



The Best Antidepressant

There are many people in modern times who suffer from depression. The diagnosis is often 'anxiety and depression' as the two regularly go together. Anxiety, worry, fear maybe, and no obvious solution to the care and worry which leads to feelings of despair and hopelessness. So, we have anxiety and depression, it is fairly universal and yet the more developed, so called, the society the greater the demands and pressures which are put on lives, and the more anxiety and depression becomes part of many lives. We are expected to succeed, we are expected to have everything, and we are increasingly pressurised by the demands of family, relationships, finance, friends and governments, adverts and so on. At the same time, we find ourselves unable to do what is required, the pressure is overwhelming with no obvious answer, and so the depression starts and gets deeper. It is like an ever-increasing downward spiral.

Depression, in fact many things in life, are a combination of nature and nurture. There are the things which we are born with, they come from our genetics, from our parents and from our ancestors in a complicated mixture depending on who our parents are. We cannot choose our parents; you 'have what you get', and you also have what you receive from them; you can identify the traits within your own personality which come from your parents, grandparents, and maybe other relatives.

Nurture is our upbringing. Again, it very much depends on our parents or those who bring us up. It is recognised that not all children are brought up by their natural parents but perhaps by relatives or even sometimes children will have been 'in care'. Many do not have a good upbringing, happily lots do, it is not always the wealth of the parents that matters, it is real love and care and attention. The attitude of those who bring us up matters too, what they tell us and cause us to believe, and to believe about ourselves. Children are very vulnerable and the younger they are the more vulnerable. They have little protection physically and little protection emotionally and mentally. Children can suffer very easily in their minds and feelings, and it can be from the way they are treated, or not treated, or from other things like the loss of a parent or a loved one.

These things, when they happen to the young, are called ACEs, Adverse Childhood Experiences. Everyone has them to a degree, we are even told that things which happen to our biological mother while we are being carried can affect our lives through childhood and into adulthood. It depends how resilient we are and that is again down to nature and the support, the nurture, we get in those difficult experiences. It all gets very complicated and human beings are very complicated creatures, so clever and yet so vulnerable. Some of the experiences some people have are so bad it leaves them with very deep psychological problems, which can be very difficult to resolve. Some experiences are like a 'kick in the teeth', so horrid. They can come from human beings or the events of life, and can be deeply engrained in the memory, producing flashbacks and so on. If you were not depressed at the

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start maybe you are now reading this, with all the difficulties which could arrive in your life. Maybe memories are brought back from where they were buried. For some the depression just arrives. No explanation, no reason, they just find themselves depressed. "Why am I depressed?" may be the question. Just the thought brings on a depression and, in the end, we are just ourselves and have to live with ourselves.

Medicine: psychiatrists, psychologists, counsellors and so on have devised all sorts of 'helps' to deal with 'mental health' issues, to try to solve anxiety and depression. There is medication which interferes with the chemical processes in our brains and stops or slows down the negative type of thinking and such thought processes. The brain itself is very complicated with all the myriad functions and millions of cells, and everyone is different, so the medication acts differently with each person. For some it is good and for some less effective; it changes the way we think and feel and in ways numbs us up to life. We are not quite the same person, not quite the 'real me'. Although every brain is essentially the same in its structure, we have a personality which comes through, much of it from our own nature, determining the way we think, the way we feel and how we respond. So, medication may be an answer, but it is definitely not the whole answer, yet a large percentage of the UK population take anti-depressive medication, from the oldest to the youngest. Perhaps they live a life not being really quite themselves and, in some ways, not free to be themselves. They just survive. Surprisingly, young people can be depressed and very depressed; the pressures can start early; many young people have deep depressions.

There are other sorts of 'medical' solutions which are often used together with medication, and one is some form of counselling. The medication is cheaper, as counselling can involve lots of time and be a drawn-out process. Some counselling is just talking and listening and sharing positive thoughts and ideas with the person in need to combat the negative thinking. It seems many people in the developed countries feel the need to explore what they call their 'inner self' to find solutions to the problems they have inside. It is all about them, very self-centred; often the richer the person and the more money they have the more they can indulge in the psychoanalysis. It seems the more they have the more they want, and the more insecure they become in what they have and what they are.

