

## The Black Clouds of Depression . . .

Have the dark clouds of depression poured their tears upon your soul? Are you emotionally stuck . . . muddled in your mind . . . mired in your emotions? Do you feel isolated and alone . . . afraid that no one understands? If so, you are not alone. People from all walks of life have languished under the black clouds of depression.

Can anything bring back the white clouds of contentment? King David—no stranger to depression—discovered the answer. He learned how to exchange the darkness of despair for the light of hope. Again and again, when his soul was downcast, he intentionally changed his focus—he continually riveted his focus on the faithfulness of his Savior . . . his Redeemer . . . his God. Three times, in three different verses, David asked himself the same question and three times he followed with the same answer.

*“Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you in turmoil within me?  
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,  
my salvation and my God.”  
(Psalm 42:5–6, 11; 43:5)*

**Q:** “Does taking medicine for depression show a lack of faith in God?”

No. Various physical conditions can contribute to depression. For example, in bipolar and postpartum depression, a biochemical imbalance exists that can basically be treated successfully with medication. Unfortunately, many Christians fear being labeled unspiritual if they seek medical help for their depression, yet by doing nothing, they can suffer needlessly.

Sometimes medication is needed for a period of time to “level out” mountainous swings so that those in the throes of depression can see truth and walk on level ground. Ezekiel 47:12 explains that God made “*leaves for healing*.” Therefore, medicine is biblical. However, medicine should be used, not to numb the pain or to escape it, but to help a person process the pain. Additionally, medication should be the last avenue—tried only after all other steps have been taken—and always in conjunction with counseling.

*“Look to the right and see: there is none who  
takes notice of me; no refuge remains to me;  
no one cares for my soul. I cry to you, O LORD;  
I say, ‘You are my refuge, my portion in the  
land of the living.’”  
(Psalm 142:4–5)*

## Six Physical Contributors to Depression<sup>1</sup>

- 1. Hormonal imbalance**  
Hormonal changes during puberty, postpartum (after childbirth), and peri-menopause (around menopause) can lead to depression.
- 2. Medications and drugs**  
Certain legal and illegal drugs can cause depression.
- 3. Chronic illnesses**  
Medical problems such as a thyroid deficiency and even a bout with the flu can cause chemical imbalances in the brain, which, in turn, can cause depression.
- 4. Melancholy temperament**  
Those with this temperament can take everything too seriously or too personally, quickly becoming depressed over circumstances or the slightest imperfection in themselves or others.
- 5. Improper food, rest, exercise**  
A deficiency in the physical basics of life can contribute to a chronic sense of fatigue, lack of energy, and social withdrawal.
- 6. Genetic vulnerability**  
Based on statistical data, those with depressed family members are two times more vulnerable to depression than those with no family history of depression.<sup>2</sup>

*“The simple believes everything,  
but the prudent gives thought to his steps.”  
(Proverbs 14:15)*

## Do's and Don'ts for Family and Friends

- **Don't say:** “You shouldn't feel that way.”  
**Say:** “I care about what you are feeling.”
- **Don't say:** “You just need to pray more.”  
**Say:** “I'm praying for you, and I'm going to keep praying.”
- **Don't say:** “You just need to read the Bible more!”  
**Say:** “There are several passages in the Bible that have given me much hope, and I've written them out for you. May I share them with you?”
- **Don't say:** “You need to get involved in a church.”  
**Say:** “I'm involved in a church where I've been learning how meaningful life can be. I would love for you to come with me next Sunday, and afterward we can have lunch together.”

*“Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down,  
but a good word makes him glad.”  
(Proverbs 12:25)*

### Key Verse to Memorize

*“I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the  
LORD in the land of the living!”  
(Psalm 27:13)*

### Key Passage to Read and Reread

**1 Thessalonians 5:16–24**

## Learn to Conquer Depression

**C**onfront any loss in your life, allowing yourself to grieve and to be healed. (Ecclesiastes 3:4)

**O**ffer your heart to God for cleansing and confess your sins. (1 John 1:8–9)

**N**urture thoughts that focus on God's great love for you. (Jeremiah 31:3)

**Q**uit negative thinking and negative self-talk. (Philippians 4:8)

**U**nderstand God's eternal purpose for allowing personal loss and heartache. (Romans 8:28)

**E**xchange your hurt and anger for thanksgiving. (Choose to give thanks, even when you don't feel thankful.) (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

**R**emember that God is sovereign over your life, and He promises hope for your future. (Psalm 71:5)

## How You Can Help

- **Be** an accountability partner—  
“I'm with you in this, and I won't abandon you.”  
(Ecclesiastes 4:9)
- **Listen** and hear their pain—  
listening affirms their value. (James 1:19)
- **Verbally** encourage them—  
sincerely and often. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- **Realize** the power of touch—  
a hand on the shoulder and appropriate hugs and kisses. (1 Peter 5:14)
- **Play** inspirational praise music to lift their spirits—  
music is therapeutic. (Ephesians 5:19)
- **Bring** laughter into their lives—  
fun cards, videos, movies, and people.  
(Proverbs 17:22)

*“Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.”  
(Isaiah 50:10)*

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### Related Topics . . .

- Fear:  
*Moving from Panic to Peace*
- Forgiveness:  
*How to Forgive . . .  
When You Don't Feel Like It*
- Guilt:  
*Living Guilt Free*
- Perfectionism:  
*The Push to Perform*
- Suicide Prevention:  
*Hope When Life Seems Hopeless*
- Worry:  
*The Joy Stealer*

HOPE FOR THE HEART's *Biblical Counseling Library Quick Reference* provides immediate, concise, biblical truths for today's problems.

For more comprehensive help, refer to our *Biblical Counseling Keys . . .*

#### **Depression:**

*Walking from Darkness into the Dawn.*

If you would like more information, call 1-800-488-HOPE (4673) or visit [www.hopefortheheart.org](http://www.hopefortheheart.org).

For prayer encouragement and biblical counsel call 1-866-570-HOPE (4673).



*Together . . . Changing Minds.  
Changing Hearts. Changing Lives.*

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1. For this section, see Archibald Hart, and Catherine Hart Weber, *Unveiling Depression in Women: A Practical Guide to Understanding and Overcoming Depression* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 2002), 49–65.  
2. Hart and Weber, *Unveiling Depression in Women*, 55.