

# Depression

---

March 1997

Two Christian women have recently spoken to me about suffering through episodes of depression. Both women are married to Christian husbands; both are middle aged; both have children (all of whom, I believe, are Christians), and both have professional jobs outside the home. Both families are extremely active in their faith; they are not “fringe” Christians who merely put on a front.

One woman’s depression was directly linked to her teenage daughter “going off the deep end.” The daughter became defiant, reckless and suicidal, eventually landing in a psychiatric ward under state custody. Her parents were denied contact with her. Financial crisis then hit as the husband lost his profitable self-employment and took two other jobs to compensate. The resulting stresses plunged the wife into deep depression.

The other woman endured the deaths of her father and other close family members. Financial pressure also played a role as her husband was forced into early retirement just as college bills began to pile up. Again, depression set in and dominated this woman’s life for several years. Some observations:

While we will all suffer occasional misfortunes, they sometimes compound until the pressure is enormous. The resulting physical and emotional stresses can take a toll on anyone.

Neither woman could think clearly enough in her depression to make simple changes that would relieve pressure. Part of reason was *denial*; the unwilling-ness to admit that the problem was out of control. One woman had to receive an unfavorable job review before she could admit that she needed help.

Why the denial? It is probably due to expectations – our own and others’. We may tell ourselves that spiritual maturity means sucking it up and dealing with it and that asking for help is weakness. Strong Christians can be so involved with doing for others that they may neglect their own needs, thus becoming vulnerable to depression.

*“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ”* (Gal 6:2). This is only one ingredient in the antidote for depression but an important one. The strong are not *always* strong. We must learn to recognize when our lives are becoming overburdened. Simplify your life. Seek a sympathetic ear. *“Let your requests be made known to God ... and the peace of God ... will guard your hearts ...”* (Phil 4:6-7). Everyone will get “down” sometime, but we don’t have to stay there.