

Scripture Citations with Sermon Starters

These scripture citations and Sermon Starters are part of the Resource Guide that accompanies the DVD, *Mental Health Mission Moments*.

"Coming Out of the Dark" (Length: 30 seconds)

Isaiah 58: 8, 9 (Isaiah 58:1-12 – Ash Wednesday, Years A, B and C)

John 1: 1-5 (John 1: 1-14 – Christmas Day, Years A, B and C)

John 8: 12

The creation story from the first chapter of Genesis tells of God creating light out of the darkness. Light is a symbol of hope and new life throughout our sacred scriptures. The Gospel of John proclaims, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." (John 1: 5) The foundation of our faith is God's victory over darkness and the ultimate triumph of light. Darkness can be terrifying for those experiencing mental illness. But love comes out of the darkness and this love gradually draws us back into the light of this world. For persons experiencing a mental illness, we can be instruments of God's love by extending care, compassion and hope to those in the grip of darkness and despair.

"Mental Illness and Families of Faith" (Length: 2:54 minutes)

Luke 15: 1-10 (Proper 19, Year C)

When mental illness strikes in young adulthood, families of faith often tell how they experience being "lost" from their faith communities much as the lost son, the lost sheep, or the lost coin in these parables. Jesus' parables image the housewife leaving nothing undisturbed to find the lost coin, and the shepherd risking the entire flock to find the lost sheep. The parables set an example of how we care for persons with a mental illness and their families. They lead us away from our impulse to blame those who are struggling and to focus instead on acceptance and support. When we surround them with our love and care, everyone can celebrate a time of hearing and recovery in the family of faith.

"Understanding Depression" (Length: 2:25 minutes)

1 Kings 19: 1-16a (Proper 7, Year C)

After a dramatic showdown with the priests of Baal on Mt. Carmel, in which Elijah was victorious, Queen Jezebel, sympathetic to Baal worship, threatened Elijah's life. Elijah left his servant and fled to the desert where he took refuge under a broom tree. He wished he would die. Instead of gathering his friends around him for support, he isolated himself. Elijah was experiencing many of the symptoms of depression, which are still so very common today, such as lack of sleep, physical exhaustion, feeling rejected and worthless, isolation and irrational negative thoughts about his own death. An angel of the Lord ministered to Elijah until he was ready to return to his community.

"Addiction and Depression" (Length: 2:17 minutes)

John 4: 7-30 (Lent 3, Year A)

In the story of the Samaritan woman, Jesus asks for water from an outcast woman - a woman who has had five husbands and is living with still another. Jesus boldly initiates the conversation with the woman at the well knowing the cultural taboos of a man speaking to a woman and a Jew addressing a Samaritan. Their lengthy

conversation centers on the theme of "living water," which Jesus promises to the woman. Persons struggling with addictions that are often brought on by mental illnesses such as depression, also thirst for "living water." Jesus did not dwell on the Samaritan woman's past. Rather he gave us an example of how the faith community can initiate a relationship with those struggling with these illnesses. Jesus clearly understood that all persons of faith, and especially those who are separated from their faith community for whatever reason, need to be offered a drink from the deep well of "living water" so they may find the gift of new life.

"Teenage Depression and Suicide" (Length: 3:11 minutes)

Luke 15: 11-32 The Prodigal Son (Lent 4, Year C)

When a young adult has a mental illness they often feel lost and abandoned by family, friends, and church. Parents need to realize that young people make mistakes, because they are young and sometimes because their judgment is impaired by a mental illness. Most, like the prodigal son come home. If they don't seem to be headed in this direction, parents need to know the signs and not be afraid to intervene. Seeking professional help is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength. The church can play a vital role in educating the congregation so that the church can be a safe and supportive community for the youth and the families struggling with these issues.

"Mental Illness and Older Adults" (Length: 2:32 minutes)

1 Samuel 16: 14-23

The young David is introduced to the troubled King Saul who is tormented by "an evil spirit from the Lord." David provides soothing music for the troubled king. But, more importantly, he is caring and compassionate even in the face of Saul's terrible rages. Too often we try to explain behaviors we do not understand by labeling as an "evil spirit" or as a punishment from God. Medical science has taught us much about illnesses of the brain. Modern researchers have theorized that Saul suffered from a mental illness. As people of faith, we are called to share God's love and compassion with those who are hurting. We can and should be instruments of healing and comfort to those we know are suffering from a mental illness through no fault of their own just as David was an instrument of healing and comfort to Saul.

"Where is God in the Darkness" (Length: 2:55 minutes)

Psalms 88 If you have never experienced the devastation of a serious mental illness, Psalm 88 is one place to begin. This Psalmist describes feelings of sadness, isolation, anger, abandonment, mistrust, spiritual emptiness and hopelessness. But sometimes it is precisely with our wounds and in our brokenness that we are most open to God. When we let go of our need to control and are truly open to God's transforming grace, we find that the darkness becomes a time not of doing and knowing, but of being and unknowing. It is here that we discover the source of mystery that holds us and surrounds us even when we are not aware of that Divine presence.

"Overcoming Stigma: Finding Hope" (Length: 2:56 minutes)

Micah 6: 8 (8th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

The major reason many persons do not get the treatment they need for a mental illness is the stigma that surrounds these illnesses of the brain. Most fear comes from our lack of understanding of these illnesses. Faith leaders and congregations can and should learn ways to be supportive and helpful to persons struggling with mental illness. The words of Micah remind us that the Lord requires us "to act justly

and to love mercy." This may require us to advocate for social issues affecting the mentally ill. By offering loving mercy and including those struggling with mental illness in our prayers and in the life of our congregations, we will give hope to those who often feel hopeless.

"Creating Caring Congregations" (Length: 2:42 minutes)

Luke 8: 26-29 (Proper 7, Year C)

The story of the man called Legion, though it appears three times in the Gospels, only appears once in the preaching lectionary. This text from Luke reveals that people with mental illness in biblical times were often banished from their communities because of the community's fear of behaviors they did not understand. In Luke's version of this story, Jesus intentionally sought out this man just as the church must do today. Because of Jesus' love and compassion, this man was healed. The church today is called to embrace those who struggle with a mental illness and be instruments of healing and wholeness. Even though this man wanted to follow Jesus, he was sent back to the full membership of his own community. And so it was that a person with a mental illness became the first evangelist to the Gentiles.