DEPRESSION

During the 40 years between 1979 to 2019 I fell into depression eight times. On each occasion I came out just as suddenly as I had fallen in. Some of these episodes lasted a period of five months. I have done a great deal of soul searching as to why I have fallen in this way. I refused to believe that I have a ‘predisposition’ to depression but looked for, and expected to find, a cure. Finally, in 2019, I found a group of people who had the tools to uncover the causes and bring the healing. They are called Elijah House Ministries. I believe I am healed and am not susceptible any longer. However, I do still take medication and am still vigilant to avoid the patterns of thought and behaviour which depleted me in the past.

My understanding of depression comes out of my own experience and not out of any professional qualifications. I believe we are integrated beings – each part of our makeup is interdependent.

Summary:
Three parts or Tools for healing
physiological body medicine
cognitive/emotional soul counselling
spiritual spirit prayer

Some disorders may be genetic, but I have not heard any reliable source to connect depression with genetic makeup. I believe the inputs a person has, especially in developing years, can leave one vulnerable to depression. The demonic world is also at the source, but deliverance alone is not the cure. Instead it was, for me, necessary to uncover the root causes which gave demons access in the first place. These were hidden from me for 40 years despite much counselling. The reason counselling did not get to the root was because it was processing the symptoms at a cognitive level. I went round and round trying to reason it all out and just got nowhere. Release for me was never going to be achieved by arguing out of my thought processes.

My thinking was very confused and warped while I was depressed. I was locked into a negative thought process and no one could argue me out of it though many, may God bless them, tried. There were deeper roots which needed unmasking. The prayer minister from Elijah House was the first person in 40 years who left my watertight (to me) arguments intact, didn’t refute them, but went on a search for their roots and found them. My arguments were a smokescreen masking the roots of my problem. As long as they remained hidden, I continued to have within me the potential for falling into depression again. And that I did, eight times over 40 years.

The discussion I am giving relates to my personal issue and my understanding of it. I don’t pretend to understand anyone else’s depression. However, I have done a lot of processing so there may be something in my discussion of help to someone else. For that reason I offer my perspective.

As I understand it, depression is to the soul as pain is to the body. It is a signal that something is wrong. Just as physical pain signals many different types of physical harm, so depression signals many types of soul harm. By soul I mean mind/emotion/will/personality. I had particular inputs in my formative years setting me up for depression. Each person has their own set of inputs personal to them. I believe it is those inputs, whatever they were, that sets a person up for the possibility of depression later in life. I also believe that whatever those inputs were, they can be disclosed and dealt with.

Each person has their own story unique to them. My story, or narrative if you like, was peculiar to me. I have written about it in a report I wrote after my first session with an Elijah House prayer minister. I titled it ‘Released from Fear’. I also included two more sessions with other Elijah House ministers in that article. The details of my particular narrative are not so important in this discussion, but I will summarise them by way of illustration of the more general issues common to others who battle depression. Again, I am not sharing as a professional, but as a recovered depressant. If my story helps even one other person – great.

Briefly my narrative is this: I was brought up in a Catholic household and was educated by the Nuns at primary school and priests at secondary. I desired to please God and so took seriously the teachings of the Nuns as a young boy. They taught the foundational tenants of the Christian faith about God and the creeds. I believed them then and still do to this day. However, they also taught that breaking the laws of the church was mortal sin which, if unconfessed to the priest, would result in going to hell. There were also many rituals which gained favour with God – the more you did the more favour. It was never clear how much was enough. Nor was it clear how to make sure you got to heaven. No-one could be sure, so we were burdened with having to do more and be better. It was a religion of law and works but no unconditional grace. Wanting to please God, I was a strict observer of Catholic laws and held Catholic clergy as my authority in spiritual matters. My father lived out his lost hopes and dreams through me and doted over my performances. So, the two authority figures in my life, both God and Dad, from my perspective, demanded my performance. For both, it was never enough. Neither of them were close to me. I longed for the unconditional love of both God and Dad but never attained it. So, I performed my best for both.

Added to that my boarding school experiences at secondary were an emotional disaster. I never fitted in with the mocking-bully culture of the boarders of my year and occasionally got mocked myself. It hurt badly. My friends were my day boy classmates.

I got to university lost and looking for answers. Some Christians, who were part of a group called Navigators found me. They introduced me to the possibility of a personal relationship with Christ and an assurance of salvation. They shared with me the gospel. I became involved with them for six years claiming to be Christian but unable to leave the Catholic way of laws and the claims of their hierarchy. I had my foot in both camps. I was doubly religious. Six years into this, at Lincoln Agricultural College, I woke one night with a nightmare that I was going to hell. It was terrifying. For the first time in my life I realised I too was a sinner like everyone else. I plunged into a terrifying depression for five months. Round and round in my head I went over and over all the opportunities God had given me to repent and believe, and to ask Christ into my life like other Catholic boys in the Navigators had done. However, I had stayed staunch, resisted their example, fobbed off the gospel again and again, made my choice and now I was damned forever in hell.

Then, on Christmas Eve of that year, in the middle of the night, a ray of light came into my mind and I decided I would do what I knew I should have done – repent and believe. What would repent mean? Stop trusting material things and religious prescriptions. So, in the middle of the night, while my family were at midnight Mass I loaded up all of my possessions and threw them in the local dump then I came back to the paddock and made a decision to put my trust in the blood of Jesus for my sins. Suddenly, I noticed my guilt and depression had gone. I went inside and reported to my family that I had just become born again and had left the Catholic Church. It was for me a ‘night divine’ as one Christmas Carol puts it; I got saved. God’s unconditional love and mercy applied the blood of Jesus to my guilty soul. ‘My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose went forth and followed Thee’ as the Wesleyan hymn puts it. By grace I was saved.

It was a decisive, even somewhat dramatic conversion experience. It was spontaneous and genuine. However, over the next 40 years I would fall back into depression another seven times. Each time the same narrative would go round and round in my head: ‘I didn’t respond to the gospel. I kept fobbing it off. My conversion was a fraud, I am a fraud. I enjoy the company of Christians but am a phoney’.[[1]](#footnote-1) Round and round I dug a deep hole for myself and imagined my end was near. No one could argue me out of my position. My self-condemning arguments were full-proof to myself but nonsense to everyone else.

I came out of each depression with a fresh revelation of unconditional love and grace of God to lost sinners. On two occasions it was the story of the prodigal son. On another occasion, the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. Another occasion, the simple scripture, “Come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest”.[[2]](#footnote-2) Hearing the word of grace set me free each time.

That, very briefly, is my story, my narrative. You can see it is peculiar to me. But there are patterns in my experience that I believe are common to most sufferers of depression including myself. These include:

1. Negative formative influences
2. Extremely low mood
3. Downward spiral of negative thoughts
4. Suicidal thoughts
5. Beyond help at a cognitive level

Medication took the edge off my low mood which made me perhaps a little less unpleasant to relate to. This was a treatment of the physiological component.

Counselling was a little comforting probably more from the kind warmth of another human being. This too, as I see it, was treatment of a symptom, my crazy arguments, but never helped the root causes.

The words of grace were offered often but it seemed to be a matter of timing before I was able to receive them. When I did my depression left; I got back into life until the next time.

This brings me back to the issue of finding the root source of the depression and bringing healing and permanent freedom. The root of my depression was spiritual in nature. The solution was also spiritual. For this we must go to the Bible.

Scripture tells us, “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.[[3]](#footnote-3)

We are told in scripture, “Your enemy, the devil, roams around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.[[4]](#footnote-4) His agenda is to ‘steal, kill and destroy’ human beings.[[5]](#footnote-5) His identity: “He is a liar and the father of all lies.”[[6]](#footnote-6) And he deceives whole nations.[[7]](#footnote-7) He blinds minds to the light of the gospel.[[8]](#footnote-8)

The only cure is found in Jesus Christ, in His death and resurrection. “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.”[[9]](#footnote-9)
“On that cross Christ freed Himself from the power of spiritual rulers and authorities; He made a public spectacle of them by leading them as captives in His victory procession.”[[10]](#footnote-10)
“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”[[11]](#footnote-11)

In trying to find the root of my depression I had to go beyond mood/emotions and beyond thoughts/cognitive and beneath these to the spiritual roots. These were not uncovered via my warped thoughts. As I understand it, the reason is that the devil and his demons are liars and deceivers. They will throw anyone off-track who tries to ‘understand’ the depressed person’s problems. Furthermore, a depressed person is at a place where they cannot reason their way out of their pit. The only way to ‘see’ behind the smoke screen of their talk is through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus promised that, “the Father will send a helper…..the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive…”[[12]](#footnote-12) This “Spirit of truth…will guide you into all the truth.”[[13]](#footnote-13)

The human mind alone is no match for the deceiver. However, the Holy Spirit alone knows and reveals the truth. An effective prayer minister has confidence and experience to depend on, listen to and hear the voice of the Holy Spirit concerning the root of a person’s problem.

In my case, as in other previous counselling sessions, they let me share my version of my story. But, unlike previous counsellors, they did not try to unravel my logic nor argue with me about my foolish talk. Instead, they prayed and asked the Holy Spirit to reveal my root problem. They let me talk and asked questions about my upbringing. From experience they expected to find something in my formative years that was the root of my depression Just as the fruit on a tree reveals the type of tree, so too the fruit I was displaying would give an indication of the root.

Filtering through all my crazy, self-condemning talk, the first prayer minister discerned the fruit of fear. With dependence on the Holy Spirit he went in search of its source. Within a very short time he asked the critical question and gave time and patience for me to open up and talk about it. He asked me, “What was it like as a little boy growing up in the Catholic Church?” Out it all came in two hours of tears. The spiritual root that had entered me as I received teaching from the nuns about mortal sins and hell but without grace and without unconditional love of God, was the spirit of fear. This was the root.

