

Bible Study Preface

Developing Resiliency Toward Better Whole Person Health: A Biblical Overview

This Bible study was created for use by congregations desiring to address the topic of mental health. It examines the Biblical foundation for whole person wellness and the interplay that our physical, mental, and spiritual health have upon one another and our whole person well-being.

This study was written for adults but could also be used by high school youth groups. It is divided into five sections (section headers are in **blue**) with discussion questions at the end of each section. At the end of sections 2-4, there are resources listed (the resource headers are in **green**) to further equip the Church. Depending on the size and discussion level of your group, approximately one to two sections could be covered in the span of about one hour. Therefore, this study could be spread out over the course of several Bible study classes in a month.

We encourage you and your congregation to be creative in applying this Bible study. For example, one congregation used the Bible study in last year's Mental Health Toolkit with their Stephen Ministry team as part of their continuing education during their monthly caregiver meetings. Others have used previous toolkit Bible studies in adult Sunday School classes, in church staff meetings, in mental health ministry meetings, and in private pastoral/diaconal counseling sessions with individuals living with a mental health concern. Consider which groups or individuals in your church might benefit from this study.

We pray that this study will generate valuable discussion and be a blessing for your congregation as you seek to care for those in your church and community with the love of Christ.

In Christ's Service and Yours,

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Bible Study

Developing Resiliency Toward Better Whole Person Health: A Biblical Overview

By Deaconess Carole Terkula

Introduction

During the past several years, and especially throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, resiliency has been a buzzword and topic of great interest. What exactly is resiliency and how can we learn from God's Word about how to develop resiliency to best cope with life's struggles, including mental health concerns?

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines resiliency as "an ability to recover or adjust easily to adversity or change." Here is another way to think of resiliency: Resiliency is the ability to cope mentally and emotionally in difficult circumstances by employing thought processes and behaviors which help protect against the negative effects of stressors. Indeed, research shows that resiliency can be cultivated and practiced. In fact, caring for whole person health (body, mind, and spirit) increases resiliency.

This connection between whole person well-being and resiliency is an interesting one, especially when we call to mind how Jesus cares for people holistically as described in various Gospel accounts of His miraculous healings. When we look at some of Jesus' miraculous healings in Scripture, we see that He cares for peoples' whole person well-being by restoring their bodies, minds, and their relationship with God and others.

This Bible study will examine some Biblical principles/practices which develop resiliency through whole person care: physically, mentally/emotionally, and spiritually.

I. Setting the Stage: A Look at Jesus' Whole Person Care Approach

Read John 5:1-15

1) A. According to this text, how long had the man at the pool been unable to walk?

B. Although Scripture does not describe this man's mental or emotional state at the time when Jesus meets him, how do you suppose he felt? How would you describe what his mental and emotional outlook may have been?

- 2) Now imagine the man’s mental and emotional state after Jesus heals him. How do you think his physical healing affected his mental and emotional well-being?
- 3) A. Where does Jesus later find the man according to verse 14?
- B. Discuss the impact that the man’s physical healing may have had on his faith.
- C. What do you think the man was doing at the temple?
- D. Discuss how the man’s being restored to spiritual community at the temple may have continued to affect his spiritual, mental/emotional, and physical well-being over the long haul.
- 4) Discuss the idea that God has made us as complex beings comprised of body, mind, and soul, and how each of these aspects of our humanity affects the others and our whole well-being.
- 5) Reflect on a time when you were facing a particularly challenging time in your life. Think back and record some of the specific things you did from a whole person health perspective that positively affected your resiliency to get through that experience. Some examples have been provided for you.

<u>Incident</u>	<u>Physical</u>	<u>Mental/Emotional</u>	<u>Spiritual</u>
Job Loss	Walked in the neighborhood each evening.	Spoke with sister over the phone each week to share experience and get support.	Listened to Christian music on the radio every day.

- 6) Additionally, think about some things you may have done during the time you reflected on in question 5 that may have had a negative impact on your resiliency and overall well-being at that time. What have you learned about things that hinder resiliency from that experience? Share as you feel comfortable.

II. Developing Resiliency Through Physical Care

God has created us as physical beings with bodies which require proper care, such as exercise, rest, and good nutrition to stay healthy and strong. Let's examine some passages from Scripture which address the importance of caring for our physical needs.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

- 7) What does this passage have to say about the importance of the body?
- 8) What is the connection between our physicality and spirituality?
- 9) Verse 20 mentions being bought at a price. What was that price and who paid it?
- 10) In what ways can we honor God with our bodies?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-56 and Philippians 3:20-21.

- 11) What do these passages have to say concerning the value and importance God has placed on our bodies?

Read Exodus 20:8-11 and Mark 2:27-28.

- 12) What do these passages have to say about the importance of physical rest on the Sabbath and why God made the Sabbath?
- 13) Discuss how God intends the Sabbath to be a day of spiritual, physical, and mental restoration for mankind.
- 14) How has modern culture affected our view and practice of the Sabbath?

- 15) A. What are some ways in which you find rest on Sundays?
- B. How might you be more intentional about making sure you are getting the rest you need on Sundays in order to be “fully charged” for service in the week ahead?

Read Mark 6:30-32

- 16) In addition to having a quiet space to get some sleep/a nap, what other important element is included in Jesus’ concept of “rest” for the disciples?

Read Daniel 1:1-15

- 17) What sort of food and beverage had the best impact on Daniel and his friends’ health?
- 18) A. Reflect on your own diet. How much of your plate or glass is filled with the types of things Daniel consumed?
- B. How could you be more intentional about making sure you are consuming these types of foods/beverages in your daily meals?

Read 1 Kings 19:1-18

- 19) Discuss the interrelationship between Elijah’s physical needs on his mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being in this passage.
- 20) Share a time when your physical needs impacted your thoughts, words, and deeds. What have you learned from that experience? Share as you feel comfortable.

Note: *Did you know that there is a correlation between some physical conditions/ illnesses and mental health? That’s why it is so important to check with your primary care physician if you are experiencing signs and symptoms of a mental health concern. It is recommended that you have a physical exam each year for your overall health.*

III. Developing Resiliency Through Mental and Emotional Care

Baptismal Identity in Jesus Christ

The most important thing we can do to foster resiliency is to remember and rely upon our identity in Christ bestowed on us in Baptism. While we may only tend to think of our Baptismal identity from a spiritual point of view, it also has a profound impact on our mental and emotional well-being because it is the solid foundation upon which our view of self and our value and worth are set. Indeed, our Baptismal identity in Jesus Christ is the anchor for our heart, mind, and soul when the storms of life arise and rage battle against us.

Let us explore some Scripture passages which remind us of God's truth about who we are to Him and who we are in Him, which give us peace of mind, calm our emotions, and provide rest for our troubled souls.

Read Isaiah 43:1-2,4

21) Put your first name in verse one in place of "O Jacob" and "O Israel," and read the verse out loud.

A. How did that affect the impact of this verse on you?

B. How does it feel to know that Almighty God knows you by name and claims you as His treasured possession?

C. When did God claim you as His own, as a member of His family?

22) A. According to verse 4, how does God view you?

B. Reading verse 4 Christologically, how can we interpret the words "I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life?" In other words, when did "The great exchange" happen for us?

C. How can you intentionally call verse 4 to mind when you are having a difficult day? How can you intentionally share it with someone else who may be going through difficult circumstances which have affected their view of self?

D. Is there someone you know right now who could benefit from hearing these verses from Isaiah?

Read Galatians 3:26-29

- 23) Discuss what it means to be “baptized *into* Christ.”
- 24) Through faith in Christ, you are God’s heir. Discuss what your inheritance is.
- 25) How do these verses inform your sense of value and worth as a human being?

