

LIVING GRACE

Living Grace is a resource designed to provide healthy solutions for your heart and mind. In each chapter, you will find opportunities to transform your daily life. Both Scripture and science will give you a new perspective and practical tools. These will help you address the challenges that come with living with any mental health difficulty or disorder.

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Mental Health Grace Alliance is a non-profit organization that cultivates healthy solutions for hearts and minds through simple, innovative biblical truths, scientific research and practical tools.

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GRACE ALLIANCE
HEALTHY SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR MIND

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INTRODUCTION

HOW IT FLOWS

FAITH

Investigate the lives of men and women from the Bible to discover how faith, personal challenges, anxiety, depression, and other mental health difficulties and disorders collide. Then, read the Scripture and summary paragraph. Finally, answer the opening question on your own or with others.

FACTS & RESILIENCY EXERCISE

Learn more about yourself and your experience as you explore compelling insights regarding relevant topics pertaining to your mental health. Various chapters will include a tool or exercise to help you further apply the topic to your everyday life.

FUTURE

Walk away from each chapter with practical steps for continuing to cultivate a healthy mind and heart. End your time with hope and encouragement found in a structured prayer.

HOW IT'S USED

ON YOUR OWN

Go at your own pace! Grab a journal or notebook to write out your responses, take notes, and try out the tools in the various chapters.

WITH A FRIEND OR MENTOR

Try it with someone you trust! Use the insights, questions, and tools to dialogue and grow together.

AS A GROUP

Develop a meaningful community! Meet in a small group setting weekly to go through the workbook together and discuss, discover, and encourage one another's journeys. Each chapter stands alone, allowing visitors to join at any time. Meet weekly for 16 weeks, or divide the workbook up into two 8-week sessions with a break in the middle (e.g., fall session, break for the holidays, spring session).

HOW TO CONNECT

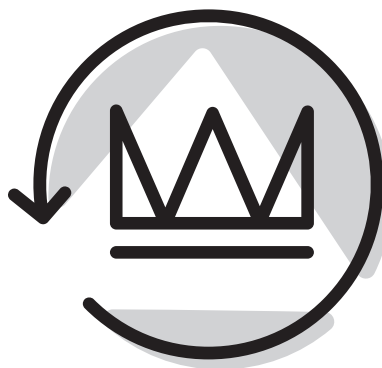
Enhance your Living Grace workbook experience by connecting and engaging with us on Facebook and Instagram. Gain further insights, tips, tools, and hopeful encouragements from our weekly posts and blogs, and share your experiences and resources with others around the world!

To find all our blogs and social media links, visit us at:

www.MentalHealthGraceAlliance.org

CHAPTER ONE

YOUR TRUE IDENTITY



KEY POINT

Circumstances and struggles do not define who we are; God does.

HEALTHY GROUP GUIDELINES

***NOTE FOR FIRST MEETING:** Introduce yourself to the group! State your first name and what you hope to experience in this Grace Group.

- 1. Healthy Comfort:** Offer respect, encouragement, and compassionate support.
- 2. Healthy Confidentiality:** Create a safe place to share by listening confidentially.
- 3. Healthy Communication:** Avoid fixing anyone's challenge, correcting, debating, or using offensive language.
- 4. Healthy Community:** Discover hope and useful tools while learning from one another's journeys.

FAITH

OPENING PRAYER

"Father, thank You for being with us and understanding our mental health journey. Give us Your wisdom to discover helpful insights and tools for each of our paths. Thank You for giving us Your hope, grace, and steadfast love for today and for better days to come. In Jesus' name, Amen."

READ LUKE 5:3-11

When Peter encountered Jesus in this story, all he could see was his own sin and brokenness. He felt unworthy of Jesus' love. He was just like you and me: far from perfect! His résumé included a lifetime of struggles, doubts, comparisons, and brash interactions. He even went as far as trying to correct Jesus (Mark 8:32-33), aggressively attacking a soldier (John 18:10), and then abandoning Jesus in His greatest time of need (Luke 22:54-62)! It makes sense why Peter later fell at Jesus' feet, ashamed of his shortcomings. However, Jesus only looked at Peter with love, seeing Peter's true identity. Despite Peter's struggles, Jesus' perfect love transformed Peter's imperfect life, by helping Peter see himself as God saw him.

