

# Mind v. Brain: Cultural Confusion, A Mental Health Epidemic, And What the Bible Says

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“Mental illness is the U.S.’s next pandemic.”

—D. Henninger, The Wall Street Journal

“Our topic is who is sick and who is not ... pretty soon everybody is going to be sick.”

—Allen J. Frances, Professor at Duke University

## I. Introduction:

### A. Freya India:

- i. “I think it’s an exaggeration to say all of Gen Z are following the cult of social justice or climate activism—but I really don’t think it’s an exaggeration to say that a significant majority of young people now interpret their lives and emotions and relationships through a therapeutic lens.”

## II. What is Mental Health or Mental Illness?

A. “Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being.”<sup>1</sup>

B. “Mental illness is nothing to be ashamed of. It is a medical problem, just like heart disease or diabetes.”<sup>2</sup>

C. Examples of Combining the Mind and the Brain:

- i. 1999 White House Conference: “We have also learned some very important facts about these illnesses, and if I can just encapsulate them briefly, it’s that these are real illnesses of a real organ—the brain. Just like

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<sup>1</sup> “What Is Mental Health? | MentalHealth.Gov,” accessed July 7, 2025, <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/what-is-mental-health>.

<sup>2</sup> “What Is Mental Illness?,” accessed July 7, 2025, <https://www.psychiatry.org:443/patients-families/what-is-mental-illness>.

coronary artery disease is a disease of a real organ—the heart. We can make diagnoses, and these diseases are treatable.”<sup>3</sup>

- ii. “Mental Illnesses are brain-based conditions that affect thinking, emotions, and behaviors. Since we all have brains—having some kind of mental health problem during your life is really common.”<sup>4</sup>

### III. How are Mental Illnesses Diagnosed?

- A. Per the Mayo Clinic, a psychological evaluation is conducted. A psychological evaluation is a where “a doctor or mental health professional talks to you about your symptoms, thoughts, feelings and behavior patterns. You may be asked to fill out a questionnaire to help answer these questions.”<sup>5</sup>
- B. If you have ever visited a psychologist or psychiatrist, a mental illness is diagnosed based off of the symptoms that you describe. You would verbally describe your experience, answer questions that are presented about most of your life, and then be able to without any lab work, scans, or x-rays be diagnosed with a mental illness if your symptoms were severe enough. This process of diagnosing is called, “symptom-based” diagnosing and has been strongly condemned by the medical world.<sup>6</sup>
- C. My Visit to a Psychiatrist:
  - i. I went to the psychiatrist to see what it would be like to simply describe my life and see what I was diagnosed with. (You can read the full transcription of my experience in *Lies My Therapist Told Me*)
  - ii. My appointment lasted for 27-minutes via online medical Kaiser Permanente platform.

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<sup>3</sup> “White House Conference on Mental Health,” accessed July 7, 2025, [https://clintonwhitehouse4.archives.gov/textonly/WH/EOP/First\\_Lady/html/generalspeeches/1999/19990607.html](https://clintonwhitehouse4.archives.gov/textonly/WH/EOP/First_Lady/html/generalspeeches/1999/19990607.html).

<sup>4</sup> “Mental Illness and the Family: Recognizing Warning Signs and How to Cope,” Mental Health America, accessed July 7, 2025, <https://www.mhanational.org/recognizing-warning-signs>.

<sup>5</sup> “Mental Illness - Diagnosis and Treatment - Mayo Clinic,” accessed July 7, 2025, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/mental-illness/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20374974>.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Insel, “Transforming Diagnosis,” *The National Institute of Mental Health* (blog), April 29, 2013, <http://psychrights.org/2013/130429NIMHTransformingDiagnosis.htm>.

- iii. I was offered medication or therapy.
- iv. If this is a matter of the body, wouldn't you want to take my vitals, labs, and/or some sort of bodily scan? I received none of those.

D. So is it really a matter of the mind or the brain? What's the difference?

#### IV. The Biblical Difference Between the Mind and the Brain

**Brain:** The brain would be correspondent to any other organ in your body, which the Bible would state is your outer man in general. Lungs, kidneys, fingers, and legs are all part of your outer man. The term "outer man" is used in different places throughout the Bible (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16).<sup>7</sup>

**Mind:** "The mind is the inner person faculty of intellectual perception that corresponds to thoughts, reason, attitudes, dispositions, opinions, volition, and morals."<sup>8</sup>

#### V. Mind

A. Old Testament:

- i. Darius sets his "mind" (Dan. 6:14).
- ii. The Lord put skill in the "mind" of the craftsmen (Exod. 36:2).
- iii. In the OT, "the inner man, ... soul, comprehending mind, affections and will, with occasional emphasis of one or the other by means of certain verbs."<sup>9</sup>

B. New Testament:

- i. Romans 14:5

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<sup>7</sup> Gifford, *LMTM*.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, [\*Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon\*](#) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 524.

ii. 1 Corinthians 14:14-15

iii. 1 Timothy 6:5

## **VI. Brain**

A. 2 Corinthians 4:16: Outer man

B. Matthew 27:33: “Place of the Skull” (i.e., *kranion*)

C. Matthew 10:30: The hairs of your head are numbered

D. Summary Statement:

“Summarily, the brain is not the mind and the mind is not the brain. The authors of the Bible don’t see them this way, nor should you. The hairs of your head or the place of the skull are tips to clueing us in to the fact that the authors knew exactly what they were talking about. So for Paul to say that the mind needs to be renewed, he was indeed aware of the outer man when he said *mind*. He could have said the outer man needs to be renewed, but he intentionally—and accurately—said mind. So what do we do with the understanding of the brain? We must see that it is the outer person. And what do we do with the mind? We must see that it is the inner person.”<sup>10</sup>

## **VII. Conclusion and Thoughts to Consider**

A. If the brain is not the mind, how can taking psychotropics change the inner person?

B. If there are no empirical ways of diagnosing mental illnesses, how should that change the way that we think about “mental illnesses”?

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<sup>10</sup> Gifford, *Lies My Therapist Told Me*.

C. Lastly, if the mental health conversation has veered into caring for the inner person, is this really a jurisdiction of the pastor?

D. You should read more on the following:

- i. The verifiability of diagnosing a mental illnesses.
- ii. The Bible's use of the mind versus the brain.
- iii. Answer the question: If there is no medical evidence of this physical illness, how should I think about it according to God's Word?