

DEFEATING DEPRESSION

A **MANNAHOUSE** RESOURCE



INTRODUCTION

We've all wrestled with depression. Everyone experiences their "dark days" and "blue moods." Each of us have felt "down" at various points in our lives.

But **depression is not inevitable. It can be avoided**, and it can be overcome. Depression is a difficult problem, but God can provide the necessary answers. In this booklet, we will examine this subject and consider some scriptural keys for finding victory over our depression.

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WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Though all of us have a vague understanding of what depression is, most of us would have some difficulty in defining it.

Simply stated, it is a feeling of having been pressed low, or “depressed,” in our spirits. It is a condition of feeling dejection and heaviness in our heart. **It has been described as feeling down, feeling blue, or feeling disheartened.** It is often a state of desperation which gives a person the feeling of hopelessness. It is a close relative of despair, despondency, and discouragement.

WHO SUFFERS FROM DEPRESSION?

Depression is so common and widespread that **everyone experiences it in some form** at some point in their life. It cuts across every conceivable boundary.

No one is exempt - no one is immune. Depression afflicts the young and old, men and women, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, healthy and unhealthy, godly and ungodly.

It is considered to be the most common mental and emotional problem affecting mankind. In fact, it is claimed that more human suffering has resulted from depression than any other single disease!

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Though the word “depression” is not mentioned in the Bible, the scriptures contain many references to this common problem.

The Bible points to many incidents of depression in the lives of godly men. As we have stated, it is not a problem which just affects the ungodly.

It appears that **Job, Moses, David, Elijah, Jonah, Peter, Paul, and the entire nation of Israel suffered from depression.** Jeremiah even expressed his deep depression in a book entitled Lamentations.

[See Job 3; Numbers 11:10-15; Psalms 42, 43; I Kings 19:4; Jonah 4:1-3; Matthew 26:75; II Corinthians 1:8; Exodus 6:9]

WHAT ARE SOME GODLY EXAMPLES?

- **MOSES was overwhelmed** with depression in the wilderness (Numbers 11:10-15).
- **JOB was consumed with a sense of despondency** because of his problems (Job 3).
- **DAVID cried out**, “*Why are you cast down, O my soul?*” (Psalms 43:5).
- **PETER experienced deep depression** after denying the Lord (Matthew 26:75).
- **PAUL stated that he “despaired even of life”** because of the intense pressures he experienced (II Cor. 1:8).

WHAT CAUSES DEPRESSION?

Many factors contribute to depression. We will consider some of the most important causes on the following pages.

The most common cause of depression is stress. Life is filled with pressing difficulties, delays, disappointments, setbacks, and tragedies. **If we do not deal with the problems of life properly, they can gradually wear us down, weaken us, and create a growing sense of depression.**

Often, these pressures are beyond our control. The loss of a job, health, an opportunity, possessions, or a loved one can all contribute to a state of depression.

When it appears that we have no real control over the problems we experience, depression and discouragement are often the result.

Sometimes it seems we have no say concerning the events which crowd into our lives. Occasionally, we feel like we've lost control and become a helpless victim of circumstances. At times like this, we may feel like we've reached a dead-end with no way out.

When we feel like we are unable to do anything to change our situation, a sense of hopelessness and frustration sets in.

When we encounter circumstances over which we have no control, we may assume that our actions are useless, no matter how hard we try. When it seems that we've run out of answers for our problems, we begin to sink beneath the waves of depression.

NEGATIVE THINKING

Depression can usually be traced to negative thinking. Negativity is so strongly rooted in the thought life of some people that it adversely affects every area of their life.

Our thinking patterns have a great influence upon our emotions, our attitudes, and our will. Depression and discouragement are often a result of wrong thinking. Depressed people see only the dark side of life. They usually have a pessimistic outlook. Life to them is an endless succession of burdens, obstacles, and disappointments. They have convinced themselves that life is hopeless. Having painted a picture of despair in their own minds, they reinforce their feelings of despondency.

Many who suffer from depression also have a negative view of themselves. They have little or no self-esteem. They often feel deficient, inadequate, and useless. They constantly minister self-doubt and criticism to themselves. This negative feeling of failure inevitably breeds self-pity and a deep sense of depression.

Negative thinking not only affects the way we think about ourselves, but it also causes us to view the future pessimistically. We may think that all the future holds is continuing failure, hardship, and frustration.

This common tendency to think negatively is an extremely destructive pattern. **Negative thinking only encourages despair and self-pity.** It is a mental rut which many people have fallen into. **It is a habit which must be broken.**

SIN AND GUILT

A person can experience depression because of unresolved sin in his life. He may become despondent because of guilt from a particular sin which has not been properly dealt with.

