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Biblical Tips for When You're in a Dark Place

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Thank you, Pastor Al for this opportunity to share with you this weekend.

Thank you to our staff, pastors and the AV staff. And thank you Calvary Worship Center for the love you give to Brenda, my girls and me. It means so much to us to receive your greetings and hugs when we return from doing ministry on the road. Thank you!

Greetings to those at Creekside and those of you online. Please get the notes for this sermon.

It seems that most people, young and old, struggle with something in life. Our struggle could be peer pressure, burnout, **loneliness (according to the CIGNA Loneliness Index Report-Generation Z (18-22) & Millennials (23-27) are the loneliest and least healthy generations;** rejection, an abortion (Life Network can help), rape, thoughts of suicide, disappointment with our significant other, spouse, children, parents, health, job or ministry, loss of a job or loss of a loved one—what do you do?

Some of us have *a profound wound in our hearts.*

Some people go to a *dark place.*

2017 was a tough year for me.

Slide 2 Picture of my Dad

Slide 3 Picture of Gary Chapman and the late Bob Cook

Slide 4 Loss of John Bass

1-2 minutes **briefly share about rejection of, from my perspective, a golden opportunity—money that will change your life.** I became depressed.

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Depression: feelings of severe despondency and dejection, "self-doubt creeps in and that swiftly turns to depression."

***If you're seeing a doctor and taking medication for your depression, please continue to do so. I'm in no way telling you to stop doing this.**

Some of what you hear may be helpful to you.

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"I would have lost heart, unless I had believed That I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living."

Psalm 27:13 NKJV

When I think of a biblical personality who wrestled with depression, Psalm 32 with David comes to mind.

Psalm 32:3-5 New Living Translation (NLT)

^{3B} **my body wasted away,**

and I groaned all day long.

⁴ Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me.

My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. *Interlude*

I wrote a very limited statement about my disappointment to my Prayer Warriors in my ministry newsletter. Some of these Prayer Warriors responded. Most from my perspective were Christian clichés?

When I was in my dark place, it was difficult for me to positively receive Christian rhetoric such as, *"When God closes one door, He opens another."* In my theology, right or wrong, God doesn't owe me anything. Pastor Al's sermon encouraged me.

Jeremiah 20:7-18, New Living Translation (NLT)

Jeremiah's Complaint & Habakkuk's too

⁷ **O Lord, you misled me,**

and I allowed myself to be misled.

You are stronger than I am,

and you overpowered me.

Now I am mocked every day;

everyone laughs at me.

⁸ When I speak, the words burst out.

"Violence and destruction!" I shout.

So these messages from the Lord

have made me a household joke.

⁹ **But if I say I'll never mention the Lord**

or speak in his name,

his word burns in my heart like a fire.

It's like a fire in my bones!

I am worn out trying to hold it in!

I can't do it!

¹⁰ I have heard the many rumors about me.

They call me "The Man Who Lives in Terror."

They threaten, "If you say anything, we will report it."

**Even my old friends are watching me,
waiting for a fatal slip.**

"He will trap himself," they say,

"and then we will get our revenge on him."

¹¹ **But the Lord stands beside me like a great warrior.**

Before him my persecutors will stumble.

They cannot defeat me.

They will fail and be thoroughly humiliated.

Their dishonor will never be forgotten.

¹² **O Lord of Heaven's Armies,**

you test those who are righteous,

and you examine the deepest thoughts and secrets.

Let me see your vengeance against them,

for I have committed my cause to you.

¹³ Sing to the Lord!

Praise the Lord!

For though I was poor and needy,

he rescued me from my oppressors.

¹⁴ **Yet I curse the day I was born!**

May no one celebrate the day of my birth.

¹⁵ I curse the messenger who told my father,

"Good news—you have a son!"

¹⁶ Let him be destroyed like the cities of old

that the Lord overthrew without mercy.

Terrify him all day long with battle shouts,

¹⁷ because he did not kill me at birth.

Oh, that I had died in my mother's womb,

that her body had been my grave!

¹⁸ Why was I ever born?

My entire life has been filled

with trouble, sorrow, and shame.

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What can we learn from Jeremiah's complaint:

- God's grace is greater than we can imagine – v. 7
- Jeremiah was talking to God, not about Him – he was not gossiping about or slandering God.
- Jeremiah was talking to the God, Who could change his circumstances or him.
- Jeremiah got as close to crossing the line with God as possible (it's not our initial response, end result).
- Telling God how we feel isn't necessarily attacking His character.

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- We might as well be honest with God because He knows our thoughts anyway. Isaiah 66:18a
- God tests those He has made righteous in hopes of spiritual promotion (for Satan, other Christ followers and non-believers to see how we who profess Him respond to adversity). Jeremiah 20:12
- We can't deny the goodness of God—it is like fire shut up in our bones, we can't keep it in. Jeremiah 20:9

I called one of my peers and vented because he has been through similar situations.

