

Resonate

BIBLE STUDY

“DEPRESSION”

Some issues are never addressed in the church. Yet, they are a reality that people face. One of these concerns is the topic of depression. Yet, the Word of God tackles this subject and we will learn how the answers relate to our lives.

DAY 1

Today's Scripture:
Lamentations 3:1-26

The Word

Lamentations 3:1-20

- ¹ I am the man who has seen affliction
by the rod of his wrath.*
- ² He has driven me away and made me walk
in darkness rather than light;*
- ³ indeed, he has turned his hand against me
again and again, all day long.*
- ⁴ He has made my skin and my flesh grow old
and has broken my bones.*
- ⁵ He has besieged me and surrounded me
with bitterness and hardship.*
- ⁶ He has made me dwell in darkness
like those long dead.*
- ⁷ He has walled me in so I cannot escape;
he has weighed me down with chains.*
- ⁸ Even when I call out or cry for help,
he shuts out my prayer.*
- ⁹ He has barred my way with blocks of stone;
he has made my paths crooked.*
- ¹⁰ Like a bear lying in wait,
like a lion in hiding,*
- ¹¹ he dragged me from the path and mangled me
and left me without help.*
- ¹² He drew his bow
and made me the target for his arrows.*
- ¹³ He pierced my heart
with arrows from his quiver.*
- ¹⁴ I became the laughingstock of all my people;*

they mock me in song all day long.
¹⁵ *He has filled me with bitter herbs*
and sated me with gall.
¹⁶ *He has broken my teeth with gravel;*
he has trampled me in the dust.
¹⁷ *I have been deprived of peace;*
I have forgotten what prosperity is.
¹⁸ *So I say, "My splendor is gone*
and all that I had hoped from the LORD."
¹⁹ *I remember my affliction and my wandering,*
the bitterness and the gall.
²⁰ *I well remember them,*
and my soul is downcast within me.
²¹ *Yet this I call to mind*
and therefore I have hope:
²² *Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed,*
for his compassions never fail.
²³ *They are new every morning;*
great is your faithfulness.
²⁴ *I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion;*
therefore I will wait for him."
²⁵ *The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him,*
to the one who seeks him;
²⁶ *it is good to wait quietly*
for the salvation of the LORD

Verse 1-20: These verses reflect the epitome of depression. It overtakes you. This writer is overwhelmed by his circumstances to the point of hopelessness. He feels attacked on every side. He does not see a way out. He thinks God has abandoned him. The key to this entire passage is found in verses 19-20. This man was reviewing all of his problems. The more he played back the old tape of his affliction, the more he felt depressed. His mind was focused on all the bad, which led to him feeling overwhelmed.

However, this writer decides to put in another tape.

Lamentations 3:22-26

²¹ *Yet this I call to mind*
and therefore I have hope:
²² *Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed,*
for his compassions never fail.

²³ *They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.*
²⁴ *I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion;
therefore I will wait for him."*
²⁵ *The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him,
to the one who seeks him;*
²⁶ *it is good to wait quietly
for the salvation of the LORD*

Verse 21-26: This man chose to lift his eyes off his circumstances and place them on God. He renewed his hope by focusing on the truth that he knew about the Lord. He spoke truth to himself despite the fact that he did not feel it in his heart. He decided to believe the Word of God instead of his feelings. He reviewed the Word and spoke the Word and placed his faith in the One who wrote the Word. This takes decisive action to change the focus of your thoughts. However, it is a vital necessity in beginning the process of turning your feelings around.

Please realize that this is not an easy task. In the middle of your pain, it is not easy to change your thoughts. This is a battle. When you are depressed, it is hard sometimes to even make it through a normal daily routine, much less a new way of thinking. However, it is worth the effort for it will keep you from more emotional scars. Learning to refocus on the eternal God will help you make it through your painful yet temporal problems.

Application

Ask the Lord to show you what "tapes" you are playing in your head. Request His help in beginning to learn how to focus on Him.

When are you most vulnerable to slip into depression?

What links do you believe there are between the thoughts of a person and their emotional state?

How can you focus on truth instead of your problems when you are feeling depressed?



Today's Scripture:
Esther 4:1-2, 4-8

The Word

A drastic event can bring us to the door of depression in a moment's notice. The report of bad news from a doctor, a phone call in the middle of the night, a police car arriving at your door and so many other terrible scenarios can leave your heart shattered, your mind scattered, and your life in shambles.

