

## UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION

By Paul Meier, M.D.

Jesus said he came so we could experience life, and experience it abundantly. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. So God obviously intends for us to be happy, even though our primary goal in life is to serve Him, not to be happy.

And yet, at any moment in time, about 2% of Christians worldwide experience enough depression to interfere with their lives. Non-Christians have about a 20% higher rate of depression than Christians. So applying biblical principals obviously does reduce the depression level.

About 10% of the population of the world inherits either a steady lifelong “dysthymia” (mild to moderate depression), or reoccurring depressions (mood swings), or extreme genetic perfectionism (obsessive-compulsive disorder). If these people applied every single biblical principle and were counseled for ten years by St. Peter or any other Christian counselor, they would still have depression because they inherited it.

“Not fair!” some Christians shout out to me.

“Who told you life would be fair?” I reply.

“God wouldn’t allow that to happen!” they argue.

We’re living in a fallen world where God does allow lots of suffering. I see it every day. I have good friends who inherited diabetes. For thousands of years, those who inherited insulin-dependent diabetes had to face extremely shortened life spans. Now, with modern medicines, they can live. But if they quit their insulin, God may allow them to die within a few days. Everyone Jesus healed in His public ministry died of something else later. In fact, the Bible tells us that the righteous will experience many afflictions in their life.

Then I tell them the good news, 100% of depressions are curable in this modern era. Those who inherit dysthymia, mood swings or OCD can take modern medicines and live a normal life with a normal amount of “chronic joy.”

“I tried an antidepressant and it didn’t work for me,” they may still argue.

I explain to them that each antidepressant works about 75% of the time. Most people get too low of a dose of an outdated antidepressant from their family doctor, so it doesn’t work for them. Or the doctor may have them on a beta blocker for high blood pressure and that sometimes keeps people depressed. Steroids can make people depressed or even psychotic. Some women react that way with hormone replacement. Others have a low thyroid, and will remain depressed all their lives, even with the best antidepressants, until they also get the right amount and kind of thyroid medicine.

Approximately eighty percent of patients who come to Meier Clinics around the USA do not get medicine. They get over their depressions by learning and applying biblical principles, like:

1. Do not hold grudges (Eph. 4:26, 27)
2. Confession to other humans (James 5:16)
3. More fellowship (Hebrews 10:24, etc. etc.)
4. More assertive confrontation of people who take advantage of us (Leviticus 19, Matthew 18, etc.)
5. The Great Commandment (learning to love God, others as well as yourself).

6. Spiritual warfare (the epistles).

7. Grieving past losses or abuses (sexual, physical, verbal, or even religious abuses).

In summary, about 80% of depressions are situational—the result of either your sins (grudges, etc.), or unresolved grief (abuse victims), or stressful life situations. Sometimes antidepressant medications are needed for about a year and then can be discontinued after counseling has brought about recovery. The average depressed person needs about 9-12 months of weekly counseling (45 minutes once a week). A better option might be a Day Program, such as those available through Meier Clinics, where clients attend six hours a day, five days a week, for approximately fifteen days. This intensive counseling care greatly shortens the treatment time, generally requiring brief outpatient follow-up treatment.

Many people with situational depressions go to their family doctor, get on a good antidepressant and feel fine. The treatment they receive is not complete, however, as the spiritual component of the healing process has not been addressed.

But some situational depressions, and nearly all genetic depressions, require the right doses of the right medicines for that unique individual.

For a deeper understanding of depression and recovery from it, I would recommend you read *Blue Genes*, *Mood Swings*, *Happiness is a Choice*, *Happiness is a Choice for Teens*, or *Unbreakable Bonds*. May God bless you on your road to recovery. Please don't give up.

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Paul Meier, M.D., is the founder of the nation-wide Meier Clinics ([www.meierclinics.org](http://www.meierclinics.org)) established in 1976. He is widely acknowledged as a pioneer in the integration of the physical aspects of man with the psychological and spiritual dimensions.

Dr. Meier received his Masters of Science degree in Cardiovascular Physiology from Michigan State University, his Medical Degree (M.D.) from the University of Arkansas College of Medicine, and completed his psychiatric residency at Duke University. Dr. Meier attended graduate courses at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, in 1975-76 while as a full-time faculty member. He also holds a Master of Arts degree from Dallas Theological Seminary, where he served as a full-time faculty member in pastoral counseling for 12 years.

In 1999, Dr. Meier was honored by the American Association of Christian Counselors with a Lifetime Achievement Award at their Worldwide Conference. In 2006, Dr. Meier was named as a Physician of the Year by The National Republican Congressional Committee and honored at a reception by the President of the United States and Congress in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Meier has been a guest on numerous radio and television programs throughout his professional career, including Oprah Winfrey, The Tom Snyder Show, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, Joyce Meyer, Paula White, and Radio Free Europe. He has been honored to teach and speak at many universities and seminaries throughout the world, often lecturing on insight-oriented therapy and other related topics. Dr. Meier has authored or co-authored over 80 books and written numerous articles for magazines and other publications.