

Depression For The Care-Giver

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[0 : 00] Well, this morning we are going to finish our series on depression. We've talked about the crisis, we've talked about the complexity, we've talked about the condition, the causes, the cures, and today we're going to talk about the caregivers.

The caregivers. Who am I talking about? Well, I'm talking about a person's family, a depressed person's family, their friends, their fellow Christians, who all will to one degree or another help that person to recover, to regain his emotional stability.

And so this is people, ordinary people, without, you know, we're not counselors or pastors or doctors or anything like that, just regular people.

Research has shown us that people do get better, improve, quicker, when they have people to support them, to confide in, to talk with, to listen to, to just be with them.

But that's what research shows us and says, but I don't think we really need research to tell us that. The Bible says that we need each other.

[1 : 24] We need each other. It's not, other people are not mere luxury in this life. Other Christians are not a luxury. They are a necessity. We need each other.

Ephesians 4, I'm not going to have you turn there, but just listen to what it says. To each one of us, grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

That is why it says, when he ascended on high, he led captives in his train, and he gave gifts to men. So we all have troubles. Every single person here has troubles.

Depression is one of those troubles that people can have. We all have troubles. We all need grace. And some of the grace that I need, the Lord Jesus, who gives all grace as he apportions it, didn't give it to me directly.

And the essential thing to realize here is, is he's never, in this situation, going to give it to me directly. Instead, he sends it to your house.

[2 : 29] And he expects you to be handing it out. And through you, it coming to people who stop by and have need for help. The Bible's picture of how we find help in our troubles is not merely individualistic.

It's not merely about the individual. There's obvious individual helps, but it's not confined to that. It's not just me and my Bible. It's all of Christ.

But Ephesians goes on and says, Grow up into him as the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligaments, grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work.

Growth in godliness, getting through troubles, living a godly life in this world, growing in maturity, is a whole body activity.

It's something that we do together. It's something that we do as we live together. So, just to put it succinctly, in other words, depressed people need help.

[3 : 41] They need their family's help. They need their friends' help. They need Christian, their fellow Christian's help. And so, yeah, they could perhaps, in some cases, or however that is, they can use a doctor, or they can use a pastor, or they could use a biblical counselor.

But, besides that, they do need regular Christians. Regular, common people, too. They need you.

They need me. And so, the question we want to talk about this morning as we end this series is, well, how can I help? How can I be a good caregiver?

Maybe depression is not something that you wrestle with at all. Or maybe you've never had that. But, even if it hasn't touched you directly, particularly, there are people around you that could use your help.

And so, we want to ask the question of how can you give help? And I have eight S's this morning. And that's just eight points. We don't have a lot of time. And so, that tells you that each point is going to be pretty succinct.

[4 : 52] We're going to be moving on. So, eight S's. And the first is study. So, how can you help? Well, study. Study.

Learning. We want to help people and not hurt them. And I want my doctors to have gone to medical school. I don't want some sort of medieval quack who thinks I still need blood.

Do you get what I'm saying? I want someone who's an ongoing learner. Who is still learning. Still willing to learn. And so, how can you help?

Well, if you want to help, then you need to study. Study. And that means a lot of things. It means studying the conditions, studying people, studying even yourself, and reading some books.

Now, I understand that my calling is probably, it is very different than yours. But just as I prepared this series, and this is a very complex topic, and it's a hard one to feel really comfortable teaching, I think I read some or all of nine different books.

[6 : 12] And I think the thing I really want to emphasize is none of them were perfect. None of them were complete. Either is this lesson, or these lessons.

They're not complete. And none of them completely agreed with each other, either. I wish there was. The only book that completely agrees with itself and all of reality perfectly is the Bible.

And everything else, you have to take with just a little bit of grain of salt. So they don't all completely agree with each other. And so, as you begin reading and studying this, you realize you aren't entering into a world where it's all clear and agreeable.

It's rather, it's an ongoing conversation. And people are saying, well, you need to think about this. And there's some people who want to emphasize some things more than the others. So if you want to learn more, where do you start?

Well, I think the best place to start is, the absolute foundational place to start is with the Gospels. Go through the Gospels and ask yourself, how does Jesus deal with ill people, weak people, sinful people?

