

Depression Versus Joy: What Would YOU Choose?

Did you know that depression is a serious medical illness affecting 9.9 million American adults? More than twice as many women (6.7 million) as men (3.2 million) suffer from major depressive disorder each year. Not too long ago, I was one of those statistics. I struggled with depression as a teenager into my early twenties. I couldn't seem to pull myself out of it. I felt so alone and hopeless. At one point, it seemed to have conquered me. I couldn't see a future; I couldn't see happiness. I isolated myself from all family and friends. My health declined rapidly. Maybe you can relate to my experience.

During my senior year in college, I randomly came across an on-campus bible study: InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. It was here that I began to learn about God—about His character and His promises. I began to understand why he died on the cross. It was because he took my place for every wrong thing I had ever done (sin). He died so I would be forgiven. And he also died so I could **live**—so that I could be free from depression. He willingly gave his life because He loves me immensely and offers me forgiveness if I ask for it. As my relationship with Jesus grew, my life began to change. Depression could not control me any longer. Sure it tried, but it couldn't. It did not have power over me any longer.

Do you know that in the bible God 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) I have this verse hung up over my computer at home as a reminder of where I've been and where I am now. Now I can honestly say that I **feel** happiness and I know what joy really is. I am telling you my story so that you will know that you have a hope and a future. God cares deeply for you and wants to have a personal relationship with you. Perhaps you've heard about people being 'born again' and finding real peace and having more love and joy than they ever thought possible. Well, it's true. It happened to me. I've been in pursuit of knowing the Lord more and more since.

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If you feel hopeless or depressed, Jesus can help you to overcome that and replace depression with joy. He wants to help you because He loves you. How do I know that He loves you? I know it because Jesus Christ, God's *only* son, was willing to die for your sin so that you could become part of His family. If you had been the only person with sin in the whole world, Christ still would have gone to the cross as a sacrifice for your sins. That's how much He loves you! This is why one of the most important things you can do is to begin to see yourself the way God sees you. You will not be the same once you realize God's love is focused on you. "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1)

Depression is not forever. Depression is death- a slow death with much pain and grief. Jesus is offering you **life**. He has done everything possible to wash away your sins and bring you into a personal relationship with Himself. But you must respond to his love. How can you do that? You can pray this prayer right now:

Dear Lord Jesus, Thank you for loving me. I believe that You died for me on the cross. I am sorry for my sins and I ask for your forgiveness. I want to turn from my sins. I ask you for a new life and to make me a part of your family. I invite you into my heart. I want to trust You and follow You as Lord and Savior. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Remember, God is only a prayer away, and He stands ready to receive you. Grab a Bible, and see what God says about His love for you. God wants to change and give you an inner peace you have never known- and He will, as you turn in faith to him. Know that Christ is with you, and He will never leave you no matter what the future holds for you.

To get to know Him it is important to (1) pray, (2) read the Bible, and (3) follow His leading in your life every day.

God has a glorious plan for your life--ask Him He will help you!

CUT--HERE

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