

An Approved Treatment For Depression: The Power of God

It was winter in Netherlands. Jessie, my friend and I were sitting face to face at the old black stove in my own room. A fire has been burning for hours there. Watching the flames dance from the burning coals, my friend was telling me about some of her experiences -- many years of severe depression. It's difficult to believe her life was darkened by depression for so long -- 10 years.

I grew up in a good family, and attended a Christian school. Ironically, that's the first time I remember saying I was depressed. When I was 15, I felt a deep sense of sadness, hopelessness, and aloneness. Indeed, depression is full of cycles that spiral downwards. It can be hard to put a finger on one thing, because depression feeds on itself. It may start at one place, but then other things get added to the mix, and they keep pushing you downward further and further. The home I grew up in had an influence on me and might have played a part in my depression in those early years. My father was usually distant and absent and then stern and demanding when present. My mother was also demanding, with high standards for me. She had a tendency to be controlling and manipulative. I was sinned against, and that was a part of the start of depression.

In 1990, in early twenties, I wrote something like this, "I really want to die today. I'm overwhelmed by my feelings that I can't figure out. I really don't know to cope. I'm scared. I don't know what to do. I can think of only one way to stop the pain: Suicide. I can't find words to express what I'm feeling. I'm totally desperate right now. I know that the answer lies somewhere in God, which both home and school contributed to. But He seems hopelessly far away. As much as I am doubting and angry with Him, I can't totally walk away from Him. If I did that, I would die. I think everyone is beginning to run out of way to try and help me. I can't stop the pain, and I can't think of anything that will help. I'm afraid I'm going to lose my mind. I'm trying to believe there's an answer somewhere with God, but I can see no light at all. Right now, I feel like I am in a pitch black hole. I know there's light somewhere, but I can't see it. I'm being pulled further and deeper into this hole."

In my rebellion, I made very destructive and sinful choices. As a sheep running off the cliff, I was not only running off to self-destruction, but I was really running into sin as well. I came to argue with God about who He is and His will for my life. I came to say to God, "Okay, God, if it is your will for me to live with depression, then that's okay", even that was almost too arrogant. "Okay God, You are good, because You say good". Shortly, after I pointedly made the decision to bow to God's will for my life regardless of whether or not that meant depression, I became more convinced of God's goodness. I came to believe that what God said is true about Himself, that He is good and that He has a good plan for my life. I believe that He loves me and has forgiven me regardless of what my own feelings and experiences say to me. I was still really depressed. Yet, I had the conviction that I needed to believe that God was good and not bad.

Something else happened at that time that was a turning point. Even though I was very headstrong about my depression that made me sinned against God, I kept praying over and over again, "God, don't let me go!" At that point of my life, I had the strongest sense of God's presence that helped me to grasp and grapple with His goodness. It helped me to come to the point where I could say to people, "There is hope for the hopeless". The hope is not anything special about me or about what I do. It's all God really works in real situations. Indeed, in the last five years, one of the benefits of all that has occurred in my life is that for the first time in my life, I'm pursuing goals like school and a career. I actually believe that in God's grace I have a future. I see the lifting of the depression, the goals in my life, and the things that have been happening on the outside as great. But they aren't the most significant or the most important changes. They are just extra added blessings on top of everything God has done. I have gained the sense of who I am in Christ, and being really and truly at peace with God. No one but God can save me from depression. Salvation comes from Him. He is a gracious God.

Credit – Esther L.