

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

24. The Day After the Most Depressing Day of the Year

You are listening to episode 24 of the Encouragement for Real Life podcast, "The Day After the Most Depressing Day of the Year." Welcome back! Did you know yesterday, the third Monday in January, was a special day? It was. (Well, each of our days are special, right? I mean each day we are given is a gift from God. Absolutely.) But yesterday was one of those weirdly termed holidays, similar but different to National Donut Day or National Take Your Child to Work Day. Yesterday, January 17, was termed "the most depressing day of the year," otherwise known as "Blue Monday."

We're dedicating an entire episode--this episode--to this subject. Because if yesterday was considered Blue Monday, I believe today can be considered Joyful Tuesday. If yesterday was the most depressing day of the year, today can be the most happy. Come along with me in this episode as we find some encouragement and hope today. Let's get to it.

So, were you aware that yesterday was the most depressing day of the year? I had no idea this day existed until I heard author and fellow lowan, Jennifer Dukes Lee, mention it in a zoom call last Tuesday. In all my years I had never heard of such a day. I thought, *seriously? That day exist? Why would we recognize a day like this? The most depressing day of the year doesn't sound like a great day to me.* In fact, I try to avoid at all costs anything depressing or discouraging in my life. So, I chose to ignore yesterday's gloomy title and did what I could to make it a great day anyway.

So, how did this day, Blue Monday, ever come to be?

Evidently the combination of the post-Christmas blues, the cold, dark nights of winter, and the arrival of unpaid credit card bills makes the third Monday in January the gloomiest day of the year.

According to Wikipedia, supposedly a university tutor in 2005 used factors such as weather, people's debt level, the time since Christmas, the time since New Year's resolutions have been broken, low motivation levels, and the feeling of a need to take action. He then came up with a formula to calculate the most depressing day of the year.

A UK travel company used it as a public relations stunt and published a press release on January 24, 2005, claiming to have calculated "the most depressing day of the year" date using an "equation." Except this same formula did not define any units of measurement, which ultimately rendered it meaningless.

So, this oddly termed special day is based on something meaningless, as scientists have dismissed it altogether. I say if scientists have dismissed this, then we can too.

Because the most depressing day of the year isn't real.

I guess you could call it "fake news," because the most depressing day of the year doesn't exist.

Yet, I wonder how many people felt down or depressed yesterday because they were aware yesterday was termed the most depressing day of the year? Or because they were given a reason to be sad and forlorn since it was "Blue Monday?" I don't know about you, but when I get something in my head, my mind can take it and run with it.

What's that saying? "What you think about, you bring about." (Bob Proctor) Our minds are powerful. If we think it's going to be a depressing day, it likely will be a depressing day. On the other hand, if we think it'll be a cheerful day, it will likely be cheerful. Our thoughts determine so much more than I think we realize.

And I have a perfect example for this.

Last week I was certain I had an infection. I've had this kind of infection before, so I know how it feels. I was sure this was it. I just knew it. There was no doubt in my mind. So thankfully, I was able to get into my doctor right away. I had all sorts of scenarios prepared in my head of what I would need to do to stay on top of it and get it cleared up as quickly as possible. Yet, I couldn't believe I heard my doctor correctly when she said, "I'm happy to tell you there's no sign of infection."

Wait, what? How can that be? I was more shocked than thrilled at the diagnosis. My thoughts had me convinced something was wrong. My body followed my thoughts in acting like there was something wrong. Again, our thoughts are more powerful than we sometimes realize. Our thoughts influence our bodies, our emotions, our attitudes, and can directly affect our lives.

Our thoughts matter.

So, when we are told a certain day is "the most depressing day of the year," how do we react? How do we respond? Do our thoughts take us down the path of sadness and misery on that day? Because someone decided to call the third Monday of January "the most depressing day of the year?" Or do our thoughts decide something different? To keep us on the path of joy and happiness, instead?

I hope we all stay on the one filled with joy.

So, were you aware of yesterday's silly title? Did you know it was Blue Monday? If so, how did you react? What were your thoughts about it? Was it a depressing day or was it a joy-filled day?

If it ended up being a depressing kind of day, don't kick yourself. Don't judge yourself harshly. Give yourself some grace. If it was that kind of day for you, it's now an opportunity for growth. When our thoughts take us down a road of negativity and sadness, we can catch ourselves before we travel too far down it. You and I can stop thinking what we're thinking and choose a different thought.

We don't have to believe every thought we think.

We don't. You and I can choose our thoughts. If a thought causes us to feel depleted or depressed, what would we rather think in that moment? What thought would serve us better? We can choose to think that thought instead.

