

Weights of the heart – Depression

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) website:

Depression is a common illness worldwide, with more than 264 million people affected. Depression is different from usual mood fluctuations and short-lived emotional responses to challenges in everyday life. Especially when long-lasting and with moderate or severe intensity, depression may become a serious health condition. It can cause the affected person to suffer greatly and function poorly at work, at school and in the family. At its worst, depression can lead to suicide. Close to 800 000 people die due to suicide every year. Suicide is the second leading cause of death in 15-29-year-olds.

Revelation 21: 1 -5 Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”
He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

1) The gravity of depression

- Depression is very deceptive as a person can look perfectly well physically, yet be experiencing the most horrific depression. Some people are able to hide it well as they go about their daily lives, but others reveal their depression in obvious ways. Because it’s not a physical condition many people don’t take depression seriously as an illness and are impatient with depressed people wanting them to merely snap out of it and get on with life. Something that they would never say to someone who has a serious physical disability. This adds to the gravity of depression.
 - In 1835 a man visited a doctor in Florence, Italy. He was filled with anxiety and exhausted from lack of sleep. He couldn’t eat, and he avoided his friends. The doctor examined him and found that he was in prime physical condition. Concluding that his patient needed to have a good time, the physician told him about a circus in town and its star performer, a clown named Grimaldi. Night after night he had the people rolling in the aisles. “You must go and see him,” the doctor advised. “Grimaldi is the world’s funniest clown. He’ll make you laugh and cure your sadness.” “No,” replied the despairing man, “he can’t help me. you see, I am Grimaldi!”
- Depression is no respecter of man and takes both believer and unbeliever alike. Well respected pastors, missionaries, apostles and prophets have suffered from depression.
- Depression does not indicate a lack of spirituality in a person, or render them lesser than anyone else.
- Elijah the prophet fled for his life from Jezebel and fell into a deep depression saying:
 - 1 Kings 19: 4 – 5 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.” Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.
- Job fell into a deep depression, although he was a righteous man, after losing everything. Some of his statements reflect his depression:
 - Job 3: 11 Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb?
 - Job 3: 26 I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil.
 - Job 10: 1 I loathe my very life; therefore I will give free rein to my complaint and speak out in the bitterness of my soul.
- David, the man after God’s own heart, was in constant despair as expressed in many of his Psalms such as this one:
 - Psalm 13: 1 - 2 How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?

- Jeremiah was constantly rejected by his own people just because he was being obedient to God. This never left him unaffected:
 - Jeremiah 20: 14 Cursed be the day I was born! May the day my mother bore me not be blessed!
- One of England's finest preachers was C.H. Spurgeon (1834-1892). Frequently during his ministry he was plunged into severe depression. In a biography of the "prince of preachers", Arnold Dallimore wrote, "What he suffered in those times of darkness we may not know...even his desperate calling on God brought no relief. 'There are dungeons', he said, 'beneath the castles of despair.'"
- As we can see that if we are suffering from depression, we are amongst some of the greatest people. There's nothing to feel guilty about.

2) Walking with the depressed

- Before talking to those who suffer with depression let me talk to the rest who are faced with someone suffering from depression.
- We're called to carry one another's burdens, not add to them.
 - Galatians 6: 2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
 - If you aren't a trained counsellor don't try to counsel the person. Just be there for them.
- Don't judge the person in any way. You don't know all the facts. Judgements are formed in statements like:
 - You don't have enough faith
 - What sin have you committed that has made you depressed?
 - You're making life miserable for everyone else around you
 - Matthew 7: 1 Do not judge, or you too will be judged.
- Show genuine care for the person
 - 1 Thessalonians 5: 11 Encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.
- Include them, and don't push them away even if they seem to be disinterested
 - Colossians 3: 12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.
- Give them hope
 - Ephesians 1: 18 – 19 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

3) A word to the depressed

- You are loved by God and his love and faithfulness don't depend on you.
 - Romans 8: 38 – 39 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 - Psalm 27: 9 – 10 Do not reject me or forsake me, God my Savior. Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me.
- You are loved by others. Lean on them
 - Ephesians 4: 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.
- Remember that you are one of many, including some of the greatest and righteous people who suffer depression. You aren't alone in this.
- Don't give up on life. God has made you for a purpose
 - Romans 8: 28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.
- Hang on to hope
 - Romans 15: 13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Allow God and others to lift the weight of depression off your hearts as you fulfil His purpose for your life. Jesus was referred to as a man of sorrows as he bore his, and your, sorrows on the cross. He understands what you're going through.