

Care and Counseling Handbook on Depression

Frank Scognamillo
Barnett College of Ministry &
Theology, Southeastern University
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The Issue and its Impact

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, in 2017, an estimated 17.3 million adults (age 18 and older) in the United States had at least one major depressive event (Ogorek, & Isaacson, 2020) and a 2019 study found that an estimated 34.4 million of the world's population had a depressive disorder, making depression the leading cause of disability worldwide (Wilhelm et al., 2024). John White (2004) notes that “up to 60% of residents in a senior living community¹ could be mildly to severely depressed.” With such a high number of people experiencing depression, understanding the issues, impacts, and ways depression can impact a person from a spiritual, mental, and physical perspective could help improve overall care for people. The focus of this paper is to perform a brief exploration of the issue and impact of depression, and to provide spiritual and physical care for addressing the issue of depression with a focus on older adults.

¹ For the purposes of this paper, unless using a direct quote or referencing a specific facility, the term “senior living community” will be used to reference aged care facilities, assisted living facilities, rehabilitation centers, etc.

Depression is a common mental illness in older adults and depression is likely to increase in impact as people age (Özer & Tanriverdi, 2023). A study on confronting adult depression notes, depression can range from “mild blues to deep despair and suicidal thoughts” (McCandless, 1991). The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III-R) “describes major depression as a change from usual functioning [to a period of] 2 [or more] weeks, consisting of either [a] depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure in activities, and at least one of the following symptoms: significant weight gain or loss, insomnia or too much sleep, physical over-activity or apathy, fatigue, feelings of worthlessness and inappropriate self-condemnation, difficulties in concentration or decision making, and suicidal thoughts or attempts” (McCandless, 1991).

People dependent on others for personal care have a higher rate of depression than those who provide their own care. Stressful life events are among the most powerful predictors of depression. Other common causes for depression, for older adults, include a low level of income, living alone and not being able to share a problem you are facing with another person, feelings of insecurity because of living alone. Older adults’ who experienced violence or abuse in the past 12 months also have a higher risk of anxiety and depression (Özer & Tanriverdi, 2023). Finding methods to address the causes of depression can help limit the impact.

The psychological and physical response to depression can be mitigated by a strong ability to understand and manage your emotional response. People who can effectively manage their emotional response to circumstances can be more effective at managing the impact of becoming depressed (Cudzi et al., 2019). From a spiritual perspective, McCandless (1991) notes that people can misapply biblical concepts relating to perfection, self-denial, and surrender. This can have negative impacts and result in people not expressing painful feelings or seeking

emotional healing. Physical responses to depression can lead to sadness, loss of interest in life, low self-esteem, changes in sleeping and eating patterns, poor attention and concentration and a negative view of the world. In an extreme case, loss of hope can lead to failure to thrive.

The following is a brief review of some treatment plans for depression, with a focus on spiritual care. The American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines for treating major depressive disorders, from mild to moderate depression, include using antidepressant medication with or without psychotherapy (Özer & Tanriverdi, 2023). A form of psychotherapy to address depression is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy which encourages the counselee to recognize negative thoughts with a goal of making positive changes to thoughts and behaviors in order to handle the depression (Ogorek, & Isaacson, 2020).

Another approach, outlined by White (2003), discusses the benefits of pastoral and spiritual care to reduce depression in older adults. White outlines a study by Mowat & Ryan (2002) which links spirituality with improved mental health. White notes there is a relationship between spiritual life, well-being, and an older person's ability and capacity to thrive. As a result, pastoral and spiritual care should be an important element in the reduction of depression in a senior living community.

The focus of the care outlined by White (2003) is a recognition that we are body, spirit, mind, and feelings. These aspects need to be considered in totality, with a focus on the care of the human spirit, to assist in the reduction of depressive symptoms. Helping older adults express feelings and fears, in an environment where there is no fear of judgement or criticism, can provide people with depression a safe environment to share (White, 2003). This can lead to hope, a sense of purpose and usefulness to help people age with dignity.

Another means to provide hope is provided by White (2003). He recommends the use of a memory box, about the size of a shoe box, painted and filled with memories collected for the older adult to help reduce or eliminate the impact of depression. “The collection of items helps connect the life of the resident to their past and acts as an assurance there will be triggers for memories of their life.”

