

Winning the War Over Depression
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Introduction

As a registered nurse I have always been interested in human emotions. So often our emotions, especially negative emotions, affect the physical and spiritual aspects of our lives as well. And while my interest as a student and beyond wasn't purely academic by any means, I had personally only dealt with clinical depression as one does looking in from the outside. Until it happened to me...

You may be surprised to find that this book is short and sweet, but the truth is it doesn't take hundreds of pages or years of psychotherapy or analysis to address the question of depression. If we really get down to issues, it comes down to one thing – are we ready and willing to admit that our lives are a mess and that we cannot pull ourselves up by our bootstraps? Are we willing to give up control of our lives to God or not? Are we ready to obey when He speaks or not? Will we trust God to catch us in midair when we give ourselves to Him or not?

I won't belabor the point, because there is no need. Rather, I will speak the truth as He revealed it to me, and leave the choice to you. But I must add that letting Jesus address your depression is only the beginning of living out your purpose, your God-given destiny, the beginning of unimagined fulfillment and a lifelong love affair from which you'll never recover. Come with me and I'll show you what I mean...

ONE--

Definition and Statistics

If you struggle with depression you are not alone. According to healthline.com it is estimated that 17 million Americans suffer with depression at any one time. One out of four women and 10-20% of men will experience depression at some time in their lives.

By definition depression is a feeling of profound and persistent sadness, despair and hopelessness caused by loss or trauma, either real or perceived, that lasts at least two weeks. It is characterized by sleep disturbances, loss of interest in normal daily activities, mental disturbances and a lack of concentration, irritability, and preoccupation with thoughts of death and suicide.

And though it may feel like this cycle is endless and that there is nothing you can do to stop it, I have good news for you. There is an answer, and His name is *Jesus*.

TWO-

Some Common Reasons Why People Become Depressed:

1. As little children some of us were born into homes where we were not wanted or welcomed. Children born into these families almost always struggle with feelings of rejection and have trouble finding their identity. As a result they may always feel like the “extra” child, and find it difficult to feel of value.
2. Others of us find ourselves under the authority of abusive adults who take advantage of us in one way or another. Young girls who have been sexually abused find it difficult to see themselves as worthy, and as a result they may seek to find their own level and end up associating with those many of us would describe as “lowlives.” Others may try to prove their worth by putting on a mask and trying to be perfect, rather than giving in or giving up on doing right.

3. Those of us who do not meet society's standards for academic excellence or beauty may feel rejected and struggle to find their place in the world.

4. Some experience losses of parents or family members, people of influence in our lives, and never resolve their grief issues. For others losses such as abandonment by parents or mates become stumbling blocks from which they never recover.

5. Some struggle with guilt over things they regret, but never find resolution for that haunted feeling.

6. Scripture says our consciences also condemn us for things we do that God has said are wrong. And even though we may try to deny it, we feel guilt that never really goes away. For that reason many of us try to kill the pain with drugs of choice, including but not limited to: street drugs, alcohol, playing video games or other entertainment, overeating, spending money, or partying. While the choices are endless, they never kill the pain entirely or permanently.

7. If we're honest, we know our sin has separated us from God, and yet we long to be fully known and fully loved and accepted by Him. In essence, we feel isolated, alone and hopeless apart from that love.

8. Some of us have believed a lie that we are too far gone to be salvaged. That even if God could

forgive us, we could never forgive ourselves, and therefore, we believe we are forever lost. In doing so we reject God's gift of salvation and sentence ourselves to eternal separation from God.

9. Others have said God is dead, that absolutes don't exist, and that there will never be a day of reckoning, but in our hearts, we know God has said otherwise. Facing the possibility of hell forever can, in and of itself, be very depressing and even bring us to despair.

10. In this day and age many face losses our parents never confronted – job losses, financial losses, issues that force us to change the way we live and how we see ourselves.

11. Sometimes physical illness, constant stress and losses have left us with no more reserves to rise above them. Psychologists say that norepinephrine and serotonin are the "feel good" hormones that originate in the brain. Over time high levels of stress tend to depress the levels of these substances, which keep us from bouncing back, recovering our normal objectivity and good humor.

12. If we are raised with unrealistic expectations or are expected to perform at superhuman levels we can lose hope of ever meeting such a standard. When we get stuck in a cycle of failure it often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, to the place where we

believe we cannot perform and when we do, we are destined to fail.

13. At times we can become depressed after we have ignored or strayed from the plan we know God has designed for us. When we refuse the gifts He's given us to glorify Him, we are convicted when we know we haven't lived out our destiny.

14. For some there are no real or concrete reasons, just a free-floating feeling of doom, like a dark cloud hovering over their heads, with no way to make it go away.

There may be other causes, but no matter what the cause the answer is always Jesus.

THREE--

Questions to answer regarding depression symptoms:

1. Have you had a loss of interest in things that you used to enjoy? Explain.

2. Have you experienced recent losses, including the death of a loved one or a job, a divorce, alienation of someone close, or a deeply felt disappointment?

