Grace for the Afflicted

Discussion Guide

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INTRODUCTION
Why We Wrote This Discussion Guide ................................................................................ 7
INTRODUCTION

Thank you so much for downloading our Grace for the Afflicted Discussion Guide! Whether you are sitting in the pew each week while silently living with a mental health challenge, trying to support someone who does, or believe mental illness doesn’t affect you....this is for you. We wrote this guide to help individuals and churches not just broaden their perspective about mental health, but USE their perspective to help themselves and others. We believe it will play an integral role in reducing stigma within yourself, your family, as well as your congregation and community.

Although simply reading Grace for the Afflicted on its own provides helpful biblical and scientific knowledge, we believe combining it with self-reflection and group discussion will help you apply that knowledge. We have structured each week of the Discussion Guide to include:

• How to Prepare
• Key Scriptures
• Key Statement
• Self-Reflection
• Group Discussion Questions

While we developed this Guide to be used in a small group setting, we believe completing the Self-Reflection section ahead of time enhances the discussion. At the beginning of your group, feel free to make time for people to share if they wish!

We cannot wait for you to start this journey toward an integrated perspective on mental health! If you’re interested in learning more, please visit www.mentalhealthgateway.com. You will find practical tools, like our Transformed Group curricula, that can help your congregation support those who live with mental health challenges and their families. We’d love to keep you updated as we introduce new tools and resources and be sure to connect with us and let us know how you enjoyed our Grace for the Afflicted Discussion Guide.

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Week One
Week One: Chapter One
FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE

How to Prepare:
Read Chapter 1 of Grace for the Afflicted and complete the Week 1 Self-Reflection.

Key Scriptures:
• Psalm 139:14
• Genesis 1:26
• Luke 2:52
• John 9:1-3
• 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Key Statement
Since God created us as a multipart being (spiritual, mental, physical, and relational), any dysfunction or disorder in one facet of ourselves negatively affects all levels of our being.

Self-Reflection
• While group discussion is important (after all, this is a “Discussion Guide”), taking the time to reflect allows for more personal growth. Use this time to process what you learned after reading the chapter. After reading Chapter 1, what did you learn about God? Yourself? Others?

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• Psalm 139 is a beautiful illustration of our intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father. Read it in its entirety, and list 3 things this passage states about God’s greatest creation, mankind.

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• Read the following quote from Chapter 1: “Biological defects and weaknesses do not go away by themselves, no matter how much we want them to or have faith that they will” (page 14). What have you wanted to will away? What does it look like to give that up to God and trust? How can you embrace it and grow?

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Open the discussion group by reading the Key Statement for the week. Ask for everyone’s first impressions, and allow room if anyone wants to share insights from their Self-Reflection. Now let’s start the discussion!

1. Read the following quote from Chapter 1: “The Scriptures tell us that in Christ we have everything we need for life and godliness, correct? So can you explain to me why Anna’s bipolar disorder and her dependence on medication is not an issue of weak faith or sin?” (page 3). What was your first reaction to the question? What preconceived ideas or beliefs do you have about mental illness?

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2. Describe the effects of sin on the four facets of the self:

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3. Read Luke 2:52. This verse outlines the four facets of the self: Physical, Mental, Spiritual, and Relational. How can you actively love God with all facets of yourself? What can your faith community do to holistically care for all facets of the self?

Physical: ____________________________________________________________________________

Mental: _____________________________________________________________________________

Spiritual: __________________________________________________________________________

Relational: __________________________________________________________________________
4. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. **How have you seen God’s power work through your weaknesses? How did your faith grow? What does this portion of Scripture teach us about handling the difficult areas in our lives and in others?**

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5. Read Ephesians Chapter 1. **What are 3 key truths we can give to our fellow believers who are living with mental illness?**

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How to Prepare:
Read Chapter 2 of Grace for the Afflicted and complete the Week 2 Self-Reflection.

