

**Series: Peace of Mind
“Keys to Remember Battling Depression”
Proverbs 12:25; Lamentations 3**

Big Idea – God wants me to know there is always hope.

Review:

Big Idea – God cares about every part of my life and being.

Two Mental Health Myths – Week #1

Myth #1: Christians shouldn't struggle with mental health.

Myth #2: God doesn't care about your mental health.

Getting help isn't a sign of weakness. It's a sign of wisdom.

God is my source and my strength.

I have everything I need to do everything He called me to do.

Last week's message from 2 Chronicles 20, Anxiety isn't a sin, it's a signal:

1. Time to pray
2. Time to pause
3. Time to praise.

Failure to do so, among other things can lead to depression.

Let me tell you about a person I read about named Titus who suffered with depression all his life. When on the outside he looked happy, but on the inside he felt hopeless, empty, dark, afraid, and alone, because Titus has battled for years, not only with ongoing chronic and crippling depression, but serious suicidal thoughts that have plagued him for years and years and years. Now, to someone who hasn't experienced depression, you might be dismissive if you met Titus, you're like, "Dude, you got so much going on in your life. Just like pull out of it, just cheer up." He would want you to know that depression is not just sadness, it's not just

discouragement, but it's constant darkness. It's Sometimes like no feeling, like no feeling at all. Like no motivation, no hope. And what's really sad is that the church should be the safest place to talk about feelings of darkness and depression. And yet, it's often not.

Sometimes in some faith communities, there's almost a stigma to it, where someone who feels hopeless also feels ashamed to talk about it or maybe even guilty like, spiritually, I must be doing something wrong. Then other well meaning but ignorant Christians might just say, "Hey, just suck it up. Come on, it's not that big of a deal. I mean, come on, pull out of it, pull your self up by your bootstraps, get over it, you know, just put your faith in Jesus and everything will be okay." And the depressed person doesn't feel safe opening up, and so withdraws even more, and the depression seems to compound.

Have you ever thought about this? Like if you're in a group and someone says, "I have a nasty sore throat, cough, fever and chills," you would say, maybe go to the doctor. If someone breaks a bone, you would say go to an orthopedic doctor.

But, If someone is battling depression, Sometimes the implied message in the church is just, keep smiling and keep it to yourself. If you are one of the many people today, especially in this painful culture we're living in at the moment, fighting with depression, one of the biggest mental health problems in our culture today, you will both identify with the verse that I'm about to read to you, and it may make you angry. You may identify with it and it might make you a little mad.

Proverbs 12:25. You'll identify with the first part. Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression. Duh. Okay. Anxiety, fear, worry, stress causes depression. Then scripture says, But a good word makes it glad. Anxiety causes depression, but a good word makes it glad. If you are battling with depression right now, you might say, "It's not that simple!" It's not that simple. A good word? A good word doesn't pull me out of my darkness,

Proverbs 12:25 "Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, But a good word makes it glad."

Say “a good word” - Some say that’s simplistic, too simple – not when it’s God’s Word.

God’s Word brings HOPE. God’s Word brings healing!

Well, I hope this isn't going to be a depressing message, but depression is a very complex issue. And in case you're feeling proud because you don't battle with depression, don't, because depression doesn't discriminate. In other words, if you don't have it, that doesn't make you more spiritual than someone that does. It can hit anybody at any time. It doesn't discriminate - there's also like no one size fits all.. I'll say it every week. I am not an expert at all. I sought a lot of expert advice and I've read and researched. according to the experts I've listened to and all the research that I've done,

There are many causes but mental health experts say 4 major root causes:

Biological—Chemical imbalance, Chronic pain, Nutrition deficit
Hormonal changes, Lack sleep, Exercise, Sunlight.

Relational—Betray—Reject—Divorce—Pandemic—Isolation

Circumstantial—Death/loss, Trauma, Bankruptcy, Retire, Kids leaving home

Spiritual—Every moment—Day—Spiritual battle! Spiritual warfare (Eph. 6)

See in the Old Testament, a very depressed man of God, and I want you to understand, this was a prophet. Here was a guy that spoke on behalf of God and he represented God. He told people what God told him to say. Yet this man of God, this person of deep and committed faith was also in a very deep and dark and desperate place. We're going to look at the prophet Jeremiah in Lamentations 3.

