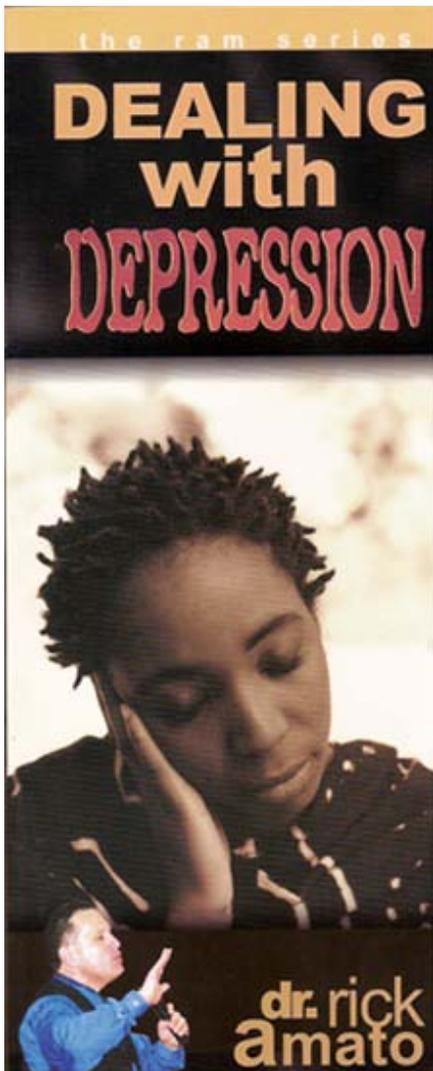


Dealing With Depression



Life in our frantic, competitive, sensuous culture is extremely difficult. People all around us are struggling with physical, emotional and mental illness. Only God's love is able to reach to the core of those complex problems.

I know. I've been there.

THE TRUTH ABOUT DEPRESSION

Did you know that one out of every four women, and one out of every ten men develop depression at some point during their lifetime? Did you know that depression could appear at almost any age? Sometimes, among the elderly, people mistake depression for senility or stroke. Most elderly and other suicides in the United States are thought to be caused by depression. If you are getting along in years or not, and feel like you would just rather die, please read this entire book and seek help right away. You are probably suffering from depression. There are so many people with self-destructive behavior because of depression.

At the same time, depression is one of the most treatable of all illnesses. Between 80 and 90% of all depressed people respond to treatment.

Everyone, from time to time, experiences feelings of sorrow and sadness. The causes and periods of these depressed moods can sometimes be physical, although there can be other

reasons. The two most common causes of depression are repressed anger or a deep sense of loss.

Usually, depressed feelings linger for a short time and then go away, and that's perfectly normal. But, when those feelings become prolonged and pervasive, the individual may be suffering from major depression. Here are some things to consider, whether with regards to yourself or someone you love.

A DEPRESSION CHECKLIST

- Have the feelings of sadness lasted more than two weeks?
- Are you (or someone you know) socially withdrawn?
- Are you irritable?
- Are you sleeping too much or too little?
- Is there loss of appetite?
- Are there spontaneous crying spells?
- Have you lost interest in things you once enjoyed?
- Are you experiencing chronic fatigue-you're always tired and don't know why?
- Has your sexual desire decreased?
- Are you having suicidal thoughts?
- Have you lost interest with people?

A WAR IN THE MIND

Sometimes it's easy for well intentioned Christians to say, "*Just trust God,*" or "*Just look on the bright side,*" or "*If only you hadn't ...*" Sometimes we tell people about our own experiences with

depression and how we've conquered it. Unfortunately, such comments and comparisons can lead to even greater feelings of alienation. They can make people feel guilty and despairing.

So what *does* help? First of all, it helps to recognize depression for what it is. Once we understand what we're dealing with, it isn't so mysterious and intimidating.

Secondly, depressed individuals need to know that someone cares about them. If you're depressed, try not to isolate yourself-reach out to a loved one who will share your burden. Remember, that's God's favorite way of comforting us. However, most importantly, we need to know what God says about depression. Let's take a moment to consider some principles that are found in New Testament Scripture.

