

## **“DEALING WITH DEPRESSION”**

### **I. Introduction**

#### **A. Let Me Tell You a Story About**

##### **DEXTER FOWLER**

1. Dexter Fowler is an outspoken Christian man who plays right field for my favorite baseball team, the St. Louis Cardinals. I was so excited when we signed him 2 years ago as a free agent after he helped the Chicago Cubs win their first World Series in over 100 years.

**(Here’s a picture of him with wife and daughter celebrating Cubs’ big win)**

2. He signed an \$80 million contract and his first year was OK. But something went wrong this year. This former all-star had career lows in batting average, on base percentage and a career high % for striking out. He was rated the worst right fielder in the Major Leagues in 2018. He lost his mojo and his big smile and he had lost his hustle on the field.

**“As his wife, I could see whatever it was, it was eating him up. He couldn’t shake it.”**

**Aliya Fowler**

3. To top it off, his season ended earlier when he broke his foot! No one could figure out what went wrong until he himself confessed the problem last week:

**“I was depressed. That’s what it was. I got mad that I let it get to me. I shouldn’t have let it weigh me down as much as it did. It was depression. I was depressed.”**

**Dexter Fowler**

4. We might well wonder how a Christian man with a beautiful wife and family, a World Series ring and a \$17 million dollar a year salary can be depressed???

5. Here's an insight from Christian May-Suzuki, writing for the blog "Redbird Rants":

**"In my personal experience, some of the worst days come when they shouldn't. When you have everything you could want, when you know you *should* be happy, that's when being depressed can be at its worst. It's that knowledge that you have the things you need to feel happy that makes it so much worse when you can't."**

**Christian May-Suzuki**

6. This story reminds me of another man who had everything and found it all futile. King Solomon was the wisest, richest man in the world; He wrote the Book of Proverbs and the Song of Solomon; he truly was "the man who had everything"; but he opens the Book of Ecclesiastes with this...

**Vanity, vanity, all is vanity.  
Ecclesiastes 1:2**

**NIV**

**"Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless!"**

7. We live in the richest, most prosperous nation on earth. But the sociologists tell us that Americans are now dealing with depression at epic levels.

a. Drug use is way up; the suicide rate is climbing, even among young people and the rich and famous.

b. It's now been 5 years since the world was shocked to learn of the suicide of famous funnyman Robin Williams at age 63. He made us laugh; but we did not know of his lifelong struggle with drugs, alcohol, and depression.

**"All it takes is a beautiful fake smile to hide an injured soul and they will never know how broken you really are."**

**Robin Williams**

c. I once heard about a French actor who became a national celebrity as a clown known for making people laugh. His stage name was Deveraux but no one knew his real identity or that in private he suffered from depression and was tormented with thoughts of suicide. One day two of his friends, seeing how low he

was, tried to cheer him up by offering to take him to a stage show to see the great clown Deveraux. To which he replied...

**“Going to see Deveraux can’t help me; because I *am* Deveraux!”**

8. Depression can attack the down and outers as well as the rich and famous; it knows no boundaries and takes no prisoners. And...

## **B. God’s People Are Not Immune to Depression**

### **1. Moses-The Great Deliverer**

**I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden *is* too heavy for me. If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now — if I have found favor in Your sight — and do not let me see my wretchedness!”**  
**Numbers 11:14-15**

a. Here is the man who just brought the nation of Israel out of 400 years of Egyptian bondage and now asks God to kill him!

b. Depression can attack you even after something great has happened.

### **2. Elijah-the Great Prophet**

a. The book of 1 Kings tells the story of how Elijah had a life-or-death showdown with the 450 false prophets of Jezebel; he had called down fire from heaven and destroyed them all. But a few verses later we find him lying down under a juniper tree, saying...

**“I’ve had enough, Lord, take my life!”**  
**1 Kings 19:4**

a. Notice that depression can attack you even after you have just won your greatest victory!

