

# Our Emotional — Well-Being



# Our Emotional Well-Being



**EVERY NATION**  
P R O D U C T I O N S

## **OUR EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING**

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## INTRODUCTION

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Most of the time, dealing with our emotions can feel like playing tug-of-war with ourselves. We try to overpower our emotions to stay in control, thinking that it's the right thing to do. For some believers, Jeremiah 17:9, which says that *the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick*, has come to mean that we need to suppress our emotions because they can deceive us. Since our emotions greatly affect the way we perceive and respond to what happens in and around us, it is important for us as Christians to understand what the Bible says about our emotions.

First, we need to understand that the Creator of all things created us with emotions. God wants to relate with us on a personal level. He wants us to understand what joy, peace, love, and all other wonderful emotions feel like. God wants us to know the depth of His love for us. In this set of lessons, we will study what happened to God's original design and how it affected our spiritual and emotional condition. Throughout the Bible, we can see that God did not hide His emotions. From compassion to anger, we see a wide array of God's emotional display.

When Jesus died on the cross for us, He did not only secure our salvation, that one day we will be with God in heaven. Christ's death and resurrection also gave us the power to live victorious lives here on earth. That means victory over emotions that we are familiar with and struggle with. This material covers some of the emotions we deal with, some regularly and others due to personal and global crises. Through the truth of God's word, we can learn to appropriate the victory we have in Christ over every area of our lives, including our emotions.

## **For the Victory Group Leader**

For some people in your Victory group, discussing these topics may result in a conversation beyond your time together, professional counseling, or further ministry. Here are a few tips:

- Ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom and approach each topic in a sensitive manner, trusting God to reveal to you how to best minister to those in your Victory group. Prepare ahead of time and be open to how the Holy Spirit will direct the Victory group meeting.
- Listen without assumptions or judgment. Do not be dismissive when people open up and share their stories by saying things like, all you need is faith, just pray, and other people have it worse. Tread lightly on these topics, understanding that people may have misconceptions and hurts related to each topic.
- Speak the truth in love. Ask God for discernment and wisdom, trusting Him to transform us. Remember the process of change: truth, repentance, and faith. We are all in the process of sanctification, and spiritual health is a journey. We are after progress, not perfection. While we may not have all the answers, we do not expect immediate results and are committed to journeying together in discipleship.
- Ask for help from other Victory group leaders and your pastors, as needed. Consider and respect the privacy of the people in your group, and be discerning about disclosing private information.

Together, let us effectively minister the truth of God's word with love and compassion.

# 1 God Made Emotions

## WARM-UP

- What is the first thing that you thought of when you woke up this morning? How did it make you feel?
- What are some things that excite you? What are some things that make you feel uncomfortable?
- Think of a song you've listened to recently. What part of the song do you resonate with the most?

**WORD** *<sup>1</sup>Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD! <sup>2</sup>O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!* **PSALM 130:1-2**

When it comes to emotions, we see two polar extremes in our culture today: the belief that emotions are everything and the belief that emotions are nothing. People who belong to the first group believe that the highest good in life is to feel good about one's self and that the most important thing about you is your feelings. People who belong to the second group believe that emotions are not to be trusted and that emotional control is the highest of human virtues.

These extremes are also mirrored in our present church culture. There are Christians who are perpetually chasing a hair-raising, emotive worship experience, while others believe that emotions have no place in the Christian life. For sure, there are many who are in the middle. However, the pervasiveness of the extremes pose a challenge to our discipleship practice. What does the Bible say about this?

A quick survey of the Bible will show the rich language of emotions mentioned in Scripture. The book of Psalms alone gives such an astonishing display of the full range of human emotions. In fact, scholars say that there is no emotion known to man that is

not mentioned in some form in the Psalms. Emotions matter for the simple reason that they are a huge part of our humanity, as we are created in the image of God. In this lesson, we will look at three biblical truths about emotions.

# 1 | Emotions are from God.

*When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

**MATTHEW 9:36**

One of the most important biblical truths we need to learn about emotions is that they are from God Himself. No one can read the creation story without getting a sense of awe, grandeur, joy, love, and wonder (Genesis 1). Even the angels who watched the unfolding of creation were singing together and shouting for joy (Job 38:5–7).

A few chapters into the creation account, man rebelled against God and the devastation that followed grieved Him to His heart (Genesis 6:6). Fast forward to the New Testament and you will see Jesus feeling compassion (Matthew 9:36) and anger (Mark 3:4–5). He even wept at the death of a friend (John 11:35).

