

April 6, 2003

Week Twenty-Five: "Overcoming Depression"

Day One: Small Group Guide

Read: Psalm 38 (p. 617)

Read: commentary (p. 618)

Reflect: have you felt depressed or discouraged recently? Why? Where was God in the mix?

Dig: Carefully read the Psalm and note below the symptoms of David's condition:

Physical:

Emotional:

Spiritual:

This Psalm is called "a petition." What exactly is the author asking for?

Read the "Freedom Point" on page 621. How does Psalm 38 put that insight into practice?

Apply: Using the chart on page 618, take a measure of your level of depression. If you are severely to mildly depressed, make sure that you follow the rest of the week's devotions; you may also need to seek Christian counseling. If you score higher, thank God for your spiritual/emotional health. Close with a prayer for yourself and others using the closing words of this Psalm to guide your prayer.

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Day Two: "The Basis for our Hope"

Read: Psalm 13 (p. 598)

Read: Commentary (p. 599)

Reflect: What gives you hope in trying circumstances? How do you try to lift other persons' hopes?

Dig: Go back in your Bible to Psalms 1-12 and notice how many of the Psalms are laments (cries of anguish). Notice how they begin. What does this tell you about honesty in prayer?

Notice how the little word "but" is so powerful in this Psalm. Compare with Psalm 10:14 (p. 597).

If this Psalm is a strategy for counseling those who suffer from depression, what, in a nutshell, is this counsel?

Apply: Put into practice the last verse of this Psalm (verse 6) and sing a song to start your day, asking God to remind you of this song often. You might use:

"O God, you are my God, and I will ever praise you (repeat)

I will seek you in the morning

And I will learn to walk in your ways

And step by step you'll lead me and I will follow you all of my days."

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Day Three: "Overcoming Hopelessness"

Read: Hebrews 6:13-19 (p. 1425)

Read: Commentary (p. 1427)

Reflect: If there is a "rock" belief under your spiritual life, what would that belief be?

Dig: What is the reason given for God's oath/promise? (see verse 17)

The analogy of an anchor is used to describe our hope. What images come to mind with this analogy?

We read "it (that is our hope) enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain." This is the place of God's presence. What might it mean that your hope is entered there?

Apply: God often uses the image of adoption (as does the commentary today) to teach us our permanent attachment to him. One adoptive parent writes, "You did not grow in my womb but in my heart. I love you." Also adoption entails an intentional choosing. Meditate on this truth for a moment and then form a prayer thanking God for adopting you as his child and heir of all the promises.

Week Twenty-Five: "Overcoming Depression"
Day Four: "The Problem of Helplessness"

Read: Exodus 6:6-12 (p. 69)

Read: Commentary (p. 68)

Reflect: Where in your own life or the lives of others can you observe "learned helplessness"?

Dig: Notice how when God speaks, he often opens with the same few words (see verse 2 and verse 29 of this chapter). Why might God keep reminding them of this truth?

Notice Moses' "learned helplessness" in verse 12 and then read Exodus 4:10-17. How does this background help you understand the mind of Moses and also the patience of God?

In the second paragraph of the commentary, re-read the three examples that the author uses to help us understand how common "learned helplessness" is in the human condition. Can you think of any others?

Apply: Turn to Psalm 61 (p. 632) and use that Psalm as a prayer (or sing it as a prayer) to overcome helplessness in your life.

Week Twenty-Five: "Overcoming Depression"
Day Five: "Overcoming Helplessness"

Read: Numbers 13:26-14:9 (p. 160)

Read: Commentary (p. 160)

Reflect: When have you been faced with a task that was completely overwhelming? How did you respond?

Dig: Read Psalm 95 (p. 654) and notice how this incident recorded in Numbers 14 was quite a turning point for God's relationship to his people. What do you learn about God's attitude toward our helplessness?

Read the "Freedom Point" on p. 162. What does this contribute to your understanding of the scripture?

Who were the only people who made it through the 40 years of wandering in the desert?

Apply: In closing today, read aloud the "Twenty Cans of Success" on p. 161. Conclude with a prayer.