### **3. Martin Luther-The Great Reformer**

a. Here is a man who turned the world upside down for Christ; Luther was the Father of the Protestant Reformation. Yet he had a lifelong battle with depression and nightmares.

#### 4. William Cowper-The Great Hymnist

**William Cowper, (1731-1800), the English poet, attempted suicide several times and spent time in a mental institution before he wrote the words to one of history's greatest hymns.**

**“There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins,  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,  
Lose all their guilty stains.”**

5. Depression and suicide still stalk God's people today...

a. One of the most successful and well known Pastors in America is Rick Warren of Saddleback Church; but his son Matthew battled depression and drug abuse for many years; then, at age 27, Matthew shot and killed himself. On his first Sunday back after the funeral, his father took the stage at the 20,000 member church with a dozen guest pastors on the front row...and delivered a classic message you can still hear online. In part, he addressed how the church tends to avoid the common problem of depression:

**“If a Christian has a problem with their heart, their lungs or with their kidneys, there's no stigma. But what if they have a problem with their mind?”**  
**Rick Warren**

b. He is saying that the Church is very understanding of those with physical illness; but takes a different view of those who struggle with mental illness.

6. Two years ago I had to address this problem when asked to preach for a Pastor friend whose wife had just shot and killed herself. This Pastor has been a spiritual son to me for over 35 years and I had prayed with them over her battle with clinical depression. Never underestimate how serious depression can be!

7. We all have moments we call “blues”, or the “blahs”; or have a “bad day”; but real depression is worse than that; so how do you deal with it?

#### **3 Steps to Defeating Depression**

**#1 You must know who you are dealing with**

**#2 You must make the decision to defeat him**

### #3 You must take up your weapons and fight

## II. 3 Steps to Defeating Depression

### A. Know Who You are Dealing With

1. The first step in dealing with depression is not to know WHAT you are dealing with but to know WHO you are dealing with!

2. Depression is not a “thing”; it is a “spirit”; a “spirit” in the Bible always speaks of a person; an evil spirit is literally a “person without a body”.

a. The Living Bible paraphrase of Ephesians 6:12 says it well:

**For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against persons without bodies..**

**Ephesians 6:12 The Living Bible**

b. Spirits are real even though we cannot see them because they do not have physical bodies; but we can know they are present by the kind of result their presence produces:

- An “unclean” spirit is at work with a person engaged in pornography
- A “lying” or “deceitful” spirit is at work in those who have trouble telling the truth

3. When it comes to depression, we are dealing with what the Prophet Isaiah calls “the *spirit* of heaviness” or mourning. This is from the Messianic prophecy in Isaiah 61; a passage Jesus quoted in Luke 4 as referring to Himself!

**Isaiah 61:1-3 NASB**

**"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me,  
Because the Lord has anointed Me  
To preach good tidings to the poor;  
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to the captives,  
And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;  
2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord ,**

**And the day of vengeance of our God;  
To comfort all who mourn,  
3 To console those who mourn in Zion...**

**Now notice v.3!**

**To give them beauty for ashes,  
The oil of joy for mourning,  
The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;  
That they may be called trees of righteousness,  
The planting of the Lord , that He may be glorified."**

4. I was helped to understand that depression is a spirit early on in my walk with the Lord thanks to the teaching and testimony of the great Bible teacher Derek Prince:

**"For many years as a preacher, I struggled with depression. I tried everything to be free. Then this revelation came from Isaiah 61:3. God gives His people the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. I realized my problem was a person; invisible but real; a person without a body. I was 80% of my way to victory."**

**Derek Prince**

5. I can testify by personal experience this has been true in my own life: anytime I begin to feel the "symptoms" of depression or heaviness I know the "spirit of heaviness" has walked into the room; or climbed into the bed; or hitched a ride in my car.

