



"What depression once took from me, God transformed and gave me even more."

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UNIVERSAL



"I almost jumped from my apartment."

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What's happening at

UNIVERSAL NEWS



SCAN ME

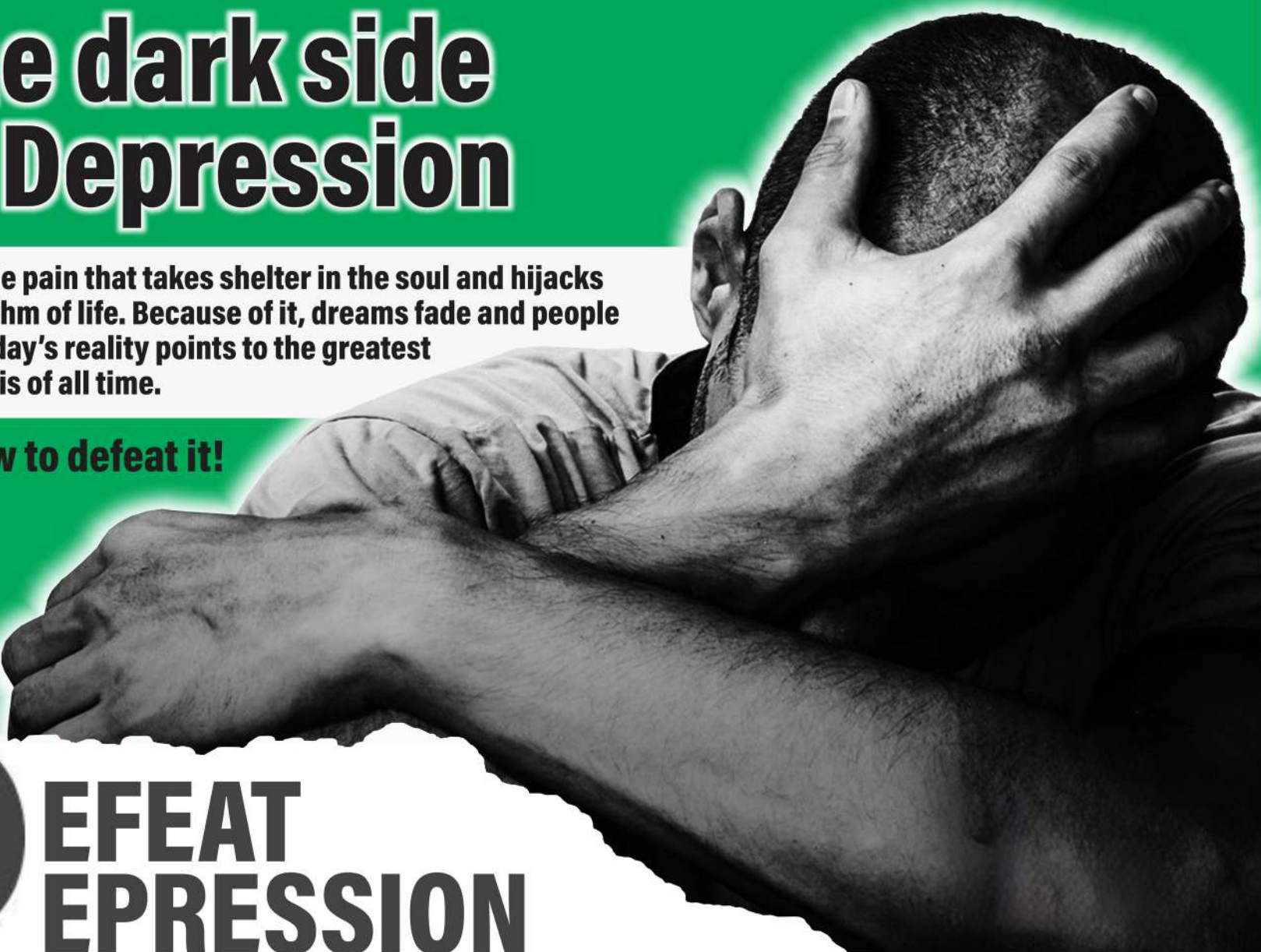
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The dark side of Depression

An indescribable pain that takes shelter in the soul and hijacks the natural rhythm of life. Because of it, dreams fade and people waste away. Today's reality points to the greatest depression crisis of all time.

Learn how to defeat it!

DEFEAT DEPRESSION



Bishop Edir Macedo

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The only direction we should be looking



The terminal illness couldn't end her faith

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MIRACLES



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NOT TO BE SOLD

| IN THIS EDITION |

The dark side of Depression

Depression is often called a silent killer. Its symptoms can go unnoticed and are sometimes hidden behind a smile or a busy life. That's why we so often hear about people who took their own lives—or tried to—without anyone around them ever knowing they were struggling.

Depression shows up in many ways: trouble sleeping, major changes in appetite, constant fatigue, feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness, loss of interest in things you once enjoyed, and most commonly, a deep, ongoing sadness. But many people cover it up with a fake sense of happiness or by acting like everything is fine. The truth is, ignoring a problem doesn't make it go away.

