

# GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

## #1 Becoming Strong / 1 Samuel 30

David's life before he was king sometimes looks like an incredibly lonely journey. In fact many Psalms record David's apparent weakness during these days on the run from Saul; Psalms 7, 27, 31, 34, 52. The story of 1 Samuel 30 is the culmination of this time in David's life, and in it we discover a great lesson for good mental health.

### Stressed, isolated, and afraid

When we are stressed, isolated, and afraid we often make decisions that are unwise, ungodly, and unnatural.

*1 Samuel 30:1-6 (NKJV) ~ Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.*

A lot of different people in this chapter were exhausted! David's men were not spiritual men (1 Samuel 22:1-2), and they did not know who to strengthen themselves. They were tough, and they were angry, and they knew how to fight! But when this new crisis came they were just a hot mess of weakened weeping men.

What brought David, his men, and the Egyptian servant to such an incredibly low place? How did each hope to change the situation? What are some healthy and unhealthy ways people try to strengthen themselves?

### Searching for inner strength

It's too late to become strong the moment evil comes. When evil comes we often run to get counsel from our spouses, our bosses, our parents or our friends, and sometimes this really helps because we get to transfer a bunch of your stress and anxiety into their lives. But often we are not actually being strong ourselves.

Eventually we need to talk to Someone who doesn't get stressed and afraid, and David did this. Before, during, and after the story of 1 Samuel 30 David was mentally and spiritual strong because he constantly strengthened himself in the Lord.

### Good spiritual habits enable good mental health

Good mental health is the result of becoming strong on the inside. The New Testament says a lot about this: Galatians 6:6-9, Ephesians 3:14-19, Philippians 4:6-9, and Colossians 3.

On your journey to good mental health learn to talk to God and yourself in healthy ways by familiarize yourself with these meditations by David.

David knew how to talk to God.	David knew how to talk to himself.
<i>Psalm 16:1-3, 8-11</i>	<i>Psalm 4:1-4</i>
<i>Psalm 18</i>	<i>Psalm 37</i>
<i>Psalm 19</i>	<i>Psalm 42 &amp; 43</i>
<i>Psalm 23</i>	<i>Psalm 63</i>
<i>Psalm 27:1-3</i>	<i>Psalm 73 &amp; 77 (Asaph)</i>
<i>Psalm 40</i>	<i>Psalm 103</i>

# GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

## #2 Becoming Strong Again / Hebrews 12

In places where the ground freezes, there is a perpetual need for farmers to remove rocks from their fields before they can plant. Theories as to where all the rocks come from aside, every spring northern hemisphere youth make extra cash by walking through farm fields picking up rocks so the farmer can plow.

In Session 2 Pastor Clive introduced the concept of *removing the rubble* through self-counseling. Today we find out how to become strong *again* applying three truths taught in Hebrews chapter twelve.

*Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears. ~ Hebrews 12:12-17 (NKJV)*

### #1 Healing takes time.

Healing is a process (Heb 12:12-13). When we injury our bodies, we see a doctor for a diagnosis, usually get a prescription, and often adjust our diet and/or behavior in order to get well. Just so when we are weak on the inside; recovery comes through correct diagnosis and commitment to healthy spiritual living.

### #2 Exercise keeps things healthy.

Besides the obvious spiritual disciplines—Bible reading, prayer, church gatherings—Hebrews 12:12-13 provides three practical “exercises” to become strong again:

- Make good decisions now. Don’t be paralyzed by past choices. Deal with sinful and unwise choices through confession to God and wise counsel, and then make good decisions now.
- Change your posture. To encourage your spirit, physical changes must be made (e.g., actual posture, schedule, medical checkups, etc.).
- To end up in a good place, make straight paths for your feet. Create different habits, find different friends, choose different behavior.

See also the comparison of physical and spiritual exercise in 1 Timothy 4:6-8.

### #3 Gardening enables the right things to grow well.

Many lives are completely overgrown with bitterness and profanity. These dangerous weeds must be dealt with!

