

Shepherding and Mental Health

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Discussion

What kind of mental health struggles are being faced in your church?



Three lives...

- Susie
- Georgio
- Kathy

Mental illness...

- Hurts
- Common
- Personal



Mental health (WHO)



Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community

A mental health crisis

Charity MIND's figures

- 1 in 4 experience a mental health problem each year
- 1 in 6 report a common mental health problem in any given week





Anti-depressant use...

1991 nine million anti-depressant prescriptions

2001 24.3 million

2011 46.7 million (9% annual rise)

2021 83.4 million

- 16% of adults receive a prescription annually
- (1 in six of the UK population)





Fundamental questions

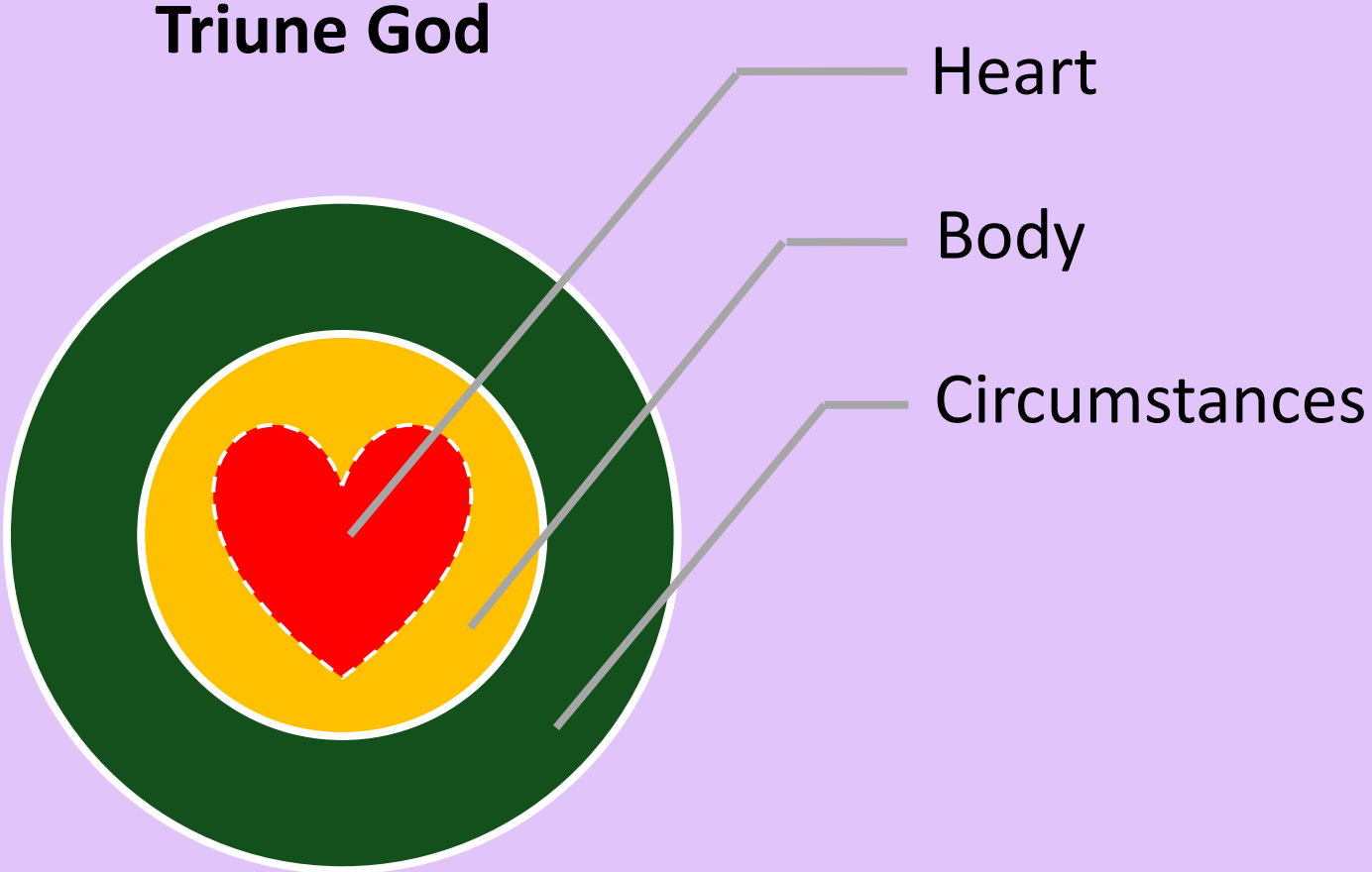
- What is a person?
- What goes wrong with us?
- What puts us right?
- What is the goal of life?

Steven Hyman, NIMH



We psychiatrists have been given an impossible task. Our medications are sometimes able to alleviate symptoms, though they often come with side effects. But we cannot give people what they really need. People need meaning and relationship.