Let me give you a little bit of context to understand his depression. You may remember Solomon's temple, which was one of the greatest tributes to God in the history of mankind. It stood for 400 years or so before it was tragically destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BC. Well, Jeremiah saw the destruction. He would've witnessed his loved ones being murdered, his close friends being taken captive. He would've watched perhaps family members being deported away as his city, his homeland, the house of God

is completely destroyed, and he saw it and he was depressed. Didn't know where to turn. And I want you to watch the descriptions of a man of God who found himself for a moment without hope. Look at the descriptive metaphors.

If you've never battled with depression, this is an incredibly accurate description of what someone would feel. He says this, he says,

Lamentations 3:1- I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath.

2. He has driven me away and made me walk in darkness rather than light.

3 Surely He has turned His hand against me time and time again throughout the day.

4 He has aged my flesh and my skin, and broken my bones.

5 He has besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and woe.

6 He has set me in dark places like the dead of long ago.

7 He's walled me in so I cannot escape; he has weighed me down with chains

8 Even when I cry out and plead for help, He shuts out my prayer.

17 Peace has been stripped away, and I have forgotten what prosperity is.

18 I cry out, "My splendor is gone! Everything I had hoped for from the LORD is lost!"

19 The thought of my suffering and homelessness is bitter beyond words.

20 I will never forget this awful time, as I grieve over my loss.

How did he get here? He was a Prophet! He really Loved God
Yet he felt Totally—Broken—Lost—Hopeless.

Circumstantial—Home destroyed—Family killed/deported
Spiritual—Feels like God him let down—

What do you do?— when you feel like there's no hope?

Keys to Remember when battling depression:

Your emotions are valid. But they're not permanent.

A lot of times in a church culture people say, doesn't matter what your feelings are, don't believe your feelings and you shouldn't pay any attention to your feelings. I used to think that, it's taken a long time but I have learned that emotions are valid.

Your situation may feel hopeless, but with God, there's always hope.

With the presence of our God, even when you don't feel it, even when you don't see it, even when everything feels hopeless with our God, there always is hope.

I want to unpack these truths and dive deep into them and pray that a good word will bring you hope. When you're hurt, when you don't know where to turn, when you feel like you've done it all and you can't get out, I want to tell you that your emotions, they're valid, they're valid, they're real. And they're actually an important part of your healing.

Naming emotions can help to change emotions.

An expert would tell you that one of the ways to heal and to actually change your emotions is to start by acknowledging your emotions and literally naming your emotions. If you feel hopeless right now, what I want you to do is just say or think, I feel hopeless! What do you feel? Name what you feel. You might say, "I feel angry." "I feel hurt." "I feel mad at the world." "I feel betrayed." If you're depressed, you might say, "I feel empty right now," or "I feel numb." You name your feelings. You might say, "I feel afraid."

Speaking of being afraid, how many of you are afraid of spiders? Raise your hands, afraid of spiders, afraid of spiders. I want to show you a study that was done, that was not just with house spiders, but this one was actually done with tarantulas. I'm going to tell you about the study and what they did is they took some people who were afraid of spiders and they exposed them to a tarantula in a cage, and then they broke them into four groups. Now what they did, let me say it again in case you missed it, is they took people who were afraid of spiders, put a tarantula in a cage and exposed them to the tarantula in the cage. They broke 'em into four groups, and they gave them four different assignments.

The first group, they said, I want you to label what you're feeling. In other words, "I feel afraid of hairy spiders." Label what you're feeling.

The second group, they said, make observations, just a general emotionless feeling-less observation like that tarantula is in a cage, that tarantula is big.

To the third group, they said, just say something irrelevant. Just say something irrelevant, like it's a Tuesday, or it looks like it might rain.

To the fourth group they said, don't say anything at all. And they gave them four different assignments, label what you're feeling, make observations, say something irrelevant, and don't say anything at all.

And they took the people that were afraid of spiders and they brought them back a week later and they exposed them again to a tarantula, this time not in a cage, and they measured their physiological responses, did they sweat, did their heart rate beat, did they pee in their pants, you know, what did they do?

And what they discovered out of the four groups by far the one who labeled their feelings a week previously did exceptionally better. They were less nervous, many of them were actually even able to touch the tarantula. And what they learned from that and other studies, and they will teach you that naming your emotions opens the door to changing your emotions.

