

# Christians Living in a Broken World: Living and Walking Alongside Those with Depression and Anxiety

Read Philippians 4:6-7, II Timothy 1:7, Psalm 55:22, Isaiah 41:10. Nearly every Christian will experience anxiety or depression at some point in their lives. They are complex subjects and there is not one simple answer to “solve” either depression or anxiety. They are a form of suffering for Christians, and depression and anxiety as suffering can work purposeful, redemptive change in the Christian life. God can and does use this suffering for the believer’s good.

1. What does depression look like? What does anxiety look like? Is it only a medical problem?
2. Who experiences depression and anxiety? Does it look the same in men and women? Are there stigmas around those who experience depression or anxiety?
3. Knowing that God has His people walk many different paths in this life, what can be some causes for depression and anxiety? Can there be a biological component to the cause of depression or anxiety? Can culture affect or even cause depression or anxiety?
4. Why do people of God who walk through similar trials respond differently? How does our spiritual maturity affect our response? How do environmental factors influence us? Are there physical components to our response?
5. How are we to handle it when we realize depression or anxiety in ourselves?
6. What resources are available to us?
7. People who are depressed often isolate themselves from family and friends. What is the proper response of loved ones? How can we encourage those we know who are experiencing depression or anxiety?
8. Can you think of Biblical examples or strategies for how God’s people have dealt with anxiety or depression?
9. In Psalm 42, David speaks of his soul being “cast down.” He cries out to God in his trouble. He expresses the depth of his pain and longing for worship. David confesses God’s faithfulness and declares God to be his God even in trouble. How can you apply this example in your life?
10. Philippians 4:6 says, “Be careful for nothing...” and Matthew 6:34 reminds us to “take no thought for the morrow.” But doesn’t everyone worry at times, especially about the future? How should we understand these verses when it comes to worry and anxiety? How can we apply these truths to our everyday lives?

**Challenge: Memorize a simple Bible verse that can be an encouragement in times of anxiety or depression.** The Christian is not promised an easy life. We walk through many trials and temptations that can lead to anxiety and depression. Through all these things it is important to remember that our God never leaves us, or forsakes us (Hebrews 13:5). He has also given us fellow members in the body of Christ to lean on when we need encouragement. Understanding some of the challenges and difficulties in dealing with depression and anxiety can help better equip us when the storms of life come. “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths.” Proverbs 3:5-6

Standard Bearer articles to reference for guidance and further books about depression.

*Broken Minds: Hope for Healing When You Feel Like You’re Losing It*, by Steve and Robyn Bloem. Reviewed by Martyn McGeown in SB Vol 91, Issue 01.  
*Depression: A Stubborn Darkness*, by Edward T. Welch. Reviewed by Martyn McGeown in SB Vol 93, Issue 07.

# Civic-Minded Christians: Aware and Engaged with our Government

We are called to be civic-minded Christians. This means first recognizing, according to Romans 13:1-7, that the source of our government and its authority is from God. But our government will not always seek the good of the church (II Timothy 4:3-4). We must learn how to submit to and obey a government that promotes evil. To obey as commanded in the Word, we must first be aware of what our government is doing, and secondly engaged with our government, so that we can serve the neighbor, uphold our values, and defend the truth.

1. Read Romans 13:1-7. Who or what is the source of our government and its power? We are called as Christians to submit to the government. Should this submission be conditional or unconditional?
2. What does submission look like in our lives?
3. What is the difference between unconditional submission and unconditional obedience? How ought Christians to respond if the government commands something against God's commandments?
4. Read II Timothy 4:3-4. This passage outlines how men (and in this case, men in the government) will seek to deceive and destroy the church, especially by false teachers who have "itching ears." There are many people in our government who seek to deceive and destroy the church. How do they do this?
5. What should the Christian do to discern truth from deception? What are some things that we as Christians can do to support each other during times of deception and persecution?
6. Because the government will try to deceive the church, this means that we as Christians must be aware of what our government is doing. What are some things that we can do to be aware of our government's actions?
7. Not only should we be aware of what our government is doing, but we should be engaged in our government. What does this look like?
8. One of the most important ways we can be engaged with our government is by voting. Why is voting an important civic activity for Christians? What principles should guide Christians when they vote and what should we look for in a candidate? If there are two candidates who are both imperfect or unsatisfactory, should we boycott the election or vote for the lesser of two evils?
9. We are called by Scripture to seek the good of our neighbors. How can we live out this calling by voting?
10. How engaged should Christians be in the government beyond voting? Could a Christian run for office with the hope of reforming our nation?