In a final method for addressing depression, Özer & Tanriverdi (2023) outline an approach for using biblical counseling based on Religiously Integrated Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. This approach tries to break the despair spiral by addressing stressful life issues and introducing the concept of purpose in life to provide people with a reason to thrive.

Helpful Scriptures

- † Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10 (English Standard Version, 2011).
- † I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. John 14:18 (English Standard Version, 2011).
- † He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. Psalm 147:3 (English Standard Version, 2011).
- † God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Psalm 46:1 (English Standard Version, 2011).
- † Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. John 14:27 (English Standard Version, 2011).
- † I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Psalm 34:4 (English Standard Version, 2011).
- † He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Isaiah 53:3 (English Standard Version, 2011).
- † When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!” Jonah 2:7-9 (English Standard Version, 2011).

- † Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life. Proverbs 16:31 (English Standard Version, 2011).
- † Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (English Standard Version, 2011).
- † For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Jeremiah 29:11 (English Standard Version, 2011).
- † Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. Romans 8:26-27 (English Standard Version, 2011).

Biblical Reflection on Depression

There can be a misconception that Christians should not suffer from depression. Henry Nouwen wrote that many people suffer because of the false impression that there should be no fear or loneliness, no confusion or doubt (Peterson, 2000, p. 134). White (2003) notes that hope is the assurance there is something more to life in the journey of aging and that without hope there is despair. He goes on to state that having a strong spiritual life can help a person deal with the issues of despair. A biblical example may help demonstrate this relationship.

By most standards, Job was seen as being at the top of his game. Well respected by the community, rich beyond belief (Job 1:3), blameless and upright (Job 1:8), a man of integrity with a recognition God was the source of his blessings (Job 1:21). When everything was taken from Job, his family, his wealth, his health, his wife encouraged Job to curse God and die (Job 2:9) and most of his friends accused Job of hidden sin (Job 4, 5, 8, 11). Through this experience, Job continues to maintain his innocence (Job 13:2) and even though he feels God has abandoned him (Job 19:1-22), Job recognizes he will see God and live for eternity (Job 19:22-27). Job responded not with cursing God but with worshiping God.²

Peter Scazzero (2017) wrote, the story of Job is the story of us all. Job quickly lost everything, while most of us experience losses over a greater period. We will lose our youthfulness, dreams, routines and stability. Many will experience one or more periods of catastrophic loss such as the unexpected loss of a family member, being stricken with illness, a painful breakup, divorce, or financial ruin. Scazzero (2017, p. 122) goes on to note that denying our wounds can “make us feel less human, an empty Christian shell with painted smiley faces.”

² Inspired by Peter Scazzero (2017)

This can be compounded by “feeling guilty for not obeying the command to “rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4) and to “come before him with joyful songs” (Psalm 100:2).

The apostle Paul, writing from prison about rejoicing in the Lord, was “not denying the pain of hardship. Paul’s joy came from the love and power of Christ, who in resurrection triumphed over sin and death” (McCandless, 1991). Paul provides the Philippians with an idea how to rejoice in the Lord with an encouragement that, “in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus Philippians 4:6b-7 (English Standard Version, 2011).

In contrast, McCandless (1991) notes that confusion about grief may also complicate depression and healing. Forgetting Jesus' grief at Lazarus' tomb, some persons may deny grief in the name of Christ's triumph over death or may interpret it as rebellion against God's will. Yet the most relevant New Testament verse to grieving, does not say "do not grieve" but rather "do not grieve as those who have no hope" (1 Thessalonians. 4:13). Tears do not indicate disobedience to God but can be infused with hope because of Christ's triumph over death (McCandless, 1991).

White (2003) contrasts the “life-denying” attributes of depression with emotions such as isolation, despair and sadness; with “life-giving-attributes” and emotions of hope, love, peace, and joy. Biblical joy describes a feeling of inner gladness, delight, or rejoicing based on spiritual realities. Jesus said: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” John 10:10 (English Standard Version, 2011). The Christian life is to be a life of joy founded on faith in Jesus, whose life on earth began as “good news of great joy” (Luke 2:10). Jesus gave us his joy (John 15:11) and his last prayer was for his

followers to have his joy made full in themselves (John 17:13). This joy comes through the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22, Romans 14:17) and does not depend on what is taking place around us (James 1:2-3) (based on an article from Koontz, 2020).

