



DVD Leader Guide

Overview

Depression is a subject that the Church tends to ignore. The reasons are many... a lack of awareness; ignorance about how to help those suffering from this affliction; and even worse... outright denial that it is a legitimate problem in the Church. We often skip over the depressive episodes of King David, Elijah and Jeremiah that are in plain view in the Scriptures.

Our silence has left many depression-sufferers twisting in the wind, uncertain where to turn for help.

Take Charge of Your Mental & Emotional Health was written and recorded to:

- Extend compassion and healing to those who suffer with depression
- Equip those who are not currently depressed with practical tools that will help them maintain mental and emotional well-being
- Empower the Church with a compassionate, biblical strategy to come alongside those who are depressed and move them toward healing

This 4-part DVD series comes out of the fires of my own personal experience with the “long dark tunnel” and my subsequent road to recovery.

Session 1 – Develop Biblical Self-Love

- Session goal – to introduce the Biblical concept of self-love. The bedrock of mental and emotional health is learning to obey the Greatest Commandment in its entirety.
- Key Scripture - Matthew 22:36-40- ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”(NIV)
- The most important command in the Bible is a 3-parter - it commands us to love God and to love our neighbor – but Jesus also commands us to love ourselves.
- How do we love ourselves in a Biblical sense?
 - Healthy self-talk - How I talk to myself about myself – Verbal insults we direct against ourselves are every bit as damaging as those we direct at others. Biblical self-love means I talk to myself with the same degree of kindness I afford other people.
 - Understand difference between self-love and self-centeredness – Acts 20:28 - ²⁸ *Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.*” (NIV)
 - “Keep watch” - comes from the Greek word - “prosecete” – “to attend to, to guard, to pay attention to, to devote thought and effort to.”
Biblical self-love includes paying attention to yourself (your own



- needs) while at the same time caring about others. Self-centeredness is paying attention to yourself exclusively.
- Embrace God's opinion of us – Psalm 139
 - Vv.1-3 – ¹ O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. ² You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. ³ You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.” (NIV).

God sees past our exterior and into our private thoughts, attitudes and motives. He knows what we are going to say before we say it! He knows everything about us – both the good and the bad. Yet the Bible makes it clear He loves us anyway.

- Vv.13-14 - ¹³ For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” (NIV)
- Vv. 17-18 – ¹⁷ How precious to me (concerning me) are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! ¹⁸ Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand” (NIV).

How many grains of sand are there on a beach or in a desert? They are uncountable. The same God who created the universe thinks about each one of us more times than we can count.

- Getting in touch with our own soul – Proverbs 19:8 - “He who gets wisdom loves his own soul.” (NIV)

Leader Tip: During the question and answer time, take a few minutes to discuss John's personal story about his journey into and out of clinical depression. Highlight what you think were the most important points of his story.

- Unmasking depression
 - 23 million in United States; 340 million worldwide
 - Can be event-driven – a major loss
 - Can be incremental – the result of years of improper mental and emotional behavior
 - Does not respond to the sheer force of our will
 - A black hole of sadness
 - Often hits when least expected
 - Can happen to anyone, even to people who love God – King David; Jeremiah; Elijah



Leader tip: In preparation for discussion time, take a few minutes to read the passages of scripture that detail the depressive episodes of King David (Psalms 6:6; Psalms 13:1-3; Psalms 31:9-12; Psalms 69:1-3;); the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 9:1,18; 13:17; 14:17; Lamentations 3:47-49;) and the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-5).

Recovery from depression does not happen quickly. It is usually a long, difficult process that *starts* with understanding the principles found in Matthew 22:36-40 and Acts 20:28.

- **Group Discussion Questions:**
 - Why is the message of biblical self-love not understood by the Church at large?
 - Possible answers:
 - Lack of teaching
 - Self-love has been confused with self-centeredness
 - Lack of biblical understanding
 - What are 4 ways a person can obey the self-love portion of the greatest Commandment? Describe each one of these in more detail.
 - Possible answers:
 - Practice healthy self-talk
 - Understand self-love is not the same thing as self-centeredness – Acts 20:28
 - Embrace God’s opinion of them – Psalm 139
 - Get in touch with their soul – Proverbs 19:8
 - Consider the startling statistics regarding clinical depression in the United States and across the world (23 million in U.S; 340 million worldwide). What factors contribute to this growing mental health problem?
Possible answers:
 - Uncertainty about how to take care of oneself mentally and emotionally
 - Increased levels of anxiety and stress due to world events, the economy
 - Abusive relationships
 - Health issues- such as facing a life-threatening or terminal illness
 - Loss of a loved one through death or divorce
 - Why does recovery from depression tend to take a long time?
 - Possible answers:
 - Most often depression happens incrementally. It is often the result of years of wrong thought and behavioral patterns. It requires time to undo years of emotional misbehavior, and learn to live with healthy behavior. (Like going on a diet VS. making lifestyle changes to maintain healthy weight, etc.)