**Challenge:** Have discussions with fellow Christians about how we can discern truth from deception in our day and age (II Timothy 4, I John 4), encourage each other to participate in civic activities like voting so that we can seek the good of our neighbors (Galatians 6:9-10), and commit to praying every week that we remain civic-minded Christians and that our government leaders make wise decisions that seek the good of the citizens under them and glorify our Father in Heaven (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

## Friend-Servants: Developing Proper Christian Friendships

Read 1 Thess. 5:11, Proverbs 18:24, John 15:12-13. God created humans to be social creatures. We need close, meaningful interactions with others. Jesus has given us the perfect example of friendship. We are also given many other godly examples in the Bible such as David and Jonathan, Ruth and Naomi, the disciples, etc. Friendship uses the bond of God's love to bring people together in a common faith with the goal of glorifying His name and living in service to His kingdom.

1. What does friendship mean to you? Who do we consider our friends?
2. What does the Bible say about friendship? Does the Bible say anything about what friendship is not?
3. What are some traits of a godly friend? What are some things that shouldn't be present in a healthy friendship?
4. Are there guidelines that the Bible gives us about who we should be friends with? Why should we desire friendships with fellow believers? Should we pursue friendships with those who are not confessing believers?
5. True friends hold each other accountable. What are some things we need to hold each other accountable for? What are practical ways we can encourage doing good and fleeing sinful influences?
6. Because friendship is between two sinners, friends may need to bring a rebuke to one another. How can we do this gently? Should friends simply put up with each other's inconsistencies? What is the calling in regard to a friend who is falling into deep sin?
7. How would you address a friend when there is manipulation, control, or jealousy creeping into the friendship?
8. If a friendship ends for either a good or bad reason, how should you treat this person in the future?
9. To have good friends we must be good friends ourselves. How can we examine our own behaviors in friendship and find encouragement to be better friends?

**Challenge: I will think about the kind of friend I am to others and what I can do to encourage friendship with others.** The reward of a godly friendship is a beautiful relationship of growing together in Christ and a reflection of the friendship of the Trinity. Having a true servant's heart, you will cherish others, value them for who God made them to be, and reflect His unconditional love for His children. Be encouraged to look to Jesus as the perfect example of friendship.

# Living Out the Antithesis: Putting off the World & Putting on Christ

Read Romans 12:1-10. The antithesis refers to separation and opposition between darkness and light, believer and unbeliever, church and world, good and evil. Verse 2 helps us understand the antithesis by teaching, "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" and verse 9 says, "...Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." Keep these verses in mind as we discuss the antithesis further.

1. What defines what is good? (see Matt. 7:21; Mark 10:17ff)
2. Romans 12:3 speaks of "grace given unto me." Without the gift of grace, whom would you serve? How is living according to God's will actually freedom? How is the world trying to convince you that making your own rules is better?
3. Does being raised in a Christian home and community make us take this gift of grace for granted? How different would your life look if you were raised in a worldly home instead? Apply this to how you spend Sundays, what you are taught at school, your sexuality, and other aspects of your life.
4. Verse 3 says, "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly." What is the connection between pride and humility and living the antithesis? When we put ourselves in tempting situations, how are we being proud? What kind of accountability can we give ourselves to keep us from worldly temptations?
5. Verses 1 and 5 bring out that "we...are one body *in Christ*" and "that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." How will finding your identity in Christ and being aware that you are a member of His body have an effect on the choices you make?

Read Ephesians 4:17-32. The antithesis is not just *knowing* the difference between good and evil, but living out that difference in our daily lives. The antithesis is rejecting that which is evil and doing that which is good (God's will). We can look at this as putting off the world and putting on Christ. Verse 22, "That ye *put off* concerning the former conversation the old man" and verse 24, "And that ye *put on* the new man..." Let's apply this same principle, of putting off and putting on, to some practical things a young person will have to make decisions about. Keep in mind, what should you put off? And what should you put on?

