

## HIGHLIGHTING THE BIPOLAR SUPPORT GROUPS MINISTRY:

IF ONE GROUP CAN SERVE 1000, HOW MANY CAN 1000 GROUPS SERVE?



"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." – [II Corinthians 12:9a \(NIV\)](#)

In Rick Warren's **The Purpose-Driven Life**, chapter 35 concentrates on how God works through our weakness, or at least what we and often the world see as our weakness. He says our greatest opportunity for ministry lies in the area of our greatest weakness for it is there where God's glory is most clearly revealed.

If you want to experience this truth intimately, I invite you to sit in with our Bipolar Support Groups during our biweekly meetings. You will find there people from all over this region of every description – all races, ages, income groups, denominations, faiths, non-believers, and so on. All are there for one reason. Bipolar disorder, or a similar mental illness like clinical depression or schizophrenia, has turned their world, or the world of their loved one, upside down. All are broken, searching for answers and a port in their storm. Over 1000 have come since we started this ministry seven years ago.

A small number of broken people are there for another reason. They have experienced God's peace and healing in their own terrible storms and now feel his call to offer love, encouragement and prayer to those who are suffering. They are our leaders and facilitators, and they come from this church and churches from across this community. They can tell you, as I can, that their involvement in this ministry is the most faith-building thing they do. Week after week God brings new, hurting people in and previous attendees back (over 300 receive our reminders). And week after week He shows up.

Did you know that mental illnesses like bipolar disorder and severe depression affect one in five Americans during their lifetimes? Do you understand that when we count the family and close friends who are impacted by the brokenness of these folks, the suffering expands to nearly all Americans?

Do you know how many churches have support group ministries like ours? Hardly any that I can find, and I've been looking pretty hard.

Can it be that God is only going to call a few people to this work? I don't think so. Everything I understand about God makes me believe that He will call many, and that churches and believers of all shapes and sizes and brokenness will be used to bring healing to the people and glory to His name.

If one group can serve 1000 people, how many people can 1000 groups serve? Let's find out. Then let's go for 10,000. It's time for the Christian church to move toward the pain.

*Bob Mills is lead facilitator of the bipolar support groups ministry of First Presbyterian Church. He is also an administrator in advancement at Wake Forest and a board member of Associates in Christian Counseling. To learn more about this ministry, go to its webpage at: <http://www.1stpres.com/Connect/SupportGroups/support.html>*