

What is Depression and How To Live Without it

Depression is the nation's number one emotional illness and is on the increase. 50,000 to 70,000 people commit suicide each year, and this is only a small per cent of those who attempt. 125,000 Americans are hospitalized annually because of depression and another 200,000 or more are treated by psychiatrists.

Dr. Nathan Kline of New York's Rockland State Hospital estimates as high as 4 to 8 million annually are admitted because of unrecognized cases of depression.

Everyone becomes depressed at some point in their life. Not, of course, the despairing depression, but depression of one kind or another. Most are "*light stages*" referred to as "*the blues*", etc.

There is a great difference between unhappiness and mental illness, but depression in any form dulls the sharpness of the keen edge of life.

Depression is not caused by circumstances, possession or position in life, but, rather, it is related to thinking patterns in our life.

Happiness depends more on our attitude than on circumstances. Whenever a person is unhappy there is a tendency to feel depressed.

To live is to experience varying degrees of unhappiness. We are all bound to, on occasions, feel depressed. The question is, "*Why do some people feel more frequently depressed than others?*" *What is the real cause of depression?*

Many try to relieve themselves of any responsibility by suggesting depression is like a physical illness. To do so means you will not recover. God does hold us responsible, however, God, also, gives a cure!

We can have a most radiant joy and contentment even in the most unhappy circumstances, or, we can take the most favorable circumstances and turn them into beds of depression. ***It's up to us!***

There are three stages of depression. It commences with **(1)** Discouragement, and **(2)** grows into Despondency, and (*unless the thought patter is changed*), will result in **(3)** Despair.

How to recognize coming depression:

- (1)** Marked change in the sleep pattern
- (2)** Apathy - the "*blahs*"
- (3)** Loss of appetite
- (4)** Loss of sex drive
- (5)** Unkempt appearance
- (6)** Many physical ailments - real and imagined

Depression begins in the mind and affects our emotions:

- (1) Loss of affection - Withdraw from others
- (2) Sadness - Life becomes joyless
- (3) A tendency to cry - "*the weeps*"
- (4) Hostility - a component of anger
- (5) Irritability
- (6) Anxiety, fear, worry
- (7) Hopelessness - Feeling trapped by circumstances

We need to understand the problem and take deliberate steps to avoid becoming a victim of depression.

The more we know about our nature . . . [*Understand what God says about our nature in His Word*] . . . the better able we are to cope with our tendencies.

What causes depression?

- (1) Disappointment
- (2) Lack of Self-esteem
- (3) Unfair comparisons
- (4) Ambivalence - "*The sense of being trapped.*
- *Unable to remedy an intolerable situation.*"
- (5) Sickness - When we are ill, or tolerance level is lowered
- (6) Biological malfunction - Nutrition is important!
- (7) Rejection - There is a tremendous "*Love-need*" in every human being.
If this is unfulfilled, depression becomes an *escape hatch*.
- (8) Inadequate goals. Not having worthwhile goals causes one to cease to struggle and depression sets in

Depression does not just happen. there is a cause. But these causes are merely covering over the real problem. They are, when we get down to it, only excuses.

The cure will be dealt with later

The real problem is a void in our life, which only God can fill. Our self-will, rebellion and sin has separated us from God, creating this "*God-void*." We can never know lasting peace and happiness until we have been "*born-again*."

Many Christians, while born-again, still have fear, guilt, frustration, futility, confusion and depression. **Why?**

You X Christ = Salvation

You X Christ X Walking in the Holy Spirit = Abundant Living!

There are three popular attempts to cure depression today;

- (1) Anti-depressant drugs

This does nothing to remedy the difficulty and gives a false sense that the

problem is solved. Drugs do not offer an ideal solution and can become addictive, with side effects that are distressing.

(2) Electrotherapy

Electro shock therapy cures only the symptoms, not the problem that caused them. Many feel shock electro shock therapy is on the way out.

(3) Psychotherapy

A depressed patient is able to speak freely to a counselor. A high percentage of depression is kindled by rejection, and a warm, empathetic counselor can frequently provide an adequate substitute. Counseling can provide a very meaningful crutch for the depressed person to lean upon.

The drawbacks are: It is painstakingly long, exceptionally expensive and serves only as a sounding-board.

