

overcoming depression



Understanding _____

1. What is depression?

- Depression is a debilitating mood, feeling, or attitude of hopelessness, which becomes a person's reason for not handling the most important issues of life.
- It entails aspects of feelings and actions.
 - We have bad feelings regardless of cause at times, so bad feelings do not always indicate depression.
 - No matter how spiritual we are, we will not always feel good.
 - How we respond to those feelings will determine whether or not we are depressed.
 - Getting rid of feelings is the wrong goal and cannot be supported biblically. (2 Cor 4:8-9)
 - When we use the feelings as the excuse to avoid dealing with important issues of life –that is depression.
- There is a distinguishable difference between depression and discouragement.
 - With depression we stop handling life or some area of life and we become immobile.
 - With discouragement, we keep on going even though we may continue experiencing the feelings of “depression”.
- Depression is a contemporary term. A century ago it was called “melancholy.” The early church fathers called it “sloth,” which they defined as sadness of heart and a reluctance to engage in any activity that requires effort.”
- A depressed person may mention their problem repeatedly, but never do anything about it. “I am at the end of my rope.” “There is no hope for me.”
- A depressed person is very feeling oriented. “I don’t feel like it.”
- A depressed person may think their problem is unique from anyone else. “Well, you won’t understand, you don’t have the same problems I do.”
- They may have a defeatist mentality. “That’ll never work.” “I’ve tried that before, but it didn’t work.” “I’m always down, that’s just the way I am.”
- They may say, “I’m tired most of the time. I cry a lot. I never get anything done.”

- They may stop doing work around their home.
 - They may stop taking care of themselves the way they use to.
 - They may be late more often and consistently.
 - They may stop going to work.
 - They may simply stop doing what is expected of them.
2. When is depression sin?
- The feelings are not sinful in and of themselves, but how one responds to those feelings indicates whether there is a sin problem.
 - When the bad feelings are the result of not using biblical principles to deal with life, that is sin.
 - When God’s Word is not used as God intends, that is sin.
 - When living by feelings is the authority rather than God’s Word, that is sin.
 - When aware of personal sin and not responding in a biblical way, that is sin.
 - When depression is a result of thinking unbiblically, that is sin.
 - Refusing to obey God because of how one feels is sin.
 - Depression may be facilitated by physical exhaustion and/or illness.
 - **Remember, having a medical physical is advised to discern any physical or nutritional deficiencies that may be contributing to the problem.**

Examples of depression

1. None of us are totally exempt to feelings of depression.
2. People in Scripture experienced what would today be classified as “depression.”
3. In the following examples, we see examples of self-focus that led to sin, which then led to “depression”:
 - Cain was downcast as a result of his offering being rejected and his brother Abel’s being accepted (Gen 4:1-14);
 - Elijah reacted to Jezebel’s threats by fearing for his own life, giving in to despair and fleeing, even after a great victory (1 Kings 19:1-4);
 - David committed sin, failed to repent, and then lost hope (Psalm 32 & 38);

- Jonah, displeased at the workings of God’s sovereignty, became angry with God, which resulted in his wanting to die (Jonah 4:1-11);
 - Peter denied the Lord by lying and cursing, which led him to weep bitterly (Matthew 26:69-75); and
 - Judas betrayed Jesus and then felt remorse. After throwing the thirty pieces of silver into the sanctuary, he committed suicide by hanging himself (Matthew 27:1-5).
4. We may experience “depression” as a result of sinning and Scripture provides for us examples and hope for overcoming depression.

Some _____ causes of depression

There are many possible reasons why we get depressed. There are numerous physical factors that do not involve sin. However, we must guard against responding to those issues unbiblically.

1. Some physical influences include: sickness, childbirth, surgery and the recovery process, hormonal or chemical imbalances, organic dysfunctions, sleep loss, unhealthy diet, fatigue, menstrual cycle phenomena, or physical maladies (i.e., hypoglycemia, diabetes, glandular dysfunction), lack of exercise or unhealthy eating.
2. Unbiblical responses to situations of life may include: physical problems, job loss, divorce, death of a loved one, loss of a relationship, financial difficulties, accidents, interpersonal conflicts, children leaving home, retirement, persecution, perceived crises, traumas, or medical treatment for yourself or your loved ones, and unbiblical response to guilt.
3. Lack of biblical obedience with regard to: failing to complete responsibilities, lack of spiritual disciplines, unfaithful prayer life, refusing to forgive others or be restored in personal relationships, lack of fellowship with other believers, failure to minister as part of the Body of Christ, or failure to confess sins to the Lord and to others in a faithful manner.
4. Unbiblical thoughts and thinking, including: bitterness, worry, anxiety, envy, jealousy, self-pity, a spirit of unforgiveness, impatience, procrastination, lustful thoughts, holding grudges, prideful thinking, anger, or esteeming yourself above others, and not believing God’s grace and forgiveness.

How to _____ depression

1. Thinking must change
 - God does have answers (Matt 11:28; 2 Tim 3:16-17)
 - God gives hope (1 Cor 10:13)
 - God gives us all the resources we need (2 Pet 1:3)
 - God gives us the strength we need (John 15:4, 5, 7; 2 Cor 12:9; Eph 3:14-17; Phil 4:13)
 - God gives us the circumstances we need (Rom 8:28-29)

- God gives even more than we need (2 Cor 9:8)
- God gives us many reasons to praise and give thanks (Lam 3:17-25; Phil 4:4-9)

2. Actions must change

- Pray and read God's Word regularly. Make a plan for it. In the beginning, especially focus on the character and qualities of God and your identity in Christ.
- Confess and deal with sin (Ps 32:5; 1 John 1:9)
- Determine to do what is right regardless of feelings. Do not let feelings have authority in your life. (Luke 9:23; John 13:17; James 1:25)
- Establish accountability. Have people in your life who will encourage you and watch for excuses for not doing.
- If necessary, studiously avoid daydreaming, TV watching, and self-pitying parties. When you see this happening, stop, and get to work doing what you should be doing.
- Watch your diet, exercise, and sleeping.
- Make "to do" lists.
- Praise and thank God in every situation. Make lists of reasons for praise and thanksgiving.
- See all of life and every circumstance from a God-centered point of view.
- Purposefully serve God and people.
- Replace pessimistic and defeatist thoughts with biblical thoughts.
- Regularly seek fellowship with God's people.
- Pursue becoming more like Christ.
- Enjoy the variety of good things God has provided.
- **DON'T TELL ANYONE TO START OR STOP ANY MEDICATION**
- God's Word, accompanied by prayer, the Holy Spirit, and the Church, is the most equipped and powerful resource for turning a depressed person into a person of joy, peace, and diligence.