

A Christian View of Depression (with Q&A;)

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[0 : 00] He is always with us when we go through these difficult times.! When we read our Bibles from Psalm 46, verse 1, God says,! God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in terms of trouble.

So He walks with us through the pain that we'll be going through. He comforts us, He strengthens us, and He grows us through those challenges that we'll be facing. What can stop Christians from opening about depression?

That's what we have to look at. Next slide, Pastor William. Thank you. Right, so that's a question most people ask, because most Christians, they don't want to open up about depression.

But again, there are some reasons why people may not want to open up about their condition. So the stigma. So mental health is stigmatized.

The negative attitudes, the prejudice, and the fear of judgment from other believers can stop Christians from opening up about depression. And some people think suffering is a lack of faith, so they avoid sharing their suffering with others.

[1 : 19] And some people think that suffering is a curse or a punishment from God, so they are ashamed to open up about their suffering.

Fear of judgment from fellow believers can stop Christians from opening up about their suffering. Sometimes believers can be like Job's miserable comforters.

Instead of helping our fellow believers, we accuse them. People may say, you are feeling this way because you have done something wrong, and you haven't repented of it.

So there may be other reasons why Christians do not open up about depression. But these are the most common reasons, you know, that can stop Christians from opening up about depression.

So what are spiritual disciplines that can play a role in the battle with depression? So we have prayer. Spending time in prayer can help reduce symptoms of depression.

[2 : 31] When we read in the Psalms, David cried out to God when he was in despair. And when we read our Bibles in Matthew chapter 11, verse 28, it says, Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

And also in 1 Peter 5, verse 7 says, Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. So spending time in prayer, remembering these promises, remembering that God is always with us, can also help, you know, alleviate some of the symptoms of depression we were talking about. And then reciting scripture. It can be an encouragement when you go through depression. I said reciting. I didn't say reading scripture. Why? Because sometimes when people are depressed, they may not even have the motivation.

We talked about the lack of motivation. They may not even have the motivation to open their Bibles. So sometimes it may be helpful to ask friends or to text you verses, Bible verses.

And some people, what they do is, when they are okay, you know, they mark verses that speak to them, that encourage them. And when that time comes where they can't even think about opening their Bibles, it's more of, you know, going back to those verses they have marked, and that can be helpful.

[3 : 50] So scripture can be encouraging because it's filled with God's promises. And then listening to worship music. According to research, music has antidepressant effects.

That's according to the researchers. But also when we read in the Bible, we go to the Old Testament, 1 Samuel 16, verses 14 to 23. David played a harp for King Saul, if you remember that, to soothe him, you know, when an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him.

So that was music being played to soothe someone, you know, from that, you know, despair that he was going through. So spending time listening to worship music or even singing along can help you

to cope with some of these depression symptoms.

And then involvement in the church. Involvement in the church community is a protective factor against suicide. Because most of the people who go through depression, like what we saw in the symptoms, they grapple with suicidal thoughts.

They just want to die. They just want to escape. But being amongst believers can be a protective factor for you. Because most of those people who commit suicide, they do it in isolation.

[5 : 07] So being part of a community, especially if it's a community of believers, can be a protective factor for those who are suffering from depression. Okay.

So should Christians take medication for depression? I think my initial response would be, should Christians take medication for any form of sickness?

When we are physically sick, we consult doctors and they prescribe medication. As we already know, depression symptoms can be debilitating.

We already know those symptoms and how it may look like. If the medication can help decrease the severity of some of these symptoms, I think we should not demonize the medication.

As you already know, medication does not cure the depression. It helps reduce the symptoms while the person attends counseling to deal with the underlying issues of the depression.

[6 : 13] So I will encourage people to take depression medication if they need it. If we have maybe family who are taking the medication, we are better off encouraging them than discouraging them because it helps them.

Because when people are going through depression, some of them can lose their jobs because they can't get out of bed. It's just too much for them. But the medication can help them to at least, you know, overcome some of these symptoms and, you know, keep on going, maintain their jobs, keep on, you know, going with the responsibilities they have.

So how do I support a loved one with depression? So research about depression and available support.

So researching about depression can help you get the information that you need. You know how to deal with it and you also know where to get help. Find out about available support and then assist in finding help.

When someone is depressed, they may not be able to reach out for help themselves. Instead of telling them to find a counselor, help them make phone calls to the counselors, book appointments for them, and even take them to their appointments.

