

DEFEATING DEPRESSION

Today I am going to talk about defeating depression. Depression is all over America. I read the other day how many people suffer with depression. There are millions in America. You think people in other countries look at America and think, "If I could just get to America, life would be okay." Then they find that millions of people in America are suffering from depression. How can that be? People say, "They have money. They have a free country. They can do anything they want to do. They can be anything they want to be. Why are they depressed?" The fact of the matter is that depression is real in America. Some of you know exactly what I am talking about.

Depression is your enemy. Depression is from the devil. It is sent to stop you. There are medical reasons for it and we will talk about that. But, at the same time, you cannot achieve all you want to do with your life through depression. It stops you. We want to talk about how to defeat depression. I hope to give you some ways that you can really use and they will make a difference.

First, I want to tell you about a miracle. I worked with people who survived Hurricane Katrina. In Amarillo, Texas, 129 people came. There was one particular man named Bill in that group. He was told, "You have five minutes to get out of your house and you have to get out now." He lost everything, except his life. He was in the water for a long time and was finally picked up out of the water. He was put on an airplane. He asked where they were going and was told, "We don't know yet. When they tell us, we will tell you." The captain came on the speaker and said, "We are going to Amarillo, Texas. That is your new home." This man was thinking, "I don't want to live in Amarillo, Texas, in the middle of nowhere, nothing going on." He came along with 129 others. I met him because I worked there day and night. It was wonderful to get to be a part of it. He and his family watch this show, and he is watching right now. I ended up helping him in a very special way. He was in the car with me and we were going to get him some help. We began to talk and discovered we were from the same town. Not only were we from the same town, we had graduated two years apart from each other. That meant we were in high school together. Then I found out that he was in the band, and I was in the band. We were in shock. How could this man be plucked out of the water in New Orleans and sat down in Amarillo, Texas, and I meet him through this series of events, and now we find this out about ourselves? We just could not believe this happened. We were asking, "Do you remember so-and-so? Whatever happened to so-and-so?" It was a lot of fun.

He ended up being put in an apartment building with a lot of other people from the hurricane. I decided that I was going to take some Bibles to some of these people that lived in the apartments, especially a Jewish man who had asked me, "Could you get me a modern translation Bible." I took a lady to a place that our church has so she could get some clothes because she lost all of her clothes in the hurricane. I was looking at the Bibles. I knew they were free, so I started loading up Bibles in my arms. I saw a blue Bible that was a Living Bible. I like the Living Bible, so I put it in my stack. I thought "I don't need that Bible" so I put it back on the shelf, then changed my mind and decided to take it. I took my load of Bibles and went to the apartment house. I gave the Jewish man his Bible and he was so excited about it. Then I was passing out the Bibles. Then I asked Bill if he would like to have a Bible and he said he would take one. I gave him the blue Bible. I went about giving the rest of the Bibles and visiting with everyone. As I was getting ready to leave I walked down the hall and said goodbye to Bill. He said, "Why did you give me your Bible?" I said, "I didn't give you my Bible. I went to this ministry center that has free Bibles and I just picked up this Bible." He said, "No. It's your Bible. Why did you give me your Bible?" I told him, "No, it's not my Bible." He said, "It is your Bible. It has your name in it. Here, look at it." He opened it up and showed me. "This Living Bible has been presented to Betty Swann on the occasion of living in New York City, bought across the street from Carnegie Hall, on this day of September 1995." This is a Bible I lost seven years ago. I took it to Russia with me. I have Russian written in it. This is a very special Bible to me. I looked everywhere for this Bible and finally gave up and got another Bible. Seven years later, in the life of a person who of course was undergoing depression and had lost everything, God has him meet me.

