

On the Basis of Mental Health

On a dreary Saturday morning in April, Jessica and Amber are reconnecting for the first time in years after they both attended a sudden funeral of a mutual friend from college. They meet up in a quiet coffee shop to grieve and catch-up.

Jessica- It's good to see you again after all of these years. It's sad that we had to reconnect again on these terms. This all happened so fast.

Amber- I agree. I had no idea that Kerry was even having these mental health issues. I really thought she was doing better after graduation.

Jessica- Me either, it seemed from her social media accounts that she was doing well. I'm pretty sure she had three kids and a really caring husband.

Amber- I thought so too. Mental health has become a horrible issue in today's society. Everyone nowadays seems to be going to therapy or taking some type of pill.

Jessica- It has become a real issue for sure. Both of my siblings have been on medication for years. If Kerry had listened to me and gone to church and tried to grow a deeper connection with God throughout college, maybe her life wouldn't have led to this.

Amber with a confused look on her face- What does church have to do with Kerry's mental health?

Jessica- What do you mean? It's not only about church. A person's relationship to God has everything to do with their mental health. A life without God is a life that leads to despair.

Amber- Well that's not true at all. I don't have any mental health issues at all. And I've never had any sort of relationship with God. Why do you believe that a life without God leads to despair?

Jessica *raising her voice slightly* - Because you're lacking the commitment to something that is greater than yourself. A lifestyle without the divine power leads to an insufficient life.

Amber- And how exactly can you justify that?

Jessica- Because it always ends in despair! Being an ethically good person or a person who always fulfills their desires does not lead to a meaningful life. Take Jenna for example. She was a single atheist all throughout college and still is to this day. Now where is she? Still living in her mom's house without a job or a husband. She has nothing going for her until she starts putting her heart and soul into God.

Amber- But what about me? I have been an atheist my whole life, never once putting my faith into some "higher being" which you believe to be there with no objective proof. And I would like to believe that I have lived a life of adventure, taking risks and living the most fulfilling life I can for myself, without something like God holding me back. Do you think I could have made it through the pandemic without focusing entirely on myself and not being distracted with trying to please any God?

Jessica- God isn't a distraction. Living a life only for pleasures will only lead you to boredom, constantly having to evolve into a scientist of pleasure to continue on the way you do. What have you committed to? This aesthetic lifestyle will turn more into a job and your satisfactions will slowly disappear. From the path that you're taking, I would probably look into some good therapists.

Amber- And what exciting things have you done in your life that you can say have allowed you to live a more compelling life? Your God is tying you down to this alternate world that has no proof of existing, and while you disregard the life you have on this earth, I continue to strive without the chains of religion holding me back in this world. My mental health has never been better in my journey of becoming the ultimate version of a human.

Jessica- I live a compelling life because I have staked my whole life for God and I am becoming more Christlike every day. I have followed Christ throughout everyday life because only he can lead me to eternal happiness. Your momentary pleasures hold you back from the eternal happiness you would gain with God in your life. The difference between me and you, is that you focus on immediacy, whereas I am looking at eternity. You are not sufficient enough to live a life with the absence of God.

Amber- Okay. Since you think it's such a "godly" problem, how do you suggest it being fixed? What would I have to do to help the mental health issue in your eyes?

Jessica- As a whole, we should be doing more to provide for those with mental health issues. We should be helping provide resources for them such as increased access to therapists, doctors, and other support networks.

Amber- But where does God fit into this? Do these therapists and doctors have to be Christian in order to fix the problem? And why should I have to attribute my tax money to a service that I don't even need?

Jessica- God fits into everything. He should be the reason we are coming together to help each other. In my opinion, everyone should be Christlike! If therapists and doctors are taking care of their patients as Christians, they are certain to fix the problem

because they have God on their side watching over them. Tax money is the last thing you should be worried about. Every month I feel like I've lost someone I know because of mental health struggles. If I need to pay a little extra money in taxes to stop this, then so be it.

Amber- In my opinion, religion has no place in politics, or in anything, really. Religion only clouds opinions that one could create on their own. People become too comfortable with their God holding their hand through everything in their life that they become lazy and too reliant on things like technology, since they don't like being uncomfortable. I think that in order for people to better themselves mentally, they need to realize how to rely on themselves and not some make-believe figure and live fearlessly, and not let things like religion hold them back. Also, if people become more reliant on themselves, then there is no need for people like therapists since they can function on their own. People need to be uncomfortable in order to grow in themselves, and religion just holds them back from that.

Jessica after taking a long, frustrated pause- How do you expect to convince people to ditch comfort, love, and security and live "fearlessly?" That is too dangerous to live a life like that. What sort of purpose do you have? I don't see how this can help mental health problems. This seems like a sad, lonely life to live. I don't even want to imagine the amounts of suicides I would hear about if people chose to live in a way that risks everything and has nobody to rely on except yourself.

Amber- If people live fearlessly and dangerously, they can reach the ultimate status of life; it's people like you who are slaves to your own religion, chained down by a God that has never shown you personally that he exists, but still carry the burdens of it on your

backs like camels through the desert. And do you really think that people who don't have to rely on anyone but themselves would be unhappy with their lives? If anything, they would be more happy because they aren't dependent on others, or other entities for that matter, to ensure their happiness in their lives. My purpose in my life is to please myself, not to please other beings that don't even pertain to this world.

