
SOLA FIDE

Mustard Seed Community Church | Vol. 12 | No. 2

Depression in Christians

No one is a stranger to hardships and sufferings. Regardless of the circumstances, everyone will face hardships and sufferings in their life. Hardships and sufferings can manifest in different ways, but one that is often overlooked is depression. Anyone can be exposed to depression. Even faithful Christian like Charles Spurgeon battled with depression for many years. Spurgeon was very open about his struggles with depression. As he once shared, “I find myself frequently depressed - perhaps more so than any other person here. And I find no better cure for that depression than to trust in the Lord with all my heart, and seek to realize afresh the power of the peace-speaking blood of Jesus and His infinite love in dying upon the cross to put away all my transgressions.” Despite the torment he faced, he remained faithful to Christ. It is very possible for a faithful Christian to fall into depression. But with the correct approach, Christians suffering from depression can learn to overcome it.

According to the World Health Organization, more than 300 million people worldwide suffer from depression. Although Christians have eternal joy from their relationship with God, they are not exempt from suffering from depression. There may be various circumstances that cause depression such as spiritual letdowns, demonic oppression, temporary life circumstances, tragedies in life, stress, peer pressure, chemical imbalance and so on. Yet, we want to take the right approach as God’s people to deal with the issue of depression. I am not an expert, but I would like to suggest a few pointers:

- 1) *God’s people must rely upon His deliverance.* Sometimes depression is temporal, but sometimes it stays with you for a longer period of time. But we need to understand that God is in control; the Bible says, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6-7). We must rely on his power and the strength for deliverance. This is important because Jesus Christ is God who healed lepers, made the blind see, made the lame walk, resurrected the dead and more. He surely then has power and authority over our depression as well. So when we rely on His authority and power, we have the greatest security and protection. Therefore, let us foremost rely on God’s power at work.
- 2) As cliché as this may sound, we must *remember that God loves us.* The biggest evidence of His love is Jesus Christ’s atoning death on the cross. God does not have the obligation to save sinners. Yet, because of His love, He sent Jesus to die on the cross so that we can have eternal life in Him. “He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32). God gladly sacrificed His son to save us because of His love and that same God of love also cares for our needs. So let us find comfort in that God who created us and sacrificed His own son for us, loves us.

- 3) *Place yourself in a Christian community.* No one should have to go through depression alone. It may be harder for some people to open up, but the community is there to help. Seek advice from other Christians and ask for their prayers. Surround yourself with godly people who are encouraging and genuinely demonstrating the love of God. Worship with them, fellowship with them, and have good godly conversations with them because they will remind you of God's faithfulness and goodness.
- 4) *Make personal adjustments.* Certain habits can be harmful to emotional and mental states. But with simple changes, it can make a difference. Some of these changes of habits include a healthy sleep cycle, healthy eating, proper exercise, active social life, maintaining better hygiene, and taking proper vitamins. Overall, making better living circumstances can improve your condition.
- 5) *Seek proper counseling.* Sometimes, the cause of depression may stem from abuse or traumatic experiences of the past. These things may be the reason for hopelessness, feeling worthless, and other symptoms of depression. A trained professional Christian counselor will be able to guide you to address these symptoms (be mindful that going to a therapist or counselor who is not a believer may yield advice that is not biblical).
- 6) *Seek a medical professional* if you are medically diagnosed with depression. In some severe cases, such as chemical imbalance, a medical treatment is necessary. Medical treatment will assist you in your battle against depression.

It is dangerous to automatically assume that the cause of your depression is a spiritual issue alone. However, it is equally dangerous to assume medication or change of lifestyle as the sole solution. Regardless of what the cause may be, we must deal with the issue of depression well.

Personally, I battle with clinical depression and anxiety. However, clearly understanding and relying on the message of the Cross causes me to be joyful and hopeful of my life because what God has promised me. Whether this may or may not be the case for you, I want to encourage you that there is hope in Jesus Christ. As Spurgeon said, there is "no better cure than to trust in the Lord with all my heart, and seek to realize afresh the power of the peace-speaking blood of Jesus and His infinite love in dying upon the cross to put away all my transgressions."

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Some practical things every Christian can do to help others dealing with depression

- 1) Listen with patience and in love. Listening to their problems will lift some weight off their shoulders.
- 2) Pray for them. Ask them what you can pray for. No one will refuse someone who offers to pray for them. Rely on God's power at work.
- 3) Engage and assist in their personal life. For example: immediate assistance such as financial assistance, hanging out, helping with home life and etc.
- 4) Encourage with Scripture. Redirect and remind them of the truth of the gospel.