

Military and Mental Illness by Ben Huot

Military and Mental Illness

4th Generation Psychology Writings

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August 2, 2022

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Introduction

Trust in the Lord

The journey has already been long
The battles continue
And they are changing
But some things remain the same

In a story the characters
Have the same names throughout
But many things about them
Evolve over time

A good author will grow their characters
But the theme remains the same
There are only a handful of basic plots
In life they occur in each generation

When I think of where I started my journey
I first think of Basic Training in the Army
But the journey started long before
And the same struggles continue

The roots of the problems run deep
And there is no obvious solution
I only know the source of the solution
Is from the Holy Spirit

When I was young it was easy to be encouraged
And it was an easier and more peaceful time period
As I grow older I trust the future less and less
Not only do I trust in no one save The Lord
I do not trust myself either

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I have travelled little distance
In my life story
But the internal struggle has been very eventful

God has always been there with and for me
From the very beginning
From some of my first memories

I was saved as a child
Even before I could read

And I asked to be baptized
And was as soon as I fully understood
The implications of my decision

It is true that my lack of trust
Started in the military
But world events and contemporary life
Re-enforced these thoughts and feelings

Over my life I have fought a number of things
Many dealing with thoughts and feelings
I have less control over
Because of how I was born
And my military service

I have recently realized my training in the military
Was very well designed
For what we deal with in this generation

I have had several mystical experiences
All painful and I would have avoided all

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If I knew beforehand

Some times we feel closer to God
In times of trial and tribulation
But there are also times of quiet
When it appears God is closer as well

It is hard to take time to listen and be patient
Certainly God values these attributes
As He constantly listens and is patient with us

When I think of some of the things
I still do not understand about God, life, and Scripture
I think of how dense the disciples could be at times

I often take too long
To break old habits
Some more costly than others

I need to be more willing to wait
For God's help

The entirety of our life
Is like being in a waiting room

We really are only here
For a very short time
But it sure feels like a lot

Sometimes when in pain
Time slows down so much
Or even stops entirely
That we perceive

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An eternity passed by

For all the things
I would have done differently
Had I known what I know now

One thing I do not regret
Is my eternal choice
To place my faith in Christ

And believe in
All He has promised us

And as I take on the crosses
He has for me to bear
I thank God that He takes time for me

And I look forward
To spending more time with Him
Both in the quiet times
In this life but also in the next

Faith Means Patience and Listening

My life is what many would call boring
But this is not the whole story
My mind is very active
Even though my body is not

You can have adventures
Worthy of a lifetime of reflection
Without leaving home

Today we measure success
Through the metrics of money, sex, and power
As we feel the need
To have the approval of others

Few today see a need to please God
The most interesting parts of life
Are the spiritual aspects
And God is the most interesting Spirit

Life as a Christian is far from boring
Many times in my life
I would have wished it more boring
As a spiritual adventure can be quite terrifying

But the most rewarding encounters with God
Are in the quiet times
When we seek God by ourselves
Some call this prayer or devotions

To please God

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Is the most rewarding activity
Emotionally, physically, and spiritually

Many of us encounter God
In painful and traumatic situations
But this is our choice not His

God created us to spend time with us
God can only be pleased
By our patience and listening (or faith)

Many of us today have much we want to say
But Christianity is more about restraint
Than it is about gathering followers
Or impacting many people

Changing who we are
Is one of the best ways
To convince others to change

Christ leads by example
Instead of being a king or general
Or anything else people wanted
Or expected Him to be

He was a teacher and role model
He wanted to have a connection with people
So He lived as one of us for a lifetime

And He wanted to free us from the
Devastating effects of sin

Christianity in general and Christ in particular

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Are very much about the problem of evil and suffering
Christ was patient and listened
Even when He was suffering

Christ had to suffer to do what He promised and chose to do
We many times suffer because of our stubbornness and
selfishness
Many Christians suffered for ideas they held onto
That were more cultural than Biblical

I for one do not want to suffer
Anymore for my country
On the other hand
I would do the best I could
To hold to the faith despite obstacles

Today we try to reduce pain through chemicals
And then we experience more pain
Maybe we need to change our lifestyle
And the way we think

The idea of slowing down
In what we try to do
Might mean we live happier lives

Many of use today
Are worried about how long we have
As a planet and as a species

And are rushing to finish doing good
Before it is too late

Just as I believe God will give

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Each person enough time
To be convinced God cares about them

So the world will be given enough time
For us to accomplish what God
Has prepared for us to do

Our world is changing faster than ever before
But we as individuals need not do the same

The ideas of the Bible are more relevant today
Than ever before

And Christ is the only answer
That could satisfy our hearts
In the world we live in today

My Life and Faith and Mental Illness

But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of God's mouth.'" Deuteronomy 8:3

—Jesus Christ when tempted by the devil in the wilderness, from World English Bible, Matthew 4:4

I have not had the easiest life in some respects while in others I am living the dream.

I am an American citizen and lived in America all my life. This puts me in a very special category like that of a lottery winner. I also have a great family and I have had God in my life from the very beginning.

On the other hand I have had some difficulties some of which very few people have. I had large warts as a child, I served in the Army as an enlisted soldier, and I have Schizophrenia, which is the most severe mental illness you can get.

I also have had to go through a psychotic episode, be in a locked down psychiatric ward of a hospital a week and a half, live in a group home with other mentally ill people a year, and I even lived in a retirement home for several years.

The army was the real life changer for me which, looking back on it, actually was useful training and prepared me well, for both my future and the future of America and the world. The positive things it gave me were more things to write about and a pension.

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There are numerous downsides to having Schizophrenia, which was caused by a combination of both my genes and my experience in the Army, as decided by the Veterans Administration.

Schizophrenia affects me personally by making me very paranoid of other people. I think people are targeting me and I think people are talking about me badly. I know on a certain level that this is not likely true, but it still is very real to me. This is what makes it impossible for me to work a job, which is the basis for disability status from the Veterans Administration.

I also have to take a medicine that always makes me very tired and slows down my entire physical body, so that I never feel rested no matter how much I sleep. This medicine also makes me much more likely to get heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

Another part of my disability from the Veterans Administration is chronic allergic conjunctivitis. This condition is commonly called pink eye, because it causes the white part of the eye to get irritated and turn pink. For me, this is caused by a combination of stress and sensitivity to toxic chemicals, like household cleaners.

The eye problem seemed to me very severe at first, but later I seemed to be able to get it more under control, once I was on my first anti-psychotic medication, in the hospital.

So I, like many people in the world today, find life a very frustrating experience, because we see everything falling apart and yet no one knows how to fix it. There is more temptation and evil in the world than every before. We seemed to solve very problem and yet we are more unhappy than ever before.

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This is because we have given up on the difficult task of following God in our lives. Many suffer more than ever before, so many blame God for this. But we know this is not true, because people are clearly the cause of all the suffering that we can find the source of.

The key to happiness is having peace with God, which will allow us to find peace with ourselves and our world. One of the biggest barriers to faith today is the issue of control.

We do not want to accept God's gift of grace. This grace comes with it eternal life, being filled with God's Spirit, being part of community of believers and spiritual gifts like wisdom or encouragement. We do not want to accept this because we know it is not a one time simple prayer, although it starts that way.

Faith is a journey through your entire life where you continue to surrender control of your life over to God. We learn very quickly today not to trust anyone or anything and so it seems unwise to let God in control of your life. It gets even more difficult when you are told you might suffer worse, because you are saved, not less.

I have found it hard to trust God, as I find it hard to trust anyone, both because I have Schizophrenia and because I know enough of how the world works and see the direction things are going in. I believed that God wanted me to join the military and a lot of pain went along with it both then and later, both physical and emotional.

But God did get me out of the military before I got hurt really bad, like many soldiers who served in combat, in that time

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period. I screwed up many things in the military, but I always gave 150% and did whatever I was told instantly. That got me an honorable discharge and later a pension.

But none of this would have happened without the direct divine intervention of God. That is the most rational explanation.

Anybody who served in the military knows most people want to leave not long after they get in and you cannot get out period until your enlistment ends and sometimes not even then. Even getting out with a mental illness requires a US congressional representative and we did not put any pressure on the military or the Veterans Administration to make their decisions.

Just as we need food and sleep so also we need God in our lives. If we do not follow God and put Him first in our lives we will get ourselves into many different addictions like food, work, or worse. Only God can fully satisfy this hunger we have for Him in our lives. We are not designed to be fully autonomous. We were designed to be in a symbiotic connection with God.