6. I don't waste my time wondering why I feel like I do or trying to figure out what's wrong with me!

**I know WHO I am dealing with!  
And that's step #1. It's 80% of the victory!**

## **B. Step Two: Make the Decision to Defeat Him**

1. It is not enough just to know that depression is a spirit, a person without a body; deliverance is a decision that you have to make; it is a decision that only you can make.

a. Pastor Rick Renner's wife has said this...

**“Heaviness can be like a cloak that someone wraps around you; but it’s your choice to wear it.”**

**Denise Renner**

2. Imagine it this way: Someone comes into your house uninvited; they light up a cigarette and the fumes fill the room and come upon you. *Are you just going to sit there and wonder what’s wrong with you?* Of course not! You’re going to make the obvious decision to kick the person out of your house! You’re going to do something!

3. The same principle applies to the spiritual realm: You are sitting comfortably at home and suddenly sense that a spirit of heaviness has fallen upon you. But you heard some good Bible teaching that this spirit of heaviness is not a “thing” on the inside of you, it’s a “person” who has come around you. So now you have to make a decision as to whether or not you’re going to let him stick around!

a. Here are 2 decisions in 1 verse...

**Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.**

**James 4:7**

(I’ve seen some get these backwards: they resist God and submit to the devil!)

b. The Greek word for resist means to “oppose” or to “stand against”; you have to make a decision to deal with the spirit that is dumping his depression on you!

4. If you wouldn’t let a person with a body stink up your physical house and cover you up with cigarette smoke, why would you let a person without a body stink up your spiritual life and cover you with a spirit of heaviness?

5. No! From not on you won’t. You will move to step #3....

### **C. Step #3: Take Up Your Spiritual Weapons and Fight**

1. When some Christians feel depressed they overeat; some stay in bed; some go to a movie or take a pill.

2. They do not realize that we will need spiritual weapons to deal with a spiritual enemy.

**For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (of the flesh), but mighty through God....**

**2 Corinthians 10:3-4**

3. God has given us a number of weapons for spiritual warfare:

### **Our Spiritual Weapons**

- **The armor of God (Ephesians 6)**
- **The Word of God (Hebrews 4:12)**
- **The name of Jesus (Luke 10:17)**
- **The blood of the Lamb (Revelation 12:11)**
- **The word of our testimony (Revelation 12:11)**

4. We need to know how to use them all; but I want to stick with one weapon so often overlooked; contained in our text...

**5. God has given His people a garment of praise as a spiritual weapon that defeats and displaces the spirit of heaviness!**

- a. But what good is a garment if it's hanging in the closet?
- b. It's like getting clothing as a Christmas gift; you have to make a decision to put it on!

6. We can defeat depression by putting on the garment of praise every day.

**“Living a life of praise is one of the most powerful ways to change your life.”**

**Andrew Womack**

7. My personal experience is that living a life of praise is not an emotion you feel, it is a decision you make; an act of your will.

## **III. The Final Step to Deliverance from Depression**

### **A. The Decision of David**

**Psalm 34:1-4**

**I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.**

**My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.**

1. Notice first, this is a decision; it is an act of the WILL!

2. We live in a culture that is more and more ruled by feelings and emotion and less by personal responsibility. This has spilled over into the church.

**“Sometimes you gotta tell your soul to sing. Even when you don’t feel a thing. That’s when you gotta sing louder louder!”**  
**Stephanie Frizzell Gretzinger**

3. The spirit of heaviness makes you feel like the last thing you feel like doing is praising God; which is the very first thing you have to do. And it’s your choice...

### **B. Make the Decision: Let’s Say the Psalm Out Loud**

**Psalm 34:1-4**

**I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.**

1. Do this every day; depression will depart!

(BY THE WAY, DEXTER FOWLER GOT HIS HAPPY FACE BACK)

**“The happy-to-the-point-I-will-pester-you-with-my-smile-and-happiness-Dex is back.”**  
**Aliya Fowler**