

Christ Church Sunday School Video & Discussion

“Depression: The Secret We Share”

Andrew Solomon

The following handout is merely a guide to process the talk and as a help for discussion. **Be sure to leave plenty of time for prayer for one another rather than trying to get to the bottom of the handout. Don't forget to introduce yourselves!** 😊 –Sarah

1. As we have discussed the elements of depression, we have not perhaps seen enough of the personal side of how it effects the entire body/mind/soul. Listen to Andrew Solomon's account of depression and write any initial thoughts below.
2. Whether from the class or personal experience, where do you resonate most with Andrew's story?
3. Do you think he missed anything in his description of depression?
4. Andrew shares a story of a husband and wife hiding their depression and medications from one another, as well as the NY Times' disbelief to the results of depression treatment for the poor. Do you think this is the norm? What about in the church? Is there a sense in which we often make assumptions of one another if individuals struggle with depression?
5. In your opinion, what can the church (either Christ Church or the church in general) do better to help those who are struggling with depression?
6. Andrew speaks of a “highly privileged rapture” (see final quote on other side). What is his reason for living, according to him? How might you respond with grace and truth to that statement?

7. If you feel led, share how depression has affected your life and walk with Jesus, whether personally or a loved one. Pray with one another.

Some Quotables:

“The opposite of depression is not happiness, but vitality. And it was vitality that seemed to seep away from me in that moment. Everything there was to do seemed like too much work. I would... decide I should have lunch, and then I would think, but I'd have to get the food out and put it on a plate and cut it up and chew it and swallow it, and it felt to me like the Stations of the Cross.”

“It was like that feeling you have if you're walking and you slip or trip and the ground is rushing up at you, but instead of lasting half a second, the way that does, it lasted for six months. It's a sensation of being afraid all the time but not even knowing what it is that you're afraid of.”

“Yes, people talk to me differently. They talk to me differently insofar as they start telling me about their experience, or their sister's experience, or their friend's experience. Things are different because now I know that depression is the family secret that everyone has.”

"But isn't depression part of what people are supposed to experience?... Isn't it part of your personality?" To which I say, mood is adaptive. Being able to have sadness and fear and joy and pleasure and all of the other moods that we have, that's incredibly valuable. And major depression is something that happens when that system gets broken. It's maladaptive.”

“...in a way it's continuous with normal sadness. There is a certain amount of continuity, but it's the same way there's continuity between having an iron fence outside your house that gets a little rust spot that you have to sand off and do a little repainting, and what happens if you leave the house for 100 years and it rusts through until it's only a pile of orange dust. And it's that orange dust spot, that orange dust problem, that's the one we're setting out to address.”

“Shutting out the depression strengthens it. While you hide from it, it grows. And the people who do better are the ones who are able to tolerate the fact that they have this condition. Those who can tolerate their depression are the ones who achieve resilience.”

“I have learned how big an emotion can be, how it can be more real than facts, and I have found that that experience has allowed me to experience positive emotion in a more intense and more focused way. The opposite of depression is not happiness, but vitality, and these days, my life is vital, even on the days when I'm sad.”

“I think that while I hated being depressed and would hate to be depressed again, I've found a way to love my depression. I love it because it has forced me to find and cling to joy. I love it because each day

I decide, sometimes gamely, and sometimes against the moment's reason, to cleave to the reasons for living. And that, I think, is a highly privileged rapture. “