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy is another 'counselling' method tried to deal with depression, when the attempt is to try and understand yourself and why you think and behave in a certain way. Then when that behaviour and thinking starts, you employ another strategy and act and think differently. It works with some people but again they are not free to be themselves. It is all very complicated but human beings are complicated and try all sorts of ways to try and solve the dilemmas of human lives.

Humans are a soul, a person within a body, a unique and wonderful being with so many things going on inside. The task of sorting all the issues is very great. Constantly we read of those, even the rich and famous, sometimes more than the less well-off and well known, who find they cannot cope with life and resort to drugs, alcohol and so on to try and numb up their deep problems, their inward pain. Some even take their own lives as suicide increases in this modern world. Young lives with much to live for are cut short, when everything just gets

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too much. Failed exams, or even the fear of failed exams, can be enough to tip people over the edge, as can fear about relationships and their breakdown or possible breakdown. So many reasons, and each situation is unique to the suffering anxious and depressed person. Sometimes people just don't like themselves and they want to be different, and yet they are what they are and we cannot really change ourselves. People seem to have little resilience against the pressures of today and collapse, at least inside, with the problems of life and the person they find they are. Is there an answer?

Depression is not new. 3000 years ago, in the Psalms King David writes this, "*Why are you cast down, O my soul? and why are you (thou) disquieted in me?*" (The Authorised Bible uses the old singular 'thou' for 'you'. it is not used these days, but it is just you, just thou the cast down and disquieted piece of you is just you). Disquieted is a word we don't use so much in modern times but in a modern Bible version it is translated 'disturbed'. We could use other synonyms in our English language. Agitated, afraid, upset, unhappy, worried, insecure, moody, and maybe helpless and hopeless. Disquieted is when the peace and tranquillity of our hearts goes away, or maybe it has never been there. Where everything should be quiet and peaceful within, it is the very opposite. The soul, the heart, that deep part of our personality, of you, is not peaceful within you. Because it is not peaceful within, that lack of peace permeates, infiltrates, gets into everything and every part of life and spoils everything. There is a sort of dark shadow everywhere, even in times of apparent happiness the shadow is there affecting our whole living and even our sleep.

We have quoted from the Bible; many of course in these days reject the Bible and any concept of God but let's have patience and see what it has to say and why so many find Jesus Christ to be the answer to all their needs. Please at least have an open mind and don't let your prejudice, your prejudging, stop you reading and listening when perhaps you know very little about the Bible. Sometimes ignorance is why we have prejudice, or we have received the prejudice from others. It is part of our nurture, from home or maybe from school.

In the next phrase in the psalm, after "*Why are you cast down O my soul why are you disquieted within me?*" is "*Hope in God for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance*". In other words, let your hope, your expectation be of God; the 'way out', the exit, from being cast down is God and hope in Him. If that takes place, a time will come when we will thank Him for the ways He has smiled on us. (That is what the help of His countenance means). People find it hard to believe that God can actually smile on them, and yet the warmth of that smile and the depths of the love of God, and the care He has for us and the help He will provide will melt away all our doom and gloom. Maybe the departure in our society from any faith in God has led to the increase in depression. If there is nothing, if no God, then we are 'without God and without hope in this world'. The famous apostle Paul, who is remembered much for his 'Damascus Road experience' says this even to Christians, "*If in this world only we have hope in Christ we are of all people most miserable*". So, if our hope is only in this world, there is not much to look forward to.

