



**Educate
+ Engage**



MIND
MATTERS



What Does God have to
Say about Mental Health?

OVERVIEW

Every part of you was created by God and is important to Him, including your mental health. He cares about your thoughts, your emotions, and your experiences. In fact, He created every piece of us to work together for our ultimate purpose: to bear His image. Learning to care for ourselves can help us fulfill that purpose in our lives.

Scripture Passage

Psalms 139: 13–15 (NKJV)

For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

EDUCATE

Mental health is a popular topic right now. We are becoming more aware of how our mental health impacts us and talk about it more frequently. There are also factors in our society that are impacting our mental health in negative ways more than ever before.

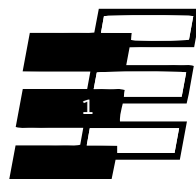
Discussion Question: What does mental health mean to you?

The more we learn about mental health, the more we understand that it involves much more than just our thoughts or mindset. Our bodies, minds, and souls (or "hearts") are all seamlessly woven together to create the whole of who we are. This is not an accident! Every piece of us was intentionally designed by a purposeful God.

Point 1: God created everything about you, and He called it good.

In our key verse today, David praised God for His masterful creation. This phrase sticks out among the others: we were "skillfully wrought." The phrase comes from a word (raqam) that means "to mix colors, to embroider, to curiously work." It paints this beautiful picture of an artist delighting in his creation, taking his time to get every brushstroke or texture just right. Imagine the artist using every ounce of curiosity or creativity he had in the process of making this creation. And that creation is you! He put that amount of thought and care into you.

In Genesis we read about God creating the first humans: "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the



Lesson 1

birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them... Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good..." (Genesis 1:26–27, 31, NKJV).

God not only thoughtfully and purposefully created us, but once He was finished, He reflected that His creation was "very good." His intention was that we would be His image bearers to each other here on earth. His acknowledgement of how good His creation was seems to be a confirmation that He was successful in creating people to be able to reflect Him well.

Point 2: Every part of us is important and helps to bear the image of God.

Each part of us plays a role in reflecting God's image. It is not up to us to decide that parts of us are important, while others are not. Our thoughts are important to God, but so are our emotions and our bodies. It can be tempting to think of your body or your emotions as things that must be endured or dismissed until your soul can get to Heaven, but in fact, every facet of you was fearfully and wonderfully made. God was intentional in His design. He did not create a portion of you that was not intended to reflect Him and His image.

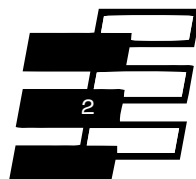
All the pieces of us work together to create a whole being, and the different parts of us constantly work together. We see this reflected in many ways, but here are some examples:

- Our minds work best when our bodies are fueled well, such as when we've had adequate rest, food, and movement. In fact, if you are starving or sleep-deprived, it is almost impossible for your brain to learn anything new.
- Thoughts and feelings are tied together. What we experience emotionally influences how we think, and our thoughts influence how we feel.

Discussion Question: Can you think of a way one part of you (body, mind, soul) influences another?

Point 3: Caring for our mental health means much more than just changing our thoughts.

If every part of us influences each other, then it makes sense that caring for our mental health involves much more than just changing the way we think. Caring for our bodies, understanding how our environment influences us, and tending to our emotions are all vital parts of improving our mental health. Our thoughts matter, but changing our thoughts often starts with these other factors.



Lesson 1

The beautiful part about God's design for our lives is that the further we go in relationship with Him, the more we understand the depth of His love and care for us. He desires goodness for us. As we become more like Him, we begin to reflect that same love and care to others, but also to ourselves. We understand more and more that our worth comes from His love toward us and not who we are by ourselves. This allows us to treat ourselves as vessels of the Holy Spirit worthy of honor and care.

Caring for ourselves does not just mean emotionally, but physically, relationally, and spiritually as well. We can care for our physical bodies by getting adequate sleep and eating well. We can pay attention to the experiences we have in our bodies and notice when something needs to change. For example, if we are feeling anxious and notice that our bodies are tense, our heart is beating fast, and our breathing is shallow, then we can take a few moments and focus on deep breathing and calming our bodies.

We can care for our emotions by attending to them well. This does not mean ignoring them or dismissing them, but it does not mean becoming consumed by them either. Attending to an emotion means to be with an emotion rather than to be an emotion. We can acknowledge what we are feeling and the importance of what it is telling us without drowning in the emotion.

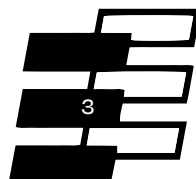
We can care for our relational selves by prioritizing healthy, godly relationships. We need other people! We were not created to do life alone. Taking time for friendships to grow and setting boundaries in those friendships as needed is important.

We can care for our spiritual selves by taking time daily to reflect on God and His word. We cannot grow spiritually without taking time to get to know God more deeply. It is not just to check off a to-do list, but rather it is to allow us time to reflect on God's character and abide in His promises. As we grow in prayer, our spiritual selves grow stronger and more integrated with every other aspect of our lives.

As we turn all of this care toward ourselves, our mental health follows. Our relationships improve, our emotions are easier to walk through, and our thoughts are easier to navigate. God desires for us to be whole. While we will never reach this goal in its entirety on this side of Heaven, we get closer and closer as we pursue God in His fullness.

Discussion Question: What is one way you could care for yourself better right now in each of these areas: physically, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually?

For the teacher, here are some ideas to help prompt discussion:



Lesson 1

Physically

- Create a sleep schedule to sleep at least 8 hours per night.
- Drink more water throughout the day.
- Move your body through walking or exercise daily.

Emotionally

- Journal your emotions throughout the week without filtering them first.
- Take a moment to quietly reflect on how you are feeling at set points throughout your day.

Relationally

- Take time to reflect on which interactions “fill your cup” or “drain your cup.”
- Take time to call a friend or hang out with them in person this week.

Spiritually

- Take time to read your Bible with no end goal in mind besides spending time with God.
- Listen to worship music at a time you normally wouldn't.

Closing

Self-care through a Christian lens does not mean treating yourself because you deserve it. Rather, it means caring for yourself because God cares for you. It is not always luxurious or fun (such as putting yourself to bed early because you need rest). But it is worth it, because it allows us to be the best version of who God has called us to be. Improved mental health is a side effect of becoming more like Christ, not just the end goal.

ENGAGE

Take some time to journal this week either in your phone, laptop, or a physical journal. Reflect on these questions:

- What does God think about my thoughts and feelings?
- Have I allowed God's love toward me to transform how I treat myself?
- Reflect on Psalm 139 and God's intentionality in your life.

