HOPE *for the* HEART

# DEPRESSION

## What the Bible Says about Sadness, Despair, and Finding Hope

# HOPE *for the* HEART

Because hope means everything.

At Hope for the Heart, hope gets real.

We know life is a series of challenges. But finding help shouldn't be.

That's why we create simple, easy-to-use resources. Professionally informed, all rooted in God's Word. We provide clear answers and practical guidance on over 100 real-life issues, helping you understand and apply the Bible to your life and those you serve.

It's all life-giving counsel that's key to living whole and free. For God's heart is to see you live abundantly and share the hope you have in Christ.

So that whatever you're facing—or whoever comes to you—you have every reason for hope, for every challenge in life.

***Because hope means everything.***

*"For everything that was written*
*in the past was written to teach us,*
*so that through the endurance*
*taught in the Scriptures and*
*the encouragement they provide*
*we might have hope."*
(Romans 15:4)

**www.hopefortheheart.org**

# DEPRESSION

Walking from Darkness into the Dawn

## What Is God's Heart on Depression?

The pressures and stresses of life often weigh us down. When our hearts are heavy and our heads are low, the clouds of depression seem to block out any ray of hope. But even in our depression, God walks with us, carries our burdens, and shines the light of His Word on our despair.

*"The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine on us."*
(Psalm 118:27)

**God is with us** in our depression.

*"Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand"* (Isaiah 41:10).

**God sees** our pain and suffering.

*"God, see the trouble of the afflicted; you consider their grief and take it in hand"* (Psalm 10:14).

**God hears** our cries and listens to us in our pain.

*". . . the LORD has heard my weeping"* (Psalm 6:8).

**God wants** to give us light in our darkness.

*"It is you who light my lamp; the LORD my God lightens my darkness"* (Psalm 18:28 ESV).

**God wants** to lift us up when we're feeling down.

*"The LORD upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down"* (Psalm 145:14).

**God wants** us to talk to Him when we're depressed.

*"Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge"* (Psalm 62:8).

**God wants** to comfort us.

*"I, yes I, am the one who comforts you"* (Isaiah 51:12).

**God wants** to give us peace.

*"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid"* (John 14:27).

> "Even in our depression, God walks with us, carries our burdens, and shines the light of His Word on our despair."

**God wants** to give us hope.

*"For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'"* (JEREMIAH 29:11).

**God wants** us to trust Him.

*"The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me"* (PSALM 28:7).

**God wants** us to comfort others who are depressed.

*"The Father of compassion and the God of all comfort . . . comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God"* (2 CORINTHIANS 1:3–4).

**God will** one day wipe away all our tears—and there will be no more sorrow or suffering.

*"He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever"* (REVELATION 21:4 NLT).

## Symptoms of Depression

The American Psychiatric Association's (APA) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th ed. (DSM-5) lists nine key symptoms of depression. It says that a person must have at least five of the following symptoms, lasting two weeks or longer, to be considered a major depressive episode. At least one of the five symptoms must be either persistent sadness or loss of interest.

— Persistent feelings of sadness, anxiousness, or "emptiness" most or all of the time

— Complete or near complete loss of interest or pleasure in activities that were once enjoyable

— Significant change in appetite or weight

— Difficulty sleeping most nights or sleeping too much

— Agitated thoughts and movements (i.e., fidgeting, pacing, tapping fingers or feet) or slowed responses (i.e., pausing more when talking; speaking slower, more quietly, or infrequently; moving slowly)

— Chronically fatigued, easily decreased energy

— Feelings of worthlessness or disappointment in oneself

— Lack of concentration, focus, memory retention, or inability to make decisions

— Recurring thoughts of death or suicide or suicide attempts

Instead of diagnosing yourself with depression, first consult a mental health professional (psychiatrist, psychologist, licensed professional counselor) who can give you an educated assessment after conducting a detailed analysis of your situation and symptoms. There is no shame in reaching out for help.

The psalmist, by his own admission, reminds us just how necessary it is to admit our need for help—first to God . . . then also to others.

