

Chapter 11



The Bitter Roots of Depression

Bible Character – David & Others – Psalm 42
Symptoms – Effects – Causes – Biblical Cures

Understanding Depression

As we continue this study of Stinkin' Thinkin', the art of correcting our thoughts about God, about the world, about ourselves, we need to discern our thoughts that control our emotions. We need to tell our thoughts the truth. It's guaranteed that if you tell yourself a lie, your emotions are going to fly. Emotions don't lie. They reveal what is really going on inside your mind. We only get into trouble emotionally when our thoughts are errant.

In this chapter, we are looking at **depression** as an emotional result of Stinkin' Thinkin.' Our negative thoughts of discouragement turn into depression when they are not corrected.

What Is Depression?

What is depression and how do you know if you are depressed? I have dealt with many troubled people as I counsel parishioners and people facing the *"dark night of their soul."* When asked if they are depressed, many of them will initially say, "No, I am not depressed, I'm just sad." Real depression is not just sadness. It is prolonged helplessness and hopelessness.

The National Association of Mental Health says it this way:

"An emotional state of dejection, and sadness, ranging from discouragement, downheartedness, to feelings of utter hopelessness and despair."

H. Norman Wright defines it:

"Anytime you have to exist in an atmosphere where...the environment is depressive...that depression can be contagious to those who are subjected to it."

(H. Norman Wright, "Single Purpose: A Devotional for Singles" (Ventura: Gospel Light, 1997), 110- 111.)

"Depressive thoughts activate the subcortex, the feeling part of the brain. We have the choice of using either the subcortex (feeling portion) or the neocortex (thinking portion) region of our brain. Remember, your mind will move in the direction of the most current and dominant thought."

(H. Norman Wright, [A Better Way to Think: Using Positive Thoughts to Change Your Life](#))

Researchers tell us that 19 million Americans over the age of 18 experience a serious depressive illness every year. That's a lot of people. It's certainly not everyone, but it's a lot of people. We are not talking about just the normal mood swings and discouraged feelings we all feel from time to time.

Most psychologists who do these surveys say in every group of people, no matter how large or how small, 90% of those people have gone through a serious bout of depression.

Depression is not uncommon. It is not some strange phenomenon for weird people, or people with chemical imbalances, or people who have emotional problems or mental illness. Depression is a normal part of life. Some of the greatest men of all time suffered great bouts of depression.

Great Men of History Experienced Depression

Winston Churchill, Charles Spurgeon, John Bunyan, Edgar Allen Poe, Van Gogh. Saint John on the Cross described it as a spiritual manifestation of “*The Dark Night of the Soul.*” Historically, sufferers of severe depression were isolated, drugged, hospitalized, institutionalized, given electrical shock treatments, and even lobotomized.

Charles Spurgeon, the prince of preachers, reported that often he would have a spirit of gloom that would come over him for weeks at a time. At times, it was difficult for him to get up and preach. Yet he was a powerful preacher and very effective. He led thousands of souls to Christ. Everyone should read *Encouragement for the Depressed* by Charles H. Spurgeon. This book is based on Spurgeon’s 11th lecture to his pastoral students, titled “*The Minister’s Fainting Fits.*” If you are a pastor, I encourage you to read it.

Many Godly Men of the Bible Experienced Depression.

Depression is described throughout the Bible. We find great men of God in the Bible that were depressed. **Moses** was depressed. **Elijah** was depressed. **Job** was depressed. **David** was depressed. **Jeremiah** was depressed. **Jesus** was depressed in the garden of Gethsemane. The fact that Jesus could get depressed should be comforting to every one of us.

Depression is not the problem. Getting out of the depression is the problem. We need to learn to come through these valleys to the other side.

Let me ask you, “Have you ever been depressed?” Depression is a thought, or series of thoughts, that produces a feeling of hopelessness and despair. In our Appendix, I have included a *Distress Checklist*. It begins with, “*I feel...*” It is good to do this inventory when you are feeling discouraged or depressed. It is a way of getting in touch with our inner feelings.

It is important that we do some emotional inventory in order to understand our emotions. If you are down in the dumps and you’re experiencing some times of gloom, there are some warning signs to heed. As you read through that list, checking off what applies to you, you might find out you have 50 of them, or 25 of them. Then you’re probably experiencing depression.

