

CA 29 TFP2 CHOOSING JOY OVER DEPRESSION (Formerly CA 31 TFP2)**(Theme music)**

FOSTER: In Psalm 43 verse 5 the psalmist writes, “*Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad?*” Sadness is an example of an emotion women *and men* experience sometimes.

However, in our last program we discussed how many men are reluctant to display their emotions—despite the fact that we are created in God’s image and God displays many emotions in the Bible. As men, it helps to admit that we have emotions because then we can experience them in a healthy way. This is particularly important today since our topic is depression in men.

Welcome to Champions Arise. I’m Foster Braun and I’m with Kent Darcie. It’s been said that one fifth of all Christians worldwide experience enough depression to interfere with their ability to function normally. So we’re going to look at this timely and widespread issue, when we return to Champions Arise.

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FOSTER: “*Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad?*” Kent, the psalmist wrote those words around 3000 years ago, but they apply to many men today.

KENT: That’s true. And while we all have times in our lives when we’re sad because of the loss of a loved one, unemployment, or family problems, depression is a more long-term condition. Symptoms of depression include a lack of energy, lack of interest in pleasurable things, sadness, and discouragement. And these are happening over a longer period of time.

FOSTER: So Kent what types of things cause depression? What does depression look like?

KENT: That’s two questions so let’s deal with them one at a time. What types of things can lead to depression? I’ll put these causes into three broad categories,

The first is physical reasons for their depression— some people have a chemical imbalance or depression in their family historically.

The second category are those who experienced a major trauma—an unexpected death or other loss for example. Here the initial sadness or grief was never dealt with and evolved into depression. These two categories are not the focus of what we’re going to talk about.

The third category of causes for depression is life itself. I’m talking about the man whose job is pressure-filled and he sees no way out, or his wife is the “contentious wife” the Proverbs refer to. Perhaps his kids are not succeeding in life and he’s worried about their future. It might be that he’s looking back at his life and not happy with how far he’s come.

The common theme is we either, have no hope that things will change, or we feel we have no power to change our situation.

FOSTER: Kent, I read earlier that two in ten Christians have depression. Why don't we talk about this more?

KENT: I think because we **feel** that by admitting we're depressed, we are defective somehow, or worse yet, we're not spiritual—don't have enough faith to "just get over it." I also think **because** we never talk about it, if we **are** depressed, we think we're the only one.

FOSTER: And that is absolutely not true.

KENT: No its not. Lots of people have, or have had, depression. In the book '*The Four Priorities*', Dr. John Tolson and Larry Krieder use the prophet Elijah as an example of someone who was depressed for a time.

FOSTER: Really! Elijah had symptoms of depression?

KENT: A number of them. We can learn a lot from his experience.

FOSTER: Well let's look at this, but first, please give us some background on Elijah.

KENT: The full story can be found in 1 Kings chapters 17, 18, and 19. Elijah was a prophet. The Israelites were straying from God and following idols and God used Elijah to draw the people back to Him. At the climax of the story, Elijah was up against 450 false prophets *and defeated* them.

Unfortunately, Jezebel the queen was really upset about what happened to her prophets and threatened to kill Elijah. So Elijah, who had just witnessed God's miraculous power against the false prophets, got scared and ran away.

FOSTER: Again we would encourage you to read the amazing story in 1 Kings chapters 17, 18, and 19. But now that we have the background Kent, what symptoms of depression can we observe with Elijah?

KENT: The first is fear. He has this tremendous victory. But right after Queen Jezebel threatens to kill him, he forgets God's amazing work. Listen to 1 Kings 19 verse 4

"Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed—that he might die."

This is the same guy who boldly challenged 450 false prophets. Now he's afraid of Queen Jezebel. He sees himself as alone and vulnerable and here is the key point; Elijah fears that things are not going to change. When there is no hope, depression can set in. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes (Eph 6:11.)" Elijah's first reaction was fear so that is where Satan attacked him. Satan knows what bothers us, so that's where he attacks.

FOSTER: Fear can paralyze us if we aren't careful, can't it?

KENT: Yes. And it can be any number of fears. Fear that you're stuck in a bad job. Fear of not having enough to provide for your family. Fear that you aren't the husband or father you think you should be.

“Fear” can overshadow “hope” like a cloud covering the sun—and depression can result.

FOSTER: This is very interesting. If you just joined us, this is Champions Arise. I'm Foster Braun and I'm with Kent Darcie. Today we are talking about depression in men by looking at the prophet Elijah. Kent what is the next symptom of depression we can see in Elijah?

KENT: There's seven of them and fear was the first symptom. The second is isolation. Elijah isolated himself. Verse 4 says *“He himself went a day's journey into the desert.”* Isolation is a destructive influence on physical and mental health. When we're alone, it's easy to lose touch with reality and let our imagination create things that aren't true. For example, we might believe that if we're feeling depressed, we're defective somehow.

FOSTER: Is that because they think that if they were spiritual enough they wouldn't be depressed?

KENT: That belief is more popular than you'd think. And many people are falsely judged because of it. Too many have the mistaken belief that if you have Jesus Christ in your life, you are supposed to be happy all the time. And that is just not true. We have **joy** in the Lord, but **happiness** can change at any moment.

