

GROW IN GRACE

NEWSLETTER

Volume 40, No.7, February 18, 2014 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / **The Grow in Grace Newsletter** — a weekly Bible Study, plus news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church... sent forth to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide who receive the Newsletter), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. **"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."**

DEPRESSION, MENTAL ILLNESS, and Psychotropic Drugs, part 4

[The phrase "psychotropic drugs" is a technical term for psychiatric medicines that alter chemical levels in the brain which impact mood and behavior.]

Even though these articles are not in line with the widely accepted 'majority' report—thankfully, a number of folks have communicated that they are being helped and encouraged. I am simply seeking to set forth the sufficiency of the Word of God and the glorious sufficient provisions that believers have IN CHRIST. **NONE OF THIS has any spirit of condemnation toward anyone.** If I am speaking with someone and they take prescription psychotropic drugs: 1. I never tell them to stop. I do not pass judgment on the matter. 2. I do encourage them to know the dangers and to realize that such drugs are not a cure; 3. Therefore, I encourage them to simultaneously FEED FAITH. Christian, you are a believer priest— SEARCH the Scripture and see if what is shared is true. Make application as guided by the Holy Spirit's application of the Word of God to you. **I have also drawn from** the research of well established Psychiatrists who are DEEPLY alarmed about psychotropic drugs. THESE DRUGS ARE FAR FROM RISK FREE:

"For the first time in nearly a century, automobile accidents are no longer the nation's leading cause of accidental deaths, according to a major [report](#) released Tuesday by the National Center for Health Statistics. **The new number one killer is drugs**— not smack, crystal meth or any other stepped-on menace sold in urban alleyways or trailer parks, but bright, shiny pills prescribed by doctors, approved by the government, manufactured by pharmaceutical companies and sold to the consumer as "medicine." Yet of the billions of legit pills Americans pop every year for medical conditions serious and otherwise, the vast majority of lives are claimed by only a select few classes— **painkillers, sedatives and stimulants—that all share a common characteristic: they promote abuse, dependence and addiction.** "This is just the tip of the iceberg of the prescription drug abuse problem," says Dr. Margaret Warner, the federal report's lead author. "The take-home here is, this should

be a wake-up call.” **Some 41,000 Americans died from what the report refers to as “poisonings” in 2008, compared with 38,000 traffic deaths.”**

[http://www.alternet.org/story/153576/the_10_most_dangerous_meds_driving_america's_pill_crisis]

Brain-Disabling Treatments in Psychiatry by Peter Breggin, M.D.

Antipsychotic drugs such as Risperdal, Zyprexa, Seroquel and Geodon are used literally to **chemically lobotomize millions of adults and children** because the resulting apathy and indifference are seen as an improvement over their previously distressed and distressing state of mind or behavior. Millions more adults take 'tranquilizers' like Xanax, Ativan, Klonopin and Valium, suppressing their overall brain function in order to reduce feelings of anxiety. A large percentage of our nation's children have their spontaneity reduced or even crushed by stimulant drugs such as Ritalin, Concerta, Adderall and Strattera, causing them to become more docile and more obsessively attentive to rote work.

Despite all the propaganda, antidepressants such as Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft and Cymbalta have no scientifically demonstrable effectiveness and are proven to cause suicidality, as well as violence and mania. They too 'work' by causing mental disabilities such as apathy and euphoria that are misinterpreted as improvements. Meanwhile, their continued widespread use is determined in part by the fact that **withdrawal produces severe psychiatric symptoms, including anxiety and depression.** In short, it is too difficult and painful for people to stop taking them.

All psychiatric drugs have the potential to cause withdrawal reactions, including the antidepressants, stimulants, tranquilizers, antipsychotic drugs and 'mood stabilizers' such as lithium. When the individual's condition grows markedly worse within days or weeks of stopping the psychiatric drug, this is almost always due to a withdrawal reaction. **However, misinformed** doctors and misled parents, teachers and patients think that this is evidence that the individual 'needs' the drug even more, when in fact he or she needs time to recover from withdrawal effects.

People commonly use alcohol, marijuana and other non-prescription drugs to dull their feelings. Usually they do not fool themselves into believing they are somehow improving the function of their minds and brains. **Yet when people take psychiatric drugs, they almost always do so without realizing that the drugs “work” by disrupting brain function,** that the drugs cause withdrawal effects, and that they frequently result in dangerous and destructive mental reactions and behaviors.

