

Dealing with Depression

The subject matter of depression is one many preachers have stayed away from. Some view depression as a sin and will simply tell you to repent and increase your faith. Others say “get over it” and stop feeling sorry for yourself. Depression is common in the world around us. While working at a medical facility billing section I noticed the diagnosis of being “tiredness” and “fatigue.” One time I asked one of the doctors how many of those were actually depression, almost all of them were. He added the burden many Christians bear is not just the depression but the questioning of their faith. After all, if they had more faith, if they trusted God more then they wouldn’t be battling depression. In this article we want to briefly describe depression, point out people in the Bible who described being “depressed,” and how God dealt with one particular case.

First, we need to know what is depression. Many times, it is being “down” or “gloomy”. Usually we feel better after a day or two. Sometimes it hangs around longer and grows deeper in us. We are constantly tired and worn out, nothing gives us pleasure, all decisions become hard or impossible to make, and there is a lack of joy in our lives. While this is not a clinical definition of depression it is a list of common symptoms.

This gets us to talking about the various people in the Bible who were “depressed.” While the word “depression” is not actually used in many cases the symptoms are described. For instance, Moses said, **"Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child,' to the land which You swore to their fathers? "Where am I to get meat to give to all these people? For they weep all over me, saying, 'Give us meat, that we may eat.' "I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me."** (Numbers 11:12-14) I can sympathize with Moses as he dealt with the children of Israel for over forty years. They were constantly complaining, questioning Moses authority, and grumbling about everything and anything. Can you and I relate to Moses feelings in Numbers 11. He was

tired of the circumstances he was placed in and took his eye off of God.

King David was overcome with grief and guilt. **“There is no soundness in my flesh Because of Your anger, Nor any health in my bones Because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; Like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.” (Psalms 38:3-4).** In David’s case, his depression was directly related to his sin with Bathsheba and having her husband killed. Keep in mind, David was not some hardened criminal or sinner who despised God, but a man who was after God’s own heart.

Men such as Jeremiah, and Jonah could be listed in this article. In none of these circumstances would we say they lacked faith in God. With Moses and Jeremiah, we can say the circumstances got to them. In David’s case we can say it was related to sin. Jonah actually disagreed with God, was angry, and felt defeated when Nineveh repented of their sins.

My final person on this list is Elijah. In 1 Kings 18, Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal to a spiritual duel. They offered a sacrifice to Baal and Elijah one to God. Whichever sacrifice was consumed would be the true God. Nothing happened to the sacrifice of Baal but Jehovah sent fire to consume the sacrifice offered by Elijah. However, Jezebel threatened the life of Elijah, and he ran for the hills. While in a cave he prays for God to take his life. **“And he prayed that he might die and said, "It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!" (1 Kings 19:4b).** Instead of praying for deliverance or God’s will to be done, he prayed for death! Why?

Elijah felt alone, 1 Kings 19:10. Keep in mind Elijah isolated himself by going to Beersheba and then traveled another day’s journey to a cave. In one sense he was alone. One big problem with depression is the desire to be left alone. This can become a vicious cycle as we don’t feel like being around other people but the more we are alone, we become more depressed.

Then God steps into the picture.

God provided Elijah food and rest. **“Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, "Arise and eat.”**

6 Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So, he ate and drank, and lay down again.” (1 Kings 19:5).

Have you ever been worn out to the point of being exhausted? Elijah had a day dealing with the prophets of Baal, the worry of Jezebel trying to kill him, and then the travel of getting to his cave. He needed rest and food. Sometimes we need to take care of ourselves and get some rest along with nourishment.

God spoke to Elijah in a small, still voice, 1 Kings 19.11-13. God did not use a voice like an earthquake, or thunder, but a small still voice. A gentle voice with a simple question, “What are you doing here?” This was not a question of rebuke as much as a question of comfort.

Next, God gave Elijah more work to do. He was to anoint Hazael as king of Syria, and Jehu as King over Israel, 1 Kings 19.15-16. These by the way were two men not in line to become King over their respective countries but it was God’s plan. We need to be doing God’s will and get to work.

Finally, God gave Elijah, a friend and fellow servant, Elisha, 1 Kings 19.16. We need to be around other servants of God. Seek those of like faith and common goals. – Dennis Tucker

(Some of the ideas for this article came from a book, “Lives Lost and Found” by Wilson Adams and David Lanphear; which I highly recommend)