

ACBC Exam Study Guide Counseling Exam 5

Q: Provide a biblical definition of depression. Describe manifestations of depression in both the inner and outer man. Explain the biblical factors that drive depression. Detail several biblical strategies to respond to depression.

1. A biblical definition of depression.

A. Cultural Definition: “Depression is a persistent mood that is characterized by intense feelings of inadequacy, sadness, hopelessness, pessimism, irritability, apprehension, and a decreased interest in or ability to enjoy normal activity. This mood must last at least two weeks to be diagnosed as clinical depressions.”¹

B. Biblical Definition:

(1) Allowing feelings and circumstances to direct responses instead of God’s Word. “The symptoms of depression are indicative of wrong thinking and/or spiritual problems. Depression results when a person uses bad feelings as an excuse not to live in accordance with God’s commands.”² Asher

(2) NOT all “depression” is because of PERSONAL sin. (Job, Is. 53:3; 2 Cor. 12:9-10; Lam. 3). ALWAYS request a full medical check-up for someone struggling with depression as you begin counseling.

(3) Description (Gen. 4:1-14; 1 Kings 19)

- a. Cain and Able were instructed about their offering (Gen. 4:2, 3)
- b. God rejected Cain’s offering (4,5)
- c. Cain was angry and his face fell (5)
- d. God confronted his anger and sadness (6,7)
- e. Cain again chose to go against God’s way (7,8)
- f. God again confronted Cain about his response (9)
- g. Cain is defiant (9)
- h. God punishes Cain (10-12)
- i. Cain’s depression (13-14)
- j. Further insight (1 John 3:11-12)

¹ Marshall & Mary Asher, *The Christian’s Guide to Psychological Terms*,” 56.
² Asher, 56.

2. Manifestations of depression in the inner man.

3. Manifestations of depression in the outer man.

4. Biblical factors that drive depression.

A. Circumstantial or Contributing Factors:³

“Giant Despair represents the kind of despair and depression a person may experience when he is under conviction of sin and does not deal with his sins in a biblical way.”⁴

- (1) Uncertainty and insecurity
- (2) Lack of necessities
- (3) Verbal and/or physical abuse
- (4) Lonely
- (5) Hopelessness
- (6) Bad Counsel
- (7) Fear of the Future

B. Biblical Factors:⁵

- (1) Failure to live according to God’s Word (Pr. 3:5-6)
- (2) Failure to trust in God’s goodness (Rom. 8:28-29; Ps. 119:91; Js. 1:2-5)
- (3) Failure to believe in a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13)
- (4) Failure to cling to God’s promises (Ps. 119:38)
- (5) Failure to remember God’s sovereignty (Gen. 50:20)
- (6) Failure to remember God’s faithfulness in the past (1 Cor. 10:13)
- (7) Failure to focus on Christ over circumstances (Phil. 4:11-13)
- (8) Failure to pray (2 Kings 6:17; James 1:15)

“Through prayer we say, ‘We can’t handle this; it is too big for us, but Lord, we know it is not too big for You.’ Then we believe God’s promises that at His own time and in His own way, He will deliver us.”⁶

³ Wayne Mack, Christian Life Issues, Vol. 2, 204-206.

⁴ Mack, 203.

⁵ Mack, 207-209.

⁶ Mack, 216.

