



# DOWNCAST

DEPRESSION AND PSALM 42

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# Overview

1. The Inward Turning of Depression
2. Ruts in the Road and Neuroplasticity
3. Body: Caring for our Bodies
4. Mind: Preaching to Ourselves
5. Soul: Turning Upwards to God
6. The Practice of Lament



# Psalm 42

A Model for Dealing with Depression



## Psalm 42

Why Are You Cast Down, O My Soul? To the choirmaster. A Maskil[a] of the Sons of Korah.

1 As a deer pants for flowing streams,  
so pants my soul for you, O God.

2 My soul thirsts for God,  
for the living God.

When shall I come and appear before God?

3 My tears have been my food  
day and night,

while they say to me all the day long,  
“Where is your God?”

4 These things I remember,  
as I pour out my soul:

how I would go with the throng

and lead them in procession to the house of God

with glad shouts and songs of praise,  
a multitude keeping festival.

5 Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you in turmoil within me?

Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,  
my salvation and my God.

6 My soul is cast down within me;  
therefore I remember you

from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,  
from Mount Mizar.



## Psalm 42

Why Are You Cast Down, O My Soul? To the choirmaster. A Maskil[a] of the Sons of Korah.

7 Deep calls to deep  
at the roar of your waterfalls;  
all your breakers and your waves  
have gone over me.

8 By day the Lord commands his steadfast love,  
and at night his song is with me,  
a prayer to the God of my life.

9 I say to God, my rock:  
“Why have you forgotten me?

Why do I go mourning  
because of the oppression of the enemy?”

10 As with a deadly wound in my bones,  
my adversaries taunt me,  
while they say to me all the day long,  
“Where is your God?”...

11 Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you in turmoil within me?  
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,  
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# What depression looks like



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## *Incurvatus in se*: The inward turning of depression

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Martin Luther: “Scripture describes man as so curved in upon himself that he uses not only physical but even spiritual goods for his own purposes and in all things seeks only himself.”





# Causes



# What causes depression?

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- Loss of a loved one?
- Traumatic childhood events?
- Genetics?
- Substance use?
- The consequences of sinful behavior?
- Discrimination?
- Conflict in a relationship?
- Poor life choices?
- Physical illness?

# What causes depression?

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- ◆ Depression can have more than one cause
- ◆ Identifying the apparent primary cause can suggest what kind of treatment might be most effective, and how long the depression will last
- ◆ The longer depression is ignored, the more difficult it is to treat



“You cannot isolate the spiritual from the physical  
for we are body, mind and spirit.

The greatest and the best Christians when they are physically weak are more prone to an attack of spiritual depression than at any other time... If you recognize however, that the physical may be partly responsible for your spiritual condition and make allowances for that, you will be better able to deal with the spiritual.”

Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression*



# Body

# The Body

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“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

- 1 Corinthians 6:19



# Neuroplasticity

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the ability of the brain  
to constantly change  
and adapt through  
growth and  
reorganization





# Depression: stuck in negative brain pathways

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People with depression have  
reduced neuroplasticity

Brain changes:

- atrophy of the  
hippocampus (learning), and  
the prefrontal cortex  
(motivation)
- overgrowth of the  
amygdala (fear and emotion)



# Sleep & Rest

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Elijah – 1 Kings 19

He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. “I have had enough, Lord,” he said. “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.”

5 Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.

All at once an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.” 6 He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

7 The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, “Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.” 8 So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.

# Exercise

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- Immediate benefits: endorphins decrease sensitivity to pain, contribute to sense of euphoria
- Long term benefits: increased release of growth factors such as BDNF which increases neuroplasticity



# Medication

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Antidepressants work by two mechanisms:

1. Reducing negative bias. Depressed people tend to pay attention to and remember only negative information, and they disregard positive information.
2. Increasing BDNF in the brain, which enhances neuroplasticity and can counter the atrophy that occurs with depression





# Mind

# The Mind

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Romans 1: 21-22a

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools

# Meditate on what is good

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Philippians 4:8

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things”

# Meditate on what is good

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- What is our “mental diet”?
- What kind of company do we keep?
- What do we fantasize about?
- What do we worship?





# Soul

# Talking back to our depression

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“Have you realized that **most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself?** ... Now this man’s treatment in Psalm 42 was this: instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he starts talking to himself, “Why are you cast down, O my soul?” he asks. His soul had been depressing him, crushing him. So he stands up and says: “Self, listen for a moment, I will speak to you.”

The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. **You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself.**

# Talking back to our depression

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- 1) You must say to your soul: 'Why art thou cast down'—what business have you to be disquieted? **You must turn on yourself**, upbraid yourself, condemn yourself, exhort yourself, and say to yourself: 'Hope thou in God'—instead of muttering in this depressed, unhappy way.
- 2) And then **you must go on to remind yourself of God**, Who God is, and what God is and what God has done, and what God has pledged Himself to do.
- 3) Then having done that, end on this great note: **defy yourself, and defy other people, and defy the devil and the whole world, and say with this man: 'I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance, who is also the health of my countenance and my God'**.

