



# Dealing with *Depression*

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Depression is a devastating and debilitating condition; it robs the child of God from any usefulness for Him and destroys their effectiveness in dealing with the normal trials of life. All of us are susceptible to falling into this condition. Many great men of faith have been in this state as well. David was a man after God's own heart, yet even he was afflicted by depression at times. The great news from the Bible is that there is a way out of depression. It is normal to feel "down" at times, but it is not a place that you have to stay at, and in fact, it is sin to stay there. Psalm 42 and 43 gives us a look at depression and the pathway out of it. Notice the darkness of depression as you read through these passages.

*Ps 42:1-11 – "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."*

Ps 43:1-5 – *“Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. For thou art the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”*

David here uses some very dark metaphors and even some direct statements to express the depression that He is in. Take a look at Psalm 42 verse 9 where He tells us the source of the problem. It says that he goes mourning because of the oppression of the enemy. He doesn't say my enemy, or thy enemy, or an enemy, he says the enemy. While this might be emblematic of saying he was talking about his personal enemy, God doesn't mix works.

Jesus used the same phrase to refer to the Devil in Matthew 13:39 when He said, *“The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.”* And again, in Luke 10:19 where it says, *“Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”*

Depression is not God's plan for you! God's plan is peace that passes understanding. He has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind. Notice that David sees the opposite of this state in verses 5 and 11 of Psalm 42 as he says, *“why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me? Hope in God!”* David then defines hope as the opposite of depression. A depressed person is a person without hope.

David further indicates that the only place to get help is from the Lord. Notice in verse 5 he says that he will praise him for the "*help of his countenance*". Then in verse 11, David says that God is the "*health of my countenance*". In other words, the health of my countenance is found in the help of His countenance. Drugs are not the answer for depression. They only mask the problem. They treat the symptom not the source. They only trick the brain. David knew that his only hope to escape depression was to get close to God. That is why He started off the Psalm like he did, "*As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?*"

Note that this is David, the mighty King of Israel, the conquerer of all that he goes to battle with, the man after God's own heart, that is depressed. When we find ourselves in depression, we often think that we are the only ones who ever felt this way, and therefore, there must be something wrong with us. However, even David found himself in this state. So, to find yourself in depression is not abnormal, but it is a sign that you are in a spiritual battle. It could be that your depression is because you have not recognized the spiritual battle you are in and turned to God for help. Or it could be that you have given Satan access to oppress you because of sin.

Romans 14:23 states, "*whatsoever is not of faith is sin*". To be without hope is to be dwelling in a sinful state. While you might find yourself there, a child of God should not stay there. David knows that it is not God's will for a person to stay in depression. But he also is searching his soul to determine where he has fallen into this oppression of the enemy. Did you notice how many times he asks why? A depressed person will often ask themselves, "why do I feel this way?" The answer is that they allowed their thinking to be co-opted by the oppression of the enemy.

As a man thinketh in his heart so is he (Proverbs 23:7). What you think will determine how you feel, and how you feel will determine how you act. The key to overcoming depression is to identify where your thinking isn't right. Ask God to help you find where you believed Satan's lies and deviated your thinking from God's Word. Once you have identified the error, then you must change your thinking. David gives us five answers on how to do this in this passage.

## 1. Praise God

Isaiah 61:3 tells us, *"To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified."* Praise is literally the opposite of depression. The word depression means to sink down or to be pushed downward, while praise means to lift up and to exalt.

The irony is that lifting God up requires the act of humbling ourselves. Depression is the feeling that we are low, but humility is the feeling that He is high. Though you might say these things are similar, the latter comes with a great promise, James 4:10 says, *"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."*

The first step to recovery from depression is to go lower, in humility. Often, someone who is battling with depression is also a proud person. In reality, they are depressed because they think that they deserve better than what they have received. It is actually their act of lifting themselves up that has caused them to be pushed down. If instead they would humble themselves and lift Him up, they would be lifted up themselves.

I am not saying that everyone who gets depressed does so because of pride, I am saying that humility is

necessary for proper praise. We teach people how to do this in Biblical counseling by having them do a stroke file where they will take a 3×5 card and on the front of it they will write three things in the morning, three things at noon, and three things in the evening that they can thank God for.

David prayed three times a day in this manner. Psalm 55:17 says, *"Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice."* Daniel prayed three times a day according to the book of Daniel. As a matter of fact, he was so faithful in this that this is how his enemies attacked him. Three times a day you should take time to seek the Lord and praise Him. This will keep His glory before your eyes all day long.

If you are struggling with depression you should begin to keep a stroke file today. On the back, we teach people to write the name of their spouse and once each morning, noon, and night write one thing that they can be thankful for about them. It could be things that they do, it could also be things that they don't do. If your spouse isn't strung out on drugs that is a great thing to thank God for.

## 2. Remember God

The next step that David takes is to remember God. This means to look back on your life and purposely remember all the things that God has done for you. When we are depressed, we only see the negative and bad things. It would be good to get a notebook and begin to write down all the things that you can remember that God did good for you.

Philippians 4:8 says, *"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."*

Notice in Psalm 42:6 that David had some special places of remembrance to God. He considered the land of Jordan. This was the promised land, the place of the promises of God. He remembered the works of God as He brought His people across the Jordan river and began to give them the place of their inheritance. Everywhere David looked, it was a reminder of the fulfillment of the promises of God. Maybe there is a special place in your life where you received the promises of God. Consider that place and what God did there for you.

Then David remembered the Hermonites, a mountain range on the northern border of Israel. Psalm 133:3 says, *"As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."*

The Hermonites were a place where David had received the commandment of blessing from the Lord. Is there a time in your life that you remember God speaking to you? You should remember that time of God's speaking and think on the times that God has spoken in your life.

