



A 90-DAY DEVOTIONAL

NAVIGATING THE BLUES

Where to Turn
When Worry, Anxiety,
or Depression
Steals Your Hope

KATARA WASHINGTON PATTON

“Katara Patton’s *Navigating the Blues* 90-day devotional is wonderfully transparent and transformational! The concepts and ideas were so useful to me as I faced my own struggles with doubt, fear, and insecurity. I found great comfort in the shared nuggets of practical wisdom, anecdotes, and use of sacred Scripture. As a mental health consumer and advocate, I can attest that Katara Patton’s book will bless those who find themselves in need of practical words of guidance and encouragement.”

—Rev. Ericka Bailey, speaker, author, and mental health advocate

“*Navigating the Blues* is a welcome resource for Christians who experience depression, anxiety, or other mental health challenges during difficult times. Patton . . . offers encouragement to face the blues with self-compassion, honesty, and faith. The devotional offers practical and relatable strategies that support healing. Patton shares wisdom from her own lived experiences with depression and employs prayer, affirmation, and action to steer readers through common but isolating occurrences of depression.”

—Keshia S. Burch, PhD, LCPC, core faculty and staff therapist,
The Family Institute at Northwestern University

“These daily devotions offer acknowledgment, acceptance, affirmation, and assistance. Blending applied wisdom with biblical truth, the author compassionately and capably leads her audience to the One who can safely steer us from deepest blue into the Light.”

—Sandra Byrd, author of *The One Year Experiencing
God’s Love Devotional*

“Often believers struggle with accepting their negative emotions because they believe that it contradicts their faith. However, *Navigating the Blues* provides space for God’s children to be vulnerable without shame or fear as they find comfort for their pain knowing that God hears the cries of His children and will rescue us amid our storms. This book will invite you not only to face those things you have intentionally avoided because of public judgment or self-guilt but also to trust the journey as you begin to heal and experience God’s gift of abundant life.”

—Jasclyn N. Coney, MA clinical psychology, MDiv

“These devotions provide a safe space to reflect and be vulnerable in overcoming our fears.”

—Leticia Ransom, SHRM-CP, PHR, MBA

“*Navigating the Blues* is not only timely; it speaks straight to an issue that so many Christians mask with, ‘Too blessed to be stressed (or depressed).’ As someone who wrestles with depression and anxiety, I appreciate the author’s vulnerability with the ‘My Confession’ sections. The way the book is structured is easy to navigate and absorb; there are times you barely have enough energy to get out of bed, let alone read God’s Word, and when you do, where do you start? Even here, the author directed me to specific Scripture that ministered to that thorn in my side. Lastly, ‘Progress, Not Perfection’ is a wonderful closing of the daily devotion, providing simple and encouraging steps to be gentle with myself. Katara Washington Patton’s *Navigating the Blues* will minister to the heart and heartache of the blues.”

—Dr. Stacey Holman, mental health advocate and filmmaker

“Katara Washington Patton has crafted a collection of meditations that touch the existential crisis we face as people of faith. How do we navigate the blues internally and the blues we face externally in our nation? Ms. Patton answers the question with spiritual depth, biblical wisdom, and theological insight. We all as human beings made in God’s image will face the blues; the question for people of faith will always be, Can we find the gospel chords among life’s blues notes? This book gives us a road map to handling the blue notes and reclaiming our gospel shout!”

—Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III, senior pastor, Trinity United Church of Christ, and professor of homiletics, MacAfee School of Theology

“How I wish I’d had *Navigating the Blues* when I was in the grip of depression. Katara Patton has been there. And she has grappled with the well-meaning but mistaken counsel of fellow believers who were certain that if her faith were strong enough, she would prevail. Full of faith, compassion, understanding, and deep wisdom, these devotions offer comfort, insight, and practical, simple tools to help us move toward wholeness, step-by-step.”

—Michelle Rapkin, author and editor

“This much-needed devotional is simply amazing. Depression is a serious issue that the church must pay more attention to. Helps like this offer those who may be suffering a way to confront their issues and begin their healing. I strongly recommend it.”