*"Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing;*
*heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled.*
*My soul also is greatly troubled.*
*But you, O LORD—how long?*
*Turn, O LORD, deliver my life;*
*save me for the sake of your steadfast love."*
(PSALM 6:2–4 ESV)

## Key Verse to Memorize

*"Why am I so depressed? Why this turmoil within me?*
*Put your hope in God, for I will still praise Him,*
*my Savior and my God."*
(Psalm 42:5 HCSB)

## Key Passage to Read

### Lamentations 3:19–26 (NLT)

*"The thought of my suffering . . . is bitter beyond words.*
20 *I will never forget this awful time, as I grieve over my loss.*
21 *Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this:*
22 *The faithful love of the LORD never ends! His mercies never cease.*
23 *Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning.*
24 *I say to myself, 'The LORD is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!'*
25 *The LORD is good to those who depend on him, to those who search for him.*
26 *So it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the LORD."*

## My Personalized Plan to Manage Depression and Live with Hope

Depression can hide the light of day from my view and leave me in the darkness of despair. A sense of hopelessness lingers. But amidst the heaviness and dark clouds of depression, God wants to lift my heavy heart and show me there is hope.

*"There is surely a future hope for you,*
*and your hope will not be cut off."*
(Proverbs 23:18)

Because depression can impact every area of my life, I must address it from multiple angles. As I walk through the darkness of depression into the light of dawn, **I will . . .**

**Recognize** that my depression is real.

— I will acknowledge my feelings of sadness, anger, hopelessness, and other overwhelming emotions.

— I will not live in denial about my depression but will educate myself about depression and seek help to move forward.

*"I am suffering and in pain. Rescue me, O God, by your saving power"* (Psalm 69:29 NLT).

**Remember** that my pain is temporary.

— I will put my pain in perspective and acknowledge that God can help me.

— I will remember that God will one day put an end to all pain and suffering.

*"He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever"* (Revelation 21:4 NLT).

**Reaffirm** the importance of caring for my physical needs.

— I will talk with my doctor about my depression and get regular medical check-ups.

— I will eat nutritious meals, get adequate sleep each night, and exercise regularly.

*"Physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come"* (1 Timothy 4:8).

**Restrict** the amount of stress in my life.

— I will identify the environmental or situational factors related to my depression, such as difficult life events, losses I've experienced, and the various sources of stress in my life.

— I will seek to adjust to stressful life events and deal with my losses in a healthy, productive manner.

*"Give me relief from my distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer"* (Psalm 4:1).

**Reveal** my emotional needs.

— I will talk with a trusted friend or family member, counselor, and especially with God about my emotions.

— I will honestly confront my feelings and process them with God's help.

*"I call to you, Lord, every day; I spread out my hands to you"* (Psalm 88:9).

**Restrain** negative thought patterns.

— I will acknowledge negative self-talk and lies I believe about myself or my situation.

— I will replace negative thoughts with God's truth by meditating on His Word.

*"Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things"* (Philippians 4:8).

**Renew** my commitment to get my spiritual needs met.

— I will cultivate my relationship with God through reflective prayer and Bible reading.

— I will attend church regularly to receive encouragement from God's Word and to be with other believers.

*"All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals* (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer" (Acts 2:42 nlt).

## How to Help a Depressed Loved One

When you have depressed loved ones in your life, you want to do something that will make a difference, but the question is *what?*

First and foremost, *do not avoid them*. Because of the tendency to withdraw and isolate, help them get involved in activities whenever they are open to doing so. Encourage them to find a new hobby. Realize, you may be their only lifeline of hope, and they need to stay connected. Do what you wish someone would do for you if you were struggling with depression.

*"Do to others as you would have them do to you."*
(Luke 6:31)

## 12 Things You Can Do to Help

### Learn all you can about depression.

Read books, watch videos, attend conferences, visit websites such as the National Institute of Mental Health (www.nimh.nih.gov).

*"Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge"* (Proverbs 23:12).

### Be an accountability partner.

Communicate both with words and actions, "I'm with you in this, and I won't abandon you."

*"I have no one else like Timothy, who genuinely cares about your welfare"* (Philippians 2:20 NLT).