We find out we know each other, and then more than that, this Bible is in his hands. We were speechless. We could not even talk. Then to let God really put a stamp on it that it is a true miracle, the lady who was the administrator of my ministry when I was the Women's Ministry at my church, starting walking down the hall. I did not know she was there. Her name is Janet and she was coming down the hall. I told her, "I was giving Bill a Bible and I gave him this Bible. Look, it is my Bible." She said, "The Bible you lost?" I said, "Yes." We were all in the middle of a miracle of God, touching a man, showing a man, "I know what you have been through and I care about you." I was looking at him thinking "Who are you? How could this all be happening to you?" It is a proof to an individual in the midst of the worst that can happen to you. "I

...all be happening to you? It is a proof to an individual in the midst of the worst that can happen to you. I know you. I care about you, and I want you to know I care about you." I guess I should have let him keep this Bible, but I just cannot tell you how much it means to me. I just could not let it go. I told him, "Bill, I will get you another Bible. I will get you a brand new Bible but I need this one." I had him write a message in it because I wanted proof. It says right here, "On 9/13/05 given to me by Betty Swann by mistake. It was her lost Bible, now found," and he signed it.

In the middle of depression, how do you handle depression? How do you defeat depression? Does God have a way to defeat it? Absolutely! Many times it can even be with God doing a miracle for you. You can think, "If God can do a little thing, He can do a big thing." Your depression can vanish just like clouds.

What is depression? There are two kinds of depression. There is the kind that is brought on by life circumstances, and there is the kind that is like a clinical issue. My family has a lot of depression in it.

Once I asked my husband if he thought I had depression. He said, "Yeah, about like Bugs Bunny." I am just a happy person. I am just made that way. I do get down, don't think I never do. I am not telling you I have it all together. I get down, but I cannot seem to stay there very long because my equilibrium says, "You can't be this unhappy, get back up there." Other people are of a different makeup. They are more melancholy and they know what I am talking about. It is really hard for you.

One definition of depression is anger turned inward. You are angry about something, you cannot do anything about it, and it makes you depressed. You need to deal with your anger and get your anger out.

Ask, "Why am I angry? Is there anything I can do about it? How can I have a different attitude? How can I look at it a different way? How can I pray about it and how can I get other people praying about it?" This is a way to get anger out. Another is through professional counseling. Do not let anyone tell you that you are a weak person if you get counseling because you are not. Another word for counseling is wisdom.

You are just going to people who have a lot of wisdom in counseling people. There is nothing wrong with it so do not make the mistake of saying, "I am weak if I have to go get counseling." In fact, you are smart if you get counseling. You are going to walk away and know things about yourself that you did not know before. If you had not gone, you would not have ever known them. You can get help. Help is there.

Depression is also a feeling of aloneness. You might feel, "No one understands. No one feels what I am feeling. No one cares. Nothing is going to change." There is a feeling of hopelessness in depression.

Some depression is clinical. Sometimes Christians are taught that it is a lack of faith to have depression. If you have clinical depression, for someone to come to you and say, "You need to get some faith. You don't have any faith in God," does not do any good. It pushes you down. When you are in the ministry, God wants you to be able to relate to people. You may not have gone through everything everyone has experienced, but at times God will give you a taste of something to let you know what it really feels like when it is something you would never experience. A long time ago, I had depression hit me. I am going to describe what I felt, and some of you watching this show will say that is exactly how you feel. I do not know what brought the depression on, but I got lower, lower, lower and lower. I could not get myself out of it. I felt like I was at the bottom of a barrel. I would try to get up and just about the time I would think it was going to be over, I would slide back down. I would try to climb up again, and slide back down. This happened over and over and over. I said, "Lord, I have never had depression. I know what depression is like. I am in a family that has it. What is the matter? This is not me." I felt like the Lord put it in my heart, "I just wanted you to know what people feel when they are trying to tell you and you can't understand." I think the Lord just let me know that.

The clinical signs of depression include: low self worth, want to withdraw, poor memory, bad sleep, up and down all night, a feeling of failure and irritability. There is medication for this. Do not punish yourself by not taking a little white pill because you think, "I have to be strong. I have to be a man." If you had a thyroid condition, you would take a pill. You would not say, "I'm not taking a thyroid pill. I have to be strong."

Clinical depression is a medical problem that can be corrected by medication and counseling. Do both. God has them both there. Remember, Luke was a doctor and he wrote the book of Acts, so God must think doctors are okay.

