

Depression (Lat. *deprimo*, "press down, depress") is a mood marked by sadness and gloom-sometimes appearing for no apparent reason-which produces unusual disinterest in life and sometimes a deep sense of despair. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, one out of four Americans will suffer a major episode of depression. Depression may be an illness, the normal result of a major life crisis, or in some cases, the byproduct of sin.

Left unchecked, depression is life-threatening. Virtually all suicides result from sudden or prolonged bouts of deep depression. Perhaps nothing is heavier than the cumbersome cloud of dark depression that descends upon some people. Depression is no respecter of persons (i.e. it comes upon young, middle-aged, and the elderly). Sometimes even strong, Bible-believing Christians experience dark periods of depression.

Symptoms of Depression:

- Loss of appetite
- Loss of sleep
- Inordinate fatigue
- Overindulgence in food, beverage, or sleep
- Disinterest in life in general
- Hypochondria
- Unkempt appearance
- Occasional loss of sex drive
- Loss of any drive to achieve
- Unexplained crying spells
- Feelings of heaviness and oppression
- Extremely negative self-image
- Anti-social behavior (including withdrawal from others)
- Lack of long-range plans
- Oversensitivity
- Feelings that God doesn't care or has no real power
- Extreme feelings of gloom and/or despair
- Thoughts like "it will never get better" or "who cares"
- Anxiety
- Lethargy
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or hopelessness
- Hyperactivity/talkativeness
- Slow thinking
- Loss of interest in usual activities



1

Vincent van Gogh, who himself suffered from depression and committed suicide, painted this picture in 1890 of a man that can symbolize the desperation and hopelessness felt in depression.

A. In Introduction to Depression

1. The Two Types of Depression

Bipolar – When a person experiences mood swings from manic enthusiasm on one hand to depressive gloom on the other.

Unipolar – When a person experiences no manic highs but only the "lows" of depression.

2. Categories of Depression

Major Depression Disorder (MDD) - Characterized by a severely depressed mood that persists for shorter periods and may be classified as mild, moderate, or severe. It is sometimes refered to as "clinical depression" ("clinical" needs *measurable*). It is many times associated with major life events. It is a "general overall term" for depression.

Dysthymia is a long-term, mild depression that lasts for a minimum of two years. There must be a persistent depressed mood continuously for at least two years.

Bipolar I Disorder is an episodic illness in which moods may cycle between mania and depression. In the United States, Bipolar Disorder was previously called Manic Depression.

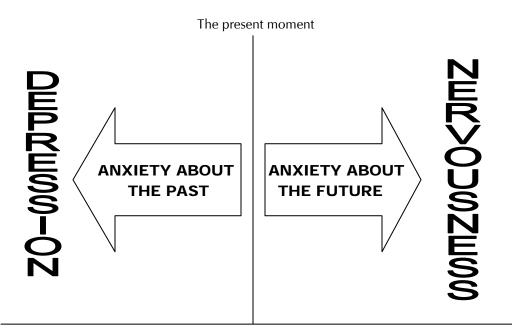
Bipolar II Disorder is an episodic illness that is defined primarily by depression but evidences episodes of hypomania (i.e., "always low").

Postpartum Depression or Post-Natal Depression is clinical depression that occurs within two years of childbirth. Owing to physical, mental and emotional exhaustion combined with sleep-deprivation, motherhood can "set women up", so to speak, for clinical depression.

3. The "jargon" of counseling

Depression is "technically" the present anxiety associated with the past.

Nervousness/Anxiety is "technically" the anxiety associated with the future.



A person's time-line (i.e., life)

B. Causes of Depression

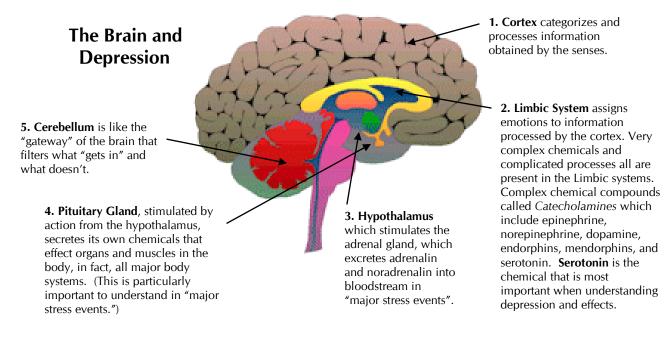
1. Physical Causes (i.e., Medical):

VERY IMPORTANT

IT IS WELL BEYOND THE SCOPE OF THIS DOCUMENT AND ITS AUTHOR TO DISCUSS THE MEDICAL ASPECTS OF DEPRESSION IN ANY DETAIL. IF YOU KNOW IT IS OR SUSPECT DEPRESSION, PLEASE SEE YOUR MEDICAL DOCTOR.

