

## Mental Health and the New Year

For Christians, the New Year offers a chance to blend faith with mental wellness, focusing on biblical truths about God's presence in suffering (like lamenting Psalms), breaking stigma that mental illness is spiritual failure, integrating spiritual disciplines (prayer, Scripture) with professional help, and finding community support to navigate seasonal pressures and personal growth. It's about realistic goals, acknowledging struggle as normal, and leaning on God's strength for a healthier whole self in the year ahead.

Here are a few thoughts as you begin the new year.

1) **Engage your issue:** We all have stuff to work on in this new year. You are not alone. Often our challenges cause us to hide and fake our way through life. The Scriptures are very clear that we will all have issues to deal with (see Moses, David, Rahab, Paul, and virtually every human in the pages of the Bible) and the best way to deal with them is engaging them head on. Leave any shame behind. Remember that God will lead us through both the valleys and the mountains. Be patient and engage.

2) **Seek the voice of God:** God is not surprised or alarmed at your challenges. He is not unaware or anxious about you. He loves you dearly and has much to say to help. Seek His voice. Make the Scriptures your #1 resource for change. There is no greater power than prayer and Scriptures to help you in your specific challenge. Yes, professional counseling, medication, groups, and friends can be huge assets, but finding the voice of God is paramount. Read scripture-laden books and journal. Memorize verses. Trust God.

One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. – Proverbs 18:24

3) **Vulnerably share with a trusted friend:** God created us to know each other on a personal level. We need each other—it is an essential and transforming element of life. You may need to ask your friend to hear you out. Ask them for 30 minutes of “pure listening time.” Uninterrupted talking gives us a chance to plumb some of the depths of our hearts and may allow us to access areas we did not know were problematic. Then return the favor.

4) **Keep Jesus at the center of everything you do:** Jesus is always my model for maintaining good mental health. Study Jesus' interactions with the hurting. Watch him as he helps a leper. Examine his heart with the deaf and blind. Marvel at the way he treated the most shamed and excluded of their day. Listen to his tender and caring words as he reaches into your very soul with life-giving words

Ultimately, personal growth isn't a sprint to the finish line; it's a continuous journey, a marathon of faith and perseverance. By intertwining faith with your mental health resolutions, you're not only nurturing your spiritual well-being but also cultivating a stronger foundation for achieving your goals. So, let's run this race with a healthier, grace-filled stride!

**Here are some suggested articles to read :**

- **"It's Okay to Have an Unhappy New Year"** by [Christianity Today](#)(Discusses unrealistic expectations vs. reality).
- **"4 Encouraging Truths for Christians with Mental Illness"** by [The Gospel Coalition](#) (Addresses common fears and biblical hope).
- **"The Intersection of Faith and Mental Health"** by [NAMI](#)(Highlights the complementary nature of faith and treatment).

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