

Overcoming Depression

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Victor Hugo Wrote: “Have courage for the great sorrows of life and patience for the small ones; and when you have laboriously accomplished your daily task, go to sleep in peace. God is awake.”
- B. **Illustration:** Some years ago the newspaper headline read: “Depressed student, 10, Kills Himself.” The story related how the ten year old boy had taken the family gun and shot himself. Upon investigating the boy’s conduct prior to his death, it was concluded that he was depressed and that was the cause of his action. What has gone wrong with out society and homes that is producing such severe cases of depression.
- C. Depression is a serious emotional disorder and a significant health problem.
1. Suicide, a byproduct of depression, is a leading cause of death.
 2. Researchers estimate that one out of seven people with severe depression will commit suicide. Tens of thousands of people do so every year.
 3. Depression is not an isolated problem . . . It is a worldwide problem.
 4. In your lifetime you run more than a twenty percent risk of having major or minor depression . . . And if you are a woman, the odds are higher, for depressions strikes many more women than men.
 5. Depression is no respecter of persons.
 - a. It strikes the rich and the poor.
 - b. The educated and the uneducated.
 - c. The religious and the nonreligious.
 - d. Depression doesn’t depend upon what you have or your circumstances in life . . . Depression comes from within.
 6. The AMA (American Medical Association) once suggested that more suffering comes from depression than any other single disease affecting man.
 7. Depression is a serious medical condition that affects approximately 12 million U.S. adults.
 - a. Depression is described by the American Psychiatric Association as a “mood disorder,” and one of the most common symptoms is a constant feeling of sadness.
 - b. Depression can make you lose interest in the things you love or drain you of your normal level of energy. It can affect your appetite and your sleeping habits — and create feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness. These feelings may make you feel as though you will never be free from your symptoms — and don't even have the energy to try
 8. Many Christians are suffering from depression.
- D. Depression is not a modern problem It is the oldest known psychiatric

illness.

1. It was described by the ancient Greeks, who listed many of the same symptoms that still are being recognized by psychiatrists in our day.
2. Hippocrates, the father of medicine, in his writings, described man as having four temperaments. One he called “melancholia.”

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

- A. The *Dictionary of Psychology*, page 30, defines depression as, “Melancholia, gloom, dejection.”
- B. Clyde M. Narramore, in *The Psychology of Counseling*, states on page 278, depression is “Undue sadness, dejection or melancholy. Feelings of worthlessness and guilt and often, apprehension. Stems primarily from inner emotional causes.”
- C. In his book, *Feeling Good*, Dr David Burns says on page 35, “Depression can mimic a great number of medical disorders because your mood swings often create a wide variety of puzzling physical symptoms. These include, to name a few, constipation, diarrhea, pain, insomnia or the tendency to sleep too much, fatigue, loss of sexual interest, light-headedness, trembling, and numbness.”
- D. Depression has a direct effect upon your self-esteem. It affects what you think about yourself as a person as well as how you rate yourself.
 1. Unresolved depression causes a person to emphasize his bad traits and minimize his good ones.
 2. Again we must stand reminded **How you evaluate your thoughts about yourself and your experiences determines your emotional reactions.**
 3. Depression is not a sin!
 - a. It is merely a signal that something is wrong in your life.
 - b. If it is not properly handled, it could lead a person into sin.
 - c. It is hard to think right and do right when your emotions are thrown off balance by the weight of depression.
 - d. God is willing to help you win over depression.
- E. Symptoms of depression
 - Depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day.
 - Lack of interest or pleasure in activities.
 - Change in weight or appetite.
 - Sleeping more or having trouble sleeping.
 - Agitation
 - Loss of energy
 - Feeling worthless or guilty for no reason
 - Difficulty in concentrating

- Thoughts of death or suicide

F. Depression includes some of the following characteristics:

- Feeling sad, blue, or down
- Feeling unworthy
- Feeling guilty
- Feeling helpless
- Loss of energy
- Feeling restless
- Feeling irritable
- Feeling lethargic
- Fatigue
- Increased sleep or decreased sleep
- Insomnia or awakening during the night
- Awakening earlier or later than normal
- Loss of interest in hobbies, activities
- Loss of interest in sex
- Decreased ability to concentrate
- Decreased ability to remember
- Increase or decrease of appetite
- Increase or decrease in weight
- Thoughts of death
- Thoughts of suicide
- Also, physical symptoms such as chronic pain or a lingering illness can sometimes signal a depression.
- Similar to other illnesses, such as heart problems, asthma, or diabetes, depression can become severe and disabling.