FOSTER: That's really true. So what is the third symptom, Kent?

KENT: Self-pity. In 1 Kings Chapter 19 verse 14, Elijah says, “Take my life. I am no better than my ancestors.” Basically, Elijah fell into *“poor, poor me”* thinking. And this can come from looking at a situation through isolation and fear. And it's not just Elijah. James 5:17 says *“Elijah was a man with a nature like ours.”*

As men who have emotions, we are all vulnerable to self-pity, if we aren't careful. And if we don't recognize the symptoms of depression, there can be problems.

FOSTER: Like what?

KENT: Men with depression may become hostile and irritable, attack or lash out when they are hurt, become obsessive and want to control everything, or they can become fearful and ashamed.

But another problem is men will try to **feel better** by using illegal and prescription drugs, alcohol, pornography, and other destructive means that don't help, and drive them further from God.

FOSTER: It's certainly amazing to think that even a powerful prophet like Elijah could succumb to fear, isolation, and self-pity.

KENT: That is why our strength must come from God. Which leads us to the fourth symptom of depression—a faded or weakened faith.

The story of Elijah is filled with God's miraculous works, but, apparently, he forgot about them and, because he was isolated, there was no one there to remind him. It's very important to have someone who can help us stand on God's truth and remember the great things He has done in our lives.

FOSTER: You know Kent, I almost see a progression here. Fear, isolation, a faded or weakened faith. Doesn't look like we're heading in a good direction.

KENT: We're not. The Bible says in verse 4, "He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die."

FOSTER: Thoughts of suicide.

KENT: Yes. Fear, isolation, self-pity, weakened faith, that's what Elijah was dealing with—and he lost total perspective. And we can too.

So my friend, if you're thinking "how do these guys know what I'm thinking?" It's not Foster and I. The Holy Spirit guided you to listen today because God wants you to take the steps to get better. If you're having suicidal thoughts, you need to tell a pastor or a Christian counselor. It's very important **not** to keep this to yourself. There is no reason to feel ashamed. As we've said, **Elijah** felt this way, and in a moment we'll talk about how God helped Elijah, but please talk to a Christian leader or counselor.

FOSTER: And if you don't have access to someone you can trust, contact us here at Champions Arise through our website championsarise.org.

KENT: Very important. Because people who have depression also are fatigued and feel rejected—which are the sixth and seventh symptoms. You may feel tired of trying anymore. Tired of the dreary days, and nobody understands. I've heard it said that fatigue is a weapon of Satan. He waits until we're tired to strike, because our defenses are down. But God is always with us.

FOSTER: As He was with Elijah. So we looked at seven symptoms of depression, how did God help Elijah?

KENT: Let's look at seven ways God ministered to Elijah.

Number 1 is God acknowledged that Elijah's depression **was real**. He didn't scold him, or tell him he was silly or didn't have enough faith.

Number 2: God encouraged Elijah to rest. When you read Elijah's story in 1 Kings chapters 17, 18, and 19 you'll see all he experienced—and he was probably tired. It's similar to us working every day, trying to be good husbands and fathers. It can get tiring. So God let Elijah rest.

FOSTER: Getting adequate rest is very important. And number 3?

KENT: The third and fourth things God did for Elijah was He didn't give counsel for a while and He allowed Elijah to explain the problem. God was exploring Elijah's heart, but first Elijah had to understand his own heart by talking. Talking it out, or venting, is important for anyone who wants to find healing. God just listened and let Elijah talk. And God will listen to you. Tell him how you feel and what you are thinking. It can really help, and God is trustworthy. "*Cast all your cares upon the Lord because He cares for you.*"

FOSTER: And the fifth way God helped?

KENT: God dealt with Elijah's false beliefs. At the core of Elijah's problems was an inadequate view of God. When we are refreshed enough to handle the truth, God will reveal the truth of scripture to us.

And once He's given us the truth, he gets us moving. The sixth thing way God helped Elijah was He gave Elijah a series of tasks to do. Doing something, even small things, is very important for moving out of depression. And the last thing is He gave Elijah a friend named Elisha. God directed Elijah to anoint and train Elisha as a prophet.

FOSTER: Thanks Kent for these encouraging words. My friend, depression is real and a season of depression may last for weeks or months, but never doubt the power of God to lead you out. We covered a lot of material today. Please listen to this program again and share this with others. Because we don't talk about this enough, there are probably men you know who are struggling with this. Look for the symptoms we discussed and take the actions we suggest.

Finally, we started today's program with the beginning of Psalm 43 verse 5. Here's the entire verse: "*Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again--my Savior and my God!*"

My friend, take that truth to heart today.

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Program Close

FOSTER: Thank you for listening to Champions Arise where men are equipped and strengthened to meet their God-given potential. Today we discussed the importance of dealing with male depression. This material was based on chapter 13 in the book "The Four Priorities," by Dr. John Tolson and Larry Kreider which is published by "The Gathering USA" in 2007 and used with permission. You can learn more about this book and listen to any of these programs at our website championsarise.org. I'm Foster Braun with Kent Darcie. Thank you for listening to Champions Arise. May God mold you into the man He knows you can be.

Closing Tag

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