[7 : 22] What's his attitude? How does he see them? What does he do with them? How does he deal with the discouraged or the distressed? What's his heart? How does he help them? And what you'll see is that Jesus moved with pity and compassion to help whole people.

We looked at this a couple of weeks ago. He doesn't just deal with people as souls. He deals with them as body and soul. He didn't see people just as sinners.

He saw them as sufferers. He didn't see them as purely biological or purely physical. The Creator came. And He came to this world to broken people knowing exactly how they are made.

Because it was through Him that they were made. And so you need to ask, what did Jesus do? What did Jesus say?

What did Jesus put His finger on? Or how did He help? I think the important thing, especially in this area, is that we need to go looking.

[8 : 30] We don't need to go look for where Jesus would do exactly what we think He would have done. Or where He totally agreed with what, if I was put in that situation, what I would say.

We want to look for where He does something that maybe is different. because that's where He's pressing us to think differently, to become more like Him. So start with the Gospels and obviously then go to the whole Bible.

We want to use the Bible as a lens to look at the whole world, at ourselves, at these people. And the more comfortable we are with the Bible as our pair of glasses to look at people, to look at situations and conditions, the more clearly and the more biblically we're going to see them.

So, I'm going to give you some books just to say, hey, these are some books that I use. But, everywhere, when you're looking at what people are saying about this, you want to have a Berean spirit.

And I just want to remind you that a Berean spirit was asking, does what Paul say, what Paul is saying, does it line up with what the Scripture says? Not, does what this person say line up with what I already think?

[9 : 49] That's an important distinction. It does not say the Bereans searched their own thoughts every day to see if Paul said what they already agreed with. It said that they looked into the Scriptures intently to see if what Paul was saying lined up with this.

what Paul was saying, what the Bible said, that wasn't going to change, but what the Bereans' attitude and what they thought needed to change.

And so, they searched the Scriptures. That was their lens. That was their frame of reference. So, as they looked at all those opinions. So, with that in mind, let me just give you a few other books that you might find helpful.

And like I said, this is not an endorsement of any of them perfectly. None of them were complete. None of them did I agree with completely. But they were good conversation partners to have.

And, so, the first one was this one. It's Overcoming Spiritual Depression by Erie Elschout. And, he passed away in the early 90s.

[10 : 53] He was a long-time minister in the Dutch Reformed churches. And, this is, this book is printed by Reformation Heritage Books, which is up in Grand Rapids. It's Joel Beeky's.

I think, his sort of organization. And, it's a, it's a long meditation. It's a, well, it's not that long, but it's a meditation on Elijah and his experience.

And, why I like this one is because the author, he struggled with depression. So, he's not coming at this from a, a point of distance. He's coming at it from, I, I know what this feels like.

I know what this is like. And, and so he combines real humble, personal experience at the same time with some real sensitive pastoral wisdom.

Another book is called Spurgeon's Sorrows. It's by Zach Eswine. And, this book just begins with Charles Spurgeon. It's somewhat, it's not really biographical, but it starts with Spurgeon and his experiences.

[11 : 55] and says, now what can we learn? And what did, how did Spurgeon sort of think through his own experience and, and the experience of others? It's not very long.

It's not very difficult, but it is pretty helpful. Other helpful books, these two, are both by Ed Welch.

This one's a stubborn darkness, our depression is stubborn darkness. And, this one is blame it on the brain. These are both pretty good. And, then the last two, and these sort of are strange bedfellows, so to speak.

They're really on the opposite ends of the biblical counseling spectrum. But, they are really good to get together and sort of read them at the same time because they are kind of different and they're approaching it so differently.

it's good to like hear them both at the same time. It's iron sharpening iron. So, the first one is this one, Good Mood, Bad Mood. It's by Charles Hodges, MD.

[13 : 03] He's a doctor in Indianapolis and a biblical counselor. This book is pretty good. And, the second one is Steve, Broken Minds by Steve and Robin Blome. These two probably wouldn't see very much in common, but, what I like about them is they have these opposite perspectives and I think they kind of can balance each other out pretty good.

