

LESSON THREE: FREE TO GRIEVE, VICTORIOUS LIFE CHURCH- PASTOR WILLIAM A. LEE, JR.

STAGE THREE: DEPRESSION AND LONELINESS

Psalm 22:1-2 “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? 2. O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent.”

Granger Westberg in his book entitled “Good Grief” states that, “In the Grief process there eventually comes a feeling of utter depression and isolation. It is as if God is no longer in heaven, as if God does not care.” In this stage, we begin to realize and feel the true extent of the death or loss. Common signs of depression in this stage include trouble sleeping, poor appetite, fatigue, lack of energy, and crying spells. We may also have self-pity and feel lonely, isolated, empty, lost, and anxious. It is during those days that we feel sure that no one else has ever quite grieved as we are grieving. Although grief is experienced by everyone, there is an amount of truth to that because no two people ever grieve alike.

However, the awful experience of being utterly depressed and isolated is a universal phenomenon.

When we are depressed, we find ourselves thinking thoughts we never have otherwise entertained. We say and think things like God does not care. We may even doubt that there is a God. It is often here that even the strongest believers might experience that is known as a crisis of faith. If one, at this stage, is feeling alone in their grief it is probably because to a degree, they are. One person expressed the feeling she had after a miscarriage saying that three, six and nine months later she felt the loss as fresh and tender like an open wound. However, the people in her life were saying and thinking things like: “It wasn’t a real baby’, “she can have others”” and “She should have snapped out of it by now.” Experiencing a normal grief in a culture that hides from death will appear strange to some people and will no doubt bring with it a sense of isolation. There will be depths ones grief that even those closest to you will not understand.

RECOGNIZING THE SYMPTOMS AND SIGNS OF GRIEF

The two "core" symptoms of depression are **low mood** and **loss of interest in activities**. In addition to those, people may also experience changes in appetite, trouble sleeping, tiredness, feelings of guilt, trouble concentrating, or thoughts of death.

When we speak of low mood, it is one that doesn't seem go away. A lasting and consistent one can be a sign of depression and its symptoms can include the following:

- low mood lasting two weeks or more
- not getting any enjoyment out of life
- feeling hopeless

- feeling tired or lacking energy
- not being able to concentrate on everyday things like reading the paper or watching television
- comfort eating or losing your appetite
- sleeping more than usual or being unable to sleep
- having suicidal thoughts or thoughts about harming yourself.

The second core symptom of depressive is a decreased interest or pleasure in things that you once enjoyed. Symptoms can be divided into the following two categories:

- **Physical loss of interest:** Those with physical loss of interest are manifested by being less able to experience sensory pleasures. For example, foods you once enjoyed now taste bland. Sex may not feel pleasurable and one may even lose interest in it.
- **Social loss of Interest:** People with social loss of interest tend to experience decreased pleasure from social situations. For example, someone who used to love meeting up with their friends for brunch is now indifferent to attending these get-togethers or returning phone calls.

Another common sign of depression is a change in how much you eat. For some people, this means a loss of appetite. This can be caused by simply not having the energy to prepare meals. Feelings of sadness or worthlessness can also lead to overeating. In these instances, food is typically being used as a coping mechanism. You may find that food elevates your mood, but when the temporary pleasure of eating is gone, you reach for more food to suppress your feelings. One study followed thousands of men and women for a period of 11 years. Those who reported feelings of depression and/or anxiety during that time had larger changes in their weight and a greater chance of being diagnosed as obese.

Psychomotor Disturbance: Psychomotor skills are skills where movement and thinking are combined. This includes things like balance and coordination, such as when picking a coin up off the floor or threading a needle. Psychomotor disturbance is typically classified as either psychomotor agitation or psychomotor retardation.

- **Psychomotor agitation:** This involves excessive motor activity associated with a feeling of inner restlessness or tension. The activity is usually purposeless and repetitive and consists of behaviors such as pacing, fidgeting, hand-wringing, and an inability to sit still.
- **Psychomotor Retardation:** The opposite of psychomotor agitation, this involves slowed speech, thinking, and body movements. This can hamper everyday life in many ways, from signing your name to getting out of bed to even keeping up in conversation.

Fatigue: Chronic feelings of fatigue can be a symptom of both persistent depressive disorder and major depressive disorder. This loss of energy, which can equate to feeling tired most if not all of

the time, can interfere with your ability to function normally. Maybe you don't feel well enough to take care of your children or tend to your housework. Perhaps the fatigue is enough that you need to call in sick at work a lot because you can't get out of bed. The fatigue that comes with depression can sometimes feel overwhelming.

Feelings of Worthlessness or Guilt: Depression can put a negative spin on everything, including the way you see yourself. You may think of yourself in unappealing and unrealistic ways, such as feeling as if you are worthless. You may also find that you have trouble letting a past mistake go, resulting in feelings of guilt. You might become preoccupied with these "failures," personalize trivial events, or believe that minor mistakes are proof of your inadequacy. An example of this would be a relationship that ended after you had a fight with your partner and said some not-so-pleasant things. This could lead you to consider yourself the cause of the breakup while potentially ignoring other issues in your relationship such as a partner who is abusive or a poor communicator. Excessive, inappropriate guilt and feelings of worthlessness are common symptoms of major depressive disorder. In some cases, the feeling of guilt may be so severe that it leads to delusion, which is an inability to see things for what they really are, therefore holding onto false beliefs.

Difficulty Concentrating: Both major depressive disorder and persistent depressive disorder involve difficulty concentrating and making decisions. People with depression may recognize this in themselves, or others around them may notice that they're struggling to think clearly. This effect has been found especially in older adults.⁹ They may notice that they're having trouble processing thoughts quickly and attribute their symptoms to cognitive decline.

Recurrent Thoughts of Death: Recurrent thoughts of death that go beyond the fear of dying are associated with major depressive disorder. An individual with major depression may think about suicide, make a suicide attempt, or create a specific plan to kill themselves. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that more than nine million adult Americans have suicidal thoughts annually. Additionally, these thoughts are highest for those between the ages of 18 and 25

DEPRESSION AND THE BIBLE

Psalms 42:5-6

5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. 6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.

"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light". (Matthew 11:28-30)

You can also find stories of the Bible where certain people experienced depression:

Moses (Numbers 11: 10-16)

David (Psalm 51; Psalm 32: 1-5), Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-18), Job, Jonah (Jonah 4:1-11), Psalmist (Psalm 73).

HOW TO HELP?

One of the most helpful things we can do for a friend at such a time is to stand by that friend in quiet confidence and assure him or her that this too will pass.

Proverbs 12:25

"Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad" (NKJV).

For some the cloud of depression will roll away in days while for some it will take weeks or months. Such people can be helped by the constant and consistent concern of those who really care about them. A congregation of religious people will need to live up to the well-known description of "the community of the concerned" showing that we are truly concerned about those who mourn, who feel lost from the world and God. This will result in earning lasting gratitude of those who mourn.

Monitor their Physical Condition: How have they changed? Weight Loss or extreme gain. Are they Grooming the same? Are they dressing the same? Other physical manifestations?

Be an Activity Activator: Get them out the house

Take them for a meal: You may have to subtly force them to eat because eating has completely lost its appeal.

Psalm 71:20-21

Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up. You will increase my honor and comfort me once again.