

Gospel Care & Counsel for Women Walking through Depression Session Outline

Overview:

- "I'm depressed." What does that even mean?
- Building a gospel-centered framework for body stewardship.
- Identifying and engaging "felt reality" through biblical lament.
- Gospel-centered wisdom (and warnings) for goal-setting.

Goal:

- To learn how the gospel of Jesus Christ helps women to navigate depression wisely.
-

I. "I'm Depressed." What Does that Even Mean?

- The term "depression" encompasses a variety of spiritual and physical components.
- God's Word helps sufferers to articulate their experiences of despondency in helpful and honest ways:
 - Proverbs 17:22: A broken spirit saps the body of its strength.
 - Psalm 42: Cast down, spiritually thirsty, constantly weeping, feeling forgotten and oppressed, taunted and mocked.
 - Psalm 77: Relentless, all-consuming, faith-distorting inner turmoil.
 - Psalm 88: Troubled, physically weak, overwhelmed, shunned, trapped, afflicted, rejected, helpless, destroyed, suffocated, drowned, abandoned, nearly dead—engulfed by darkness.
- Common emotional facets include: hopelessness, weariness, sadness, anger, anxiety, shame, and loneliness.
- Sadness is a God-given emotion meant to drive meaningful change and produce redemptive benefits.
- *Explained sadness* is tied to identifiable loss. Its time and intensity is proportionate to the problem (insights derived from Dr. Charles Hodges).
- *Unexplained sadness* is not tied to identifiable loss. Historically known as "melancholia" or disordered sadness.
- Sadness is *safe* when:
 - We're able to perceive Jesus as a real and present refuge. (Ps. 16:1)
 - We're willing to engage him in our emotional pain. (Ps. 102)
 - We come to rest in the everlasting arms. (Deut. 33:27)
 - It propels us to entrust ourselves "to a faithful Creator while doing good." (1 Pt. 4:19)
- Sadness is *dangerous* when:
 - We cannot perceive Jesus as a real and present refuge.

- We hesitate to engage him in our emotional pain.
- We seek rest and relief apart from the everlasting arms.
- It propels us to trust our own understanding and interpretation of reality.

II. Building a Gospel-Centered Framework for Body Stewardship

- We are embodied souls. God designed us as physical and spiritual beings (Genesis 2:7).
- Spiritual problems can impact physical health just as physical problems can impact spiritual health.
- The interplay between our physical and spiritual matter can sometimes be mysterious, so we seek to be faithful to what we can know about spiritual and physical contributing factors in depression while entrusting God with what we cannot figure out.
- An *imbalanced view* of depression is narrow; it oversimplifies contributing factors and therefore disqualifies appropriate helps.
- A *balanced view* of depression is nuanced; it's holistic when considering contributing factors and therefore realistic about appropriate helps.
- Influences on the despondent soul (insights derived from David Powlison/CCEF):
 - Physically-embodied
 - Socially-embedded
 - Spiritually-embattled
 - God of providence

Case Study: Elijah in 1 Kings 19

- Key Scriptures on gospel-centered body stewardship:
 - Romans 6:13
 - Romans 12:1
 - Romans 14:7-8
 - Philippians 1:20
 - 1 Corinthians 6:19
- Practical applications:
 - Reassessing our responsibilities.

- Accepting our limitations.
- Entrusting our concerns to God.
- Submitting our bodies as an act of worship.

III. Identifying and Engaging “Felt Reality” through Biblical Lament

- The *grace* of lament is that it helps us to talk to God about pain.
- The *goal* of lament is renewed trust in God.
- Building our emotional vocabulary is helpful for recognizing and expressing our "felt reality."
- "*Felt reality* is what's happening from my vantage point. It's reality framed by my own thoughts, assumptions, and emotions...Getting felt reality on the table can be the first step in seeking to steward and shepherd our thoughts and emotions so that they more fully align with God's." -Joe Rigney
- Lament is how we engage the "terrible truths" of our pain *and* the "wonderful facts" of the gospel.
- Lament helps us to **EVACuate** to the Lord when we're troubled or overwhelmed.
 - E=Engage God
 - V=Voice your complaint
 - A=Ask for help
 - C=Choose to trust
- See attached worksheet for a suggested pattern for personalized lament.
- See Psalms 6, 13, 22, 31, 32, 38, 42, 55, 69, 73, 77, 88, and 102 for examples of biblical lament.
- Suggested resource for counselors: *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy Devotional Journal* by Mark Vroegop.