Key Scriptures:
- Matthew 4:1-11
- Acts 10:38
- 1 John 4:4
- Ephesians 6:10-17
- 1 Peter 5:8-9

Key Statement
“In the end, the root cause of an infirmity doesn’t seem to matter to the biblical authors as much as the fact that Christ is sovereign over illness, whether or not it has demonic origins” (page 24).

Self-Reflection
- James 5:13-16 emphasizes the power of prayer. It shows us our response to any illness or hardship should incorporate prayer. Read this passage, and afterwards write a specific prayer for individuals living with a mental illness for personal use and/or during prayer services and altar calls.

Write your prayer here.
• On page 20, the author teaches us that temptation from Satan may be direct (purposely placed enticement to draw you into sin chosen specifically for your set of weaknesses) or indirect (commonly presented to everyone in a given culture). Write down examples of direct/indirect temptation you have experienced. Which of these temptations are aimed at your mental health, and how are you working to overcome it?

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• As referenced on page 24, Acts 10:38 shows us that God is able to heal all illness, regardless of the origin/cause, but he sometimes chooses not to heal. Instead, he provides sustaining grace to those who turn to him. Joni Eareckson Tada, a Christian author and evangelist who has been a paraplegic for over 50 years, makes a powerful claim that “grace always heals deeper.”\(^1\) What does it look like to accept that sustaining grace in the midst of not receiving healing? Through what hardships in life has God’s grace sustained you?

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1. At the beginning of the chapter, the author tells a true story of a man who interrupted church service by claiming he was Christ. **How would you have responded if a man stood up during the middle of service believing himself to be Jesus? How would your faith community have responded?**

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2. After reading Chapter 2, **what do you believe is the difference between demon possession and demonic influence?**

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3. Some Christians truly believe that all mental illness is caused by the demonic. They believe spiritual practices are the only defense against mental illness, often recommending people to “pray it away”. **What is the danger in believing this? How can this attitude potentially be harmful to someone living with a mental illness?**

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4. In Job 1 and 2, Satan was only permitted to afflict Job as much as God allowed. This demonstrates the sovereignty of God over the adversary and his forces. After reading this section in Job’s story, and this chapter, what do you believe to be an appropriate Biblical response to the question of demonic influence on individuals living with a mental illness?

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5. Using scriptural evidence the author believes that “this fallen world is so contrary to God because of Satan’s control” (page 19). Even though this is true, what are some verses that can bring hope to someone who lives with mental illness?

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Week Three
Week Three: Chapter Three
THE SECULAR AND THE SACRED

How to Prepare:
Read Chapter 3 of Grace for the Afflicted and complete the Week 3 Self-Reflection.

Key Scriptures:
• 1 Samuel 21:12-15
• John 10:20
• Acts 17:11

Key Statement
St. Augustine said, “All truth is God’s truth”, meaning all truths are based in the creative power and majesty of God.

Self-Reflection
• After reading this chapter, especially the section titled “How the Mentally Ill Were Viewed in Biblical Times” (page 38), do you think our society’s attitude about mental health has shifted from Jesus’ time? Why or why not?

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• The author states on page 38, “The simple fact is that Christians develop mental illness at the same rates seen in the general population and admonitions such as ‘you need to pray more’ or ‘this is just the result of a lack of faith’ are ineffective in dealing with this problem.” What would it look like for the church to deal with this more effectively?

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• Looking at the approaches to psychotherapy on pages 42-44, which approach seems the most impactful to you and why?

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1. Discuss the section on pages 39-40 titled, “Scientific Fact and Biblical Truth.” What is an accurate understanding of the relationship between scientific fact and Biblical truth?

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2. Read the story in 1 Samuel 21:12-15 about David pretending to be what the biblical authors describe as “a madman.” Notice King Achish’s response. How is the stigma of mental illness present in this story? How is his response similar/different to our society’s treatment of those who live with mental illness?

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3. On page 40 the author states, “The Scriptures teach us who God is and who we are, but their purpose is not to give us all factual truth.” What can your faith community do to begin to merge the gap between the sacred and the secular?