It is painful to follow God, but it is more painful not to. You will suffer no matter what in this world. But you can have peace with God, yourself, this world and in the next. Following God is hard work and requires the ultimate commitment, but so does anything worthwhile.

God's Choice

Sometimes God works
By closing doors
Instead of opening them

Sometimes serving God
Means not pursuing
Whole aspects of life

Many expect so much of life
In this contemporary world
But we can't have it all

Sacrifices must be made
As pursuing some things
Necessitates not pursuing others

God can help with this
And does so sometimes
By placing limits on us

Some things that are legitimate
For one person are not for another

Sometimes it comes down to priorities
Some of it is just about wisdom

Good things are often done for bad reasons
And bad things for good reasons
But neither approach is legitimate or ethical

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Sometimes things are easier to understand
As to why we are not permitted
To do some things
That other believers are allowed

But God does not always
Connect the dots for us
Or give us a blueprint of His plans

There are general instructions
For all Christians in the Bible

But God also speaks to us
As individuals in our specific circumstances

We have to act out our faith
As individuals doing different things

Much as the patriarchs proved their faith
By doing different acts as called by God

What do we do when God says no?
How do we accept sacrificing things
That other Christians are allowed?

There is no normal Christian
And there is no easy version of faith
There is no quick or easy answer

Cancer is often fought as a battle
Against a sentient being

So we also struggle against not just circumstances

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But also against evil in spirit and matter

The devil is the father of lies
And so uses deception
As his weapon of choice

Ignoring God or minimizing Scripture
Is never the answer

We do not choose how we must suffer
Or what things we must sacrifice
Any more than we get to choose our death

There is purpose and meaning in life
But the real goal is growing closer to God
As it is the one things we take with us
Into the next life

We often spend so much time bringing others to Christ
That we forget to take care of ourselves

If you want to grow in faith
You have to put in the time and effort

There is no fast track
Or simple solution
Faith is difficult period

Many people blame God for their struggles
Or they blame themselves

But there is more to the situation
Than we will ever be aware of

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At least in this life

The interactions between all lifeforms
In both material and spiritual worlds
Must be truly astonishing

I am glad I am not God

I think of what God could do
To prove He was real
That people could not argue against

But then I think
God must be very careful with us
Especially when He does miracles

Indisputable proof of His power and authority
Could easily destroy our entire world

Many people give up on God
Because they struggle for so long
And they think God is too quiet

They want solutions to their problems
But maybe there is meaning and purpose
In some of the struggles

It would be terrifying to try to survive
For even a minute without God

I truly do not understand why it makes sense
To not believe in God to get back at God
You still suffer the same amount

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But for nothing

But it is hard to be rational
When you are denied something
You see everyone else enjoying

It is easy to lose your faith
When life ends up so much worse
Than you ever expected it

But your faith will come back again
If you draw close to God
He will draw close to you

When you seek God with all your heart
You will then feel the reality of His presence

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Military Experience

War in an Entertainment Culture

The way most people understand the military comes from movies. This means most people think being in the military is exciting and educational. The military unlike the ones simulated by Hollywood is very boring and depressing. Video games are fun because you suffer no emotional or physical pain.

Serving in the army is like doing heavy construction work all day and getting paid below minimum wage. In addition you are also being exposed to toxic chemicals and are likely to leave with psychological trauma. You have no rights and when you leave you have no benefits.

The military does not encourage critical thinking anymore than a cult. The military is like being bipolar - you have terror and you have boredom but little in between. The one thing good about the military is the people you work with. The bad part is they job you are required to do. This is the sad part of the military: they get real nice people to do some very bad things.

Most people join the military because they are fooled by the promise of benefits and /or because their situation is worse. Historically only people who were near serving time in prison or who were new to the country would be willing to join. Today we want people who are disciplined and good with technology as warfare has become a specialty and requires more training but fewer people.

The military is not difficult intellectually nor does it require extensive technical ability either. They take people who are willing but do not train them long enough. We are a high

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technology army that uses expensive weapons manned by people without adequate knowledge of what they are getting into. The military also expects you to never be late to a meeting and never to hesitate before doing anything asked of you.

They also put everyone on the front lines. The difference between medic and infantry is that the foot soldier carries a lighter pack. This is because they don't have to carry the morphine or the bandages.

Our country is not known for being able to shoot well even though our rifles are very easy to shoot accurately with. They want everyone to work together as a group and respond very quickly. We win wars by supporting these foot soldiers better than any other army does.

Saying our army is the best in the world compared to other armies does not mean it is good compared to advanced research universities. The job in the military largely entails withstanding pain and having a huge amount of energy. It does not require understanding quantum mechanics but rather having laser focus on the mission.

Critical thinking is frowned on in the army because it takes too much time to do right. We outsource the brains to the officers. We in the American military do not choose to fight in wars.

When I was in the military, being sent to combat was the scariest thing you could think of. The countries we fight are even meaner than you see in the movies. They are ready, willing, and enthusiastic to make any American suffer as much as they possibly can.

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Your enlistment is only one part of the story. The other is how it affects you the rest of your life. Many people come out with post traumatic stress disorder or missing a leg or two. These are great people who are willing to do something everyone else claims they support but won't do anything to help. The biggest injury in warfare is exposure to toxic chemicals and most of that is entirely unnecessary and directly self-inflicted.

In order to get rid of stuff in combat they have decided to burn everything from jet fuel, poop, old uniforms, garbage, and anything else they want to get rid of in open burning pits next to where our people work, train, and sleep. When the military inhales these chemicals they get very sick and get things like cancer in their 20s and 30s.

A direct connection has been proven and there is plenty of evidence but you have to submit your claim individually as they assume you are not affected unless you fill out the right forms. The head of the VA says we have plenty of money to pay for this, but the Department of Defense will not release what chemicals are being burned in the pits. This is likely because they do not want anyone to know what they are destroying.

A much smarter idea would be to employ local civilians to take out the trash for us or bury it in the middle of the desert. Our military places a higher value on our lives to not care at all about this. They must be destroying something they don't want someone else to get their hands on.

The next time you decide to vote for a candidate that gets tough on our enemies or has the will to fight an inevitable war before it gets out of hand, sign up yourself instead or your children or grandchildren if you are too old. It is easy to be the one that

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declares the war and fun to ride in a parade but serving in the war is a sacrifice not because you serve in a tough job for a few years but because it destroys your life and those you are fighting against.

No one really wins a war. We fight wars every decade and lose the peace in almost all of them. This is senseless suffering. If you value the American soldier do not thank them for their service. Stop the wars or serve in their place.

Terror in the Military

There is a difference between agreeing to something
And doing it because you don't have a choice

Sometimes you are forced to make the better of 2 bad choices
There are many times you just do something
Without fully accepting both the rationale
And the inevitable consequences

The military is much like this
The concept of the military is basically this
We destroy things and kill people
When we are told to
Because worse things will happen if we do not

Many join the military
Because their alternative option is worse
There is less of that today in recruits
This is likely why the Army chose to
Motivate us by the you have no options route

My infantry training also known as basic training
Was for people who were not foot soldiers by specialty
Many of us could have gone on to college successfully
We were likely less gullible than those they were used to
Quickly we realized this was not what we signed up for

We were promised a 9 to 5 job in an office
This was true technically but not in spirit
The hard part of the military is not your specialty

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The hard part of the military its that everyone
Is put on the front lines
To support the foot soldiers better
Regardless of their specialty

The Army constantly has you on call
And continually has you do infantry training
For every specialty in your free time

The Army goes to the gas chamber once a year
They prove they can shoot their rifle once a year
They do training in some sort of combat survival skills
Every month at least

The Army is not like the Navy
The Navy gets a specialty connected to their rank
And they do little else
Except for maintenance for the first few weeks

The Army are janitors as well the whole time
Think of the Army as cleaning in the middle of combat

Again the hard part is the risk you take on
And the even harder part is the pain you might experience
Just doing your job

For the past 30 plus years in combat
The Army, Marines, and unlucky Navy and Air Force
Have had to breathe in toxic smoke
From open burn piles
That our military decided to use
To get rid of any and all waste products

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Almost any military specialty
Will expose you to toxic chemicals
I had no trouble getting a partial disability
For chronic allergic pink eye
Shortly after I left the military

So no one in their right mind
Would choose this over college
One they know the details

Especially as you can change the world
Or serve your country
Much more through college
Than with an Army enlistment

At the bottom your effect on the system is non-existent
You are lucky if you are allowed to
Increase your efficiency doing your assigned mission

