

3 Things to Not Say to Someone in Depression

Sometimes it's hard to be a Christian.

Christianity is a balancing act of being an example of Christ's life in us and honesty. It's not easy to balance these two things, because it's not sincere to act like we don't have real problems, but it is not a good testimony when the world doesn't see joy in our lives.

I believe Christians battle depression just as unbelievers do. The problem is when a Christian gives in to depression and stops trying to find God's strength to rise above it.

There are Christians who don't believe that Christians should fall into depression, and when they find a brother or sister in depression they pass judgement on them.

But last week in our Good Morning Girls' study we found Job in a depression. In the seventh chapter he says this, "Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul."

During the day he was in unbelievable pain and at night he couldn't sleep because of his nightmares. He had lost all his children, all his wealth, and now his health is gone. How wouldn't someone in a situation like his not fall into depression?

Depression, in these circumstances, is a normal thing. What isn't normal is when we surrender to it.

And Job didn't surrender. He fought. He prayed. And in the end the Lord rewarded him.

How should we respond when a brother or sister is in a depression?

Here are three things you shouldn't say to someone in depression

1. "Get over it." I am convinced that if it were possible to just "get over" depression, most people would immediately get up and get out of it. The problem is that it's not that easy, and that is why so many people are taking dangerous psychosomatic drugs. Because they can't get over it. And it's an insult to them to insinuate that their pain isn't legitimate.

2. "You are in a depression because you've sinned." This is, in fact, what Job's friends were saying to him. But we see in the end that God told Eliphaz in chapter 42, "My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has." Despite Job's depression, he remained righteous while his friends spoke wrongly of him and to him.

Even when it is clear that the depression is because of sin, we should always wait until the proper time to confront it because saying the right thing at the wrong time can close the door on an opportunity to help lead someone to a place of repentance.

3. "You don't have faith, and that is why you're depressed." There is a tendency in some circles to embrace the errant theology that if you are not rich, happy and successful you don't have faith; because these things indicate God's blessing.

I don't know, but I have seen a lot of unbelievers who live blasphemous lives and are rich, happy and successful, while many very dedicated Christians are poor, unsuccessful by the world's standards and are sometimes not very happy.

We see in the seventh chapter that Eliphaz had this belief system: Bad things = God's judgment, good things = God's blessing.

If only life were that simple!

But it's not.

When we face difficult circumstances our faith reminds us that God hasn't abandoned us, and He never will. Our faith reminds us that God will always turn things around for our good.

That is true faith!

So, what should we say to someone who is depressed?

1. "I am praying for you." Prayer is a powerful tool and these three words can mean everything! Our prayers can do one hundred times more for someone in a depression than anything we could ever say. And it is a comfort to them to know that you take their situation seriously enough to pray for them.

2. "Call me if you need someone to talk to." I am an external processor. Actually, there have been many times that I've solved my own problems just by talking about them out loud. One of the greatest comforts is knowing that we have someone we can talk won't judge us.

We see that there were times when even Job realized that he had exaggerated or gone too far with what he said. And rather than his friends looking past that – knowing that he didn't always mean everything he said (such as in Job 6:26), they used his words against him. They were not trustworthy friends.

3. "God is with you, even if you don't feel Him right now." We all probably know this to be true, but there are some times when we need to be reminded that God hasn't abandoned us.

Have you ever had times when your brain knew that God was there, but your heart doubted it because you couldn't feel Him? Not in prayer, not in worship, not even when you read your Bible. It was like the heavens had turned to brass and God had turned His back on you.

But He hadn't turned His back on you. The heavens were not brass. This is why we don't listen to our hearts, but instead make a conscious choice to believe what His Word says. And a true friend will comfort us with those promises!

Depression isn't God's will, just as it wasn't God's will for Job to remain in his difficult circumstances. But sometimes depression is a normal reaction to hard times, and how we respond to a person in depression is very important!

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