1. How *should* we start our day? Using social media, listening to podcasts, and checking out of the latest highlight reels and scores are not necessarily bad things. But at what point do they become wrong?
2. How and when do we use our gifts and talents properly?
3. How can we apply this principle to our dating relationships? How about to the music we listen to and entertainment we enjoy?
4. In what other areas in life must we replace worldly behavior with godly, positive behavior in order to replace the worldly behavior for good?

**Challenge: Identify one area in your life where you can *put off* worldly behavior. Make a plan for what you will *put on* in its place.** Living out the antithesis begins in the heart and what you set your affections on. Colossians 3:1-2, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.... Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Let's encourage one another to set our hearts on the things of God and not of this world.

# Peacemakers: Navigating Conflict with Wisdom

Read Matthew 5:9, Romans 12:18, II Corinthians 5:18, Ephesians 4:30-32. As members of the body of Christ, we are called to live in peace and unity with one another (Col. 3:15). Although conflict and trouble are inevitable in a sinful world, our response to it should reflect the humility and love of Christ. When we face conflict with other members in the body of Christ, the words of James 1:19 should be our guide: "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath ...".

1. What should be the driving force in our hearts when dealing with another person over a disagreement, sin, or conflict? How can we determine what is a small issue that can be ignored, or something more important (like sin) that needs to be addressed?
2. We must realize that everyone we have contact with is a sinner in need of grace, and none more so than ourselves. In Matthew 7, we are warned to remove the beam from our own eye before pointing out the mote in our brother's eye. Knowing our own sin and weakness, how can we ever address the sins of others?
3. Ephesian 4:15 says, "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." Conflicts often escalate when people are determined to speak "their truth." Even Christians with differing views on an issue may both believe that they are speaking the truth and have proof texts from Scripture. How do we determine what truth is? What does it mean to speak the truth in love and how can it resolve conflict?
4. God calls us to love our enemies, do good to those who hate us, and pray for those who mistreat us (Matt. 5:44). How can we live out this command with someone who hasn't acknowledged their sin or asked for forgiveness?
5. Sometimes a relationship with another person can be plagued by repeated conflict and trouble. Consider Job's friends, whom he called "miserable comforters" (Job 16:2). Are there times when we need to distance ourselves from friends who create stress and show patterns of toxic behavior? How do you determine when you need to draw boundaries in friendship? What might those boundaries look like?
6. Conflicts with friends can be sensitive and hurtful. Give your thoughts on how to handle the scenarios below:
  - After a basketball game, you overhear friends planning to go out, but you weren't invited. How do you respond?
  - You receive a text from a friend that wasn't meant for you and it includes something hurtful about you. What do you say?
  - A friend has chosen to leave your denomination for another church. How do you respond when challenged about your membership in your church? How can you be "ready to give an answer" (I Peter 3:15)?
7. What are some things we can do in our lives to grow in humility and patience towards others? How can we practice being "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath"?

**Challenge: This week, I will take time to reflect on how I handle conflict and disagreements.** Choose one situation, whether in person or online, where you can practice being "swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath." Before responding, pause and ask yourself: *How can I reflect the humility and love of Christ in this moment?* Our motivation is the beautiful promise of Jesus in Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

## Tech-Wise Teens: Discernment in a Digital Age

Read Philippians 2:1-11. This passage reminds us of the importance of humility in the body of Christ. We read of the perfect example of our Savior, who gave up the glories of heaven to suffer the humiliation of the cross for our sins. Freed from the bondage of sin and selfishness, we must put on the mind of Christ and strive to live in love and service for our neighbor.

The mind of Christ must shape how we use social media and engage with others online. As we discuss digital discernment, think about the importance that humility has in all of our interactions with others, both digitally and face-to-face.