The Situation (biblical character)

Psalm 42 – David’s Song of Depression

For our study of depression, we want to turn to Psalm 42, a Psalm of David. When you read through the Psalms you find David was a man of mixed emotions. He was often overwhelmed, defeated, discouraged, persecuted, depressed and, at times, despondent. Yet in other Psalms he climbs out of the depths of despair to soar on wings of eagles in the heights of exultant praise.

Psalm 42 is a picture of David’s depression. David laments, but in the end, he sings praises. He knows how to climb out of despair and depression. You often find that in the Psalms, David is very honest with the Lord about his emotions. He doesn't cover up anything. He doesn't pretend to be happy when he is not. He laments, groans, bemoans, complains, cries out and says what needs to be said. But in the end he always comes back to praising the Lord.

Most of us are familiar with the first two verses of Psalm 42. We love it because it says:

“As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants after God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?”

So far, so good. We sing songs about panting after God. We think that's good, but I have heard no songs about the bulk of the passage. The rest is a song of a person in deep depression. This Psalm really reflects what's going on inside of David’s thoughts. There's a storm. There's turmoil. There's sadness. There's gloom, and there is despair.

God allowed David to go through these kinds of emotions for us, that we might have hope in our darkest nights. It brings us comfort that it's okay to have storms. It's also important that we realize we need to come through the storm as David did.

So listen carefully as you read this Psalm,

¹ “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. ² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? ³ My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, “Where is your God?” ⁴ These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty One with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng. ⁵ Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. ⁶ My soul is downcast within me therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar. ⁷ Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me. ⁸ By day the Lord directs his love, at night his song is with me—a prayer to the God of my life. ⁹ I say to God my Rock, “Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?” ¹⁰ My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, “Where is your God?” ¹¹ Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

David was caught up in Stinkin' Thinkin'. We are what we think. We began this series with the premise "*As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.*" (Proverbs 23:7)

God sees our hearts. He knows what we think. He also knows that what we think determines what we become. If we have bad attitudes, we will become sad and mad. We are what we think. If our thoughts are bad, negative, and untruthful, our attitudes will be bad and our emotions will be bad.

The Symptoms of David's Depression

Obviously, David was depressed. Can you pick up on the symptoms of depression from this passage? Let me review them quickly.

His daily tears. "*Tears have been my meat day and night.*" It was a daily thing. He was sorrowful. He was just constantly gloomy. This was not a passing temporary mood swing. This was the depths of despair.

His Isolation. He said, "*I used to go with the congregation to sing and have joy.*" Now there's a symptom. It's lost joy in things that used to be enjoyable. If you find somebody at the church has been missing out of the congregation week after week, talk to them to find out if they're down, discouraged, or depressed. They're probably experiencing depression and it's very difficult for somebody that's depressed to go to church and hear everybody singing songs. They don't want to sing. Their thoughts are negative and it's difficult for them to look at other people being happy. David experienced that.

His Mourning. David talked about mourning. He was going around bemoaning the fact that he had all this gloom going on. Then **groaning** was another symptom. He said, "My heart was **disquieted** within me." It was **upset**. It was **downcast**. He uses a lot of words to draw a picture of what was going on inside of him.

His Fallen Countenance. He looked like he was depressed. That is one symptom that is hard to hide. It's going to come out. It's not just the long face, but the long face that drags you down. As other people look at your long face, it drags them down as well. David had that fallen countenance. Someone with depression is often unkempt in his appearance because he doesn't care.

His Attitude of Despair. Hopelessness and helplessness accompany depression. In your sadness you give up hope. You feel hopeless, that it is no use trying any longer. You're giving up.

Loneliness, David says, "Where are you, God? Why did you leave me alone?" This almost always accompanies depression. It's the feeling that God has left you alone. It's not just a feeling, it's a thought. It's not true, but it is a very real feeling that God has left you alone.

His Blaming. Finally, it's an attitude of blame. In verse nine, David says, "*Lord, it's your fault. Why have you forgotten me?*" That's an accusation against our Heavenly Father. "God, it's not my fault. I'm depressed and it's your fault. You left me alone." Or we might say it's the circumstances he allowed, therefore God is ultimately at fault.

Other Biblical Characters Who Battled Depression

There are perhaps four biblical characters that can help us understand depression. **Job**, of course, comes immediately to mind. But we will leave him aside for the moment. The others were **David** as in Psalm 42, **Moses** in Numbers 11, and **Elijah** in 1 Kings 19. You can read those stories on your own. I won't print them out here.

