

LECTURE #17

Depression

Introduction

The goal of tonight's lecture is to show from God's Word that a Christian can help another Christian, who is struggling with depression, how to change. The goal is not to try to change the world's philosophy on the cause and treatment for depression, although we will look at some things that the world espouses. Many Christians have been led astray by the world's influence, have been "psychologized", and they forfeit the grace and power that is available to them. The challenge is to help them move from a **man-centered, secular worldview** to a **God-centered, Biblical worldview** so lasting transformation can occur.

I. Some preliminary thoughts

- A. A depressed person needs to _____ His **thinking** and **behavior** needs to change. **God knows** what he needs. God, our Creator, knows our hearts, each individually, and cares very much for every single person.

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Ps.139:15, 23

For God is greater than our hearts, and He knows everything. 1Jn.3:20

- 1.) Encourage this person for coming for help. God commends people who acknowledge they have a need. It shows the beginning of a **humble attitude**, and God is gracious to the humble in heart.

God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. James 4:6

He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. Ps.25:9

- 2.) God is Himself a "**Wonderful Counselor**" , Isa.9:6 **His Word counsels** us:

Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors. Ps. 119:24

Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.
Ps. 119:105

- 3.) We'll see how the best counselor in the world ministers to Cain, David, Elijah, and Jonah, and learn some valuable insights on how God comforts, and confronts his people, so they can change.
- 4.) We'll also see what God does not do:
 - a. dredge up the person's **past**,
 - b. _____ his present emotional problems on someone else, like parents' failures;
 - c. neither does He blame present sinful thinking and behavior on outside influences, past or present. Mk.7 Jesus tells us that what goes into the mouth (any defiling influence from the outside of us) does not cause us to sin. **What causes us to sin comes from the _____, from within.**
- 5.) Why mention sin in relation to depression? The Scriptures teach that any thought, attitude or behavior that does not glorify God or image Jesus Christ is sin. 1Jn.5:17, Rom.3:23

As followers of Christ, our main focus in life is to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ, and He never manifested an attitude of despair, giving up, or doubting the goodness of his Father. **Despair is utterly _____ the promises of God.**

- B.** Give _____. God promises we have everything we need in his Word for all the issues of life, and how to be godly, no matter what has happened to us. It is not only possible, but expected, that we be **overcomers, and conquerors**, because of our union with Christ.

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by sinful desires. 1Pe.1:3-4

And His commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. 1Jn.5:4

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.
Rom.8:37

You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your Word.
Ps.119:114

- C.** Help the counselee learn how to **call out to God**. Many of the **lament** psalms minister to a depressed person. He can pray it back to God.

*I love the Lord for He heard my voice; He heard my cry for mercy. Because He turned His ear to me, I will call on Him as long as I live. The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the Lord: “**O Lord, save me!**” Ps.116:1-4*

“How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and everyday have sorrow in my heart?” Ps.13:2

“Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” Ps.46:10

*Why are **you downcast, O my soul?** Why so disturbed within me? **Put your hope in God**, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God. Ps.42:5*

- D.** Remind him that God’s Word is:

Powerful Ps.119: 98-100

Life-transforming Ps.19: 7-11 2Tim.3:14-15

Authoritative Ps.119:144 Matt.5:18

Sufficient Ps.119:130, 165, 2Tim.3:16 2Pe.1:3

Unchanging Ps.119:89,91,152,160 Matt.24:35

- E. Goal in Biblical counseling**

(Unlike the goal of **secular** counseling which is generally to improve self-esteem and focus on the feelings, **which misses the target**.)

1. **Glorify God** in his present situation.