### Initiate regular dialogue.

Send frequent text messages and phone calls. Make intentional contact and encourage them sincerely and often.

*"Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them"* (Ephesians 4:29 NLT).

### Listen to their pain.

Take time to hear their story and let them share their feelings without fear of judgment. Listening affirms their value and helps them process their emotions and circumstances.

*"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry"* (James 1:19).

### Talk about depression

Talking about depression helps remove the stigma of it.

*"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver"* (Proverbs 25:11 ESV).

### Help them find a support group.

There is strength in numbers. Inquire at a nearby hospital, local church, or search the web for listings of support groups in the community dealing with depression or mental illness.

*"Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help"* (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 NLT).

### Realize the power of touch.

As appropriate, a hand on the shoulder or a hug can be a great comfort.

*"Greet one another with a kiss of love"* (1 Peter 5:14).

### Play inspirational music when you're with them.

Music is therapeutic and can lift their spirit.

*". . . speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit"* (Ephesians 5:19).

### Bring laughter into their lives.

Share funny cards, pictures, stories, videos, or movies.

*"A cheerful heart is good medicine"* (Proverbs 17:22).

### Work with them to set small, daily goals.

Encourage them to set and achieve small goals that require minimal effort. Check on their progress regularly.

*"The desires of the diligent are fully satisfied"* (Proverbs 13:4).

### Enlist help from other family and friends.

Be specific about your concerns and engage others in caring for the one depressed.

*"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ"* (Galatians 6:2).

### Take all threats of suicide seriously.

If suicide is a concern, ask, "Are you thinking about hurting yourself or taking your life?" While asking this may create some discomfort, awkwardness, or make them initially upset—it is worth the risk. Don't shy away from the hard questions, but always ask them in a kind and gentle way.

*"A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions"* (Proverbs 27:12 NLT).

## How to Respond to Suicidal Thoughts or Threats

If you, or a depressed loved one, are having suicidal thoughts or planning to harm yourself, it is important to talk with someone immediately. You will find information for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and the Crisis Text Line below. These free and confidential services are available 24/7 to provide emotional support and helpful resources for those facing distress and having suicidal thoughts. When you contact them, you will be connected with a real person who is trained to provide guidance and support. You are *not* alone.

*"Be strong and courageous.*
*Do not be afraid or terrified . . .*
*for the LORD your God goes with you;*
*he will never leave you nor forsake you."*
(Deuteronomy 31:6)

**NOTE**: If you are ever in imminent danger, call 911 immediately.

### Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

- 988
- For Deaf or Hard of Hearing (For TTY Users: Use your preferred relay service or dial 711 then 988.)
- Ayuda disponible en Español
- 988lifeline.org (Live chat available)

### Crisis Text Line

- Text HOME to 741741 (United States)
- Text HOME to 686868 (Canada)
- Text HOME to 85258 (United Kingdom)
- www.CrisisTextLine.org

Don't hesitate to call or text these hotlines if you're thinking of harming yourself. Remember, no matter what you're feeling or how bad things seem . . .

*"There is surely a future hope for you."*
(Proverbs 23:18)

# 4 POINTS OF GOD'S PLAN

Whether you're trying to make sense of your past, trying to overcome something in the present, or trying to make changes for a better future, the Lord cares about you. He loves you. No matter what challenges you or your loved ones are facing, no matter the pain or difficult feelings you may be experiencing, no matter what you've done or what's been done to you, *there is hope*. And that hope is found in Jesus Christ.

God has a plan for your life, and it begins with a personal relationship with Jesus. The most important decision you can ever make is whether you will accept His invitation. If you have never made that decision, these four simple truths can help you start your journey together with Him.

*"'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the* LORD*,*
*'plans to prosper you and not to harm you,*
*plans to give you hope and a future.'"*
(JEREMIAH 29:11)

### 1. God's Purpose for You: *Salvation*

— What was God's motivation in sending Jesus Christ to earth? To express His love for you by saving you! The Bible says, *"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him"* (John 3:16–17).

