



Dr. William J. Finnigan

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Added to these figures are the multiplied millions who feel down, blue, and unhappy with their station in life, not to mention the astounding increase of depression among children.

In "Facing Depression," Dr. Finnigan presents a thorough examination of the Biblical answer, which is far better than secular solutions.



Facing Depression, Exploring its Cause and Cure

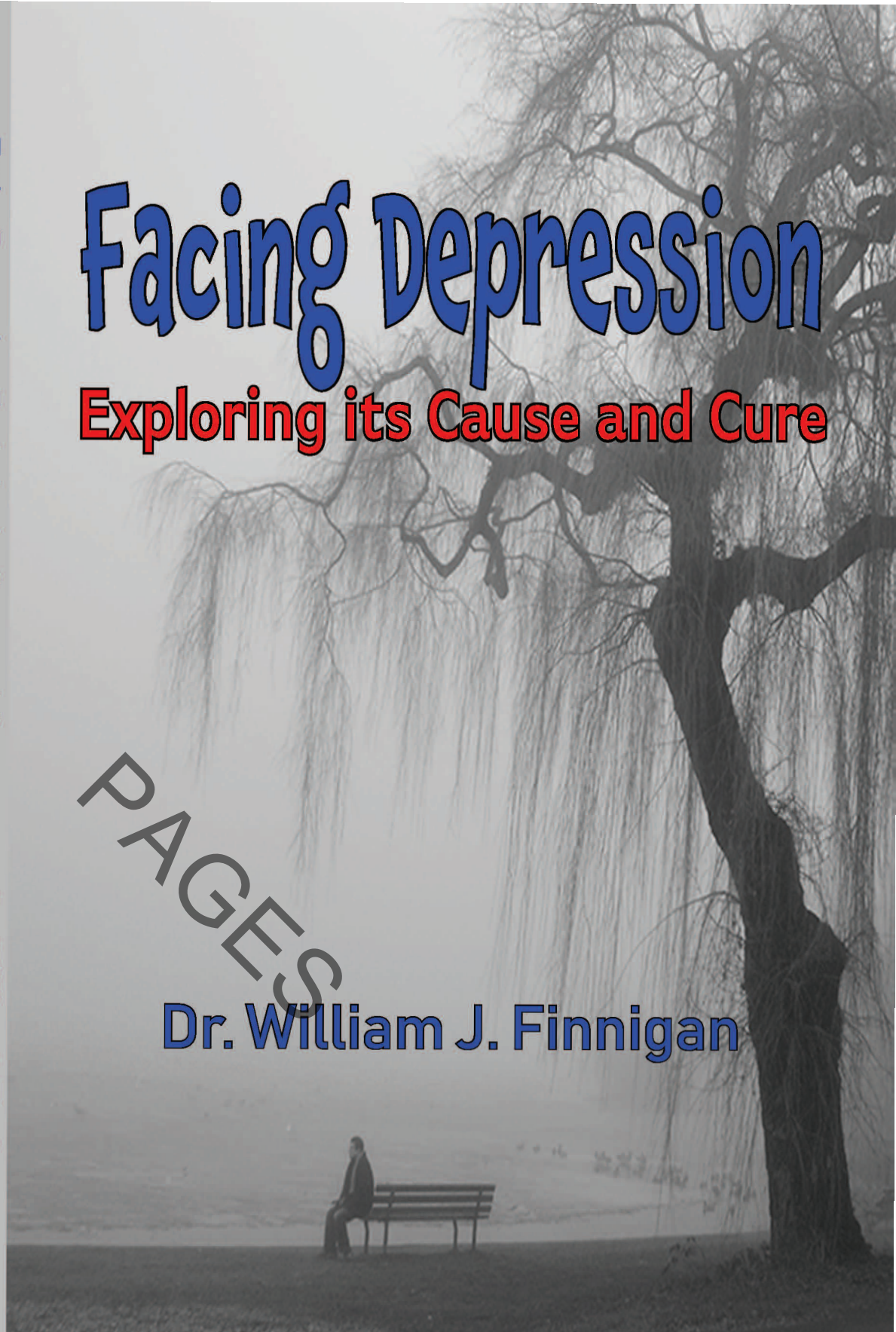
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Facing Depression

Exploring its Cause and Cure

PAGES

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FACING DEPRESSION

Exploring its Cause and Cure

By

William J. Finnigan, D. Min.

