

## MORNING DEVOTIONS

### Chase Away the Gloom

It seems that some people are all about doom and gloom. A bit like Eeyore, the little sad donkey in *Winnie the Pooh*, who is always pessimistic and gloomy. They can't see anything positive in life and become part of the negative world – they're not the happiest people to be with, a bit like a wet blanket.

What can you do? Listening carefully to their complaints is a good start, providing it doesn't affect you – they can drag you down too. After all, everyone has a bad day from time to time. Negativity can be contagious. A negative person isn't a good choice to turn to when you're feeling down.

When you do engage with them, use non-committal language. Acknowledge their comments without endorsing what they are saying. Agree with them as far as you can, then rephrase their complaints using less loaded language. You can't change their personality, but you might neutralise their toxic outlook.

It can be hard going living with a gloomy, negative person. The only person whose happiness you can control is your own. You can, and should, remain positive when dealing with negative people, but don't fool yourself into thinking you can cheer them up or change their mindset. Instead, provide a sympathetic and non-judgemental ear. If they ask to hear your thoughts, offer them gently and calmly.

When I say the word "gloom" maybe you think of a dark, wet, windy day when there's no sun. Weather does affect our moods and attitudes. Some days everything appears gloomy. And then there's that person who is gloomy – meaning they are sad or pessimistic. It may be part of their personality, as some are more inclined that way than others. It can be about their temperament. We become worn out and need to remind ourselves that **the sun will shine again**, even if it's only for a few minutes at a time.

We live in a society where a high value is placed on being positive. Yet sometimes this simply isn't possible, and people find themselves facing temporary or long-term sadness. Often, our coworkers or family will say, "Cheer up!" or "Be positive," when this just doesn't seem like something you can do.

I think you probably need to identify the sadness – what is it that makes you feel sad and depressed? Surround yourself with people who make you happy and remind yourself that life is a long journey filled with good and bad moments. We need to stay close to our significant others, those who love and care for us.

Sometimes this needs to be others than our immediate family – others who will provide us a "relaxed, patient, and attentive environment". People who will listen and love and give us a point of reference, guard us from distorting reality, and give us a warm and secure sense of how to relate to the world. Focus on the good moments and you may find yourself feeling better without even realising it.

I'm sure each of us have gloomy moods or moments from time to time. It's part of the human condition. But when that feeling stays a long time – then that's another matter. Consulting a professional counselor would be a good step.

But there is another help available – and that is trusting in a personal, loving God. God can chase away the gloom and sadness for you and give you a deep sense of joy and peace. The Bible is full of people who felt despondent. Isn't it comforting to know that others before us have felt like we do? King David wrote plenty of Psalms expressing sad feelings:

- “Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me?” (Psalm 42:5 NIV).
- “My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught” (Psalm 55:2 NIV).

There is another fantastic Bible verse to take to heart, “The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.” (Psalm 34:18). If the feelings of gloom are persistent in your life, seek help, and try praying to God. And this is not some God who operates at a safe distance from you. This is a God who hears you when you cry for help, who rescues you from your troubles. This is the God who draws near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

Jesus said He gives us a peace that is difficult to understand in human terms. In John chapter 8 we can read how Jesus explained His mission with these remarkable words:

“I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.” (v12).

John Clements wrote a hymn which is very old these days and probably not sung much in churches today. But some of the words are:

“Come in, O Lord, drive out the gloom,  
And make my heart a sunlit room,  
Chase all the shades of night away  
And make it bright and light as day”