

ROCK BOTTOM



how to win over depression and loneliness

World Challenge

Live a Better Life, Make a Better World Through Jesus Christ

Copyright © 2019 by World Challenge, Inc.

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner without the express written permission of World Challenge, Inc.

For permission requests or to order additional copies, go online at worldchallenge.org/contact or write to us at P.O. Box 8930, Pueblo, CO 81008-9802.

Printed in the United States of America.

WALKING THROUGH THE VALLEY OF DEPRESSION

In an interview with *Variety*, Jared Padalecki — American actor with an estimated net worth of \$12 million and father of three — talked about his struggle with depression: “I was 25 years old. I had my own TV show. I had dogs that I loved and tons of friends, and I was getting adoration from fans, and I was happy with my work, but I couldn’t figure out what it was; it doesn’t always make sense is my point. It’s not just people who can’t find a job, or can’t fit in in society that struggle with depression sometimes.”

He went on to describe an event that pushed him into speaking out about his own depression. “I had just lost another friend — not the first friend, unfortunately, I’ve lost to suicide — but I lost a friend here in Vancouver who I knew for 10 years, and he lost his battle with depression.”

For the nominally Catholic but largely nonreligious actor, he seems to approach this issue as purely medical, maybe with a dash of social causality.

Another actor and Hollywood star who would seem “to have it all” also admitted to wrestling with mental health issues. Dwayne Johnson was ranked in *Forbes* as one of the world’s highest paid actors, and he was also put on the *Time* “100 Most Influential People in the World” list in both 2016 and 2019.



However, he openly discussed his bouts of depression on the Oprah Winfrey Network. “I found that, with depression, one of the most important things you could realize is that you’re not alone. You’re not the first to go through it; you’re not going to be the last to go through it. And oftentimes — it happens — you just feel like you’re alone. You feel like it’s only you. You’re in your bubble.

“I wish I had someone at that time who could just pull me aside and [say], ‘Hey, it’s gonna be OK. It’ll be OK.’ So, I wish I knew that. Just got to remember, hold on to that fundamental quality of faith. Have faith. And on the other side of your pain is something good.”

With the seeming contradiction of wealth and unhappiness in mind, David Wilkerson asked the poignant question of “Why is it that when people attain what they want in life — fame, money, love, position — suddenly everything loses all meaning? At what seems to be the height of living, many end up instead hitting rock bottom.”

He was quick to point out, however, that the rich and famous aren’t the only people to face this issue.

“I know a young mother in Harlem who’d hit rock-bottom with a problem of another kind. Every time she opened a cupboard door, roaches scattered in all directions. A single light bulb hung on a cord directly over her baby’s crib. ‘That’s to keep the rats from biting my baby in the middle of the night,’ she told me.”



The child had been bitten twice already.

“Don’t preach religion to me,’ she said. ‘What I need is a decent place to live and a safe place for my child to grow up. These rich people talk about how miserable they are. Say money doesn’t satisfy. But just give me a chance with their money, and I’ll show you what happiness means.

“Money. That’s all it takes to be happy. These people who’ve got it keep on getting more. And they’re the ones who tell me that if I had it, I’d be miserable. Hey, just try me! I’ll trade places with them any day.”

Within all of these experiences with hitting rock bottom is a cry that is both wildly diverse and yet terribly simple at its core: “I would be able to beat this if only I had —”

While better support systems, more awareness programs, closer friends to keep you company or more money might temporarily help, none of these or the thousands of solutions people have come up with across the ages have been able to save our souls from feeling shaken by life, knocked down and badly bruised.



THE UNSHAKABLE BLUES

David Wilkerson was no stranger to hearing the stories of very ordinary people — not just mind-bogglingly wealthy celebrities or the desperately poor — who were trying to articulate their soul-deep dissatisfaction with life as they were presently living it. He once related the deceptively mild yet disturbing content of a letter he'd seen from a sixteen-year-old girl in Dallas.

There has to be more to life than what I've experienced. Church is boring. Classes are boring. So you get the fever on weekends and you go out cruising and boozing. If you're in the mood, you give and get some sex. You do a few joints, you snort a little coke, and most of all you party. For what? You still end up down. You still feel rejected, guilty and lonely. Life is supposed to be free, so why do I feel like a prisoner? Why doesn't anything I do make me happy? I'm convinced I'll never be satisfied.

This girl had what most people would consider the setup for success. She was in school and appears to have had friends and an active social life. Not only that, but she was going to church. On the surface, she would've appeared to have all the Christian boxes checked.

From a secular point of view, she had the freedom to experiment with drugs, but she didn't seem addicted. She'd experienced the “sexual liberation” that



liberal second- and third-wave feminists demanded for their generations.

None of these tokens, Christian or secular, seem to have helped her.

Nor would many people be willing to argue that today's youth — or many others, for that matter — are much better off. A research project collaborating with the University of Oxford conducted a study on depression and anxiety disorders worldwide in 2016, and they found that about 322 million people globally suffer from depression, making it one of the most predominant modern psychological disorders.

In his own reflections on depression and social ills, David Wilkerson wrote, “Why are so many people in the pits of despair? Why is there such widespread depression, emptiness and spiritual poverty? In spite of prosperity and every available pleasure, as a whole, this nation is miserable.”

Depression is difficult to explain away in a society with one of the highest standards of living in the world currently. Some may try to lay all of the blame on genetics or child-development theories, but far more start to looking doubtfully at their own lives, wondering if they've been cursed or helplessly trapped in the consequence-vortex of poor past choices.

Certainly one biblical figure who wrestled with these questions was the writer of Ecclesiastes, most commonly believed to be King Solomon.



“He was reputed to be the wisest man of his generation,” pointed out David Wilkerson in his writings on this man and his book, “so he decided to use that wisdom to discover the meaning of life, and he experienced everything imaginable in his quest. Still, he came up empty: ‘I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind’ (Ecclesiastes 1:13-14 NKJV).

“He gave himself wholeheartedly to fun and pleasure. He drank fine imported wines and partied with his friends and companions, but the parties, the wine and the laughter left him empty. ‘I said in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure”; but surely, this also was vanity. I said of laughter — “Madness!”; and of mirth, “What does it accomplish?” I searched in my heart how to gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun’ (Ecclesiastes 2:1-3, 11).



“Solomon then decided to turn his energies to creative work. ‘If I work hard and stay busy,’ he reasoned, ‘I’ll find peace of mind.’

“He built mansions, expensive architectural masterpieces. He added exotic gardens with reflecting pools, fruit orchards and huge barns for his horses. He amassed a fortune in silver and gold, prize cattle and the very best art collection of his day. He maintained a harem of the most beautiful women in all the world. Indeed, he stated, ‘Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure...’ (Ecclesiastes 2:10).”

Once Solomon had indulged and intuited that none of these things would satisfy, he seemed to fall into a bitter self-loathing. “I hated my life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind” (Ecclesiastes 2:17).

Very little here indicates repentance so much as self-incrimination in which he resigned himself to the consequences of his choices and how he had directed his life.

“I turned my heart and despaired of all the labor in which I had toiled under the sun.... For what has man for all his labor, and for the striving of his heart with which he has toiled under the sun? For all his days are sorrowful, and his work burdensome; even in the



night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity” (Ecclesiastes 2:20, 22-23).

Centuries later, that same sense of futility and nihilism grips our society. It happens even to the busiest, wealthiest, most industrious and successful people. In spite of pursuing everything life has to offer, they often experience an unshakable depression. They end up convincing themselves that they’ve condemned themselves to heartbreak, interspersed only occasionally by brief moments of peace and joy.

To make matters worse, no one can shake the indelible sense that this is not how life should be.

“It is the vision of which Cosette sings amidst the squalor of Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables*, her ‘castle on a cloud,’” James K. A. Smith muses in his book *You Are What You Love*.

“To be human, we could say, is to desire the kingdom — some kingdom. To call it a ‘kingdom’ is to signal that we’re not talking only about some personal, private Eden — some individual nirvana — but that we all live and long for a social vision of what we think society should look like too.

“That’s why there’s something ultimate about this vision: to be oriented toward some sense of the good life is to pursue some vision of how the world ought to be.”



THE WORLD THAT OUGHT TO BE

David Foster Wallace, a troubled philosopher and writer who had a life-long struggle with depression, commented on the heart of many people's bone-deep dissatisfaction in his article "Plain Old Untrendy Troubles and Emotions."

"In the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping.

"Worship your own body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly.... Worship power — you will feel weak and afraid, and you will need ever more power over others to keep the fear at bay. Worship your intellect, being seen as smart — you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out.

"The insidious thing about these forms of worship... is that they are unconscious. They are default settings. They're the kind of worship you just gradually slip into, day after day, getting more and more selective about what you see and how you measure value without ever being fully aware that that's what you're doing."

From a Christian point of view, James K. A. Smith outlines the Bible's description of this issue. "God has created us for himself and our hearts are designed to find their end in him, yet many spend their days



restlessly craving rival gods, frenetically pursuing rival kingdoms.”

