

God's Provision for Mental Wellness

Pastor Kevin Morris
Family Vacation Bible School
August 4, 2025

"I will give thanks to you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are your works, and my soul knows it very well."

Psalm 139:14

The New Testament word most often used for mind is *nous* (pronounced "noose") and it designates the seat of thought, perception, judgment, purpose and moral reasoning. It embraces both rational intelligence and the spiritual faculty by which God's truth is apprehended and acted upon. It is never a neutral or merely cerebral term; Scripture treats the mind as a dynamic battleground where allegiance to God or rebellion against Him is decided.

Strong's Bible Concordance

The most closely related Old Testament words used are translated "heart" or "inner man."

"The thinking activity is not isolated in man but is connected with his whole personality. Man thinks as he is; from the heart comes forth foolishness and every evil thought (Mark 7:21-22)."

Herman Bavink
Biblical and Religious Psychology

Challenges to our mental health (wellness) come from external circumstances and internal turmoil. Any follower of Jesus can at any time become mentally unhealthy due to these stresses. 1000 years ago earnest Christians were writing about personal, prolonged times of mental / spiritual sadness and deep discouragement referring to it as "The Dark Night of the Soul." Well known believers such as Martin Luther, Charles Spurgeon, and Hudson Taylor repeatedly referred to their times of intense inner struggling.

GOD'S DIRECTIVES THAT PROMOTE MENTAL WELLNESS

- Romans 12:2 ... "be transformed by the renewing of your mind..."
- Ephesians 4:22-24 ... "lay aside the old self...be renewed in the spirit of your mind ... put on the new self which in the likeness of God has been created"
- Philippians 4:6-8 ... "let your requests be made known to God...dwell on these things ...the God of peace will be with you."

- I Corinthians 2:11-16 ...”the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God ... we have received...the Spirit who is from God...we have the mind of Christ.”

WHAT DOES GOD’S PROVISION FOR MENTAL WELLNESS LOOK LIKE?

Luke 24:13-35

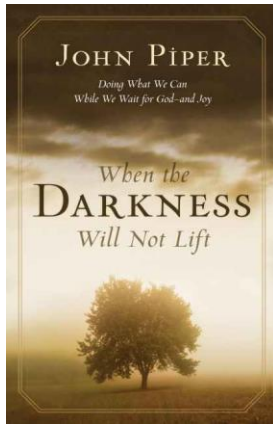
- BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE IN EXTREME MENTAL/EMOTIONAL DISTRESS
 - Naomi (Ruth 1:19-22)
 - David (2 Samuel 12:15-25; 18:33-19:8)
 - Elijah (1 Kings 18-19)
 - Jonah (Jonah 4)

A KEY TO MENTAL WELLNESS FROM THE BOOK OF JAMES

- James 1:5-8 The stabilizing effect of wisdom lived out by faith
- James 1:21-25 The turning point of honest self-evaluation (see Psalm 139:23-24)
- James 3:13-17 Oh my heart...is it well with my soul?

11 Quotes From “When The Darkness Will Not Lift”¹

January 22, 2020 — Craig T. Owens



John Piper has given us an extremely helpful book whether we ourselves are battling the darkness of depression, or someone close to us is. Please check out my full book review of *When The Darkness Will Not Lift* by [clicking here](#).

“This is the rock where we stand when the dark clouds gather and the floods lick at our feet: justification is by *grace alone* (not mixed with our merit), through *faith alone* (not mixed with our works) on the basis of *Christ alone* (not mingling His righteousness with ours), to the glory of *God alone* (not ours).”

“Where should you start? Start at the easiest place for those in darkness. Start with despair. Despair of finding any answer in yourself. I pray that you will cease from all efforts to look inside yourself for the rescue you need. I pray that you will do what only desperate people can do, namely, cast yourself on Christ.”

