



# Fact check

## Christianity and mental health

We have fact checked three common misconceptions about mental health that may be held by Christians

### Common misconception

#### Mental illness is God's will

As Christians, we believe we are known and loved into being by God our Creator. We do not have to be perfect to be worthy of God's love; God loves us for who we are and how we are.

God does not want us to suffer but being alive means we will experience joy and pain, love and loss. Having faith in God does not prevent us from having these experiences. Rather, it gives meaning to what we experience.

God also gives us opportunities to overcome illness and suffering by accepting the therapies and treatments doctors and therapists will offer us.

We have hope because, no matter what happens in our lives, we know that God is with us.

Psalm 139. 14 You are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Jeremiah 29.11 For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

#### Accepting treatment will interfere with God's will.

Symptoms of mental illness can be very difficult to live with and may prevent you from leading the life God is calling you to. Accepting help and advice may enable you to pursue a more 'spiritual' path.

Medical science is not to be understood as 'opposite' to God or going against God.

Ultimately, God has given us gifts of creativity, science and technology and we have used these to make huge advances in our understanding of mental illness and of medical science.

So, accepting treatment and other help, such as counselling, is not going against God's will. It is allowing God's healing to work in us, through the treatment and support of others.

Mark 2.17 Jesus said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick."

Proverbs 13.10b ...but wisdom is with those who take advice.

Psalm 147.3 He heals the broken hearted, and binds up their wounds.

#### You can't combine 'western' therapies with spiritual therapies

Illnesses affect everyone, whether they have strong faith or a less strong faith. A strong faith encompasses your needs and vulnerabilities and recognises when you need others to support you.

In the Gospel stories about Jesus, we hear that he travelled around healing people who were unwell. This has been taken to mean that if people have enough faith or belief, they will be cured of their illnesses.

But what Jesus actually offered to people was more than cure; it was restoration. They were able to return to the temple to worship, they were able to rejoin their families, to live and work as full members of their communities. That is what it means to be well.

You do not have to be cured to be well. You can live a fulfilling and faithful life alongside your mental illness.

Mark 5.24 He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

John 5.9 At once the man was made well.

John 10.10 I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

### Fact checked

### Evidence from the Bible