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Game: What are the behaviors of depression?

When I was in university, I spent an entire year avoiding deep communication with others. I didn't hang out with my friends unless it was necessary; in fact, I cut off almost all my friendships. I didn't want to talk to anyone and did everything possible to be alone. One day, while thinking about my future, realized that I was not sick in body but in my mind. I knew I had to escape this state, or my spirit would die.

As a result, through this opportunity, I came to know my Lord, and later, after fighting few years, the depression left me.

Game: What causes depression?

Different Causes for Depression?

- › In fact, there are many reasons that can cause depression. One cause is physical health issues. I read about a few godly people in history, like Charles Spurgeon and Martin Luther, who also suffered from depression. Their depression was caused by terrible physical conditions, such as severe knee pain, which led to long periods of suffering. In these cases, they rely on God to overcome it, the process was never easy. This may happen to any people who have poor body condition.

I know you are young, and most of you probably won't face this issue at your current age. So today, I will talk about another cause of depression: spiritual reasons. While some may refer to it as a psychological issue; however I would say that the matters of the mind always belong to the spiritual realm.

This is a common cause for most depression cases. If you truly want to fix people's minds or their spiritual situations, the only cure is to heal their soul. Many people believe that drugs can cure depression, but this is a mistake; it will never happen. I admit that some medical treatments can relieve the symptoms of depression and prevent it from becoming worse, potentially preventing suicide. However, medical treatments cannot cure the mind, they never will. No medical cure can fix issues of the soul.

You might wonder why depression is so common in this age and why it seems like it wasn't an issue until the 20th century. The truth is that depression has always been present, ever since our first parents, Adam and Eve, fell. However, psychology was only developed in the last century, and it was then that this condition was named "depression." According to the books I have read, it's clear that people have faced

same depression for the past 500 years, just like we do now. But without psychology, how did they face this challenge?

- › The answer is that they would go to church and seek counsel from their pastor. The pastor acted as a doctor of the soul, helping to restore their spiritual well-being by directing them to the counsel of God, understanding God's will, and following His commandments. Pastors would correct their minds, encourage weak souls, and rebuke proud hearts. Just as doctors fix the body with medical treatment, pastors heal the soul using the word of God. If you read old books, you will find extensive experience and biblical research on this topic.

Today, we call this "biblical counseling". I won't talk about psychology, which is a worldly theory of the human mind, a theory which ignoring God as our maker and ruler of life. Instead, I will discuss what the Bible says about Depression. God is the creator of the human mind, so let Him speak to us and provide the cure for depression.

What is Spiritual Depression?

My definition of depression is this: Depression is a "sense of no hope." People who suffer from it find no meaning in their lives, feel they have no control over their minds, and cannot take responsibility for themselves. They pity themselves, believe they are victims of the world, and blame everything around them. Gradually, they lose the ability and energy to face any challenges.

- › This is a completely different stage from discouragement. Everyone experiences failure and may feel discouraged by significant setbacks; however, they usually recover and are restored. In contrast, depression is a long-term state. While it may look similar to discouragement, depression is a much more severe situation. People who are depressed often lack the ability to recover or restore themselves. In other words, depression represents a state of hopelessness. A discouraged person can find a way out through hope, but depression traps someone in a pit with no light in the darkness, no water in the desert, and no air to breathe. It chokes people until the death of both body and soul. Depression shuts down every choice, causing the person to lose the motivation to do anything. Nothing seems to matter to them; even a slight burden can feel overwhelming, and a careless word can shatter their fragile heart.
- › The book by John Bunyan, "Pilgrim's Progress", contains a vivid chapter featuring a giant named Despair. He captures Christian and Hope, imprisoning them in an iron cage and using cruel words and violence to push them to kill themselves. I remember a scene from the "Pilgrim's Progress" movie where a man is locked in a cage, he keep crying out, "No hope, no hope." It seems like he can't escape from the cage, but the

key is right beside him; he could easily grab it and get out, but he just sits there in despair.

People who are in depression have many choices, but depression shuts them all down. The only way to avoid depression is to have hope for life. However, people sometimes cling to false hopes instead of seeking true hope.

Why does depression exist in this world?

I am going to ask a deeper question: "Why does depression even exist in the world?" and "Why do people end up in such a horrible condition?" This question is beyond what scientists can answer; it remains a mystery for psychologists. Unbelievers might recognize that there is an issue in the human mind, but they are unable to explain its origin. The answer is in the Holy Bible; it is revealed in the first few chapters.

| Genesis 3:8–10 (LSB)

| Then they heard the sound of Yahweh God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife **hid themselves from the presence of Yahweh God** in the midst of the trees of the garden.

| Yahweh God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

| And he said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and **I was afraid** because I was naked; so I hid."

Every horrible thing in the world can be traced back to its origin, which is sin! Before Adam and Eve's fall, they never hid themselves from the presence of God. On the contrary, they loved being in God's presence, as they were meant to. But one event changed everything. They chose to disobey God, and here's what happened next!

