

## VICTORY OVER DEPRESSION

# *Life With God In Recovery*

## RELAPSE PREVENTION: VICTORY OVER DEPRESSION



*He led them from the darkness and deepest gloom; he snapped their chains.* (Psalm 107:14 NLT)

We all experience times in life when we feel down for various reasons. Under perfectly normal circumstances we sometimes get tired and emotionally drained. Satan tries to use anything for evil, including normal “down times” that indicate the need for rest and renewal. This is particularly true for individuals in early recovery. At low times, and any time, in whatever way he can, Satan seeks to fill our minds with negative thoughts and emotions. He is a discourager. He is the giver of despair and he just wants to pull us down and keep us down. But Jesus is our encourager. He knows our weaknesses. Jesus is the generous supplier of strength to the weary. He came to lift us up. He, through His Holy Spirit, brings righteousness, peace, and joy to our lives.

*The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.....you, O Lord, are a shield around me; you are my glory, the one who holds my head high.* (John 10:10; Psalm 3:3 NLT)

Everyone experiences times of frustration and distress when life doesn't go according to the way we planned. When hopes and dreams are unfulfilled it is normal to feel disappointed. Memories and all sorts of things may make us feel sad but, for our own well-being, we must not STAY sad. If we do, Satan will take advantage of the open door and push his way into our lives so our sadness becomes discouragement, then disillusionment, then depression, then we end up in despair. God knows that we will experience periods of difficulty from time to time and, in His tenderness and kindness, He invites us to come to the light of His love. As we draw near to Him, we will experience joy as surely as night becomes day by the light of the dawn.

*Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning.....The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine.* (Psalm 30:5b; Isaiah 9:2 NLT)

As we do an initial set of steps we sometimes feel overwhelmed with everything we are learning about ourselves. Many people become depressed because they determine they can't face truth. However, the God who came to fill our lives with joy is the same God who came to reveal truth. Even more, God promises to **“heal the broken hearted and bind up their wounds.”** (Psalm 147:3 NIV) God will heal and

bring restoration to everything we uncover in our step work, as we continue to turn our will and our lives over to His care.

Avoiding and blaming give the devil's lie a chance to flourish in our hearts. This lie says, "Living with the truth will be more painful than concealing it." We will avoid depression when we quit making excuses and stop blaming everyone and our circumstances for how we feel. Depression can sometimes be anger turned inside. When we acknowledge the truth, and repent for our incorrect beliefs, God forgives us and helps us leave dark clouds behind and enter into settledness of heart with joy.

***"I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. (Isaiah 42:6-7 NIV)***

When we live in depression our number-one enemy is our emotions. We tend to be led by how we feel, regardless of the fact that feelings are unreliable. They change from day to day and they often don't convey the truth or at least the complete truth. We have needs, including emotional needs. Our emotional state gets depleted for a variety of reasons. When we feel low we do not have to withdraw and believe there is no solution in sight or no source of comfort and strength to draw on. Rather, we can allow these feelings to draw us close to God's heart and allow Him to embrace us, comfort us, strengthen us and help us get through the challenging moment.

***As for me, I look to the Lord for help. I wait confidently for God to save me, and my God will certainly hear me. Do not gloat over me, my enemies! For though I fall, I will rise again. Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light. (Micah 7:7-8 NLT)***

Acknowledging to God the truth about any negative feelings we may have and asking for His help brings His wisdom, healing, encouragement, and blessing into the situation. When we awaken in a day feeling tired or discouraged, we should not tell ourselves "I feel depressed, or, it's too hard for me to face this day." God invites us to look at the very same feelings and say, "God, I feel tired and discouraged so I place myself into your care. Comfort and strengthen me. Fill me to overflowing with a sense of Your goodness. Thank You Lord that Your unfailing love and tender mercy are available to me all through this day."

***You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. (Psalm 23:5-6 NIV)***

Living with God in recovery does not mean we deny that we have feelings of discouragement and sadness. Sometimes we will have negative feelings, but we can make our feelings line up to the truth of God's Word. This new way of responding takes practice because we are used to reacting negatively to difficult feelings. God will help us as we seek Him and learn new ways of coping honestly and positively with each situation we encounter.

To find victory over depression the Bible teaches us: ***"we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."*** (2 Corinthians 10:5 NIV) This is a two-part process. 1) We resist depression and feeling sorry for ourselves because it is of the devil. ***Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*** (James 4:7 NIV) 2) We fill ourselves with gratitude and focus on how God is working in us and around us. ***Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!*** (Philippians 4:4 NIV) This is not being fake. It's not suppressing the truth. It's bringing all that we are before our loving God for His help and then trusting His promise to meet our need. We then intentionally shift our focus from our need to observing all that is good and all that God is doing and promises to do. If we stay filled up with gratitude, there is no room available for depression.

We can't control our circumstances, but we don't have to let what happens around us spoil our day and lead us into the darkness of despair. God is with us. God knows all about our struggles. As we turn our experience over to God's care we will have victory over depression every time.

#### **Questions For Reflection and Discussion**

1. When am I most vulnerable to feelings of sadness, discouragement, or despair?
2. What familiar negative responses to discouragement and depression do I need to recognize and be careful to avoid?
3. In what ways can I bring God's help into times of despair and heaviness?
4. How does a person practice the 2-step process of changing our thoughts to find victory over depression in everyday life?

**Heavenly Father, When times are hard, thank you for being with me and accompanying me through the challenges. You know the reason for my sadness. You understand my grief. You don't condemn me for the way I feel. Instead, you are understanding and the friend who stays closer than a brother. I ask you to draw me close to your heart and fill me with peace. I rest in your strength and trust in your unfailing love to get me through today. Thank you that you care for me and the things that concern me today. Amen**