Caregiver SUPPORT

DISCUSSION GUIDE #02

Is My Loved One's Mental Illness My Fault?

Because of Jesus, God does not deal with us according to our sins.

WELCOME

» Welcome attendees, look for newcomers and acknowledge them specifically

» Share the group's mission statement:

This is a safe and judgment-free environment where caregivers can find support, encouragement, and help to lift their eyes to Christ.

» Review guidelines for the meeting:

  » Begin and end at set times

  » Respect time allotted for sharing, set by facilitator

  » What is shared in the meetings is confidential, unless it involves abuse of a minor

  » Offer an empathetic and respectful ear to others

WHAT THIS GROUP IS

  » A place to biblically care for the caregivers

  » A place to bring the hope of the gospel to their situations

  » A place to pray for God to meet and bless them with the hope of the gospel

  » A place to listen, to hear struggles, and give help from the bible

  » A place to encourage

WHAT THIS GROUP IS NOT

  » A place to deal with 'patient care' solutions and diagnosis for your loved one

  » A place to give direction for patient care for your loved one

  » A place to hear answers to 'fix' your loved one and the situation you have

  » A place to share political opinions

» Open in prayer

» Encourage group to share current situations (3 minutes). Be sensitive to new attendees.

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QUESTION

Our question for discussion tonight is, “Is my loved one’s mental illness (or other illness/disability) my fault?” Let’s read John 9:1-7 (ESV).

> *As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world.” Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man’s eyes with the mud and said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.*

DISCUSSION

When hard things happen it’s a common temptation to look inward, to believe that somehow our sin was the cause of our loved one’s disability. This idea was even present in Jesus’s day as we read here in John when the disciples asked Jesus, “Who sinned…that he was born blind?” We can falsely believe that God is punishing us and that our loved one’s mental illness is our fault.

Have you ever struggled with this idea? How so? *Allow for discussion.

OBSERVATIONS

Jesus’s answer to his disciples was probably not what they expected. “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.” Instead of a harsh answer, Jesus is gracious. He turns their attention outward toward God, away from themselves. Away from that man’s parents. And Jesus invites us as well to look for God’s hand in our difficulty, to seek him and his glory.

HOPE

And what does that mean for us today? If you trust in Jesus, Romans 8:38-39 (ESV) tells us that nothing can separate us from his love. We read there,

> *For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Where it says, “nor anything else” we can insert our own “anything else” like mental illness, for example, or other disability. Also, in Psalm 103:10-12 (ESV) we read,

> *He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.*

Because of Christ's finished work on the cross, the punishment that we rightly deserve for our sins was placed on him. As Christians, we can turn away from looking inward and look to God who gives us mercy instead of punishment through Jesus.

GO DEEPER

» Write down the accusation you hear most in your head. Then read Psalm 103:10-12 for the next few weeks to remind you of how great God's love is toward you.

» If you aren't a Christian and want to know more about the gospel and what Jesus has done, talk with another Christian you may know.

» We encourage you to be a part of a local church that preaches from the Bible. If you need help thinking through that, feel free to reach out to us.

PRAYER OF LAMENT AND HOPE

Jesus, thank you that you are just and compassionate. Thank you for reminding us of this tonight through these sections of scripture. Help us this week when we are tempted to look inward and believe lies about ourselves or about you. Some days it's very hard to do that when our loved one experiences such profound suffering. But it is so true that you do not treat us as our sins deserve. We see this most clearly when we remember the gospel. Give us rest tonight and strength for tomorrow and the week ahead. We trust you with our needs, nothing is too hard for you.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

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