

The Christian and Depression

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Introduction: Depression is a greater problem among Christians than most people realize!

A. There are not many families here who have not been touched by this problem in some form.

B. What is depression?

1. A psychotic or neurotic condition characterized by an inability to concentrate, insomnia, and feelings of extreme sadness, dejection, and hopelessness.
2. From a Bible standpoint there are several words which would either describe or involve depression: Anxiety, despair, worry, an overwhelmed spirit, etc.
3. This is not a study of psychology but the Bible. This is a real problem that the Bible provides real answers to.
4. This lesson does not propose to suggest that all problems with chronic depression are a result of a spiritual problem, *in some cases they are not*. However, in many cases there is. In both, cases the Christian, his family and his brothers in Christ need to know how to best respond.

C. The Christian life is a joyful, abundant life. (**John 10:10; Phil 4:4**)

1. God has not promised to take away the sources of our despair, but has given us the way to endure with joy. (**1 Cor 10:13; Phil 1:30**)

2. The most powerful example of our faith is how we respond in suffering. (**2 Cor 12:10**)

I. Characteristics of Depression

A. There are different levels of depression - Short term, Periodic and Chronic.

1. To be depressed is not in itself a sin! All God given emotions are to be experienced. (**Ecc 3:2-4**) Also there can be physical reasons for depression.
2. However if depression is not checked it can come to control ones actions and thinking. In many cases this is an issue within the control of the Christian.

B. Consider some indications of chronic depression.

1. An unreal view of the world and people. They often have their own reality.
2. They become ego centered. All things are viewed by how it relates to them.
3. There is a strong desire to withdraw.
4. There is a strong desire for escape. (Eating, shopping, drugs, alcohol, "binges", spending all spare time on recreation)
5. There are physical changes.
6. Thoughts of suicide.

C. Consider some examples of men of faith who experienced short term depression.

1. Elijah (**1 Kings 19:2-10, 18**)

2. David (**Psa 142:1-4**)

3. Both these men were able by faith to overcome this time when they were overwhelmed by events.

II. Sources of Depression

A. Buried anger. Seeking a passive escape rather than facing and solving problems.

(**Eph 4:26-27; 1 John 3:15**)

1. Often the angriest people I know are the most passive ones.
2. By burying and dwelling on hurts we only make them bigger.
3. It is never better to run from problems. God has commanded what we should do.

(**Matt 5:23-24; 18:15-17**)

B. Living in the past. (**Phil 3:12-14**)

C. Selfishness. **(Phil 2:3-4)**

D. An overemphasis on the here and now. **(1 Tim 6:6-10; 17-18)**

E. A poor family upbringing. **(Eph 6:4)**

1. It is not uncommon for depression to go through generations.
2. Some are raised in an anger filled home where resentment is taught.
3. Others are taught to run from problems rather than solve them.

III. The Christian's Response to Depression

A. To the one dealing with depression.

1. Build your faith in God. **(Phil 4:11-13)**
 - a. A daily transformed mind. **(Rom 12:1-2)**
 - b. A God centered mind. **(Phil 4:5-7)**
 - c. A life of meaning and fulfillment. **(Matt 20:28)**
 - d. Worship to the ever present God. **(Psa 73:16-17)**
 - e. Confidence in the hope of heaven. **(Rom 8:24-25; 12:12)**
2. Surround yourself with faithful people. **(1 Cor 15:33)**
 - a. Some seek to associate with others who are depressed because they will "understand". This could lead to compounding your problem.
 - b. During your times of weakness you will need others who will strongly encourage you to faithfulness. **(Gal 6:1-2)**
3. Do not flee from problems!

B. To the family of the depressed.

1. There are two common, but wrong approaches to the depressed.
 - a. Some treat the member with silence and by ignoring them. Others may even ridicule or bury anger against the depressed.
 - b. Some may allow the depressed to rule. In this situation they must submit to the depressed person or be punished. This way they have "peace" in the home. Here the depressed one can be very manipulative.
2. Have the courage to give the person what they need, not everything they ask. **(Mark 10:21)**
 - a. This may lead to short term anger, but long term solutions.
 - b. I have seen cowardly men and women allow these problems to make shipwreck of their entire family.
 - c. There may be a need for professional help.
3. Understand your own limitations.
 - a. You cannot change another person against their will.
 - b. Always keep your own faithfulness in mind. **(Gal 6:1)**
4. Have realistic expectations.

C. How the church should respond.

1. Give understanding, love and support to the brother. **(1 Cor 12:22-24)**
2. Stop the depressed from spreading their fear and in some cases gossip.
3. The depressed fight "contending for the faith". They want no more conflict. Do not let this attitude spread **(Jude 3)**

Conclusion: Let us draw near to a living God who will provide for us day by day. **(Phil 4:8-9)**