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:

Outline:

Grab the Room (Intro): needs work…

Tension (what’s the struggle): Our souls are unhealthy and in need of restoration. Is it well with your soul?

Text: Ecclesiastes 3:11; Psalm 23: 1-4; John 15:4-5

THP: Stay with the Shepherd or “It is Well”

Supporting Points: Your soul can be deeply satisfied by following God

-Maybe you don’t feel like God is with you in the valley because you weren’t with Him in the pasture

-The vine and the branches. Remain in me.

Application (call to action):

-Stay with the shepherd (Remain in me)

-Your soul needs a shepherd (Gospel invitation for those who are lost)

Message Series: Mental Health

Message Title: Be Refreshed

Key: [Media] Scripture Slides

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Intro.

When was the last time you were really honest about how you are doing? [pause] As a society, we aren’t really good at doing this with ourselves, much less with other people… like you see your best friend after not seeing them for a couple of days, and you say “how’s it going?” They respond, “I’m good, how are you?” I’m fine. And then we kind of leave it at that….

By a show of hands, how many of you have said “I’m good” and flat out lied about what was actually going on inside of you. Like, some of you may have had the worst day of your life and you missed the bus, forgot your lunch, you failed a test, didn’t make the sports team, and you got home and your cat was dead…and you still told your friend everything was okay. For some of you, finding out you didn’t have a cat anymore may actually be a good day, but that’s another story…

But when you answer that question, “How are you” what defines if you are good or not? Is it based off of the grade you got on your last assignment or how your last sports game went? How things are going in your family? Or, is it just an emotion of whether you feel good or not in that moment?

For me, I can often answer that question of how I am doing by how things are going in my life. If I feel like I’m having a successful day at work, if I had a good day with my family, if I felt good because the sun is shining…too often, I can define success based off what happens around me.

Tension

But what if success looked different? What if we could be successful in our personal lives without it being dependent on what’s going on around us?

One story that comes to mind when things were crazy around us is the coronavirus pandemic…the world around us was going crazy, and we were forced to stay home. Ya’ll are still stir crazy from fear of being cooped up in your house for so long again. You’ve probably had enough family time to last you through the end of the year.

And I think one of the reasons why that season was especially difficult for you is because for the first time, you were forced to be still. And it’s different than summer vacation because you didn’t even have the option to hang out with friends. In fact, I’m sure that because you were told you couldn’t be with your friends, you actually wanted to hang out with them more… But you just had to be still.

You were stripped of your classes, your sports teams, even physically being at church was taken from you. And while adults are freaking out because of the severity of the sickness and fear of contagion, there is a subtle freak out happening in students…one that you may not have even realized you were doing.

For the first time in maybe a really long time, you had the chance to look at yourself…not like “hey, I’m trying to get ready for beach body” look at yourself. You had a chance to look inside yourself, and it was uncomfortable…you had to sit alone and look at your life and think “Am I okay with the life I’m living? Is this all there is? Who am I apart from being a good student, a star athlete, in theater or dance, or whatever else?... There has to be something more than what I’m currently doing…

I know those are questions you ask because those questions, the longing for something more, is put deep inside of us by our Creator. We were created to long for more and we were created to be dissatisfied with a life without Jesus. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says “He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.” We know there is more to life because God has put that in us. But we can’t fully understand everything that God has been up to…and it can feel deafening to our mind souls because we can’t figure it out on our own.

But we try to fight the silence don’t we? When something feels uncomfortable, we reach for a friend to FaceTime to encourage you so that we don’t feel empty. We binge watch Netflix because if I can’t be with my friends, at least I can watch x # seasons of the TV show Friends. We fight the silence by listening to music, going to sleep, working out, posting on social media, or my personal favorite…just checking what’s inside the fridge over and over.

If we are being truly honest with ourselves, I think we could all say there is something deeply messed up within us. We feel it when we are on the go from class to class and then to sports and then to dinner and then to homework and never slow down. We feel it when get that grade or get recognized for sports only to feel empty and try to keep topping our last achievement because our best is never good enough. We feel it when see the craziness around us or the way we become numb to the hurts of this world…

It’s something people don’t really talk about…especially students. But we all have it. There is a deep desire within you for something more. And if you’re longing for more, you’re in good company.

