

Avoiding Depression

The obligatory disclaimers: 1) I am not a “mental healthcare professional”- if you need one, I’ll be happy to provide some recommendations; 2) “Yes,” there are some people who need mental healthcare professionals to assist them- “Try Harder” and “Have more faith” doesn’t solve every mental health problem; 3) Though I have been and do get “down,” I don’t think I’ve ever been clinically “depressed”- so “No,” I don’t experientially “know what’s like” exactly; but, 4) I do have a mind, a fair understanding of Scripture, and have come to realize what helps me when I get “down.” I also understand that in treating any problem/condition, it is as important to grasp why the “well” are not plagued as much as why the “afflicted” are affected. Now, we those out of the way, let’s proceed...

God, the *creative power* that spoke “light” into existence on day 1 and sustained it until He created an *apparent* source on day 4 (the *Sun*, cp. Gen.1:3-5,14-19), also created a *garden paradise* for man to live. This *Garden of Eden* would provide for all of man’s *physical* needs, but would also supply his *aesthetic* desires, Gen.2:9. Now, notice particularly and carefully Gen.2:15, “*Then the Lord took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it.*” Did God, the *creative power* that created the Universe with the power of His words, really need a *gardener*? **No, but man needed an occupation- something to do, something to work toward, something to occupy him, something at which to be productive.** Think about it: People who work hard most of their lives to provide for themselves and their families decide to retire. Those who either *have nothing to do*, or perhaps better stated, *don’t find something with which to occupy themselves*, often become depressed. **The reason is simple: Man needs to be engaged, occupied, involved, and productive- it’s the way we were created.** God knew it and provided Adam, as He did with all man’s other needs, with something *productive* to do.

When I start getting “down,” it’s almost always because I’m not seeing, not doing, and not being engaged with what either needs to be done, or what can be done. Consider Mark 14:3-9. This woman:

- **Went to be with other good people-** I have no idea if she was invited or not. The text only says that she “*came*” to “*the home of Simon the leper*” where “*He*” (Jesus, and surely several others) was, v.3. She didn’t *isolate herself*. She didn’t *sit at home* obsessing over herself; she *went* to where *good people* had gathered.
- **Got outside herself and her own problems-** whatever they might have been, to think of someone else and what might benefit them, vv.3,6. Jesus called it a “**good deed.**” She *thought of others* and *their needs* before her own.
- **The timeliness factor-** Jesus emphasized this in v.7. While there are some opportunities to *do good* that are ever-present, v.7a, others are *time-sensitive* and *time-limited*, v.7b; cf. Eph.5:16; Col.4:5. Procrastination and excuse-making prevent the utilization of opportunities that may not always be there.
- **She did “what she could”-** There are many things of which you and I are incapable. Dwelling on what we “can’t do” often prevents us from *seeing* and *doing* what we “can/could do.” This woman may have been terrible at preparing food; she

may have been lousy at organizing and keeping her home; she may not have even been a particularly good wife- if she was married at all. But she didn't allow any of that (what she *couldn't do* or was *lousy at doing*) to prevent her from doing "*what she could*" do.

Because of these things, she has an everlasting epitaph from the Lord Himself, "*wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, that also which this woman has done shall be spoken of in memory of her,*" v.9. The text nowhere says she was either "down" or "depressed"- I get that. But I'm suggesting **that what she *thought, felt, and did* is "good," either as a preventative or prescription, nonetheless.** Perhaps sometimes, we need to consider what other people do NOT to get down/depressed in order to avoid it ourselves. Consider: a) this woman was closely associated with Jesus and the Twelve, since she was accepted into this gathering at a critical time, v.3; b) she evidently understood what the even the disciples had failed to grasp- that Jesus was about to be killed, cf. v.8b; and yet, c) she didn't let either of these factors *prevent* her from *doing "what she could,"* v.8a. So...

Now, if you're simply a bit "down," or even more seriously depressed:

1. **Don't isolate yourself-** go be with *good people* who will support and encourage you, and whom you can support and encourage, cf. Gal.6:2; Heb.10:24;
2. **Get *outside of yourself and your problems*** by thinking of someone else and how you might benefit them, cf. Phil.2:3-4 and 2Cor.8:1-5;
3. **Understand the critical nature of time-** *now* is what we have, so don't make excuses and procrastinate; if it needs to be done, do it *today*, cf. Heb.3:12-15; Jas.4:13-17; and,
4. **Never allow what you *can't do* prevent what you *can do*,** cf. 1Cor.12:28-31ff. Not able to "lead" some aspect of worship? Open the door for and greet brethren and guests as they enter. Not able to teach a bible class? Volunteer to help those who do with preparations or "wrangling" kids during one. Not able to "get out and go" see and encourage others the way you once did? Telephones- even those with cords attaching them to wall, still work. Not good talking to people? The Post Office still sells stamps and delivers mail.

Conclusion:

The overall points are these:

- **Inactivity/having nothing to do wasn't good for the first man, Adam, and it isn't good for *any* of his descendants!**
- **We all need SOMETHING *PRODUCTIVE TO DO*.**
- **If you can't think of anything, call the Elders, the Deacons, the Preacher, or the Bible Class teachers and ask how you can help.**
- **But don't *isolate yourself*; don't *obsess about yourself*; and *don't allow even real incapacities* to prohibit *possible capabilities*!**