

Women Caring for Women: Depression
CBC Sunday School
October 19, 2025

Discussion question: What's something that always brings a smile to your face?

1. What is lost?

- a. Mental health - how do we define that?
 - i. Mental health is having appropriate emotions at appropriate times and being able to cope with ups and downs
 1. It is not "feeling zen" all the time or just never being sad. Physically healthy people get sick but they get better - mentally healthy people get sad or anxious but they can recover after a time and feel joy and peace again.
 2. Emotions are real and good and have important roles in a healthy person's life
 - a. Sadness causes us to slow down, contemplate, remember, recalibrate
 - b. Anxiety helps us study for a test, prepare for a busy day, pack extra clothing for an airplane ride with a toddler, etc
 3. Some level of stress is healthy - it pushes us to grow, to realize how much we can handle (it's often more than we think!) You need stress to grow, just as athletes have to "stress their bodies" (i.e. run a little longer, swim a little faster, lift a little heavier) to grow in stamina or ability
 - ii. Mental illness can look like having emotions that are disproportionate to the situation
 1. Anxiety is problematic when it overestimates the severity of the problem and underestimates your ability to solve the problem.
 - a. This can lead to avoiding the situation altogether, which reinforces the belief that you are not able to handle it.
 2. Sadness is problematic when a person is sad not about a particular thing (pet dies, friend moves away, etc) but instead is sad all the time about everything. Mental illness can look like not being able to "bounce back" after a time of sadness. It lingers and morphs into depression. (Others liken it to a switch being flipped)
 3. Usually a person must feel this deep level of sadness and despair for at least 2 weeks to render a diagnosis. Depression is different for everyone, but here are some ways people have described it: (see note)
 - a. Like a vast nothing. Nothing matters. Everything is too hard.
 - b. Like I'm on an island, deep in a dark cave of shame and self-hatred.
 - c. Questioning why I am even here. Feeling like I am a waste of space and oxygen.
 - d. Like being on the outside looking in and feeling uninvited.
 - e. Like I'm underwater to my nose, eyes can see the air but I can't reach it.
 - f. "It even affects the senses. Sounds seem muted, music discordant...visually, colors seem less vibrant." Ed Welch, *Blame it on the Brain*
 4. Physical changes in the brain - depression is not simply emotional. (Experts don't know if depression is the cause or result of these brain changes)
 - a. Parts of brain that are involved in mood regulation show reduced gray matter, decrease in neurotransmitters that aid in mood regulation, altered connection between areas of the brain can result in communication or coordination impairment

- b. Physical health
 - i. Can't sleep or can't stop sleeping, always fatigued, listless
 - ii. Chronic pain
 - iii. Nausea, Appetite changes, Weight gain, Gastrointestinal problems
 - iv. Increased risk of heart problems, obesity, diabetes, metabolic disorders
 - v. Weakened immune system
- c. Community
 - i. Feels judged by others
 - 1. "In the eyes of many people, including Christian people, depression signifies cowardice, faithlessness, or a bad attitude. Such people tell God in prayer and their friends in person that the sufferer of depression is soft or unspiritual." Zach Eswine
 - ii. Her friends and family may be frustrated that she can't just cheer up, be thankful and move on
 - iii. She may isolate herself from others
- d. Identity, perception of worth
 - i. Feelings of worthlessness, that your loved ones are better off without you
 - ii. Suicidal thoughts
- e. Assurance of God's care, love and attention
 - i. She doubts whether God hears her prayers for relief, whether he loves her, and whether she can be a Christian if she's wrestling through the darkness of depression.
 - ii. "This burglar of joy also likes to plunder our sense of God." Zach Eswine

Discussion question: Because depression feels so isolating, and those who suffer often feel like they're the only ones, would anyone be brave enough to share if they've experienced this before?

2. Where is God in the pain?

- a. God is near to the downhearted
 - i. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." Psalm 34:18
 - ii. Even though depression often makes sufferers feel as though God has forgotten them, that he is far and doesn't care, nothing could be further from the truth. God does not recoil from us when we are in our darkest state. He leans in.
 - iii. Just as we might hold a sick child in their restless, feverish sleep and they have no idea we are near, God holds us near in our suffering, even when we do not realize it.
 - iv. "If I descend to the depths, you are there..." Ps 139
- b. God gives language to feelings of depression - validation
 - i. Lament is a huge theme in Scripture. The feelings of those suffering from depression are validated all over the Bible.
 - 1. "I am overwhelmed with troubles and my life draws near to death. I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am like one without strength. I am set apart with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom you remember no more, who are cut off from your care. You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths. Your wrath lies heavily on me; you have overwhelmed me with all your waves. You have taken from me my closest friends and have made me repulsive to them. I am confined and cannot escape; my eyes are dim with grief." Psalm 88:3-7
 - ii. In the psalms, God has given the church a language which allows it to express even the deepest agony of the human soul in the context of worship." Carl Trueman, "What Can Miserable Christians Sing?"

