

# I Trust When Dark My Road

## *A Lutheran View of Depression*

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## About the Author

- Pastor @ Messiah Lutheran Church in Kenosha, Wisconsin, for 11 years
- Husband to Kathryn, father of 4 children (ages 9, 7, 4 & 2)
- Graduate of Seward and Fort Wayne
- Deaconess intern supervisor (once)
- Author of *I Trust When Dark My Road: A Lutheran View of Depression*, editor of Psalms section in the *Treasury of Daily Prayer*, editor of *Higher Things Magazine* (2001-2006)



# Good Friday



In God my faithful God,  
I trust when dark my road;  
Great woes may overtake me,  
Yet He will not forsake me.  
My troubles He can alter;  
His hand lets nothing falter.  
(LSB 745:1)



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## Disclaimer

I am not a

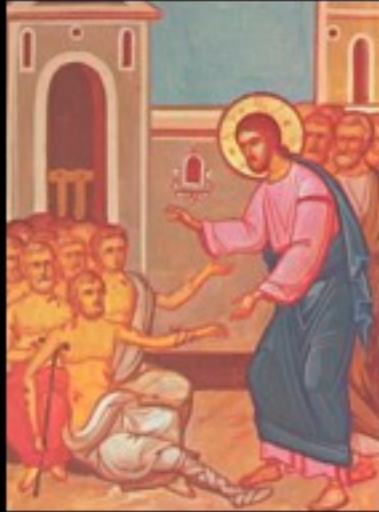
- DOCTOR
- PSYCHIATRIST
- THERAPIST/  
PSYCHOLOGIST



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# The perspective is..

- Personal
- Pastoral
- As both the receiver and the giver of care



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No one ever learned anything apart from suffering.  
- Malcolm Muggeridge



## Building Up to the Fall

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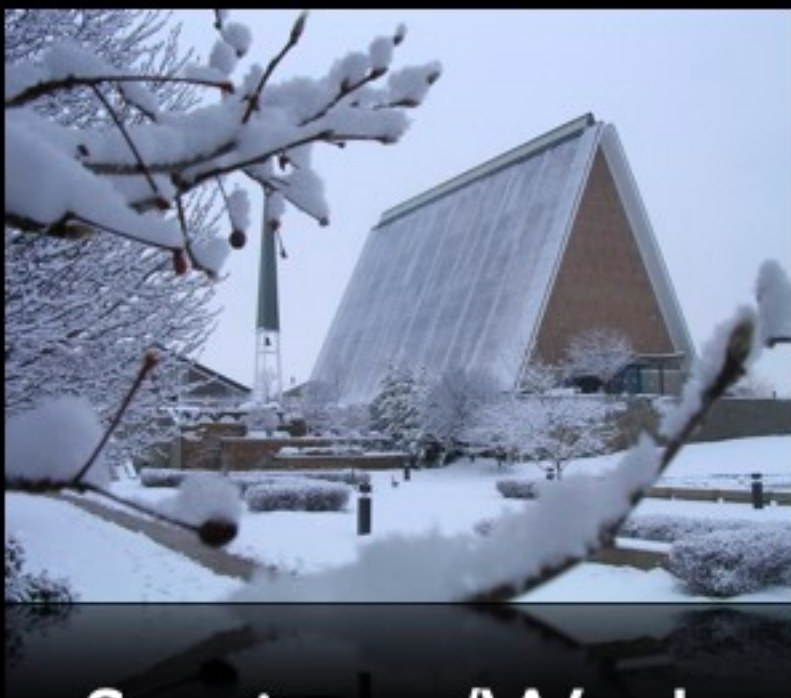
# Pastors

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# College

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## Seminary/Work

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## Messiah

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# The Disease

Bow down Your gracious ear to me And  
hear my cry, my prayer, my plea; Make haste  
for my protection,  
For woes and fear Surround me here.  
Help me in my affliction.  
(LSB 734:2)



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## What is Clinical Depression?

An all encompassing low or severe mood that is often accompanied by a loss of self-esteem, interest in the outside world, and a lack of interest in pleasure or any regular activities.



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# Other descriptions

- darkness
- a fog
- walking through thick water
- seeing the world in the faintest of grays
- the noonday demon
- extreme “incurvatus se”
- chemically induced narcissism
- Mental paralysis

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## What are the different elements?

- Physiological
- Psychological
- Situational
- Spiritual

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# Why is the church worker at risk?

## 4 Reasons

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## SUPERPASTOR

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# STRESS



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# Compassion Fatigue



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# Satan

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## Living with Depression

My flesh and my heart may fail,  
but God is the strength of my  
heart and my portion forever.

Psalm 73:26 (ESV)



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## Impact on Spiritual life

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## Some of the spiritual effects...

- Can't read
- Can't hear God's Word
- Anger at God
- Self-absorption
- Guilt/Shame
- Hard to go to church at all

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## From the wife of a pastor...



It is so hard to understand how depression changes everything about how a person sees the world. I imagine you will also discuss the spiritual confusion that depression/mental illness can create. My relationship with God has been deeper, more primitive, more fraught, and sometimes so painfully distant in the midst of depression. The law is misery to me when I am deeply depressed; grace absurd and life-giving.

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## From Robert Preus...



Pastors who suffer stress and affliction, like any Christian in similar circumstances, may be tempted to look to their faith as a reason for self-esteem and assurance, rather than to the only object of faith, Christ and His pardoning Word. They conclude that failure and inability to cope are due to weak faith or the lack of faith altogether. They are viewing faith as their act rather than as their reception of God's mercy.