I think the key point that changed my mind
About how the military is different
From what the military recruiter said
Was when I had to go into the gas chamber

My recruiter was an Army Ranger
Who served during the first gulf war
He claimed the no one uses chemical weapons anymore
And all that would happen in the gas chamber
Is you would have trouble breathing for 30 seconds

Either he was lying about the first part or the second
The third part is believable
As there is so much tear gas in Army Ranger training

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The Army is incredibly hard physically and mentally
But it was the emotional part that broke me
I never accepted what was happening was always ok with me
I never bought in to the mission of the US in the world

I never was asked to do anything immoral to anyone
But what is expected of you by the military never ends

I think one of the reasons why my battalion commander
Signed off on my early release
Was I refused to let up and not give 150%
When the lower enlisted in the battalion begged me to

I knew from the beginning
Despite my poor understanding of the military
That I had to do whatever I was told
And always give 150%

My Drill Sergeant in advanced training said
If I continue doing those 2 things
I would do well wherever I was assigned

There are no secrets or what we call privacy in the military
There is no safety or comfort for those
Who guarantee this for the other Americans

You have no rights in the military
The military justice system is at least twice as bad as ours
For punishments alone

The military is the kind of dictatorship
That it fights against

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It is something to think about
Before signing up for anything
That you think of the worst cast scenarios

And the simulated drowning and confinement
Are not the worse things that can happen
After you sign up for the military

The biggest things that got to me
Were the lack of sleep and constant terror

Enough Grace

In the middle of hell
I lost all hope
Would the pain ever stop?
Would I ever leave?

Sometimes time just stops
And you can do nothing
Sometimes God is silent
At the worst possible time

Sometimes Christians must experience hell
This is not what I signed up for
But there is no going back
To my back an iron door
And before me a monster

But if you go through hell
And God is nowhere to be seen or heard
Or the pain blocks your eyes and ears
What is a Christian to do?

Sometimes you get knocked down so hard
You cannot get up
No matter how much you want to
Sometimes you can get stuck in an earthly hell

You will later realize that Christ
Was standing along with you in the furnace
And He felt all you did
But this later recollection is of little comfort

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During that ungodly episode

As Christians we believe we will never experience hell
But this is not true
You can also experience hell for a long time
Some create their own personal hells
Others just get in line
Not realizing what they were told were all lies

What draws someone to volunteer
For something no one should be asked to do?

It is easy to lose your faith
When asked to do something your faith
Is supposed to save you from
None of use can truly understand what hell is
Just as no one can understand the military until they join

Schizophrenia feels like you are constantly in imminent danger
And you never feel safe
You are always worried about bad things happening
And when they do it hurts so much more

In the military I learned how to wait
With no book and without talking
But to be silent and disciplined
While in constant pain
This is more than you can expect of a person

People often ask what discipline means in the Army
It means doing whatever you are told
Immediately and without complaint
There are never any excuses for non compliance

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This alone takes a toll on a person

You are literally a tool of the government
We see the mistakes of the government
As comical or ridiculous
But they can and do cause real pain

When a leader screws something up
You have no control in the military
Over anything including your own body
And in some way over your mind as well
Much more of that later on

Many see military service as a sacrifice
Of several years of your life
But the scars can last for your entire lifetime

The military wants you weak and afraid
Because you are more likely to be a follower
You are not encouraged to think independently
One group is given complete power over you
And you are reminded of this constantly

This is what it means to have no power
It means you have no hope
Sin can also lead you down the same road

But God is there even when we are unaware of Him
And some things we just need to accept with faith

Pain really makes faith hard sometimes
It breaks down our ability
For our rational mind

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To tell us this is just a short time

But even if the time is short

To us it can be an eternity

Perception and fact may be different

But with pain perception is the only relevant thing

Maybe those with control over their thoughts

Things may be different

Hopefully they will never experience certain types of pain

Anticipation can enhance an experience

But it can also make pain more intense

One thing similar between being a veteran

And having Schizophrenia

Is that it becomes your story and your identity

A person does not just struggle with Schizophrenia

Or just work in the military

They are a soldier

And they are a person with Schizophrenia

The things that happen in your mind

May only be fully real in your dreams

But for a person with Schizophrenia

It does not matter what is real by evidence or proof

The proof is that they feel the pain

The evidence is this is what their brain says

You cannot over rule your emotions

If the rational part of your brain doesn't work

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Although in some situations this can be beneficial
Provided you have the control to turn this on and off
Much as adrenaline or fear itself
Are both useful if they only appear at a useful time

But adrenaline makes you very tired
If it never stops pumping
Fear can be useful too if the warnings are timely
But constant fear is like a dog barking
That has no sense of what a legitimate threat is

Having Schizophrenia makes our brains
Closer to those of animals
As animals have poor self control in some areas

But just as animals
People with Schizophrenia
Can experience God
Just as well as people of sound minds

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Faith and Symptoms

Pain, God and Family

I want no more adventures
I want no more pain

I have had to deal with several things
That I wish no one else has to go through

I want to be healed
I no longer want to fight
Everyday to survive

I want to get past this
And get on with my life

I want to work a job
And get married
Like a normal person

The thing is I am not normal
One of my biggest obstacles
Is my fear of many things

This is especially true of
What I cannot predict
What I cannot prepare for
What I cannot accept

Fear of the unknown
Is one of the greatest fears
That normal people can relate with

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In many ways I appear normal
But that is far from
What I know is going on inside

I do not trust anyone
For a variety of reasons
But I even distrust those
Who are closest to me

It may be wise now
To trust few people
But trusting no one
Including yourself
Is truly disabling

Counseling doesn't work
If you do not trust the therapist
You cannot hold down a job
If you cannot trust your coworkers

But it is not just trust
That I struggle with

I am constantly dead tired
This is one of the many side effects
Of the one type of medicine
That is effective to treat psychosis

Schizophrenia is very lonely
Because you cannot relate with other people
There are so many things I cannot understand
Because the important parts of my brain
Are damaged or malfunctioning

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People see that I am intelligent
And they see I do not work
So they assume my life is easy

If you ever think it is easy to not have work
Talk to someone who can't find work
Or has taken off work for more than 6 months

I can't even handle any kind of pet or plant
The day to day rituals
Can be devastating to those with my condition

Many people think that most people's problems
Are solely due to poor knowledge or understanding
Including many counselors

What makes taking care of myself hard
Is partly a lack of motivation
Is partly that I get distracted easily
Is partly that I overthink it

Is partly that I get stressed out
Because I know I have to continue
To repeat this for the rest of my life

In some ways I have been able to compensate
For my lack of a functioning frontal lobe of my brain
I am distrustful of not only other people and myself
But I also distrust my intuition
And awareness of my surroundings

I know if something seem too dramatic

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It is likely a type of delusion
I know life for peons is normally boring

And if anything is too interesting in my life
This is a sign that my perception
Is being impaired or compromised

I see the world as a reflection of my mind
The only things we know are the things we perceive directly
Everything else we accept by faith

Some people are so programmed by society
They believe only what they can see, hear, quantify, and describe
But this is a conscious decision
And certainly not a natural one

Some people think life should make sense
This is quite an assumption
I do personally have faith in Christ
But I believe in little else

When the pain is intense
In its many forms and aspects
It makes it much hard to believe
That life has a purpose

But I truly do believe that many things
In this life make little sense
Bureaucracy is one of them

I experienced this in the Army
And for a couple decades
Navigating the Veterans Administration

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With the indispensable support of my family

One of the things that has been so different
About my experiences compared to the normal ones
Is that I continue to have
A positive relationship with my family

They treated me well when I grew up
And I had no reason to reject them

They decided to keep looking out for me
Even though their obligation
Had long since passed

God has also made all the difference
It seems that the only logical answer
That I have been able to do things
That people with Schizophrenia just don't do

I have kept adding to my website daily for 25 years
I have written over 3,000 pages over the same 25 years
I have also read and kept up on technology the entire time

This has only been possible
Because God chose to heal parts of my brain
I continue to get more and more independent over time
I master more and more things
That people with Schizophrenia just never do

I definitely have Schizophrenia
As the VA and every psychiatrist
I have met and interviewed with
Has immediately agreed upon

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So my performance can only be explained
By divine intervention

Racing Mind - Racing World

How can I trust the future?
I cannot even trust myself
My mind is not quiet
And my heart burns from within

My country destroyed my brain
And democracy is a lie
There will be no way to redeem
The country I live within

There will be no resolution
To the conflict we have
From within ourselves
And from within our cities

When darkness begins to settle in
The light struggles to emit
If there is but one shred of hope
It would only make it more painful

Can we just fade into obscurity
Why do we need one last fight?
Sorrow is nothing but a dream
But that dream is our lives

When will we see face to face again?
When will things feel normal?
I will never be normal again
And our country will not be happy
Until it is willing to change its mind

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The richest and most powerful country
This world has ever known
We get excited about conflict
And only the blood of our children
Will make us happy

I stand with no one but the Lord

No one else will stand with me
There is but one left
Who will stand before all
And outlast time itself

There is but one purpose and one allegiance
That transcends our limited imagination

There is only one way forward
The road splinters into many pieces
But not far ahead it dead ends

The roads look like mazes
There is but one road beyond this
But how do we get there?

