

Anxiety & Depression

To those who struggle with anxiety, depression, mental health...

"I hear you and I see you. I care for you." These are things that are true of our Father that I find myself all too often forgetting in an overwhelming sea of darkness as I walk through anxiety and depression. I have struggled with this since I was a junior in high school. Not just "fear of the future", "not trusting God" kind of anxiety, but rather a crippling, nauseating, overwhelming feeling of darkness and helplessness that seems to control me almost daily. Feeling completely incapable of loving the very God that brought me from death to life. This has characterized, to varying degrees, my life in different seasons for the last 5 years. Feeling isolated, forgotten, and alone by both my community and my Father, I believed a lie that people would not believe the depths of what I was walking through even if I did confess- after all, I grew up in church, I'd known Jesus since I was 11. I was energetic, outgoing- surely I couldn't be depressed. But I was. Often, I still am. Only by God's grace do I walk in freedom in my life.

Let people in on the fullness of your life- the beautiful moments of rejoicing as well as the parts that seem most broken and shameful. Ephesians 5:8-21 says: "for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.' Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."

By not confessing, not sharing, you are walking in darkness. I walked in darkness for four years. Anxiety and depression seem and feel stifling, suffocating, unbearable. Isolated, you believe you must walk in it alone. I implore you to confess. Galatians 6:2 says "Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." After four lonely years, I let one friend in. Then three more. Then slowly others in my community as well. And I felt hope. These friends pursued me on nights where I completely shut them out, sought me out when I physically ran away from them, they loved me clearly in a way that so reminded me of Christ's steadfast pursuit of us. Let people in. We weren't created to walk alone. We see more of the Gospel and God's character by being the body to and for one another.

Mental health and the battle against anxiety and depression take place in your mind. 2 Corinthians 10:3-7 says, "For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete. Look at what is before your eyes. If anyone is confident that

he is Christ's, let him remind himself that just as he is Christ's, so also are we." Our battle is against a very real, very strong, very powerful enemy- an enemy who desperately desires to distract from God's glory. Being aware that there is a real enemy that is battling for your attention and waging war on you is a sobering fact. I may not be able to control my anxious thoughts, my physical symptoms of anxiety, or a deep lack of feeling and emotion that stems from depression, but I follow the only one that can control it. When I say that my only hope is Jesus, I mean that with every fiber of my being. Walking through this with Jesus is hard as it is- I cannot fathom a life without Him. The Father has used depression and anxiety to remind me of my weakness and His power (2 Corinthians 12:9). I am unable of even feeling emotion or waging war on my flesh apart from Him. Oh, how desperately I am reminded of my need for Him. Oh, how even in the midst of darkness my heart fully believes these struggles to be worth it from the ways I've seen the Father work and what I've learned through this.

But if you have walked or are walking through anxiety, depression, or other mental health struggles, you know the pain and hurt. The Holy Spirit in me and through me is writing to remind you of hope. So... let people in. Find resources such as friends, Christian counselors, ministers - people with God-given gifts and abilities to help. Don't rely on these things alone for healing, but may they be a catalyst to spur you on to rely on the Father more deeply, casting all anxieties on Him because He cares for you (1 Peter 5:6).

So daily, I fight a battle- we all do. We cannot fight on our own. Romans 12:1-2 says, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." We **need** the Spirit to renew our minds. Present yourself, your life, your mind, your heart as a living sacrifice to Him. Ask him to fight for you. Be quick to be vulnerable for the sake of His power being made perfect in weakness. In fullness of joy and in deepest darkness, may Jesus always be our hope and treasure. By God's grace and for His glory, we can walk in abundant life, hope, and joy. May you always see following Jesus as infinitely worth it.

If you would like to reach out to talk with someone, please send a message to strugglewell@allthingsministries.com

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