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4. Read John 10:1-21. After Jesus spoke these truths, in verses 19-21 the Jewish people were divided in their opinion of him, some even accusing him of being “mad”. **Why did they assume he was “mad”?** How do our own biases lead us to judge a person’s thoughts and behaviors, even with the presence of mental illness?

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5. **What preconceived notions (positive or negative) did you have about therapy before reading this chapter?** How would you advise a Christian who is seeking therapy?

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Week Four: Chapter Four
A CAKE OF FIGS

How to Prepare:
Read Chapter 4 of Grace for the Afflicted and complete the Week 4 Self-Reflection.

Key Scriptures:
• 2 Kings 20:1-7
• Mark 7:32-35
• Colossians 1:16-17
• James 1:2-4

Key Statement
God is sovereign in all things, including healing, and we must make wise use of the abundant resources provided to us by a loving God.

Self-Reflection
• On page 50, the author shares five common reasons why people in the Christian community tend to deny the legitimacy of mental disorders. Have you ever been guilty of denying the legitimacy of mental disorders? What has your faith community done to accept its legitimacy?

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• Pages 54-56 reminds us of God’s sovereignty by explaining that God is in control over all things and is the true agent of healing. It can be difficult for people to consistently believe that God is in control, especially those who struggle with health conditions. **How can you share the comfort and wisdom you have gained from this study so far? Write the names of 2 people who would benefit from learning this truth and describe how you will explain it to them.**

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• Read the story of Hezekiah’s illness and recovery in 2 Kings 20:1-7. Notice how Hezekiah was not alone in his illness. The prophet Isaiah came to visit him. Although Isaiah initially came with “bad news,” he heard a word from the Lord and became an instrument (along with Hezekiah’s servants) in God’s plan to heal Hezekiah. People living with mental illness often suffer from loneliness and hopelessness, and could benefit from the loving presence of fellow believers who walk alongside them in their journey. **List 3 ways you can be a healing presence in the life of someone living with mental illness.**

1) __________________________________________________________________________________

2) __________________________________________________________________________________

3) __________________________________________________________________________________
1. As mentioned on page 48, research shows that 25% of Christians who are living with a mental illness or have family members who are mentally ill stated their church either discourages or forbids the use of psychiatric medications. **What impact does this approach have on people who are taking or considering taking medication? What stance should the church have about medication for mental health?**

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2. On pages 48-49 the author highlights the fact that neuroscientists have yet to fully understand the complexity of the brain. **Would having full knowledge affect our attitudes toward mental health? Why or why not?**

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3. The author provided an example of a disorder that has a solely biological origin, Alzheimer’s disease. Even though this disease is not a mental illness, it impacts people in a similar way - causing physical damage to the brain, which then affects a person’s behavior. **How can we be as compassionate toward those with mental illness as we are toward those with Alzheimer’s disease?**

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4. Read James 1:2-4. **What does this passage teach us about persevering through life’s challenges, especially when it relates to illness and suffering?**

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5. The author discusses on page 55 how God used a common treatment of the day to bring about Hezekiah’s recovery. Then read Mark 7:32-35. In this passage, Jesus used his own spittle to heal a deaf man with a speech impediment. **Have you seen God use physical remedies to bring about healing in your life and in the lives of others?**

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**Week Five: Chapters Five - Thirteen**

**CHAPTERS 5-13**

**How to Prepare:**
Week 5 will be a discussion over Chapters 5-13, so divide reading assignments amongst your group. Completing the corresponding Self-Reflection is especially important in this discussion! You do not need to read all nine chapters, just come prepared to talk about the one you read. Feel free to finish the rest at your leisure.

**Key Statement**
“The presence of a mental illness does not alter or thwart the perfect purpose and plan God has for a person’s life” (page 94).