As humans created in the image of God, we have this God-given ability to feel emotions. And the Bible teaches us that they actually play an important role in our relationships with God and with other people. How does this truth make you feel?

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## 2 | Not all emotions are bad.

<sup>35</sup>Jesus wept. <sup>36</sup>So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

**JOHN 11:35-36**

One of the most striking parts in the Bible is when Jesus wept. This is so fascinating for so many people because Jesus is perfect and He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead a few minutes later. How could a perfect human being cry? And why cry when He knew He was raising Lazarus soon after?

Jesus' tears demonstrate two parallel truths about emotions: even God the Son felt negative emotions; and in some cases, negative emotions like anger, grief, or sadness and the tears that come with it are the right emotions to feel.

We are naturally uncomfortable with negative feelings. When we feel bad, we automatically think it's because we don't have enough faith to turn our feelings around. We have fallen victim to the lie that Christians are only supposed to feel upbeat emotions. But the Bible is full of aching, grieving saints who tear their clothes and sit in ashes when their world crumbles. Negative emotions are a thoroughly biblical and appropriate response when tragedy hits us. Share of another passage in the Bible when negative emotions were expressed. What do you think we can learn from these examples?

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### 3 Emotions are an indicator of what matters to us the most.

<sup>35</sup>Jesus wept. <sup>36</sup>So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

**JOHN 11:35-36**

When Jesus wept at Lazarus' tomb, the Jews who watched the whole spectacle concluded that it was because He loved Lazarus. How did they know?

Emotions have one very important function: they uncover what we love. Jesus' tears were proof that He truly loved Lazarus. If He didn't love him, He wouldn't have cried. And this is true for all of us. Only the things and people we truly love elicit our strongest emotions.

How is this true in relation to our spiritual walk? If our emotions always remain unmoved in our worship to God, can we claim to love Him?

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## APPLICATION

- Recall a time when you felt that God spoke to you. How did it feel? How does God relate with your emotions?
- What of God's emotions catches your attention the most when you read the Bible? Why?
- How do God's emotions revealed in Scripture help you to live as His child? How can these help in engaging with people who have yet to hear about Him?

## PRAYER

- Thank God for His ability to relate with us even through emotions.
- Ask God to help you be more like Him as you continue to walk in faith.
- Seek God for wisdom on how best to express His nature to the people around you. Pray that those who have yet to hear about Him may know Him in a personal way.

## 2 The Past, Present, and Future of Emotions

### WARM-UP

- If you posted your photo from ten or twenty years ago and another one from today, what differences would people observe? How do you feel about the before and after photos?
- As a child, what would get you most excited (e.g., Christmas, birthdays, school, or sports)? How would you feel in the weeks and days leading up to it?
- Recall a recent challenge you worked hard to overcome. What happened?

**WORD** *Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.*

**1 JOHN 3:2**

Emotions are strange. Everyone has them and yet most of us can't even name them. We recognize the major ones like joy, sadness, anger, or fear. But the minor ones, the in-betweens, the vague sense of heaviness or emptiness, we don't have words for them. Our vocabulary range fails us when we try to describe the strands of feelings we have inside. And that's just the naming part.

The understanding part is even harder. How do we make sense of emotions we don't have a name for? It is one thing to feel things. It is an entirely different thing to try to make sense of our feelings. Some of them are powerfully positive, like love, euphoria, and excitement. Others are potentially destructive, like depression, rage, or extreme loneliness.

But the hardest of all is neither the naming nor the understanding. It's the handling. What is the godly, righteous way of handling our emotions? Can't we just sweep them all

under the rug and go about our lives like nothing happened? Do we rebuke them the same way we rebuke and cast out evil spirits? Or do we just wait for them to blow over while we languish on the inside?

We have an obligation to understand our emotions for two basic reasons. First, because emotions are biblical; and second, because emotions are a deeply personal subject that makes us do or not do things. In other words, emotions directly affect our obedience to the Lord Jesus. This is why we need a good theological grounding for our understanding of emotions. What does the Bible say about this?

The best place to start is to locate emotions in the big story of the Bible: in man's pre-fall state, fallen state, regenerate state, and future state.

## 1 | Before the Fall

*<sup>26</sup>Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*

*<sup>27</sup>So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. **GENESIS 1:26-27***

Prior to the fall, Adam and Eve had perfect emotional lives. They could walk with God in the garden and not feel terror. They could coexist with animals and not be afraid. They were even naked but not ashamed. Loneliness, fear, shame, and a host of other negative feelings that are so familiar to us were foreign to them.

