

DEPRESSION IS DEFINED AS A PERSISTENT SAD MOOD OR LOSS OF PLEASURE IN NORMAL ACTIVITIES. DEPRESSION IS ALSO DESCRIBED AS AN EMOTIONAL HEAVINESS THAT WEIGHS THE HEART DOWN.

Normal ups and downs are a common part of life. Feelings of sadness can be a normal reaction to difficult situations or struggles. For some, however, feelings of sadness and hopelessness can become crippling or prolonged, making normal day-to-day functioning a struggle.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS

If you are struggling with feeling depressed, answer the questions below. Invite a close friend to help you process these honestly.

- Do you have intense sadness that lasts longer than a few days at a time?
- Are you lacking energy or feeling fatigued for no reason?
- Do you have persistent feelings of hopelessness or sadness?
- Have your eating or sleeping patterns changed?
- Have you lost interest in activities you used to enjoy?
- Do you feel guilty or worthless?
- Are you becoming more irritable or more apathetic?
- Are you feeling indecisive or having problems focusing or concentrating?
- Are you experiencing thoughts of suicide?

DEPRESSION CAN COME FROM MANY SOURCES. WITH THE HELP OF A CLOSE FRIEND, CONSIDER THE QUESTIONS BELOW.

Circumstantial:

- Have you experienced a recent loss, such as a death, a relationship, a dream, a job, etc.?
- Is there something in your life, that if it changed, would change your mood or outlook on life?

Emotional:

- Are there emotions (such as anger, sadness, fear) that you have ignored, rather than taking time to honestly work through them with God and others?
- Are there past events, hardships, or hurts that are weighing you down?

Physical:

- Have you recently experienced an extended period of stress?
- Have there been changes in how you care for your body, sleep, eat, or exercise?
- Have you recently experienced physical changes (like weight loss/gain, hair loss)?
- Are you taking any new medications or drugs? Make a doctor's appointment to discuss concerns and get a thorough medical exam.

Spiritual:

- Are you in a season of feeling distant from Jesus Christ? Are you regularly praying to God and listening to Him through the Bible?
- Do you know of any ongoing sin or unconfessed sin in your life? Do you feel trapped or helpless because of someone else's sin?
- If you are a Christian, do you fully accept that you are completely forgiven through Christ, and see yourself as a secure, significant, loved son or daughter of God?
- Are there things you think about yourself, God, or others that lead to a depressed mood?

BIBLICAL INSIGHTS

GOD LOVES YOU EVEN WHEN YOU ARE DEPRESSED. YOU CAN APPROACH HIM FOR MERCY AND GRACE. If you struggle with depression, know that God loves you and understands. There is hope for you in Christ.

- "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Hebrews 4:15-16)

YOU ARE NOT ALONE. MANY PEOPLE IN THE BIBLE STRUGGLED WITH DEPRESSION YET FOUND HOPE AND CARE IN GOD.

- Job experienced many losses and felt a darkness in his life (Job 3:1-5).
- King David felt despair from unconfessed sin (Psalm 31:9-10) and trying times (Psalm 43:5).
- Elijah lost hope after battling against evil (1 Kings 19:3-4).
- Paul experienced emotionally trying circumstance to the point of despair (2 Corinthians 4:8-9).

YOUR FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS ARE REAL, BUT THEY ARE NOT ALWAYS A RELIABLE SOURCE OF TRUTH AND REALITY. When your thoughts do not align with God's word, the Bible, they can weigh you down. Renew your mind with Scripture (like John 3:16 below) that declares the truth about God and his love for you:

- "For 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)

GOD OFTEN WORKS THROUGH STRUGGLES TO CHANGE SOMETHING IN YOUR LIFE THAT IS HURTING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM OR YOUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS. God knows you intimately. He cares about every detail of your life. Through life's ups and downs, sadness and losses, God offers a relationship with Himself—the only unchanging source of joy (John 10:10). Sometimes, depression reveals hurts from the past, or brokenness that Christ wants to heal so that you can experience God's best.

- "He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes..." (Isaiah 61:1-3)

YOU ARE NOT MEANT TO BATTLE DEPRESSION ALONE. It is easy to isolate yourself when you are depressed, but you were made for relationships. You are meant to share life with others, being fully known and fully loved.

- "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." (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

NEXT STEPS

- Bring your pain and heartache to Jesus. He wants to give you His peace.
- When feeling depressed, it's easy to want to withdraw. Be courageous to be honest with a friend about your struggle. There is no shame in admitting feeling depressed. Honestly admitting your need begins the journey of healing (1 John 1:7).
- Meditate on God's word to renew your mind and remind yourself about what is true, such as: Romans 8:31-39; Psalm 103:2-4; Lamentations 3:20-26; Zephaniah 3:17.
- From the sources of depression questions, consider areas that might be contributing to your feelings of sadness. What are 3 next steps you can take?
- If you are having suicidal thoughts and have a plan to take your life, please seek medical help immediately by calling 911. Your life is precious.

God loves you. There is hope in Christ. God can heal your depression. If you do not yet have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, you can learn more at [rprecovery.org/the-gospel](https://www.rprecovery.org/the-gospel).