This reminds me of a Bible verse I pray daily. It's 2 Corinthians 10:5b. *We capture every thought and make it give up and obey Christ (NCV).*

I ask God every day to help me capture my thoughts and make them obedient to Jesus. Because I've proven not every thought I think is a good one or a healthy one. Not every thought is one I should believe. Only those thoughts that line up with Jesus' thoughts. And the more time we spend with Jesus, filling our minds with thoughts of Him, praying, reading God's word, the more our thoughts will line up with His.

Because when I'm thinking like Jesus, my thoughts are like those mentioned in Philippians 4:8.

I've shared this verse before. It's one of my favorites. It says this: *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.* Philippians 4:8
ESV

I also pray daily for Jesus' thoughts to be my thoughts and for His ways to be my ways.

Philippians 2:5 (WE) speaks to this: *Think the same way Jesus Christ thought.*

Yes, I want Jesus' thoughts to be my thoughts. I desire for His ways to be my ways. Only when my thoughts are like His do they give Him glory. My thoughts, on their own, do not. Only when my thoughts are like His are they like those mentioned in Philippians 4:8. On my own, my thoughts do not measure up anywhere close to Philippians 4:8.

I invite you to join me in paying attention to our thoughts today.

What are we actually thinking about? What fills our minds? Pure, lovely, excellent thoughts? Or dark, ugly, unhealthy thoughts? Are our thoughts glorifying God or are they far from that? If we realize our thoughts aren't so great, is there something we can do? Yes, we can take them captive, as 2 Corinthians 10:5 says. We can capture those thoughts and change them. Asking ourselves two questions may help: 1) What thought would I rather think here? 2) What thought would better glorify God?

Then we can switch our thoughts. Again, we don't have to believe every thought we think. And we get to choose what we think. You and I don't have to let any random thought in and affect us. Because that's what the enemy of our souls likes to do. If he can affect our thoughts, he can affect our lives. If he can place discouraging thoughts in our minds, he can defeat us.

So, today is the day after "the most depressing day of the year."

I say we make today the most cheerful, the most joyful. Let's call it "Joyful Tuesday." Or whatever day it is when you're listening to this.

So what if it's winter? So what if it's cold out or rainy or snowy? We can still remain joyful despite our environment. So what if our circumstances aren't perfect, or we haven't done so well with our new year's resolutions? You and I can choose to be cheerful right here, right now. So what if we made a mistake today, or our day hasn't started off very well? We can choose to believe the best for today, for tomorrow, for our future. And so what if we felt discouraged and depleted yesterday? Today is a new day and we have every reason to live this day in all its fullness. God is with us and isn't going to leave us! Today is a very good day!

And if you need some ideas on how to remain joyful this winter, listen to last week's episode, episode 23 for 10 Simple Ways to Remain Joyful This Winter. Link is in the show notes.

And the good news is, since "the most depressing day of the year is behind us," we have it out of the way and each day for the rest of the year can be a positive, uplifting, blessed day! Right?

I say we can claim every day what the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 118:

This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it. Psalm 118:24 NLT

But I am fully aware that depression for many is real and serious. I have friends who suffer with depression. I understand it's difficult and it's not a desired diagnosis for anyone. So, if you're feeling uncontrollably sad and overly depressed, and you just don't feel like yourself, please see a professional for help. They can help get you back on track. Please know I am praying for you, and God is right there with you.

Would you pray with me, for all of us today?

Father God, You are good, You are great, and You are worthy of our praise today. Thank you for making each one of us so complex, with physical bodies, minds, emotions, and souls. We are so grateful for these gifts. You've given us brains that manage our bodies and emotions and control our memories. You've given us the ability to think, process information, reason, and make decisions. Thank You. Our minds are powerful, even more than we can comprehend. We give You our thoughts today. Help us to take every thought captive that comes into our minds and equip us to recognize if our thoughts are not glorifying to You. If they aren't healthy for us. Help us be aware of what we think today. We ask for you to help us live this day with abundant expectancy, with a cheerful attitude, and a grateful heart. This is the day You have made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Thank You. We love You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

I invite you over to our Encouragement for Real Life Community Facebook group today as we are discussing over there our thoughts and the difference they make. The link for this encouraging community is in the show notes.

If you'd like to receive these podcast episodes each Tuesday in our email inbox, plus would appreciate access to the free resources as a bonus on my site, visit the Resources link in the show notes. You won't have to go looking for the newest episode anymore.

In closing, just because a day is termed "Blue Monday," doesn't mean we have to believe it. Nor do we have to believe every single thought that comes into our minds. You and I have a choice in our thoughts. And I pray we choose wisely. As you go about your day today, living encouraged and hopeful, may God fill you with His joy, His peace, and His love. Thank you for joining me here today. I appreciate you. God bless you!

Julie Lefebvre