Dear Lexie,

Nothing Shall Separate Us

Over the years I’ve run into many members, friends and relatives who deal with a darker side to life than many of us are aware of. In so many ways their perception of the world is somewhat skewed in a way that makes "soldiering on" a very hard battle to fight. Depression is a reality and not only a form of mood but also a function of sickness that can disrupt and destroy the lives of thriving and beautiful individuals. Although this is a known fact in society, it tends to be an underexplored topic when it comes to the church.

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Upcoming Events
Future events include:

- **Children's Choir** will be meeting after services on Sabbath at 1:15 in the Choir room. We will meet briefly for registration and to distribute the 2015-2016 choir schedule. If you'd like your children to be a part of this great ministry please have them to the choir room on time.

- **Children's Church** is September 19th in the Memorial Chapel. Look forward to a fantastic spiritual experience for the kids as they have fun and get to know Jesus and the Bible at a level they can easily understand.

- **Friends and Family Day** is October 3rd. Invite all your friends, family, and neighbors to come and join us as we celebrate Sabbath and fellowship together.

- **GLOW** is the new Young Adult Sabbath School meeting in the Memorial Chapel every Sabbath Morning at 9:30am. It stands for God Lighting Our World. There will be refreshments served for Young Adults and a program designed to bring our young adults closer to Christ. Follow the Young Adults on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com).

- **Sabbath School Training** will be held on September 19th at 8:45am in Fellowship B. A special speaker will be on hand to deliver inspiration and training for our Sabbath School teachers and leadership. Please make plans to be there.

- **CONCERT LINE-UP!**: We have a line-up of great concerts for you to invite your friends and family to at Sligo Church: National Christian Choir Sept 26, Jaime Jorge Oct 10, Sandi Patty Nov 14!

- **Prayer Gathering** (every Wednesday night @ 7PM)
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Audio Archive
Nothing Shall Separate Us

Richard Castillo

Over the years I’ve run into many members, friends and relatives who deal with a darker side to life than many of us are aware of. In so many ways their perception of the world is somewhat skewed in a way that makes “soldiering on” a very hard battle to fight. Depression is a reality and not only a form of mood but also a function of sickness that can disrupt and destroy the lives of thriving and beautiful individuals. Although this is a known fact in society, it tends to be an underexplored topic when it comes to the church.

I’ve dealt with depression on and off during my life and I can very clearly tell anyone that when depression hits, it can take much more than just family and church support to make it out of the darkness. I’ve dealt with friend’s suicide, both attempted and successful, as many of us have. I’ve always struggled with what it means to be a part of a world that on the one hand can be so supportive spiritually but on the other can seem to turn its head when it comes to mental disability or depression.

In the beginning of my ministry I was challenged by a woman who was in so many ways desperate to be a part of our young adult ministry but at the same time was fighting anti-social demons. By “demons” I’m referring to what can seem like a war of chemicals inside an individual’s head. Brain chemicals can misfire to the point that a person can cease to function as a normal citizen and isolate himself or herself, either because of overwhelming or misdirected guilt or paranoia. She was poor, a single mother, with little to no real income and no healthcare. She tried and failed to self-treat through borrowed medication, that she ended up abusing. While many would see her actions as irresponsible and careless, I began to see her attempts at self-healing as her desperate defense in a war for her soul.

We can discount individuals whom we can’t relate to, and even shun those who have problems that seem so overwhelming that we feel we cannot do any more than pity and pray. I don’t blame people who find themselves in this situation, because as with this woman, so many times I wanted to just walk away. I desperately wanted to escape the uncomfortable conversations, her constant need to self-deprecate and desperate need to find some love in the world around her, even though at the same time she would seem to banish any attempts. Have you ever been holding a cat that is purring one minute and gets spooked the next? You can end up with wounds from its desperate attempt to escape the loving arms that are there to comfort.

A close friend in college dealt with depression on a massive basis. He is an amazing person with people all around who loved him and supported him at every turn. We all also knew that he self medicated with marijuana. There wasn’t anyone among us that didn’t know that the drug was illegal. He never smoked openly in front of me, but we all knew. The crazy thing is, he never seemed high or stoned. It just seemed to even him out, so he functioned normally. We chose to ignore the sin, for the sake of his happiness, whether misguided or not.

So where do individuals who are fighting depressive “demons” fall with God? When they begin to make bad decisions based on their illness, how is this viewed from a heavenly angle? Let me start with this simple yet
profound word of God: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:35, 38–39).

We have to know with every fiber of our being that God isn’t walking away in our greatest moments of darkness. If anything, God is pressing harder to make a connection with us. As God gave each man choice and the ability to make his own decisions, He must stand on the edge of our consciousness at times until we are willing to reach out and accept his grace. The challenge comes when the person is so filled with the weight of their depression and chemical induced guilt that they seem to purposefully shun God as if they don’t feel they deserve his grace. I believe this is a product of the illness that many of us on the outside will give way for. Many don’t feel it’s their place to force God into someone’s life, and I would advise you don’t force religion or theological lectures into a person dealing with these demons. I know that God is love and I believe his guidance is purely in that regard. We are to surround those who are hurting with as much love as they can take, meaning many will have to love from afar.

We must view these mental afflictions in the same way we view physical ailments and hold on to these individuals with as much affection and support as we can. At the same time, I believe we can’t shy away from the blessings that God has given us through the talents with which he has blessed our medical professionals. Don’t be afraid to reach out for help.

Please remember that this sinful world and the life we live in it are merely the preparation for what God truly has in mind for our existence. He knows what is in our heart of hearts. He sees through the darkness, the illness, the depression and he sees you even when you can’t seem to see you.

“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (ESV)

I’m not even going to pretend I have all the answers or try to answer these massive questions in the space of an editorial, but I hope that this has set a seed in your mind. Whether you are dealing with depression right now, or you have friends who are, it is always a good time to reach out to God and your close friends and make sure they know you are there.