Annotated Bibliography

Ogorek, D., & Isaacson, J. (2020). Biblical counseling: An alternative for treating depressive symptoms. *Journal of Christian Nursing: A Quarterly Publication of Nurses Christian Fellowship*, 37(2), 80–87. <https://doi.org/10.1097/CNJ.0000000000000706>

Biblical counseling: An alternative for treating depressive symptoms is written by Dr. Denise Ogorek a certified biblical counselor and registered nurse, and Janalee Isaacson, PhD, and registered nurse. The authors discuss the impacts and causes of depression with a brief outline of traditional treatment options. The focus of the article is an introduction to Biblical counseling as a supplement to medical-based treatment. The authors note different studies exploring the impacts of religious verses and conventional cognitive behavioral therapy for major depression. They outline a 12-week treatment plan using Biblical counseling. They note the importance of recognizing the Scriptures as the authoritative standard and the importance of integrating hope, as obtained from the promises of God through a personal relationship with Jesus, into each session. The article also provides a brief history and information on receiving certification on Biblical counseling.

Özer, N., & Tanriverdi, D. (2023). Determining depression, abuse, and neglect in elderly individuals. *Psychogeriatrics: The Official Journal of the Japanese Psychogeriatric Society*, 23(4), 690–700. <https://doi.org/10.1111/psyg.12979>

Determining depression, abuse, and neglect in elderly individuals is written by Nesrin Özer, a psychiatric nursing doctoral program candidate and Derya Tanriverdi a faculty member in the Department of Psychiatric Nursing, Gaziantep University, Gaziantep, Turkey. The article is a review of the problems of emotional abuse, neglect, and

depression in older adults. The findings are based on a descriptive study of older adults looking at three family health centers in Gaziantep. The study reviewed at the probability of abuse across multiple risk factors (physical, emotional, sexual and economic abuse and neglect) and compared the rate of abuse and neglect based on multiple characteristics (age, gender, education status, income level, living alone, etc.). Based on the study result, conclusions were drawn, to outline at risk populations.

McCandless, J. B. (1991). The church confronting adult depression: A challenge. *Counseling and Values*, 35(2), 104–113.

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The church confronting adult depression was written by John McCandless, Ph.D. in Religion, and Associate Professor in the Department of Religion and Christianity. The article begins by establishing symptoms and reasons for depression. The focus of the article is a treatment of how misunderstanding certain biblical ideas can intensify depression and hinder emotional healing. The article provides correction for several Scripture that can be mis-represented such as “You... must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48) to make people feel they are doing something wrong or negatively person’s level of depression. McCandless concludes with a discussion on the need for the church to help provide instructions to parents to provide a supportive home environment and build self-esteem in children, to prevent depression from taking root in early childhood.

White, J. (2003). Spiritual and pastoral care approaches for helping older adults with depression. *Journal of Religious Gerontology*, 16(3/4), 91.

<https://doi.org/10.1300/J078v16n03-07>

The article was written by Reverend John White, MEd, Rector with the Anglican Church, and Academic Associate in a School of Theology. Spiritual and pastoral care Approaches for helping older adults with depression, looks at approaches to reducing depression in senior living communities through the introduction of spiritual and pastoral care as part of a treatment plan. The article examines common causes of depression in older adults and establishes a link between “spiritual life, well-being and the older persons’ ability and capacity to thrive.” Rev. White outlines the benefits of pastoral care to provide non-judgmental time to listen to the older adult and help them develop a community of faith and spiritual companionship. Rev. White also discusses helping the older adults overcome the fear of moving into a senior living community and the need to help older adults prepare for end-of-life issues.

Community Referrals

Healthy Waters Counseling Services, LLC

(407) 809-1819

Preteen, Teen, Adults, Elders (65+)

Cost: Individual Sessions \$150; Couple Sessions \$175

Counseling services to help clients face challenges at times of divorce, relational distress, the loss of a loved one, and mental health concerns. Designed for people feeling overwhelmed or lacking the necessary support or healthy coping skills to navigate life circumstances.

