

Breaking Free of Depression's Unholy Grip

I've never been one to shy away from difficult conversations, but this one has had my knees buckled for quite some time: depression.

Some mention depression without the slightest bit of understanding or sympathy. Others discuss depression with a calloused heart and only call it sin. Many identify and see depression as part of them, part of their identity.

We often only see those three choices; ignore it, hate it or embrace it. Is there any other way to live? Is there any other way to address an issue that has taken countless souls captive, many of whom are supposed to be marked by the joy described in Scripture?

So many hearts heavy laden with unanswered questions. And I won't pretend I have anywhere near all of the answers.

This post has robbed me of many hours where I could have been sleeping. I've wanted to discuss it but have felt intense resistance and opposition.

There are two reasons I believe the topic of depression makes a difficult conversation topic:

1. There are different types of depression, but they're all discussed in the same way.
2. The culture we live in gives little room (if any) to talk about issues of identity. Mental disorders are no different, since most who struggle with mental health attach it to their identities.

Before I proceed, I want to share my personal story and why I feel burdened for those who struggle with mental health.

After my first two children were born, I dealt with postpartum depression and anxiety. Although I had additional factors tangled into the depression, like severe anxiety and other hormonal disadvantages, the depression I experience was the main thing that marked me. This included:

- feelings of being numb
- sleeplessness
- dips into severe sadness
- thoughts of suicide
- doubting God's existence because I couldn't 'feel' Him
- a lack of enthusiasm for life
- self-hatred.

My list of depression symptoms could go on and on.

When I was finally able to acknowledge my problem, my eyes opened to the countless women and men I had come across who dealt with depression cyclically or regularly. My heart grew immensely burdened for those imprisoned souls. Over the course of many years, when I mentored young women who dealt with depression, I would often tell them to read their Bibles more or go for a run. I was grieved to realize my terrible counsel to those I was entrusted to mentor; mainly because I had little to no empathy for their struggle with depression.

I don't doubt that God brought me through my own season of depression so I could be burdened to love on those who often feel God Himself is ignoring them. They watch while friend after friend is rescued and healed of their struggles and question why it's not their turn. Why hasn't God intervened and removed the thorn from their flesh?

And while I cannot promise to have all the answers, I can emphatically identify with their pain and say, "I'm so, so sorry this is the road you have to walk."

Since struggling with depression myself, mental health has become one of my central ministries and also my focus when I

read. I study, I pray and I press for answers so I can give them to someone who is in the midst of the dips.

I am not a doctor, a psychiatrist or a certified therapist. But I am a friend who knows the pain. And sometimes, we need someone to come alongside and talk with us more than someone looking at us and talking to us.

I want to talk with you, not at you.

I feel *with* you. And I'm here to tell you that you are not alone. That God does have a plan for the depression you experience. Your depression is not you (another post for another time).

Would you join me in this series on depression?

I believe God will place in your heart a confidence that the darkness will lift. And I want to be right there beside you as it does.

In the rest of the series, I will address:

- different types of depression
- depression as an identity
- whether God can heal depression
- practical tips to apply when you go through depressed seasons
- practical tips for the significant other of someone struggling with depression
- letter from your depressed loved one.

The verse below is the one I cling to in low seasons, and this is the verse I am believing will be planted in the hearts of those who read this series:

"If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light shall be as night about me,' even the darkness is not dark to You, but the night shines as the day, for the darkness is like light to You" (Ps. 139:11-12).

There is no darkness too dark for God. Even in the darkest moments in life, God still sees and can deliver. {eoa}

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