

## ***Depression, the "Common Cold" of Mental Health Disorders***

***"My People are destroyed for lack of knowledge . . ." (Hosea 4:6).***

***Depression will be the second largest killer after heart disease by 2020 - and studies show depression is a contributory factor to fatal coronary disease.***

- ❑ Depression is a common medical condition that causes disturbance in thoughts/beliefs, feelings/attitudes and actions/behaviors. Like diabetes, heart disease or asthma, it is a treatable medical condition.
- ❑ Depressive disorders affect approximately 18.8 million American adults or about 9.5% of the U.S. population age 18 and older in a given year. This includes major depressive disorder, dysthymic disorder, and bipolar (manic depressive) disorder.
- ❑ 15% of the population of most developed countries suffers severe depression.
- ❑ 30% of women are depressed. Men's figures were previously thought to be half that of women, but new estimates are higher. The rate of increase of depression among children is an astounding 23%
- ❑ 41% of depressed women are too embarrassed to seek help. of depressed people are not currently having any treatment For African men, 92% do not seek treatment when depressed.
- ❑ 15% of depressed people will commit suicide. 15% of adults over 65 suffer from some type of depression, yet the majority will never seek help.
- ❑ Depression will be the second largest killer after heart disease by 2020 -- and studies show depression is a contributory factor to fatal coronary disease.

***92% of African American men do not seek help when depressed.***

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

- ❑ Depression results in more absenteeism than almost any other physical disorder and costs employers more than \$51 billion US dollar per year in absenteeism and lost productivity, not including high medical and pharmaceutical bills.
- ❑ According to the US Dept of Health and Human Services, nearly 25% of all prescriptions written in this country are for psychotropic (mental health) medication..

### ***The connection between depression and suicide***

“The National Institute of Mental Health statistics indicate that more than 32,000 deaths occur every year due to suicide, making it the 11<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death nationwide.” (Christian Counseling Today, Vol. 16, No. 2, p.52).

### ***Depression and suicide among African Americans?***

***Suicide is not a "White thing."***

- ❑ According to Dr. Alvin Pouissant, noted African American, Harvard Medical School Professor says “They (Blacks) see mental disorder and depression as a sign of personal weakness or moral failure.” More than 60% don't see depression as a mental illness, which makes it unlikely they will seek help for it.
- ❑ Suicide is killing more young black men than ever before. It is a taboo subject among many cultures, but more so among African Americans.
- ❑ Between 1980 and 1995, the suicide rate of black males doubled to about eight deaths per 100,000 people. The doubling of this suicide rate among black men between the ages of 15 and 24 makes it the third leading cause of death for this age group.
- ❑ Regarding Black teens: Suicide is not a “White thing.” Until recently, White teens committed suicide at a much higher rate than Black teens, but over the last 20 years, the rate of black teen suicide has increased dramatically.

***Suicide is the 3<sup>d</sup> leading cause of death for Black men between the ages of 15 & 24.***

*The rate of suicide for all African Americans doubled between 1980 & 1996.*

- ❑ Regarding Black women: Their complaints may be verbalized as “being sick and tired of being sick and tired.” When treated with various medications and procedures, the root is frequently not explored, as they continue to complain of being tired, weary, empty, lonely and sad . . . They are alive, but barely, and are continually tired, lonely and wanting (Warren, 2007).
- ❑ Although Whites are still more likely to commit suicide than blacks, the rate for all African Americans doubled between 1980 and 1996.
- ❑ African American women have a triple jeopardy status, which places us at risk for developing depression (Boykin, 1985; Taylor, 1992). We live in a majority-dominated society that frequently devalues our ethnicity, culture and gender. In addition we may find ourselves at the lower end of the spectrum of the American political and economic continuum. Often Black women are involved in multiple roles as they attempt to survive economically and advance themselves and their families through mainstream society. All of these factors intensify the amount of stress within their lives, which can erode self, esteem, social support systems, and health (Warren, 1994).

### *Causes of Depression*

- ❑ **Biological or Genetic Causes** - imbalances in brain chemistry, more commonly found in persons with bipolar disorder. Specifically, it’s usually due to a deficiency in norepinephrine or serotonin.
- ❑ **Physical Causes** – Life changes illness such as heart attack, cancer, stroke. Also lack of sleep, exercise, poor sleep, diet and nutrition, overwork, exhaustion, or some physical illnesses such as thyroid diseases or traumatic injuries.
- ❑ **Spiritual Issues** – (1) Sin; (2) God sent trials; (3) Demonic attacks; (4) Existential vacuum or feelings of meaninglessness and emptiness; (5) and “Dark night of the soul” – a spiritual dryness.
- ❑ **Personality and Psychological Issues** – Some people have “depression prone personalities.”
- ❑ **Interpersonal Issues** – Interpersonal disturbance or relationship problems can lead to depression. 50% of depressed people have such interpersonal problems as marital problems. In children, depression is often caused by parents’ separation or divorce, significant family stress, learning problems or sexual, physical or emotional abuse.
- ❑ **Environmental or Societal Issues** – political unrest, terroristic events like 911, economic recession; divorce rates, poverty rates, etc.

### *Symptoms of Depression*

- ❑ Depression is not just having a “down” or “blah” day or the “blues.” It is not as easy as “snapping out of it.” Or “just praying about it.” When professionals speak of clinical depression they are referring to a list of criteria that last at least two weeks and affects the way one feels physically and emotionally and the way one acts and thinks. Symptoms:
  - ❑ Eating disturbance- too little, too much or eating all the wrong stuff
  - ❑ Sleeping disturbance - too little, too much or restless sleep; bad dreams
  - ❑ A pervasive feeling of sadness that one cannot “shake off”
  - ❑ Crying spells
  - ❑ Decreased energy/ tiredness.
  - ❑ Sense of worthlessness or guilt
  - ❑ Impaired ability to think, concentrate, remember, make decisions, confusion
  - ❑ Loss of interest in activities that once brought pleasure, ex sexual activity, playing golf, reading, church attendance, prayer, and other spiritual activities
  - ❑ Thoughts of suicide or not wanting to go on living; not wanting to “be here” or hurting self by (ex. cutting, abuse of alcohol, drugs, prescription and non prescription)
  - ❑ Thoughts of wanting to hurt others or the person who hurt you.
  - ❑ Physical pain or somatic complaints

*Depression is not the “blues,” the “blahs,” feeling “down” or having a “bad day.”*

## How Depression Manifests Itself

**Men and women experience depression differently.**

- Depression manifests itself differently in men and women, children and teens, and in older adults. For example:  
**Female** depression is most often diagnosed by the pattern of feelings a woman is experiencing. Women are able to express their pain more directly, either by displaying it openly, like crying or by verbalizing their emotions or by talking about them.
- **Male** depression is better diagnosed by the behaviors associated with depression. Generally speaking men tend to *act out* their emotions while women *feel* their depression. Men hide their emotional pain through workaholicism, anger, aggression, irritability, or substance abuse

## "But I am a Christian. I can't be . . . I refuse to accept . . ." Examples of Depression in the Bible

- Men and women of the Bible suffered depression, ex. Jonah, Elijah, Jeremiah and Job.
- Well-known church leaders also suffered depression, ex. Martin Luther, Charles Spurgeon, Winston Churchill, Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Being a depressed Christian is a contradiction too awful for many people to admit, but Christians do not have immunity to depression.**

### The Example of Job:

**Job was a "perfect and upright man, and one that feared God and eschewed evil (1:1)."**

#### In Chapter 6, Job feels victimized by God, (vs. 1). He also experienced;

- Vs 6, 8 - Eating disturbance – no appetite, food has lost its flavor; he longs for death.
- Suicidal /or desirous of death - *O that I might have my request . . . that it would please God to crush me.* (Vs. 9).
- Vs 11 - *And what is my end that I might prolong my life . . .*
- Low self esteem - Feels like a failure
- Vs 11 - Loss of energy - Feels a loss of strength
- Feels rejected by his friends in a time of loss of hurt, by their lack of kindness  
Vs 14 – 15 - *To him that is afflicted pity should be shewed from his friend . . . My brethren has dealt deceitfully as a brook . . .*
- Vs 11- Hopelessness - *What is my strength that I should hope?*
- Vs 24 - Seeking to understand his erring and why God has done this to him; and
- Also in vs. 17 – 21, he bluntly questions God, which God says we can do (Isa. 1:18).
- Vs 29 - He states, "*my righteousness still stands.*" (He knows he hasn't done anything wrong, yet he does not understand why all this has happened).