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In the Proverbs there is an interesting verse, - there are many but let's quote this one. *"He that has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls"*. The spirit is the heart, the deep part of every human being, and this verse says if we have no rule, no control over our own spirits/hearts we are like a ruined city, we have no protection from all the things which come against us, from both outside and inside and our own thinking. The lack of walls means everything and anything can come in and cause damage to us, the person, which is you, inside. We may get the idea from the pictures on the TV and in newspapers, of cities broken down with all the recent missile attacks in modern times. All the buildings are destroyed, that is how people feel inside, and they will say I am 'just a wreck'. But the wreck is not of buildings but of our souls and minds and our emotions, the things which go together to make you/us. Of course, being 'a wreck' inside with our mental health can also have a knock-on effect on our physical health. In this world there is little or no protection for our lives. In many ways that is understandable as some of the things people endure are too big for them to cope with, they cannot control the feelings in their hearts and get broken down, and some of the things people inherit are too big for them too. Some people are, of course, more resilient than others but that is nature and nurture, and yet most people are damaged to some extent. They are disquieted inside, have no peace and are very insecure. They have no anchor for their souls.

So how do we get to rule over our own hearts and find help to control our inner being? Also, how do we get repair for the damage already done. This is where God, Christians believe, comes in. We need someone bigger and stronger and yet tender and loving and caring and who understands us, someone to smile on us, on the inside and be able to put things right. A God who is REAL, not just the figment of an imagination.

The prophet Isaiah helps us to start to find the answer. He spoke 600 years before Jesus was born but, with immense accuracy, he describes and foretells for us the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. He tells us what happened in Jesus' death, why He died and how that affects you and me. You may think that is a bit odd for 2 reasons.

1. How can someone's death affect me? The loss of a loved one can affect your life, so death can have an effect. With Jesus' death, a very good effect; more later.
2. If these men were speaking centuries ago how can they be accurate before the event? God knows what is going to happen in the future and therefore can put that knowledge into the mouths of these men, that is what being a prophet means. God may be bigger than you have thought Him to be; it is a bit awesome, and yet He will still smile on you.

Isaiah says this, *"Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows"*: A newer translation says this, *"Surely He took up our pain, and bore our suffering"*, We have the little word 'surely', maybe 'really' or 'actually' is more modern, it is 'for real'. Yes, Someone and His name is Jesus has actually taken on Himself all your pain and grief and sorrow and suffering, all that has damaged you. That includes not only the things you have suffered from others in your life but also the things you have suffered from your own, often very negative, thinking, and maybe the guilt you have for the way you have treated others. He has also taken the things

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you have inherited too. Part of despair is that there is no way out, and with the way we think we often 'oppose ourselves,' we work against ourselves. We don't give ourselves a chance, we press the self-destruct button. But Jesus took all that on to Himself. He took not only the griefs, pain, and sorrow, but all our wrongdoing, all our self-centredness, all our guilt and all our not believing in God. All the things which cast down our souls. The Bible calls wrongdoing 'sin' and tells us the wages, the payment, for that sin is death. Eventually we die physically but all this grief and sorrow and pain kills us off as people, on the inside, and slowly destroys us, and any moments of happiness and pleasure we may have. The dark cloud is always there.

Let's go back to the Lord Jesus and His life, and His death and resurrection. He was the perfect human being, the Son of God who lived a life on the earth fully in control of His own spirit. He was not "a wreck" and was completely protected so nothing destructive ever got into Him. He said, "The prince of this world comes and has nothing in me". No place where the enemy of our souls could find a place to hurt Jesus. If Jesus was to carry all our griefs and sorrows, He had to do it in a way in which they would not overcome Him, but He could come through them in the end, and having overcome them help us out of them. So, first nothing could be in the Lord Jesus that any of our griefs and sorrows could defeat Him with, and that was exactly what we find. What was the secret of Jesus' life? *"I do always the things which please my Father". "Not my will but your will be done"*. The 'not my will but your will be done' we read of Jesus when under the huge pressure not to go through His death and therefore not provide a way out of our problems, for everyone in the whole world. If Jesus had not gone through His death there would have been no one to take on and carry and deal with all our problems. The Bible calls this solving of our problems 'salvation', the way out, the way of being rescued. Salvation also means to heal, to make whole, and that is what Jesus did in His death on the cross. So very much worth taking a look at?