- c. Jesus the Man empathizes and Jesus the Priest pleads our case
 - i. Jesus the Man can empathize with our weaknesses: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.” Heb 4:15
 - 1. “The darkness of the sky was an outward symbol of the spiritual darkness, which developed him... ‘Outer darkness’ was one of the expressions Jesus used for hell since it is an absolute exclusion from the light of God’s presence. Into that outer darkness, the son of God plunged for us.” John Stott
 - ii. Jesus the Priest pleads our case: “Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.” Rom 8:34

Discussion question: Is there an attribute of God or Scripture that has been a refuge for you in a time of depression or even sadness?

3. What does healing look like?

- a. Know that depression is an illness, not a sin.
 - i. “It is not a sign of personal weakness or a condition that can be wished away. People with a depressive disease cannot merely “pull themselves together” and get better. Without treatment, symptoms can last for weeks, months, or years.” -Bev Hislop
 - ii. It is common
 - 1. 1 in 4 women will have an episode of severe depression
 - 2. Depression affects twice as many women as men
 - iii. Many strong believers have had depression
 - 1. Charles Spurgeon, William Cowper, John Piper, King David
 - 2. “He who has been in the dark dungeon knows the way to bread and water.” - Charles Spurgeon
 - iv. You may have the illness depression, but it is not your identity
- b. Get help - depression usually will not go away on its own
 - i. Trusted friends
 - 1. *Help for Jill looked like friends who checked in, persisted in showing love, sometimes imposing themselves on her*
 - 2. *Deana was helped by those who reached out and weren’t afraid to talk about her anxiety. She especially appreciated when others shared their experiences with mental illness because it is easy to feel like you’re the only one.*
 - 3. *Sara values people who she can be completely honest with about her struggles & coping mechanisms. They don’t make her feel condemned or express disappointment but show true love and understanding*
 - ii. Good counsel - therapy
 - 1. *Deana is thankful she went to therapy right away instead of thinking she could do it on her own. She found that dealing with the symptoms first enabled her to think rightly and address deeper issues*
 - iii. Medication
 - 1. Taking medication for depression/anxiety is not a failure
 - a. God’s common grace to all mankind is the development of helpful medications
 - b. *Deana was helped by medication – chemical imbalances are real! She figured that if you were diabetic, you’d take meds so why not for chemical imbalances. She wondered if she would feel like herself again. It took about a year of prayer, support, therapy, meds.*

2. People do not become addicted to antidepressants because the side effects are unpleasant
3. Not a magic cure
 - a. Medication is usually not effective unless accompanied by good counsel and help from friends
 - b. Persistence is important - Meds take months to begin to work, but the side effects are felt immediately
- c. Seek truth - Our feelings do not change the truth about God or ourselves
 - i. Feeling: God doesn't love me or has removed his favor from me
 - ii. Truth: "As God did not at first choose you because you were high, he will not now forsake you because you are low." John Flavel
 - iii. Feeling: I'm unlovable, undeserving
 - iv. Truth: Jesus saves people because he wants them, not because they are cheerful or steady or feel useful or don't cry excessively.
 1. "Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him." Mark 3:13
 - v. *Jill's lifeline was her husband reminding her to tell herself the truth. He said it not critically, but lovingly. Jill's feelings told her to quit, that life is worthless. The truth told her that God is sovereign, all knowing, not surprised by her circumstances, that He was faithful and powerful to carry her through.*
 - vi. *Deana's clinical anxiety was helped by taking thoughts captive, dissecting them and comparing them to the truth of Scripture.*

Discussion question: Can you think of feelings that have clouded truth in your own life?

- d. Think big: find hope in a God who is bigger than depression
 - i. God has a good track record - turn your thoughts to him!
 1. "The same Heavenly Father who picked up his son out of the muck, misery and mistreatment can do the same for us." Zach Eswine (Phil 2:8-9)
 2. *More helpful even than looking for truths from Scripture that identified who she was (forgiven, created with purpose, beloved, etc.), Jill looked at the character of God (books like None Like Him by Jen Wilkin). It brought her comfort and grounded her mind. It brought deep healing even when it didn't feel like it at the time. Her mind needed to not be so full of "me."*
 - ii. Depression may be here to stay for now, but its eviction date is coming soon.
 1. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." Rev 21:4
 2. "Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning." Ps 30:5
 3. "Conversion to Jesus isn't heaven, but it's a foretaste. This side of heaven, grace secures us but doesn't cure us." Zach Eswine
 4. *When Deana had negative thoughts/feelings, she would remember that she is a believer and her eternity is secure.*
- e. Think small: Do the next thing
 - i. Caring for the body can aid the soul: sleep, healthy food, exercise, fresh air
 1. "The very best thing in the world, when you are nervous or troubled, is to live by very short periods...live by the day; or better still, live moment by moment." Charles Spurgeon
 2. *Jill needed to commit to one step at a time. Getting up and brushing her teeth. Looking at the whole day felt overwhelming.*

- f. Serve others: it helps us step outside of ourselves and concentrate less on our own pain.

