

PSYCHOLOGICAL STRENGTH

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INTRODUCTION

We adopt the principle that the gospel has applications for most every aspect of us and our associations.

Psychological has to do with the way things seem; it deals with the subjective dimension. We are not dealing directly with mental health even though we are dealing with matters that affect it.

1. Scripture may not directly address the issue in this study, but we can draw attention to things we see in scripture that relate to the problem of psychological strength.
2. Scripture does deal with strength in the face of adversity.

Examples of psychological difficulties

1. Fragmentation *vs.* wholeness
 - the sense of disconnection between the parts of life
 - loss of wholeness, hence, meaninglessness
 - feeling that not all the parts are present or available
2. Frustration *vs.* purposefulness
 - sense of not being able to accomplish what you try hard to do
3. Insecurity *vs.* stability
 - sense of anxiety
 - fear that there is nothing/no one stable, dependable, or strong
 - sense of inconsistency in one's environment
 - too much change in unexpected and undesirable ways
4. Disorientation *vs.* having a center for life
 - sense of having no direction/center from which to figure how everything else relates (cp. getting lost)
5. Depression *vs.* transcendence
 - sense of overwhelming sadness because of inadequacy, failure, guilt, hopelessness, worthlessness, helplessness

I. GOD'S NATURE

Much of our psychological strength comes from the kind of God we serve.

A. Oneness of God

Contrast the eternal, complete unity of Father, Son, and Spirit with the polytheistic religions: disorientation, fragmentation, inconsistency, insecurity, distance.

B. Holiness

God is consistent between what he says and what he does, between what he has been and what he will be. Security and stability are implicit in the characteristics he has.

C. Omnipotence

God's all-powerfulness surely implies security and relieves frustration as an underlying experience of human existence.

We can have the confidence that good will triumph over evil.

D. Omnidience

God knows our situation, what is happening to us. We need not feel abandoned in this world's hostile environment.

E. Love

II. OUR ACTIVITIES

A. Remembering that other people have problems too (1 Peter 5:8-9)

Sometimes we act like we have special problems, perhaps as a way of getting attention, maybe as an excuse for imperfection. It helps us to understand that we are not the only ones with problems; then we know that the world is not picking on us.

B. Doing something (Proverbs 13:4)

Setting some goals—short-range and long-range.

Getting busy relieves that sense of unfulfilled yearning. Not doing something usually means wishing, pitying, feeling despondent. We can think ourselves into depression. We tend to avoid problems instead of attacking them. Jobs can seem like mountains till you get started, so not procrastinating helps.

C. Doing everything as to the Lord (1 Corinthians 10:31)

1. Unifies life under one frame of reference (vs. fragmentation)
2. Gives dignity and value to all activities
3. Helps sort out what to be doing (Can it be done as to the Lord?)
4. Supplies positive motivation in hard circumstances (Colossians 3:22-23 re slaves)

D. Recognizing our limitations (2 Corinthians 12:9-10; cp. 13:4, 9)

“When I am weak I am strong” means a healthy awareness of my limitations; it means that I do not set up unrealistic expectations for myself. Avoiding such expectations means not experiencing failure relative to those standards. That, in turn, means turning over

to the Lord those matters that are beyond us, and we have a sense of strength as a result, both in reference to what we can control and to what we cannot.

Since you are limited,

E. Ranking things by importance (Matthew **6:33**)

Righteousness precedes peace (Hebrews **7:1**).

Deal with the “queen bee” and the rest of the swarm will come along. God has planned life with provisions for every need, including physical ones.

F. Reducing life to manageable units (Matthew **6:34**)

This principle applies both to time and size.

There is nothing more exciting than the “breakthrough” experience. Trying to do too much leads to a feeling of failure, or not doing it as well as we would like, and so on.

G. Spending time and energy on things that last (2 Corinthians **4:16-18**; cp. Hebrews **12:18-29**)

Overly investing ourselves in things creates frustration because our efforts keep deteriorating in our hand (Matthew **6:19-20**). Do not live to the flesh; live the resurrected lifestyle (Colossians **3:1-3**; 1 Corinthians **16**; Romans **6**). Flesh is subject to the law of diminishing returns.

Tap into resources beyond ourselves.

H. Letting other people help us (Matthew **26:36-46**)

If Jesus wanted his disciples to pray with him the night before his crucifixion, there is among us no such thing as a self-sufficiency.

It is pride that keeps us from accepting help.

The idea that we are sufficient in ourselves is unreal.

I. Trusting God to supply our needs (Philippians **4:19**; cp. 1 Timothy **6:6-8**; Hebrews **13:5**)

J. Conceiving of our problems as given to Christ (1 Peter **5:6-7**)

We are servants of Christ; it is the master’s responsibility to keep us fed, clothed, sheltered, healthy as long as we are doing what we are supposed to do.

Mental matters

K. Considering difficulties as opportunities for development

James **1:2-4**: patience

Hebrews **12:10**: better behaved

L. Thinking about wholesome things (Philippians **4:8**)

Noting the power of positive thinking

We say that we become what we fill our minds with.
Dwelling on the good things, rather than the bad ones

M. Practicing love

1 Corinthians 13:7: *“Love bears all things.”*
1 Corinthians 8:1: *“Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.”*
1 Corinthians 16:13-14: *“Be strong. Do everything in love.”*

N. Obeying Christ

We should not expect to be psychologically stable while adopting lifestyles God has forbidden. He forbade them because they are not in our best interests.

In 1 Corinthians 6:18, Paul warns that sexual immorality destroys our sense of identity, which has implications for psychological strength.

CONCLUSION

Disorientation, fragmentation, depression, and other emotional feelings we can deal with by applying the gospel to life.

We overlook invisible matters because we cannot “see” how they hurt anything. It hurts in precisely the invisible area of psychological concern, which is just as real as any other aspect of human experience.

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