See, we’ve been in a conversation about mental health, but deeper than that, we should really be talking about soul health…what is soul health? It’s another way of saying “how are you REALLY doing? How are you doing not just in your thoughts, not just your feelings, but all of you…how are you honestly doing if you look deep inside yourself? The world defines success by what happens around you? What if success isn’t about what happens around you, but success can actually be measured by what is happening INSIDE of you?

Many times, we may attribute our negative feelings to depression, anxiety, or some other type of disorder, but what we really have is a disordered soul. We may not have a mental block, but we have a soul block. We may not actually be depressed, have anxiety, or some other disorder, but we might actually have a disordered soul…something is off inside of us. Too many times, people can look for a physical solution or claim a disorder too quickly before looking inward and seeing how they are really doing on the inside.

So let me ask you, how are you REALLY doing?.... [pause] If you were to honestly look at yourself, what would you find? Is it well within you?

You might find the inner voice of fear motivating you. There is something deep within you that needs to control things or to achieve things. There is the inner voice that is a wreck when things aren’t peaceful or in their place. You may have a need to know things, and if you can’t be the smartest person in the room, you’re not okay… but there is voice that can be more powerful than all of these voices put together. It’s a voice that says there is more out there, and you can be at peace…that empty place in the deepest part of you is there for a reason, and it can only be filled with taking satisfaction with God.

Listen to the story of one man who was deeply satisfied with God...even though his whole world fell apart. [From Soul Keeping- John Ortberg”]

“Horatio Spafford invested most of what he had in real estate. He lived in Chicago and lost everything in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. It destroyed his home. In 1873, he put his wife and their four daughters (their son having died shortly before the Chicago fire) on a ship heading to England as he stayed behind to re-stimulate his business. A few days after the ship departed, he received a telegram from his wife: “Saved alone. What shall I do?” There had been a shipwreck. All four of their daughters perished. Horatio quickly boarded another ship to England, and as it passed over the very same place in the ocean where his daughters had drowned, he wrote these words to a song: “When peace, like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll; whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul.”

This song is still song in many churches today. But how could it be well with his soul when he just lost his daughters…it doesn’t mean that he didn’t feel sad and he was just writing a song where things are all rainbows and unicorns. No, he felt the loss, but there was something deep within him that was unshakeable in his soul that allowed him to push through the tragedies of life. He had a successful soul that sustained him.

 Is your soul unshakeable? And whatever is happening in your life, is it well in your soul?

Truth

Listen…lean in. You were created to do life with God. Anything else apart from God will feel shaky and unfulfilling to you. You desperately need God to have a meaningful life. King David actually gives us a picture of how much we need God in Psalm 23. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and open up to Psalm 23.

In this passage, David actually compares people to sheep and compares God to a shepherd. A sheep is entirely dependent on the shepherd and without guidance, the sheep will wander. Sheep are not super smart so it’s not too hard to wander off…and like us, we are wanderers. If we are not careful, we wander away from what really matters or we can’t listen when the shepherd points us in the right direction.

Listen to what David writes: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” Stop right there. David realizes that when He is with the shepherd…like actually WITH the shepherd and listening to Him, He doesn’t want anything else. It means His soul is at peace and doesn’t need to be filled with anything…His soul doesn’t need success to feel validated. He doesn’t need his friends to accept Him for him to be happy or for his photo to be liked on Instagram. He is completely content. Is your soul completely content? What are you trying to fill it with? [pause]

Let’s keep going… “He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He RESTORES my soul. To a sheep, there is no better sight than a bunch of food and a bunch of water! It doesn’t need anything else…just food, water, and its shepherd. Life is simple. Don’t you wish life could be more simple than it is sometimes?…so many times, we try to complicate things.

