

I. Introduction

- A. Top Ten Lines You'll Never Hear From Your Dad
 1. Wow, what band is that? Can you turn it up?
 2. Here, you can have the remote.
 3. That's a great tattoo, sweetie; why don't I get one that matches?
 4. Hey Jonny, look on the counter I left you the keys to my pickup and \$50 for gas.
 5. Little Susie, you know what your 13th birthday means; it means you get to go on un-chaperoned dates with older guys!
 6. You know what I really want for Father's Day? Soap on a Rope.
 7. What? You got engaged to that surfer-dude high school drop out with a great smile? I'm so happy for you!
 8. Yes, little Joey, it feels great when you kick my car seat like that.
 9. Kids, why don't we turn off the Super bowl; let's just talk instead.
 10. Honey, that outfit isn't revealing enough; run and put on something skimpier.
- B. Happy Father's Day to every dad out there. I was going to preach a sermon on being a good dad, but I'd exhaust everything I know in about 2 minutes, so I'll just quote Bill Cosby:
 1. Poets have said that the reason to have children is to give yourself immortality. Immortality? Now that I have five children, my only hope is that they are all out of the house before I die.
- C. Welcome to week 8 in our series called Can You Feel It. We're talking about God's Wisdom on Human Emotion. This is week 8, and next week we'll wrap it up. Today, our topic is Depression. I want us to look at depression from the Bible's perspective.
- D. You're going to suffer depression, if you haven't already. You're going to suffer it, and you need to understand it from God's perspective.
- E. Here's our key Bible verse:
 1. *"Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God."* Psalms 42:11, NKJV.
 2. *"Why am I discouraged? Why so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise Him again—my Savior and my God!"* Psalms 42:11, NLT.

II. Depression

- A. A famous Bible teacher named Vance Havner wrote about being depressed. Following the death of his wife, he published a diary of his experiences as he walked "through the valley of the shadow of death." Christian experience has three levels, Havner concluded.
 1. First there are "mountaintop days" when everything is going well and the world looks bright. But it is unrealistic to expect—as many people do—that we can spend life leaping from one mountain peak to another as if there were no plains or valleys in between.
 2. "Ordinary days," therefore, are those days when we work at our usual tasks, neither elated nor depressed.
 3. Third, he said are the "dark days" when we trudge heavily through discouragement, despair, doubt and confusion—sometimes these days string out into months or even years before we begin to experience a sense of relief and victory. When they persist, dark days are days of depression.
- B. Even God's best followers got depressed and discouraged.
 1. Job (Job 3)
 2. Moses (Num 11:10-15)
 3. Jonah (Jonah 4:1-3)
 4. Peter (Matt 26:75)
 5. Whole nation of Israel (Ex. 6:9)
 6. Jeremiah (the Book of Lamentations)
 7. Elijah (1 Kings 19)
 8. In church history, Martin Luther suffered bouts of depression. One day, he'd been depressed and angry for a long time, and he came to breakfast to find his wife, Katie, wearing a black armband. Luther asked, "Who died." Katie said, "God died." Luther said, "That's ridiculous, God can't die." Katie said, "Judging by the way you've been acting, He must have died!"
 9. Famous leaders like Charles Spurgeon, John Bunyan, and George Whitefield suffered depression.
- C. Now I want to say that there can be medical causes of depression, and they need to be treated medically. In fact, when I talk with people who are depressed, I always suggest that you take action on three fronts: body, soul, and spirit.
 1. Body—rest, diet, exercise, medicine, medical treatment
 2. Soul—counseling, therapy, community, sharing, talking, loving
 3. Spirit—an encounter with God

- D. And I want to show you all three of these elements in the Bible. Now, our focus today is NOT on medical depression—depression with a physiological base. I want to focus mainly on spiritual and emotional depression from the Bible.
- E. But first let me say something really strange, and then back it up.
 - 1. Depression is God's gift to you, to buy time to enable your soul to heal.
- F. Now let me back up a little bit and talk about five principles of depression.

III. Five Principles

- A. The core of depression: Loss.
 - 1. At the core of every snowflake is a speck of dust. Water condenses around the speck and crystallizes into a snowflake.
 - 2. At the core of every pearl is a speck of dust. The dust gets into the oyster and the oyster coats it with pearl.
 - 3. At the core of every depression is a loss. You've lost something: Hope, a loved one, money, status, health, or a father figure. You've lost innocence, safety, security, your dreams, your future, or your child.
 - 4. Now understand this: one way or another, you will grieve every loss in your life.
 - 5. The more you acknowledge your loss, the more healing your grief will be. The more you bring your loss into relationships, and community, and talk it through, and receive prayer, and pray over it the more healing your grief will be.
 - 6. But when you don't acknowledge the loss...
 - 7. And when you wrap bitterness around the loss...
 - 8. That's when you turn to depression.
 - 9. Follow this progression:
 - 10. LOSS --> HURT/PAIN (emotion/sadness) --> ANGER (a healthy emotion) --> Into toward God and into relationships --> Healing
OR...
 - 11. LOSS --> HURT/PAIN (emotion/sadness) --> ANGER (a healthy emotion) --> Away from God & relationships --> BITTERNESS --> REVENGE
 - a) Against others: DESTRUCTIVENESS
 - b) Against God: A HARDENED HEART
 - c) Against Self: Psycho-somatic symptoms and Depression
 - (1) [Adapted from Gary Collins, Christian Counseling, pg. 88.]
 - 12. You are going to layer something around your losses, and you have to decide what it's going to be.
- B. The Purpose of Depression: Conservation
 - 1. God designed you to survive and thrive. You are fearfully and wonderfully made, says the Bible.
 - 2. When a person gets injured your body goes into shock. God made you this way, because going into shock can save your life.
 - 3. What happens?
 - a) Your skin turns clammy. Why? Because your body is pulling blood to the core, to keep your vital organs going.
 - b) Your mind becomes disinterested. You don't feel like chatting or surfing the Internet or anything. Why? You lose interest in everything, and that way you won't waste energy on anything. You'll just sit still, because you're dealing with a major physical trauma.
 - 4. Depression is your soul's equivalent of going into shock.
 - 5. You suffer a loss and immediately your soul pulls inward. This is a God-given survival mechanism. You don't feel like doing much. Your friends go to a ball game, and you don't care. Your spouse makes rib eyes, and you don't care. Your happiness isn't as happy as it used to be. Your sadness isn't as sad as it used to be. You become NUMB. You are disinterested in life, relationships, recreation, work, and family. Your main emotion is APATHY. You don't care.
 - 6. When C.S. Lewis described the pain he felt when he lost his dear wife, he wrote: "And no one ever told me about the laziness of grief." (A Grief Observed, p 5)
 - 7. He didn't feel like doing anything.
 - 8. Why?
 - 9. Because he suffered a major wound, and he needed to heal. When you're depressed, you pull back from activities, busyness, fun stuff, hard work, relationships, studies, God, and just about everything.

10. This is God's way of conserving energy. You're running on fumes, so God designed you to shut down all un-necessary systems.
 11. Your prime directive is to live.
 12. Get it?
 13. You're not bad. You're not unspiritual. You're not a lousy Christian. You're not a failure.
 14. You're a person, who has suffered a loss, and your soul is doing exactly what God designed your soul to do, and that is **TO HUNKER DOWN AND BUY TIME TO HEAL**.
 15. What does that healing look like?
 16. This is what Jesus taught: *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* Matthew 6:19-21, **NKJV**.
 17. This is really important for understanding depression, and here's why: sooner or later you will lose everything. You come into this world with nothing, and you exit this world with nothing. For the first half of your life, you accumulate stuff. And for the second half of your life, you get rid of all your stuff.
 18. And everything you get rid of feels like a loss.
 19. Depression forces you to adjust your life to the new reality. It forces you to accept the new normal. You can't go on as if everything was the same before your loss.
 20. You can't be sane and deny reality at the same time.
 21. Remember last week's lesson? We said that we are fallen members of a fallen race living in a fallen world. That's why we feel lousy. The Fall guarantees that we will lose people we love and stuff we've grown attached to.
 22. And that's super-depressing, **EXCEPT FOR ONE SIMPLE HOPE**:
 - a) That God is protecting our real treasure in heaven, in a place where we will never know loss again.
 23. If you don't have that hope, you're going to have a very depressing second half of your life.
 24. And all the terrible, painful losses we feel down here are God's way of reinforcing this one reality that you can't run from: in this world you are a pilgrim, and your real home, your real joy, your real love, your real health is in heaven and with Jesus, you will get there.
 25. The goal of depression is letting go; a constant giving of your future to God, and saying, God, I don't like what I've gone through, but I believe a better day is coming.
 26. And our great hope is this: Jesus knows exactly how you feel. He lost what you lost. He feels what you feel. Whatever else we can say about God and human suffering, no one can say that God stood aloof from it. He entered into our world and felt suffering to the maximum. And when Jesus died on the Cross, one of the reasons why He died was to **HEAL YOUR BROKEN HEART**.
 - a) *"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."* Psalms 147:3, **NKJV**.
 - b) *"For thus says the High and Lofy One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.'"* Isaiah 57:15, **NKJV**.
 - c) *"The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed;"* Luke 4:18, **NKJV**.
- c. The Complication of Depression: Bitterness
1. *"Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;"* Hebrews 12:15, **NKJV**.
 2. Depression is a process. It takes time. You can't hurry it up. **BUT** you can slow it down.
 3. And here's how: settle into a state of resentment against God and people.
 4. That state of resentment is called bitterness. A bitter spirit will prolong your depression **FOR DECADES**. Bitterness has two results:
 - a) It causes trouble. That word means to torment your inner world.
 - b) It defiles many. That word means to contaminate your relationships with evil.
 5. Now, this is the powerful spiritual dimension of depression. Because in our lives, there is a spiritual realm that is invisible, but the Bible describes it. We have a spiritual enemy, and evil counselor named Satan, and he loves to kick a guy when he's down.
 6. Your bitterness, says the Bible, gives a foothold to the devil (Eph 4:27). It gives him turf in your life. And he will chew you up and spit you out if you let him. Bitterness is permission for dark forces to mess with your life.
 7. The ultimate bitterness is bitterness against God. You can't forgive God for the loss you suffered.

