

ECT 201 Lessons 32 and 33 Understanding Depression and Counsel for Depression

From John Morrison's article Depression: Riding a Merry-Go-Round in a Fog

April 28, 2024

The three common causes of depression:

1. Physical causes – 15%
2. Spiritual causes-5-10%
3. How people respond to loss and disappointment. 75-80%

Spiritual Causes of Depression

- Satan, the enemy of our souls, attacks those following Christ, but Jesus intercedes for believers when Satan attacks:
- 1 Peter 5:8 "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."
- Revelation 12:10 "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night."
- John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks *la* lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."
- John 10:8-10 "All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. ⁹ I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."
- Romans 8:33-34 "Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; ³⁴ who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, **who also intercedes for us.**"
- Zechariah 3:1-6 "Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the **angel of the LORD**, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. ² The LORD said to Satan, 'The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?' ³ Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel. ⁴ He spoke and said to those who were standing before him, saying, 'Remove the filthy garments from him.' Again he said to him, 'See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes.' ⁵ Then I said, 'Let them put a clean turban on his head.' So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of the LORD was standing by."
- Ask about internal statements which most assume are "your thoughts" because they are in your head; statements such as "you are such a loser" or "who would want you?" You have no reason to talk to yourself as you. You would normally talk to yourself as "I". Sometimes this can be an indication of the **enemy** speaking thoughts that are negative and hopeless, and these are not things YOU really believe about yourself or that God believes about you.

Video: [youtube.com/watch?v=f74gQm5Zxx4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f74gQm5Zxx4) “Laura Gallier – Fighting the Demonic Realm – Faith vs Culture” from minute marker 11:41 – 14:30

Responding to Spiritual Attacks with three biblical passages:

1. James 4:1-10 especially 7-10 “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”
2. 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, ⁴ for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. ⁵ We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ”
3. Ephesians 4:26-27 “In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold.” NIV

Depression Caused by a Person’s Response to Loss and Disappointment

- When a person evaluates his or her loss with fear instead of faith, or with anger turned inward, the result is depression.
- Examples of loss and disappointments resulting in depression are loss of a job, career or business; divorce; death of a loved one; broken relationship; serious illness; loss of ability to reach goals or attain expectations.
- Loss produces pain and pain produces sorrow. An unhealthy response is to try to gain control over painful circumstances or deny that it hurts. Trying to gain control leads to anger or to depression because things can’t always be controlled. Denying that it hurts leads to a deadened heart. Both lead to depression.
- Healthy people respond to Loss > Pain > Sorrow > Faith in a Sovereign God
- Depressed people respond Loss > Pain > Sorrow > Fear or > Anger
- Fear – This must change; it must go away. I can’t live with this. Where is God?
- Anger – I don’t need this! How could this happen? Where is God? God can’t be trusted. It may be directed against others, against themselves or against God.
- When anger turns inwards is results in depression. What I really need I am unable to make happen.

Assessing Depression

1. Ascertain the starting time of depression. Ask them to recall a time when depression did not exist.

2. Determine the intensity of the depression. Have them describe their feelings through an average day. Look for indications of hope, motivation or enjoyment or their absence. Find out how they spend their time, specifically. Are there periods of the day when they function normally? Note: The deeper the internal pain, hopelessness and withdrawal from daily responsibility and functioning, the more important it becomes to have a physician involved in their care. If they are completely non-functional (staying in bed 15 hours per day) refuse to work with them unless a doctor is involved.
3. Find out what happened in their life and the life of those close to them near the beginning of the depression. Take time to ask questions concerning what that loss meant to them.
4. If you are unable to detect any particular loss, it is more likely that the cause is physical or spiritual.

Important Steps in Getting Out of Depression

1. Depression by its nature clouds thinking and make the person think things are hopeless even when they are not. Depression deceives in a downward direction.
2. Depressed people need someone to draw alongside who can listen, hear what is going on, pray and help that person find a way out.
3. Depression zaps the person of physical strength and energy so these three things are very important but will not feel important to the depressed person. These should be charted for accountability:
 - a. A good night's sleep – 8-9 hours. Sleep should be consistent with a bedtime between 9-11 PM and rising between 6-8 AM. Often depressed people get their body clocks out of rhythm which contributes to worsening symptoms.
 - b. Healthy eating - three balanced meals and a small snack or 5-6 small meals well-spaced out. Avoid sugary and starchy foods, and refrain from alcohol which is a depressant.
 - c. Exercise – 30 minutes of walking is a great place to start.
4. **Listen** to the depressed person, remembering Romans 15:7 and God's call to "accept one another as Christ accepted us."
5. Find out what the person's support network is like. Are others aware of what is going on? Remember Ephesians 4:25, 2 Corinthians 1:4; Galatians 6:2
6. What is the person already doing to get out of depression? Are they stuck in perpetual hopelessness, actively changing their circumstances or trusting God?
7. Ask if they are working with a doctor. Are they communicating their current struggles with their doctor?
8. Does this person know the Lord? How is their daily walk with God? How do they respond to:
 - a. John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."
 - b. John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."
 - c. Psalm 73:25 "Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you."