Jesus said in Jn.17:4 “*I have brought you glory by completing the work you gave me to do.*”

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 1Cor.10:31

2. **Become more Christ-like.** Rom.8:28, 29

II. Symptoms and dynamics of depression

A. What are symptoms of depression? (From the DSM-IV TR, Psychiatry's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 4th edition)

Depressed mood, overwhelming sadness that lasts for more than 2 weeks
Diminished interest or pleasure in daily activities
Weight loss or gain
Insomnia, or hypersomnia
Fatigue or loss of energy
Feelings of worthlessness, or excessive guilt
Diminished ability to think or concentrate
Recurrent thoughts of suicide

This is a quote from Depression Education Center”:

“What causes depression? In addition to external, societal factors that may contribute to depression, there are other reasons why a person may become depressed. These include traumatic life experiences such as the death of a loved one, living with disease, taking medications with unpleasant side effects, substance abuse, hormonal changes, or a family history of depression. Sometimes the cause of depression is unknown.

Whatever the circumstances, depression is caused by an imbalance of certain chemicals in the brain. Normally, these “chemical messengers” help nerve cells communicate with one another by sending and receiving messages, and they may also influence a person’s mood. In the case of depression, the available supply of the chemical messengers is low, so nerve cells can’t communicate effectively.”

1. Some physical conditions can produce symptoms associated with depression and fluctuations in mood: stroke, Parkinson’s disease, chronic pain, brain damage, thyroid trouble, diabetes, chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, poor health habits, deficient sleep, pregnancy, postpartum period. It is important to have the counselee **evaluated** by a medical doctor if the depression seems to be of recent onset with no apparent explanation.

2. What about the counselee who wants to go off his medication?

Several points to consider:

- a. Why was he put on it in the first place? If he is mishandling problems of life, and goes off the medication, he will again experience the depressive emotions.
- b. Being on medication does not have to be **the main issue**. . The biblical counselor is not the doctor and should not tell the person to

stop his medication. Some medications should not be discontinued abruptly.

- c. Diseases that cause symptoms of depression are _____ not excuses for sin. A **person can glorify God even when he does not feel well**. Grace is available for him to trust God, focus on His goodness and faithfulness, and he can obey God. 1Cor.10:13, Phil.4:13, 2Cor.12:8-10
- d. Your worldview, whether secular or biblical, will determine your **starting point**.
 1. If it is **secular**, you believe that
 - a. man is basically good,
 - b. needs high self-esteem to function successfully in life, and
 - c. bad things that happen to him will cause dysfunctional behavior-
 - d. He's a victim- his body's chemicals get imbalanced and he can't help how he feels. If that is what you believe, then the treatment approach will be to
 - e. medicate for unpleasant emotions,
 - f. implement measures to improve self-esteem, and influence him into thinking what has happened to him makes him a victim and
 - g. He's not really responsible for his bad behavior. This does not give hope to anyone.
 2. The **biblical** approach:
 - a. The Bible says no one is good, _____ **is good**.
 - b. Man is a rebel in his heart and continually turns away from God, goes his own way from birth, and does not trust God in the everyday issues of life. Ps.51:5, Rom.3:9-18
 - c. He does not live his life for the glory of God, the purpose for which he was created. Isa.43:7, Rom.11:33-36
 3. The message of **hope found in the gospel**, is relevant in every counseling situation. With **renewed thoughts and desires**, and **obedience** the goal, our emotions are also renewed, we **experience joy as a _____ of godly living**.

B. Starting with **biblical presuppositions**, we look at Common dynamics of depression from a **biblical** perspective.

When it comes to areas of thinking, feeling, motivations, and behavior the Bible is the Christian's authoritative resource. God looks at the heart because it is the source of words and behavior. The heart is where you think and believe; where sin begins; where all negative and positive emotions

reside; where repentance begins; where change begins; God’s Word exposes; and God will especially judge.

Prov.4:23, “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”

Heart issues:

1. Depression occurs when

- a. You have a strong desire (hope, demand, craving, felt need, expectation) that rules your heart.

There are innumerable idols in the human heart: desire for control, comfort, recognition, love, security, respect, money, prestige, honor, a good family, wanting spouse to change, wanting children to obey, and act well in public,
 Unchecked, these idols of the heart result in a person being trapped in a lifestyle of shame, regret, self-focus, and blame shifting.

2. **Unresolved sin** Ge.4:1-16

Cain spiraled down to depression because of sin. Right actions accompanied by **faith** are pleasing to God. Heb.11:4

1Jn.3:12 says, “Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother’s were righteous.”