- Martin Lloyd Jones, *Spiritual Depression*



# Psalm 42: Upwards turning towards God

1) He **addresses God**

A) He talks with God about **his longings**

B) He talks with God about **his doubts**

C) He talks with God about **his suffering**

2) He reminds himself of **God's past faithfulness**

3) He remembers **who God is**

A) He remembers God's steadfast love

B) He remembers God's presence

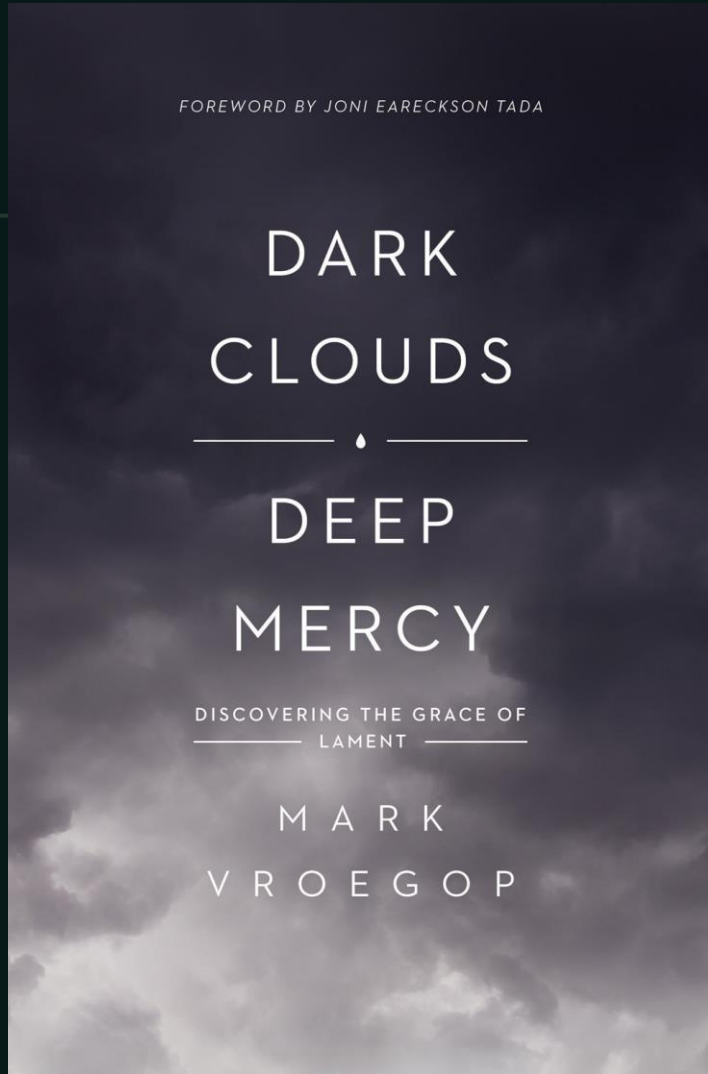
4) He **hopes in God**



# Lament: Bringing our Suffering to God

“Lament is how we bring our sorrow to God. Without lament we won’t know how to process pain. Silence, bitterness, and even anger can dominate our spiritual lives instead. Without lament we won’t know how to help people walking through sorrow. Instead, we’ll offer trite solutions, unhelpful comments, or impatient responses.... Lament is how Christians grieve. It is how to help hurting people. Lament is how we learn important truths about God and our world.”

- Mark Vroegop, *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy*



# Lament in Depression: Bringing Your Suffering to God

- ◆ 1. Acknowledging Suffering
- ◆ 2. Engaging suffering
- ◆ 3. Bringing our suffering to God
- ◆ 4. Remembering God's past faithfulness
- ◆ 5. Calling on God to be faithful again

# Hope

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“I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He has driven me away and made me walk in darkness rather than light... I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me.

Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness”

