

CLEAR SAILING AHEAD!

Here are a few suggestions to help in navigating through the fog of depression. Albeit not exhaustive, these will give some direction when the fog settles.

1) View it as a season - not a lifetime. Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 3 that *"to everything there is a season ... A time to weep, and a time to laugh. A time to mourn and a time to dance."* As difficult as it may be to think that the fog will lift, it will. God has allowed this fog to settle so we would trust His care over us in the midst of it. Wait on Him.

2) Cry out to God! Foghorns are used to alert ships that they are near land. They send out a very unusual sound. As we pour out broken hearts to God, keep in mind that He knows the tears we cry and the groaning of our hearts. Don't mask it, don't try to cover it up. God already knows your pain. He felt it Himself and is our sympathetic High Priest (Hebrews 4).

3) Let others know so they can pray for you. One of the activities Paul attributes to his deliverance from his despairing circumstance was the prayers the Corinthians offered for him (2 Corinthians 1:11). As others understand your situation, albeit not completely, you can at least ask them to pray you through the fog.

4) Listen, wait, and heed God's Word. Keep in the Word. If you feel as though it's no use, ask God to reveal Himself in a new and fresh way to you — music, praise songs and recorded messages from godly preachers will help in rekindling the fire in your heart for God's Word again.

As you let God speak to you through this dark time, you will begin to see and feel the fog lifting. Psalm 30:5b tells us that *"... Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning."* Also, you will be able to say with the psalmist *"You have turned my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness."* (Psalm 30:11)

All scripture is from the New King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Soul Care Bible

The Freedom from Depression Workbook
by Les Carter and Frank Minirth

Depression: A Stubborn Darkness
by Edward T. Welch

DIGGING DEEPER

For more help on this topic or for information on the multi-faceted ministry of America's KESWICK call 800.453.7942 or visit our website at www.americaskeswick.org.



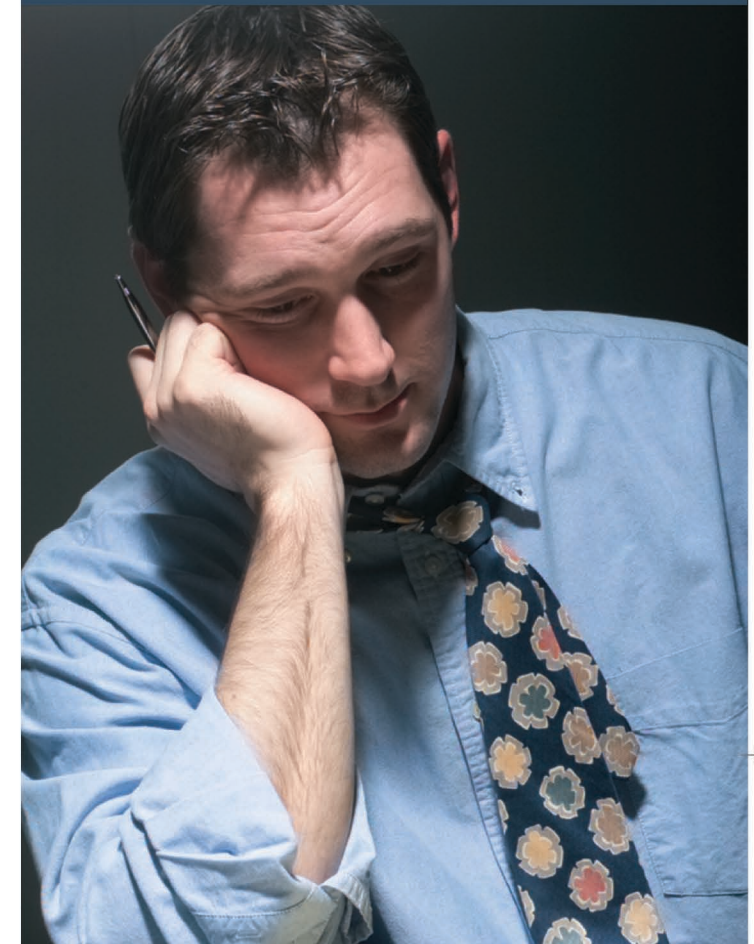
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DEPRESSION