Living with anxiety, depression, and other mental health difficulties and disorders can be stressful and painful. The experience may cause us to question who we are and what our worth is. Just like Jesus responded to Peter's fears by revealing Peter's true identity, Jesus extends that same grace and love to us! The key to discovering who we are starts with knowing what God thinks about us.

What do you find interesting about this story?

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FACTS

1. Anxiety, depression, and other mental health difficulties and disorders are physical conditions, not our identities. No one ever says, “I am cancer,” they say, “I have cancer.” No matter what mental health difficulty or disorder we may be facing, we can confidently say, “I am not [depression, anxiety, bipolar, etc.]. It’s only my condition, not who I am. I am fully and unconditionally loved by God, forever His child.”

Describe why this idea can be so challenging for us to believe.

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2. Some of our symptoms may cause us to pull away from other people. However, as believers in Christ, we are not alone. We are His children and part of a greater family, which the Bible refers to as the Body of Christ. This community of faith exists both inside and outside of the Church, and even includes this Living Grace group.

Describe your experience being part of a community or a group while dealing with symptoms of your mental health difficulty. Why do you think attending a group like this is helpful?

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3. Our mental health difficulties and disorders do not limit our relationship with Jesus. Although feeling disconnected from God can be normal and frustrating, it is not a result of our failure or a reflection of God not being present with us. Christ is in each of us, and His presence is with us in all circumstances, both good and bad. He wants us to share our feelings, our thankfulness, and our requests. The Bible says, “He longs to be gracious to you” (Isaiah 30:18).

Without feeling the need to “do more” or work for God, describe practical ways you’re able to remember that God is with you and for you.

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THE RESILIENCY EXERCISE

OUR REDEFINED IDENTITY

The experiences that we face when living with mental health difficulties and disorders can cause us to carry negative and shaming labels with us. Knowing who we truly are in Christ can bring new freedom and the desire to explore the unique characteristics and talents that God has instilled in each of us.

Choose three Redefined Identity Statements (see below) that impact you the most and write them in the “I AM” spaces on the next page. Next, describe when it would be beneficial to remind yourself of these truths throughout the week (e.g., “when I am feeling lonely and isolated,” “when I’m feeling overwhelmed by my symptoms”).

FOR GROUP USE: If comfortable, share your responses with your group.

REDEFINED IDENTITY STATEMENTS

I am a son or daughter of a loving heavenly Father..... Romans 8:15

I am made completely new and am not defined by my old self..... 2 Corinthians 5:17

I am chosen and loved more than I know by God..... Colossians 3:12

I am freed and forgiven by God’s never-ending grace..... Ephesians 1:7

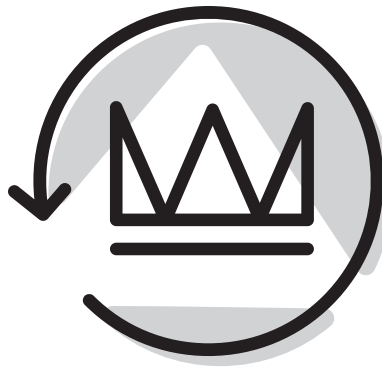
I am not alone; Christ is always present with me..... Colossians 1:27

I am never separated from God because I have direct access to Him..... Ephesians 2:18

I am a valued member of God’s community..... 1 Corinthians 12:27

I am called a “friend” by Jesus..... John 15:15

I am made complete in Christ..... Colossians 2:10



MY IDENTITY STATEMENTS

I AM

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I AM

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I AM

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When would remembering this be helpful?

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FUTURE

YOUR WEEKLY TAKEAWAY

1. Continue to read the “Redefined Identity Statements” and Scriptures throughout the week. The more you affirm who you are in Christ, the more your thoughts and behaviors will reflect your true identity.
2. Throughout the week, continue reminding yourself that your circumstances and struggles do not define who you are; God does! He is with you. You are part of His family. His love is constant toward you.

PRAYER

“Lord, we are so thankful for the opportunity to learn more about You and who You made us to be. Thank You for loving us, even in our most challenging seasons of life, and always reminding us of who we are in all circumstances. Thank You for being with us as we grow in confidence and live out our authentic selves – who You intricately designed us to be. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

NOTES