We live in a world that says “fake it till you make it,” but when it comes to depression, that mindset doesn't work. When you avoid dealing with it, you give it more room to grow—and it only gets worse. Depression is often brushed aside, but its impact on someone's life is real and serious. It's not just a passing feeling or a bad mood—it affects a person's soul.

Are you—or someone you love—battling depression? Does it feel like that heavy weight keeps getting heavier with each passing day? Maybe you feel stuck in a cycle of sadness and can't seem to break free. But don't lose hope. Change is possible. You can overcome depression.

Keep reading to see real-life stories from people who broke free from the grip of depression. Each one came to The Universal Church and found help. They all felt stuck at one point, but with guidance, support, and persistence, they made it through. And you can too.

We're here for you. That's why we're inviting you to a special event against depression, on Sundays at 10 a.m. in every Universal Church nationwide. Come as you are—and leave completely changed.

| BEATING DEPRESSION |

Depression is more than just feeling sad—it's a deep, overwhelming sorrow that weighs down the soul. It brings feelings of hopelessness, drains motivation, and makes even the simplest tasks feel impossible. In severe cases, it can even rob people of their will to live. Depression isn't just a state of mind—it's a sickness of the soul. But what remedy can be used to heal the soul? Only the Savior, the Lord Jesus, has the power to restore a troubled heart.

Every Sunday, The Universal Church opens its doors to those who are battling depression. If you need support, we invite you to visit a nearby branch. Join a Chain of Prayer—a seven-week commitment where you'll receive spiritual strength through powerful prayers, practical guidance, and one-on-one counseling.

You are not alone in this battle. Thousands around the world have found hope and transformation through faith, proving that a Chain of Prayer can truly make a difference. **You can be the next success story. You can overcome depression!**

BEAT DEPRESSION
BEATING DEPRESSION THROUGH THE POWER OF FAITH!

Call 1.888.332.4141
Text 1.888.312.4141
For more information
SEE PAGE 12 FOR LOCATIONS



Bishop Edir Macedo

The only direction we should be looking



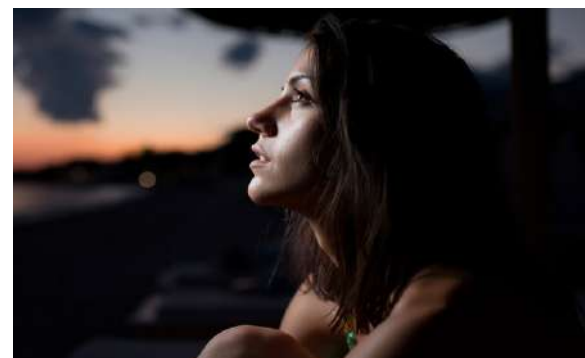
“So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. When He had spit on the man's eyes and put His hands on him, He asked, ‘Do you see anything?’ The man looked up and said, ‘I see people—they look like trees walking around.’ Once more, Jesus put His hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.” — Mark 8:23–25

How can we expect to receive anything from heaven if our eyes are always fixed on the world? Looking toward heaven means choosing to live by faith—it means trusting in what we can't see yet, believing in the supernatural power of God

In this passage, the blind man didn't receive full healing until Jesus told him to look up—away from people and toward heaven. That shift in direction made all the difference.

A lot of people say they believe in God, but they still rely heavily on others. That kind of dependency can hold you back, because true restoration doesn't come from people—it comes from above. Others may want to help, but their strength and resources are limited. Everything they have to offer ultimately comes from God anyway.

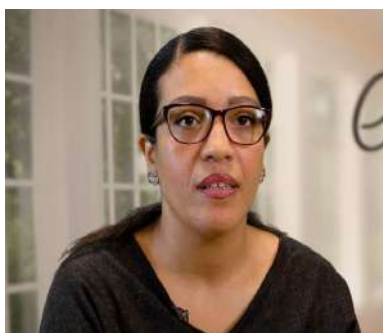
John 3:27 says, “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.” That's why Jesus



didn't just heal him halfway. He made sure the man looked in the right direction—upward—so that his healing would be complete.

So let me ask you: if your life still feels broken or incomplete, could it be because you're looking in the wrong direction? When we lift our eyes to the Most High, the impossible becomes possible. Real transformation only happens when our faith is pointed toward heaven.

People can support you, but their help has limits. Heaven doesn't. And even if no one else steps up to help, don't worry—God is always ready. Heaven is always open. So lift up your eyes. Fix your focus on heaven. Stay in faith. The direction you look can change everything.



“My problems left me hopeless”

My lowest point came when I couldn't even take care of my son financially. I tried so many ways to fix it, but the more I tried, the worse things got. We were about to lose our home, and I was out of work. I went to someone I thought could help me, but she said there was nothing she could do.

On my way back home, I passed in front of a church. The pastor was standing outside and he saw the sadness on my face. He stopped me and asked what was wrong. He told me about the church and said something I'll never forget: “Go home. Don't worry. Today you're going to find a solution. God is going to give you an answer.” I thought it was strange, but I thanked him and went home. Later that same day, the woman I had visited in the morning called me and said there might be a way she could help me with my problem. God answered.

From that day on, I started coming to the church. Sometimes twice, even three times a day—just to hear the Word. And every time I listened, I felt better. I felt hope—something I hadn't felt in a long time. I followed the advice from the pastors and assistants. Everything they told me to do, I did.