3. Have you had a prolonged feeling of sadness or hopelessness lasting two or more weeks?

Regarding sleep problems:

4. Have you experienced sleep disturbances, for example – sleeping for long periods and still waking up tired?

5. Does it feel better to be asleep than awake simply because the pain is not as overwhelming? Explain.

6. How would you describe your mental attitude? Awake? Alert? Struggling to concentrate and stay on task? Do you make frequent mistakes, or forget things you used to remember easily? Explain.

7. How has the depression affected your appetite?

8. How have your feelings of sadness affected your relationships? Explain.

9. How do you see your future?

10. Have you considered ending your life just so the pain will end? Explain.

If your answers reveal disturbances that have affected your life in any of these areas, there is help for you. This season will not last forever if you dump it all out to God.

FOUR--

How to Confront Your Depression

Perhaps you see yourself in these pages, and you want to know how to confront the depression you feel.

First of all, let me say that no matter which of these descriptions (if any) fits your situation, there is hope for you, because Jesus has been where you are, and He understands your pain.

As far as I'm concerned, there is no way to address this subject apart from God. In fact, when I was crashing emotionally, I saw a psychologist, who, as an unbeliever, could only show me the pile of rubble left of my life, and hand it back to me with no solutions whatsoever. This only intensified my feelings of failure and worthlessness, and did nothing to alleviate the depression.

The truth is, it doesn't take a psychology degree, or big money and a lifelong commitment to a

psychiatrist to get past our issues. It takes yielding ourselves to someone with answers – Jesus! It takes repentance and lining up with the plan of the Master Designer, the creative Architect who knows us inside out and upside down. Dealing with that psychologist made me realize that as human beings we have absolutely no hope of truly and permanently recovering from depression (or any other problem for that matter!) apart from a mighty move of God.

Because He created us, He knows how we tick, how we think, how we feel, what we need, and only He can offer answers and healing – real solutions for what ails us. Once we connect ourselves to our Source of Life, He transforms us from the inside out, making us brand new and touching everything that hurts, turning it from scarred tissue into baby soft skin.

You may be saying, “I’ve tried the religion route before, and it did nothing to ease my feelings of despair.” Well, let me be very clear on the subject. I’m not talking religion or the traditions of man, because those are dead, ineffective, and worthless when it comes to addressing issues of life and death.

I’m talking a living, breathing person, the human personification of the One and Only, Eternal God, Jehovah Himself, in the Person of Jesus Christ. And lest you say, “Didn’t He die a long time ago?” He did, but that’s not the end of the story. He rose from the dead, taking death captive and snatching the

keys of hell from Satan, and He is now standing before God representing you and me.

And while I may seem radical, I have good reason. I was a believer, but emotionally devastated and close to suicide – but now I'm found, saved, set free, living in power and full of hope. And best of all, I am a priceless treasure in my Father's hand, though I don't really understand why He feels that way about me. But I praise God that He does!

FIVE--

My Story~

I was conceived out of wedlock, though my parents deeply loved each other, and even went the ladder/elopement route to get married over her parents' violent protestations. They had great plans for her to attend college and make something of herself that didn't include sudden motherhood and marriage.

My mother, who had a very high IQ, had just turned eighteen and was less than a year out of high school, while my father, at age twenty-three, had just returned from Alaska where he served as a radioman first class for the Navy in World War II. And in spite of their rather poor financial circumstances and challenging start with a baby already on the way, my parents doted on me, and I knew I was loved.

Both my mother and her mother were classic examples of perfectionists. My first memory is of Mother's use of excessive force to wash my dirty

face. Dirty hands and faces were always addressed with a vengeance using a wet washcloth that, when we were going away from home, she habitually folded into tin foil, (before the advent of plastic bags) which she tucked into her handbag back in the fifties. Such was my life and those of my three younger brothers.

Because my maternal grandmother never approved of my mother, Mother could not seem to love her children unconditionally, and, in fact, never did. It was clear to me at a very young age that you can't give what you've never received. I also realized very early that she would never love me if I wasn't entirely compliant, so I always made it my goal to do everything she wanted exactly the way she wanted, with almost a sixth sense that let me know what that was before she ever said a word.

In fact, the one and only time I ever talked back to her (her words) was when she gave me a verbal list of six things to do when I was only eight, and I was simply incapable of recalling them all.

Understand, she wasn't being purposely mean. Rather she was acting out of her pain. If she couldn't get her mother's love any other way, she would be perfect and force her children to be perfect, hoping to earn that love.

By the age of five I was her clone, an exact replica of Mother and was loved as much as she could love

anyone. Two of my brothers didn't fare so well and were badly wounded by her lack of acceptance. My youngest brother, because he was of a compliant nature, never had a bit of trouble with Mother, because he never crossed her once.

