

## Seminar on Depression

### 1. Medical Causes of Depression - Dr Philip Stewart

### 2. Biblical Anthropology

#### **We are Created Beings – Genesis 1:26-27**

We are made in the image of God, for relationship with God and with one another.

#### **We need Rest – Genesis 20:8-11**

We are made in the image of God, yet as created beings, we need rest for the restoration of body and mind as well as to nourish our relationship with God and his people.

#### **We sin and so suffer illness and death – Genesis 3**

Depression is not the result of our personal sin necessarily (though it can be) but because we live in a fallen world. Depression may be affected by our genetics, personality and “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.”

But, praise God, Jesus Christ has taken our curse and death, so by faith in him we are innocent before God (justified) and united to Jesus Christ!

#### **A Christian has a new life which affects our Bodies - Romans 5:18, 6:8-14 (1 Peter 2:11, 4:15)**

Given that Christians have the new life of Christ in them, this new life changes what we do with our bodies.

#### **Our bodies affect living out our new life - Romans 7:14-25**

Even though we have a new nature by our union with Christ, the flesh (our sinful nature) is particularly active in our bodies, which are yet to be redeemed.

## **We wait for the resurrection of our bodies - Romans 8:22-25**

Our bodies bring a sense of groaning because we have tasted the freedom of the world to come, but remain in unredeemed bodies.

So depression has many causes, overwork, grief, genetics, suffering, chemical imbalances, anxiety, stress, sin, isolation etc etc. We must listen well to a person who is depressed.

“The first error is to assume that the problem of depression is entirely a spiritual matter....the second error is to uncritically absorb the kinds of views that we might hear in the world around us....it is to leave spiritual questions out of our understanding of depression and to assume that depression is purely a medical problem.” Dealing with Depression - Collins and Haynes

### **3. Attitudes of heart and mind often associated with Depression**

Depending on the nature of the depression, we may not be able even to consider the Bible or read at all. In which case it is even more important to be equipped before a bout, or to have our minds ready to be able to think beyond our resistance to it. Similarly the depressed may need medication more than they need the Bible as they may simply not be able to read or focus on anything.

Psalms 22 and 88 mean we can express the sense of darkness and abandonment we feel to God.

But the word of God is the means by which the Spirit controls our minds and we may need to :

- a. memorise God's word (Psalm 119:11, Deuteronomy 6:6-7)
- b. meditate on God's word (Psalm 1, 119:78)
- c. means of grace for our weaknesses (the Lord's supper, God's people 1 Peter 4:7-11)

#### **i. Guilt and Accusation - No Condemnation Romans 8:1-4**

The feelings of depression can mean that we feel particularly guilty and condemned. All we may be able to see is our sin, and we can even read the Bible with accusation rather than with a sense of our forgiveness.

**8:1-4 There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus..**

Why?

**Because through Christ Jesus the law (principle) of life set me free from the law (principle) of sin and death.**

How?

**For what the law (Old Testament code) was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature (flesh) God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.**

So what?

**And so he condemned sin in sinful man so that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.**

We may need to develop a habit of confession of sin and then meditating on our innocence before God, calling to mind passages that assure us of a right standing before God.

## **ii. Loss of Assurance – Security through Election Romans 8:37-39, 9:14-16**

Given our sense of sin, or dislocation from other Christians, we can lose our assurance feeling that we cannot be a child of God even though we trust in Christ. We may need to make sure we have repented of covenant breaking sins (see Galatians 5 e.g. an affair) but assuming that these are not part of our lives.....

**8:37-39 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him who loved us.**

Why?

**For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor demons neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

Why does God choose some and not others to be his children?

**9:14-16 “What shall we say then? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” It does not depend then on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy.”**

God is the reason why we are Christians, not our decisions, will, feelings or sense of being his children.

## **iii. Negative Identity – New Identity Colossians 3:1-4**

The depression can bring negative feelings about our lives, which can further compound the depression. Our identity is in Christ, not in our achievements, or abilities or lack of them through depression.

**3:1-4 “Since then you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.**

Why?

**For you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory”.**

It is easy to deepen the depression to consider what depression has robbed us of in terms of earthly achievements or pleasure. Breaking this cycle can be done by remembering where our true identity is, in Christ, and where our true life is, in Christ above. Our life is now hidden.

## **iv. Despair – Eternal Glory - 2 Corinthians 1:8-11, 4:15-18**

It is easy to think that the genuinely Christian position emotionally is one of constant joy and celebration and that being down is not Christian and that letting others know we are down is equally wrong. This is false:

**2 Corinthians 1:8-14 “We do not want you to be uninformed brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed in our hearts we felt the sentence of death.**

Why did God allow this?

**But this happened so that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favour granted us in answer to the prayers of many”.**

God allowed Paul and Timothy to come under such pressure that they despaired of life, so that through the prayers of others God delivered them and Paul and Timothy hoped in God.

There is still God’s purpose in our sense of despair.

**4:15-18 “All this is for your benefit so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.**

So that what?

**Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary but what is unseen is eternal.”**

Whilst in the context of Paul’s ministry, he uses his cross shaped ministry to teach the Corinthians.

Outward degradation - inner renewal.

Momentary troubles - eternal glory.

Seen temporary – unseen and eternal.

This applies to everything we go through – **“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose”.** Romans 8:28

#### **4. Interview with Jon Stenner**

#### **5. Group Questions**

How do we wriggle out of the goodness and security of these passages?

How can we remember these truths and meditate on them?

How can we help others who may be going through depression?

#### **6. Presentation by Duncan and Alex Brisk.**