The first change I experienced was

the disappearance of that hopelessness. It was like a weight had lifted. I finally believed that things could get better. And little by little, they did. I found a job, got back on my feet financially, and things began to fall into place. But the greatest blessing I received was the Holy Spirit.

Early on in my journey with God, I learned how important the Holy Spirit is. I realized I needed Him to stay strong in my faith. I saw how peaceful and secure the pastors and helpers were, and I wanted that too. So I started seeking. I joined a special campaign, went to a vigil for the Holy Spirit, and that night—while praying at home—I received Him. It's hard to describe. It was a feeling of pure joy, but also this awareness of how small I was and how big God is. He gave me this incredible gift. That moment changed everything. The way I saw life, the way I acted, even the way I connected with people—all of it changed.

Eventually, after 10 years apart, my son's father and I found our way back to each other. We met again in church and were able to work through the issues we once had. Now we've been married for 15 years. My life today is completely blessed.

- Helena Leite

Experience the Power of God this Sunday



“The Terminal Illness Couldn’t Put an End to Her Faith”

Spots on her skin, headaches, and constant vomiting were the symptoms that led Maria Cristineide da Silva, now 52 years old and a taxi driver, to seek specialized medical help. However, after returning home from the initial diagnosis, she continued to feel unwell and extremely fatigued. One morning, she woke up with black lips and fingernails — a sign of something much more serious. “I went back to the hospital, and after further testing, I was diagnosed with leukemia. I was 27 years old. The doctors said I might not survive the night because I was already in the terminal stage,” she recalls. While in the hospital, Maria began watching Universal Church programs on TV and frequently participated in prayers led by bishops and pastors. She shares: “I started to consecrate water and used it in faith.”

She shocked the doctors when she arrived at the hospital walking on her own and showing no side effects or complications. When her test results came back, the doctors, visibly surprised, called her in: “They were in disbelief over my healing and transformation. They even said I looked healthier than all of them combined.” When congratulated on her recovery, she made sure to give credit where it was due: “I said, ‘The congratulations go to God. He’s the one who healed me.’” Since then, she hasn’t experienced a single symptom or relapse.



“The spiritual attacks are over.”

For years, I suffered from spiritual attacks. Almost every night, when I went to sleep, I felt something heavy coming over my body. It was a horrible experience. But then I started using my faith. On Sundays, I prayed, I drank the blessed water from the church, and I didn’t give up. I kept believing and attending the prayer services. Little by little, things began to change. I started feeling better. The sleepless nights stopped. I no longer feel anything crawling on my bed or pressing down on me. Now, I sleep peacefully—like a baby. Thanks be to God.

– Mrs. Gloria



“The eye problem is gone.”

I was dealing with cataracts for a few years. They were still small, but I had to wear glasses for reading and using the computer. I also started seeing little floaters in my eyes. I used the blessed water—I prayed, washed my face with it, and even held it over my eyes. But when the floaters kept showing up, I said, “No, I rebuke this.” I continued using the water with faith, and I didn’t give up.

Now I want to share something amazing—everything is completely gone. My vision is clear and bright!

Thanks to God and to putting my faith into action by using and drinking the blessed water.

– Miss Jennifer



**RECEIVE THE
HEALING WATERS
THIS SUNDAY**
at your nearest
Universal Church





| MESSAGE |

Bishop Joshua

Depression hits the soul



When you speak of things like racism, it usually affects one group of people more than another. When you think about poverty, you know immediately that it doesn't impact the rich—it affects the poor. When you consider heartbreak, it only touches those who are in a relationship (or were in one).

But there is one problem that doesn't care about your race, financial status, or whether you're single or married, rich or poor. This problem can affect anyone and everyone. Its name is depression.

Depression is the kind of problem that strikes the soul. It reaches the deepest part of a person, regardless of their background. It can drain someone of all motivation and joy for life. It can lead a person to feel like life itself has no meaning. Many have given up entirely because of it.

For most people, depression is rooted in the problems they're facing—problems that seem unsolvable. But Jesus said in His Word:

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."
— John 16:33

Jesus knew we would face hardships, but He told us to be of good cheer. That's difficult when you're depressed—cheer feels out of reach, and sorrow feels all-consuming. Yet His words remind us to be strong and face our challenges without letting them break us.

When you're confident in your faith and your relationship with God, you won't allow the struggles that break so many others to break you. You'll trust and depend fully on Him, facing your difficulties with faith.

So I invite you to do just that:

Stop letting your problems trap you in a pit. Instead, rise up in faith and power—and you will see the hand of God move in your life.

May the God of the Bible bless you.

Stop letting your problems trap you in a pit. Instead, rise up in faith and power—and you will see the hand of God move in your life.

Depression is a silent illness that affects millions worldwide. It is often called the "illness of the century" because of how deeply it impacts lives, leading many to despair and even suicide. Those who suffer from depression may feel trapped in a cycle of emotional highs and lows, losing their desire to live, work, study, or care for themselves.

Depression is not just sadness—it is a complex illness that weakens a person's initiative and affects the body, mind, and spirit. People with depression may struggle with fatigue, memory loss, trouble sleeping, and loss of appetite, making daily life a burden.

