

9 Ways for Christians to Overcome Depression

Never once did it occurred to me that my thoughts may not be true. According to my line of thinking, every thought I had was a reflection of who I was. We are what we think, I thought. Good thoughts are thought by good people, and bad or even evil thoughts are thought by bad.

I had considered myself to be in the good category, but then my thought life took a turn, and as my thoughts became increasingly dark, I became deeply disturbed.

What is wrong with me? I wondered each time the thoughts came. How could I have thought that?

I was afraid. Afraid of what others would think or do if they knew what I was thinking. Afraid of who I was becoming. Afraid I was going insane. Afraid of myself, really. My thoughts had become so dark that I didn't trust myself any longer. I honestly didn't know what I was capable of. My mind had become an unsafe place. A place I couldn't seem to escape. All I wanted was to turn my thoughts off, but the more I tried, the more they reverberated in my head.

I had become my own worst enemy as I fell to anxiety and depression. It was awful. Words cannot even begin to explain what it was like in that place—surrounded by darkness, paralyzed by fear.

But if there's one thing I know, it is that light shines brightest in the darkest of dark. When we let the light of Christ shine into our hearts and minds, we will most definitely see darkness flee. As I've heard many knowing Christ followers say, the battle begins in the mind. It begins with our thoughts—and not just for those of us who have experienced mental illness, but for every one of us.

I was not a believer when the anxiety and depression came, but I've since learned that even strong Christians can experience anxiety and depression if they have not learned to bring their thoughts in line with God's. Thoughts are powerful. What we think will lead us toward, faith or fear, victory or defeat, life or death.

After coming to Christ, I learned—over time, by the power of the Holy Spirit—to be more intentional with my thoughts which brought me back to a place of mental health. Jesus had restored my mind and my heart, and I had learned some things, things I'd like to share with you today, if you'll let me.

I had learned that we must fill our minds with truth.

Truth is found in the Word of God, and all other things must be measured by it. Proverbs 16:20 says, "He who handles a matter wisely will find good, and whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he." When we inundate our minds with Scripture, we allow truth to reign in us, and we will be most assuredly be blessed.

We must set our minds on the things of God, not the things of this earth.

Something incredible happens when we align our thoughts with God's. In Mark 8:33, Jesus rebuked Peter, saying "But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, 'Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.'" Again, Colossians 3:2 says, "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth" (NASB). We are called to set our minds. To choose where we place our focus. First Corinthians 2:16 says, "We have the mind of Christ." That coupled with the power of the Holy Spirit allows us the ability to think the things God would have us think.

We must understand that not all thoughts are true.

Yes, Scripture tells us “out of the heart come evil thoughts,” but we have an enemy. One who seeks to “steal and kill and destroy” (John 10:10, MEV). One who “prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). And I believe with my whole heart that it is our enemy’s primary goal to get us thinking wrong thoughts.

Our thoughts affect our emotions and our emotions affect our actions. Our enemy knows there’s a good chance that, if he can get inside our heads, we will fall to temptation. Just look at the tactics he used with Jesus while Jesus was being tempted in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights. Satan used truth, quoted scripture, to tempt Jesus to sway from the path the Father willed for Him. Satan twisted the truth, in an attempt to get Jesus to think wrong thoughts. Obviously, his tactics did not work on Jesus, but even now, he tries the same schemes with us, and so we must remember that not every thought we think is truth.

We must consciously choose which thoughts to embrace and which to cast out.

Second Corinthians 10:5 says we should be “casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” Every thought. Using Scripture as our guide, we must learn to examine our thoughts to determine whether or not they are true. Whether or not they are beneficial. Whether or not they build us and others up or tear us down. We must learn to embrace only thoughts that are true, good and beneficial. All others must be cast out and replaced with the good.

But telling ourselves, “Don’t think that ... don’t think that ... don’t think that,” will only make us think that thought all the more. Trying to rid ourselves of a lie or a bad thought only focuses our attention on the very thing we’re trying to get rid of. And so instead, we must learn to reframe how we

think about that thought. If you identify a lie, you replace it with the truth. You may still think the lie, but every time that lie crosses your mind, you choose to tell yourself the truth. When you think a thought that is true, but not beneficial, you'll need to learn to reframe your thinking. You'll need to choose to think about that thought in a more positive light. This, however, is not "the power of positive thinking." This is aligning your thoughts with God's.

All of this definitely takes practice. Training your mind, by the power of the Spirit, to be a more active participant in your thought life takes time, but it is incredibly rewarding.

We must inundate our minds with good.

Philippians 4:8-9 says: "Finally, brothers, whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue, and if there is any praise, think on these things. Do those things which you have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you."

