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Parting the Clouds
FACTS ABOUT DEPRESSION
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DEPRESSION is one of the most prevalent mental disorders in the United States.¹

- *Do you have difficulty staying asleep at night?*
- *Do you wake up after one or two hours of sleep and have difficulty falling back asleep?*
- *Are you tired and anxious most of the time?*
- *Is it difficult for you to get up and face the day?*
- *Have you lost enjoyment in most activities?*
- *Have you had a significant weight loss without dieting?*
- *Do you have feelings of sadness, dread or hopelessness?*
- *Are you having difficulty making simple decisions?*
- *Do you want to isolate yourself from the world?*

These are common questions I ask clients coming into my office whom I suspect are suffering from depression. Oftentimes, many of them have suffered for several weeks or even months with these symptoms, thinking that if they just tried harder and waited it out, they would eventually get better and the symptoms would go away. Many fear losing their jobs, feel guilty that they do not have energy to go to their children's activities, and feel like God seems so very far away.

About two out of every ten people will experience depression in one form or another in their lifetime.² If their depression is identified early enough and they seek treatment immediately, 95% of even the severely depressed can recover from these symptoms and be totally cured.³ There are many causes for depression. Oftentimes depression is caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain which can be triggered by stress at work or home, or stress from interpersonal relationships. Other causes for depression can be physical health, hormone imbalance, or medication-related. Depression can also be inherited through genetics. Oftentimes there may be family members and relatives who have been depressed. Those who have had a history of

¹ Tan, Siang-Yang (1995). "The ABC's of Depression," *Christian Counseling Today*. Buffalo Grove, IL: Christian Counseling Resources, Inc.

² Ibid.

³ Wright, Norman (1977). *Training Christians to Counsel*. Denver, CO: A.B. Hirschfeld Press, Inc.

abuse and abandonment in their childhood could suffer from a chronic form of depression. Many who experience a loss will also suffer from depression as they grieve. Depression can also be caused by a spiritual attack.

Treatment for depression has been greatly improved over the past fifteen years due to a new family of medications called SSRI's (serotonin selective reuptake inhibitors). You probably have seen many of these medications advertised on television, like Prozac, Paxil, or Zoloft. These medications are effective because they resolve the symptoms of depression with relatively little side effects. These medications prescribed by a psychiatrist alongside of psychotherapy with a professional therapist, or psychotherapy by itself to deal with the feelings, stress, anxiety, and sadness, will help to relieve these symptoms in most people.

Depression, as well as other mental health symptoms continue to be under-treated in the Asian American community, as well as in the elderly population. The tendency of Asians to "tolerate symptoms" as a part of life that "has to be endured" prevents many from seeking relief from their suffering. If you are experiencing these symptoms or know someone who is experiencing these symptoms, call AACCS or your mental health provider to begin the process of recovery and healing.

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