In the Garden of Eden, in the very beginning of creation, Adam and Eve were created, nature was created, and life was simple…**In Genesis 2:7,** it says that “the Lord formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living creature. Listen, before God breathed into man, it was a lifeless body. But when God breathed into Adam, he was alive. What makes us come alive? It’s God’s breath living inside of us…it is God living inside of us that make us come alive even today.

Picture it in the beginning. It was just Adam and Eve, green pastures, a bunch of still water, a bunch of food, and their shepherd, God. But sin broke that simplicity and that connection with God, and it shattered our souls. While we are physically alive, we are spiritually dead on this inside. And the only thing that can make us come alive is God, living and active inside of us. Because something died on the inside of us, humans have been trying to fill that void by having a successful life on the outside, but no amount of success on the outside can satisfy an unsuccessful soul.

There is a piece of us that got lost, and we can never get it back without finding satisfaction and rest in God. God can restore your soul. And God can’t restore something that is not broken, but our souls are broken without God.

David continues: “He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Some of you feel like you’re in some pretty deep valleys right now…or you’ve at least been there, and you know what that feels like. You know what it feels like to be lost, to feel uncertain of your future, to feel fearful, and to feel like there is something messed up inside of us. But with God, you can keep moving forward. You don’t need to be stuck in fear or confusion.

But God is with you, and He can comfort you…but listen, without experiencing the restoration of the soul and just being with the shepherd, our God, those valleys feel a lot scarier. So many of you are going through valleys right now, and you’re going through them tired, feeling rushed, wondering if this is it…if life is always going to feel like a valley.

**Maybe you don’t feel like God is with you in the valley because you weren’t with him in the pasture**…it’s not God who abandoned us. It’s us who abandoned God. Even in the darkest valley, it says that we can be comforted…but how?

APPLICATION

1. To satisfy our souls, we need to stay with the shepherd.

 Jesus says this is so important to stay with him. In John 15, he also says that he is like a vine, and people are the branches…the Bible is pretty big on analogies so listen in: Jesus says “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes that it may bear more fruit…. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine: you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he its that bears much fruit, for apart from me, you can do nothing.

Abide in me is another way of just saying “stay with me.” Stay with me so that your life can be fruitful and alive. If a branch is not with the vine, it is cut off from it’s source of life. We’ve all seen a dead branch and branch that is alive before…the dead branch is brittle, easily broken, and it has no chance at life. The branch that is alive is strong and fruitful because it is connected!

Sometimes, there are pieces of ourselves that feel dead inside because they aren’t connected with God. What feels dead inside of you? What is missing from your life?

Because there is an easy fix. You need to just stay with the shepherd…stay with God, and He will give you life and satisfy your soul. Apart from Him, you can do nothing! If you are apart from God, you will feel dead inside.

And if you are a Christian, are you fully connected to God? Maybe you aren’t fully experiencing the life that God has for you because you only stay with Him on Sundays or whenever your remember to pray…what would it look like to stay with God at all times?

Now, for those of you thinking you have to be literally thinking of God 24/7, that’s not what I’m saying. I’m saying that throughout your day, you stay with God and you rest in him. When you wake up, instead of feeling hurried and anxious, you can start off slow and unhurried by thanking God for a new day.

When you are on the way to school, thank God for the opportunity and privilege you have to go receive an education. When you are walking to class, you can thank him for a body that functions. When you’re at sports or band practice, thank God for the ability to compete or create. And as you do, you’ll realize that God is much closer than you think, and you’ll be more focused on what you do have. So, let me ask you again, is it well?

[Share a story of how staying with the shepherd helped you when your world felt crazy]

And second, there are some of you that are listening in, and your job isn’t to just stay with the shepherd, but your soul NEEDS a shepherd. Your soul is lost, and you feel it. You know something is off, but maybe you haven’t been able to put your finger on it. You have eternity placed in your hearts, and you can never find rest until your soul finds a home. That home is with Jesus.

Just like sheep, people have a way of wandering. We wandered from God in the beginning of creation when Adam and Eve sinned. We wander from God when we hurt other people or disobey God. Our souls have been lost and shattered, and there is no way for them to be restored without our Savior.