Job was certainly depressed.

Even though he was initially positive in the unexpected trials that came his way, it became obvious in the subsequent chapters and in the advice and opinions of his friends that he despaired even of life. Who wouldn't be depressed having his miserable friends as your counselors?

David was depressed in Psalm 42.

He had been through a lot of troubles. Saul was trying to kill him. He was exiled from the kingdom. Friends betrayed him. Later, he had an affair and some of his best men left him. His own son, Absalom, tried to take over the kingdom. He had good reason to get discouraged.

Moses was depressed in Numbers 11.

Moses had trouble with people from the first days of their escape from Egypt. The people rebelled at the Red Sea and wanted to turn back. After crossing the Red Sea just three days' journey, they complained about the lack of water. Then they complained about the lack of good food. God gave them quail and they got sick of that. Then they complained about the manna from heaven. Moses was at the end of his rope. He was so depressed, he asked God to take away his life. (Numbers 11:10-15)

Elijah was depressed in 1 Kings 19.

Elijah just finished his competition with the 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah on Mount Carmel. God sent fire from heaven to consume Elijah's offering and it burned up the bull, the wood, the water, and even the stones were consumed. Elijah won! Then he prayed for rain, since it had not rained for three years at his command. It rained! But Jezebel heard of the defeat at Mount Carmel and swore to take off his head before nightfall. Elijah ran away. He ran for his life. Elijah ran into the wilderness. He ran as far and as long as he could, and when he got to the wilderness, he sat under a tree so discouraged he said, *"God, take away my life. I'm no better than my ancestors. I don't want to live anymore."*

Then the Lord sent the angel to give him some food to eat and water to drink. Then he slept a long time. Again, the angel came and fed him, then charged him to go through the wilderness for 40 days. He ended up in a cave. He sat down and the Lord came to him and asked, *"What are you doing here?"*

I like that phrase because the Lord's asking more than just, *"Why are you in the wilderness?"* God meant, *"How'd you get into this mess? How'd you get so depressed that you want to die?"* Elijah took the opportunity to make his complaint to the Lord. Then he pulls out his pity party card. *"I'm the only one left out of all the people of Israel. They've all forsaken you. I've been fighting the battle all by myself and everybody else ran away. And here I am all alone."*

So, the Lord sent him out to stand in front of that cave. God sent a great wind, then an earthquake, and finally a forest fire, but He was not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire. Then there was a *"still small voice."* It was God whispering to him again.

The Lord asked him again, “*What are you doing here?*” Elijah rehearses to God his same complaint about being the only one in Israel, that everybody else left him alone, that he was tired. It was a real pity party. Finally, God said, “*You’re wrong. You’re not alone. I have reserved 7,000 who have not bowed to Baal.*” So, God corrected his Stinkin’ Thinkin’.

Biblical Symptoms of Depression

From these examples of Job, David, Moses and Elijah, we can discern at least seven symptoms of spiritual depression:

- 1) Exhaustion – “*I’m so tired I could cry.*”
- 2) Overzealousness – “*I’ve done all I can do.*”
- 3) Disappointment – “*I’ve failed.*”
- 4) Despair – “*Nothing works.*”
- 5) Death wish – “*I don’t want to live anymore.*”
- 6) Self-pity – “*Nobody loves me, everybody hates me and I’m all alone.*”
- 7) Blaming God – “*It’s not my fault. It’s your fault.*”

The Similarities in Biblical Depression

David – Psalm 42	Moses – Numbers 11	Elijah – I Kings 19
1. Tears – v3	Blaming God – v11	Blaming God v14, 18
2. Isolation – v4	Disappointment – v12	Disappointment – v3
3. Countenance – v5	Self-pity – v11-12	Self-Pity – v14
4. Mourning – v9	Helplessness – v13	Overzealous – v10
5. Groaning – v9	Exhaustion – v14	Exhaustion – v5
6. Despair – v9	Despair – v15	Despair – v4
7. Blaming – v9	Death wish – v15	Death wish – v4

Every time we go through depression, we go through the same walk that all the people of God have walked throughout history. Depression is not new to God. You're not alone in your depression.

To me, that's encouraging. I take great comfort in David, Moses and Elijah because they were great men of God. I can't wait to get to heaven to shake their hands and say, “Thank you for being transparent. Thank you for being a failure. Thank you for losing your temper and getting fed up. Thank you for getting discouraged and wanting to die, because that encourages me in the moments of my depression.”

