

Practical Theology: Depression, part 1

Read Psalm 88

What is depression?

“Depression is a common mental disorder that presents with depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, low energy, and poor concentration.” – World Health Organization

Less Severe	More Severe
Situational depression	Clinical depression
Dysthymic disorder	Major depressive disorder
Discontent	Hopelessness

What does depression feel like?

“Depression...involves a complete absence: absence of affect, absence of feeling, absence or response, absence of interest. The pain you feel in the course of a major clinical depression is an attempt on nature’s part...to fill up empty space. But for all intents and purposes, the deeply depressed are just the walking, walking dead.” – Elizabeth Wurtzel

“Profound melancholia is a day-in day-out, night-in night-out, almost arterial level of agony. It is pitiless, unrelenting pain that affords no window of hope, no alternative to a grim and brackish existence, and no respite from the cold undercurrents of thought and feeling that dominate the horribly restless nights of despair.” – Kay Jamison

Symptoms: *depressed mood, diminished interest/pleasure in anything, weight loss/gain, insomnia/hypersomnia, fatigue, feelings of worthlessness/guilt, diminished ability to think/concentrate, indecisiveness, recurrent thoughts of death, psychomotor agitation, persistent aches/pains/cramps/headaches/digestive problems*

The reality of depression

- One in five people experience depression
- 121 million people in the world suffer from clinical depression
- 5.8% of men and 9.5% of women suffer from a depressive episode in any given year

“Being depressed is bad enough in itself, but being a depressed Christian is worse. And being a depressed Christian in a church full of people who do not understand depression is like a little taste of hell.” –John Lockley

Depression in the saints

Job (Job 3:20-22, 7:15-16), Moses (Num 11:14), Elijah (1 Kings 19:4)

CS Lewis: *“My heart is empty. All the fountains that should run with longing are in me dried up.”*

CH Spurgeon: *“I have suffered to the extent and to the depths of which I hope none of you ever has to suffer.”*

William Cowper: *“Darkness long has veiled my mind...”* (Bipolar, several suicide attempts, insanity, tormented by thoughts of hell)

Oswald Chambers: *“Nothing but the overruling grace of God and the kindness of friends kept me out of an asylum.”*

Causes of depression

Physical problems

- Genetic predisposition
- Unhealthy lifestyle (too little sleep, poor diet, lack of exercise, overwork/underwork, conflicting medication, physical pain/sickness, biochemical imbalance)

Spiritual problems

- Sin (nouthetic counseling)
- Unconfessed sin
 - o *"For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer." - Psalm 32:3-4*
- Pride: alienating oneself from God and others
- Imposed guilt: unwarranted guilt

Circumstantial

- Major life transition (relocation, pregnancy, graduation, loss of relationship, death, etc.)
- Unmet expectations.
 - o *"Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life." – Prv 13:12*
- Unforeseen happenings

"Abandoned" by God

- Book of Job
- Hezekiah: *"God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart." (2 Chr 32:31)*
- The "dark night of the soul"

How to look at depression

- Understand how common it is
- It is a complicated issue with no easy answers
- Consider all the possible causes before taking medication or some other type of action
- Realize that it is a consequence of living in a fallen world
 - o *"For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves..." (Rom 8:22-23)*
- Point to/look to God
 - o *"Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar." (Psa 42:5-6)*