1. Talk about how social media has shaped your lives as teens in 2025 compared to someone growing up 30 or 40 years ago. What social media platforms do you use? Do you think teens are better connected today than 30 years ago? Why or why not?
2. In Phil. 2:4, Paul calls us to look “on the things of others”. It is easy to “look on the things of others” as we scroll through Instagram and TikTok, but what is Paul really describing here? How does the use of social media inhibit this calling, rather than promote it?
3. What current social media trends do you see as potentially problematic for a Reformed young person? Where have you seen social media harm relationships within the body of Christ?
4. We have been “called unto liberty” (Gal. 5:13) to serve one another. How can social media interfere with the time we dedicate to serving others? How does it impact your prayer life, Bible study, or service in the church? Are there ways to use social media to better serve others in the church?
5. James 4:6 says, “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.” Everyone struggles with varying levels of pride and selfishness. How does social media feed our pride? In what ways can we foster humility in our lives?
6. Name some of the positive aspects of technology/social media in our lives. How can we use it to the glory of God and for the benefit of others?
7. Consider the following list of suggestions for fostering digital discernment and building healthy habits with technology.<sup>1</sup> Are there any suggestions that you already implement in your use of technology? Any that interest or challenge you? How else can you encourage wise use of social media and technology in your day-to-day life?
  - Delete nonessential and time-wasting apps. Turn off nonessential app notifications.
  - At night, keep your phone out of your bedroom. Use a real alarm clock so your phone is not the first thing in your hands in the morning.
  - When eating with your friends or family members, leave your phone out of sight.
  - Try a digital Sabbath—one day offline each week.
  - Invite your friends and family members to offer feedback on your phone habits.

**Challenge: I will use discernment in my use of social media, striving to have the mind of Christ in all my communications.** Someday we will stand before our holy God and answer for every word that we text, every meme that we share, every Snapchat that we send, and every reel that we watch. There is no such thing as clearing our browser history before the eyes of the omniscient God. Our prayer is Psalm 19:14, “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength and my redeemer.” May God give us wisdom and discernment in our use of social media so that we may exhibit the mind of Christ within us.

---

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the book *12 Ways Your Phone is Changing You* by Tony Reinke, 2017.

# Life, Liberty, & the Pursuit of Service: Young Women in the Church

Read Romans 6:14-23. We were once enslaved to sin, bound by its power and separated from God. But through His sacrifice on the cross, Jesus has set us free and given us righteousness in Him. Our convention theme from Galatians 5:13 reminds us that we have been set free to serve, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love, serve one another." Our new liberty in Christ isn't about doing whatever we please; it's about living in joyful obedience, using our gifts to build up the body of Christ and reflect His love. Serving within the church is not just a duty, but a privilege—an outpouring of the freedom we have received in Christ.

1. Galatians 5:13 says we are free in Christ but called to serve one another in love. The idea of being free, yet a servant, seems contradictory. Is it? How can we use our freedom to serve rather than focus on ourselves?
2. Jesus washed His disciples' feet (John 13:12-17) as an example of humble service. What does this teach us about the attitude we should have when serving?
3. Almost all acts of service first involve pushing ourselves out of our comfort zone. What are some common excuses we might give for not serving in the church? How can we overcome those obstacles?
4. Are there times when we might be called to serve outside of our apparent gifts and abilities? Can you think of someone in the Bible who was ill-equipped for their calling, yet conducted it faithfully in submission to God's will?
5. What are some practical ways young women can serve others, even if we feel like we don't have special gifts or experience? Think of needs that you see in your church or community. How can we, as young women, help meet those?
6. In Luke 10:38-42, Jesus gently corrects Martha for being overly distracted with serving, while commending Mary for listening at His feet. What does this teach us about the balance between worship and service? Discuss the importance of our desire to serve coming from a heart that is first devoted to Christ, rather than from stress, duty, or seeking approval.
7. Proverbs 31 describes a woman of godly character who serves her family and community. How can young women today display that spirit of service in practical ways?
8. Women played significant roles in the New Testament church (Mary Magdalene, Lydia, Priscilla), yet we know that the roles of women in the church are different from men. In a society that promotes a distorted view of feminism and female empowerment, how can young women use their God-given gifts to serve and lead in ways that honor biblical teaching on church leadership? (See Romans 12:4-7, Acts 18:26, Titus 2:3-4, 1 Timothy 2:9-12.)
9. Think of a time when you were able to serve within your church or community. What did you learn about yourself? What did you learn about the body of Christ? How did that experience affect your faith?