In the midst of this darkness, there is hope. Depression has a cure. You will learn from Jackeline's story that faith in God can be a powerful tool in the fight against depression. Through prayer, spiritual support, and belief in the healing power of Christ, many have found freedom and renewal when engaged in a chain of prayers for deliverance.

If you've sought help before and still feel lost, know this: God has not abandoned you. With faith and the right spiritual guidance, you can overcome depression and live a new life filled with purpose, joy, and peace.

Read her story...



My name is Jackeline, and the biggest giant I faced was depression. Growing up with separated parents in a home filled with fights and poverty, I didn't go hungry—but I went without a lot. At 15, I lost my mom, and that left a huge emptiness inside me. As time went on, I ended up getting married, thinking it would fill that void. I had my first child, and soon after, I went through postpartum depression. But I didn't even know what depression was back then.

Eventually, I turned to doctors for help. In one year, they did 13 EKGs because my symptoms felt like I was dying—rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath, constant tingling. But after all those tests, the diagnosis came back:

there was nothing physically wrong. The doctor said, "You're dealing with depression."

I was referred to a psychiatrist and started taking strong medications. I needed pills to sleep at night and others to stay on my feet during the day. That's when suicidal thoughts came. I'd look at the staircase in my house and think about hanging myself. The voices in my head kept telling me, "End it—it'll stop the pain." And for a moment, I believed it. But when I looked at my kids, I couldn't do it. I just didn't have the courage.

One day, while taking a work course, I met a woman of faith. She saw how bad things were for me and invited me to church. By then, I had been living with depression for 16 years. I accepted her invitation, and the day I stepped into the Temple of Solomon, I remember taking a deep breath and thinking, Wow, this place feels different.

As I listened to the pastor speak, I was shocked by how boldly he spoke about faith. I thought, If I talked like that, God would strike me down! I didn't understand it at the time. But that night, for the first time in years, I slept. I woke up feeling rested. That was the beginning of something new.

It had been a 16-year battle, but like David facing Goliath, I believed I could win. David wasn't fighting for Saul's army—he was fighting with the God of Israel. And I believed that same God was with me. The more I came to church, the bigger the giant seemed. Sometimes I thought, This thing might be worse than Goliath! But I told myself, I'm going to fight. And I did.

I defeated that giant.

Today, depression is no longer part of my life. I received the most precious gift anyone could have: the Holy Spirit. I consider myself the richest woman in the world—not because of money, but because God chose to live inside me. Having His Spirit gave me the strength to cut off the head of every giant in my life.

Since the day I received the Holy Spirit, everything changed. I'm complete. I'm happy. I have joy, peace, and a reason to live again. Now, the simple act of sleeping and waking up in peace is something I treasure. That peace overflows in every part of me.

Jackeline

JULY BIBLE READING 2025						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 GENESIS 15 ✓	2 GENESIS 22 ✓	3 GENESIS 37 ✓	4 GENESIS 39 ✓	5 GENESIS 40 ✓
6 GENESIS 41 ✓	7 JOSHUA 2 ✓	8 JOSHUA 6 ✓	9 JUDGES 6 ✓	10 JUDGES 7 ✓	11 JUDGES 11 ✓	12 RUTH 2 ✓
13 RUTH 3 ✓	14 RUTH 4 ✓	15 1 SAMUEL 1 ✓	16 1 SAMUEL 2 ✓	17 1 KINGS 3 ✓	18 1 KINGS 17 ✓	19 2 CHRONICLES 32 ✓
20 ESTHER 3 ✓	21 ESTHER 4 ✓	22 ESTHER 6 ✓	23 JOB 1 ✓	24 JOB 2 ✓	25 JOB 3 ✓	26 JOB 42 ✓
27 DANIEL 1 ✓	28 DANIEL 2 ✓	29 DANIEL 3 ✓	30 DANIEL 4 ✓	31 DANIEL 6 ✓		

What's happening at the Universal Church

“What depression once took from me, God transformed and gave me even more.”



After losing her brother to violence, Ingrid Otaviano was consumed by grief. At just 9 years old, she watched her family fall apart.

“My brother got involved in crime and was murdered a week after leaving jail. My mom shut down completely. It felt like I lost her too,” she shared.

As her home turned into a place of silence, pain, and daily fights, Ingrid fell into depression.

“I grew up angry, wrote letters to my dead brother saying I wanted to die. I was lonely, surrounded by bad influences, involved in parties and toxic relationships. I smiled outside, but inside I was broken.”

Things began to change the day a neighbor invited her to the Universal Church.

“I went on a Wednesday—ironically, the same day a friend of mine was killed. I’ll never forget that meeting. During the search for the Holy Spirit, I felt something I’d never felt before. I left feeling light, like I could finally breathe.”

That day marked the start of her transformation. As she continued attending services and seeking God, the pain began to fade.

“I realized my problem was spiritual. The suicidal thoughts stopped. The void inside me was replaced with a burning desire to know God.”

In 2015, during the Fast of Daniel, Ingrid received the Holy Spirit.

