

Reflection on the impact of COVID on mental health and emotional well being

We are going to spend the next few moments thinking about and praying about the impact of COVID on people's mental health and emotional wellbeing. I am going to make a few comments about the current situation, then share some promises and then finish in prayer.

These are extraordinary and unparalleled times across our communities, nation and the world. The impact that these challenges have created cannot be underestimated. There is also the recognition that people's experience of Lockdown can be very different. Some people have hardly been affected at all, whilst others' lives have been devastated by COVID.

Some have been working at home and some have been working more on the frontline. Some have thrived in this time of change and a new way of 'being', whilst others have really struggled.

Consequently, it can seem like a 'Corona roller coaster' of feelings and experiences with all its highs and lows, comfortable and uncomfortable emotions, opportunities and disappointments.

Even before COVID, there were many individuals and families who were impacted by bereavement, complex needs, poverty, job losses, uncertainty, loneliness, chronic ill health, mental health needs,women, children and men feeling unsafe in their own homes,women, children and men as victims of a range of abuse; for many the pressure of Lockdown has accentuated this.

For some there has also been much loss since LOCKDOWN – loss shown in many different ways.....the anguish of bereavement for those who have died and not being able to say goodbye in a way they would have wanted.....separation from those who are elderly, those who are new born..... unrealised dreams and unmet expectations. With this has come increased isolation and loneliness.

You may recognise some of what I have just mentioned - for yourself, family, friends or colleagues.

All of this can affect your sense of safety and security regardless of how 'strong' you may feel - your identity and role, your social network and connections, and your sense of competence and achievement - as well, as confidence in your own decision making.

Core beliefs, values and faith can seem vulnerable - and a lack of control and influence, can generate strong feelings of anger and frustration; this can often be out of a sense of unfairness, wanting justice and your voice to be heard.

Fear and anxiety are natural responses when we are unable to predict something - although this does not always make it easier.

Again, these may sound familiar to you or others you know.....and that's 'ok'.

Tolerating uncertainty is like walking up a mountain – find your own pace and keep going, step by step and pause every so often to see how far you have come.

We need to show compassion and kindness to ourselves as well as others; to be forgiving to ourselves as well as others - allowing for mistakes to be made by ourselves and by others.

Someone once said, you will have courage because you will have hope.

People of Hope can have a combination of willpower, waypower, waitpower. I believe we need all three at the present time.

God is not expecting us to rescue ourselves. He is the one who promises to redeem any situation. God will never change his mind about his promises – they are covered by oaths and a covenant - a rock solid guarantee. Grab hold of these promises with both hands and never let go. As we consider his faithfulness today, may we walk faithfully to our next place of promise tomorrow.

Here are some biblical promises and guidance about the mind and emotions

My mind is held in you. Clothe my mind in Christ – claim who I am, what I am and what I have in Christ as his child.

..... and the peace of God which goes beyond anything I can imagine, will guard my heart and mind as a I live in Christ Jesus

For God has not given me a spirit of fear but of power, love and sound judgement

God asks us to fit every loose thought and emotion and impulse into the structure of life shaped by Christ

*Lean on, trust and be confident in the Lord with **all your heart and mind and do not rely on your own insight or understanding.***

*I want you woven into a tapestry of love, in touch with everything there is to know of God.
Then you will have minds confident and at rest, focused on Christ*

The following prayer is taken from the first two verses of a song, titled – *Do little things with great love* – written by The Porters Gate.

Let's pray....

*In the garden of our saviour, no flower grows unseen.
His kindness rains like water on every humble seed.
No simple act of mercy escapes his watchful eye.
For there is one who loves me, his hand is over mine.*

*In the kingdom of the heavens, no suffering is unknown.
Each tear falls is holy, each breaking heart a throne.
There is a song of beauty in every weeping eye.
For there is one who loves me.
His heart it breaks with mine.*

As you pray now in your own homes, bring to Jesus all that is fear filled, confused and broken in people's minds, emotions and relationships. Ask for a spirit of clarity and healing as we are each held by The Trinity – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

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