

## Concerning Depression

Isaiah 61:3 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

*To grant those who mourn in Zion,  
Giving them a garland instead of ashes,  
The oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting.  
So they will be called oaks of righteousness,  
The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.*

## Introduction

Depression affects about 9% of Americans (CDC). Many of us will experience it at some point of our lives. Some of our loved ones suffer from it as well. For years at times. But, here's the good news. God has an answer for depression.

A quick overview of depression.

**Definition:** Depression is a mental disorder. [mental: relating to the mind, relating to disorders of the mind--Oxford]

**Symptoms** may include:

- *Feelings of sadness, tearfulness, emptiness or hopelessness*
- *Angry outbursts, irritability or frustration, even over small matters*
- *Loss of interest or pleasure in most or all normal activities, such as sex, hobbies or sports*
- *Sleep disturbances, including insomnia or sleeping too much*
- *Tiredness and lack of energy, so even small tasks take extra effort*
- *Reduced appetite and weight loss or increased cravings for food and weight gain*
- *Anxiety, agitation or restlessness*
- *Slowed thinking, speaking or body movements*
- *Feelings of worthlessness or guilt, fixating on past failures or self-blame*
- *Trouble thinking, concentrating, making decisions and remembering things*
- *Frequent or recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts or suicide*

- *Unexplained physical problems, such as back pain or headaches*

(<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/symptoms-causes/syc-20356007>)

## Causes

*A number of factors may increase the chance of depression, including the following:*

- **Abuse.** *Past physical, sexual, or emotional abuse [spiritual---added: kc]*
- **Certain medications.**
- **Conflict.** *Personal conflicts or disputes with family members or friends.*
- **Death or a loss.** *Sadness or grief from the death or loss of a loved one*
- **Genetics**
- **Major events.** *A new job, graduating, or getting married, moving, losing a job or income, getting divorced, or retiring.*
- **Other personal problems** *such as social isolation [loneliness: kc]*
- **Serious illnesses.**
- **Substance abuse.** *Nearly 30% of people with substance abuse problems also have major or clinical depression. (<https://www.webmd.com/depression/guide/causes-depression#1-2>)*

## Treatments

*Medications and psychological counseling (psychotherapy) are very effective for most people with depression (Mayo clinic). Note here that these approaches focus on things visible and mental, not things invisible or spiritual. They seldom identify the spiritual causes of depression such as the devil, evil spirits, sin, guilt, shame, or unforgiveness. They rarely talk about the biblical solutions such as God, Holy Spirit, repentance, or forgiveness. They never point out to the Word of God where God's wisdom and strength are found to overcome depression. All they do is to try to relieve the symptoms, therefore, lacks the solution to the root cause.*

## Content

This morning, I am going to explain to you three spiritual and biblical aspects of depression: first, depression is a spiritual matter. It is more than a mental disorder. Second, it is not God's will for us to be in depression. Therefore, we must resist the devil's scheme

to keep us in depression. Finally, God offers three practical ways to prevent and overcome depression. By faithfully practicing, we will win the battle against depression.

### **Depression is a spiritual matter.**

First, and foremost, we need to understand depression from God's perspective as a spiritual oppression, therefore, its treatment and prevention must begin and end with God. For instance, consider a depression caused by physical abuse. How can the victim come out of depression? By overcoming evil with good. By forgiving the perpetrator and move on. Humanly impossible, but absolutely possible with God. How about a depression caused by our own bad choices such as substance abuse? Well, to get out of it, we must change our lifestyles, and God is an expert in the life-changing business. What about a depression caused by the lack of life's purpose? God can fix that too by giving us the meaning and purpose in life. Some depressions are purely caused by spiritual attacks from our enemy, the devil. Such a case will go away when and only when we resist the devil and cast out the spirit of depression.

The devil has only one goal: to steal happiness from you, to kill you, and to destroy your life. Jesus said it right in John 10:10: *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*

Our enemy utilizes destructive thoughts and negative feelings to assail us with depression. How do you overcome such destructive thoughts and feelings? By bringing them under God's control. How do we do it? Through our spiritual discipline, trust, and obedience to God's Word. Listen again to the Word of God: *We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ* (2 Corinthians 10:5). I am going to talk more about this topic of negative thoughts later on. Depression is a spiritual matter.

