

Truth and Spirit Ministries

Breaking the Cycle of Depression Part II

By Denise Bostic

God has given us effective and powerful keys in his Word that will help us to combat and overcome depression whenever we find that it's pressing in on us. Jesus said, "*The truth shall make you free.*" (John 8:32) When we consistently apply these truths to our lives, they will help us to overcome and also to maintain the freedom that God has given us through his Son. As we hear the voice of his Spirit, he will reveal those things that we need to know about ourselves as well. He can show us our own shortcomings and also what is toxic to our spiritual lives so we can be cleansed. He can empower us to overcome these things and to go on to live happy and victorious lives. Always remember, there is nothing impossible with God. (Matthew 19:26) Together, with him, there is nothing that we can't conquer! You and I are never without hope because we *always* have hope in Christ.

Depression is an Affliction of the Soul

Although depression can be brought on by physical problems, it's really a condition that afflicts a person's soul (mind, will and emotions) and this in turn can also have a negative impact upon our spirits. As believers it's important for us to understand that God wants us to be made whole in *spirit, soul and body*. Although Christian counseling can be very beneficial we must also personally rely daily on the Lord to empower us through his Spirit to overcome any issues or problems we may be having and to make us completely whole. He wants us to look to him as Savior, Healer and Deliverer.

When we become oppressed or weighed down for long periods of time we can be in danger of going into depression. To prevent this we must learn to use the spiritual weapons that God has given us to combat this assault on our souls. When oppression turns into depression, it can begin to spawn one or even several negative and spiritually toxic thoughts and emotions depending on our situations and personalities. Some are depressed because they have repressed anger, physical and emotional pain from being abused or unresolved issues in their lives. This in turn can spawn constant worry, fear, self-pity or a victim's mentality and even feelings of hopelessness. If that depression gets severe, it can also stop an individual from functioning normally in life or even lead to thoughts of suicide. God doesn't want us to live this way though. He wants us to be happy, healthy and free.

Having negative thoughts and emotions are not only toxic to our spiritual lives but can cause us to be *inwardly* focused rather than *outwardly* focused. It was a real wake-up call for me when God revealed to me that depression is selfish in nature because in reality the one who is depressed spends most of their time and energy focusing on themselves, i.e. self pity or my problems, my hurt, my pain, my anger, my worry or my fear. When our

minds become bombarded with negative thoughts or emotions, it's important that we take bring these thoughts captive to Christ. (II Corinthians 10:5)

God doesn't expect us to ignore the causes of our depression He cares about us and wants us to bring our needs to him. While we are waiting for healing, help or deliverance though we can ask him to help us to strive to have a positive attitude and thoughts that will focus on what is good and godly. When we do, he will impart to us a peace that transcends all understanding. (Philippians 4:8-9) We should make room for God in our lives and give him the time to bring healing, deliverance or the solutions that we need so we can spiritually move on in our lives.

If we choose to wallow in negative thoughts then eventually these things will become strongholds in our minds. We must realize that these kinds of thoughts are not Christ-like in nature but from the sinful nature. They are not from the spiritual mind of Christ but from carnal mind. Depression can become selfish when a person becomes too inwardly focused rather than outwardly focused. These thoughts and actions are not how God desires us to think and act. Now we have been born again by the Spirit and are new creatures in Christ. We've been given his very nature and mind. This is who we are. This is how we are to think and act as well.

When someone is inwardly focused, they are selfishly only thinking about their desires and needs but not the desires and needs of others. Being outwardly focused however is being unselfish and *Christ-like*. It is the character and nature of God to be giving, loving and attentive to the needs of others. Jesus came to set the example for us of what it means to be self-sacrificial, loving and focusing on helping and serving those around him. As believers in Christ we'll find that we're the happiest and most fulfilled when we're helping and serving others. One of the best ways to begin to break the cycle of depression is to get our minds *off* ourselves and *on* to others. Doing kind acts for others will not only help us to be productive in a positive way but lift our spirits as well. Serving others will also help us to keep our minds clear of any negative thoughts and emotions that we may be having.

Having a negative frame of mind for long periods of time is detrimental to our spiritual health. Realize that God has given us better options. We have the options of having faith, trust and hope in the Lord and that he will help us with all things. Instead of spending our energy on negative emotions, we can use our energy for more godly pursuits that will strengthen us and build us up spiritually such as praise and worship, prayer, bible study and serving others in love. This, in turn, will help us to exhibit God's fruit in our lives.

All of these things will help make us strong in the power of his might. These things, among others, will help us to overcome any attacks from the devil. God has given us powerful weapons in which to combat and overcome the power of the enemy of our soul. He has given us weapons of warfare that will help us have the victory over depression and anything else that may rise up against us. I will be teaching in part three about what those weapons are but first I would like to tell you more about our Great Physician.

Receiving Divine Therapy

In Part I of this teaching I wrote about Jesus being our Great Physician. Not only can he give us a diagnosis of our condition but he can also help us to get down to the root causes

of why we are depressed. In today's world so many people are treating their depression with pharmaceutical drugs but are not getting down to the inner root of their problems and this in turn will keep them in a chronic cycle of depression. Medicine can only really mask the symptoms of depression but it cannot cure it and as a result the underlying problems remain.