“You cannot isolate the spiritual from the physical for we are body, mind and spirit. The greatest and the best Christians when they are physically weak are more prone to an attack of spiritual depression than at any other time and there are great illustrations of this in the Scriptures.”

“It will be of great advantage to the struggling Christian to remember that seasons of darkness are normal in the Christian life.”

“One of the reasons God loved David so much was that he cried so much. ... It is a beautiful thing when a broken man genuinely cries out to God.”

“Faith is sustained by looking at Christ, crucified and risen, not by turning from Christ to analyze your faith. ... Paradoxically, if we would experience the joy of faith, we must not focus much on it. We must focus on the greatness of our Savior.”

“It follows from this that we should all fortify ourselves against the dark hours of depression by cultivating a deep distrust of the certainties of despair. Despair is relentless in the certainties of its pessimism. But we have seen again and again, from our own experience and others, that absolute statements of hopelessness that we make in the dark are notoriously unreliable. Our dark certainties are not sureties. While we have the light, let us cultivate distrust of the certainties of despair.”

“Instead of only saying, ‘Just do your duty,’ we must say...that joy is part of your duty. The Bible says, ‘Rejoice always’ (1 Thessalonians 5:16). And in regard to the duty of giving, it says, ‘God loves a *cheerful* giver’ (2 Corinthians 9:7). In regard to the duty of service, it says, ‘Serve the Lord *with gladness*’ (Psalm 100:2). In regard to the duty of mercy, it says do it ‘*with cheerfulness*’ (Romans 12:8). In regard to the duty of afflictions, it says, ‘*Count it all joy*’ (James 1:2). We simply water down the divine command when we call someone to half their duty.”

“In dealing with our sin we can make two mistakes. One is to make light of it. The other is to be overwhelmed by it.”

1. “11 Quotes from *When the Darkness Will Not Lift*.” Craig T. Owens. CraigTOwens.com. January 22, 2020. <craigtowens.com/2020/01/22/11-quotes-from-when-the-darkness-will-not-lift/>. August 4, 2025.

"If we want the joy of seeing and savoring God in Christ, we must not make peace with our sins. We must make war."

"Sometimes the darkness of our souls is owing in some part to the fact that we have drifted into patterns of life that are not blatantly sinful but are constricted and uncaring. ... Unconsciously we have become very self-absorbed and oblivious and uncaring toward the pain and suffering in the world that is far worse than our own."

"Paradoxically, depressed persons may say that they must care for themselves and cannot take on the problems of the world, when in fact part of the truth may be that their depression is feeding on the ingrown quality of their lives. ... Joy in Christ thrives on being shared. That is the essence of Christian joy: it overflows or dies."

The Dark Night of the Soul²

R.C. Sproul

The dark night of the soul. This phenomenon describes a malady that the greatest of Christians have suffered from time to time. It was the malady that provoked David to soak his pillow with tears. It was the malady that earned for Jeremiah the sobriquet, “The Weeping Prophet.” It was the malady that so afflicted Martin Luther that his melancholy threatened to destroy him. This is no ordinary fit of depression, but it is a depression that is linked to a crisis of faith, a crisis that comes when one senses the absence of God or gives rise to a feeling of abandonment by Him.

Spiritual depression is real and can be acute. We ask how a person of faith could experience such spiritual lows, but whatever provokes it does not take away from its reality. Our faith is not a constant action. It is mobile. It vacillates. We move from faith to faith, and in between we may have periods of doubt when we cry, “Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief.”

We may also think that the dark night of the soul is something completely incompatible with the fruit of the Spirit, not only that of faith but also that of joy. Once the Holy Spirit has flooded our hearts with a joy unspeakable, how can there be room in that chamber for such darkness? It is important for us to make a distinction between the spiritual fruit of joy and the cultural concept of happiness. A Christian can have joy in his heart while there is still spiritual depression in his head. The joy that we have sustains us through these dark nights and is not quenched by spiritual depression. The joy of the Christian is one that survives all downturns in life.