Your emotions are actually valid. Name your emotions. It's not something like spiritual to pretend like they're not there. They're there. God gave you emotions. They're valid. But they're not permanent. When you recognize they're not permanent and you identify them, "I feel alone, I feel desperate, I feel hopeless", when you name it, that opens the door to God being able to change it.

Don't make permanent decisions based on temporary emotions.

And because our emotions are temporary, very, very important, we are not going to make permanent decisions based on temporary emotions. When you are feeling down, we're not going to make permanent decisions based on that. Not only are we not going to make permanent decisions, but don't make permanent conclusions. When you feel, "Well, all men are this. Well, all people are that. Well, all churches are that. Well, you can't..." No, no, no,

we're not going to make permanent decisions or permanent conclusions based on temporary emotions.

When you feel afraid, when you feel threatened, you might feel like quitting on your marriage. You might feel like quitting on God. You might feel like running out the door and shutting everybody out and getting a big bottle of Jack Daniels and drinking yourself silly. In the darkest times, you may feel like life is not worth it. And your spiritual enemy who wants to steal, kill, and destroy may whisper to you, "You'd be better off if you weren't here." in the moment that may feel true.

But I want you to know that is never, ever, ever, under any circumstances true, because God knew what he was doing when he made you. He knew you before you were formed in your mother's womb. And he put you here on earth to know him and gave you good works in advance to do.

so we're not going to make permanent decisions or permanent conclusions based on temporary emotions. Your emotions, they're valid. They're real. God gave them to you. We're going to feel them, but not be ruled by them. Not ruled by them. Your emotions are valid, but they're not permanent. And the second thing I want to show you today is that your situation may feel hopeless, but with God, there is always hope.

With God where is always, always hope. You may not feel it, you may not believe it, but I want to bring a good word to you today. And I'm praying the good word will bring you hope. God always can give you hope. In fact, I want to show you in our text today, in Lamentations 3, so in verse 20, and then I'll read 21, in verse 20, do you remember what Jeremiah said? In verse 20 he said, "My soul is downcast." My soul is downcast. And then verse 21, he turns to God

Jeremiah depressed – turns to God

Lamentations 3:21-32
21 Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this:
22 The faithful love of the LORD never ends! His mercies never cease.
23 Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning.

24 I say to myself, "The LORD is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!"

25 The LORD is good to those who depend on him, to those who search for him.

26 So it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the LORD.

27 And it is good for people to submit at an early age to the yoke of his discipline:

28 Let them sit alone in silence beneath the LORD's demands.

29 Let them lie face down in the dust, for there may be hope at last.

31 For no one is abandoned by the Lord forever.

32 Though he brings grief, he also shows compassion because of the greatness of his unfailing love.

And in the middle of his darkness, he declares God "great is your faithfulness." I call this to mind. Because of the Lord's great love we're not consumed. Because of his love... The word love in the Hebrew text is the plural form of the word *hesed*, which is a very powerful word, it's very difficult to translate. It's in the Bible 248 times and it's packed with meaning.

Many Hebrew words, they're more like a sentence or a thought, or almost like a mini story. It's very hard to translate some of them into English, because they're so rich and deep with meaning and the word *hesed*, translators try to say like loving kindness or translate as mercy or loyalty or such.

But this word is impossible to describe apart from the fullness of God's character. Two definitions I like, translators said it this way, *hesed* actually means the unbreakable devotion to God's promises.

It's a covenantal commitment to God's character. That's what it is. Because of his love we're not consumed.

And his compassions never fail. The word compassions is translated from the Hebrew word *rahamaw*, which is the very same root word, which actually means a mother's womb. I love this. What happens in a womb?

Well, the womb is a safe place. The womb is the sanctuary where life begins, in the womb the life is nourished and is strengthened and is protected. And it's in this womb that the compassions never fail. They're new every morning. The grace of God is new every morning. His presence is new every morning. He gives you enough every morning. He gives you

the daily bread. He gives you daily grace. He gives you daily compassion. He gives you daily goodness. He gives you daily presence.

With him there's always hope. There's always hope. So what do you do when the whole world feels dark? Well, acknowledge it. Like call it what it is. I feel depressed. I feel hopeless.

And then just also acknowledge: I need help. This is a safe place to say that you need help.

