

SERVING CONTENTEDLY

Week 5: Why Do I Feel This Way?

At some time or another, everyone faces discouragement, despondency, or depression. Then the problem arises—how to cope. For some, these are just occasional feelings; for others, these feelings come far too frequently or are of long duration. The grim facts are: depression is the nation's number one emotional illness, and it is on the increase. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 9 percent of adults in the United States, from all walks of life, suffer from some form of depression. Thousands who fail to cope turn to suicide, thinking that is the only way out. But those who face depression should turn to the Bible for the solution.

1. When feeling discouraged, Christians may face an additional problem. They may feel there is some stigma attached to Christians' being despondent, thinking they aren't where they should be spiritually. In reality, no one is free from the attacks of Satan. These attacks may be physical, spiritual, or mental, but Christians can take the problem to the Lord and receive help. What are some examples in the Bible of children of God who faced such attacks? How were they brought through?

2. Those who have suffered extreme discouragement and depression know how quickly Satan charges one with being out of the will of God. The Christian, of course, will do some heart searching. But it is helpful to remember that Satan is the accuser of the brethren. He tried to accuse Job before God, but the Word says that Job was "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." Why then was Job tested so

severely? What might be the reasons for suffering in the lives of those who are truly living close to God? Refer to 1 Peter 5:10.

3. One feeling common to all who go through periods of discouragement is that of being all alone—forsaken, abandoned—and that no one really cares or understands. Many of the psalms reflect David's periods of discouragement: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me ... I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people" (Psalm 22:1,6). How desperately, then, do we need the hope offered in the Scriptures, the reminder that God is there whether or not we can see Him or feel His presence. What particular Scripture has God used to bring you hope and comfort in time of testing or discouragement?

4. Satan's business is to rob the child of God of his rest and peace in Christ. Often there is only a short step from being slightly discouraged to the deep gloom of

depression, from the “blues” to being on the edge of despair. Many of life’s circumstances can lead to despondency: ill health, loneliness, unemployment, death of a loved one. These problems are common to all. How can the Christian gird himself for the battle and prepare to fight this foe when it strikes?

5. It is possible that discouragement comes as a result of our own doings. The enemy of our souls is constantly alert to ways and means of enticing us to yield to the desires of the flesh or the carnal nature. We must be careful what we do, where we go, whom we choose as associates, what we talk about, what we establish as goals. It is easy to strive for the things of this life to the neglect of the spiritual. For example, going into debt could be a trick of the devil. The Bible admonishes us to take heed to ourselves, and if we fail to do so, we may find ourselves in trouble. It is important to identify the source of our trouble and then take steps to correct the problem. How might Matthew 18:8,9 relate to the solution of such problems?

6. Some may say, “I’ve searched my heart and life for anything I need to do and the Lord has shown me nothing. Yet my prayers don’t seem to go through, and I can’t

help feeling discouraged and depressed.” What encouragement can we offer such a one?

7. The battle against depression may not be won in a skirmish or two, but be persistent: victory is assured! Ephesians 6:12 spells out who the enemy is. What has God provided for our use against the enemy that assures his defeat? Ephesians 6:13

8. We have studied various aspects of depression and possible causes and cures. We have read biblical references to believers who endured periods of discouragement amounting to despair in some cases. God brought them through, and He will bring those through today who look to Him in times of discouragement. Every trial He allows to come our way is for our profit, “that we might be partakers of his holiness” (Hebrews 12:10). Read the eleventh verse and then summarize in a few words how God can “turn your troubles into treasure.”

Scriptures used in this session:

Psalm 22:1,6; Matthew 18:8,9; Ephesians 6:12,13; Hebrews 12:10,11; 1 Peter 5:10

Supplemental Scriptures:

Numbers 11:15; Joshua 7:7,8,10; 1 Kings 19:4; Isaiah 46:4; Romans 8:28; Ephesians 4:32; Philippians 4:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Hebrews 13:5; 1 Peter 5:10

Suggested verse for memorization:

For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not: I will help thee.—Isaiah 41:13