VERY IMPORTANT: Any good plan for battling depression <u>must involve consulting a qualified</u> <u>physician to see if physical causes are at the root of an emotional downturn.</u> Your physician may want to run thorough blood tests, diagnostic tests, and ask personal questions of you before deciding on a recommendation.

[Personal note: "The medical profession is no enemy to faith in God. Doctors, nurses and qualified helpers are many times God's representatives of healing in our lives." - JKT]



Summary Statement Regarding Your Body and Depression

Depression is a mood disorder that causes a disturbance in an individual's emotions and feelings; if someone has depression, or a depressive illness, they experience a pervasive and sustained change in mood which leaves them feeling persistently sad, worthless and helpless. These feelings may be triggered by a life event, such as the death of a loved one, or they can occur for no identifiable reason. Without treatment, symptoms can last for weeks or even years, rendering life meaningless and hopeless for the sufferer. Medication used in treating depression may help but it will take time for the drugs to reach maximum effectiveness. The treatment of depression is best done by a team of helpers (i.e., Doctor, counselor, pastor, friends and personal reading/research) and is seldom immediate. Depression can get better—give it time and effort, please!

2. Unresolved Guilt

Please note the word unresolved. Guilt, in and of itself, is not a bad thing. It's a built-in alarm God has placed within us that goes off when we've sinned. Such guilt is good because it drives us to repentance, and thus to wholeness. But if guilt is unresolved, or covered up, depression is sure to move in and affect the person.

3. The Loss of a Loved One

Normal grief follows the loss of a parent, spouse, child, or close friend. This loss may be either through death, divorce, a major move, etc. The normal grief process may take up to four years in severe cases. Grief is one thing, but lingering grief turns into depression of the spirit. It should be dealt with before this happens.

4. Boredom

Some depression is brought on by what appears to be inescapable boredom. Many people are depressed because the boredom in their lives has not been managed and/or negotiated.

5. Spiritual Attack

Satan brings attacks of depression upon believers and non-believers alike through various means. We make a big mistake when we underestimate Satan's power and his desire to destroy our lives.

6. Self-pity

Many times we have circumstances that we did not ask for but they are still realities in our lives. If you allow yourselves to wallow in self-pity, depression is sure to follow.

7. Disordered Priorities

There is a hierarchy of godly priorities that, if we observe them, will lead us to greater emotional health. If we live by priorities that are not in keeping with God's Word, we set ourselves up for problems.

8. Distorted Perspective of Life

We live in an affluent and increasingly decadent society filled with pressures and temptations. When we begin to look at others and seek to be "better than the Jones" we again set ourselves up for problems.

9. A Major Life Change

From time to time, we undergo changes and experience situational problems that make us feel anxious and depressed. If not dealt with, our anxiety may become clinical. Many times, we are *normal people, reacting normally, to abnormal situations*.

10. Sin: Being out of fellowship (or relationship with God)

Depression is sometimes a natural by-product of sin, and that depression usually remains until our sin has been forgiven by God.

Clinical Depression and Suggested Therapies	
THE FOUR SOURCES OF DEPRESSION (SUMMARY)	Suggested Therapies (Broad)
Chemicals in the brain	Medication / Coping skills / Counseling
Circumstances in life	Grief and/or Stress Management / Processing the Event
Consequences of sin	Personal repentance / Understanding true forgiveness
Combat with Spiritual Forces	Prayer, Pastoral/Church Support, and Spiritual Armor
The Big Questions is, "What is the Source of the Depression?"	

C. What the Bible Says about Depression:

1. Acknowledge the source of your depression.

(Jesus said) "<u>I came that you might have life</u>, and that you might have it <u>abundantly</u>." - John 10:10

"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. <u>Your adversary, the devil</u>, prowls about like a roaring lion, <u>seeking someone to devour</u>." - 1 Peter 5.8

If Jesus came to give us an abundant life and Satan seeks to destroy us, we must realize that *satanic activity is <u>ultimately</u> the source of <u>almost all</u> depression.*

Any good program to fight depression will *include* the spiritual aspects of Bible study, prayer, worship, Christian/pastoral care, encouragement, and accountability.