Mindful Health Solutions

Jesse Rodriguez Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner

(352) 758-3296 Ocala, FL 34481

Teen, Adults, Elders (65+)

Cost: \$200 per session

Psychiatrist services designed to help clients change their thinking patterns via learning to recognize their distorted thinking which may be creating problems. Teaching better ways of coping with problems and presenting understanding of the behaviors and motivations of others and how that may influence the client.

Marion Senior Services

(352) 620-3501

1101 SW 20th Ct, Ocala, FL 34471

<https://www.marionseniorservices.org>

Elderly, disabled, and disadvantaged residents

Cost: Free

Marion Senior Services is a nonprofit, charitable social agency providing supportive care services to elderly, disabled, and disadvantaged residents of Marion County, Florida. They help clients remain living in their own homes independently as long as possible by providing Meals, Transit, and In-Home Support services.

Better Living Senior Assistance Services

(800) 755-1458

8270 Woodland Center Blvd, Tampa, FL 33614

Elderly individuals needing home health care

<https://www.assistedlivingcenter.com/states/florida-assisted-living/>

Cost: Free

Local Senior Living Experts helping clients choose the right senior care. Get immediate assistance from a trained professional who knows your local communities and services. General services include help with medication and food as well as grooming, dressing and using toilet facilities.

Hospice of Marion County

(352) 873-7415

3231 SW 34th Ave, Ocala, FL, 34474

<https://hospiceofmarion.org>

Cost: varies, contact for details

Hospice of Marion County (HMC) provides expert, compassionate end-of life care to patients and families wherever they call home. HMC's care is holistic addressing physical, psychosocial and spiritual needs as well as their caregivers.

Strategic Pastoral Counseling of an Individual with Depression

Strategic Pastoral Counseling is a structured counseling model that is time limited, includes homework for the client, focuses on one central problem, and designed to show that “wholeness cannot be found apart from a restored relationship with God through Jesus Christ” (Brenner, 2003, p. 67). The following discussion is an approach to apply the various stages of the strategic counseling model, to a client dealing with depression. The framework for this strategic counseling model is based on Brenner (2003).

Session One - The reason for counseling – The initial meeting is designed to establish the reason the client is seeking counseling assistance. The session will start with a brief period of introductions to put the client at ease. Then, I will set boundaries such as noting the counselling will be conducted in a maximum of five sessions. The session will transition to a discussion to understand the primary reason for the client’s feelings of depression. This time will be spent listening to the client, encouraging them to talk, treating them with respect, and providing prompts and questions to gain information on the client’s personal story and their inner experience (Brenner, 2003, p. 76/77).

After determining the central issue for the depression, the session will transition to understanding if the client has taken any steps to address the causes of depression or noted times when the depression does not occur. As the session transitions to a close an agreement will be made on the need and time for a second meeting. Based on the central issue for the depression, I will provide a homework assignment to review one of the Scriptures from the 7 Day Devotional. In addition, I will ask the client to journal feelings of depression they experience before the next meeting and to note if there are times when they are not experiencing the feeling leading to the

depression. We will close in prayer, and I will note the importance of having God involved in our discussions.

Session Two - Understand the emotions – I will open Session Two in prayer, ask the client how they have been doing since the last session, and what they experienced as they worked through the homework assignment. Based on the input, we might have additional discussion on the homework assignment with a specific focus on their experiences leading to depressive moments compared to times when they did not feel the depression. I will make notes but not discuss the topics if they are off course from the central issue identified in Session One. Next, I will direct the discussion to understand the different emotions associated with the counselee's depression (Brenner, 2003, p. 117). Brenner also notes "emotions were given [by God] to enrich life and energize behavior" (Brenner, 2003, pg 90). Listening to the client's story is a way to help them share their concerns and can provide insight to understand how to address the central issue of the depression.

I will also ask about the Scripture reading to understand if there were any misconceptions of God. Based on the first session, I will select additional Scripture for the client to review and direct the client to continue journaling. We will close in prayer and establish a meeting time for the third session.