God confronted him, gave him a chance to repent and do right. Gen.4:6-7 says, *Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you **angry**? Why is **your face downcast**? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?*

He was envious of his brother, became hateful, bitter, and finally killed him. After God judged him, he still **would not repent**, but only **complained** about how hard his life was. He was only **concerned about** _____, not about being right with God. The words “I will be sent way from your presence.” are good to show someone who acts like Cain. Some counselees will not respond to godly counsel. Severe depression, dark, lonely emotions would be appropriate for a person who is **alienated from God because of sin**, and sensing His judgment hanging over them. Sin separates us from God. Ask a counselee, “How do you think a person would feel if he is separated from God?” satisfied, joyful, peaceful?

No, he would feel, empty, unsatisfied, agitated. Where are these negative emotions coming from? They are coming **from thoughts** that register “I don’t trust God; therefore I won’t do what he says.”

Salvation is a prerequisite to overcoming depression. Only when one is rightly related to God, does he have the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, giving him the power to obey God and be set free **from _____ ungodly responses** and sinful thinking.

3. Unresolved sin in a believer:

David was a godly man who went down into depression because of failure to deal with a particular sin. Ps.32 tells of the mental and physical anguish he experienced of God's heavy hand of chastisement.

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For night and day your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Ps.32:3-4

Finally, the prophet Nathan, helped him see how serious his sin really was, and he became remorseful, confessed his sin, **repented**, and showed evidence of real change. He wrote Ps.51, which **demonstrates humility**, and a willingness to take **full, personal responsibility** for his sinful actions. After that he could say,

"Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit there is no deceit". Ps.32:1-2

4. Depression from mishandling a difficult event

Look at diagram #1, we see the downward spiral to depression when:

- a. You experience a difficult life event,
- b. Respond to it in a sinful way, falling into **self-pity**, then anger, bitterness, and finally despair, **hopelessness** and thoughts of suicide, or wanting to die.

In 1King's 18-19, Elijah experienced a traumatic event, the killing of 400 prophets of Baal. Then he heard the report that Jezebel was out to kill him. He became, **afraid, ran away, isolated himself, and prayed that he might die**. He said "I have had enough, Lord, take my life.".....

A depressed person often isolates himself, sometimes runs to a different place, looking for relief, (not thinking it through or relying on godly counsel, but just reacting.)

First of all, God ministered to his physical needs. Then He asked him a question, "What are you doing here? **God corrected his wrong interpretation** of how many prophets were left, and then told him what to do. In other words, get back to

fulfilling your responsibilities. Elijah obeyed God, and the depression left because his thinking changed, and his behavior changed.

Diagram 2 shows what goes on inside a person when he responds to difficult situations in an unbiblical way.

- a. **Disappointment:** unbiblical expectations; “I should not be sinned against.” Or unbiblical inordinate desires: “I just want her to respect me.” or “I want him to love me, pay attention, show he cares.”
- b. **Discouragement:** unbiblical thinking; “I don’t deserve this.” Or “I have my rights.”
- c. **Disillusionment:** “This will never change.” Or “I can’t believe he did that.” “It wasn’t supposed to be like this.” “I’ll never be happy again.” “I don’t want to live the rest of my life like this.”
- d. **Depression:** self-focused thinking, Absence of godly thinking. Shutting down, not fulfilling responsibilities. Blue mood for long periods of time, sinful responses, leads to more negative emotions.
- e. **Despair:** hopelessness, utterly dejected. Thoughts of dying or suicide. Thoughts like, “I’m no use to anyone.” “No one cares.” “What’s the use.”

Asaph wrote Psalm 73. He despaired because of looking at the godless and seeing their prosperity. He **became envious** and “almost slipped.” Then he turned to God and refocused on the truth and realized that in the end, God makes things right. He turned back to worshipping God and became stabilized in his emotions.

“But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.” Ps.73:28

In Lamentations 3, Jeremiah teaches us that focusing on the circumstances, that are out of our control, difficult as they may be, will lead to disabling emotions. He turned his _____ back to God, remembering his character. That gave him hope.