The presence of faith gives no guarantee of the absence of spiritual depression; however, the dark night of the soul always gives way to the brightness of the noonday light of the presence of God.

In writing to the Corinthians in his second letter, Paul commends to his readers the importance of preaching and of communicating the Gospel to people. But in the midst of that, he reminds the church that the treasure we have from God is a treasure that is contained not in vessels of gold and silver but in what the Apostle calls “jars of clay.” For this reason he says, “that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.” Immediately after this reminder, the Apostle adds,

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ([2 Cor. 4:7–10](#))

2. Sproul, R. C. “The Dark Night of the Soul.” Ligonier/Christian Living/Life Issues. Ligonier.org. June 13, 2023. <learn.ligonier.org/articles/dark-night-soul>. August 4, 2025.

This passage indicates the limits of depression that we experience. The depression may be profound, but it is not permanent, nor is it fatal. Notice that the Apostle Paul describes our condition in a variety of ways. He says that we are “afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down.” These are powerful images that describe the conflict that Christians must endure, but in every place that he describes this phenomenon, he describes at the same time its limits. Afflicted, but not crushed. Perplexed, but not in despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken. Struck down, but not destroyed.

So we have this pressure to bear, but the pressure, though it is severe, does not crush us. We may be confused and perplexed, but that low point to which perplexity brings us does not result in complete and total despair. Even in persecution, as serious as it may be, we are still not forsaken, and we may be overwhelmed and struck down as Jeremiah spoke of, yet we have room for joy. We think of the prophet Habakkuk, who in his misery remained confident that despite the setbacks he endured, God would give him feet like hind’s feet, feet that would enable him to walk in high places.

Elsewhere, the Apostle Paul in writing to the Philippians gives them the admonition to be “anxious for nothing,” telling them that the cure for anxiety is found on one’s knees, that it is the peace of God that calms our spirit and dissipates anxiety. Again, we can be anxious and nervous and worried without finally submitting to ultimate despair.

This coexistence of faith and spiritual depression is paralleled in other biblical statements of emotive conditions. We are told that it is perfectly legitimate for believers to suffer grief. Our Lord Himself was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Though grief may reach to the roots of our souls, it must not result in bitterness. Grief is a legitimate emotion, at times even a virtue, but there must be no place in the soul for bitterness. In like manner, we see that it is a good thing to go to the house of mourning, but even in mourning, that low feeling must not give way to hatred. The presence of faith gives no guarantee of the absence of spiritual depression; however, the dark night of the soul always gives way to the brightness of the noonday light of the presence of God.

Mingling Groans of Pain and Songs of Hope:
Charles Haddon Spurgeon on Depression³

Susan Verstraete

It's a good thing he wasn't born in the 20th century. Many believing brothers and sisters would label his tendency to melancholy sinful, or evidence of a lack of self-discipline, or even the result of shallow faith. A psychologist would probably send him away with a prescription and a self-help book with twelve easy steps to overcome depression. But Charles Haddon Spurgeon, perhaps the greatest preacher of the 19th century, had a different attitude toward his affliction.

Spurgeon knew "by most painful experience what deep depression of spirit means, being visited therewith at seasons by no means few or far between." He warned his students, "Fits of depression come over the most of us. Usually cheerful as we may be, we must at intervals be cast down. The strong are not always vigorous, the wise not always ready, the brave not always courageous, and the joyous not always happy." Although he said, "Spiritual darkness of any sort is to be avoided, and not desired," he never assumed that a Christian suffering depression must necessarily be in sin. Instead, he wrote, "I note that some whom I greatly love and esteem, who are, in my judgment, among the very choicest of God's people, nevertheless, travel most of the way to heaven by night."

Spurgeon goes on in his book, *Lectures to my Students*, to give some of the reasons believers fall into sadness. He also provides hope for those so overtaken.

