


STUDY 7

Growing Through Depression and Anger

SELECTIONS FROM JEREMIAH

harles Spurgeon, England's most famous preacher in the late 19th century, is probably the most quoted man in America's pulpits on any given Sunday. Preachers love his colorful stories and practical insights. What we're not told, however, is how much Spurgeon suffered from depression. He often warned those he taught to watch out for Mondays when they likely would be plunged into despair from the heights of exaltation on Sundays.

Depression is no stranger to many Christians. It often leads to anger at God, which results in guilt feelings, which leaves us more depressed, and then the cycle repeats itself. We feel as if we're being strangled to death by a python. The prophet Jeremiah felt like that too, and he got angry with God. God met him at his lowest point, and Jeremiah returned to his calling with courage and faith.

1. Why do Christians so rarely admit or talk openly about depression?

READ JEREMIAH 1:4-10,17-19.

- ✎ 2. What were the various factors involved in God's call to Jeremiah to be his prophet?

- ✎ 3. What did God command Jeremiah to do (verses 9-10)?

What might be the consequences for Jeremiah if he obeyed God's command?

4. What did God promise to do for Jeremiah when he began to experience opposition to his ministry (verses 17-19)?

- ✎ 5. How does a realistic assessment of your problems and of God's resources help you deal with discouragement or depression?

READ JEREMIAH 11:18-23.

6. Jeremiah's hometown was Anathoth (1:1). What is the response of his fellow townspeople to his preaching (verses 19,21)?

How might the reaction of his hometown have contributed to Jeremiah's depression?

7. Why does criticism from our peers and even our family members bother us so much?

READ JEREMIAH 12:1-5.

- ✎ 8. Jeremiah became angry over God's apparent injustice. What effect does his anger have on his attitude toward the wicked (verses 3-4)?
- ✎ 9. God answered Jeremiah with vivid questions about surviving in more challenging situations (verse 5). What principle of spiritual growth did God want to teach Jeremiah?

READ JEREMIAH 15:15-21.

- ✎ 10. What evidence of Jeremiah's deep depression do you find in verses 15-18?
- ✎ 11. Why did God call Jeremiah to repent (verse 19)?
12. Of what value was it to Jeremiah to be reminded of God's original promise of protection (verses 20-21 and 1:17-19)?

READ JEREMIAH 20:7-18.

- ✎ 13. After being beaten and imprisoned, Jeremiah continued to preach judgment on Judah (see 20:1-6). Describe his emotional roller-coaster ride, his lows and highs.

Note: Later, Jeremiah's writings are burned (chapter 36), he is imprisoned (chapter 37), he is thrown into a cistern to die (chapter 38), and his wise counsel is rejected (42:1-6; 43:1-7). His preaching fails to save Judah and Jerusalem. However, after Jeremiah's outburst in chapter 20, we find no further signs of anger, depression, or complaints about God's dealings.

- ✧ 14. Jeremiah spilled out his anger, resentment, and depression to God. As he listened to God, Jeremiah changed his attitude toward his circumstances and toward God. In what ways can Jeremiah's example help you deal with depression and anger toward God?

Pray the Bible into Life

- Ask God to help you be more realistic and honest about depression, anger toward him, and discouragement.
- Pray for boldness to talk to God about these things, just as Jeremiah did.
- Seek God's grace and power to overcome at least one cause of depression, anger, or discouragement in your life.