

Mental Distress: Is it because of sin or Satan?

Gen 3:1-19; John 10:7-16

Archdeacon Wong Tak Meng | St John's—St Margaret's Church
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Mental Distress: Is it because of sin or Satan?

- A. Because of Sin**
- B. Because of Satan**
- C. Because of Both**
- D. Because of Neither**
- E. Hard to say; it's complicated**

Answer

?

**Let's
break it
down**

A. What is Mental Distress?

**B. How does Satan and Sin
affect our Mental
Wellness?**

C. What Hope can we find?

A. Mental Distress





Mental Distress is an Experience of being troubled and unwell inside

- **Emotions:** Anxiety, sadness, mood swings, overwhelmed, etc.
 - **Thinking:** Intrusive, obsessive, confusing thoughts, etc.
 - **Physical effects:** On sleep, appetite, weight, energy level, physical discomfort, etc.
 - **Spiritual condition:** Far from God, loss of hope/purpose/meaning/direction, etc.
 - **Behaviour:** Compulsions, irritability, substances (incl. food), etc.⁵
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Mental Distress is part of the Human Condition and varies greatly:

- Frequency:

Occasional

Frequent

- Duration:

Brief

Prolonged

- Intensity:

Mild

Severe

- Complexity:

Simple

Complex

- Ease of Resolution:

By itself

Needs professional help

Mental Illness



- Mental Illnesses are **medically-defined health disorders** that affect our **mood** (emotional regulation), **thinking** (cognition) and **behaviour** (functioning) associated with distress and problems in social, work or family life.
- **Mental illness is an illness** like any other (like diabetes, high blood pressure, etc) that **can be treated and managed.**

Mental Illness: Examples



- **Mood disorders:** Depression, bipolar disorder, etc.
- **Anxiety disorders:** Obsessive-compulsive disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, phobias, etc.
- **Post-traumatic stress disorder:** Depression, anxiety, etc.
- **Addictions:** Substance and process addictions
- **Psychosis (break from reality):** Schizophrenia, paranoia, dissociative disorders, etc.

An experience of Mental Distress is **not always** a **Mental Illness**.

- **Mental illness** needs to be diagnosed by a medical professional according to **established clinical procedures and criteria**, so that safe and effective treatment and care can be provided.
- **Do not self-diagnose or label others.**

Mental Distress and Mental Illness

- **Severe mental distress** could indeed be a **mental illness**.
- **Unattended mental distress** could over time worsen into **mental illness**.
- **Delay in seeking professional help:** Unnecessary suffering and does not improve outcomes.

