

I JUST WISH THAT...

WK FOUR - 12.17.23
**I COULD
FEEL NORMAL**

INTRODUCTION

When you were a kid at Christmas, you made your "wish list." Remember what was on it? As adults, we've still got our wish lists; they just look a little different. During the Advent season, we're talking about a few things that are probably on yours – and what Jesus has the power to do with them at Christmas. In week four, Pastor Chip shared the difficulties mental health challenges can bring – especially around the holidays – and how God leans in, understands, and allows us to see ourselves and each other through a new identity.

DISCUSSION

1. A "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" mentality to mental health can lead to self-isolation and potentially some poor coping mechanisms. If you're comfortable, and without naming names or sharing details, discuss how, growing up, your family approached the subject of mental health.
2. Pastor Chip explained that God leans into – not away from – our mental health struggles. Rather than feeling guilt or shame, how does knowing God's presence and care in this area change your existing view of him and mental health?
3. Jesus was betrayed and lost close friends and family. His hometown rejected him, and while hanging on the cross, he was worried about what would happen to his mom. How does God's personal experience with pain, sadness, and anxiety help us process and navigate our own?
4. **Revisit and read Ephesians 1:3-13.** It's tempting to define ourselves by our feelings or diagnosis. What's the benefit of having your identity rooted in Christ instead?
5. So much of life is having the wisdom to control what you can control and letting go of what you can't. Share with your group one thing this holiday season you want to work on in regards to your control (or lack thereof).

APPLICATION

- **Focus on controlling what you can control.** Ask yourself, "What can I control about this situation?" Write it down if you need to. Surrender what you can't to God and let it go. For what you can, make a plan of action that includes healthy boundaries.
- **Maintain healthy rhythms.** If you want to feel "normal" this season, keep doing what helps you feel that way every other season of the year. Healthy rhythms are huge! Keep exercising, don't overeat, and spend time in prayer and your Bible. Build some rest into your calendar, even if it's just three minutes to self-regulate. Consistency is key!
- **Check in with yourself and others regularly.** The more disconnected we are, the easier it is to hide and struggle in silence. Remember you have no idea what internal battle the people in your Little Iowa face. Everyone is fighting a battle you likely know little about. Lead with grace and mercy rather than judgement.