Most consumers of psychiatric drugs do not realize how much these chemical agents disrupt the function of the brain and mind. As a result, their treatment in effect becomes involuntary. Many other adults are physically forced to take these drugs in hospitals and even under outpatient commitment that allows for enforced drugging in the home. Because **children** cannot control their lives, or understand the implications of taking drugs, they **are always involuntary participants in these brain-disabling treatments.** Our society needs to stop forcing psychoactive drugs on its citizens, young and old...

The brain-disabling principle of psychiatric treatment is not a speculation. It is a solid scientific theory based on hundreds of evidence-based reports, clinical experience, and common sense observations. I believe it will stand the test of time." Source: www.breggin.com

What you will find for the remainder of this Newsletter is an article by a Christian lady who turned to prescription drugs because of the counsel of her pastor; and she tells of her journey to be set free.

NOTE: IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW is presently using prescription drugs— how should you feel about this article... or this entire series? That is your choice. Make good and godly ones! When God's Word and/or the testimony of others exposes me to a path that I am not presently on— I believe I should listen; and then seek to respond in whatever way that pleases the LORD and that squares with His Word. I don't always do that; AND IN THE STRUGGLE to do so, I may have many failures. However, IN CHRIST, I must reject any and all spirits of condemnation. At the same time, I do need to be open to Holy Spirit conviction. James Bell

Anti-depressants and Spiritual Conviction

Bottom of Form

Author: Anonymous Author

Note: *Below is an anonymous article given to the women of our church from one of our newer members. It is anonymous due to the fact that she wishes to protect her former church. I believe that what this member is saying should be heard by many. Please feel free to distribute this to those who might benefit the most from it. This is a controversial subject. Please do not be reactionary, but carefully note what the author is saying and what she is not saying. She has attempted to be balanced and fair about a very difficult issue, coming from personal experience and also some training. She does not deny that some people have been helped by anti-depressants~~ **Jim Elliff.***

Taking the Edge Off

"My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. My wounds fester and are loathsome because of my sinful folly. I am bowed down and brought very low."

This passage is from Psalm 38, which is subtitled, "Prayer of a Suffering Penitent." Ladies, have you ever felt as David did when he wrote these words? Have you ever had a burden of guilt too heavy to bear? Remember now a time when you were brought very low by your sin, so low that you went about as if in mourning all day long. Do you have that time or place in mind? Good. Now, praise God for it! Thank Him that you were able to feel the real grief your sin caused, both for you and for Him, and let me explain to you why that is a blessing.

Five years ago I experienced a deep "valley" in my life. My father was very ill. Diabetes, high blood pressure, heart problems, and heavy smoking had brought him to a place of

chronic serious illness. My mother, already dependent on him because of her own health problems, had broken her arm and needed a lot of help. I was home-schooling my two children at the time, co-leading the youth ministry at my church, and fulfilling other key leadership roles in the congregation. We had attended this church for 5 years at the time, and my husband and I were both heavily involved in ministry.

I was overwhelmed with responsibility. My heart often pounded and I was short of breath. I would become so anxious I felt sick, but on good days I could still function, at least at a minimal level. On bad days, I (literally) stayed in my basement and did not come out. I had frequent crying spells, could not think rationally, could not sleep, and felt very sorry for myself. I was resentful of my unbelieving siblings, because they did not take any responsibility for my parents' care, since I was the one who "didn't work." Anger, bitterness, and self pity became entrenched in my heart.

At this point, one would hope that the church would step in and hold me accountable for my attitudes, while helping me with the practical burden of caring for my family. Sadly, this was not the case. Instead, my pastor confronted me with something he thought I should do, and promised to hold me accountable to do it: "Go to the doctor and ask for anti-depressants." Not a word was said about my sinful attitudes regarding my responsibilities, and there were no offers of practical help. Just go to the doctor. He proceeded to tell me about many other women in our church who had taken his advice and were doing great. In retrospect, this makes sense-ours was a "happy church". No one seemed to struggle with any serious life issues. Only smiling, happy greetings and small talk. Imagine the Stepford Wives at church and you'll get the picture.

I trusted this pastor a great deal. He had led me to Christ and had brought me along through my Christian infancy. He was a brother to me and a friend. I took his advice. I went to see my doctor who, by the way is also a professing Christian. He asked me a list of questions, diagnosed me with depression, and prescribed something to "take the edge off." Within a few weeks I was feeling better. By two months into treatment I was doing swimmingly, smiling and small-talking with the best of them. I was still feeling a little sorry for myself, and still bitter about my siblings (more self-righteous, really), but those things didn't especially bother me. I didn't see them as sin, and no one identified them for me as such. In fact, most of our friends at church just applauded my devotion to family, and encouraged me to "vent" my frustrations, which I gladly did. I was handling the stress better and sleeping well. Most of my physical complaints were gone, and I felt very capable. Life went on.

