

## Depression

Today we are in **Week 2** of our series called “**Sound Mind**” where we are diving into the topic of mental health and attempting to address some of the major struggles we have regarding our mental health. Our theme verse for this series is **2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV) For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.** It is because of this incredible promise that we can have the HOPE of VICTORY regarding whatever we may be facing physically, emotionally or spiritually.

Our goals for this series are threefold:

**First, to help you understand you are not alone!** The mental health issue is a human issue! We all struggle in some way with our mental health!

**Secondly, we want to help you see that therapy (seeking the help of a mental health professional) is not a sign of spiritual weakness but is actually a step of courage.** Sharing your burden with others who are equipped to help you is a blessing God has given us. Sometimes we need help sorting through and working on things that have us bound up emotionally.

**And thirdly, we want you to see Jesus is the answer for whatever your struggle may be!** Jesus wants to heal you, comfort you, and give you victory over whatever is coming against your life.

Today, we are going to deal with the issue of **DEPRESSION.** (Let's **PRAY** before we jump in)

[\(First Half of Tim Hunt's video testimony regarding Depression\)](#)

Depression is a real thing that affects millions of people and Christians are not exempt from the issues of depression.

Some **really high profile suicides** over the past few years such as rock stars, fashion designers, athletes and even pastors have brought a keen awareness to the issue of depression...**Whenever there's a mass shooting in the news** usually a discussion on **mental illness and depression** ensues.

Btw, when we use the term “mental illness” I don't want you to think of that in a demeaning way or take that as an insult or some type of slur towards one who is struggling mentally and emotionally. It is simply a term we are using to describe that an individual is not well. Just like if someone had the Flu. We call the Flu an illness and when we do we don't consider that as a demeaning term making that person less than. We are simply stating that the person is not well. So, if you happen to be one who is struggling mentally and emotionally please don't feel like you have to be on the defensive.

**Depression is everywhere.** Mental illness is no respecter of persons or age. In fact, counselors on college campuses are seeing more and more students **requesting help with the issue of depression.** PRAISE GOD that more people are beginning to seek help (I'M encouraged by that) but at the same time it is also discouraging that **SO MANY PEOPLE ARE HURTING.**

I am not a certified counselor, or considered a medical professional -- **but I am a Pastor,** and today I am going to do what I CAN DO, which **ultimately is, lead you to God and tell you what the Bible teaches about this issue.** Listen, **I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT** there is **Hope** and there is **Healing** in the name of Jesus as it pertains to our mental health struggle.

### **What exactly is DEPRESSION?**

**Depression** is a mood altering disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest. Also called major depressive disorder or clinical depression, it affects how you feel, think, sleep, eat and behave and can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems that can impact your physical well being.

You may have trouble doing normal day-to-day activities, and sometimes you may even feel as if life isn't worth living. And it's widespread issue:

Studies say that **1 out of 9 people are on some sort of depression medication.**  
**1 out of 5 people HAVE BEEN on some sort of antidepressant medication in the past.**  
**The use of Depression meds has gone up over 300% and is continuing to rise each year.**

Now, I understand that all of us deal with doubt and depression from time-to-time. But when we are talking about **Clinical Depression it is more than just a bout with "the blues";** depression isn't a weakness and you can't simply "snap out" of it. **Depression is a mental illness, a medical issue people deal with, and it is not a SIN to be SICK.** Having depression also doesn't mean that you did something morally wrong. There's a big stigmatism associated with the term mental illness, like it's saying you are crazy or broken to the point that it is your full identity. Mental illness, as we stated earlier, is just simply stating that you are unwell. That mentally you aren't in a good place. **The brain is an organ, and just like hearts, lungs, kidneys and gall bladders, brains can get sick also.** I pray that by talking about it today that we can **overcome** the stigma that is associated with mental illness in the church.

Let's not dismiss the fact that the church can be one of those places where we feel the need to cover up what we're going through... everybody SEEMS to have it all together, or so we think. We just want to remind you that **"It's okay not to be okay."** But we want you to know that we don't want you to **"stay that way"**. I don't want you to feel the need to hide what you're going through. We want to help you get the help you need so that you can be all that God desires you to be.

