

Discouragement and Depression



Life can be discouraging and disappointing.

Discouragement is a loss of courage, confidence or enthusiasm. Often, people find that life situations and relationships are not what they hoped they would be and they find themselves struggling with feelings of discouragement or disillusionment.

However, if a person's feelings of discouragement intensify and begin impacting their day-to-day functioning, they may be experiencing depression. Depression is a mental health condition that effects how a person feels, thinks and acts.

Helpful Scripture

"Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." (Lamentations 3:21-24)

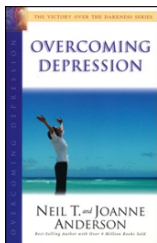
"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13)

"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." (Psalm 42:11)

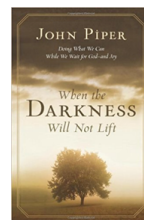
"I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in him." (Psalm 40:1-3)

Helpful Resources

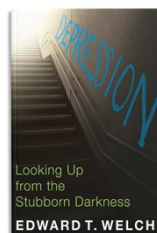
Below are resources written from a Christian perspective about coping with discouragement or depression.



Neil Anderson
& Joanne Anderson
Overcoming Depression



Jon Piper
*When the Darkness
Will Not Lift*



Edward Welch
*Depression: Looking
Up from the Stubborn
Darkness*



David Murray
*Christians Get
Depressed Too*

Complete the following questionnaire to learn if you are currently experiencing symptoms of depression.

Depression Questionnaire (PHQ-9)

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
Little interest or pleasure in doing things	0	1	2	3
Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless	0	1	2	3
Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much	0	1	2	3
Feeling tired or having little energy	0	1	2	3
Feeling bad about yourself or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down	0	1	2	3
Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television	0	1	2	3
Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed. Or the opposite, being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual	0	1	2	3
Thoughts that you would be better off dead, or of hurting yourself	0	1	2	3

Calculate the sum of the numbers circled for each question. Scores of 5, 10, 15, and 20 are cutoffs for mild, moderate, moderately severe, and severe depression. Respectively, if you scored a 10 or higher, circled any response other than “not at all” for #9, or feel symptoms of depression are interfering with your day-to-day life, discuss your symptoms with your primary care physician or a professional counselor.

Coping With Depression

There are many examples in the Bible of great spiritual leaders who experienced despair and even depression. David provides examples of coping with discouragement and depression through Psalms. Psalm 42 provides a number of insights about coping with depression.

1. Share your thoughts and feelings. Throughout the Psalms, David honestly shares his thoughts and emotions with God. In Psalm 42:9 he says, “I say to God, my rock: ‘Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?’” He lets God know exactly how he is feeling. It is okay to bring raw emotions to God. He

cares for us and will help us to process and make sense of them. Many also find it helpful to share their thoughts and feelings with a trusted friend or counselor.

2. Seek God. Psalm 42 begins with David seeking God through prayer. He says, “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God.” This is a desperate recognition of his need for God. When a person experiences any type of struggle, whether it is a physical condition or mental health condition, God is the source of healing and is a place of comfort and refuge.

3. Remember what is true. In the midst of deep discouragement, David affirms God’s sovereign love for him. Psalm 43: 8 says, “By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.” In verses 5 and 11, he calls God “my salvation and my God.” When a person is depressed, they often struggle with pessimistic, negative or discouraging thoughts. Thoughts can be measured against Scripture. Thoughts that do not align with Scripture can be considered lies and discarded. Thoughts that do align should be considered truth and clung to. Sometimes it is hard for a person who is depressed to know the difference. Care providers, counselors and trusted friends can listen and help you sort through your thoughts.

4. Encourage yourself. David not only calls to mind what is true about God, he also speaks it out loud to his soul, “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” (Psalm 42). It is often helpful to identify a couple of Scriptures or thoughts, and speak them aloud to encourage yourself. In the same way, Bible verses or helpful thoughts can be written on pieces of paper and placed where you will regularly see them. It is also important to engage in self-care by making sure you are getting enough rest and exercise, and eating a nutritious diet.

5. Wait on the Lord. Finally, we know that David had to patiently wait on God to deliver him from Saul and restore him to his rightful place as king. In the same way, recovering from depression can take time, even when a person does all they can to facilitate their recovery process (e.g. seeking God, eating a healthy diet, exercising, finding healthy outlets for emotions, meeting with a counselor or psychiatrist). Try not to be discouraged if your symptoms don’t improve as quickly as you would like, and know that God cares for you and is at work in your life even when you feel depressed.

Building a Network of Support

If you or someone you know is experiencing depression, it is important to have extra support from a variety of relationships. Friends, pastors, care ministries and support groups can offer practical, emotional and spiritual support. It is also important to talk to your primary care physician as well as a professional counselor. The Charis website (www.charisnetworkct.org) provides information about Christian care and counseling services.