Slide 9 Dr. Bill & Hazel Pannell

One of my Prayer Warriors is a counselor. I actually met her years ago. I had counseled her husband. She offered to talk with me. My initial thoughts were, I do counseling. I don't need counseling. The Holy Spirit immediately said, "Yes, you do."

So I spoke with her in very raw terms. She listened. Then, she shared these truths with me:

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"When you're in your dark place as a Christ follower, God is with you, so you're not alone and never alone." Dr. Monique Gadson, Ph.D., LPC, Atlanta, GA

"When you go through deep waters (a dark place), I will be will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you."

Isaiah 43:2

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"And I will give you treasures hidden in the darkness—secret riches. I will do this so you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, the one who calls you by name."

Isaiah 45:3

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"The Lord will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength (Psalm 32:3-4). You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring. Some of you will rebuild the deserted ruins of your cities. Then you will be known as a rebuilders of walls and a restorer of homes." Isaiah 58:11-12

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"The idea that God isn't with you in your dark place is an illusion."
Bob Hudson, Founder & Director of Men at the Cross

"In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory." Ephesians 1:13-14

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Because God is with you in your dark place, your dark place can become a Holy Place.

God heals you in your dark place because you can't come out of your dark place without Him. *Have the emotional maturity of the age they received their (un-dealt-with or unhealed) hurt.*

God may need to kill something in you in order to birth new life to something else He wants to do in you for His glory. Jeremiah 18:4

While in my dark place, I began to ask myself: "Why do I feel this way?" As I began self-reflection, the Holy Spirit joined in. I don't remember asking. But Psalm 139:23-24. Gary Chapman says that if you ever ask the Holy Spirit what is wrong with you, get a pencil and paper because He will tell you.

Over the years, God has asked me, "Why do you want to impress or prove yourself to people who don't care about you?" I've struggled with this question because I didn't want to answer it.

When in junior high school if a coach told me I was too short to play, I would just work hard during the next year and make the team—showing them and myself that I was good enough.

As an adult in the Christian community, if I feel discriminated or rejected, I can't "prove myself."

As I pursued this train of thought, it took me to my sin of idolatry – not a pretty place.

Another friend called me. He shared that he has been fired from his church position with no explanation. He read my newsletter and said let's walk together through this. He is so much more spiritually mature than me.

God had used him several years before when I was depressed. He got me and 50-100 people to read through the Bible in 90 days! It saved my life because being saturated in the Word of God overrode my idolatrous thoughts.

I knew I needed to return to memorizing God's Word. I blocked out an hour (30 minutes study the biblical truths of the verses and 30 minutes memorizing verses)

Gary Chapman says, *"If we are going to change our emotions, we have to line up our thinking with the truth of the Word of God. Then, we have to line up our actions with the truth of the Word of God—then, our emotions will catch up with us. If we don't do this, our emotions will never change."*

I'm grateful for peers and mentors who love me in spite of me. There are people, who love you in spite of you—let them love you—they may not know how you feel and that's okay—accept God's love for you through them.

How did God get me out of my dark place?

- Keep going to church – truths in the sermon.
- He kept me in ministry – keep serving others (Joseph in prison- Genesis 39).
- My Christian friends kept calling – Monique, Johnny, Jonno, Brian.
- My dark place helped me better understand why some Christians don't respond to biblical truth or Scripture or counseling.
- Often God will use the ones you are trying to help to help you. **(We are part of God's Story—we're not The Story & help my unbelief—we don't have to have 100% faith)** Stephen Kendrick's prayer.
- Thank God before you or your circumstances are changed. Psalm 57:3-7
- Then, thank God for things not going the way I wanted them to go.

1 Thessalonians 5:17

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We need to be able to distinguish the difference between **self-pity and grieving** (only God and you know the difference-ask for clarity)

What did my dark place reveal to me?

- My idolatry Jeremiah 18:4

This revelation has changed and increased my worship. My time with God is so much sweeter—mostly I just listen. I am much more at peace with myself and God.

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Hurt People Tend to Hurt People

Source: *Marriage Mission International*

Fifteen Tendencies of Hurt people:

- Often transfer their inner anger to those around them.
- Interpret every word spoken to them through the prism of their pain.
- Interpret every action through the prism of their pain, causing them to suspect wrong motives or evil intent.

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- Often portray themselves as victims and have a “victim spirit.”
- Often alienate others and wonder why no one is there for them.
- Have the emotional maturity of the age they received their (un-dealt-with or unhealed) hurt.
- Are often frustrated and depressed because past (unhealed) pain continually spills over into their present consciousness.

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- Often erupt with inappropriate emotion because words, actions, or circumstances “touch” and “trigger” past (unhealed) wounds.
- Often occupy themselves with busyness, work, and/or accomplishments as a way of compensating for low self-esteem.
- Often attempt to medicate themselves with excessive entertainment, drugs, alcohol, pornography, sexual relationships, or hobbies as a way to forget their pain and run from reality.

