



Say to wisdom, “you are my sister” And make understanding your closest friend. For they will keep you from the immoral woman. Proverbs 7:4-5a

**Women's Discipleship Group – 2006**  
**HELPMATES, HANDMAIDENS & HARLOTS ONLINE BIBLE STUDY**  
**EMOTIONAL LIFE SERIES**

**LESSON # 1 – From Depression To Joy**

**Website:** [www.wdgonline.org](http://www.wdgonline.org)

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**Definitions: Helpmate – Handmaiden – Harlot**

**Helpmate:** A married woman who is committed to the well-being of her husband.

**Handmaiden:** A married or unmarried woman who is committed to serving the Lord.

**Harlot:** A married or unmarried woman who will sacrifice her soul and body for personal gain.

**OPENING STATEMENT:**

One of the greatest worldwide epidemics of this day and age is the disease of depression. It affects the young and the old; women, men and children; the educated and the drop-outs; millionaires and welfare recipients. According to The National Institute of Mental Health, more than 17 million people in America alone suffer from depression. Seven million women, three and a half million men, approximately four million teens and over a million pre-schoolers are plagued by this disease.

**WHAT CAUSES DEPRESSION:**

The cause of depression can be biological, emotional and even spiritual. Factors involved in causing depression may include the following:

- A history of depression in the family. Researchers believe that depression can be passed on genetically from generation to generation.
- Grief from the death or loss of a loved one. Divorce.
- Personal or family conflicts, including finances, infidelity and disagreements.
- Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse.
- Stress on the job, school, church or community.
- Major lifestyle changes. Marriage, graduation, changing jobs or cities, retirement.
- Accidents; serious illness (mental or physical) or a reaction to certain medications or foods.
- Substance abuse: Close to 30% of people who abuse alcohol or drugs suffer from major depression.
- Personal problems: Legal; shame or embarrassment; low self-esteem; social isolation.
- Demonic attack. Involvement with occult practices. Palm reading, casting spells, astrology, charms and potions.

## **SIGNS OF DEPRESSION:**

Very often the person who is suffering from depression is the last one to realize the change in their behavior. The following may be an indicator that you or someone you love is suffering from depression:

- Constantly sad or irritable. Negative attitude.
- A loss of interest in activities they once enjoyed.
- Eating more than usual (especially junk food) or eating less than usual. Noticeable weight gain or weight loss.
- Can't sleep at night or sleeping all the time.
- Feeling tired and lacking energy.
- Neglect of personal hygiene and personal appearance.
- Getting upset and anxious about the smallest things.
- Expressing feelings of guilt, worthlessness or blame.
- Difficultly concentrating and finding it hard to make decisions.
- Resorting to alcohol, drugs or unauthorized medication.
- No interest in prayer, studying the Bible or participating in church or Bible study.
- Pre-occupied with conversations about death and suicide.

## **SPIRITUAL ANSWERS TO DEPRESSION:**

First, I want you to get rid of that idea that Christians are immune to depression.

Please note that even Jesus had his bouts with depression:

*(Matthew 26:36-38) – Then Jesus came to a place called Gethsemane and said to the disciples, sit here until I go away and pray. And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and **deeply depressed**. Then he said to them: My soul is very sorrowful even unto death.*

Jesus understands our emotional highs and lows because he experienced them first hand. The life of Christ demonstrates that you may be attacked with depression but it doesn't have to take control of your life. The Lord has promised that whatever challenges we face, He will make a way for us to escape depression and live in joy.

But how can a woman find joy when she is weighed down with feelings of depression?

1. *(Philippians 4:4) – Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say, rejoice!* To rejoice simply means to re-hearse joyful memories. Begin to focus on the good things that God has done for you. Continue to re-hearse the smallest and biggest joys. Rebuke negative thoughts and *choose* to think joyful thoughts. Talk about the joyful times in your life. Write them down until you start to rejoice inside. When you do this, your mind will begin to move away from feelings of depression and feelings of joy will begin to fill your heart.
2. *(Psalm 27:6) – Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.* There will be times when rejoicing will be the biggest sacrifice that you will have to make. You don't feel like thinking about, or talking about the goodness of the Lord. You may not feel like singing songs of praise, but your sacrifice of joy and praise is the very thing that will free you from depression. When you praise the Lord and give thanks in spite of your

circumstances, the Lord will come to your rescue and free you from the bondage of depression. The more depressed you are the more you should sing and praise the Lord.

3. *(Nehemiah 8:10) – “Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”* Depression can make you feel weak and helpless. When you rejoice (rehearse the joyful things that the Lord has done) you will begin to feel stronger. A joyful spirit gives you strength. When you are at home, work or school, you can control the atmosphere if you are filled with rejoicing. Spiritual strength comes from rejoicing. Those around you who think negative or evil thoughts will be powerless to pull you down because your joyful spirit will change the atmosphere from strife and depression, to joy.
4. *(Psalm 16:11a) – In Your presence is fullness of joy.* No matter how depressed you feel, don't stop praying and reading the word. If you can't find the strength to pray, call someone and ask them to pray with you. If you can't go to a church service, listen to a taped message. If you can't read the Bible or you don't have one, be still and rehearse all of the things that you've learned about God. The enemy knows that once you press your way into the presence of the Lord you will be filled with God's joy and once you have joy, then your strength will return. Because *the joy of the Lord is your strength.*

### **The Helpmates Story:**

From the outside looking in, marriage may appear to be blissful, but even in the best marriages, there will be times when the multiple roles of wife, mother, employee, housekeeper and family go-to-person can take its toll and leave you battling with depression. Depression can spring from a bout with PMS, menopause or just plain old overload. But rest assured there is a way out of depression:

1. Don't make “overload” your lifestyle. Some women try to take care of their family, work and go to school or do ministry all at the same time. Take a look at your schedule and ask yourself if you're trying to do too much. All work and no play can lead to depression. If your lifestyle is something you feel you have no control over, please remember that God can send you the help that you need. But first you must be willing to let God help you.
2. Don't suppress your feelings. If you're not happy about certain aspects of your marriage, or other areas of your life, pray first – then sit down and have a talk with your mate. If he doesn't understand, or refuses to talk – keep praying. I also recommend that you go to counseling on your own. Perhaps your pastor or a friend can get your husband to open up or see your point of view.
3. Help your husband understand your body and your emotions: Many husbands are in the dark when it comes to PMS, menopause and other phases that women go through. It's important that you get to know your family history;

know how your own body works (physical, mental and emotional) and then pass the information on to your husband.

