

Christians Get Depressed Too

Session 4: What Causes Depression? (from last week)

Fourth, Sickness

“Just as the curse on this world and our bodies can cause mechanical, chemical, and electrical problems in our hearts, our livers, our pancreas, our eyes, and other body parts, so we can also have mechanical, chemical, and electrical problems in our brains, which may affect the way we think, and even our personalities. Many of us have seen friends or loved ones with brain injuries, bleeds, or tumors undergo distressing personality changes. Nutritionists have demonstrated how certain foods can affect our moods and thoughts, our feeling and thinking. Emotions can also be affected by exhaustion, diabetic hypos, exercise, hormonal changes, gland disorders, high blood pressure, and even sunshine.” – David Murray

“Treating a depressed person with medication is often no different from my giving my eight-year-old daughter one of her many daily injections of insulin for diabetes. I am not merely alleviating symptoms, but addressing the cause—depleted insulin due to dying or dead cells in her pancreas. And if she is lethargic, weepy, or irrational due to low sugar levels, I do not ask her what commandments she has broken... I pity her, weep for her, and thank God for His gracious provision of medicine for her.” – David Murray

Fifth, Sovereignty

Genesis 50:19–20 (ESV) — 19 But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? 20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

2 Corinthians 12:7–9 (ESV) — 7 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

“God will sometimes allow His children to descend into the depths of depression ‘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 further occasions of sin, and for sundry other just and holy ends.’” – (Westminster Confession of Faith 5.5) David Murray

Isaiah 53:7–11 (ESV) — 7 He[Messiah/Jesus] was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? 9 And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. 10 **Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief;** when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

[Job 1:20-22; Acts 4:25-29]

Session 5: What Helps with Depression? - 2022-05-22

four measures that should be considered parts of a 'package' of healing.

CORRECT YOUR LIFESTYLE (1st measure)

"It is vital to lead a balanced lifestyle in order to relieve the 'stretch' that threatens our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being." – David Murray

First, We Need Routine.

"A positive step in recovering from depression is to restore order and discipline in your life. Regular and orderly sleeping, eating, and working patterns will rebuild a sense of usefulness and healthy self-esteem. It is also glorifying to God who is a God of order, not of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33)." – David Murray

Second, We Need Relaxation

"We need to build times of relaxation into our lives. This may involve finding a quiet spot at various times throughout the day to simply pause, calm down, and seek the peace of God in our lives. Jesus recognized and provided for this need in His disciples when He took them 'apart into a desert place, and rest[ed] a while' (Mark 6:31)." – David Murray

Third, We Need Recreation

Fourth, We Need Rest

“A Christian psychologist recently said to me that he starts most depressed people on three pills: ‘Good exercise, good diet, and good sleep!’ That’s great advice...” – David Murray

“As regular sleep patterns enable the body and mind to repair and re-charge, set fixed times for going to bed and getting up, and try to get at least eight hours of sleep. Avoid caffeine, vigorous exercise, phone calls, TV, and Internet use within three hours of sleeping. Get into a routine for going to bed, and try to secure cooperation from others in the house.” – David Murray

Fifth, We Need to Reprioritize

CORRECT YOUR FALSE THOUGHTS (2nd measure in our package of healing)

Asaph examines his thoughts

1. My life situation <i>Time? Place? People? Events?</i>	Asaph’s life situation is not defined in detail in Psalm 77. Asaph calls it ‘the day of my trouble’ (v2), a deliberately general description which fits many life situations.
2. My feelings <i>Sum up your mood in one word if you can. Are you say, worried, guilty, angry, ashamed, irritated, scared, disappointed, humiliated, insecure, anxious? You may want to rate the intensity of your feeling by determining what percentage of the time you feel that way.</i>	Troubled (vv. 2, 3, 4) [100%] Inconsolable (v2) [90%] Overwhelmed (v3) [90%] Cut off from God (v7) [90%] Pessimistic (v7) [95%] Insecure (v2) [80%] Scared (v2) [75%]

<p>3. My Thoughts <i>What am I thinking of at this time? About myself? Others? The present? The future?</i></p>	<p>My past was all great, but the present is all terrible (v5). God has cast me off(v7). The future is bleak and gloomy (V7). God’s promises no longer hold true (v8). God has forgotten how to be gracious (v9). God has shut up His mercies (v9).</p>
<p>4. My Analysis <i>Identify false or unhelpful thinking patterns such as false extremes, false generalization, false filter, etc. (see chapter 3 for others.)</i></p>	<p>The psalmist confesses to wrong and unhelpful thinking when he looks at his thought patterns and says ‘This is my infirmity’ (v10). His ‘infirmity,’ or his distorted thinking, includes false extremes, false generalization, false mind reading (of God), false fortune telling, false feeling-based reasoning.</p>
<p>5. My Behavior <i>Impact of 1-4 on me and my relations with others. Stopped helpful activities? Started unhelpful activities? Reduced activity? Hyper-activity?</i></p>	<p>Crying (v1) Complaining (v3) Cannot sleep (v4) Cannot speak to others (v4) Cannot pray to God (v4)</p>