Wisdom comes from, the Bible says, having many counselors. others. And, it's best sometimes when everyone doesn't agree with each other.

So, iron sharpens iron. And so, study and with the Lord's blessing you can grow in wisdom, you can grow in understanding and nuance and appreciating just the complexity.

but, as you do that, you can become more useful to people. As you have a broader, more thorough understanding, you will be more useful to people, more sympathetic.

And, and that's our second S is sympathy. So, study and sympathy. Thoughtful, prayerful, study, not just of books, which is good, but, experiencing and studying what this is like in real people, that usually should increase our sympathy.

[14 : 34] That does increase our sympathy. Sympathy comes from deep understanding. You look at the Bible or you look at God in Psalm 103. Why does he have compassion on his people?

Well, I suppose there's a lot of reasons, but he says he knows how we're made. He, he knows us. So, he has compassion upon us.

And so, by sympathy, I mean an ability to communicate that we really understand the problem, that we understand the symptoms, and we are deeply concerned, and that we're going to do what we can to help.

So, I understand, I understand what you're going through, I appreciate it, and I'm deeply concerned, and I'm going to do what I can to help.

So, sympathy is a grace of God. Sympathy is what Jesus learned through his sufferings. He, he learned that, and we need to learn it ourselves, to have a deep experiential understanding of, that's what this person is going through, and, and so you're sympathetic with them.

[15 : 46] And we need it because it is easy to get angry, to get impatient, to jump the gun, to run ahead, with people who are really struggling.

But, we need to learn that there's no temptation, or struggle, including depression, that is not common to man, that can't happen to me, that can't happen to me, that I can't struggle with.

I just want to quote and emphasize this warning from Dr. Murray. If you treat depressed people with impatient contempt, you may, like many others before you, have to learn sympathy the hard way.

And that's just a warning to take to heart. Be careful what you're doing with people. They need sympathy, not impatient contempt. That's the second S, sympathy.

The third is support. Support. What do they need? How can we be good caregivers? Well, we can support them. Stan and Chuck, they both had slings on for a little while.

[16 : 59] That's support. It's something that bears weight. Some folks have canes and walkers. That's support. It's holding up something that's too weak to hold itself up.

It's bearing weight. That's what we're talking about. So the Bible in Galatians talks about carrying each other's burdens. We need to learn to do that.

And that means the weight is going to fall on us. And we're going to have to carry it. Jesus daily carries our burdens. Depressed people need someone to come along and bear their burden to carry that with them, to step inside the yoke with them, to carry some of the weight.

That doesn't mean that you totally excuse them from all of life or anything like that. That's to go to the opposite extreme. But what does this look like? It looks like being available to listen, being understanding, asking good questions, and then speaking encouragement.

It includes praying with them. them. We want to pray for them, definitely. That's support. That's holding them up before the Lord. We want to pray with them.

[18 : 19] Sometimes people have a hard time when they're depressed, even putting words out, like putting sentences together in prayer.

And so what does support look like? Sometimes it means you put your hand on them and you pray for them right there. You be their mouth. You talk for them.

It means praying with them. It means praying for them. It means calling them on the phone, in person. What do I mean by support? Well, support is unconditional love.

And our world has gone overboard with that notion and taken it into completely wrong ways. But we have to remember that unconditional love, love is the kind of love that God has for us.

That when we were still sinners, he loved us. And even now, Paul can say, what a wretched man that I am. And God is still loving him. That's what I mean by unconditional love.

[19 : 21] The cane doesn't ask if the person is worthy. The cane carries the weight because it needs carried. Sometimes depressed people are going to make bad decisions.

Sometimes they aren't going to do what they need to do, even in their own best interest. Sometimes they can turn on you. But love never fails.

Love keeps going. And again, I'm not saying you don't hold them accountable or you don't confront them. what I am talking about is the unfailing love of God that keeps with us despite the fact that we make bad decisions.

Despite the fact that we do what hurts us instead of what helps us. So support is sticking with them. Not because you're getting something out of it, but because you really want to do them good.

And doing good means you have to stay in it with them. Sometimes it means real practical help. Going on a walk with them.

