



## Only in God

During Mental Health Awareness Week I would like to take this opportunity to share with you a message of Christian hope and understanding.

For many who have mental health challenges they can find themselves not only on the margins of acceptance and understanding within the community, but they may also find themselves on the margins of their own self-acceptance and understanding...and this can be immensely challenging.

So as people of faith I want to share with you this simple message – you are not alone, you are not abandoned, you are known and loved by God.

In John's Gospel Jesus tells us that he has come so that we may have life and have that life in abundance, and life in all its fullness is certainly not a life without suffering, pain, or disappointment (look at the life of Jesus to understand this point), nor though is life without its joys, hopes and celebrations.

But for those of us who have the gift of faith we believe that life in all its fullness, in all its richness and completeness is a life which is lived out with and in God. It is within God where our lasting hope is found, that through his son Jesus we can live well and experience meaningful and fruitful lives no matter the storms which may beset us.

To quote John Swinton from his book finding Jesus in the Storm, he reminds us that mental health challenges are difficult experiences, but they needn't prevent us from living well, living faithfully, and loving Jesus.

And so this week let us remember that we have God with us who continually accompanies us along our complex life journey. Our mental health challenges may well be great and will often seem overpowering and unbearable, but they do not define us...what does define us is our relationship and identity in God.

We are not alone, we are not abandoned, we are known and loved by God.

I would like to end by sharing with you some words of God from the book of proverbs...

*Trust wholeheartedly in the Lord, put no faith in your own perception. In every course you take keep him in mind, he will see that your paths are made smooth.*