There is a time and place for everything
But the evil in our hearts
How much longer must we wait
For a revelation from God?

When you cannot find your way
When life eludes you
And your mind only wanders

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Is there a method for the mad?

When we feel like giving up
When does our second wind come?
I feel like the wind is knocked out of me
I feel like all I want to do is sleep

Each day only brings us closer
To the deeper truth
That there is no love left
There is no reason to fight the future

We must just embrace the chaos
And roll with the punches

It will be a long wait for the King's return
And in this century of winter
Many spirits will die
And many hearts will be reborn

There are always multiple mirrors
That we can see diverse reflections within

There will still be time for laughter
And meaning in memories and family
But as a whole
Our people no longer care

About what makes our society stable
Or the good parts of our past traditions

We merely shout and wave hands
We would be more vocal

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But it is hard to hear through masks
We would wrestle our opponents to the ground
But we would have to get less than 6 feet apart

We have changed our speech so much
That I no longer understand
What our leaders say
And they no longer care what I feel

How do we read the room
When we cannot trust the information?
At this point nothing is certain
And anything can happen

Maybe we are the first generation
To truly feel this way
But this will be common in the future

I grew up in a time of peace
When many bad schemes
Were first plotted and hatched up
I look at my childhood
As a simpler and more hopeful time

Today to even grasp the scale of change
And the damage we do to keep things going
It would take a lifetime of travel
To the most secret locations on this planet

Nothing awaits for us but a singularity
The future is unpredictable now
Even 5 years from now may as well be a century
The pace of time continues to accelerate

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As the light flashes before our eyes
Each button transports us to a new reality
Behind each picture there is a sad story
With each destructive move
More big pieces of our culture are erased

Blink once if you understand
And twice if they are listening
Turn your head around
And see other laughing at you
From the other side of the world

Sometimes it seems we dream during our work
And wake up at night to rest
Without a consistent measuring device
Even precise machines start to malfunction

When I can no longer hear the pulsing of my mind
Or the negative thoughts in my head
There lies before me possibilities
Too complex to describe
Too subtle to accept

People now fear this is the end
But what if this is only the start?

Getting Home

Home it not here
Home is with someone you love
Home is in the past
Home is in the future

I need not fear my future
Because it is with the Lord

Looking back from here
Gives me something to gauge the future with
One things that is consistent
Is nothing is written in stone

True the future is uncertain
But the flip side of this means
We still have freedom
As individuals as well as a species

We know we still have hope
Because we know God has not abandoned us
I stand with God because of this

I cannot even dream of being ashamed of the Gospel
If God is willing to work with me
Why on earth would I reject Him?

I am not like those in the Bible
Save maybe Lazarus
And he was already dead
But even he was used by God

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That I find greatly encouraging

How can we fear the future
If we don't even know what it is?
How can we underestimate God
When we cannot even measure His power?

Why is patience so hard?
Why do we give up so easily?
Even the greatest Christians
Gave up easily at first

If literal enemies worked together
To build the early Church
And someone was made leader
Who had no prior interest in following God
We really do underestimate God

When we see the evil within our own hearts
This can scare the bravest of us
Sometimes I feel I have as much control over my life
As a stuffed toy or a decorative pillow

As the sun rises each day
I am reminded of how beauty and joy
Can persist even at the darkest of times

I remember in the military
Feeling I had no power and no protection
But God came in out of nowhere
And ordered me back home

Sometimes I wonder if I write

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Purely for my own encouragement
I sometimes worry about what future
There will be for my life's work

But God could create greater writings
Off the top of His head
And they would be more relevant
Than the best I could imagine

God not only has better writing skills
But He even understands our point of view
Better than we do ourselves
As He know things about us that we do not

None of us have any insights God does not have
Nor ability nor useful circumstances
It makes me wonder what the missing ingredient is
What do we need to bring the world to God?

Better yet what do we need
To reform our own thoughts and actions?

Maybe I am too ambitious
I know I am not very patient
There are so many things we miss
And so many things we do
That we know we should not

If there is anything that needs to happen
God will make sure it does
Often He uses other people for this as well

In many ways we are like enlisted soldiers

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We have detailed instruction and supervision
At every step of the assignment
In the form of the Holy Spirit

Sometimes it is difficult with no script to follow
As the Bible gives so few specific directions
When you read the Bible much is comforting
But God never promises we will not suffer
This is not comforting

The Bible goes on to say we will likely suffer in this life
And even more so than unbelievers
Heaven is worth this and Christ even more
But how can we endure when the fear holds us back?

I proceed with caution
As I know too well of the consequences
Of volunteering for dangerous duty
No one else steps forward for good reason

I need to learn from my past mistakes
God saved me in the pit of my despair
But just because God saves you once
Does not mean you can expect it
The second time around

I have the faith to believe if it is God's will
And if it is God's will for it to happen now
It is happening period

But how do we know something will happen
If it does not say so in the Bible clearly?
Sometimes that leaves little to go on

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I just wish God would place a limit
On how much pain a person can experience
Before they die

The world the Bible describes
And further eludes to
Is a bigger and wilder world
Which rightfully scares anyone
With sufficient imagination

The truly scary things is when the pain
Is worse than you imagined
For many 70 years is not long enough
For me it is too long

Spiritual and Emotional Thoughts

There continue to be knocks on the door
And I continue to awake out of a deep sleep
Sometimes I wonder if the fear will ever stop

Like evading a persistent stalker
A noise that keeps repeating indefinitely
The voices come and go
But the terror remains

Our society seems to live
Much of their own lives in fear
As if it is some sort of game
To keep their minds off their lives

Soldier fight their whole youth
And some their entire lives in wars
Mostly just to entertain and distract
An audience bored out of their minds

It seems much evil is done to escape
Dealing with feelings and hard issues
Most people will do anything to avoid
Self reflection and time alone

Many people's biggest fear is their own thoughts
There is a high correlation between what is fun at first
And what is bad later on

When you do something purely for fun
Without considering the consequences

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Many times the consequences are not fun

Fear is one of the most basic emotions
Many fear emptiness and stillness
Many artists and writers fear an empty page

Maybe what we really fear
Is our own freedom
There are too many choices
And we want someone
To tell us where to go
And make the decisions for us

In this way philosophy and Christianity
Have much in common
The future is uncharted territory
No one really knows how to prepare for the future

We desire control in our lives
As Americans we expect to be comfortable
But those who are truly at peace
Like most animals
Don't mind a lack of noise
Or wake up from worry

Animals really know how to relax
I think relaxing requires someone
To emotionally accept uncertainty

You have to ultimately trust someone
I choose to trust God
And in so doing begin to trust myself

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Because our inner conflicts
Are not entirely with ourselves
We struggle against evil
But we are not exactly evil itself

We do bad things
But we are not the bad things
There is a struggle within
But it is not us vs. God
Or us against ourselves

We struggle against death
Against the wall of separation
Between us and God

Christ says there is nothing we can do
To inherit the Kingdom of God (heaven)
But later He also says
With God all things are possible

God has created a way
Not only for salvation from our choices
But salvation of our minds
God wants to transform our minds
As much as He wants to save our souls

Part of changing who we are
Must start with changing how we think
Our focus needs to be on God
And this will bring things into proper perspective
Our fears are very real to us
But they place no limits on God

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Our God gives believers clarity
Just like many talk about moments of clarity
God brings a lifetime of clear thoughts

I take medication for clear thoughts
But there is more to mental illness
Than our brain chemistry

That doesn't mean chemicals in medicine are of no value
In Psalms 23
As I go through the valley of the shadow of death
My rod and my staff they comfort me

I think it is truly hard to study both the Bible
And be aware of modern psychology
But to not see the connections

Hopefully Christians and psychologists
Begin to realize that much of what they talk about
Spills out from one realm into another

Out of the overflowing of the heart
Does the mouth speak

The Holy Spirit Himself is described as the Encourager
Who stands alongside us
And Christ is described
As the Wonderful Counselor

Is it any wonder that religion
Brings out such great emotion
Much as physical exercise
Can reign in powerful emotions

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And produce calmer mental states

So religion can affect emotions too
Many see religion as focusing on fear
And that it triggers obsessive compulsive tendencies

Christianity starts out as a tough pill to swallow
Much like admitting you cannot do it on your own alone

But you must make the choice yourself
And only you can conquer your own mind
And control what you do
But you cannot do this without outside help

Christianity is a good fit for psychology
Because its ideas are effective in treatment
Of both addiction and mental illness
The thing is once you admit you have a problem
Christianity is really encouraging from this point onwards

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Psychological Theory

Long Term Psychology

Many like to use logic and science to argue the non-existence of God. I argue that God exists by paradox and intuition. Many of the things people consider anti-Christian I think are more consistent with Christianity than the former.