5. Biblical strategies to respond to depression.⁷

- 1) Identify what is wanted more than pleasing God. (2 Cor. 5:9, 14-15)
- 2) Correct wrong thinking reflected in wrong speaking (“It’s hopeless!”) and actions (“I can’t”) because thoughts affect feelings. (Pr. 4:23, 2 Cor. 10:5)
- 3) Establish regular times of praising and thanking God that circumstances are God’s servants to bring about Christ-likeness. (Ps. 119:91; Rom. 8:28-29)
- 4) Identify sinful responses to despair and seek repentance accordingly.
- 5) Identify interpersonal relationship that need to be restored. (Heb. 10:24-25)
- 6) Explain the process of spiraling downward and upward
- 7) Teach that good feelings result from obedience to God’s Word (Gal. 6:7)
Ed Welch, “In depression, the new way of living is to believe and act on what God says rather than feel what God says. It is living by faith.”
- 8) Add constructive physical EXERCISE to spiritual disciplines (1 Tim. 4:7-8)
- 9) Identify specific responsibilities and help make a plan to fulfill them
 - a. Write down things neglected that need to be done (Eph. 4:1-2)
 - b. Prioritize using biblical principles (Mt. 6:33, 22:37-40)
 - c. Make an action plan (Pr. 21:5)
 - d. Schedule each day accordingly (Eph. 5:15-16)
 - e. Establish accountability (Heb. 3:12-13, 10:24-25)
 - f. Keep homework assignments small, simple, and specific (Eph. 4:22-24)
 - g. Establish that the goal is not getting rid of depression but pleasing God even if feeling depressed (2 Cor. 5:9, 14-15)

“The key to warding off depression, then, is this: do not follow your feelings when you know that you have a responsibility to discharge. Instead, against your feelings, you must do as you should. And when you do, even if at first you do so mechanically, simply because you want to please God and you know that He wants you to do this, in time your feelings will change. You must not wait until you feel like it, or you may never feel like doing the task. Nor must you try to change your feelings directly; you cannot do that. Do what you know God wants you to do, WHETHER YOU FEEL LIKE IT OR NOT, and a change in feelings will take place, as a by-product, in time.” Jay Adams

Key Texts:

Genesis 4:3-7

Psalms 42 & 43

Proverbs 4:13

Matthew 7:24-27, 27:3-5

2 Corinthians 10:5

⁷ Adapted from Asher’s *The Christian’s Guide to Psychological Terms*, 56-57.

Key Resources:

- Jay Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual* (Zondervan, 1986), 350, 375-376.
- Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Zondervan, 1986), 126, 146.
- Jay Adams, "What to Do When You are Depressed" pamphlet.
- Marshal Asher, *The Christian's Guide to Psychological Terms*.
- Richard Baxter, "The Cure of Melancholy and Overmuch Sorrow by Faith and Physic" sermon.
- John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, Scene involving by-pass meadow through escape from Giant Despair in Doubting Castle. Commentary from *Christian Life Issues, Vol. 2: The Christian Journey Continued and Concluded* by Wayne Mack (Chs. 20-21).
- Jeffery Forrey, "Dealing with Depressing Thoughts."
- Laura Hendrickson & Elyse Fitzpatrick, "Depression: An Opportunity in Disguise" in *Will Medicine Stop the Pain?* (Moody, 2006), 97-120.
- Charles Hodges, *Good Mood, Bad Mood*.
- Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression*.
- Wayne Mack, *Down, But Not Out*.
- Wayne Mack, *Out of the Blues* (Focus, 2006).
- Richard Sibbs, *The Bruised Reed*.
- Robert Smith, *The Christian Counselor's Medical Desk Reference* (Timeless, 2000), 195-223.
- Bob Somerville, *If I am a Christian, Why Am I Depressed?* (Xulon, 2014)
- Charles Spurgeon, *Beside Still Waters*.
- Susan Verstraete, "Mingling Groans of Pain and Songs of Hope: Charles Haddon Spurgeon on Depression."
- Ed Welch, *Depression: A Stubborn Darkness*.
- Ed Welch, Depression (booklet)
- Dan Wickert, "Counseling Those Who Are Depressed," www.soundword.com
- <http://thebcd.org> (Numerous free resources)

ACBC Exam Study Guide Counseling Exam 6

Q: Provide a biblical definition of anxiety and fear. Describe manifestations of anxiety and worry in both the inner and outer man. Explain the biblical factors that drive anxiety and fear. Detail several biblical strategies to respond to anxiety and fear.

