Series Road Map: Possible title: In My Head

Series Overview: Students are experiencing all time high anxiety and depression, but few people are talking about issues in a healthy way. We’re talking about how to get out of our heads and into God’s plan for a better life. We’re talking about 1-Being transformed, 2-Anxiety, 3-Depression/Suicide, 4-Soul Health, and 5-Spiritual Warfare.

Week Overview: Depression and Suicide are a sad reality that too many students have been impacted by. The feelings are real, but the Truth of God’s redemption story can be even more real than the feelings we have. How do we hold onto hope when it seems like hope is lost? We hold onto God’s Truth to give us hope.

Outline:

Grab the Room (Intro): Personal story about things going wrong

Tension (what’s the struggle): What happens when it’s more than a bad day but it seems like things are just bad…?

Text: John 20:19-22

THP: Don’t Give Up, Dig In

Supporting Points: suicide doesn’t solve the pain, it multiplies the pain.

Application (call to action):

Step 1: We have to be totally honest with what’s going on inside of us.. Step 2: We have to totally attach this feeling with a resurrection statement of redemption.

Message Series: Mental Health

Message Title: Suicide/Depression

Key: [Media] Scripture Slides

Intro

Have you ever had a bad day before? Not like…I guess I can’t go hang out with my friends today because I have to do chores…but like one of those days where it seems like EVERYTHING goes wrong…so much so that it’s kind of comical?

[share about a day/vacation/season where so many things went wrong but now, it’s kind of funny…]

TENSION

Life can really throw us some curveballs sometimes…but what happens when it’s more than a day? What happens when it’s a couple of days where it seems like nothing goes our way? Or, what happens when it feels like weeks or months where we’re constantly getting disappointed and we slowly stop thinking life has much to offer us?

Life has a way of having some amazing ups, and the lows can feel super low… and unfortunately, we don’t always make the best decisions when we’re at our lowest. Some of you have been close to friends who have made some incredibly painful decisions when they were at their lowest…and tonight, we’re going to have a conversation about the low seasons. We’re going to talk about depression and suicide. This conversation may not feel as heavy for some of you, but for a lot of students, this may hit a little too close to home for you.

Unfortunately, depression and suicide are not new to many of you. Many of you have experienced or have friends who experienced depression… about 20%, 1 in 5 students are affected by depression by the time the are adults**. [Stand up for your friend….]**

So, whether you are the 1 in 5 or the other 4 of the 5, chances are, you are affected by this in some way because one of these students might be your friend, teammate, sibling, parent… while only 1 in 5 experience it, it is felt by so many others.

Suicide is also the 3rd leading cause of death in teens ages 10-24…this hurts to hear that something so preventable is stealing so many lives, so many futures from reaching their full potential.

Depression doesn’t just impact the loners. Depression can hit the star quarterback, the best student, the “good” kid, the artist, the guy, the girl…depression isn’t picky about its target…it can take anyone.

Some of you may have been impacted by depression. You’re slowly losing motivation for things you once loved, and it’s not being replaced with new passions. Maybe you’re finding it harder and harder to get out bed in the morning, not because you need more sleep but because you’re looking forward to your life less and less. You might even have thoughts of suicide plaguing your mind, and you’re looking for hope.

Before I continue, I also want to draw a distinction between sadness and depression… Someone who is depressed might feel sad, but those are not the same. Sadness is an emotion, and it’s honestly a healthy emotion to process difficult events. Sadness is usually triggered by an event and a person can generally feel a sense of relief (maybe not all at once) by talking about it, processing it, adjusting, and maybe even crying. But depression doesn’t always have a trigger. Sometimes it just comes up out of the blue, and it’s symptoms are a feeling of hopelessness most hours of the day lasting two or more weeks in a row. While sadness will feel especially strong sometimes and lesser when processing, depression tends to color all aspects of one’s life with feelings of sadness or hopelessness.

There’s not one cut and dry form of depression so it looks like so many different things. It’s can be a difficult topic to navigate…and middle and high school can be very unkind to the emotional health of anyone.

And because your community is fairly limited to your school, it can feel like that’s all there is, and it can feel like things will never change. It can feel like the little things are a big deal because even the little things get made fun of or gossip runs rampant in hallways. Everything bad feels more magnified, including the feelings of depression.

And my heart goes out to you all. It can be tough to be a student…but that doesn’t have to be your biggest Truth. It can also be fun, meaningful, impactful to others, and incredibly life-giving.

TRUTH

And I love that God’s Word talks about everything a person deals with in life. So many times, we look at people that followed Jesus, and they just seem larger than life. They don’t seem like ordinary people, but they seem like super Christians that are legends and we can’t compare ourselves to them…but people in scripture dealt with feelings of depression and hopelessness. They too, had their worlds feel magnified, and life got really tough.

So, let’s take a look at Jesus’s disciples lives and see how they traveled through depression. Open up to John 20:19.