I think I was about four when I sang my first solo in a Sunday night church service. Afterward, Mother began a new ritual when she said, "Well, you tried. Clearly that isn't your gift, but we'll keep searching, and find other things you're good at." The trouble is, when you're a perfectionist nothing is ever good enough, so, after examining many options that might have been my gifts, she discarded them all, leaving me feeling ill-equipped, worthless and afraid to try new things unless I was sure I could master them.

It wasn't long after I started elementary school that I understood my mother was a victim of clinical depression, though, of course, I had no idea what it was called. All I knew was that we often told her we loved her or complimented her great cooking, but she was unable to hear our words, because her dream of being loved by the only one, who mattered--her mother, had been thwarted. Even then I understood the incredible power of positive reinforcement and unconditional love sincerely offered. Men have died for less.

We attended a church where the Word of God was preached clearly and unapologetically. And to this day I am grateful for the incredible scriptural

foundation God has used so beautifully in my life. The verses I learned in my youth are powerful and easily accessible because they are imprinted on my memory and in my heart.

But that church, as many others have done, refused to believe that the Book of Acts is alive and well and applicable in our day. And with my performance mentality I struggled to see God as a gracious, loving God who delighted in me, and instead saw Him as a harsh and arbitrary dictator, who demanded perfection and cracked the whip whenever I got out of line. I wondered if He ever struck people dead when they blew it. Would He strike me dead when I messed up? He certainly had the power to make it happen.

From the outside our middle class home looked like the perfect place to grow up, but there was much chaos, and Mother yelled when things felt out of her control, which, as you can imagine, happened often when we were small.

I remember asking God to help me be good, because, as hard as I tried, I knew I never quite measured up to whatever imaginary line was drawn in the sand.

As I began to study Scripture on my own, however, I began to see that my church preached only a partial truth. My Bible actually said that Jesus loved me unconditionally and that from the beginning of time

He knew my name, the number of hairs on my head, and would even bottle every tear I cried. Psalm 139 said He knew me in my inward parts and planned for each one of them. I was intrigued to learn this, and yet struggled to understand why, if He knew way ahead of time that I was going to be imperfect, He hadn't said, "Listen, forget her. This one's a faulty model. A do-over."

But the wonderful truth is that before any of us were born, He knew we would be imperfect, and yet He still finds us irresistible. Let me say that again for emphasis--*He still finds us irresistible*. Isn't that amazing? When Adam and Eve sinned, God had Plan B ready and waiting for the moment in history when Jesus would step onto the scene, coming as a perfect infant, the only begotten Son of God, and in time, stand in my place in judgment and die on a cross, so I could go free.

What an awesome revelation that was. I didn't have to be perfect at all. He knew I was weak and wayward, and still He loved me and had made plans to not only save me from sin and hell, but also to protect, teach, bless and encourage me, and include me in His plan to win the world. To say that I was blown away at this idea is to vastly understate it.

To learn that He anticipated my struggles and had no illusion regarding my competence, was an enormous and life-changing epiphany that allowed me to relax for the very first time in my life.

God and I had a long history of togetherness, after I had fallen in love with Jesus at age five. It was at a children's church that I saw a man do a black light chalk drawing of three crosses on a hill called Calvary, where Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, gave up His life in exchange for mine. That day, He became irresistible to me, and I asked Him to come into my heart and change me. I have never been the same since.

Though I'd been saved at an early age I had many doubts, not about Him but about my worth. Who was I that He should love me in the first place?

And those old messages from my mother and my church were like powerful tapes going round and round in my head telling me I would never be good enough no matter how long I lived or how hard I tried.

At age twenty-three I graduated from nursing school and married a fine, Christian man, to whom I am still married today, and together we had a son and a daughter. But the demons of my perfectionist past would not let me go, even after I had a family of my own.

The year I turned thirty-five my mother had a stroke and died at the age of fifty-three, and my life was turned upside down. I had lived only to please

her, and once she was gone, I had no identity of my own and no clue regarding where to find one.

During the next two years, I struggled to find my place in the world without her, still trying to reconcile the dichotomy between the tapes that replayed in my head and what I read in God's Word. I was devastated, confused and felt abandoned, like a child in a boat without anchor, oars or adults to rely on.

And that wasn't my first traumatic loss. Five years earlier I had lost my beloved grandmother, who had prayed for each of her seven children, their spouses and twenty-eight grandchildren every day, by name. She had known God the way I needed to know Him, but by then it was too late to ask questions of her.

She was one of those rare people who I knew would have loved me even if I was an ax-murderer or did something else equally heinous. Because of her amazing unconditional love I had loved her more deeply than I had any other human being, and once she was gone I missed her so much I thought I would literally die.

And from then on, my life began to unravel. Now you have to understand that my mother had taught me a terrible untruth upon which she had staked her life. She had always maintained that bad things never happened to good people who loved God. Even as a small child I could see the error of such a belief system, but she would not be dissuaded.

Now the Bible does say that all things work together for good to those who love God, but it is a gross error to say that bad things will never happen to us. God never promised us a rose garden. He did, however, say that He would be with us no matter what we go through.

