

COMPANIONS
in the
DARKNESS

SEVEN SAINTS
WHO STRUGGLED
WITH DEPRESSION
AND DOUBT

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FOREWORD BY
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INTRODUCTION

As you begin, reflect on your assumptions about depression. Who or what do you typically assign blame for it? What do you envision as an appropriate road to treatment? What stereotypes or biases might you hold towards those who struggle?

What role do you see stories play in seasons of struggle? Have you experienced a season when stories reached you like nothing else could? How might the presence of the stories in this book speak to the ways we think about, talk about, or experience depression today?

CHAPTER 1: Martin Luther

What resonated most with you in Luther's story? Did anything surprise you?

In the midst of one intense trial, Luther wrote down a note: "You are at school." How have seasons of struggle (depression or otherwise) shaped, taught, and molded you?

What are some of the "simple, physical pleasures of life" that keep you grounded in life's goodness? How can you practice a discipline of paying attention to them?

CHAPTER 2: Hannah Allen

What resonated most with you in Hannah Allen's story? Did anything surprise you?

For a time, Hannah found great help in keeping a journal. Do you journal? How have you found it to be helpful for your mental, emotional, and spiritual health?

Hannah suffered from a particular historic type of depression known as "religious melancholy," which included specific symptoms related to her spiritual life. How have you seen depression intertwine with your (or someone else's) spiritual life? How have you seen others respond to this in the past (both positively and negatively)? What wisdom might Hannah and her caretakers offer about how to navigate that?

CHAPTER 3: David Brainerd

What resonated most with you in Brainerd's story? Did anything surprise you?

The author briefly mentions the possible bad interplay of Brainerd's spiritual/theological tradition and depression. Do you agree that certain spiritual practices or theological beliefs might (unintentionally) exacerbate depression? How so? How might we safeguard against this?

Brainerd didn't get to see much of the fruit of his faithfulness. How might looking back on his legacy today (and that of the other companions) encourage us when we are depressed, discouraged, and unable to see the fruit of our own faithfulness?

CHAPTER 4: William Cowper

What resonated most with you in Cowper's story? Did anything surprise you?

What are some of the ways Cowper's friends supported and encouraged him in the midst of depression? How does their example inform the way you help those who struggle with depression today?

How did art help Cowper survive depression? Why do you think creating and taking in art has a unique way of reaching us when we're hurting? Have there been any particular pieces of art (visual arts, music, poetry, fiction, etc.) that have helped you in difficult times?

CHAPTER 5: Charles Spurgeon

What resonated most with you in Spurgeon's story? Did anything surprise you?

Have you ever heard a sermon that mentioned mental health? Was it handled helpfully or poorly? How does hearing a pastor or other spiritual leader talk about mental health issues impact both those who struggle and those who care for them? What sort of guidance might Spurgeon offer?

What role and benefit do the words of the Bible offer when we're depressed? How did Spurgeon keep the promises of God close and how did they help him?

CHAPTER 6: Mother Teresa

What resonated most with you in Mother Teresa's story? Did anything surprise you?

Did you find the revelation of Mother Teresa's interior life shocking? How does the knowledge of her suffering influence the way you see her work?

What did Mother Teresa's story teach you about what it may look like to follow Jesus faithfully "in the dark"?

CHAPTER 7: Martin Luther King Jr.

What resonated most with you in King's story? Did anything surprise you?

How does an awareness of King's underlying struggles impact the way you view him and his work?

What has enabled you to be resilient in the face of suffering? What are the tools or practices you employ?

CONCLUSION

Which of the seven companions did you most connect with? How will their story continue to shape you?

How will these stories influence the ways you support and help those who struggle with depression? If you struggle personally with depression, how have these stories impacted you?

Do you have a story you need to tell? What steps can you take to share some of your story and offer companionship to others?