

## Negative Thoughts Cause Emotional Turmoil by Dr. David Gallagher

Psalm 42 and 43 both end with these words, "Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God" (NIV). We live in uncertain days filled with fear and doubt. Much of what we see, hear and read causes negative thoughts and emotional turmoil. As we prepare our hearts for Advent and the Christmas season, perhaps it would be helpful to take a fresh look at the greatness of God.

In Psalm 42 and 43, we read about David experiencing negative thoughts, fear, discouragement and even depression. Negative thoughts cause emotional turmoil and nearly all time such thoughts are distortions.

David applied some basic principles to his life in dealing with negative thoughts, fear, discouragement and depression and he gained victory.

Psalm 42 gives *five of basic principles* to overcome negative thinking and emotional turmoil:

- **David remembered that God helped in the past.** Psalm 42:4, 6 says, "These things I remember as I pour out my soul...therefore I will remember." If you are depressed, lonely or experiencing grief, remember a time when God helped you. Keep the memories of God's faithfulness before you. David remembered how God had helped him in the past. We must remember how God has cared for us in the past.
- **David practiced hope and praise, even during times of discouragement.** Psalms 42:5-6a, 11; 43:5 say, "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God." If you are experiencing depression, discouragements, and grief, try using a hymnal to read or sing some of the wonderful old hymns and gospel songs of the church. If you are lonely and discouraged, think of the good things God has done. Remember, when you are down, look up and offer praise. Remember what God has done for you. David remembered what God had done and offered hopeful praise.
- **David knew that God was his stronghold and his strength.** In Psalm 43:2a David said, "You are God my stronghold." Sometimes to gain victory over depression, we must help our 70+ folks remember what God has done and is now doing. We will need to practice hope and praise. We will need to claim the victory of God who is our strength.
- **David knew there was light and truth to guide him,** even though he might not see it at that moment. Psalm 43:3 says, "Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell." God's Word has power to help us each day. The Holy Spirit indwells with power. We may not see the end right now. David remembered what God had done. David practiced hope and praise. David claimed that God is strength and David knew there was light and truth to guide him.
- **David went to the altar of God to find joy and delight.** Psalm 42:4-6a says, "These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng. Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God." God desires that we place our lives on the altar.

As you approach this Advent season and Christmas during times of uncertainty, reflect on these questions:

- What causes God to seem far away at times? Who moved?
- Notice David's responses in Psalm 42 and Psalm 43 in dealing with his depression:
- He cried, 42:3
- He talked to himself, 42:5 & 11; 43:5
- He reminded himself of God's nature, 42:6 & 8
- He prayed honestly, 42:9; 43:2
- By comparison, how do you deal with depression?