Mental Health and the Christian Life: Part One
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I. Definitions, Distinctions, and Descriptions

A. What is mental health?

i. Distinct from physical health, mental health our non-physical life.

ii. Someone can have a (relatively) healthy mind, and be spiritually dead.

iii. And someone can be spiritually healthy, but struggle with mental health.

B. Addressing our assumptions.

i. Some accept modern psychology completely and uncritically.

1. But modern psychology is shaped by our modern culture.

ii. Others completely reject modern psychology, and say mental health is a myth.

1. This doesn't reflect biblical anthropology (we are a unity of body & soul).

2. There are biological reasons for emotional and psychological struggles.

C. What are mental health disorders?

i. We all experience mental health struggles, and wrestle with difficult emotions.

1. We all experience anxiety and depression at different levels and times.

2. Self-diagnosis isn't ideal for that reason!

3. It rises to a disorder because of its intensity and frequency.

ii. Where's the line between normal emotions & mental health disorders?

1. There's no fool-proof test, or brain scan—it isn't that simple!

2. Modern psychology (DSM-5) provides a long list of symptoms; if you experience a certain number of those symptoms within a certain timeframe, then you receive the diagnosis.

3. medication; instead of getting behind symptoms to a psychological cause.

4. But different people will evaluate those criteria differently.

5. This is all to say: misdiagnosis and overdiagnosis happens all the time.

6. But that doesn't mean an accurate mental health diagnosis is impossible.

7. A true mental health diagnosis is a starting point, not an ending point.

II. Some Biblical Perspective

A. Biblical cautions about psychology:

i. Secular psychology has a bad anthropology: All body, no soul.

ii. By underplaying or denying the soul, psychology denies the reality of sin.

1. There's no moral responsibility; everyone is a victim, a sufferer.

iii. The Bible treats humans as sufferers, sinners, and (in Christ) saints.

B. Biblical cautions about anti-psychology:

i. A bad anthropology: All soul, no body.

1. Not all mental health disorders are a spiritual problem, sometimes it is a physical problem; that isn't simple, or easily explained, but it's true.

ii. Psychology (at its best) is part of God's common grace.

1. We should be able to glean what is helpful from psychology, acknowledge its ability to diagnose & treat disorders as God's common grace.

C. Considerations from Scripture:

i. David faked insanity, which means that mental health isn't a myth.

ii. The Psalms are filled with mental anguish from faithful saints.

iii. Jesus himself suffered mental anguish in the garden of Gethsemane.