After Mother's death, loss after loss occurred like a chain of dominos collapsing, under the weight of disappointment, disillusionment, physical pain of undetermined origin in my upper right abdomen, fires, and deaths, not just of people I loved but of my own personal dreams. During that time I took a stress test given by our pastor, who said a score of 200 put you at great risk for emotional or health problems. I personally scored over 400.

I sought God in prayer and read the Word, desperate for a connection, but for some reason, I could no longer feel His arms around me, or hear His voice when He spoke. I had every single symptom of clinical depression – I could've been their poster child. It was as if heaven was glass, and my prayers bounced back without ever reaching God.

Those who attended my church supposedly loved God but turned away from me as if deaf, because they had no idea how to deal with my problems. No one offered to listen or pray, because they had no idea how to use spiritual warfare. I intuitively felt

they would prefer that I just take my sadness and disappear. My presence made them uncomfortable.

Feeling abandoned on top of everything else, I began to lose hope that things would ever change. And by September of 1985, I was at my wits' end. With no hope and no relief in sight, I told God I just couldn't deal with it any longer. I had made up my mind.

The thing you should know is this: I was not and have never been a melancholy disposition or given to deep self-analysis or depression. In fact my personality tests always described me a sanguine, outgoing and lighthearted. To be honest I had never understood how people could want to take their lives – it just wasn't a part of my life experience up to that point. But my own looming despair was certainly reality now--the result of prolonged and persistent stress and grief.

That particular morning, I took my children to school, put supper in the refrigerator, cleaned my house leaving everything in perfect order, and drove to a nearby town where a railroad crossing ran right through the center of a beautiful city park.

Though fall had always been my favorite time of year I scarcely noticed the stunningly hued autumn leaves fluttering on the trees. Depression had caused my 3-D, Technicolor world to fade to gray, with not even a vague, distant hope for improvement. I sat

there and waited for that train, weeping in despair, not wanting to die, just wanting my pain to end. As I watched I saw mothers pushing playground equipment filled with happy preschool-aged children, but I could feel none of their joy. Whatever joy I had known was a thing of the past.

Soon I could hear the rumble of the train and feel the vibration under my tires. It wouldn't be long now.

I was trembling with dread mingled with an odd kind of relief as I started my car and pulled to the place where I had only to drive ten feet to be in the path of that train. And I prayed one last time, "Lord, I don't want to do this, so if you're there, and you have any other suggestions, I'm listening."

Suddenly and without warning He appeared in the passenger's seat in the form of heat and light, a visible presence I will never forget. I felt Him caress my face as He spoke to my heart. "This isn't my plan for you. I know how much you hurt, but I am here. I have incredible things ahead for you that you have never even dreamed of. Will you give me another chance?"

Instantly I put the car in reverse and parked under a shade tree, relieved to have other options, and to finally hear His voice. I was anxious to feel His loving embrace. He had given me new hope.

Back at home I got into the Psalms and read how much He loved me, and it was as if He was personally nursing me back to health. He had me use our new computer to dump all my fears, doubts, guilt, bitterness, heartache and remnants of the past that haunted me, onto paper, over 200 pages in all, before giving it to Him, and setting fire to it later, letting die all the old demons of my past. I was a new creature in Christ, and I finally felt like it inside, praise God.

And in the process, I was comforted, knowing that He had an amazing future mapped out for me; He had told me in His own words. And for the first time in a very long time I felt excitement and anticipation rise up in me, along with hope.

In fact, did you know that hope is the one thing that keeps us alive and able to get up in the morning? Those without hope give up and even die premature deaths as a result. And in the same way, fear hinders us from ever stepping out in boldness.

So, what did that future include? Six beautiful grandchildren, and children and their spouses who love and serve God with all their hearts, all of whom I dearly love. My darling faithful husband, who stuck through with me through all this, is still beside me, after nearly forty years of marriage, and we are happier and more in sync than ever, because Jesus is the cement that holds us together.

That future also included something I never imagined. God moved us from the only home I'd ever known, Nebraska, to Missouri after our children both got married in 1999. This was a curve ball I hadn't expected and once again I fell into depression, though not nearly as deep as the previous one.

He transplanted me into the middle of another wilderness, literally, in the middle of the Missouri Ozarks, while I kicked and screamed that I didn't want to go.

And boy was I upset! I could see no reason to move to a place where I had no family or friends, no church, and absolutely no support system. In truth, I was so homesick that I drove back to Lincoln, Nebraska every six weeks to visit family and friends.

But God knew the end of the story. Exactly at the two-year mark, on March 1, 2001 I asked Him for the thousandth time what on earth I was supposed to do in Missouri, and He said something astounding. He said, "Sit down. I'm going to teach you how to write."

My response? "You've got to be kidding, Lord. Don't you think we might have started when I was still young?"

His answer? "You weren't ready then, but you are now. Sit down. I'm going to teach you how to write."

