

BEING WHOLE & WELL IN A POST PANDEMIC WORLD

Week 2

COVID-19 was a virus that attacked and compromised physical health, and in the process did a number on overall mental and emotional health. If anything was in play mentally or emotionally before the pandemic, it likely grew worse during it. Other than suicide deaths all other mental/emotional issues also skyrocketed.

Here are sobering facts to illustrate my point:

- The Century Foundation's study revealed that during the pandemic we saw an increase in severe anxiety – 6.1% in 2019 – 40% in 2020.
- Severe anxiety can be a precursor to depression, which saw a four-fold increase from 2019-2020.
- NAMI reports a jump to 43.8M, or 19% of our total population, experienced major mental illness episodes in 2020. 18% of the country were diagnosed with full blown P.T.S.D.
- CDC reports drug overdoses, suicide and liver disease were the first, second and sixth causes of death in ages 15-44 in 2020.
- Speaking of liver disease, alcohol consumption rose dramatically, and the increase cannot be linked to increased social drinking. Other studies support this:
 - ✓ 34% of American's reported binge drinking; 7% admitted to extreme binge drinking, all to cope in 2020.
 - ✓ Across America alcohol sales grew an average of 54% and it gets worse. Annual beer, wine and liquor sales totaled \$3B in 2019; it jumped to \$5.6B in December 2020. That's a lot of alcohol consumed to cope, which doesn't work by the way.
- Mental care hot-line calls increased by 64% nationally; in May-June, still relatively early in the sheltering-in-place mandate, New York City saw an increase of 100%.
- 42% of adults 18 and older reported more symptoms of anxiety and depression in 2020 – up from 11% in 2019.

- It is believed that isolation and loss of connection was tantamount to smoking 15 cigarettes per day, and some disconnected senior adults aged three years during the twelve months of Covid quarantine.

So, what's the answer for us to be whole and well and for the unwell non-faith masses who are going at it alone, living without connection to a faith community?

Well, us first. If we are not healthy we won't be able to help the unaffiliated, suffering people out there, but this begs a new question, what exactly is the definition of wellness?

Faith and Health.org defines it: "the state of being perfectly well in body, soul and spirit (meant to include mind, will and emotions)."

National Wellness Institute tell us, "Wellness is the active process of becoming aware of making choices toward a healthy fulfilling life."

Breaking this down we can highlight a few important ideas: The path to whole wellness is an active one that requires our full attention. This is a massively focus-intensive lifestyle, but when done well it can keep us mentally, emotionally, even spiritually healthy, even during a long pandemic that saw 33.7M cases and 606K deaths in the U.S.; 185,455,246 cases and 4,010,625 deaths worldwide.

Whole wellness is much more than being free of illness, it's a composite of all things that make us tick. We are a mosaic of four main entities: our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual selves. Go sideways in any of the four and the remaining will suffer.

So, what should our goal be? It's two-fold: to be as "whole-healthy" as possible in order to reach our "fullest potential", and to be as whole and well as possible as we reach out to scarred, still suffering people.

Think of yourself as a caregiver. If the caregiver is not whole, well and healthy, who will take the good news (small caps) that health and wellness is within reach of virtually everyone. And while we are helping people with the good news, small caps, we can share the Good News, upper case, with them.

If this becomes our goal we will save lives and souls.

We, us, this Sunday School Community, can be world changers. So, let's dialogue about how!

Being Whole & Well In A Post-Pandemic World

Week Two Dialogue Questions

Opening Statement: The statistics presented on the video are equally alarming and scary. Collectively we took a hit, and we need to focus on being as well as possible, for ourselves and for the many people out there going it alone.

Q 1: What do we mean by the title, “being whole and well?” Define it.

Q 2: Were you surprised by the mental/emotional health statistics presented? Which statistics alarmed you the most? (*those listed on the video were isolation-induced damage; self-harm; mental health hotline calls; severe anxiety and depression; P.T.S.D.; almost doubling in alcohol sales; domestic disputes/abuse, etc.*)

Statement: *If this type and degree of societal damage continues it is obvious the church will need to approach ministry differently. We will need to adapt and interface differently with society.*

Q 3: First, how do you feel about that statement; and second, what might that look like?

Statement: *Let’s flip things around: The “church” is all of us collectively and it’s an entity, but it’s also each of us individually. Saying “All by myself I am the church” is very accurate.*

Q 4: So, how will I as an individual adapt and interface differently considering a record number of people need Jesus but are confused, disillusioned, beat-up and scarred? If I’m the “church,” what should I be doing differently?

Statement: *People are not capable of de-compartmentalizing when different facets of life slip. We are and always will be made up of spiritual, emotional, mental and physical quadrants. To be at our best and reach our fullest potential requires attending to all four. If one facet goes sideways we will be impacted. This means that people who have not yet found God are deficient on the spiritual side. Which brings up a couple of questions:*

Q 5: What is the stigma surrounding mental and emotional illness in general, especially in the church? Does anyone hide the reality they broke a bone and received help?

Q 5a: How can we present the Gospel in work and action and help meet the needs of the mentally and emotionally impacted, many of whom are worse after the pandemic season? *(It must be said that we Christians must first take care of ourselves in all four facets in order to be equipped/ready to help others. This is a must if we hold a prayer of reaching truly lost people.*

Closing Statement: The church is slogging uphill in today's culture and losing ground by the year. The jury is still out on how we did during the pandemic, but the trajectory must be changed regardless. Being whole and well ourselves and reaching out to others who are struggling can assist hurt people and help the church's identity issues. It is impossible to teach theology in a crisis. Let's create relationships and trust God's leadership. That's in the Bible.