**Challenge:** I will be mindful of the great gift of freedom I have in Christ, and use that freedom to give of myself for others. As you look for specific ways to be involved in your church and serve others, be aware of the temptation to serve out of pride. The temptation to have others notice us and earn the praise of men can be strong. To fight against this temptation, challenge yourself to conduct a small act of service that no one notices. See what you learn about yourself and the work of serving others (Col. 3:23-24).

# Life, Liberty, & the Pursuit of Service: Young Men in the Church

Read Romans 6: 14-23. We were once enslaved to sin, bound by its power and separated from God. But through His sacrifice on the cross, Jesus has set us free and given us righteousness in Him. Our convention theme from Galatians 5:13 reminds us that we have been set free to serve, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love, serve one another." Our new liberty in Christ isn't about doing whatever we please; it's about living in joyful obedience, using our gifts to build up the body of Christ and reflect His love. Serving within the church is not just a duty, but a privilege—an outpouring of the freedom we have received in Him.

1. Galatians 5:13 says we are free in Christ but called to serve one another in love. The idea of being free, yet a servant, seems contradictory. Is it? How can we use our freedom to serve rather than focus on ourselves?
2. Why do you think Jesus calls us to serve one another? How does serving reflect His love?
3. Jesus demonstrated servant-leadership by washing His disciples' feet (John 13:12-17). What does this teach young men about leading through service rather than seeking status or recognition?
4. Almost all acts of service first involve pushing ourselves out of our comfort zone. What are some common excuses we might give for not serving in the church? How can we overcome those obstacles?
5. The United States of America was founded on principles of liberty and the right to certain freedoms. How is the liberty we enjoy in Christ different from the liberty we enjoy as citizens of the USA? Do we have a proper understanding of spiritual liberty?
6. Paul encourages Timothy to set an example for other believers (1 Timothy 4:12). How can young men today lead by example through serving in their church and community? What men in your church or community have been good examples for you? What of their examples do you want to emulate?
7. Sometimes young men hesitate to serve because they feel unqualified or uncertain. Are there times when we might be called to serve outside of our apparent gifts and abilities? Can you think of someone in the Bible who was ill-equipped for their calling, yet conducted it faithfully in submission to God's will? How can we overcome fear or doubt and serve confidently in the areas where God has called us?
8. What are some practical ways young men can serve others, even if we feel like we don't have special gifts or experience? Think of needs that you see in your church or community. How can we, as young men, help meet those?
9. Think of a time when you were able to serve within your church or community. What did you learn about yourself? What did you learn about the body of Christ? How did that experience affect your faith?

**Challenge:** I will be mindful of the great gift of freedom I have in Christ, and use that freedom to give of myself for others. As you look for specific ways to be involved in your church and serve others, be aware of the temptation to serve out of pride. The temptation to have others notice us and earn the praise of men can be strong. To fight against this temptation, challenge yourself to conduct a small act of service that no one notices. See what you learn about yourself and the work of serving others (Col. 3:23-24).



### For Discussion Group leaders:

Here is a list of opportunities for both men and women (young and old) to serve in the church.

- Be present at church functions, lead/attend Bible studies, join in other activities. To serve your church, you must first know your church (and be known.) Your very presence is an encouragement to the older saints that God's covenant promise is extended to their generations (Deut. 7:9).
  - As a young person, attend Young People's Societies, Young Adults Discussion groups, YP Mass Meetings, Young Calvinists' events, etc.
  - Join a service trip, volunteer at Special Needs Week, be a Student Council member, serve on the YP Fed Board, help with the Young Calvinists' committee, etc.
- Visit those who are in need (maybe with friends!). Go Christmas caroling, host a game night with the older saints, find ways to spend time with the older generation. Ask them questions ...they have endless stories and a lot of wisdom!
- As you get older, join a church committee: Evangelism, Sunday School, church picnic, convention planning, choir director, accompanist, church library, etc.

### Examples for men specifically:

- Officebearers—elders/deacons/pastors
- Usher, valet, lead song service, service committee (give example of HPRC)
  - School board member

### Examples for women specifically:

- "Helping Hands" committee to bring meals and care for those in need
- Nursery attendant, librarian, Sunday School teacher
  - Organize fundraisers, join a school Mothers' Club, serve as a room mother, host a kids' storytime at church, etc.