Read Ephesians 2:4-10

- 26) Discuss the impact of knowing and believing that you are God’s “workmanship.”
- 27) A. How might you be able to share this verse with someone you know who feels that they are a “mistake,” or that they don’t have value or purpose in this life?

B. How might God’s truth in these verses aid in bolstering resiliency?
- 28) What are some specific things you can do to allow all the Scripture passages in this section to permeate your mind, heart, and soul toward better resiliency?
- 29) How might the Scripture passages in this section bless someone recently diagnosed with a mental illness who feels as if the label of their diagnosis has impacted their identity and sense of worth?

Community Building

Another important component that aids in developing resiliency toward better mental and emotional health is a sense of belonging in community. In fact, research has shown that for people living with mental health concerns, having a sense of belonging and connection in community aids in their mental wellness journey. God has indeed made us as social creatures who thrive in relationship with Him and one another.

30) A. Discuss the impact that self-isolation/quarantine had on your mental and emotional health during the COVID-19 pandemic.

B. When congregations were not able to worship in person during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, how did that affect your congregational community? Are there lingering effects?

Let's examine a passage from Scripture which demonstrates the importance and impact of community connection.

Read Mark 5:1-20

31) Discuss how the isolation and experience of having been chained may have impacted the demon possessed man's human dignity and sense of self.

32) Upon his healing, the man desires to follow Jesus. Yet what does Jesus say to him?

33) Jesus' mandate for this man to return to his family shows Jesus' compassionate care of him. How do you think the man's being enabled to rejoin his family continued to aid in his mental and emotional well-being?

34) On his way to be reunited with his family, the man interacts with many people in the region. How do you think his being restored to the larger community affected his sense of dignity, worth, and overall mental and emotional well-being?

35) How did God use this man for His glory and to expand His kingdom?

36) Think about the people in your congregation living with physical, mental, or emotional challenges. How might your congregation intentionally reach out to include them more in the mission, ministry, and life of the church? What might be the impact of doing this on the individual, their family, your church family, and community?

IV. Developing Resiliency Through Spiritual Care

There are several spiritual practices mentioned in the Bible which lend themselves to the strengthening of faith and nourishment of our souls, contributing to resiliency. Let's explore some of these spiritual practices which enhance overall well-being.

Prayer

Read Mark 1:35-37, Luke 11:1-4, Luke 22: 39-46

37) Why do you think Jesus frequently retreated to a solitary place for personal prayer time with His Heavenly Father?

38) How did Jesus' habit of personal prayer time impact his disciples?

39) A. What does your personal prayer time with God look like?

B. What affect does prayer have on your emotional, mental, and spiritual state?

Two kinds of prayer, in particular, can greatly aid in spiritual growth as well as mental and emotional well-being. The first is a prayer of thankfulness and the other is a prayer of lament.

Read Psalm 106:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Colossians 3:15-17

40) According to these verses, why do we give thanks to God?

41) Who is the source of a Christian's joy and praise?

42) A. According to these verses, is our thankfulness tied to our earthly circumstances?

B. How could giving thanks to God in difficult circumstances affect our perspective, attitude, and overall well-being?

It is interesting to note that science now proves the practice of thankfulness and gratitude is good for us. In fact, research has shown that a practice of gratefulness can increase our sense of joy and overall well-being. “When we express gratitude and receive the same, our brain releases dopamine and serotonin, the two crucial neurotransmitters responsible for our emotions, and they make us feel ‘good’. They enhance our mood immediately, making us feel happy from the inside. By consciously practicing gratitude every day, we can help these neural pathways to strengthen themselves” (<https://positivepsychology.com/neuroscience-of-gratitude/>).

A recent study at Berkley “suggests that gratitude writing can be beneficial not just for healthy, well-adjusted individuals, but also for those who struggle with mental health concerns. In fact, it seems, practicing gratitude on top of receiving psychological counseling carries greater benefits than counseling alone, even when that gratitude practice is brief” (https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_gratitude_changes_you_and_your_brain).