They hid themselves from God, and when God looked for them, Adam said, "I was afraid." This was the first time humans began to feel fear, shame, and confusion. Most importantly, they lost their meaning of life. The only purpose of mankind's existence is to glorify God, and now we have failed. At the same time, we lost all hope in life; we are spiritually dead, and death is counting down our earthly days.

- › Humans are lost—they have lost their life's meaning, their hope, and their Creator. They wander in darkness and the desert, with no direction or clear conscience. I would say this: all human beings are naturally prone to depression, or they are supposed to be depressed, since sinners have no meaning or hope in life. Their conscience constantly judges them, peace has been lost in their minds, lust has taken control, and confusion has become their master. Depression is the inevitable result for every sinner!

However, by observation, we can see that not everyone falls into depression, right?

There are many who do, but not all! So, why is that? What is happening? Here is what I want to talk about: false hope in the world.

False Hope

All human beings are naturally prone to depression. It should be their normal state because, after Adam's fall, no one naturally had hope. Sin cut off the true hope of humans. However, just as mankind invented many false religions, they also created many false hopes. People imagine that, without God, something else can provide true meaning in life.

I used to work for a family that owned a company. The boss admired success and always wanted to build a business empire. In the company, there was a room called the "Achiever Room," which had statues of great achievers, including Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister during WWII. Since the family had moved from England, I guess Churchill was a hero to my boss.

It was clear that my boss hoped to achieve great things. He had a goal and was working toward it. A few years later, he died from an illness. Before he died, he continued to pursue what some saw as vain glory. Despite his age and illness, he remained energetic and did not fall into depression. However, he was clinging to a false hope. It was really sad.

- › The reason that many unbelievers do not fall into depression because they still have false hope. They use counterfeits to replace the genuine, like using clay to replace gold. They create their own meaning of life and try to live for it, praise it, and encourage others to adopt it. They live in their imagination, seeking their own meaning of life and rejecting God's definition of life's meaning.
- › In worldly psychology, psychologists use a similar way to help people overcome depression. They might first provide medication to prevent depression from leading to suicide. Then, they try to instill false hope to help them out of depression, such as encouraging them to enjoy life or find something they think is meaningful of life or find fun in life.

This is why I never accept psychology in church: it contradicts what the Bible teaches; It is a human-created theory to explain the human mind and is not true.

The consequence is that people will miss the true hope of life and look for a fake hope for their life's meaning, leading them to hell.

- › People only feel lost and depressed when they realize their false hopes have failed. This makes it a good opportunity to share the gospel with them. If they are confident in their false hopes, they won't look for true hope. As long as they are proud of their

current state, they won't be humble enough to listen to the gospel. When they realize their hopes are fleeting and meaningless, it becomes the right time to introduce them to faith in Jesus Christ.

This is how I came to believe in Jesus Christ. I fell into depression in my second year of university because I was disappointed with my grades and friendships. I used to crave others' approval and believed that achieving good grades and strong relationships would satisfy me. However, I only saw competition, jealousy, and envy among my friends, including myself. I hated that life.

So, I decided to cut off those relationships. I stopped contacting them and didn't hang out with them anymore. I tried to avoid all communication unless it was necessary. I stayed in this state for a year, but eventually, I couldn't bear it anymore. In my third year, I looked for a club to join, and I ask a classmate to go to his Christian fellowship. He had invited me before, but I had refused because I didn't think I needed it. However, at that point, I needed to find meaning in my life or I would live meaninglessly. So, I went to the fellowship, and that was the first time I heard the gospel message. It was about the future, death, and the afterlife. I believed what the preacher said, and that was the beginning of my faith.

In the next few years, I struggled with my depression because my mindset was still wrong. I was ignorant of God's word and believed many of Satan's lies, which are this corrupted worldview. But gradually, I was corrected by the word of God. I learned to distinguish right from wrong, the way of life from the way of death, and to recognize whether a view was from the Holy Spirit or from the devil's deceit. This was essential for my recovery from depression.

What should we do to avoid depression?

Game Part-----

Just as we have said, depression isn't a new topic in modern society; it has existed since the fall of humanity. To address depression, I agree with the Puritans' old method. What is the method? Before helping a friend with depression, they always checked if the person was a true Christian. False hope is not an option for fighting depression; it won't help at all. Instead, it might lead people to believe they can live without God. It is just as evil as feeding them poison or leaving them to die.

First, be a true believer

- › Even though it may seem harsh, I have to say that there is no true cure for unbelievers. They are destined to be depressed because sin is the root of all tragedy. They might try to find some joy in life through false hope, but this is even worse than having no hope. Despairing people search for hope, while those who are satisfied

with false hope will despise true hope. Therefore, the most important thing in your life is to make sure you are a true Christian.