Paul, the Apostle, was once a murderer of Christians. He met Christ on the road to Damascus and went on to become our teacher, spiritual father, and perhaps the greatest Christian of all time. In his letter to the believers at Rome, chapter seven, he writes these words, beginning with verse 14: **"But in every part of me I discover something fighting against my mind"** (CEV)

MORE THAN A BLUE MOOD

According to most reliable sources, at one time or another, 80% of the people

living in the United States will come face to face with mental illness. It will strike a member of your family or someone you know. Or perhaps one day you will wake up, look in the mirror, and find a stranger staring back at you.

For too long, the church has been silent about this. And yet, most every Christian will, at one time or another, come face to face with depression. It affects the way we eat. It affects the way we sleep. It affects the way we feel about ourselves. It affects the way we feel about God and His Word.

I'm not talking about a blue mood that comes and goes. I'm not talking about something that you are able to overcome with sheer will power. Depression is, for many, what the apostle Paul described as a war, which is being waged in our minds. And for some people, depression is a continuing battle. It never ceases. It never goes away permanently.

What causes depression? It should be comforting to some of us to know that it seems to occur in certain families for generation after generation. That means it has a hereditary root.

Depression seems to be triggered by a serious loss, a chronic illness, difficulty in a relationship, or any unwelcome situation. It usually finds its source in deep pain - the wound - that has been hidden in the darkness of the soul for years. And, in case you think depression is a petty distraction, let me tell you, things can get really bad. It can become a major problem.

THREE KINDS OF DEPRESSION

There are three types of depression. One is chronic, or clinical depression, a disabling disorder in which we cease to have normal desires. As the checklist indicates, normal desires are diminished or completely disappear. We are robbed of joy, peace and any sense of well-being. A shadow stretches across our inner world; we enter what some writers have called the dark night of the soul.

There is also a form of, minor depression - - dysthemia. Less disabling than chronic depression, this condition prevents us from being able to function as well as we'd like to. We may always feel as if something is wrong; we're always out of sorts. (By the way, I'm not talking about being negative.) Dysthemia is not the same as being negative, pessimistic or grumpy.

I heard a story about a man who decided to cure his next-door neighbor from his negativism. One day it was raining. The man said to the negative neighbor, "My, the rain is sure pretty, watering the ground".

The neighbor said, "Yep. If it keeps this up, there will be a flood."

Before long the sun came out. The man said to the negative neighbor, "The sun's coming out. It's going to dry everything up."

The negative neighbor said, "Yep. If it keeps this up, there will be a drought."

The man pondered the problem, and asked himself, "How can I help this

negative neighbor overcome his negativism?"

An idea came to him. He taught his Labrador Retriever to walk on water. Then he took the neighbor out duck hunting. Pretty soon, boom - boom! Two ducks fell from the sky. The dog jumped out of the boat and pranced across the top of the water, and picked up both ducks. Then, without missing a step, he pranced back across the top of the water and jumped back in the boat. Only his paws were wet.

The negative neighbor looked at the dog, and then at the man. He shook his head sadly. "Your dog can't swim, eh?"

The third major depressive disorder is known as manic depression or bi-polar disorder. This condition is marked by dramatic mood swings, inappropriate elation, inappropriate irritability, severe insomnia, grandiose delusions, increased talking, disconnected and racing thoughts, enormous amounts of energy, poor judgment, inappropriate social behavior and increased sexual desire.

All of these symptoms are followed by a mood swing that drives the victim into an immense darkness inhabited by sadness, anxiety and emptiness. Feelings of hopelessness and pessimism prevail, along with guilt and worthlessness.

The sufferer loses interest in all the normal pleasures that God intended humans to have. The depressed individual experiences acute physical symptoms for which there is no apparent cause. Manic-depression is a dangerous

and frightening affliction and requires ongoing medical attention.

WHAT ABOUT CHRISTIANS?

What about Christian believers? Is it possible for them to have a mental illness? The answer to this question can be found in another one. Can a Christian believer suffer from cancer? Leukemia? Emphysema? The brain is also an organ. When it doesn't work right it can cause depression. Of course believers can and do suffer from depression. The problem is that many suffer and some even die because of some false idea that if you are a Christian you will never be depressed.

So, how are we to treat depression once we've accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior, and believe that through Him, "All things have become new?"

(2 Corinthians 5:17). How then do we win the battle that's raging in our minds?

