

# Matthew Warren's Struggle With Depression Is My Struggle

When I heard the news that Rick Warren's son had committed suicide, I wept. According to a statement posted by evangelist Greg Laurie, Matthew was tortured by mental illness "in spite of America's best doctors, meds, counselors and prayers for healing." Like Matthew, one out of every 10 adults in the U.S. is affected by depression, according to statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

I cried for Matthew because I know that pain. I struggled for many years with suicidal thoughts that swarmed like a dark cloud around me. After my mom died, and I gave birth to my second son, these thoughts consumed me. I started visiting a therapist, and my doctor at the time wanted to prescribe medications.

I didn't want to take the medication because of the side effects. Instead, I tried counseling, reading my Bible, talking to the pastor's wife ... to no avail. My husband, Jerome, didn't know what to do.

We had a beautiful home, and on the outside, it looked like I had it all. My husband was kind, caring and loving. I had a great job and two healthy children. I had the blessings of God, but couldn't enjoy them.

The church couldn't help me, and I wondered ... where was the God that I read about in the Bible who brought healing? Then one day I visited a revival service at Smithton Community Church in Smithton, Mo., with Lee Grady of *Charisma*. He was writing a story about the services that attracted a quarter of a million people from all over the world during a period of three and a half years in the late 1990s.

I knew Lee from working for him at *The Forerunner* magazine in Gainesville, Fla. I looked up to him like a big brother and thought it would be a chance for my husband and me to reconnect with him. I didn't know that during that service, I would experience deliverance from depression.

After the service, Pastor Kathy Gray prayed for me. She had no idea that I had struggled with depression and, during her prayer, I felt something physically snap off inside of me—it was like a metal shackle around my heart—and freedom flooded in.

I had never experienced anything like that, and felt overwhelmed by goodness, hope and joy. I fell to the ground. Suddenly I started crying, and the grief over losing my mom began to lift. A light enveloped the dark cloud around me and when I opened my eyes, colors seemed brighter.

For the first time, I had a moment free from depression that turned into seconds, then minutes, hours and days. I had a close encounter with God that brought freedom from depression. My husband testified later in front of the congregation that he had a new wife.

Since that time, depression has tried to overcome me again, but it doesn't overwhelm me. When I'm struggling with my children and thoughts of failure or suicide come back in, I pray or worship. The dark cloud is now just a mist that drifts in and out when I stand against it with His authority.

I believe that depression is a dark force from the enemy with the mission to steal, kill and destroy. I understand Matthew's struggle with suicidal thoughts. There is no easy answer to dealing with depression, yet I know that an encounter with the living God of the Bible can set you free. We were not meant to fight these dark forces in our own strength. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to live as a Christian.

Why didn't Matthew find freedom from depression? Spiritual

forces and chemical imbalances that trigger mental illness can make death look like the only way to freedom in a moment of weakness. To be honest, my struggle with depression is not over. It is a moment-by-moment decision on how I will respond when those dark thoughts hit me, and that makes me completely dependent on Him for ongoing freedom.

My heart goes out to the millions of Christians struggling with this dark force. I pray that if you are struggling with depression, you too would have an encounter with the God from the book of Acts who still comes on the scene to bring freedom and deliverance. I pray that you cry out to Him because He answers. And for Matthew's family and friends, may God pour out His comfort.

If you struggle with depression, tell me on Facebook. I will pray for you because I know your struggle. You are not alone.

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**Leilani Haywood** is a Kansas City, Mo. based award-winning writer and columnist. Her work has been published in the Kansas City Star, Metro Voice and other publications. When she's not updating her status on Facebook or Twitter, she's driving her three kids to school or their next rehearsal. Follow her on Twitter @leilanihaywood.