Fast forward five years. That church has tripled in size. After an agonizing but fruitless process of trying to persuade the leadership to make drastic course corrections, we made the heart-breaking decision to leave. We sought out and joined a church where sin is called sin, and people are held accountable. This brings me back to the psalm at the beginning of my story. At the new church, I met people who grieve over their sin. They are literally brought to tears as they confess sin to one another. This was foreign to me. I have never cried over my sin. I have felt bad for my sin, but I have never truly grieved over it. My sin has never been "a heavy burden that weighed too much for me." I have felt weighed down by responsibility, but never by guilt for sin. I began to think that perhaps that little pill that was meant to "take the edge off" was preventing

me from grieving over sin. One thing I had noticed since being on it was that I could *not* cry. Nothing could bring me to tears, and I mean *nothing*. I didn't even cry when my dad died, not even as I watched him take his last breath, uncertain where he would spend eternity. No tears. My siblings were amazed at my composure, and so was I. I took great pride in my ability to be "the strong one" as my siblings fell apart. I reasoned that God was sparing me terrible grief because I was one of His. More self-righteous pride.

As I spent time in this new church, I began to wonder, "Why am I not grieved over my sin"? I am a true believer and I know that Christ suffered for me, but sin just didn't seem to impact me the way it did them. I began to have the sneaking suspicion that the drug was taking the edge off of *my conviction*. Somehow it softened the blow, so I didn't feel it quite so much. I began to pray about whether this pill might be masking my awareness of sin in my life, keeping me from experiencing the full impact of it, and consequently preventing me from offering the repentance God wants from me. After much thought and prayer, I decided to get off the medication.

Fast forward again 3 months, to the present time: I am almost completely weaned from the antidepressant. The first month or so was rough, with sleep disturbances (nightmares really), serious mood swings, nausea, appetite fluctuations, etc. But now things are on a pretty even keel. There is one change though. Last week, after I sinned in anger at my son, I was *grieved!* I had asked for forgiveness from him and from the Lord, but I could not deny a deep sense of grief in my soul as I realized this had been a pattern of sinful anger for years. I had committed this same sin many times before, but felt justified, either by stressful circumstances in my life or by my son's bad behavior. I had never before felt such grief over my own sin, and I knew I could not indulge one more outburst like this.

This brought me to another experience I had denied the need for: accountability. I had told people about sinful things I had done, but it was more with the intention of commiserating than repenting. I had to confess this sin to someone who would offer a stern rebuke and hold me accountable. Even as I write this, I am stunned that I, as a Christian, had *never* felt a need to be held accountable for my sin! I had never wanted a Nathan who would confront me and tell me I cannot be allowed to sin so grievously. (I believe this is partly because the drugs did not allow me to *feel* the grief my sin caused my Lord. Of course, my own flesh and sinful nature made up the difference.) I was aware of my sin, but there were no *feelings* associated with it. It wasn't bad or good, it just *was*. This is what the antidepressants did, at least in me. *They blurred the ends of the emotional spectrum, so that I experienced neither deep sadness nor great joy.* I have now come to appreciate that both are vital to the Christian life. Oh, I was somewhat happy, and able to cope with life quite well, but the edge was off, not only from my sadness, but from my joy as well. (The joy part is another article all by itself!)

The point I want to make for other Christian women is this: When a believer is plagued by what the world calls depression, she must take a hard look at what is underneath it. Feelings are notoriously unreliable in most areas, but they are vital in recognizing sin. I believe that God gave us our emotions primarily for *His* use in convicting us of sin. Of course, they have many other uses, but I believe His primary purpose is for His glory,

to convict us of sin and to show us a glimpse of the joy of being in Christ. When a woman turns to a drug to shut off the emotional response to the guilt of sin, she loses the ability to see sin as sin and experience the godly sorrow that leads to repentance (2 Cor. 7:10).

I am not saying that it is never appropriate for a woman to use prescribed medication to fight depression, especially if it has a physiological cause and has so skewed the person's thinking that she has become irrational.¹ Recognizing and confessing sin does require rational thought, and it is difficult to hold a woman accountable who is incapable of thinking through what God requires. In some cases, antidepressants or anti-anxiety drugs might help a person get to a place where she can think rationally. At this point, a qualified nouthetic counselor or pastor can begin to lead the individual to see how her own sin has brought her to the state she is in². By the grace of God, she will repent, turn from her sin, and recover from her depression, alleviating the need for the drugs.

