

Voices: Depression: God delivers

March 25, 2025

Depression is a sneaky illness. I have seen it a lot of in my lifetime.

If you have been depressed, you likely have turned to the Bible for help.

In the Old Testament, we read about the depression of King David and the prophets. They seemed to have good reasons for stress and anxiety—David being chased and threatened with the javelin, the prophets being terribly sad because Israel was sinning and no one was seeking God.

My reasons for depression were not so spiritual. I was not thinking about the lost world as much as I was processing my own dreams and losses.

1 Timothy 6:17 tells us God gives us richly all things to enjoy. In Philippians 4:19, Paul writes that God will supply all our needs from his riches in glory in Jesus. Apparently, God's will is for us to be joyful with nothing to worry about.

While that is God's will, depression and its accompanying altered brain chemistry feels powerful enough to cancel all that divine plan. We even may feel beaten over the head with the good news, asking: "What is wrong with me? Of course, I want God's joy!" But that is the illness talking, and not truth. The illness tends to be very talkative.

Once, I saw a psychologist for depression, and I made the statement in my therapy session: "We cannot proceed any further on how I feel. I have to go forward on what I know."

Several times in my life, those words have guided me to walk toward truth and act on truth. Feelings were not reliable at those times.

Causes of depression

Not meeting expectations we place on ourselves is a common source of depression and low self-esteem. The media shows us prototypes of the popular teenager; the perfect homemaker and mother; the rising “professional;” the good-looking, young pastor with a huge church. Everyone looks healthy, gorgeous and rich. Many of us expected for our lives to be like that.

Sometimes, the expectations others have of us cause depression, such as when people don't accept us for who we are. We feel unloved.

Myths we hold about other people, even heroes we deeply respect, are often misleading. All people have a human side with imperfections.

Often, we elevate certain people influential in our lives to a position they cannot maintain. We think they will take care of us, remain loyal, never choose self-interest over what is right. Then ... *bam!* We are sorely disappointed with them and ourselves for naively trusting them. This can be depressing.

We find ourselves dealing with major disappointments, usually loss.

Depression can be caused by job loss, loss of a close relationship, business failure, extreme loneliness and/or feeling inadequate to take the next steps in life. Physical illness and decline are reasons for depression. Death of a loved one and prolonged grief may lead to depression, as well. The list of causation is very long, personal and individualized.

The bright side

A positive aspect is through these excruciating experiences, we learn about life, what to expect, what to do and how to cope. As we cope better, we

tend to feel better.

Perhaps because of this life-long learning process, we are less depressed in later years, or we have different reasons for depression, reflecting our time of life.

Seeking help

Depression has felt like a shaking rhythm of nerves that will not quit. Since nerves are throughout our body, nervous symptoms can cause physical disruption throughout the body.

Nerves also get tired. I have experienced depression as exhaustion, depletion and excess sleep, as well.

Whenever we are feeling “off” with mental health, whatever our symptoms might be, a visit to our doctor is in order, so our overall health is assessed and other disorders are ruled out.

If you are depressed or anxious, you may need to seek a medical diagnosis; take medication as prescribed; engage in talk therapy or perhaps new treatments that help alleviate traumatic memory, such as EMDR—eye movement desensitization and reprocessing; or even therapy that electrically stimulates the brain.

Science is giving us new paths to healing every day. A well-trained physician will know what you need.

Be willing to try more than one medical protocol. I can recall several medications that did not suit me because of side effects, but now, oddly, through cancer treatment, I found the perfect medicine for me.

Do what you can to be with other people and share what is in your heart. Talk to God. He has been my loyal companion through many a sleepless

night, through weeping to joy in the morning.

God delivers

The Bible is rich with Scriptures that promise God's unending presence and protection and his power to lift us out of the pit of depression.

Psalm 34:17 says: "The righteous cry out and the Lord hears them; and he delivers them from all their troubles."

He hears us when we are too ill to form sentences, too weak to talk to anyone for a long time, or too unsure of ourselves to attend church. He hears in the Spirit.

God loves us, and he delivers.

Take heart. You are very important and loved just as you are.

Ruth Cook is a longtime Texas Baptist. The views expressed in this opinion article are those of the author.