

# Counseling Issues

## Week 5

### Depression

## **COUNSELING ISSUES: DEPRESSION**

### Real Life Stories

One man who had great success in the eyes of the world is in the hospital, diagnosed with depression. One morning he could not think of a reason to get out of bed. Two weeks later, his wife had him admitted to a mental health facility. He had a good paying job that he loved, a beautiful wife and an expensive home. Two years later, he was still in the private hospital. The Gospel held the keys to new life and a reason to live.

A 20 year old woman in the same institution described her life as a downward spiral of depression, with the low point of each cycle more severe than the last. She had no purpose for life. She had little hope that change was possible. Salvation by the forgiveness for sins through the blood of Christ could change her life, spiritually and in regard to depression. The care of God could infuse her life with a level of love and purpose she had not previously known.

A 22 year old woman cannot keep a job for more than a few weeks. That's the typical amount of time between episodes of depression. Her depression results in low energy and the feeling of worthlessness and lack of reason to fulfill her responsibilities. What does she wish would change? That her mother would love her. The Word has the answers for this woman.

A non-Christian man in his forties rarely leaves his couch. He was betrayed by his business partner (a long-time friend) and his wife had sexual relations with a man in their town. He is sad. He says he does not fear being hurt again, but he has no desire or energy to return to society. There are truths that are related to the Gospel that could save his soul, change his life and end his depression.

A forty year old Christian woman, in the past few weeks, has gradually lost energy and competency at work and in conversations. She visits a psychiatrist, who diagnoses her with depression and prescribes psychotropic drugs to change her mood to more energetic. Also, she calls a biblical counselor who seeks to find out what significant events have occurred in recent times. She says that she knows when things changed. There was a

tragedy in her family a year ago. She has been angry at God since. The Word and her response to it hold the keys to this woman's recovery from her depression and reconciliation with the Lord.

### Keys in counseling the depressed

Build a relationship based on Christlike love, patience and kindness (often depressed people do not perceive that they are loved; true biblical love is often a prerequisite to having your counsel from God's Word heard)

From the beginning, communicate the great hope that God provides in his Word (by definition, the depressed person lacks hope...possible exceptions: the depression is a feeling caused by a physical factor such as medications, diet, illness or fatigue)

### Gather thorough data

Use journals to get a detailed view of the exact thought pattern

Ask heart-level questions

What do you wish was different?

What would circumstances be if you were encouraged or at peace?

What is your biggest fear?

What events occurred around the time you begin to feel depressed?

What has changed in your life since?

Are you taking any prescription medications? What/ what dose/how long?

Have there been other instances of depression in the past? What happened before/ during/ after?

What do you think about when you are down?

What do you think about when you are feeling better?

What do you hope happens in your life?

How do you think this depression will end?

How do you seek relief?

How do you think God views this situation?

What have others told you is the way out of depression?

If the Bible showed you how to deal with depression would you want to obey it?

## SCRIPTURE

Review the Hope from God's Word study (semester one, Theology of Counseling course, week 10)

The answers to the data gathering questions reveal the nature of the counselee's depression and heart motives

Focus on the specific aspects of this person's thought pattern with pertinent Scripture

Through journals, cause the counselee to interact with the Scriptures (primarily hope) daily and at the heart level

Monitor the responses to the Word: yielding the will / changing the thinking / trusting God / asking for His help / resistant / not hearing the truth / reluctant to let depression (and idols or unmet desires) go ?

Depression can result from dealing un-biblically with:

Failure

Idols (desired love, respect, accomplishment more than pleasing God)

Rejection

Sins of others against you

A person's own sins

Grief

Laziness

How depression develops and can be alleviated

Not dealing with sin biblically

Seeking idols of pleasure, being loved, success

Sins may include choosing to desire ease or success more than righteousness  
Hope in God's love, purpose and help are forgotten

Focusing on failure, not getting what one wants or feelings (exalting self, not God)  
results in discouragement

Truths about life are obscured by the obsession with problems

Gathering detailed heart level data on the desires, motives, thoughts and fears are  
key in analyzing the problem and realizing the specific biblical course for change

The cure is repentance from sin and focus on solution (God's help and His Word)  
rather than the problems

Hope from the Word may be essential

See Jay Adams' "Competent to Counsel," pages 116-127

See Jay Adams' diagram in "The Christian Counselor's Manual"

Depression can be caused by meds: check PDI, WEB MD; therefore gather  
extensive and accurate data

Our culture's view of depression

It is a disease, not a choice

Often, medications are prescribed

Resources for study

*A Christian Growth and Discipleship Manual*, page 87: "Depression: Help for Overcoming Depression"

\*Students: read through this study

*A Christian Growth and Discipleship Manual*, pages 35-75: Studies that give hope

\*Students: be aware of these studies; you are not required to read them as part of this course

Common homework assignments for counselees

Memorize Philippians 4.4-9. Pray daily for God's strength to only think thoughts that comply with these guidelines of Scripture. Make a list of things to no longer think about and instead, things that are honoring to God to think about based on verse 8.

Daily confess all known and previously un- confessed sin. Choose to no longer think about these sins in terms of guilt or shame but rather only in the context of God's great grace and forgiveness, giving thanks for His love and this freedom

Class Notes

Case 1

What was desired that was not received?

Were trials dealt with unbiblically?

What crucial heart level data was gathered?

How was the love and compassion of Christ in the counselor important in this case?

What truths of the Word were key to change in this case?

What are the three most important differences between this person's thinking before depression began and now?

Class Notes

Case 2

What was desired that was not received?

Were trials dealt with unbiblically?

What crucial heart level data was gathered?

How was the love and compassion of Christ in the counselor important in this case?

What truths of the Word were key to change in this case?

What are the three most important differences between this person's thinking before depression began and now?

Class Project