

Dealing with Depression

While there sometimes can be physiological reasons for depression that are treated by a doctor, many instances of depression are caused by spiritual problems. As we look at Scripture, we will see the example of three individuals who suffered from what we now know as depression. Simply popping a pill might have made them feel better, but it would not have solved the root problems. God always gets at the heart of the matter!

Defining Depression

Many times, depression is mistakenly called an illness by modern medicine¹

- Illness – something that causes the body to not function in a normal way (physically measurable)
- Doctor's base their diagnosis on changes in **behavior** and **thinking**, not in measurable changes to body (See *DSM – IV – Diagnostic Criteria for Major Depressive Episode*)
- The chemical imbalance theory is a **theory** not a **fact**
- People want a reason for their **behavior** that removes personal **responsibility**

The problem with calling it an illness is that we ignore the root problem and focus on feelings. In doing so, nothing ever gets permanently resolved!

Depression – a debilitating mood, feeling, or attitude of hopelessness which becomes a person's reason for not handling the most important issues of life.

Depression has 2 distinct aspects

1. A strong **feeling** orientation
2. The **feelings** become the basis for **actions**, what the person does or does not do

What is the difference between Depression & Discouragement? – **Immobility**

Based on this definition, is depression a sin problem? (see 1 Corinthians 10:13)

Yes, it is a sin problem because we say that we can't help sinning because of the way we feel. This invalidates God's Word and leaves us in a spiritual desperate condition.

Biblical Illustrations of People in Depression

Biblical Illustrations

Cain – Genesis 4:1-15

What was Cain's root problem?

He didn't bring an acceptable offering to God and God wasn't pleased with it.

What would the solution have been to his problem?

Go back and bring a proper offering to God.

How was Cain's depression manifested?

His countenance fell, he became jealous of his brother. He eventually killed Abel

¹ There are a few physical conditions, such as hypothyroidism, that can produce feelings of depression. These are known and measurable conditions via blood tests.

Dealing with Depression

Elijah – 1 Kings 19:1-18

What was Elijah's root problem?

His faith waivered.

What would the solution have been to his problem?

Trust that the Lord would have protected him. He just killed the prophets of Baal.

How was Elijah's depression manifested?

He ran from his problems and complained to God.

Principles from these Examples

1. Sinful habits that go **unbroken** will **bind** us even tighter – Proverbs 5:21, 22
2. The danger of **feeling** oriented living – 1 Corinthians 9:25-27
 - a. Unpleasant feelings become the excuse to **avoid** responsibilities
 - b. Only **talks** about the problem
 - c. Unbiblical check points used to **measure** spiritual condition
 - d. The belief that “My situation is **unique** and **hopeless**”

Defeating Depression

1. Change the way you **think**.
 - a. Know that God has the **answers** – 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:3
 - b. Know that with God there is always **hope** – Philippians 4:13
 - c. Know that with God, problems have **purpose** – Romans 8:28-29
 - d. Focus on **praise** and **thanksgiving** – Ephesians 5:18-20
 - e. Apply your thoughts to finding **Biblical Solutions** – Colossians 3:17
2. Change the way you **act**
 - a. Do what is **right**, no matter how you **feel!** – John 13:17, James 1:25
 - i. If you say you must feel **good** before doing what is right, you have made your feelings into an **idol**.
 - ii. Read Matthew 26:38-39 – Did Christ feel like dieing on the cross? What would have been the result of Him living by His feelings?

No, He didn't feel like dying on the cross but His goal was to be obedient to the Father. If He had not died on the cross, we would all be doomed to eternal destruction
 - b. Establish **accountability** with another Christian – Proverbs 27:17

The goal of changing the way you think and act is NOT to change your feelings, but to glorify God and be more like Christ. Don't focus on feelings. Focus on the Lord! He will take care of the feelings in His own time.

Dealing with Depression

DSM-IV™ Criteria for Major Depressive Episode

The DSM-IV™ Diagnostic Criteria for Major Depressive Episode are as follows:

- A. Five (or more) of the following symptoms have been present during the same 2-week period and represent a change from previous functioning; at least one of the symptoms is either (1) depressed mood or (2) loss of interest or pleasure.

Note: Do not include symptoms that are clearly due to a general medical condition, or mood-incongruent delusions or hallucinations.

1. depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day, as indicated by either subjective report (e.g., feels sad or empty) or observation made by others (e.g., appears tearful). **Note:** In children and adolescents, can be irritable mood.
2. markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all, or almost all, activities most of the day, nearly every day (as indicated by either subjective account or observation made by others).
3. significant weight loss when not dieting or weight gain (e.g., a change of more than 5% of body weight in a month), or decrease or increase in appetite nearly every day. **Note:** In children, consider failure to make expected weight gains.
4. insomnia or hypersomnia nearly every day.
5. psychomotor agitation or retardation nearly every day (observable by others, not merely subjective feelings or restlessness or being slowed down).
6. fatigue or loss of energy nearly every day.
7. feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt (which may be delusional) nearly every day (not merely self-reproach or guilt about being sick).
8. diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness, nearly every day (either subjective account or as observed by others).
9. recurrent thoughts of death (not just fear of dying), recurrent suicidal ideation without a specific plan, or a suicide attempt or a specific plan for committing suicide.