**Changed Into His Image**

***Lesson Fifteen: Basics for Depressed Believers – Psalm 42***

**Introduction:** The Bible records not only the “high points” of a biblical character’s life. It also records their “low points.” The same Elijah that stood on Mt. Carmel is the same Elijah who sat under a juniper tree and wished to die (1 Kings 18-19). Upon the loss of her husband and sons Naomi wanted to be renamed “Mara” because of the bitterness that had come to her life (Ruth 1:20). Perhaps you too have come to some low points in life. The purpose of this lesson is to give you God’s remedy for depression.

1. **The Path to Depression**
   1. First, there is a disappointment that comes to a person’s life.
   2. As the person considers the disappointment he or she can become discouraged. They see little to no hope in the situation.
   3. Discouragement can proceed to the level of depression.
2. **Physical Causes of Depression** 
   1. Depression isoccasionallythe result of a bodily malfunction: a thyroid condition, certain infections, unstable hormonal activity, reaction to a medication, and so forth. For this reason, it is wise to seek the medical attention of a physician.
   2. True medical conditions of this kind, however, are seldom the cause of the depression we encounter in our lives.
   3. “Unless there is a truly identifiable medical condition, drugs merely mask the real cause of the problem: mishandled problems of living” (Berg 326).
3. **The Real Problem for Most of Us**
   1. The depression most of us experience is the result of a wrong reaction to certain losses in life.
   2. God designed us to experience a “down” emotion anytime we lose something that is important to us.
      1. The loss can be tangible like the loss of a loved one, a job, a friend, or money.
      2. The loss can be an intangible loss like loss of respect in someone’s eyes or a loss of control in some area.
   3. When we think about the loss, we experience what the Bible calls *sorrow:* *God-given emotion of loss.*
      1. Jesus experienced sorrow in the Garden when He thought about the upcoming loss of fellowship with His Father when He would bear the sins of the world and experience the agonies of crucifixion (Matt. 26:38; Isa. 53)
      2. Peter experienced sorrow when he remembered the time he denied the Lord three times. (John 21:17)
   4. Depression is the result of sorrowing without *hope*.
      1. We lose hope when we start thinking that things will never get better or that there is no purpose for our pain.
      2. The following is a summary of the dynamics of depression.

**Step 1 Normal Experience When We Lose:**

Thoughts of Loss Sorrow (Emotion of Loss)

**Step 2 Unbiblical Response to Loss:**

Sorrow without Hope Depression

* 1. The following warning can help you to handle loss biblically.

*Watch how you* ***muse*** *and what you* ***choose*** *when you* ***lose****.*

1. **Watch How You Muse When You Lose**
   1. Emotions are the byproducts of thoughts. To change the emotion, we must change the thoughts. Ask yourself the following three questions:
   2. Did God arrange or allow the loss over which I am depressed because it was wrong for me to have the thing I lost in the first place?
      1. A teenage girl who lost the unsaved boy she was in love with when he began dating another girl.
      2. An adult who experienced a serious financial loss when he impulsively purchased a time-share property, automobile, or household appliance after a high-powered sales pitch.
      3. It is important to remember that there are some things God never intended for us to have, and he mercifully arranges for them to be removed.
   3. Did God arrange or allow the loss over which I am depressed because I was becoming dependent upon the thing I lost instead of upon God for my happiness and stability?
      1. An industrious individual “whose life is their work” loses the use of their leg in an automobile accident and is confined to a wheelchair.
      2. A student who feels his happiness and stability are dependent upon what others think of him and loses several friends over an argument.
      3. A perfectionist who has to “have everything under control” and who has to “have their act together” experiences a major setback when they lose their job, or are diagnosed with a health problem.
   4. Did God arrange or allow the loss over which I am depressed because He simply wanted to show me that my Christian life was too shallow?
      1. If you genuinely are trying to do right but lose hope and become depressed when life is hard, God may be allowing the trial to further perfect and mature you.
      2. Consider: James 1:1-4; I Peter 1:6-7; John 15:1-2
2. **Watch What You Choose When You Lose**
   1. You can complicate your problems by making wrong choices when you are depressed.
      1. Go on a spending spree to forget what has been troubling you to make yourself feel better.
      2. Indulge your lusts and passions in sexual activities in order to “feel good” again.
      3. Binging on food to experience a little bit of

pleasure amidst all the disappointment.

* 1. If you are not careful you will also have to face the consequence of these decisions (debt, addiction, work terminations, shame, and guilt) along with your depression.

1. **God’s Antidepressant**
   1. When you begin to experience depression (sorrow without hope), identify what it is that you have lost.
   2. Ask yourself the three questions stated earlier to determine what God might be trying to say to you through your loss.
   3. Examine your thinking. Are you “leaning on your own understanding,” or are you thinking about your loss from God’s perspective? Does anything (thoughts or choices) need to be repented of and forsaken?
   4. Seek the help of a spiritual leader who can help you get your thinking about your loss in line with God’s perspective.
   5. Finally, remember: “Watch how you muse and what you choose when you lose.”