

Can the Church Respond to Depression?

It's amazing how many Christians are suffering from depression. There are precious people who love the Lord dearly yet find themselves struggling in a day-to-day battle to simply enjoy their lives.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 1 in 10 Americans take an antidepressant (it's even higher in women), yet at the same time so many leaders in the church find themselves ill-equipped when trying to understand and minister to those who suffer from this often-confusing condition.

I am thankful to see a surge of great resources coming into the marketplace that are specifically geared toward emotional healing so the church will become better equipped to help meet this ever-growing need.

I have noticed many Christians seek out medical help *first* without even considering what spiritual guidance they may need as well. Medicine can address only the physical causes and effects of depression but will never help someone with the spiritual and emotional component of depression.

So, how do you replenish your hope when it has become dangerously low? As a believer in Jesus, I believe the only safe place to lay our trust down is at the feet of Jesus. Even the good things in life (people we love, our careers, our passions, this world) cannot fulfill and mend a broken heart. Jesus, our Prince of Peace, is the only giver of God-hope—the kind of hope that has eternal value and the one true peace attached to it.

If you or a loved one is suffering from the hopelessness of depression, be fearless in seeking out a Christian counselor

who can help begin the process of emotional healing. If you are a minister or leader in the church, seek to understand more about this condition and run toward—rather than away from—those in your church who are suffering.

Here are some final thoughts as we look to minister to those who suffer from depression:

1. Seeking medical treatment is good and sometimes necessary, but equal attention needs to be paid to the spiritual causes of depression.
2. Healing from depression is most often a process. Everyone wants a quick fix when they are feeling bad, but for a vast majority of people, God's healing comes over time as the Lord does a mighty work in the person's heart and mindset.
3. God can only fully work in a person's life when they are obedient to His Word and promptings. There must be willingness in the person to do what God directs them to do. For example, if God asks us to forgive, we have to obey. Not obeying means we hold on to the bitterness and our hearts are left unhealed.
4. God does miracles *today*, and He loves to heal the brokenhearted. Don't give up if healing doesn't come in your timeframe. Trust the Lord that He will finish the work He starts.

Jenny Swindall is the author of *Freedom From Depression* (Charisma House, 2013). She has a Bachelor of Science degree in microbiology from Auburn University and started her career in clinical pharmaceutical and biotech sales. *Freedom From Depression* was birthed out of Jenny's own struggle and triumph over depression more than a decade ago. Through powerful storytelling, biblical teaching and care for people, she ministers to many on subjects such as emotional healing, Christian dating, how to study the Bible, women's issues and living a Holy Spirit-filled life.