How fearfully and wonderfully God has made us! What He has told us to do in the Bible regarding thankfulness is actually designed for our overall well-being!

Lament is another type of prayer that can be a balm for our mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being, especially during life’s difficulties. Prayers of lament allow us to express pain and suffering to God openly and authentically and to rest in His promises to hear us and to be with us in and through these difficulties.

Read Psalm 22

43) Psalm 22 is the most referenced Psalm in the New Testament. In fact, the first verse may ring a bell for you. Who spoke Psalm 22:1 in the most dire of circumstances? (See Matthew 27:35)

44) The Psalms of Lament typically follow a pattern:

- Calling out to God using one of His names, form of address
- Crying out to God, expressing your emotions, suffering, and pain
- Asking God for help
- Affirmation of God's character and your trust/faith in Him

Pull out the phrases from Psalm 22 which exemplify the pattern of lament above and list them below:

- Calling out to God:
- Crying out to God:
- Asking God for help:
- Affirmation of Faith in God:

45) As a group, discuss how a prayer of lament can be cathartic for the individual praying it and how lament can also draw an individual closer to God amid trials and suffering.

Corporate Worship

The regular practice of in-person corporate worship also cultivates and nourishes faith toward greater resiliency. Let's examine some aspects of corporate worship which aid in spiritual formation, growth, and resiliency.

The Preaching of God's Word**Read Romans 10:14-17 and Romans 16:25-27**

46) A. According to Romans 10:14-17, from where does faith come? Which sense is utilized?

- 47) According to Romans 16:25-27, in what way does the preaching of the Gospel impact Christians who hear it?

Receiving the Lord's Supper

Luther's *Small Catechism* does a nice job summarizing the spiritual benefits of receiving the Lord's Supper. **Read Part II "The Benefit of the Sacrament of Altar" within the Explanation of "The Sacrament of the Altar" as it appears in [Luther's Small Catechism](http://catechism.cph.org/).**

- 48) The *Small Catechism* lists four spiritual blessings of receiving the Lord's Supper as understood through Scripture. List these benefits below:

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.

- 49) How can each of these spiritual blessings impact overall resiliency? Be as specific as possible, reflecting on the examples from Scripture listed in the *Small Catechism*.

Read Hebrews 10:24-25

- 50) What are some additional benefits of participating in corporate worship according to this passage?
- 51) Discuss how in-person worship and Christian fellowship impact resiliency and a sense of overall well-being.
- 52) How is your congregation intentionally reaching out to members who may have fallen away from coming to worship regularly and/or church activities due to the pandemic?

V. Conclusion

This Bible study has explored some practices described in Scripture which contribute toward resiliency through whole person care: body, mind, and spirit. It is important to remember that each of these distinct aspects of our humanity are interrelated and that people thrive when each aspect is well cared for, nourished, and supported.

Wrap-Up Discussion Questions

- 53) Was there a particular point in this Bible study that has stuck with you?
- 54) What are some of the practices described in this Bible study that you would like to incorporate or strengthen in your own life for greater resiliency?
- 55) How can your congregation help foster resiliency toward better whole person health among your congregation members and community?

For free faith-based mental health resources, please visit the [LookUpIndiana.org](https://lookupindiana.org)

<https://lookupindiana.org/faith-mental-health>

If your congregation would like information about how to begin or expand a mental health ministry, please contact Deaconess Carole Terkula: carole@thelutheranfoundation.org; 260-458-2115.

Closing Prayer

Gracious Father, You have knit us together, and we are fearfully and wonderfully made. We thank you for providing for all our needs of body, mind, and soul. Help us in our care of one another, that we may reflect Your Son Jesus' compassion to people in our midst who are suffering in various ways. Strengthen and equip our congregation to be a warm and caring place as we tend to peoples' spiritual, mental, and physical needs. Amen.

This Bible study was written by Deaconess Carole Terkula, Ministry Associate at The Lutheran Foundation on May 31, 2022.