



Equipping the Saints to Love and Serve Those Who Battle Depression

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Purpose:

To help equip you as saints to better love and serve those who battle depression so that they may benefit from and become a benefit to their families and communities for the glory of God.

Common Myths to Dispel:

- “Depression can be chased away by a deep faith and powerful prayer life.”
(cf. **Jeremiah 15:10-18 and 20:14-18**)
- “Depression can be shaken off with encouraging words and gratitude journals.”
(cf. **Psalm 42-43**)
- “Depression is just a distorted perspective on one’s life which you can snap out of.”
(cf. **the Book of Job**)
- “Depression is just a means to get attention; it’s a choice.” (cf. **Psalm 6**)
- “Depression is just a subjective experience or circumstantial situation that can be fixed.”
(cf. **Psalm 88**)
- “Depression doesn’t require medication or intensive treatment; you just need a little time.”
(cf. **1 Timothy 5:23**: This is not a direct reference to depression but to the treatment of a physical ailment with a physical remedy. The brain is an organ and can get sick requiring a medicinal remedy.)

Common Symptoms / Presentation:

- Change in mood, such as sadness, loneliness, or apathy (i.e. “I don’t care...”)
- Feeling profoundly overwhelmed often described as drowning or suffocating
- Inability to focus due often described as a storm raging in the brain
- Negative thoughts about self and life circumstances
- Expressed desires to escape, hide, or die
- Retreat from normal living with associated physical changes like withdrawal from community, loss of appetite, poor sleep habits, decreased care in appearance, decreased activity levels
- Increase in agitation and loss of patience with minor things

Common Causes:

- A significant loss of some sort during one's life with a failure to fully grieve: death of loved one or close friend, financial/job, relationship, opportunity
- Heredity
- Biochemical changes such as having a baby, hormonal changes, illness, age
- Prolonged struggle/suffering
- Failure/Regret

How You Can Love and Serve Someone Who's Depressed:

- Don't view them as a problem to be fixed or project to be completed but a fellow image bearer with whom you are a committed family member
- Recognize the uniqueness of their circumstances and struggles
- Check on them frequently through the means that gives them the best space to respond
- Be available to offer supportive service and love
- Listen, listen, listen! Speak to guide with gentle questions being firm in love
- Help them grieve well
- Help them remember the specific times that God has been good in their life
- Gently and accurately help them see things differently than through the fog of depression
- Help them find reliable resources for treatment
- Provide acts of service without their having to ask or give detailed instructions, especially when they are at their lowest
- Faithfully pray for their deliverance. Pray with them as is appropriate being careful to speak words in due season that will be edifying and encouraging.
- Encourage the continued use of the means of grace no matter how brief or poor their motivation
- Be patient with them as they travel the confusing ups and downs of depression
- Stay grounded and connected yourself in the means of grace and community available to you to stay healthy

Resources:

-www.ccef.org

-*The Healing Path* by Dan Allender, Ph.D.

-*A Sacred Sorrow* by Michael Card

-*Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering* by Timothy Keller

-*A Grief Observed* by C.S. Lewis

-*Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure* by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

-*Lament for a Son* by Nicholas Wolterstorff

-*Experiencing Grief* by H. Norman Wright