Most psychologists are purposely "*non-directive*," assuming that the solution lies deep within the patient and his task is simply to help draw it forth.

However, unless the patient knows Christ Jesus as his personal Savior, the answer does not lie within himself.

In this case, an "*amoral*" individual is counselling one who has serious guilt problems that caused his depression. Moral values are, often, ridiculed, even attacked, and the patient is often encouraged to pursue a loose pattern of living in order to rid himself of his guilt.

This new style of immoral behavior may bring a period of exhilaration, but it is short lived, followed by an overwhelming consciousness of guilt, which far exceeds the original problem.

WHAT IS THE TRUE ANSWER ?

Man is intensely a "*spiritual*" being, yet spiritual therapy is commonly neglected by secular doctors, psychiatrists and counselors today. Little or no consideration is given to the highly significant "*spiritual being*." Unless therapy includes a remedy for his *spiritual nature*, any result will be minimal and temporary.

The depressed person must be aided *externally*. There must be something (or Some- one) outside the individual to support and sustain him.

What makes "*spiritual therapy*" so forceful is that it acknowledges this need for **EXTERNAL POWER!**

Scripture declares man to be ***body, soul and spirit***.

(1) Man is body - Physical.

The physical is the least important, because unless the other areas function properly, the body will malfunction.

(2) Man is Soul - Mind, will and emotion

"None of These Diseases," states that, "75 per cent to 80 per cent of all physical ailments are provoked by emotional disturbances."

EMOTIONS FLOW FROM THE THINKING PATTERNS OF OUR MIND

Our minds are confronted with some problem, and, if our "*thinking pattern*" is to worry, and that worrying persists over a long period of time, it can bring a physical breakdown or sickness.

THE MIND CONTROLS THE EMOTION - AND EMOTIONS CONTROL THE BODY

We are what we think! Whatever we put into our mind will cause response in our emotional center - and emotions activates physical response. And, since feelings are caused by the mind, then, if an abiding cure is ever to be found, "*depression*" must be initiated by a renewed mental thought pattern.

God's Word tells us "*The mind is the problem.*" The real problem is, "*How do I control an uncontrollable mind?*" If man denies his "*spiritual nature*" . . . which is what many modern psychiatrists do . . . he makes himself a slave to his own mental weakness.

A professional boxer entering the ring with a patch over one eye and one arm tied behind him, illustrates the dilemma man finds himself in when he attempts to fight depression without his spiritual nature. He is blind to the tremendous power available to him to overcome depression, fear and any other conflicts. It is because of this "*spiritual*" vacuum in his life, he is on a treadmill of restless activity and on a constant quest for identity and peace.

God gave a *spiritual* dimension to man's being in order to stabilize and motivate his mind, heart (*emotions*) and body. To ignore this mighty power is to put our self in a position of functioning on 6 cylinders when your motor has 8 cylinders. We don't need better spark plugs on the 6 cylinders. We need full restoration of the inoperative cylinders!

The unique characteristic which distinguishes man from the animal kingdom is his "*will*." It is with man's will that he can ignore and reject God, or he can by his *will* accept and cooperate with Him. Man, himself, must make that decision, however, he must remember that his happiness, or unhappiness, is dependent upon that choice.

In the center of our *spiritual nature* is the ***Throne of our will.*** God made every man the **Master of his own fate, the Captain of his own soul.** Even those who have accepted Jesus into their life can still allow their "*Ego*" to rule on the throne of their heart, and by their "*will*," make their own decisions, independent of God. However, those who do this are destined to a life of frustration and futility.

Life is made up of a myriad of decisions and our happiness depends upon these decisions. We can live life self-sufficient, independent of God. We can let "ego" rule supreme on the throne of our *will*. However, if we do, we will experience varying degrees of frustration, confusion, guilt and fear. **This is the primary cause of depression!**

Sometimes it is difficult for a minister to say things that must be said.. He often feels much like a surgeon must feel as he is preparing for an operation upon a patient. He knows there is no way to remove the tumor without pain. The same is true *spiritually*. The moment one start to remove the "*tumor*," there is pain, and the person, generally, resents it. We would rather receive sympathy, pills or pious platitudes - or place the responsibility somewhere else.

Here comes the Surgeon's knife!

