

7 Bible Figures Who Struggled with Depression

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We rub shoulders every day with people who are desperate, hurting, and lonely. We may not even be aware of the dark road they travel. Sometimes we notice, but often we don't. Maybe we're too busy, preoccupied, or overwhelmed ourselves. To be honest, many days, we might be those people, the desperate, the hurting, the lonely.

Just needing someone to notice. To slow down. To take time. To care.

Though the Bible doesn't use the word "depression" except in a few translations and verses, it's often referenced by other similar words, such as "downcast," "brokenhearted," "troubled," "miserable," "despairing," and "mourning," among others. Throughout the Word, there are a number of stories about godly, influential men and women of old, who struggled and battled through dark times of hopelessness and depression. Many of us may find ourselves struggling there today.

But we don't have to stay stuck there. There's hope. Here are **seven stories about depression from the Bible to remind us that we're not alone in our battles:**

1. David was troubled and battled deep despair.

In many of the Psalms, he writes of his anguish, loneliness, fear of the enemy, his heart-cry over sin, and the guilt he struggled with because of it. We also see his huge grief in the loss of his sons in the battle of El Gaba and in the death of his infant son. In other places, David's honesty with his own weaknesses gives hope to us who struggle today:

"My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear."

"Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God."

2. Elijah was discouraged, weary, and afraid.

After great spiritual victories over the prophets of Baal, this mighty man of God feared and ran for his life, far away from the threats of Jezebel. And there in the desert, he sat down and prayed, defeated and worn:

"I have had enough Lord, he said. Take my life, I am not better than my ancestors."

3. Jonah was angry and wanted to run away.

After God called Jonah to go to Nineveh to preach to the people, he fled as far away as could. And after a storm at sea, being swallowed by a giant fish, and then being saved and given a second chance, he obeyed. He preached God's message to the people of Nineveh. God's mercy reached out to all people who turned to Him. But instead of rejoicing, Jonah got mad:

"Now O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."

And even after God reached out to Jonah again with great compassion, he responded, *"...I am angry enough to die."*

4. Job suffered through great loss, devastation, and physical illness.

This righteous man of God lost literally everything. So great was his suffering and tragedy that even his own wife said, *"Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!"*

Though Job maintained his faithfulness to God throughout his life, he still struggled deeply through the trenches of pain:

"Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb?"

"I have no peace, no quietness, I have no rest, but only turmoil."

"I loathe my very life, therefore I will give free rein to my complaint and speak out in the bitterness of my soul."

"Terrors overwhelm me...my life ebbs away, days of suffering grip me. Night pierces my bones, my gnawing pains never rest."

5. Moses was grieved over the sin of his people.

In his feelings of anger and betrayal from his own people, Moses, as a leader, was about ready to quit. He came down from his mountaintop experience with God, commandments in hand, only to find the Israelites in complete chaos and sin. His heart-cry to God on their behalf was desperate:

"But now, please forgive their sin – but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written."

6. Jeremiah wrestled with great loneliness, feelings of defeat, and insecurity.

Also known as the weeping prophet, Jeremiah suffered from constant rejection by the people he loved and reached out to. God had called him to preach, yet forbidden him to marry and have children. He lived alone, he ministered alone, he was poor, ridiculed, and rejected by his people. In the midst of it, he displayed great spiritual faith and strength, and yet we also see his honesty as he wrestled with despair and a great sense of failure:

"Cursed be the day I was born...why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?" Jeremiah 20:14,

7. Even Jesus Himself was deeply anguished over what lay before Him.

He knew what was to come. He knew that God had called him to a journey of great suffering, he knew what must happen in order for us to live truly free. Our Savior and Lord was willing to pay the price on our behalf, but it wasn't an easy road. Isaiah prophesied that Christ would be *"a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."*

We can be assured, that in whatever we face, Jesus understands our weakness and suffering, our greatest times of temptation and despair, because he too traveled that road, yet without sin.

In the garden, through the night, Jesus prayed, all alone, calling out to His Father, asking Him for another way:

"And He said to them, 'My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch.' And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. And He was saying, 'Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.'"

The Bible says that so great was his anguish, that he sweat *"drops of blood."*

What's true about all of these stories and many others is this: God was with them. Close. Near.

"The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

He was there in the good days and in the dark days too. He didn't condemn them for their questions and pain. He didn't tell them to just tough it out. He reached down to their deepest pit of suffering, and lifted them out.

He cared.

He showed compassion. He offered mercy. He brought hope. He instilled purpose. He gave victory.

And He still works in the same way today.

Our world desperately need joy-givers, hope-bringers, those in our lives who will help us remember

what real grace is and where lasting help is found.

The greatest truth is this, we have a Savior who understands our pain, who knows about every weakness and hurt, and reaches out with compassion and hope.

He is Healer. Redeemer. Restorer. And friend.

He will never waste the seasons of suffering we face, but will use it, in some way, to bring good, to instill purpose, to help others, and to make us stronger.

Depression is a common, yet very treatable condition that affects many people in our world. Yet statistics tell us that only about one-third of those who are depressed actually receive treatment. This is unfortunate since 80-90% of those who do seek treatment often report feeling better within just a few weeks. It's also known that depression is the linked cause for over two-thirds of suicides reported each year.

Help is available. Don't feel the need to try to hide your pain, or struggle through on your own. Talk to a friend or counselor. Seek out professional treatment and care.

If you find yourself in dark places today, know that you're not alone. Not ever. God knows your way, is with you always, and has good still in store.

Note - If you or a loved one is struggling with suicidal thoughts and tendencies, please get help. Don't try to face this on your own. There is hope and healing, and there are many who will journey through this trial with you. Call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at (8255) at any time day or night 24/7, to talk to someone who understands. Or go online at for more information and help.

Debbie McDaniel is a writer, pastor's wife, mom to three amazing kids (and a lot of pets). Join her each morning on Fresh Day Ahead's facebook page, , for daily encouragement in living strong, free, hope-filled lives. Find her also at and .

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