I am a born again Christian but almost every other view I have is contrary to what most Christians believe in America. There is more than one way to live life and still be a Bible believing Christian.

I think we as Christians can learn from both the Bible and modern psychology. I also think like many other things attributed to other people modern psychology comes from the Bible. If you read through the letters of the Apostle Paul, I can not understand why you wouldn't believe he is the first existentialist.

One of God's titles is Wonderful Counselor. Reading in the Psalms makes me think of someone confiding in a good psychologist. Jesus did not just make simple literal responses to what those who talked to Him said but took time to listen to them and meet them where they were. He realized that what a person is saying does not always fully reflect what they are thinking.

We are not fully rational in our psychological composition and this is a good thing we need to work with rather than struggle against. Just like there are two sides to every personality trait that have both useful and troubling aspects, so there are positive and negative uses and properties of every emotional response. Fear can save your life or destroy it, depending in how, when, and why you use it.

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The emotional aspects of the brain can be worked with in extreme and time sensitive situations. In the Army, you constantly train in the combat survival skills you first learned in basic training, so that you can perform them without thinking. The military requires great mental toughness and fast decision making under pressure but is not difficult intellectually for the most part.

We need to learn to develop control of our emotions as much as we need to learn to make use of our intellectual abilities. We need to continue to teach people of all ages what the appropriate ways of reacting are in different situations. Of course, in order to do so, we must first decide upon a common moral standard and philosophical system.

Currently most people do not know what is appropriate in group settings as our society teaches conflicting principles and people have opposite ideas on how they want people to interact. This is why the online world is so abusive and depressing. We need to learn as much from the humanities as the sciences as a society.

Creativity is very important but so is self control. You do not want to have to choose between either of these, because a society that does not value both of these is not going to survive very well and will be dominated by other societies that can. Some of the most important emotional attributes are kindness and forgiveness. A society that cannot master a at least this will be like hell to live in.

People were meant to live and work together, even in crisis situations. Even in a hunter gatherer or agriculturally based society, no one can survive by themselves. People who go off grid are still dependent on society working together so that they can

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trade and get energy without constant warfare or stealing. While our society is as complicated as it is, we all need to learn how to recreate and maintain as many aspects as possible with as little outside help as possible. At the same time, we still depend upon many others just to be able to use what are now very common systems.

But we are spiritual life forms as well. This means there are complex interactions between not only other people but within ourselves with major connections between the spiritual, mental, and physical aspects of ourselves. This is at least part of what being created in the image of God means. God also has a spirit and a human body. God to an extent looks like us although His thinking and morality are perfect rather than our absolute failures.

Christ gave the best examples of self control, creativity, kindness, forgiveness, leadership by example, and obedience to His Father. Unfortunately many people have broken family relationships and so have trouble understanding who God is. But we can see in the Gospels what an ideal child parent relationship should be.

People are evil by default. They were created good and can eventually be restored over time to a be better people. Essentially we are never going to live up to the kind of people we can and should be.

Many people do not want to follow rules of any kind on both ends of the political and social spectrum. But being a religious person means following the instructions of someone else voluntarily. It requires spiritual maturity and most importantly humility. The lack of humility in the world today is a big

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contributing factor as to why there is so much unnecessary suffering.

Spiritual things are ignored in our society largely because we have decided to move things along so fast. We consume so much in natural resources and generate so much waste. We treat each other like garbage and run through people and animals to produce as much as fast as we can to entertain each other.

We do nothing that truly satisfies us so we continue to hunger and try to get filled on negative experiences. Only God can truly satisfy all our needs. Removing God from our society has made life meaningless for most people. That is why most people want to be distracted. Meaningless information can be the most distracting thing of all.

For us to find God we must turn down the noise and wait patiently for Him.

Be subject therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners. Purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament, mourn, and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he will exalt you.

James 4:7-10 WEB

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Know Yourself

Most people think certain things that are often in conflict with how they feel. This is because people often have poor self knowledge and are motivated mostly by irrational or emotional arguments. Their emotions and thinking are not in sync because they are in internal conflict.

Major world belief systems tend to encourage self reflection and acknowledge that a person has a reality that is not entirely based on quantifiable data. Many modern people seem to think science is the only or best way of knowing about life. We reduce our feeling down to facts and then argue about something different from what we feel.

We are not honest with our motives to others because we are not honest with ourselves. We need to accept that we are primarily driven by emotions and emotional arguments. Many of the issues we argue about are not the real ones we are concerned with. We are afraid we may appear weak if we acknowledge that emotions are as valid as facts in forming opinions.

I have no problem admitting that I am irrational and subjective. In fact I think anyone who truly believes they are objective is trying to take the place of God. Only God can truly be objective. I am not trying to be objective and I am not trying to argue with factual evidence. I do not desire to change your opinion.

This does not make me better or worse than others and I admit that I likely have poor self knowledge as well. I think spiritual growth helps us see things more from God's point of view. I find this helpful because it allows me to see beyond my own feelings

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without resorting to making myself as the center of things or oversimplifying human existence and major life issues as purely factual in nature.

God is a perfect blend of emotion and logic and so should we be also. Ignoring your feelings does not make you stronger. Not accepting your limitations does not allow you to accomplish more. Even denying fear is not beneficial to your self mastery.

Emotions happen faster than logic does and are useful when we are in dangerous situations. They also help limit what we see as acceptable by what we can do alone. Science answers a lot of useful questions about how to do something. But it requires more to decide whether or not to do something.

Our society is as optimized by science for economic efficiency as is possible without radically different technology. But this is not the most important thing. If we were more responsible and saw things from a longer term perspective we would come up with radically different solutions to our problems.

We seem to have decided sometime ago that it is acceptable for someone to suffer in the place of another. Many people believe that it is morally justified for the needs of the few to be sacrificed for the many. This is one of the reasons why I am in favor of the US Bill of Rights even though I do not believe people have rights just because they are people.

I think that nothing should suffer unnecessarily and few things are really necessary. In other words the Bill of Rights is important to me because it places limits on what a society is allowed to do even when the majority thinks something is best even if it hurts the individual.

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I do not believe that the ends justify the means ever. We should never decide between the best of two bad things. If we are confronted with this choice, we should do nothing or get more creative.

We should not always choose the easiest way to do something. We should place a higher value on being kind to the individual at the expense of society. The individual needs to be protected from the group more than the group from the individual.

We like to divide ourselves into 2 groups with an us vs. them mentality. But our real conflict is internal. If we can find peace within ourselves it will be much easier to find peace with each other.

Today we argue about who is more tolerant but exclude the other major perspective from this argument. It does not matter who we are theoretically tolerant too. It matters that we both get along with each other from both major belief systems in America. It is not Muslim vs. Christian or Science vs. Faith. It is conservative vs. liberal.

The point is that philosophy matters and it is not always what you can prove that determines what is right or what the outcome will be. There are many other methods of determining what is true other than measurable phenomena. Pain itself transcends the physical, emotional, and spiritual realms of human existence.

You cannot reduce yourself or your opinions down to nothing but what can be proved and what cannot. What you feel and believe is important and valid no matter why you feel that way. But before you can communicate this effectively to others you need to

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know yourself well enough to be able to discover why you feel this way for your own peace of mind.

Self knowledge is important because without knowing yourself and why you do what you do how can you ever understand why other people do what they do? To start learning more about yourself you need to study a broader field than just one academic discipline and the broadest discipline is philosophy. In fact Science and Social Science came out of philosophy as they were once called Logic, Natural Philosophy, Philosophy of Mind, and Ethics.