When you have depression, what could have brought it on for you? Did anyone in the Bible have depression? Yes they did. David wrote the Psalms. The Psalms is about half on getting yourself out of the hole, and about half on "Hallelujah, I am out of the hole. Life is wonderful. God You are great and I love You." Remember, when you are depressed, one of God's answers is "Get in the Psalms." It is His clue to you. How do you do that? There are 150 of them. If you will start reading through them, sooner or later you will find one that you think, "That is me. I just thought those thoughts." These were written about 3,000 years ago. David understood how you feel. God wanted you to know He understands what you are feeling. He had a man write it and put it in the Bible. There is always an answer. If you read the Psalms, the last few verses will say, "But I will hope in God anyway. He will help me. He will be here for me."

That is what you have to do to defeat depression. When you are down, the last thing on earth you feel

That is what you have to do to defeat depression. When you are down, the last thing on earth you feel like doing is praising God. You cannot even think of it. God says, "Praise Me anyway. Give thanks anyway." I have had times when I have been discouraged and I would think "I don't mean this but I know you want me to do it. Praise the Lord, Praise God, Praise You Jesus. Well, praise You Jesus. Hallelujah. God, I love You so much. Bless You Lord. You are so good. I am so glad I know You." It lifts me up. Praise lifts you up. Why is that? I hate to hear cussing because it is offensive. I do not like it and I want to get away from it. The devil is that way about praise. Praise to the devil is like cussing is to us. When you find reasons to be thankful in the middle of this mess, the devil has to leave. He cannot stay where there is praise in the place. Put on praise music. Do you have any good music that you listen to? Maranatha has good music, Hill Song has good music, Vineyard Music is good. There are all kinds of wonderful praise music. For those of you that live in America, at the end of some programs they might say "Order the top 20 worship songs for \$20." You should get that. When you are down, you would be surprised how it lifts you up. When I am getting ready to do these shows, I have to drive over four hours from my town to get here. Then I am in a hotel and I do 12 shows back to back, but I am all by myself. Sometimes I bring a friend, but sometimes it is just easier if I come by myself. What do I do to make sure I am ready to come and talk to you? I put on praise music. I turn it up as loud as I think can without the hotel or someone banging on the wall. I know praise drives the devil out of my presence. He has to leave. He cannot stand it. It fills me with faith and joy. I did that this morning. It was wonderful. I was listening to Gary Oliver.

What can cause depression? I am going to talk to you about some of the causes and I want to see if you have them. The first cause is a lack of self-esteem. Romans 8:37 says, "If God is for me, who can be against me." That is a good one. If the lack of self-esteem causes you to put yourself down in your mind, read Romans 8:1 that says, "Therefore there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." If you are in Christ Jesus, there is no condemnation. Sometimes I have thoughts cross my mind like "You can't do this, you can't do that. You shouldn't have said this, shouldn't have done that. Why did you do that? A long time ago you made that mistake." I got so tired of it. I thought, "It might be me thinking it, but I believe a lot of it is the devil." You might think this is crazy, but I do it and it works. When I get that thought, I look up to heaven and say, "Jesus, this is a phone call for You. Somebody wants to talk to You." Every time I have those thoughts, I do that. It has made them stop. I think maybe it was the devil. The devil is the accuser of the brethren. He accuses you. He accuses God to you. He says, "God isn't going to help you. Why would God help you? Who do you think you are? Who do you think you are that you could do something great for God?" When those thoughts, whatever they are, hit me now, I call on Jesus and say, "Jesus, you have a phone call. Someone is wanting to talk to You." It makes it stop.

Another cause is you have ambivalence about your character, gifting and talents. You would not be on this earth right now and listening to me if God did not have a great plan for your life. Some of you were never intending to watch Christian television. You just went to the remote control and hit this station. I am telling you today that God wants you to know you can do anything He wants you to do. You can do anything, and be successful at it, exceedingly successful at it. It says that in Ephesians, more than you could think of, more than you could dream of. Look at what I am doing. I never dreamed of this.

