

Seminar

Identity in Darkness



Jane Casey

What this seminar is not:

- A thorough discussion of what depression is, and what the contributing factors might be.
- Debate as to who can and should offer help.
- Arguments for and against the use of medication.
- A rigorous examination of **how** we can listen well, enter into the struggle, and understand what's going on underneath.

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What we are going to do:

- Think about how we can offer the Word of God to someone at a very low point, in a way that connects, and brings hope.
- Use a familiar passage that we might not usually choose to use.

How can we offer Scripture?

- Discuss, in groups of 2 or 3, ***When is the right time to bring Scripture into a conversation with someone who is depressed, or feeling extremely low? How much do we need to know first?***

How can we offer Scripture?

- God's word is where the power to change comes from.
- He knows all the details of someone's struggle, even if we don't yet.
- We need to bring hope that change is even possible.
- But we need to bring it in a way that connects with where they're at.

Painting a picture

- Using the Psalm to help someone see that their experience is seen and known by the Lord.
- Building an image where they can say "That's me! That's what it feels like".

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Psalm 23 (ESV)

¹ The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

³ He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

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Psalm 23 (ESV)

⁵ You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
for ever.

Psalm 23

- Discuss in your groups: ***Would you use Psalm 23 with someone who is deeply struggling? Why, or why not?***

Psalm 23



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Or Psalm 23?



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Why Psalm 23?

- A very familiar Psalm.
- Easily accessible in troubled moments.
- Vivid imagery.
- A Psalm that sets out a wonderful destination, while being real about life in a fallen world.

3 Biblical categories that are elements of depression:

- A deep sorrow - the soul is aching.
- A sense of despair - the absence of hope.
- Meaninglessness - an emotional experience of 'What's the point?'

Addressing Hopelessness

..Hope returns when we choose to believe what we know to be true about God..

Do you agree with that sentence?

Addressing hopelessness

- Psalm 23 is not just conceptual, but personal.

What is Biblical Hope?

Biblical hope is not wishful thinking. Hope is the present assurance of some future good based on the true nature and character of God. Remember, our hope is in God, not in humanity and the circumstances of life. His word is true. His promises can be counted on and claimed with confidence. He cannot break His New Covenant that assures us of His presence within us and the forgiveness of our sins.

'Overcoming depression' Neil and Joanne Anderson

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Using Psalm 23

- How does the Psalmist find hope?
- What does he do while feeling lost in a dark place?
- Does this mean he doesn't struggle any more? Does the struggle mean that there's something wrong with his faith?
- Depression and hope can exist side-by-side

Connecting to our union with Christ

- How has God's big picture story developed since this Psalm was written?
- What difference does that make?

Union with Christ means I'm known in my depression

- *Sam's story*
- The shepherd has given us language because He knows what it is like. Nobody knows darkness like Jesus

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Union with Christ means I am not alone in my depression

- *Melissa's story*
- I couldn't be more connected to Jesus. He couldn't be any closer as He enters into my experience and walks me through it.
- My destination, the green pastures, is certain.

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Discussion:

How could you help Sam or Melissa formulate this into a prayer of repentance and hope? What would you be wanting them to say to the Lord about what He has been saying to them?

Is this true for everyone?

- What if the person we're talking with isn't sure they're 'In Christ'?
- Who can we offer this assurance to and how?
- What will be our expectations of the process of growing through, or out of, depression?

Any Questions?



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