

Today We are going to begin in a new series called Overwhelmed.. Dealing with Stress, Anxiety and Depression.

Today depression, is a very real problem. The statistics are alarming.

- One in five 18 to 25 year olds experienced a mental illness in the past year
- According to the World Health Organization, depression is projected to become the second leading contributor to the global burden of disease by 2020
- An Estimated 1 in 10 U.S. Adults Report Depression (CDC)
- Depression is a common mental disorder. Globally, more than 350 million people of all ages suffer from depression. (WHO)
- Depression is more common than AIDS, cancer, and diabetes combined
- Depression is a prevalent and increasingly recognized risk factor for both the development of and the outcome from coronary artery disease (CAD). (National Institute of Health)
- People with depression are 4 times as likely to develop a heart attack than those without the illness.
- Many conditions may coexist with depression. Depression may increase the risk for another illness, and dealing with an illness may lead to depression.

So with the reality of these things and the state of our lives right now, I felt it was important to deal with this subject.

What is interesting is that I planned out this topic back in October of last year. I knew it was something we should deal with. But true to form for God and my relationship, God doesn't just allow me to preach on a topic unless I have some real concrete experience with it.

For about the last month now I have not been doing the greatest. Now don't get me wrong, I have not been suicidal or anything but I have been dealing with some bouts of depression.

Now before we go much further I want you to know, "It is OK not to be OK, But it is not OK to stay that way" This series we will discover some secrets from the Word of God that will help us to begin the healing process of dealing with depression in our lives.

Now there are many different kinds of clinical depression. There is Dysthymic depression, and there is Major clinical depression. There are other forms such as SAD, postpartum, atypical, psychotic, bi-polar, pre-menstrual, and situational. Some of these can untreated lead to other more severe types.

It is a very real problem, and the Bible has A LOT to say about it. Many of the people

in the Bible dealt with or had bouts with depression. And there is a lot of help to be found in how to address it from these pages.

Here is the BIG TRUTH for this entire series **"God does not want you to be Overwhelmed, instead he wants you to Overcome."**

I want us to memorize a verse together this series. Isaiah 45:3 says...

"And I will give you treasures hidden in the darkness--secret riches. I will do this so you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, the one who calls you by name."

I believe wholeheartedly that God has something special and powerful for each one of us in our dark times. If we are willing to press in to God and He will show us secret riches and treasure in our times of Stress, Anxiety and Depression.

You see each one of us at times feels we are a hamster on the wheel of life right? My kids love hamsters. We had one that was awesome. He would get on his wheel and he was fast. He would get running and he would get going so fast that his little legs could not keep up and all of the sudden he would get put in the spin cycle you know what I mean? He would get swept up in the pace of life so much that it would throw him head over heels in cage.

Many of us have felt like that haven't we. With the pace of life we feel like all we are doing is running. Then all of the sudden something happens and the next thing we know we are overwhelmed. Thrown into the spin cycle of life and not sure where we will end up.

The question I have for you today is: **Are you willing to settle for being overwhelmed by circumstances forever, or do you want to step up and overcome whatever is robbing you of joy in your life?**

Change begins with a decision. That decision is whether you will be overwhelmed or you will overcome. Some people never make it out of the current of their circumstances. Instead they simply surrender to the stress, anxiety and fear - simply because they do not know how to take the first step.

The path to victory is paved by making the decision that life is not going to overwhelm you anymore. Now before you think I am just going to give you some pep talk and talk about "the Power of Positive thinking"... That is not it at all. Here is a principle of life that we need to learn. Attention ultimately determine our direction in life!

You say but pastor you don't know what I am dealing with... and you are right! But God does and He does not want you to be Overwhelmed, instead he wants you to Overcome.

Let me be clear, I'm not saying that if you simply think you aren't in bad circumstances, they'll just go away. But what It does require is a shift in focus.

Here is the secret #1 **Stop looking at your problem and start looking to Jesus.**

Don't close your eyes and bury your head in the sand. Instead redirect your eyes to Jesus.

Hebrew chapter 12:1-2 says...

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. 2 We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.