[7 : 37] Because sometimes they can't. I experience that with the people I work with. You wait for them, they don't show up. And then you call them, they tell you, ah, you know, they give you any other reason, but you know it's difficult.

Sometimes it's just difficult for them. And I've noticed the families who bring their family members for counseling, which is really good because on their own, sometimes they just struggle to find the motivation to get out of the house and go for their appointments.

So engage in activities with them. When someone is suffering from depression, they may not have the motivation to engage in activities. So instead of telling them that they need to do this and that, do those things with them.

For example, instead of telling them to pray, pray with them, pray for them. Instead of telling them to go for a walk, take them for a walk.

Because on their own, they can't do that. They don't have the motivation. And be compassionate and avoid blame. Don't blame them for their condition because they didn't invite it.

[8 : 43] I think from the causes of depression, some of those causes, you know, there's nothing anyone can do to avoid that. So instead of blaming them, be compassionate, be caring to them.

I have had people who say, my family or my friends tell me to just go for it. So we have to be kind and compassionate to our loved ones when they are going through these struggles.

So it sounds like a daunting task to walk alongside someone suffering from depression. But when we do so, we are helping them carry their burden, right?

As Christians, we know that Galatians 2 verse 6 says, bear one another's burden and so fulfill the law of Christ. So when we do that, we are also doing our duty as Christians.

So how do pastors provide support? Address the issue of depression as a means of suffering.

[9 : 50] Pastors can support by addressing depression as a form of suffering. Talking about it from the pulpit can help reduce the stigma. I would like to thank Pastor William for even organizing the

mental health event we're having today.

This is another way of reducing the stigma because we are talking about it and we're talking about it in the church amongst us as believers. So those are some of the things maybe pastors can do to help the church.

Be receptive. Maybe as a pastor, if people open up to you about their condition with what judgmental comments like, create a safe environment by just being there, being present and listening to them and sometimes avoid giving advice that may minimize their condition.

Sometimes we can be giving advice but then they feel like, oh, you are not taking me serious but they are struggling. So it may be helpful to avoid giving them advice and just ask them what they need and how we can help.

And be discerning and not condemning. Sometimes one may be suffering because they have sinned against God. We cannot rule out that. It happens sometimes.

[11:04] Pastors have the role to point out unrepentant sin. However, they have to do it in a gentle way so that, you know, they can restore that person to God.

So those are some of the ways pastors can be able to help as well. Right. And the next question is, do I need to see a Christian counselor? As we already said, maybe you can go to the doctor.

They can give you medication but you still have to deal with those underlying issues in counseling.

There is nothing wrong with getting help from a secular therapist because they have the skills.

They know how to do this job. The reason why I would encourage a Christian to see a Christian counselor is that sometimes the issues pushing you down that, you know, dark hole of depression may be linked to your faith.

For example, someone may be struggling with the why questions. Why is God not answering my prayers? Why did God let this happen to me or to my family?

[12:11] Why did you not protect me when your word says you are my refugee and my fortress? You know, grappling with all those questions can push someone down that dark hole of depression.

Or maybe someone may be wondering if their faith is weak. So working with a Christian counselor will help you to address these questions from a gospel perspective. The worst thing is to seek help from someone who may end up deconstructing your faith because they are not a believer.

so they may not know the importance of you, you know, hanging on to that faith. Also, most Christian counselors, they pray for their clients.

I pray for my clients before they come to my office and after they've left my office, I pray for them. Sometimes we don't pray with them.

It depends. If they need me to pray with them, I can pray with them. But we are, you know, we are guided by our code of ethics. So sometimes that may not be very good to pray with them.

[13:20] But if they do ask, especially if they are Christians, some of them, I ask them if they want to pray, if they want me to pray, we can do that. But mostly what I do, I do it like in an implicit way.

Pray for them before they come. Pray for them after they leave. And sometimes I take time even to pray for my clients during my personal quiet time. I think about them and I pray for them.

The reason why I pray is I know God is the counselor. I'm just an instrument that he's using to, you know, help those people. So God is the one who can, you know, bring healing.

When we read the word of God, I guess, from Psalm 147, verse 3, it says, he heals the brokenhearted and binds the wounds. So this means God provides healing, comfort, restoration, and emotional, you know, from all those emotional pains that we may be going through, from all that emotional despair.

So it's more of depending on God. And for the Christian counselors, they are using their skills they have learned to help you, you know, go through that time of despair.

[14:27] But at the same time, they will be pointing you to your God who is the one who knows everything, who created you. I remember when we were going through some of those causes of some of these mental health disorders, we can realize that, oh, some of these things are biological.