DEPRESSION IS A RESULT OF SELF-PITY

When depression is stripped of all its veneer of excuses, "*self-pity*" stands naked and exposed as the real culprit!

Self-pity is a habit! The more we indulge in it, the easier it becomes to drift into this attitude whenever disagreeable circumstances happen. The more we follow this habit, the more we establish a pattern and it becomes ingrained in our behavior.

BUT WE ARE NOT A SLAVE TO HABITS! HABITS CAN BE BROKEN!

Self-pity is a sin!

Philippians 2:14 states, "*Do everything without complaining or arguing.*"

It is easy to justify ourselves by blaming insults, injuries, rejection or the tragedies of our life. However, to receive a permanent healing from depression, we must be willing to face "*self-pity*" as a sin that will destroy us. Unless we do, we will never break its evil control over us. Self-pity will keep us from drawing on the power of God's Holy Spirit in our time of need. Self-pity quenches the Holy Spirit. We must confess it and ask God for victory over it!

We do not have to be a slave to self-pity. When we receive Jesus Christ, we inherit a "*new dimension*" of power, created within us, to provide us victory over our old, selfish life.

I am not speaking of "*self-discipline*" or "*mental self-control*," because we lack the strength of character to accomplish this. However, when we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior, He enters the "*natural man*" and provides supernatural power through the Holy Spirit.

Let's go a little deeper with the surgeon's knife:

SELF-PITY IS A RESULT OF ANGER!

Even though, we may not always recognize the cause of the resentment, it does not eliminate the fact of its existence. If we only deal with just the organic, or psychological, aspects

of the problem, we are dealing with only the symptoms. And, as we have seen, these are only the result of our reaction to insult, disappointment or rejection.

**ALL DEPRESSION, IN ITS DEVELOPMENT,
INCLUDES A COMPONENT OF ANGER!**

This anger may be visible or invisible, conscious or unconscious, but it is there!

The two most powerful human emotions are love and anger. Love is a health-producing emotion, while anger is a health-destroying emotion. This concept takes on a significant indication when we realize that God's Word commands us to (1) "*Love everyone,*" and (2) "*Be thankful for everything.*"

Anger is man's "*natural*" defense mechanism against insult, injury or rejection. Love . . . [as we will see later in this study] . . . is accepting these things as God's way to mature us into Christ-likeness.

Anger is harmful - emotionally, physically and spiritually. Depression is the result of our inability to cope with these conflicts.

Ephesians 4:30-32 state, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

This passage shows us the tragic emotional and physical result of bitterness, wrath, clamor, malice and resentment. God's Word says, "*This is how we grieve the Holy Spirit.*" It takes place in our heart because of **ANGER!**

Anger is the sin that besets more Christians and causes more spiritual defeat than any other sin. It severely limits God's use of our lives. Anger is a sin! We must confess it to God and ask Him for victory over it, then thank Him for His grace and power to enable us to overcome it.

Let's delve still deeper with the surgeon's knife,

ANGER IS THE RESULT OF LIVING BY "*TEMPORAL VALUES*"

The key to Christian living is found in Luke 9:23, where Jesus states, "*If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself. . .*" To "*deny*" oneself means to **give up all rights.**

The Greek word which is translated as "*meek*" in our English Bibles, has the meaning of one who has yielded up all of his personal right. It comes from the word meaning "*to domesticate,*" as when the strength and power of an animal which has run wild and done exactly what it wanted to do, has now been domesticated. Instead of doing what he wants to do, all of his energy and vitality is now under the rule of a new master.

The principles of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount are built upon this premise . . . *yielding up our personal rights* and placing ourselves under the rule of a new Master!

When we become angry or resentful, it is because some "*personal right*" has been infringed upon.

**Anger is demanding our rights.
Meekness is yielding our rights.**

If a solution to our problem is to ever come, we must find the Scriptural response to our "*personal rights*." How is this done?

- (1) Identify the "*personal right*" which is involved.
- (2) Transfer these right to God. God knows our needs and, when we are willing to give up our personal rights, He will give them back as "*privileges*," Trust God!