As you’re opening up, just a disclaimer…I realize some of you in this room are taking medication for depression, anxiety, bi-polar disorders and so many other things. You may be in counseling, and let me tell you…please keep taking your medication and going to counseling. God’s Word can help with any situation, and it is healing, but there is no stigma or judgment for taking medication or counseling. But, if we ignore the spiritual sickness, we keep ourselves from another aspect of healing that will be beneficial to us.

Background for this story: Jesus’s 12 disciples spent 3 years following him. Their previous lives as fisherman, tax collectors, etc were left behind and their new world was spent with Jesus. They believed in him so much, they committed their lives to following him, and they even saw miracles…but things were about to change. They weren’t just going to experience a bad day, they were going to experience the worst day of their lives.

See, Jesus, the son of God, was their hero. But one day, they were eating dinner, the last dinner they would all spend together, and Judas, one of Jesus’s disciples leaves to go give Jesus over to the officials. Jesus is later taken, and Jesus’s followers don’t know what to do, so they fled…and Judas actually immediately regrets his decision, and he is so filled with hopelessness and regret that the only way out that he could see for himself was suicide…and he hung himself.

And the rest of the disciples all scattered! They had no hope…they gave up everything to follow Jesus, and now he’s about to be crucified, and they are about to lose everything.

Can you imagine how they would be feeling? In John 20:19-22 it actually says exactly how they were feeling. “On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’

The disciples were locked up and they are hiding for their lives! They aren’t praying with people, they aren’t healing others, they aren’t casting out demons, they aren’t talking about the good news of Jesus. They are freaked out, and their mission isn’t to talk about Jesus; their new mission is just to stay alive. They think everything has been a fake, and they have just experienced the biggest let down of their life. They started questioning EVERYTHING.

They said, if Jesus wasn’t the Messiah, what do we do now? Will we even have a shot at a “normal” life because they just murdered Jesus…think of what they’ll do to us! …but then Jesus showed up in their panic. He saw the worry. He saw the hopelessness. And he came to be with them.

When he had said this, he showed them His hands and His side. Then, the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.’ And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus shows them, it really is me. Look at my wounds. Peace be with you…you don’t have to panic. And then He gives them a purpose and a blessing. He says, you’re not going to stick around in this locked room. I did not die on the cross for you to be stuck in this hopelessness, but your life has meaning, and I’m giving you the help of my Holy Spirit to accomplish this!

When we feel depressed, I’m sure it felt just like how the disciples felt when they found out Jesus was crucified. Their future suddenly looked dim with no sense of getting better. They had no hope. Their world was shattered. They were in shock and felt numb… they couldn’t believe they ended up in this situation. They felt empty. And they didn’t want to go live an awesome life, but they were locked in a room, locked up in their feelings of hopelessness.

For 3 days, they were waiting…they didn’t know that Jesus was coming back. They lost hope. They were just waiting and sitting in their depression. Maybe you feel like you’re just waiting. You’re losing hope. And you’re not sure when you’re going to feel hopeful again.

Listen, Jesus told the disciples that He was coming back. They should have waited differently, but they didn’t know that He would show up. Depression has a way of making us doubt everything that we’ve believed and it can suck out all of the growth we’ve experienced.

And Jesus, in His kindness, showed up, gave them hope, gave them purpose, and blessed them. See, in the waiting, they only experienced the quietness and the hopelessness…but when they saw the resurrection, they were filled with gladness and hope. When they saw the new life that came on the other side of Jesus’s death and resurrection, they were renewed, had deep purposed, and they had a blessing.

Too many times, people give up before they see the resurrection, the redemption of their situation. In the waiting, they aren’t sure if their situation will get better so instead of riding it out, it can feel easy to give up…but if we give up, we’ll never see the redemption of the story.

My mind goes to Judas. Judas never had a chance to see the redemption of his story on earth. He made a big mistake betraying Jesus, and he was so filled with hopelessness that they only way to deal with the pain was to take his own life… but imagine if he would have waited.

Imagine if he would have just sat with the pain for 3 more days [pause] He would have seen that his failure was not final…That his betrayal wouldn’t be the thing He was known for, but he could be known as the one who started the catalyst for a movement of Jesus followers. He wouldn’t be filled with shame, but He would know that God took his mistakes and he turned it into good! Despite his actions, God still used Judas to further HIS Kingdom. Because without Jesus’s death, there was no resurrection…as much as it is weird to say, Judas was an essential part of the resurrection story. What if Judas didn’t lose hope?

He would have seen that his mistake would reveal the Messiah, and He would be able to see the risen Jesus. Judas missed out on the resurrection story of Jesus on earth because He let his feeling define his reality. His last moments on earth wouldn’t be filled with regrets and hopelessness, but He would have been filled with wonder and awe at the power of God.

Imagine what that would have done for Judas’s life if he would have seen Jesus on the other side of his situation…I promise you, it would mark him forever. It would show him that God can defeat anything, even death on a cross. It would show him that no matter how hopeless things seam and how big of a screw up he made himself to be, God still loved Him and had a plan for him. And I think Judas would tell you, that feeling you’re feeling right now, it doesn’t have to be the end of your story…if only Judas would have waited and looked to Jesus instead of focusing on his pain.

