

ignore root causes. Some people may use antidepressants to avoid approaches that require you to deal with other unresolved issues. It seems easier to pop a pill. A general rule of thumb is to try other strategies first, unless the depression is so severe that the person endangers themselves or finds themselves unable to participate in other therapies.

Depression is a complex area, and severe problems of depression deserve the attention of a pastor or other counselor. This material is from © Dr. John Bechtle at [www.ChristianAnswers.com](http://www.ChristianAnswers.com)

### Practical And Helpful Tips When Depressed

- **Avoid being alone** - Contact family or friends. Force yourself to be with people. It is awful to suffer alone. Also keep the house well lit. Avoid living in dark depressive conditions.
- **Seek help from others** - Please get help from the Medical Profession. Go to your doctor and express your feelings. You may need medication. We live in stressful times so they understand. Speak to those who deal with depression. There are many phone Counselling centres.
- **Stop Holding Yourself Responsible for the Decisions of Others** - Everyone makes good and bad choices. We need to respect their freedom of choice and not try to be control freaks. When we try to control others, we have few friends and often feel depressed. We may think things would be different if others obeyed us, but we are not the ones responsible for their decisions. The Bible teaches that each person is fully accountable to God for what they say and do (Hebrews 4:13, Matt. 12:35-36).


- **Avoid the self-blame game of guilt** - We often say 'if only' I had done more. The fact is that others do not always receive our advice. They make their own decisions and we cannot change what is, so we need to forgive them and ourselves, let it be and leave it with God. He understands and does not hold us responsible for what others do.
- **Praise and give thanks** - It is easy to feel bad, but sometimes certain people can help conquer depression by focussing on the good things in life "*In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you*" (1Thessalonians 5:18).
- **Lean heavily on the power of God's Word** - It has been proven that if we keep our mind occupied we can 'chase the clouds away', so to speak. One way to do this is to read or have someone read the Bible to you. The Psalms can soothe the stress and depression.
- **Rest confidently in the presence of God's Spirit** - Pray and call upon Him for power to cope. "*Hope in God, for I shall praise Him for His help and His favour*" (Psalm 42:5).

Remember, this study is just a guide. Depression needs to be taken seriously and people who experience it regularly, must get professional help.

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So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. - John 8:36 ASSOCIATION

# Dealing with Depression



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# Dealing with Depression

Depression is a widespread condition, affecting millions of people, Christian and non-Christian alike. Those suffering from depression can experience intense feelings of sadness, anger, hopelessness, fatigue, and a variety of other symptoms. They may begin to feel useless and even suicidal, losing interest in things and people that they once enjoyed.

Depression is often triggered by life circumstances, such as loss of a job, death of a loved one, or divorce, or psychological problems such as abuse or low self-esteem.

## What is Depression?

\* **Depression** is not simply normal sadness, being moody or just a low mood, but a serious illness. It causes both physical and psychological symptoms.

\* **Depression** is common. Up to one in four females and one in six males will experience depression in their lifetime.

\* **Depression** is the leading cause of suicide.

\* **Depression** is often not recognised or treated.

Current treatments for depression are safe and effective.

\* **Depression** also commonly occurs with specific anxiety syndrome.

## Are you Depressed?

Depression affects how people feel about themselves. They may lose interest in work, hobbies and doing things they normally enjoy. They may lack energy, have difficulty sleeping or sleep more than usual. Some people feel irritable and some find it hard to concentrate. Depression makes life more difficult to manage from day to day.

**Depression is too complicated to solve with a single pat answer** - People use the word "depression" to cover everything from disappointment over losing a baseball game to the terrifying gloom that drives people to suicide.

**Psychologists list eight major causes for depression:**

- (1) Biological factors,
- (2) Learned helplessness (sense of being trapped without a remedy for an intolerable situation),
- (3) Parental rejection,
- (4) Abuse,
- (5) Negative thinking,
- (6) Life stress,
- (7) Anger,
- (8) Guilt.

© [Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counselling: A Comprehensive Guide*, (Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing, 1988).]

Dr. John Bechtle writes, The Bible does not use the word "depression," although it describes people whom we might call depressed. However, here are a few general principles I would recommend when "dealing with depression".

**1. Aim to work on the causes of your depression, not just the symptoms** - Scripture points to many issues of sin or conflicts that can affect your emotions; most counselors would agree that depression can result from other underlying issues. Don't just worry about the depression itself; check to see what other problems need attention.

**2. Realize that you can't base life on your emotions** - Christians base life on truth, not feelings. James 1:2 asks us to "*Consider it all joy when we fall into various trials.*" James doesn't tell us to feel joyful; he tells us to believe, or choose to think about our situation, as a spot where we can have joy in the midst of troubles.

**3. Hold on to your Faith** - Choosing to trust truth rather than your feelings may require a lot of faith. And if that is what we mean by asking if faith can solve depression, then faith may be enough in some cases. Trusting what God says rather than your feelings is certainly a more realistic approach to life!

The Bible tells us that God will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5) nor will he allow trials into our lives that are too much for us to handle (1Corinthians 10:13).

**4. Heed God's Advice** - However, many people talk about "faith" and only mean a vague hope that God will somehow pull them through. That's too ambiguous a concept to be reliable. Many of the same people who claim to have faith keep plunging through life ignoring God's principles for healthy living. If we spurn the good advice the Bible contains, we won't escape the consequences - even if we have faith.

**5. Chemical Imbalances** - Some cases of depression may be caused by chemical imbalances. If that is the cause, then antidepressant drugs may be the answer. God has allowed mankind to learn about many medical drugs, and He sometimes uses medicine to heal. There may also be some cases of depression so severe that medications are necessary to bring the sufferer to the place where they can tackle some of the other issues; such cases might require medication, at least temporarily. I know of no Scripture that forbids such use.

**6. Unresolved Issues, Root Causes** - However, any medications should be used with caution. Virtually any medicine has some side effects. Drugs can mask the symptoms, allowing you to