- Uproot bitterness. Bitterness slowly intertwines itself into every part of our lives, and saps all life away.
- Stop feeding your flesh. Esau was a *profane* person, wanting only to feed his desires. Once a person has already “failed,” it becomes so much easier to fail again. Esau’s catastrophic moral decision was the result of his inward spiritual attitude and intense physical weakness (Gen 25:29-34). Instead of feeding our appetites, let us pursue peace with people and holiness with God. See also Galatians 6:7-9.

# GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

#5 Mind Body Heart Soul / 1 & 2 Peter

## Love me with all of you

*Mark 12:28-31 (NKJV) ~ 28 Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?" 29 Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment."*

*Deuteronomy 6:4 (NKJV) ~ "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."*

Jesus said we must love God with everything!

- Emotionally — with the sincerity of our heart and feeling of our soul
- Intellectually — with our minds, thinking well and according to truth
- Volitionally — with our will and energy, fervor and strength

From other New Testament passages we could add, "Physically." We also love God with our bodies.

## Help for the whole person

There are numerous passages that address not only the the individual aspects of our humanity, but also the relationships between them.

<b>Mind</b>	Prov 3:5-6; Phil 2:1-5; 3:12-16; 4:6-9; 2Cor 10:3-6; 1Pet 5:6-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose what goes in.</li> <li>• Taking thoughts captive.</li> <li>• Practice prayerful meditation.</li> <li>• Obey what you know.</li> </ul>
<b>Body</b>	1Sam 30; 1Kings 19; Jn 4:6; Rom 12:1-2; 1Cor 3:16-17, 6:15-20; Acts 17:16-34; 1Tim 4:8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diet and exercise (extreme issues extend both ways)</li> <li>• Physical condition and changes in your body, medications</li> <li>• Discipline and routine</li> <li>• Sin in your body (habitual issues must be addressed)</li> </ul>
<b>Heart/Spirit</b>	Pro 25:28 with 16:32; Ps 32:3-4; 40:1-3; 51; 2Tim 1:7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn what touches your spirit; finance, events, cycle, etc.</li> <li>• Address unique temperament and personality difficulties</li> <li>• How does your body affect your spirit?</li> <li>• How do decisions of your soul affects your spirit?</li> </ul>
<b>Soul</b>	Ps 1; 42; Matt 11:28-30; 1Cor 11:27-32; 2Cor 1:8-11; 1Pet 1:9, 22; 2:11, 22; 3:20; 4:19; 2Pet 2:7-8, 14; Heb 12:12-17	<i>Determining cause or effect is the single most helpful step in finding hope, help, and healing for your soul. Did your soul cause the problem, or is your present condition the effect of something else?</i>

# Good Mental Health

David & Paul are fantastic examples that help us understand how you and I can deal with our past!

## Dealing with your past #6 2 Samuel 11-18

### A look into the past

We need to distinguish between connection and control when it comes to our past leaking into our present life. No quick fixes but rather the solution requires daily dependence on the truths of God. We are trying to point you to these truths, so you can start this process and we can help you to stick with it.

In the Bible in 2 Samuel 11-18 on we see years of bitterness, consequences of action, regret come to light in so many terrible ways. Let's consider this story as we look at dealing with our past.

### 1. THREE CAUSES

#### Three things that cause an unsettled past

If you have something in your past hindering your walk with the Lord, hindering your relationship with peers and family, or is the starting point of a downward spiral it is something bigger than “bad day a work” kind of emotional health but in this story and in our experience these things general cause an unsettled past.

**Philippians 3:13-14 (NKJV) 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**

#### Regret

- David regretted His sin of adultery and murder greatly.
- The regret led to other sins and other indirect effects just as the Lord said it would
- He dealt wrongly with dealing justice to His son Amnon because of guilt or regret for His own sins and that caused another string of actions.
- He was forgiven immediately, because of true repentance and the grace of God
- David understood that forgiveness comes with a renewed joy
- Ask God as David did to bring back this “joy” of our salvation of forgiveness and mercy He has shown us despite our past actions weigh on us.

*Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.*

*(Psalms 51:8-12 KJV)*

*And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.*

*(2 Samuel 12:13 KJV)*

Text

## Resentment/bitterness/anger

- In 2 Samuel 11 Absalom plotted the death of his brother in revenge and he plotted to overthrow his father, David who refused to forgive him.
- Absalom plotted his brother's death for two years, and then went into hiding fearing justice for three years, and then living another two years back home before he even saw his father's face.
- Do not give bitterness time to fester like he did. It was short-lived and because he spent his lifetime plotting revenge against his father and brother and we know he was clinging to his past because he named one of his daughters Tamar.
- He forgot his hope should be in the great judge who will one day take account of every action. Justice will be done.
- We must strive to forgive and give way to wrath because there is nothing more harmful to ourselves and others if bitterness has its way.

*And Absalom spake unto his brother Amnon neither good nor bad: for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar.  
(2 Samuel 13:22 KJV)*

*So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face. Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to have sent him to the king; but he would not come to him: and when he sent again the second time, he would not come.  
(2 Samuel 14:28-29 KJV)*

*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.  
(Ephesians 4:30-32 KJV)*

*Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.  
(Romans 12:19-21 KJV)*

## Trauma

- The death of his baby child, the rape of one of his daughters, the betrayls of his son and disloyalty of his generals must have been traumatic.
- The definition of Trauma: a deeply distressing or disturbing experience. "a personal trauma like the death of a child.
- Tamar was physically violated and the event was downplayed because David was struggling to let go of his past.
- We must always handle trauma honestly and get help because your future self and those around you depend on it.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.  
(1 Peter 5:6-7 KJV)

Revelation 2:10 (NKJV) 10  
Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

### 3. THREE HELPS

#### Three statements about biblically dealing with your past

- Your past is not a blanket to cover up issues, or hide under from problems

Rom 14:12 *So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*

- Your past should not take away from where you are now

Mat 6:34 *Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*

- Your past is never greater than the grace of God

2Co 9:8 *And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:*

### 2. THREE TRUTHS

#### Statements about biblically applying forgiveness, thankfulness and hope

- Hope does not mean security from future regret, trauma or hurt

1Pe 3:9 *Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.*

- Forgiveness does not erase the consequences of our past

Gal 6:7 *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

- Thankfulness does not mean we need to suck it up and get over it.

Job 5:11 *To set up on high those that be low; that those which mourn may be exalted to safety.*

## An accident

There once was a person in a dreadful car accident. This left him with a permanent disability. Regret over things that he never got to do. Anger over the third party, over God for letting it happen. Trauma from 10 minutes without a heartbeat, 20 operations, three months in the ICU, skin grafts, 27 broken bones internal bleeding and more.

Many years afterwards when asked if this person was happy. The answer was usually no but the accident, or the disability doesn't come up he made his peace with the drivers. He learnt to do everything he did before and more. No What brings this person stress, and unhappiness, and sleepless nights is family conflict, unfair bosses, long work hours worry about money, the economy, the news. Regrets spills over about bad decisions from his teenage years, or about being a bad parent.

It is not our experiences that define our ability and inability to find lasting joy in the Lord. Dealing with your past does not mean building a numb resistance to it emotionally or downplaying and forgetting it. On the way home or the next time you have a few moments consider this passage from lamentations and psalm 51 and maybe you will agree that the cure for a broken past is the same cure as every other broken thing in this world.

## Passages to take your study further

(Lamentations 3:16-26 KJV)

*He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, he hath covered me with ashes. And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD: Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.*

(Psalms 51:2-12 KJV)

*Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit*

# GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

#7 Escape from despair / 2 Corinthians 1; Lamentations 3; Psalm 42

## Facing reality

There are many reasons people find themselves depressed.

- Regret and/or guilt
- Pressure
- Anxiety
- Trauma
- Low—and often untrue—opinion of one’s self.
- Emotional and spiritual depression
- Physical and mental exhaustion
- The weight of responsibility
- Individual temperament
- Clinical depression
- Spiritual oppression
- Spiritual conviction

### 1. Elijah escaped spiritual and physical exhaustion (1 Kings 19).

Elijah was exhausted after a great victory. He had stood alone against a King and Queen; against a nation. Discouraged and despairing in the fight for righteousness, he fled.

Part of Elijah’s cure was found partly in physical exhaustion. Before God spoke of any spiritual matters or truthful perspectives, he gave Elijah some food and allowed him to sleep. Then God told Elijah truth: “There are many others serving me as well.”