Psychiatrists and psychologists are prepared to assist us with both therapy and medication. There may be a very real need for you to take medication, even if only short term. You should speak to a qualified physician about this. But is there more to be done? Paul asked a similar question in Romans Chapter 7, verse 24:

"Who will rescue me from this body that is doomed to die?" (CEV)

The mental health system can and should - treat symptoms. Drugs will alleviate the disease's manifestations, but it can't completely solve our problems. Medical science and secular psychology are valuable tools in helping us, and we sometimes need them to assist us in

finding our way. But these valuable resources are missing some key elements in their formulas.

VOIDS AND VACUUMS

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and He formed mankind in his own image. There is a spiritual component to mankind - a part that cannot be seen. Mankind's spirit cannot be phenomenally observed, sensed or gauged. Yet throughout history, individuals of religious experience have testified that there is an emptiness inside us that's just big enough for God to fill. There is a void inside everyone.

Every human being on this earth has an inner mirror that will not ever be complete until the reflection of God's face can be seen in it. It was Saint Augustine who said, *"The whole purpose of man is to know God and enjoy His presence forever ... Our hearts are restless until they find their repose in Thee."*

There is another law that the mental health system has forgotten and that is the universal law of the vacuum. Jesus said in Matthew 12, **"When an evil spirit leaves a person, it travels through the desert, looking for a place to rest. But when the demon doesn't find a place, it says, "I will go back to the home I left." When it gets there and finds the place empty, clean, and fixed up, it goes off and finds seven other evil spirits even worse than itself. They all come and make their home there, and the person ends up in worse shape than before."** (CEV)

How simply amazing and amazingly simple is God's understanding of the human mind!

Let me give an example of how that story plays out in today's world. Many people become depressed around the holiday season. Maybe you're one of them. Perhaps, when the Christmas lights go on, your heart begins to sink within you. Everybody's singing "Noel!" and you're singing, "No way!"

When that begins to happen, you realize something is wrong, something is missing. So, by your own will power, you pull yourself up by your own boot straps and you attempt to eliminate the bad things in your life, whether they be bad habits, negative thoughts, wicked impulses or motivations that aren't good. You get rid of all those things. You sweep and clean your home.

But you have forgotten that the vacuum is still there. You may temporarily fill it with activity or alcohol or Christmas candy or other distractions or addictions, but once you've made it through Christmas, things are going to be seven times worse.

Before long, you're going to crash and burn unless you fill that vacuum with God, and allow Him to heal the wound in your soul.

Take it from a recovering addict. I searched through the rubble of this world, through the back alleys and the bar rooms, looking for satisfaction. I tried becoming a workaholic as an anesthetic for my pain. I finally came to the point of no return. That's when I admitted I was powerless. Personal powerlessness is

the foundation of spiritual awakening. The first step to dealing with depression is to admit you are powerless over it and that your life has become unmanageable.

WILL IT EVER END?

Yes, there is a battle that rages. Yes, there is warfare in all of our minds. If it was in St. Paul's mind, you can believe it is in yours. I want you to know that you, too, can have the victory. Depressive disorders should be treated with professional help, but deep healing comes through the power of Jesus Christ and His Cross.

Maybe you're like my grandma Cleo, sitting in the hills of West Virginia a 76-year old in her wooden rocking chair, poor as dirt. Grandma never had anything in her whole life.

I said, "Grandma, do you remember the Great Depression?"

She said, "Sure I do."

I said, "Do you remember when it ended?"

Grandma asked, "Is it over?"

Yes, depression can come to an end, but I personally don't believe it can come to a lasting end without the intervention of God. Someone once asked me, "What did Jesus mean when He said a river of living water will flow through your belly - through the inner most party of your being?"

Here's how I describe it. When I used to abuse drugs and alcohol, down in the pit of my stomach it would feel like somebody had a rag, wringing it out until it was tighter and tighter. It was more than

tight - it was hurting and painful. Today, where once there was that tight feeling inside my stomach, now there is a free, flowing fountain of eternal life, serenity and peace are there. You see, sin thrills and then it kills. Jesus thrills and then He fills.

Paul answered his own question.

"Oh wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is doomed to die? Thank God! Jesus Christ will rescue me." Romans 7:24-25 (CEV) I want you to know you can have the victory over depression through Jesus Christ.