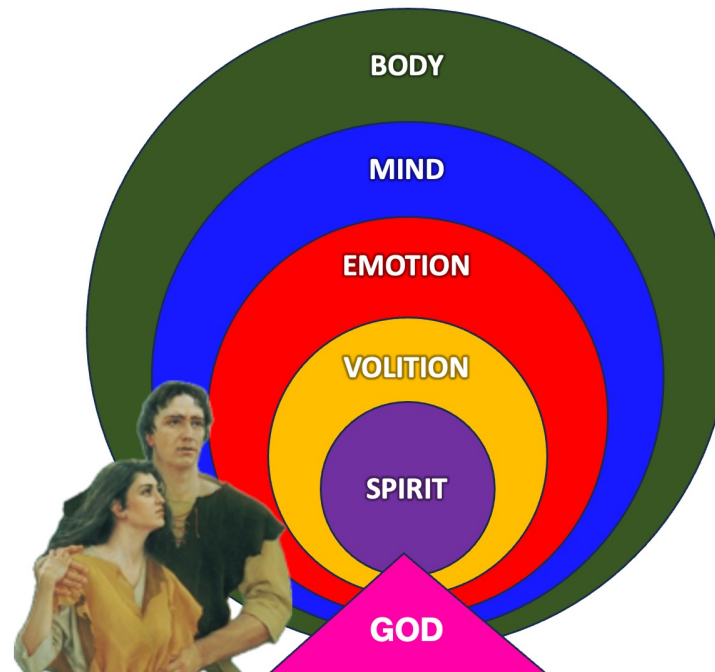
B. Satan and Sin

Gen 1-2: Paradise, a picture of Wholeness

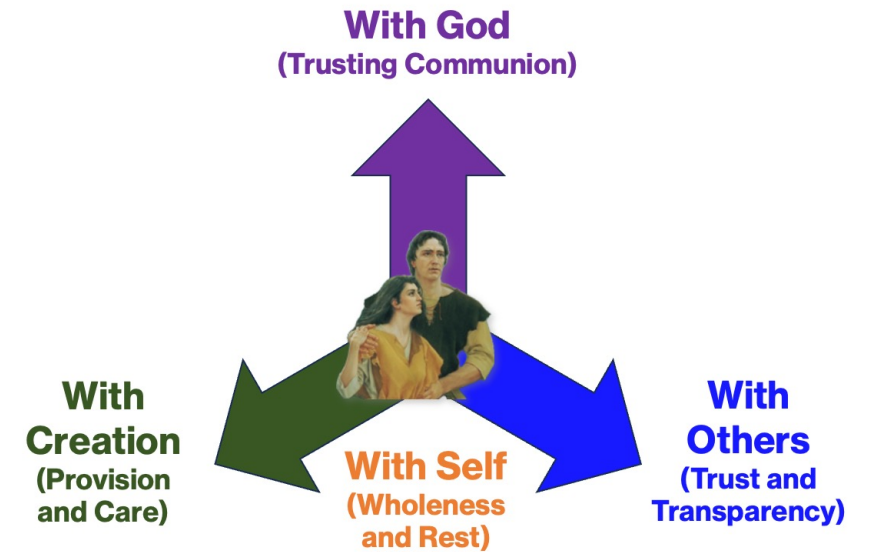
WHEN OUR DEEPEST NEEDS ARE MET IN GOD...



...WE LIVE IN A WHOLENESS THAT IS ROOTED ON GOD...



...AND WE EXPERIENCE HARMONY INSIDE AND OUTSIDE.



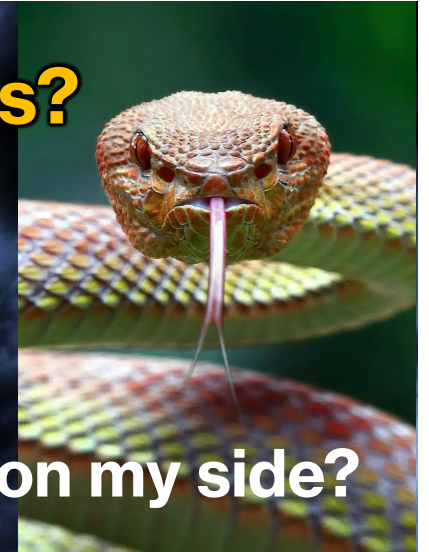
Enters **Satan**: Who is he? What does he do?

- Satan is personified as **the Serpent**:
 - “Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.” (Gen 3:1)
- **A created being**, like all others; not God.
- **A crafty being** – bends the truth:
 - “Father of lies” (John 8:44), “tempter” (Matt 4:1-3), “accuser” (Rev 12:10), “to kill, steal and destroy” (John 10:10).



Gen 3:1-10 **Satan's Goal** is to separate us from God who made us in His own image.

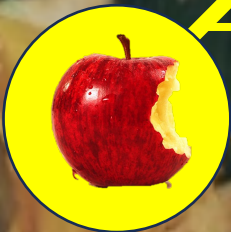
- Can God really meet my deepest needs?
- Can I really trust God?
- Will I be better off without God?



X • SECURITY?? Is God really on my side?

