

Fran and Jesus on the Job: Dealing with Depression

Presented by Mary Lowman

Air Dates: March 10 – 14, 2025

Day One

Is depression an indication of sin in a believer's life? I think many Christians struggle with how to deal with depression, their own and other's. In fact, our friend, Fran, faces that situation as we catch up with what's been happening in her life.

If you've been reading these devotionals a long time, you know I periodically tell this on-going story of a fictional workplace woman named Fran who is in the process of learning to be aware of the truth that Jesus is with her at all times, even at work.

Fran has a very good friend where she works, Louise, who is also a believer, and they meet each week to pray for their company and coworkers. Over the years, they have seen God answer many prayers. But lately Fran has noticed Louise is just not herself. In fact, for the past two weeks she has canceled their prayer time with what seemed like last minute flimsy excuses. It has Fran baffled really, because it just isn't like Louise. She can sense Louise is backing away from her.

Fran has been talking to Jesus about this situation. "Lord," she says, "I'm puzzled as to what is wrong with Louise. Have I offended her in some way? Have I failed to be the friend she needs? Lord, please show me what I am supposed to do; make me aware of any hidden errors on my part; give me wisdom to be a good friend to Louise as she has been to me so many times."

After much prayer Fran finally decides she needs to say something to Louise. She prays about what to say and when, and the next day at work she catches her just as she's leaving for the day.

"Oh, Louise, I'm so glad I caught you now. I just have to know if I have done anything to offend you. Please tell me because I can sense something is wrong, and I just don't know what to do." Fran looks at her and realizes Louise has begun to softly cry. "Oh, my," Fran says, "I have done something, haven't I?"

Quietly Louise replies, "No, no, Fran, it's not you. I don't know what it is. I'm just...just...depressed, I guess." And with those words, Louise runs out of the building to the parking lot and drives away without giving Fran a chance to respond.

"Depressed?" Fran thinks. "Why is Louise depressed?"

Day Two

Mental health professionals tell us depression can be a result of an emotional or psychological problem, or it can have a physical connection. Our friend, Fran, has just learned her best friend at work, Louise, is going through some severe depression, which is affecting her behavior quite noticeably.

Fran finally confronted Louise, and she admitted she feels depressed but wouldn't talk about it any further. Tonight, after getting her kids ready for bed, Fran finally has time to make an uninterrupted call

to Louise. She gets her home phone voicemail. "Louise, it's me, and I really want to talk with you. Please, if you're there, pick up."

After a long pause, Louise picks up the phone. "Hi, Fran. Thank you for calling; I know you're concerned, but really there's nothing you can do. I'm just going through a depression, I guess. I'm sure it's my fault. I need to get right with the Lord or something."

"Wait a minute, Louise," Fran says. "Where did you get this idea that depression is always an indication of a spiritual problem? Don't you know it could be a chemical imbalance or something physical? Have you seen a doctor?"

"No," Louise continues, "but I talked with one of the pastors at church. He seemed to think that all I needed was to read my Bible and pray more."

"Well, there's nothing wrong with that, but is he a health professional?" Fran asks.

"No, no," Louise replies.

"Louise, you need to see a doctor and find out if there is some physical reason for your depression," Fran encourages her.

Louise begins to cry. "Oh, Fran, I can't tell you how awful I feel. I can't sleep at night; I can't concentrate at work. Sometimes I feel lightheaded, and my heart starts pounding. And I cry at the drop of a hat; I even cried at the office today in front of Andy. He thinks I'm crazy, I'm sure."

"Oh, Louise," Fran says, "I'm so sorry. Why didn't you tell me about this sooner? How long have you been feeling this way?"

"It started about a month ago, but I just figured it would pass. And I felt guilty because Christians aren't supposed to be depressed, right?" Louise says.

"That's ridiculous, Louise. Think of people in the Bible who showed signs of depression. There's David singing the blues in the Psalms. And Job certainly was depressed. And what about Elijah? He wanted to die. Moses was so depressed he ran away for forty years. Louise, you need to find out what is causing you to feel this way, and maybe a doctor could help you," Fran says.

Day Three

Listen to the words of King David:

My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death assail me. Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me. I said, 'Oh that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. I would flee far away and stay in the desert...' (Psalm 55:4-7).

Would you describe those as the words of a man in depression? Let's continue the story of Fran and Jesus on the Job.

Fran's friend, Louise, has been feeling depressed for the past month or so, but she has kept it inside and not told anyone because she was ashamed to admit it. Fran has reassured her even Christians can be depressed.

She says to her, "You've heard the name Charles Spurgeon, Louise? He was a great preacher in England, the prince of preachers they called him. And he fought feelings of depression all of his life."

“Really?” Louise says. “I figured a strong Christian would never be depressed.”

“Well, that’s just a wrong notion, so are you willing to go see a doctor?” she asks.

“I’m ready for some help, Fran,” Louise says. “I just can’t go on this way much longer. I can hardly get out of bed each morning; and I know I’m going to get fired if I don’t concentrate better at work. But I just don’t care about anything anymore—except going home and locking the doors against the world.”