We can't control that. But he's the creator. He created us. He knows each and every, you know, one of us. He needed every vein that what he says. So we can only go back to him and seek help from him.

Right. That was short. Shorter than the first one. We are done. Thank you so much. Thank you so much for listening to us again.

And just let you know, I just realized that the recording wasn't on. And so we've got the second one. But we are recording from now on.

So there's no problem as well. Yeah, I'm not the tech guy, obviously. So I think we have lots of time for questions. But perhaps before we kind of jump into questions, and there's a few here from Sunday and a few from, you know, that others have asked, maybe turn to the person next to you and why don't you ask, what's one question you have from, yeah, from maybe what Felicity has just shared about depression.

[15:45] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Thank you.

Thank you.

All right, so who's got a question that they're willing to open up? I can pass you this mic. Any questions that you're willing to ask? No?

Okay. Okay. Yep, okay. I'll pass it to me. Thank you. So, for example, in the situation where a person may suffer from depression, but I guess I don't know that person that well.

But so what's the best way to support them? So is it to sort of constantly ask, you know, how are they or whether they want to hang out?

[17:31] And in which case it might stress them even more or to just, like, leave them alone to have their peace? Yeah. I think that's a very good question.

Because when someone is maybe going through that phase of depression, sometimes they just want to be alone. And like what you said, maybe asking them, maybe bothering them as well, just adding to their distress.

I would say, depending on how you know them, for us, I guess, as Christians, our first point of course is we pray to God, ask for wisdom. How do we help this brother?

How do we help this sister? Sometimes God will give us a way of how to approach them. And sometimes it could be maybe talking to someone who is close to them. If you're not very close to them, talk to someone who's closer to them to maybe see if they can help, to just help them aware that they need help.

The most difficult part is they may not be in a position to seek help themselves. They may need someone, you know, to help them, you know, connect them to where they can get help.

[18:38] So if there's someone maybe close to them who can maybe talk to them and encourage them to maybe go with them to seek help, that may be helpful. Yeah.

And also, depending on their situation, mostly the first point of course is go to the doctor. Because we cannot diagnose ourselves, right? To say, oh, because I'm feeling sad, I'm feeling low, I'm depressed.

Go to your GP, they will ask you a series of questions and then they can, you know, refer you to the right people. So maybe it may look like, oh, looks like you haven't been doing so well these days.

Do you think it may be helpful maybe to talk to your GP or do you want me to take you to the doctors? You know, that kind of conversations. Cool, Wink.

Thanks. That's a great question. Others? Question? Okay. Okay.

[19:34] This one is from last week, but I think it's an important question. So firstly, you'll ask this one first. Are there, in your practice or your experience, Philister, are there mental health issues that are maybe more common among maybe immigrant contexts or, you know, like a church like ours?

You know, there's lots of people who have moved countries. They've experienced lots of, as you know, you talked about trauma, but lots of, you know, hardships and stuff like that. Yeah. Are there particular mental health issues that you see more often than maybe a church like ours or in a community like ours?

Yeah. And if so, yeah, any advice? Yeah. I think that's a very good question. And considering that in New Zealand we have a lot of people. We've come from different countries. We have come from, you know, our country to come here and we left our families there.

And most of the people maybe we work with who are immigrants, they struggle with depression. They struggle with anxiety. And we know anxiety from what we have learned today is more about constantly worrying about things.

They don't know how maybe they are going to manage things. They come here, maybe they can't find a job. They don't have support. It's a lot of old things they have to deal with to settle. So that can trigger anxiety in most of, you know, the immigrants, I think, which is why a lot of them struggle with anxiety.

[20 : 49] Depression, they are lonely. They don't have support. All the support maybe is back home. And maybe some of them, they can hardly even, you know, conduct their families because of the time differences.

It's afternoon in New Zealand. Back home, they are sleeping. And they don't have anyone, you know, they can, you know, talk to for support. And some things like we're talking about, you know, how we can, you know, advocate for some of these things like discrimination to be eliminated. Some people face discrimination. And those things can also, you know, aid to, you know, those issues of having, feeling anxious, you know, depressed.

Because you think of going to work and, you know, I know they don't like me there or, you know, they treat me this way. That can cause a lot of anxiety and people can be depressed. So anxiety and depression are mainly common in most people who have left their countries to come and maybe settle in New Zealand.

