

Healing for Depression

Warning: Depression is emotional despair that can lead to suicide. If you are struggling with depression talk to your pastor, do not try to face suicidal feelings alone.

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How do we Define Depression?

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

- Isaiah 53:3

Before we expect to find the cure for depression, we must first define the disorder. This definition comes from the Mayo Clinic.

The two symptoms key to establishing a diagnosis are:

1. Loss of interest in normal daily activities. You lose interest in or pleasure from activities that you used to enjoy.
2. Depressed mood. You feel sad, helpless or hopeless, and may have crying spells.

In addition, for a doctor or other health professional to diagnose depression, most of the following signs and symptoms also must be present for at least two weeks.

1. **Sleep disturbances.** Sleeping too much or having problems sleeping can be a sign you're depressed. Waking in the middle of the night or early in the morning and not being able to get back to sleep are typical.
2. **Impaired thinking or concentration.** You may have trouble concentrating or making decisions and have problems with memory.
3. **Changes in weight.** An increased or reduced appetite and unexplained weight gain or loss may indicate depression.
4. **Agitation.** You may seem restless, agitated, irritable and easily annoyed.
5. **Fatigue or slowing of body movements.** You feel weariness and lack of energy nearly every day. You may feel as tired in the morning as you did when you went to bed the night before. You may feel like you're doing everything in slow motion, or you may speak in a slow, monotonous tone.
6. **Low self-esteem.** You feel worthless and have excessive guilt.
7. **Less interest in sex.** If you were sexually active before developing depression, you may notice a dramatic decrease in your level of interest in having sexual relations.
8. **Thoughts of death.** You have a persistent negative view of yourself, your situation and the future. You may have thoughts of death, dying or suicide.

Depression can also cause a wide variety of physical complaints, such as gastrointestinal problems (indigestion, constipation or diarrhea), headache and backache. (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2008)

The Mayo Clinic staff compiled this list of symptoms from the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) bible, the [DSM -IV-TR](#) ¹. The DSM -IV-TR represents the current opinion of the APA, and was created in an attempt to standardize treatment for different mental disorders. In reality, psychiatrists interpret the different symptoms of mental illness subjectively. For instance, how much "loss of interest in normal daily activities" does it take for a healthcare professional to check that symptom? Therefore, in real life, the line

between being temporally depressed and being diagnosed with clinical depression is imaginary, and subject to change.

Chemical Balancing is Not a Cure

It is also important to note that the Mayo Clinic's definition did not mention a chemical imbalance. This is because the relationship between depression and chemical imbalance is not as established as many in the mental health community would have us believe. According to Jonathan Leo and Jeffrey R. Lacasse's *The Media and the Chemical Imbalance Theory of Depression*, factual documentation for the chemical imbalance theory is rather sparse. If you know a patient who has been diagnosed as having a chemical imbalance, you should ask them one question. Was their diagnosis established by a blood test or with a behavioral questionnaire? Would your friend accept the diagnosis of a serious physical ailment, such as diabetes or cancer, from a doctor using a questionnaire instead of the appropriate lab tests?



Admittedly, there is heated debate on the topic of chemical imbalance and both sides have firm convictions. Unfortunately, the money from the pharmaceutical companies has had a major influence in shaping the medical community's opinion. If you believe that chemical imbalance causes depression, then you will likely believe that counseling and lifestyle changes will be ineffective without psychotropic medication, the only real answer.

Even if the chemical structure of the brain were different in a person suffering from depression (this has not yet been established), that alone would not prove the chemical

imbalance theory. For example, a person who is really angry will have a fast pulse and elevated blood pressure, but this does not prove that a fast pulse and elevated blood pressure can cause anger management problems.

If you accept the opinion that you have a chemical imbalance, the blame shifts from your behavior or worldview, to some outside force (in this case too much or not enough of a particular chemical). If you are wrong, you may spend the rest of your life medicated (many people do), yet you will never be healed. Even worse, when taking medication for depression it is easy to mistake the side effects of the medication for the symptoms of depression. In fact, every FDA approved drug for depression has "suicidal thoughts" as a side effect. To show this, I have prepared a [spreadsheet](#) that compares the symptoms of depression with all the side effects of the different psychotropic medication used to treat them.

If you are currently taking prescription drugs for depression, do not stop taking the medication except under the care of a physician. Withdrawal symptoms from psychotropic drugs are dangerous, even life threatening. You should ask your mental healthcare professional about all the side effects and dangers associated with taking a prescription medication (and withdrawing from the medication) before you start taking any drug

It is important to realize that there will always be ups and downs in life.

*A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
- Ecclesiastes 3:4*

However, as Americans we are conditioned to expect immediate healing. For instance, as we sit in front of the television, sitcoms introduce some emotional problem and its solution in less than half an hour. During the commercials we are sold instant cures to all our problems. We are told that we deserve to always feel good. Have you ever wondered why the cure for almost everything is a pill? Do you have a headache? Take a pill. Stomach ache? Take a pill. Have an infection? Take a pill. Have an allergy? Take a pill. Have a runny nose? Pill. Leg cramps? Pill. This conditioning has been going on for a long time. Quoting Dr. Bernstein as early as 1973:

"Prescription drugs are now a multibillion dollar industry. The public has been convinced that human problems such as anxiety, misbehavior, obesity, insomnia, overpopulation, sadness, rage, marital difficulty, and school adjustment all require medical attention. Once a problem is considered as a "disease," it is easy to think of drugs as a cure ([Bernstein and Leonard, 1973](#))."²

Have have advertisers improved their skill since 1973? Unfortunately, when you do not understand depression, it becomes like a Chinese finger cuff: the harder you resist, the harder it grips. I am not against taking an antibiotic for an infection; they that are sick need a physician. I am opposed to doctors who prescribe antibiotics, or other medications, that are not in the patient's best interest; like the doctor who offered a new widow psychotropic drugs so she would not have to mourn her husband's [death](#)³. Rainy days are a normal part of life. There are times when we need to mourn.



And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. - Matthew 9:15

The Prescription for Healing Depression

Even though there is a time to mourn, some people suffer from a depression that goes beyond normal grieving. If drugs are not the answer, then what is the cure?

Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. - Jeremiah 31:13

A life given to Christ

In the simplest terms, [giving your life to Christ](#) will cure depression. While this study will not offer an altar call until the very end, the cure offered in this study comes from the teachings of Jesus Christ. After many years, scientists are starting to find out that following His teachings will lead to a sound mind. Those who have given their life to Him will concur with Jesus' statement:

*I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.
- John 10:10b*

This does not mean we will not have trials or sorrows. It does mean that we can have joy and peace in the midst of our trials, and hope in the midst of our sorrows.

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. - John 16:33

Even so, don't many professing Christians also suffer from depression?

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Luke 6:46

Unfortunately, and at the risk of being offensive, many who profess to be Christian are not following the teaching of Jesus, even if they are practicing the traditions taught in their church. Many Pastors, instead of counseling the word of God to their congregation, have become a referral service for psychologists. In fact, pastors are the main referral service for the secular psychiatric community. In doing so, pastors ignore many biblical admonitions including:

Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. - Hebrews 13:9

Even if a pastor does not refer to a psychologist, he may incorporate into his teaching many doctrines from [modern psychology](#). Yet Sigmund Freud hated Christianity, calling it a neurosis; Albert Ellis felt religion hindered the fun of fornication and therefore was detrimental to mental health; Carol Rogers founded the Association for Humanistic Psychology; Maslow and Jung both thought that Christianity was, at best, mythology. Any Pastor who couches the teachings of someone who mocks or hates Christianity, teachings which are diametrically opposed to the Gospel, is playing the role of a wolf in sheep's clothing. Jesus and Paul both warned us of them:

[Jesus warned:] Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. - Matthew 7:15

Paul also lamented:

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. - Acts 20:29-30

In order to defend yourself against wolves, or if you are a pastor playing the role of a wolf, you must learn the contradictions between the Gospel and [modern psychology](#). When speaking to the religious leaders Jesus said:

Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. - Mark 7:9b

If you will leave tradition behind and begin to obey Jesus, you will see victory over not only depression, but other mental disorders, as well. Believing this, let us look at some of the specific precepts that Jesus taught.

For good mental health, stay open to counsel, accountability and exhortation.

And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God. - Zechariah 13:9

AND

That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: - 1 Peter 1:7



As we start to look at exhortation and accountability, we see two competing worldviews. The most popular is a belief in relativism and the other is a belief in absolute right and wrong. Absolute rights and wrongs are one reason that so many have a hard time submitting to Jesus.

Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. - Proverbs 9:8

AND

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. - John 3:19-20

Compare the above scriptures with the methods of secular counselors, who treat their patients' depression by trying to increase their [self-esteem](#)⁴. In such cases, the patient must return week after week to have their lifestyle affirmed. The psychiatrist of a patient I personally knew, told her to avoid people who did not affirm her choices, "they are 'dangerous' people." After this, the patient could no longer receive correction from family or friends. In obedience to her doctor, she regarded those who would not affirm her decisions as dangerous and avoided them. Unfortunately, as the result of making poor decisions, she suffered with depression for the rest of her short life, which ended in suicide.

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. - Proverbs 14:12

It is more natural to look for affirmation, than it is to admit a fault when we have done something wrong. For example, Jane Doe has an abortion. Her boyfriend, parents, even her pastor pressured Jane into it. These friends told her that she had no choice; that carrying this untimely baby to term would ruin her life.

Countless women receive the same counsel every day. If we look into Jane's future, we would not be surprised to see her actively counseling other women who are in a similar situation, to get an abortion. In counseling others, Jane is trying to reaffirm her own choice that she made years earlier. She *had* to end her baby's life. At this point, Jane has closed her mind to any counsel or exhortation that may be critical of her earlier choice.

Jane is still [hurting from her abortion](#), which is common. As long as she remains closed to self-examination, she will never heal. Jane's mind is telling her that she had no choice and that it was only a blob of tissue. Jane's psychiatrist is telling her that she has a chemical imbalance. Yet deep down Jane's own heart is telling her, "I killed my baby."

While untreated post-abortion syndrome is one source of depression in women, any sin that has hurt others will cause depression. Real deliverance comes when we recognize and purge our hearts of these secret sins. In order to see how we have hurt others, and in order to overcome our weakness, accountability, and even criticism, is very helpful.

If you are open to receiving correction, I recommend using the Bible as the final authority. You can judge every admonition by it. If unsure on the meaning of a scripture verse, err on the side of literalism. Be sure to the exegete (get your doctrine from) scripture, not eisegete (read your personal beliefs into your interpretation of) scripture. Beware of loyalties to family, culture, and even the church in regards to interpreting the Word of God.

The [Berean's] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. - Acts 17:11

Always give credibility to scripture over your own experience. Our own limited experiences can be misinterpreted, subjective and deceptive. For example, most people, if they judged by nothing but their own experience, would conclude that the world is flat.

More Bible passages on the topic:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: - 2 Timothy 3:16

AND

[Jesus said:] As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. - Revelation 3:19

Good mental health needs a good diet and exercise

The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat. - Proverbs 13:4

As we start out on our quest for a sound mind, we will briefly look at diet and exercise. And we will start this by looking at part of a news article from Reuters Health:

A number of studies have found that physically active people are less likely than couch potatoes to suffer depression. Some clinical trials have shown regular exercise can help treat the disorder, and perhaps be as effective as antidepressant drugs in some cases.

The new findings suggest that exercise can even help people whose symptoms have been resistant to medication, according to the study authors. (Clinical Practice and Epidemiology in Mental Health, 2007)

This study implies that if you are sitting around glued to the TV you are probably suffering from more symptoms of depression than if you are a physically active person. And the same thing goes for your diet. When Moses gave the law to the Hebrews, he inserted many dietary requirements. Even doctors who believe

in the *chemical imbalance theory* should see the importance of a balanced diet and try this approach before prescribing a drug cocktail. Avoiding the chemicals in processed foods and supplying the proper nourishment for the body to function properly makes sense, even if you are not suffering from depression.

When a person is suffering from depression, they often neglect their responsibilities. The piling up of these neglected responsibilities only aggravates the depression. Understanding this, for part your daily exercise simply tackle on one responsibility each day. One day, it may be to pay some bills (getting out of bed), the next day it may be to clean out the refrigerator or do a load of laundry to completion.

Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. - Ephesians 5:14-16

The healing power of forgiveness

The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh. - Proverbs 11:17

When discipling troubled people, I have seen one very common problem that arises with monotonous regularity: unforgiveness. "I can't ever forgive him" and "You don't know what he has done" are common phrases. Often the one who will not forgive becomes a bitter person, suffering from many physical and psychological disorders, while the offender goes through life blissfully unaware of any problem.

Studies on the subject of forgiveness did not appear in the mental health community until the 1980's. Prior to that time, it was a practice primarily taught in the Christian faith. Loren Toussaint of Luther University and her colleagues were the first psychologists to establish a long-term link between a person's health and their propensity to forgive.

Before we try to understand forgiveness, we should probably wade through the confusion and understand what forgiveness is not. First, a victim does not have to return to a place of vulnerability in order to forgive. Similarly, forgiveness does not mean that you have to restore fellowship with the offender. Depending on the transgression, restored fellowship may not come until the person who committed the offence repents and asks for forgiveness. Thus, gentlemen, do not fool around and then try to tell your wife or girlfriend that it is in her self-interest to forgive you. The apostle Paul said:

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. - Ephesians 5:11

Next, forgiveness is not belittling the transgression, and it is not necessary to play the situation down in order to forgive. When receiving an apology, a victim need not answer, "That's okay, it was nothing". Offences can be as great as murder and still be forgiven.

And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. [died] - Acts 7:59-60

Finally, forgiveness is not taking the blame, or even partial blame, for the offence. Do not feel like you must take partial responsibility in order to forgive the offender, unless you really are partly responsible for the offense.

Then what does it mean to forgive? The New Testament [definition](#)⁵ for forgiveness, as Jesus forgave us:

- 1) release from bondage or imprisonment
- 2) forgiveness or pardon, of sins (letting them go as if they had never been committed), remission of the penalty

In talking about sin, Jesus often used the example of debt. Once you have marked the balance as zero, the person no longer owes you anything. Going further, when you forgive, try to empathize with the offenders plight, wish him well and move on, whether the offender is sorry or not.

Forgiveness is a skill that you can and may have to learn. Researchers have discovered:

Often just a couple of short sessions in which the wounded are guided toward positive feelings for an offender can improve cardiovascular function, diminish chronic pain, relieve depression and boost quality of life among the very ill. (Healy, 2008)

When a person says, "I cannot forgive him" this is because the victim has not learned how to forgive, not because the offender has done something unforgivable. Jesus isn't asking us to do something that He Himself wasn't willing to live out. Even in his death, He gave us a perfect example. While he was nailed to a cross:

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they [the soldiers who just nailed him to the cross] parted his raiment, and cast lots.
- Luke 23:34

In the last decade, those studying and preaching forgiveness have found many health benefits. As simple as this is, there is still confusion in the mental health community concerning forgiveness. Some psychologists find the new science of forgiveness troubling. They are afraid that when a patient is pressured to forgive it may be psychologically damaging. To quote Jeanne Safer, a New York psychoanalyst and author of *Must We Forgive*:

"For many patients, forgiveness is a double-whammy: First someone (hurts) you, and then it's your fault you don't want to embrace them in heaven. I'm not against forgiveness; I'm against compulsory forgiveness with no choice. And I'm against 'forgiveness lite,' which keeps you from feeling the intensity of the experience, from deeply grappling with what's been done to you." (Healy, 2008)

As a psychoanalyst, Safer believes that you must go into the past and be "grappling with what's been done to you". Some psychologists believe that you must also vent your anger (which is the opposite of forgiveness) before you can experience healing. It should be no wonder that it's a normal thing for patients to spend their whole lives in psychoanalysis without being cured.

Ms. Safer is partially right though; there is a double-whammy: First, someone hurts you. However, she is wrong on the second whammy; the second whammy is when the victim suffers from ongoing depression and other health disorders as the result of being unable or unwilling to forgive. With such an aversion to forgiveness, Ms. Safer is probably unable to forgive, herself.

In another example, Linda Davis, executive director of *Survivors of Incest Anonymous*, also has concerns with forgiveness.

"Among victims of incest, many of whom have turned blame inward or fear that forgiveness entails reconciliation with an abuser, pressure to forgive can be stressful and sometimes impossible"

"I always tell ministers, 'Don't use the F-word.' [Forgiveness]."

"You have to get to a place of acceptance, forgiveness is a bonus. You don't have to get there." (Healy, 2008)

In defining forgiveness as turning blame inward and restoring fellowship with an unrepentant molester (placing the victim in a vulnerable position), Davis does not understand what forgiveness is. In telling ministers never to use the word forgiveness, comparing it to the F-word, it sounds like Linda Davis is also unable to forgive someone. While Davis and many other psychologists resist the idea of forgiving,

A study at the University of Northern Iowa of psychological treatment plans for adult women who had been victims of childhood incest found that **those who went through forgiveness therapy experienced less anxiety and clinical depression than a control group**. Gains for the forgiveness group also persisted after the therapy ended. (Todd McPherson, Bandar Seri Begawan , 2008)

If you need to learn how to forgive, you must go to someone who is able to practice and teach it.

There is more confusion concerning forgiveness in the mental health community. Another mistake is in a form of psychotherapy called *Recovered Memories*. This is where the therapist asks leading questions (often combined with drugs, hypnosis and or suggestive dream interpretation) in an attempt to recover a patient's lost memories.

This therapy, the opposite of forgiveness, is dangerous. Though it has recently been debunked and there are lawsuits against recovered memory therapists, there are still counselors practicing it. Numerous individuals, some whom I have known personally, have falsely remembered and 'relived' horrendous experiences that never happened.

Other psychotherapies are also preoccupied with revisiting your childhood. Yet, it is unprofitable, even counterproductive to look up past wrongs if you do not intend to forgive them. If you want healing, do not keep revisiting past wrongs in your mind. Healing comes when we forgive others for past wrongs and then move on.

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,
- *Philippians 3:13*

Lastly, some confusion exists since some psychologists have gotten forgiveness completely backwards, teaching patients that they must forgive *themselves*. Other relativistic psychologists believe that there is no right or wrong. Does this mean that there is no such thing as forgiveness? Advertisements like the following are common.

"If you are feeling depressed or anxious or stressed out, you might feel like you are a bad person or have done something wrong. **This is not true**, but it can be hard to shake that off by yourself. As a compassionate, ..." (NetworkTherapy.com, 2008)

But if "you are a bad person or have done something wrong" (we all have) this counselor's help will be useless and even counterproductive. Jesus did not brush our transgressions aside; he paid for them.

Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: - Galatians 1:4

Jesus paid the ultimate price for our sins, a death on a cross. When we realize what Jesus went through, the thought "I can't be forgiven" is replaced with thankfulness that He paid for the cost to forgive us.

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; - Acts 3:19

Forgiving yourself is meaningless. It is like owing yourself money: there is no debt, nothing to forgive. Forgiving oneself may also be counterproductive, if it is not accompanied by repentance and reconciliation. When you reconcile you cannot always expect the one whom you hurt to return to a vulnerable position (depending on your sin). If someone needs to forgive you, go to the one you have hurt, ask them for their forgiveness, and try to reconcile with them (as far as possible), and then move on. One also ought to ask forgiveness from God. When that is received, there is tranquility.

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. - Matthew 5:23-24

AND

There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked. - Isaiah 48:22

Traditionally, forgiveness has been thought of as only a blessing extended to the transgressor (and it is true that the person who truly forgives has made a personal sacrifice), but scientific studies have proven that the healing power of forgiving extends to the one willing to forgive, as well. Let us look at a few quotes from three different sources:

Worthington, who is a professor at Virginia Commonwealth University and a pioneer in forgiveness research, has found that **people who won't forgive the wrongs committed against them tend to have negative indicators of health and well-being: more stress-related disorders**, lower immune-system function, and worse rates of cardiovascular disease than the population as a whole. [...]

In contrast people who forgive, Worthington finds, may have better health, **fewer episodes of clinical depression**, longer marriages and better "social support," another indicator of well-being. [...]

Another study of elderly women, published in the journal Psychotherapy, found that those who scored well on a standard test of forgiveness traits had higher self-esteem and **fewer episodes of anxiety and depression** compared to those who scored poorly. (Easterbrook, 2002)

AND

Those more inclined to pardon the transgressions of others have been found to have lower blood pressure, **fewer depressive symptoms** and, once they hit late middle age, better overall mental and physical health than those who do not forgive easily. (Healy, 2008)

While you do not need to be a Christian to forgive, unbelievers are often unconvinced of the need to forgive. As for us Christians, Jesus gave us no option but to forgive our debtors. In what we call 'The Lord's Prayer' Jesus taught us to pray, saying:

And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. - Luke 11:4

AND

And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. - Mark 11:25

So how can you know that you have forgiven successfully? As one who has also struggled with forgiveness in the past, I suggest praying for the power to forgive until the ill feelings toward the wrongdoer are gone. Later, if evil thoughts toward the one who wronged you reappear, say the same prayer all over until the thought is gone. Do this until you can think of the offender without having any ill will toward him. I know it sounds simple, but sometimes the most simple methods can be the most effective.

There are two simple ways to recognize success. First, if you hear good news about the person and are happy for them, you have forgiven them. Second, if you hear bad news about the person and are sad for them, you have forgiven them. If their good news upsets you, or their bad news makes you happy, go back and pray.

As a Christian, we should occasionally meditate on the price that Jesus paid for our sins. Only the most stubborn person will not try to forgive or will believe they are still unable to forgive. For those people Jesus taught a parable of a king reviewing his servants accounts:

And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshiped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him a hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?

*And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.
- Matthew 18:24-35*

The healing power of charity

There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches. - Proverbs 13:7

If there were two characteristics that stood out in our culture, the first would be materialism and the second would be emptiness; an emptiness that often borders on depression. The National Institute of Mental Health⁶ estimates that one quarter of our adult population is suffering from a mental disorder at any given time. One of the most common disorders is depression, and one of the main reasons for depression is selfishness. If you wish to overcome depression, you must start giving of your time and resources.

I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed [fortunate, well off, happy] to give than to receive. - Acts 20:35

The disciples of Jesus have taught this for a long time, and now modern science is starting to concur. For instance, in a recent study, researchers at the University of British Columbia and Harvard University asked Canadian students to rate their happiness. Then at random, they gave each student an envelope containing from five to twenty dollars. The researchers instructed half of the students to spend this money on themselves, the other half were to buy a gift for someone else.

That evening the students were called together again and asked to rate their happiness. According to the researchers, the amount of money they spent had no impact on their happiness; however, those assigned to buy something for another person reported greater happiness than those who purchased things for themselves.
(Schmid, 2008)

These results should not be surprising; one group spent a significant portion of that day:

- Thinking about their own selves while they spent the money.
- Buying something to please only their selves.
- Trying to gratify a desire with a material object.

The other group spent a significant portion of that day:

- Thinking about someone else while they spent the money.
- Shopping for someone else.
- Imagining the happiness of another person receiving the gift.
- Seeing the happiness of the person to whom they gave the gift.

These same researchers did other studies that reached the same conclusion. We can look to our own experiences to see the same thing: a person who is continually selfish will very likely be suffering many symptoms of depression. If your therapist tells you that you must love yourself more, do not be surprised if his advise brings no relief from your depression.

In light of these findings, one counselor has come up with a simple yet effective 12-step program to overcome depression.

- Step one - Donate time, energy and talent to sacrificially help someone else. You must not expect or desire to receive any personal compensation in return.
- Steps two through twelve - Repeat step one.
- If this does not cure your depression, go through the program again.

Let all your things be done with charity. - 1 Corinthians 16:14

As a Christian, we can take this therapy further. Jesus taught:

But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

Give, and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. - Luke 6:26-38

Only children of the Highest have the hope which makes it possible to genuinely love their enemies. To give, expecting nothing in return, becomes not only possible, but also becomes a pleasure when we believe that we are giving to Jesus.

[Jesus speaking:] Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. - Matthew 25:40b

The healing power of thankfulness

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. - Hebrews 13:5

Practicing charity is a good beginning; now let us look at our preoccupation with worldly possessions. As already mentioned, Americans are hit with hundreds of advertisements daily, none of which would be effective were it not for our covetous nature. We are constantly told that if we buy a coveted product we'll be happy, and that making our neighbors envy us will bring contentment. If these promises are true, then why are we not only deeply in debt, but still suffering depression? Americans have more material possessions, and at the same time suffer from more mental illnesses, than [ever before](#).⁶ Living for worldly possessions does not bring happiness, it enslaves us.

The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. - Ecclesiastes 5:12

Even in prosperity, and often because of prosperity, we succumb to despair, confusion and depression. To see this clearly, next time you are in line at the supermarket look at the tabloids at the checkout counter. They reveal the lives of our Hollywood role models; the very people who have arrived at the pinnacle of worldly success are often the most miserable. Brad Pitt gave a candid interview in *Rolling Stone Magazine*.

Pitt: "Man, I know all these things are supposed to seem important to us - the car, the condo, our version of success - but if that's the case, why is the general feeling out there reflecting more impotence and isolation and desperation and loneliness? If you ask me, I say toss all this - we gotta find something else. Because all I know is that at this point in time, we are heading for a dead end, a numbing of the soul, a complete atrophy of the spiritual being. And I don't want that."

Rolling Stone: So if we're heading toward this kind of existential dead end in society, what do you think should happen?

Pitt: "Hey, man, I don't have those answers yet. The emphasis now is on success and personal gain. I'm sitting in it, and I'm telling you, that's not it. I'm the guy who's got everything. I know. But I'm telling you, once you've got everything, then you're just left with yourself. I've said it before and I'll say it again: it doesn't help you sleep any better, and you don't wake up any better because of it." (Testamonies, 2008)

The problem of depression is bigger than just Hollywood. Look at some of the greatest men in history. Alexander the Great died of alcoholism at a young age. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon went insane for seven years (Daniel chapter four). Solomon, an ancient king of Israel whose wealth and power was supreme, came to the same conclusion:

And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy ... and, behold, all was vanity [emptyness] and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun. - Ecclesiastes 2:10 11

Jesus Himself taught:

Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. - Luke 12:15

If you harbor any thoughts like, "If I had this, I would be happy", you are only deceiving yourself. If you are jealous or envious of another person, your covetousness is keeping you from being content with what you currently possess. In order to overcome depression you must replace covetous thoughts with thankfulness.

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. - Colossians 3:15

AND

*And having food and raiment [a covering] let us be therewith content.
- 1 Timothy 6:8*

AND

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. - 1 John 2:15

AND

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, - Romans 1:21-22

"He who dies with the most toys wins." is the best hope that unbelievers have. From the Christian perspective, though, he who dies with the most toys is still dead. **Not to covet** is foolishness to the worldly person, wisdom to the Christian, and healing to the person suffering from depression.

Peter warns the self-gratifying hedonists:

That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:

Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: - 1 Peter 4:2-4

It is interesting to note that those who live to party think ill of the one who begins to think soberly. Yet those very same hedonists have empty lives, doing recreational drugs to forget their emptiness.

In closing I would like to point out that not many people teach thankfulness because there is no money in it. It's easy, on the other hand, to exploit another's covetousness.

But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. - 1 Timothy 6:9-10

The healing power of love

And the second [commandment] is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. - Matthew 22:39

What does it mean to love your neighbor? The definition of love that has withstood the test of time was given to us by the apostle Paul:

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity [love], it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth.

- 1 Corinthians 13:3-8a

Love is more than giving to the poor or dying for a cause; it is the motive for doing these things. Jesus also defined perfect love:

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

- John 15:13

True love doesn't give in order to get something in return, rather, it gives for the sole benefit of the other person.

But I [Jesus] say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? - Matthew 5:44-46

AND

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

- John 13:35

Often a part of loving others is making friends. Humans are social creatures; while we can survive in solitary confinement, we cannot thrive in solitary confinement.

The only two things that can satisfy the soul are a person and a story; and even a story must be about a person. - G. K. Chesterton

If we need companionship in order to be fulfilled, then companionship can also help in a struggle with depression. Sometimes it is hard to make friends, especially good ones, because many forms companionship are unhealthy. The embrace of a pickpocket is not love. Some keys to making friendships are:

Learn friendly behavior

- ✓ Do not talk about yourself.

When you are trying to make a friend, do not talk about yourself. Talk about your friend and ask them questions about themselves, taking an interest their lives. Be sure to sit quietly and let them talk; do not interrupt. People who monopolize conversations are not popular.

He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit. Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding. - Proverbs 17:27-28

- ✓ Avoid Flattery

A man that flattereth his neighbor spreadeth a net for his feet. - Proverbs 29:5

People can usually tell when they are being flattered. While a sincere complement will bind friends closer together, insincerity never will.

He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favor than he that flattereth with the tongue. - Proverbs 28:23

- ✓ Leave early

Do not overstay your visit with friends. There have been times when I have visited a lonely person, and they would not let me leave without showing me one more thing and telling one more story (which led to showing one more thing and telling one more story). It's like the telemarketer who won't hang up until he's sold his product. Often loneliness causes this behavior and this behavior causes more loneliness. While wanting to visit a lonely person, it is difficult to do so unless I have time to spare; even then, I often feel insensitive when I finally tear myself away.

Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbor's house; lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee. - Proverbs 25:17

- ✓ Do not be a gossip

This rule is important for close friendships. Do not try to build up yourself up in the eyes of your friends by putting other people down. It does not work; the conversation won't be that enjoyable and your friends will suspect that you also talk about them the same way, behind their backs.

Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips. - Proverbs 27:2

- ✓ Forgiveness and charity

We have already talked about forgiveness and charity. These two qualities will make a person popular.

A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men. - Proverbs 18:16

AND

Many will entreat the favor of the prince: and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts. - Proverbs 19:6

Learn where to look for friends

- ✓ Avoid the bar scene.

Bars are full of dysfunctional people, people who are lonely. This is often because they have not learned the above mentioned rules of friendly behavior. The guy in the bar will be friendly because he, like the pickpocket, wants an embrace, not because he really cares about you. Until he starts to think about others, instead of himself, he will suffer from mental disorders, and it is only after you get to know him that you will see this baggage. When this relationship breaks up, it will leave a person with even more baggage, including more depression.

He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. - Proverbs 13:20

Another reason for picking your companions carefully is that "a person is known by the friends he keeps." One who might otherwise be a good friend, may avoid you if he is trying to avoid trouble himself.

- ✓ Find a church

The basic biblical definition of *church* is 'an assembly of people.' In a good church, you will find friends who will genuinely care for you.

*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.
- John 13:35*

While dysfunctional people often go to church too, those who are trying to overcome their trials can be healthy friends. In fact, Bible studies and informal accountability groups are very healthy.

A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. - Proverbs 17:17

AND

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another. - Hebrews 10:24-25a

- ✓ Watch out for cults

A cult is not the same thing as the church. While the church should be known for the love we have for one another, those who have come out of a cult will tell you that belonging to a cult is more like being in slavery. The danger comes when cults flatter lonely people by given them attention during the recruitment process.

Recognize that God is your best companion

Sometimes, even when you have done everything right, you may still be lonely. In these times, it is good to know that Jesus himself has given us the promise of His and the Father's fellowship. Jesus said:

*And I will pray the Father, and **he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.***

*Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that **I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.***

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he

will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. - John 14:16-23

To explain what God dwelling with us is like is difficult, so to many this may sound overly simplistic, but it is hard to suffer chronic depression when you have an intimate friendship with God.

Controlling our Thoughts

Do chemical imbalances cause depression, or is depression the fruit of our preoccupations? Is it possible that our thoughts are the engine and our feelings the caboose? In the Bible, Moses records an interesting view about the thoughts of men:

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. - Genesis 6:5

Many years later Jesus showed up on the scene. The apostle John said this of Him:

But Jesus did not commit himself unto [his fellow countrymen], because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man. - John 2:24-25

What do you spend your time thinking about? What do you watch on television? What type of jokes do you think are funny? Would you like to share your thoughts with Jesus? If you had been entertaining Him last night, would you have watched something different on television? Would you have turned the TV off? Is it not strange how some of us do not wish to overcome our old nature? Do we imagine that we can entertain ourselves with wrong thoughts now, and then when we get to heaven will somehow desire only good thoughts?



And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; - Hebrews 12:13-15

If God did make us, then it would make sense that filling our minds with things that offend Him will cause us mental and emotional problems. For this reason, the apostle Paul taught:

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. - Philippians 4:8

You can control your thoughts. It takes practice, and occasionally you may slip up, but as you practice dwelling on good thoughts your disposition (and symptoms of depression) will improve. Does this mean we are not subject to chemical imbalances? No. It is just that we should use thoughts, not medication, to balance our chemicals. We all know that if you tell a scary story around the campfire to a group of boys, they'll get

an adrenalin rush. The best way to calm them down so they'll sleep later is not to medicate, but to redirect their thoughts. A psychiatrist's recommendation to medicate depression is an oversimplification of the problem. A single living cell is far more complex than a space shuttle. If a space shuttle had a glitch, would dousing the control panel with chemicals really counter-balance the problem? Yet psychiatrists think that drugging the human brain, which is made up of billions of these complex, living cells, is an adequate solution. If medicating really balances the chemicals, then why do these medications so often have [suicidal and other dangerous side effects](#)?

If God wants us to control our thoughts, then it is possible to do so.

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; - 2 Corinthians 10:5

AND

*Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.
- Proverbs 16:3*

AND if he wants us to get the victory over depression, then it is possible to do so.

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. - 2 Timothy 1:7

AND

*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.
- 1 Corinthians 10:13*

When it seems impossible to control your own thoughts, go to Jesus on His terms, and He will help. Jesus said:

*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and **him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.** - John 6:37*

Realize that all things work together for good.

Our last prescription for overcoming depression is to look at our trials in a positive light. This is more than learning to accept what happens, we must realize that trials like chastisements are good for us. According to the Apostle Paul:

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. - Romans 8:28

If you believe this truth, you will look at your troubles differently. Many people with depression also suffer symptoms of anxiety. In plain English, they are worried about many things. If people could realize that the problems they are worried about are allowed by God for their good, rather than stress, they would have peace.

Once when I was in manufacturing, I made a big mistake, costing the company I worked for thousands of dollars. I was worried that we would lose our client, which at that time could

have been a fatal blow to the company. Adding long hours and some other problems to this, I began to suffer an anxiety attack which fortunately brought me to a point of prayer, during which I recalled the above verse. In professing to love God and believing that He was in control, I was able to accept that all things work together for good. My mind was refreshed, and my anxiety left, replaced by the hope that I would learn quickly whatever God was trying to teach me. With the anxiety gone, I was able to function normally and continue in my responsibilities, which I wasn't able to do under stress. Finally, most of the things I had been worried about never come to pass (most never do 😊).

A Christian worldview will help you to see differently the situations that are causing your anxiety and depression. Some passages in the Scripture speaking on our present suffering include:

And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. [...] Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. - Hebrews 12:5-8,11

AND

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; - 2 Corinthians 4:17

And here is an interesting Scripture verse.

Though he were a Son, yet [Jesus] learned obedience by the things which he suffered; - Hebrews 5:8

With the right worldview, our trials should produce hope, not depression.

And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: - Romans 5:3-4

Many true stories could be told of overcoming depression by realizing that all things work together for good. If you believe this, you can endure any situation that He places you in. But it is more than that; one who has experienced the love of God would rather be in tight spot with Him than to have all the world's pleasures without Him. For an amazing example of the peace of God in a tight spot, look at Polycarp, an early church leader:

Polycarp, the venerable bishop of Smyrna, hearing that persons were seeking for him, escaped, but was discovered by a child. After feasting the guards who apprehended him, he desired an hour in prayer, which being allowed, he prayed with such fervency, that his guards repented that they had been instrumental in taking him. He was, however, carried before the proconsul, condemned, and burnt in the market place.

The proconsul then urged him, saying, "Swear, and I will release thee;--reproach Christ." [All Polycarp had to do at this point was deny Jesus, and they would release him]

Polycarp answered, "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never once wronged me; how then shall I blaspheme my King, Who hath saved me?"⁷

Even with Polycarp's troubles, because of his faith it was impossible for him to suffer from anxiety or depression. No doubt without Christ Polycarp would have been overwhelmed with distress, willing to do nearly anything to negotiate a release. But knowing that all things work for good to them that love the Lord, Polycarp could embrace his trial. Did it work for good? Yes, he went immediately to his glory, and he has left us encouragement and a glorious testimony. He, of all people, had reason to suffer from anxiety and depression, but he did not, because his *King had saved him*.

The conclusion

Reviewing the cure in outline form:

A sound mind comes from obedience to the teachings of Jesus.

- ✓ A life given to Christ

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. - Isaiah 26:3

- ✓ Openness to counsel, accountability and exhortation

That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. - Mark 4:12

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. - 1 Thessalonians 5:21

- ✓ A good diet and exercise

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

- ✓ Forgiveness

Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. - Colossians 3:13

- ✓ Thankfulness

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. - Hebrews 13:5

✓ Charity

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.
- Matthew 5:44-45

✓ Love

If ye fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well: - James 2:8

✓ Controlling your thoughts

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; - 2 Corinthians 10:5

✓ Knowing that all things work together for good

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. - 1 Peter 4:12-13

Addiction to depression:

Up until this point we have discussed the cure for depression, but we have not yet covered one important point: being addicted to your depression. All sin is addictive, and, unbelievably, so is depression. If you do not believe that all sin is addictive, name one that isn't, and be sure to let me know!

Nobody likes feeling depressed! Why, or how, could somebody become addicted to the symptoms of depression? While it is different for each person, some possibilities include:

It has become their identity; they may not even know the way out.

Some like pity, and everyone likes to be the center of attention. Does your depression give you an opportunity to be the center of attention?

It is easier to lay in bed with depression, than to get up and do something about it.

Some would rather be depressed than forgive or be thankful, because often they are punishing somebody.

For some this is the easiest way. They would rather have depression than be obedient.

For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. - Matthew 13:15

If you understand the addictive nature of sin, you will realize that when you resist the temptation to sin, eventually its attraction will diminish. Many will get angry with me for implying that they *like* to be

depressed. However, I did not say that, I am saying that they are *addicted* to their depression. It is because of this addiction they will not do the things necessary to be cured.

Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house forever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. - John 8:34-36

Altar call

Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD. - Psalms 144:15

To those of you who are suffering with depression, why not give your life to the Lord?

*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.
- Matthew 11:28-30*

To learn how to, or for support, email me at jeff@the-gospel.org.

Or you can take our [two-question test](#) and learn about salvation. Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Authored by [Jeff Barnes](#)

End notes

- [1] Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder, Fourth Edition, Text Revision.
- [2] Journal of Chemical Dependency Treatment volume 1, No. 2 1988 page 23
- [3] This widow is a personal friend of the author.
- [4] Low self-esteem is of the symptoms of depression.
- [5] From Thayer's Greek Definitions
- [6] NIMH claims that over 1 in 4 adults in America are suffering from a mental illness at any one time. Half of these cases are suffering from two or more different mental disorders.
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/statistics/index.shtml>
- [7] Fox's Book of Martyrs



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