They lived in perfect *shalom* (peace and wholeness). Their faculties worked in perfect harmony with each other. They perceived truth and reality accurately. They had emotions that properly responded to truth and reality. They had wills that were properly motivated by unflawed emotions. What do you think this felt like?

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## 2 | Fallen Condition

*<sup>8</sup>And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup>But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" <sup>10</sup>And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." GENESIS 3:8-10*

The perfection of man's emotional state did not last. Satan entered into the picture and tempted Adam and Eve. The rebellion resulted in the shattering of *shalom*. Man's relationship with God broke. So did his relationship with others, with nature, and his inner sense of self. The once perfect harmony of godly relationships and their attendant emotions broke into pieces. In Adam, we inherited a broken sense of self from the beginning of our existence.

Imagine dropping glass on the floor. The broken pieces would be of all different shapes and sizes. No two shards would be the same. That's how our lives look like. Because of the original sin we inherited, we were all born broken. But our brokenness comes in different shapes and sizes. Some of us are more broken in the area of anger, while others in the area of loneliness, and still others in the area of emotional numbness. This is why we have different emotional reactions to things. In a sense, we are all longing for emotional wholeness. What do you think would happen if we all understood that we are all broken, just in different ways?

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### 3 | Redeemed Condition

*"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."* **JOHN 10:10**

The coming of Jesus into the world had one very specific purpose: that we might have life. That life is not just any life. It's the restoration of the fullness of life that was broken in Eden which will eventually blossom to eternity. In other words, Jesus came to fix the brokenness that we inherited from Adam. He came to untangle the complicated, chaotic tangles of lives, our minds, our wills, and our emotions. We have a word that encompasses all these: salvation.

Salvation means that every part of our humanity is being redeemed: our minds are being renewed (Romans 12:2); our wills are being brought into conformity with God's will (Mark 3:35); and our emotions are being reconstructed, renewed, and realigned (1 John 2:15–17; Ephesians 5:1–2). The Holy Spirit cultivates brand new emotions now (Galatians 5:22), changing our lives as He progressively works with us. But this work is not yet done. That is why until today, we still struggle with emotions. How did you experience Christ's salvation, and how are you experiencing God's continuous work in your life every day?

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## 4 | Future Condition

*Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 1 JOHN 3:2*

This is the clincher. We can't seem to get our emotions right even if we try very hard because they are still in the process of sanctification. We struggle because we still live in this fallen body. We are saved, yes, but our salvation is not yet fully consummated because we are still here on earth. The full blossoming of our salvation is when Jesus takes us home. The same thing is true with our emotions. We have been emotionally redeemed, yes, but the full blossoming of our emotional health will not happen until we get to heaven.



When we are glorified to be like Christ, our minds, wills, and emotions will function in perfect harmony. Love will be perfected, joy will be endless, peace will never end. In heaven, all our emotions will be in full bloom. We will love in ways we never knew. There will be no more dark corners of anger, bitterness, jealousy, or hatred. We will all be in perfect emotional health. In light of this future hope in Christ, how do you think we should live today?

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## APPLICATION

- How does Jesus' finished work on the cross change your understanding of our emotions? What are some of the new emotions that you've experienced as you walk with Him?
- Think of a recent experience where you had a hard time processing your emotions. Why do you think it was difficult? Are there any emotions you need to surrender to God?
- Why do we need to renew our minds every day? What are some mindsets and habits that you can start today to help renew and realign your thoughts to God's pleasing and perfect will?

## PRAYER

- Thank God for sending His Son, Jesus, to redeem us, including our emotions. Ask God for forgiveness for the times when you did not trust in His restorative work that heals every part of your being.
- Ask God to help align your emotions back to His will as you continue to know Him more. Pray that every thought and action would honor Him and reflect His nature.
- Think of a family member or friend who is struggling with processing his or her emotions. Ask God to touch this person's heart in a personal way and enable you to be an expression of His love.

# 3 Beyond Fear and Anxiety

## WARM-UP

- Share a time when you got lost and found yourself in an unfamiliar place. How did you feel?
- If your car broke down in the middle of a busy road, how would you react or respond to the situation?
- When you were a student, how did you feel the night before a big test?

**WORD** *<sup>39</sup>And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. <sup>40</sup>He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" <sup>41</sup>And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"* **MARK 4:39-41**

Our world is full of variables and uncertainties. Like the disciples who were being rocked by the storm, we could be amazed and full of faith in one moment after witnessing a miracle of Jesus, but a few moments later be in fear or anxious.