—Rev. Dr. Virgil M. Woods, author and pastor

NAVIGATING THE BLUES

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To all my sisters who have wrestled with, or who are currently wrestling with, depression, anxiety, and other mental health challenges. I see you. I pray for you. I appreciate all of my friends who have shared with me your struggles and walked with me on my journey.

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INTRODUCTION

Let me begin by stating: I'm a Christian who has suffered with depression for many years. Some of those years I've silently slept more than I care to admit, eaten much more than I should have (especially chocolate), and walked around feeling just numb. Other times, I've taken the advice of a few trusted friends, sought help through psychotherapy, prayed mightily, taken medication, and put into action some of the steps I mention in this book.

Since dealing with my own bouts of depression, I've been troubled by our faith community's response to mental illness for the most part; some, but not all, Christians walk around spouting verses like they are some panacea for anxiety, depression, and other mental illnesses. Until lately (like the past few years), many churches and people of faith haven't even acknowledged that people are suffering from mental illness; they've swept the issue under the rug or, dare I say, under the holy cloth and the holy cloak of being fine (or blessed and highly favored). In addition to rarely seeing our churches collectively assist those suffering with depression, the blues, anxiety, or other mental disorders, I have been told by dear loved ones that all I needed was my Bible and Jesus. Yet, as a person of faith who believes in the power of prayer—and who prayed and prayed for relief—I still suffered. So, what did that say about my faith? How does a Christian keep going when their prayers for relief seem to go unanswered? I didn't question my faith during this time nor did I question God's power to heal me; however, I did keep quiet about how I was feeling sometimes to avoid the Christian quips and “simple” (or should I say insensitive) solutions to a complex illness.

INTRODUCTION

After slowly finding relief from a particular bout, I decided to speak about my experience with the dark cloud known as depression. It was a bold move because many people didn't know I had suffered. I am usually pretty cheerful and upbeat; I wear the mask well—but no one is with me 24/7 except my God, and therefore only God knew what and how I suffered. When I spoke about depression, I received so many confidential messages from friends and acquaintances and even strangers. I had put words to what others were feeling.

One of the most helpful things in this world is to be seen, to be known—not judged but simply known. What I said resonated with many. What I said described some of the feelings others had. And here I was, still standing in my faith, still praying, still seeking and trusting God, yet admitting to being down many days.

That is why I share my story through these reflections. I'm not offering a cure—Lord knows I wish I could. And I'm very clear: I'm not a therapist. But I am a woman who has dealt with depression and reflected on it more days than I'd like to recall. In this devotional, I am offering messages from God's Word that have helped me make it through cloudy days. I'm not erasing faith because I sought help; I'm hopefully displaying how I put faith into action to take steps toward healing—even on days I felt like I was static and not moving or, worse, regressing into my dark place. And that's why after each devotional reflection I've included

- statements for you to repeat (to encourage yourself);
- actions for you to do (progress, not perfection): small steps to push you toward one more step, wholeness, and healing; and
- a prayer to assist you when your own words won't come.

INTRODUCTION

I pray right now as you read that you will find some comfort and solace in the words I've written within this book; I pray that you will be encouraged to seek whatever help you may need to make it through your cloudy days; most of all, I pray you keep moving forward, knowing that healing is a process and that you can take one tiny step in that direction today (you've picked up this book!). I pray God reveals His strength to you this day and provides exactly what you need.

If you are ever feeling like you cannot go on, I ask that you call this number immediately: 1-800-273-8255 or dial 988; you don't have to suffer alone so keep this number nearby and use it if you need it.

CRY OUT

Matthew 27:45–50

About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).

MATTHEW 27:46

Depression is complicated, to say the least. The numbness, lethargy, disinterest, and sadness often cannot be understood by anyone who has not experienced the complicated illness.

And what about faith? Where is it during these very low points in our lives? That’s a question those who love us dearly yet have not experienced depression may pose too. (They just don’t understand why you can’t shake this or snap out of it.)