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# Reception: The Story of Merle

- Raised 5 Daughters by himself
- Ever present, ever serving, ever positive
- Cancer
- "Pastor, I don't want to be a burden on anyone!"
- "Sometimes the greatest gift you can give is to let others serve you."



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## The Confessions...

Thus the worship and divine service of the Gospel is to receive from God gifts; on the contrary, the worship of the Law is to offer and present our gifts to God ...This passage, too, brings the greatest consolation, as the chief worship of the Gospel is to wish to receive remission of sins, grace, and righteousness. Of this worship Christ says, John 6, 40: This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life. (Ap III, paragraph 189)

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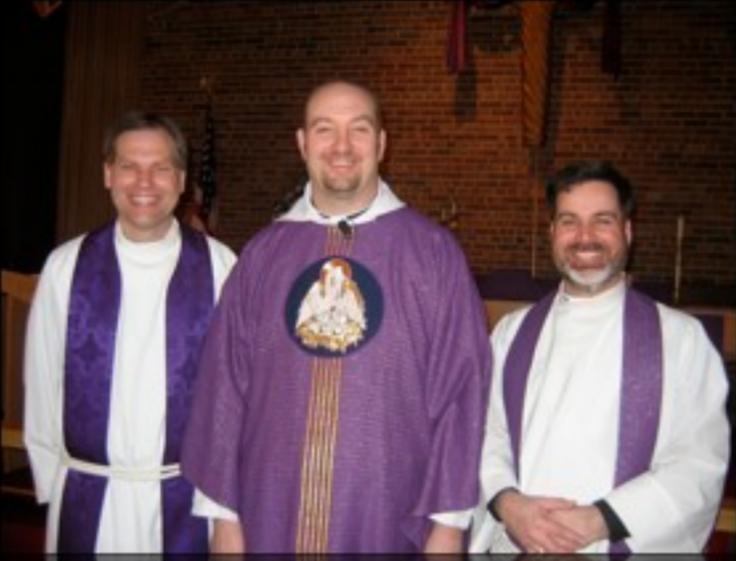
## Impact on Family & Relationships

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## The Megaphone



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Impact on  
Congregational Life

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## How does depression impact your ability to serve?

- Energy
- Ability to interact with others
- Patience
- Lack of Sympathy/  
Empathy
- Self-Absorption
- Time Management
- Forgetfulness
- Related question:  
whom do you tell and  
when?

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# How does the congregation respond to a suffering church worker?

- Confusion
- Guilt
- Love
- Frustration
- Anger
- Trust
- Mistrust
- Uncertainty about their role

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# Hope



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# Physical

(putting the pieces together)

- Medication
- Light
- Exercise
- Food



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# Mental

- Therapy
- Rethinking expectations
- Clarify Expectations
- Understand you are not a goddess that can do **any** **anytime**



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# Spiritual

- Receiving God's Word changes how you think about yourself
- Confession
- Intercession
- Regular consistency in encouragement in the Word



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# Personal

- You will learn who your friends really are
- Learning how to receive mercy from others is the best training ground for learning how to show mercy

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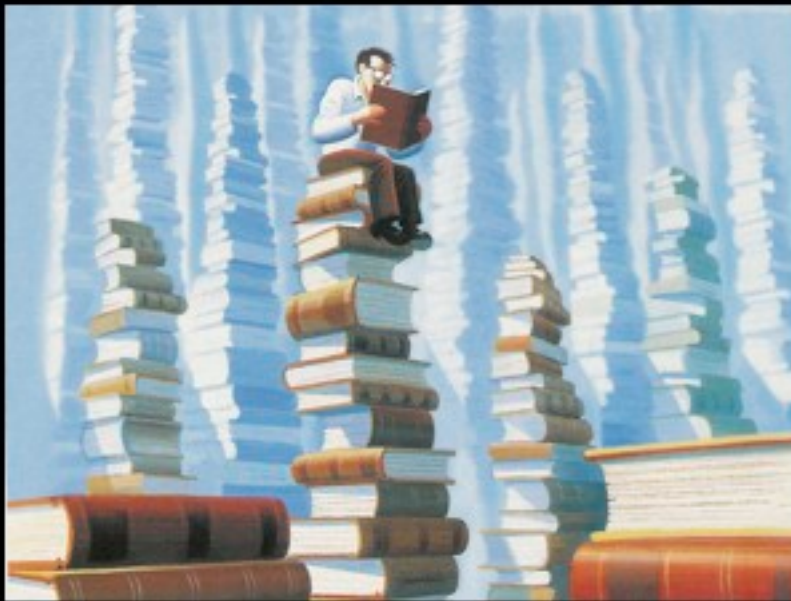
END OF DAY ONE

# I Trust When Dark My Road

*A Lutheran View of Depression*

DAY TWO

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Of Many Books...

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Developing a Plan for  
Service

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# An Approach to Serving the Mentally Ill

- Pray
- Talk (and listen!) to them
- DON'T try to simply talk them out of it
- Talk to their spouse or family
- Give them space, but don't be too far away
- **NEVER GIVE UP**

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## The “Team” for Healing

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# The Team for Healing

Pastor

Doctor  
(preferably  
psychiatrist)

# CHRIST

Advocates

Family  
Friends

Deaconess

Therapist  
(Psychologist or  
counselor)

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## Who will mother this work?

- Spouse
- Other Family
- Pastor
- Doctor or Counselor
- You



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# The Challenges to Quarterbacking/Mothering

- Walking the fine lines between serving/leading and intruding
- Experience vs. Expertise
- Serving from below vs. directing from above
- Finding the gaps or holes in healing



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## Three Case Studies

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## #1 The Deaconess

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## #2 The Pastor

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### #3 The Parishoner

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## Conclusions and Implications

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