Difficult situations can cause us to be anxious and to worry. As humans, we like predictability, control, and stability. However, trials and tribulations are part of life, and these create instability and insecurity. Does this mean then that we'll always be anxious and fearful of what is to come? How can we deal with anxiety and fear? Below are some principles from the Bible we can follow.

## 1 | Cast your cares on God.

*<sup>6</sup>Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, <sup>7</sup>casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 1 PETER 5:6-7*

*<sup>6</sup>. . . do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7*

Anxiety is a response to difficult situations that people face. Sometimes this is an actual situation, but other times it is perceived, like fearing that our worst-case scenario will become a reality. Whenever we experience fear, God invites us to cast our anxieties on Him. This means opening up to Him and surrendering whatever is causing us to be in fear. *Casting* can also mean to send forth, or even to throw out. In this case, we are to cast our anxieties on Him, because God doesn't want us to hold on to our fears.

God has paved the way for us to have a conversation with Him, and He cares for us. When we cast our cares on Him, we can identify, acknowledge, and name our fears in prayer. The more specific we are in identifying our fears, the more we get to experience His presence in the midst of our anxious thoughts. And as we bring to Him all our cares, He promises that His peace will guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus. What could be stopping us from casting our cares on God?

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## 2 | Confess your sin and doubts.

*. . . For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.* **ROMANS 14:23**

*Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.* **JAMES 5:16**

Though not all negative emotions like fear, doubt, and anger are sin, there are times when they could be rooted in sin, such as doubting God's love or His ability to provide. The Bible tells us that when we sin, we are to confess it before other believers, not to be judged or held accountable, but to be ministered to and prayed for. This then brings healing to our souls, allowing us to experience the peace of God again. When we confess our sin before others, we are also afforded the opportunity to release our burdens, and to receive love and support from the church community. What do you think will happen if we do not confess and repent from our doubt and fears?

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## 3 | Confess your faith and confidence in God.

*The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.* **PSALM 18:2**

*"Be still, and know that I am God. . . ."* **PSALM 46:10**

After casting our cares and anxieties on God, it is good to recognize and focus on who He is in our lives and in the world. He is the Almighty God who created everything with

the command of His voice. When the situation we face drags us into a pit of fear and doubt, all the more that we are to confess that God is sovereign over all things. He is in control. While we may not see the resolution of our situation according to our timeline and our ways, we can trust God's character, His ways, and His perfect timing. What passages of Scripture encourage you to trust God during difficult times? Which attributes of God give you peace of mind?

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## APPLICATION

- What are some of the cares that you need to surrender to God this week? How do you plan to do this on a regular basis?
- Recall the times when you overcame difficult situations. Reflect on how God ministered to you and guided you then. Share some of the life lessons you learned because of adversity.
- What passages of Scripture do you hold on to for encouragement? Recall some of God's promises to you in the Bible that you have meditated on. Who can you share this with in the coming week?

## PRAYER

- Thank God for His invitation to cast your cares on Him. Repent for the times when you trusted yourself, something, or someone else other than God.
- Acknowledge that Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is sovereign over all, including your life situation and what is up ahead for you. Cast your cares on Him today.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to remind you of God's word, which strengthens, encourages, and comforts. Pray that you would be an encouragement and God's mouthpiece to others this week.

## 4 No Bitter Root

### WARM-UP

- Would you consider yourself as someone who is good at relating with people? Why or why not?
- If you had to go to a crowded place today, how would you prepare and what would you do? Why?
- What's one thing that frustrates you the most right now?

**WORD** *See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled . . .* **HEBREWS 12:15**

(Read also **EPHESIANS 4:26, 31-32.**)

Our lives are designed by God to reflect His nature and character. He is a relational God, and He loves to relate to us and desires that we always relate to Him. As a result, all of us, deep inside our hearts, are craving and longing for meaningful relationships with the people around us as well. Yet, most of the time we see a gap between our desire for thriving relationships and the reality of our broken world. Instead of experiencing life and joy, many times we experience dysfunctions, rejection, offense, and hurt. Living in a broken world, every day we face the tendency to allow bitterness to take root in our hearts.

How can we guard ourselves from allowing bitterness to take root in our lives, thus helping us enjoy the meaningful and thriving relationships God intends for us to have?