Discussion question: Have you cared for someone with depression? What did that look like?

4. What can comforters do?

- a. "Mourn with those who mourn" - Ask questions to learn what she's experiencing and grow your compassion
 - i. "We should feel more for the prisoner if we knew more about the prison." -Charles Spurgeon
 - ii. "When you listen closely to the experiences of those who are depressed, it sounds like a form of psychological torture." Ed Welch, *Blame it on the Brain*
 - iii. "The mind can descend far lower than the body, for in it there are bottomless pits. The flesh can bear only a certain number of wounds and no more, but the soul can bleed in ten thousand ways, and die over and over again each hour." -Charles Spurgeon
- b. Move toward her (even when your instincts are the opposite) knowing that supporting her will require patience. Depression is not quickly overcome. It may be a lifetime (episodic) struggle
 - i. Keep reaching out to her - even if she doesn't want to talk
 - 1. *Sara's friends offered practical help in her dark moments - cleaning, yard work, financial assistance/bills management*
 - ii. Keep inviting her - even if she doesn't come
 - 1. *Sara is helped by friends who keep checking in even though she cancels on them a lot – they are understanding, flexible*
 - 2. Holidays may be particularly hard for her - a time when the expectation for joy and happiness is high, and she just can't feel it
 - iii. Keep hugging her - even if she seems stiff
 - iv. Keep seeing her - the real her, even if she can't see herself anymore. Don't treat her as weak. Send the message that you believe she is strong and CAN tackle depression.
- c. Pray for deliverance
 - i. "We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened 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 again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers." 2 Cor 9:8-11
 - ii. Pray FOR her all the things you want to preach to her (but are wisely holding your tongue for now). Pray God's promises over her. Pray God's goodness over her.
- d. Point her to Jesus (without preaching to her)
 - i. "How can you present Jesus in a way that is not condescending or oblivious to a person's pain? Consider simply asking depressed people how you can help them see Jesus. I have known depressed people who have had the following ideas:
 - 1. Be physically present
 - 2. Pray with them
 - 3. Clean the house with them
 - 4. Read the Psalms together
 - 5. Read some of the old hymns from a hymnbook
 - 6. Go for a walk or exercise together

Whichever ways you choose, always keep one eye open for the enemy who wants to use the same tactics he used in the book of Job. Satan persistently asks, "How can you trust and worship God when he has deprived you of earthly pleasure?" Ed Welch, *Blame it on the Brain*

- e. Ask her if she's thinking about self-harm or suicide
 - i. You won't plant the idea by asking about it
 - 1. Studies show that it is preventative to open the conversation
 - 2. "It is often a wonderful relief to be able to tell out your grief." Charles Spurgeon
 - 3. If she admits to having thoughts of suicide, ask if she's made a plan.
 - ii. "We can pause, weep, and pray with empathy for how miserable the howling abyss must be that can lead a human being to desire to end his or her life. And how courageous an act of faith it must require of them to choose otherwise day by day." Zach Eswine
 - iii. Resources
 - 1. Kansas Suicide Prevention Resource Center
<http://www.kansassuicideprevention.org>
 - 2. 1-800-273-TALK
 - 3. 1-800-SUICIDE

Recommended Resources

Spurgeon's Sorrows: Realistic Hope for those who Suffer from Depression by Zach Eswine

Depression: Finding Christ in the Darkness by Edward T. Welch (31 Day Devotional)

Anxiety: Knowing God's Peace by Paul Tautges (31 Day Devotional)

None Like Him: 10 Ways God is Different from Us (and why that's a good thing) by Jen Wilkin

Note: What Depression Feels Like <https://mywellbeing.com/therapy-101/what-depression-feels-like>

Women Caring for Women CBC Sunday School Syllabus

Part 1

Oct 5:	Introduction to loss, grief, suffering and healing
Oct 12:	Infertility & Miscarriage
Oct 19:	Depression
Oct 26:	Chronic Illness & Terminal Illness
Nov 2:	Post Abortive Syndrome
Nov 9:	Divorce

Part 2

Jan 18:	Domestic Abuse
Jan 25:	Sexual abuse
Feb 1:	Eating disorders
Feb 8:	Addiction
Feb 15:	Pornography / Infidelity
Feb 22:	Same Sex Attraction

Questions or feedback? Contact us!

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