### 2. Job escaped the trauma of severe emotional loss and physical pain (Job 3:1-10).

Job endured incredible emotional trauma from catastrophic loss. Added to this, his physical condition was painful, and endured for a great length of time. These were circumstances beyond his control. But what made his tragedy so tragic, was is the absence of answers. Often we are convinced that if our present trial had some meaning, we would bear it with more courage.

Job was answered, but only with more questions. In the end God asked Job 139 questions! Job’s cure came not in *answers* to the great number of questions buried deep within his heart, but rather in the knowledge that God has the answers.

### 3. Jeremiah escaped fear and anxiety (Jer 20:11-18; 1:17-19; Lam 3:55-57).

Called *The Weeping Prophet* for all the tears he shed for his people, Jeremiah eventually found himself in a very dark and deep hole, physically and emotionally (Jer 18:20-22; 37:11-21; 38:7-13).

Before and during his darkness, God strengthened Jeremiah. Jeremiah’s cure came in the knowledge of God’s providence—that these things are the purposes of God for my life. His cure was found in the assurance that God is good and that He sees and knows all things... *Fear not*.

### 4. Paul escaped increasingly mounted pressure (2 Cor 1:3-8, 9-12).

Throughout the entire book of Second Corinthians Paul talks about *pressure*. The phenomenal weight of responsibility continued to grow in Paul’s life, and eventually it was too much.

God comforted Paul, and so did people. Paul was strengthened by remembering that Jesus also faced pressure and very real suffering. He was strengthened by people, through their effectual prayers and compassionate care of him. When we say, “We don’t want to bother people,” we often mean, “I don’t want your help.” But God did not intend for us to face our trials alone (Gal 6:1-5).

### 5. Jonah escaped personal sinful choices... we assume (Jonah 4:1-3, 8, 4:4-11)!

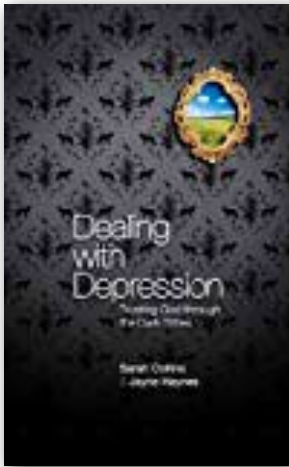
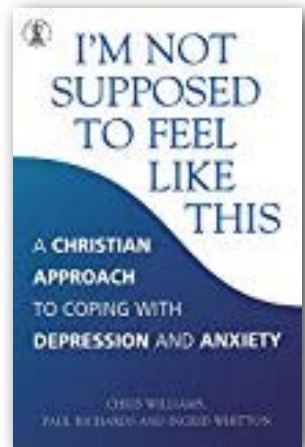
Jonah thought God had made a mistake, and so he justified his disobedient actions. Sometimes despair is nothing more than pity at the expense of others. Many of God’s weary saints found comfort; Jonah was rebuked. God would not change His mind; Jonah was left to change his own. And since the book was written, we assume Jonah did eventually come around!

Added to their unique situations, each person felt entirely *alone* in their battle. But they weren’t. God was there, along with many others.



## 1. *I'm Not Supposed to Feel Like This* by Chris Williams

Accurately sub-titled “A Christian Self-Help Approach to Depression and Anxiety.” This was the most helpful book my wife and I used when she was going through a lengthy period of pregnancy-related depression. Especially good on teaching you how to do some basic CBT (Cognitive Behavior Therapy).

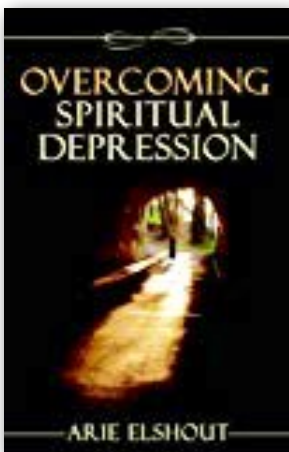
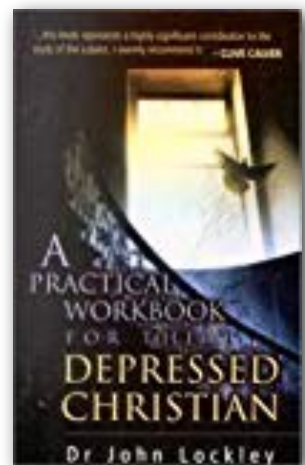


## 2. *Dealing with Depression* by Sarah Collins and Jayne Haynes

Smallest book of the bunch but one of the best for a balanced introduction to depression.