Facing Depressions, Exploring its Cause and Cure

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FACING DEPRESSION

Exploring its Cause and Cure

PROLOGUE

Depression in America has reached **alarming** proportions! According to one source, it is estimated that nearly 19 million adults suffer from serious depression, which is almost 10% of the U.S. population. This does not include the millions of teenagers who are depressed and prone to suicide. The World Health Organization says that cases of depression are “doubling every ten years and will be, by 2020, the most pervasive illness in the world, ...second to heart disease, and the second major cause of death... In the US and Australia, and throughout the western world, a pall of stigma and secrecy still surrounds this experience.”¹ Added to these figures are the multiplied millions who feel down, blue, and unhappy with their station in life, not to mention the astounding increase of depression among children.

What accounts for such an epidemic? How can this condition exist in a nation so blessed with opportunity and wealth? Unlike most of the world, our young people have been born with the proverbial silver spoon in their mouths, yet the suicide rate continues to surge. What’s going on? Among other things, the breakdown of family life, along with an explosion of technology and “social media” has undoubtedly contributed to this precarious phenomenon. It’s so easy for our youth to be totally absorbed in a “make believe” world via a hand-held computer! Obviously we are faced with an issue that needs to be seriously and squarely addressed.

It is significant that our culture, along with others in the world, is rapidly being overtaken by drug addiction of all sorts. Not only are we facing the illegal drug usage of cocaine, heroin, and the like, but also the legal prescription market of

so-called psychotropic medication. The term “psychotropic” is derived from two words meaning “mind” (psycho) and “change” (tropic). These are drugs that alter or affect the mind, emotions and behavior. Products like Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft and Lexapro are escalating at an alarming rate in the treatment of depression. It is estimated that 300 million prescriptions for Prozac and anti-depressants are filled annually in the USA alone!²

The tragedy is that whether legal or illegal, drugs only deal with symptoms, not the cause of the problem. There is no medical cure for depression. Yet precious people endure this condition with drug assistance, never realizing that depression can be cured. Therefore, the thrust of this book is to explore both the cause and cure of this insidious condition called “depression.”

We are dealing with a subject that has all but consumed the attention of our modern culture. It is a condition that has risen to epidemic proportion, having a crippling effect upon our workforce in America. Millions of dollars are lost annually by corporations due to various forms of depression among employees. Unfortunately, the church at large is also inundated with this problem; it is not uncommon to meet believers who take high and frequent doses of anti-depressant medication. Is this a valid remedy for depression?

I’m fully aware that I am traveling a difficult and controversial road in addressing this subject, but it’s time to take a hard and honest look at this problem. For too long we have trusted psychology and medical science to solve issues that are clearly addressed in God’s book, the Bible. Christian leaders have compromised with the secular and ineffective “treatments” of modern psychiatry, not realizing the true remedy found in the very Word they proclaim.³

Chapter One

How Did We Get Here?

My underlying confidence in dealing squarely with this subject comes from the conviction that God's Word has the ultimate answer to this dilemma. Evolutionary science and medicine have no clue as to man's origin and God-given function. If man began as "a piece of **goo**, ending up in the **zoo**, and now it's **you**," then who are we really? If I am the descendant of a turkey or a fruit fly, then what is my purpose in being here and where am I going? Science has no valid explanation for those vital questions. But in Genesis 2:7, it says:

"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

Man: His God-given Purpose and Function

The Lord made man directly out of clay and placed something in him that was not only world-conscious, but God-conscious—namely, a spirit (soul). This inner function made him more than a body, or hunk of protoplasm with arms and legs. This "breath of life" (Heb. *Neshamah*) produced a real person within who became accountable to his Creator. Now there was more to deal with other than mere human flesh. Into man's spirit was placed a conscience, the voice or witness of God within. Man was now responsible for his actions.

So God made or manufactured man for His glory and purpose. Like any responsible manufacturer, He gave him a manual to go with the product. In this case, it is called the Bible. It states how and why he was made, what happened

when Adam sinned, and what provision has been made to remedy his fallen condition. Wow! This manual addresses all the basic principles of human life on this planet. We could say in acrostic form that the BIBLE grants us **B**asic **I**nstruction **B**efore **L**eaving **E**arth!