Yeah. In short, that's what I can say. Okay. So there's more anxiety, more depression, more of everything you talked about in a church like ours. So how can we help? Is there anything specifically that a church like ours can do other than what you said?

[21 : 58] Yeah. I think community, like what we said, say maybe being part of a community is very helpful. Maybe making sure we support people, especially noticing those who are lonely, who don't have families, and try to accommodate them.

And maybe invite them for lunch, invite them for dinner. I remember when we moved from our home country, the church I go to Papa Cura Baptist. We just came here. We didn't have family. But we're really thankful to God that they embraced us and they tried to help us with whatever we needed. And they just accommodated us. So that helped us a lot. So just, you know, embracing them, showing them love, can help them feel safe and can maybe eliminate them having to go through all those other issues we are talking about.

Okay. That's really helpful. So feel free to follow up if that's something that you guys want to ask about as well afterwards. All right. So this is a different question. How should the church respond and care for people whose mental struggles or traumas are caused by the church or maybe specific people in the church?

Yeah. Do you have any thoughts about that? Yeah. I think that's a very important question. Because normally when we're at church, we think we are safe. That's our safe place. But I've worked with people who have suffered a lot of horrible things in the church, you know, being perpetrated by some believers, I would say, in quotes, I guess.

[23 : 22] It's very difficult for those people because considering that church is safe, they believe church is safe. When things like that happen to them, maybe I'll give an example.

Maybe the people I've worked with people who have been sexually abused in the church, you know, and that's one example I'll give. So the problem with those people is because church is safe, that's what they've learned over the years.

And having to go through that will just shatter all those assumptions they had because they thought, this is a safe place. That's where I can go and, you know, find help when I need help.

But when things turn around that way, that can even maybe cause them to deconvert. Some people will leave church and go and maybe, you know, just not be a church member anymore.

Some can go to other churches which may be better because they are still believers. But some people just abandon their faith. So the struggle with those people mainly is asking why things are happening like that in the church where we think maybe we are safe.

[24 : 30] But when we are working with people with that, I think what is important to make them realize is, yes, we are in the church. But we also have to think that God is a loving God, but we also have the adversary, the devil.

The Bible says he comes to steal, to kill, to destroy. So we always have to be aware that he is also at play. And when we are in the church, of course, we would expect that as believers, you know, we are believers, we do right.

But there are some people who can just infiltrate the church and they have their own motives that are very different from, you know, what we all, you know, come here for. So when you are working with people like that, the most important thing is to believe them.

When they tell you that this is what is happening, this is what happened in the church, they need to be believed. Because most people, they struggle because if they come, for example, I'll just give an

example because I've worked with these people.

For example, someone has been sexually abused, maybe by an elder in the church. Then they go to the pastor. They tell Pastor William, this is what happened, right? And then Pastor William, because we want to protect the reputation of our church, we are not going to talk about it.

[25 : 42] We just, you know, leave it like that. Don't talk about it. Don't tell anyone. That will just destroy that person. What is important is to acknowledge that, yes, this is wrong.

This has been done. I guess as pastors, they know sometimes how to address such issues. But what is important is to acknowledge the wrong that has been done and walk alongside that person in a way that will help them feel loved and supported.

Because if they feel loved and supported, they will know that, yeah, at least the church loves me, God loves me. I've worked with, you know, I would say people have experienced that. So I remember one person, the church was supportive.

And when I worked with that lady throughout, she really still could feel that God loves her because she had all this support from the church. The church supported her. But I worked with another lady because they wanted to protect the reputation of the church.

They tried to just suppress everything. And that just destroyed that lady. So what is important to know is when we are in the church, there are things that may happen.

[26 : 49] We are not immune to those things, although we are in the church. But what we have to know is we are at war, right, with the devil. So things do happen, but we have to pray and trust God to protect us as a church.

And he does do that. But when we have situations like that, let's be supportive of those people. Do as much as we can to help them. Sometimes it can be difficult for them to come to church.

We have to understand that. Why? Because coming to church, just being in the church can be a triggering environment for them. So maybe because things happened in here or maybe just seeing maybe people in the church who have done those things can be a trigger for them.

That's when they start reliving. We talked about flashbacks when we were talking about trauma, I think. They just go back and relive that over and over again, which is not good for them. So sometimes it's good to give them space if they say, oh, I'm not ready to come back to church yet.

Support them as much as you can. Give them time to heal while they stay at home. And also encourage them to seek help. I'm not sure. I know pastors, you just counsel sometimes, right?

