

## **Depressed Bible Characters Resolutions and Helpful Verses**

### Introduction:

1. I have been asked to talk to you about “Depressed Bible Characters, Resolutions and Helpful Verses.
2. I plan to do that, but I have some things to say about depression and our approach to depression before I get to that.
3. A day in the life of John.
  - a. John’s day began early with a call from Dave. It was a pleasant conversation, just a friendly call, but John could not help but be reminded of Dave’s extreme anger. It’s been years, but Dave’s wife had betrayed him and he’s still struggling with it.
  - b. Mid-morning John received another call. It was Tim. Tim was concerned because he was planning a business trip with Jack, a mutual friend. Jack cancelled his participation in the trip. When Tim called Jack to talk to him about it, he seemed distant and the conversation uncertain.
  - c. John pursued it and his suspicions were confirmed. Jack was struggling with some old issues regarding a betrayal by his wife.
  - d. Throughout the day John couldn’t help but think about the pain that Dave and Jack must be experiencing.
  - e. Later that afternoon John’s wife, Jane, came home. Immediately he could tell something was wrong. She had been crying. When he asked what was wrong she said, “I don’t want to talk about it.” Shortly, she revealed that her evaluation at work was not positive and a co-worker had reprimanded her and blamed her for having failed.
  - f. The family pet is sick, but John and Jane are on the way out the door. The congregation where they worship is having a singing and they are already late.
  - g. Tomorrow John and Jane will make their way to the funeral home to celebrate the life of their young friend who died from an inoperable brain tumor leaving his young wife after only a brief marriage.
4. Most everyone in this scenario is sad and grieving. Some of them may even be depressed.
5. Sometimes we are able to get through the tragedies of life, but sometimes our sadness spirals out of control. It may stem from our experiences or seem to develop out of the blue. It overwhelms us with darkness, our emotional and physical strength is drained and we find ourselves drowning in sadness. It is more than feeling sad. We may feel emotionally blank, worthless, useless and unable to continue. Suicide may seem like a legitimate option, the only escape, the only way we have any control.
6. We may turn to the Bible and to our friends searching for help. Are there Bible characters who were depressed? If so, how did they resolve their situation? Are there verses that help?

### Discussion:

- I. Sometimes “helpers” are not very helpful.
  - A. Will power and mental toughness are highly prized in our society. We are often quick to label the depressed as “a whiner,” “lazy,” “feeling sorry for themselves.”

- B. The typical response of “helpers” is to identify what they think you should do to get out of your depression.
  - 1. “Don’t think about it.”
  - 2. “Instead of isolating yourself and withdrawing you should get out of the house and interact with people.”
  - 3. “Get involved in something you enjoy doing.”
  - 4. “Biblical prescriptions.”
    - a. “Rejoice in the Lord” (Phil. 4:4). Translation: “Christians are not supposed to be depressed.”
    - b. Think on positive things (Phil. 4:5).
    - c. Pray more.
    - d. Study scripture more.
- C. Thing is the depressed doesn’t “want” to do these things. They may feel like they can’t do them. They may have tried them already and it has not helped.
- D. I do not want what I say today to come across like Job’s friends.
  - 1. More of the same ol’ thing that doesn’t work backed up by the Bible—as an authoritative prescription of what you need to do or must do and if you don’t--well you just won’t listen to God and you’re not a good Christian.
  - 2. That just adds to my depression! The Bible does not diagnose depression, nor does it give a prescription about what to do about it.
- E. What I want to do is to identify some of the biblical characters that I think had good reason to be depressed and identify how they responded to it. If you see anything in what they did that you think might be helpful to you try it. If you see things that they did that are different from what you have done—try it you may be surprised. Something that seems “odd” or “unlikely” may be helpful. Whatever “works” for you . . . (as long as it is not sinful) try it.
- F. Often folks try to avoid pain, grief, anger, sadness. Sometimes it may be better to go toward the grief, going toward the dark place, embracing it, scheduling time to devote to it and giving yourself to the grief may be more effective than trying to get away from it.