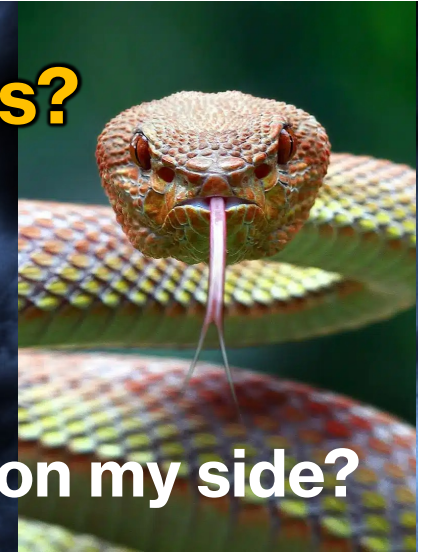
X • SIGNIFICANCE?? How can I, a nobody, be special or significant?

X • SELF-WORTH?? What am I worth when others are better than me, and have more than me?



Gen 3:1-10 **Satan's Strategy** is to make us doubt, reject and disobey God (**Sin**).

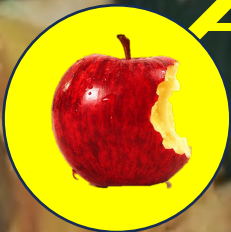
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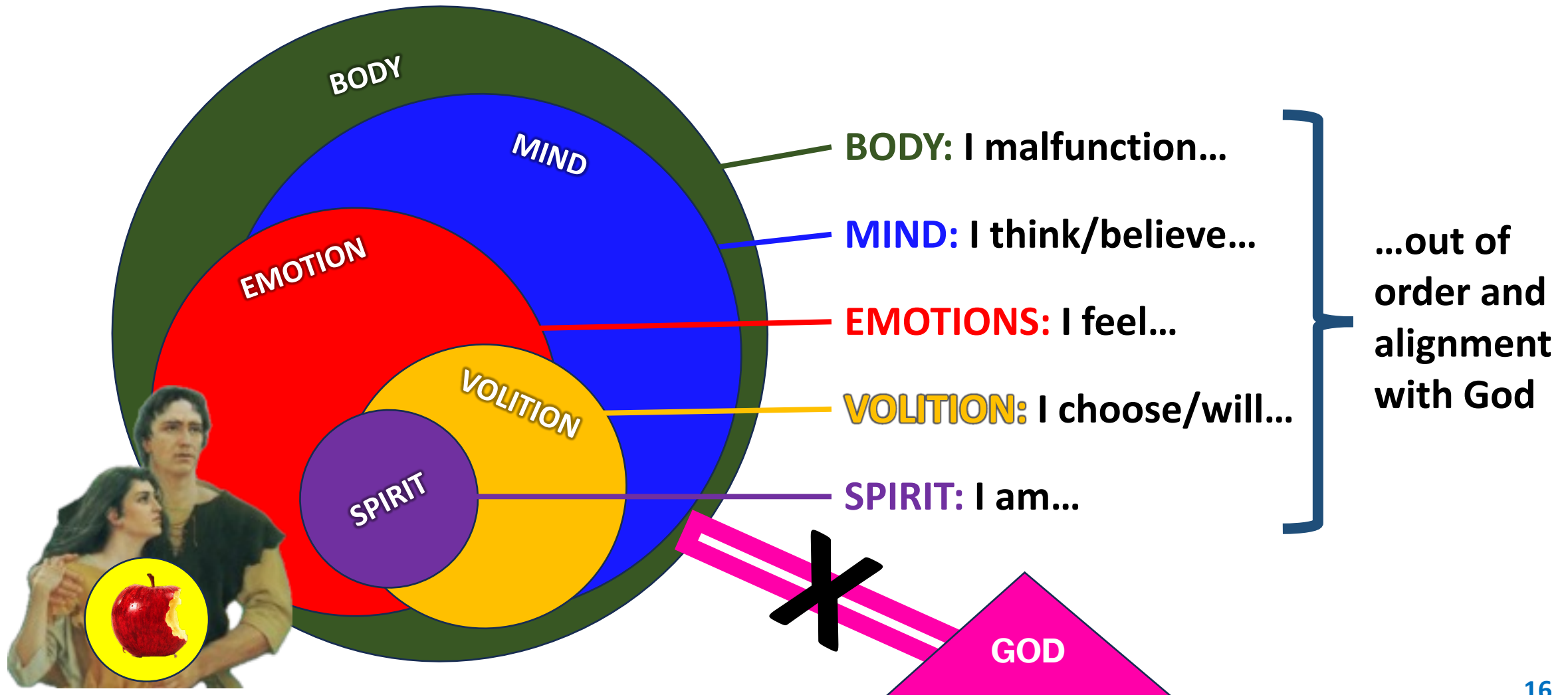
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X • SIGNIFICANCE?? How can I, a nobody, be special or significant?

