

“Stigma”

Keeping Hope in Mind Sermon Series | Week Three | Newbreak Church

May 15th, 2022

Newbreak's Sermon Study Guide is an in-house resource that serves sermon-based Life Groups and/or individuals who want to reflect further on how the message contributes to our spiritual formation.

In this week's study, we talk about how life is somewhat like being dealt a hand of cards, but regardless of “the deck of cards” we are working with, there is always a wildcard that allows us to win with the hand we have been dealt.

Icebreakers for Life Groups

- What's your favorite card game? Why?
- What is something you have been dealt in life that is outside of your control?

Going Deeper Into the Message

There are often stigmas attached to mental health struggles, which is something we want to toss out. We have no problem taking time off work when we injure ourselves physically, or come down with the flu, but when it comes to mental health, we often just try to suck it up and press forward. But that's not what is best for us or even for those around us.

Like a game of Poker, we have to learn to play with the hand we have been dealt.

Point 1 – Recognize the influence of my chemistry.

These are the things that are genetic and hereditary.

Examples of this are:

- Some are hypersensitive to pain, that is the way they are born.
- Some were born with very low energy and some with very high energy.
- Some of us were born with an addictive personality and others of us not.
- Some people are born with strong vision/eyesight and others have weak eyesight.
- Some of us are born with a hypersensitivity to certain types of food.

All of us have biological and chemical deficiencies. These can create emotional, physical, and mental problems. We all have these and have to be aware of them...because they play a major role in who we are.

Read Job 1:1–12 (NLT)

Why look at Job?

→ Here was a man that went through tremendous suffering even though it was not his fault.

→ He was a victim of “the hand he had been dealt.”

Point 2 – Recognize the influence of my circumstances.

We are one bad day from having genuine mental health struggles. For Job, this happened all in one fell swoop.

The story of Job doesn't sugarcoat anything... Life was going great:

- Job is one of only 3 (yes, one of only 3) people in the whole Hebrew Bible are described as being “blameless and a man of complete integrity,” (Job 1:1) the other two being Noah and Abraham. *Side note: that does not mean he was perfect, it just meant that he was incredibly faithful and knew how to get right with God when he did mess up.
- Being incredibly faithful to God did not spare him from facing life's most difficult tragedies, suffering the loss of not just “things” but his own children.
- **Without a doubt, these circumstances would have caused not just spiritual and existential crises, but also something as serious as mental health issues.**

Read Job 8 (NLT)

Point 3 – Recognize the influence of my connections.

While there are numerous chapters in the book of Job covering the conversations Job had with his friends, Job 8 is a good example of how his friends' counsel was impacting Job in a negative way. They started out great, in Job 2:11–13 they sat in silence with Job—that's a great way to befriend someone in pain! But as you read about their responses to Job, you'll see that they have the situation painted all in the wrong light. They claim that if Job is experiencing suffering and struggle, it must be his fault—he must have done something to deserve it because that's how God works in the world, according to them. And they are patently wrong! Their mischaracterization of God, Job,

and the world caused Job even more angst. And we, too, have to be aware that the relationships (“connections”) we have might not be doing us any favors when it comes to our mental health. The solution isn’t to abandon all relationships but to simply latch onto the right ones that promote our mental and spiritual health, meanwhile keeping healthy boundaries with the rest.

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- Do you have a clear understanding of your personal chemistry, or biology, and how it affects you? If not, spend some time exploring that this week.
- Are there circumstances in your life right now that are causing you sadness? What control do you have in responding to these?
- Is there someone in your life who is not helping your mental health right now? What healthy boundaries can you put in place to lessen, or negate, their influence? Do you need to seek out some help for this?
- How have your current mental health challenges impacted your faith in God? Has it brought you closer to God or do you feel more distant?

Learning how to “win” with the “hand we have been dealt” is all about knowing how to play the wild card...

Point 4 – I have the power of choice.

That’s the wildcard—*choice*. We always have a choice. We did not choose our chemistry; we cannot always control our circumstances, and our connections may not be coming to our aid... but we can always choose how we will respond.

Read Job 27:1–6 (NLT)

Job’s friends have shared their “two-cents” about why Job is suffering and they have both painted wrong pictures about Job’s character and even about God!

And in one of Job’s great responses—even though he has spent plenty of time being honest; lamenting the terrible hardship that he has gone through—**he demonstrates the wild card of choice** that is more powerful than any other card in the hand we have been dealt.

He says this to his friends...

Job continued speaking: ²“I vow by the living God, who has taken away my rights, by the Almighty who has embittered my soul— ³As long as I live, while I have breath from God,⁴ **my lips will speak no evil, and my tongue will speak no lies.** ⁵**I will never concede that you are right; I will defend my integrity until I die.** ⁶**I will maintain my innocence without wavering.** My conscience is clear for as long as I live.

Hopelessness says there is nothing you can do about it (this is known as the “external locus of control” ... everything happens to *you*). No one can take your choice/agency (this is known as the “internal locus of control”).

Some of us think we have more control than we really do.

→ Those who try to exert the most control are usually those who are the most out of control. Some of us think we have less control than we really do.

You can have hope because there are things you can control.

- I can choose to get help.
- I can choose to speak life over my life.
- I can choose to pray.
- I can choose to allow God to walk me through a journey of healing and then use my pain to help others!
- I can choose to thank God for the good in my life, even the most basic good things, indoor plumbing!
- And the choices go on and on!

Job continually exercises the power of his choice to grow through the challenges he faced. His story ends on a high note (Job 42) but that did not come without some things forever looking different. For example, Job’s kids were still gone. There are some things we have to walk through in this life that doesn’t always resolve themselves the way we would hope. But we can still experience a “full life” (Job 42:17), something Jesus offers to give us (John 10:10) which does not contradict the life of sacrifice and sometimes suffering he calls us to (Matthew 16:24–26).

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- What good choices can you make when you feel hopeless? Plan these ahead of time and write them down, as it may be too difficult to think of them in the midst of hard times.

- What is one verse, or passage, that speaks life into your soul when you feel like everything is outside of your control?
- What is a choice you can make today to help your mental health?

—FINAL CHALLENGE QUESTIONS—

How are you going to think or live differently in light of what you have read, heard, and discussed this week?

How does this week's message shape or nurture your relationship with God?

BONUS: For those of you with kids or around kids: What is one truth from this message that you can share with your kids in a way that they would relate to or understand?