2. Take time to seek out encouragement from God's Word.

"You can <u>throw the whole weight of your anxieties on Him</u>, for you are His personal concern." - 1 Peter 5:7 (PME)

3. Give your depression over to God.

"Cast your cares on the Lord, and he will sustain you."

- Psalm 55:22a

[Suggested Prayer] "Lord, I hereby relinquish all my depression to you. I know it doesn't belong in my life, and you're not the author of it, so I hand it all over to you and ask that I never receive it back again. I pray that Satan will be bound from my life. I pray this in the Name of Jesus. Amen!"

4. Commit yourself to continually giving thanks to God.

"Rejoice without ceasing; pray without ceasing; in <u>everything give thanks</u>, for this (giving thanks to God) is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

5. We may experience tough situations, but we can avoid deep depression.

"<u>We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed</u>; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."

- 2 Corinthians 4:8, 9

"<u>Trust in the Lord with all your heart</u>, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.

- Proverbs 3:5-6

An Important Word about Feelings (in general):

What do we do with feelings? We cannot control them any more than we can control the "feeling" of someone touching or hitting us—we will feel it physically. If we don't feel it, we are in big trouble. The only thing we can do (if we can't remove ourselves *from* the circumstances or raise our ability to cope *in* the circumstances that caused the feelings) is give our feelings to God.

5

D. A Word about Depression from your pastor.

- It is important to diagnose whether a person's depression is a normal reaction to abnormal situations or serious clinical depression. Please seek pastoral and/or professional help in making a proper determination. (Remember, the word "clinical" means *measurable*.)
- 2. The Minirth and Meier Clinic suggest five warning signs of depression:

___ (1) Moodiness

Moodiness is the category of symptoms that most people associate with depression; a sad facial expression, frequent crying or moping, downcast features, anger, exhaustion and /or discouragement.

____ (2) Painful thinking

Painful thinking often centers around guilt-either authentic quilt (the result of actual mistakes and sins) or false guilt (blaming oneself for actions and consequences of which one is innocent or that could not be helped). If the depressed individual could think realistically and objectively, he/she would realize he is taking on responsibility for acts that are beyond his/her control.

_ (3) Anxiety

Anxiety and depression often occur together. The depressed individual often develops signs of anxious, irritable behavior (i.e. tense, nervous and agitated).

(4) Physical symptoms

These include, but are not limited to, sleep problems, body movements usually decrease, stooped posture, signs of physical exhaustion, appetite and body weight changes, alternating bouts of diarrhea and constipation, drop in sexual interest, tension headaches, dry mouth, rapid and/or irregular heartbeat, changes in menstrual cycles, etc.

(5) Delusional thinking

Though comparatively rare, this occurs in cases of very severe depression. A person afflicted with delusional thinking cannot sort fantasy from reality. It may be paranoid in nature; thinking people are conspiring against them or talking about them, etc. It may also be grandiose in nature; hearing voices, getting a "word from God" that is not in keeping with His Word, etc. Please note: In a case of depression with delusional thinking, swift intervention and treatment (usually in a hospital) is called for and can usually restore a person to normalcy.

- I strongly encourage people with depression to seek both pastoral/spiritual and professional assistance. (NT. Your pastor and/or spiritual mentor, professional Christian counselor, and medical doctor should be involved in the healing process.)
- 4. Don't think it is socially unacceptable to have depression. Today, about 5% of the total population is medically diagnosed with depression, and many times that number (some say as high as 35%, I say more) experience depression but will never get the help they need. In fact, the majority of all people will experience serious depression at one time or another in their lives.
- 5. I like a comprehensive approach to treating depression:
 - Profiling to learn more about yourself
 - A complete physical by a qualified physician
 - Biblical counseling
 - Pastoral care
 - Professional counseling
 - Self improvement training (i.e. goal setting, time management, conflict resolution, etc.)
 - Accountability and support prayer groups
 - Personal reading and research
- 6. A statement about medication: Depression is usually classified according to its source (i.e. external or internal). Endogenous Depression comes from sources that are entirely within the individual, such as a chemical imbalance in the brain or physical disease. Exogenous Depression is caused by a person's reaction to eternal stress factors that are situational. In any case of endogenous and sever cases of exogenous depression, medication can be of great help. There are some great medications available and your Medical Doctor will assist you in this decision.