They were all human. They were just like us. They were touched with the same infirmities, the same weaknesses, just like us.

Symptoms of Your Depression

It is nice to know that David came out on the other side. There are some symptoms that you ought to watch for in any depression that you might face.

- Sleep problems, insomnia, or sleeping all the time
- Loss of appetite
- Overeating, sublimating to satisfy something missing in your life
- Lack of energy, apathy, lethargy
- No interest in anything fun
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Feeling helpless
- Feeling hopeless
- Feeling guilt
- Difficulty concentrating
- Unusual indecisiveness
- Wishing you were dead
- Suicidal thoughts

If you have any four of these, you're probably depressed. You need to recognize that this is a serious problem. If you've never been depressed, I want you to listen carefully because there are people around you that are depressed, and they don't need you to say, "Oh, just snap out of it."

It's not that easy. It wasn't easy for David. We are going to look at Moses and Elijah, and it wasn't easy for them, but it is possible to come out of depression. So we look first at some symptoms of depression. Psalm 42 gives us David's symptoms.

A Description of Depression

Let me describe depression to you. For most people, it will come on rather suddenly, or I should say unexpectedly. They don't know where it came from. It will begin with a feeling of gloom and sadness. Then it will deepen to the extent that when they go to bed at night, they describe it as a deep dark hole they can't get out of. Others have said, "It's like a pit and you can't find any way to get out." You're just stuck in there. It's damp and dark. You can't see light. You don't even want to see light. You can't see hope. You can't see tomorrow being any better. Nothing gets you out of this. You feel paralyzed, helpless, and hopeless. It's like you're a prisoner and you can't get out. You're trapped.

Pilgrim's Progress

John Bunyan wrote about depression in the Pilgrim's Progress. It's an old book with old English language. There are some modern translations that make it easier to read. It is an allegory of the Christian life and the struggles we face. In one of my favorite chapters he talks about the Giant of Despair. The main character and his friend were locked in a prison for trespassing on the Giant's property. For weeks at a time, they sat there sulking. The Giant would come down and torment them every day telling them what was going to happen to them, and that there was no hope. They couldn't get out. Bunyan paints a vivid

picture of a person who is depressed. In the end, after all these torments, they despaired of life and wanted to take their own lives as the only way out.

Finally, in the middle of the night, Pilgrim remembered he had a key the whole time. He had the key to get out of the prison. He had forgotten all about it. God gave it to him when he began the journey. He was told that any time he needed it, he could grab the key that would unlock any door. That's the picture of a believer caught in the prison house of depression. God says you have a key to get out of the prison of depression. In this chapter, we want to show you that key.

Pastor Don Baker's story

I'd like to recommend another book to you titled, *Depression, Finding Hope and Meaning in Life's Darkest Shadows*. It's a story of Pastor Don Baker, who was a pastor of a very large evangelical church with a very successful ministry. Yet, at one point in his ministry, he experienced depression. It would come and go. Finally, it came and stayed. He became so overwhelmed with his depression that he could no longer preach. Eventually, he was taken to the hospital and put into the psychiatric ward. He was a pastor of great notoriety in his community.

While he was walking down the halls of the hospital, one nurse, who was a parishioner of his, saw him and approached him and said, "Pastor Baker, who are you visiting here today?" He described the shame and the humiliation as he had to tell her, "I'm not here visiting. I'm here as a patient."

The entire book describes his bout with long-term depression, discouragement, despondency and hopelessness that he went through. Yet, there was light at the end of his tunnel as God helped him to find the key and the source of deliverance from those symptoms of depression.

I encourage you to read this and other books that can be very helpful in understanding your own depression or perhaps the depression of a loved one. You are not alone in your depression. Your friends and family need to know they are not alone. There is help. In severe and prolonged depression, there is no shame in seeking a trained professional counselor to help you walk through your dark valley. Consider your counselor a wise friend who will walk with you through and out of your dark night.

The Source of Depression

The Causes of Depression

There are many causes or triggers of depression. In our initial chapters, I mentioned a few of the triggers for many of our dysfunctional problems. It would be good to review them here just to remind ourselves that there are triggers outside ourselves. Though we cannot prevent the triggers from happening, we can control our thoughts that become errant and depressive during these times.