Did Jesus understand as a human being the issues we all have? Did He go through all the trials and challenges of human lives? That is, in a way, the centre of the Christian gospel. God became a human being and experienced what humans experience and yet in those experiences was never overcome and triumphed even through death. How? Jesus trusted His Father; He believed in God and never did or thought the wrong thing and never gave into the many temptations He endured. It was His faith in God as a human which took Jesus through everything, and He would want us to follow His faith and to believe in Him and what He did for us. Jesus said to His *disciples* *"Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God believe also in me. I go and prepare a place for you"*. We could say more, but the place is a place of spiritual safety, and if, by believing in Jesus, our hearts are not to be troubled, that will solve the disquiet in our souls, bring peace and start to remove the depression.

Jesus did suffer. He endured a painful death when He had done nothing wrong. It was the final rejection. (Read Isaiah 53, it is all set out there, the rejection is declared 600 years before it took place. Jesus had to suffer, He said He had to be rejected by humans, by the people of Israel and be killed). But before all that, in His life Jesus had suffered many things. There was the death of his father Joseph, not His real father but the husband of Jesus' mother Mary,

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who had taken Jesus in and looked after him as one of his own. So, bereavement, yes. Rejection we have found already. Betrayal: we have Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus. Being let down; Peter denied Jesus three times, and all the other disciples ran away. Was Jesus abused? Yes, they put a crown of thorns on His head, they hit Him, they mocked Him, and they scourged Him. Jesus suffered being lied about, being plotted against, being threatened with death, having nowhere, He said, to sleep, being misunderstood and so much more. Yes, Jesus experienced all those things and yet was in control. He endured and yet was not 'a wreck and ruin' psychologically or emotionally. His protection, His Father, and Jesus' heart being resolved to do God's will. It is said of Jesus, He delighted to do the will of God. In His death He could say, *"Father forgive them"*. No anger, no bitterness, no hatred, no desire for revenge. He practised what He preached. *"Love your enemies. Pray for those who despitefully use / persecute you"*. He was an amazing person, which is why God could put all our grief, sorrow, disappointment, guilt, hurt, fear, anger and bitterness on Him and He could take it all away in His death. Someone in our place. Like going to court when guilty and yet being released because someone else took the punishment.

How do we know that Jesus took it away? Resurrection! We have said the wages, the payment, for sin is death. If Jesus had not risen from the dead then no hope, no way out, but He is risen, so there is hope, there is salvation; there is an eternal hope; we have more than hope in this life only, so we don't need to be miserable.

We go back to the prophet Isaiah. This is chapter 61 (You can read it all, and chapter 40, but this is edited so as just to get the words which meet our needs for now)

*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me;
because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek;
he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to comfort all that mourn; to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities,*

This is chapter 40, *"Comfort you, comfort you my people, says your God.
Speak ye comfortably, and cry, that the warfare is accomplished, that her sin is pardoned"*.

The words from chapter 4, 'Speak comfortably' are comforting words, the battle is over. No more fighting, the victory is obtained, and it can be yours. What a relief, no more fighting battles we cannot win, no more trying to fight the depression ourselves. No more trying to 'pull ourselves up by our own boot laces'.

In chapter 61 the 'me' is Jesus Christ (we could be more detailed as to why, and if you want to read more, much more, follow this link)

https://www.revivaluk.org.uk/index.html_files/lordofall.pdf

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He says He has come to bring good news to the meek, to the humble. If we are still too proud to hear the good news, then it is not for you. There is a need, as with most things in life, to be a bit humble and to recognise we need help.

If we listen, His words are, *"I have come to bind up your broken heart"*.

If you are depressed because of a broken heart, from broken relationships, betrayed by a close friend, abused, it will not help you control anything. Jesus loves you and died for you. He will bind up your broken heart and free you from the inner prison of your sadness, sorrow, bitterness and depression, and will comfort you in all your sorrows. Ashes are put on the head in times of sorrow and loss in some cultures. They spoil the appearance of a person. It is a sign of mourning. Instead, Jesus will put beauty in its place. Where there is inward mourning over what you are, what you do, and what has happened to you, Jesus will make you beautiful within, give joy in place of mourning, and thankfulness and gladness in all the heaviness. You see how Jesus, how God, understands depression with such words. You feel the heaviness, and Jesus will replace it with joy, happiness in His love, enabling you to thank God for taking all the heaviness away. We go back to Isaiah. *"He bore our suffering"*. Jesus took the weight, He took the heaviness, and gives you praise of God in its place.