I am writing to caution against a *stall* in this process. I was able to get out of my basement, to think rationally, and to begin to function practically. If the Lord had been willing, I would have, at this point, recognized my sin as such, repented of it, and been off the drugs in short order. In God's sovereignty, however, I spent five years continuing in "happy sin" oblivious to its effect on my life. Now I must deal with long-term consequences to the relationships I have damaged over these years.

I am thanking Him now for placing me in a body of believers who truly understand the seriousness of sin and have called me to repentance. I believe there are others like me who are under the spell of antidepressants and other prescription remedies for depression and anxiety. Are you? If so, please heed the warning of this article, and examine yourself. Are you using a powerful drug to mask the effects of sin in your life? Have you surrounded yourself with "Stepford Wives" who coddle you and commiserate with you in your sin? Whether or not you know the grief you are causing yourself and the Holy Spirit, there are consequences for your sin and you will one day experience them.

I write this as a cautionary tale because I believe my experience might help others in a similar situation. In the beginning, the drug was good, because it enabled me to think rationally and come out of my basement. If I had used that rational thinking to get a grip on the sin that was pulling me down into depression, I could have dealt with it biblically, and been off the drug in short order. But I did not. I became dependent on those pills and was gradually numbed to the seriousness of my sin. By God's grace, I came to the recognition that this drug could be stunting my spiritual growth, and that turned out to be exactly the case.

Begin right now to examine your response to your own sin, whether or not you are using psychiatric medications. Surround yourself with godly brothers and sisters who will hold you accountable (James 5:16). Christians should be happy, but if you are in a "happy church" (that is, one where sin is trivialized and where there is a refusal to move in the direction of biblical reform), I am certain that the exit is clearly marked. Use it! Do not allow one more day to pass in denial of your sin. Seek a true church, one

with a biblical perspective on sin and repentance. Ask the Lord to take the blinders off your eyes and show you your sin so you can repent of it. As ironic as it may seem, there is great joy in grief over sin!!

"I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"; And You forgave the guilt of my sin." (Psalm 32:5)

David "did not hide" his iniquity. By God's grace, he confessed and repented of his sin. Of course neither David nor anyone else can hide sin from God. I believe that before he was moved to write this psalm he had been hiding it from himself by denying its seriousness. Do not make the same mistake. If you are thinking about using medication for depression, I urge you to prayerfully consider the warning I have presented here. No one understands better than I do how desperately you want relief. But don't be too quick to stifle what may be the Holy Spirit's way of showing you your sin. Seek godly counsel about the reasons you are feeling depressed and ask the Lord to search your heart and show you if there is sin at the root of it. Meditate on Psalm 139, especially verses 23-24:

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way."

By God's grace, you may avoid years of unrepentant sin, damaged relationships, and stunted spiritual growth.

¹I do not claim any medical credentials in making this statement-only experience. A person should always get medical advice before making any kind of decision about the use of prescription medication to treat depression.

²Of course, not all depression is directly caused by sin. Some is brought on by grief or monumental life change. It is however, always sinful to remain in a state of profound sadness based on life experience. The believer must turn to Christ, His Word, and other believers, to find a way out. Joy must be the overriding, consistent emotion of Christianity if we are to be a good testimony for Him.

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SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES!

TUESDAYS: Come and sing with us every Tuesday night at Gallatin Health Care nursing home. Meet at the front door at 5:30PM. Any questions contact Bradley Pennington at 615-804-3054.

****** LADIES BIBLE STUDIES— EVERY other Thursday, each month, 11:00am.**

NEXT ONE, 2/20/14, led by Cindy Bell

***** WEDNESDAYS: PRAYER SERVICE at 7:00PM! NOTE:** Jody Allen is ministering to young Children, up to about age 10 during Prayer Service. Older children, but not old enough for the Youth Group... will be with their parents in the Prayer Service.

YOUTH GROUP: Wednesdays 6-8pm... led by Byron Smith_

SATURDAY MORNINGS @ 8am: Men's Fellowship/Bible Study!

SUNDAY SCHEDULE FOR FEBRUARY 23

- 1. 9:30am- Sunday School→ Bible Study and Small Group Fellowship**
- 2. 10:45am- Morning Worship / Children's Church**
- 3. Noon:** Fellowship 'covered-dish' Meal together!
- 4. 1:00pm-** Early afternoon Service, in the Fellowship Hall

SOUTHSIDE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL:

Children are like young plants in a garden— while young and tender they must be protected. Southside Christian School works in harmony with the local Church and empowers parents!

<http://www.aceministries.com/curriculum/?content=presentingACE>