

Lifting the LID

Bible Study exploring God's heart for mental health

Session 2: Caring in the Low

'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.'

Matthew 5:5

Session Objective: This week we are looking at one of the most common mental health diagnoses – depression and mood disorders. We'll learn how God cares for and restores those he loves from the story of Elijah. And we'll also talk about the causes of mental health problems for mood disorders and effective treatment options.

Bible study – 1 Kings 19:3-15: Elijah

- a. How would you describe how Elijah is feeling in verses 3-5?
- b. Have you ever felt similarly?
- c. What does God do in v.5-9? What does He not do?
- d. What does God do in v.10-15? What does He not do?
- e. Are there any principals we can learn from God's approach to Elijah?

Background: This passage finds Elijah in a mess. The context is this: Elijah has just had one of the most intense periods of his life – standing up against 450 prophets of Baal; calling down fire from heaven; watching as God brings a rainstorm after years of drought and famine; running 17 miles ahead of a chariot, receiving a death-threat from the queen, fleeing for about 100 miles and finally finding himself alone in the wilderness!

How does God treat this exhausted man? He supports Elijah very practically – gives him food and allows him to rest. Once Elijah is starting to feel better, God takes him to a very special place – Mount Horeb. This is the same place as Mount Sinai – where God met Moses, giving him the Ten Commandments and confirming His covenant with the people of Israel. Standing in that place, Elijah would no doubt have been reminded of God's promises and His past faithfulness. But unlike God's appearance to Moses, which was marked by wind, fire and earthquakes, this time God comes in a gentle wind.

Finally, once fully recovered and renewed, God gives Elijah an important new task, showing he can still be used by God.

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Learn it Up – Mood Disorders and Depressive states

When you think about depression, do any characters from TV, film or books come to mind? How would you describe them?

Depression can affect anybody, including Christians. In fact, every year one in five church ministers will suffer from depression. Medical skill, an active faith and a supportive community can make a real difference.

What is depression & mood disorders?

The word depressed is a common everyday word. People might say “I’m depressed” when in fact they mean “I’m fed up because I’ve had an argument, or failed an exam, or lost my job”, etc.

Depression (major depressive disorder) Defined: is a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, the way you think and how you act.

Mood Disorders Defined: any of several psychological disorders characterized by abnormalities of emotional state.

True depression means having a low mood and other symptoms each day for at least two weeks. Symptoms can become severe enough to interfere with normal day-to-day activities. There will be low mood, loss of enjoyment and low energy. It’s difficult to think positively about the future. It can affect sleep, weight and appetite. *Depression isn’t just ‘feeling a bit low’.*

Causes depression and mood disorders? It can be triggered by a one-off event or by long-term unhelpful thought patterns. It could have its roots in a physical illness. Occasionally, depression may have a spiritual cause, such as struggling to accept forgiveness.

Can it be treated? Depression doesn’t go away by just ‘pulling yourself together’, but requires a combination of approaches. Talking treatments can help change

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negative thought patterns. Antidepressants can help balance the chemicals in the brain which allow us to feel good.

What about faith? Even though the word 'depression' is not found in the Bible, God has always helped people whose mood was low.

Biblical Characters:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)
- 6)
- 7)

'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.' Matthew 5:5

Question: Depression can cause negative thoughts, including feeling guilty, helpless or hopeless. God offers alternatives: forgiveness, love and hope. But remember, depression can make it hard to believe this.

Being part of a community like a church is very helpful. It can be hard to attend regularly or meet people, but in church everyone should feel valued, no matter what. Phone calls and simple support mean a lot. You don't need to be an expert to help.

We should pray for people with depression, but just as with physical illnesses, God doesn't always work in ways that we expect. Sometimes God does cure people of their illnesses, but often He brings healing in other ways. It's important to understand that if someone isn't cured from depression, it's never the fault of the individual for not having 'enough faith'. God uses many different ways to heal, including miracles, counselling and antidepressants.

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Group discussion:

Looking at Elijah's story, we see how God responds to a desperate man. He takes the initiative to give practical support – food, drink and rest. Then He gently reminds Elijah of His past faithfulness. Finally, He restores him by giving him a new task.

- ☐ How can we put this into practice?
- ☐ Are there people in your church who need practical help?
- ☐ What can you do to support them practically?
- ☐ How might we support them spiritually?

Prayer for the Broken hearted:

O God, whose love restores the brokenhearted of this world: pour out your love, we beseech you, upon those who feel lonely, abandoned, or unloved. Strengthen their hope to meet the days ahead; give them the courage to form life-giving friendships; and bless them with the joy of your eternal peace. Amen.

Vienna Cobb Anderson

See the Additional Handouts to the Session:

Types of Depression Disorders

Common Causes and Reasons for Depressions

Common Treatment Methods for Depressions