

Keys to Beat the Blues

Most of us have gone through seasons of depression, discouragement, and despair. Some have good reasons. Maybe their spouse left or a loved one died. Others cannot quite pinpoint the reason, but they just feel down. Whatever the case, the One who made us has shown us things we can do to defeat these destructive feelings and patterns. Some of the remedies may sound simple, while others you never considered, but take these things to heart and they will help pull you out of despair. I can recall occasions in the past when I just felt down and I didn't know why. On some occasions I wanted to feel sad, so I wallowed in my depressed state. There is little one can do for those in this condition. In order to get better, you must want to get better. However, there were times when I was tired of feeling down and I started to search myself to find out why I was feeling bad. I would at times trace the feeling back to some little insignificant thing that happened. Once I identified the problem, I began to assure myself that it wasn't as bad as I was making it out to be. So the first thing I would encourage is to think about what is making you feel down and say with David, "my spirit makes diligent search" (Ps. 77:6)

Physical Health

Often when we are feeling down, we like to sit inside and pout. In this condition, we are drawn to depressing things. We like sad movies, listen to sad music, and think defeating thoughts. All this only makes matters worse. In order to conquer the blues, we must recognize the value of healthy living. The Bible says, "a faithful ambassador brings health" (Prov. 13:17). There is a clear connection between our physical and mental, or emotional health. For this reason it is crucial that we maintain physical health during times when we are

depressed or disposed to depressing thoughts. Drink plenty of water, eat proper amounts of healthy foods and rest. The Bible says be "temperate in all things" (1 Cor. 9:25). That means we must be careful not to get too much or too little in our food or rest. Both extremes will hurt more than help. Even if you are not working, get yourself on some kind of regular schedule. Exercise is also very helpful. Start a regular exercise routine, but keep in mind that outdoor exercise is best. The Bible also says, "light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun" (Ecc. 11:7). Studies have proven that sunlight is a powerful medicine used for defeating depression.

Emotional Health

Attitude is so important. The Bible says, "a merry heart does good, like medicine" (Prov. 17:22). This has been scientifically backed even by those who don't believe the Bible. There's an old saying in alcoholics anonymous that says, "Fake it till you make it." That is, go through the motions until you start believing it, and feeling it. Even if you are depressed, act like you are not depressed. Smile and be cheerful. The very act of smiling produces chemicals in your brain that help stir up happy feelings. Not only that, it will lead others to smile and be cheerful back at you which also stirs up happiness. So often we talk about chemical imbalances in the mind without trying to change those chemical through our behavior, but God has given the mind amazing abilities if we will put it to work. Another thing we can do to defeat depression is train ourselves to look at the positive side of life, even in the darkest circumstances. This will take work. It does not come naturally, which is why most don't do it, but if you are willing to make the effort to change the way you look at things, looking at the positive side of things, trying to make

lemon-ade out of lemons, you will soon find the clouds of depression dissipating.

Spiritual Health

Whether you believe in God or not, sin leads to depression. While even the Bible admits that the "passing pleasures of sin" continue for a season, they do not last (Heb. 11:25). Sin ends in guilt, despair, discouragement, depression, and other feelings of hopelessness. The Bible says "the way of the unfaithful is hard," and anyone "who sows iniquity will reap sorrow" (Prov. 13:15; 22:8). Sadly, the things most think bring them happiness are the very things that are holding them in the chains of depression. Get rid of things considered ungodly. Sinful practices naturally depress the soul by leaving a lingering internal sense of guilt. Even if we are not aware of the influence, sinful habits bring us down, so make some changes. Get rid of pornography, alcohol, and cigarettes. Give up gambling. Stop using foul language. Take up some new hobbies that are not considered sinful. Go white water rafting, lean the guitar, take up ice skating or skiing. Trying living spiritually pure. Join a church group. Try reading your Bible. Spend more time in prayer and see how your feelings start to change, for "godliness is profitable for all things" (1 Tim. 4:8). You may be surprised at what a difference it makes.

Look Without

So many people spend their lives chasing after things they think will make them happy, not realizing that even if they gained the earthly treasures they would not be happy. This is seen in the lives of many famous people who have seemingly everything, but are miserable. The reason is because true happiness comes through giving rather than getting. True happiness comes in serving others. While the world tells

you to love yourself first, God says, “in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself” (Phil. 2:3). “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over” (Luke 6:38). When we give, we reap the benefits of joy, peace, and true satisfaction. The reason most do not find true fulfillment in life is because they refuse to believe that happiness comes through serving others. Those who have dedicated their lives to service know that it’s true. This will require some effort on your part, but look for some way you can help others. Share Jesus with the lost. Visit elderly in nursing homes, or do volunteer work. See how many people you can make smile. Trying to make others happy, healthy, and whole is a sure remedy for depression.

Finding the Source

Most are so busy chasing after the fruits of happiness, peace, and fulfillment in life that we ignore the source. While physical helps, mental exercises, medication, and other things may help on some level, God is the source from which all the waters of true happiness flow. The Bible says, “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness” and more (Gal. 5:22). God is the source of all good things. James 1:17 says, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father.” Tragically, this is often the last place people search. Still, those who finally come to the end of their rope and are ready to turn to God in their despair will find the fruits of joy “pressed down, shaken together, and running over!” So why don’t you turn to God right now, say a prayer and invite the source of joy into your heart, then get up and live out the Bible principles that have been presented here and beat these blues.

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