There's a psychiatrist named **Stephen Ilardi**, and he has an incredible Ted Talk about depression that I would encourage you to check out when you have some time. In fact, our roll-in for the message this morning was a snippet from his talk. He says, "*Clinical depression is painful because it LIGHTS UP the PAIN circuitry in our brains -- which is why extremely clinically depressed people describe it as torment.*" He goes on to talk about how our bodies are impacted either positively or negatively by the type of life we are living. He believes that "**clinical depression is a disease of lifestyle.**" According to Ilardi, he believes the rise in clinical depression is linked to Modern American life being incredibly different from how our ancestors lived throughout history. He says this,

*"We were never designed for the sedentary, indoor, socially isolated, fast-food laden, sleep-deprived, frenzied pace of modern life."* - **Stephen Ilardi, Author, The Depression Cure**

As I heard this I thought to myself, "**Does this not describe just about everyone in my church?**" We don't get enough exercise, don't get enough sleep, we eat too much of the wrong things, and go-go-go every single day of our lives! We don't spend enough time outside, getting sunlight... our kids don't get out and play enough with other kids... We didn't have a choice but to go outside when we were kids. Inside was boring!!! The only time TV was good was on Saturday morning. And video games really were just beginning to be developed for home entertainment. We knew nothing of cell phones or the internet. We went outside, created our own games and played with other children. And this kind of world is becoming more and more foreign to our kids with every generation.

We're gonna get into the Bible in a second and look at what the Word of God says about all of this but I want to take a moment to mention that suicide is at epidemic levels and the ultimate end goal of depression is to get you to believe that the only hope for you to get relief from your depression is to end your life. Here are some startling statistic: **Suicide claims over 1 million lives per year worldwide. 49,500 suicides in America 2022 -- TWICE the murder rate and it is the number 1 killer of kids 15 - 24.**

Maybe you are here today and you are someone who struggles with the pain of suicidal thoughts. I want to remind you that whatever is bothering you is TEMPORARY - **Death is a permanent solution to a TEMPORARY issue.** I know it seems like the pain will never end, but nothing is forever except for eternity. Your pain WILL END eventually and your life is way too precious to allow feelings of hopelessness to destroy your life.

If you ever struggle with suicidal thoughts and just need someone to talk to you should call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline **1-800-273-TALK (8255)** or call or text **988** If you need to talk to someone that's what this number is for. Remember, as we said last week and as we will continue to say throughout this series, **do not allow yourself to be isolated or cut-off from others,** please reach out for help!

God isn't silent on the subject of DEPRESSION. Some of the **heroes of the Bible** had very real bouts with depression. As a matter of fact, there is a whole book of the Bible, called LAMENTATIONS, which is like a whole book that is written from the Prophet Jeremiah's depression:

**Lamentations 3:17 (NIV)** *I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is. 18 So I say, "My splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the Lord." 19 I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. 20 I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me.* A BIG part of his issue was his overwhelming negative thoughts -- Have you ever been there?

Even the Apostle Paul pondered death due to depressive thoughts and feelings: **2 Corinthians 1:8 (NIV)** *We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself.*

And not only Jeremiah and Paul, but Job struggled, David struggled, just read of his laments in Psalms, Jonah, Moses...Here is what I want us to see, sometimes even the people who love the Lord struggle, feeling depressed and overwhelmed by their feelings making it hard to function and carry on with life as normal. **Once again, you are not alone!**

I want to camp out on a really popular story from the Bible about the Prophet Elijah: In **1 Kings 18**. Elijah has a HUGE victory on Mt. Carmel. (summarize the defeat of the 850 prophets) After this great victory an emotional attack comes due to a threat against his life. You know, most people think that you get depressed because something's wrong, or someone did something. I want you to know **that sometimes the attack comes after great victories.** Sometimes, after coming down from such a high emotionally, it can be easy to mishandle the feelings of "normalcy" and believe the lie that something is wrong. When in reality, life is full of intense and boring moments full of different emotions.