## 1 | We need a daily encounter of God's grace and forgiveness.

*See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God . . .*

**HEBREWS 12:15**

*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. EPHESIANS 4:32*

Daily meditation and understanding of God's grace and love for us helps us to see that God loves us unconditionally, in spite of our own failures and mistakes. When we encounter and experience that same love every day, we will begin to see our relationships with others thrive as well. When our hearts are only full of God's kindness and compassion towards us, there will be no room for bitterness in our hearts. What will eventually take root in our hearts is not bitterness. Instead, it will also be kindness and compassion towards people. How have you received God's grace in your life? Do you find it hard to receive God's forgiveness for you? Why?

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## 2 | Allow God to help you identify and remove any trace of bitterness.

*See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled . . . HEBREWS 12:15*

*Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. EPHESIANS 4:31*

When we find ourselves having feelings of unforgiveness, resentment, and hate toward others, it could be an indication that bitterness has already begun to take root in our hearts. The earlier we identify any trace of bitterness, the more we can overcome the potential harm it can bring to us and others. It's not impossible to trace and discern these things. We can ask help from God and other people in our spiritual community to help us see these. As we identify these things, God is willing and desires to help us deal with it even before it takes hold of our hearts. God can help us control our emotions and not allow our emotions to control us. What usually triggers your anger toward people? Why do you think this is so and what have you learned about this in your life?

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### 3 | Learn to forgive others in light of God's forgiveness to you.

*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. **EPHESIANS 4:32***

If we only look at ourselves and our own ability to learn to forgive others who have offended us, hurt us, and wronged us, we may find it almost impossible to forgive them. What will enable us to learn to forgive and take a step at a time towards reconciliation with the people around us is the forgiveness we have received from God. After all, we can only give what we have received. We can forgive others not because we want to give them our own mercy and grace, but because we ourselves are recipients of God's forgiveness and mercy. When we look to God to help us forgive, we will also realize that we are no better than the one to whom we are extending forgiveness. When you can't find any reason to

forgive and keep the relationship, look to the cross of Christ where He sacrificially and lavishly forgave our sins, and find your reason there. Who have you learned to forgive in light of God's forgiveness to you?

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## APPLICATION

- What are some of the traces of bitterness in your life that you have identified? Where can you ask for help or who can you go to in order to process these things?
- Is there any person in your life whom you find hard to forgive? What can you start doing this week to help you meditate more about the grace and forgiveness of God in your life?
- Recall moments in your life when you significantly found God being so gracious and merciful to you. How can it help you in your journey towards reconciliation with others in your life?

## PRAYER

- Receive God's forgiveness today through prayer and thank Him for His grace and mercy in your life.
- Ask God to help you discern and identify any trace of bitterness in your heart. Surrender it to God in prayer. Ask God for strength to help you forgive those people who have wronged you. Ask God also for strength to help you ask for forgiveness from people whom you have wronged.
- Pray that your relationships with family and friends, coworkers, and classmates will be full of grace, kindness, mercy, and love.

## 5 Facing Disappointment

### WARM-UP

- What's one thing you wish you can fully control?
- Was there an instance in your life where things didn't go according to plan? What did you feel?
- Are you the type of person who always has a plan and wants to stick to it? Recall an instance explaining this.

**WORD** *<sup>1</sup>I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. <sup>2</sup>My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad. <sup>3</sup>Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!*

**PSALM 34:1-3**

Since we live in a broken world, we all have to daily face the reality that we are not in control of most of the things in our lives. Things don't always go according to plan, and things don't usually turn out the way we expect them to. As a result, we all face disappointments in our lives, and if we are not careful in dealing with these things, we can experience greater pain and hurt. However, disappointment is not our only reality. Our journey through life also includes God's grace and faithfulness. The truth is, God's grace is always available to us and He is faithful in giving us the strength to face disappointments that come our way. Here are two principles that can help us face the disappointments in our lives and not allow them to overwhelm us.

## 1 | Magnify God rather than your disappointments.

*<sup>1</sup>I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. <sup>2</sup>My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad. <sup>3</sup>Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!* **PSALM 34:1-3**

When we face disappointment, we have a choice on how we will respond and what our attitude will be. David chose to praise God. David declared that no matter what disappointment he felt in his heart, praise would come out of his mouth. He chose to praise God not just when it felt good; he chose to praise God at all times. David magnified God, not his problems.

