

free from depression

BY BETTY THIESSEN



WHAT HAPPENED TO ME was a miracle. A complete release from the self-pity and negative thoughts that were slowly choking the life out of me.

Throughout the 1960s I suffered from severe depression. At various times, I have briefly shared the story of my deliverance on *It's a New Day* and have been amazed by how many people have written in, wanting help, asking me how I overcame it, and to write it all down.

But... my story is not a formula. Each person's reason for depression is different; each person's struggle with depression is unique. I can't promise you the same miracle I received. I can only share my story and pray that you too will seek the Lord for the word that will turn your world around.

Out of Focus

For seven years, I lived with an oppressive weight that grew stronger with each passing year. People thought Willard and I were content – a happy husband and wife raising their three young children. There was so much that was right in our lives, but our household was not a happy one.

My heart and mind focused on the little pieces of life that were wrong. I completely lost perspective and could only see the areas where the people around me and I myself fell short. I was depressed, and my family was feeling the effects.

Feeling Alone

The first half of my struggle with depression, we lived on a farm in small-town Manitoba. Six days a week Willard was busy farming. When Sunday came, he left for church early in the morning, driving the bus for Sunday school and helping out at the church all day.

We never had a family day. I dressed and fed the children by myself. I got them ready for church by myself. We went to church by ourselves. Every week, I felt as though I was on my own.

It was important to Willard to make other people happy, and I always felt that other people – and the church – came first, and I was second rate.

This wore on my emotions, but I never knew how to communicate my heart to my husband. How do you ask someone to not serve the Lord on Sunday and to focus on his family instead? It seemed so selfish.

Trapped!

The bitterness, self-pity, stress, negative thinking and lack of self-worth that flooded my emotions opened the door for depression to enter my life. As time passed, it grew stronger and stronger, and I found myself trapped beneath the depression, unable to get out from under it.

There were times when I considered taking my own life. I can understand the desperation that leads people step by step to suicide. Sometime the desire to end it all was almost all I could see. I could just taste the end of my problems. In my self-absorption I practically lost sight of my children, my husband, my loved ones, my God.

Desperate Housewife

When Willard took a job as a marketing engineer with Bristol Aerospace and we moved to Winnipeg, I think I had the smallest twinge of hope that things would change, at least a little.

However, Willard's new career required frequent trips, and he traveled at least once a month - sometimes gone for weeks at a time.

Again, he was not there for me, or there to help with the family. I strongly expected and desperately needed him to meet all my needs – but how could he do that when he wasn't even home?

I became good friends with my neighbours, and we would get together and talk while our children played. But they had no idea what I was going through. We never shared the struggles and pains in our hearts. The general feeling was that it was shameful to talk about problems, especially when they were this intense.

I felt inadequate, unfulfilled and alone - literally a desperate housewife, pretending to be happy and in control while really living in complete despair and hopelessness.

In Need of Change

In the lowest of my lows, I turned away from looking at myself just long enough to grip the terrifying reality that I needed change, and I needed it fast. I turned the only place I knew to turn: to God. Empty, confused and desperate, I

opened my Bible, searching for answers, hope, healing – anything that would bring change.

I read the gospels and the book of Acts. So many times it was hard to see the grace of God. I kept seeing His law – the rules, regulations and guidelines I could never live up to. I had to grasp at the little glimpses of grace I found in His word and try to see past my low self-worth into the miracle of His love for me.

I wanted to know what Jesus did and if and how He could take away the depression that was destroying my life. I read about how Jesus healed people. There was never a formula. Sometimes He forgave them, something He wiped salve on their eyes, sometime He cast out demons.

A Real Enemy

I had been raised with a traditional background and had no understanding of deliverance and demonology. I had also studied psychology in university and was so confused as I read. I had always thought emotional problems were completely psychological. My relationship with God had been strictly intellectual – I had no idea that He had given us the Holy Spirit to enable us with the power to change.

When I also realized that the devil was active in the world, my mind was spinning. "Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour" (1 Peter 5:8 NLT). I began to wonder whether my depression was an opening for the devil to oppress me, but I had no idea how to get rid of his damaging influence.

Then one day, it happened.

Life Transformed!

I was desperate to try anything. I had to get rid of the lion. I had to just try this thing called deliverance. Maybe it could work. Alone in my bedroom, I pulled the covers over my head and quietly said the words that would change everything: "Satan, get out of my life."

Immediately, I felt a surge of cleansing power as the Holy Spirit delivered me from depression and self-pity and, in an instant, completely altered my life.

Searching...

Willard had just returned home from a business trip. Though he had known I was unhappy, he too had assumed that depression was something that simply had to be "worked through" –



not something that I could be delivered from through the power of the Holy Spirit. But he immediately saw the change in my life and embraced the truth with enthusiasm.

After attending a meeting where people sang in the spirit and spoke in tongues, we began to desire the same. Our upbringing had told us that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was something to be afraid of, but we were starting to see that really it was something to be desired.

We searched the scriptures for truths about the Holy Spirit, trying to understand and break past the traditional mindset ingrained in us.