“That’s when everything changed. I became a new person. Depression, sorrow, bitterness—they’re all gone. Today, I live alone, but I’m never alone. God is with me. My mom is my best friend. I’m in a healthy relationship, I have peace, and I love sharing what He did in my life. What depression took from me, God gave back—far better than before.”

Suffering in silence



“Because of depression, I spent two years without getting out of bed. That was the lowest point of my life.”

—Camila Carla Reis da Silva Soares, 35, married, mother of two

Camila, a hairdresser, left her hometown hoping for a better life in a new city. But instead of finding new opportunities, she found herself crushed by depression. Years of silent suffering followed—along with multiple failed treatments—until one invitation changed her life, helping her put depression behind her once and for all.

“I was born into hardship,” she says. “I was raised by my grandmother in poverty. There was barely enough food, and I had no clothes, no shoes, not even a chair to sit on. All of that made me a depressed child.”

In an attempt to escape her reality, Camila married young. But the struggle continued.

“Nothing got better,” she recalls. “We were still poor. Everything we had came from donations—or things we found in the trash.”

Trying to turn things around, Camila and her husband moved their family to a new city. But life only got harder.

“We ended up living in a basement,” she says. “For a while, I tried to fight the de-

pression, but one day, it just overcame me. I started crying all the time. I felt empty inside. I didn’t want to get out of bed anymore.”

Eventually, Camila sought professional help.

“I spent two years in treatment at a Psychosocial Care Center. I was even hospitalized three times for suicide attempts. I gained a lot of weight. It felt like there was no way out,” she shares. “I lost everything to depression—even my voice—because I didn’t see the point in speaking. I’d try to explain what I was feeling, but it felt like no one really understood.”

That pain followed her—until the day she stepped into a church.

“I went to an event held by the Universal Church, and as soon as I walked in, I felt peace,” she remembers. “When I stood in front of the Altar, I surrendered my entire past to God. I was honest. I laid it all there—the poverty, the days I spent digging through trash, the things doctors said about my diagnosis. I had just a few minutes to talk to God, but when I opened my eyes, everything looked different. I felt lighter. I felt joy inside me.”

From that moment, Camila’s transformation began—inside and out. She committed to growing in her relationship with God and feeding her soul through His Word. With time, her appearance began to change as well. She found strength to invest in her marriage and to develop her gift as a hairdresser. Today, she uses her testimony to help others facing depression.

“Now I can tell people with confidence: there is a way out,” she says. “When we give our lives to God, all that sadness, all the pain from the past—it becomes nothing.”

YPG NEWS
YOUTH POWER GROUP

**Every
Sunday
at 1pm!**



WHAT DOES YPG MEAN TO YOU?

To me, YPG means youth united for a greater purpose—growing together, pushing through struggles, and becoming the best version of ourselves. It’s more than just a group; it’s a movement built on faith, positivity, and real support. In YPG, I found people who truly care—people who lift each other up, who help one another rise above negativity, and who celebrate each other’s wins. It’s a safe space where I feel like I belong. I’m not judged—I’m encouraged. To me, YPG is family. Being part of it has changed the way I think, boosted my confidence, and completely shifted the direction of my life. —Laurie Gedelien

REACH OUT NOW: 1 888 332 4141



Come and See

Depression:**A silent illness with a loud impact**

Depression is a silent illness that affects over 350 million people worldwide, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Its impact can be devastating—every year, around 11,000 people lose their lives to suicide as a result of this condition.

For those dealing with depression, life can feel like an emotional roller coaster—ups and downs that never seem to stop. Moments of happiness are often short-lived and quickly replaced by overwhelming sadness that doesn't always have a clear cause. This illness is often compared to a degenerative disease because it slowly steals a person's ability to enjoy life and find meaning in daily activities. Even simple tasks like studying, working, or taking a shower can feel impossible.

Psychiatrist Fernando Fernandes explains, "Depression is a disease that takes away your initiative, and it's very difficult for someone to fight a condition that attacks exactly what they need to fight it with." He points out that depression is much more than just feeling sad—it's a serious clinical condition that affects the mind, emotions, and body. Symptoms often include trouble concentrating, changes in sleep and appetite, constant fatigue, and memory problems.

So, how can we fight this silent illness? The Universal Church believes that faith plays a key role in healing. Trusting in God, along with emotional and spiritual support, can help bring hope and strength to those battling depression.

Maybe you've already tried many different paths in search of healing—and nothing has worked. But you should know this: it is possible to break free from depression and all the pain that comes with it. A new life is within reach.

The cure for depression

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." — John 14:6

It's time to stop following paths that only lead to more suffering. Choose the only path that offers a real and lasting cure for the wounds of your soul.

Join us and fight depression through faith. Every Sunday at all Universal Church locations. (See the back page for the address nearest you.)

**"I almost jumped from my apartment."**

My name is Samia, I'm 37 years old, and I'm a lawyer. I used to have a real prejudice against churches. Honestly, just hearing the word church made me feel repulsed. If someone even mentioned it, I didn't want to keep listening. If it came on TV, I'd change the channel right away. I wanted nothing to do with it. I would say things like, 'Church? I'm out!'

I had it set in my mind that no pastor could be trusted. Whenever someone told me they went to church, I'd respond, 'I'll never step into a church. They lie, they manipulate, and they steal from people. I can go anywhere in the world, but never to a church.' At that time, my life was a mess. I was a single mom after a failed relationship. I had started several college degrees, but I could never finish any of them. It felt like I could never complete anything I began.