Depression is often the result of ignoring sin or failing to deal with it promptly. Occasionally, we may try to conceal sin rather than face up to it honestly. When we try to cover up sin, it inevitably takes its toll. A spirit of heaviness and condemnation can develop as a consequence of sin which has been allowed to stubbornly remain in our life.

Often the sin of self-pity is a common cause of depression. Pent up resentment, lingering anger, unforgiveness, a critical spirit, or a tendency to murmur and complain can all be contributing factors to depression.

PRESSURES OF RESPONSIBILITY

Sometimes the trials, deadlines, and responsibilities that we face can create pressures which contribute to depression.

Occasionally, we all fall short. At times, we don't quite measure up. We fail to meet deadlines, achieve goals, or fulfill expectations.

The many demands of life can overwhelm us and produce depression and discouragement.

When facing the responsibilities of entering Canaan land, the Israelites were overwhelmed by the challenge and sank into discouragement (Numbers 13, 14). When we sometimes face our own formidable giants of responsibility, we can also sink into depression.

PHYSICAL FACTORS

Physical factors can, and often do, contribute to depression. No matter how good our philosophy, no matter how well adjusted we are, and no matter how ideal our environment may be, **if we don't take care of ourselves properly we can pay the price in depression.** When we allow our physical health to run down, we begin to prepare ourselves for possible depression.

Sometimes we suffer depression not because of sin, stress, or negative thinking, but simply because we have neglected our bodies. **Physical health contributes to mental and emotional well-being.** A healthy body is less susceptible to mental and physical illness. A lack of sleep, improper diet, or a lack of exercise can all contribute to depression.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF DEPRESSION?

There are not only many causes of depression, but depression produces many symptoms and manifests itself in a variety of ways, as well.

These can include sadness, pessimism, fear, apathy, weariness, fatigue, a loss of energy, a lack of enthusiasm, an inability to make decisions, a desire to withdraw from life, self-criticism, a sense of worthlessness, helplessness, a loss of interest in work, sex, and normal activities, a difficulty in concentrating, insomnia, and a loss of appetite.

As we can see, **depression has many side effects, all of which can be very destructive.**

WHAT IS THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM?

The root problem is sin. Depression is not always sin, but our failure to deal with the problem of sin is. *“To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin”* (James 4:17).

Though we may not always be responsible for the circumstances which contribute to depression and discouragement, we are responsible for handling the problem in God’s way. We must recognize that we are not helpless, but responsible and accountable to God.

When we don’t seek God for answers, we assume the burden ourselves and inevitably fail. Depression is often the result. **The first step to victory is in focusing upon Christ, rather than ourselves.** This requires confessing our faults to God, and asking Him for grace and guidance.

IS THERE A SOLUTION?

Yes! One of the greatest lies of Satan is that there is no hope for those suffering depression. This is a lie because God has the answers.

Even though our circumstances may look dreary, we don't have to give in to depression. Many times a depressed person is overcome by a sense of hopelessness, but **God understands our pain and offers compassion.** He is here to help if we will not shut Him out of our lives.

Christians must recognize that there are no hopeless situations in Christ. **People allow themselves to become hopeless because they haven't looked to Jesus.** Our situation doesn't have to look bleak if we will bring Christ into the picture.

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO DEPRESSION?

In God's way - not ours. Many Christians sink into a pit of despondency simply because they have not responded to their problems scripturally.

King David probably suffered from depression more than any other Bible character. He experienced great depths of prolonged depression, yet he learned some vital lessons for dealing with this problem. The Psalms are filled with examples of his suffering:

"Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me?" (Psalms 42:5; see also Psalms 42, 43, 69, 88, and 102).

Though he had many bouts with depression, David discovered some important keys for finding victory. We will examine the seven keys to overcoming depression on the following pages.

1. TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION

One of the most important things we can do is to deal with the problem of depression immediately.

Depression must be challenged promptly. If you allow it to remain, it will spread like a cancer and corrupt every area of your life. A common tendency is to brood over our problems and quietly nurse our depression simply because we do nothing about it — instead we dwell upon self-pity and reinforce our despondency.

David recognized this important first step and responded by forcefully challenging himself and his depression: “*Why are you cast down, O my soul? **Hope in God!***” (Psalms 43:5). Take action now!

2. WE MUST DISCIPLINE OUR THOUGHTS

“Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (II Cor. 10:5). **Christians must discipline their negative thoughts by submitting them to the Lordship of Christ.** If we don’t, they can become very destructive.

This involves submitting our thoughts to the reality of God’s Word. **Christians must guard their thought life.** We must not yield to corrupt thinking or indulge in negative confessions. **The Word exhorts us to “meditate on” whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of a good report** (Phil. 4:8).