G. Symptoms in children ages 6-12

- Somatic (generalized bodily)
- Complaints
- School difficulties
- Negative self-statements
- Fatigue
- Boredom/apathy
- Eating disturbance
- Lack of motivation
- Decreased concentration
- Anxiety/worry

H. Symptoms in children ages 12-18

- Suicidal thoughts
- Hopelessness

- Social isolation
- Drug/alcohol use
- Sexual acting out
- Overeating and oversleeping
- Rage

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF DEPRESSION

Many people in the Bible were challenged by their emotions.

A. MOSES. Numbers 11

1. This great man of God had served as leader of Israel through many challenging situations.
 - a. He had confronted Pharaoh on their behalf.
 - b. He led them through the Red Sea and into the wilderness.
 - c. He wanted to lead them to the Promised land.
 - d. He became discouraged because of the murmuring of the people.
 - a. God gave them water.
 - b. God gave them manna.
 - c. The people complained about the manna and wanted meat.
2. Moses became so discouraged that the signs of depression became obvious in his conduct.
 - a. **Numbers 11:14-15** – “I can’t carry all these people by myself. They are too much for me. ¹⁵ If You are going to treat me like this, please kill me right now. If You are pleased with me, don’t let me see my misery [any more].”
 - b. God intervened and helped Moses by giving him seventy men to help him bear his responsibility. Numbers 11:16-30

B. KING SAUL.

1. King Saul had it all going for him until he rebelled against God.
 - 1 Samuel 15:8-35
 2. Because of his actions he was rejected from reigning over Israel.
 - 1 Samuel 16:1
 3. **1 Samuel 16:14** – “Now the Spirit of the LORD had left Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD began to torment him.”
2. Saul was told by a servant that music would be good therapy for his depression. 1 Samuel 16:16
 - a. **1 Samuel 16:17** – “Then Saul commanded his servants, “Find me someone who plays well and bring him to me.”
 - b. **1 Samuel 16:23** – “Whenever the spirit from God [troubled] Saul, David would pick up his harp and play, and Saul would then be relieved, feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.”
4. It has been medically proven that certain kinds of music is good mood therapy.

C. ELIJAH

1. Elijah, the great prophet of God, is another good man who became so depressed that he desired death.
2. Jezebel had threatened Elijah’s life which led to his running away.
3. **1 Kings 19:4** – “But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, ‘It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!’”
 - a. God provided two meals that sustained him for forty days in the wilderness.
 - b. God told the prophet to get busy . . . There was work he must do. 1 Kings 19:15
 - c. God told Elijah that he was not the only faithful servant left . . . There were 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. 1 Kings 19:18 **This was God’s way of reminding Elijah that things were not as bad as he seemed.**

D. JONAH

1. God called Jonah to go and preach to the city of the Assyrians, Nineveh.
 - a. Jonah felt that this enemy city should be destroyed, not preached to.
 - b. After a three day stay in the belly of a large fish, Jonah decided to obey God.
 - c. Jonah goes to Nineveh . . . Preaches God’s message . . . And the city Repents Mission accomplished, mission successful!
2. God spared the city from destruction. This was too much for Jonah.
 - a. Jonah became angry. Jonah 4:1
 - b. Just as two other prophets had done, Jonah requests that God take his life from him. Johan 4:3
 - d. The depressed Jonah goes over to the east side and makes a shelter to sulk under while he waits to see what is going to happen to Nineveh.
 - e. God prepared a gourd for shade, then allowed for it to die. Jonah 4:6-8
 - f. Jonah became angry over the matter and wanted to die.
3. The book of Jonah closes with Jonah still in his state of depression. **Like Jonah, some find it difficult to accept God’s counsel.**

E. JUDAS ISCARIOT

1. In Matthew 27, Judas’ guilt at what he had done and the failure of being able to make it right, led him into a state of depression.
2. His guilt and subsequent suicide is the end result of unresolved depression. **Matthew 27:3-5** – “Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” And they said, “What is that to us? You see to it!”

Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.”

NOTE: Depression is not the exclusive territory of the spiritually weak.

The pages of God’s Word reveal that it was a frequent experience of many great leaders. We learn from their lives that God will help us if we will trust Him and serve Him.

