

# Biblical Living (12) – Depression (Part 3)

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## 4) Think rightly about your feelings.

a. Rather than mask them, let feelings identify problems in your thinking or acting:

b. Acknowledge the priority of truth over feelings:

Feelings are chronic liars, and must often be treated with a healthy level of distrust.

Phil 4:8. *Finally, brethren, whatever is true ... dwell on these things.*

c. Remember that actions precede and produce feelings:

Genesis 4:7. *... If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up?*

d. Learn to "dominate" your emotions rather than be dominated by them.

The psalmist's example: Psalm 42:5. *Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence.*

## 5) Embrace the forgiveness of God and others.

Psalm 32:9. *Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, otherwise they will not come near to you.*

Asking for and embracing God's forgiveness must replace the depressing downward spiral of self-condemnation.

- ❖ Romans 5:1. *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ...*
- ❖ Romans 8:1. *Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*
- ❖ John 3:18a. *He who believes in Him is not judged.*

## 6) Correct wrong thinking about God.

- ❖ The goodness of God. Psalm 34:8
- ❖ The nearness of God. Psalm 34:18-19 Psalm 73:28a
- ❖ The sufficiency of God. Psalm 73:25-26
- ❖ The attentiveness of God. Psalm 22:24
- ❖ The faithfulness of God when it feels like all others have turned against you. Psalm 27:10
- ❖ The compassion and strength of God. Psalm 55:22 2 Corinthians 4:1

## 7) Correct wrong thinking about life (including the situation that initially stimulated the depression).

✓ Life should be pleasant and easy all the time. Psalm 30:6-7. *Now as for me, I said in my prosperity, "I will never be moved" .... You hid Your face, I was dismayed.*

Ecclesiastes 1:13. *And I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom concerning all that has been done under heaven. It is a grievous task which God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with.*

Ecclesiastes 7:14. *In the day of prosperity be happy, but in the day of adversity consider--God has made the one as well as the other so that man will not discover anything that will be after him.*

✓ I can find satisfaction outside of God.

Ecclesiastes 2:25. *For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?*

✓ Money will satisfy me.

✓ People won't fail me.

✓ Etc.

Note: Especially help the person to begin to think biblically about the situation that initially stimulated the depression.

### **8) Eliminate all feeding factors.**

Depression is fed by:

- brooding (... *taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ*, 2 Cor 10:5) • mutual gripe sessions during which problems are rehearsed again and again without any positive solution being given or positive actions being taken • procrastination • avoiding problems • putting off difficult decisions • resentment • avoiding people • lying • cutting corners • excessive eating • refusal to eat • sleep loss • failure to wisely eliminate unpleasant or discouraging tasks from the most difficult days of one's menstrual cycle

### **9) Become a habitually thankful and joyful person.**

1 Thess 5:18 Psalm 30:11-12 Psalm 100: 1-2, 4 Proverbs 17:22

### **10) Increase your intake of spiritual nutrition.**

Bible reading: Psalm 119:25 Psalm 119:50 Psalm 119:92

Church attendance:

Observation: Depressed Christians don't do better when they don't go to church.

Hebrews 10:24-25. *Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.*

For the depressed person (as with everyone else) church attendance must be other-focused—to encourage others—not self-focused.

Fellowship:

2 Corinthians 7:5-6. *For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within. But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus.*

Proverbs 12:25. *Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down, but a good word makes it glad.*

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. on the importance of friendship

### **11) Talk to your depression, rather than listen to it.**

Psalm 36:1. *Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart.* Here we are trying to get godliness to talk to the depressed person instead.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones:

*Have you realised that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? Take those thoughts that come to you the moment you wake up in the morning. You have not originated them, but they start talking to you, they bring back the problems of yesterday, etc. Somebody is talking. Who is talking to you? Your self is talking to you .... This [psalmist's] treatment was this; instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he starts talking to himself.*

*The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself .... You must go on to remind yourself of God, Who God is, and what God is and what God has done, and what God has pledged Himself to do. (Spiritual Depression, 20-21)*

Point:

Depressed people need to learn to *talk* good theology to themselves, rather than *listening* to the gloom and negativism of their depression. The psalmist's example: Psalm 42:11. *Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God.*

### **12) Be willing to be encouraged.**

Replace hopelessness with a willingness to be encouraged: Psalm 42:11. *My tears have been my food day and night .... Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God.*

### **Six closing words of advice on counselling depressed people:**

1) Be prepared for the challenges of counselling a severely depressed person.

- A one-way relationship:

- Depression defiles many:

*It is almost as if depression feels contagious—after a few weeks with a depressed person, you begin to feel depressed. (Welch, Blame It on the Brain?, 121)*

2) If the person is on medication for his depression, instruct him not to alter the dosage of his anti-depressants or other medications without first consulting the prescribing doctor. Anti-depressants are powerful drugs and usually need to be stepped down gradually.

Note: Also warn the counselee about the challenges of dealing with withdrawal symptoms: *When you stop medication, you might mistakenly think your feelings of depression are returning when you are actually experiencing withdrawal symptoms. (Welch, Depression: A Stubborn Darkness, 212)*

3) Resist the temptation to give too much Bible study.

4) Don't be afraid to be personal to draw the person out of his or her insulated, self-contained cocoon of depression.

5) Don't be afraid to contradict a depressed person's unbiblical thinking.

*Proverbs 26:5. Answer a fool as his folly deserves, that he not be wise in his own eyes.*

*Proverbs 16:25. There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.*

*Proverbs 27:5. Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed.*

6) Don't be scared off because the person's problem is depression—as if depression were something beyond the scope of biblical assistance.