Over time, I fell into depression. And not just any kind of depression — the kind where I couldn't even sleep. I went three or four nights in a row without rest. I would lie awake all night long. I had serious thoughts about ending my life. I lived in a high-rise, and I'd look down and constantly hear this voice — not out loud, but in my mind — saying, 'Jump. Just end it. You're a failure. You can't finish anything. You're not even talking to your parents. You don't value your own child. You can't even sleep.'

I was drinking a lot, and smoking even more. I was smoking two packs of cigarettes a day. That's where I was mentally and emotionally when I met a woman who became a friend. I enjoyed talking to her — she gave off a sense of peace, and there was this light in her eyes that I couldn't explain. She told me she did prayer chains at the Universal Church. Even though her words made me feel good, I still criticized her behind her back. I'd talk to my other friends and say, 'Can you believe she goes to that place? She's a doctor, an educated woman. I understand if they deceive people who didn't

go to school, but her?' I judged her hard. But the next day, I called her and told her the truth: 'I'm not okay. I almost jumped from my apartment. I haven't slept in four days. I smoked 40 cigarettes just last night. I'm at my limit.'

She said, 'You're coming with me. Right now.' At first, I panicked. I thought, 'Oh no, she's going to take me to that church, and I am NOT going in there.' I told her, 'I'm okay now. It's passed. I feel better.' She didn't budge. She said, 'That's an order. Come down now.' I remember getting to the door and saying, 'Why are you bringing me here? There are so many other places... so many other churches.' She looked at



me and said something I'll never forget: 'I'm bringing you here because this is the only one that's open right now.'

She compared it to an emergency room: ‘You’re sick. Really sick. And this is the ER. This is where you need to be.’ So I went in. As soon as the pastor started praying, I felt something shift. It was like a huge weight lifted off me. After the service, the pastor came to talk to me. He said, ‘Speak to the Lord Jesus. He’s alive. He’s here. And He wants to hear your voice.’ I remember praying for the first time and saying, ‘If You really are the God this pastor is talking about, then please help me stop smoking so much. Help me stop drinking so much. Take away this desire to die. I just want to be happy. That’s all I want.’

I left the church and got home around 7 p.m. I laid down on my bed... and when I opened my eyes, it was 7 a.m. I

had slept all night. I rested. And I didn’t feel like smoking. That same day, a friend came by with a cigarette and asked me to light it. When I brought it close, I felt nauseous. I didn’t want it anymore. Right then, I said, ‘My God... that prayer worked. Jesus is real!’ I felt the desire to go back to church. I kept attending the services, and little by little, I was delivered — from every addiction, from the depression, from the insomnia. Then, I had my encounter with God. One Sunday morning, I received the most precious gift of my life: the Holy Spirit. That moment was unforgettable. That’s when the old Samia died and everything changed. God made everything new. My life finally began to move forward. The same woman who couldn’t finish anything — who

had dropped out of every course — when I started attending church, I was in my fifth year of law school. And I always thought, ‘I’m never going to pass the Bar. I barely study. I miss too many classes.’ But something changed inside me. By my final year, before I even graduated, I passed the Bar exam — both parts — on my first try.

Soon after, I met my husband. He’s a man of God and shares the same faith I do. Everything changed. Everything became new. To me, the Holy Spirit is everything. Without Him, I’m nothing. If I can say today that I’ve become someone, that I’m a real person — I owe it to the Holy Spirit. Before, nothing in my life worked. Nothing about me was good. But when the

Holy Spirit came, everything changed. I could never let go of Him — not for anything in this world. And to think I used to believe that the church would take something away from me...

Today, I see the church as my spiritual mother. I love it deeply, I respect it, and I’m so grateful for the Universal Church.

I constantly ask God to bless me financially — not for me, but so I can support this work. I want to be a pillar in this house of faith. Because I know there are other women like me — other ‘Samias’ out there, depressed and ready to end their lives — who will walk into the Universal Church and be set free, find new life... and above all, be saved.”



That lack of direction led me into depression. I was overwhelmed with responsibilities—especially trying to pay off my debts. That became my only focus. Every day, I’d think, “How am I going to pay all this off?”

It started to crush me. The pressure got so bad that I began having suicidal thoughts. I’d hear that voice telling me, “You don’t need this. Life isn’t worth it. There’s a better place than this.”

I struggled with those thoughts for years. I was working hard, trying to keep up, trying to face how deep my problems really were. I felt like life had let me down. I blamed myself, my family, and everything around me. I didn’t even realize I was dealing with depression.

I kept telling myself, “Why should I share my problems with anyone? They’ve got their own to deal with. How could they help me?” And everywhere I turned, it seemed like everyone was



going through something. So I told myself, “I’ve got to fix this on my own.” That’s when I thought about seeing a psychologist. I knew I needed help. I wanted to get out of that dark place—I needed to.

“In life, I had no direction at all.”

At that time, my partner had started going to the Universal Church. I noticed a real change in her. And that made me curious. I wanted to know what was behind that transformation—what had changed her so much that maybe, just maybe, it could change me too.