**Self-Reflection**
See Chapters 5-13 for their corresponding Self-Reflection.
Chapter Five
A LOST MIND

Key Scripture:
• Daniel 5:21

Key Statement
Although schizophrenia is a chronic condition that requires lifelong management, it can also be a transformational experience that draws one closer to God.

Self-Reflection
• Please write out the two most surprising facts you learned about the disorder and be ready to share them with the group:

1) __________________________________________________________________________________

2) __________________________________________________________________________________

• Read one of the bible stories that are mentioned in “A Biblical Example” section (pages 73-77). How were God’s purposes still fulfilled in the biblical example of someone experiencing schizoaffective disorder/schizophrenia?

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• Read the excerpt on the first page of chapter 5 by Jennifer, the mother of a son diagnosed with schizophrenia. God specializes in using those considered weak and lesser than by society to accomplish His purposes. How have you seen God use someone that you or others least expected? What biblical examples also demonstrate this fact?

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Chapter Six
TORMENTED

Key Scripture:
• 1 Samuel 22:17

Key Statement
“This situation challenged our view of his goodness, but it was the process of recovery that made his love and security truly real to us all. God has redeemed and strengthened our family” (page 90).

Self-Reflection
• Please write out the two most surprising facts you learned about the disorder and be ready to share them with the group:
  1) ____________________________________________________________________________________
  2) ____________________________________________________________________________________

• Read the bible story mentioned in the “A Biblical Example” section (pages 90-94). How were God’s purposes still fulfilled in the biblical example of someone experiencing bipolar I disorder?
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• Chapter 6 tells the story of a missionary couple, Michael and Linda, who had to leave the mission field to treat Linda’s bipolar disorder. Michael stated that “the worse she became, the more I questioned God’s faithfulness” (page 89). While you may or may not live with bipolar disorder, how can you relate to Michael and Linda’s story? How can we encourage ourselves and one another during difficult times that make us question God’s faithfulness?
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Key Scripture:
- Psalm 6:6-7
- Psalm 38:6-10
- Psalm 13:1-3

Key Statement
“Hope that transcends our circumstances, even depression, is only available in the loving God who created us, sustains us, and made a way for us to be in eternal relationship with him” (page 111).

Self-Reflection
- Please write out the two most surprising facts you learned about the disorder and be ready to share them with the group:
  1) ____________________________________________________________________________________
  2) ____________________________________________________________________________________

- Read the bible story mentioned in the “A Biblical Example” section (pages 106-110). How were God’s purposes still fulfilled in the biblical example of someone experiencing major depressive disorder?
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- Depression is often described as the silent epidemic. Blake states on page 96, “nobody could see how much I was hurting.” Have you ever suffered alone in your pain? How can you be proactive in helping your faith community make sure that no one is suffering alone?
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Chapter Eight
OVERWHELMED

Key Scripture:
• Psalm 94:19
• Isaiah 21:3-4
• Psalm 55

Key Statement
Anxiety is not a sin, but a normal cognitive and physiological response that God designed to call our attention to the seriousness of an event or situation, and motivate us to action.

Self-Reflection
• Please write out the two most surprising facts you learned about the disorder and be ready to share them with the group:
  1) ____________________________________________________________________________________
  2) ____________________________________________________________________________________

• Read the bible story mentioned in the “A Biblical Example” section (pages 124-125). How were God’s purposes still fulfilled in the biblical example of someone experiencing a panic attack?
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• In Psalm 55, King David demonstrates a biblical experience of a panic attack. Read this chapter in its entirety. What parts of David’s experience can you identify with?
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Chapter Nine
BROKEN AND CRUSHED

Key Scripture:
- Deuteronomy 28:34
- Genesis 37:35
- Job 7:3

Key Statement
“Yet in the midst of trauma and tragedy, faith serves as a stabilizing anchor in an ever-changing sea” (page 144).