BE PATIENT WITH YOUR PROBLEM

First of all, be patient with your problem. You did not get this way over night. Don't expect to be changed over night. If you have loved ones with mental illness, or you yourself struggle with it, don't expect anybody to simply snap out of it.

We live in an instant society, an instant culture. We think all human needs can be instantly gratified. You want a cheeseburger; what do you do? You go down to Burger Biggies, you pull up to the drive through and say, "I want a big burger from Burger Biggies to fill up my belly!" In a few moments-presto! A little plastic box, a little plastic cheeseburger, and a little plastic piece of cheese. You want a cup of coffee; what do you do? You go to the microwave, push the button and presto, instant coffee.

That's the way we think life is with God. We think we just come down to the

altar and say, "Jesus, zap me!" He zaps you and all your troubles, are over. This is why many people fail to maintain their relationship with God. You cannot by one giant, Herculean effort, defeat all the depression and solve all of the problems in life. Believe me it doesn't work that way.

The Bible says that we're to **work out our own salvation with fear and trembling**, Philippians 2:12 (NKJV). Paul said, "My friends, I don't feel that I have already arrived. But I forget what is behind, and I struggle for what is ahead." Philippians 3:13 (CEV). It's a continual labor. Some things are so big that they just won't leave after one prayer. The second step then in dealing with depression is to come to believe that a power greater than you can restore you to sanity. It is a gradual process of the fog clearing after a long and dreary night. Your faith will become stronger and the depression weaker from now on. It is a process of coming to believe.

There are ministers who will put their hand on your head and say, "I'll just drive all that out of you!" Well, I know Jesus could do that, but I've never yet met anybody else who could.

It's almost as if our mind is an ocean. You go to the ocean, sit down on a nice dry spot and lay your towel there. You go to sleep in the sun and wake up soaking wet. Depression is that way. The tide of depression slowly but surely returns from time to time. We're going to have to be patient with our problems. Things take time to be worked out. God has his own timetable for healing.

STOP PERSECUTING YOUR PERSONALITY

Second, we have to stop persecuting our personalities. We live in such a celebrity syndrome society, people actually think that famous people don't get depressed! Many famous and wealthy people have terrible battles with depression.

Depression can happen to anyone. And if we set goals so high for ourselves that we can never attain them, we'll add to our depression when we fail. Every time we aren't able to meet a goal, we will end up putting ourselves down. Stop persecuting yourself-there are probably plenty of people doing that already! Instead, allow the God of all Encouragement to build you back up.

Jesus said to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Sometimes, in our attempts to pay ourselves back for our shortcomings, or in our seasons of self-loathing, we treat everyone else better than we treat ourselves. If you don't love yourself, how are you going to love your neighbor? If you don't care about yourself, how can you care about anybody else?

When Jesus Christ died upon the Cross, an eternity of hell was laid upon Him. The worst pit of depression anybody ever was in - total rejection by His father, the Creator God - was what He experienced on our behalf. He saw it coming in the garden. He said, "My **Father, if it is possible, don't make me suffer by having me drink from this**

cup. But do what you want, and not what I want." Matthew 26:39 (CEV)

Shortly after this, under so much pressure, He was sweating blood as in the garden of Gethsemane He knew what was about to come upon Him He said, "**My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death**" Mark 14:34 (NKJV). One translation reads He said, "I am so depressed I could die."

Jesus knows first hand what it means to be depressed - He went through it Himself, paying the price for you! Ultimately, He surrendered to death, even the death of the Cross! He finally prayed, "**Father, not what I will but what you will**" Mark 14:36. Christ Jesus paved the way for victory, but you have to act upon it. You receive it by surrendering.

You surrender by being patient with your problems.

You surrender by refusing to persecute your personality.

There is an other way to surrender.

START PRIORITIZING PEOPLE

You receive Christ's victory by putting people first. That is where God's encouragement often gets acted out in our lives. Sometimes people are sent our way to help us. It is humbling and necessary to surround ourselves with supportive, caring friends who are willing to listen to us generously, pray for us faithfully and love us unconditionally. Just as we are to love others as if they were Christ Himself, we are also to receive His

love through the hands of those He sends our way. If you feel He hasn't yet sent you people who can help, ask Him to.