Philippians 2:5 teaches, "*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.*"

Anger is an alarm system, like a headache, which tells us something else is wrong. The headache, in self, is not the problem. The real problem is something else within the body. Anger is the signal which tells us that some "*personal right*," which we thought we had given all of our "*rights*" to God, was missed. It's still there, we still seek to possess it.

- (3) Thank God - whatever the outcome might be!

1 Thessalonians 5:18 states, "*Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*"

Romans 8:28 teaches, "*We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.*"

God can use everything in our life for our good! He is interested in every facet of our life and is more willing than we are to give us victory in our life.

1 Corinthians 10:13 teaches, "*No temptation . . . [or trial] . . . has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear . . . [it will never be so overwhelming that you will break under it] . . . But when you are tempted . . . [or pass through a trial] . . . He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*"

Scripture teaches us that *every trial is filtered first by my Heavenly Father*. Since this is so, why is it that we are to prone to demand immediate deliverance and to by-pass every affliction?

James 1:2-3 teaches, "*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.*"

After our "*personal rights*" are yielded to God:

- (1) Expect God to test His rights. He will allow situations to develop to test these rights. If we resent it when a right is withheld, we can be sure our "*yielding*" is not complete.
- (2) Learn to develop inward qualities through the loss of rights.

The deep inward feelings which result when rights are withheld, provide motivation to personally identify with Scripture. God will give corresponding insight into His Word.

The way we face crises and trials of life, determines the state of our spiritual development.

God does not want us to give up our "*rights*" because He **needs** them, but because He cannot work in our life until we do. He wants to show Himself strong in behalf of those who will completely trust Him.

THE REMEDY FOR DEPRESSION!

(1) Conversion

A definite "*Born-again*" experience with Jesus Christ is absolutely necessary. It takes this **EXTERNAL** power to overcome depression permanently.

(2) Completely committed to the will of God

Conversion is no guarantee that you will never be depressed. You can nullify the power of God by violating certain Scriptural principles.

Romans 12:1-2 state, "*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed **by the renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will.*"

A "*Self-willed*" Christian is a "*Carnal*" Christian and is vulnerable to a host of conflicts.

(3) Know the principles of God and live by them

Note that we are transformed by the "*renewing of our minds*," therefore we must renew our minds by a regular reading diet of God's Word.

(4) Increase our faith

Romans 14:23 teaches, ". . . *everything that does not come from faith is sin.*"

When we are commended "*to grow in faith*," it does not mean that we must understand all about the Bible, but, rather, it means to personally apply what we do read and understand.

Faith will grow "*like a seed.*" Faith is making ourselves available to God to let Him work in our lives.

(5) Walk in the Spirit

Ephesians 5:16-21 teaches, "*Making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, **be filled with the Spirit.** Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*"

Note, the result of being filled with the Spirit is:

"*Having melody in your heart,*" - (verse 19)

"*a thanksgiving attitude, no matter what happens,*" - (verse 20), and

"*a submissive spirit,*" - (verse 21).

It will work! The more we surrender to our new nature in Christ Jesus, the more we will grow and it will produce:

(A) A melody in our heart

(B) A thanksgiving attitude, and

(C) A submissiveness to God and others.

Let's deal with another area! Our *conscious* mind says, "*I will not indulge in self-pity when I am rejected, injured or insulted,*" however, my *subconscious* mind . . . (because of the force of habit) . . . **RETORTS**, "*Everybody treats me like dirt, I am getting a raw deal.*" Regardless of the vitality of my "*will-power,*" I continue to indulge in self-pity and am led down the path to depression. What do I do?

In 2 Corinthians 10:5 God says, "*Cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*"

"*Imaginations*" are the most powerful factors of the mind! If we maintain a negative picture in our imagination, it will ultimately break down our will and lead us to self-pity and depression.

God has given us this tool "*imagination*" to use for Him. With it we can picture Christ and make Him real to us. With it we can discern His presence and the awareness of His reality. He says, "*That Christ may **dwell in your hearts** by faith.*"

**THROUGH THIS FASCINATING DEVICE,
THE IMAGINATION,
WE CAN BE AWARE OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE,
AND LIVE VICTORIOUSLY FOR HIM**

Our imagination can be harmful or helpful! We saw that our actions are influenced by our

emotions (our heart); our emotions are influenced by our mind; and our mind is influenced by our will. Our **WILL** determines what we put into our mind. Our **WILL** activates our feelings and ultimately our conduct.