*“I remember my affliction and wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is **downcast** within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope. Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, “The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for Him.”* Lam. 3:19-24

Jonah experienced disabling emotions, despair, and thoughts of dying because of disobedience. Jonah was angry that God would be so compassionate to this

wicked, cruel nation. In fact he was **angry enough to die**. God asked him “Do you have any right to be angry?” Notice how often anger at the circumstances, (really it’s anger at God), accompanies depression.

“Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs. But I, with a song of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the Lord.” Jonah2:8-9

III. Getting started; Implications to the Biblical counseling process

A. Emphasize *the heart* as you gather data

1.) Initially, develop a trusting relationship.

Listen carefully. Get into his world, **find out what is happening**, put yourself in his shoes. Jesus showed compassion on people who were suffering. Take good notes and listen for “unbiblical talk.”

Enter the counselee’s world, but don’t stay there. Pivot him around to God and other people. A depressed person is self-absorbed and needs to change his focus.

2.) Ask **questions** that prompt the person to relate to you how he is interpreting his circumstances. For example, “What are you thinking as you sort through what’s happened?”
 “How does this make you feel? “What do you think needs to happen so you’ll experience peace and joy again in your life?”

Sometimes metaphors help to describe a person’s experience of depression. “I feel like I’m groping in the dark.” I don’t know who I am. I have no identity. I’m in a fog with no light or way out.

Subjective feelings may include suffering, emptiness, sadness, hopelessness, aloneness, isolation, apathy, anger, fear/anxiety, spiritual battle.

Prov.20:5 says, “*The purposes in a man’s heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out.*”

3.) Say back to the person what you hear his experience is in the midst of all that is going on. This is not the same as just empathy, or just being supportive. As you get a better understanding of what is driving his behavior, then you can help him make **positive changes, which gives hope.**

B. Emphasize the heart as you **teach and admonish .**

1. How is he responding to the circumstances? What patterns of thinking need to change?
 - a. Change focus from circumstances and feelings to God and His unchanging Word.
 - b. **Talk to yourself** with Scripture rather than passively listening to yourself.
 - c. Consciously and repeatedly **direct thoughts to God**.
 - d. Memorize small portions of scripture. If too difficult, write out on 3x5 cards, and read 5 times a day.

I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I will not be shaken. Ps.16:8-9

Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

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

C. Emphasize the heart as you help the counselee understand the **change process**

1. Salvation is a prerequisite to overcoming depression. The indwelling Holy Spirit enables you to change **habitual** ungodly responses to difficult life events and you are thus set free. Explore his understanding of the gospel.
2. Change involves “putting off” unbiblical thoughts and behavior, and “putting on”, or replacing them with biblical thinking and behavior. Eph.4:22-24 (see handout)

D. Emphasize the heart in homework assignments

1. Evaluate areas in which he has shut down and is not fulfilling his God-given responsibilities. **Obey God in every situation.** Depression affects every area of life; relationships, work, finances,

devotions, service and ministry opportunities, daily habits. What God commands, He enables.

*Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed-not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence-continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to **will and to act** according to His good purpose. Phil.2:12-13*

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Phil.4:13

1. **Make a list** of responsibilities that need to be done at home:
such as cleaning, laundry, cooking
2. **Set small goals** and accomplish 1 thing at a time. Check them off and bring the list in for evaluation
3. **Set aside time daily** for Bible reading, prayer, Scripture memory.
4. **Make a list** of 25 things you are grateful for; material things, relational, and spiritual blessings
5. **Do 1 act of kindness daily** for a family member with no expectation of reward. Do this to show love towards God and your “neighbor”
6. **Send out cards** to people to encourage them
7. Limit TV watching. **Get physically active**, especially if you don't feel like it. Have someone in family check up and be accountable to.
Go for short walks
Clean a small section of the home that needs it
8. Explore understanding of **marriage roles**, and how to fulfill them
9. Are any relationships severed due to sin? **Make a list** and go to each person and ask **forgiveness**.
10. Explore how to **better serve** in a church ministry

