Jessica Brody – Depression is like being in a hole you can’t climb out of, or a net that won’t let you go free. Crying doesn’t help, and neither does rage. You’ve prayed with all your might, yet it’s still there.

For those who don’t have it, depression can be hard to understand. A mood disorder with both mental and physical impacts, depression is different from typical feelings of sadness or grief.

Some people describe it as feeling like a series of weights have been placed upon their shoulders, dragging them lower and lower until they can barely crawl.

Others say it’s a persistent, invading melancholy that won’t go away no matter how good life seems to be.

Still others feel numb, lethargic — like they’re running on a battery that’s slowly, methodically winding down to a bare hum of energy.

1 Samuel 13:14
14 But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people...
Psalm 139:23–24
23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.
24 Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

Psalm 38
1 O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath!
2 For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has come down on me.
3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin.
4 For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me.

5 My wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness,
6 I am utterly bowed down and prostrate; all the day I go about mourning.
7 For my sides are filled with burning, and there is no soundness in my flesh.
8 I am exhausted and completely crushed. My groans come from an anguished heart.
9 O Lord, all my longing is before you; my sighing is not hidden from you.
10 My heart throbs; my strength fails me, and the light of my eyes—it also has gone from me.
21 Do not forsake me, O LORD! O my God, be not far from me!
22 Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation!

- I am a 27-year-old female. When I was 14 I began to experience depression frequently. I was not a Christian nor was I raised by Christian parents....my depression continued as I grew older, and as a result became worse as time passed. I became a chronic suicide case....

When I was 20 I went to a psychiatrist who diagnosed me as a manic depressive. He put me on lithium and told me I would be this way for the rest of my life. The drug therapy kept me from going into a severe suicidal depression. However, the deep feelings of depression and despair were still a reality.

I finally came so low that there was nowhere to turn but to the Lord. I heard the Christian life was supposed to be the only way to live, but God was not real to me. I decided I was going to seek God with my whole heart, then if I found this to be nothing but an empty endeavor, I would give up living.

I fed upon tapes of your Bible teaching. The Lord began His work in me. Through His word as you taught, the Holy Spirit showed me just exactly what my problem was, and what I needed to do about it.
My problem was sin—a heart that would not forgive, and it was making me bitter. I turned to the Lord and asked Him to help me forgive. I continued in the Word diligently, and the transformation process took place. The Lord delivered me from this depressive illness. The memorizing of Scripture is renewing my mind. This is the only key for anyone suffering emotional problems, because it is the living word of God, it is the supernatural power to transform anyone’s life and mind.

Psalm 142 A psalm of David, regarding his experience in the cave. A prayer.

1 I cry out to the Lord; I plead for the Lord’s mercy.  
2 I pour out my complaints before him and tell him all my troubles.

3 When I am overwhelmed, You alone know the way I should turn.

About a year ago I heard a prominent Christian leader whom I respect explain his thoughts on depression. He said that he did not believe true believers in Christ could really be depressed because our hope is ultimately in Christ. He talked about how Christians understand
this life can be difficult, but that in the end we know that Christ will not give us more than we can handle, and that we know in the end that Christ will prevail.

Therefore, no committed Christian should suffer from depression because we know there is more to life than our present circumstances. It did not make sense to him that a Christian could be depressed.

He was wrong.

Now for those familiar with my story, you know that I lost my father to suicide in 2009.

2009 was a horrible year in my life. Five people I knew died in 2009, and obviously none were as difficult to deal with as my father’s death.

In the fall I headed back to UNC-Wilmington for my sophomore year, hoping this would help me heal and move forward.

Unfortunately it didn’t. Many other things went wrong when school started back up.

I got to the point where I feared each day wondering what bad thing would happen next. I was not happy, I was internally bitter at every single person who seemed happy, and I thought I would never feel anywhere close to “normal” ever again.

I was depressed.
I thought I hid it well, but then people I barely even knew began asking me if anything was wrong. I must have been asked that at least twice a week by various people for about two months. I still am not sure how most of these people could tell I was “different,” they barely even knew me.
I knew many people were praying for me and my family. I was surprised by the people who knew what I was dealing with and truly cared. I was also surprised by some who I thought would care more but hardly did anything.

**But how does this prove that this prominent Christian leader was wrong in his views on depression?** Because I have never been closer to Jesus in my life than I was those three months that I was depressed.

I read the entire Bible through in about 70 days. I prayed more often and for longer amounts of time. I would be so upset that I would hand write chapters of the bible on notebook paper. I read the entire biblical books of Isaiah and Jeremiah in one day. That was 118 pages of the bible in one day. Bible pages have small print and two columns per page. That’s a lot of reading.

And I was depressed.

Never once did I question God’s goodness in all I went through that year.

I never questioned why this happened to me or even if God existed.

The only thing I did question was the power or prayer.

And through it all, I knew that God was still God and that God was still good. I knew that Jesus was still greater than what I was going through and that he can bring good out of any situation.

I knew all of that. I know God cared, I knew God loved me, I knew God was in control. But I couldn’t help it, I was still depressed.
By the end of the year I began to come out of it by the grace of God. I was still a long ways away from feeling any kind of “normal” again, but I was slowly getting better.

If you are a follower of Christ and for whatever reason have fallen into depression trust me,

I like the following quote that says,

*It’s okay not to be okay, but it’s not okay to stay there.*

If you need help, get help. Do not stay “stuck.”

And to the prominent Christian leader, and no doubt others, who believe that firm believers in Christ should never be depressed, you’re wrong. I’ve been there. I did not chose it, and I did all I could to get out of it. But for a while there was nothing I could do to change it.