[20 : 39] Exercise is good for them, but sometimes it's hard for them to get going. So maybe you need to go for a walk with them. Maybe they need that time not just to exercise but just to talk, to be with someone.

Maybe babysitting, maybe helping take care of their parents. You hear about people who are trying to care for their children and also have to care for their elderly parents.

That's a heavy load. So taking them out to eat or to the park. Maybe it's saying, hey, I think it's time for you to go see a doctor.

It's doing what needs done. It's coming alongside and putting your neck in the yoke. That's the kind of love God has for us. That's the kind of love that we are celebrating in the Christmas season of Jesus coming down and being with us and helping us.

So that's number three. Number four is secrecy. Do you want to help people? Learn to keep a secret.

[21 : 49] Of course, that's not a total blank statement, or blanket statement. I hope you realize that. But in this area, I just want to quote David Murray here and then move on.

If someone trusts you enough to confide in you, then you must maintain the strictest confidence. There must be no sanctified gossip.

Oh, I'm just telling you this so that you can pray about it. It is tragic that so many depressed Christians have to prolong their secret suffering because of a justified fear that no one can keep a secret in the church.

The church is in desperate need of Christians who are known to have this simple talent. They keep confidences. They keep confidences. That's number four.

Number five is self-esteem. Again, you probably hear that and you're like, oh no, I can't believe that. Thankfully, even the world is realizing the whole self-esteem movement is just complete nonsense.

[22 : 52] I mean, this is not part of the lesson, but they've gone into prisons and prisoners have self-esteems that are just fine. It's not a low self-esteem that causes problems.

What I am talking about is not an unrealistic, ungodly pride. I'm talking about a clear, accurate, honest view of yourself, a proper esteem of yourself, a healthy sense of your purpose, your usefulness, what God is doing through you, what God is doing with you.

And that really can be a very sensitive point and the point where depressed people are, where they aren't struggling with, oh, I'm so good.

They're struggling with, I'm completely worthless. I'm useless. And so what we can do is help them to see themselves as God sees them, as other people see them, just give them a more accurate view of themselves.

So how do you do that? Will you highlight their God given gifts? We just talked about that in Ephesians 4. If they're Christians, Jesus has given them gifts, places where they are necessary, places where they are particularly suited, to serve, and be useful to others.

[24 : 19] You can highlight their God-given gifts and contributions to others. So, kind of what this looks like in real life is, so let's say you have a young mother and she is depressed and however she got there, whatever her situation is, now she's looking at herself and she's saying, I am completely, I'm garbage, my family's nightmare, everything is bad.

And why does she feel like a total failure? It's because everything's not perfect, or she's not getting to everything that she wants to achieve in a day.

And we can help that lady, that young lady, that mother, see that she achieves a lot in a day. So, even though she doesn't manage to do everything she would like, we can say, you aren't useless or worthless.

I mean, look at these clothes you've cleaned. Look at these dishes that you've done. You went to the store, you made these meals, you paid for these bills, you played with the children. Now, it's wrong to go around strutting and thinking that you're so good and you don't need help and you're, it's wrong to be proud, but it's, I think it's equally wrong to just focus on this is what I'm not doing.

I'm not doing this, I'm not doing that, what we haven't accomplished. Paul said, but by the grace of God, I am what I am.

[25 : 58] And his grace to me was not without effect, but I labored more abundantly than all the rest, yet not I, but the grace of God, which was in me.

Paul had an accurate and healthy view of his own calling, his place, his usefulness, his work. When the super apostles came and started running him down, he didn't say, yep, you're right, wretched man that I am, I can't do anything right, I'm not doing any good to anyone.

He said, no, God's grace came to me and it had an effect. And the effect was, I worked harder than all the rest. And so when it comes time, he's like, I'm out of my mind to be talking like this.

But you want to know what my credentials are? And he goes in and he talks about the beatings and the shipwrecks and how much he suffered. Paul knew he was a sinner.

We just talked about that. Paul in Romans 7 could say, oh, what a wretched man that I am. Not that what I was, but what I am. And Paul knew, you know what, I'm a sinner, I offend daily.