Salvation and ultimately each moment of repentance are a recognition of our need for God at the center of our lives to give us purpose and meaning.

Bernhard Langer, one of the best golfers of his generation, expressed how this truth brought him out of some of his own life’s darkest hours.

“The lifestyle we all (especially us sportsmen) are leading — it is all about money and who you are and who you know and what you have, and these things aren’t really the most important things. I think people who have these things, they realize that... there is still something missing in their life, and I believe that is Jesus Christ.”

David Wilkerson also emphatically wrote about this in his own articles and books about depression. “God’s message is simple and clear: He promises that he alone is the source of all meaningful life, and that any human being can discover his or her full potential through faith in him.

“The Bible states this emphatically. True happiness, joy and peace are found only in Jesus Christ. It says, ‘For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he made the Son to be the source of life’ (John 5:26 KJV).”

A relationship with God reorients us to our true purpose on this earth, the way humanity was intended



to operate before the fall in Genesis. “Christ offers not just a superficial respite for the troubled soul but a complete resurrection of the inner man,” David Wilkerson pointed out. “He renews the mind and spirit.”

As David Foster Wallace’s life — which was eventually claimed by suicide — shows, however, many Christians must also be judicious when handling cases of depression, either in themselves or in a loved one.

“Humans are intricately complex creatures. When things go wrong in us, they do so in myriad and nuanced ways,” wrote Dan G. Blazer in a Christianity Today article on depression. “If churches want to effectively minister to the whole of fallen humanity, they must reckon with this complexity.”

DISCERNING BETWEEN DEPRESSION AND DISCOURAGEMENT

In his podcast on the topic of depression, President of World Challenge, Gary Wilkerson, carefully differentiates between types of depression and the ways people may approach them.

“Not everything in culture that we label ‘depression’ is actually depression. Some of it is bad news has come to you and you’re hurting, but we still put it in the category of depression.



“You take a young woman whose husband is abusing her and maybe left her, and as a result she has started drinking but feels guilty for that because she’s a Christian, so she comes to me or another pastor and says, ‘I’m really battling depression.’

“In a case like that, I might say something along the lines of, ‘Maybe you’re not. Maybe life is really hard, and you’re suffering, and this is painful. You just need to cry and scream out to God.

“I think that surprises people, but it also relieves some people because when we put things in the category of depression then this fear comes: Maybe I’m clinically depressed. Maybe I need medication. Maybe this could lead to suicidal thoughts.

“This type of ‘depression’ is from the bombardment of negative circumstances in your life that have been so persistent that it fatigues you mentally, emotionally, spiritually, even physiologically and chemically. If your body is depleted of the endorphins and other good things that ideally come out of life, you could delve down into a realm of depression.”

There is a necessary aspect to mourning and processing loss or grief with our Father. This is the same God who did not condemn Job for grieving about his children and other grave losses. Isaiah 53:3 calls Jesus “...a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” and Christ dealt tenderly with those who had been staggered by terrible news or hard circumstances.



“Our American Christian culture has lost its ability to lament,” remarks Gary, “and we think every Sunday should be a pep rally and every sermon should be, ‘You can do it,’ from cheerleader pastors.

“However, the Scripture’s full of laments, particularly in the Psalms.”

Sometimes we need to give ourselves time to heal and recover from wounds that may leave us in a temporary season of melancholy.

That said, there is another kind of downheartedness which requires a different approach.

“The second type of depression is more medical,” Gary points out. “It might not be circumstantial. In this case, I would advise that person to see somebody in the medical field — whether it’s a Christian counselor, a Christian therapist, or your doctor — and also do some blood work. I think that’s a safety issue.

“This is not to negate faith; we actually can — in faith — heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons and cleanse the lepers. We can, in faith, conquer kingdoms and destroy powers of the enemy. We can overcome.

“However, denial or a false claim of ‘I’m healed! I’m healed!’ is not going to help.”

“I believe it would almost be like someone saying, ‘You’re healed of cancer! You don’t need chemo therapy anymore, and you don’t need surgery.’ Well,



go to your doctor and run a series of tests and make sure the cancer's gone. Let God's healing power and touch be affirmed and blessed by the medical field. It's a testimony for them to see as well."

While Gary has certainly seen God move and heal many people, he's also seen moments when miraculous healing under the best of circumstances — a sick person approaching in total faith, a request for healing on the behalf of children or family, prayer warriors present — has not happened, for reasons unknown.

He stresses the importance of not ignoring those moments when divine healing doesn't occur, and God chooses to move through medical advancements and health professionals.

