



# Dealing With the Holiday Blues



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**Psalm 42:5**—Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence.

The holiday season ushers in the hanging of bright lights, the joy of festive singing, and the spirit of generous giving or what some might call “selfish indulgence.” But it also brings feelings of discouragement, depression, and anxiety. The question is: what is at the back of these things and how are we to deal with the “holiday blues” that come with this season?

First, let us place our finger on **what these feelings are**. The “holiday blues” are nothing more than various degrees of depression. Depression has been called “mental weather”; it clouds the mind from seeing the sun above. Some say that is it anger turned inward. Many of God’s people have battled with depression. Jonah wrestled with it and desired death (*Jon.4:3*). Elijah struggled with these feelings of dejection and defeat (*1 Kings 19:1-4*). David, the sweet singer and shepherd king of Israel, was so overcome with feelings of depression that he said, “*Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest*” (*Ps.55:6*). I can certainly identify with these men, for I have been there myself. Perhaps you have, too.

## **Where do these feelings of depression come from?**

The feelings of depression can be triggered by **past memories**—both good and bad. Perhaps your mind recalls a happy time of fellowship with loved ones and friends who have passed away or who are now distant from you.

Sometimes **present problems and pressures** trigger these feelings of depression or discouragement. Television and Madison Avenue both play a big part in this. The impression in media is that all is well with the family and if you are not enjoying the warm fellowship of loved ones, then you are missing out on something or you're just not normal.

Still, these depressing feelings can be rooted in **fear and unbelief**. In the Scriptures, God's children are taught again and again "*not to fear*" (*Is.8:12-13*). But this is not easy to overcome. How is it possible? It is the fear of the Lord in our hearts that delivers us from the fear of man (*Jer.1:8; Matt.8:26; 1 Pet.3:14*).

### **How do we deal with these holiday blues?**

There are many common but ineffective ways that you may be prone to use in dealing with these feelings. Let me list some and explain briefly why they are no real remedy for the problem:

- Denial—*pretending they are not there doesn't make it so.*
- Entertainment—*laughing instead of thinking doesn't solve problems, it only masks them and leaves them for you to run in to again, often at the most inconvenient time.*
- Drugs and drinking—*these are only depressants and false escapes from dealing with past or present problems.*
- Preoccupations with work—*legitimate duties are blessings, but they can become a curse if we hide behind them in an attempt to avoid issues.*
- Shopping—*Jesus spoke of "the deceitfulness of wealth" as that which gives the feeling of security and significance, but ultimately adds nothing to the soul. (Cf. Matt.13:22ff)*
- Withdrawal or isolation—*for moments of reflection and prayer this can bring refreshment to the soul, but it can also be the wilderness where Satan can do some of his most devastating work in your life.*
- Overeating—*this spreads the waistline, but not the soul.*
- Counsel of men—*wisdom can be gained in the counsel of godly men or women; God's wisdom in Christ brings true satisfaction.*
- Positive thinking—*mental gymnastics may help in the short-term, but in a world of sorrow and pain, good old salty realism best prepares you to face life.*
- Physical exercise—*"bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come" (1 Tim.4:8).*

### **What you need to know**

These feelings of depression and discouragement are not from the Father, for "*just as a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him*" (*Ps.103:13*).

These feelings of depression and discouragement are not from Christ, for His office reveals that "*a bruised reed He will not break and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish...*" (*Is.42:3*).

Neither do these feelings of depression and discouragement come from the Holy Spirit, for He is a helper and a comforter and although He convicts us of sin, He does so that we might find relief in Christ (*John 14:16*).

## What you need to do

1. First, keep in mind that there is a radical difference between desiring to be delivered from a world of disappointment and sorrow and longing to be delivered from this body of death in order that we may be present with the Lord. Paul desired the latter. (*Cf. Phil.1:23*)
2. Second, in spite of your feelings, turn to God. No matter how downcast you may be, it is the privilege of the believer to unburden his heart to the One who sticks closer than a brother. Pour your soul out to the One who "*knows our frame [and]...is mindful that we are but dust*" (*Ps.103:14*), nevertheless He is touched with the feelings of your weakness.
3. Finally, yield to the Lordship of Christ and stay on the path of righteousness. To walk in the flesh is to cut yourself off from the springs of spiritual refreshment. But in the hour of grief or when dark depression captures us, know that God's faithfulness will appear. Sorrow may last for the night, but joy comes in the morning to those who hope in God through Christ and trust in His Word (*Ps.30:5*).

Shall the Good Shepherd refuse to take care of His sheep that are tired, stressed, and discouraged? Shall the Great Physician refuse assistance to one of His patients just when he or she needs Him most?

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