Self-Reflection
- Please write out the 2 most surprising facts you learned about the disorder and be ready to share them with the group:
  1) ____________________________________________________________________________________
  2) ____________________________________________________________________________________

- Read the bible story mentioned in the “A Biblical Example” section (pages 139-143). How were God’s purposes still fulfilled in the biblical example of someone experiencing posttraumatic stress disorder?
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- Read Job 7:3-4. Job, a man of great faith, experienced multiple traumas in his life that resulted in PTSD symptoms. He suffered through excruciating periods of agony and misery, yet remained honest with God about his pain. Think about a time when you or someone you loved experienced trauma. How did it affect your relationship with God and others?
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Chapter Ten
DISTRESSED AND DESTRUCTIVE

Key Scripture:
• Judges 15:7-8
• Hosea 6:4

Key Statement
“A personality disorder does not disqualify an individual from a relationship with or service to God” (page 166).

Self-Reflection
• Please write out the two most surprising facts you learned about the disorder and be ready to share them with the group:

1) __________________________________________________________________________________

2) __________________________________________________________________________________

• Read the bible story mentioned in the “A Biblical Example” section (pages 161-166). How were God’s purposes still fulfilled in the biblical example of someone experiencing a personality disorder?

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• Personality disorders can be the most isolating due to the serious relational problems they often cause. As mentioned by the author on page 148, they can make it very difficult to form and maintain healthy relationships. How can you support someone who may be living with a personality disorder? How can your faith community offer the same support?

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Chapter Eleven
STRICKEN IN YEARS

Key Scripture:
- 1 Kings 12:6
- Job 12:12
- Leviticus 19:32
- Psalm 71:9
- 2 Samuel 19:32-35

Key Statement
Advanced age is considered a blessing of God, wisdom is attributed to the aged and the young are called to honor, respect, and care for the elderly.

Self-Reflection
- Please write out the two most surprising facts you learned about the disorder and be ready to share them with the group:
  1) ____________________________________________________________________________________
  2) ____________________________________________________________________________________

- Read the bible story mentioned in the “A Biblical Example” section (pages 182-184). How were God’s purposes still fulfilled in the biblical example of someone experiencing dementia?
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- Often elderly people, especially those with dementia, feel as though they are a burden to their family and friends and therefore decline help. But Psalm 71:9 tells us the true cry of those who are aging. From this verse, what should our response always be to the aging in our community? List 3 ways you can help someone in your faith community who is caring for an elderly family member, even someone suffering from dementia:
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Chapter Twelve
STRUCK DOWN BY VIOLENCE

Key Scripture:
• Luke 1:64

Key Statement
The acronym FAST (Face drooping, Arm weakness, Speech difficulty, Time to call 911) is a way to remember the signs of a stroke, and can help toward identifying the onset of stroke.

Self-Reflection
• Please write out the two most surprising facts you learned about the disorder and be ready to share them with the group:

1) ____________________________________________________________________________________

2) ____________________________________________________________________________________

• Read the bible story mentioned in the “A Biblical Example” section (pages 194-200). How were God’s purposes still fulfilled in the biblical example of someone who experienced a cerebrovascular accident?

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• Page 186 tells the story of Frank’s stroke and Joan’s support in his recovery. Notice Frank’s statement, “…It is hard to let someone care for you. God has used this struggle to teach me humility…” How can you identify with Frank? What hard times in your life has God used to teach you humility?

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Chapter Thirteen
THE GOLDEN BOWL

Key Scripture:
• Acts 20:9-12

Key Statement
“Brain disorders are messy things; they don’t fit well into our rigid and highly structured churches” (page 216).

Self-Reflection
• Please write out the two most surprising facts you learned about the disorder and be ready to share them with the group:

1) ____________________________
2) ____________________________

• Read the bible story mentioned in the “A Biblical Example” section (pages 212-215). How were God’s purposes still fulfilled in the biblical example of someone who experienced a traumatic brain injury?

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• Read Acts 20:9-12. Notice Paul’s comforting response to Eutychus, who sustained a head injury, which interrupted service. What steps can you take to follow Paul’s example, and ensure people (not rituals or traditions) remain the central focus of your ministry?