Here’s the thing about depression and suicide. We may think that suicide is the only way to solve our pain. We think it’s the only option left, and it would be better to feel nothing than to feel pain…but listen**, suicide doesn’t solve the pain; it multiplies the pain.** There is a ripple effect of pain in your family, in your friend groups, on your sports team, in your schools, and in your community. The pain is multiplied and it impacts so many people. If you want the pain to go away, dig in, and find hope! don’t give in to the painBut the worst thing to do is to multiply your pain.

DON’T GIVE UP, DIG IN!... Don’t give up on your story. Don’t give up on your potential. Don’t give up hope that things can get better… Dig in to the fact that God has an amazing story for you. Dig in to the Truth that your potential has so much more. Dig in to the hope that you will see better days ahead of you if you just hold on….

Application

So how do we do this? Step 1: We have to be totally honest with what’s going on inside of us.. Step 2: We have to totally attach this feeling with a resurrection statement of redemption. We have to feel what we are feeling and then hold that emotion or thought against the empty tomb of Jesus. Because you may be in the hopelessness phase of your journey, but on the other side of hopelessness, there is a resurrection.

**Here’s what this looks like: You may say:**

**- “I feel the lowest I have ever felt….but with God, I can make it through the lowest valleys”**

**- “I don’t know that I will ever shake this feeling of depression…but I know that I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.”**

**-“Something bad happened to me and I don’t know how I will get through it…but God can bring healing to all situations.”**

**-“My school may feel like the loneliest place in the world…but with God, I am never alone.”**

**-“I’m not sure I want to keep living…but God’s mercies are new for me each day, so if I just keep going, God has a new day and new plans for me if I will just live to see them out!”**

Listen, these aren’t just feel good statements. These are feeling statements held to the light of Truth statements so that your feelings are not the final part of your story. Your feelings are valid, but God’s Truth is steady when emotions are chaotic.

God is writing the story of your life, and He is writing an amazing story. Suicide has ended too many amazing stories before the redemption came. Just like the disciples abandoned hope, people abandoned their stories because they didn’t believe the author had an amazing story left to write. They thought the best had already come, but with God, the best is yet to come! **Don’t give up, dig in!**

There are better days ahead of you…not just because I say so, but because that is who God is! He comes to give you life and give it to the full. John 10:10 God doesn’t just want you to experience heaven after death, He wants you to experience a piece of heaven on earth. And we experience heaven when we are filled with God’s presence.

What would happen if you believed that God was a good Author for your story? What would happen if you believed that your feelings of depression are not the end of the story? What would happen if you were brutally honest with yourself about how you feel, but you totally submitted those feelings to the cross and then the empty tomb of Jesus to see what can come on the other side of redemption of your situation.

Some of you have had some really difficult chapters in your life. You may be currently experiencing an incredibly difficult chapter in your life right now…or, it seems like there have been a couple chapters in a row that it feels like it’s the theme of your story. Listen, just because you have a bad chapter, doesn’t mean you have a bad book. Just because you’re feeling down now, doesn’t mean you’ll always have a bad life.

What might you miss out on if you don’t hold onto the resurrection statement of your feelings?

Let’s hear of how one student held onto hope in depression…

Student/leader testimony video about struggle with depression/suicide.

That is an amazing story. And that’s his story. And that can be your story too…because before it was his story or your story, it was Jesus’s story. On that cross, death thought it got the final word, but 3 days later, hope defeated the darkness, and life was restored.

One of the most powerful things you can do to experience life is to talk about it. The disciples were locked in a room, locked in hopelessness, and they didn’t know who to talk to…but here tonight, there are people who would love to pray with you, talk to you, and help give you hope.

You don’t have to be struggling with thoughts of suicide, but if you’re struggling, you’re not alone. It can be difficult to see hope on your own, but when someone else points it out to you, it’s so life giving. The disciples needed Jesus to point out hope.

You need community to point out the hope that we have in Jesus. Satan tries to isolate us and he tries to make us think that we are alone in our story. He tries to make us feel like we’ll be a burden to someone else or if we share, it won’t make a difference anyway.

Inspiration

But we have something different than the world has. We have the hope and knowledge that Jesus can redeem all things! What if as a community, we chose to believe the Truth of God more than the feelings we have? What if we entered into people’s lives to see how they are REALLY doing instead of shying away for fear of what we might find or fear that we might not be able to help? What if we banded together and rallied together to be rock solid in a shipwrecked world? **Don’t give up, dig in!**

Guys, the world is crying out for hope, crying out for life, and the Church is the hope that they need! NOW is the time to be bold even if you feel like the emotions inside of you are weak. NOW is the time to encourage each other!

You have the opportunity to bring hope to your families, to your teams, and to your schools. There are some dark places out there, but the hope of God can break any darkness. What would your life look like if you truly believed that?

I promise you…it would change your life, and it would change so many lives around you.

Let’s pray.