

CROSSING ATTITUDES

Study Guide

Lesson Five – Grief, Depression, and the Blues

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All of us experience sadness at various times of our lives. Ecclesiastes 3:4 reminds us that there is “A time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.” We may feel blue for no particular reason, we may be grieving over a loss, or we may feel a persistent sense of hopelessness. Throughout the Bible, we read about people struggling with grief and sorrow. These times of heartache come about for various reasons. They may be caused by the sin of others, our own sin, or the consequences of living in a fallen world.

Feeling sad is a natural emotion. However, as with anger or any other emotion, there can be a sinful component to it. As we’ve seen in previous studies, we can easily buy into Satan’s lies if we are not choosing to believe truth. Those lies can become fantasies that we begin to chase, leading us down a dark road of frustration and despair. Remember that Satan’s goal is to get us to think about self rather than resting in God’s love and provision. In eleven years of counseling, I’ve never met a person struggling with persistent depression that wasn’t focused on how negative circumstances affect their goals for a “happy life.” Depression causes us to lose sight of God’s eternal perspective as we live for today with fear of tomorrow.

- 1) Sadness is simply an emotion, neither good nor bad. Unfortunately, when a Christian goes through a time of grief, they can wrongly believe they are in sin. Other Christians can accuse them of not having enough faith. Too often Christians get the idea that they should go through life with a happy smile no matter what the circumstances. They think that if they go through a season of tears that there must be something wrong with them either spiritually or physically. They think that walking in the joy of the Lord means never crying. That is wrong theology. Look up the following verses. Take note of which Person of the Trinity is being represented and the cause of His grief or sorrow.

Genesis 6:5-6

Isaiah 63:9-10

Ephesians 4:30-31

Luke 19:41-44

John 11:30-37

Matthew 26:36-38 and Luke 22:39-44 (*Both passages give details of the same event.*)

Note: If a psychiatrist or psychologist of today had walked by and found this Man in such emotional agony that He appeared to sweat great drops of blood, they would have hauled Him off to the nearest psych ward. They would have given Him a mental disorder label, claiming that He had a brain chemical imbalance. The physician would have then prescribed some sort of psychiatric drug.

Jesus did not go to the cross with a mental disorder. He was also not in sin because of His intense show of emotion. He didn't go to the cross with a smile plastered on His face. He went to the cross with a determination to do the Father's will, no matter the personal emotional and physical cost. Fruits of the Holy Spirit include joy and peace. Jesus, being the embodiment of the Holy Spirit, was therefore full of joy and peace, even in the midst of deep grief.

2) What do the following verses say about helping those in grief?

Rom 12:15

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

3) Read Job 2:11-13. How did Job's friends demonstrate care for Job?

4) Job's friends started out as great comforters, but as the book goes on, they gave a lot of bad advice. Read Job 42:7. Why was the Lord angry with Job's friends?

5) Part of the bad advice Job's friends gave him was that the adversity he experienced was judgment for sin in his life. Read John 9:1-3. What is the truth from this passage?

- 6) Because we live in a fallen world, bad things can happen to us even though we are not in sin. On the other hand, there are always negative consequences of sin. Sinful attitudes cause sinful actions that lead to confusion and pain. For an unbeliever, the Bible refers to this as worldly sorrow. As Christians, sin can (and should) cause periods of grieving or sorrow in our lives because we know we have grieved the Holy Spirit. Read 2 Corinthians 7:10. What does each type of sorrow produce?

Note: In his book *Those Ugly Emotions*, Ken Campbell states, “A standard textbook of clinical psychology offers five schools of thought on the subject of depression. It then offers ten competing humanist medical models of depression.” He goes on to say that common symptoms of depression may include: Persistent sadness, emptiness, sense of hopelessness, worthlessness, helplessness, lack of energy, physical weakness, aches and pains, sleeplessness, difficulty in concentrating, restlessness, difficulty in making decisions, unexplained changes in weight, or vague feelings of guilt.

Many of these symptoms mirror grief. However, after several years of counseling depressed people, I find that the average person who struggles with depression has common characteristics that go beyond grief. Depressed people are often self-focused and self-condemning. Feeling good is a high priority that they rarely achieve. Emotions often lead to wrong choices in behavior. They tend to have a negative outlook on life. If they are Christians, they have a hard time praising the Lord and there is a general lack of trust in God. They may even be angry with God.

- 7) Read Psalms 42:1-5. Describe the psalmist’s anguish. What is the answer to his despair?
- 8) Philippians 4:8 says, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things.” (NKJV) For each thing that we are to meditate on, what are the opposite thoughts that we need to take captive (as in 2 Corinthians 10:5)? Use a dictionary if you want to.

Meditate on These Things	Take These Things Captive
True	
Noble	
Just	
Pure	
Lovely	
Good Report	
Virtuous	
Praiseworthy	

Psychology Myth: “It is a fact that depression is caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain. Depression is therefore a mental disorder that must be treated with an anti-depressant drug.” How does what we’ve learned in this lesson (or the teaching) refute this myth?

Proverbs 17:22 – A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones.