**Finding Joy in the Fog of Depression**

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| **Slide #** | **Text** |
| Slide # 1 | Adventist health week, front page. |
| Slide # 2 | **Disclaimer:** The health information contained in this devotional is for general population use only, and must not be used to replace professional advice, guidance, or treatment. Where there is real concern and need for professional help or review, we strongly recommend contacting your primary care provider, general practitioner, or local mental health team. |
| Slide # 3 | **Finding Joy in the Fog of Depression**  **Pastor Bob Larsen**  **President, North New Zealand Conference** |
| Slide # 4 | *“I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.” Psalm 40:1-3* |
| Slide # 5 | Recently a good friend asked me how my health was. I replied, “Great!” Then he asked, “How’s your mental health?” That is a much harder question to answer.  How would you answer it? What criteria should we use? |
| Slide # 6 | Can we experience joy when we are living with depression? |
| Slide # 7 | King David experienced a full range of emotions - ranging from joy to depression and was able to acknowledge and express them honestly in the Psalms. Many scholars believe that he lived with bouts of depression as evidenced in many of the psalms he wrote. For example, in Psalm 13:2-3 he prays, *“How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? … Look on me and answer, O LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death”.* This is a remarkably candid admission and a good description of the interior dialogue which so often dominates our thoughts. |
| Slide # 8 | Despite the fact that David loved and pursued God, he still experienced times when depression rolled over him like a fog. Though David defeated the giant Goliath with a single stone, the giant of depression is not that easily defeated. |
| Slide # 9 | What is depression and is there hope when you are in that valley, or the fog seems so thick that it is hard to see one’s way forward?  The World Health Organization describes depression as; *“A common mental illness characterized by persistent sadness and a loss of interest in activities that people normally enjoy, accompanied by an inability to carry out daily activities, for 14 days or longer.”1*. |
| Slide # 10 | Depression may be associated with a number of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual conditions, and may be associated with changes in the hormones or chemicals found in the brain. |
| Slide # 11 | If we were to compare depression with a common disease such as a cold or even COVID, we will notice there are similarities and major differences.   * Both are found in all sectors of society * Both are debilitating * There is no quarantine period for depression * Depression does not disappear in a few days * Depression can linger * Covid has no stigma, but there is often a stigma attached to depression.   This, in itself, can aggravate the situation. |
| Slide # 12 | The Fog of Depression  I remember going through the fog of depression when the problems I faced as a pastor mounted up and seemed to be overwhelming. I felt that I was the target of personal attacks. The issues coloured every part of my life and I wondered if there was any way out. These thoughts only made the fog thicker, and the depression deeper |
| Slide # 13 | I love how Dr Henry Cloud describes this downward spiral of depression with three “P’s”; problems seem **Personal, Pervasive** and **Permanent**.2. I found these words really helpful in my own journey.  This analysis is just one tool that may help us by addressing how negative thinking may drag us down. |
| Slide # 14 | When I take it **personally**, it’s easy to see the problem as “me”. Instinctively I might start thinking "By default, it must be my fault". Instead of saying, “I'm bad”, I need to tell myself, “That's bad”.  Dr Cloud recommends that we separate those two thoughts; so instead of taking things personally, we should take them seriously but not see the problem as an attack on our identity. |
| Slide # 15 | When I take things personally, it’s easy to go to the next step and see the problem as **pervasive** - that is, everywhere. When I struggle in this area, I’m tempted to let negative thoughts fill my whole life. This problem is everywhere and by inference, I must be terrible at everything! This simply is not true. |
| Slide # 16 | If I see my problems as personal and pervasive, then it’s easy to believe it is **permanent** - there is no way out. If my failure in this area is permanent then there is no hope for change. This thinking can lead to and keep you in a state of depression. |
| Slide # 17 | What can you do?   * Remind yourself that you can **take things seriously without taking them personally**. * Remember, **your problems are not pervasive**  - identify areas of your life which are not problematic. * Don’t see your problems as permanent. **Change is possible.** |
| Slide # 18 | While there will always be things we cannot control, as we look at these three ‘P’s’ we realise there are ways out of the fog. One thing we can control is our choice to **pray a prayer of acknowledgment.**  In the Psalms, that is the first thing David does. In prayer, he acknowledges his situation and seeks help. Psalm 31:9-10 *“Be merciful to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief. My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak.”* |
| Slide # 19 | Secondly David **waits patiently** for the Lord. Psalm 40:1-3. *“I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry”.* When we are down in the valley of depression and the fog has set in, it is hard to be patient. |
| Slide # 20 | David had been there. Psalm 23:4 says: *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; …*” That takes patience. |
| Slide # 21 | When we go through that valley it’s as if the joy of life has been smothered by fog. Kay Warren offers a great perspective in her book **Choose Joy: Because Happiness Is Not Enough**. She says:  *"I used to think that life came in waves: There was a wave of good and pleasant circumstances followed by a wave of bad and unpleasant circumstances, with a lot of ebb and flow in between. Or life was a series of hills and valleys; sometimes we’re up, then we’re down. But I’ve come to realize that life is much more like a set of parallel train tracks, with joy and sorrow running inseparably throughout our days.* |
| Slide # 22 | *Every day of your life good things happen. Beauty, pleasure, fulfilment, and perhaps even excitement occur. That’s the track of joy. But every day of your life also holds disappointment, challenges, struggles and perhaps even losses for you or those you love. That’s the track of sorrow.3* |
| Slide # 23 | The process of changing our negative thoughts to positive thoughts can be greatly enhanced when we find ways to practice gratitude. Praising God is an uplifting way to show we are thankful for what he has done in our lives. |
| Slide # 24 | David understood those two tracks, and in the midst of troubles, he **praises** God. “*But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, for he has been good to me.”* Psalm 13:5-6 |
| Slide # 25 | Understanding that there are parallel tracks of sorrow and joy has been a great help to me. Finding opportunities every day to praise God, helps me roll back the fog and give peace. |
| Slide # 26 | **To Review,** there is hope, even when the fog of depression surrounds you. Remember, there are 3 P’s that can take us down the wrong path, but David offers three other P’s that can roll back the fog of depression and give joy. They are **Prayer, Patience** and **Praise**. |
| Slide # 27 | May the words of Psalm 40:2 be your experience. *“I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God." (psalm 40:1-3)* |
| Slide # 28 | God Understands when you’re feeling down  But wants to lift you up! |
| Slide # 29 | **References**  https://www.who.int/news/item/30-03-2017--depression-let-s-talk-says-who-as-depression-tops-list-of-causes-of-ill-health  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tEeHCaJ9roU  Choose Joy: Because Happiness Is Not Enough. Kay Warren. Revell Publishing, 2012. Kindle edition. Page 19  All scripture references from NIV. |
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| Slide 31 | **Suggested Follow-up Discussion**  Form groups of between 3 to 5   * Allocate each group one of the Positive “P’s” (Prayer, Patience, Praise) * Allow 10 to 15 minutes for each group to unpack exactly what that means in practice (eg. How to pray? What to pray for? When to pray? etc.) * Members may voluntarily wish to share testimonies within the group - if a system of confidentiality/trust is present. * allow 5-10 minutes for follow-up open/guided discussion with combined groups   Words for Slide for Slide #31  In groups of 3-5 discuss one of the following by asking the following questions: what? why? who? when? where? how? etc   * Explore the practice of prayer. * Explore the meaning of patience! * Explore the concept of Praise! |