

My Little Pink Pill: Reflections on Mental Health

Personal Story

-Effexor- SNRI- serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor

-spiritual grounding, supportive spouse, some friends, some family, counselling, medication

Not Always Finding My Place in the Church Story

-people think? judged? found lacking? bombarded with solutions? non-human spirituality?

- silent sufferers > shame- something wrong with me
- triggered by church > unsafe place to be
- bad advice personally or from pulpit > guilt- I did something wrong

-can Bible Study and prayer alone cure mental illness? (LifeWay Research- Nashville US)

-48% agreed; 47% disagreed; 5% not sure

-reveal my struggle > not living victorious Christian life, don't trust Bible/prayer, etc.

-irony? hyper non-human spirituality drives us away from church and from God

Always Finding My Place in the Canadian Cultural Story

- in any given year, 1 in 5 experiences a mental health or addiction problem
- mental illness issues 3-4 times higher in lower income; homeless 23-67% more
- cost- over \$50 billion annually- health care, lost productivity, reduced quality of life
- given week in Canada- 500,000 out of work due to mental illness
- anxiety most prevalent mental illness in Canada
- 1 in 4 have some kind of anxiety disorder in their life time

(From Anxiety Disorders Association of Canada and Center for Addiction and Mental Health)

Always Finding My Place in God's Story (Psalm 139:1-18)

You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. ²You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. ³You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. ⁴Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely. ⁵You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. ⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. ⁷Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? ⁸If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. ⁹If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. ¹¹If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," ¹²even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. ¹³For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. ¹⁵My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. ¹⁷How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! ¹⁸Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand—when I awake, I am still with you.

Finding My Place in the Human Story Under God

-Physical Relational Emotional Actions Cognitions History Environment Spiritual

-mental illness- changes in **e**motions, **a**ctions, and **c**ognitions, associated with significant distress, and impaired functioning

-**EAC** influenced by and influence **P**hysical, **R**elational, **H**istory, **E**nvironment, **S**piritual

-God knows and loves humans with mental illness > gives strength and provides a model

Reflecting on Fear

1. Fear is a response to a known and specific threat or danger that is real or imagined. In contrast, anxiety is usually more free floating and does not have a specific object or event in focus. When you think of how you use words like fear, afraid, uptight, nervous, anxious, worried, etc., do you accurately distinguish between fear and anxiety?

2. Fairly recent Canadian research carried out by Canadian Cancer Society published the following list of fears for men and women.

Top 5 fears for men

- Snakes (33%)
- Heights (31%)
- Public speaking (28%)
- Spiders (21%)
- Tight spaces (20%)
- Natural disasters (20%)

Top 5 fears for women

- Snakes (46%)
- Spiders (40%)
- Natural disasters (40%)
- Mice/rats (38%)
- Heights (37%)
- Public speaking (37%)

Do you see yourself in these lists? Do you have other fears that do not appear on the lists?

3. Fear often relates to our genetics, environment, experiences, and overall history. When you think of your fears can you trace them back to particular situations where they began?

4. Fear centers around our emotions, actions, and cognitions—what we feel, what we do, and what we think. When you think of your fears can you articulate these three components of each fear?

5. It is interesting that there are so many references to ‘fear not’ in the Bible. Of course the Bible is not suggesting that all we have to do is plug in those verses and all our fears will disappear. Often in our maturing process it is a slow, gradual evolution to get to the point where our fears, while still real, are not debilitating or destabilizing.

Read these biblical passages and ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the nature of the fear?
- How is the fear addressed?
- What is the implication of this passage for your own fear(s)?

Deuteronomy 3:22; 31:6

Joshua 1:9

Isaiah 35:4; 41:10; 43:1

Psalms 23:4; 27:1; 56:3-4; 118:6

Proverbs 29:25

Mark 6:50

John 14:27

I Peter 3:14