

Patterns of Grace and Gratitude Week 6

Monday, May 17



Photo credit: Steve Bettencourt. "Sunlight over the water"

God is our refuge and strength, a help always near in times of great trouble. That's why we won't be afraid when the world falls apart, when the mountains crumble into the center of the sea, when its waters roar and rage, when the mountains shake because of its surging waves. There is a river whose streams gladden God's city, the holiest dwelling of the Most High. God is in that city. It will never crumble. God will help it when morning dawns. Nations roar; kingdoms crumble. God utters his voice; the earth melts. The lord of heavenly forces is with us! The God of Jacob is our place of safety.

Psalm 46: 1-7, CEB

Thoughts from Hannah Ewald for today: For all of my life I've been taught to be open with your emotions. It's okay to cry, it's good to seek help, through prayer, by seeing a therapist, talking with a trusted friend and to acknowledge "I am not okay." Anxiety and depression run fluidly in my family trees so it was and is normal for me to have conversations around the struggles that come with mental illness. One thing I've learned for certain is that this isn't custom everywhere. Even crossing geographic lines, it can be more or less acceptable to talk about mental health. Sometimes we feel as though we have to have an answer for someone else's struggles or our own, we have to understand the why. But that's just not always the case. When it comes to mental health the best approach we can have is having our arms wide open. Ready to listen and ready to love.

It is within our calling as faithful people to be grace-filled to those who are suffering with mental illnesses, and this most certainly includes ourselves. It can be hard to articulate that we too may be struggling when in every other season...we have it together. Through Jesus' radical love we understand that God calls us to wrap our arms around the neighbor who is struggling. We can offer grace just by being a comforting presence, a listening ear and a daily text to check in on a friend or family member. We can also offer grace to those we love by nudging them to seek professional help, try a 12 step program or let someone else know about the difficult journey they are navigating, so they know they don't have to walk it alone. This may seem like a daunting task, again whether we are nudging ourselves to seek help or be it a friend or family member. Yet this is one of the best ways to express our love for someone we care so much about. To let them know: you are worthy, a beloved child of God who is loved by me and by many. It's okay to not be okay. And it's okay to ask for help, we're not meant to walk this road alone, for God is always by our side.

Prayer: Holy God, we know that you created us from the inside out. You know when we sit down and when we stand up, you know when we are aching in body and soul and when we are joyful. Remind us to check in on ourselves and our friends and reassure each one that they are not alone. Forgive us when

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we remain silent to others' struggles out of our own fear of not knowing. Instill in us bold hearts to love all and shower one another with your grace. Amen.