

HOW WE HIDE OUR HURT

SOMETIMES DOWN TIMES CRASH OUR PARTY and we know we're down.

We might even use the label "depressed." Or we might have a hard time seeing ourselves as "down." "Depression," we tell ourselves, "is for old ladies." However, there are a lot of people walking around depressed, but masking their depression—hiding it from others, or even from themselves.

And how do we try to hide depression from others, or from ourselves?

■ *Sometimes we keep our schedule so full that we do not allow ourselves to slow down.*

We feel we just can't face what feels like hideous boredom, or a hopeless problem. That oppressive feeling we are running from, trying to cover up, may be depression.

■ *Sometimes we mask it with smiles.* We're the joker, and nothing fazes us. (And if it does, we'll never tell.)

■ *Sometimes we take on a bad-guy image.* We get involved in vandalism or even crime. We feel comfortable with the label, "troublemaker." We feel cruddy, like we don't deserve goodness, so we act out our extreme down feelings by doing bad things.

The truth is, we are depressed and don't know how to ask for help.

■ *Sometimes we turn to slow-motion suicide.* We get involved in self-destructive behavior: drugs, alcohol and/or promiscuous sex. All this to hide from down times we don't know how to handle. Problems that may feel hopeless.

It is important to recognize these masks for what they are. There is a way out of our depression. But solutions begin when we face problems, not hide from them.

WHERE'S GOD WHEN I FEEL DOWN?

SOME CHRISTIANS would tell you that your blues will evaporate if you'll just turn to God. If you trust him, he will pave the roadway of your life with prosperity, an unlimited load of good times. This is not quite true.

Christians face suffering, hardship and confusion just as the rest of the world does. With a twist. One Christian who went through trying circumstances summed up his experience like this: "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:8).

Many of God's friends have had similar circumstances. They would remind us that in our down times, prayer connects us to him.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).