Now Jesus has bound up (repaired) our hearts, they are made whole and strong, with strength provided to enable us to rule over our heart/spirit. That provides the walls, the protection, the security, the place of safety, so then Jesus can start the rebuilding of the 'waste' places, the parts of our soul which have been devastated, and repair all the broken parts of us as a person.

It all happens gently in the love of God, seeing Jesus knows and understands our need. We are told He knows all our weaknesses and can feel those weaknesses, and yet we can come to Him with those weaknesses and find grace to help. The battle is over, we have seen that, so it is not our work to sort ourselves out, it is of grace. It is God's grace, lots of mercy, patience, kindness, gentleness, compassion and understanding. We cast all our cares, our worries, our fears on to Him. Why? He cares for us. God showed His care when He sent Jesus to die for us. Then there would be a person who could help us and who has the answer to the needs of our souls, to lead us out of the darkness of depression into His light.

Lots of people know the 23rd psalm. It is often read at funerals. It starts, *"The Lord is My Shepherd"*. Someone to lead and to guide through life. When we come to Jesus and receive Him, He, the Lord, becomes our Shepherd. He leads us through our lives.

One verse in the psalm says, *"He restores my soul."* The re-building of the soul, the repair work, the ruined parts of us made good again. How? We read this, *"He leads me in paths of righteousness for His Name's sake"*. How wonderful, Jesus our Shepherd leading us in the right path, in a right relationship with God, maybe the God we did not believe even existed. In that relationship, like any other, the closeness brings changes, and the love works in the life. God's love, as we are led, restores our soul, which happens naturally and yet spiritually naturally. The process continues through the whole of our lives, it is gentle and patient. As we become more like Jesus in our living, we can demonstrate the control and discipline of spirit which He knew, and yet all in the love of God. We rule over our own hearts and are protected and repaired, our souls being restored. We become less self-centred and less

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insecure and can then start to love others. We will find we will love God too and live for His Name's sake. It is for Jesus, so He can be honoured by our lives and faith, and yet we walk in the light and are free from the old dark days. *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"*. As said, we are free from being self-centred, we are Jesus centred, God centred, it is for Him, for His reputation as a Saviour.

He is the Shepherd, but the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep and that is what Jesus did. That is why we can know and will know that He is good, the Good Shepherd and He will lead us in the right path and restore our souls.

The comment was made earlier, that if we only have hope in Christ in this world, we are very miserable. Once we receive the Lord Jesus, once He enters our lives and changes us, we receive, in Him, eternal life. We know we have eternal life. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life"*. Here is the hope. Biblical hope is really a certainty in the future, not only in this life but hereafter and for ever. The true Christian has hope for ever and is not 'of all people most miserable' but 'of all people most blessed and full of joy'. No depression here, just life everlasting with a wonderful hope.

Jesus said He gives us His peace, not like the world with its temporary solutions, but His peace, peace with God for ever. No more will our heart be 'disquieted within us', no longer distressed, or afraid and anxious, but assured of the love of God for ever. *'Why are you cast down O my soul? Hope in God.'* You will see His smile, the warmth of His love towards you. Jesus said, *"that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full"*. So, we have peace and joy in Jesus Christ for ever. We have His peace and His joy, and then our joy is full. No place for gloom and doom, the heaviness is gone.

See how He loves you and loved you when He gave His life for you. He is the best antidepressant. He is the answer to all the anxieties, cares, worries, self-doubt, self-hatred, guilt, shame, hurt, or whatever we want to call the source of the depression. Receive Him. It does not mean life will be a 'bed of roses', it will still have many challenges, but the Good Shepherd will lead you in the right path, restore your soul and then in all things you will know that goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life and you will be with Jesus, and safely in the house of God for ever: He is the best antidepressant.



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