

A photograph of a forest at dawn. Sunlight filters through the trees, creating a warm, golden glow. The trees are tall and thin, and the ground is covered in green ferns and moss. A red wavy line is at the top of the image.

DEPRESSION

EMERGING FROM DARKNESS
INTO THE DAWN

June Hunt



HOPE
for the Heart

DEPRESSION

Walking from Darkness
into the Dawn

JUNE HUNT



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Depression: Walking from Darkness into the Dawn

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Dear friend,

Do you feel the weight of the world on your shoulders? Do you feel stuck in a painful situation—you can't see the light at the end of the tunnel? Do you say to yourself, "I can't *see* anything that's good. I can't *feel* any sense of happiness. I can't will myself out of feeling so down!" If so, like millions of people, you are under the dark clouds of depression. And, if so, *I truly understand!*

When I was a teenager, I felt deeply depressed over the pain in my family. My father was not only unfaithful to my mother, but also verbally and emotionally abusive toward everyone in our family.

Struggling in the darkness of depression, I looked at life through a black filter. I had difficulty seeing any good in my circumstances and certainly couldn't see anything good in myself. I harbored hatred in my heart, felt helpless in the "here-and-now" and hopeless about the future. The pain was so intense, I even wondered if I was going crazy.

Then one day I genuinely invited Jesus into my heart and gave Him control of my life. The hurt in my heart didn't go away, but the Lord lifted the excessive burden that was crushing my spirit.

Today I can truly say,

*"Praise be to the LORD, to God our Savior,
who daily bears our burdens."*

(Psalm 68:19)

If you are walking in the darkness of depression, I hope these truths that made the real difference in my life will be helpful to you.

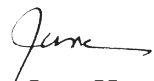
- #1 You need to see your life from God's perspective. He cares about you and has positive plans for your life. The Lord says, *"For I know the plans I have for you ... plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future"* (Jeremiah 29:11).
- #2 You need to know that God has a purpose for everything that touches you. Nothing in your life occurs that has not first been filtered through God's fingers of love. If God permits it, He guarantees He will use it for your good and for His glory. Romans 8:28 says, *"We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."*
- #3 You need to know that there will be times when your heart will be pressed down, but also times of restoration because God is a healer of broken hearts. He heals us when we give our heart to Him. And, He knows

how to restore our joy. Second Corinthians 4:8–9 says, “*We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.*”

#4 You need to know that no matter how great your despondency, God can open your eyes to His unique design for your life. Just as storms replenish the dry, parched soil, giving birth to new life, the storms in your life can revitalize your relationship with the Lord and give birth to personal growth beyond what you could ever imagine. Psalm 119:67 says, “*Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word.*”

If you are struggling with depression, my prayer is that you will see this time as an opportunity to allow the light of God’s love to comfort you, carry you and encourage you so that you can walk from the darkness into the dawn.

Yours in the Lord’s hope,


June Hunt

“*The LORD is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold
of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?*”
(Psalm 27:1)

DEPRESSION

Walking from Darkness into the Dawn

On June 20, 2001, the entire city—the nation, the world—was stunned when Andrea Yates systematically drowned her children in the bathtub—all five of her children ranging in age from six months to seven years.¹

In rapid fire, the shocked world asked, *How could a mother do the unthinkable—kill her own children? What could drive a mother to commit such a heinous crime, five times in a row?* In a word, the answer is *depression*—but not just “normal depression,” rather a *psychotic depression* that caused Andrea to break with reality.² Couldn’t someone have rescued this mother and these innocent children from their ultimate doom? The simple answer is yes. And the Lord admonishes us all to ...

**“Rescue those being led away to death;
hold back those staggering toward
slaughter. If you say, ‘But we knew
nothing about this,’ does not he who
weighs the heart perceive it?
Does not he who guards your life
know it? Will he not repay each person
according to what he has done?”**
(Proverbs 24:11–12)

DEFINITIONS OF DEPRESSION

Have the dark clouds of depression poured their tears upon your soul?

Do you feel stuck in your situation, muddled in your mind, mired in your emotions?

Creative geniuses and slow learners alike, international leaders and migrant farmers have struggled beneath the black clouds of depression. Can anything bring back the blue skies of contentment in the midst of depression?

King David of Israel discovered the answer to this question—he exchanged the darkness of despair for the light of God’s hope:

**“Why are you downcast, O my soul?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise
him, my Savior and my God.”
(Psalm 42:11)**

WHAT IS Depression?

If you place a heavy iron on a heart-shaped pillow, the buoyant pillow becomes pressed down—“depressed.” But the next day, if you remove the iron, the pillow pops right back to its original form. However, if you wait to remove the iron for months, the pillow will not spring back to its original shape. Instead, the pillow will be flat and stay depressed. A pillow, which can sustain temporary pressure, is not designed to hold its shape for long under heavy pressure.

The same is true for the human heart. When it is “pressed down” due to normal pressure from normal situations (situational depression), your heart is made by God to be capable of rebounding once the pressure is removed. However, He did not design you to live under the weight of heavy pressure for long periods of time without having your heart enter into a “state” of depression. During those painful times when *hope seems* elusive, your emotions feel flat and your heart feels sick, Solomon, the wise author of the book of Proverbs, explains that “*Hope deferred makes the heart sick.*” (Proverbs 13:12)

- ▶ Depression is literally a condition of being “pressed down” to a lower position (as in a footprint).³
- ▶ Depression can refer to a state of decline and reduced activity (as in an economic depression).⁴
- ▶ The apostle Paul used the Greek word *bareo*, which means “pressed or weighed down” to describe the immense emotional pressure and severe hardships that he and Timothy suffered at the hands of those who opposed Christ.⁵

**“We do not want you
to be uninformed, brothers,
about the hardships we suffered
in the province of Asia.
We were under great pressure,
far beyond our ability to endure,
so that we despaired even of life.
Indeed, in our hearts
we felt the sentence of death.”
(2 Corinthians 1:8–9)**

WHAT IS Psychological Depression?