To think beyond a logical world you need other methods of measuring the importance of what you experience than just math. Religion is a great way to get into this mindset. Religion expands your mind because you are forced to wrestle with ideas that are not provable empirically.

How do you prove whether karma is true or sin is true? Both are similar in that they both deal with morality but are very different in how this is resolved. Both involve changing the way you think and they involve similar morally significant actions. But they are different in that one is done by you and the other is done by God.

Ultimately we need to decide if we want to live our own lives and end up suffering unnecessarily or follow God and have purpose in our suffering. Christians definitely do suffer but they have purpose and hope beyond this little life on earth. The Christian God understands what it is like to be us because He created us, He lived as us, and His Spirit is willing to live within us.

God cares about the individual and our feelings because He wants our hearts, minds, and souls not just to correct our

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behavior or to gain power over us like the world does. God loves us because He chooses to do so despite and even in our immorality and disobedience.

Even when God lives within us, we are still free to do what we choose. This is known by most of us who know or who are Christians because we still sin even as believers. But God's focus is not on punishing us but transforming us by changing our thinking, our experiences, and our actions by His direct supernatural intervention.

God created us with free choice but made it so we still could not sin because we at first did not know what evil was. God now allows for free choice while still guaranteeing us we have been pre-selected to be believers in Him. If He can do this He has the power and will to make us better people despite our stubbornness and rebellion against Him. Free will and fate do not need to be in conflict anymore than facts need to be with emotions.

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Mental Health History

Changing Our Own Minds

The key to most of the positive things in my life stem from my willingness to admit I made a mistake and / or need help. I learned this the hard way by constantly having to ask for forgiveness because I often offended people as a young adult by saying stupid things.

Failure was the key to my writing ability as well as I started almost 25 years ago with having failed in completing both college and my military commitment. That is what interested me in Taoism and at that time I even thought that I might be a Goth. Shortly afterwards I learned that I was mentally ill.

This is where my Christian faith becomes very useful in a practical sense. I was willing and able to admit I needed help. It is very hard for anyone to believe now that what they are experiencing may not be real or their closely held beliefs could be based on misinformation.

We often see ourselves as the lone hero against the world as a romantic view of life that we experience in movies. But we need each other and if everyone else seems to be wrong maybe we need to consider that we on the other hand are the ones with mistaken views.

Opening up this possibility also allows one to understand other people's point of view in other areas and is something I have developed in myself in the study of philosophy for many years. There are few things in life that have to be done one way and there are few things in life we can be sure about.

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The big outlier is the Bible and God. I know sometimes from the outside faith in God sounds like the things people say when they are in a cult. But the difference is that mature Christians usually have learned often the hard way that their faith should be in God and not in other Christians. I realize many people today don't believe in God, but to understand Christians you have to accept this possibility.

You will quickly find that I approach Christianity from a wildly different point of view in some ways and in other ways I must sound like every other Christian you have ever heard. One of the ways in which I am different is that I only believe in the Bible and the Christian God and in every other area outside this I am a skeptic.

What does this mean in a practical sense? Most people believe in science the way Christians believe about God including Christians. I do not believe in science in this way. I know enough about science to know that it is not supposed to be a belief system technically. But from the way many average people act they very much treat Science like magic or faith.

Part of the problem is that scientists are people too and fallible and so are not objective, at least not fully. But the idea that science and math or facts cannot be disagreed with puts it into the same position as God in our lives. God does not share power with any other group or individual and since He created everything has every right and it is entirely reasonable and natural for Him to want control over His creation.

So you cannot depend so much on science and math in your society that facts become more important than truth and still be a society that has faith in God. Why do even Christians argue about

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the reality of God but not the accuracy of science? It is very convenient that science can describe itself as a never ending process and continue to evolve over time. We live in the here and now and so we need some definite answer to some basic questions before we die.

Truth is too important to get right only centuries later and then realize that is wrong too. And science and scientists do not limit themselves to the minute details of how to do things. They stretch their hands into human relations with social and applied sciences and the creation and ending of reality. With the direction of advancements of technology they want to be the source of all knowledge and all power.

We are at a point that even non Christians should see that the future though far from certain to us at least is not going in a good direction. Most our major problems in society started after the Enlightenment which conveniently occurred around the same time as the Industrial Revolution and European Colonialism. So we attribute the problems to be the individual technologies and specific political powers of the time, but the problems are greater and more fundamental.

Ask yourself if you could not have America as we know it without oil or computers and that the different ideas we know that are killing us are all tied together. What if you needed to give up the modern world for God? Would you give up your belief in America or the usefulness of science for your belief in God?

So we as a society need to now evaluate the modern world and see if everyone else in the world is right about America or are we right. Is our wealth a legitimate factor to justify us before God? Are we any different than other empires? And what would Christ

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do in the world today? Would He lead us into battle against our political rivals or would His second coming surprise us more than His first coming?

It is hard to stand against things that have been assumed to be right for so long. But for much larger periods of history and even most people throughout the world today might have a completely different view of what is important in life and how you should express your faith. Maybe we need to understand history better before we try to understand the modern world.

A Sad Story

People in general, especially those who prescribe my psychiatric medications, often want to know about my childhood. I seldom write about it because there is little drama and it was quite normal and good. Actually it was too good. I don't feel I lived up to my potential that I was led to believe I had, prior to joining the military.

The biggest reason why I did not live up to my potential is that I have Schizophrenia and have had it since and because of my military service. I also think the military opened my eyes to what extent evil plays in this world. Most Americans would not believe how cruel people can be to one another and animals.

I think the key point where I had enough stress to trigger my genetic tendency towards Schizophrenia happened in my what they called at the time NBC training. This comes down to what civilians call a chemical suit and gas mask.

To motivate people to put one on fast enough and to test how good the seal is, the Army has everyone go through a gas chamber filled with tear gas. You then take your mask off while inside, for about 5 minutes. This happens during the mid point of Basic Training.

You are also exposed to tear gas later (in the open air) during Field Training Exercises, where you put together all your initial training. It is a very depressing form of camping. Later you go through the gas chamber each year, while in the Army.

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To some people this may seem inhumane, but it is very necessary considering the parts of the world we fight in and who we fight against. It is much more humane than people getting gassed with poisonous gases. Various parts of this training for chemical weapons take a large part of the time for the Combat Survival Training first learned in Basic Training. There is even an NCO (for example, a Sergeant) who in the Army is responsible for the NBC training in every unit.

We learn how to clean off skin and eyes exposed to chemical weapons. We train to give shots to ourselves or others, in case of nerve agent exposure. We practice shooting and do our specialities in complete chemical suits (what they called MOPP4 gear at the time). We needed to know how to recognize signs and grenades that signal chemical weapons. We also tested on how to put on the entire suit in a few minutes.

So being in the military made me too paranoid to take almost any risks. One of the things I learned from the military was to be very careful how I exposed myself to possible accidents or commit to any extensive responsibility. At this time I decided for sure I never wanted to be a leader. Our platoon, nicknamed Troopers, had a motto called "No Slack" which meant that you are never given any allowance for failure in any way.

When I look back on what happened to me during my childhood, I thought I would be an international businessman and specialize in distribution for big business. A good example of one of the most well known ones today is the current CEO of Apple Inc. In High School, I became an Eagle Scout after being in Boy Scouts (now called Scouts) 11 years and was elected to the Order of the Arrow and staffed at several Scout Summer Camps (one on the coast and one in the mountains). I started and was President of

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my own Political Club. I was President of Model United Nations in my High School and lead a committee in the regional Model UN conference, I won first place in a National Peace Essay Contest for my state and won a minor scholarship and trip back to Washington, DC.

I also was also in Cross Country and Track most of Middle and High School with one year I took off to be in Cheerleading as the Spirit Man and Yell King (of my High School). I took 4 years of advanced English literature, 4 years of Math, 4 years of French, and 3 years of Science in High School. I was treasurer of my Catering Club and was given an award for my Speech club and went to State competition in both Speech and Future Business Leaders of America.

In the military I had some success. I was told in front of my entire platoon that I would be the one promoted as the Drill Sergeant had only one she could promote but that I had already had that rank for being an Eagle Scout. I missed getting a gold coin for 95% grade in my Advanced Training classes by a fraction of a point, so my AIT Drill Sergeant gave me hers from her Drill Sergeant school.