Sources – We might call them causes or triggers. Stinkin' Thinkin' doesn't just happen. It has its roots. Discovering the causes is not to blame and shame yourself or anyone else, but simply to show how life's circumstances can affect our thinking patterns and lead us to Stinkin' Thinkin'.

1. Genetics – chemistry, predisposition
2. Parents – behavioral influence
3. Siblings – peer pressures
4. Teachers – authority figures
5. Preachers – theological beliefs
6. Events – traumas, crises, hurts
7. Satan – whispers from the enemy

If you were to read a psychological book, you would get a lot of medical causes for depression. There are medical triggers, things that happen physically that can help trigger the onset of depression. Depression can be triggered and aggravated by chemical imbalances and/or physical sickness, but they are not the real problem.

It is never just a physical problem. It is a mental problem. It's a thinking problem, and it's an emotional problem. We need to get this into our heads, that all our emotions are controlled by our thoughts. There's no other way around it. You don't have emotions without thoughts, and your thoughts create your emotions. So, if you can take away the distressing thoughts, you can take away the depressing emotions. Take away depressing thoughts and you take away the sad emotions depression brings. These are not really causes, but triggers of depression.

Weather

You wake up in the morning. It's rainy. You have some tough assignments or your kids haven't been behaving. It's just a gloomy day. Depression is chronic in the far north where the sun doesn't come out for months at a time. I don't know how anyone can survive that without getting depressed. Psychologists say that February is the darkest month of the year, Christmas is past and spring is still months away. Not all of us can move to Florida for the winter.

Losses

There's depression after a significant loss. It could be a job loss, a marriage failure, a financial reversal, a house fire, or an accident. These are real life hurts and it is normal to experience sadness after times of loss. There is actually a scientific calculation for predicting depression based on the number of significant losses or life changes one experiences.

Grief depressions.

Someone in your family dies. Somebody close to you suddenly dies, a husband, a wife, a child. It's normal to go through a bout with depression. That's not abnormal at all. You shouldn't think it's strange. Yet, there are Christians that try to encourage people who have had recent deaths in their home and tell them to just get over it. I think that's foolish. We need to grieve. Grieving can take a long time. You can't hurry it. We need to go through that valley of the shadow of death, but come out the other side.

Sickness

There's depression related to prolonged sickness. Sickness can affect your emotions. You get down. You get sick and tired of being sick and tired. Your stamina is low. Your body chemistry is out of whack. You're in pain. You don't feel like yourself. Even a bad cold can cause you to have short-term depression.

Postpartum Blues

Those of you that had babies probably went through postpartum blues. After the euphoria of having a baby, your chemistry is all messed up. That's a normal depression. Usually mothers go through it and come out the other side. But sometimes they get stuck there.

Regardless of the cause or the trigger for your depression, it is still depression and depression is always a thinking disorder because emotions are always based on thoughts. Remembering that will help you deal with depression in a healthy way.

Sayings (self-talk)

Identify Your Depressing Thoughts

Depressing thoughts draw from a variety of other dysfunctional thoughts, including love anemia, perfectionism, insecurity, anger, complaining, etc. They build on one another. One feeds into several other dysfunctions.

Recurring Thoughts of a Depressed People

I'm a failure	I can't even if other people can
I'm a fool	I can't lose weight
I'm no good	I can't ever win
I'm hopeless	I can't catch a break
I'm an idiot	I can't do anything right
I'm so dumb	I can't take it anymore
I'm stupid	I can't stand it anymore
I'm a jerk	There I go again
I'm ugly	I'm so dumb
I'm unattractive	I'm so stupid
I'm fat	I'm not good at anything
I'm a slob	I'm miserable
I'm lazy	I'm a miserable friend
I'm clumsy	I'm nervous
I'm spastic	I'm afraid no one will like me
I'm unlucky	I'm afraid I'll fail.
I'm no good at anything	I'm a boring person
I'm lousy	I envy everyone else's happiness
I'm always wrong	What a dumb thing to do
I'm worthless	How can anyone stand me?
I'm a loser	No wonder no one likes me.
I'm wasting my life	I have no talents
I never win	Life is unfair
I never...get my way	It's not fair
I never...have any luck	My life sucks, stinks, is ruined
I'll never amount to anything	My life has no meaning
I'll never succeed	My life is a waste
I'll never get married	It's wrong for me to be angry
I'll never be happy	I hate life...because...
I'll never ...	I dread tomorrow...because...
No one ever...	I dread going out...because...
Nobody ever...	Just my luck.
It Never...	It always happens to me
Everybody always...	I hate life...because...
All the time	I hate people...because...
Everywhere I go...	I hate church...because...
Everything I do...	If only __ ...I'd be happy
Every time I try...	If I were _ ...I'd be happy
I can't make myself happy	If only people would...I'd be happier
I can't change my attitude	If only I were rich...I'd be happy
I can't make anything work for me	If only I were married...I'd be happy
	If only I didn't have kids...I'd be happy

Your thoughts will either accuse you or excuse you. Your thoughts are under your control. You choose what to believe. You choose what is true for you and what is not. Choose wisely.