And He did. I had arrived in Missouri on Prozac, but within a year, I had written six books and had no need for Prozac anymore. And within one more year the first book was published. In the ten years since the move I have written thirty-seven books, (some still waiting in queue to be published) and have learned to listen when God speaks. I've learned from hard experience that He knows what He's talking about, and He's trustworthy whether I 'get it' at that moment or not. He knows the end from the beginning, and it's a good end if we allow it.

The thing is, He is a gentleman who does not enter where He is not welcome. So if you and I put up stop signs saying, "Keep out. This is as far as you go," He will go no further. He can only use us to the degree we allow it.

As you can imagine with my strict background, I struggled with fear of the power of the Holy Spirit. My church had preached that anything having to do with the Holy Spirit and tongues was straight from the pit of hell. But once again I studied my Bible, and that stuff was still in there. God hadn't removed His miracles, signs and wonders after the first century. And if that was so, how could it be wrong?

Because I was still dealing with the issue of performance and control in order to feel secure, it took some time for me to decide it was worth the risk for me to ask God for everything in His arsenal.

As afraid as I was I told God I had to have it all. I wanted to be just like Jacob who wrestled with the Angel of the Lord. He refused to let go of that angel until He blessed him, and though Jacob's hip was dislocated, leaving him with a lifelong limp, he did, indeed, receive the blessing he so desperately sought.

In fact, Scripture says that's exactly the kind of people God is looking for. He is seeking those who long for Him, seek Him because they'll die without Him, and won't let go until they see the fullness of His blessing on their lives. Well, that described me perfectly. I was desperate for more of God. Scripture says to that person, "I will let you find me."

God does not hide from those He loves. He is seeking us, chasing after us as with the Hound of Heaven, yearning for our company.

And though He didn't have to include us in His grand plan to save the world, He made a place that requires our participation, and fills us up to overflowing in the process.

As we seek Him in Scripture and prayer, He reveals Himself by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, who speaks to us, ministers to us, and reveals His very nature to us. Isn't that amazing? He actually allows fallen human beings into His secret world and reveals to us His very heart.

When I learned this, I got excited. This God was worth getting excited about, worth shouting about, worthy of all my praise and worship. And now I bask in His great love, knowing Jesus would've died for me even if I had been the only person in the world who needed salvation. His name in Hebrew is Jehovah Rapha, which, by definition means, God my healer. And heal me, He did – like brand new, giving me a brand new song and a new outlook on life.

It's been over twenty years since I sat in my car awaiting that train, and in those years God has become the anchor that holds fast no matter how hard the storms of life beat down on me. He is with me, never abandoning me, and He's even given me a vision of Him actually singing songs of joy over my head. I weep when I see that picture in my spirit. What amazing love He must have to love someone as weak and wayward as I.

SIX--

Tools to Help You Get Past Your Depression-

The following tools helped me to overcome my depression and you may find them helpful, too.

1. Because depression is not just an emotional issue, but also a physical one that affects the whole person, long term stress and grief depletes our bodies of vitamins that help us cope with our stressful circumstances. This is why it's vital to eat right and take a good quality multiple vitamin, especially one with a good B Complex, called a stress complex, that builds up our immune systems and helps strengthen our neurological systems to cope with stress and rise above it.

2. Herbs such as Sam-ee and St. John's Wort are also helpful against depression. If these are not sufficient check with your doctor. Perhaps there is a physical reason for these symptoms.

3. It's absolutely essential to get into God's Word, and especially the Psalms, and ask God for *rhema* –

Scriptures to meet you right where you are at the moment you need them.

4. Read and re-read Psalm 139, to learn how precious God says you are. You are one of a kind, but you must renew your mind with the good words God says about you in order to overcome the old, negative messages in your mind.

5. If you're struggling with projects that overwhelm you, step away for a few days, and just get into the Word, and let God love on you. Turn on praise music that puts you into worship mode and lie down with your pillow and blanket and soak in the love of God. There's tremendous healing in doing this little exercise.

6. Journaling is one of psychologists' most common suggestions for those struggling with depression. Write whatever is on your heart, or heavy on your mind, old, new, hurts, burdens, wounds that are festering--write them all down, and dump them in God's lap in the process. When you get through you will find that when you see them in black and white they crystallize and lose their power to manipulate and hinder you. (Oh, and reject the temptation to pick them up once you've laid them down.) Once God showed me a picture of my wounded heart (and it was scarred beyond belief) He then showed me an *after* picture of my heart once He had touched and healed it. The new one was soft and new, smooth as

a new baby's bottom. And He will do the same for you if you ask Him to.

7. Tell yourself the truth. No matter what kind of life you've lived, God is bigger than your past. He is the prescription for whatever ails us, because He not only loves and understands us, but if we repent He forgives our sins, erasing them from His memory, as far as the east is from the west, according to God's Word. And He has a future and a hope for you if you'll dump your past, and your sins at the cross, where He can give you a brand new heart and new desires. Scripture says, "Old things are past. All things become new."