While our **WILL** determines what material we will put into our mind, it does not govern our attitude or fully regulate our mind. The **sub**-conscious mind cannot be controlled by our will directly, but, rather, it is influenced through the imagination! The "*governor*" of our subconscious mind is the imagination.

Most people employ destructive imagination. They picture themselves as ineffective, clumsy, fearful or rejected. They dwell upon the negative! **THIS IS THE PICTURE WHICH GOVERNS THEIR SELF-IMAGE!**

God gave the "*imagination*" for creative use, therefore, "*casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*"

Whatever we hang on the wall of our imagination, will govern our activities. "*As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he*" (Proverbs 23:7). What we hang on the walls of our imagination determines how we feel, and will result in how we act.

God calls us to fully control our thought life.

Philippians 4:8, states, "*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - **think** about such things.*"

God has given us a **WILL** in order to control our thoughts, and thereby, control our mind - and result in controlling our feelings and our actions. How? We accomplish this by hanging beneficial images on the walls of our imagination.

This is the only method which deals with the real problem, not just the symptoms. Medication, counseling, electric-shock may provide minimal results, however, unless we change the "*image*" we have of our self in our **IMAGINATION**, there will be no real life-long cure over depression.

If we create a negative, self-pitying picture of ourselves in our imagination, it will inevitably make us feel depressed. However, by creating a fresh, new image, we will modify our feelings and our behavior.

Only God knows the function of the human mind and so He inspired man to write the Bible to meet our needs. God tells us to reject negative, undesirable things.

Some would tell us to, "*Talk out all your frustrations. Recall all the past experiences, verbalize them, in order to eliminate of them.*" However, God tells us, "*Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead . . . press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called us heavenward in Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 4:13-14).

God says, "*Don't think about inadequacies and failing (real or imagines). Don't indulge in self-pity because you are rejected or insulted, but be transformed by the **renewing** of your mind.*"

As the mind goes, so goes the behavior. A transformed conduct only follows in the wake of a *renewed* mind. Romans 8:6, states, "*The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.*"

The Holy Spirit will enable us to imagine creative thinking that will produce healthy emotions.

What to try the power of suggestion? Picture a steak! Doesn't the saliva glands cause your mouth to water? Think about it long enough and you can literally taste it.

Depression can be fashioned in the same way. Anticipate it and we won't be disappointed. Our mental attitude is important! What we hang on the wall of our imagination will influence our life.

HOW CAN I INFLUENCE MY SUBCONSCIOUS MIND?

(1) Decide to direct our imagination positively to the glory of God.

(2) Project worthy goals.

We are sons of God with abundant power at our disposal.

The mind cannot function without a vision, because it is a "*goal-oriented*" mechanism and must be pursuing some explicit end.

We need to give our mind worthwhile and challenging goals. They will gradually diffuse self-defeating, negative and pessimistic goals. These worthwhile goals will etch deeply into our imagination and activate our subconscious mind toward proper achievements.

(3) Live by "*spiritual principles*." The best way to reverse negative thinking patterns is to memorize Scriptural principles.

(4) Make sure our "*memory-bank*" is pleasing to God. The human mind does not forget and, what goes into it, strongly influences our behavior. To dwell on distressing, rejection or pessimistic thoughts will naturally make us liable to depression.

God says, "*Forget those things which are behind - refuse to focus on disagreeable experiences of the past.*" If they become deeply etched on the table of our mind, they will perpetuate feelings of depression.

Look toward the future and the power and blessing of God.

Program the mind to look at difficulties through the eyes of faith.

(5) Learn to be constructive in our thinking habits. When we do something

on a consistent basis, it becomes easier each successive time. We must make a habit of thinking more about God's blessings and, then, we will maintain a good mental pattern.

(6) Allow the Holy Spirit to bring to our remembrances the things of God.

From the store-house of Biblical principles the Holy Spirit will draw out God's beautiful riches, as we require them. The Holy Spirit will remove the harmful memories and replace them with positive messages from God.

God want to fill and enrich our life. He wants to instill in us a dynamic testimony of abundant living, however, we must co-operate with the working of the Holy Spirit in our life.

Psalms 1:1-3 states, "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers."