

Prayers for *Depression*

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About This Book

Depression is an illness which can creep up on us before we realize it. It is not uncommon to feel low at times. It's when days stretch out into weeks, and it is having a negative effect on your life, that you need to take it seriously.

It can take many forms. This book offers information and advice about different aspects of the condition, and what can be done to help. Each page of advice is accompanied by a relevant prayer.

The prayers are divided into two groups. The first is for the use of those with depression, or on their behalf. The second is for family, friends and the wider community.

When praying for someone, you may wish to insert *him*, *her* or a personal name, in place of the more general pronoun *they*.

My warm thanks are due to Mind.uk, Depression.uk and the many people whose personal testimonies of depression have helped to shape this book.

PART A

For the use of,
or on behalf of,
those with depression



The Dark Cloud

People with depression often speak of feeling that they are surrounded by a dark cloud. It cuts them off from everything which used to make life enjoyable and meaningful. Because nothing gives them satisfaction or pleasure, there seems no point in doing anything. It's not even worth getting out of bed.

Try to concentrate on the little things. Hard though it is, it is important that you go through the motions. It matters that you get up in the morning. You need to make yourself a simple breakfast, even though you don't have an appetite. The way you are feeling, each of these small successes becomes a great achievement. You can pat yourself on the back.

Prayer, too, may seem like going through the motions. But it's not wasted time. Its usefulness doesn't depend on the feel-good factor.

In the Gospels we read of the man at the Pool of Bethesda. Every day he dragged himself there, hoping to be cured of his disability. But he had no one to help him. When the healing spring bubbled up, he couldn't get into the water in time. Yet, day after day, he kept going, even though it seemed hopeless. Because he was there, Jesus saw his need and offered him his own healing.

Keeping going, even in small steps, is part of getting well.

Lord, I know I ought to pray.

I *need* to pray. . . I can't pray.

I sit in the usual place. I open my Bible. I try to focus my mind on you. . .

Nothing happens.

I feel as though nobody is there.

I am surrounded by a grey cloud. I can see nothing beyond it. I feel nothing. I hope for nothing.

There seems no point.

Nothing that used to delight me gives me pleasure. I don't want to see my friends. I have no appetite for my favourite food. Trying to pray to you seems meaningless. No one will hear me.

I'm just going through the motions.

If you are really there, somewhere beyond this greyness, have pity on me.

I used to think that the Holy Spirit blew through the world like the wind of God. I beg you to tear this cloud apart and let in your heavenly Light.

Lord, help me. Help my unbelief.

Feeling Worthless

It is common for people who are depressed to lose their sense of self-worth.

The condition may be triggered by some form of rejection: losing your job, failing an exam, the breakup of a relationship with someone you loved.

It's natural to feel low afterwards. Anyone would. But you need to be concerned if the pain has gone so deep that you feel you haven't just failed in this one thing, but that your whole life is a failure.

When you have been knocked so low, it's hard to start to pick yourself up and look at the positives. If you still have a job, or studies, or a relationship, your depression about one thing may make you want to withdraw from others. Your sense of failure can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The one thing which is most difficult to do if you are depressed is to 'snap out of it.' If only you could.

Look back over your life. See if you can find a photograph or some other memento which reminds you of the high points. When were you happy? When did you do something you felt good about? That time was real, even if you don't feel like that now. If it was true once, it can be true again.

Make a box of your 'positives.' Open it when you feel down. Relive your times of joy. One day, you can be again the 'you' you were then.

Christ, Saviour of Sinners,

I know I need to ask your help, but I don't feel I'm worthy to come before you.

I know I'm a failure. I can see it in the faces all around me. I can't do my job properly. I'm rude or surly to my friends. I can't sort myself out, let alone help anyone else. Why should you bother with me? Why should anyone?

Sometimes I think I should just let go and die. Who would miss me? The way I am, I'm just a waste of space.

But then I remember Calvary. I see you hanging there. I see the blood running down your side. I see your head bowed in agony. I hear your words of desolation: "My God, why have you forsaken me?"

And I know you have been through a darker vale than mine. You let yourself be mocked and spat upon and crucified.

The amazing thing is that you did it for people like me. Not just for the good people. Not just for the heroes. Not just for the ones who are giving their lives to serve your kingdom. You died for the worthless, for the failures, for the guilty. You died for me.

In the blackness of the way I feel about myself, this is the one thing I can hang on to. You value me. You love me. You thought I was worth dying for.

Medication and Drugs

If you are experiencing depression, there are a variety of possible causes. Your depression may be related to medication you are taking. It could be the result of alcohol or street drugs.

If you regularly take medication of any sort, check the leaflet. Does it list depression as a possible side effect? If so, it's an easy matter to go to your doctor and explain how you are feeling. They can probably change your prescription without causing you such distress, or offer other help.

Depression can also be brought about by alcohol or street drugs. You may be tempted to drink more if you are feeling low. Check out any drugs you use and see if this relates to you.

Not everyone reacts in the same way to drugs. There may be factors in your makeup, or in your experience, which make you particularly vulnerable.

Seek help. You may be messing up your life or doing long-term damage, if you let it go on. Discuss it with your doctor. You may be given a support worker who can help you make changes in your lifestyle. There are self-help groups, where people sharing your experience can help each other get through it.

Don't hold back if you have been using an illegal substance. It's not about being judgmental; it's about healing you.