

## The Truth Will Set You Free from Depression

In **John 8:32**, Jesus said the truth will set us free. We've already learned this is about more than doctrinal truth. It is about the emotional, psychological, and spiritual truths the Word of God reveals. When our lives are governed by God's truths, we will gain repeated victory over the sin that otherwise would easily beset us. But there is even more to it. If we are talking about emotional, psychological, and spiritual truths, we recognize that the truth will also set us free from the emotional, psychological, and spiritual debilitations we face. For instance, the truth will set us free from depression.

Please understand, I'm not suggesting depression is a sin in and of itself. Further, I recognize there are some depressions caused by a physical problem that will need that kind of solution. Finally, when I speak of depression I'm not just talking about sadness. Clearly, sadness is a legitimate feeling (see Jesus' sadness in **John 11:35**).

Depression is an overwhelming and debilitating sadness that places a dark cloud over every silver lining, leaving its victim with a sense of hopelessness. It doesn't simply feel sadness about specific events, allowing them to blend in with the many emotions that make up a greater approach to life. It becomes the dominant approach to life, conquering every other emotion and distorting every situation to its dark and dismal perception. Further, it refuses to be brought back to a place of peace and serenity. It refuses to allow sad events to take their rightful place in the long list of multiple experiences—some positive, some negative. Rather, it filters every event and uses the negative aspects of everything that ever happens to mount a seemingly insurmountable wall of darkness. Many of us have been there. Some of us probably are there now.

Here is the problem. While sadness may be prompted by reality, debilitating depression is not. Satan has fed us with lies that we tell ourselves over and over again that darken our perception, leading to the debilitating depression. Consider a few examples and the truths we need to remember to overcome.

Let's consider an extreme case—the loss of a loved one. This can happen when you move and no longer have interaction with the loved one. It can happen when relationships shift and an important person in your life no longer considers the relationship important. It definitely happens when a loved one dies. Certainly, this is a cause for sadness. Paul admitted that in **Philippians 2:27** when he claimed the death of Epaphroditus would have caused him sorrow upon sorrow. Relationships change, friendships alter, and people die; we can't get away from this. It causes sadness, but does it have to cause a lingering, debilitating depression? No. The event is not what causes the depression. What causes that are the lies we let Satan feed us. Subconsciously, and sometimes consciously, we say to ourselves, "I can't go on without so-and-so." "Life is not worth living without my loved one." "I'm worthless without my loved one." "No one else can ever fill that hole in my life like my loved one." These statements may seem like they are honoring the loved one. But they are actually lies. They are a form of idolatry as they set our loved ones up as greater than God in our hearts.

Consider the truths that can help us overcome. In **Psalms 27:10**, it says, "For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the LORD will take me in" (ESV). When loved ones forsake us, God draws us closer. **Luke 18:29-30** explains that when we've lost a relationship, we can find many more in the body of Christ. **Philippians 4:13** reminds us that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us, not through our loved one. That means we can make it through the day even without our loved one. But it also means the thriving we were doing when our loved one was present wasn't because of them, but because of God. Surviving and thriving today depends on the same power—God, not our loved one. These lies we tell ourselves about our loved ones are not honoring them in a godly way, but idolizing them. If we are dealing with a friend who has forsaken us, they aren't worth that. If we are dealing with a loved one who has died and gone to be with God, they don't want that. They want you to keep God first in your life. If you do, then you'll be able to say with David in **II Samuel 12:23**, "But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me" (ESV).

Consider another case—feelings of worthlessness or failure. Many of us examine our lives and decide we are worthless. We repeat that message over and over again. We make a mistake and say, "Of course, I would make this mistake. I'm so stupid." We consider an endeavor but decide against it saying, "What's the point. I'm such a failure; this will never work." We are like the third servant in the parable of the talents found in **Matthew 25:14-30**. We are convinced we can't succeed, so we live our life based on failure. Guess what we end up doing? We fail. Then we have another notch in our belt of failures that Satan uses to remind us that we are just worthless, unlovable, failures. Then we have the relationships in which people help us feel that way. They reject us, ridicule us, mock us, belittle us, and we listen to their lies believing there is something wrong with us. Why should we be surprised we have no friends; we are worthless. After a period of hearing and accepting these lies from Satan and repeating them

to ourselves, it is no wonder we carry our own dark cloud with us raining not only on our own lives but on the lives of everyone around us. We are certain we have a realistic case to base this on, but we don't. Sure, making a mistake is a good reason for sadness. Being rejected is a good reason for sadness. But it is not these real events that cause the depression. The debilitating depression is caused by the misperceptions Satan's lies fill us with.

Consider the truths that can help us overcome. First, there is a difference between having failed and being a failure. The only person who never makes a mistake is the person who never tries anything. And considering **Matthew 25:18, 24-28**, that is a mistake in and of itself. But the real truth we need to realize is that our worth is not based on what we have done. It is based on what God has done for us. It is not based on what the people around us think of us. It is based on what God thought of us. Read **John 3:16**, but insert yourself into the verse: "For God so loved me, that he gave his only Son, that if I believe in him I should not perish but have eternal life." And yet, through Satan's lies we respond, "That can't apply to me. I'm such a sinful loser. I'm a terrible Christian. I'm a terrible spouse. I'm a terrible parent. I'm a failure on the job..." Remember the truth found in **Romans 5:6-11**. Jesus died for us knowing all the mistakes, failures, flubs, and sins we would commit. He died for us so that we could be victorious through reconciliation. When Satan's lies rear their ugly head saying we are worthless, we must remember we were worth a Son to God. Our lives don't have to be based on how fickle people treat us, but on how the unchanging God treated us. He loved us so much, He sacrificed Jesus for us. He adopted us into His family because He wanted us there. We must boldly repeat that truth to ourselves. When Satan's lies rear their head, we can tell him to get behind us. We are going to focus on the truth of God, not the lies of the devil.

We could go on with example after example. But the long and short of it is simply this—get into God's Word. Learn and know His truth, it will set you free even from the dark depths of debilitating depression. You can live in the light again. You can be free.

—Edwin L. Crozier