

DEPRESSION

MIND GAMES

WEEK 4 GROUP GUIDE | MESSAGE BY CHAD BRUEGMAN

START

To get things started, let's go around the circle and answer this question:

What is the worst job you've ever had and why?

SHARE

Welcome to our new series entitled, "Mind Games."

Every day we experience an entire spectrum of God-given emotions. Think about your day so far. How many different emotions have you experienced? In a given day it is possible to feel happiness, frustration, sadness, joy, optimism, regret, anger, insecurity, fear, and anxiety. It's fascinating, the roller coaster of emotions we can experience in just one day. There are many factors at play with our emotions. For instance, if we are tired or worn out, we might be more susceptible to be easily frustrated or angered. If we are feeling joyful and well-rested, we might be more likely to be gracious and patient with others. Not always; but more likely.

Now if that wasn't complicated enough, let's add the powerful influence of our thought life. We all have a wide-range of thoughts that go through our brains and half the time we don't even understand where they are coming from. Some of us think the best in situations, while others tend to believe that the sky is falling and think the worst. Thoughts are powerful and what you believe about God, yourself, and other people is more important than you might think.

We are told throughout scripture that we are loved, valuable, and we are worth being pursued by a loving God. We can either think about the truth of what God says about us or we can believe lies. In 2 Corinthians Paul tells us to literally, "...take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." We shouldn't let our thoughts push us around. We can take control and make sure that those thoughts line up with the Word of God. If the thoughts you're having aren't true, send them packing and cling to what God says is true! Make them obedient to Christ.

This week Chad spoke about one of the greatest and most hidden struggles we face today, especially in America. The struggle with depression is far from new, as Chad demonstrated by discussing some of the most influential and famous historical and current individuals we know who have fought desperately against depression's persistence. The battle with depression is

complex, and certainly different for everyone who experiences it. However it manifests itself, it often leaves the individual feeling isolated and alone.

As we walk through this topic, we want to make sure that we align with God's heart for those who struggle with depression. Minimizing or ignoring the struggle does not make it any less real, nor disappear. If you have personally struggled, or know someone who has, you understand how powerful it is. However, we serve a God who is the ultimate Healer, and the good Physician. As Chad said, we believe that struggling with depression is not exclusively a medical, spiritual, or emotional issue. However, as the body of Christ, we want to explore the spiritual approach to this sensitive issue and continue to grow in our walk with God.

Let's read Psalm 42

Have you had periods of time when you felt downcast? What do you remember most about those times?

What is the difference between feeling sad and truly battling depression?

What can we learn from David's life when reading the Psalms?

GROW

David was honest and shameless in expressing the range of emotions he felt, and we can read about them throughout the Psalms. As we read through David's struggles, a pattern emerges. David continually expresses himself to God; then reminds himself of God's goodness and strength. David knew the value and power in believing what God says and not losing sight of the truth during difficult and emotional moments.

Let's take a look Psalm 42, in the Message translation.

A white-tailed deer drinks from the creek; I want to drink God, deep draughts of God. I'm thirsty for God-alive. I wonder, "Will I ever make it-arrive and drink in God's presence?" I'm on a diet of tears - tears for breakfast, tears for supper. All day long people knock at my door, pestering, "Where is this God of yours?" These are the things I go over and over, emptying out the pockets of my life. I was always at the head of the worshipping crowd, right out in front, leading them all, eager to arrive and worship, shouting praises, singing thanksgiving-celebrating all of us, God's feast! Why are you down in the dumps, dear soul? Why are you crying the blues? Fix my eyes on God - soon I'll be praising again. He puts a smile on my face. He's my God. When my soul is in the dumps, I rehearse everything I know of you, from the Jordan depths to Hermon heights, including Mount Mizar. Chaos calls to chaos, to the tune of whitewater rapids. Your breaking surf, your thundering breakers crash and crush me. Then God promises to love me all day, sing songs all through the night! My life is God's prayer. Sometimes I ask God, my rock-solid God, "Why did you let me down? Why am I walking around in the tears, harassed by enemies?" They're out for the kill, these tormentors with their obscenities, taunting day after day, "Where is this God of yours?" Why are you down in the dumps, dear soul? Why are you crying the blues? Fix my eyes on God - soon I'll be praising again. He puts a smile on my face. He's my God.

Is there a section of this Psalm that stands out to you? If so, why?

As our situations begin to feel overwhelming or exhausting, we can purposefully look back to the past when God showed himself faithful in tough situations. If you are just starting in your relationship with God, or have not had the opportunity to see Him work in your life for very long, use these times to start to believe with faith that God is who He says He is. Proclaim God's word and truth over your life and heart, and trust that He will do what He says he will do. These are the promises of God that we can cling to.

For those of us who have followed Jesus for a while, what story would you want to share about God's faithfulness in tough times?

Do you try to keep a journal or a sort of "God File" of how God has worked in your life?

MOVE

As Chad talked about, when we are faced with depression, or someone we love is dealing with it, we have two choices. We can either be agents of grace, or we can be agents of judgment who make people who are dealing with depression want to hide all the more in shame. Instead of judging others, let's ask God how we can help be agents of grace and a listening ear.

Read Psalm 3:3, 34:17, 40:1-3 Philippians 4:6,7 and 1 Peter 4:12-13

We must not forget that Jesus walked this earth as a human, and experienced real life and all the difficulties and temptations that we have experienced. Our God is a God who can empathize with our weaknesses. We are not alone, but it is up to us to reach out to Him, and to seek the help we need.

What are some important truths found in the scriptures we just read?

What can we learn from the scriptures and the people in the Bible about the Lord's heart for those who struggle with depression?

PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other, especially for the struggles that people might be facing today. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men's and women's groups to talk more freely.

TO GO.

1 Peter 5:7

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.