

## Patterns of Grace and Gratitude Week 4

Thursday, May 6



**“Alyssa & Drew Thiele”**

*Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2*

**Thoughts from Alyssa Thiele:** May is known for being mental health awareness month. But one thing I find difficult is that it is only talked about during that one month. See most people who deal with mental health issues such as anxiety and depression deal with it all 12 months out of the year.

When I first began experiencing signs of anxiety and depression in high school, I tried very hard to fall on my faith. I prayed to feel better. I prayed to get better. I “handed” my problems to God. Now, many years later, I am not “healed” and I still work every day to keep my emotions in check.

Sarah Griffin Lund asked in her book *Blessed are the Crazy* “Does God give certain people mental illness because God knows they are strong enough to handle it?” I would answer ‘No’. God did not give me anxiety and depression because I was strong enough to handle it. But he did give me people who would help me through it. They help to carry my burdens when they arise so that I am not alone.

I will always remember my wedding day. Not just because the fact that it was my wedding day, but because I had a full-on panic attack before walking down the aisle. My now husband thankfully knew this was a possibility and knew it had nothing to do with marrying him. He learned early on in our relationship that each day I carry around this extra weight of anxiety and depression. The overwhelming fear of not knowing what tomorrow will bring is my constant reality. Marrying me also meant marrying this burden. He showed me on this day that he was willing to help me carry that.

Something that brought us together and continues to keep us united is our faith. Sarah also writes in her book “Faith cannot cure mental illness... but [it] can carry the cross and bear the burden of mental illness.” Throughout the years, I have surrounded myself with a support system of friends and family much of whom have deep roots in their own faith, who I can rely on to be with me. When my anxiety begins to bubble, they are the people I turn to and share my feelings. This is why we need to recognize mental health all year long. Spring for many is a time of sunshine and new beginnings but I always find it one of the most difficult times to find happiness in. Others may find the dark days of winter difficult or the heat of summer unbearable.

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Whatever you may be going through, a great place to find help is the church. It is full of people who are willing to sit and help carry your burdens so they don't have to feel so heavy. For this is what God wanted from us.