Paul was onto something here. He had learned to train his mind to think of all things good, even when faced with trials. He penned this Scripture while sitting in a jail cell, and yet Paul was able to experience joy. I believe God gave him that joy, but I also believe his joy came through his commitment to the instructions in the verses above. And so, like Paul, we too must practice these things.

We must fight fear with faith.

We all experience fear at one time or another, and in these moments, our thoughts can most certainly get the best of us. We can learn a lot, however, about how to handle fear from an Old Testament story about King Jehoshaphat.

"Jehoshaphat was afraid," 2 Chronicles 20:3 says, when told of

an army coming against him. But the very first thing this man did was he “set his face to seek the Lord” (20:3). Instead of getting all up in his own head when presented with fear, Jehoshaphat sought the Lord. Later on, we see Jehoshaphat pray, saying “For we are powerless ... We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You” (20:12). He stood before his people and said, “Believe in the Lord your God, and you will be established” (20:20). He set a worship band before his army, and we read that “when they began to sing and praise, the Lord set an ambush” against his enemies (20:22).

We must fight fear with faith, believing that God will work all things according to His good purposes. Following Jehoshaphat’s example, we set our eyes and our thoughts on God, not our circumstances as we seek the Lord, pray and worship.

We must fight anxiety with prayer, thanksgiving and worship.

Philippians 4:6-7 says, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with gratitude, make your requests known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will protect your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” This was the first verse the Lord gave me when the anxiety raged within my heart. I printed it out, pasted it on my bathroom mirror and tried my best to do what God was calling me to do through it.

I’ve since learned the power of prayer and thanksgiving. As a Veggie Tales song touts, “a thankful heart is a happy heart.” It’s next to impossible to be thankful and negative at the same time. All those negative, self-defeating thoughts will fall to the wayside the more we begin to realize just how blessed we really are. I’ve taken to numbering my blessings with pen and paper, and I’d encourage you to do the same.

But I don’t think there’s anything more powerful than prayer. Romans 12:12 tells us to “rejoice in hope, be patient in

suffering, persevere in prayer.” James 5:16 says, “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much.” And again, 1 Peter 3:12 says, “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers.”

Pray. Never cease to pray.

We must learn contentment.

During Paul’s imprisonment, he wrote, “I know both how to face humble circumstances and how to have abundance. Everywhere and in all things I have learned the secret, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things because of Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:12-13).

Contentment is an incredible thing. It’s ceasing to seek after more, knowing we have already been given all we need. It’s allowing our thoughts to be at peace, knowing we will be OK regardless of what life throws at us.

We must think less of ourselves and more of others.

I don’t know about you, but my thoughts tend to be more about myself than others. It’s sickening to even write that, but I’m pretty sure I’m not alone in this. I’ve learned that the more I allow myself to think about myself, the more I am discontented and self-serving. Philippians 2:3-5 says, “But in humility let each esteem the other better than himself. Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Let this mind be in you all, which was also in Christ Jesus.” Remember, we must set our minds.

Second Corinthians 5:15 says, “And He (Jesus) died for all, that those who live should not from now on live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” And to that, I shout a resounding AMEN! We were not created to live for ourselves, nor were we created to have this constant monologue in our minds about ourselves.

James 3:16 says, “For where there is envying and strife, there is confusion and every evil work.” Jesus said, “This is My commandment: that you love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12). Right before those words, He said, “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full” (John 15:10-11).

There is much joy to be had when we lay ourselves aside to love others. When we selflessly consider others more important than ourselves.

I’d like to share one last thought on mental illness: I understand that mental illnesses, such as anxiety and depression, have a chemical component to them, but I also know that our God is Creator of all—Creator of our bodies, minds and souls. He is the One who constructed our chemical composition and is fully able to bring it back into balance. That is not to say people should not seek medical attention. There may be a time and place for that.

Still, all it takes is a word from God, and we will be made well.

I also believe God calls us to do the Word of God, and when we do, things begin to happen. We change, we grow and we are made well. We cannot think ourselves well. Only God can heal, but I do believe our thought lives are the greatest contributor to mental health, not only for those who have experienced mental illness, but for every one of us. We all need right thinking. And so I encourage you today to commit yourself to learning and practicing the discipline of managing your thought life by the power of the Spirit. And I am fully convinced that, if you do so, your life will never be the same. {eoa}

Any thoughts? Share in the comments or join the conversation on Twitter or Facebook.

*This article first appeared on .

*Please note: I am not a mental health professional. I cannot attest to the reality of mental health from a medical perspective. This article relays my experience and is in no way to be considered medical advice.

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