Depression

Navigating Through the Fog

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Transformation Resource Series



Soul Trouble

Many people suffer from what is called depression. It spans a wide spectrum of emotions — from disappointment to desperation, from feeling discouraged to suicidal. Depression will change a person's countenance from upbeat to downtrodden, from hopeful to hopeless. With considerable problems of depression, it feels as though a fog has settled over a person's soul so there is no longer a clear direction, clarity of thought or even the motivation to change. For those who suffer from prolonged seasons of depression, physical problems may arise. Disruption in eating and sleeping patterns may take place that complicate and even compound the effects of depression. Care for personal appearance is no longer evident. Generally, depression is something we all experience to some degree. This resource will attempt to help those who find themselves "in the fog." Perhaps you may know someone who is dealing with depression. This will give you an insight into how to help those you know and love navigate through the fog. To give a biblical point of reference, let's consider some of the following passages of Scripture.

Generally, depression is something we all experience to some degree.

"Out of the depths I have cried to you, O LORD; ... I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope." — PSALM 130:1, 5

"My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say to me 'where is your God?' ... Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance." — PSALM 42:3, 5

"O LORD my God, I cried out to You, and You healed me. O LORD, You have brought my soul up from the grave; You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit." — PSALM 30:2-3

HOW DOES DEPRESSION START?

There are many factors that can contribute to depression: fear, loneliness, stress, guilt, grief, biological factors (organic chemical imbalances), even unconfessed sin. When these factors are figured into a person's depression, it can create considerable confusion in getting to the root of the depression. God can even use depression to spur a person to do a specific work (for example, Nehemiah's work of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem).

WHERE IS GOD IN THE MIDST OF DEPRESSION?

Those who suffer from depression often feel as though God is a million miles away and that they're either under His judgment or have been abandoned by Him. Many of these feelings are due to circumstances which seem overwhelming. Remember, depression fogs the soul. Psalm 42:7 describes the feelings as follows, *"Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls; all Your waves and billows have gone over me."* As hopelessness sweeps over the one who is suffering, trying to mentally process everything begins to sound like rushing waters or "static." Here's a little experiment to try to understand the processing ability of one who suffers from depression:

God assures us that His presence in the midst of our circumstances protects us from permanent ruin.

tune a radio to a section that is between two stations, try to decipher through the static what each station is trying to transmit ... that's a close parallel of the frustration and confusion that afflicts a person with depression.

The truth is, God is right there with the person who is suffering. Isaiah 43:2 states, *"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the*

fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you." Notice the text says when, not if. This implies overwhelming circumstances are going to come upon us. God assures us that His presence in the midst of our circumstances protects us from permanent ruin.

NAVIGATING THROUGH THE FOG

Whenever a ship at sea enters into a fog or an area of low visibility, the captain of the ship relies on the instrument panel that communicates the bearings of the vessel and directs the way out of the fog. The instrument panel communicates the truth of the ship in the midst of the fog. The captain may not be able to clearly see into fog, but he trusts the instruments to help him navigate through the fog. In the same way, those who suffer from depression may not be able to see clearly through the fog in which they find themselves, but God has provided an "instrument panel" to navigate with — His Presence and His Word — the Bible.

The apostle Paul and Timothy were in an overwhelming situation while in Asia. The account does not describe exactly what the situation was but it describes their feelings and how they navigated through it. 2 Corinthians 1:8-10 tells us that they *"were burdened beyond measure, above strength so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us."*

Paul and Timothy knew that they could not see clearly through their distress so they could not trust in their feelings about their circumstances. They knew that the unchangeable God of all comfort was the only One they could trust to get them through their season of despair. When navigating through the fog, it's important to know that God's character and Word bring immutable comfort to the despairing soul.