

Mastermind

Week 3 | Rising Together

BOTTOM LINE

Commit to lean in, even when it's uncomfortable.

GOAL OF THE GROUP

In response to the statement "There is hope and you are not alone" we will discuss navigating the idea of walking with someone on their journey of mental health.

SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Share:** Talk about an opportunity you have had to step into someone's struggle with mental health. Has there been a time when you leaned in (even if it was uncomfortable)? Has there been a time you avoided or pulled away because it felt like too much?
2. Paul took the gospel to many different people groups, was highly intelligent, and likely spoke multiple languages. These things point to his strengths. But he also knew what it was to feel weakness. He had many critics and opponents who would boast of their own abilities, strengths and expertise. Has there been a time when you were made to feel weak as others boasted of their own strengths?
3. **Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 and Discuss:**
 - a. Paul describes a "thorn in his flesh" which he pleaded with God to take away. Can you speculate what he might have been referring to? Do you have something you plead with God to take away from you because it makes you feel weak?
 - b. Many people feel desperate and weak at the same time when someone they care about is suffering with their mental health. Practical passivity doesn't mean you don't feel desperate to help...it means that in your desperation you don't know how to help so you remain passive. Based on what Paul says in verse 9, where can you get your strength (wisdom, courage, care) when you feel weak? Has there been a time you experienced that kind of strength?
 - c. Maybe you have tried to engage with someone in a healthy way but it just hasn't gone well. Are you done? Will you come back and try again? Maybe you truly do not know how to help. Read verse 10 and share what it means to be weak and strong.
4. Recognizing our own limits is important in walking with someone through mental health difficulties. It's OK to feel insecure. It's imperative to lean on God's strength and not your own. But it is helpful to commit to some specific actions. Discuss the following applications:
 - a. I will lean in, when it would be easier to pull away.
 - *Is there someone you are leaning away from by withholding difficult questions?
 - *Are you privately hoping someone else will have the conversation with someone else?
 - *What personal insecurities do you need to name that are keeping you locked into practical passivity?
 - b. I will ask how I can help and follow-through.
 - *Ask. Listen. Respond. Repeat.
 - c. I will not be the fixer, but rather become a listener.
 - *You can't fix it.
 - *You can't control it.
 - *You can respond and be present.

Did you know that Kensington offers care programs and resources for children, teens and adults?

Go to kensingtonchurch.org/care to learn more.



TRY THIS

Pray: God show me how to implement these commitments:

I will lean in, when it would be easier to pull away.

I will ask how I can help and follow-through.

I will not be the fixer, but rather become the listener.

Mastermind

Week 2 | Unbridled Honesty

BOTTOM LINE

There is hope. You are not alone.

GOAL OF THE GROUP

To talk about mental health in an effort to reduce the stigma, acknowledge what is happening around us and come together as a community.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 26:38-39, 2 Corinthians 1:3-5, and Romans 8:18-21

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Share:** The church has often been silent on the topic of mental health. Both culturally and in the church, there seems to be a deep stigma around this topic. Do you agree? If so, why do you think it exists?
2. **Read Matthew 26:38-39 and Discuss:**
 - a. Often, the assumption is that if God is good, He shouldn't allow people to suffer. Talk about a time you wrestled with this thought or heard someone else express this tension.
 - b. Clearly Jesus is suffering and crying out to God. If God doesn't answer Jesus by removing the pain and sorrow, can He still be considered "good"? Explain.
 - c. At the foundation of our faith is a God who made himself like us and then endured suffering for us. If God doesn't promise to remove suffering, what has He promised?
3. **Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 and Discuss:**
 - a. Paul wrote about half of the New Testament and brought the gospel to many areas of the world. And he knew about suffering. He was imprisoned, shipwrecked, beaten, and robbed, just to name a few. He also refers to a "thorn in his flesh" which likely describes a chronic infirmity or illness. In these verses Paul is not speculating about how God comforts, he has experienced it himself. Have you ever experienced God's comfort in the midst of suffering?
 - b. Just as God doesn't always respond to our suffering by removing it or by promising that it will go away, but by comforting us in it, how can we keep this in mind when we have the opportunity to offer comfort to others?
 - c. Many people will admit they draw closest to God in a time of trial or suffering. Can you relate to that?
4. **Read Romans 8:18-21 and Discuss:** We wish we could address an issue like Mental Health and somehow solve all of the problems and remove all of the pain and suffering. We cannot. But we can commit to helping remove the stigma by talking about it, and we can point to hope. What stands out in these verses that offer you hope?

THINK ABOUT

Did you know that Kensington offers care programs and resources for children, teens and adults?
To learn more, go to
kensingtonchurch.org/care



TRY THIS

We all desire to be a community that actively loves our neighbor. If you would like to gain some practical knowledge about the mental health issues that affect 1 in 5 people in the US, check out any of this 7-part video series. Go to kensingtonchurch.org/rightnowmedia, set up your free RightNow Media account, and search for "Silent Images".

Mastermind

Week 1 | Uniquely Wired

BOTTOM LINE

Your life moves in the direction of your thoughts.

GOAL OF THE GROUP

To spend some time talking about your mind and how powerful it is over your life.

SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 and Romans 12:1-2

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Share:** If asked "What are you thinking about right now?" How would you honestly answer? And further, how are those particular thoughts affecting your emotions right now?
2. **Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 and Discuss:**
 - a. Paul talks about waging war, demolishing strongholds, and taking captives. The people of Corinth would be familiar with this military terminology. When he talks about the weapons we fight with, obviously he was not talking about swords and spears. He talks about the weapons having divine power. Have you ever felt you were in a battle where physical weapons would be of no use and you needed to rely on the kinds of weapons that have divine power? Share an example.
 - b. In verse 5 Paul talks about taking thoughts captive and making them obedient to Christ. Can we really take our own thoughts captive? If this is something you practice, can you explain it at a practical level?
 - c. A stronghold could be described as: anything that would divert or deflect our mind away from God's truth. What are some strongholds you find yourself battling against?
3. **Read Romans 12:1-2 and Discuss:**
 - a. Your mind is part of your body. Re-read verse 1 and put the word "mind" in place of "body". Which seems more challenging to you...offering your **body** as a living sacrifice, or your **mind**? Explain.
 - b. Through modern technology and advances in neuroscience, it has been proven that it is possible to change/renew the mind! Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to restructure itself after *training and practice*, thereby creating new neuropathways in the human brain.
What does *training* and *practice* look like when it comes to the mind? What are some practices that can renew your mind?
4. **Your life moves in the direction of your thoughts.** Also, you have the ability to think about your thoughts. Look at these action steps together and decide if you can commit to trying any. Plan to share with the group next time if you implemented any of these:
 - **Identify current strongholds:** Am I angry, lonely, fearful? What lies am I believing?
 - **Be an observer and gatekeeper of your thoughts:** Don't let random thoughts wander unchecked. Journal the process of your thoughts and observations. Look for patterns that are building unhealthy brain pathways.
 - **Redesign and reframe toxic thoughts towards healthy thinking:** Label the thought and the emotion it's creating, choose to reframe toxic thoughts into something that is moving you in the direction that Jesus is calling you towards. Use the imaginative power of your mind to discover what truth God wants to replace toxic thoughts with.

Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your **mind**.' Matthew 22:37



TRY THIS

*There is a neuroscience of religion known as **neurotheology** which attempts to explain religious experience and behavior in neuroscientific terms. Religion is often cast in opposition to science. Yet both are deeply rooted in the inner workings of the human brain. Sound interesting? Google it to learn more!*