

## I. A DEFINITION OF DEPRESSION

- **A debilitating mood, feeling, or attitude of hopelessness which makes it difficult to accomplish the basic responsibilities of life.**

## II. THE CULTURAL RESPONSE TO DEPRESSION

### A. The Common Symptoms of Depression

- Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (or DSM IV)

*At least one of the following three abnormal moods which significantly interfered with the person's life:*

- 1.) *Abnormal depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day, for at least 2 weeks.*
- 2.) *Abnormal loss of all interest and pleasure most of the day, nearly every day, for at least 2 weeks.*
- 3.) *If 18 or younger, abnormal irritable mood most of the day, nearly every day, for at least 2 weeks.*

*At least five of the following symptoms have been present during the same 2 week depressed period.*

- 1.) *Abnormal depressed mood (or irritable mood if a child or adolescent) [as defined in criterion A].*
- 2.) *Abnormal loss of all interest and pleasure [as defined in criterion A2].*
- 3.) *Appetite or weight disturbance, either:*
- 4.) *Abnormal weight loss (when not dieting) or decrease in appetite. Abnormal weight gain or increase in appetite.*
- 5.) *Sleep disturbance, either abnormal insomnia or abnormal hypersomnia.*
- 6.) *Activity disturbance, either abnormal agitation or abnormal slowing (observable by others).*
- 7.) *Abnormal fatigue or loss of energy.*
- 8.) *Abnormal self-reproach or inappropriate guilt.*
- 9.) *Abnormal poor concentration or indecisiveness.*
- 10.) *Abnormal morbid thoughts of death (not just fear of dying) or suicide.*

### B. The Assumed Cause of Depression

- Because of the **materialist** view of man (all matter, no soul) it must be medical.
- If something isn't found in basic medical tests, there must be a **chemical imbalance** in the brain.

### C. The Common Cure for Depression

- Since chemical imbalance is the cause, medications that fix that imbalance is the cure.
- These drugs are called psychotropic, meaning having an altering effect on perception or behavior.

### D. The Accepted Result of Depression

- Responsibility is removed. Because one doesn't feel good, they aren't expected to be able to do good.

## A Brief Critique of the Cultural Assumptions

- 1.) This is based on a false presupposition of the nature of man. Man is more than a machine, but also is created in the image of God with a soul or spirit.
- 2.) This is based in behavior and thinking, not verifiable changes in the body. Based on subjective not objective medical criteria.
- 3.) Chemical imbalance is a theory not a fact. This isn't to say that there aren't imbalances, but this hasn't been proven. There is no present way to medically verify this theory other than results (not to say there never will be).
- 4.) This approach often leads to a series of "experiments" with psychotropic drugs to find solutions. It often leads to a series of prescriptions of combating drugs (i.e. anti-depressant, anti-psychotic, etc.) It is important to ask questions like "what imbalance is there?" and "what does this drug actually do?"
- 5.) This approach often searches for what makes one feel better apart from dealing with the thinking and giving hope. It deals with feelings apart from a possible source.
- 6.) The assumption is that we are controlled by our feelings, and can't help but be a servant of them. Feeling well means you can respond well; feeling poorly means you can only respond poorly.

## III. A BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO DEPRESSION

- There is the purely materialist view, but there is also a potential "hyper-spiritual" view. This says that all the problems are merely and issue of sin. If one would repent, everything would be okay. This view is not more biblical, but is sometimes cruel.
- Fundamental to really helping those in such a state is to properly understand what we are. We are both physical and spiritual beings. God created us in His image, and we are more than machines.
- We must also understand the effects of the fall. We are broken not only in our body, but also spiritually. Our minds are effected by sin, and therefore our thinking is sinful. We don't handle life as we should.
- This is closely connected to the previous topics of guilt, anxiety and fear. These can lead to long-term forms of depression. Much of what was said previously is to be used here.
- The Bible reveals that there is a psycho-somatic (soul/body) connection. They two are intertwined, and cannot be strictly separated. Because of this, there is to be a two-pronged approach to dealing with depression.

**A. Physical**

- There can be a true connection between one's physical condition and the results. There are legitimate and verifiable reasons for feeling bad.
- This makes real medical evaluation essential. This includes consideration of hormone check, blood tests, searching out family medical history, evaluation of sleep patterns, eating habits, etc.
- We cannot trust in theoretical pseudo-science and experts of unknown mysteries to solve our problems.

**B. Spiritual**

- There is a responsibility to think and behave rightly even when we don't feel like it. We are to exercise self-control in loving obedience to God because we live in a fallen world in which this will always be difficult.
- We are not to be passive victims, but active in pursuing God and obedience to His Word because of His grace.
- There are many who, changing in these areas, find that they feel better. This enables them to handle real difficulty with degrees of success.

**1. Change Thinking**

- There are some common things that are at the root of depression. It could be thing connected with disappointment (failed relationship, loss of a loved one, loss of job, abuse from parents), regrets (past failures and sins), anxiety and fear (concerns for the future, relationships, vocation, financial, that a sickness will never be cured). The possibilities are as wide ranging and individual as people and their individual experiences.
- The reality is that we live in a fallen world with all of these things which we can respond to wrongly. Often the answer to depression is focused on fixing those things. While some things can be fixed, some things cannot be
  - 1.) Take in great amounts of God's Word – Rom12:2
  - 2.) God's Word has answers – 2Tim3:16-17
  - 3.) God's redemption gives ability - 2Pet1:3
  - 4.) God's Word gives hope – 1Cor10:13 Rom8:28-29
  - 5.) Replace expressions of hopelessness with praise and thanksgiving – Eph5:20. Life and death are in the power of the tongue, including our own Prov18:21. Not "name it claim it" or saying things that aren't true. It is okay to say not feeling well, but express confidence in God's Word.
  - 6.) Remember that not only are physical illnesses inherited, but also ways of thinking and handling difficulties in life. This is the answer to why there are often patterns in family history. This is part of our responsibility as parents in what we teach our children.

**2. Change Behavior**

- 1.) Realize that there is blessing in obedience - Jn13:17 Jm1:25
  - 2.) Get busy, no matter how you feel. Recognize responsibility, and set course for accomplishment. Do the next thing.
  - 3.) Work with a schedule, setting up realistic goals and plans. Establish accountability (frequently a problem with mothers and those who set own schedules due to perceived failures).
  - 4.) Don't start or stop medication without direction from medical doctor. There are side effects from coming off of medications too quickly.
  - 5.) Constantly look to Christ for help - Phil4:13
- In doing these things, even where there are medical problems, there can be significant progress in overcoming the effects of depression.
  - Psalm42:5 hope in God when we are cast down. He helps our countenance.
  - There is the realization that we remain imperfect, and the feelings will never completely be changed until heaven when we are healed body and soul.
  - I plan to deal specifically with physical illness in our next session.