The Lord knows how to get down to the root of our problems no matter what they may be. He can reveal things that we would never see on our own. He knows us better than anyone else and even better than we know *ourselves*. He knows all and sees all within our lives and can give us whatever we need to help us overcome anything and everything that may be causing us to be depressed. In his divine therapy plan for us he will administer his love, truth, correction, compassion, mercy, joy and peace. He will release his saving, healing and delivering power to us help us become completely whole and happy again. God wants us to be well and prosper in every area of our lives. (III John 2)

You Are a Soldier in the Lord's Army

When God set me free from depression he showed me that there was a bigger picture that he wanted me to see behind my battle with depression. He showed me why the devil was oppressing me and why he was bombarding my mind with negative thoughts. This revelation is worthy of sharing with believers who suffer with ongoing depression because it actually applies to all of us. As Christians we're all called to be soldiers in the army of the Lord. (II Timothy 2:3-4) Whether we realize it or not there's a war going on between two kingdoms. One is a kingdom of light and the other is a kingdom of darkness. When we received Christ, we literally passed over from death to life and from Satan's kingdom of darkness and into God's Kingdom of light. (John 5:24; Acts 26:17-18) The moment we were born again we were placed on the spiritual battlefield of this war. What is the battle over? The battle is over the *souls* of men.

The devil and his evil spiritual forces are enemies of God and now they are our enemies too and fight against us. They do this to try to hinder or stop us from serving God effectively. But since Jesus defeated the devil through the Cross and literally disarmed all the principalities and powers of their weapons, the only things they have left in their arsenal to use against us are their lies and deception. (Colossians 2:15) They use them in the hopes that we will receive them so they can try to get a foothold in our lives to work or maybe even take us captive to do his will.

The greatest threat and fear that those from the kingdom of darkness have is that believers will receive the truth from God that will set them free and walk in the Kingdom power that's been given to them by Christ. This is why these dark spiritual forces are trying so hard to deceive, lie to and oppress as many saints as possible. They want to prevent us from being effective and advancing the Kingdom of God in the earth today.

Knowing all this is important so that we don't receive the deception, lies and oppression that these powers of darkness are dishing out. This is exactly why we shouldn't cave in to depression but instead believe by faith that we can overcome it in Christ. Whenever our minds are inundated with ungodly or negative thoughts, we need to bring them captive to Christ. We need to vanquish the fiery darts that the enemy shoots at our minds with faith in

God. I want to remind you at this point that according to the Bible, oppression, as it relates to men or the devil is *when one exercises harsh control over another; it is when one uses their power against another.* [2616 Joseph Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament]

Depression is the result of oppression. When the devil and his demons oppress us they are using their power against us to try to control us. If they can control us they can also hinder or even try to stop us from being effective soldiers in the army of the Lord. Unfortunately there are some believers today that have been taken captive by the devil as POW's and now have been taken captive to do his will. (II Timothy 2:25-26) But I tell you brothers and sisters in Christ, we don't have to fall into his trap. We can continue to fight as soldiers in the army of the Lord.

If we have suffered loss, harm, bruises or wounds on the battlefield, we must trust God to pick us up, deliver or heal us and then strengthen us to continue to fight the good fight of faith. When we turn to him and allow him to fix what needs to be fixed, this will enable us to get past these things and move on to what he has for us. We cannot allow the powers of darkness to render us ineffective for Christ and his Kingdom. We cannot give them a foothold in our lives. (Ephesians 4:27) We cannot let them hinder us from fulfilling our call.

In these last days the devil and his powers of darkness are working harder to oppress the saints of God. They know that their time is short and are working double time to come against us but we have the Lord on our side. Together, we cannot be defeated. In fact, he has promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church. We must choose to believe him over the devil. In all of this we must realize that God has not left us defenseless. He has given us everything we need to war a good warfare and come out victorious in every battle we encounter. The good news is that we win the war through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Put on the Whole Armor of God

Before I continue on to teach about the weapons that God has given us to use in warfare, it's important to know that God has also given us something else to help us in conjunction with these weapons. No soldier goes to battle without having his armor on. We need to be ready to do battle both *offensively* and *defensively*. The armor of God that we should be clothed in on the battlefield helps us to take a defensive stand against spiritual forces of evil while the weapons of our warfare help us to attack our enemy offensively. We learn about what this armor consists of in Ephesians 6:10-18.

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of

faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

The very first thing mentioned in this passage of scripture is the necessity for us as believers to realize that our strength must be in the Lord and his mighty power. In this armor God has given us divine protection and the greatest defense against the attacks of the enemy. We can't never lay our armor down but be dressed and ready for battle daily. Just as we put on the full armor of God in order to take our stand against the devil's schemes, we must also use the weapons of warfare that God has given us to expose their works of darkness, attack them and be victorious over them. (II Corinthian 10:3-5; Ephesians 5:8-11; I John 3:8)

We also learn in this passage that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. This teaches us that our battle is not in the *natural* realm but in the *spiritual* realm. The armor of God helps us to stand our ground against evil spiritual forces but the weapons of our warfare help us to demolish their strongholds and advance in the Kingdom of God.

Part III