Fran calls a woman at her church who is a doctor and asks her for a recommendation for Louise. The next day at work she gives the name and number to Louise. “Here’s a doctor I can recommend for you, Louise. All you have to do is call and make an appointment.”

But somehow Fran can sense even making a phone call is too much for Louise. She looks dejected and lifeless today. “Hey, better still, let me call and make an appointment for you, okay?” And with that, she dials the number and asks if the doctor has any cancellations today. Sure enough, she is able to make Louise an appointment late in the afternoon.

“Would you like me to go with you, Louise?” Fran asks. Louise doesn’t answer. “I will go with you. In fact, I’ll drive you. We need to leave here about 4:00. I’ll come by and pick you up.” Louise doesn’t object.

All through the day Fran prays for Louise and for the doctor to have wisdom in helping her. It breaks her heart to see her good friend in such a condition.

Do you know someone in a depressed state? There can be causes beyond his or her control, and that person needs your friendship right now.

Day Four

If you’ve ever gone through a depression, whether long or short term, you can empathize with Louise, Fran’s friend. In our on-going story of Fran and Jesus on the Job, Fran is trying to help Louise, a fellow believer on her job, who has been going through a serious depressed state for reasons unknown. Fran has made an appointment for her with a well-recommended doctor and is taking her there this afternoon.

Louise doesn’t talk the whole way to the doctor’s office and Fran decides it’s no time for small talk, so she just prays silently for her while she is driving. As they arrive, Louise is reluctant to get out of the car. “It won’t do any good, Fran,” she says. “I’m just wasting your time and my money.”

Fran gently takes her arm and helps her out of the car. “Don’t worry about that; it’s worth a try, Louise.” And so, slowly, Louise walks with Fran into the doctor’s office. When her name is called, Louise can barely lift herself out of the chair. With Fran’s help she goes into the doctor’s office. “Why don’t you stay with her,” Doctor Monroe suggests, seeing how frightened Louise is.

Louise grabs her hand, “Yes, Fran, please stay.” So, she sits down.

“How can I help you, Louise?” the doctor asks.

“I don’t think you can,” she replies, “but Fran thought I should find out if my problem is physical.” And with that Louise begins slowly to tell the doctor of her experience with depression over the past few weeks.

“Louise,” the doctor responds, “what you have described sounds like a textbook case of clinical depression. That means that it is likely to have a physical connection, and medication may be able to help you.”

“I don’t know about taking medication,” Louise says. “That scares me. Sounds like I should be admitted to a mental institution or something.”

“Oh, no,” the doctor assures her, “no, Louise, it just means we need to find out if this sudden depression has a physical cause. I see many people with similar symptoms, Louise, and many times some medication is able to get them back to a somewhat normal state so they can begin to work on other issues that may be contributing to their feelings. If you had any other kind of physical imbalance, you would have no qualms about receiving some medication for it, and if these symptoms are caused by a physical imbalance, then why not take some medicine for them as well?”

After more discussion, Louise agrees to the doctor’s suggestion and leaves there with a prescription.

Clinical depression is a problem many people face—yes, even Christians. And we need to be informed about how best to help those who suffer from these bouts of depression.

Day Five

Through our on-going story of Fran, we’ve been talking about the topic of clinical depression. Fran has encouraged her good friend, Louise, to seek medical help for her depressed state of mind, and Louise is now beginning to take a prescribed drug to see if indeed it will help her to emerge from this depression.

The next day Fran is talking with her doctor friend at church, Anne. “I sure hope this helps Louise,” she says. “But what if it doesn’t?”

“Well, Fran, if Louise has other issues, such as sin in her life, medication won’t fix it. But you indicated that you don’t know of any existing problem like that, so it could be that this medication can help her get herself back, if you know what I mean.”

“Oh, that would be wonderful,” Fran says.

“But remember, sometimes the doctors have to try several different kinds of medication before they find the right one,” Anne reminds her.

“Yes, that’s what Dr. Monroe warned us about yesterday,” Fran says. “And she highly recommended that Louise also go for some counseling as well. I think that bothered Louise. What do you think?”

“Well, rarely are these depressions caused solely by physical reasons. It’s usually a combination of stress or perfectionism or workaholism along with a chemical imbalance,” Anne informs her. “So, I would concur that Louise should see a Christian counselor, at least to make sure she’s not living in denial about other areas that could be contributing to her problem.”

“I’m going to encourage her to do that,” Fran says. “And I’m going to encourage her to spend even more time in the Bible and prayer. She says it has been very difficult to read her Bible or pray since this depression hit her.”

“That’s a typical reaction, Fran, and I’m sure the enemy of our soul moves in at times like these to make matters worse,” Anne says.

“Well, I’m going to pray for her more and pray with her more. At least I can do that for her, while she’s finding it difficult to pray herself,” Fran says.

With a good friend like Fran, Louise will have the support she needs to help her recover from this depression. All of us need to be more sensitive and aware of the needs of others who may be going through something like this. It’s a time to gather around that person and help them, not abandon them.