

# Hope for the Depressed

Beyond a  
“Cheer-Up” Theology



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Beyond a  
“Cheer-Up” Theology

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**N**ever has so much been crammed into one word. Depression feels terrifying—your world is dark, heavy, painful. Some days you think that physical pain might be easier to endure; at least the pain would be localized. Instead, depression goes to your very soul, corrupting everything in its path. Dead but walking is one way to describe it. You feel numb, but you still remember when you actually *felt* something. Somehow that makes it harder to bear.

So many things about your life are difficult right now. Things you used to take for granted—a good night's sleep, having goals, looking forward to the future—now seem beyond your reach. Your relationships are also affected. The people who love you are looking for some emotional response from you, but you feel empty. Sometimes you are cranky and doubt their love, and then relationships are even more strained.

You aren't alone, of course. Depression affects as much as 25% of the population. But statistics

offer little comfort. In fact, a depressive spin on them can make you feel worse: You wonder why so many people are depressed, and you're afraid that means there is no solution to the problem.

Yet there is another perspective. God tells us that he cares about one wandering sheep in a hundred (Matthew 18:10–14) and counts the hairs on individual heads. If he has this much compassion for a solitary, lost individual, he certainly cares for you and such a large group of suffering people. You may not understand *how* he cares for you, but you can be certain that he does.

### **Suffering Makes Us Aware of God**

You are suffering, and suffering brings God into view. That's the way it always happens. The soldier who escapes from a treacherous battle will instinctively thank God. The stockbroker who just lost a fortune might instinctively curse him. When hardships come, we either cry out to God for help, shake our fist at him, or do both. There is actually a picture

of this in the Bible: Throughout history God has taken his people out into the wilderness, and you are certainly in the wilderness.

The journey in the wilderness is intended, in part, to reveal what is in our hearts, and to teach us to trust God in both good times and hard times. Why does he do this? To show us those things that are most important. Don't forget that God takes his *children* into the wilderness. He even led his only Son into the wilderness. We shouldn't be surprised if he takes us there as well.

While you are in the wilderness what are you seeing in your own heart? How are you relating to God? Do you avoid him? Ignore him? Get angry at him? Do you act as though he is very far away and too busy with everything else to attend to your suffering? Are you frustrated that God is powerful enough to end your suffering but he hasn't?

In your depression, let God reveal your heart. You might find spiritual issues that contribute to or even cause your depression.