## 3. *A Practical Workbook for the Depressed Christian* by Dr John Lockley

Biggest of the bunch, but very readable and practical. Takes on the “Depression is always caused by sin” myth but also provides lots of practical advice. Totally disagree with pages 267-270.

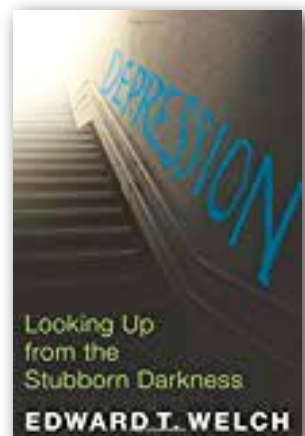


## 4. *Overcoming Spiritual Depression* by Arie Elshout

Very short and partly biographical book. Although it says “Spiritual Depression” in the title, unlike Lloyd-Jones’s book it covers a lot more than that with some fine practical chapters on sleep, nourishment, and self-esteem.

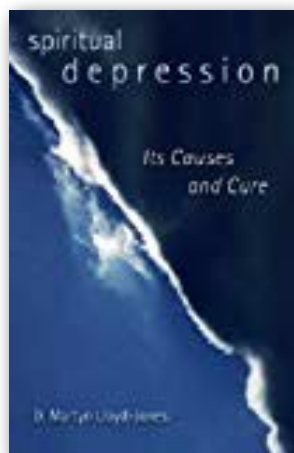
## 5. *Depression: Looking Up From The Stubborn Darkness* by Ed Welch

A sympathetic and sensitive book, especially good on helping sufferers discern whether their depression has a spiritual cause and how to respond to that. Sometimes seems to revert to the “medicine only alleviates symptoms” dogma, but this is still a good book for a pastor or counselor to guide someone through.



## 6. *D Is For Depression* by Michael Lawson

An accessible look at spiritual, psychological, and medical resources for healing depression. Looks at depression caused by burnout, painful memories, identity issues, discouragement, and suffering.

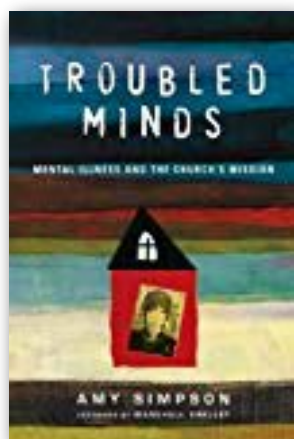


## 7. *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes And Cure* by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Although this is an extremely good book for those whose depression has primarily spiritual causes, it's not a book I would give to everyone suffering with depression as there are often other factors that may be far more significant.

## 8. *Broken Minds* by Steve and Robyn Bloem

A harrowing biographical look at depression by a pastor and his wife. If you want to feel the pain of depression with being depressed, this is the closest you'll get. Perhaps over-balanced into the "physical-only" approach, but gives a deep insight into the struggles of depression and what the church can do to help.



## 9. *Troubled Minds: Mental Illness and the Church's Mission* by Amy Simpson

Actually deals more with schizophrenia than depression, but so many of Amy's points apply to how the church responds to depression as well. Amy weaves her own family's painful sufferings throughout her challenges to the church to increase in compassion and care towards the suffering.

## 10. *Christians Get Depressed Too: Hope and Help for The Depressed* by David Murray

A kind of Depression 101 (or 911).

Also see:

THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY GROUP  
[www.sadag.org](http://www.sadag.org)



# Good mental Health

What's holding us back / fear and decision making

We can be a powerful paralyzer, getting in the way of big decisions and even everyday life. It can be a wreck in works when it comes to good mental and emotional health.