Faith and depression can exist in the same space. Just because you’re walking through a low point doesn’t mean you do not have faith. Even Jesus suffered mightily and questioned God. Depression can make you do that.

But Jesus, the Master Teacher, continues to enlighten us through His example. His words uttered while on the cross teach us to cry out to God especially when we’re in excruciating pain. As Jesus moved closer to His ultimate mission on earth, He cried out to His Father, God. Jesus stared death in the face as He was drawn up on a cross. He understood what was about to happen as a part of His purpose, His mission, yet He cried out: “Father, why have you forsaken me?” (see Matthew 27:46).

Can’t you hear the agony in those words? Jesus feels abandoned by His Father—but I’ve never heard anyone question Jesus’s faith. The very fact that He is crying out to God means

NAVIGATING THE BLUES

Jesus acknowledges God and His control over everything. Crying out can serve as a means to release your agony and acknowledge that God is still God—even in the midst of your pain.

Crying out during bouts of depression may not ease the pain immediately, but it's a model from Jesus that we can follow. And it may just draw us closer to our God—which in the end is a win. Crying out like Jesus may be the reminder you need to know that you are going to be okay.

MY CONFESSION

I can cry out. I can yell at God—even question God—as uninvited pain takes up residence in my body and mind. I have no answers, but I do have the ability to cry and lament and the assurance that God hears, sees, and cares for me.

If Jesus cried out, so can you. Release what's on your heart to God.

**PROGRESS,
NOT
PERFECTION**

Take a few moments and cry out to God. Share what's on your heart and mind, how you feel, what concerns you. Release your thoughts to your Father who cares for you (see 1 Peter 5:7).

My God, my God: Sometimes I feel forsaken. Why am I enduring so much pain that I cannot always explain it to others? Help me. Be with me. Hear my prayer. Amen.

DOWNCAST SOUL

Psalm 42:1–5

My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, “Where is your God?”

PSALM 42:3

If you think you may be depressed but are conflicted about how a person of faith can be depressed, it may be helpful to remind yourself of biblical people of faith who also dealt with depression. It may have been called something else—or not diagnosed at all—but a careful look at Scripture shows the likes of David, Elijah, and even Jesus dealing with what we might call depression today. And we can learn from these biblical giants and others how to navigate our blues.

In today’s passage, the writer of this psalm—evidently a worship leader—is crying out and asking, Why is his soul so downcast, why are his tears so constant, like food, in the day and the night? The psalmist is clearly disturbed within. He recalls how he used to gleefully and cheerfully go to God’s house, leading a processional with instruments of praise. The writer recalls being joyful when worshipping God and getting chances to enter into His house and presence.

But something has shifted. The psalmist no longer feels like his former self. He no longer wants to enter into God’s house with joy and praise.

But in the midst of the psalmist’s lament (which can help the soul; cry out!), he offers the prescription he needs. He tells himself to put his hope in God, to praise God, and to remember all He has done in the past.

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This is a good formula for when we are downcast and depressed and perhaps may not feel the connection to God or others we once enjoyed. We can lament (cry out and share our emotions: grieve, mourn, complain, release), but we can also talk to ourselves like the psalmist does and remind ourselves to put our hope in God. Why? We can list all of the ways He has helped us in the past. And hopefully soon we too will be, like the downcast psalm writer, praising God again.

MY CONFESSION

I know God is present even when I may not feel God's presence.
You can cry out to God when your soul is downcast.

**PROGRESS,
NOT
PERFECTION**

Make a list of things God has done for you in the past. How can this list give your downcast soul hope?

God of hope: I need you to lift up my downcast soul. Help me to recall the ways you've brought me through in the past as I lean on you for strength to make it today. Amen.

WHEN WE ARE DISTRESSED, PART I

1 Kings 19:1–9

He himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

1 KINGS 19:4–6

Elijah is another biblical figure many admire and consider to be a mighty, faithful man. Yet, when I read Elijah's story, I see more. I definitely see a courageous prophet who stood up to King Ahab and his wife, Jezebel. But I also see a human being grappling with issues of fatigue that led to depression.

Elijah shows us some important ways to deal (and not deal) with our blues.