X • SELF-WORTH?? What am I worth when others are better than me, and have more than me?



Disconnected from God by Satan and Sin, we become Disordered and Distressed



Satan and Sin has caused Distress to all Humanity by corrupting our relationship with God, with others, with creation and even with ourselves

With God
(Broken Communion)

Gen 3:10 And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."

Gen 3:17 cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; 19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground"

With Creation
(Overuse, abuse and neglect)



With Self
(Emotional brokenness, biological disorder)

Gen 3:12 The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." 13 ... The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

With Others
(Distrust and manipulation)

Humanity falls into Distress as we strive in vain to meet our deepest needs without God:

Jer. 2:13 for my people have... forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, **broken cisterns that can hold no water.**

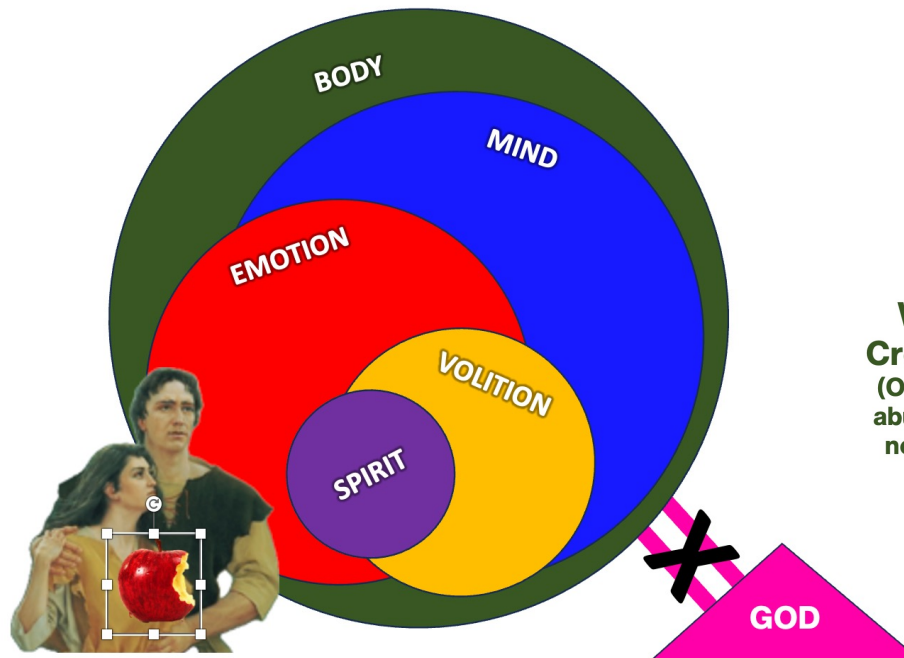
- **Lacking SECURITY**, we compete to protect ourselves by working harder, being stronger, so that no one can hurt us. But we still get hurt, and in turn hurt others. → **Bullying, abuse, trauma, irrational fears.**
- **Lacking SIGNIFICANCE**, we counterfeit it with honours, job titles, influence over others, etc. → **Delusions, anxiety, shame, etc.**
- **Lacking SELF-WORTH**, we strive to achieve and accumulate more than others. When we fail, we feel worthless, and life is meaningless. → **Burnout, depression, negative self-talk, etc.**