- Depressed individuals often find it difficult to reach out for help – this compounds the problem because depression is rarely cured in a vacuum. It is a burden that is too heavy for a person to carry alone.
- Depressed individuals do not always fully address their illness even after they have been properly diagnosed. Depression is a whole-person issue that needs to be addressed on multiple fronts: physically (exercise), nutritionally, in terms of schedule, relationally (distance from others who may be fueling the depression); medically, psychologically, spiritually (note that most depression is not demonic in nature – it is just easier for the devil to whisper lies to a person who is depressed).



Session 2 – Manage Your Anger

Anger is misunderstood by many people both inside and outside the Church. Mismanaged anger contributes significantly to the staggering number of people suffering from clinical depression.

It is not a sin to *feel* the emotion of anger – it’s just easier to say or do something sinful when we are angry. Learning and then implementing the biblical model of processing anger helps a person stay mentally and emotionally healthy.

- Session goal – to provide biblical understanding of anger and a practical pathway to manage it
- Key Scripture – Ephesians 4:26 – *“In your anger do not sin.”*
- **Leader tip:** In the discussion time, be prepared to share examples of both when you mishandled your anger and when you handled it well.
- How do we manage our anger biblically?
 - Give it an honest appraisal
 - Anger is a normal response when healthy boundaries are crossed by others
 - Often involves leftover feelings from past events
 - Appropriate anger
 - Depth/duration of our anger matches the depth/duration of the offense
 - Holy anger – Mark 3:1-5
 - Has to do with the ultimate well-being of other people
 - Acknowledge the way God uses our anger
 - Energy to stand up for ourselves when we are attacked
 - Motivation to bring positive change
 - Bringing attention to root areas we need to address – anger can be a signal that something in our life needs attention
 - Avoid unhealthy responses to anger
 - Giving way – waving the white flag – “it’s genetic!”
 - Blaming others – “I wouldn’t act this way if *you* would just behave better!”
 - Submerging it inwardly- this leads to bitterness and eventually to depression. An unwillingness to forgive keeps you chained to the trauma that was inflicted on you
 - Express anger appropriately
 - Ephesians 4:31 – *“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger.”* (NIV)
 - Understand the negative impact of mishandled anger. When we go ballistic it is destructive to ourselves and to those in the path of our rage
 - Identify the root of your anger - Ask God to show you what is fueling your anger



- Identify relationships or situations where an emotional eruption is more likely to occur – spend time praying beforehand
- Be assertive as opposed to aggressive or passive when expressing anger – Inappropriate language, screaming or swinging our fists are examples of aggression. Stuffing your anger (repressing it) and allowing it to fester on the inside, or giving the silent treatment, are examples of passivity. Assertiveness involves expressing clearly, respectfully and firmly, how someone’s behavior is negatively impacting you.

Leader tip: Come prepared to share an experience with the group where you found yourself acting assertively. What feeling accompanied that experience?

- Group Discussion Questions:
 - What are some possible sources of leftover (residual) anger?
 - Possible answers:
 - Growing up in an abusive home
 - Perfectionism
 - Lack of healthy relational boundaries
 - Inability to express anger in a healthy manner
 - Lack of forgiveness
 - What problems could arise from repressing anger? Discuss the effects of repressed anger on mental and emotional health.
 - Possible answers
 - It can reduce the level of neurotransmitter chemicals in our brain and as a result depress our mood
 - It can result in a person looking at life through the lens of their anger. Anger has the ability to color relationships, thought processes, etc. in a negative way.
 - Explore the differences between aggression, passivity and assertiveness as it relates to anger expression. Explain the impact of each response on our mental and emotional health.
 - Possible answers
 - Aggression is an explosive expression of anger that often takes the form of raised voices, unwanted physical contact, or the use of coarse language. Intimidation and fear may be used to attempt to control a situation or person. Aggressive responses

tend to isolate us from people that we love; it damages relationships.