E. What is your depression potential?

Source: Minirth and Meier New Life Clinic (1.800.638.5433)

The following inventory will help you determine your potential for depression and depression-related problems. Place a check in front of each statement you agree with. Only after you have completed this inventory can you check the Box at the bottom of the page for evaluating your results.

- 1. I feel like crying more often now than I did a year ago.
- _____ 2. I have lost interest in the things I use to enjoy
- _____ 3. I feel blue and sad.
- 4. I feel helpless a good part of the time.
- _____ 5. I feel helpless about the future.
- _____ 6. I feel that I am not useful or needed.
- _____ 7. I am losing my appetite.
- _____ 8. I notice I am losing weight without trying.
- _____ 9. I have trouble staying asleep through the night.
- 10. I am restless and jumpy a lot.
- _____ 11. My mind is not as clear as it used to be.
- _____ 12. I have less energy than usual; I tire easily or for no reason.
- _____ 13. I have lost a lot of my motivation.
- _____ 14. I have been very irritable lately.
- _____ 15. Morning is the worst part of the day.
- _____ 16. I find myself introspecting a lot.
- _____ 17. I don't like the way I am or I don't like who I am.
- _____ 18. I think about the past a lot.
- 19. I have more physical problems (headaches, upset stomach, constipation, rapid heartbeats etc.) than I did a year ago.
- _____ 20. People have noticed that I don't do my job as well as I used to.
 - 21. I have recently been thinking that life is not worth living.
- _____ 22. I think other people would be better off if I were dead.

If you placed check marks in front of at least seven statements OR if you placed check marks in front of statement number 1, 2, or 3, and these symptoms have persisted for at least two weeks, there is a strong possibility that you mark in front of statement 21 or 22, regardless of your results on the other statements, you should seek the help of a professional immediately. These feelings your are experiencing will pass and you can feel better with the proper feelings.

Depression Evaluation Key

F. Suggested Scriptures

Psalm 42, NLT - ¹ As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God. ² I thirst for God, the living God. When can I go and stand before him? ³ Day and night I have only tears for food, while my enemies continually taunt me, saying, "Where is this God of yours?" ⁴ My heart is breaking as I remember how it used to be: I walked among the crowds of worshipers, leading a great procession to the house of God, singing for joy and giving thanks amid the sound of a great celebration! ⁵ Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again— my Savior and ⁶ my God! Now I am deeply discouraged, but I will remember you— even from distant Mount Hermon, the source of the Jordan, from the land of Mount Mizar. ⁷ I hear the tumult of the raging seas as your waves and surging tides sweep over me. ⁸ But each day the Lord pours his unfailing love upon me, and through each night I sing his songs, praying to God who gives me life. ⁹ "O God my rock," I cry, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I wander around in grief, oppressed by my enemies?" ¹⁰ Their taunts break my bones. They scoff, "Where is this God of yours?" ¹¹ Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again— my Savior and my God!

Isaiah 40:26-31, NLT - ²⁶ Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out like an army, one after another, calling each by its name. Because of his great power and incomparable strength, not a single one is missing. ²⁷ O Jacob, how can you say the Lord does not see your troubles? O Israel, how can you say God ignores your rights? ²⁸ Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. ²⁹ He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. ³⁰ Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. ³¹ But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

2 Corinthians 4:8-9, NIV - ⁸ We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18, NIV - ¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Psalm 91:1-2, NIV - ¹ He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. ² I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

Psalm 139:1-12, NIV - ¹O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. ²You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. ³You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. ⁴Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord. ⁵You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. ⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. ⁷Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? ⁸If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. ⁹If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. ¹¹If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," ¹² even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

Romans 8:18, NIV - ¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

Romans 8:28, NIV - ²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:31-39, NIV - ³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as

sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

John 10:11, NIV - 11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

John 10:14-15, NIV - ¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.