If you want to know how to confirm that you are a true Christian, you can find many verses about this topic in the Bible. To ensure you are chosen, this verse might help you:

| 2 Peter 1:10 (LSB)

| Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and choosing sure; for in doing these things, you will never stumble;

How do we confirm our sonship with God the Father? The answer is by doing "these things." What things? read 2 Peter 1: 5-9

| 2 Peter 1:5–9 (LSB)

| Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge,

| and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness,

| and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love.

| **For if these things are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

| **For in whom these things are not present, *that one* is blind, being nearsighted, having forgotten the purification from his former sins.**

Plainly saying, your life must grow day by day. If your life has not become more Christlike over the course of a year, you have good reason to doubt your sonship with God. If your life has never changed since you believed in the Lord, then you can confirm that you are not a Christian. The Bible tells us to be diligent in making our calling and election sure. If you are transformed and renewed daily, your calling will be sure. Being a true Christian means having a true hope; this is the foundation for facing depression. Otherwise, you have no way to overcome it.

Second, beware of Satan

The second matter is that you must not forget the deceit of your biggest enemy, Satan. Many Christians fall into depression because they believe a lie. 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 says this:

| 2 Corinthians 10:4–5 (LSB)

| for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the tearing down of strongholds,

as we tear down **speculations and every lofty thing** raised up against the **knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,**

The battle between God and Satan is primarily a conflict between Truth and Lies. John 8:44 tells us that Satan is the father of lies, while Jesus is the Truth. The battleground of Truth and Lies is in our minds. Satan establishes strongholds of lies in universities, society, government, and even in the church. This battle is not just about who is the true God of the world, but about every aspect of your life, including obeying God's commands and trusting Him in every matter.

- › Even though Satan may not be able to destroy your faith in the true God, he can definitely disturb your heart regarding your sanctification. He may lead you to believe his lies, causing confusion and disorder in your life. He may tempt you to rely on yourself. Instead of trusting in God's providence, he may encourage you to trust in yourself and continue in your old ways. Beware of Satan, especially in your mind.
- › About the deceit of Satan, unbelievers often cannot see this truth; they do not realize they are under his power. Worldly psychologists may tell their patients to avoid negative thinking, believing that positive thinking is the key to dealing with depression, but they are completely wrong. While much negative thinking may come from the devil, it can also stem from one's conscience and isn't always bad.
- › Furthermore, even positive thinking can come from the devil and may not always be beneficial, as it can lead people to become proud or self-centered. Satan knows how to deceive depressed people, proud people, lazy people, and even diligent people. To some, he offers sweet bait; to others, he uses harsh ways. He understands each person's weaknesses and applies the right method in proper moment to bring them down.

For example, Satan may tell you that you must have good grades to be useful, causing you to spend all your time studying while neglecting your faith. This is a lie. He may say that unless you have the affirmation of others, you have no value, leading you to sacrifice everything for others' applause. This is also a lie. Conversely, you may hold the right beliefs but feel despised by others, making you believe you are worthless. This too is a lie.

You must stay alert and examine your thoughts. Ask yourself: Does this come from the devil or from God's word? Study God's word diligently, join a Bible study, and participate in fellowship. Meditate on the meaning of God's word. Trust me, the time you spend in meditation will not be wasted! It's better to meditate on God's word than to waste time struggling with your depression. Believing a lie can lead your life into disorder and gradually pull you into depression.

Third, have a disciplined life

- › The third point is training yourself to have a disciplined life. I remember a Puritan pastor said in his book: "Laziness is a temptation to tempt Satan to tempt him!" This is so true, friends! Even though you have true hope in this life and know the way of life, if you ignore the need for a disciplined life to pursue this hope, you may fall into depression.

Think about this: Would you recognize a disordered person as a Christian? Those who fail to lead a disciplined life and mess up their own lives? If they say they are Christians, you might be shocked because a true disciple would not allow themselves to be like that. Lacking a disciplined life is like opening a door for the devil. "Self-control" is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Paul often compares disciples to athletes because they are similar, especially in self-control. Both aim for a goal—athletes aim for vain glory in this temporal world, while disciples aim for eternal glory in the next world.

Listen, you may hear of famous people falling into depression, especially singers or actors, and some even committing suicide. But you rarely hear of an athlete falling into depression. To keep their bodies in the best condition, athletes must lead disciplined lives. However, due to their disordered lives, singers or actors may easily fall into depression.

But we know that even athletes have only false hope; their glory is vain and short-lived. So, discipline yourself to aim for true glory!

1 Corinthians 9:25 LSB

Now everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.

Paul encourages us to work even harder than athletes because we have eternal glory waiting for us. If you have true hope and a new goal, then train yourself to reach that goal. This will help you avoid falling into depression.

Forth, teach and encourage your soul

| Psalm 43:5 (LSB)

| Why are you in despair, O my soul?

| And why are you disturbed within me?

| Wait for God, for I shall still praise Him,

| The salvation of my presence and my God.

This is how David prayer, he talk to God and meanwhile he teaches his soul!