Paradise Lost: Distress and Disorder

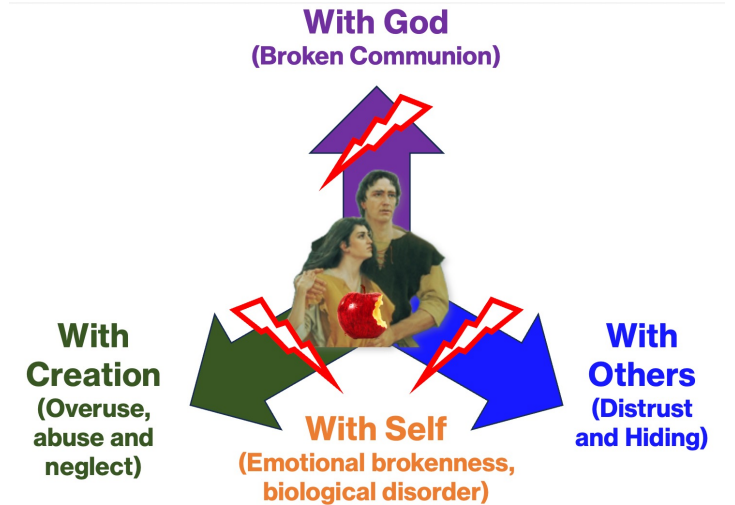
OUR DEEPEST NEEDS
ARE **NO LONGER MET** IN
GOD...



...WE LIVE IN
DISORDERED CHAOS,
CUTOFF FROM GOD...



...AND WE EXPERIENCE
DISTRESS INSIDE AND
DISCORD OUTSIDE.



Satan/Sin and Mental Distress/Illness

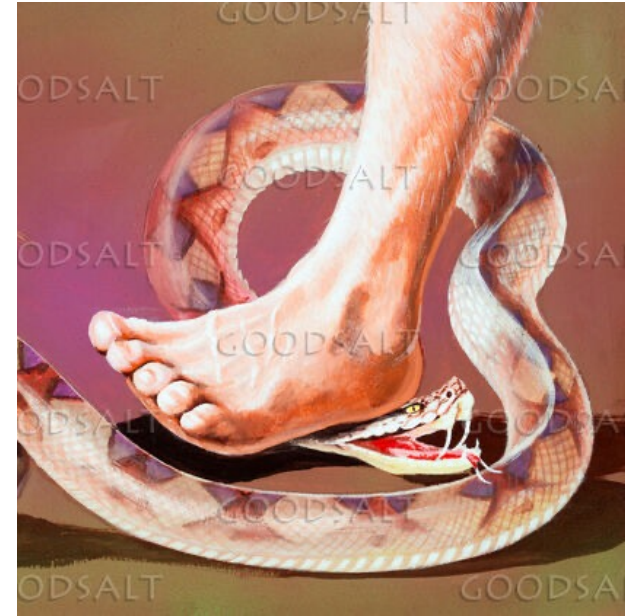
- **Mental Distress/Illness** is the reality of living broken lives in a disordered and fallen world.
- With the exception of Satanism and persistent moral depravity, there is **no biblical, theological or scientific basis** to say that every instance of Mental Distress/Illness is directly caused by Satan's activity or personal sin.



C. Our Hope: Redemption in Christ

God had a plan from the beginning

- **The seed of the woman** shall bruise the serpent's head (Gen 3:15 - the First Gospel)
- **The first sacrifice** of blood (Gen 3:21 skin garments)
- **The covenant people** (Gen 12:2-3 the Abrahamic Covenant)
- **The emptying of Christ:** to become human to redeem us from our sin (John 1:14, Phil 2:5-8)
- **We are chosen to be saved,** along with all creation (Rom 8:21), before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4; 1 Pet 1:18-19)



In Christ, we are **reconciled** with God and **restored** to God's fold for healing and wholeness

- **John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. 11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep... 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.**