[27 : 18] And yet, that did not stop him. That wasn't the only story. That wasn't like his life verse. He saw that, but it had a bigger, broader context of what Jesus was doing in his life.

And what Jesus was doing through him. That wasn't all he thought about himself. And so we can help depressed people see their contributions, see what God is doing in them, see their usefulness, their purposes and their gifts.

And people need a sense of that. A healthy sense of that. if they're going to function. So that's fifth.

What do we call that? Self-esteem. Number six, subjectivism. Subjectivism. How can we help?

Well, we've talked a lot about this idea. but we can really help when we can point out that their feelings aren't matching up with reality.

[28 : 31] Their subjective feelings, that's not corresponding to what is actually going on in the world with God. It's not reality. And so we've talked about this.

They feel rejected, and so they say, I am rejected. They feel useless, and so they say, I am useless.

And one thing that we can really do is, instead of letting them stay in that, instead of just acknowledging that, excuse me, and just letting them go on, we need to bring them, we need to take them, we need to challenge those thoughts, and make them see, to look again, and to come to really accept as much as we can, the objective truths of the gospel.

So they feel all kinds of things. And it's not just depressed people, can't we all say this? Sometimes we feel all kinds of things. But, there are objective truths that we can count on, that we live on.

So what can depressed Christians think about? Well, they're adopted. They're adopted. They're children of God. They're under His care. They're loved by Him.

[29 : 52] They're justified. They're called. They're loved. They're being sanctified. God's promises to them are yes and amen. Now, are they just going to give in and totally agree with that right away?

Probably not. But we need to persistently, consistently say, now, is that real? Is that true? You feel this way, but is that what the Bible says? And it's not just these things.

We can talk about what we just talked about. You feel useless, but dear mom, are you useless? No, you're doing things. You're valuable, you're important to the family.

That's what they need, more and more to be pulled out of their isolated world of bad feelings. depression is like that. It gets to be very self-absorbing.

And I feel bad, and so it is bad, and so I feel bad, and so it is bad. And we need to shine the gospel light into their hearts. And let's suppose they aren't saved.

[30 : 58] And so we can't say, oh, they're adopted, justified, called, loved. We can't say that for sure. But you know what? if they are not saved, we have a gospel for them that promises them if they repent and believe, if they come to Jesus, that all these things can be true.

So the gospel is for Christians, but it is the good news for depressed people who are sinners, who are outside of Jesus. So we need to fight against that subjectivism.

Number seven, suicide. suicide. Caregivers need to know at least how to handle suicidal thoughts.

This is important when we're talking about this subject. If you suspect someone is considering suicide, the thing to not do is not to say, well, I don't want to bring it up.

They'll put the idea in their head. That's the wrong thing to do. If you suspect them of they're considering suicide, they're saying things that sounds like it, then we need to ask if that person is thinking along those lines, and if he already or she already has a plan.

[32 : 22] That's two questions. Are you thinking about that? Have you started to really consider that? And if they say yes, then you need to say, well, have you thought about a plan of how you would do it?

There's a number of steps that almost everyone, that almost always happens in suicide, suicide attempts. First, there's the beginning to contemplate it.

That's that first question. And lots of depressed people do that. They think about that. that's part of the condition. They feel so useless and worthless that it would just be, and maybe it hurts so badly that they honestly say, well, I just better off be dead.

We hear that in the Bible sometimes. People think those thoughts. It's not completely unusual. You know, they say to themselves, I'm better off dead.

The pain will stop. My family will be better off without me. it's all lies. It's all wrong. But that's what they start to think.

[33 : 36] Now, most people never get past that stage. Most people don't get to the second stage where they really start thinking about, okay, if I'm going to do this, how am I going to do that?

And so, it is serious, but it's not necessarily time to push the panic button. they need serious help. We don't want to belittle it. They need immediate attention somehow.

But the next step is actually starting a plan. And that's why if you suspect them of thinking about suicide, you need to ask if they have thought of a plan. Again, don't worry that, oh, that's going to put the thought in their head.

That's not how that works. rather by asking, you're helping them to admit that they have plans. You're helping them to seek professional help.