We need to focus on who we have—Christ—more than what we don't have in life. It is important for us to start remembering how God has been faithful to us and start surrendering our future to God. It is good to magnify He who is in control, rather than focusing on what we can't control. When we focus too much on what we can't control and try hard to fix everything by our own ability, we will end up disappointed again and again. However, learning to accept that we can't control everything and facing what comes our way with trust and surrender to God will help us cope with disappointment. What do you think would have happened if David focused on his problems rather than God? How are you learning to do the same?

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## 2 | You don't have to face your disappointments alone.

*Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!* **PSALM 34:3**

In this song, David is inviting people to rejoice with him and praise God together. Disappointments become so much harder to face when we deal with them alone. We need community: to help us remember what we have in Christ, to remind us that God is in control, to point us back to God's faithfulness, and to help us realize and be grateful for what we have. In community, we can find people with whom we can share our disappointments in a healthy manner and who help us face life with the grace of God. A church community is a good place to start. Share about specific people who have helped you process your thoughts regarding your disappointments and pointed you back to Jesus.

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## APPLICATION

- What are some of the most recent blessings you can be thankful for? What are some opportunities in your life that did not materialize in your life, but as you look back now, you are grateful for the way things turned out? List them down and begin to thank God.
- What are the things in your life that you try so hard to control? Begin to surrender it to God. How do you think your response or outlook towards your current situation needs to change? Take some time to reflect on this in the coming week.
- Think of a family member or friend who is facing disappointment. How can you be there for him or her this week, and how can you remind this person of who God is?

## PRAYER

- Thank God for the blessings you have received this week.
- Pray for healing and renewed strength to trust God with the disappointments you have experienced in your life.
- Pray for strength to find people who you can trust and help you process your disappointments. Ask God also for courage and wisdom to stand with others who are also experiencing disappointment.



## 6 Overcoming Loneliness and Isolation

### WARM-UP

- What is one snack or food you want to eat when you're sad? Why do you think you look for this?
- What songs do you usually listen to when you are lonely?
- What is one story or quote that has helped you get through tough times in your life?

**WORD** *Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted.* **PSALM 25:16**

(Read also **PSALM 25; 68:5-6.**)

Loneliness is something we all have felt at some point in our lives. Whether it was sadness brought about by loss, because something did not happen in your life, or when you feel like crying because of a particular situation you are going through. When we are lonely, we may also feel like we want to isolate ourselves, which can lead to grief. While loneliness and isolation can seem unbearable at times, they are not impossible to overcome. The good news is, through the grace of God, we can do something about what we are feeling. What can we do to overcome loneliness and isolation?

## 1 | Call out to God for He is near.

*<sup>14</sup>The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant. . . . <sup>16</sup>Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. PSALM 25:14, 16*

*Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. PSALM 68:5*

When the psalmist was afflicted and feeling alone, he turned to God because he knew that God was always there with him. Times of isolation can become moments of solitude with God, spent communing with Him alone and remembering that only He can satisfy our deepest longings. We can ask God for comfort in our times of grief and loneliness. He is an ever-present Friend and Father to His people, especially those who are alone. The experience of loneliness and our encounter with God can help us realize that nothing in this world can truly satisfy us, apart from Him. In your times of loneliness, how has God been near to you, turned to you, and been gracious to you?

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## 2 | Ask God for deliverance.

*<sup>17</sup>The troubles of my heart are enlarged; bring me out of my distresses. . . . <sup>20</sup>Oh, guard my soul, and deliver me!*

**PSALM 25:17, 20**

*Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation.* **PSALM 68:5**

God is faithful to help those who cannot help themselves. We can ask God to deliver us from this feeling of helplessness and hopelessness because He promises deliverance for those who come to Him. There is a way out of your loneliness: God. He knows, sees, hears, and understands our deepest longings. He alone can take you out of the pit of distress. Why do you think it was important for the psalmist to go to God for deliverance?

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## 3 | Share your life with church community.

*God settles the solitary in a home . . .* **PSALM 68:6**

The NIV translation of Psalm 68:6 is, *God sets the lonely in families* . . . Though God has given us the privilege of coming to Him directly, He also provides for people who are lonely and isolated by placing them in a home or family. We also need to connect and open our lives to a community. Especially for those who do not have natural families or are inaccessible, God provides the church to serve as their spiritual family (Ephesians 2:19). God uses people to comfort us. His comfort is felt through other people when they can relate with what we are going through and when

they are there for us in our times of loneliness and need. His presence helps us overcome our loneliness. How should Ephesians 2:19 affect how one should view and relate to other members of the church?

