

Women Counseling Women:
Biblical Answers to Life's Difficult Problems

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Week 4

“ The Difficult Road through Depression”

The origin of depression:

Physical causes-exhaustion, injury, sickness, chronic pain, thyroid problem, lack of sleep, side effect of medication, too much fast food or junk food, too much caffeine or alcohol, eating disorders.

Inward causes-

emotional pain, overwhelming grief or difficult circumstances (death, moving, loss of a job, relationship problems, church conflict, marriage breakup, rebellious child, severe financial problems) unconfessed sin, personal failures, unmet desires, disappointments, crushed hopes

Sometimes physical factors that lead to depression need urgent attention before the inner causes can be addressed.

Example: Elijah (1 Kings 19)

“The condition of our bodies makes a difference in the capacity of our minds to think clearly and of our souls to see the beauty of hope-giving truth.” (John Piper)

“Are you well-rested, well-fed, well-exercised?” (Pastor Young)

Hope for your soul- the inner you:

When you are in the depths of depression, it is safe to cry out to God, your Abba Father. (Mark 14:34-35) He understands He hears, (Heb 4:14-16) and His Spirit is praying on your behalf. (Romans 8:26)

Questions to ask yourself:

1. Am I treasuring anything more than Christ?
(beauty, health, control, success, approval of people)
2. What do I think I *must* have in order for my life to have meaning again?
3. Am I filled with anger and bitterness, and unwilling to forgive someone?
4. Have my disappointments led to sin in the area of not caring for my body, the temple of the Holy Spirit?

Rest in the Gospel!

Christ was abandoned that we might never be alone (Mark 15:34)

He was cast off that we could be brought into God's family.
(Ephesians 1:5)

Christ bore God's wrath and suffered in our place that we might be forgiven (Ephesians 1:7-8, Romans 5:9 Matthew 26:38-39)

He was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven where He is interceding for you. (Romans 8:34)

Christ has met our greatest need – peace with God. (Romans 5:1)

The guilt of our sin doesn't have to crush us because it already crushed Him. If we confess and forsake our sins we will obtain mercy. (Proverbs 28:13)

Example: David (Psalm 32:3-5)

We are not alone or friendless – we're part of His family! God isn't angry or disappointed with us. We are *in* Christ. (Romans 8:17)

We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.
(Romans 8:37) We are secure in God's love. Nothing can separate us from it. Let your weary soul find rest here - Jesus has conquered for you!

What a hope we have - that there is coming a day when we are no longer subject to sin, pain, and suffering! (Romans 8: 18-21) (Rev 21:4)

Our suffering is designed by God for a purpose. He wants to make us more like Christ. He is teaching us to trust in His wisdom, love, and power. He is drawing us closer to Himself; He is making Himself our only hope.

Example: Job

Let God's love motivate you to action:

*Seek counsel from a mature Christian who can help you see your blind spots, pray with you, and help you find Scripture passages to meditate on.

*Don't believe Satan's lies! ("You are useless. Your battle has already been lost. God has abandoned you. Everyone is better off without you.") (John 10:28) Depression is a spiritual battle for your very life. There is more to your struggles than you can see. (Ephesians 6:12)

*Spend time with the Great Counselor. Take time each day to get into God's Word. God's Word is ultimate truth_– an antidote to distorted negative thoughts that lead to hopelessness. God's Word renews our minds with the truth and has the power to change our feelings. (Godly people who experienced the depths of despair: Job, Moses, Elijah, Jonah, Jeremiah, David) (Lamentations 3:22-23, 31-33)

*Voice your sufferings to God, who already knows what you are going through.

Example: David (Psalms - despair replaced by hope)

*Thank God for what you know you should be grateful for – His abundant goodness. As you pour out your heart before the Lord in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, you will find comfort.

Example: Paul and Silas singing in prison (Acts 16:25)

*Fulfill your responsibilities as much as you can. Pulling back from meaningful work and activities only adds to depression and complicates the problem.

*Look outside yourself. Pray for and reach out to someone else on a daily basis no matter how you feel. (I John 4:7)

*Seek fellowship with other believers even though you feel like withdrawing. (Hebrews 10:24-25, II Corinthians 1:3-4)

*Don't give up! "Weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning." (Psalm 30:5)

Recommended Resources

Trusting God: Even When Life Hurts by Jerry Bridges

Because He Loves Me by Elyse Fitzpatrick

Comforts from the Cross by Elyse Fitzpatrick

A Steadfast Heart by Elyse Fitzpatrick

Counsel from the Cross by Elyse Fitzpatrick and Dennis Johnson

When the Darkness Will Not Lift by John Piper

When God Weeps by Joni Eareckson Tada and Steven Estes

Depression: A Stubborn Darkness by Edward T. Welch