An entire nation heard news which led them to bitter tears.

Esther 3:13-14

¹³ Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews—young and old, women and little children—on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods. ¹⁴ A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so they would be ready for that day.

Verse 13-14: Due to an evil plot by a man named Haman, an edict was sent out to the entire kingdom to kill every Jew. How would you feel when you heard about this new law? They were captives in this nation. It was not as if they could just move to a new location. They were stuck. All they could do was wait for the day of their destruction. They had received the death sentence in a foreign land where they had no advocates. The Jewish people were overcome by sorrow and fear.

Esther 4:3

³ In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

Their pain was overwhelming. They refused to eat. Their cries could be heard from a distance. They dressed themselves in uncomfortable clothes, to represent the torment of the heart. It was an outward sign of an inward pain. Ashes were thrown on the head as a sign of humility. In essence they were saying, “We are only made from dirt and to dirt we will return. We are insignificant”. They were showing their helplessness in the middle of this perilous situation.

One Jew who felt this distress was named Mordecai.

Esther 4:1-2

¹ When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly. ² But he went only as far as the king's gate, because no one clothed in sackcloth was allowed to enter it.

Verse 1-2: Mordecai was the cousin of the queen of Babylon, Esther. However, no one knew about their relationship for Mordecai had told Esther to tell no one she was a Jew. Through a series of events, Esther replaced the former queen, Vashti. Yet, her Jewish heritage was kept secret from her husband. That is why Mordecai headed toward the king's gate, to get near his cousin, Esther.

Esther 4:4-8

⁴ When Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, she was in great distress. She sent clothes for him to put on instead of his sackcloth, but he would not accept them. ⁵ Then Esther summoned Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs assigned to attend her, and ordered him to find out what was troubling Mordecai and why.

⁶ So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate. ⁷ Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. ⁸ He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and explain it to her, and he told him to urge her to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.

Verse 4-8: When Esther heard about her cousin's pain, she did what often many of us do when someone is hurting, she tried to fix the immediate problem. He was dressed badly so she tried to give him new clothes. She did this without first finding out why he was in sackcloth and ashes. We often go about trying to “fix” the problems of others without understanding their need. Mordecai did not need fashion counsel; he needed someone to go to the king. Esther was able to truly help once she heard the issue.

Mordecai showed wisdom even in the midst of his depression. First, he went to a person who could help, namely Esther the queen. Then, he shared with her (through the eunuch Hathach) the reasons behind his downcast spirit. This is an example for us today. In our times of sorrow, we need to be willing to go to someone else and share our pain. This could be a friend, a pastor, a counselor, a mentor, a teacher. It just needs to be a trusted person who will recognize your hurt, be concerned about your broken heart, listen to you, and give you wise advice. This does not need to be someone who will just tell you what you want to hear. It should be someone who will speak to you truth in love. If this person can act on your behalf, they need to be willing to do so. Esther was willing to help Mordecai, herself, and her people.

The fate of the Jews turned around because of Esther's wisdom. In fact the Jews conquered their enemies and Mordecai was given a position in the king's court, second in command!

Mordecai, even in the midst of his depression, reached out for help. This act saved an entire nation.

Application

During our times of hardship, we may feel alone. God is with us and He has even given us one another to help each other during difficult times. Ask God to show you people in your life with whom you can entrust sharing your thoughts and feelings, even your deepest pain.

The Jewish culture is known for their demonstrative displays of emotion. In our culture, however, we keep our feelings to ourselves. How can we let others know how we feel since we do not have the habit of wearing sackcloth and ashes?

How can we stop "fixing" the problem and begin truly helping others?

How do we choose the person(s) with whom to share our pain?



Today's Scripture:
Genesis 21:14-19

The Word

There are times that our hurts are so great that we want to run away. We do not know how to face our situation, so we avoid it at all cost. When there is no way out, no future, no hope, God can meet us even there.

A woman named Hagar felt the pain of impending death. Her sorrow, however, was not for herself but her son. It was her only son. The father of the boy had sent them out in the desert. She and her son were all alone.

Genesis 21:14-16

¹⁴ Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the desert of Beersheba.

¹⁵ When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. ¹⁶ Then she went off and sat down nearby, about a bowshot away, for she thought, "I cannot watch the boy die." And as she sat there nearby, she began to sob.

