

The S.A.D. Solution (February 2016 Devotional)

I grew up a Hoosier, the youngest son of two teacher-coaches. My mom taught kindergarten and coached girl's high school basketball and my dad taught physiology and coached boy's baseball and tennis. My summers were spent in Northern Michigan from the time I was born until I got married. I fished for trout, bass, northern pike and walleyes with my dad, water skied with friends and worked at a marina through high school and college. My dad's summer job was opening, renting, cleaning, maintaining and then closing the cottages on the shore of beautiful Burt Lake which was ten miles long and five miles wide. Summers in Michigan were wonderful with plenty of woods, water and sunshine.

Decades later a job change moved our family from Indiana to Michigan. It was at that time when we were introduced to a mysterious illness. Our first clue to this disorder happened during the first week in our new location when a new washer and dryer were delivered. The delivery man, upon seeing our license plate, commented, "I see you are from the Sunshine State." I replied, "No we are from Indiana, not Florida." The second clue came a few weeks later at a Michigan State football game. Fans started cheering even though no exciting play had occurred on the gridiron. I looked around wondering why they were cheering and then asked the fans sitting in front of us. They pointed to the sky and said. "The sun just came out!"

You see, Michiganders experience lots of gray days from November to April. In fact, where we lived an average of 130 of those 180 days were without sun. This lack of sunshine caused many people to come down with S.A.D. or Seasonal Affective Disorder. It is a mood swing characterized by depression, distress and an unhappy spirit.

Have you been there? Maybe this is where you find yourself today. Maybe you are experiencing those bleak midwinter days right now. Gray, depressing days can close in on you for any number of reasons: injury, illness, bitterness, moral failure, legal woes, loneliness or the loss of a friend or family member. If so, you are not alone.

David, whom God called His beloved, experienced a similar condition causing him emotional stress, uncertainty and unhappiness while hiding from King Saul in a dark, damp, dismal cave (1 Samuel 22). David probably found himself discouraged, depressed and confused as to why God allowed this to happen. In studying Psalm 142, we see that David looked in four directions for relief:

He looked internally searching his own soul. (:3) *"As I sink in despair, my spirit ebbing away, you know how I'm feeling, know the danger I'm in, the traps hidden in my path."*

He looked horizontally seeking a friend. (:4) *"Look to the right and see: there is none who take notice of me; my refuge remains to me; no one cares for my soul."*

He looked vertically speaking to the Lord (:1-2, 5-6) *I cried aloud to God; I lift up my voice to the Lord for mercy. I pour out my complaint before him; before him I tell my trouble. I cry to you, O LORD; I say, "You are my refuge, my portion, in the land of the living." Attend to my cry, for I am brought very low!*

He looked ahead surveying his possibilities. (:7) *Set me free from my prison, that I may praise your name. Then the righteous will gather about me because of your goodness to me.*

God allows us to experience many things during our lifetime, some pleasurable and some painful. However, all are chosen to draw us closer to Him. If you need encouragement in the midst of a trial, God wants you to read His Word, work it into your heart by meditating upon it, call out to Him in prayer and listen for His counsel. Your hope doesn't lie within yourself or your circumstances, but in the Lord. He heals and transforms lives regardless of **wherever** you find yourself and in **whatever** situation you are experiencing.

He is light and provides the way out of darkness (1 John 1:5). He will never leave you (Deuteronomy 31:6). He knows your needs (Matthew 6:8) and He gives good things to those who ask (Matthew 7:11). You can look ahead with confidence for He is **your hope**, "But now Lord, what do I look for. My hope is in you" (Psalm 39:7), **your strength**, "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 40:31) and **your joy**, "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." (John 15:11).

Jesus invites you to call out to Him when you are sad, discouraged, depressed, tired out, worn out or burned out and He will relieve and refresh your soul. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). He came that you might have life and have it to the full (John 10:10).

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