## II. Bible characters that seem to evidence signs of depression.

- A. Cain (Gen. 4:6-7).
  - 1. Was he depressed?
  - 2. Signs.
    - a. He was angry (at God). Anger can be evidence of depression, especially in young people, men, the elderly.
    - b. His countenance was fallen.
    - c. God had no regard for his sacrifice.
    - d. Homicidal.
- B. Moses (Num. 11:10-16).
  - 1. Moses’ situation.
    - a. The Lord was angry and “Moses was displeased” (NASB, margin- “sank down”). Moses evidences anger too. Some have referred to depression as “anger turned inward.”

- b. Moses asked, "Why have you been so hard on Your servant?"
  - c. He said, "You have laid the burden of all this people on me."
  - d. "I didn't conceive all this people. I did not bring them forth. Why are you asking me to carry them like a nurse carries an infant?"
  - e. Where am I to get food for them? They weep before me saying, "Give us meat."
  - f. I am not able to carry all this people. It is too burdensome for me.
  - g. If you are going to deal with me like this just kill me. Do not let me see my wretchedness. Is he suicidal??? He is thinking of death as an escape.
2. God gave him some help (Num. 11:16ff).
    - a. Feeling alone in carrying heavy burdens may cause depression.
    - b. Preachers?
  3. God reminded Moses of the greatness of His power (11:23).

C. Jonah (4:1-11).

1. Jonah's mission was to preach repentance to the people of Ninevah. They were his enemies. Knowing of the lovingkindness, graciousness and compassion of the Lord he did not want the people to be saved from calamity.
2. He was angry with God.
3. He prayed, "Take my life, for death is better to me than life."
4. God blessed him with a plant for shade and then took it away. (Those not familiar with Israel's heat may not appreciate this account, but believe me shade is a powerful blessing.)
5. Jonah became faint and "begged with all his soul to die, saying, 'Death is better to me than life.'"
6. Jonah explained that he had good reason "to be angry, even to death."
7. Jonah had compassion on a plant, but no compassion on the 120,000 people of Ninevah. He was completely absorbed in his anger.
8. This can occur with us. Ex. Anger against an unfaithful spouse. Anger against one who enticed their spouse. Anger against some grave injustice: sexual abuse, rape, murder.
9. Not taking our own revenge, but leaving room for the vengeance of God is not easy (Rom. 12:19). Giving a blessing when your enemy deserves curses and death (Rom. 12:20-21; 1 Pet. 3:8) is at best challenging. What do I do with all these emotions? How can I carry the pain of their sin when I am innocent and they are guilty? How can I ever forgive?

D. Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-18).

1. Elijah has just come off a "mountain top experience" with the prophets of Baal. What an emotional situation that must have been. Remember he slew them at the brook Kishon.
2. God has demonstrated His great power over the weather and Baal's impotence.
3. He has effectively destroyed the religion of Jezebel. You think Isis's destruction of ancient historical artifacts and ancient cultural monuments is an atrocity think how Jezebel must have felt toward Elijah.
4. She seeks Elijah's death.
  - a. Elijah sat under a juniper tree in the wilderness and requested, "O Lord, take my life."

- b. God sent an angel, had him eat and drink, after he had slept and sent him on a mission.
  - c. But Elijah went into a cave. Hiding? When God asked what he was doing there he explained, "They have forsaken your covenant, torn down your alters, killed your prophets and I alone am left and they seek my life." That's a pretty good reason to be hiding out in a cave. And it is a pretty good reason to be depressed.
  - d. The Lord returned him to his mission.
    - 1) Anoint Hazael king over Aram.
    - 2) Anoint Jehu over Israel.
    - 3) Anoint Elisha as prophet in your place.
  - e. The Lord reminded him that there were 7,000 in Israel who had not bowed their knee to Baal. "You are not the only one left."
  - f. Sometimes our situation can cloud our minds to our mission. Account of Shelley who lost a child in death. Became severely depressed. Came to realize that her grief for her one child was distracting her from being a mother to her child that was living. Sometimes our situation can be so overwhelming that we loose sight of our mission.
- E. David (2 Sam. 12:10ff).
- 1. If any man ever had a right to be depressed it was David.
  - 2. Elijah had been faithful, but David had "despised the word of the Lord."
  - 3. The consequence for David was severe.
    - a. The sword would not depart from his house.
    - b. Evil would arise from his own household.
    - c. His wives taken in public to humiliate him.
    - d. His young child would die.
  - 4. Amnon raped Tamar. Absalom, her brother, killed Amnon.
  - 5. Absalom took over the kingdom from David, and went in to his father's wives on the roof top in public humiliation of his father. Much like a foreign army might rape the women of a conquered country.
  - 6. Absalom is ultimately slain by Joab, commander of David's army.
  - 7. David is grief-stricken. "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would that I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"
  - 8. I cannot begin to imagine the sadness, the grief, the depression associated with the loss of a family. And then to add to that the recognition that your own failures led to the condition.
  - 9. Some of us carry such burdens.
- F. Job. (Perhaps the oldest book in the Bible and note what it is dealing with.)
- 1. What can we say? He lost everything. Financial collapse. The death of all of his children. The loss of his health. Pain.
  - 2. He wished he had never been born.
  - 3. Then his friends came along.
    - a. They get a bad rap, but they came to sympathize and comfort. The situation was so terrible they did not recognize Job. They tore their robes and wept. They sat on the ground for seven days and seven nights and said nothing. I don't know if