- Passivity is an inward turning of our anger that often results in the “silent treatment.” It waits for others to act, takes no outward action, and uses avoidance as an escape tactic. Submerged anger festers inside, leads to bitterness and difficulty with forgiving, and depletes brain chemicals that affect our mood.
 - Assertiveness is a clear expression of how someone’s misbehavior is negatively impacting you. An assertive person takes initiative, an action of some sort to stand up/set limits (boundaries) or conditions. Assertiveness helps a person set healthy relational boundaries and avoid the negative emotional effects associated with aggression or passivity.
- What are the differences between being an angry person versus a person who can get angry?
 - Possible answers
 - A person “who can get angry” is slow to become angry, and when they do get angry, they process that emotion quickly. They will allow others to express opinions and emotions contrary to their own without feeling threatened.
 - An angry person quickly blows up or submerges their anger on a consistent basis. However, it is not easy to predict which of these responses will be triggered—so others may feel uncertain as to how this person will react, and be guarded—may feel the need to “walk on eggshells” around this person to diffuse the situation to avoid confrontation or to protect themselves.
 - How can anger call attention to root issues that need addressing?
 - Possible answers
 - It can be a signal that we are over-scheduled
 - It may mean we have unresolved conflicts that we’re avoiding
 - It can alert us to our need for emotional refueling



- It may indicate emotional issues—For example, angry people usually are not tolerant of those who disagree with them—revealing a root of insecurity.

* NOTE to Leaders: If a person has a history of problems with managing their anger, they may need therapeutic counseling, which is outside of the scope of your small group or Bible study. . Discuss ahead of time with your leader/pastor how they would like you to handle these situations.



Session 3 – Protect Yourself from Abuse

Abuse of any kind is one of the most significant contributors to a lack of mental and emotional health. As our culture becomes increasingly dysfunctional, the number of abusers seems to grow proportionately. **An abusive person is anyone who harms you mentally, emotionally, verbally, physically, sexually or spiritually.** Instead of running away to a mythical place where these personality types don't exist – God wants us to learn how to stand our ground in the face of their behavior. It is only by telling the truth in love to the abusive people we interact with, and refusing to tolerate their abuse by standing up for ourselves, that we get free.

- Session Goal: To equip a person with practical tools to protect themselves from abusive personalities
- Key Scripture: 2 Timothy :14-15 – *"¹⁴ Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. ¹⁵ You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message."*
- Five safeguards
 - Be convinced that standing up for yourself is the right thing to do – When you're confronted with abuse, you have the right to refuse to be treated in a harmful way.
 - Understand difference between persecution and abuse - Matthew 5:11 Jesus told his disciples - *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you **because of Me.**"*
 - Maintain self-love in the face of abuse – When abusive people try to intimidate or victimize you, keep telling yourself "I am loved and respected by God. I am a capable person. I don't deserve to be treated this way."
 - Understand what "loving your enemy" really means – Matthew 5:44 – Jesus said - *"But I tell you: Love your enemies."*
 - Jesus was teaching us to not allow hatred to lodge itself in our heart because hatred will destroy us.
 - We need to ask ourselves: What does it mean to genuinely love our enemies? It means we care what happens to them, hope the best for them, and pray for them – however, it does not mean you allow them to take advantage of you
 - Consistently address abuse when it happens

Leader Tip: Be prepared to share situations where you were confronted with abusive behavior (be careful not to get too personal here). Be able to articulate a time when you responded well, and a time when you did not.

- Group Discussion Questions:
 - Discuss the difference between being persecuted for Jesus' sake vs. being abused by toxic people. What are some appropriate responses to abuse?