E. Although you may _____helpless, God's truth declares you can persevere and endure. Saving faith always perseveres. Jude24

Exercise faith in the situation facing you. Every testing is an opportunity to grow spiritually and become more like Jesus Christ. God is Sovereign over every detail of our lives and if He has allowed a difficult circumstance to come to you, it is His intent to strengthen you, conform you to the image of His Son. Rom.8:28-29

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. 1Cor.10:13

F. Learn to be patient. Overcoming depression may take time. The process for getting there is essential for spiritual growth. There will be relapses, failures, days of feeling badly. But you will make progress.

Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it out to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Phil. 1:6

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 2 Cor. 4:17

IV. What about “Bipolar Disorder” formerly called “Manic depression?”

Definition: A condition characterized by periods in life where the emotions and behavior swing from the extreme of depression to the other extreme of mania. In the manic phase, the person attempts to recover from the depression by manifesting bizarre behavior to compensate for the uncomfortable depressed state. These behaviors are sinful responses in thinking and behavior:

1. Overcorrection: shopping spree, overspending, overindulgence in alcohol, eating, promiscuous sex
2. As a solution: trying to numb the pain of depression
3. Denial: don't want to face the real issue
4. Frantic straw-grasping: just reacting, not thinking things through

This is pendulum living- by your feelings. Always responding to life, people, circumstances with wrong thinking and behavior.

Main issue: Not trusting God. Will always result in unstable emotions.

Biblical answers the same as we discussed: to teach counselee how to trust God, repent of wrong thinking and behavior, to obey God in every situation no matter how difficult, because God promises a good result.

References:

Out of the Blues by Wayne Mack

Biblical Counselors Medical Desk Reference by Dr. Robert Smith

Spiritual Depression by D. Martin Lloyd Jones

Homework for a person who struggles with depression

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. **Eph. 4:22-24**

“Put off”	“Put on”
1. Inordinate desires	1. Desire to please God glorify God. 1 Cor.10:31 1 Thess. 4:1, Ps.16:2
2. Doubting God	2. In God’s power, choose to believe the truth. Ja.1:6-8, Eph.3:20, Phil.1:6, Heb.11,
3. Self-pity, hopelessness	3. Hope in God, faith. Ps.31:14-15 Ps. 40,42,46
4. Self- focused thinking	4.Focus on God, His Words, other’s needs. Jn.13:12-17 Jn.15, Phil.2:3-5, 4:6-10
5. Anger, bitterness	5. Forgiveness, overlook offenses, bear with one another./Col.3:12-15, Eph.4:31,32 Prov.19:11,
6. Feeling oriented	6. Commandment oriented. Jn.14:15, 1Sam.12:14-15, Prov.13:13, 28:26, Matt.7:24-27
7. Inadequate view of trials, pressure	7. Trust God will use trial for your good. Rom.8:28-29 Accept God’s purpose Heb.12:1-3, 2Cor.4:16-18 1Pe.1:6-7, Ja.1:2-4
8. Unforgiving spirit	8. Forgiving spirit Matt.6:14-15 Lk.17:3-4 Eph.4:31-32, Col.3:13
9. Guilty conscience	9. Confession of sin. Do right before God. Gen.4:6-7 Ps.32, 38, Prov.28:13
10. Unthankful	10. Thankfulness 1Thess.5:18, Eph.5:20, Ja.1:2 Col.3:15
11. Lack of Christian fellowship	11. Relationships with growing Christians 1Pe.4:9-10 Heb.10:25 Rom.12:10 Jn.13:34-35, Eph.2:19-22
12. No ministry involvement	12. Serve God and fellow believers Jn.12:26, Rom.12:4-8,11 Eph.4:16 1 Pe.4:10-11 Gal.5:13; 6:9-1
13. Selfishness	13. Love others 1Pe.4:8 1 Jn.3:11-24
14. Lack of joy	14. Joy in the Lord Phil4:4-5, Ja.1:2, 1 Thess.5:16