

Destroying the Lie That Plunges You Into Depression

By the time I reached adulthood, I had become convinced that God couldn't bless me because I had all the wrong feelings.

Because I suffered from depression and couldn't feel all those positive, joyful emotions no matter how hard I tried, and because I could not generate an emotion of expectation that God would do great things for me, I believed God couldn't favor me. Everything I heard all around me in renewal circles reinforced that sense. I was told repeatedly by many well-meaning people that my emotions were all wrong and that as long as I felt that way, hurting and depressed, I was expressing unbelief. If I had the wrong feelings, God's work in my life would be restricted. I would reap destruction.

To counter this, we were taught to confess this and confess that, as if our words could create the reality that our inward faith could not. At root, the question wasn't, "How can I trust the Father who loves me?", but rather, "How can I get God to move on my behalf?"—as if He really didn't want to and had to be coerced.

This was the dark place where I lived imprisoned for more than five decades, believing that because I couldn't seem to feel the way I was supposed to feel, God withheld blessing. It would be difficult to express how much energy I invested in trying to push all that hurt aside so I could keep it under control, function in life and do what I had to do.

Looking back, I realized my feelings had never had anything at all to do with God's ability or willingness to bless and prosper me. What counted was His love, not my emotional condition or any failure of mine.

I realized, even in the face of my failure, that my Father God

had given me a wonderful wife. Together, we had produced three awesome children, all of whom serve the Lord today together with their spouses. We bought our first home because of a miracle of provision. I planted our first church in the panhandle of Idaho and pastored it for eleven years. These miracles of provision had nothing to do with what I felt or didn't feel.

God's love and favor would not be held hostage by my human condition. Through it all, I confessed all the wrong things, felt all the wrong things, feared all the wrong things, and lived day to day in clinical depression. There are no wrong feelings in faith, only wrong actions. God's love passes understanding and will not be held hostage by my emotional state or my limited, fleshly ability to believe.

Looking back on all this, I know beyond a doubt that faith can never be defined as a measurable quantity, so that if you have enough of it, then God has to move, and if you don't have enough of it, then He doesn't have to move—or won't.

Can you imagine the God who defines Himself as love saying, "Well, you need five pounds of faith for Me to move, but you have only four and a half, so I can't do anything for you"? The real effect of my lack of faith was only to plunge me unnecessarily into depression.

Faith lies in the act of obedience, in the position in which you place yourself in response to the call and command of God. Fear becomes unbelief and lack of faith only when acted upon. Depression constitutes unbelief only when you obey the urge to isolate from others, choose to abandon your calling in life, or both.

The quality of my life and destiny in the Lord through all those years of clinical depression stood because most of the time I determined to refuse to act on fear, depression and negative feelings. I chose instead to obey God no matter what

I felt. Certainly I failed—and often— but God continued to bless me even when I stumbled.

Stop being imprisoned in a form of salvation by works in which you strive to generate a set of feelings you call “faith.” Rather, choose to act in obedience, regardless of the condition of your heart, and to seek rest in a revelation of the true nature of the Father who loves you beyond your capacity to understand.

Striving will always bring the disappointment so many of us feel. Grace brings the revelation of who our wonderful Trinitarian God really is. Therein lies freedom and a depth of satisfaction that goes beyond words. {eoa}

R. Loren Sandford *is an author, musician and the founder and senior pastor of New Song Church and Ministries in Denver, Colorado. He has a bachelor's degree in music and a master of divinity degree from Fuller Theological Seminary. In addition to pastoring, Sandford has an international teaching and worship ministry. Married since 1972, he and his wife, Beth, have two daughters and one son. They live in Denver, Colorado. This passage is an excerpt from his book, Yes, There's More.*