

Navigating Depression

Sunday School Lesson

Lamentations 3:1-20, 31-33, 42b-48; Psalm 103:1-10

March 8, 2026

The percentage of U.S. adults who report currently having or being treated for depression has exceeded 18% in both 2024 and 2025, up about eight percentage points since the initial measurement in 2015. The current rate of 18.3% measured so far in 2025 projects to an estimated 47.8 million Americans suffering from depression. Most of the increase has occurred since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Current depression rates have risen dramatically since 2017 among adults under the age of 30, doubling from 13.0% in 2017 to 26.7% in 2025. The current estimate is up from 24.6% measured in 2023, indicating that depression continues to be a worsening problem among young adults.

Among those in households earning under \$24,000 per year, reports of depression have risen from 22.1% in 2017 to 26.1% in 2023 to 35.1% now, a 13-point increase in eight years. The change for these lower-earning Americans is particularly notable given the nine-point increase since 2023.

Suicide rates increased 37% between 2000-2018 and decreased 5% between 2018-2020. However, rates returned to their peak in 2022. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among people 10-24 years of age. Last month, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) released its latest National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, with the most recent available data showing little change from the previous year in terms of annual suicides and daily averages.

The report analyzed veteran suicides between 2001-2023, with 2023 being the most recent year for which data is available. Suicides among veterans in 2023 totaled 6,398, a slight decrease from the 6,442 suicides in 2022. The average number of daily veteran suicides fell from 17.6 in 2022 to 17.5 in 2023.

Those who have never experienced depression so severe that you consider taking your own life have little understanding of the depth of pain experienced by people considering suicide. Reading your Bible is not going to “snap you out of it” or give you a better perspective. When my children were young, we took a trip to Disney World where I rode Space Mountain for the first time. At first, it looked like any other roller coaster ride. It wasn't. Space Mountain is a roller coaster in complete darkness. You cannot see your hand in front of your face. In a regular coaster, you can see you are about to go up or down, right or left, or even upside down. But in the darkness, you lose total orientation. That is what severe depression is like. You lose connection with your own story. In Space Mountain, you know that disorientation will last for four minutes. In depression, you have no idea when it will end and that makes it worse.

William Styron wrote this in his national bestseller, *Darkness Visible – A Memoir of Madness*: *Depression is a disorder of mood, so mysteriously painful and elusive in the way it becomes known to the self – to the mediating intellect – as to verse close to being beyond description. It thus remains nearly incomprehensible to those who have not experienced it in its extreme mode...*

I would put the author of this lesson in that category.

Purpose Statement: To confront depression from a biblical perspective

The psalms of lament and many of the passages of lament have an emphasis on remembering. Job became disconnected to his own story then God showed up and reoriented him. Job never got the answers he sought but he knew God was with him and that meant everything.

The people of Judah and Israel had every reason to lament. The ten Northern tribes of Israel never recovered. The two tribes of Judah were eventually overwhelmed by the Babylonian armies and taken into exile. Gone was the Temple, gone was the land, and gone was their culture. But the priests did something unexpected – they brought the law with them into exile. They never allowed God’s people to forget who they were. It is one thing to practice your piety when you are healthy, with your own home, your own family, and your own culture. It is quite another thing to practice your piety when you have lost everything. Job did it. So did the people of Judah. The priest reminded them over and over who they were. They kept them connected to the greater story. Every psalm of lament has a call to remember:

- Psalm 3:3-4 - But you, Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high. I call out to the Lord, and he answers me from his holy mountain.
- Psalm 6:9 - The Lord has heard my cry for mercy; the Lord accepts my prayer.
- Psalm 13:5 - But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.
- Psalm 22:4-5 - In you our ancestors put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. To you they cried out and were saved; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.
- Psalm 44:26 - Rise up and help us; rescue us because of your unfailing love.
- Psalm 102:16-17 - For the Lord will rebuild Zion and appear in his glory. He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea.
- Psalm 140:12-13 - I know that the Lord secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy. Surely the righteous will praise your name, and the upright will live in your presence.

Our ultimate hope is lies not with our own righteousness but with the steadfast love of God that never fails. Hope, justice, and righteousness are character traits of God. Even when we are unfaithful, God remains faithful. One of the important aspects of community life in the church is telling our faith stories. We have seen God at work directly and indirectly. We are called to tell those stories and retell those stories. It is our best defense of tackling the disconnection with sometimes feel when we are confronted with loss after loss and disappointment after disappointment. Even though I was taught that God has a punishing rod, that has not been my experience. God has been faithful even in all my losses, disappointments, and doubts. Thanks be to God!

Let us pray:

O Merciful God, we know you love us but there are times when our worlds are crushed and we feel abandoned. Thank you for giving us the space to cry out. Thank you for giving us the time needed before we are ready to face your truth. Lead us to hope by remembering you are with us always. Amen.