



# Mental Health from a Biblical Perspective

**George Hu, PsyD**

*Licensed Clinical Psychologist*

*Department Chair, Mental Health*

Shanghai United Family Pudong Hospital

*President*

Shanghai International Mental Health Association



# 1

NEW  
FRONTIER  
HEALTH



# ”Good Mental Health”



# What is “Good” Mental Health?

- Hard to define/subjective
- Happiness?
- Avoidance of pain? Avoidance of disease?
  - **Jesus said we will have tribulation**
- Bible does not refer to “mental health” specifically
- Bible barely mentions “happiness”
- Bible presents a picture of how humans are designed to live and operate
- Psalm 16



# 2

## Biblical Themes



# Social Relationships

- Psalm 16:3 “As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight.”
- Harvard Happiness Study followed 724 men over the course of 79 years
- Two groups: Harvard undergrads and boys from Boston’s poorest neighborhoods.
  - High correlation between social relationships and happiness/health
  - Quality of relationships are more important than quantity
  - Forgiveness/reconciliation is healthy (living with conflict is extremely detrimental to health)
  - Positive social relationships sharpen memory and other cognitive functions



# Social Relationships

- Pulin, Brown, Dillard, Smith, 2013. University of Buffalo (New York) Dept. of Psychology
  - 100 adults in US, ages 34-93
  - For every major stressful life event, risk of dying from stress-related causes increased 30%
  - BUT people who spent time caring for others did not show ANY stress-related increase in death rate
- CARING creates RESILIENCE



# Social Relationships

- Take stock of your relationships
- Do you need to be reconciled with anyone?
  - Matthew 5:23-24
  - <sup>23</sup> “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.
- Who needs your love and care? How can you express that to them?



# Social Relationships

- Przybylski & Weinstein, University of Essex, 2012
  - 74 participants assigned to two conditions:
    - A) phone absent
    - B) phone present
  - Participants were paired off and asked to discuss the most interesting thing that happened to them in the past month
  - Participants in the phone present condition:
    - Lower relationship quality
    - Lower partner closeness
    - If they attempted to share a meaningful conversation, they experienced less trust
    - If conversation was meaningful, they experienced less perceived empathy from their partners





# Digital Stewardship Suggestions

- Examine your digital device use habits
  - Establish a “device-free” rule during certain mealtimes
  - Establish “device-free” zones in your home
  - Increase the physical distance between you and your devices
  - Don’t charge your phone next to your bed
  - Use a traditional alarm clock
  - Turn off your device at least 30 minutes before bedtime
- Examine your social media consumption
  - Don’t be afraid to mute notifications or hide apps
  - Help your WeChat contacts understand that you may not be a person that instantly replies



# Boundaries

- Psalm 16:5-6

5 Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure.

6 The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.

- Boundaries are not limitations to limit/restrict
- Boundaries allow us to flourish



# Boundaries



# Boundaries



© 2015. All rights reserved. All rights reserved.



# Boundaries



©2015. All rights reserved. All rights reserved.





# Building Resilience: Boundaries

- Activities, places, relationships
- It's ok to:
  - Have people you prefer and not prefer
  - Things you don't do/eat/drink
  - Places you don't go
  - Things you won't touch
  - Things you don't have time for
  - Priorities that you keep
  - Time limits





# The Art of Satisfaction



# The Art of Satisfaction

- Maximizers vs. Satisficers





# The Art of Satisfaction

- Maximizers vs. Satisficers
- Satisficer



# The Art of Satisfaction

- Maximizers vs. Satisficers
- Satisficer





# The Art of Satisfaction

- Maximizers vs. Satisficers
- Satisficer



- Maximizer



# The Art of Satisfaction

- Maximizers vs. Satisficers
- Satisficer



- Maximizer



# The Art of Satisfaction

- Maximizers vs. Satisficers
- Satisficer



- Maximizer





# The Art of Satisfaction

- Maximizers vs. Satisficers
- Satisficer



- Maximizer





# The Art of Satisfaction

- Maximizers vs. Satisficers
- Satisficer



- Maximizer





# The Art of Satisfaction

- Maximizers vs. Satisficers
- Satisficer



- Maximizer







# The Art of Satisfaction

- Maximizers vs. Satisficers
- Satisficer



- Maximizer





# The Art of Satisfaction

- Maximizers vs. Satisficers
- Satisficer



- Maximizer



Who is more satisfied?