Why Drugs?

As a counselor, I constantly witness the effects of both legal and illegal drugs. In most cases the results are very similar. Every so often someone poses the question: “Why do so many people take drugs?” I can only cite that humans are needy souls, looking for something to relieve the pains of daily existence. This is a tough world. We came in upside down (head first) and we leave with a struggle; the journey between the womb and tomb is a rough one, at best. For many, it is unbearable.

What is a person to do with his troubles? What about the guilt of sin and the violation of his conscience, not to mention the physical and mental stresses that plague a human soul living in a world riddled with hatred and loneliness? In light of what people face every day between home and work, I marvel that the number of those depressed is not higher. I know that apart from God’s mercy, I could easily be one of the statistics. I have personally been in that dark, painful pit of despair and am glad to announce in this writing that there is indeed a way out of the dark. This “demon” can be defeated!

I do not treat this subject lightly nor mean to be simplistic about its condition or cure. However, neither do I want to compromise with those who make depression a mental illness which must be tolerated ‘til death’. It is certainly valid to mention that God allows bouts with depression, as with other conditions, to further our spiritual maturity. (1Peter 1:6,7)

This principle is certainly illustrated by the Biblical patriarch Job. (See Job 1-2) Under God's direction and permission, Job is exposed to horrendous trials and the attack of Satan. He is accused of serving God for material and financial gain, but God challenges Satan to prove his theory, granting the Devil authority to strip Job's possessions (1:12). When Job passes that test, the enemy is then granted permission to touch Job physically (2:4-6). The saga ends with Job's survival and victory over one of the most severe attacks of Hell ever perpetrated on a child of God.

Therefore, we must be careful to rightly diagnose our situation. The source of our dilemma is important to decipher. Not all physical conditions are simply physical. It takes wisdom and discernment to know whether we are dealing with a sheer medical condition or a spiritual attack. While God certainly allows these trials for His purposes, we must not conclude that there is no way out of the dark. Thus, to insist that a believer must spend years on end living under a black cloud of despair is a contradiction of the abundant power of the Gospel of God's grace.

It was the late D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, a renowned English preacher, who said:

"Unhappy Christians are, to say the least, a poor recommendation for the Christian Faith. And there can be little doubt but that exuberant joy in the early Christians was one of the most potent factors in the spread of Christianity."⁴

The great Spurgeon said: "The most powerful of all sermons is joyful holiness." By "joyful" he was not suggesting mere laughter or frivolity, but that fullness of the Spirit which fills the believer's soul with heavenly rapture. Holiness,

likewise, is not to be confused with “long-faced” morbidity. God has called us to be sanctified, or set apart, for His purposes. In Him we are made whole, or sound, thus reflecting the Spirit’s holiness through our lives.

In fact, our bodies have become the temple of the Holy Spirit whereby we have the privilege of glorifying God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). This is another way of saying that we live our lives in such a way that God’s character is displayed, and Christ looks great! That is, when people observe how we spend our money, care for family, house, business, church, etc., they know that we are not absorbed in this world but live with eternity in view. How powerful it is to witness a believer who demonstrates this divine combination of godliness (literally, God-likeness) and exuberant joyfulness!⁵

Chapter Two

The Early Stage of Depression

Depression begins somewhere. It is not an airborne virus or disease which attacks the body, nor is it primarily a mental disorder, as many claim. However, it does find root in one's thinking process; indeed, it is an attack upon the mind. This is illustrated in the following:

"It was once announced that the devil was going out of business and would offer all his tools for sale to whoever would pay his price. On the night of the sale they were all very attractively displayed, and a bad-looking lot they were. Malice, hatred, envy, jealousy, sensuality, deceit, and all the other implements of evil were spread out, each marked with its price. Apart from the rest lay a harmless looking wedge-shaped tool, much worn and priced higher than any of them.

Someone asked the devil what it was.

'That's discouragement,' was his reply.

'Well, why do you have it priced so high?'

'Because,' replied the devil, 'it is more useful to me than any of the others. I can pry open and get inside a man's consciousness with that when I could not get near him with any of the others; and when once inside I can use him in whatever way suits me best. It is so much worn because I use it with nearly everybody, as

very few people yet know it belongs to me.’