Session Three – Behavioral Patterns – We will open in prayer. The focus of Session Three is to look at the client's behaviors, those problems contributing to the central issue for depression and possible solutions. I will start the session by asking the client how they are doing and their thoughts on the homework. Then we will have a discussion to review their behaviors associated with depression. I will use this time to get an understanding of which behaviors might need change, and where the client might be more willing to change. I will look to the homework

and notes from Session One and Two as the basis for the discussion. For example, we might explore what activities lead to feelings of depression and discuss times when the person experienced those activities but didn't feel depressed. The goal is to help them discover the reason for their depression. As Pr. Pam Thomas noted, "if you talk to them long enough, they will come to the conclusion, instead of me telling them. I feel the Holy Spirit will do that, that's what the Holy Spirit does, leads us and guides us in all truth. But a lot of times it's by asking questions that they all of a sudden have an aha moment" (P. Thomas, personal communication, October 1, 2024). Having established one to three behaviors leading to the central issue of depression, I will conclude the session with prayer, assigning additional Scripture reading and asking the counselee to reflect and journal on the behaviors we discussed.

Session Four - New Perspectives – We will open in prayer. At this point I will ask the client if they are comfortable in opening in prayer. If they are, I will pay close attention to their prayer to better understand their relationship with God and any petitions they make. Next, I will check the client's progress on homework and then I will transition to a discussion on helping the client develop strategies for change. I will guide the conversation to focus on times when the client had exceptions to the problem we identified as the central cause of depression. The goal is focus on things working in the life of the client to help they find relief from their depression.

I will work with the client to direct the discussion in a way to set actionable and realistic goals. Another focus will be on helping the client get relief not just "from the struggles of life but to see the presence of God in their midst" (Brenner, 2003 p. 93). As we prepare to close, I will remind the client that our next session will be the last time we will meet. As homework, I will direct them to work on the goals we mutually agreed to. We will pray to close the session and set a final session for two to three weeks in the future.

Session Five - The Disengagement Stage – To start Session Five I will again ask the client if they are comfortable opening in prayer. Next, I will ask the client to review what they have learned from the overall counseling experience (Brenner, 2003, p. 97). We will discuss and difficulties that might still exist. There will be a recognition that while things are better, they might not be perfect, and the client will need to continue to work on the set goals we have set. I will be clear that this will be concluding our time together, but I will leave the door open to future sessions on a new topic. If needed, I will refer the client to another counselor if immediate work is needed in an area, I am not able to address. I will conclude by emphasizing the need to seek God in prayer and reading the Bible and we will close in prayer.

7 Day Devotional

Day 1 – Focus on the goodness of God

Meditate on Jonah 2:7 - *When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple.*” (English Standard Version, 2011).

Reflection – Our 7-Day journey into the Scripture starts with understanding how much God loves us. Jesus said, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” John 3:16 (English Standard Version, 2011). Jesus came that all might experience the love of God.

In our reading today, Jonah was called to tell his enemies about the love of God and the need to turn from their sin. But instead of listening to God, Jonah decided to do his own thing and ignore the Lord. Jonah found himself in trouble because of his actions. Once Jonah recognized his sin, and he recognized his mistake, Jonah remembered the Lord, prayed to the Lord, and the Lord rescued Jonah. We don’t need to sin or ignore the Lord to find ourselves in times of trouble. No matter the situation, we can turn to God. The LORD will always be with you, and He will not leave you (Deuteronomy 31:8) and our prayers will be heard (Revelation 8:4).

Day 2 - Whose voice will you listening to?

Meditate on John 10:10 – *The thief comes only to steal kill and destroy. I came that they might have life and have it abundantly* (English Standard Version, 2011).

Reflection - Most of us have had an experience where we replay a situation, either real or perceived, over and over again. Have you noticed we are more inclined to replay negative thoughts and experiences, with a small voice inside our head telling us what we did wrong, why we are not good enough, smart enough, loved enough? This is not the voice of our Father, God.