I even tested out of an entire year of college, did so well at my job that they wanted to keep me (knowing that I had mental problems), and I was doing very well in my physical fitness. I went on a half marathon through Kole Kole Pass in Oahu Hawaii, where I was stationed. I got A's in the 2 civilian college classes I was studying at. The one I slept through the final but still got an A+ on the then 9 page essay final (no book).

That is why I have not written much about my childhood. It makes my life as an adult sound sad in comparison. So now I

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never travel very far, I haven't had a job in a very long time, and do not lead anything or are even been a member of anything.

I have written a lot in the last 25 years - maybe 2,500-3000 book size pages and run a website for that long, but that doesn't sound very impressive. I tried various volunteer jobs and between my not having a car and not being able to be around bleach (my other disability from the military), there are basically no opportunities.

Change Over Time

On thinking over my life from the period when I went into the military and became mentally ill, before and after, my life changed tremendously outwardly but also my thinking changed. I started out as a kid being overly silly and outgoing whereas after my period of difficulty became more artistic and very serious. I also suffered a very significant loss in understanding of cultural norms and my interpersonal behavior suffered as a result.

I had not only to relearn how to relate with other people but to get a sense of confidence and humor about life. It took many years to learn to express how I felt and how to learn how to lower my pain. I did though have a sense of purpose and this was to lower the suffering in the world and specifically to do so by writing and art. That was based both on my personal experiences and study of world religions.

Learning to deal with my illness had to start basically with little prior knowledge. There was little written that applied to me much because many of my issues tied together spiritual, mental, and physical problems I had. What ultimately I would like to do is to integrate Christianity with modern psychology. I believe I can do this well by continuing to deepen my knowledge of the Bible, which seems to center much around being aware of the context. This is because I believe that modern psychology comes from the Bible.

Many of the issues I have had to deal with involve things common to younger adults and to those living in this era of time in America. There are so many distractions. I once thought and

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still think it too often that my life is very boring and unimportant because I have few outward signs of success in terms of money, power, or even recognition of any kind. But this is certainly not a sad thing, especially considering so many have so much less, that I have little to give evidence of my contributions to this world.

I guess it makes it easier to keep your heart right with God by not having the power to fix everything in this world. I see so many suffer so much many much beyond anything I have had to deal with and I would like to make a dent in it. It seems our problems escalate at a steep rate by the year and most people in this part of the world are actually making the problem worse and many don't believe it even exists.

It is always easier to fix world problems than personal ones though. I still struggle with many of the same problems as I did 10 or 20 years ago.

One of these is called paranoia, which is an irrational fear of people coming after you even though there is no evidence of it. It is a specific type of delusion. This is one of the major symptoms of Schizophrenia that is most disabling to me. This makes it almost impossible to trust anyone else.

One of the other major problems I continue to have is that I still do not know how to rest. I have recently come back to church for a variety of reasons, chief among them a change in why I go to church (for God now not my benefit) and as a bonus I have a great church too. Going to church regularly has given me much more peace with the world.

I guess one of the problems I have resting is that I have a tremendous drive or ambition to contribute as much as possible. I

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also feel tired no matter how much I sleep because I am on a powerful sedative which is the main medicine for psychosis. It is hard to know how far to push myself. My dad says I need to let myself rest.

I find it very difficult to let things go without perfecting them indefinitely. I continue to get inspired to produce art and writing and I have trouble stopping when I get exhausted. This makes the paranoia worse as it is triggered, like many symptoms of chronic diseases, by stress. How do you tell yourself to stop helping others when you are partially responsible for the world's problems?

Another problem I have is that I am not focused enough on my daily needs. I have a hard time making myself stop to eat, sleep, or get out. I do not like being bothered when I am in the middle of creating. Many things I do can take 15 minutes or 8 hours, depending on my running into issues I could not predict. I have this fear of losing things and so I spend much time and expense in making sure nothing important is lost.

This basically means I am a workaholic and too ambitious. I have to find some way to be less of an alpha. I have this family trait that when I reach a certain point of achievement, I raise my expectations of what level is considered an achievement in my work going forward. At this point, I have very high expectations of myself and none of anyone else.

Some of the causes of these problems are isolation and need to distract myself from paranoia and voices. I have tried many years to find volunteer opportunities and I have basically come up short, but I have found a good church in walking distance now. I am trying to get more involved there.

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One of the things I think God is trying to teach me now is patience. That is one of my biggest obstacles to personal growth.

Advice on Treatment

Mental Illness Stereotypes

Many people today who were marginalized in the past are now being accepted as normal. One group that seems to still be the other and a group that is still targeted for discrimination is the mentally ill. It is still considered socially acceptable to blame social problems on the mentally ill.

Obviously people of different races and genders are very easy to accept into normal society because little to no accommodations need to be made and those that do are generally physical. The same is true of people with easily understood physical or mental disabilities.

For many people depression can be managed by medicine and counseling. For people without sight, hearing, or with mobility disabilities there is much in the way of technology that can make things much easier at least than it was 20 years ago. There is also less social stigma with these categories of disabilities.

When it comes to mental illness and Schizophrenia in particular many people are still quite afraid of those with mental illness. Ironically most people who know someone with Schizophrenia realize that people with Schizophrenia, although going through difficult things, are the same as everyone else in other areas. Most people with Schizophrenia have average intelligence and abilities. Their biggest problems are often money and relationships like most people.

But beyond that the most disabling part of Schizophrenia is not the way you are perceived but the way you perceive reality. Schizophrenia is defined as a split between reality and fantasy

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and most people with Schizophrenia have trouble distinguishing between fantasy and reality. Some have trouble with auditory hallucinations, others with delusions about people plotting against them, and others have trouble with other types of delusions about reality in general.

Many people especially within the mental health community see religion as a trigger or source of confirmation of the reality of their psychosis. They often discourage religion and religious communities and participating in them. The reality is more complex.

Although not a primary treatment of Schizophrenia, religion can be useful in helping people with Schizophrenia to live more healthy lives. Religion provides community, belonging, and socialization. It helps people get out and exercise, helps focus their minds on positive things, gives them hope and peace, promotes self esteem, and helps provide a more balanced perspective to help counter delusional thoughts.

True religion should be based on the deity not the people and Christianity works because it is not primarily about what someone thought of and has a long view of history. Most religions dominated by an individual are not as cross culturally relevant and do not have the longevity of major world religions. Christianity has clear moral standards and a realistic and complex perspective on how people think and act.

Study of the Bible and the practice of Christianity helps build a sound mind and a healthy lifestyle as it encourages moderation and self control. Christianity is accessible to everyone and many people have spent a great deal of effort making sure the Bible and the church include everyone that want to be part of it.

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Mental illness has some strong similarities to addictive behaviors in terms of symptoms and treatments. Many people with Schizophrenia have or had addictions. Some of the longest lasting and successful treatments for addiction are based on Christian ideas.

Many powerful people have seen the mentally ill, especially people with Schizophrenia, as useful targets to make people feel better about themselves. Both parties often try to associate mental illness with evil and so it gets blamed for criminal behavior. In reality though morally bad things are not done any more frequently by those who have a poorer grasp on reality.

People do bad things because they choose to, not because they don't know better. They are doing what they think will improve things for themselves but don't think or care about the effect it has on others. Having trouble controlling your thoughts does not lead to bad behavior anymore than having diabetes or consuming alcohol does.

A person with Schizophrenia may do irrational things although so do many who have no good reason to do so. Just like people can have their sight, hearing, or mobility compromised by many factors, permanently or temporarily, some in and some out of their control.

People with Schizophrenia are disabled and need help like someone with physical or relatively minor mental issues. This is where you see that helping with mental illness can become costly and difficult. And this is why there is so little support for it.

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People with mental illness are often living in poverty and so have all the problems associated with this like needing low income housing, financial aid from the government, and government paid health care. Just like upgrading your sewer system these things are not fun or exciting and so get little interest amongst the voting public or the powers that be.

Maybe we could transform our society into something that could provide meaningful work for those with severe mental illnesses. But in order to do so we might need to undo most of what we consider to be the defining characteristics of a society. Some people with mental illnesses could survive effectively without much help, as well as anyone else today, if society totally unwinds itself though.

But the biggest factor that triggers symptoms for almost any mental or physical illness is stress. Lowering people's stress in ways we control by treating each other with kindness, patience, and empathy would go a long way. Many of the problems in our society now arise from people unwilling to see things from someone else's point of view.

We assume too much about people today but people are diverse, not just in physical ways but in their views of reality and what is important in life. Some of these problems highlight deeper problems in our society that are not easy to solve. Making things better for the mentally ill would likely improve things for others who are not considered fully normal by large segments of society.