We see examples of several kinds of fears in scripture and how people were faced with daunting decisions despite this fear. In God and through diligence in godly living we see a way through the fear.

## Fear of failure

Joshua is repeated told by God to be strong and courageous. It is two bookend statements and in between we read why. It seems He had the hopes of a nation on him and his fear was failing in this momentous task before him not in dying or fighting in the many battles ahead.

*Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous... Joshua 1:6-7 2.*

## Fear of people

Proverbs are generally true statements not absolute fact. However, when we make decisions because we fear someone else then people will inevitably have cause to lie, cheat, and make other ethically compromising decisions. When we trust in the lord it is always better spiritually and emotionally.

*The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe. Proverbs 29:25*

## Fear of unhappiness

When we think about happiness generally what we are saying is we want to be content, we want to have purpose, we want to be free of daily worry. John 10 Jesus states that we might have life more abundantly.

*The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. John 10:10-11*

## Fear of the past

This verse describes looking to the future with some very interesting adjectives such a reaching forth and pressing towards. Verbs that imply effort and motivation.

*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:13-14*

## Fear of the unknowns

This is such a direct clear statement to help us with our fear of the unknown. If we don't know how then we ask God to show us how. He gives it freely, but we must ask in faith in other words without fear.

*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed... James 1:5-8*

## Fear of the future

When we say we are afraid of what the future hold what we commonly feel is worry or anxiety. But we are wasting our precious time when we do. When we plan out of fear then we plan in faithlessness.

*...Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Matthew 6:30-34*

## Fear of irrational things

People are often embarrassed and even ashamed to admit phobias or irrational fears, but it can be just as debilitating as the "big" fears. We must deal with it and acknowledge that it can be overcome.

*And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Colossians 3:15*

## Overcoming fear

Rejoice daily over what Christ has done for you on the cross (Phil 4:4)

Think rightly about God, especially His sovereignty, wisdom and goodness (Ecc 7:14)

Foster a habit of Christian joy and thankfulness (1 Thess 5:18)

Enjoy the good gifts God has given you (Ecc 5:18)

Live one day at a time. Don't try to spend today's grace on tomorrow problems (Matt 6:34)

# Good mental health

Helping others find help through God

## The need for good Christian advice

No one has all the answers. Frequently God used other people to give advice encourage and rebuke. Very rarely did He send angels or other divine means to do this. In the church, we are clearly commanded that the body of Christ strengthens itself.

Romans 15:14 And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.

Hebrews 10:25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself so that you too will not be tempted.

## Breaking down a counselling session

Gather data

Ask specific questions and listen to get to the root of the problem

Define the problem

It helps to repeat back in your own words what they see the problem being. "Just so I understand, what you are concerned about is..."

Be careful of defining too quickly or overlaying your story onto theirs.

We must analyse the data gathered during the inventory phase so that we can understand it from a biblical viewpoint. And we must decide what should be done about the problem according to Scripture. (in MacArthur and Mack, Introduction to Biblical Counselling, 231)

Involve yourself

There needs to be a level of trust between you and the person you are helping. Don't just back away if you don't know that person well enough. Get involved make efforts to do so.

(in MacArthur and Mack, Introduction to Biblical Counselling, 174) Counsellors cannot allow themselves to become exclusively problem-oriented. Rather, they need to be person-oriented.

Give hope

Heb 6:19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

To give hope throughout your time with the person you are helping especially early on because, usually when people come to you, they have tried everybody else and they have no hope.

Do not give false hope and correct false hope when it is present by teaching truths that inspire true hope. God absolute power in our circumstances, or the promise of eternity for example

Provide instruction

2Ti 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

Instruction is a general term with several meanings. Overall it is giving information that is meant to instigate change or initiate action.

If it is a sin issue instruction can take the form of warning and loving rebuke

If it is relational, or emotional instruction can be to bring about a change of mind or simply encouragement in truth.

Give homework

It is imperative that you give people homework. Give more than verses.

It doesn't have to be on the nose but if change is the goal there must be some level of commitment.

