

Can I get some help in the Bible for depression?

Believe it or not, most times depression is a choice. By that we mean that a person chooses to get depressed or stay depressed. Therefore, they can choose to quit feeling depressed. For the most part, people do not want to accept the responsibility for their own depression, so they end up blaming circumstances or others for their feelings. Thus, they think there is no scriptural help for them. Consequently, they rarely start feeling better until they get on some kind of medicine or start seeing a therapist.

We don't intend to minimize clinical depression. There are times when people are so overwhelmed with chemical imbalances that they cannot shake their depression without some sort of medical assistance. But for most people, drugs and therapy are unnecessary. They simply need to believe what the Bible says and "do" something about the problem.

Common causes for depression are found in the Bible. They are:

- **Fear** – Elijah's horrible fit of depression was brought on by the fear of Jezebel's threat to kill him (1 Ki. 19).
- **Guilt/Shame** – Feelings of guilt and shame over sins cause people to feel depressed (Rom. 6:21; Lk. 22:61-62).
- **Pride** – People commonly set their expectations higher than they can achieve and then beat themselves up for failing to meet their expectations. This is a common problem with perfectionists. The root of their problem is pride (Prov. 16:18; 1 Cor. 10:12).
- **Lust** – Many people get terribly depressed when they can't have something that they want (1 Ki. 21:4).
- **Bitterness/Anger** – These sins consume a lot of mental and emotional energy leaving the culprit very depressed (Heb. 12:15-17).
- **Loneliness** – Nothing like feeling that you are all alone to brighten your day, huh? (1 Ki. 19:10). You get the idea that no one understands and no one cares.

There are other reasons for depression, but these are some of the main ones. And you can see why they are so difficult to deal with because people are generally unwilling to admit that they have any of these problems! But if you search deep enough, you will usually find one or more of these at the root of the depression.

So, what can you do about this problem? The Bible has many good remedies!

- **Fear God** – When you fear men or the consequences of your actions you are actually paralyzed into idleness. You can't function normally. But when you fear God, you have confidence and power (Prov. 14:26-27; 2 Tim. 1:7).
- **Forget the past** – You can have a terrible time with regret over your past sins and failures. You cannot erase those. You can only leave them in the past and move on (Phil. 3:13-14). God has washed, sanctified and justified you, and given you a new life (1 Cor. 6:9-11; 2 Cor. 5:17). What more could you possibly want?

A clear account with men? That will never happen. The world loves to find fault with you (1 Pet. 3:13-17).

- **Leave the vengeance with God** – When you have been hurt by another, whether it were physically, verbally or emotionally, you are not going to be satisfied until you get even. Nothing frustrates you more than to see the person get off "Scott free," while you are left to carry the scars of your injury. This breeds bitterness and will send you into a depression that will haunt you throughout the rest of your life. The best remedy is to remember three things. First, Jesus Christ was totally innocent and willingly accepted the punishment for all of our sins without bitterness. That's our example (1 Pet. 2:20-24). Second, God will never allow you to take matters into your own hands to "settle the score." Vengeance is the Lord's (Rom. 12:17-19). Third, the way to overcome evil is with good (Rom. 12:20-21)
- **Control your thoughts** – When you are prone to depression you generally have an active imagination that is filled with worrisome thoughts. These thoughts will consume your mind causing your affection to turn away from the Lord and turn toward yourself (2 Tim 3:2). These thoughts have to be trained to obey Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5). When the thought life is under control, the affections will be turned toward God (Col. 3:2), the thoughts will be right (Phil. 4:8) and that old disobedience will be revenged by your obedience (2 Cor. 10:6).
- **Be content with what you have** – Remember not to fret over not having everything you want, particularly when you want somebody and they don't want you. You have the Lord, who will never leave you nor forsake you (Heb. 13:5). He loves you and cares for you (1 Pet. 5:7). And he will give you everything you need (Phil. 4:19; Matt. 6:8; Jas. 4:1-3).
- **Make friends of God's people** – When you are depressed you are very lonely. But when you have friends that love you, you are accepted for just who you are, a child of God (Eph. 1:6). Remember that you have to get out of your shell and make friends (Prov. 18:24). Don't think they are going to pity you and come looking for you. You'll be very disappointed.
- **Praise the Lord** – You have a command to "Rejoice evermore," (1 Thes. 5:16). When you are depressed you are breaking this commandment routinely. When you are depressed, you also tend to be very ungrateful, which is against God's commandment to give thanks in everything (1 Thes. 5:18).
- **Humble yourself** – You are not the center of the universe and you are not the most important person on earth (Rom. 14:7-8). There are others who have faced problems similar to yours or worse (1 Pet. 5:9). And the way to get through these is through humility (1 Pet. 5:6-8).
- **Watch your diet, exercise, and rest** – Many times you can make great strides against depression by just taking better care of yourself. There are a number of things in your diet that can contribute to depression, not the least of which is sugar (Prov. 23:1-3). We live in a stressful world and exercise is vital to shed the stress and resulting depression (1 Tim. 4:8). Rest is of utmost importance. When you are depressed you can't sleep when you need the rest because you have burned up the good sleep chemicals in your brain (Matt. 11:28-30; Ecc. 5:12).

This is just some plain, practical advice from the Bible. Put it to good use.