Some of these issues might bring us back to what causes evil and how we could reduce it. But certainly blaming evil or equating it with mental illness is factually incorrect, not useful in solving the problem, and is a form of discrimination. This may not sit well

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with much of the population but so did racial integration of public schools.

Crazy Treatments

If you read much about Schizophrenia you will quickly realize a few things. One is that there is very little data to work with which is why even the official treatments and understanding of what Schizophrenia is change frequently. The second is that the ideas on treatment vary widely even currently, especially outside the mainstream medical community. The third is there is very poor understanding of the brain and so much of what they do understand comes from studies done in the last literally few years.

When it comes to trying to learn about Schizophrenia, people cannot even agree that it is a disability. Anyone living with it and able to bring back their mind to any kind of useful state will find that Schizophrenia does not give you special powers or insights. Having Schizophrenia does not mean you are necessarily a genius or really creative. Even if we made major changes in society to make the world more compatible and hospitable to Schizophrenia we would just create an anarchy and the mentally ill would be treated no better or maybe worse.

If you remember one thing about Schizophrenia is that it is disabling. This means it is harder to live with Schizophrenia by a long shot. Most of the social parts of your brain do not work or do not work properly. You are constantly in fight or flight mode. You trust no one. Many people with Schizophrenia are more religious than most people today because society has grown to repress religion in general and specific aspects of it like the supernatural.

You cannot expect a person with Schizophrenia to be able to use their mind usefully any more than you can expect someone

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without legs to be able to use them usefully. Many physical disabilities can be remediated by using newer forms of technology, but this is not true for Schizophrenia unless they literally do brain transplants. You then will likely be a different person.

All they can do now is sedate you enough to kill the voices and paranoia to the degree that you can function with them. Being on a sedative slows down your entire body too, not just your mind. This causes many other problems as well like rapid weight gain.

I don't mean to imply you cannot have a positive life with Schizophrenia, but it takes a lot of support for most people. It is also a major illness in that it is quite painfully and physically as well. It also causes major depression as it is hard to deal with day in and day out.

There is much room for improvement in both medication and secondary treatments. One of the ideas gaining prominence in mainstream medicine is that of Buddhist meditation. The problem with this is that if you can control your mind enough to meditate it is likely not relaxing or you cannot do it correctly or at all.

Mediation is very difficult for anyone. Most people who became monks traditionally and practiced Buddhism in this way across major schools would spend their whole lives on this. I seriously doubt they would take people with Schizophrenia at that time in history especially if they ever worked with someone with this condition. Buddha himself had no major psychological problems.

In fact people with Schizophrenia typically died of starvation after being in a psychotic episode for a few weeks, because they stopped eating. This happened until the 1950s when they realized

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that sedatives could be effective in treating Schizophrenia. Viktor Frankl, the famous existential psychologist, was the first of one of the first to try this.

There is a lot of crossover between psychology and Buddhism and some ideas could be helpful. I think breathing exercises by themselves could be very useful, but I think it is unreasonable to expect people who have lost the rational part of their brain to meditate. The concepts themselves are very subtle. If most people with Schizophrenia have trouble keeping a schedule, getting proper sleep, and working a basic job having them learn meditation is like sending them back to basic training.

Another extremely scary type of treatment being discussed is taking once illegal drugs. The way people describe how this works sounds exactly like getting high and the way addiction works. This is not a treatment but just an abuse of drugs. The problem with once illegal drugs is that they have no legitimate medical or psychological therapeutic uses. If they worked they would just be controlled substances like morphine or oxycodone.

The problem with being high is that it is not sustainable and so people go on to more extreme drugs to get a bigger high. When they stop they get extreme depression. You cannot maintain a high as the brain has to balance itself back out again.

The other thing about addiction is that it is directly chemical driven and goes around the rational part of the brain. People with Schizophrenia do not want to operate purely on emotion. That is what we are trying to change as the goal of treatment.

One of the big problems we are running into is people specialize too much in one area. Maybe to understand Schizophrenia better

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we need to spend more time around people with the disease and to have a greater emphasis on studying across academic disciplines. One of the big problems is funding and our insistence on making everything perfect and no one dying. HIV gets many times more funding than mental illnesses do. Also there is little money in making medicine for Schizophrenia.

Because the drug Risperdal caused some people to get tender breasts, the government punished the drug company. I was on the drug when I was first diagnosed and it was very effective. The drug actually had less side effects than other comparable drugs as this one was one of the newer ones, at the time. The antipsychotics cause many more serious problems than tender breasts (which they warned me about too before taking it) like heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

So you think you have Schizophrenia?

To get a diagnoses of Schizophrenia or any other mental illness you have to see a psychiatrist, not a psychologist. They need a doctorate in both medicine and psychology. This psychiatrist should have a speciality in mental illness and experience working with the mentally ill.

Generally not much will likely be done until you have a paranoid episode which is how most people find out they have Schizophrenia. Also many people are misdiagnosed because the diagnoses are often done by people without proper training, people over exaggerate what they feel to get money, and other people do not communicate to their provider well at all.

Schizophrenia is triggered by a stressful event, most commonly military service, but has a genetic component as well. Most families with members suffering with Schizophrenia have had one member with this condition each generation. You are most likely to get Schizophrenia in your 20s if you are male and 30s if you are female. It affects about 1% of the population worldwide.

Schizophrenia is a thought disorder not a mood disorder so instead of having amplified feelings your senses are amplified. The medicine basically sedates you as that is the most effective primary treatment for Schizophrenia. It feels like you are having adrenaline running through your system all the time and being on the medicine feels like you are also having something pushing you back down.

The medicines now are very effective at suppressing things like hearing voices, paranoia, and other delusions. They are not as

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effective in treating the other symptoms like depression, obsessive compulsive behavior, and anxiety. Other symptoms like exhaustion, weight gain, and increased chance of serious medical conditions like heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes are actually caused by the medicine. Newer medicines have fewer side effects but often are not effective with all patients.

People with Schizophrenia tend to have other characteristics like unique ways of sayings things, obsession with symbolism and religion, inappropriate emotional responses, lack of enjoyable experiences, and isolation from society. Some of the big things people often experience with Schizophrenia are poverty, being victims of crimes, and people not understanding how to work with you.

When you have your psychotic break, you will likely commit a petty crime. The police will then likely escort you to the police station, where you will be committed to the mental ward. This is usually until the admitting psychiatrist agrees you are no longer a threat to yourself or others. You will be in a locked down facility you cannot leave but you are also not in a jail. You will likely be with other mental patients and share a room with someone else.

You usually have to take an MRI scan before you can leave to rule out brain tumors. You will then be prescribed anti-psychotics to take with you when you leave. You will see a social worker who will try to help you but they likely will mix things up because they are overworked and not always fully qualified.

Once you get diagnosed with Schizophrenia you need to apply for all available social services as soon as possible and find a temporary housing situation like a group home. You will need to fill out many forms as quickly as possible as wait times for most

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services, money, and housing are backlogged and you often can wait 2-5 years for many programs.

The key to surviving on SSI (state financial assistance) and community services is to pay for as little as possible. You can survive on this much money if you can make use of all the services available and avoid reoccurring expenses. You will need to make use of buses, donated food, thrifts stores, dollar stores, discount grocery stores, government paid or assisted housing, government medical insurance, and county health and mental health / behavioral health services.

The best way to stay healthy is to keep taking your medicine, get daily exercise, and find a way to connect with the community like through church or volunteering. You should also try to get a part time job if you can, but be sure you do not make too much money or that will disqualify you for government financial aid. Your biggest problems will likely be surviving on little income, taking your medicine, and communicating with other people.

Losing your mind is not the end of the world. You can do well in life, but just adjust your expectations to what is realistic, so you don't get discouraged. People expect very little of you when you are mentally ill. Survival is the only thing really required of you. See this as an advantage - you get to live a lower stress lifestyle (in fact this is necessary or the medicine will not be effective).

But you will likely have lots of time to devote to creating art or doing some sort of hobby. But reading or concentrating on anything is hard with Schizophrenia so don't expect to be able to continue your education. You will likely meet other people to form friendships but it is hard to find people nowadays for anyone so be realistic about your romantic future. Don't expect to

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be different than you are now in personality but do expect to have limitations because this is a serious illness.

Some of the things that can make it easier are family support, faith, friendships, taking your medicine regularly, regular exercise, getting a good nights sleep, and being as independent as you can.