

Depression in the Body of Christ: Looking to the Bible for Answers

If you are in crisis, please call 1-800-273-8255 or visit suicidepreventionlifeline.org. You are not alone.

It seems to me that our Christian culture has made it a sin to despair, question God or be just downright sad. However, the Bible is filled with mighty men of God who struggled with God, questioned God, sought their own way or just had down days. I don't feel like Christianity should promote despair, but I also don't think that it should try to make it seem like everything will be awesome, every day of the week. This is an unrealistic goal which can cause us to be frustrated when we cannot achieve it or to ignore these thoughts and push them away without dealing with them directly.

Let's look in the Bible where men of God questioned God and their circumstances:

- John the Baptist was in prison and questioned if Jesus was the Messiah, even after proclaiming it at Jesus' baptism (see Matt. 11:2-3).
- Habakkuk 1:2 says, "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear? Or cry to You, 'Violence!' and You will not save?"
- Moses was frustrated with God and the Israelites many times. In Numbers 11:11, he said to the Lord, "Why have You hurt Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your eyes, that You lay the burden of all this people on me?"
- Many of David's psalms were filled with sadness and discouragement, including Psalm 22.

- In Psalms 73, Asaph questioned God about the prosperity of the wicked.
- After the defeat of the prophets of Baal, Elijah suffered from despair, even wishing to die. In 1 Kings 19:4b, he said “It is enough! Now, O Lord, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers.”
- Jonah rebelled against God, but after the successful saving of Nineveh, Jonah became bitter, telling God “Therefore, Lord, take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live” (Jon. 4:3).

Martin Luther, the great reformer, struggled with doubt. It’s one of the key drivers of him questioning the church at the time to lead the reformation. At one point, his doubt led to such a great depression that he wrote, “For more than a week I was close to the gates of death and hell. I trembled in all my members. Christ was wholly lost. I was shaken by desperation and blasphemy of God.”

What is our end goal when we despair? If we question God or have sadness what do we do? We do not live in that state; we use it to propel us forward and out of it. We seek help, read the Bible, pray to God and ultimately stand firm in our faith in who God is. It is important to not go through this alone; we need to find fellow believers we can be accountable with and who we can call up when we are struggling.

Our doubts and fears are not sinful in and of themselves. We should not feel unworthy for having them. But after we push through, get everything out in the open and fall back on God’s sovereignty, we can get back to pursuing God. We can then truly claim that “The joy of the Lord is my strength” (see Neh. 8:10b).

My guest on this episode of *Everyday Discernment* on the Charisma Podcast Network is Ben Courson. He has a powerful testimony of recovering from depression and multiple suicide

attempts. It is his goal to bring light to the darkness of depression and provide strategies to be victorious. We discuss why depression is not weakness, how to reframe triggers for depression, the neurological benefits of prayer, why it is important to find a tribe, how to help someone struggling with depression and much more. {eo}

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