**1 Kings 19:1-4 (NIV)** *1 Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2 So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them." 3 **Elijah was afraid and ran for his life.** When he came to Beersheba in Judah, **he left his servant there,** 4 while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors."*

Let me share with you a few mistakes Elijah made that you and I can learn from:

### **Mistake #1: He Worried**

Elijah is afraid for his life, I don't blame him... but God just did a MIRACLE in His life and literally defeated 850 false prophets. That's God showing up and showing out! But Elijah begins to worry about a THREAT from Jezebel. That's what worriers do... **they run through their mind "what if" scenarios as if what "could happen" is "going to happen"**. Also, don't forget that FEAR

is a powerful emotion that really binds us up and can trigger all kinds of distress that is designed to paralyze us mentally, emotionally and even physically. If we don't know how to process and deal with these real emotions and thoughts it can really have some harmful effects on our lives.

**Matthew 6:33 (NIV)** *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.* Do you ever get inside your head and have bad conversations, arguments, and at times, self-loathing?

How many times do we borrow from tomorrow's troubles and scenarios that may never come? We will talk a little more about this next week when we look at ANXIETY. Negative situations and difficulties are bad enough. Let's make sure we are not borrowing tomorrow's troubles and robbing us of energy that we need for today regarding real issues.

**Philippians 4:8 (NIV)** *Finally, brothers and sisters, 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.*** But for Elijah **He Worried.**

### **Mistake #2: He Isolated**

So many of us are guilty of this. "What's wrong with you?" "NOTHING!" Pretending like everything's ok. You've seen the commercial where the people have the smile drawing they put over their mouths to make people think they are ok.

YOU can be with people and be isolated because you keep it all inside. Others of you isolate because you aren't letting anyone in when you NEED to let someone in. You need some outside perspective. **It's a dangerous thing to get inside your own head. YOU'RE the last person you need to be listening to when you are depressed and not feeling well emotionally.** That's what Elijah did, he isolated himself and got inside his head:

**1 Kings 19:3 (NIV)** *"...When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there,"*

This is why we talk about VGroups. This is why we promote you belonging to the body of Christ. You need some BELIEVERS in your life who are SPEAKING life into you. If you're the ONLY ONE who knows your secrets you're in trouble. If you've been here for long you have heard us teach **James 5:16 (NIV)** *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

We confess to God for forgiveness, we confess to people for freedom. Shining a light on our darkness is the most freeing thing that we can do! You shouldn't scream it from the rooftops, but you need to find someone you can trust. Be diligent. Be intentional. I want you to notice that Elijah did the opposite of what Jesus when he was overwhelmed with sorrow. Jesus drew near to God, while Elijah ran. Jesus brought his disciples near, while Elijah left his behind. Elijah Worried! He Isolated!

### **Mistake #3: He was in his Feelings.**

Because he was alone, isolated, it left him vulnerable to his feelings. Feelings are real and they are powerful! Make no mistake!! However, we need to process them against the backdrop of REALITY and against the PROMISES of God. Feelings flow from what our mind is fixed on and we must make sure we are processing those feelings in a healthy way. Sometimes we may not know how to do that. Sometimes our situation can overwhelm us to where we don't know where reality begins and our feelings end. We are NOT our feelings. We have feelings, but we are not to be defined by them. Feelings are signals to take seriously or false alarms that don't need any tending to. This is why we need the help of others and we need the presence of God and His word for comfort and direction in helping us work through our feelings

**1 Kings 19:4 (NIV)** *while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord."*

In this moment, death seems like a better alternative to the life that he was living. **He was in his Feelings.** You sit around and think... scenarios, arguments, you fill-in-the-blanks for people you haven't EVEN spoken to... **overthinking with a mind that isn't well is a dangerous exercise.** I said a minute ago, the last person you need to listen to when you aren't thinking right is you. If you fantasize about dying, listen, YOU NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT IT. Mistakes that all of us can make when it comes to our mental wellness: **He Worried / He Isolated / He was in his Feelings.**

#### **Mistake #4 He Compared himself with others**

Comparison is so satanic. Why do we do that? We compare our problems to everybody else's highlight reel. Nobody's life is as good as it looks on Social Media. They show you what they want you to see. Quit comparing yourself to people!!! That's what Elijah is doing: **V.4 "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors."** I have a **BETTER** alternative -- instead of **comparing ourselves to the lives that people WANT us to see, when we are struggling,** **Let's set our eyes on Jesus and the life He has for us.**

What do you find your value in? Things of this world or in what God says about you? If it's what God says about you, then you will be able to resist the temptation to find your value in what you do compared to others.

