

## CAN WE CONTROL OUR THOUGHTS?

A while back, when I went to a friend seeking support during a depressed spell, she said to me, “Marja, you’ve got to take your thoughts captive. You can control your thoughts. I have to do that all the time myself and I know it’s possible.”

I think she had 2 Corinthians 10:4-6 in mind: *“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”*

Was she right? Can we control our thoughts when we’re suffering from the effects of our moods?

Some people believe you can:

- make a conscious decision to stop the thoughts,
- catch thoughts as soon as they appear,
- concentrate on something else.

Joyce Meyers had a few things to say about the thoughts we have when we’re depressed. Unfortunately this is the perspective many Christians have – Christians who have not learned to look on mood disorders as the medical conditions they are.

Meyers: “...when God drew me into a closer walk with Him and I began seriously studying His Word, I learned that I didn't have to follow every feeling and thought that I had. I began to speak aloud and say, "I will not be depressed." I learned to put on the garment of praise spoken of in Isaiah 61:3

*[...and provide for those who grieve in Zion—  
to bestow on them a crown of beauty  
instead of ashes,  
the oil of joy  
instead of mourning,  
and a garment of praise  
instead of a spirit of despair.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
a planting of the LORD  
for the display of his splendor. ]*

We may not always feel like praising, but a victorious person does not have the luxury of living by feelings.”

Meyers talks further in the article about “the fruit of self-control. James 4:7 tells us to resist the devil, and we must also resist depression, and anything that resembles it, because it is of the devil.”

- How do YOU feel about that?

Grant Mullen M.D., has another way of looking at it. He points out that humans are made up of three parts: Body, Spirit and Personality. He recognizes that depression, anxiety and bipolar disorders are medical conditions. Here is what he has to say about the physical conditions that affect our 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.

“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.

“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.”

- How do you feel about that? Do you feel shame? Or are you able to talk freely about your disorder with the people in your church?

“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, 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.”

(Grant Mullen is the author of *Emotionally Free, The Breakthrough Solution*)