In the first part of 1 Kings 19, Elijah was scared even though he had just defeated many of his enemies. With God's help, he had performed the miraculous. (Elijah had just challenged the people who worshipped an idol god to have their idol send fire; when their god could not deliver their request, Elijah demonstrated the one and only God's power to send the fire. See 1 Kings 18:16–39.) Yet when we see him in today's Scripture,

NAVIGATING THE BLUES

Elijah is telling God to take his life. He is ready to die because he has had enough. Elijah feels like a failure.

In this passage of Scripture, we have some prescriptions to assist with the overwhelming symptoms of the blues, severe fatigue, and depression.

1. Go to sleep. Get your rest. Take a nap; sleep in; go to bed earlier. However you can manage to get more rest, do it. If you had a cold or another type of illness, you'd rest. Don't think any differently about emotional illnesses. You need your rest—sometimes more rest than you would normally.
2. Eat. And eat foods that will help you. It has been shown that processed foods and fast foods (fried items) can enhance depressed moods. As best as you can, try to leave those alone during this time. Use food as another form of treatment and medicine. Find foods that can help your mood—fresh fruits and vegetables; good, lean meat (if you eat meat). Ask someone you trust to prepare a few meals—many who might want to help don't know how. You can give them some suggestions.
3. Pray. Even when it feels like God doesn't hear you, know that God does. That's what Elijah did when he cried out to God and asked for God to take his life. He was praying. And God answered with some help through an angel's message.

What will you do today to practice one or more of Elijah's prescriptions for depression?

MY CONFESSION

I can rest, eat well, and pray today no matter how I feel.

If you are considering harming yourself, know that there is help. Reach out at 1-800-273-8255 or dial 988.

WHEN WE ARE DISTRESSED, PART I

**PROGRESS,
NOT
PERFECTION**

Follow Elijah's prescription today. How will you get more rest, eat better, and remember to pray?

My God, my God: I need you today. Give me what I need to make it through this day and through this season of distress. Help me to rest, choose good food, and keep praying. Send me the help I need. Amen.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A regular contributor to *Our Daily Bread*, Katara Washington Patton is senior editor for Our Daily Bread Publishing and the author of eight books. In addition to *Navigating the Blues*, she has authored *Successful Women of the Bible*, *Successful Moms of the Bible*, *Successful Leaders of the Bible*, *Inspiration for Christian Teen Girls*, *Joyous Advent*, *5-Minute Devotional Book for Women*, and *The Parables of Jesus Coloring Book Devotional*.

She has worked in the editorial and acquisitions departments at Weekly Reader Corporation, *Jet* magazine, Urban Ministries, Inc. (UMI), McGraw Hill, *The African American Pulpit*, *The Chicago Defender*, Tyndale House Publishers, and *Christian Century* magazine. In 2014, she was named nonfiction editor of the year by the Advanced Writers and Speakers Association (AWSA).

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Katara is a native of Thibodaux, Louisiana. She and her husband, Derrick, reside on the South Side of Chicago. They have one daughter, Kayla. Katara is a member of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago. As much as possible, she tries to enjoy a Zumba class and a competitive game of Scrabble to keep her life balanced.

So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold
you with my righteous right hand.

—ISAIAH 41:10

There is hope and relief from worry, anxiety, and depression. Inside this 90-day devotional you'll find encouragement through Katara Washington Patton's vulnerable story, godly wisdom, and practical steps that lead to healing and freedom. Each day includes a unique, relatable message, uplifting Scripture passage, and reminder of the countless people, including Jesus himself, who found their strength and comfort in God during their darkest times. Use this devotional to cry out to the God who hears you, loves you, and will help you.

Katara Washington Patton is senior editor for Our Daily Bread Publishing's Voices Collection. She has authored several books, including *Successful Women of the Bible*, and edited for *The Chicago Defender* and *Jet* magazine. She holds a master of journalism from Northwestern University and a master of divinity from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. A native of Thibodaux, Louisiana, Katara and her husband reside on Chicago's South Side. They have one daughter.

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