So I decided to go with her. When I got there, the man of God invited me

I’d hear that voice telling me, “You don’t need this. Life isn’t worth it. There’s a better place than this.”

to a Friday service. I’ll never forget hearing him say that no matter how big your problems are—no matter how overwhelming they feel—there’s a way out. Even if it feels like an avalanche is coming down on you, you can overcome.

He kept saying, “Leave your past behind. Keep moving forward. The only way to find what’s ahead is to take the next step.” That message hit me. I started attending regularly. And through those services, I realized I needed inner healing. I needed to change. I needed to forgive myself.

When I truly understood that, and when I heard the Word being preached, I knew I had to let go of the past. That’s when I began to experience deliverance.

I kept attending the Universal Church, and after about six months, I began to learn how things worked—how to pray for myself, how to face and overcome my problems.

Because everyone has problems—big or small. But I learned how to deal with mine. I started attending Monday services focused on finances, because of the debt I was carrying. Those messages helped me see the bigger picture. They helped me develop a vision for my future.

Eventually, I realized I could start my own business. That vision became real—and I didn’t hesitate. I moved forward. I paid off my debts, and beyond that, I was blessed in ways I never imagined.

Even my family began to see the difference. They saw the transformation in us, and that drew them closer to the faith. Now, they want to know more, learn more, grow more. And through all this, I just hope my story can inspire someone else—to believe that change is possible. To know that if it happened for me, it can happen for them too.” - Sharokh Hatami

UNIVERSAL BEYOND BARS

You are NOT alone!

LOST, BUT NOT A LOST CAUSE...

I was always a good kid at heart, but everything changed because of the friendships I made. I'll never forget the day my mother followed me. I told her I was going to school, but instead, I ended up hanging out with my friends. I was smoking, I had guns and weed on me.

Then I looked up—and there she was. My mother. Her eyes met mine, and I remember the look on her face. My heart dropped. I asked her, "What are you doing here?"

I sunk deeper. It reached a point where I was involved in many assaults and robberies. Eventually, I started trafficking drugs—armed drug trafficking. That's when I found myself in the middle of constant fights and turf wars within my own community. We would meet up to organize criminal activities. My mindset was completely lost—I had no focus, no purpose.

I wasn't just bad. I became much worse.

Eventually, I ended up in prison. It happened when my gang and I were planning a large drug sale. We had weapons ready. The night before, I went home to rest a bit. But early the next morning, around 7 a.m., the police showed up at my door. I panicked. I had pistols, a rifle, and drugs with me. That day, I was arrested in my own home and taken to prison. I never thought I would go through something like that. Honestly, everyone around me thought I was a lost cause. But my mother, despite all the pain, began to use her faith. She



Gabriel in prison

participated in the Campaign of Israel at church on my behalf. While I was in prison, something changed. I decided,

for the first time, to truly give my life to God. I surrendered everything—my weapons, drugs, responsibilities. It wasn't easy especially after my release. I was known in my community. They would say a lot of things, a mixture of good and negative comments spreading throughout.

I remained focused, I didn't allow opinions of others to change my direction. I avoided certain areas just to stay away from old friends who were still involved in crime, especially on my way home from church. I was decided: I was changing. Therefore, I avoided walking my old route home, and would "inconvenience" myself and take a longer way, so I wouldn't get drawn back in with the old company.

I got baptized in water—a symbolic step to show God I was serious. I attended services regularly, especially the deliverance services. Each day, I became a better person, a real friend, someone people could enjoy being around. My presence had changed. But—I wanted my faith to increase. My mom had taught me about the power of sacrifice, and I remembered that. I sold whatever I had left pertaining to my old lifestyle, I made my own sacrifice in the Campaign of Israel. I was sure that God would rewrite my story. Not long after, I had a real encounter with God. Within



me I had the assurance, it was like God said, "I am with you." That moment changed everything. I started to evangelize and became active in the youth group. Just as I had once been on the front lines of crime, now I was on the front lines for God. I never looked back. Even my wife, who



didn't believe in me at first, saw the change in my life. She started coming to church and eventually became strong in her faith. My life continued to transform. I had once been completely addicted to drugs—but no longer. Each day was a sacrifice, from faith to faith, but my life was becoming

Gabriel & his mom.



whole. I started earning a living in a legitimate way. My family—once broken—was restored. My marriage healed. My children now see me as a man of God. My story is a different kind of story. It's a testimony of a living, powerful God. The Holy Spirit became everything I was looking for in the world but never found. He gave me peace, joy, and purpose. Everything I have today is because of the Holy Spirit. I bring happiness to my mom and family. I'm a good husband, and father. People in the community now respect me. They greet me with a hug. They enjoy being around me.

Today, I can say with certainty: I am truly happy.



I'm counting down the days...It feels like forever. I want to go home." You don't understand.

Speak out, I am all ears! If you want to be added to my E-Message list, send me a letter with the correct info to: 7075 SW. Fwy. Houston, TX 77074.

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Let it go. Move on !

During King David's reign, the stories of his personal relationships often reflect deeper human struggles. One such account is that of Haggith, a lesser-known wife of David, whose emotional journey reveals the long-lasting impact of unresolved hurt and the dangers of holding on to resentment.