III. Gospel-Centered Wisdom (and Warnings) for Goal-Setting

- Self-condemnation or feeling like "a failure" can reveal a reliance on works-based righteousness.
- Our hope can slowly shift off Christ and onto achieving an outcome or experiencing burden relief.
- It's not wrong to desire burden relief, but it is destructive to worship/idolize it.
- How can we know if we worship burden relief? When life's not worth living without it.
- We want to change our goals from "I want _____ more than I want to breathe." to "I want to glorify God with my life more than I want to breathe." (Dr. Charles Hodges)
- Trading *burden-centered goals* for *God-centered goals* helps to break a "fix-it" mentality (Matt. 6:33).
- Helpful diagnostic questions (Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*):
 - Do you think that there is a "secret" to the Christian life that ends the struggle and makes life easy sailing?
 - Have you resigned yourself to a failure as a Christian because it seems too hard to change?

- When you become aware of a shortcoming in your life, do you treat it as a crisis, either 1.) to excuse or 2.) to despair over or 3.) to seek instantaneous perfection and deliverance?
- "This life, therefore, is not righteousness but growth in righteousness, not health but healing, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it; the process is not yet finished but it is going on; this is not the end but it is the road. All does not yet gleam in glory but all is being purified." -Martin Luther
- Setting goals that help instead of hurt:
 - Embracing God's redemptive work in us (Jas. 1:2-4)
 - Engaging God in pain and confusion (Ps. 62:8)
 - Accepting God's grace for our imperfections/limitations (2 Cor. 12:9)
 - Making wise accommodations for this season of life (Ecc. 3:1)
 - Remembering that God works through depression to humble our hearts, purify our faith, and teach us his ways (Gen. 41:52)

Recommended Reading & Resources

Depression: Looking Up from the Stubborn Darkness by Ed Welch

Good Mood, Bad Mood: Help and Hope for Depression and Bipolar Disorder by Dr. Charles Hodges

Spurgeon's Sorrows: Realistic Hope for Those Who Suffer from Depression by Zack Eswine

Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament by Mark Vroegop

I Want to Escape: Reaching for Hope When Life is Too Much by Rush Witt

Angry with God: An Honest Journey through Suffering and Betrayal by Brad Hambrick

My Books & Resources

Midnight Mercies: Walking with God through Depression in Motherhood (P&R Publishing)
christinemchappell.com/midnightmercies

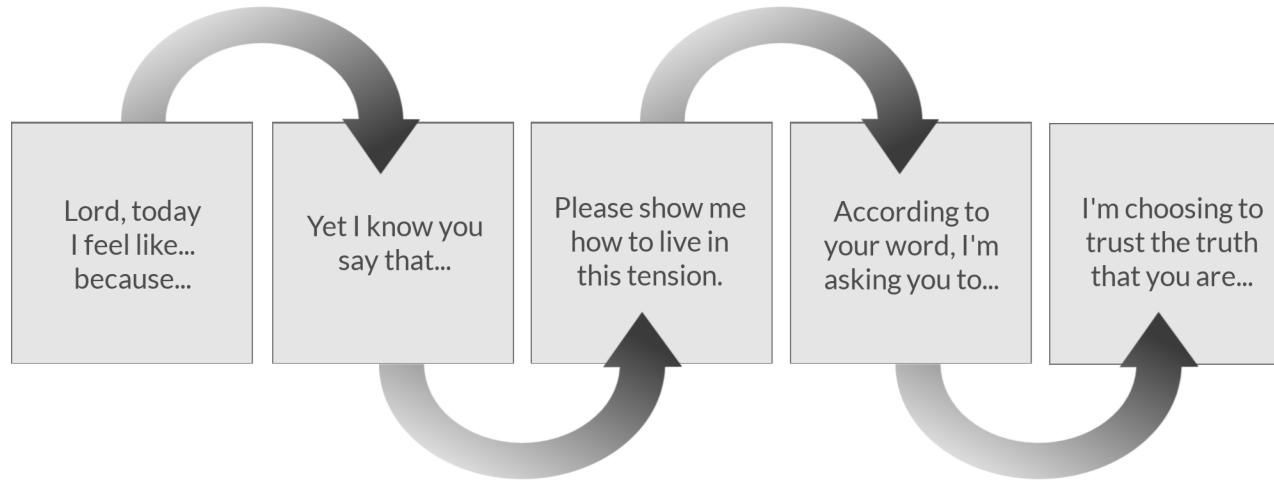
Help! I've Been Diagnosed with a Mental Disorder (Shepherd Press)
christinemchappell.com/help

Help! My Teen is Depressed (Shepherd Press)
christinemchappell.com/helpmyteen

Hope + Help Podcast: ibcd.org/hopeandhelp or christinemchappell.com/podcast

Building Personalized Prayers of Lament

Using the flow chart below as a guide, try building your own depression-specific prayer of lament. Honestly acknowledge *how* you feel, *why* you feel that way (if you can pinpoint the reason), and then turn your prayer with a "but" or "yet" statement that submits your felt reality to biblical truths about who God is and what he has promised to you. Write in the blank space below, as the Spirit leads.



Lord, today I feel like...