9. Find out if they drink alcohol, and if so how frequently and how much. Listen and get the facts. Remember, if they are an alcoholic, self-reporting is often inaccurate. As mentioned before, alcohol is a depressant and can make the counselee not care and deepen the depression so urge them to stop drinking, especially if taking an anti-depressant.
10. Ask them if they have suicidal thoughts. WAIT quietly for their response. Most of the time you will get a negative response but if you get an affirmative response, ask if they have a plan. If they do, get them to tell a family member and get them to see a doctor and confide the plan. Under no circumstances should you remain in the #1 position of helping them if they are suicidal. They need professional accountability. It is also helpful to have them fill out a “No Suicide Contract”.

Dealing with the majority of depression and its “outside the body” cause, you will want to **kindly, gently, lovingly, patiently, yet directly attempt to help them see the way that their very reasonable desires have become unreasonable demands, which when not met, have created depression.**

Verses to use:

- 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

This verse shows us that we are in a spiritual battle designed by the enemy to keep us from knowing God. **Why? Why is “knowing God” the battlefield?**

- 2 Peter 1:2-3 Because when we come to know God more and more, we receive multiplied grace and peace, life and godliness.
- Philippians 3:10
- 2 Corinthians 10:5
- 1 Corinthians 10:13
- James 4:1
- James 4:6-10

Helping People out of Depression Involves Six Things:

1. Take time to assess their safety and well-being and strongly urging medical care when indicated.
2. Take time to understand their losses from their perspective, and relationally speaking, weep with those who weep (whether physically weeping or not.)
3. Slowly help them examine whether what might have been legitimate desires slipped into becoming hidden demands, which when violated, resulted in anger turned inwards and then depression.
4. Encourage them towards repentance and trust – repentance where they have demanded anything of God or others, and trust in Him to meet their true needs in His way.
5. Urge them towards practical steps that help in depression such as regular simple exercise, proper eating, good bedtime and waking rituals.
6. Help them pursue the Lord daily, be connected to godly community, and have good reading material.

Remember to be patient! Often they can find healing as they believe

1. God is sovereign
2. God is good
3. Suffering is normal

You love your counselee sacrificially when you attend to them by:

1. Listening well
2. Praying for them often
3. Steadily urging them in the right direction

Depression Homework – Possible Assignments

1. Go to your doctor and get a complete physical to see if there are any organic issues that are driving the depression.
2. Make a list of your God-given responsibilities (as a husband, wife, parent, employee etc.) Note areas you are consistently failing to fulfill your responsibilities. Prioritize the areas and set a goal to begin working on the #1 item that week. When you are doing that one consistently, begin doing #2. Don't attack everything at once. You will need accountability.
3. Establish routines in your life. Write up a schedule for the day and stick to it regardless of how you feel. Get up at the same time each day, and go to bed at the same time. Don't sleep in late and stay up late surfing the net or watching television. When you get up each day, make the bed. Shower and dress each day. Load dishwasher by bedtime and unload dishwasher in the morning.
4. Use a heart journal to record the day and time that you struggle most with "feeling depressed". Brainstorm to determine what you were thinking or saying to yourself at that time, then craft a new biblical thought that would replace the despairing one.
5. Read your Bible every day – start out with 10 minutes. Start with the book of Psalms and read with a purpose. Look for God and His characteristics. Use a notebook to record any characteristics that you see about God each day in your reading. Take a moment to meditate on how that characteristic of God should shape your day. In light of that characteristic, what should you think today?
6. Select some areas in which you can serve. Help in the church office. Help in the nursery. Take a meal to a shut-in or sick person. Get out of your home each week and serve others.
7. Write a note of encouragement to someone who has benefited your life, either presently or in the past. Thank them for how they impacted your life.
8. Make a list of 50 things for which you can be thankful. Be specific. Don't list large general categories. Go over the list each morning after you read your Bible.
9. Take notes on the Sunday sermon and act on them. Look for ways to apply the teaching.
10. Fill your home and car with uplifting music that points to God or the cross. Eliminate ungodly or depressing music that glorifies despair, mockery, sexual sin and anger.
11. Select a few people to ask to pray for you and invite them to speak truth to you. Ask them to pray for more than just the alleviation of depression. Ask them to pray some of the scriptural prayers like Ephesians 1:18, Eph. 3:13

12. Read Ed Welch's booklet "The Way Up When You are Down" and underline the 10 most important sentences to you and share it with someone.
13. Select three of Welch's suggestions from p. 21-23 and put them into practice this week
14. Start memorizing 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 and 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. Write them on 3x5 cards and post them on your bathroom mirror to read while getting ready for the day. Post them on your computer or somewhere visible at work. Post them on the dashboard of your car to think about as you drive.