8. If we harbor unforgiveness in our hearts, Scripture says He will not hear our prayers. Because He forgave us, He also expects us to let Him clean out the festering bitterness and garbage we've hidden in the back cubbyholes of our hearts. Do this by responding when He brings certain sins to your mind. Give Him the keys to those areas and let Him clean them out, and repent of them as He reveals them to you. Only as we give Him access to those dark places and confess our sins will we be set free, delivered, and ready to soar above our circumstances as overcomers the way He planned.

What bitterness and unforgiveness are you harboring?

9. Keep short accounts with God. In other words, when you sin, immediately make things right when He speaks to you. Talk to Him all day every day about everything, and let Him give you wisdom, direction, counsel, comfort, hope, joy, and blessing. Tell Him everything that upsets you, dumping it in His lap, and let Him replace it with forgiveness and joy – His viewpoint. Anything less will give the enemy, Satan, a legal right to hold onto a piece of the ground in your heart. Don't give him a single opening to operate.

10. Now if you're like I was you may not be keen on the idea of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, but don't discount it because of fear or lack of understanding. At least consider the idea. And even if you're not open to it now, pray about it. When the time comes that you see you need more of God's power, pray, asking God for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. As humans, you and I are like putty in the hands of the devil, unless we are endowed with Holy Ghost power, discernment and wisdom. Once we have the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and allow God to make us bold and use us, we can turn the world upside down for Jesus. Ask God for a prayer language once you get the baptism, because praying in the spirit allows the Holy Ghost to pray through us, without the interference of our minds and often warped opinions.

11. God has given us dominion and authority over spirits if we use the name of Jesus. We can actually tell anxiety, fear and doubt to be gone in the name of Jesus. Use Jesus' name and the scripture God gives you, to speak to the enemy and make him leave. Praising God in spirit and in truth is a very powerful weapon that forces Satan to flee. Every day, put on the armor of God and plead the blood of Jesus over yourself, and your family. Read out loud the verses in Ephesians 6:12-18 that explain the armor of God, until you memorize them, then quote them out loud telling the devil he has no legal rights to you in Jesus' name.

12. If you've ever had any dealings with the occult in any form including but not limited to: Ouija boards, tarot cards, witchcraft, séances, fortune telling, astrology, or anything like that, you have given a piece of your heart to the devil. This means he has the legal right to meddle in your life. If this describes you, repent, asking God's forgiveness. Ask Him to remind you of any other strongholds Satan may be holding against you, and renounce them. Tell the devil, "In Jesus' name, I take back the ground I gave up when I..." and fill in the blank. If you struggle repeatedly to get victory in a certain areas, ask God to reveal places where you need to be set free and get victory, then go through this exercise again. Once you've done that begin to praise Him for your amazing breakthrough.

13. There is much power in praising God. So get into the habit of praising Him with every breath, for everything, including hard things, for they bring maturity and patience, growing us up to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Let go of superstitions that make you worry about what's going to happen next. Just see Him as your wonderful, amazing Dad, your biggest cheerleader, and expect Him to take care of things, just as He promised in His Word, because He's got your back.

Write a short prayer of praise to God for what He is doing in your life.

14. Ask God to lead you to a church that welcomes His Holy Spirit to move according to God's will, rather than man's. And soak in the Word, and let the people love on you while you love on them, because the body of Christ is the great leveler, and powerful in helping us get on our feet to the place where we can develop our gifts and be used mightily by God.

15. Read the *Declarations of Your Identity* (located in Chapter 8) on a daily basis to renew and transform your mind. Watch your depression disappear as you learn to see yourself as God sees you. You are precious in His sight, and He has a future and a hope in store for you, if you just draw near to Him and let Him minister to your needy heart.

SEVEN—

There's Hope For You.

Perhaps you're like me and you've struggled with depression, disappointed with yourself and your lack of perfection. Or for whatever reason, the grief you feel is so painful that you can no longer cope with it.

Well then, there's something you should know. God created you and me knowing we would never be perfect until we get to heaven. That's right. *He created us, knowing we would be less than perfect*

He created us and loved us unconditionally, so much that He bought us back from the clutches of the enemy with the blood of Jesus. And once we are called by His name, He delights in us, like a Daddy dotes on his darling little child. (If you are not yet a child of God and want to know more, please see the section entitled: *How to Become a Child of God*, located at the end of this book.)

In fact, Scripture says God completes us--that *whatever we are not, He is*. Isn't that incredible? Let me say that again. *Whatever we are not, He is*. Whatever we lack, He supplies. We are incomplete without Him, but fully equipped when we allow Him to save us, change, fill, and use us.

The thing is, most of us have heard terrible, demanding, perfectionist messages from society, our parents, our churches and the devil himself. And you and I have adopted those messages believing they were our own, and used them to belittle, shame, and even try to motivate us to do better. But they don't motivate us, do they? They embarrass and paralyze us, hindering us from stepping out again. Sometimes they even make us afraid to try, because we might fail.