You're sort of like throwing a line down into a deep well and saying, I see you. You can come up. You're giving them a lifeline to step into the light.

[34 : 48] So, if they have a plan, then that's where you really do need to start to get help. And I'm talking about serious, full-time attention help.

They need to see a doctor. They probably, if they are serious and they are planning something, that's when you probably need to have them admitted into a psychiatric hospital.

Not because psychiatric hospitals are the best places in the whole world, but because they can at least provide 24-hour care. That is something that I'm going to find difficult to do and probably you're going to find difficult to do.

The window where people actually will commit suicide, where they actually have a plan and now they have every intention of going through with it, is usually less than an hour.

Real suicidal thoughts, where you are ready to pull the trigger only last a few minutes. That's why they need that constant observation and care until they're out of that danger zone.

[36 : 05] But besides all that, I at least hope that gets you thinking or at least that helps you in some way if that ever happens. besides all that, if you're a caregiver who's trying to help someone who is contemplating suicide, not just going to the doctor, not just admitting them to the psychiatric hospital or something, but you want to take arguments with you.

Steve Blom, the author of this book, suffered severe depression where he wrestled with suicidal thoughts and he would argue with himself and say, now this, I know this hurts, I know everything in you is screaming, it would be better off if I was dead, but let me, and he's talking to himself, let me tell you why you shouldn't.

And this is what he says, and just here's a few of these arguments that he would argue with himself. It is a sin and it would bring shame to Christ and his church.

It would please the devil and it would weaken greatly those who are trying to fight him. It would devastate family members and friends and talking to himself.

You might be responsible for them following your example if they come up against intense suffering. So they might just follow your example.

[37 : 38] It may not work and you could end up severely disabled and still depressed. It is true. Our God is a refuge.

He's a refuge. Help is available. If you push hard enough someone will help you. He says to himself, if you're unsaved you will go to hell. This is not because the act of suicide but because of those who die apart from knowing Christ personally will face an eternity in a far worse situation than depression.

If you are in Christ, then Jesus Christ is interceding for you that your faith will not fail. God will keep you until you reach a day when your pain will truly be over.

Revelation. Now, there's more that we could be said for sure. But what is that? That isn't faith rolling over dying.

That is faith alive and fighting. That's what it looks like to really cling to Jesus Christ when life hurts so badly. It's not faith beaten.

[38 : 58] It's faith living. So take arguments with you. The last S is, and this is where we're going to end this series, is slow.

Slow. Caregivers, we can expect a slow recovery. Not always. Not always.

Sometimes the light shines, the prison doors fly open, and it's a quick thing. It's an instant thing. But not usually. It's usually a slow process, and that means patience, and that means long suffering.

And remember, long suffering means suffering for a long time. So you are going to be suffering as you're helping them. You need to be in that with them.

Because there's really not quick fixes. It could take weeks. It could take months to recover. And so we need to have a long-term view.

[40 : 01] you. Because that's how it is. And you're going to have to face the same troubles again and again. You're going to have to confront the same doubts and the same unbelief again and again.

You're going to need to go over the same ground again and again and again with this person. They're going to need the same reassurance that they needed last week.

They're going to need you to be with them again this week and the week after that. So think of the story of the tortoise and the hare.

You have to think, I've got to be the tortoise. And in the meantime, you need to keep taking your depressed Christian brother or sister or husband or wife or child or friend before the throne of grace.

Bringing them to Jesus. you remember that passage in John where Mary and Martha they sent word to Jesus and they said, Lord, the one you love is sick.

[41 : 10] Lord, the one you love is in need. And so that's what we need to do. We need to keep bringing that person up to Jesus. Lord, the one you love is sick.

Lord, the one you love is in trouble. Lord, the one you love is so confused. It's so dark for him. Jesus is the healer. Jesus is the redeemer. Jesus is the savior. And whether he works directly or indirectly, through means or without means, we need him.

Jesus is the great answer to depression. He is. And so we need to be bringing ourselves and our friends to Jesus again and again.

Because he's the answer. Nothing more and nothing less. Well, our time's up. We're dismissed. up. up. up. up.

up. up. up. up. up. up. up. up.

[42 : 20] up. up.