"Is it not first, that they are men?" Spurgeon acknowledged that being a Christian did not make a man or woman immune from suffering. In fact, he said, "Even under the economy of redemption it is most clear that we are to endure infirmities, otherwise there were no need of the promised Spirit to help us in them. It is of need be that we are sometimes in heaviness. Good men are promised tribulation in this world." But he points out that through this suffering, we "may learn sympathy with the Lord's suffering people." Paul says something similar in 2 Corinthians 1:4; God "comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."

"Most of us are in some way or another unsound physically." Spurgeon suffered terribly with a joint disorder that was diagnosed as gout. He was forced to stay in bed, sometimes for weeks at a time in excruciating pain. "I have been brought very low," he wrote to his congregation during one long bout, "My flesh has been tortured with pain and my spirit has been prostrate with depression. . . . With some difficulty I write these lines in my bed, mingling them with the groans of pain and the songs of hope."

With characteristic balance, Spurgeon understood that physical pain and natural temperament contribute to depression, but did not allow his students to use them as an

3. Verstraete, Susan. "Mingling Groans of Pain and Songs of Hope – Charles Haddon Spurgeon on Depression." 2007. Christian Communicators Worldwide. <bulletininserts.org/mingling-groans-of-pain-and-songs-of-hope-charles-haddon-spurgeon-on-depression/>. August 4, 2025.

excuse for despair. “These infirmities may be no detriment to a man’s career of special usefulness,” he said. “They may even have been imposed upon him by divine wisdom as necessary qualifications for his peculiar course of service. Some plants owe their medicinal qualities to the marsh in which they grow; others to the shades in which alone they flourish.”

“In the midst of a long stretch of unbroken labor, the same affliction may be looked for.” Spurgeon’s schedule was exhausting. In a typical week, he preached ten times. He answered approximately 500 letters, taught in a ministerial college, administrated an orphanage and dealt with dozens of individuals concerning their souls. He wrote for publications, entertained visitors at his home, taught his own family and encouraged his bedridden wife. It is no wonder that his health suffered under such a workload. Spurgeon’s church finally insisted on regular vacations for him each year. Spurgeon told his students, “The bow cannot be always bent without fear of breaking. Repose is as needful to the mind as sleep to the body. . . . Rest time is not waste time. It is economy to gather fresh strength.”

“One crushing stroke has sometimes laid the minister very low.” On October 19, 1856, the 22 year old Spurgeon spoke for the first time in the Surrey Gardens Music Hall in London. The church was no longer big enough to contain the crowds of people who wanted to hear him preach. Thousands packed into the music hall, seating themselves in aisles and stairways after all the regular seating was full, and hundreds more waited outside, hoping to hear part of the sermon through the windows. Just after Spurgeon began to pray, someone in a balcony shouted “Fire!” People pushed and shoved to get out of the building, and a stair railing gave way under the pressure. Seven people were killed and 28 more were injured. The tender-hearted Spurgeon never completely recovered from the emotional impact of this incident. He wrote, “I was pressed beyond measure and out of bounds with an enormous weight of misery. The tumult, the panic, the deaths, were day and night before me, and made life a burden.”

Many have experienced a natural disaster, the death of a loved one, devastating financial loss or overwhelming disappointment when a child or a fellow believer has fallen into sin. Spurgeon offers hope from his own experience. “The fact that Jesus is still great, let his servants suffer as they may, piloted me back to calm reason and peace. Should so terrible a calamity overtake any of my brethren, let them both patiently hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God.”

“The lesson from wisdom is, be not dismayed by soul-trouble.” In the end, Spurgeon acknowledged that depression may come to some believers for no discernable reason. He did not consider it an illness, a sin, or surprising condition, but an inevitable season in the life of a Christian and an opportunity to demonstrate trust in the God who will one day wipe away every tear.

Any simpleton can follow the narrow path in the light: faith’s rare wisdom enables us to march on in the dark with infallible accuracy, since she places her hand in that of her Great Guide. —Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to my Students*