In a similar sense, freedom from depression comes when we start trying to lift others out of their depression. This is one reason group therapy and recovery groups are so successful and helpful. The greatest therapy of all is focusing your attention on others; making people your number one priority. You are not as busy as you think you are. And, even though we can't reach into the whole world's depths of human suffering, we can help one person at a time.

We can feed a hungry person.

We can clothe a naked person.

We can visit a sick or elderly person.

We can pray for someone with heartache.

We can listen to someone who's lonely.

There is another way to surrender.

PRACTICE THE PRAISE OF GOD

Fourth, we can receive Christ's victory over depression by practicing the praise of God. A guy who said, "Rick Amato, I think you're crazy", once confronted me!

I said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "You're always hollering, 'Hallelujah!' You're always shouting, 'Praise the Lord!' I think you're becoming a fanatic."

I want to tell you something. I like being a fanatic. If being a fanatic means being a fan, make me the biggest fan of Jesus since Paul - I love Him, because

He pulled me out of a slimy pit, set my feet on a solid Rock and made the boundaries fall for me in pleasant places. The Bible says, "**Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; be thankful unto Him, and praise His name**" Psalm 100:4 (CEV).

Thankfulness is a powerful weapon against depression, and ingratitude is the root of all kinds of sin. Gratitude and depression cannot live under the same roof. Count your blessings, and thank God for everyone of them. Thank Him for who He is. Thank Him for His promises to give you a good future. Thank Him for bringing you this far. Thank Him for His promise to complete the good work He has begun in you.

Even thank Him for the things that trouble you, because He's promised to work them together for good. "**And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God**" Romans 8:28 (KJV). You don't have to thank Him for the fact that everything that is happening to you is good. Everything that is happening to you is *not* good. But everything that is happening is working *together* for good. By faith you can thank God for this. Do this and watch God set you free!

Another method of surrender is to ...

PERCEIVE THE PEACE OF GOD

Fifth, perceive the peace of God. We live in a day when men say and model that religion is a way to get rich. But the Bible says, "**Godliness, with**

contentment, is great gain" 1 Timothy 6:6. We don't come into this world contented. I have five children, and I can assure you that not one of them was born contented! Kids want more and if you give them more, they only want one other thing - MORE!

Kids aren't the only ones with the problem. You get a nice big car and what do you want? A mini-van or a motor home or another big par. You get a nice little house and what do you have to have? A bigger house! You know the well-known story - someone asked John D. Rockefeller before he died, "How much money does it take to make you happy, Mr. Rockefeller?" Mr. Rockefeller said, "Just one more dollar!"

Let me tell you about a suit I was given a long time ago. It was a beautiful brown suit. I put that suit on, and I got up and began to preach in it. I started sweating, so I reached in my pocket to get a handkerchief. There was no pocket. I reached into the pant leg there was no pocket there, either.

So, I went to the person who gave me the suit and I said, "I really appreciate this suit. I'm so grateful for your generosity, and I thank you very much! But - did you know it doesn't have any pockets?"

The woman smiled sweetly at me and said, "Oh, I should have told you. That suit came from a funeral home. They don't bury people with pockets because they don't feel they'll need them!"

People say you'll never see a hearse with a U-Haul behind it. Be content with what you have; it's more than

you'll take with you when you leave this world.

The question I ask you is not, "Do you have what you want?" but "Do you want what you have?"

If you really want to defeat depression, see that the greatest treasure of all cannot be held with your hands. The greatest treasure of all is the kingdom of God; the presence of God in your life. The greatest wealth you can ever possess is knowing that you're clean before Him because of your faith in His finished work of salvation in dying for you on the Cross. It is out of gratitude then that you begin obeying Him. You are keeping His commandments, and you're being faithful to your family, loving to your brothers and sisters in Christ, and loyal to the God who called you.

Faithfulness, gratitude, and love are the essential possessions in life. They motivate us to start doing what's right. Gather them and treasure them. They are the things that make for contentment.

ONE FINAL AND FAMILIAR STEP

There's one final step - or series of steps we always have to take when we're depressed. They are the steps I had to take when I was working my way out of addiction. The same process is necessary when we are confronted with the darkness of depression.

First, we must admit powerlessness. It is impossible for us to defeat depression on our own.

I Can't

Second, we must come to believe in a power greater than ourselves that can restore us to sanity. Nothing is too hard for our God, who is the God of the impossible.

God Can.