John 10:27-29, NIV - ²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

2 Corinthians 12:9, NIV - ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

Revelation 21:3-4, NIV - ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

F. Great Christians Who Suffered from Depression

- You seem to imagine I have no ups and downs but just a level and lofty stretch of spiritual attainment with unbroken joy.... By no means! I am often perfectly wretched and everything appears most murky.—John Henry Jowett, pastor of New York's Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church and later Westminster Chapel in London, to a friend in 1920
- There are dungeons beneath the castles of despair.—Charles Spurgeon, who suffered debilitating bouts of depression all his life
- Lord Jesus, receive my spirit and put an end to this miserable life.—John Knox, persecuted preacher.
- I had my temptations attending me.... Sometimes I should be assaulted with great discouragement therein, fearing that I should not be able to speak the Word at all ... at which times I should have such a strange faintness and strengthlessness seize upon my body that my legs have scarce been able to carry me.—John Bunyan
- Resolute as was Dr. Whyte's character, he had seasons of deep depression regarding the results of his work in the pulpit or among his people.—G. F. Barbour, biographer of Alexander Whyte, Scotland's greatest preacher since John Knox
- God is to me the Great Unknown. I believe in him, but I find him not.—Adoniram Judson, America's first foreign missionary, suffering from a deep depression following the death of his wife, Nancy
- With the last of her savings drawn out of her small bank account **Lottie** [**Moon**, the great Southern Baptist missionary to China] lapsed into a period of deep depression. She quit eating, and her mental and physical health declined. A doctor was sent for, and only then was it discovered that she was starving to death. In hopes of saving her life, her colleagues made arrangements for her to return home in the company of a nurse, but it was too late. She died aboard ship while at port in Kobe, Japan, on Christmas Eve, 1912.—Ruth Tucker, in From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya

Cursed be the day in which I was born!-Jeremiah, prophet of God

It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life.-Elijah, prophet of God

Conflicts without, fears within ... depressed.—Paul the apostle, in 2 Corinthians 7:6 (NASV)

G. A Heartwarming Story

"I Must Tell Jesus"

any New Testament promises have corresponding verses in the Old Testament that reinforce their power. When Peter, for example, said, ". . . casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7), he was but restating David's words in Psalm 55:22: "Cast your burden on the Lord and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved."

Elisha A. Hoffman loved those verses. He was born May 7, 1839, in Orwigsburg, Pennsylvania. His father was a minister, and Elisha was introduced to Christ at a young age. He attended Philadelphia public schools, studied science, and then pursued the classics at Union Seminary of the Evangelical Association. He worked for eleven years with the Association's publishing house in Cleveland, Ohio. Then, following the death of his young wife, he returned to Pennsylvania and devoted thirty-three years to pastoring Benton Harbor Presbyterian Church.

Hoffman's pastime was writing hymns, many of which were inspired by pastoral incidents. One day, for example, while calling on the destitute of Lebanon, Pennsylvania, he met a woman whose depression seemed beyond cure. She opened her heart and poured on him her pent-up sorrows. Wringing her hands, she cried, "What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?" Hoffman knew what she should do, for he had himself learned the deeper lessons of God's comfort. He said to the woman, "You cannot do better than to take all your sorrows to Jesus. You must tell Jesus."

Suddenly the lady's face lighted up. "Yes!" she cried, "That's it! I must tell Jesus." Her words echoed in Hoffman's ears, and he mulled them over as he returned home. He drew out his pen and started writing,

I must tell Jesus! I must tell Jesus! I cannot bear my burdens alone; I must tell Jesus! I must tell Jesus! Jesus can help me, Jesus alone.

Hoffman lived to be ninety, preaching the Gospel, telling Jesus his burdens, and giving the church such hymns as WHAT A WONDERFUL SAVIOR, DOWN AT THE CROSS, ARE YOU WASHED IN THE BLOOD?, LEANING ON THE EVERLASTING ARMS, and a thousand more. Do you have a burden too big to bear? Why not close this book and take a few moments to tell Jesus about it. Take your burden to the Lord, and then leave it there by faith, casing all your concerns on Him, for He cares for you.¹

F. Final Quotes

Americans, on average, may be more depressed, and at a younger age, than they have ever been: unprecedented psychological misery in a nation with unprecedented prosperity and material well-being. - Psychologist Martin Seligman

The devil's one object is so to depress God's people that he can go to the man of the world and say: There are God's people. Do you want to be like that? - D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Depression is filling our hospitals, asylums and graves. Men cannot drink it ways with whiskey not play it away at card tables not laugh it off in a theaters nor sleep it away with sedatives. Our remedies threat only the symptoms and not the disease. Like Elijah the prophet said (cf., 1 Kings 19:1-13), "Our Journey is too great." If you are under the juniper as he was, for whatever reason, press on to Horeb (where God wants you), and get your orders; not in wind, earthquake, or fire, but in the whisper of the still, small <u>Voice</u>." - Vance Havner

¹ More Real Stories for the Soul. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000, S. 4