A couple months later, I was reading about Stephen in the book of Acts. A man full of God's grace and power, Stephen was being falsely accused by lying witnesses. Their outrageous claims caused him to be arrested, even though he had done nothing wrong. In chapter seven, the leaders rushed at him and dragged him out of the city to stone him.

"And as they stoned him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' And he fell to his knees, shouting, 'Lord, don't charge them with this sin!' And with that, he died" (Acts 7:59-60 NLT).

I was blown away. How could Stephen forgive the people that were attacking him, the people that would kill him for things he had never even said or done? When I saw his complete grace and forgiveness, I broke. I was stunned by the power of forgiveness through the Holy Spirit and realized how much I needed the power of the Holy Spirit to forgive others.

Holy Spirit Power

I read on into chapter eight: "As soon as [Peter and John] arrived [in Jerusalem], they prayed for these new Christians to receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them, for they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John laid their hands upon these believers, and they received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:15-17 NLT).

Right then, Jesus baptized me in the Holy Spirit. The life of freedom, release and inner healing that was to follow was nothing I could ever have imagined.

The Journey Begins

Though my deliverance from depression was instant, my journey of inner healing took time. I found it important and strengthening to read through the Psalms, to worship, to be grateful for what God had done and to really see all the good in my life.

My heart and mind were filled with an incredible freedom, and my hunger for God grew every day. I began to really know His love for me, and He began to speak to my heart, helping me forgive and love and change many areas of my life.

When I told my friends about my deliverance from demon oppression and baptism of the Holy Spirit, they backed away, unable to understand. In the past, this reaction would have caused me to fall back into self-pity and bitterness; but through the power of the Holy Spirit, I was able to stand up to those feelings and to love and forgive - just as Stephen had. The tendency was still there, but the Holy Spirit's power gave me the ability to overcome!

Eyes Opened

God allowed me to grieve my past hurts and move on. He brought deep inner healing to the deepest pains. He helped me forgive myself. He helped me forgive the people in my life who had hurt me the most. Relationships were changed, and life became so incredibly meaningful.

I began to see my children through new eyes. The anger and impatience began to melt away, and I prayed for wisdom and discernment regarding the root of problems. Previously, my mothering had revolved all around me; now I was beginning to focus on the needs of my children and not just my own.

Sufficient Grace

He changed my marriage. One day while I was working in the kitchen, I was struggling and in need of Willard to provide me with emotional support. Then God spoke to me: "My grace is sufficient for *all* your needs."

So often, women think their husbands are there to be the strong anchor, the solution, the person who meets their every need. These are expectations that no person can live up to, but God can - and He does!

When God opened my eyes to this truth, my relationship with Willard completely changed. It freed my heart to love without conditions - and it freed Willard from the control and pressure of always trying to live up to my lofty expectations.

Unconditional Love

God then transformed my relationship with my dad. Though my parents had always been loving and caring, I had the perception that my dad thought boys were better than girls.

I felt as though I had no value to him. It was obvious to me that my brother was more important to my dad than I was. All my life I had worked hard to drop everything and do anything for my dad - obeying and pleasing him was just what we did.

At this stage of my life, my dad was disabled from a stroke and needed someone at his beck and call. When he would phone and ask me to help, I would stop whatever I was doing to be there for him - and he would always thank me and give me a few dollars.

Sometimes Dad would come over for dinner at our place and, before he left, he would deposit a \$50 tip on the table for me. It was at a time that we were entering ministry and needed financial

help. The money was important to us, but it soon translated into a means of control. As my dad paid me for my services, I was being controlled to do whatever he asked.

One day when Dad called to ask me to come help him, I said I needed to first pray about it. I felt God said to go - but I was no longer to accept money for helping him. When I saw my dad, I told him he couldn't pay me and that I would help him because I loved him.

Then something broke in our relationship. It changed us. I think we both needed to know we loved each other for who we were - he needed to know I wasn't there just for the money just as much as I did. It was a blessing to be able to spend guilt-free, control-free time with Dad - and, soon, we grew close. God opened the doors to our hearts, and forgiveness, love and genuine care filled our relationship.

Still at War

I still need to walk out my deliverance. I am very aware of the fact that today, thirty-five years later, I still have a weakness toward self-pity. I make a conscious effort to watch for these feelings and to crush them before they can even begin to destroy me. It is important to be thankful and to see God as my heavenly Father who comforts me and is always faithful.

Both then and now I have found encouragement in the book of Hebrews. No matter how much we change or our circumstances change - for better or for worse - "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:5, 8 NIV). Nothing can change that promise. Nothing.

And no matter how empty we feel, no matter how devastated, depressed and alone we think we are, it's all a lie of the enemy. Jesus is there for us: "For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'" (Hebrews 13:5 NKJV). What a promise!

Hope for Today!

Today, no matter what circumstance you find yourself in, no matter how depressed and hopeless life seems, cling to the grace of God. See His mercy. He can bring complete healing to your life - through deliverance, inner emotional needs or even treatment of chemical imbalances.

There isn't a formula that fits everyone. Talk to people around you, to your doctor, to God. Search the scriptures and cry out for Him to open your eyes to the incredible power of His Holy Spirit available to you today.

There is an answer specifically tailored to you. God loves you more than you could ever imagine, and He wants you to be well. A miracle can happen.