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1. What were the two most surprising facts you learned in the chapter you read?
   1) ___________________________________________________________________________________
   2) ___________________________________________________________________________________

2. While educating ourselves about the symptoms and behaviors associated with mental and neurological disorders can be helpful, using this knowledge to categorize or “fix” others can be counterproductive. How can we protect ourselves from the tendency to self-diagnose or diagnose others?
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3. Chapter 6 begins with a quote from Patty Duke: “my recovery from manic depression has been an evolution, not a sudden miracle.” How do you define recovery? What’s the difference between recovery being an evolution vs. a sudden miracle?
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4. Every chapter tells the story of a family who eventually received help after experiencing a mental health crisis. **What can the church and its members do to prevent these crises and help those experiencing them?**

- Ch. 5 - Read Daniel and Nancy’s story on pages 72-73
- Ch. 6 - Read Mark and Shirley’s story on pages 79-80
- Ch. 7 - Read Brenda and Kelly’s story on pages 104-106
- Ch. 8 - Read Martha and Hannah’s story on pages 123-124
- Ch. 9 - Read Jane and Trey’s story on pages 138-139
- Ch. 10 - Read Cami and Ray’s story on pages 158-161
- Ch. 11 - Read Leslie and Joyce’s story on pages 180-182
- Ch. 12 - Read Meg and Shannon’s story on pages 193-194
- Ch. 13 - Read Brad and Clare’s story on page 212
Week Six
How to Prepare:
Read Chapter 14 of Grace for the Afflicted and complete the Week 14 Self-Reflection.

Key Scriptures:
- 1 Kings 19:1-20
- Job 6:8-11
- Jonah 4:1-11
- Acts 16:25-34
- Ephesians 2:8

Key Statement
“Having faith, even a strong faith, does not guarantee that during times of extreme distress an individual will not consider suicide as a way out” (page 231).

Self-Reflection
- What kind of response does the word “suicide” provoke in you? What factors do you think contribute to this response?

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Week Six: Chapter Fourteen
A FATAL DECISION
• What concerns do you have about asking someone if they are suicidal? How have those concerns been alleviated after reading this chapter?

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• As mentioned on page 228, people are more likely to turn to suicide as a solution when they feel their current situation is completely hopeless. Read Job 6:8-11. What times in your life have you felt the most hopeless, and how did you cope?

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1. Read the account of Elijah’s experience with suicidal ideation in 1 Kings 19:1-9. Prior to his feelings of intense depression and hopelessness, Elijah had shown great courage and faith and was victorious over the prophets of Baal. Soon after, he desperately wished to die. This shows that even righteous and faith-filled believers have dealt with suicidal thoughts. **How does having this understanding help us to not judge those who are struggling with thoughts of suicide?**

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2. As a result of this new understanding, **how can we mirror God’s response to suicidal ideation, and offer comfort instead of condemnation?**

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3. Read the account of Paul and Silas with the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:25-34. They saw the jailer was at risk and became actively involved in preserving his life. **How can your church follow Paul’s example and promote prevention strategies (talking, means restriction, etc.)?**

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4. The way we talk about suicide can help us be better friends, parents, coworkers, Christians, or can unintentionally cause us to alienate people who silently struggle. **How can we respectfully and gracefully talk about suicide?**

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5. Read the following quote from page 220: “sometimes no matter how hard we try, those we love still act on their hopeless feelings and end their lives.” **How do we help those who may be feeling guilty after a loved one dies by suicide?**

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Week Seven
How to Prepare:
Read Chapter 15 of Grace for the Afflicted and complete the Week 15 Self-Reflection.

Key Scriptures:
• Hebrews 11:1
• Psalm 13
• Lamentations 3:21-23
• Romans 5:1-5
• 1 Peter 4:10-11

Key Statement
“The goal of recovery goes far beyond symptom reduction but aims at equipping the individual to live beyond their illness” (pages 234-235).