Ten Distorted Thought Patterns

Untruthful Thoughts (lies of Satan)

1. All-or-Nothing (expecting perfection)
2. Overgeneralization (Murphy's law, pessimism)
3. Mental Filter (gloom and doom)
4. Disqualifying Positives (minimizing good things)
5. Mind Reading (reading people's thoughts, motives)
6. Fortune Telling (predicting disaster)
7. Magnification (dwelling on small things, blowing them up)
8. Should-itis (demanding fairness, blame and shame)
9. Name Calling / Labeling (derogatory name calling)
10. Personalizing Everything (feeling responsible, pity party)

Since depressing thoughts are many, we refer you to the Appendix for the title, Lies We Tell Ourselves, which contains a long list of many of the distorted thoughts we tell ourselves. I'm sure you can add a few of your own favorite negative thoughts. These thoughts always generate depression.

Solutions (God's truth)

God's Cure for Depression

Finally, I want us to look at God's cure for depression. We want to take comfort from those that have experienced the same thing—Job, David, Elijah, Jeremiah, Moses, and Jesus.

God wants us to know the potential for discouragement can come on us when we least expect it, but don't be overwhelmed. God's people have experienced it throughout history.

FIRST, UNDERSTAND IT

We need to understand depression. We need to understand where it comes from.

There are three levels of attack. When you are depressed, Satan will consistently whisper false narratives to your mind.

1. **Satan will attack your worth.** You'll feel that you're worthless. Satan will attack the worth of your life and help you feel that your life isn't worth living. You might have more descriptive and colorful terms for it, but your life isn't worth diddly squat. Examine the *Lies We Tell Ourselves* in the Appendix.
2. **Satan will attack your work.** That thought that you are a failure is not from God. It is never from God. God doesn't make fun of his children when they fail. He picks them up. David says, *"He pities as a father pities his children. He knows we are made of dust."* Check out your inner dialogue. What are you telling yourself? What thoughts are you allowing to persecute you? Which of the 10 distortions, the 10 lies of Satan, are you mentally repeating? *"I'm no good. I'm a failure. I can't do anything right. I'm a screw-up. I'll never be successful."*
3. **Satan will attack your worry that God doesn't care.** You can guarantee that God does not accuse himself of failing you. Where then does that thought come from? The enemy *"accuses you before the throne day and night."* (Revelation 12:10) If you feel God doesn't care, then you are believing a lie. You've swallowed Satan's line. When you feel God has left you alone, who are you listening to? If you feel like God failed you, then search for the lie. When you feel like his promises aren't true, who do you think is whispering that? Talk back to the devil.

Every time that you are depressed, know that it is a thinking problem. I want you to understand that when you are depressed, you are under an attack from the enemy. Someone is trying to destroy you. Someone is lying to you. Satan cannot destroy your soul, but he wants to destroy your effectiveness. He wants to destroy your joy. He wants to take away the feeling of God's presence.

That's why depression came on Moses. That's why it came on Elijah. That's why it came on David. That's why it came on Jesus. And that's why it comes on you. It is an attack on truth. It is an attack on God. It is an attack on you to destroy your effectiveness.

As people come to me for counseling about their depression, I encourage them to back track the events that led up to the depression. There are always footprints in the sand. Depression doesn't just pop up out

of the blue. It is always attached to your internal dialogue, your self-talk, and the thoughts you are telling yourself and believing.

We need to understand that it's an attack from the enemy. God says, "*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*" (Hebrews 13:5) Does God lie? No, He does not. You'll find when you are depressed, you feel the jury is out on whether or not God lies. You will be tempted to think that His promises are not true. Somebody is whispering that to you. Don't believe it. The dangerous thing about depression is that it's not just about you. It's about God and His love and faithfulness. In the end, it's always about God, his care and faithfulness.

