

# HOPE FOR THE DEPRESSED & ANXIOUS HEART

## Lecture Two: Cure(s), Compassion & Calling

### LECTURE TWO

#### I. The Cure(s)

- We must take a holistic approach to the cures!
- Addressing the *cures* under three main categories...the natural, the spiritual and the medicinal.

#### Natural

- By natural we mean doing those things which promote natural health and stability. Such as...
- Daily routine: When someone is depressed or anxious, usually the first thing that goes to the wayside is maintaining a daily routine.
- The first massive step in curing depression and anxiety is to re-establish a daily routine! In other words, you must resolve to work hard at whatever God has put before you to do; regardless of how you feel!
- Don't commiserate with your depression! Don't naval gaze. Don't study it, analyze it! Resist getting pulled into that vortex of self and becoming paralyzed. If you turn in on your depression and anxiety you will feed it!
- Relaxation & rest: Build into your routine adequate time to be alone with the Lord, in His word and prayer. Take a walk in the sunshine. Do everything you can to allow yourself proper sleep.
- Practical steps: designate the same time to go sleep each night. Avoid eating, drinking caffeine, TV, internet use or phone conversations 3 hours prior to going to bed.
- Diet & exercise: Proper nutrition not only rightly fuels the body but exercise helps expel harmful chemicals and toxins from our bodies. Exercise helps stimulate natural chemicals like serotonin in the brain which affects our moods.
- So routine, relaxation, rest, diet and exercise are all a natural means to help the body and mind repair and recharge from depression and anxiety.

## Spiritual

- For an exhaustive treatment on dealing with the cures for depression and anxiety please see Martin Lloyd Jones "*Spiritual Depression*".
- The most important weapon in our arsenal as Christians in battling anxiety and depression is to be renewed in the spirit of our minds. There is no more potent cure that God promises in His word that will produce deep and lasting freedom from anxiety and depression than the cure of reprogramming our minds.
- It is critical it is for depressed and anxious people to change their thought patterns.
- The battle field of the Christian life is in the battle field of the mind. Sanctification begins with our minds. So if we by-pass our mind and look to or rely upon our constantly fluctuating feelings and subjective moods...we will become prisoner's of Satan in this spiritual war.
- We need to constantly be renewing our mind with the very gospel itself! A lot of depression and anxiety can be weakened and possibly expelled altogether if we will renew our minds on the glory of God's grace in the gospel.
- The gospel drives out false distorted views of God; it drives out condemnation, guilt and fear. It drives out performance based living; but most of all...the gospel assures us that nothing can separate us from God's love.
- *The most terrifying panic attack nor the darkest pits of depression can ever separate us from God's love since His love is not based upon our faith but His grace!*
- Depression and anxiety is riddled with lies telling us that God does not love us. So what we need more than ever in those battles is the assurance of God's unfailing love. And only the gospel can supply that cure!

## Medical

- A lot of Christian teaching and counseling discourages or in some cases rejects the role and use of medicine. This is a mistake.
- Medicine is wrongly viewed as merely addressing the symptoms of the problem and not the problem itself.

- Dr. Murray, *"We must not view medication as a rejection of God and His grace but rather as a provision of God and His grace."*
- Medicine is not our Savior nor should it be our first line of defense.
- However, after one has addressed and applied the above areas in the physical and spiritual, and is still struggling with anxiety or depression, then one should under the care of a trained physician consider the use of medication to help alleviate symptoms, to help replenish the brains chemistry and to allow that person to address those other areas of their life and their heart.

## II. The Compassionate Care of the Saints

- If you have a loved one who battles depression or anxiety, then give yourself to concentrated reading and study in this area. See 10 resources provided at end of this outline.
- Some key principles to work by in caring for the depressed and anxious heart...
- #1 Know that anxiety and depression are normal and common battle grounds for the saints; some of whom shined the brightest in the history of the church.
- Elijah, David, Jeremiah, Paul, Timothy, Martin Luther, David Brainerd, William Cowper, Charles Spurgeon, and Jonathon Edwards are all men who battled melancholy, depressive moods and anxious states of mind.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> thing we need to do in caring for depressed and anxious people is to listen well!
- Develop the skill of listening carefully and patiently. Take time to really understand what that person is experiencing, how they feel etc. Be quick to listen and slow to speak. Depressed and anxious people need to know they're being heard and loved.
- #3 ask questions with gentleness. This is a part of the listening process. By inquiring with questions you are positioning yourself to assess all the various causes. Your listening is taking a holistic approach to care.
- One question we should ask *with all gentleness* is to ask the anxious or depressed person if they want to be healed?

- 4<sup>th</sup> commit yourself to pray for them! Intercede before the throne of God that the Lord would powerfully intervene. At the end of the day we're all ultimately dependent on God.
- 5<sup>th</sup> and finally, counsel people to take a *holistic* approach to healing.
- Help people to address both their bodies and their souls, and to do so under the direction of a pastor or trained counselor and under a physician for medical use if necessary.
- Beware of the quick fix mentality!

### III. The Calling

- Westminster Confession Faith chapter 5 section 5 says, *"The most wise, righteous, and gracious God does oftentimes leave, for a season, His own children to manifold temptations, and the corruption of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled;\* and, to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon Himself, and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for sundry other just and holy ends."*
- After we've done our homework, studied, assessed ourselves, the situation, the causes, complexity and applied the cures...and yet we still find ourselves battling depression and anxiety...then we may have to humbly resolve that God may have called us to this.
- God has wise and loving and holy purposes in all our battles. The Lord may have ordained you to struggle with depression or anxiety your whole life; **not b/c** He doesn't love you; but b/c He does love you and this battle, as difficult as it is, may actually be the very instrument He uses to...give you more of Him and to give others more of Him through you!
- *"There are dungeons under the castle of despair."* Charles Haddon Spurgeon
- Our suffering, no matter its depth, its difficulty or its duration, is never, ever wasted. God is redeeming all our suffering, even our anxiety and depression for our good and for His glory!

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

*For further reading, study and application...*

1. *"Christians get depressed too"*; Dr. David Murray  
\*also visit [www.headhearhand.org](http://www.headhearhand.org)
2. *"Spiritual Depression"*; Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones
3. *"Deserted by God?"*; Dr. Sinclair Ferguson
4. *"Running Scared"*; Dr. Ed T. Welch
5. *"I'm not supposed to feel like this"*; Chris Williams and Paul Richards
6. *"Broken Minds: Hope for healing when you feel like you're losing it"*; Steven and Robyn Bloem
7. *"OCD: Freedom for the obsessive compulsive"*; Dr. Michael Emlet
8. *"Overcoming Anxiety: Relief for worried people"*; Dr. David Powlison
9. *"Depression: The way up when you're down"*; Dr. Ed T. Welch
10. *"Depression: Looking up from this stubborn darkness"*; Dr. Ed T. Welch