

➤ **Introduction** – Depression is prevalent in many places these days.

Q1. If you have ever experienced depression, please raise your hand.

- The National Institute of Health (NIH) believes that more than 10 million Americans suffer depression.
- NIH believes that 10-15% Americans will experience depression at least once in their lives. Two-thirds will be women.
- You are not alone is suffering from depression.

➤ **Try to UNDERSTAND depression.**

- Depression can be very **painful**.
- What do you feel? What do you see inside yourself? “Desperately alone, doom, dark holes, deep wells, emptiness?”
- “I am now the most miserable man living. If what I feel were equally distributed to the whole human family, there would not be one cheerful face on earth. Whether I shall ever be better, I cannot tell. To remain as I am is impossible.”

Q2. On a scale of 0-10, how painful is your depression tonight?

- Understand that **culture** is a factor.
 - Since 1980 depression diagnoses have increased exponentially.
 - Early generations resisted self-disclosure and experienced a greater stigma concerning having a mental health problem.
 - Recent generations have begun to embrace a victim mentality.
 - American culture is individualistic, prone to self-centeredness. A study in 1984 of a tribe in New Guinea showed a total absence of depression, despair and suicide.
- Understand that **medical knowledge** has limits.
 - There is a precise test to measure if your blood sugar is the cause.
 - There is no test to determine whether brain chemistry is a cause.
 - There is no magic pill to take if you are depressed.
- Understand the history & **criteria of diagnosis**.
 - Prior to 1980, there was little reliability. No generally accepted criteria enabled doctors to give differing diagnoses.
 - DSM-3 solved the reliability problem but not the validity problem. Too many people who are not clinically depressed can meet 5 of the 9 criteria (e.g. sad people can be down and disinterested for several weeks, and have trouble sleeping and focusing, and be fatigued without actually being depressed. Some doctors feel that 90% of depression diagnoses are false. The exclusion criteria (illness and grief) are generally too narrowly utilized.
- Understand the **severity** of your depression.

- Don't think of depression as something you have or don't have. Assess the severity of your mental and emotional pain.

- The size and duration of any loss usually determines the intensity and duration of sadness (depression).

➤ Understand the difficulty (impossibility) of **identifying all the causes** of your depression.

- We can usually identify some of the triggers.
- There are often multiple causes as with Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7).
- Often we have no idea, like Job, that there are other causes.
- We do not need to know all the causes, if we know the cure.

➤ **III. RESPOND WELL to depression.**

➤ **Call upon the Lord**; lean on God.

- God whispers in pleasure but shouts to us in our pain (CS Lewis).
- We either choose to turn to God or away from Him in our pain.
- Look up from the stubborn darkness (Ed Welch, *Depression*).

➤ **Believe that pain can have benefits.**

- Godly sorrow can bring repentance (2 Cor. 7:8-11).
- Don't just ask God to get rid of the pain as quickly as possible.
- Let God work in your life as He did in Paul's life (2 Cor. 12:9).
- The visibility of Nehemiah's (2:2-5) and Hannah's (1 Sam 1:9-11) pain led to more than mere deliverance from sadness.

➤ Develop **holistic lifestyle** choices.

- When Elijah was suicidal (1Kgs 19), God first ordered sleep & food.
- "Self-help" books like Ellen Copeland's *Depression Workbook* provide a treasure trove of ideas (intended for individual use).

➤ Develop skill to **describe how depression feels**.

- Don't act out in anger, isolation or suicide, describe your feelings.
- Read and pray Psalms (13:1; 22:6; 55:4-7; 69:2-3; 88:3,6,13-14).
- Tell God and others (like us) that "darkness is your closest friend."
- Write poetry like Milton, "The mind is its own place, and in itself Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven." (*Paradise Lost*)
- Journal

➤ **Do not suffer alone.**

- Depression turns us inward & puts a wall between us and people.
- Resist the emotional pressure to make your home & bed a refuge.
- Invite someone from this group (same gender) to your home when you are in severe pain. Your life may depend on it.

Prayer Requests

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.

"I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. ² Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. ³ The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came over me; I was overcome by distress and sorrow. ⁴ Then I called on the name of the LORD: "LORD, save me!" ⁵ The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. ⁶ The LORD protects the unwary; when I was brought low, he saved me." (Psalm 116:1-6 NIV)

Mood Disorder Share & Prayer Support Group

Will Darkness & Fog Ever Lift? Understanding, and Responding to, DEPRESSION

Our Mission – Glorify God by serving those who suffer from a mood disorder and those who care for them

Pillar # 8

We believe that what is shared in a meeting must remain confidential; we are committed to not disclosing any personal information with anyone outside our group. "Therefore, rid yourselves of... slander of every kind (1 Peter 2:1 NIV)."

A ministry of Grace Baptist Church, Bowie MD
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