Homework must be measurable and quantifiable

## Other frameworks that can be used

Four Phases of Counselling (from Paul Tripp, Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands):

Welcome - Build a relationship of understanding and trust with the counselee while building the counselee's hope in God. (331)

Understand - Gather data that moves toward the heart... Gain first-hand knowledge and refocus attention on what matters. (331, 334)

Confront and comfort - Help counselees to see themselves biblically and to embrace God's promises. (337)

Action - Assist the counselee to apply the truths learned about God, self, and others to the specifics of his living situation, making biblical corrections and instituting new biblical habits (343).

Three questions to ask (from Joel James, a reference guide for biblical counsellors)

What is the problem – defining the issues, by gathering data and getting involved

What does God say about the problem – interpreting the facts understanding the issue from a biblical perspective

What does God say to do about the problem – giving guidance and encouragement based on the biblically interpreted data?

# GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

#10 A Counseling Toolbox | Psalm 119:25-32 & Luke 17:5-10

## Handle problems with biblical principles.

We want our problems fixed. Now. But there are no shortcuts! These principles provide biblical frameworks for working through many situational problems.

- 1. Healing takes time, and becoming strong takes effort.** But small changes usually produce immediate results! Usually within only a few weeks—sometimes even days—there are measurable results, both for physical changes and spiritual choices. See Galatians 6:6-10 and Hebrews 12:7-17.
- 2. Exercise keeps things healthy.** Several passages relate the management of our bodies to spiritual exercise. See Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 9:26-27, 10:31, 1 Timothy 4:8, and 3 John 1:2.
- 3. Gardening enables the right things to grow well.** Amos 9:14 parallels Israel's spiritual restoration with healthy gardens. Isaiah 53 tells of salvation through the Messiah, and God uses a beautiful garden to describe His magnificent work! Psalm 1 would also be a very practical passage for spiritual growth.
- 4. Find inner strength for outside problems.** Many times the “problem” is not actually the problem. Psalms 27 and 84 describe the need for God's help in facing problems with people and circumstances.

## What counselling looks like...

Sessions 2, 4, and 9 dealt specifically with counseling. The following steps will eventually become natural.

- 1. Gather data** — You will have to ask difficult questions. Don't only inquire about the “others”
- 2. Define the problem** — Diagnosis can be very difficult, and should not be done until there has been sufficient gathering of information. It's easy to jump to conclusions. Be patient, and ask God for wisdom.
- 3. Involve yourself** — You are becoming their emotional and spiritual guide. They many choose not to follow! But at least you are offering to lead them somewhere good; to help them walk with God.
- 4. Offer hope in God** — People want hope and they try to find it anywhere. Make sure you point them to God!
- 5. Provide instruction from God's Word** — Be careful to not guide others with only your opinion. Counsel should be founded on Christ's commands and biblical principles.
- 6. Give homework** — Unless you are in a formal counseling session, this “homework” would simply be recommendations by a friend. Offer to walk with them. Suggest steps to take. Be willing to disciple.

## Duty and discipline are not bad things.

Spiritual disciplines do not make one spiritual, but they are good and necessary for spiritual living. The story in Luke 17:5-10 illustrates that we increase our faith by doing our duty.

- 1. Insist upon obedience to what God has already said.** People want to hear God speak into their lives and fix their problems. But for most cases, God has already spoken. Very early on in the “counseling” process you will know whether or not the individual really wants help by observing how they respond to what God has already said. See James 4:1-10 and 1 Peter 5:5-11.
- 2. Help people to read the Bible.** The Bible can be very intimidating for someone who is unsaved or new to Christ. Give them some verses that have been special to you. Agree to read the same book together. Great places to start are Matthew 5-7, the book of James, Philipians.
- 3. Teach people how to pray.** De-mystify prayer. Tell them how you pray. Explain that prayer is just talking to God. Direct them to good Bible prayers in Matthew 6:8-15, Ephesians 3:14-21, Luke 18:9-14, and Romans 8:26-30.
- 4. Engage them in the body of Christ.** Spiritual life becomes strong only within the body of Christ. Communicate that we do not simply “attend” church; we are the church. Ideas of worship, fellowship, responsibility, spiritual growth and understanding all come through the life of the church.