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The *Stress-Buster* and Women's Ministry Motivator



Coming Out of the Dark Part 2 Mary Southerland

Children are wonderfully different. When our son, Jered, was nine months old, he began to pull up on every piece of furniture he could find. For weeks, he maneuvered his way around our home until the day he took his first step alone. It was a step of inches, but we celebrated as if he had completed a marathon. On the other hand, our daughter, Danna, had a different plan. She never pulled up on a piece of furniture and never took "a" step. When she was ten months old, she stood up, looked around and trotted across the room. Jered and Danna both walk extremely well today as teenagers, but they both began with tiny steps and in their own way.

Nobody gets depressed overnight and nobody overcomes depression overnight. The journey out of the pit is a process of steps uniquely planned by your Father. Let's look at some of the steps we must take in order to find our way out of the dark.

1. Wait. The psalmist simply says, "I waited." Waiting is not passive. Waiting is a time of preparation, a time of rest and healing, a time when God covers us with the shadow of his wing.

- **To wait means to accept the pit.**

Isaiah 45:3 is a compelling verse, "I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, who summons you by name."

Any time the word, "LORD" is capitalized, it means "Father. This verse indicates that our Father has gone before us and, in every dark moment or painful circumstance, has buried a treasure or stored a secret. The only way we can find the treasure or learn the secret is to pass through that darkness. Some things cannot be learned in the light. The pit of depression has become a hedge of protection in my life, a warning light that something is wrong, or out of balance! To wait means to accept the pit, knowing it is for our good.

- **To wait means to admit there is a problem.** Isaiah 40:29 "He gives power to the tired and worn out, and strength to the weak."

We must be willing to admit we are struggling but pride often prevents us from doing so. Emotional health begins at the point of emotional integrity, being willing to say "I need help!" and being honest with ourselves and with others. When clinical depression overwhelmed my life, my husband, Dan, was pasturing a church in South Florida. We could choose to be transparent and real or we could sweep my struggle under the rug. We concluded that in order to be right, we had to be real. Dan and I shared my battle with the staff, the deacons and then with the entire church. Yes, we took a risk but learned an important lesson in doing so. A shared load is a lighter load. We were created to need each other.

- **To wait means to be still.** "I waited ..." To wait means to hope in and look for someone or something who will rescue us.

So much about God can never be known on the run. We can get so wrapped up in ministry that we fail to be wrapped up in Him. The busier we are, the more stillness and rest we need. During those two years in the pit, I not only gave up every role of leadership in church, I could not even attend church at times because of panic attacks. The Father taught me an important truth. He is more concerned with who I am than what I do.

2. Cry out for help. Psalm 40:1 “I waited patiently for the Lord; He turned to me and heard my cry.”

People struggling with depression often look for help in the wrong places. Let me share with you some of the right places.

- **God stands** waiting to hear your voice; and when you cry out to Him, He comes running – through His Word, through prayer and through His people. There was a terrible storm and the little girl was afraid. When she cried out in fear, her father came running down the hall, into the bedroom and scooped her up in his arms as he said, “Honey, God will take care of you.” The tearful child replied, “I know God loves me and will take care of me but right now, I need somebody with skin on.”
- **Doctors and Counselors** Proverbs 15: 22 gives us an important truth when it says, “Plans go wrong with too few counselors; many counselors bring success.” I encourage anyone experiencing depression to get a physical because depression is often rooted in a physical problem, requiring medication. The medication does not eliminate the depression but simply levels the playing field so that you can deal with the issues that landed you in that pit. Christian counseling is a gift from God. He knew we would need them.
- **Others** 1 Thessalonians 5:11 instructs us to “encourage each other and give each other strength.” I would never have survived the pit of clinical depression without the help and encouragement of family and friends. Members of our church brought meals, cleaned house and helped take care of our kids. The deacons were guardian angels at church and other women took my place in leadership. I would not be standing here today if it were not for these people who helped rescue me from the pit of depression. Has it affected their opinion of me? Yes! It has shown them that I am just like them and gave them permission to face their own weaknesses. You may be thinking, “I have no one in my life that will help me.” If you cry out to God, He will bring you help.

3. Count on God to come through. One of the promises I clung to while sitting in the darkness of depression was Psalm 107:13-14. “Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom and broke away their chains.” The Psalmist promises that when we cry out to God, He will:

- “lift you up out of the slimy pit”
- “set your feet on a rock”
- “give you a new place to stand”
- “put a new song in your heart”
- “use your pit so that others will “see and trust God”.

God is drawn to broken people. Psalm 40:1 says “He turned to me.” Notice it does not say David turned to God. Honestly, I doubt David had the strength to turn to God – so God turned to him. God heard the cry of David and he will hear yours. I was angry at God but he never turned away from me. Instead, he surrounded me with his love and compassion and as Psalm 56:8 promises, he knew every tear I cried. “You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.” You can count on God to come through.

4. Be patient. “I waited patiently for the Lord.” The word, “patiently” means “without tiring and with perseverance”. To come out of the darkness takes time and requires patience. It took me many years to hit rock bottom. It took me two years to climb out of that pit and I am still climbing. Yes, I still battle depression from time to time. I have asked God to deliver me but he has said, “No.” Do you know what my name, Mary, means - bitter, but when broken, sweet. Depression keeps me broken and anything that makes us cry out to God can be counted as a blessing. When we come to the end of ourselves, God begins.

The story is told of a little boy who was walking home when he spotted a caterpillar struggling to get out of its cocoon. Feeling sorry for the helpless creature, the little boy ran home, grabbed a pair of scissors and ran back to cut the caterpillar free. He watched it spread its wings and try to fly, only to discover that it couldn't. It is in the struggle out of the darkness of the cocoon that the butterfly's wings gain enough strength to fly. Be patient. I don't know if you are in a pit and need help or if someone you love is in that pit and you need to help them but one thing I do know. The purpose of the pit is to purify and then restore. Right now, surrender the broken pieces of your life to God and watch as he brings you out of the dark. Do not quit! Do not quit! God is at work in your life.

Philippians 1:6 “And I am sure that God who began the good work within you will keep right on helping you grow in his grace until his task within you is finally finished on that day when Jesus Christ returns.”