4. Take time for spiritual restoration. When you don't take time to build your spiritual immune system, you open the door to depression and other types of attacks from Satan. Make time for church and Bible study. Set aside a time for personal prayer and meditation on God's word. If you're in a place where there is no church or bible study – start one. The Lord will bless you and shield you from depression if you are brave enough to step out on faith.

### **The Handmaiden's Story:**

God has called us to do good works, but depression has the power to interrupt God's plan for your life. One of the devices that Satan uses to create feelings of depression in the life of the handmaiden is negative thoughts. He makes you think that you'll never be happily married. You'll never be used in ministry. You'll never have friends or be accepted or forgiven. You'll never be pretty, or young enough, or talented enough. Like bait on the end of a fishing line, the lies go on and on until he gets you to bite. Once you're "hooked on a negative feeling," depression will begin to cloud your mind like a rainy day. There is nothing worse than a woman who claims to know God, but she's depressed most of the time. Here's your way out:

1. Give yourself away. It is my firm belief that the number one cure for non-clinical depression is to *give yourself away*. By this, I mean getting your mind off your problems by helping someone who is less fortunate than you. If you are unemployed, going through a breakup, or having other personal challenges, you are a good candidate for depression. But the Lord has made a promise to those who remember the poor and less fortunate. *Blessed is he who considers the poor; the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble (Psalm 41:1)*. Helping other people is medicine from the Lord.
2. Don't allow Satan to live rent free inside of your mind. Depression feeds on a negative thought life. The thoughts that attempt to enter your mind should first go through a background check – just like applying for a place to live. If the thought is negative (as in old hurts) don't allow Satan to move into your mind with a lot of hurtful thoughts. Speak to Satan in the same way you would speak to a negative person trying to bring you bad news: "I don't have time to deal with that...it's in God's hands!" When the good thoughts come to apply for access to your mind, let them pass through. Have lots of uplifting conversations with your positive, godly thoughts. Mention the name of Jesus and depression will soon be evicted.
3. Pray before taking anti-depressants. Many people (even Christians) really do need medication and professional treatment. But some of my sisters have been seduced by well meaning doctors and pharmaceutical companies. If you do a little research, you will find that there are many alternatives to treating depression without medication. Diet and exercise is at the top of the list. Exercise releases natural chemicals in the brain that relieve depression. Find an exercise program

that you're comfortable with and work it into your daily routine. Check into natural herbs and remedies that treat depression. Look for a support group or bible study that deals with your particular issue. I also recommend Christian counseling.

### **The Harlot's Story:**

The lifestyle of a harlot is a breeding ground for depression. Women's Issues report that 75% of all prostitutes attempt suicide and 15% of all suicide victims are prostitutes. It is impossible for a woman to misuse her body without doing damage to her soul. The harlot is convinced that selling or misusing her body is profitable. It may be that the pain of past hurts and abuses has led her to a destructive lifestyle. But the result is always the same: Temporary good times that lead to long-term depression. Never forget that some of the women who were the closest to God's heart once lived the life of harlotry. Joy is waiting for those who dare to reach for it.

1. Recognize that what you do is not who you are. Just because God doesn't like your lifestyle, doesn't mean that God doesn't love you. He loves you just like he loved a prostitute named Rahab and Mary Magdalene who had seven demons. His desire is that your life would be filled with joy and not sorrow. At the end of the day, there is no joy in being a harlot. God has made a way for you to escape sin and depression. It's as simple as believing that he loves you and trusting him to make a way for you when you choose to live a godly life. When you say the words, "Lord I want out!" He will hear you and rescue you from the bondage of sin and depression.
2. Recognize the difference between happiness and joy. In order to be happy something has to "happen" that pleases you. But I like to think that joy is not based on good things that "happen." Joy is contentment in spite of our circumstances. When Christ becomes the center of your life, you can face challenges and setback without losing your joy. That's what separates Christians from people who don't know the Lord. A relationship with Christ and a righteous lifestyle will fill your heart with joy and rescue you from depression.
3. Don't allow depression to rob you of your hope. A sinful lifestyle can leave you feeling trapped. You try to escape, but you find yourself right back in the same mess. I am a witness that sin can only make you a prisoner when you lose hope. The purpose of the demon of depression is to take away your hope...to make you believe that things will never get better and your lifestyle will never change. If you talk to enough people, you will find that thousands of women have escaped from the grip of sin and depression. Feed your hope with prayer and the word of God. The Bible says that *weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.*

## **OBSERVATIONS AND APPLICATION:**

Read: Psalm 30:5 –

1. Is depression a permanent?
2. Have you ever felt like your depression would never end? (explain)

Read: John 15:1-11

1. What are some of the steps that are necessary to finding joy?
2. What difficult experiences eventually brought joy to your life?

Read: Psalm 51:1-12

1. How did the writer lose his joy?
2. What caused you to lose your joy and how was it restored?