Let us run the race God has set before us! You see God has something in store for you. *"And I will give you treasures hidden in the darkness--secret riches. I will do this so you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, the one who calls you by name."* Isa 45:3

Vs 2 Fixing our eyes on Jesus... Why because He is the champion. IT begins with Him and it ends with Him.

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. Philippians 1:6

IF YOU WANT TO WIN ... FOCUS ON HIM.

Turn to Daniel Chapter 1

We are very quickly going to look at the story of Daniel. now first of all let me say we could just spend all of our time looking at Daniels life and learn some amazing lessons about how to overcome overwhelming situations in life, and we might just look at some parts of his story but I want to begin with Chapter 1, because what we learn is that Daniel understood how Great God is in the midst of overwhelming

circumstances, and how He kept His eyes on God in the midst of those times.

History...

in 605BC Babylon invaded Israel and absolutely laid the smack down on them. And according to historical records of that time period, when one nation conquered another, it was often quite brutal, with thousands of people getting slaughtered or being forced into slavery.

This is where we pick up in Verse 3-7

Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief of staff, to bring to the palace some of the young men of Judah's royal family and other noble families, who had been brought to Babylon as captives. 4 "Select only strong, healthy, and good-looking young men," he said. "Make sure they are well versed in every branch of learning, are gifted with knowledge and good judgment, and are suited to serve in the royal palace. Train these young men in the language and literature of Babylon." 5 The king assigned them a daily ration of food and wine from his own kitchens. They were to be trained for three years, and then they would enter the royal service.

6 Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were four of the young men chosen, all from the tribe of Judah. 7 The chief of staff renamed them with these Babylonian names:

Daniel was called Belteshazzar.

Hananiah was called Shadrach.

Mishael was called Meshach.

Azariah was called Abednego.

Put yourself in His place just for a moment. Do you think maybe he was just a bit overwhelmed?

So Daniel and has gone from being the cream of the crop, Royalty, good looking, healthy, strong... to being a slave! He has probably seen many of his friends and family killed. Taken them from the home he loved (about a 4 month journey by camel [Ezra 7:9]), Changed his culture, language, surroundings, station in life, food, even his name.

Now don't worry this is not where I tell you... "Your circumstances are nothing compared to Daniels." That may be true, but one thing I have learned is no matter how bad someone else has had it it doesn't make me feel any better. And in the midst of the problems I often doesn't look that way either. I don't want to minimize

how you feel in anyway.

What I want to do is focus us on how Daniel responded to these overwhelming situations and maybe we can learn from His example.

Daniel's walk through his overwhelming circumstances to victory began with the decision about what he believed about God.

Here is the problem we have most of us let our circumstances determine what we think about God at any given time in our lives.

He Loves me... He Loves me not!

Daniel refused to allow his circumstances to shape his belief system but rather allowed his belief system to help Him overcome his circumstances.

Secret #2 - Correct thinking leads to correct action. What's the truth here?

You see the Babylonians were trying their best to make Daniel a slave just as our circumstances often attempt to enslave us. But look at verse 8. Those next 4 words.

8 But Daniel was determined not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king. He asked the chief of staff for permission not to eat these unacceptable foods.

You see Daniel drew a line in the sand and refused to cross it. It was like he was saying "You can invade my country, kill my family and friends, march me across a desert, give me a new language, change my name, and force me into a new way of life but I will not worship any other God because my God is greater than the circumstances I am going through.

It that doesn't mean that what Daniel was experiencing was not real or bad, or even Real Bad! But what it does mean is that Daniel had a confidence in God that He is bigger than any circumstance in his life.

"But Daniel", You might rush right past that at first but here is why that is so meaningful. His captors tried their best to change Daniel's name to a Babylonian name and in that culture if someone changed your name then you essentially lost your identity. You see Daniel means "God is my Judge" But the Babylonian name Belteshazzar means "Baal saves" or "Baal saves my life"

The Symbolism is Huge! Daniel did not give in. We are not reading the book of Belteshazzar, we are reading Daniel.

Secret #3 If you don't want to be overwhelmed by our circumstances, then we cannot take on the identity of what enslaves us.

You are not your problems, You are not your struggles your are not your sin. Those things do not define you! You are a child of God!!!!