The good news is, those messages are not from God. They are lies from the pit of hell itself, and they prevent us from receiving the promises of God.

For much of my life, I've felt ill-equipped, inadequate, and ashamed of my lack of perfection, and it hindered me no end. And though I knew I was given victory to live what Scripture calls the abundant life, I simply couldn't grab hold of this concept.

One small failure had the capacity to knock me down for a week, a month, a year, or, on occasion, a lifetime. I simply could not forgive myself for my

failures. Fear was my greatest enemy, and my list of failures was endless.

Because I knew I didn't have this down, I hung onto God for dear life, bugging Him to give me the key to overcoming this terrible obstacle. Just like Jacob wrestled with that Angel of the Lord, I wouldn't let Him go until He blessed me with answers. And He did exactly that. He showed me things I'd never seen before.

First, He showed me that His Word is truth, and in His Word, He makes declarations about me that I need to grab hold of. When I do that and repeat them on a daily basis, my mind is renewed, and my heart can actually grasp the fact of His love, making that message my own.

And once the new messages become my own, I can let go of doubt, fear, anxiety, and dread of the future, because I know that I know that I know that my God loves me, and He has everything under control and I am secure. Scripture says perfect love casts out fear, so getting into the secret place and basking in His love has the power to shatter fear and doubt. So no matter how bad things look in the natural, the future is bright, because nothing is impossible with God and He promises to provide for His beloved. I can rejoice because Scripture says He delights in me and loves to give me the desires of my heart. He thinks I'm worthy! I can forgive, because I have been forgiven every evil thing I've ever done. That

thought makes me want to dance and shout with joy. And at this place I can also rest, believing with my whole heart that these things are the truth.

But how can we grasp these truths? By daily reinforcing the incredible words God says about us in Scripture.

It's only been recently that I learned these truths and as I first read the declarations listed below, I shook my head. I knew they were God's words about me, but I absolutely didn't believe them, so I set them aside until the next day.

The second day, I picked them up again, hopeful this time, because if God said them, they certainly had to be true. And I followed the directions. Looking at myself in the mirror, I read them out loud. I wept, overwhelmed when I finally grasped the truth, that God's love has covered my sins, freed me from the wreckage and bondage of my past, given me hope for the future, and offered me a niche in the incredible kingdom of God, where I can be a tool in the Master's hand. I finally belong! How could He possibly love me that much when I'm so weak and imperfect? I don't know, but He does!

And that was the beginning of transformation, the beginning of healing, hope and revival, renewed excitement about my wonderful God. The fears and doubts and dread are gone, shattered by the truth of God's amazing love.

The following list of declarations has literally changed my life. So often we struggle to trust God, because we feel we aren't worthy. And because believing God loves us is foundational to everything else we do, we must renew our minds, reinforcing and believing what God says about us. Remember, He says these words about *you!*

EIGHT--

Declarations of Your Identity

If you repeat this exercise every day and choose to take God at His word and believe it, I promise you'll never be the same again.

Stand in front of a mirror, smile, and with passion, repeat these words:

I am the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

He puts a new song of praise in my mouth. (Psalm 40:3)

I am more than a conqueror through Him who loves me. (Romans 8:37)

I am the apple of His eye, and He delights in me. (Psalm 17:8)

I am the beloved of God. (Psalm 60:5, 108:6)

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13)

I am not who I used to be, but a brand new creature in Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

I am forgiven, and God has long forgotten things I refuse to let go. Therefore, I will no longer bring them up, but let go of them. (Psalm 103:12)

I am changed by the renewing of my mind, replacing my old messages with the new and powerful words of anointing God says about me. (Romans 12:2)

I will not fear, but will believe God in every situation. (Deuteronomy 31:6, 8; Ps. 46:2)

I will stand on His promises, and refuse doubt and depression, because they are lies from the pit. (2 Corinthians 1:20)

I will rejoice in the Lord, for He is the strength of my life. My God sings a song of joy over me. (Psalms 27:1, 28:7; Is. 5:1)

I will comfort myself in the truth of His Word that says He is my provider, my protector, my victory and my hope for the future. (1 Corinthians 15:7)

I will abide in the Lord, believing Him for every good thing He wants me to have, the fruits of the

spirit, the power that comes with living in His very presence, and the faith to believe for the impossible. For Scripture says those who waiver and doubt, will get nothing. (Psalm 91, Luke 1:37)

I will praise God with passion, yearning after Him, no longer satisfied with simply going through the motions, for then He will hear my cry, and pour out His spirit on me. (Revelations 3:16)

I will wait upon the Lord, anxious to hear His voice and obey, ready in season and out of season to minister to those who need to hear and be encouraged. (Isaiah 40:31)

For more information to help you in your spiritual walk, check out Nancy's website and especially her mini books section at: www.nancyarantwilliams.com and may the Lord richly use you to lift up and bless the name of Jesus!