<p>6. My Reasons <i>Why do I believe the thoughts I listed in step 3 are true? What evidence is there to support my conclusion?</i></p>	<p>The psalmist is not explicit but does imply: This is how I feel. This is how things look to me.</p>
<p>7. My Challenge <i>List evidence and reasons against the thoughts in step 3. Think of what God would point to, to show you that your thoughts are not completely true.</i></p>	<p>God has dealt with His dear people similarly before (v10). God’s powerful providence through out the years (vv. 11-20). God sometimes leads His people through deep waters (v19). God sometimes shepherds His people through the wilderness (v20). God will lead His people to the Promised Land (v20).</p>

<p>8. My Conclusion <i>Come to a balanced conclusion, which will also be truthful and helpful.</i></p>	<p>Although I feel cast off and forgotten by God, He is redeeming me and leading me through the wilderness into the Promised Land. Unlike God’s Word and works, my feelings are infirm—inaccurate and unreliable.</p>
<p>9. My New Feelings <i>Copy some or all of the feelings from step 2 and rate them again.</i></p>	<p>Asaph is not explicit, but from his words in verses 13-20 we may reasonably infer that Asaph now feels a degree of confidence, optimism, safety, and comfort. Troubled [30%] Inconsolable [20%] Overwhelmed [15%] Cut off from God [30%]</p>
<p>10. My Plan <i>How will I put the balanced conclusion into practice?</i></p>	<p>I will think more about God than myself. I will think more about God’s deeds in the past. I will believe God’s unchanging power and grace. I will trust even when in the deep waters or in the wilderness.</p>

CORRECT YOUR BRAIN CHEMISTRY (3rd measure)

“If assessing your feelings and thoughts (steps 2 and 3) does not work or you can’t even get started, then I would suggest that you seek out trained medical personnel for diagnosis and possibly prescription of appropriate medication. And please do not wait until things have gotten so bad that you ‘crash’ to a halt. The farther you fall, the longer it will take to return. Even a low dose of anti-depressant is sometimes enough just to begin to restore depleted brain chemicals and pick up your mood sufficiently to enable you to begin to take the steps necessary to correct your lifestyle and thoughts. However, more serious depressions sometimes require medication for two to five years in order to permanently restore the brain’s chemistry and processes.”

CORRECT YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE (4th and final measure in the package of healing)

First, Correct the spiritual consequences

Here are some practical things you can do to help address the spiritual consequences of depression.

1. Accept that being depressed is not necessarily a sin and indeed is compatible with Christianity. Many Bible characters and many of the greatest Christians passed through times of depression.
2. Try to understand that your loss of spiritual feelings is not the cause of your depression, but rather the depression has caused a general loss of feeling in all parts of your life, your spiritual life included.
3. Patiently wait for the corrections in your lifestyle thinking, or brain chemistry to have an effect on your feelings as a whole and your spiritual life will pick up at the same time also.
4. Have a set time for reading your Bible and praying. Depressed Christians may either give up reading and praying, or they may try to read and pray excessively in order to try and bring back their spiritual feelings. Both approaches are unhelpful. Instead, set aside a regular time each day to read and pray. If concentration is a problem, keep things short (5-10 minutes) until you feel better.
5. Bring objective truth to mind (for example, the doctrine of justification or the atonement), especially positive verses that set forth God's love, mercy, and grace for sinners (for example, Rom. 8:1; 8:38-39; 1 John 1:9; 1 John 4:9-10). You may want to write out a verse and carry it around with you. When negative thoughts overwhelm you, bring out the verse and meditate on it.
6. When you pray, tell God exactly how you feel. Be totally honest. Ask God to help you with your doubts and fears and to restore to you're the joy of your salvation. Thank Him for loving you and being with you even though you do not feel His love or presence. Praying for others who suffer can also help to turn your thoughts away from yourself for a time.
7. Keep going to church and seek out the fellowship of one or two sympathetic Christians you can confide in, and ask them to pray with you and for you. Be careful about who you talk to . Sadly, some Christians cannot keep confidences, and others will have little understanding of or sympathy for your condition.
8. Remember God loves you as you are, not as you would like to be.

Second, Correct the spiritual causes

“If, having examined your life, you find that there is a sin that you are deliberately and stubbornly persisting in or other sins that you have never really repented of, it is time to fall on your knees and seek God’s pardon for the sin and God’s power over the sin. See Psalm 32 and Psalm 51 for examples of how to do this.” – David Murray

1. Ask someone to help you and keep you accountable.
2. Focus on one problem at a time.
3. Decide on the best solution.
4. Write out a step-by-step plan.
5. Set realistic short-term and long-term targets.
6. Review to correct and also to encourage.
7. Above all, pray for God’s help and His blessing on the steps as you go.

Thought Investigation Questionnaire

<p>1. My life situation <i>Time? Place? People? Events?</i></p>	
<p>2. My feelings <i>Sum up your mood in one word if you can. Are you say, worried, guilty, angry, ashamed, irritated, scared, disappointed, humiliated, insecure, anxious? You may want to rate the intensity of your feeling by determining what percentage of the time you feel that way.</i></p>	
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<p>8. My Conclusion <i>Come to a balanced conclusion, which will also be truthful and helpful.</i></p>	
<p>9. My New Feelings <i>Copy some or all of the feelings from step 2 and rate them again.</i></p>	
<p>10. My Plan <i>How will I put the balanced conclusion into practice?</i></p>	