And remember, asking for help is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of wisdom. I need help. And then get help. What might you do to get help? Well, you might talk to a counselor. That's wise. You might go to a doctor who might prescribe helpful medicine. That's wise, and that is not unspiritual.

You might change your diet. That's wise and spiritual. It works with the way God designed your body. You might start to exercise or you might journal, or you might get in a small group.

I don't know how people deal with the forces of darkness without having people of life standing by them to encourage them, pray for them and cheer them on. We need community and we need each other. And we are better together. Iron sharpening iron to help us become the people of God called to walk in his ways and share his light and his love.

You might pray, and you might pause, and you might praise. I call this to mind. I call this to mind. And when you do these different things, do you know what happens? Let me tell you what happens.

You start to change your posture. When you're depressed, if you're talking to a depressed person question are their shoulders up or their shoulders down? They're down.

Is their voice loud with confidence or quiet in darkness? Are they smiling or are they frowning? They're frowning. Their posture's down. Now, I can't prove this, but I can almost guarantee you, but Jeremiah said "I'm in darkness," his posture is down. "I've lost our hope," his posture is down.

And then he said, "Yet I call this to mind." He changed his posture. "Yet I call..." Here's what I want you to know. Your posture, it reflects your mood, but your posture can also impact your mood. Yet I call this to mind. And I don't know if he did this or not, but perhaps he did, maybe in his darkness, he looked down, and then he changed his posture. And maybe he looked up and raised up his hands toward heaven.

Any time you raise your hands toward heaven, what happens if you raise your hands if someone puts a gun to you? That's a sign of surrender. I surrender! I need help! I can't do this on my own! I surrender. What else is it? It's a sign of victory. We won. We're winning. What I love about this, when you surrender to God, you find victory in God. When you surrender to him, you find victory in him. And Jeremiah says, "I say to myself," watch this. "I say to myself," sometimes you just have to preach to yourself. If you've never preached to yourself, sometimes you just have to say to yourself. And he says, "The Lord is my portion. Therefore I will wait for him." He says to himself, "The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him." He says to himself, "The Lord is good to those who seek him." He says to himself, "It's good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord."

Sometimes you just have to preach to yourself. Why so downcast, O my soul. My soul is downcast within me. Yet I call this to mind. I don't know what you would say to yourself, I may say, "You, O Lord, you are a shield about me. You are my glory. You are the lifter of my head. My God, he is my refuge and my strength. He is my ever present help in times of trouble.

Sometimes you just gotta preach to yourself. So I need to hear this. So why are you so downcast? Put your hope in God. You're feelings. They're valid. They're real, but they're not permanent. You feel like you have no hope, but with God you always have hope. There's always hope. When he's on the throne, there's hope in your home. There's always hope. There's always hope.

For I am convinced, you might say, that nothing can separate me from the love of God, not death, nor life, not angels, nor demon, neither the present or the future. You preach it to yourself. Not my depression, not my darkest days, nothing in all creation will be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, my Lord. You preach to yourself.

Is that going to solve everything? I don't know. Sometimes you have to renew your mind. Sometimes you have to correct your body. It's complex. We're not going to belittle it, but we're not going to, we're not going to surrender to it. We surrender to God. - Amen. We fight. We fight, we fight. This is how we fight our battles. We fight with the presence of God. Anxiety, it weighs the heart down. It makes you feel depressed.

But a good word... Oh, a good word. Too simple, preacher, insulting. Maybe, maybe not. Maybe not. Maybe a good word from God is just enough to get you through today. Today. Maybe it is just enough to get you through this hour. And maybe it's just enough to get you through the minute. A good word. And there's a good word available for you now. And there's a good word available for you in the next minute you need it.

Remember the prophet Elijah? 1 Kings 19:1 – 18 you can read his story. Depressed so badly he wanted to die! God had him sleep, get rest for his exhausted weary body and soul, fed him angel food cake that angels literally came and baked for him, then God let him know that he was not isolated, not alone like he thought, like he felt he was. There were 7,000 more like him who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

I want to make available to anyone who wants it a free PDF on depression. To get your copy just email us at office@capitalbible.com and request it and I will see to it that it's emailed it to you. You may also want to buy the book written by our friend Tim Kaufman a Gospel singer friend of ours in FL who suffered with severe depression. His book is on Amazon and is titled *SINGING HALLELUJAH When You Feel Like Hell*, a true life story of How to Triumph through Depression.