**Job experienced the gamut of disturbance in thoughts, feelings and actions in his "heavy grief" (6:1, 2:3; 11-13) reaction to his losses.**

#### In Chapter 7, He experienced:

- Vs. 2-4 - Sleeping Disturbance - Wearisome nights, lying awake, tossing and turning - *When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? And I am full of tossing to and fro unto the dawning of the day.*
- Vs. 6 - Lack of fruitfulness; hopelessness – *My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope . . . nothing is accomplished.*
- Vs 7 – Negative talk – *My eyes will never see good again.*
- Vs 11 – Speaking of his anguish and bitterness of soul. *Therefore I will not refrain my mouth. I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.* Also bitterness of soul in 10: 1-2.
- Vs. 14 - Nightmares – *Then thou scareth me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions*
- Vs 15 - loathing his life (disgust for life, aversion to, to dislike greatly, filled with disgust, lost all appetite for)
- Vs 15 - deadness of soul– *So that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than life.*
- Vs 16 – social withdrawal . . . *leave me alone . . . for my days are vanity.* . . He tells God to leave him alone twice.

#### In Chapter 9, Job experienced the following:

- Vs 10 – 11 – Couldn't receive from God or experience His presence
  1. *If He goes by, I do not see Him.*
  2. *If He moves past, I do not perceive.*
- Accuses God of filling him with bitterness in vs. 18. He says that God *will not allow me to catch my breath.*

**God said, "Hast thou considered my servant Job . . .?" (1:8; 2:3)**

*Job  
cursed  
the day  
of his  
birth and  
longed  
for death  
during his  
suffering.*

- ❑ Vs 21 Confusion – *I am blameless, yet I do not know myself.*
- ❑ Vs 22 - Self-hatred – *I despise my life.*

#### In Chapter 10, he experienced the following:

- ❑ Vs 15 - *Even if I am righteous, I cannot lift up my head.* Righteous, but disgraceful (shame and disgraced).
- ❑ Vs 18 – 20 – social isolation and withdrawal - Very upset with God. Like a pouting child, he tells God again to *leave me alone.*
- ❑ As you consider Job’s situation, you might think that if God allowed a righteous man as Job to experience the depths of depression and despair as we see in the Scripture, He may also allow you to experience such, but He will walk with you so that you do not journey alone. The experience of Job answers the question:
- ❑ *“Is all depression caused by sin?”* The answer is obviously “No.” Some depression is the result of sin – of the person experiencing it or of someone who sins against an individual, but in this case, the grief or depression experience of Job is not related to anything Job did wrong, nor to someone’s sinning against him. This testing of Job was God’s idea.

### *How is depression treated?*

- ❑ *Talk Therapy – Individual, group and/or family counseling or therapy*
- ❑ *Bibliotherapy – Reading appropriate self-help books or as assigned by your therapist.*
- ❑ *The Word, Prayer, Praise, Fasting*
- ❑ *Medications –*
- ❑ *Last Resort Therapies: Electroshock Therapy (ECT), or newer therapies - Vagus Nerve Stimulation (VNS) or Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) therapies for treatment - resistant depression.*

### *Summary Statements*

- ❑ Depression is a serious, treatable mental health illness that can lead to suicide. Eighty-five of the people who get treatment get better, and are able to go on with their lives. It affects individuals throughout the life cycle – children, adolescents, adults, and seniors.
- ❑ Christians are not immune from depression. Being depressed as a Christian does not mean that you have no faith, that you have fallen from grace; or that you are morally weak. Even if sin is a factor in the depression, then confessing the sin is part of the treatment. God is with us in our suffering and depression is definitely suffering.
- ❑ First step to getting treatment is getting the facts about depression; understanding what it is and that help is needed. The second step is admitting and accepting that the information applies to you or yours. Treatment is available and is effective.
- ❑ There is **HELP!** There is **HOPE!** There is **HEALING!!!!** Contact the local Mental Health Clinic in your area or your pastor. In addition, if in the Hampton Roads, Virginia, you may contact me (below), or Christian Psychotherapy Services, 281 Independence Blvd., Suite 326, Virginia Beach, VA 23462. **757-490-0377**, Or [www.christianpsychotherapy.com](http://www.christianpsychotherapy.com)

*God turned  
Job's  
captivity...  
Likewise  
there is  
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&  
HEALING  
for you  
if you are  
depressed  
or have a  
loved one  
who is.*



Another Mental Health Informational Pamphlet Authored and/or Compiled by

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