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## APPLICATION

- What are some of the things you have looked to for happiness? Why do these ultimately not satisfy? Spend time this week meditating on the truth that God is near and He brings comfort.
- Starting today, what can you start or stop doing to allow God's comfort to be more real in your life? In what area of your life do you need to experience His comfort, peace, and joy more?
- Which is harder for you: approaching God directly or approaching people in church? What is one thing you are willing to do differently to grow in this (e.g., set aside specific time in the day to be alone with God, contact people you can open your life up to)?

## PRAYER

- Thank God for His presence and comfort in your life. Pray that He would help you see that loneliness or isolation is not the main story of your life.
- Ask God to deliver you in areas of your life where you experience intense sadness.
- Pray for your family members and friends who also need God's comfort and peace.

# 7 Learning to Rest in God

## WARM-UP

- What is the longest you've ever stayed awake? What was the experience like?
- What do you usually do on days when you don't have to work?
- Have you participated in a long-distance sporting event? If yes, how was it? If not, would you like to someday? Why or why not?

**WORD** <sup>28</sup>"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." **MATTHEW 11:28-30**

With all of its hills, mountains, and valleys, life is like a journey. It has its ups, but it also has its downs. The "down" parts may feel like we are in a dry, desolate place—*heavy laden*, exhausted, drained, and out of it. We can feel this at work, but also at home, with an ever-expanding to-do list. Work is a blessing, but sometimes it does feel like punishment. If work feels more like a burden, we could already be experiencing symptoms of emotional exhaustion and burnout. Maybe this is why Jesus gives an invitation to His followers to rest. Today, we will look at what Scriptures say about preventing, avoiding, and overcoming burnout. Here are four principles that form the acrostic "REST" for us to learn to rest in God.

## 1 | Recognize that real rest can only be found in God.

*28"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."*

**MATTHEW 11:28-29**

Real rest for our souls can only be found in God. We can try to rest by going on vacation, hanging out with people, and binge watching, but we can still feel very tired afterwards. These activities may have been distractions and a source of amusement, but when that ends, we may feel disgusted or terrified by the thought of returning to normal life.

On the other hand, Jesus invites us to Himself, to unburden our hearts of the troubles that weigh us down. When we surrender to Him and allow Him to lift the burdens we carry, we acknowledge that He is God, and that He is in control and sovereign over all creation, including us. Where did you look for rest before, and how did you realize this can only be found in God?

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## 2 | Evaluate your lifestyle and examine the condition of your heart.

*It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.*

**PSALM 127:2**

Many people burnout because of unhealthy lifestyles of work and the lack of proper rest. We need to evaluate if we are working too much or at an unhealthy pace. Yes, we may be

able to accomplish the tasks before us, but to what end? We can't just think about our output; we also need to watch out for the ill effects our lifestyle and work can have on us. Depending on how exhausted we are, it can even affect our relationships.

On rest days, do we take the time to physically rest? Or is this the time to do errands, take exhausting trips, or engage in activities that can drain us physically and emotionally? When we take a real break from our busyness, we can examine our hearts and reflect on these questions:

- What is my ultimate goal in life? Is this goal from God or from the world?
- What or who do I consider as having the greatest value in my life? What am I doing to nurture and care for them?
- What are some of the things that seem important but really aren't, which I have invested a lot of my life on?

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### 3 | Set apart time for solitude and stillness.

*"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."* **EXODUS 20:8**

After God created the world and man, He rested to enjoy His creation. Likewise, we too need to take some sacred time off to enjoy our Creator. We are already distracted and overburdened with so many things in the world, thus the need to shut these out as we commune with our Creator.

When we commune with God and take time to share our weary and troubled hearts to Him, He welcomes us to tell Him all that is in our hearts. We can be specific, and even by



ourselves, we can encounter Him. After speaking with Him, we can also spend a few minutes in silence, allowing His gentle voice to speak and minister to us. Why do you think solitude and keeping the Sabbath are so rare today? Why are these so important?

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## 4 | Talk to people who can help you avoid burnout.

*<sup>9</sup>Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. <sup>10</sup>For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!* **ECCLESIASTES 4:9-10**

While solitude is good for the soul, isolation is not. We are not meant to go through life alone. God has designed for us to be in relationship with others—people who can walk with us and even pick us up when we fall. With the love, friendship, and support of life-giving family members and friends, we can overcome burnout. These are people who will encourage us rather than judge us. These are people who will speak the truth in love. These are people who will pray for us, laugh with us, and cry with us. These are people who will be there for us, even in our darkest moments. Who are the specific people you run to when life seems exhausting?

