that all you need is just more prayer, go to service more, sit down at the altar and read more of the Word of God,” Antonelli told Dr. Steve Greene on a recent episode of “Greenelines” on the Charisma Podcast Network. “That’s all tremendous stuff, but when it comes down to it, they won’t acknowledge you may be depressed, and they almost always point out that it’s your fault.

“Then, people who are clinically depressed (and may not recognize it), they go and do all that and more, and they’re still depressed, and they say God must not like me because I’m doing all the right stuff but it just isn’t working. But to say that God doesn’t have a provision for us to have mental wellness is a misnomer.”

“People who are depressed don’t want to say they are because then they are pigeonholed with the stigma that they somehow don’t have enough faith or they are not spiritual or godly enough. The church must stop doing that. God accepts us in our human condition. People have to first acknowledge that they have issues with mental illness because it’s the first step to getting well. They can be set free from the pious hand of legalism.”

For more of Fred Antonelli, his ministry and his book *Struggling Well*, listen to this podcast.