

Dealing With Depression

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Depression is a difficult, complex topic. There are many causes of depression: physiological, physical, emotional and spiritual. Psychology looks at depression from a physical, disease model. We are told we need to treat unbalanced brain chemistry, but the truth is no one knows what the correct balance of serotonin, dopamine or norepinephrine should be. Whatever the cause—since we are body/mind/spirit beings—depression will affect us spiritually.

I suffered from episodes of deep depression on and off for most of my life. I tried medication and talk therapy but couldn't find a way out. I thought I was doomed to live as a "lesser" Christian. I felt such shame because I couldn't get the Christian life right. However, through Biblical counseling, God has set my feet on level ground. God was faithful during the years I was depressed, though I couldn't see it at the time. Looking back, I see His umbrella of Grace over my long process of deep change. I know now that God was there for me through it all, working for my freedom, even when I was at my very worst.

Depression is fueled by lies, like chains that keep us down in the black pit of despair. The Bible's way of transformation is found in Roman 12:2 – "Be transformed by the *renewing of your mind...*"

Chain 1: Unbelief: We don't know or don't believe the Bible's words about how God sees us. Because of hurts or lies we heard when we were young, we don't understand our value and that we have God's favor. **The Truth:** Remember God's faithfulness, look for His individual and personal love to you every day. See Him as He truly is, through the unfailing truth of His Word.

Chain 2: Yesterday and Tomorrow. We live in yesterday's hurts (unforgiveness) and tomorrow's promises ("when I feel better, I'll act better") but not in the Grace of today.

The Truth: Forgive, so the hurts of yesterday don't continue hurting today. Accept God's grace for mistakes, and believe that "*there is no condemnation*" for you either. (Romans 8:1) Obey God today, whatever He asks you to do, and trust that He is not unmerciful or demanding. He will never ask you for more than you are capable of, with His help.

Chain 3: Victim Thinking. We have been told that we are victims of our circumstances or bad brain chemistry or an undiscovered illness, and we have to learn to love ourselves.

The Truth: Practice trusting God for what He alone can do. Quickly obey what He has told you to do. *He has given us all we need to live a godly life.* (2 Peter 1:3)

Chain 4: Shame. Shame says 'who I am is bad' and is usually the root of all the lies we believe.

The Truth: Grace defeats shame. Grace will overcome the screaming lies. The way we live in that grace is by *scorning the shame*, just like Jesus did (Hebrews 12:2). Refuse to listen to the lies and tell yourself the truth when shame overwhelms you. (1 John 3:19-20)

If you experience depression, know that the Lord is close to *the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.* (Psalm 34:18) and know that there is hope. Learn to live in Grace and Truth, knowing you are wholly and completely loved. If you are helping someone who is depressed, remember there is no "quick fix" for depression, but you can help by patience, understanding and giving truth.

RESOURCES *Good Mood, Bad Mood* by Dr. Charles Hodges | *Will Medicine Stop the Pain?* by Elyse Fitzpatrick and Laura Hendrickson | *How People Change* by Paul David Tripp and Timothy S. Lane
Depression: Looking Up From the Stubborn Darkness by Edward T. Welch | *Hope Ahead* by Barb Mulvey and Cris Paulson | IBCD Care & Discipleship Training (www.IBCD.org)

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