Fighting Thoughts of Suicide or Death Wish

As I counsel with people that are depressed somewhere in the conversation, I ask the question, "Have you been tempted with thoughts of suicide?" Or the less threatening question, "Do you wish you would were dead?"

Many people won't answer that, but they immediately look down. They don't look at me. Then they say, "No." That tells me they probably are not telling me the truth. I know, I've been there. We don't want to add to our shame by admitting suicidal thoughts. So, we lie. Why not? We are lying to ourselves in our myriad of negative thoughts. What's one more little white lie? Have you ever thought, "I wish I was dead"? Or "I wish I'd never been born"? or "I wish God would take my life"?

If we're honest with ourselves, when we are deeply depressed, those thoughts are like bacteria in a petri dish. It grows and grows even faster in the darkness.

Satan desires to attack our lives, to take us out of commission and destroy us ultimately. He attacks our thoughts on those things that are most valuable to God, our self-worth, our importance to other people, and the purpose that God has for us here in this life.

We need to understand this so that we can face the attacks of the devil. In our next chapter, we are going to look at the thought of suicide, so I will not take time to address that here, but it is a very serious issue and depression usually brings it on.

SECOND: CHALLENGE IT

The second thing we should do to cure depression is to challenge it. When we are depressed, our emotions are telling us we need to give up. Just quit. Give in. Do nothing. We become lethargic, lazy in mind and body. We don't feel like fighting. We are tired and tired of being tired. We are just down for the count. Game over. We don't want to do anything. The last thing we feel like doing when we are depressed is to fight it or challenge it.

God says challenging your thoughts is the first thing you ought to do. I'm going to ask you when you're depressed, or when you know somebody who's depressed, to guide them through four questions. Ask them to answer them honestly. If you're depressed, answer them for yourself. When you are depressed, challenge it by asking these four questions.

Four Questions:

1) **The first question is, what promise have I ceased to claim or believe?** Because when you're depressed, you have forgotten the promises, just like Pilgrim in the Giant's dungeon of despair. He forgot the promise. He forgot the key that God gave him. That means you need to get out your Bible and ask God to show you what promises you are neglecting to claim.

2) **The second question is, what character of God am I forgetting?**

God's character is all-important. In Exodus 34, God shows His character to Moses. God is always **compassionate**, always **gracious**, always **slow to anger**, always **abounding in love**, always **true**, always **faithful**, always **merciful**, always **forgiving**, and always **just**. Please forgive my repetitive use of "ALWAYS" but I want to be sure we understand God is the superlative of all His characteristics. He is never just some of what He promised to be.

When we are depressed we are usually focused on the wrath and judgment of God, rather than the love of God. Are you forgetting that God is forgiving, or that He loves you, or that His mercies are new every morning, or how great is His faithfulness? Satan wants you to believe the opposites of God's character. He wants you to see God as mean, vacillating, angry, judgmental, and cruel.

3) **The third question is, what song have I stopped singing?** I can guarantee if you are depressed you're not singing. It troubles me sometimes as a pastor to lead the singing and see God's people are not singing. Sometimes that might be a sign that they're depressed, or they're angry at God, or they're going through some trauma where they have dropped their song and refuse to sing it. Israel hung their harps on the willows when they were taken captive in Babylon. They quit singing when they should have been singing the most. Paul and Silas sang in a dark, dank, stinky prison. Depression is a prison. So, sing, even and especially when you don't feel like it. Satan hates singing! So, sing. Sing out loud. Even singing *Jesus Loves Me* is better than singing no song at all.

4) **The fourth one is what command have I stopped obeying?**

Do you know God says we should give thanks for everything and in everything? It's a command, not a suggestion. We are to give thanks in everything, not just some things, or just good things. "*Give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*" (1 Thessalonians 5:18) When I'm depressed I don't want to sing and I don't feel like giving thanks. I want to pout. Thanksgiving is a command of God. "***Think on these things***, whatever things are pure and lovely, and good. If there's any virtue, any praise, ***think on these things***." (Philippians 4:8) When we are depressed we reject those commands. Why? Maybe it's because we don't want to be told what to do or we are mad at God.

We need to challenge the depression that confronts us and say, "Okay, wait a minute. I must be doing something God says I shouldn't be doing." What is it? Ask yourself these four questions. Write them in the back of your Bible. It will help.

THIRD: FIGHT IT!

This brings us to the third part, the cure for depression. Fight it!

