

IS THERE ANYTHING GOOD ABOUT DEPRESSION?

Depression is ugly. It's hard to think that there's anything good about it. And yet many places in Scripture suggest that there is value in it,

- Can you think of some ways in which it's made a difference for you?

In the Message, Eugene Peterson wrote:

*Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.
(James 1:2-4)*

- Has this ever been true for you? In what way?

God uses problems to draw you closer to himself. The Bible says, *'The LORD is close to the broken-hearted; he rescues those who are crushed in spirit.'*

Your most profound and intimate experiences of worship will likely be in your darkest days – when your heart is broken, when you feel abandoned, when you're out of options, when the pain is great – and you turn to God alone. It is during suffering that we learn to pray our most authentic, heartfelt, honest-to-God prayer. When we're in pain, we don't have the energy for superficial prayers.

- Has this been true for you? Would you like to share how?

Every problem is a character-building opportunity, and the more difficult it is, the greater the potential for building spiritual muscle and more fiber.

- Has this changed (transformed) you in any way?

Living with depression or other forms of pain qualifies us to minister to others who suffer like we have. Though it's painful, it's a gift to be able to do that.

- Have you known this to be true in your own life?
- How does it make you feel when you're able to minister to others?

So, would you say that we are richer for having suffered? Here's how one writer describes what happens when we go through frequent periods of suffering:

“The soul that is always lighthearted and cheerful misses the deepest things of life. Certainly, that life has its reward and is fully satisfied, but the depth of its satisfaction is very shallow. Its heart is dwarfed, and its nature, which has the potential of experiencing the highest heights and the deepest depths, remains undeveloped. And the wick of its life burns quickly to the bottom, without ever knowing the richness of profound joy.” (from the devotional, *Streams in the Desert*)

Remember, Jesus said, “*Blessed are those who mourn.*” (Matt 5:4)

- What are your thoughts on this?