

Can God Fix This?
First Colony Church of Christ
Small Group Series Leader's Guide
Fall 2011

Depression: I'm Blue and Bored

Depression is a tough subject to discuss. I can be very personal and painful for those who suffer from it. There are basically two categories of depression: physiological and circumstantial. The former is the result of a chemical imbalance in the brain that prevents the depressed person from being able to receive the chemicals that allow them to feel happiness. The latter is the result of any number of difficult situations in our lives. If someone cannot point to circumstances in their life that are causing them to feel sad and blue all the time, then it is likely that they are suffering from a medical condition and should be referred to a doctor. Our discussion this time will focus on circumstantial depression.

So far in this series we have talked about dysfunction, betrayal, feeling stuck, guilt, doubt, and grief. Any of these can lead us into depression. The dictionary defines depression as:

severe despondency and dejection, typically felt over a period of time and accompanied by feelings of hopelessness and inadequacy.

It's easy to feel alone during a time of depression because we usually don't want to talk about it. Many of us have been conditioned to think that feeling sad is wrong because as Christians we are supposed to be "happy all the day." The truth is that many strong, mature believers go through depression and there are even several bible heroes who suffered from it as well: David, Moses, Job and Elijah just to name a few. Solomon acknowledges the pain of depression in the Proverbs:

Proverbs 13:12(NIV)
Hope deferred makes the heart sick...

Proverbs 18:14 (NLT)
The human spirit can endure a sick body, but who can bear it if the spirit is crushed?

Companionship may be the best "cure" for circumstantial depression short of the problem in which we find ourselves actually being resolved. There are two important presences that we need in our lives to help us overcome the deep ache of depression. The first presence is God's. Read 1 Kings 19:1-18. Elijah is discouraged and ready to give up. He tells God, "*I have had enough, LORD. Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.*" Many of us can empathize with the feelings Elijah is experiencing. God sends him on a long journey at the end of which Elijah finds communion with God. God's presence was the soul-restoring medicine that Elijah needed. The second

presence is that of a godly friend. Our initial reaction during difficulty is often to retreat inward but running into the grip of a trustworthy friend is often the drink for which our soul truly thirsts. Solomon reminds us of the benefit of a good friend:

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10(NIV)

Two are better than one,

because they have a good return for their labor:

If either of them falls down,

one can help the other up.

But pity anyone who falls

and has no one to help them up.

Depression can be painful for the one experiencing it. It can also be painful for those close to the depressed person. It may be hard to understand what is wrong or how to help. The key for those who are close to a person feeling down and blue for a long time is to remain faithful. It may be hard to watch and you may even be wounded in the process, but it is crucial not to abandon to hurting person to loneliness.

Can God Fix This?

First Colony Church of Christ
Small Group Series Leader's Discussion Guide
Fall 2011

Depression: I'm Blue and Bored

Icebreaker:

It has been said if you play a country song backwards you get your house back, your car back, your dog back and who knows what else. Can you think of a song that fits this scenario? It could be a country, blues, rock or any other kind of song. Describe to the group the lyrics and what good things will happen if you play the song backwards.

Discussion:

1. Over the past 6 weeks we have discussed difficult subjects, all of which could lead to depression: Dysfunction, betrayal, feeling stuck, guilt, doubt, and grief. What is depression and what is it about these subjects that could cause us to feel depressed?

The dictionary defines depression as: severe despondency and dejection, typically felt over a period of time and accompanied by feelings of hopelessness and inadequacy.

2. In 1 Kings 19 we find the prophet Elijah struggling with his own depression. Read verses 1-5. What was the circumstance that led Elijah to feel the way he did? How does Elijah react to this situation? How might we react to a difficult situation like this?

Elijah is being chased and persecuted for obeying God. He runs away and gives up. He even asks God to kill him.

3. God provides food and sends Elijah on a long journey to meet Him. Read 1 Kings 19:9b-13. Describe how Elijah feels in your own words. Have you felt similarly? What aspect of his interaction with God was comforting and energizing?

Elijah want's God to know he has been working hard but in spite all his work God's people aren't listening. God's gentle presence is what started Elijah on the road to recovery.

4. During depression God's presence and a friend's presence can be extremely helpful. Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-10. How have you seen these verses to be true in your life? Who has been a friend to you during a tough time?

Encourage the group to share as much as they feel comfortable.

5. Is it difficult to be around a person dealing with depression? What are the best things we can do for a person struggling in this way? What are some “don’ts” when trying to help?

It is best to simply be faithful in loving our friends struggling through depression. getting angry, trying to fix them, or abandoning them are all bad choices.

Can God Fix This?

First Colony Church of Christ
Small Group Series Discussion Guide
Fall 2011

Depression: I'm Blue and Bored

Icebreaker:

It has been said if you play a country song backwards you get your house back, your car back, your dog back and who knows what else. Can you think of a song that fits this scenario? It could be a country, blues, rock or any other kind of song. Describe to the group the lyrics and what good things will happen if you play the song backwards.

Discussion:

1. Over the past 6 weeks we have discussed difficult subjects, all of which could lead to depression: Dysfunction, betrayal, feeling stuck, guilt, doubt, and grief. What is depression and what is it about these subjects that could cause us to feel depressed?
2. In 1 Kings 19 we find the prophet Elijah struggling with his own depression. Read verses 1-5. What was the circumstance that led Elijah to feel the way he did? How does Elijah react to this situation? How might we react to a difficult situation like this?
3. God provides food and sends Elijah on a long journey to meet Him. Read 1 Kings 19:9b-13. Describe how Elijah feels in your own words. Have you felt similarly? What aspect of his interaction with God was comforting and energizing?
4. During depression God's presence and a friend's presence can be extremely helpful. Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-10. How have you seen these verses to be true in your life? Who has been a friend to you during a tough time?
5. Is it difficult to be around a person dealing with depression? What are the best things we can do for a person struggling in this way? What are some "don'ts" when trying to help?