So yes, Christians can suffer from depression. And in the words of David Crowder who wrote a song I listened to over and over in my depression:

*In joy and pain. In sun and rain. You’re the same.*
Psalm 142:3 ...Wherever I go, my enemies have set traps for me.
4 I look for someone to come and help me, but no one gives me a passing thought! No one will help me; no one cares a bit what happens to me.

5 Then I pray to you, O LORD. I say, “You are my place of refuge. You are all I really want in life.

6 Hear my cry, for I am very low. Rescue me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me.

7 Bring me out of prison so I can thank you. The godly will crowd around me, for you are good to me.”
Psalm 143
1 Hear my prayer, O LORD; listen to my plea! Answer me because you are faithful and righteous.
2 Don’t put your servant on trial, for no one is innocent before you.
3 My enemy has chased me. He has knocked me to the ground and forces me to live in darkness like those in the grave.
4 I am losing all hope; I am paralyzed with fear.
5 I remember the days of old. I ponder all your great works and think about what you have done.

In the world of science there is no more prestigious institution than Cambridge University’s Cavendish Laboratory, home to more than two centuries of Nobel Prize-winning research, including the discovery of the structure of DNA.

Inscribed over its entrance are these words: “The works of the Lord are great, sought out by all of them that have pleasure therein”—Psalm 111:2 (KJV).

NLT How amazing are the deeds of the LORD! All who delight in Him should ponder them.
The works of the LORD are great, studied by all who have pleasure in them.

Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them.

The verse (in Latin) was carved in oak over the original entrance when the laboratory was established in 1874 by Cavendish Professor of Physics, James Clerk Maxwell (1831-1879).

Maxwell was known for numerous achievements in mathematical physics, including formulating the classical theory of electromagnetic radiation.

He was also a committed follower of Jesus.

When the Laboratory moved to its present site 100 years later, the inaugural verse again received star billing, now in English.

If we’re shocked at eminent scientists citing Scripture as the ground and inspiration of their work, it’s because

Prominent early scientist, Johannes Kepler, described his work as “thinking God’s thoughts after him.”
Deuteronomy 4:9 9 Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.

Deuteronomy 8:10–14
10 When you have eaten your fill, be sure to praise the L ORD your God for the good land he has given you.
11 “But that is the time to be careful! Beware that in your plenty you do not forget the L ORD your God and disobey his commands, regulations, and decrees that I am giving you today.
12 For when you have become full and prosperous and have built fine homes to live in,
13 and when your flocks and herds have become very large and your silver and gold have multiplied along with everything else, be careful!
14 Do not become proud at that time and forget the L ORD your God, who rescued you from slavery in the land of Egypt.

6 I lift my hands to you in prayer. I thirst for you as parched land thirsts for rain.
7 Come quickly, Lord, and answer me, for my depression deepens. Don’t turn away from me, or I will die.

Our deepest need must be for the Lord Himself.

10 Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. May your gracious Spirit lead me forward on a firm footing.

The year before I graduated from seminary – I lost my faith. There’s not a big job market out there for pastors who are atheists. But I couldn’t help it. Life became too painful.

One night, in a last ditch effort to salvage whatever remnant of faith I had left, I called a mentor and professor of mine from college and shared my struggle with him.

I told him, “My faith in God right now is like a walk on the beach. I’ve taken off my shoes, and as I stand at the water’s edge, the tide has started to roll across my feet. It feels wonderful. Up to this point my spiritual journey has been incredible, but in the last six months doubt has begun to paralyze me. It’s like when the water goes back out to the ocean. It is washing away the sand underneath me, and my feet keep sinking lower and lower and lower. If this keeps up, there won’t be anything left to stand on.”

His mentor said back to him: “Brian, I have stood where you’re standing. I’ve felt the water cascade across my
feet. I know how wonderful that feels. But I’ve also had the water go back out to sea. I’ve felt the sand get washed out from underneath my feet.

Brian – listen to me when I say this. When the last grain of sand is finally gone, you’re going to discover that you’re standing on a rock.”

That one sentence saved me. That once sentence gave me enough spiritual strength to eventually, over time, rediscover hope, which the Bible beautifully calls “an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” Heb. 6:19

Psalm 13
1 How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?
2 How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

5 Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad?

5... I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again— my Savior and 6 my God!
Jim Wallis "Hope is not a feeling; it is a decision. And the decision for hope is based upon what you believe at the deepest levels - what your most basic convictions are about the world and what the future holds - all based upon your faith. You choose hope, not as a naive wish, but as a choice, with your eyes wide open to the reality of the world..."

Pastor Todd Peperkorn shares the following:

Overcoming depression is not a matter of “cheer up!” or “just have more faith and joy!” or some pious version of “get over it!” I knew the gospel. I knew all the right answers. I had it all figured out and preached it Sunday after Sunday. But our Lord, in his mercy, chose to crush me, to cause me to suffer with him, so that the faith he gave me . . . would be stronger, clearer, and more focused. By traveling down that dark road, I have come to understand what the light of Christ is all about.

As Christ’s followers, we’re called to reflect his light. We’re called to remind one another, as the Psalms constantly reassure us, that those who know and love God also struggle through seasons of despair.

David was a man after God’s own heart, with a faith so vast it steeled him against a giant. Yet in the Psalms he laments. Seasons find him in agony, crying out to the Lord whom he cherishes, but who he fears has fallen silent. In their deep longing and poetic imagery, the Psalms give a voice to our own suffering. They reveal that even those rich in faith are prone to despondency.
“to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.’

“to live is Christ to die is gain”

5... I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again— my Savior and 6 my God!

8 But each day the LORD pours his unfailing love upon me, and through each night I sing his songs, praying to God who gives me life.

9 “O God my rock,” I cry, “Why have you forgotten me? Why must I wander around in grief, oppressed by my enemies?”
11 Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad?

I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again— my Savior and my God!