We must look at our life, our situations, and our future from God’s point of view. We need to fix our thoughts obediently upon the reality of God’s Word, meditate upon the scriptures, and cleanse our minds with the cleansing water of God’s Word.

3. HOPE IN THE LORD

David challenged his soul to **"HOPE IN GOD!"** (Psalms 42:5). We must likewise place our hope firmly in Christ.

In 1 Peter 1:3 we see that God has called us to a *"living hope."* Our hope is not dead but alive because it is fixed upon a living God. It is a hope that is never disappointed because of God's loving commitment to us. **When we get our attention off of our problems and upon the power of God, we have access to confidence, courage, and strength.** David affirmed this in Psalms 31:24; *"Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you who hope in the Lord."*

4. STAND ON THE PROMISES OF GOD

Christians must stand upon the reality of God's Word. We must recognize that "ALL THINGS" are working together for our good. When we receive this truth, we can accept our circumstances realizing that God has not forsaken us in them. There are no hopeless situations in Christ because God is in the midst of our circumstances. This is the absolute guarantee of God's Word!

When we trust in the reality of God's Word, we have great hope. **The scriptures contain all of the answers to life's problems.** They sustain us and encourage us in every way. The counsel of scripture can minister genuine hope in spite of our circumstances. David confirmed this when he wrote:

"My soul faints for Your salvation, but I hope in Your word"
(Psalms 119:81).

5. REJOICE IN THE LORD

One of the most liberating keys to victory is found in Philippians 4:4
"REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS. AGAIN I WILL SAY, REJOICE!"

This is the Christian's way to escape depression. **The answer is not in running from our circumstances or withdrawing from life, but in rising above them through praise.** We don't rejoice just when everything is going smoothly. **Paul said we are to rejoice always.** He also said "*Rejoice evermore... in everything give thanks*" (1 Thess. 5:16, 18, KJV). We don't rejoice because we feel like it, but as an act of obedient faith, realizing that "in the Lord" we have grounds for confidence and rejoicing. **We know that the Lord is bigger than our problems,** and is working everything for our eventual good!

6. CONFESS OUR FAULTS TO THE LORD

“IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST TO FORGIVE US OUR SINS AND TO CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.” - 1 John 1:9

Sin can be both a cause of depression and a product of depression. **Often, when we have unresolved sin in our life, it produces guilt and self-condemnation, which lead to despair.** When we harbor bitterness, resentment, anger, ill-will, jealousy, or any other sin in our hearts, it affects us negatively. Often, we fall into despair because of the sin of self-pity, murmuring, and complaining. Sin defiles our conscience and perverts our walk. If we have been concealing our sin or failing to deal with it promptly, we need to confess our sin to the Lord and seek His cleansing power. Often, when the weight of sin is removed from our shoulders, we are released from the burden of depression.

7. WE MUST WATCH OUR HEALTH

As we have seen, **physical factors can play an important role in depression.** Poor health habits contribute to depression.

We not only have a responsibility to care for ourselves spiritually, but physically as well, because our bodies belong to the Lord (I Cor. 6:19). **When we abuse or neglect the temple of God (our body), depression is often the consequence.**

We can help prevent depression if we will give proper consideration to the simple rules of good health.

SUMMARY

"And David was greatly distressed... BUT DAVID ENCOURAGED HIMSELF IN THE LORD HIS GOD" (I Samuel 30:6, KJV).

It is very helpful to have others encourage us during our times of depression. But David encouraged himself. **The important thing to realize is that he didn't encourage himself in his circumstances, but "IN THE LORD."** Often our circumstances give us little encouragement, but in Christ we have access to great encouragement. David learned this through much experience. In doing so, he set an example for us. We've already reviewed the keys for doing this:

1. Take immediate action
2. Discipline our thoughts
3. Hope in the Lord
4. Trust in His Word
5. Rejoice in the Lord
6. Confess our sins
7. Take care of our health

CONCLUSION

We have briefly examined this difficult subject, and have offered some scriptural guidelines for dealing with it. Depression is a problem, but it is not an impossible barrier in our lives. It is not a permanent condition. It is one which will pass away with God's assistance. **We can usually overcome depression if we will simply follow God's prescription for the problem.**

However, we recognize that depression can be a complicated condition, difficult to define, and hard to treat. If this counseling booklet has not adequately answered this problem, **we encourage you to seek further counsel from your pastor.**

For a brief overview of the main points of this booklet, please re-read the boldly printed words on each page.



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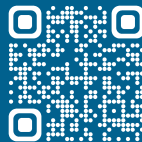
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