Freedom From Depression

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I would like to tell you a story today about a man. Every morning he would wake up and run to the lake by his home for a swim. He loved the way the fresh water felt as he swam across it each day. It was off the beaten path; it was his own secret place, and it always refreshed him. Months and years went by and he was faithful each day to swim from one side to the other. As he got older, he discovered that on some days and for no reason at all, it seemed as if the lake was thicker and harder to make it across. On those days, it took more effort, but he would always make it across and be glad that he did.

As strange as it seems, the same water that was invigorating would some days be so thick that he felt as if it was pulling on him and drawing him down. On those days in particular he would really have to work to make it all the way across. After a while, those hard days came more often, and he would find himself having difficulty finding the will and even the desire to keep swimming. He kept telling himself that he was strong enough to overcome. He didn't quit swimming and never failed in finding a way to cross over to the other side.

No one around him knew he was struggling on those hard days. They just assumed that he was swimming each day as he usually did. His family and friends all loved him, but he never told them about his struggles. Then one morning, as he was half way across the lake, he found himself in the thickest water he had ever faced. It didn't even seem like water anymore. It actually felt like mud and mire. He tried with all of his might and couldn't get past it. He used all of his strength and all of his willpower but still, he had not moved. It was pulling him in deeper every second, and when all of his strength was used up, he felt hopeless.

This beautiful lake had somehow become a burden and turned into a pit that was holding him hostage. In an odd way, it seemed so embracing and safe for him to give up and no longer struggle. Soon his family noticed that he had not returned back home and they ran down to the shore of the lake. They could see him there and they cried out to him to swim, but he was without hope now. Nothing they said mattered to him. They could not see the pit that held him; they could only see the lake.

Day after day went by and he had not moved. Each day He would try to muster up enough strength to fight this dark mud, and each day he would fail. It seemed hopeless and he felt helpless against the pull of this once beautiful water. For months he was stuck in this same place, unable to rescue himself, and unable to be rescued.

This story is similar to the one a dear friend of mine told me of how he battled with depression. He struggled with it off and on during his life, but one day it just seemed to overwhelm him like never before, and let me tell you, it wasn't because he was weak. During a whirlwind of circumstances that were pieced together by hell itself, my friend Johnny found himself engulfed with such a battle that it seemed that he would never be able to pull himself out.

He stopped going to work—a place he had been faithful to for thirty years. He withdrew from his family and closest friends and found himself locked in his basement for months. That is correct: He hid in the lowest part of his house and he had no strength to get out. Every day he would beg God to deliver him, and when his wife tried everything she knew to coax him back into life, it didn't help. To Johnny, it was beginning to seem that all was lost for him.

This depression snuck up on him little by little until it began to feel like it was normal. It was so difficult for people looking in to understand what he was going through. Eventually the smallest things seemed to become so overwhelming that he couldn't even find the strength to talk about it.

What battle is this that the enemy wages against our hopes and dreams, a fight that destroys our strength and courage? It pushes us to loneliness and isolation, where eventually, we stop hearing the ones who love us the most and there seems to be no hope to overcome.

Johnny didn't stay there though: "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God" (Psalm 42:11). While in the midst of the pit and the deepest of depression, Johnny made a decision that the hopelessness that he felt was a lie from hell. He made himself get dressed as if he was going to work and began to worship God. Every emotion in him fought this decision, but he was determined to trust in God's Word and not in himself.

It wasn't easy, but instead of trying to get out of the basement, he focused all of his strength on simply whispering to God these powerful words: "I love You"; "I trust You"; "You are beautiful"; "You are my Father"; "Your Word is Truth"; "Thank You for loving me." Over and over, he would build a connection of love with these words of worship, and he began to find a courage that didn't come from himself but from his Heavenly Father. He spent up to four hours each day doing this. It was his only hope, and soon he was back at work. He said to me that he still had to fight his fears, but worship gave him the strength each day to not bow down to them. He also said that after three months of worshiping God, he finally felt as if he was free.

It was as if Jesus Himself walked upon the water of that lake and reached down His hand to lift Johnny up, and together, they walked on top of the circumstances and fears. The Lord walked with him, took him to the shore, and gave him back to his family who had been waiting and praying for him all this time. Jesus did it for Johnny, and He will do it for you if you need Him. You may not be in such a serious situation, but I know in my life I have needed to worship to find strength in certain situations.

Worship is a pure way of trusting in God's Word over our thoughts and our emotions. When it seems like things will never change, we can always find hope in His Word. When you make the private time to worship, you are actually connecting your heart with God's, and soon, you will see yourself as He sees you.

"To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. I waited patiently for the Lord; And He inclined to me, And heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, Out of the miry clay, And set my feet upon a rock, And established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth—Praise to our God; Many will see it and fear, And will trust in the Lord" (Psalm 40:1-3).



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