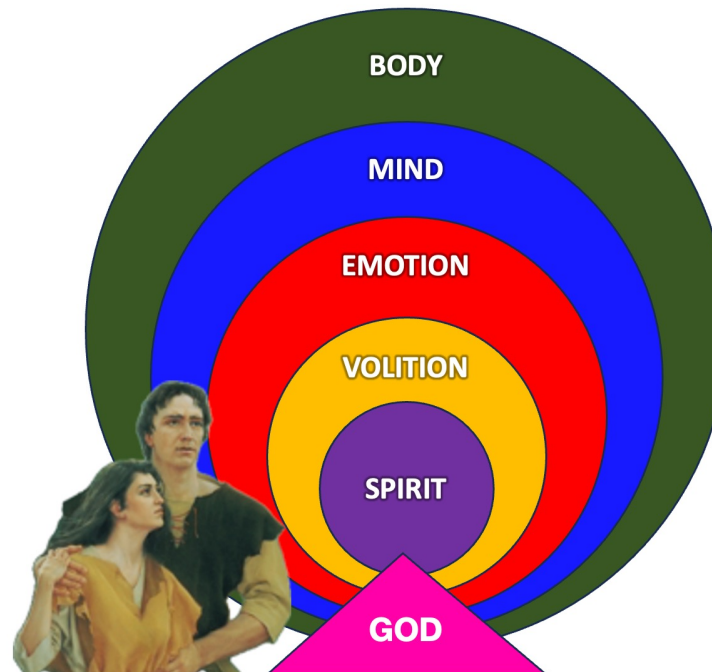
“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...” (Rom 12:2)

WHEN OUR DEEPEST NEEDS ARE MET IN GOD...

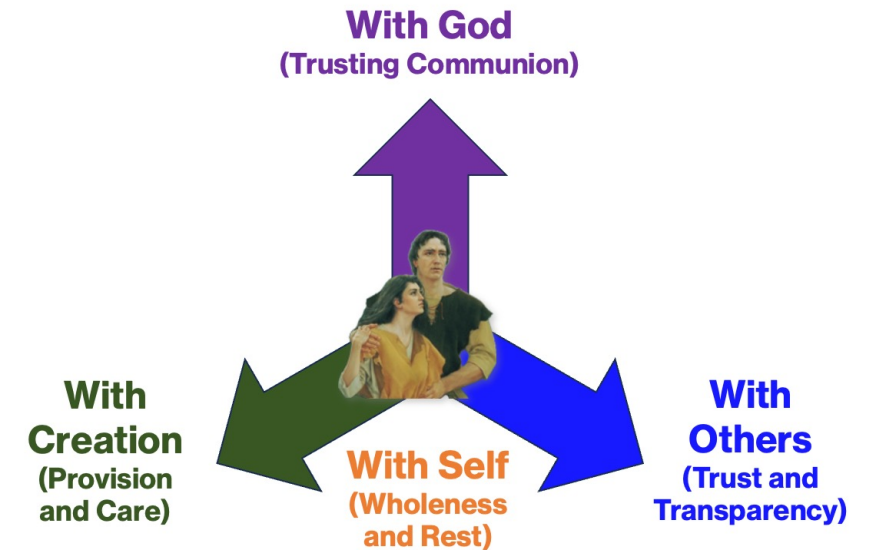


Renewed relationship with God, self-awareness, mental and emotional hygiene

...WE LIVE IN A WHOLENESS THAT IS ROOTED ON GOD...



...AND WE EXPERIENCE HARMONY INSIDE AND OUTSIDE.



Receive the gift of medication, psychotherapy, rest, community

Recovery of Mental Wellness: Personal transformation and growth

- **Spirituality:** Draw closer, be centred on God.
- **Choices:** Choose to lean upon God for all our Security, Significance and Self-worth.
- **Mind:** Develop new mindset, attitudes and self-talk based on God's promises and the example of Christ. Counselling based on Christian principles.
- **Emotions:** Release our emotions to God and trusted matured brethren. Pain shared is pain halved.
- **Physical:** Medication, nutrition, work, exercise, rest.
- **Relationships:** Journey prayerfully with one another toward wholeness (no more fear or stigma).

KINTSUGI: Restored to be more beautiful than the original

