

Week 6 CFC – Growing Together as a Gospel Centered Community
Exercises Wisdom and Compassion in Ministering to others in Specific Life Challenges
(Depression, Anxiety, Trauma,)

When we seek to minister to others experiencing Depression, Anxiety, or Trauma (D/A/T) we are talking about a **spectrum of severity** which will dictate what resources are necessary, and where I can help and where I should defer/refer to others.

1. Though It is **NOT** your responsibility or place to diagnose, using wisdom and compassion involves observing the following about symptoms:
 - **Intensity** of Symptoms—e.g. I feel down, or I feel jittery on Sun night before work, vs. I can't get out of bed, or I repeatedly get anxious at the slightest thing
 - **Pervasiveness of Symptoms**— I've lost my appetite vs. I have over half the classic symptoms of depression (easily found on the internet)
 - **Duration of Symptoms** – comes and goes with circumstances vs. steady and intense for longer than a couple of weeks

2. Using Wisdom and Compassion involves First Assessing if this is an Emergency situation
The following Info from A Christian's Guide to Mental Illness by David Murray (pastor and counselor) and Tom Karel Jr (psychologist at Christian Mental Health Center)
The severity of the sufferer's condition helps us decide whether the first step is the doctor, the ER, or law-enforcement. Some questions to consider in making this decision are:
 - Is the person a danger to self/others?
 - Is the person psychotic (hearing voices, hallucinating, or not in touch with reality)
 - If affirmative, a trip to the local emergency room or a call to law enforcement may be the first step.
 - A general rule: "Better to err on the side of caution rather than to wish you had."

3. Using Wisdom and Compassion Means Understanding How Medical Professionals Play a Part
 - **Primary Care Physician (PCP)**. If a person is struggling with depression or anxiety but is still able to function in everyday-life activities, the family doctor is usually a good first stop. The PCP will be able to do some basic assessment to determine the nature and severity of the concerns.
 - The PCP will determine whether this is an illness and how serious it is, usually using standard questionnaires and listening to the story. The doctor will then decide whether he can manage it him/herself or if he/she should request a non-urgent referral to specialists.
 - He/She will monitor the ongoing condition and progress

4. Using Wisdom and Compassion means having an informed view on Medication Views on Medication
 - We Don't Run to Them First
 - We Don't rush to the Other Extreme and Rule them out Altogether
 - We Don't Rely on Them Alone
 - E.g. With Depression I use comprehensive plan from *Moving Beyond Depression* by Gregory Jantz that involves making a weekly change in the following 5 Categories for 12 weeks
 - Spiritual Renewal
 - Emotional Wellness
 - Environmental Balance (e.g. my surroundings, how I'm spending my time)
 - Relational Healing
 - Physical Health

Using Wisdom and Compassion – a Personal Example

I had the following Components

- Good medical support
- Supportive and Strong Care from family and friends
- Supportive Church Community of Mentors and Peers
- All Working together to help me become **willing to grow, acknowledge and confess my sin, my youth and immaturity, grow in my understanding of how my upbringing influenced my beliefs, interpretations, and coping mechanisms**

Using Wisdom and Compassion – A Scriptural Example (God and Elijah in 1 Kings 19)

- **He Approached Elijah with gentleness, patience, and compassion and nurture** 5-8 And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, “Arise and eat.”⁶ And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again.⁷ And the angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, “Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you.”⁸ And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God
- **Listened to him and allowed him to express what he was thinking and feeling without shaming him or narrowly focusing on sin** 9-10 “here he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”¹⁰ He said, “I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.”
- **Established a sense of His Presence with Him** 11-13 And he said, “Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD.” And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake.¹² And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper.¹³ And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.
- **Only after all this did God directly but kindly pointed out his errors/sins and Exhorted him to keep moving forward** 13-15, 18 “And behold, there came a voice to him and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”¹⁴ He said, “I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.”¹⁵ And the LORD said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria.....¹⁸ Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”

God’s Model for Us to Follow

- Began by demonstrating tangible patience, compassion, nurture
- When Listening do so non-judgmentally and without critique
- Demonstrate tangible abiding presence
- Speaking truth directly, but with support and without shaming

Some Practical Things for Friends and Family:

1. Don't quickly discount or discredit a person's description of their experience of D/A/T. or give them a quick positive statement to counterbalance their sense of despair. That's often hard to apprehend or can increase a person's sense of isolation from what they should be feeling. Instead seek to understand how they feel/ what they're experiencing in that given moment. Then look for opportunities to speak truth later on when you sense it would be better received
2. Recognize that your sense of presence with a person experiencing D/A/T is being an image-bearer and is a strong factor in promoting growth and healing. Seek creative ways to demonstrate **presence rather than proclamation**. For example, rather than say "I'll be praying for you," ask "Do you mind if I pray for you right now?" They are free to decline your offer. But when one is depressed or anxious you feel hyper-alone and discouraged and need tangible moments of hearing people pray for you more than they need assurances you'll pray later on. Rather than quoting encouraging verses to someone ask them "As I've been reading the Bible I've been thinking about you as I've been reading certain encouraging passages. Would you mind if we took just a few short minutes to look at them together?" Again, cognitive truth is often hard to apprehend when depressed or traumatized. But by you taking the time to fellowship with them over the truth of the Word is akin to Jesus dwelling among us. We bring the truth to people along with our loving presence.
3. Regularly Evaluating and Adjusting your Expectations is essential to be effective and prevent fatigue and burnout. Remember that Jesus recognized when people wanted His help and when they didn't. While Jesus spoke truth and gave us commands to follow, and was always hopeful people would respond affirmatively to Him, He did not do so in an insisting and demanding way. Sometimes people experiencing D/A/T will be responsive and sometimes not. As we exercise wisdom and compassion, we are growing in discernment when it is ok to push and when it is ok to let go for the time being or longer.