Third, we must turn our lives and our wills to the care of God. He has His own way of doing things. He works in His own time. He insists that we submit to Him, to the principles found in His word and to those He has put in authority over us. These individuals may include medical professionals who are skilled at dealing with conditions like ours. They may include Christian counselors or pastors. They may include a group of godly friends to whom we are accountable. When it comes to overcoming depression, we can't do it alone, but as we work with servants of His choosing, God can.

So Let Him!

Here is a suggested prayer and meditation that has proved successful in helping me personally deal with this "dark night of the soul".

Father In Heaven I praise you for who you are. You never change. I thank you for your all powerful never ending love for me. I praise and thank you that proof of this love is neither my circumstances nor my feelings but the gift of your son Jesus Christ and his

death on the Cross. I affirm my faith that Jesus died to save me and rose from the dead to prove it.

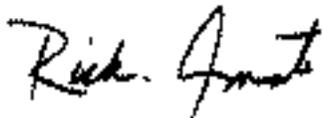
Because of this faith I ask for your grace and mercy to rise above these feelings of depression into your presence. If for some reason, for my growth and your glory these feelings must stay here until I change then may I watch them and feel them from above. This may not take these feelings away but it eases my pain and I thank you for that right now.

I ask this in the name above every name, the name of the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of the Living God.

Having prayed this prayer now make this affirmation out loud and read it out loud again and again until you feel it in and know it by your heart.

I am not the depression I am suffering from. Because of God's love through the Cross I am deeply loved, fully pleasing, totally forgiven, and completely accepted in Christ. Because I love God what I am going through will ultimately result in my good and His glory. Romans 8:28 promises this.

The steps of surrendering to God in this booklet are a good start. If you need further instruction please feel free to communicate with me using the information on the last page of this booklet.



To order more of this or other booklets from Rick Amato Ministries, or if you would like more information, call us 24hrs a day at (800) 543 WORD, or you can visit us on the web at www.rickamato.com.

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___ of the "*Finding God's Hidden Power: Turning Your Stress Into Strength*" booklet from Dr. Rick Amato

___ of the "*Shadow of Shaddai: Finding the Secret Place of Success*" booklet from Dr. Rick Amato

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Rick Amato is founder and President of Rick Amato Ministries. His organization is multi-faceted in its worldwide ministries.

RAMCARE is a division of the ministry that focuses on the post-socialist nations of the world. **RAM CARE**, with the help of thousands of volunteers has placed over 1,000,000 Scriptures in Russia freely. Over \$1,000,000 of medicine and equipment to the children of Cuba, along with hundreds of thousands of spiritual materials and Scriptures in Romania, China, South America and many other countries.

In addition to his many crusades in churches all across America, Amato also has a secular program for the public schools. Through his "*Power of a Choice*" assemblies, he has now spoken face-to-face with over 400,000 junior and senior high public schools students. Using his personal experience along with the latest scientific knowledge, he presents a powerful and hilarious presentation that impacts students long after he leaves.

His work and message has been featured on **VHI, FOX**, the British Broadcasting Company, the Canadian Broadcasting Company, and many other national and international television networks.

Dr. Amato is author of the book, "*A Pocket Full of Pennies*" that teaches people how to discover the daily miracles in their lives.

Amato lives in Michigan with his wife of 25 years, Nancy Jean. They have five children, and four grandchildren.

1 in **4** women
and **1** in **10** men
deal regularly
with **depression.**

This booklet, *Dealing With Depression*, could be the most important message you or your loved ones have ever heard. Countless numbers of people wrestle with depression daily. Many of us try to be helpful by giving advice. Unfortunately, it is difficult knowing how to deal with this "Dark Night of the Soul."

The message in this booklet comes from Dr. Rick Amato's own experiences and his relentless search of the Scriptures and science for God-centered and relevant answers. Out of his search, Rick has developed a method which does not focus so much on treating symptoms as on solving problems.

One in four women and one in ten men deal regularly with depression. Each of us are emotional beings. God made us that way. So how do we reconcile the depths and the darkness of depression with the "victory" we are supposed to experience through Christ? Dr. Amato believes people can be healed from depression. The questions are answered in this booklet, *Dealing With Depression*.

If you or someone you know is suffering from depression, have hope. You can be free! This message shows you the way.



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