Verse 14-16: Some of the greatest pains come from watching the suffering of another. When you cannot help relieve their pain, especially of your child, you feel the most vulnerable, the most useless, the most alone. Who can describe the sorrow of a mother watching her son die? Hagar could not bear the torment. She did what she could by putting him in the protective covering of the bushes. But she had nothing else to give. She walked away, heartbroken, knowing the inevitable to come. She stayed close but could not bear to witness his slow torture of dehydration and death. The tears flowed easily.

Genesis 21:17

¹⁷ God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there."

Verse 17: What I find so amazing in this passage is that God called to Hagar even though Hagar had not called to God. The Lord met her in the midst of her pain. He did not say, "Well, she did not say the right words so

I will not speak to her.” She had done nothing but cry and God responded to those tears. When we are in our lowest moments, the Lord meets us there. He is not saying, “Pull yourself up by your bootstraps. Get over it.” Instead, He is a tender Father hearing the cries of his little girl.

God then asks Hagar, “What is the matter?” It is not that God does not know. It is a gentle reminder that you can tell God your pain. He is interested. He cares. Then, the Lord meets her deepest need by letting her know that He has heard the cries of her son.

If you are a parent, you are not the only one who hears the cries of your children. God hears them. He not only hears them, He is concerned for them. His concern was not like the concern of Hagar, who was helpless in meeting her son’s needs. Instead, his concern leads to helpful action.

Genesis 21:18-19

¹⁸ Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.”

¹⁹ Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

Verse 18-19: God gives Hagar clear direction on what to do. Go to your son and take him by the hand. Lead him and guide him for the Lord has great plans for him. When Hagar was willing to step out in faith and do what God had told her to do, her eyes were open to salvation. The water was found in the desert. Life was restored to her son, as well as to herself.

In the midst of depression, we can barely see past the next minute much less years, even generations ahead. But God told Hagar to look past her pain into what He was going to do. She thought her son would die that day. God was going to make his descendants into a great nation. If we will allow God access to our pain, He will help us to see His plan in it. The desert was the catalyst for beginning a new nation. Where Hagar had seen only death, God could see future life. We need to allow God to speak to us in our pain.

But God did not only give Hagar a future hope, but He met her present need. He helped her find the water. He opened her eyes to see the answer she so desperately needed. The Lord will lead you into steps of recovering from your pain. But you must be willing to listen to His Word and allow Him to change your “eyesight”, the way you see your circumstances. Then, you can step out from sobbing to serving others the Living Water, the precious eternal life-saving gift of Jesus Christ.

Application

Spend time in praise of the Lord who meets us in our personal “deserts”.

What deserts have you walked through or maybe are walking through right now?

How does God speak to us in our times of depression?

What eternal purposes can be brought from our personal deserts?



Today's Scripture:

John 19:25, 20:1-2, 11-17

The Word

It is impossible to compare bad days. Our circumstances vary so much that we can not evaluate our response to them. One person may not be fazed by a problem that would crush another. We are all so different. But there is one woman's grief that has spoken to people throughout the generations. We have so much to learn from the woman who watched the Son of God die.

John 19:25

²⁵Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

Verse 25: Mary Magdalene. She stood near the cross, would have seen the crown of thorns thrust through the skin on His head, the nail causing gaping holes in the wrists and feet, the swarming of flies and other insects to the blood. She would have heard the gasping of air, the groaning of pain, the statements made. The smell of blood would have permeated the air. His face was so battered that He would have been unrecognizable. Despite the grossness of this morbid scene, she stayed near the cross.

This was not just any man. This is the Man who loved her, who had saved her. We know from the Scriptures that Jesus had cast out seven demons from Mary Magdalene. He released her from all the torment and pain she had experienced. When others made her an outcast, God made her His child. With all He had done for her, she could do nothing to help Him. So she did the only thing she could, she stayed near Him in His death.

Who can describe the depths of her feelings? Who can imagine her pain? Who can recount all the questions running through her mind? She watched Him die. Her agony mounted. Her hope was gone.

Days later, she is still in her state of absolute sorrow. She returned to His tomb, the only place she knew to go.

John 20:1-2

¹Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ²So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

Verse 1-2: To add to her sorrows, now the body of Jesus is gone. She had already seen His life robbed from Him and now she is experiencing His body being robbed from her. She had no idea who would be sick enough to steal a dead body, but all she knew was that He was gone. The confusion and pain reached a breaking point as she ran to the disciples and told them the news. She later returned to the tomb. She was now delirious with grief.