What if you have unrealistic goals? Many people do. We had a man come to us who was about 5'6" and weighed about 125 pounds. He said, "I am going to play football for the Dallas Cowboys." That was an unrealistic goal. He was not built to play football for the Dallas Cowboys. Besides that, to play football for the Dallas Cowboys, you have to make a cut above hundreds of men. You have to be excellent, the best. It was an unrealistic goal. He was sad because he never reached that goal when we talked to him years later.

Stop dreaming your own dreams. Dream God's dreams. They are better anyway. They are bigger. They fit you. They challenge you. They take you places you could never go. I got a prophetic word right after I started doing these television shows. I said, "Lord, I tell people about all the stuff you have done for me. I tell them about all the miracles, all the signs and wonders, all the healings and deliverances I have seen and done. I have a notebook of them that I have kept for 35 years. But, is that going to turn people off if I tell what I have seen and done?" I was speaking at Faith City Mission and a man in a Christian band came up to me and said, "I have a word from the Lord for you." I said, "Okay." He said, "I am not a tame spirit. Follow me and I will take you on adventures you never dreamed of." I said, "Okay, that is what I want. Adventure is in my bones, I want it and I will do it." An unrealistic goal is a goal you set for yourself. Maybe you said "I am going to be president of the company. I am going to own this company." Here it is 20 years later and you are not. Maybe it was not God's plan for your life. When God has big goals for you and big dreams, you have to pay a price. Maybe you did not pay the price. There is a price to be paid for leadership. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "I know the plans I have for you. They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you hope and a future." Does it lift you out of depression to think that God has a plan?

After you have had a baby, your hormones drop off and you can be sad. That happened to me one time after I had my first baby. I was not prepared for it. I called the doctor and told him "I don't know what is

after I had my first baby. I was not prepared for it. I called the doctor, and told him I don't know what is wrong with me. I am just sad. I feel awful and down." The doctor said, "Mrs. Swann, have you got the baby blues?" I just sobbed and said yes. That is just a natural function of life, like what I was talking about before.

Sometimes you do unfair comparisons. You might look at someone and say, "Look at what they are doing. I can't do anything like that. I must be crummy." It is unfair to compare yourself to someone who has a gift and a talent from God, a calling, and you do not have it. God does not think that I am better than you because I am on television and you are not. God let me know that really quickly when I started doing this. He told me, "I want you to do this. I am the one calling you to do it. Work hard and do a good job. If I tell someone to work in a business cleaning floors and they do the best job and touch people's lives, and they are smiling and are sweet and kind, and people see Jesus in them, do not ever think that is not just as important to Me." God let me know that. Do not compare yourself. There are always going to be people smarter, more educated, prettier, wiser, or whatever. There is always going to be someone better. But, there are going to be people looking at you, too, and saying, "I wish I could be like him. I wish I could be like her." For those of you who live in America and have never traveled, you can be poor in America and you are rich compared to the rest of the world. You have no idea how poor people are in some areas. God has put you in this country. Be blessed by that.

What are some specific things you can do? If you do it the wrong way, you are going to have a temper or try to have your own way. You are going to try to manipulate people. Maybe you will withdraw and stay in your house for days or weeks and never come out. You are going to be weepy. That is not what God has planned for you. He wants you to rejoice. He wants you to have good cheer. He wants to help you attack the problem. Forgive people. If someone has really hurt you and done a terrible thing, forgive them. Don't you want to be forgiven by God? You have done something so bad you killed the Son of God. Forgive them. It is not worth it. God will take care of them. They are not going to get off the hook. You can forgive them and go on. Get rid of that grudge. Do something nice for somebody. Right now, if you are depressed, I want you to think of someone that you can do something for that causes you to get out and go do it. Now go do that. God says He comforts us so we can comfort others, with the comfort He has given us.

QUIET TIME QUESTIONS

1. How can understanding how much God loves you help lift you out of depression?
2. How can reading the Psalms help you?
3. What does praising God do?
4. What are some of the causes of depression?
5. What Bible verses can you have on note cards or memorized to help you combat depression?
6. What are some specific things you can do when feeling depressed?

To watch the video on DEFEATING DEPRESSION, Pillar Five, Relational Skills, go to www.bettyswann.com.

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