



## The Secret Lives of Almost Everyone Week Four

### Important Note For All Groups

We will talk more about this as we go on, but as we move through our time together let's remember that our group doesn't exist to solve or fix people's problems.

### Opening Prayer

God, help us to encounter you and your love today. Help us to make the most our time with you and one another today.

### Psalm 13:1-2 (NIV)

This week's talk centered on the topic of depression and anxiety. According to the Center for Disease Control, almost half of U.S. adults will develop at least one mental illness in their lifetime and one out of every four Americans experience mental health issues in a given year.

- Have you ever personally suffered from depression, anxiety, or another mental illness?
- Have you ever walked along someone who suffers from depression, anxiety, or another mental illness? What was that experience like?

### Read 2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV)

It's important for us to understand the topic of mental illness often carries an ignorant and negative stigma. For example, it's not uncommon for us to say someone is "crazy" simply because we don't understand them, dislike them, or disagree with them. In the church world, sometimes well intentioned people contribute to the problem by telling people to "pray away" their mental illness or attributing mental illness to a matter of "needing more faith". Well intended believers have also misquoted scriptures — like the one we just read — to say God has given those in the faith a "sound mind" so there is no room for mental illness. (Most translations of the Bible actually translate "sound mind" to "self control" because it's a more accurate interpretation of the original language and both very consistent with the rest of the message of the Bible.)

- When you don't like someone, disagree with them, or don't understand them, what is your initial reaction most often? Where did this propensity come from?
- What would be a healthy, kind, compassionate, intelligent, and wise approach to use when you don't like someone, disagree with them, or don't understand them?
- Have you ever been a part of a conversation where someone tried to solve or make sense of an issue by dropping a prepackaged Christian, Jesus, or religious line? What was that experience like?

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### Read Isaiah 53:3 (NLT)

The Bible doesn't dismiss sorrow and pain. In fact, while Jesus didn't suffer from depression, Jesus himself was not always happy. He was deeply familiar with sorrow and grief. He was also regularly present with people who we were hurting. Through the life of Jesus, we learn about God's posture towards pain and suffering.

Jesus also teaches us that a faith community must welcome and love those who struggle. Jesus showed us that “it’s okay to not be okay” — whether it’s clinical depression, clinical anxiety, another other mental illness, or we are just having a rough time in life for some known or unknown reason.

- Do you know someone who is really good at being with people in their pain and sorrow? Tell us about this person.
- How hard or easy is it for you to be with someone in their pain and sorrow? Why is that the case?
- Have you ever experienced Jesus comfort in your pain and sorrow firsthand?

### **Read Romans 12:15 and Matthew 5:4 (NIV)**

Despite our urge to “fix” those who are struggling, our job as believers is to empathize, comfort, and encourage people who are hurting.

- Is it hard or easy for you to empathize, comfort, and encourage people when they are hurting?
- Have you ever been confronted with a well intended person who tried to fix you or your issues? What was that experience like?
- Are you prone to try and fix people? If so, what is your motivation?
- What are some tips or tools we can practice in our efforts to focus on empathy, comfort, and encouragement?

### **Read Psalm 139:23-24**

God invites us to be honest about our pain with ourselves and with God. Mental and emotional health is not about our “strength” or our ability to “handle” things. Inner health is not an indication of weakness; in fact, knowing when to admit you have a problem and when you need help is wise, healthy, and courageous.

- Is it hard for you to admit you're hurting? Why or why not?
- Have you ever struggled with feeling weak when you're hurting? Where did you learn this message?

### **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NLT) and Romans 8:17-19 (NLT)**

As all of us grow in our healing, it’s important we remember we are spirit, soul, mind, and body. Each aspect of our life matters. Along these lines, we must remember to embrace the reality that our illness is not our identity. Our issues may affect our lives in real ways, but our issues don’t to define us. Our identity and purpose can be found in Jesus.

- When is it hardest for you to find your identity in God?
- How does remembering your true identity help you face your issues, illness, limits, etc?
- What are some tips or tools we can use to help remember our identity is found in God?

### **Closing Prayer**

God, you know our struggles, our issues, our hurts, habits, and hang ups. Help us to get honest with ourselves and you about the stuff we struggle with. Help us to get the help we need and to find remember that our identity is found in you.