NINE--

How to Become a Child of God

If you do not yet have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that is the starting place for healing of depression.

Let me explain: At creation, God made man for an intimate and loving relationship with Him. He wanted to walk and talk in intimate fellowship. But Adam and Eve chose to rebel against God when they disobeyed, and the perfect fellowship between man and his God was broken.

As a remedy for that broken relationship, God sent Jesus, to be born and to die on a cross, paying for your sin and mine, for the purpose of restoring fellowship, between God and man. When we accept that gift of salvation we become friends of God, and joint-heirs and brothers with Christ.

The Bible says in Romans 3:23: *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* The truth is, we cannot save ourselves.

Romans 6:23 says: *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.* God wants you to receive His gift, and become not just His creation, but His child.

Romans 8:1& 2 says: *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.*

Romans 10:9 & 10 says: *If you confess your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth, he confesses, resulting in salvation.*

Dear friend, if you desire to know Jesus as your personal Savior, the Scripture says in Matthew 7:7&8: *Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened.*

You can become a child of God, if you pray this prayer of salvation. *Lord Jesus, I agree with your Word when it says I am a sinner, and cannot save myself. I believe that you died for me, and I ask you to forgive my sins, and make me a new creation. I give myself to you and ask You to come into my heart, and make me a child of God. Help me to learn to walk in your ways. I believe, now, since I have asked, that you have made me your own.*

And I give you thanks, for what you have done, In Jesus' name. Amen.

At the end of this page are two recommended Bible study links that will help you grow in your new walk with God. Bless you, dear one, for you will never be the same again. E-mail me at: nancy@nancyarantwilliams.com and let me know of your decision, so I can pray for you.

Read the Bible everyday, asking Him exactly what He wants to show you, and He will speak to you personally through His Word. If you feed on the Word of God, you leave no room for depression or meddling by the devil, so resist the temptation to skip reading your Bible, because it's your weapon of choice in every situation.

The good news is that you are loved with an everlasting love and underneath are the everlasting arms of Jesus!

Your new life as a Christian is just beginning, and it will be the greatest adventure you could ever hope to find. You are loved, important to both God and to me!

Links:

www.treeoflife.com

www.gospelcom.net

TEN—

Scriptures to Meditate on--

In addition to repeating the declarations out loud every day, meditate on these scriptures and bask in the truth of how much God loves you.

We are given a future and a hope, in 1 Chronicles 29:14

He knew us before we were formed, in our mother's womb. Psalm 139

He gives us joy and gladness and perfect sleep. Psalm 4:7-8

He delights in us. Psalm 18:19

He inclines his ear to hear our prayers. Psalm 4:3, 10-11

He is waiting for us to call on Him for deliverance. 2 Chronicles 20:9

He loves & draws near to a broken or contrite heart.
2 Chronicles 34:27

He is a stronghold for the oppressed in the time of
trouble. Psalm 9:9-10

He girds me with strength, . . .and makes my feet like
hinds feet on high places. Psalm 18:32-33

He is my shepherd, I shall not want. Psalm 23:1

He is my light and my salvation, whom then shall I
fear? The Lord is the defense of my life, of whom shall
I be afraid? Psalm 27:1-2

He is with you; do not fear nor be dismayed. 1
Chronicles 28:20

He delivers us from all our fears. Psalm 34:1-7

His lovingkindness will surround all those who love
him. Psalm 33:10-11

Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him. Psalm
34:8

The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and
he hears their cry. Psalm 34:15-17

I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined to
me, and heard my cry. He brought me up out of the
pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, and set my feet
upon a rock, making my footsteps firm. Psalm 40:1-3

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Psalm 46:1

He will never allow the righteous to be shaken. Psalm 55:22

He has delivered my soul from death, and kept my feet from stumbling. Psalm 56:13

Trust in Him; He is a refuge for us. Psalm 62:8

Whom have I in heaven but thee? My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. Psalm 73:25-26

When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, thy consolations delight my soul. Psalm 94:19

He sets the needy securely on high away from affliction. Psalm 107:35

The Lord is my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation. Psalm 118:14

And my favorite verse of all: I Corinthians 2:9: Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for those that love him.

Once you have renewed your mind, you will be able to see yourself through the eyes of the Holy Spirit, and hope will spring forth like brand new buds on flowering plants, restoring your sense of equilibrium, empowering you to cope with your circumstances and not let them defeat you again.

May God richly bless and heal you, for He has plans for you that you can't even imagine, so never, never, never give up. Instead look up – to Jesus.

About the Author

Nancy Arant Williams is a multi-published author, retired RN, mother, grandmother and wife, who, with her husband, John, own and operate The Nestle Down Inn Bed & Breakfast, located in the heart of the beautiful Missouri Ozarks. (www.nestledowninn.com) Her desire is to minister and encourage those who struggle and to remind them that God loves them and has an incredible plan for their lives. For more information, see Nancy's website at: www.nancyarantwilliams.com

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