Self-Reflection
• As quoted on page 233, Robert Frost believed that “the best way out is always through.” How has this been true for you? How has your faith community played a part in helping you through battles you have faced?

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• Page 246 describes how living in community helps meet your spiritual needs, and emphasizes the importance of staying connected to life-giving relationships instead of being bogged down by large gatherings or events. **Who are the trustworthy and supportive people in your life, and how are these relationships life-giving? To whom can you reach out to in order to offer this kind of comfort and support?**

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• Whether you have a diagnosable mental disorder or not, we all can and should be on a journey to better ourselves. **List 5 things that you can do this week to meet your physical, mental, spiritual, or relational needs.**

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2) ____________________________________________________________________________________

3) ____________________________________________________________________________________

4) ____________________________________________________________________________________

5) ____________________________________________________________________________________
1. “Recovery is a process, not a quick fix” (page 237). Many people living with mental illness have heard things like “just pray about it”, “snap out of it”, or “you just have to be strong.” These statements imply that mental illness is a sign of spiritual or emotional weakness, and can be quickly overcome if you do certain things. **How are these statements unhelpful and even harmful? Discuss compassionate and encouraging things you can say to someone throughout their recovery process.**

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2. Beyond offering prayer and Bible study, **how can your faith community adopt a holistic approach to mental health recovery?** How can you uphold this approach with your friends/family who may benefit from this?

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3. Although pages 244-245 discuss the importance of meeting spiritual needs by reminding others that God is faithful, it can be hard for Christians with mental health challenges to receive these truths and emotionally connect to God. **How can we as Christians support our fellow believers, even through seasons of doubt that may be exacerbated by mental illness?**

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4. In order to meet the relational needs of those who are living with mental health challenges, we must overcome the stigma. Page 248 states that “stigma is always born out of fear and misinformation, and can only be overcome by truth and education.” What stigma about mental illness is your faith community still battling against? What will you do after this study to help overcome it?

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5. “An active and supportive faith community cultivates life, while isolation brings frustration and fatigue” (page 246). Faith communities have tremendous built-in strengths that can provide life and hope to those living with a mental health challenge and to their family members. What strengths does your faith community possess, and how can you use those strengths to bring comfort and support?

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How to Prepare:
Read Chapter 16 of Grace for the Afflicted and complete the Week 16 Self-Reflection.

Key Scriptures:
• James 5:14
• Galatians 6:2
• John 13:34
• James 2:14-17
• Romans 12:15

Key Statement
“The involvement of the church in mental health is the missing piece necessary to transform our broken system, making it accessible and more effective” (page 253).

Self-Reflection
• The author states “The Scriptures do not give us qualifiers about who we should minister to; they simply say we should love one another” (page 258). Read John 13:34. What can get in the way of you fulfilling this command? In what ways will you show love to someone living with a mental illness?

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• Look through your previous journal entries and think about your personal journey through this study. How has your attitude toward mental health shifted? How can you share your personal journey to help others also have a clinical and biblical perspective on mental health?

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• After reading this book, what will you do differently if God places a person living with mental illness in your life? How will you let grace be your guide?

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1. Read Galatians 6:2. **How does your faith community currently “bear one another’s burdens”?** What more can you do to bear the burdens of those living with a mental health challenge and their families?

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2. Read James 2:14-17. **What is your faith community’s response to those in need?** How can you ensure your faith community seeks to demonstrate love through meeting the needs of people, even if they are “messy”?

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3. The author discusses the challenges in ministering to individuals affected by mental illness on pages 258-259. **What challenges do you anticipate in this ministry?** How will your faith community overcome them?

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4. In your faith community’s pursuit to promote mental health and wellness, how can it ensure it provides concrete and accessible support instead of disjointed resources that are difficult to access? What is your role in these efforts?

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5. What is your faith community currently doing to become more involved in transforming the mental health care system? Discuss at least 3 more ways your faith community can become “mental health equipped.”

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