

Can you control your thoughts?

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Over the past few months we've been talking about the journey of emotional recovery. Like any journey, it has many unpredictable twists and turns. The good news though, is that God is always walking beside you, helping you along and encouraging every step.

Today I want to talk about some of the obstacles on the recovery journey that can slow you down if you don't see them in front of you.

Do you remember how many parts there are to humans? Yes, you guessed it, three. Body, Spirit and Personality. Each of these parts can affect your emotions and in each of them you may find chains that could be holding you back from emotional freedom.

There are 3 links in the chain of emotional bondage that correspond to the 3 parts to humans. If we look at the body, there are physical conditions that affect our thoughts and emotions. In the spirit realm there are forces that want to disrupt your thoughts and feelings. In your personality, you have wounds and memories that are affecting your attitudes and relationships. Over the next few months we will look at each in turn.

First, let's look at the physical conditions that affect your thoughts and emotions. Forming a thought is actually a physical event. You don't see anything move but signals are actually passing along brain nerve cell pathways transmitting the information necessary to give you control of your thoughts. If the nerve cells are all communicating correctly, you have full control of your thoughts and moods. If they are malfunctioning in some way, then you lose control.

It's really no different than if we were talking about controlling your arm. If you want to move your arm, a signal is carried along nerve pathways to the muscle telling it to contract. If the nerves are all working well, then you have full muscle control. If you have a nerve injury like a stroke, you lose the ability to control your limbs.

Like anything else in your body, nerve cells can malfunction so that you have difficulty controlling your thoughts and moods. These medical conditions are called the mood disorders. The most common ones are depression, anxiety disorder and bipolar disorder.

These disorders are very common. We aren't exactly sure how common they are

since we don't have a physical test to determine who is having trouble controlling their thoughts. These conditions are hard to spot since they are an invisible handicap. You can't tell by looking at someone what they are thinking or what they may be struggling with.

We estimate that ten to twenty percent of the population has one of these disorders. The problem though, is that 80% of the people with mood disorders don't realize they have a correctable condition, so they never get treated. That means that there are a very large number of people trying to function normally while struggling with an undiagnosed and untreated mood disorder.

Do you think a Christian could ever have depression? If our sins are forgiven, what could we possibly ever get depressed about?

As I was growing up in the church, I never thought Christians got depressed since I never heard it talked about. I heard the church pray about all kinds of illnesses that people were in hospital with, but they never mentioned depression. I just presumed that it never happened to Christians.

Well the truth is that Christians suffer with depression just as frequently as non Christians, because it is a physical, medical disorder, common to humans.

There is a difference though, in how depression affects Christians and non Christians. In my observation, after 25 years of treating mood disorders, Christians suffer more intensely when they have depression than non Christians. That should not be happening.

When a non Christian is depressed, they are down, sad and anxious. When a Christian is depressed, they are down, sad, anxious and overwhelmed with guilt and shame for being depressed when they are supposed to be walking in victory.

By not talking about depression and how common it is, we have actually made things worse for those suffering with it. I even heard a minister say in a large public meeting that "No Christian of good character will ever suffer from depression." I guess he forgot about all the great Bible heroes of faith who were at times overwhelmed with discouragement and hopelessness. When Christian leaders make such incorrect and hurtful statements it's no wonder there is such guilt and shame over having such a common and treatable medical condition.

It's time we talked openly about depression and mood disorders. People with blurred vision are allowed to wear glasses without shame. Mood disorders are just conditions with blurred thinking and there are medications that can correct and control it.

If you have depression or any mood disorder, it will be hard to shut your mind off or control your thoughts and moods. This will slow down your recovery journey

until you regain thought control through medical treatment or God's healing touch.

So how do you know if you have depression or a mood disorder? There is no medical test so we use a checklist of symptoms that you can compare yourself to. I have put the checklist in my book *Emotionally Free*, along with a description of the most common mood disorders and how they affect Christians.

Compare yourself to the checklist and if you have enough of those symptoms then show the list to your doctor so he knows what you are struggling with. He can then start you on treatment that may turn your life around.

You can find lots more information about Christian mental health on my website, www.drgrantmullen.com.

Depression is not a sign of weakness or spiritual immaturity. It's just another common medical condition. If you have it, treat it. I have seen many people supernaturally healed from depression so continue to pray and receive healing prayer.

If you are struggling today with depression or any mood disorder, remember this,

Psalm 30 :5

Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.

God has not forgotten you. He is still holding you even when you can't feel his arms. He is walking with you along the recovery journey even when you feel so alone.

Remember, God wants you to be emotionally free.

Dr. Grant Mullen is a mental health physician and author who lectures internationally on the keys to emotional recovery and healthy relationships. He has a special interest in the integration of medical treatment with spiritual and emotional healing models to see people and organizations transformed.

Dr. Mullen is the author of [Emotionally Free](#) , [The Breakthrough Solution](#) and the producer of [14 DVD's](#)

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