Let me show you what God did for Elijah:

**1 Kings 19:5-6 (NIV)** *5 Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." 6 He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.*

Most of us need to chill. One of the most spiritual things you can do is lay down, take a nap! Not in a depressive way either, but to really slow down and rest your whole being in the LORD! Eat some bread, wash it down with some cold water, PRAY and then take a nap! Quit worrying...stop trying to solve it on your own..... quit running on the hamster wheel of life thinking you have to do more! Our pace of life is killing our spirits. There's a reason God says work 6 days and rest and reflect and love Him on the 7th. It's how He restores and refreshes

you. Btw, do not rush the restoration process, it's God's timing, not ours. Notice the last part of verse 6. He laid down again! It wasn't until after the second nap that he was ready to continue on.

**1 Kings 19:7-9 (NIV)** *7 The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." 8 So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. 9 There he went into a cave and spent the night.*

Notice what God does next with Elijah: God shows Elijah where He's not found! Make sure your looking for Him in the right places!

**1 Kings 19:11-12 (NIV)** *11 The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, **but the Lord was not in the wind.** After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. 12 After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire.*

**I want to point something out to you.** If you are Elijah and you've seen God move mightily on your behalf YOU EXPECT God to do something big. But God wasn't found in the wind // earthquake // not even in the fire.

**1 Kings 19:12-13 (NIV)** *12 After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a (gentle whisper). He was found in the whisper! 13 When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.*

Once Elijah had an opportunity to rest his soul he was now ready for God's intimate presence signified by the WHISPER. The whisper is only heard when we turn down the noise of our life or our feelings or our circumstances and posture ourselves to seek His face. As a result of the whisper God was able to restore Elijah completely by reminding Him that he wasn't alone and that God was and is working through Him. He was able to continue on and serve the Lord faithfully but only after he was able experience the healing in God's intimate presence. When we are not right mentally, emotionally, or spiritually, don't run from God, run to Him!

Elijah did do one thing right! He LOOKED to God and LEANED on Him in his state of depression! Yeah he got some things wrong! He worried! He isolated! He got overwhelmed with his Feels! He even compared himself to his ancestors only making it worse! But even in all that he still cried out to the LORD! **1 Kings 19:4 (NIV)** *while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord,"*

**Don't Worry / Don't Isolate / Don't get in your Feelings / Don't Compare - But whatever you do, **Don't stop relying on the LORD!** Because He will bring you through if you will let HIM!**

(2nd half of Tim Hunt's Depression Testimony)

**If you are in a pit of Depression how do you get out?**

**If you are someone struggling with bouts of depression let me invite you to take 4 ACTION STEPS as we close.** (Don't think of these as steps you need to take in some sort of order as much as they are actions you need to commit to simultaneously!)

- 1) **Cry out to GOD for HELP!** Bring your burden to Him! No matter what, don't stop crying out to Him! Have an honest dialogue with God regarding your struggle! (This verse will continue to be a theme throughout this series) **Matthew 11:28** *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*
- 2) **Give attention to your HEALTH!** Are you getting enough sleep? What are you eating? Is it providing the right nutrients for good brain health? Get outside and get some sunshine. Take a walk. Build this into your routine. **1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV) 19** *Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.*
- 3) **Reach out for Help from others!** You need godly friends to pray over you and encourage you as you battle. Seek the help of a Pastor or Christian Counselor or both to help you sort through your feelings and process what to do with them. Do not isolate any longer!
- 4) **Renew your mind!** If feelings are generated from what our mind fixes itself on then we need new thought patterns. What better way to do that than with God's word and His promises to us!!

**Romans 12:2 (NIV)** *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

**Philippians 4:8-9 (NIV) 8** *Finally, brothers and sisters, 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. 9* *Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*