The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) show us a picture of the love God has for us. This picture is demonstrated through the actions of Jesus. Jesus, who tells the people – come to me all you who are weary and burdened (Matthew 11:28) and who the psalmist said of God, “For you bless the righteous, O Lord; you cover him with favor as with a shield” Psalm 5:12 (English Standard Version, 2011).

In our Scripture today, Jesus tells us “The thief comes only to steal kill and destroy. I came that they might have life and have it abundantly” John 10:10 (English Standard Version, 2011). When you hear that small voice, filling you with negative thoughts, know those thoughts are not from God and don’t let them pull you away from the love of the Lord.

Day 3 - Not sure what to pray

Meditate on Romans 8:26-27 *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God* (English Standard Version, 2011).

Reflection – It is amazing to know, that even we are not sure what to say, perhaps the situation feels overwhelming, or we just find ourselves at a loss for words, we can still come to the Lord in prayer. Psalm 25:4 says “Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths” (New International Version, 2011). This Psalm is attributed to David, a man the Bible says was a man after God’s heart (Acts 13:22). How reassuring it is to know that even David had times where he needed to seek direction from God. When you find yourself not sure what to pray, what to say; don’t worry. As a follower of Jesus, the Holy Spirit is in you and will guide you in your conversation with the God.

Day 4 – Fear is not from the Lord

Meditate on 2 Timothy 1:7 *for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control* (English Standard Version, 2011).

Reflection – Fear is something that affects all of us in a wide variety of ways. From fear of a social activity to panic attacks, fear is a legitimate emotion. But the word for fear used in our Scripture, means timidity or cowardice. The type of fear is not from God. God does not leave us with this type of fear, but instead, God says we are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). This is the same Holy Spirit Jesus promised he would send, the comforter, an advocate, a counsellor (John 14:16, 26). Jesus goes on to instruct us not to be troubled but to be reassured he will leave with us with his peace (John 14:27). What a blessing knowing, God will not leave us in fear but instead, gives us love, peace and self-control to manage those fears.

Day 5 - Rejection

Meditate on Psalm 46:1 *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble* (English Standard Version, 2011).

Reflection – Most of us have experienced a time when we have felt rejection. Rejection can take a number of forms from breakdown in your family, death, or divorce. Our tendency, when we are rejected, is to go into protection mode which can lead to our failure to depend on God. But the psalmist tells us that God is our refuge and strength! It's amazing that the creator of heaven and earth is our refuge, our shelter, and our protection. How can we overcome rejection? Remember that God loves you dearly and calls you to be his (Romans 1:7) and as followers of Jesus, we do not receive a bondage of fear, but we are adopted into the family of God and we can cry out Abba, to our Father (Romans 8:15).

Day 6 – Anger

Meditate on Ephesians 4:31-32 *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you* (English Standard Version, 2011).

Reflection – Handling anger is an important part of life. The apostle Paul said, don't let the sun go down on your anger (Ephesians 4:26). Paul recognizes we will be angry, but he encourages us not to let that anger linger and cause us to sin. One way we can keep check on our anger is by monitoring what we read, what we watch on TV, or who we hang out with. The Message Bible says, “don't hang out with angry people; don't keep company with hotheads. Bad temper is contagious - don't get infected” Proverbs 22:24-25 (The Message, 2018). Another way to keep check on our anger is to understand that as God forgave us (1 John 1:9) we need to forgive those who hurt us (Ephesians 4:32), and often that starts with forgiving ourselves (Romans 8:1)!

Day 7 – He understands our pain

Meditate on Isaiah 53:3 *He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not* (English Standard Version, 2011).

Reflection – When we find ourselves depressed, we can think we are the only one who feels pain, who feels confusion. But the Scripture tells us he [Jesus] was despised and rejected by man, acquainted with grief, and despised. We can relate to Jesus because he experienced the pain and sorrow we feel. Yes, our experiences will be different from those Jesus experienced but the same love that is in Jesus is in us as well (1 John 4:9-10). How did Jesus respond to being despised and rejected? We can get an idea when Jesus said, we should love the Lord our God

with all our heart, soul, and mind and love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39). Jesus responded in love and asked God to forgive those inflicting the punishment (Luke 23:34).

Putting the focus on someone else can often take our mind of our troubles as we focus on those around us.

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