SOME CAUSES OF DEPRESSION

Depression, like so many other emotional problems arises from a variety of causes. What causes one person to become depressed may not cause another person to become depressed. There are, however, some basic causes of depression, that at various times, may be prevalent in the life of a depressed person. One or more of the following things may produce depression.

- A. Negative thinking that produces a negative attitude toward life.
- B. A failure to eat properly, as well as poor sleeping habits will produce a tired body. A tired body is more prone to depression than a rested one.
- C. Many times a certain medication a person is taking may cause depression. A person should check with his physician if he suspects it is causing his bouts with depression.
- D. Physical illnesses or malfunctions may cause depression.
- E. A hormone deficiency or imbalance may contribute to depression. Example: A thyroid problem . . . secreting too much or not enough thyroxine.
- F. Inflammation of the liver, called hepatitis, may cause depression.
- G. Reactive grief may produce depression. The loss of a spouse, relative, friend, job, etc. may spark bouts of depression.
- H. Unresolved emotional conflicts such as anger, guilt, low self-esteem, bitterness, unforgiveness, fear, anxiety.
- I. When a person’s life is not right with God there is a high chance that he will experience depression.
- J. Rejection and loss of love is a major cause of depression. This ranks as one of the most devastating causes of depression in our society.
- K. Discouragement and disappointment are at the top of the list of causes of depression.
- L. A lack of faith and trust in God and His word produce consequences that lead to depression. True happiness and true peace of mind comes from knowing God.
- M. Depression can be triggered by setting unrealistic goals and/or unattainable goals for your life.
- N. As strange as it may sound, temporary depression may follow a success.
 1. After the peak has been reached you are left exhausted.
 2. You may begin to worry about what you will do next.

3. Alexander the Great was upset that he had no more nations to conquer.
- O. Indecision is another cause of depression. This occurs when you are caught between one decision or another . . . One attitude or another.
1. You can't make up your mind . . . You become depressed.
 2. Hence the Biblical warning: “. . . a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” **James 1:8**

NOTE: Don't take depression lightly. It is serious and can radically affect your life. It isn't so much what happens to you that counts, but how you respond to what happens.

OVERCOMING DEPRESSION

NOTE: To properly wind over depression, you must be able to respond positively to circumstances and things which may cause depression. If you can do this, your depression won't last as long or be as harmful as it could be otherwise.

- A. Don't be afraid or ashamed to acknowledge that you are depressed. It happens to all of us at one time or another. Take a few minutes to answer *why* you are depressed.
- B. Never forget that God will help you win over depression. Invite Him into the specific situation that is depressing you. He cares . . . He really does.
- C. Admit your weakness to God; pray specifically about it. God answers prayers. **James 1:3-7**
- D. Change your routine . . . Take a vacation . . . Get another job . . . Rest awhile.
- E. Have a physical checkup. Ask your physician about your medications if you suspect they can be contributing to your depression.
- F. If you have become inactive, become active.
- G. Remember: “This too shall pass.”
- H. Have someone you can talk to about your frustrations. **Galatians 6:2** – “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”
- I. Always remember that God loves you.
- J. Try to rid yourself of negative, self-defeating beliefs . . . You are not ugly . . . There are other jobs, etc.
- K. Try not to make any major decisions when you are depressed. Example: Many people decide to end their marriage when they are depressed.
- L. Don't drag on and on with the discussions about your depression. Prolonged discussion of your feelings intensifies them.
- M. Don't blame others for your depression. **You are responsible for what you think.**
- N. Never try to escape from reality by using drugs or alcohol. They only make things worse.
- O. Set realistic goals for your life. This keeps you on a positive track.

P. Don't take lightly any thoughts that you may have about killing yourself. This is a danger signal.

Q. Biblically speaking:

1. Remember “our sufficiency is of God.” 2 Corinthians 3:5
2. Confess all your sins and faults to God. 1 John 1:7-9
3. Meditate on God's Word. Psalm 119:97; John 8:32

CONCLUSION

A. God does not want us to be robbed of joy and peace through depression.

Matthew 11:28 – “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

B. When depression, and other emotional problems, come into your life, they do not have to stay there.

1. With God's help you can stop their growth.
2. With God's help you can overcome these emotional struggles.
3. **2 Timothy 1:7** - “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of **power** and of **love** and of a **sound mind**.”

C. **God's Plan for Man's Salvation**