



May 7, 2009

Dear Pastor:

Hello. I hope you and your family are doing well. I know you are actively involved in evangelism. Reminder – there are alternative format bible studies for persons with disabilities in Braille, Tape/CD, and DVD – sign language.

As you may remember in my last memo, May is mental health awareness month. Our theme is: “Understanding Mental Health: From the Cradle to the Grave.” We will focus on people who suffer from depression, anxiety, bi-polar (manic depression) and borderline personality disorders throughout this year.

Last week I attended the Frontline Mental Health Interfaith Conference (actually sponsored by our NAD Church Ministries Department). Mental health is something we don’t talk about in our churches, but awareness is direly needed, especially for these tough times. I would like to quickly share some of the discussions we had:

The first presenter – Jack Haffner stated there are 3 “maladies” in our churches:

1. Hurry Sickness. The Microwave Society – impatient - wanting things quickly, not wanting to “wait” on the Lord.
2. Soul Fatigue – weariness and emptiness – discouragement when God doesn’t answer our prayers the way we want or feel He should.
3. EDS – (Elder Brother Syndrome) – story of the two brothers. When the younger brother who had squandered his inheritance came back, the elder brother became angry, complained, criticized, was self-absorbed and resentful.

If people who’ve overcome alcohol, drug or sexual addictions *don’t* change the addictive behavior, they will continue to have problems the rest of their lives – *no matter how many times they get baptized*. They remain “dry drunks or addicts.”

Our second presenter - Jude Boher-Patrick, (SDA Christian psychiatrist) reported there are four top mental disorders that are seen in our churches:

1. Depression – biological and situational. We must understand “*why*” people are depressed. What you believe about depression impacts your counsel to them. (i.e., 70% of church members believe depression is a sign of personal weakness and not a disease. If you believe that theory, your counsel will not be helpful to a person with major depression).
2. Anxiety – these are manifested as panic, obsessive compulsive disorder, PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder). These people always anticipate the worst, and have physical problems – fatigue, nausea, headaches, etc.
3. Bi-polar (manic depression) – combination of depression and mania. These people exhibit racing thoughts, are talkative and hyper-sexual. They also have suicide tendencies.
  - a. **NOTE: If someone indicates they have a “*plan*” to commit suicide, you should call 911 immediately. Clergy can do emergency petitions for mental health evaluations. Make sure you document!**
4. Borderline personality disorders. There are 11 personality disorders. There is no pill for treatment. Long term psychotherapy helps.

The two disorders that *wreck havoc and chaos in the church* are:

1. Passive Aggressive Narcissism – will manipulate the truth and are self-absorbed – “it’s all about me” (i.e. – “I’m the one who started this church and they don’t appreciate me...”)
2. Borderline personality. These people know your weakness, have volatile relationships - one minute your best friend – the next your worst enemy, *cause chaos wherever* he/she goes, and have chronic unemployment problems.

There are several books that will help you in ministry to persons with mental disorders. Some books were written in the late 90’s but can still give you information you need. All can be purchased on christianbook.com. They are:

- Grace for the Afflicted: A Clinical and Biblical Perspective on Mental Illness, Matthew Stanford – 2008, (Haworth Press).
- The Treatment of Bipolar Disorder in Pastoral Counseling (Community and Silence), David Welton – 2006, (Haworth Press)
- Mental Illness and Psychiatric Treatment: A Guide for Pastoral Counselors, Gregory B. Collins and Thomas L. Culbertson – 2003 (Haworth Press)
- The Pastor’s Guide to Psychological Disorders and Treatments, W. Brad Johnson and William L. Johnson – 2000 (Haworth Press)
- The Pastoral Care of Depression: A Guidebook, Binford W. Gilbert – 1998, (Haworth Press)
- A Minister’s Handbook of Mental Disorders, Joseph W. Ciarrocchi – 1993, (Paulist Press)

DVD

- DVD/Workbook – Dr. Neil Nedley – Depression Recovery Program

Websites that will be helpful are:

- [www.pathways2promise.org](http://www.pathways2promise.org)
- [www.nami.org/faithnet](http://www.nami.org/faithnet)
- [www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org) (children and teens)
- [www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net)
- [www.mentalhealthministries.net](http://www.mentalhealthministries.net)
- [www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov)
- [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

Enclosed for your information is a brochure from Review and Herald, Pathways to Promise, and Mental Health Ministries. There is also an article on William Cowper, poet/hymnist of "There is a Fountain Filled with Blood."

I pray that this information will be helpful to you as you minister to members with mental illness. I know your crusade will reap a harvest for your church. Please continue to keep Disability Ministries in your prayers.

Yours in Service,

Rosemary Graham  
Disabilities Ministries Director

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Enclosures