Jessica- By this point, it is clear we are not going to agree on the aspect of religion. I'm sad that you have chosen to live your life this way and hope that you will have a conversion one day. But how do you recommend that we, as a society of multiple beliefs and religions, help with mental health issues? There are way too many people in this world struggling from these issues for us to simply sit back and let them deal with it on their own.

Amber- Surely, some people will need help on their journey towards becoming independent and fearless, and that's why we need people who act as lions, paving the way for those to reach their maximum self attainment. I suppose these can be people like the therapists you suggested, but they need to not be affiliated with religion, and strictly to the sense of ensuring the creation of the ultimate human. That way, people get their "help" without becoming reliant on these individuals and still striving towards their independent, fearless self.

Jessica- So you agree? People do need therapists. How do you suppose we give people who don't have adequate healthcare or the financial ability to see these professionals? I don't see how those struggling mentally can become independent and "fearless" without a therapist and without God. This lifestyle that you describe doesn't seem applicable to every individual.

Amber *after taking a large sip of her coffee*- I think some people are being too held back by religion to completely free themselves and live a compelling human life, so they might need more guidance. But I don't think these individuals are to be reliant on their "therapist" to ensure their happiness. As for how to afford it, I don't see how this "therapist" should cost any money, because if it did, people would be indebted to them and be forced to be dependent on them.

Jessica- If therapists were free, then nobody would want to be a therapist because you couldn't make a living out of it. Paying to see someone regarding mental struggles doesn't mean you're forced to be dependent on them, it means that you're strong enough to get help. Once they have helped you conquer your inner battles, you now have the tools to fight them on your own.

Amber- It's not something that one should feel obligated to make a living out of; it's more of volunteering to pave the way and helping people reach their ultimate form of themselves. By paving this path, they are creating an overall better world because there are more ultimate humans living among them.

Jessica- If they're not professionally trained to deal with mental health, then people might as well turn to God to help them fight their battles. Volunteers are not capable enough to actually help and make a difference to those struggling. Mental health issues are a lot more serious than what you're making it seem like. Our friend just died! This is literally a life and death matter. Also, there is no ultimate human. Every person is an individual and should be striving to become more Christlike.

Amber- Well, obviously, these volunteers would know what they need to know because they have already escaped the chains of religion, and know how to create the pathway

for them to succeed. And once these people reach their ultimate form, they no longer have to be concerned with mental health because they are at the peak of their existence, no longer chained back from religion. Religion only holds them back and forces them to stay in their toxic mindset.

Jessica shaking her head- Fine. I give up arguing with you, but I have honest questions. What would you tell someone to do if they are struggling with mental health issues? Would you tell them that they need to be independent and alone and shouldn't be relying on anyone? Would you tell them that there isn't a higher being and that they have no purpose in life? You can't just tell a person struggling with anxiety and depression to be fearless. Fear consumes them already. They need help in order to pull themselves out of that dark whole. Obviously, by now you realize that I believe God holds the ultimate power to pull someone out of that. But even if we play along with your absurd opinions, it just doesn't seem plausible.

Amber- Well, I think that it's necessary to be blunt with someone about their situation; you have to be realistic if you are going to try and fix your mental health. I'm sure you've heard many times before that saying "in order to better yourself, you have to understand yourself", so how can one understand themselves if they are too concerned with the basis of religion? How I see it, you are too enthralled with your God to fully understand yourself, and I think that's where Kerry fell short with her journey. She was too focused on God, an entity that you don't even have physical proof of existing, to ensure her mental health was in a good state.

Jessica- Obviously you need to realize your mental state and accept the fact that you're struggling in order to get help, but nobody understands you better than God. He made

you. If you could give Kerry, or anyone struggling with mental health, any sort of advice, what would you say?

Amber- I would obviously feel for the person struggling; however, I think the best advice to give would be to ask them if their religion is really benefiting them, or if they are too concerned with trying to please their God to please themselves. I think it's best to be completely honest about the chains religion can have, and show them a glimpse of someone that has fully realized themselves. That way, they can understand and begin striving towards that goal, and overall better themselves.

Jessica- You see chains, I see a path. God does not hold you down, he can't. That's why it's possible for you to be an atheist. A person has the free will to choose how they believe, which is why it's so easy to be a textbook Christian instead of a true Christian. My point is, even though you disagree, God does not make you a slave, he guides you to be the best you can be through Christ and his actions.

Amber- How can God lead you though, he doesn't have an animate form; he can't speak, so he can't tell you how to live. You are basing your entire life and happiness on a figure that has never shown his face to you. I just don't understand how having all of your focus on him can contribute positively to your mental health; your mind isn't even focused on this world that we live in now, you're too focused on an imaginary figure.

Jessica- I feel like at this point we need to just agree to disagree. Kerry's death is a tragedy that will stick in our hearts forever. I'm going to a march next weekend through my church to advocate for more resources to combat mental health struggles. I would be happy to have you join us. If you ever find yourself struggling with mental health,

please call me. Even though we have our differences, I would be happy to be there for you.

Amber- And I would be more than happy to try and show you a new way to live if you ever get tired of exploring other-worldly figures. But for real, I'll always be here, despite our differences.