

What Depression Is and What It Is Not

In this session we will look at the concept of depression as a disorder or illness, integrating knowledge from Scripture, neuroscience, and psychology. What are the different patterns of depression and how common are they? How do secular professionals understand the causes of depression and when should we seek professional help? And how helpful are the different approaches to management?

Glynn Harrison is Emeritus Professor of Psychiatry, University of Bristol, UK, where he was a practising consultant psychiatrist and Chair of the Department of Psychiatry. He preaches locally and speaks widely on issues of faith and psychology, neuroscience and psychiatry. He is especially focused on supporting men's ministries and fostering the development of Christian leaders and pastors.

A. Emotional experience in humans:

1. What is emotion? Definitions

2. Basic emotions

3. Sadness and depression

B. The concept of mood disorder or 'major depressive illness'

1. Mood changes

2. Speech and cognition

3. Biological/behavioural

C. Causes and risk factors

1. Prevalence and outcome

2. Genetics, biochemical factors and physical illness

3. Social

4. Psychological models

D. Suicide and self-harm

1. Risk profiles

2. Assessing risk and acting safely

3. When to refer for professional help

E. Treatment within secular professional framework

1. Basic advice about self-care

2. Physical approaches: medication and ECT

3. Social: support groups, community, bereavement advice etc

4. Psychotherapeutic:
a. Interpersonal

b. Cognitive-behavioural

c. Spiritual: meaning; cognitive re-framing; idols of the heart

F. Other types of mood disorders

1. Cyclothymia and Bipolar illness

2. Bereavement reactions

3. Seasonal affective disorders

Resources:

Winter, R (2012) When Life Goes Dark. IVP Books

Comprehensive, balanced, integrative approach bringing together medical and psychological insights within broad biblical framework

Procter E and Procter A (2012) Encountering Depression SPCK

Simply written, very accessible, balanced approach written for people struggling right now

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinformation/mentalhealthproblems/depression/depression.aspx>

Very good fact sheet on depression from UK College of Psychiatrists (also leaflets for men and depression, depression in old age, and one version available in Polish)