[27 : 55] So maybe take time to counsel them. Help them understand, you know, that these things happen. But it's not because God doesn't love them. Because most people think, oh, God doesn't love me. Help them understand that God loves them regardless of what's happening.

But also there's, you know, these other adversaries who are at war with us as Christians. So supporting them, believing them, and maybe just giving them space can be helpful.

I don't know if I answered that. Yeah, that's really helpful. And, yeah, I think this is a really hard topic sometimes. So, and I don't know, just even for myself, even as a pastor, I'm a sinner in need of a savior.

We know that we make mistakes. And so no one is immune to that, not a single leader. So I think I'll just add to that and just say, like, yeah, just build off that.

But if you have experienced hurt or harm from someone at church, please reach out. Talk to someone. You can talk to myself or either or any of the other leaders.

[29 : 00] Just someone that you think you can trust. And, yeah, let's make this a space where you will be believed. Yeah. I think a church is not a museum where, you know, everyone looks perfect all the time.

We always talk about this as a, it's like a hospital. We all carry our wounds. And like you reminded us earlier from Galatians 6.1, yeah. We're actually here to, you know, to bear each other's burdens. And so, yeah, do reach out if church has been a place of hurt for you. And talk to someone about it so that you'll be heard and be listened to.

And we can, yeah, we can go forward together on that. Yeah. Yeah. Thank you. Yeah. Yeah. Any other questions or different topics?

Looks like most people are okay. Is it depressing? Yeah. Depressed already, right? Yeah. It's funny. The weather matched our mood, you know.

[29 : 59] We came in, oh, sunny. Oh, rainy. Sunny. I've learned a lot from today. And so I'm really grateful. Thank you for not just sharing. I was just struck, you know, because actually when we talk

about mental health, sometimes it can feel like you're speaking a different language.

But you made it so relatable to us. And you showed us quite often, you know, through your presentation how, yeah, God has lots to say about the struggles of our souls. So, yeah, I really resonated with that.

I really encourage that. Yeah. In this world, we will have tribulation, but we can trust in our Lord Jesus. Take heart. He says, I've overcome the world. And he does that through, you know, through each other.

So everything you've learned today, you are now the ones who are better equipped, Lord willing, to encourage, to listen, to pray alongside and with others in this church and in your families and communities.

So, yeah. So I think let's call time. We've got lots more food. So we can just keep chatting and keep talking as long as you want. Promise that we'll be done by 12 and we'll keep that promise as well.

[31 : 06] Before we go, Felicitas, just a thank you from our church. And again, just to say thank you so much for giving up time. But also, I mean, praying into the sessions and also just sharing your wisdom.

So this book is called *Serving Without Sinking*. So I hope that will be the case for you. And then a gift as well from our church as well. Thank you so much. I was not expecting anything.

I know you weren't. Because I'm just doing my service, you know, as a Christian, serving God's people. So, yeah. I appreciate your gift. No, it's fine. You served us so well. I wasn't expecting anything at all.

That's fine. Because it's, you know, part of my duty. I'm a child of God. I serve people. And God is the one, you know, who gave me, you know, this gift and gave me the privilege to be able to do what I do. So I really, yeah, thank God.

And I want to thank you all, you know, for coming and listening to me. And I'm hoping and trusting that, you know, you are taking away something that can help you, that can help your family members or someone maybe in the community.

[32 : 08] I do have, I think Pastor William said that. I do have some resources I brought. I think I'll just leave some of them. What do you think? Please do, yeah. Leave it and we can share. I have some flyers there. I have some cards as well.

Just in case you want, you know, someone who needs help or you want to reach out and seek counselling, we do have some phone numbers there. And there are also some flyers with some information on, you know, how you can do some things.

And I have some contacts as well. There's a whole list of contacts, who to contact when you need help with what. So I hope that will be helpful as well. Thank you so much. Great.

How about, yeah, I'll pray for us to close and then we'll head on and grab some more food. Thank you, Father. Thank you that in all our struggles and hardships, you love us, you care for us, and you equip us with so many different ways that we can support one another.

Father, for all the things we learned today, may it just be one small step towards a greater understanding and sympathy for those of us who wrestle and struggle with anxiety, depression.

[33 : 12] Other, yeah, other situations and, yeah, conditions we haven't even been able to speak of. But you know them all. And thank you that you've made us so unique. And yet we, when we struggle, we can bring everything to you.

So, and we thank you for this day. And I pray that you would just bless us as we head on our separate ways and into the weekend as well. So we thank you. We pray all these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Great. And thank you.