8. And the amazing thing you should never forget is this: God suffered a loss too, and in a way it was your fault. And He forgave you. He enriched you through that loss. Jesus died for you. He shed His blood for you. God sent Jesus for you because He loves you. Through Jesus, God forgave you.
 9. And now God wants to make you whole.
 - a) How can you refuse to forgive God for a loss you think He caused, when He forgave you for a loss the whole universe knows you caused?
- D. The Healing of Depression: A Prescription
1. If you're really depressed, I urge you to get professional help. I really do. God gave us doctors. God gave us counselors and therapists and psychiatrists. God gave us medications. All of this is His gift, and we should use it.
 2. Now, I'm going to give a little prescription here and whatever else you do, you need to mix these elements together to find healing for your depression.
 - a) Time: It takes time. You can't wave a magic wand and make the pain go away. God is the Lord of time, and the amazing promise He makes is that he will restore to you the years that you've lost going through the dark valley of depression (Joel 2:25).
 - b) Community: This is one where you have to get out of your shell, out of your comfort zone, and bring your pain, your numbness, and your depression into a trusted relationship. Don't hide your depression; it only turns toxic when you do that. Cultivate some friendships where you can talk it out. Live in community. That's one reason why we have small groups in our church. So you can have those healing relationships.
 - (1) *"Therefore, confess your sins [faults, weaknesses] to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."* James 5:16, NAS95.
 - c) Prayer: Let us pray for you. Prayer can heal depression. Sometimes it's instant. Sometimes it's not. But the best thing about prayer is this: it gets you past your bitterness against God. **THE REFUSAL TO SEEK PRAYER IS A SIGN OF BITTERNESS AGAINST GOD.** You are hardening your heart, and the first step in softening your heart is prayer. Turn to God, not away from God.
 - d) Scripture: The Word of God has a healing power. Read it. Memorize it. Think about it. Learn it. Meditate on it. Get a Bible today, and start to wear it out. We did the funeral service for June Edwardson this last weekend, and the family put her Bible up here on the stage. It was beautifully worn out. God's Word is like medicine for your soul. It will heal you.
 - (1) *"He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions."* Psalms 107:20, NKJV.
 - e) Serve: Not right away. Not a lot. But you'll know your life is moving on when you can genuinely serve other people and love them in Jesus' name.
- E. The End of Depression: Heaven
1. Sometimes we Christians get stupidly happy, and we try to gloss over the pain in our lives. It's easy to think that if life hurts you're doing something wrong.
 2. No.
 3. Life hurts. Life has great joys, and great hurts too.
 4. And in all of it, God is a good God. That pastor who lost his wife, Vance Havner, wrote these powerful words about his own journey through depression
 - a) Whoever thinks he has the ways of God conveniently tabulated, analyzed, and correlated with convenient, glib answers to ease every question from aching hearts has not been far in this maze of mystery we call life and death. He has no stereotyped way of doing what He does. He delivered Peter from prison, but left John the Baptist in a dungeon to die. At this writing I never knew less how to explain the ways of Providence, but I never had more confidence in my God. I accept whatever He does, however He does it. (Though I Walk Through the Valley, pp. 66, 67)
 5. One last verse here for anybody who feels the weight of depression. There is a future and a hope for you:
 - a) *"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,"* 2 Corinthians 4:17, NKJV.
 6. There is nothing you lose here, that you won't get back in eternity a thousand times over and a million times better. Your loss does not define you. It does not get the final say in your life. You have a Daddy who loves you. Come to Him, and let Him heal you.