I have any friends that would do that!!!

- b. Yes, they investigated Job, questioned his integrity, defended God and honestly could not figure out why these things were happening to him. Typical to ask “WHY?” when faced with such situations. Our friends don’t know what to do. We don’t either!
- 4. Job said, “You are sorry comforters” (16:2). He accused them of insulting him ten times (19:3).
- 5. His wife said, “Why don’t you curse God and die?” We have given her a bad rap, but perhaps she, seeing his pain, is offering him a way out. Euthanasia??? We want relief and we want it now!
- 6. Everything that he got back did not make up for what he had lost.
- 7. He always believed that God was faithful!
- G. There are others that evidence signs of depression.
  - 1. King Saul (1 Sam. 16:14-23). Depression? Music helped.
  - 2. Ahab (1 Kings 21:4). Vexed. Laid on his bed. Turned his face to the wall. Would not eat. Spirit was sullen.
  - 3. Judas (Matt. 27:3ff). Committed suicide.
  - 4. Peter (Matt. 26:75). Preached to others. Something to be said about applying your life to helping others in helping you to deal with your own depression.
  - 5. Paul (2 Cor. 11:23-29). A persecutor. A murderer. Turned sufferer for the cause he had persecuted.
- H. Jesus (Lk. 13:34-35; Matt. 26:38; Mk. 14:33ff; Lk. 22:39-46).
  - 1. Grief over men’s rejection of the grace of God. “How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!”
  - 2. In His final week, knowing where He was headed, He worked to prepare His disciples.
  - 3. In the Garden of Gethsemane.
    - a. He had brought Peter, James and John. Asked them to keep watch with Him. They slept.
    - b. He was grieved and distressed, to the point of death in anticipation of what was coming.
    - c. Prayed, “If possible let this cup pass from Me.” Yet resigned Himself to the will of God: “Not as I will, but as You will.”
    - d. They slept.
    - e. He prayed. An angel strengthened him.
    - f. He prayed. In agony very fervently, His sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground.
  - 4. Scourging and crucifixion.
  - 5. “Learned obedience through from the things He suffered” (Heb. 5:8).

Conclusion:

- 1. These Bible characters reveal that sadness and depression is often a circumstance associated with this life.
- 2. Some were angry with God and with other people. Some were saddened by their own sin. Others were saddened although they had done no wrong. Some wished for death. Some

prayed seeking God's help. But sometimes that help was delayed. Some lost focus on their mission and were called back to their work.

3. Some found relief by sharing their burdens. Some found their "helpers" not very helpful. Some found strength through an angel of God.

4. Continued loyalty and dependence upon the Lord was always desired.

5. While we may long for relief and seek it diligently the Lord promises to walk with us through the valley of the shadow of death.

### **Helpful Readings from Psalms**

Psalm 6, 13, 18, 23, 25, 27, 31, 32, 34, 37-40, 42-43, 46, 51, 62-63, 71, 73, 77, 84, 86, 90-91, 94-95, 103-104, 107, 110, 116, 121, 123-124, 130, 138-139, 141-143, 146-147