— What was Jesus' purpose in coming to earth? To forgive your sins, to empower you to have victory over sin, and to enable you to live a fulfilled life! Jesus said, *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full"* (John 10:10).

### 2. The Problem: *Sin*

— What exactly is sin? Sin is living independently of God's standard—knowing what is wrong and doing it anyway—also knowing what is right and choosing not to do it. The apostle Paul said, *"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway"* (Romans 7:18–19 NLT).

— What is the major consequence of sin? Spiritual death, eternal separation from God. The Bible says, *"Your iniquities* [sins] *have separated you from your God"* (Isaiah 59:2). Scripture also says, *"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 6:23).

### 3. God's Provision for You: *The Savior*

— Can anything remove the penalty for sin? Yes! Jesus died on the cross to personally pay the penalty for your sins. The Bible says, *"God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).

— What is the solution to being separated from God? Belief in (entrusting your life to) Jesus Christ as the only way to God the Father. Jesus said, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6). The Bible says, *"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved . . ."* (Acts 16:31).

### 4. Your Part: *Surrender*

— Give Christ control of your life, entrusting yourself to Him. Jesus said, *"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"* (Matthew 16:24–26).

— Place your faith in (rely on) Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior and reject your "good works" as a means of earning God's approval. The Bible says, *"It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast"* (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Has there been a time in your life when you know you've humbled your heart and received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior—giving Him control of your life? You can tell God that you want to surrender your life to Christ in a simple, heartfelt prayer like this:

"God, I want a real relationship with you.
I admit that many times I've chosen to go my own way instead of your way.
Please forgive me for my sins.
Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins.
Come into my life to be my Lord and my Savior.
Change me from the inside out and make me
the person you created me to be.
In your holy name I pray. Amen."

## What Can You Now Expect?

When you surrender your life to Christ, you receive the Holy Spirit who empowers you to live a life pleasing to God. The Bible says, *"His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life . . ."* (2 Peter 1:3). Jesus assures those who believe with these words:

*"Truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life."*
(John 5:24)

The information in this resource is intended as guidelines for healthy living. Please consult qualified medical, legal, pastoral, and psychological professionals regarding individual concerns.

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# QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

God gives us His Word not just for information but for transformation. The Lord wants you to "*be transformed by the renewing of your mind*" (Romans 12:2). This isn't something you do alone, but something God does in you by His Spirit.

The following questions are designed to help you reflect on the biblical truths in this resource. Take a moment to pray and ask God to settle your mind and quiet your spirit as you reflect on His truth.

*"Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this."*
(2 Timothy 2:7)

**What are two key truths, Bible verses, or "takeaways" from this resource that you found helpful—or that you simply needed to be reminded of?**

**In relation to this topic, what behavior(s) do you need to *begin*, *change*, or *stop* in order to help you grow into the person God created you to be?**

**In relation to this topic, what is the biggest obstacle you need to overcome in order to move forward?**

**What might your life look like a few years from now if you do *not* make changes regarding this issue? How might your life be different if you *do* make changes?**

**Is there anyone in your life who needs help with this topic/issue? How can you pray for them, and what is one thing you can do to encourage them?**

**What can you give thanks to God for today?**

*"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself*
*and God our Father, who loved us*
*and by his grace gave us eternal comfort*
*and a wonderful hope,*
*comfort you and strengthen you*
*in every good thing you do and say."*
(2 Thessalonians 2:16–17 NLT)

## The Complete System of Care

Designed with the whole person in mind, Hope for the Heart's *Complete System of Care* provides a comprehensive library of resources and training tools that are all professionally informed, rooted in God's Word. Centered around our 100+ topic *Keys for Living Library*, these practical, biblical resources ensure you have everything you need when getting to the heart of common life issues.

Whether for personal help or training purposes, it's all key to being completely equipped for effective care and counsel. From practical guidance in our books to deeper insights through courses, events, and media, these tools work together to help you experience freedom and transformation in Christ—and equip you to share that hope with others.

Explore our resources today and get the tools you need to take better care of yourself and others.

**www.hopefortheheart.org**