1. Biblical definition of Anxiety

- A. “Worry is an over-anxious concern regarding the future or things that keeps a person from fulfilling current responsibilities.”⁸
- B. “Worry is a sin of continual dwelling on and preoccupation with some fear, usually associated with the future.”

2. Biblical definition of Fear

A. Right fear versus sinful fear⁹

(1) Fears that are right:

a. The fear of GOD (Ecc. 12:13, Prov. 1:7, 9:10)

- i. By its rise; it is caused by saving convictions for sin.
- ii. It driveth the soul to lay fast hold of CHRIST for salvation.
- iii. It begetteth and continueth in the soul a great reverence of God, his word, and ways; keeping it tender, and making it afraid to turn from them, to the right hand or to the left, to any thing that may dishonor God, break its peace, grieve the Spirit, or cause the enemy to speak reproachfully.

b. Fear of DANGER (Job 41:33, Gen. 4:14-15, 1 Cor. 6:19-20, Ps 64:1)

(2) Fears that are sinful

“Sinful fear arises from unbelief – an unworthy distrust of God. This occurs when we fail to rely upon the security of God’s promise; in other words, when we refuse to trust in God’s protection.”¹⁰

a. Fear of MAN instead of God (John 12:42-43, Luke 12:4-5, Gal. 1:10)

b. Fear of things TEMPORAL rather than eternal (Luke 12:4-5, 1 Cor. 4:5, Gen. 26:7)

c. Fear of things we cannot CHANGE (Prov. 3:25, Gen. 4:14)

⁸ ACBC definition

⁹ For further study, *Taking Hold of God*, 70, 73-74.

¹⁰ Flavel, Works, III:248.

“Fear becomes sinful when it undermines our trust in God.” Yuille

3. Manifestations of anxiety and worry in inner man¹¹

- A. Heavy Heart (Pr. 12:25)
- B. Consumed by thoughts (Ps. 94:19)
- C. Focus on earthly priorities (Mt. 6:19-34, Luke 10:40-41)

4. Manifestations of anxiety and worry in outer man

- A. Physiological responses in the body can include nervous stomach, ulcers, increased heart rate, fatigue, sleeplessness, panic attacks, etc...
- B. Preoccupied with securing earthly pleasures and safety (Mt. 6:19-34)
- C. Failure to serve others in love (1 John 4:18; Gal. 5:13)

“Worry is senseless because you have a heavenly father who cares for you, worry is useless because it does no good – it actually does you harm, & worry is faithless because it is a denial of God’s care for you.” Jim Newheiser

5. Biblical factors that drive anxiety and fear

- A. Idolatry: Pursuit of temporal pleasures and praise of man (Mt. 6:19-34)

“You must mortify your affections to the world, and to the inordinate and immoderate love of every enjoyment in the world. The more you are mortified, the less you will be terrified. It is not the dead but the living world that puts our heads into fear and trembling. If our hearts were crucified, they would soon be calmed. It is the strength of our affections that puts so much strength into our afflictions... The strength of our love for the world is directly proportionate to the strength of our fear. If ever you would rid yourselves of your comely fear, you must use God’s means to mortify your affections.”¹²

- B. Unbelief:

- (1) In believer’s identity in Christ (Mt. 6:32; 1 Corinthians)
- (2) In ability of God to meet our needs (Phil. 4:19)
- (3) In God’s purpose to use suffering for good (Rom. 8:28-29)
- (4) In God’s plan to bring His children greater delights than what earthly suffering may take from them (Rom. 8:18)
- (5) In God’s plan to bring light through suffering (1 Pt. 2:21-24)

- C. Apathy in thought and deed (Mt. 25:25-26; Pr. 6:6-11)
- D. Poor stewardship of the body (1 Tim. 4:7-8; 1 Cor. 6:19)

6. Biblical strategies to respond to anxiety and fear

- A. Repent of wayward thinking and unbelief (1 John 1:8-9; Is. 26:3)
- B. Value what God values (Mt. 6:33)

¹¹ Adapted from Faith Lafayette Conference, Track 5, 2015.
¹² Stephen Yuille, *Triumphing Over Sinful Fear* (Flavel).