### **Depression is not God's will for us.**

Next, depression is unnatural in the sight of God and is out of God's creation order. In other words, God never wants us to be depressed or stay depressed. He wants us to stay out of depression and He will deliver us from it.

Here's why I say so. In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, God commands us to: *"<sup>16</sup> Rejoice always; <sup>17</sup> pray without ceasing; <sup>18</sup> in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."* Reason with me. God commands us to rejoice always, that means, He doesn't want us to stay in a sullen and gloomy mood that leads into depression. God wants us to pray without ceasing, that means, He doesn't want us to stay in worries which can lead us into depression. God wants us to be thankful even in bad circumstances. That means, in no

circumstance (repeat), does He want us to entertain suicidal thoughts that are often associated with depression. Depression is not God's will for us.

### **Three ways to handle depression:**

There's no other better way than God's ways. God's Word is the best anti-depressant.

Now, I am going to present to you three biblical ways to prevent, to treat, and to overcome depression. Three commandments of Jesus. 3 spiritual pills a day. Every day. They are: Rejoice, Pray, and Thank in all circumstances. These are the best defense against depression.

**Rejoice.** This is something that requires our will and discipline. Learn to rejoice in the Lord even when you don't feel like doing it (the power does come from the Holy Spirit, not from you). Remember you are a child of God. Each time you rejoice, your Heavenly Father is delighted. Learn to rejoice despite circumstances. Learn to rejoice not because all things are well, but because you want to please your Father in Heaven. Rejoice not because you have something to celebrate, but because you want to keep His command. Your habit of rejoicing will keep you from sadness and tearfulness.

E.g. Derek Prince. Depression enshrouded him all the time like a dark gray mist. It also shut him off from family and friends. Over the years, the sense of hopelessness and the negative feelings about himself would assail him saying, "Others can, but you can't. You can't get any farther in your life."

One day he was reading the Bible. Isaiah 61:3. A lightbulb came on. He received that day a *remma* (a God's Word given to us that applies to a specific situation in our lives) for his life-long depression. *The Lord will replace ashes with a garland, mourning with gladness, and the spirit of heaviness (or fainting) with the mantle of praise.* In order to obey God's remma to defeat depression, he started calling upon the name of the Lord. He intentionally started putting a garment of praise on him. He also stopped using negative words and stopped being a grumbler. He started proclaiming the verse out loud. Daily. He started praising and thanking God every day. By doing all of this, he eventually overcame his depression. The evil spirit of heaviness finally departed from his soul, because he didn't give the enemy a chance to depress him.

**Pray** without ceasing: Prayer is the best antidote for anxiety (Philippians 4:6-7). The Psalmist in the midst of depression cries out to God in prayer saying, "*7 Come quickly, LORD, and answer me, for my depression deepens. Don't turn away from me, or I will die*" (Psalm

143:7). In the midst of depression, let your prayer rise to God. Constantly. Without ceasing. God will rescue you from depression.

**Be thankful** in all circumstances: practice every morning to be grateful for ten good things and to be thankful for ten not-so-great things. Being thankful never means that you are so glad that bad things are happening/have happened to you. No, even though you wish that they never had happened, even though you wish them gone away, you still put your unwavering faith and trust in God and in His good will. Being thankful means to entrust your life in His mighty and faithful hands. It also means that you submit yourself to God day in day out as the Psalmist (143:8): *Show me where to walk, for I give myself to you.* Give thanks to God, and give yourself to God each day, and depression will stay away from you.

## Conclusion

For my curiosity, I thought about a sure-fire way of getting into depression and staying there. They are: complain, stay glum, never pray, keep worrying, never be thankful, dwell on negative thoughts, and be selfish always. If you do all of these, you will live in depression forever.

Listen to the Psalmist once again (Psalm 143:8): *Let me **hear of your unfailing love each morning**, for I am trusting you.* If you are depressed, make sure you hear of God's unfailing love each morning from God's Word. Make God's Word #1 priority. Have Christ as your life's purpose. Reinforce your efforts (rejoicing, praying, and being thankful) with God's Word every day. The devil will be thwarted in his scheme to oppress you with depression. Amen.