So, to reconnect us with God so that we could stay with God forever, God sent his one and only Son, Jesus. God loved you so much that He gave you His best. Jesus was fully God and fully human, and he lived a perfect life. Jesus had a life that was unshakeable from pain, from loss, from anything this world had to throw at Him because He had a life deeply connected to his father in Heaven.

The consequences of a lost soul, a soul that has wandered from God is eternal separation from God and punishment. But, Jesus made a way for our souls to be connected to God. See, Jesus lived a perfect life, so he traded his life in an act of sacrifice to save our souls. Jesus was crucified, meaning he was nailed to a cross, and died the most painful death so that we wouldn’t have to live in spiritual death.

But three days later, He came back to life. He was restored, and he rose from the grave. He took what was broken, and he made a way for it to be not just put back together but to be made new. This restoration of your life is called salvation, and the gift of salvation is eternal life after death in heaven and to experience true life here on earth.

If you know that your life feels empty, lost, and you have wandered from God, this is your opportunity to find restoration from you brokenness and to be made new. And through this process, you’ll start to see an unshakeable life result as you stay with God, and He strengthens you. You don’t have to be lost anymore…you can give your life to God, and you can experience true life today. Your soul can finally have a home, and that home is with Jesus. When your soul has a home, everything in the world can be chaotic around you, but in the comfort of your home, your inside world can be at rest.

How would you live differently if you truly embraced the fact that no matter what happens to you or around you, you could have a soul that is at peace. What would happen if you chose to stay with the shepherd and let him continue to change you from the inside out.

Let me tell you, you would live in boldness, you would take more risks, you wouldn’t be so torn up by the little things, but you would have such a futuristic and optimistic approach to life that people would look at you and wonder what it is that you have. And you can tell them that it is well with your soul because you don’t have to wander anymore, but you can go through anything, and you can know that God is with you.

Your soul, the inside you can be successful no matter what craziness is going on around you. God can breathe into you true life today, and your soul can be restored. If something feels off within you, it’s because your soul will never feel at rest until it has found its way back to being restored with God. Your soul longs to be reunited with God because that is the way it was created to be…life was meant to be simple. It was never about achieving and succeeding…it has always been about relationship and connection with God to enjoy what He has created.

Is it well within you? And if it’s not, If you feel tired of searching and feeling unfulfilled, your soul can find its home today. Your soul can be with the shepherd today, and the peace you’ve been looking for is here…and it is yours if you’d like to give your life to Christ today. If that’s you, pray something like this.

Gospel prayer.

Celebrate.

Let’s give it up for all of those who just found eternal life today! You are no longer broken, but you are a new creation. Your old way of life is gone, and you can have a new future. Your life won’t be perfect all the time, but it will get better. And if you choose to stay with the shepherd, to rest in him and spend time with him, he will continue to give you an unshakeable soul that is not tossed back and forth when things go wrong or don’t go your way.

And if you’re willing to embrace this lifestyle, would you act on it. As a way to start this, we have notecards up front, and I’d love for you to write what has been off inside of you…maybe it’s been anger, it’s fear, it’s a damaged relationship, feelings of insecurity, feelings of failure, maybe it’s anxiety from a sick relative, you name it…and on the other side, would you write “it is well in my soul” meaning whatever happens God, I’m not going to let it shake me from following you.

It may not feel good, the problem may catch me off guard, I may feel like the loss is too much to handle…but no matter what happens, I’m going to choose to follow you God, and whatever happens outside of me, it can still be well with my soul because I am with you and you are with me.

And if you gave your life to God for the first time, you can fill out one of these decision cards letting us know that you’re making a decision to find life in God, and we’d love to help you get started in this new life.

We’ll watch a worship video, and would you just let God speak to you? When you’re ready fill out the notecard, and go back to your seats…feel free to circle up with a couple of friends to pray with them, and if you need prayer, please grab a leader and ask for prayer. We are here for you.

So, let me ask you one more time, is it well with your soul? And if you’re willing to follow Jesus and let Him care for you and change you from the inside out to experience to true life, would you tell that to God?

Play “it is well” video or do live worship<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=8Wb_WD1emFQ>