In ancient writings, the earliest reference for our word *depression* was the word *melancholia* (literally “black bile”). The assumption was that the melancholy person had an excess of black bile, which resulted in depression.

In the second century AD, a physician named Aretaeus referred to his melancholy patients as “sad, dismayed, sleepless. They become thin by their agitation and loss of refreshing sleep. At a more advanced state, they complain of a thousand futilities and desire death.”⁶

Even today *melancholia* is defined as “a mental condition characterized by extreme depression, bodily complaints, and often hallucinations and delusions.”⁷

Psychological depression is a state in which the heart is pressed down and unable to experience joy. Those suffering with depression feel trapped underneath a pervasive canopy of sadness, grief, guilt and hopelessness.

Psychology is the science or study of the mind as it relates to thoughts, feelings and behaviors, focusing on why people think, feel and act as they do.⁸ Thus, the term psychological

depression pertains to the mental, emotional and behavioral characteristics of a depressed person.

Psychological depression is a condition that impacts the whole person: body (the physical), soul (the mind, the will, and the emotions) and spirit (the source of our deepest inner needs).

Psychological depression is an umbrella term that covers feelings from mild discouragement to intense despair.⁹

WHAT ARE the Four Classic Types of Psychological Depression?

How we respond to our hurts and losses in life is all important. Jesus cares about our hearts and knows that we are especially vulnerable when we are heavy hearted. He cautions us ...

**“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap.”
(Luke 21:34)**

1 *Normal* depression—situational or reactive depression

- An *involuntary* reaction to painful pressure
- The *normal problems* of life press down the heart for a short period of time (rejection, failure, illness).
- The *transitional stages* of life often press the heart down (adolescence, empty nest, midlife crises, major moves, menopause, retirement).

2 *Masked depression*—hidden depression

- A state of *buried* unresolved conflict
- True painful feelings are denied or covered up.
- Relief from pain is unconsciously found in self-effort or excessive activity.

3 *Neurotic depression*—a minor Depressive Disorder¹⁰

- A *prolonged* state of depression (longer than the normal time frame needed for emotional recovery)
- The symptoms interfere with normal biological and social activities.
- The cause can usually be traced to a precipitating event.

4 *Psychotic depression*—a major Depressive Disorder¹¹

- A *severe* state of depression
- A psychosis involves dissociation or a loss of contact with reality.
- The psychotic person can experience hallucinations, delusions and/or schizophrenia.

WHAT ARE the Three Divisions of Mood Disorders?

Every year, new maladies as well as new medicines come on the scene. So, how “new” is depression? As far back as the fourth century BC the famous physician Hippocrates gave the first clinical description of melancholia, including the erratic mood swings of what today is called Bipolar Disorder. And even over 500 years earlier, the psalmist King David gave this vivid description of his emotions during one of the most severe storms in his life.

**“My thoughts trouble me
and I am distraught. ...
My heart is in anguish within me;
the terrors of death assail me.
Fear and trembling have beset me;
horror has overwhelmed me.
I said, ‘Oh, that I had the wings
of a dove! I would fly away and
be at rest—I would flee far away
and stay in the desert;
I would hurry to my place of shelter,
far from the tempest and storm.’”
(Psalm 55:2, 4–8)**

1 **Depressive disorders: Unipolar depression**

- Unipolar (*uni* = one, *polar* = pole) refers to “one extreme end.”
- Unipolar is characterized by one extreme, emotionally low state.
- Unipolar is the most common type of depression.

2 **Bipolar disorders—formerly called manic-depression**

- Bipolar (*bi* = two, *polar* = pole) refers to “two opposite ends.”
- Bipolar is characterized by an alternating pattern of extreme emotional highs and lows called mania and depression.
- Episodes of mania are characterized by traits such as increased activity, incessant talking, loss of appetite/sleep and often excessive spending, grandiose thinking, poor judgment, immorality, impulsive behavior, hostile aggression and suicidal thinking.

3 **Etiological disorders—literally, disorders based on etiology.**¹²

- **Etiology** means “cause” or “origin.”¹³
- Under this classification are two primary types.

The first type of etiological depression is the Mood Disorder Due to a General Medical Condition. This means that the *unhealthy* changes in the body due to illness cause psychological depression. For example, 25–40 percent of those with a neurological condition (Parkinson’s, Huntington’s and Alzheimer’s diseases, Multiple Sclerosis and stroke) develop a marked depression during illness.

The second type of etiological depression is Substance-Induced Mood Disorder. This means that something entering the body causes depression. The substance could be medication, drugs or exposure to a toxin (examples: alcohol, sedatives, birth control pills, medications to treat various diseases such as Parkinson’s).

QUESTION: “Is depression a sin?”

ANSWER: Not always, but it can become sin when ...¹⁴

- ▶ You are depressed over the consequences of your sinful actions, and you don’t attempt to change.
- ▶ You are depressed because you choose to let others control you instead of choosing to obey Christ and allowing Him to be in control.