A model: creation and fall



Connections

Depression...despair...& *hope*

Anxiety...fear...& *a father who cares for us*

PTSD...safety...& *security in the Lord*

Addictions...powerlessness...& *slavery to sin*



An opportunity for church

To care for the flock

To show God's word is powerful in all circumstances

To witness to a wider world

Acts 2

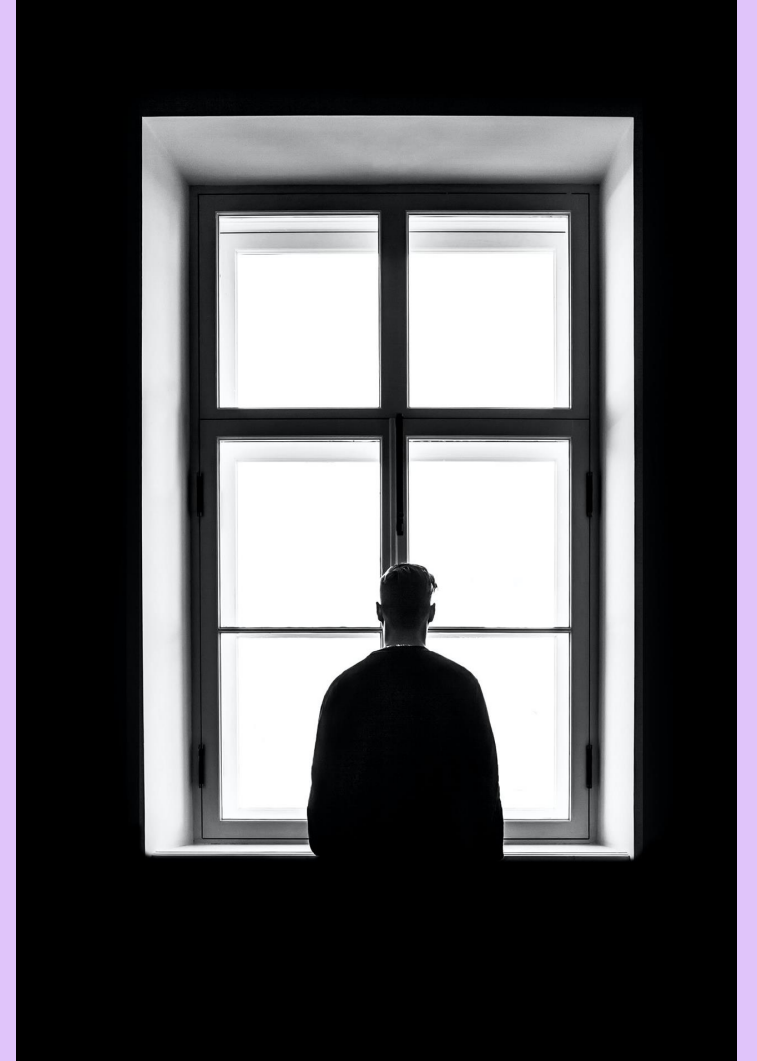


Discussion

- What are some of the barriers to care?
- What are some of the questions that remain about why caring should be part of our gospel call?

Barriers

- Stigma
- Conceptual issue
 - Not church business
 - Spiritual / psychological divide
- Struggling to connect the Bible
- Feeling deskilled & untrained
- Lack expertise – ‘leave it to experts’
- Fear of doing harm
- Too time consuming



Changing culture

- The gospel is for the needy...

*But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.
(1 Corinthians 1:27)*



Raising Awareness

- Accept the normality of brokenness – model a life of dependence
- Set a tone of appropriate openness – in the general ups and downs
- Avoid the miracle of the church car park
- Use testimonies / bookstalls / posters to raise awareness
- Normalise praying together after services for tough life circumstances
- Apply sermons to everyday situations over coffee

What awareness-raising already exists in your church?



Relating Well

- More similar than different
- Move towards one another
- Keen to listen – to see the person beyond the diagnosis
 - What does that feel like?
 - Can you tell me more?
 - What's been hardest this week?
- Boundaries – articulated and kind

What are some of the challenges in setting boundaries?





Structuring carefully

- The God who bears responsibility
- The leader who equips for care
- The congregation who service
- With wise policies
- Everyone confident they can do something – no-one thinking they are equipped to do everything

Ephesians 4. What structure questions do you have?



Reading the Bible in Small Ways

- Short passages
- More narrative and poetry than proposition and argument
- Explore rather than teach
- Ask only a few simple, familiar questions
- Engage the heart (does this passage bring comfort or hope?)
- Explore the how (how does this passage help?)
- Add in brief testimony

Remembering Identities

- Rooting in who God is
 - It matters
 - Metaphor over proposition (most of the time)
- Rooting in who we all are in Christ
 - Ephesians 1
 - Christ defines us – struggles don't

Ephesians 1



Replacing old self with new

Helping each other focus on what's true

- I'm all alone – Psalm 139
- I can't carry on – Exodus 16
- I'm guilty – the cross
- It's all out of control – Genesis 35-50
- There is no hope – Revelation 21-22

What other narratives could you tell?



Rota-ing Practical Support

- Meals
- Lifts
- Paperwork
- Dog walks
- Trips to appointments

(With lots of delegation along the way)



Persevering in helping

- With corporate confidentiality – and plenty of rest
- For the glory of God and the good of those around
- Until we see real change – until it's right to pass the privilege on - or until we have helped our friend keep limping until the Lord calls them home

What steps might you take to avoid exhaustion in this privilege of caring for others well?

Any questions?