David further remembers the hill Mizar. The hill Mizar is a peak in the mountain range. It is not clear exactly what happened here, but this was a special place for David. As he recalled what he experienced in this place, it is clear that He remembered the blessing that God gave him there.

There are also times of blessing in your life that if you keep them in remembrance, it will bring you up out of depression. There are some mountain top experiences that God has given each of us that will strengthen our hearts.

### 3. Seek God's Word

Psalm 119:50 – *"This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me."*

Psalm 119:81 – *"My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word."*

Psalm 119:114 – *"Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word."*

David found strength and encouragement when delighted himself in God's Word. Psalm 119:130 tells us, *"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."* Notice what David did when he had come to a place of depression in 1 Samuel 30:6, *"And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God."*

Romans 10:17 tells us, *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* Listen to the Word in order to strengthen your faith. You can get an audio version of the King James Bible and keep it playing in your home. It will strengthen you. When in times of depression read the Psalms. They are encouragement to the soul.

#### 4. Sing Songs

David goes on to say that to recover from depression you should sing songs in the night. All through the Bible we see a strong connection between the spirit and music. For example, Saul had David play on the harp and sing when he was troubled by an evil spirit, and the evil spirit would depart. The Prophet Samuel had musicians play music when seeking the Lord. King David was the sweet Psalmist of Israel. King Solomon also wrote Psalms and had a great choir that sang at the temple. Music is an expression of the soul; thus, it can bring both sorrow and joy. A person who is struggling with depression should surround themselves with Godly uplifting music.

## 5. Prayer

The last step that David took was to spend time in prayer. Philippians 4:6-7 says, *"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*

Often, the last thing we want to do when in a state of depression is pray, when in reality, it should be the first thing that we do. Revelation 12:11 tells us, *"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."* To plead the blood and speak of the testimony of what God has done for us is how we see the enemy being defeated over and over again in the Bible.

In Psalm 42, David deals primarily with what the depressed should do, but in Psalm 43, we find out what God does in response to our obedience in these five things. David is praying at the beginning of Psalm 43 and asking God to examine Him. He says,

*"Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. For thou art the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles."*

The word judge here is not a cry for condemnation, but for examination and help. It is the thought of one who might inspect an item that is imperfect so that it might be corrected. The last thing that a person who is in depression wants is judgment, but it is the thing that they need, not the judgment of people, but the honest examination of God in their lives. This is accomplished by two means in this passage.

## 1. His Light

The first way that God examines us is by His light. Light began with God. He said, "let there be light" and there was light. That was physical light, however, the light that is spiritual began with Him as well. The darkness of depression is a place without the light of God illuminating it, thus He must speak His light into such a place. That doesn't mean that a person who is in depression isn't in the Word, but that God must illuminate His Word in them. The power of the Word of God is His Holy Spirit illumination of it. Consider the following verses,

Psalm 4:6 – *"There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us."*

Psalm 36:9 – *"For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light."*

Psalm 97:11 – *"Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."*

Consider the last verse that light is sown. We think in terms of sowing a seed, but God sows light, meaning it is planted for a purpose. It is not just floating around aimlessly. Physical light is sown by God for the purpose of bringing forth the fruit of the ground thus making provision for us. Spiritually, light has been sown as well.

It was sown by Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. It was also sown in His Word in such a manner that it has been planted for the purpose of bringing forth more light. Just as a planted seed brings forth much fruit, so much light is produced by the sowing of light.

Psalm 112:4 – *"Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous."*

Psalm 119:105 – *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."*

Psalm 119:130 – *"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."*

God's response to our obedience is to begin to shed His light into the darkness of our depression and illuminate our souls.

## 2. His Truth

The next thing that God uses to judge us is His truth. Psalm 119:151 says, *"Thou art near, O LORD; and all thy commandments are truth."* Jesus said in John 17:17, *"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."* When God's Word is sent out to our hearts, it reveals the error in our hearts.

Earlier I wrote that the reason for depression is that we have believed a lie from the enemy. Only the acceptance of the truth can challenge the lie and correct it. Once we accept that God's Word is truth and begin to ask Him to judge us and correct our error by it, we must commit ourselves to obey whatever He tells us to do.

James 1:22-25 says, *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."*

The result of yielding ourselves to the examination of God's light and truth is shown to produce results in Psalm 43. Here we find out that they lead us.

Part of the struggle of addiction is that there is no clear direction for life that is known. Likewise, a depressed person is wandering aimlessly. Life has no meaning or purpose, but God's Word gives a leading, a purpose when it is applied to our lives. David goes on to show where God's Word leads us. First, He says to God's holy hills, then to His tabernacles, and then to His altar.

There is a natural progression of restoration that is presented here. First, he comes to the holy hills, that is the city of Zion. Then he comes to the tabernacles, that is the place of God's presence. Then he comes to the altar, that is the place of my acknowledgment of God. In everything there is a progression of accomplishing the goal.

The goal in Psalm 42 was close fellowship. Here God reveals that in order to have that close fellowship you first have to get in the right proximity of God's will and reject the lies of the enemy. Then you must come to the place of worshiping Him as He should be worshiped. Once you have been brought to this place you will find what you have been searching for all along.

As David says in the last verse of Psalm 43, *"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."*

There is health for your countenance, and hope for your soul in God if you will obey Him and allow Him to search you and accept His truth.

To learn more about the life God intended you to have, I encourage you to take our free Bible study entitled, "Finding Hope in Jesus". Contact us at [biblestudyglobal@gmail.com](mailto:biblestudyglobal@gmail.com) to learn more about our FREE Bible study program.

Also, below are some other helpful articles written by Pastor Carter. Please feel free to share these articles with someone who might be helped by them.



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