John 20:11-13

¹¹but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹²and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³*They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"*

Verse 11-13: Mary is so depressed that angels do not even bother her. In most places in Scripture, whenever someone saw an angel, they would be so frightened that the angel would say, "Do not fear". Sometimes the person's fear was so great that they would fall down as if they were dead! But Mary just simply looks at them and focused on the fact that where those angels are sitting is the place where Jesus' body should be! So, instead of being told to "not fear", Mary is asked, "Why are you crying?"

The angels knew the truth: Jesus is alive. They felt like the evidence was clear: stone rolled away, no body, angels sitting in the tomb. Even a bad detective could have put those pieces together. But Mary was hurting so bad that even the obvious was missed, even when she was looking the Evidence directly in the face!

John 20:14-17

¹⁴*At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.*

¹⁵*"Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"*

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

¹⁶*Jesus said to her, "Mary."*

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).

Verse 14-17: In her state of gloom, she could not see Jesus right there in front of her. With one word, though, it all changed. He called her by name. Are you suffering through a difficult time? Do you feel abandoned by God Himself? He has not left you. You may be missing the evidence of His Presence. But that does not mean you are all alone. He is with you even when you feel like you have been abandoned.

Mary, in her grief, gives us a model to handle our pain. She just kept trying to be near Jesus. At Calvary, she stood near the cross. After His death, she went to the tomb. Even seeing angels was not enough, she wanted to be around Jesus not the heavenly hosts! In your sorrow, when you do not know which way to go, when going through a normal routine seems beyond your ability, remember this: do whatever it takes to be near Jesus. With one Word, He can turn your grief into joy!

Application

Praise God that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is our hope during any time of sorrow that we may be facing in our lives today.

How can grief blind us from realizing the hope, the good, the potential in our lives?

What are ways we can choose to be near Jesus?

How does the reality of the Resurrection help us during times of sorrow?

How can we help others to see past the tears into the face of Jesus?



Today's Scripture:
1 Corinthians 12:21-30

The Word

It is time for being truthful. How many of us avoid depressed people? They are not easy to be around. Some of them refuse to walk out of grief into joy. However, some of us have refused to even try to walk with them. If you are one of those who thinks, "I'm not comfortable with other people's tears", let me tell you from the basis of the Word of God, "get over it". It is time for you to begin ministering to those around you and stop criticizing them. God deals with a whiny baby like you (by the way, we are all whiny

babies when you think about it), so you can start dealing with the hurts of the people around you. We are called to do this.

1 Corinthians 12:25-27

²⁵so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

²⁷Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Verse 25-27: We are called to be concerned for one another. We are to hurt and rejoice with one another. Life is not meant to be lived alone, instead we are to help one another along the way.

A body is made up of many parts. Each part is important. If one piece does not function affectively then other parts of the body may be in danger as well. That is why one person's grief needs to be shared by others. All of us are called to help one another. It does not matter if you are not an emotional type person, a trained counselor, or a pastor, all that matters is that you respond to the need of the person near you.

How do you do that? If you are an analytical person, should you pretend to be the gooshy, emotional type? If you are a big soft teddy bear, should you pretend to be a strong shoulder for someone to cry on? The point of this passage is not we minister in our strengths or weaknesses, but instead by the Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians 12:27-30

²⁸And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?

If you are in the body of Christ, then you have been given a spiritual gift. We are to know what our gift is and then let the Spirit work that gift through us in order to build up the body of Christ.

As the body of Christ, we need one another. Are you avoiding someone because they are too "needy"? God placed that person as well as you into the body of Christ. We need to be sensitive to one another. We need to realize that God gifted us to help one another. You help someone but then

another person may help you. That is how the body functions together. We need each other.

1 Corinthians 12:21-25

²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" ²²On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.

Verse 21-25: We are to help one another. There are some weaker parts of the body. But realize that these parts are indispensable. They are not a burden but a value. We need to honor others and help them in their vulnerability. We need to encourage them, not slander them; help them, not ignore them; value them, not discard them; protect them, not victimize them.

If you know someone who is going through a difficult time, pray for that person. Ask God how He would call you to use your spiritual giftedness to help them. Do not abandon your brother or sister in his or her time in need. Instead, be the heart of God to them, showing them His eternal love.

Application

Thank God that He shows His concern for us. Ask for His help to show this same concern to others.

Why do we usually avoid helping others?

Why does God want us to show our concern for one another?

How can we help someone who is suffering in the grips of depression?