C. Trust:¹³

(1) God is control working for good (Rom. 8:28-29)

“In order to free yourself from sinful fear, you must consider Christ’s providential kingdom is over all creatures and affairs in this world. Poor fearful souls! Is there not a King, a supreme Lord, who rules over all?... If we were to study Christ’s dominion, and the creature’s absolute dependence upon Him, it would cure our trust in and fear of others. We would soon realize that they have no power to help us or hurt us, but what they receive from above. In their pride, our enemies are apt to overrate their power.

Sadly, we are apt to overrate ‘their power’ in our fear.”¹⁴

(2) God is concerned for His children (Mt. 6:30, 32)

(3) God is able to provide for His children (Phil. 4:19)

(4) God is able to drive out fear with love (1 John 3:16)

“The sin of unbelief is the real and proper cause of most distracting and afflicting fears.

To the extent that our souls are empty of faith, they are filled with fear.”¹⁵

D. Responsibility:

(1) In prayer, which is the antidote to anxiety (Phil. 4:6-7)

(2) In focusing on today’s concerns (Mt. 6:34; Phil. 4:8-9)

(3) In planning (Pr. 6:6, 16:19; Js. 4:13-14; Eph. 5:15-16)

(4) In loving (1 John 4:18; Rom. 12:21)

Where sinful FEAR...	LOVE
Focus on SELF	Focus on GOD & others
Self-protecting	Self-GIVING
Asks What will I LOSE?	Asks What can I GIVE?
Avoids problem	Solves problem
Secludes self	Sacrifices self
Hesitates	Starts (Initiates)
Can be cast out	Can cast out fear
Is Highly suspicious	BELIEVES all things
Says I won’t TRY	Acts obediently

¹³ For further study, *Beside Still Waters* by Spurgeon, 281.

¹⁴ Stephen Yuille, *Triumphing Over Sinful Fear* (Flavel).

¹⁵ Stephen Yuille, *Triumphing Over Sinful Fear* (Flavel).

Might fail	Reaches OUT even if fails
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(5) In caring for your body: rest, nutrition, sleep, exercise (1 Cor. 6:19)

Key Texts:

Matthew 6:25-34

Philippians 4:4-9

Proverbs 3:25-26

Matthew 10:28

Proverbs 22:3, 29:25

Proverbs 1:7, 9:10

1 John 4:18

Key Resources:

Jay Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual* (Zondervan), 413-425.

Jay Adams, "What Do You Do When Fear Overcomes You?" (P&R, 1975).

Jay Adams, "What Do You Do When You Worry All the Time?" (P&R, 1975).

Jerry Bridges, *The Joy of Fearing God* (Random House, 1997).

Elyse Fitzpatrick, *Overcoming Fear, Worry, and Anxiety* (Harvest House, 2001).

John MacArthur, *Anxious for Nothing* (David C. Cook, 2012).

Wayne & Joshua Mack, *Courage: Fighting Fear with Fear* (P&R, 2014).

Phil Moser, *Safe in the Storm: Biblical Strategies for Overcoming Depression*.

David Powlison, *Worry: Pursuing a Better Path to Peace* (P&R, 2004).

Lou Priolo, *Fear: Breaking Its Grip* (P&R, 2009).

Lou Priolo, *Pleasing People* (Calvary, 2008)

Stuart Scott, *Anger, Anxiety & Fear* (Focus, 2009).

John Vandegriff, *In the Arena of the Mind: Philippians 4:8* (John Van Dagriff, 1992)

Ed Welch, *Running Scared* (New Growth, 2007)

Ed Welch, *When People Are Big and God is Small* (P&R, 1997).

Timothy Whitmer, *Mindscape: What to Think About Instead of Worrying* (New Growth, 2014)

Stephen Yuille, *Triumphing Over Sinful Fear* (Reformation Heritage, 2011)