"One experience that comes to mind was a person who was on a medication and went off abruptly, thinking, 'Well, I don't need it anymore.' Then the depression came back, and they killed themselves.

"The medical side of this issue is very important as well.

"I would also say don't be depressed that you're depressed. It's almost like somebody who gets angry because they're always angry. That only intensifies the problem.

"Just think along the lines of, 'Okay. This is something I have to deal with. It's a place I'm in right now, and I'm not going to beat myself up for being here.

I'm not going to accuse myself for not being a good Christian.’”

Taking care of our bodies and minds with the help of appropriate medical professionals and godly council or therapy honors God.

THE RELIEF OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

David Wilkerson noted in his writings about depression, “The Old Testament prophets proclaimed that God would pour out his Spirit upon mankind.

“‘It shall come to pass in the last days,’ says God, ‘that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams’ (Acts 2:17).

“You have been promised the power of the Holy Spirit as your comforter in times of need. The moment you call upon God in simple, childlike faith, he sends the Holy Spirit to assist you.”

This promise is clearly seen in scriptures as Paul describes the third member of the trinity’s work in believers’ lives.

“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. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:26-28 ESV).

Regardless of where a person is in their journey with any type of depression, these verses are powerful reminders of God’s promises to us that hold true no matter what our circumstances are.

“Are you tired of your life as it is now?” David Wilkerson asked. “Would you give anything or do anything just to find true happiness and peace of mind? It is one thing to complain about the restlessness and emptiness you now suffer, but it is quite another to face up to the truth and do something about it.”

In fact, the Bible reveals two simple truths about the Holy Spirit that are for believers so that we can be set free.

TRUTH #1

“Those who love their life in this world will lose it” (John 12:25a NLT).

Simply stated, life must have Christ as its source, or eventually it will wither and die. One moment life is radiant, exciting, fulfilling — all our dreams seem to be coming true — then suddenly everything begins to



slip through our fingers like sand.

Thousands can testify to this phenomenon. “Everything was going so smoothly. I thought I had arrived, and the happiness would last forever — Bang! It all just blew up in my face.”

Many divorced people know all about this principle of life. When they got married, they hoped it would last forever and that they’d found the love of their life. For a while, the relationship felt like a bit of heaven with love, laughter, dreams and hopes. Then one day the roof caved in with misunderstandings, overwhelming stress or adultery. Their home became a miniature hell. They simply lost it, in spite of all their good intentions.

Life often seems to take switchback turns; you’re headed one way, then the next minute everything’s turned in the opposite direction. All it takes is an unexpected diagnosis, a family tragedy, even a dream fulfilled that doesn’t satisfy the way we’d hoped. The rosy glow fades. Bewilderment sets in.

Know for certain that without Christ all of life will fail to satisfy or fulfill us. Eventually, as Solomon discovered, it will become discordant and empty.



TRUTH #2

“Those who care nothing for their life in this world will keep it for eternity” (John 12:25b).

“God always meets the one who is desperate,” David Wilkerson wrote. “You will never change what you are until you honestly hate what you have become. You must become so thoroughly disgusted with the way you are living that you will cry out, ‘I want more than this. Lord Jesus, give me your abundant life.’ Believe that Christ is your friend and that he cares about you.”

As children of God, we are never left to face depression or life’s troubles alone.

Believe that Christ is your friend and cares deeply for you. When you call on him for help, trust that he hears you. He’s not ignoring your pain.

In his book *Your Mind Matters*, John Stott remarks, “...true faith is essentially reasonable because it trusts in the character and the promises of God. A believing Christian is one whose mind reflects and rests on these certitudes.”

Regularly reminding ourselves of what exactly God says in the Bible is not only a worthwhile practice but also a biblical command. Psalm 119:11 and Joshua 1:8 urge believers to store up the Word in our hearts.

This booklet includes a small list of biblical promises God has given us and then another list of some



additional resources available to anyone who may be wrestling with depression or be walking alongside a loved one on their mental health journey.

VERSES

“Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6-7).

“We ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:3-5).

“The Son of Man has come to save that which was lost” (Matthew 18:11).

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life” (John 5:24).



“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

“Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God” (1 John 4:15).

“If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:7-9).

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

“Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

“Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1).





RESOURCES

Mental Health Grace Alliance

Hope and Healing Center & Institute

Have You Felt Like Giving Up Lately?

By David Wilkerson

God's Favor

by Gary Wilkerson

When the Darkness Will Not Lift

by John Piper

Redefining Grace

by the Faith Alliance



