

Book Review - New Light On Depression

Sandra Gutierrez

Alliance University

GCN 722 NOS Anxiety and Mood Disorders

Dr. Elaine Eng, MD, MA Biblical Studies

March 23, 2023

Biebel and Koenig titled their book "*New Light on Depression*." Once you have read the first four chapters, you begin to understand why: it consists of three sections that offer a comprehensive view of depression, untangling what it is and is not, guiding you to understand the myths, symptoms, and causes, differences between clergy and professionals, treatments, and the personal spiritual struggle that comes with it. They creatively and intentionally weaved personal stories and professional anecdotes, reflection questions, self-help activities, assessments, suicide awareness, and ways to help loved ones struggling with depression. The book can be a lot to digest, sometimes feeling academic with overly use of statistics. However, the charm is its simplicity of the language, making it easy to read, along with an all-embracing view of depression from a medical and biblical perspective providing help, hope, and answers.

Biebel holds a Doctor of Ministry degree in Personal Wholeness from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (Zondervan, 2019). Koenig is a psychiatrist working on evidence-based connection analysis between mental disorders and religion (Duke University, n.d.). With that said, their life, work experiences, and education enable them to reveal the complexities of what it is to “really” live with depression by filling pages with anecdotes of Christians struggling with the illness, making it clear that it is no respecter of age, gender, religion, or job profession.

They highlight important topics and present insights chapter by chapter to their target audience - Christians. One such topic is the disproval of the myths and misconceptions about depression, eliminating the fallacy of whether or not real Christians get depressed and affirming that depression is like any other illness, such as hypertension and diabetes, which can happen to anyone. Therefore, depression's medical interventions are like "God's allies" (Biebel & Koenig, 2004, p. 69).

Another topic put forward is the differences between a licensed professional and clergy, which validates the fact that "many clergy do not have adequate theoretical or clinical training to recognize or treat major depression though this has been slowly changing over the past few decades, at least in the seminary level" (Biebel & Koenig, 2004, p. 122). The topic of love as a means of showing support, encouragement, and understanding to help the depressed individual see their suffering as a gift rather than a burden. Love can help Christians who undergo: shame, feelings of prayers not being heard, and a sense of detachment from the church and God. Therefore, adding psychotherapy and medications can make it easier to love and be loved.

The last topic is how crucial it is to provide a different standard of care for the depressed, which includes treatment for the body, soul, and spirit. Thus, patients need a cooperative multidisciplinary team of healthcare providers guaranteeing an exhaustive and efficacious treatment plan for the sometimes long healing process.

I loved this book published by Zondervan because it is an extensive introduction to depression; they painted broad brushstrokes of the types of depression, Christian and secular counseling methods, and medications. My favorite part of the book was Chapter 4, which debunks ten depression myths in society and the church. I relished their outlines on how to choose a Christian therapist because it can be overwhelming for anyone.

Beibel & Koenig's qualifications and experiences enabled them to blend the biblical and medical facts to bridge the divide between these two views that have been at odds for Christians for many years by providing help, hope, and answers. It is an excellent addition to any library and useful for depressed individuals, clergy, counseling students, and family members of the depressed. I would recommend this book, as it is an outstanding book. It is biblically and medically reliable, easy to read, and very practical.

## References

Biebel, D. B., & Koenig, H. G. (2004). *New light on depression: Help, hope, and answers for the depressed and those who love them*. Zondervan.

Duke University. (n.d.). *Harold G. Koenig, M.D.* Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health.  
<https://spiritualityandhealth.duke.edu/index.php/harold-g-koenig-m-d/>

Zondervan. (2019, April 11). *David B. Biebel*. <https://www.zondervan.com/author/1298/david-b-biebel/>