# The Art of Satisfaction



# The Art of Satisfaction





# The Art of Satisfaction





# The Art of Satisfaction

- Martha and Mary

<sup>38</sup> As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. <sup>39</sup> She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. <sup>40</sup> But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

<sup>41</sup> "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, <sup>42</sup> but few things are needed—or indeed only one.<sup>[f]</sup> Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."



# Boundaries & Satisfaction

- Do you need to establish/re-establish certain boundaries in your life?
- Are there unhealthy habits, activities, etc, that you need to reduce?
- Who can assist you in improving your boundaries?
- What “boundary lines” has God given you that are in fact good? Do you see them as good, or have you been complaining against them?



# Cognitive Flexibility

- Genesis 50:19-21
- <sup>19</sup> But Joseph said to them, “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup> You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. <sup>21</sup> So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.” And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.





# Cognitive Flexibility

- The ability to view things from a different perspective
- Example: Stress
- Keller, Litzelman, Wisk, et al, 2012. University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health
  - 32,000 adults in US for 8 years
  - People who experienced high levels of stress were 43% more likely to die from a stress-induced reason



# Cognitive Flexibility

- The ability to view things from a different perspective
- Example: Stress
- Keller, Litzelman, Wisk, et al, 2012. University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health
  - 32,000 adults in US for 8 years
  - People who experienced high levels of stress were 43% more likely to die from a stress-induced reason
  - Result was only true for people who believe stress was bad for you
  - Among people who did NOT believe stress was bad for you, they were no more likely to die from a stress-related reason
  - Researchers estimate that this makes the belief that stress is bad for you the 15<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the US



# Cognitive Flexibility

- Jamieson, Nock, & Mendes, 2012. Harvard University Dept. of Psychology
  - Participants were trained to think that their stress response is HELPFUL
  - These participants shows reduced stress levels, reduced anxiety, and increased confidence
    - Increased heart rate prepares for action
    - Faster breathing brings more oxygen
  - These participants also showed a CHANGE in physical stress response
    - Relaxed blood vessels even though heart was pounding
    - SAME physical response as in JOY and COURAGE



# Cognitive Flexibility

- Psalm 16: 7-8

7 I will praise the Lord, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me.

8 I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

- Practice gratitude—start a gratitude journal
- Practice praising God in all circumstances by identifying the “silver linings” in all circumstances.



# Adjustment to Imperfection

- Matthew 9: 10-13

<sup>10</sup> While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. <sup>11</sup> When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

<sup>12</sup> On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. <sup>13</sup> But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

- Romans 5:8
- But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: **While we were still sinners,** Christ died for us.



# Adjustment to Imperfection

- As sinners, we are OVERQUALIFIED to receive the gospel
- Something within us cries out against admitting our faults
  - Defensiveness
  - Lack of examples to children
- Satan's lies
  - If we admit our faults, we will be looked down on
  - If we admit our faults, we will be taken advantage of
  - No one else has faults like yours
  - Everyone's a sinner, but your sins are ESPECIALLY bad
- **Fight lies with truth: Jesus has something for you only if you are a sinner. The good news of great joy is, we are sinners and Jesus came for people like us!**



# Hope

- Psalm 16: 9-11

9 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure,

10 because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

11 You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

- Matthew 1: 21-23

<sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

<sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: <sup>23</sup> “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).



# Hope

- Our ultimate assurance is from the fact that God does not abandon us to the
- God does not promise that he will take away all of our suffering on this side of heaven. But he promises that He will be with us.
- Let's meditate on this HOPE God gives us every day!





谢谢!  
Thank you!