Depression doesn't just happen. They are attacks upon the soul, by the enemy of our soul, through the gate of the soul, the mind and thoughts. Something always triggers depression. That something is a thought from hell.

Three Steps to Take

There are three steps that I would point out for victory or recovery from depression.

1. Identify the Source:

The first one is to identify its source. To me, that is essential. If you are depressed, even if you manage to climb out of that pit of despondency by some miraculous, wonderful bootstrap Christianity, you're going to fall right back in because you didn't find what caused it. If we find what causes and what triggers our depressions, it will help us stay away from those things.

“Why are you here, Elijah? Why are you downcast, O my soul?” As we have said before, depression doesn't just happen out of the blue. It is not a cloud that settles on you for no reason at all. It's a thought or a combination of negative thoughts going on in your internal dialogue that causes depression. Sad thoughts create sad emotions. What are the sad thoughts going through your mind in the last 24 hours? Track backwards to when you weren't depressed, then go forward to identify when your depression started. What were you thinking? What did someone say? What did you hear on the radio? What TV program were you watching? What were you reading? Did that preacher say something that set you off? Something changed. What was it?

When you find that event or statement that caused your depression, you can undo the negative thoughts that caused you to start down the dark alley of depression. I encourage all my counselees to keep a daily journal of thoughts and feelings. Actually, it should be feelings and thoughts. Write down your feelings. You feel blah? Why? What thoughts created that feeling? It's a good discipline to develop. Use the chart we provide in the Appendix.

In Revelation 2:5 Jesus said to the church, *“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first.”* So, we need to turn around our thoughts and get back to thinking godly, truthful thoughts.

2. Discover Your Hidden Thoughts:

David asks the questions: *“Am I cast off forever? Are your mercies gone forever? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Does his promise fail for evermore?”* (Psalm 77:8)

Those Scriptures reveal the inner workings of David's mind. He was doing some Stinkin' Thinkin'. Make this an exercise. Look at Psalm 42 and evaluate the Stinkin' Thinkin' that David was practicing. Pull out the list of 10 common distortions and go through the list. What negative thoughts are you thinking?

Learn These 10 Common Distortions – What are they? Do you know them well enough to spot them when they crop up? They are hidden thoughts. They are the “*little foxes that spoil the vine.*” They are moldy bacteria that pollute the whole loaf of bread. Learn them well.

3. Fight the Good Fight of Faith:

The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. Use it! Lay hold of God’s promises. Jesus said, “*And you shall know the truth and the truth will set you free.*” (John 8:32) Know the truth. Believe the truth. Think the truth. Speak the truth.

Study the Word. Memorize Scripture. Read your Bible daily. Talk back to the devil with Scripture. That is what Jesus did. Follow his example.

Philippians 4:8 – Think on these things

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

Philippians 4:13 – You can do it

“I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.”

Philippians 4:19 – God will supply

“But my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

Lamentations 3:20-24 – Live in the light of praise.

²⁰ I will remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: ²² Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. ²³ They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ²⁴ I say to myself, “The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.”

Habakkuk 3:16-19 – Bask in thoughts of thanksgiving.

I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled. Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us. ¹⁷ Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, ¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. ¹⁹ The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights.

Stop Here!

Don't read any further until you have digested, applied, and used what you've just read.

Avoid overload. Read only one chapter a week.

Personal Response to Depression

1. How did this subject make you feel? Sad, confused, upset, depressed, guilty, condemned, enlightened, happy, hopeful, etc.?
2. Was this chapter helpful in identifying some of your own Stinkin' Thinkin'? If so what specifically?
3. What 3 negative thoughts do you need to change? What are they and why are they distortions of truth?
4. What 3 or more biblical truths, verses, or promises do you need to digest and make a firm part of your thoughts and beliefs?

Group Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever been depressed? Mildly? Seriously? Prolonged? Describe how it feels?
2. Do you ever have days when you just feel sad? Why do you think this happens? What makes you sad?
3. Do you know of anyone who has a gloomy spirit? Do you know an Oscar the Grouch? Do you know an Eeore (from Winnie the Pooh)? Are you one?
4. Do you ever cry? How often? What makes you cry?
5. Do you know anyone who is depressed? How could you be a help to them?

Download our helps and tools at go to www.PrayerToday.org/Stinkin.htm

**10 Sermons on Stinkin' Thinkin'
365 Promises of God
Exercises & Forms in 8.5x11 PDF format**