Lamentations 3:1-2, 12-23

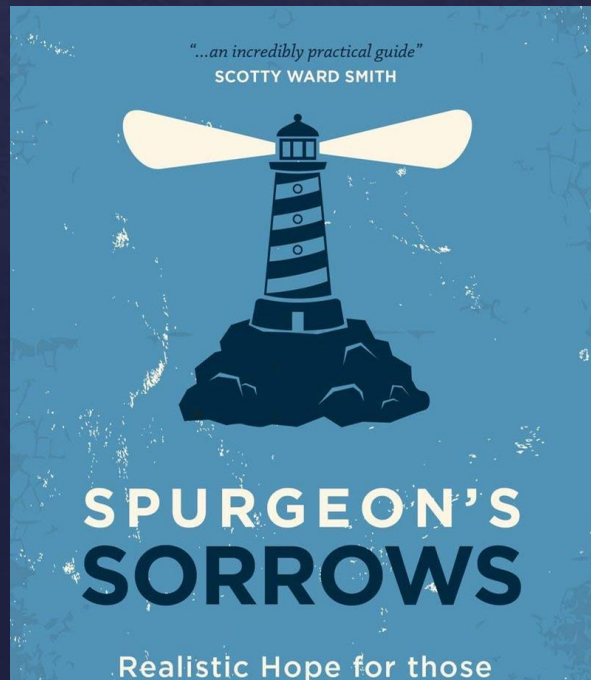
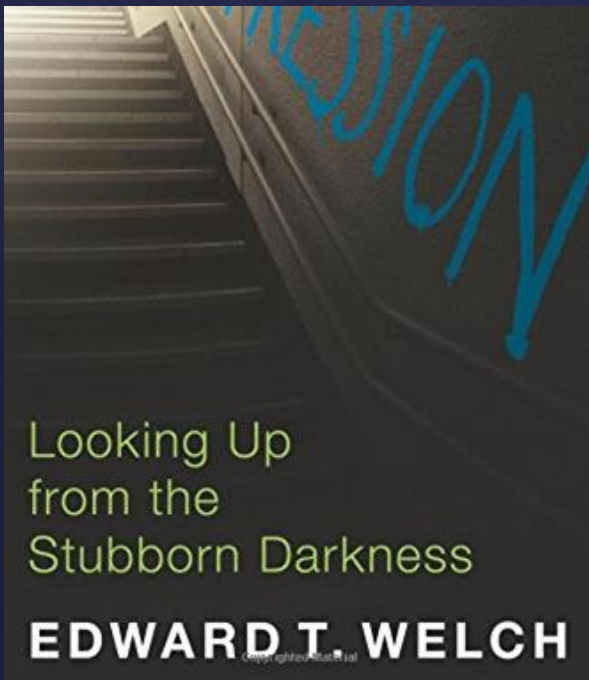
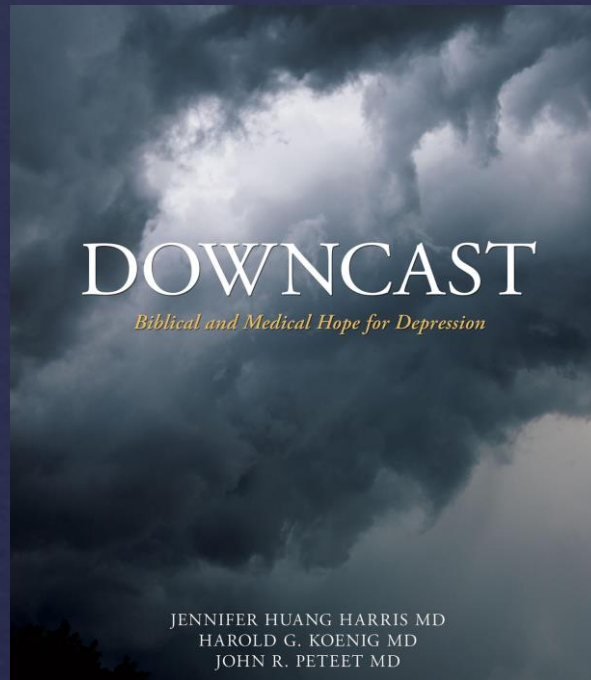
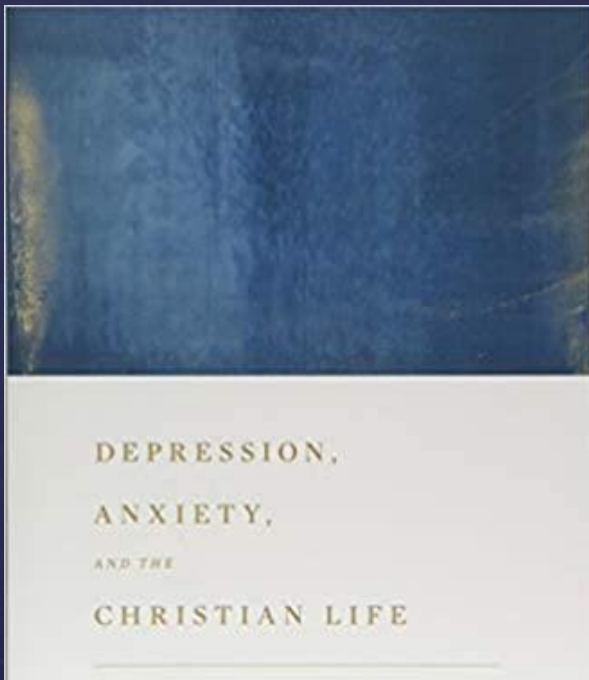


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## RESOURCES:

- ◆ Baxter and Lundy - *Depression, Anxiety, and the Christian Life*
- ◆ Harris, Peteet, and Koenig  
*Downcast: Biblical and Medical Hope for Depression*
- ◆ Zach Eswine - *Spurgeon's Sorrows*
- ◆ Ed Welch – *Depression: Looking Up From the Stubborn Darkness*
- ◆ Martin Lloyd Jones – *Spiritual Depression*