In my second session with another Elijah House minister, two and a half months later, I shared that I had struggled with low self-worth. This was a fruit. Again, the prayer minister did not attempt to address this symptom but went in search of its root. He did not offer a lecture about being made in the image of God, fearfully and wonderfully made, with a purpose and destiny. I had heard plenty of such advice, but it was all like a crutch to a cripple; his legs are still broken. Rather he asked for help from the Holy Spirit and looked for its source. The venue of that session happened to be in walking distance to my old secondary school. He asked me about my experience there as a boarder. He listened, looking past the story for the roots. It was shame. When being mocked by peers the spirit of shame had entered me and played out over many years.

In a third session one month later, I was still suspecting there may be more roots responsible for falling into depression. The minister, a woman this time, simply got me talking about my boyhood. Asking the Holy Spirit for a key, she focussed in on my drive to please both God and my father by performance. My whole orientation to life was about doing and pleasing authority figures. I took this into adult life, and it depleted me continually. When I became so drained out in my spirit, I became vulnerable to tipping into depression.

So these three prayer ministers uncovered roots; fear, shame and performance orientation. Uncovering the roots is only half the process. Setting free from these roots is the other half. At this point some would conduct deliverance and bring relief. However, the trauma or ‘legal ground’ which gave entrance to the demon(s), needs to be healed first. If it is not healed the problem can reoccur. It had done so many times in my case.

This level of healing has only one solution – applying the redemptive work of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Elijah House ministers do this very thoroughly. It is not a formula solution but requires training and mentoring and experience with accountability. If the job is only partially done it can leave a wounded person vulnerable, opened up but not put back together again. I haven’t had this training so can only relate elements of my experience.

They include but are not limited to:
1. Forgiving everyone who has caused your pain;
2. Renouncing all vows you have made to protect yourself apart from God;
3. Renouncing false refuges and put your trust in God;
4. Applying the blood of Jesus to wounds;
5. Visualising Jesus at the scene of trauma events;
6. Applying scripture to bring healing and freedom.

All this is done in prayer.

These six points are just brief recollections of my own experience of the healing and freedom these sessions brought. There is more detail of my ministry sessions in the article ‘Released from Fear’.

The process is an application of Jesus’ own description of His mission before He started His public life:
“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor:
He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed.”[[14]](#footnote-14)

In order to address the spiritual root of depression it is necessary to be born again. Depression is pain of the soul. It is very often the condition that God uses to get a person’s attention. It was certainly that for me. It was a very terrible mental turmoil but in it I realised that I too have a sin problem and my own efforts and religious performances had done nothing to solve that problem. That first depression was God’s mercy and kindness leading me to repent.[[15]](#footnote-15) As a preparation for repentance the Holy Spirit was giving me a conviction of sin.[[16]](#footnote-16) If you sense that is your situation don’t delay. Repent and believe Christ.

Repent: Confess your sin and stop trusting whatever it is you have been trusting
Believe: Know that Jesus died for your sin. He loves you. Ask Him to forgive you and invite
 Him into your life to be your Saviour.

When I did that from my heart my depression disappeared. I had found my Saviour. I was born again.

You may be asking: Once I am born again should I not be free from depression forever? Not if my experience is anything to go by.

If an orphaned child is legally adopted by loving parents, it is secure in that family and an heir just like a natural born child. However, there will still be a lengthy process of healing of wounds and trauma related to the loss of its natural parents and other pre-adoption inputs. It is the same with the born-again Christian.

Finally, to fellow depression sufferers may I offer this advice:
1. If your doctor prescribes medicine, take it.
2. If your counsellor or those who know you and care about you have good advice, take it. We need others.
3. If you want to get to the root of your problem of depression take it to Jesus. He loves you and He died in your place for your healing and freedom.
He said:
“Come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.”[[17]](#footnote-17)
God bless you.

Paul Duncan
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DEPRESSION – QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Have you, or anyone you know, experienced depression?
2. How have you, or they, tried to get relief?
3. How does depression differ from low mood?
4. Why might counselling not be sufficient to recover from depression?
5. What are some formative influences or trauma which may have contributed to your or their depression?
6. What do you think of the statement: “I refused to believe I had a predisposition to depression but I looked for and expected to find a cure.”?
7. What do you think of the description of human beings as made of three levels: body, soul and spirit?
8. Which levels are affected when depression strikes?
9. What do you believe may be at the root of your or your friend’s depression?
10. How is the death and resurrection of Jesus relevant to heal your depression at its root?
1. Eph 2:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Matt 11:28 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Eph 6:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 1 Peter 5:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. John 10:10 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. John 8:44 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Rev 20:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 2 Cor 4:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 1 John 3:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Col 2:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. 2 Cor 10:4,5 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. John 14:17,17 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. John 16:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Luke 4:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Rom 2:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. John 16:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Matt 11:28 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)