When King David fell into sin and began to treat his wives with growing indifference—often bordering on emotional aggression—many were affected, but none more deeply than Haggith. While others eventually accepted his remorse and moved forward with their lives, Haggith found herself unable to let go of the past.

Despite David's later repentance and sincere apologies to his family, Haggith continued to harbor resentment. Over time, the pain she carried evolved into a persistent grief that gradually consumed her. Instead of healing, she became bitter—her life marked by emotional isolation and a thirst for retribution.

"Hurt-ridden people don't move on and think it's because of the person who hurt them, but the reality is that they are the ones left behind, constantly having to remember what they've suffered and how much they've been hurt. Unconsciously, they want to punish, but they end up punishing themselves."

Example: Haggith's involvement with Joab—David's military commander—was not driven by love but by a desire to retaliate against David. "Her affair with Joab is an example of this, "It's payback for David leaving her for Bathsheba." You see when you do not resolve the emotional and relational toll of unresolved hurt:

"Grief never comes alone, but it makes you lonely." It's accompanied by hatred, anger, revenge, and envy. All these companions of hurt come and live inside you, while you gradually lose all your relationships." When a person remains trapped

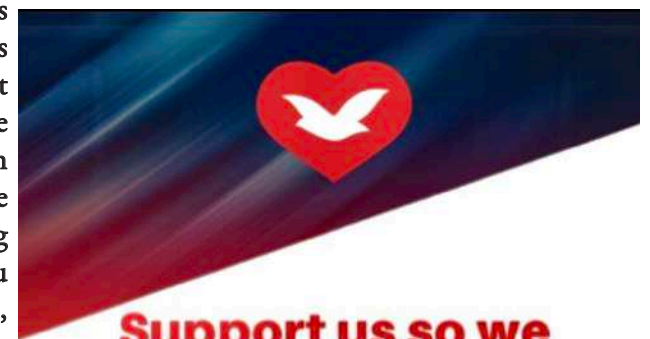
in grief and bitterness, they isolate themselves emotionally. A person who is hurt becomes incapable of giving or receiving love. They hurt others around them and will continually struggle in their relationships. However, the hurt person is not to blame for the harm others have done to them, but they are responsible for harboring that pain within themselves. Life is unfair. If you become bitter because of the world's unfairness, you will stop living. What we must do is take advantage of the escape God has provided. That escape, according to Christian teaching, is forgiveness.

Forgiveness, is not about excusing the offender but about freeing the wounded from continued suffering. "Forgiveness isn't about letting the other person get away with what they did to you, but about you not suffering every day from the harm they did. What has already happened is enough. You don't need to keep dwelling on it and revisiting it, allowing that person to continue hurting you years after everything you've been through.

This powerful lesson aligns with the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, who instructed: "But I say to you: Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven." — Matthew 5:44

"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." — Matthew 6:12

Jesus wouldn't say something we can't do. He didn't say it was easy, but good things aren't easy. What we have to do with God's counsel is simply obey it. The story of Haggith serves as a cautionary tale for those who find themselves trapped in past wounds. Through faith, reflection, and the deliberate act of forgiveness, healing is not only possible—it is promised. In a world marked by brokenness and injustice, forgiveness becomes the path to freedom.



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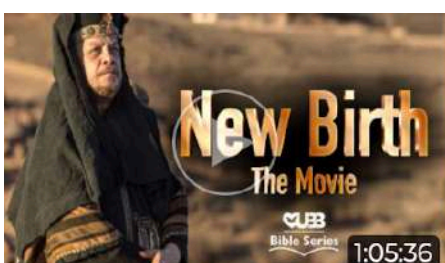
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When God Took Over the Business

During the pandemic, I got COVID-19 and ended up in critical condition. I had to be intubated. After 20 days in the hospital, I was finally discharged, but I couldn't walk. I was extremely weak and completely dependent on my wife for everything, including physical therapy. Because of that, I had to leave my motorcycle business in the hands of relatives and employees.

By the time I was well enough to check in on the business, things had taken a turn for the worse. The store was struggling, and I was deep in debt—about \$2 million.

My mom had been attending The Universal Church for a while and often invited me to go with her. Given the situation, my wife and I decided to check it out. At first, we were just showing up—we didn't get too involved. My only focus was on how to pay off that mountain of debt.

But during one of the meetings, I had a realization: something essential was missing in my life—God's presence. I came to

understand that only by seeking God's Kingdom and His righteousness first would everything else fall into place. So my wife and I began to truly seek the Holy Spirit. And eventually, I received Him.

Once I had God's presence in my life, I found peace—even though I still had all that debt. I made God my only business partner, and I believed we'd find a way

through it. Not long after, I heard that someone I knew was selling a store with 20 motorcycles in stock. That's when the verse from Isaiah 55:1 came to mind: "Come, buy without money." I knew God was guiding me. From that point on, things started to turn around. Business picked up at both stores. I went from being afraid to answer the phone—terrified of talking to creditors—to having the confidence and wisdom to negotiate each debt. Some were even settled for just 3% of what I originally owed. Today, the same amount I once had in debt, I now have in assets. But honestly, the greatest blessing that came out of that entire crisis was receiving the presence of God.



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