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- Have learned to accommodate their private “false self” or “dark side.”
- Are often self-absorbed with their own pain and are unaware they are hurting others.
- Are susceptible to demonic deception (there is a spiritual battle for your mind).
- God often purposely surfaces pain so hurt people can face reality.
- Need to forgive to be released and restored to freedom.

Slide 19 picture of the book, *Turn the Page* by Dr. Johnny Parker

Slide 20 picture of T-Shirt, *Success Is Hard Work, Heart Work, Worth the Work, Do the Work*

“The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, He will show you a way out so that you can endure.” 1 Corinthians 10:13

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Journal your emotions while in your dark place, your process of coming out of your dark place, and when you’re completely out of your dark place. Then, journal about what God may have taught you during each step of coming out of your dark place.

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“There are no hopeless situations; there are only men (and women) who have grown hopeless about them.” Clare Boothe Luce

Victims Advocate sharing her story with widow—helped widow and victims advocate to share her frustration with God and God bringing her out in His own time, not hers.

God if I never become successful in the world’s or Christian community’s eyes, or even my own, teach me not just how to survive my lot in life, but to embrace it!

Habakkuk’s response of faith 3:17-19 read it

Diane – prayer warrior – Matt Leahy’s office

Don’t quit (“You’ll win if you don’t quit”) Bishop T.D. Jakes

Olus

“God makes no mistakes” – said this at Janelle’s funeral, Isaiah 43:13 John 10:27
A simple faith and trust in Him—we persevere (no parent ever expects to bury a child)—realizing is it –do we really believe what the Bible teaches—“I’m not going to have any more children”—emotions were up and down—but that’s how we got healed, this grind got us through.

Purity—the snow (Janelle) Trucking guiding and clearing the way for us in blizzard to Janelle’s funeral

“I know that it hurts—I don’t know your pain” Olus Holder

How do you articulate that and be sensitive

“He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with His comfort through Christ.”
2 Corinthians 1:4-5

God often will transform our misery into our ministry. 2 Corinthians 1:4-5
"When God allows us to suffer, it is to show us that our survival is not based on anything we can do, but solely on His Grace and Power!" Dr. Clarence Shuler

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"Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance (Christlikeness) has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing." James 1:2-4

- You will be better, but you may not feel better.
- You will be different. You may not be able to verbalize how, but you'll sense there is something different about you. You will know yourself better and God better. I believe you will experience an increased closeness, sensitivity, and worship of God because He brought you closer to Him.
- With all of this, you may feel that you're in the process of coming out of a fog. You probably are still in it to some degree. That's okay.
- You can't go back to the way you were before experiencing this dark place with God and yourself because it won't satisfy you.
- You have to spend more time with God—for me, I believe focusing more on listening to God and reading His Word than me speaking.

As I was coming out of my dark place, it was revealed to me that I had an intellectual and theological understanding of Lordship, but not much of an experiential one because of me – my sin of idolatry. Psalm 139:23-24

So I said to God, *"Obviously, You don't have all of me. And obviously, I don't know how to give all of me to You. So You are going to have to teach me."*

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"If racing against mere men makes you tired, how will you race against horses? If you stumble and fall on open ground what will you do in the thickets near the Jordan?"
Jeremiah 12:5

God isn't done with you yet. God wants to do great things to you, for you, and through you!

"We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation." Romans 5:3-4

Isaiah 54:17 “. . . no weapon turned against you will succeed. You will silence every voice raised up to accuse you. These benefits are enjoyed by the servants of the Lord; their vindication will come from me. I the Lord, have spoken!”

Isaiah 41:10 “Don’t be afraid, for I am with you. Don’t be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with My Victorious Right Hand.”

Isaiah 40:31 “But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.”

Help Me Believe by Kirk Franklin from the CD, *The Fight of My Life*

My Everything by Bri Babineaux

It Doesn’t Matter by Bishop T.D. Jakes, *He-Motion*

Champion & God Got My Back by TaMyya J

Clean by Natalie Grant

Thy Will Be Done by Hillary Scott & the Scott Family

More Than Enough (the 10:20 version sung by a man) he speaks of being overwhelmed by God

Anonymous poet

I asked for health, that I might do greater things; I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.

I asked for riches, that I might be happy; I was given poverty, that I might be wise.

I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men; I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.

I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life; I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.

*I got nothing that I asked for.
But everything I had hoped for.*

I am among all men, most richly blessed.

“Because I am a woman, I must make unusual efforts to succeed. If I fail, no one will say, ‘She doesn’t have what it takes.’ They will say, ‘Women don’t have what it takes.’ Clare Boothe Luce

“Money can’t buy happiness, but it can make you awfully comfortable while you’re being miserable.”