- Possible answers
 - Address the abuse when it happens
 - Practice healthy self-talk
 - Avoid abusive people when possible
- What factors contribute to setting ourselves up for abuse? How can we overcome those tendencies?
 - Possible answers
 - Being raised around dysfunction
 - A lack of biblical self-love
 - Not knowing how to set healthy boundaries
 - We can learn to overcome these by:
 - Being aware of any tendency to set ourselves up to get abused
 - Educating ourselves on how to set and enforce healthy relational boundaries
 - Being closely related with people who support our goal of drawing healthy boundaries with our abuser(s)
- Explore the negative effects of subjecting yourself to continued abuse. What impact does long-term abuse have on a person?
 - Possible answers
 - You begin to believe you deserve to be abused
 - Your resentment towards the abuser deepens
 - Your anger increases and tends to be submerged – causing depletion of important neurotransmitters, which can eventually result in depression
- Discuss the relationship between loving our enemies and not allowing ourselves to be abused. Do these activities contradict each other?
 - Possible answer
 - No – these two do not contradict each other – it is possible to love someone who is abusive without subjecting yourself to their abuse
- What responsibilities, if any, do we have toward our abusers? How do we maintain self-love in the face of their abuse?
 - Possible answers:
 - Our first responsibility is to avoid retaliating. Why is this so? For example, in Matt 5:38-39 Jesus teaches us that if someone strikes us on the cheek, we are not to respond in the same way. Jesus was addressing the Old Testament teaching from Exodus 21 of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” (retaliation). He was putting a new covenant



perspective on this—saying “I don’t want you to respond with ‘I’m going to get even.’” The point here is not that we allow someone to beat us up, but rather to control our reaction and not retaliate in kind.

- Our second responsibility is to want God’s best for them. Remember that Jesus died for our abuser too, and He loves them. He does not love or approve of the sin they have done/are doing, but He does love them and want them to be saved.
- Maintain self-love by building protective fences around our emotions by using healthy self-talk
- Maintain self-love by respecting ourselves enough to put distance between ourselves and our abuser(s) – especially if the abuse is physical in nature

* NOTE to Leaders: If a person has a history of problems with abuse, (abuser or abused) they may need therapeutic counseling, which is outside of the scope of your small group or Bible study. Discuss ahead of time with your leader/pastor how they would like you to handle these situations.



Session 4 – Refuel Emotionally

If the thought of adding one more item to your to-do list causes you to have an out of body experience – you’re probably running on emotional fumes! You and I cannot possibly say “yes” to everything that presents itself to us. As we begin to make good decisions about our schedules, and learn how to feed our souls – the mental/emotional part of our being – we will stay healthy and productive long-term.

- Session Goal: To learn how to give to ourselves emotionally
- Key Scripture: Matthew 11:28-30 – 28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (NIV)

Leader tip: Many people fall into one or two extremes: workaholism or laziness. Both extremes are unhealthy. During the discussion time, be prepared to share from your own personal experience where you land along that spectrum, and what you are doing to address any imbalance that exists.

- Emotional Fuel Indicators
 - Your pace (schedule) - Paying attention to pace is not the same thing as laziness or irresponsibility. It is an appeal for sensible scheduling
 - Your people (friendships) – healthy friendships help us refuel
 - Your plan (emotional maintenance)- be intentional about the following items:
 - Laughter – Proverbs 17:22 - Laughter releases feel-good chemicals in our brain that reduce stress hormone levels and lift our mood
 - Exercise - Exercise helps to burn off nervous energy and reduce stress
 - The mundane – balance between the eternal and the “not-so-eternal”
 - Emotional tenacity – Emotional tenacity combines the qualities of love, kindness, truth and strength. There are situations that require us to be strong and firm... while at the same time realizing these responses are not at odds with being a loving person.
- Refueling emotionally takes practice – it requires us to think and act counter-culturally
- Mark 6:30-32 - *“The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’ So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.”* (NIV)



- Group Discussion Questions:
 - Which emotional indicators do you need to address? Pace? People? Plan?
 - How can a person recharge their emotional batteries?
 - Possible answers:
 - Setting a reasonable pace
 - Making time for healthy friendships
 - Discovering activities that are emotionally replenishing
 - Incorporating exercise into their weekly routine
 - Learning how to lighten up and laugh
 - Explore the concept of emotional tenacity. What examples of this do we see in Scripture? How does this work in day-to-day living?
 - Possible answers:
 - Moses demonstrated this principle in his response to the Israelites' worship of the golden calf.
 - Jesus exemplified emotional tenacity when He threw the moneychangers out of the Temple
 - In our generation, emotional tenacity can be thought of as "tough-love" – speaking the truth with a loving tone and out of pure motives, even when it may cause temporary pain to the listener.

Series Concluding Thoughts - Here is the emotional infrastructure required to enjoy sustained health:

- Love yourself
- Manage your anger
- Protect yourself from abuse
- Refuel emotionally

If you do these things you will have a better life, better relationships with people – and a more effective, sustained ministry to a broken and hurting world.