It hardly needs to be added that the devil’s price for discouragement was so high that it was never sold. He still owns it and is still using it.”

----Selected

Self-centeredness: Nothing New

This is not to say that Satan arbitrarily runs slip shod over people, but he does engage their reasoning ability. This is clear from his strategy toward the first couple in the Garden of Eden. His initial approach to Eve was in the form of a question: “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” (Genesis 3:1) This is vitally significant, because it subtly challenges what God said—namely, His Word! That becomes the whole basis of the temptation, sin, and eventual fall of humanity.

But there is another factor here that is often overlooked. Satan was not only challenging God’s word (command), but also the goodness of God’s character. Here was a subtle slander of God’s graciousness pertaining to the full provision of their needs. Why would God withhold anything from them? Was He hiding something that really should be theirs? Well, that’s just not fair!

How clever and snaky was this classic temptation of the Serpent! Notice that the tempter never commended God for anything. He said nothing about the beauty and bountiful provision of this paradise on earth. Rather, he fostered discouragement and discontentment in Eve’s heart by questioning the Lord’s loving-kindness and goodness in their behalf.

Isn't that the way it works with us as well? We have so much in our part of the world, and yet we never seem satisfied. It is so easy to emphasize what we don't have, rather than to be grateful for what is ours. We are blessed beyond measure and yet so prone to complain. The all too popular mentality is to ask: "What is in it for me?" We are possessed by self, which is the essence of sin. Thus, whatever comes our way is never sufficient. This greedy spirit further produces discontentment, which in turn makes life discouraging.

It is important to note that self-centeredness is an inner mental attitude. When the apostle John speaks of "*the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life*" (1John 2:15), he is referring to the sinful nature (mind) of man. Solomon put it another way: "*As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.*" (Proverbs 23:7) Worldly pleasure and power are attractive because of the gravitation of our fleshly nature. Remember that even Lucifer himself fell from his heavenly estate, not by getting drunk, but by his prideful lust for power!

We could also mention here the "hurt" of being rejected by others, the disappointment in losing a job or advancement, grief over health and family issues, a divorce or the death of a loved one, etc. These can be traumatic challenges which need to be handled properly by God's grace.

Beware of the so-called "prosperity gospel" in the church, which is patterned after the "self-esteem" message of modern psychology. This humanistic philosophy bypasses man's fallen nature and the need to be born again by God's grace through Christ. Man has always attempted to save himself and build self-esteem; his cry has been: "I did it my way." This same mentality has invaded the church in the form of "doing our thing with Jesus' help." What havoc this has produced, leaving in its path a multitude of depressed and disillusioned saints!

Little Things Unchecked Become Big

In a day when so much emphasis is placed on violence, drugs and sex, it is uncanny how many people are ensnared by the insidious power of discouragement. True Christians are very much aware of the “big” sins like adultery, drunkenness, murder, robbery, and the like. I would say that relatively few believers are engaged in such activities. Certainly, we have taken a stand against the gross sins of the flesh, and now, as new creatures in Christ, we live moral lives. Drugs and alcohol, for instance, are no longer part of our lifestyle—we have victory over our old ways. Yet, is it not ironic, how lethal are the remaining “little” sins of our flesh, like worry, fear, self-pity, and resentment!

We are not lacking in this day for psychological explanations for depression, which some refer to as “burnout.” Genetic predisposition is cited for its cause; that is, my parents were depressed, thus I have this “disease” in my genes. Others would blame their “mid-life crisis,” whether male or female. Still others use their temperament, personality, and nationality as causes. Lastly, many say they are overworked and cannot cope with the pressures of life. While there may be some validity in the above responses, they cannot rightly explain nor justify the epidemic proportion of this problem. Again we are faced with accepting the theories and hypotheses of human psychology as opposed to God’s infallible Textbook of Life, called the Bible. It is the purpose of this book to clearly demonstrate the life-changing remedies from the Manual of Life given to man by his Manufacturer.

Discouragement is commonly defined as the condition where someone is “deprived of courage, hope or confidence—to be disheartened.” Like other inward conditions, it can be hidden and go undetected, but eventually takes its toll. Fear and resentment may begin to mount, bringing further devastation to