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## APPLICATION

- What does resting in God look like for you? What are some adjustments that you need to make this week in order to avoid burnout?
- How can you integrate the discipline of solitude and stillness in the Lord as part of your lifestyle? How can you find solace in God regularly?
- How can you help someone who is experiencing burnout?

## PRAYER

- Thank God for His faithfulness and sovereignty over your life. Repent from unhealthy work and recreation patterns that distract you from communing with God. Repent from trying to find rest in what the world offers.
- Pray to surrender your burdens to God. Ask that He would lift the weight of the world off our shoulders.
- Pray for God to enrich your life with life-giving relationships. Pray that you would reflect God's love and encouragement to others as well.

## 8 Cultivating an Emotionally Healthy Life

### WARM-UP

- Why do you think being surrounded by nature is different from a day in the city? What are some of the benefits of being outdoors?
- What hobby do you enjoy doing alone? What's something you enjoy doing with other people?
- Think of something valuable you have taken care of (e.g., a pet, a relationship, a business). What needed to be done in order for it to grow?

**WORD** *<sup>3</sup>And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup>And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. <sup>5</sup>Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, <sup>6</sup>but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. <sup>7</sup>Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. <sup>8</sup>Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. <sup>9</sup>He who has ears, let him hear."*

**MATTHEW 13:3-9**

It is no accident that when Jesus talked about the power of the word in the life of a believer, He used agricultural imagery to drive home His point. In the parable of the sower, the seed falls on good soil, grows, and in due season bears fruit.

This picture of farming is powerful. In order for plants to grow and remain healthy, we must pull the weeds. But pulling weeds is not enough; there is another process called cultivation. Cultivation demands that we have a good watering system, that we prune at the right time in the right places, and that we use fertilizer to

nourish the plants. The same thing is true with Christian living and discipleship.

We often think that Christian life is all about putting our sins to death (Romans 8:13). But that's only half of the story. The other half is the cultivation of certain graces. We must flee from sin, but we must also pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness (1 Timothy 6:11). In other words, the way to an emotionally healthy Christian life is to pull up the sinful emotions by the roots and cultivate godly emotions that make us love God more and serve others better.

What are the things you can do in order to cultivate an emotionally healthy life?

## 1 | Read your Bible and pray every day.

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

**ROMANS 12:2**

Cultivating a healthy, godly emotional life doesn't just happen by chance. It is a product of hard work, time, and grace. And because our emotions are heavily influenced by our thoughts, our first task is the renewal of our minds through the reading of Scriptures and prayer.

Some people will have a sinking feeling when they see that the first suggestion is about the Bible and prayer. We've already done this before; why bring this up now? The reason is quite simple: What you put into your mind can stir up your emotions and desires. If you want your emotions to be healthy, you need to feed your mind with good and hopeful things. Nothing does this better than a regular intake of the life-changing, heart-transforming word of God. When you pair that with regular pouring out of your heart to God in prayer, the peace of God, which is beyond our comprehension, will guard the doors of our hearts

(Philippians 4:7), keeping errant thoughts and destructive emotions out. How has God's word and prayer guided you to a more healthy and mature life?

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## 2 | Go outside.

*<sup>1</sup>The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. <sup>2</sup>Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. PSALM 19:1-2*

This suggestion might strike some people as odd. What's so spiritual about going outside for a walk or swinging on a hammock while watching the night sky? A lot, actually. Psalm 19 says that nature has always been preaching about the glory of God. When we go outside, we are reminding our bodies and souls that we live on a larger stage and in a larger story than the four corners of our homes. This brings peace and comfort to our anxious hearts.

When we are limited in a place that doesn't show God's magnitude and glory, we might think differently of our situation. But light, nature, and God's creation reflect who He is and what He is doing in the world today. What are some of the challenges of going outside? How has this practice been helpful to you?

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### 3 | Sing in worship.

<sup>19</sup>. . . addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,  
<sup>20</sup>giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . **EPHESIANS 5:19-20**

Some of us may think that singing is just a nice part of a worship service. But whether or not we like to sing or have the ability, singing is a huge part of the Christian experience. We sing not only because our hearts need to respond to the truth of God's word, but also because singing is designed to stir our emotions towards God. We sing because God sings (Psalm 105:43; Zephaniah 3:17), because God deserves our praise (Psalm 48:1), because God commanded us to sing (Psalm 30:4; 33:1-3), and because we will be singing throughout eternity (Revelation 5:9-14). Those who sing in worship know the emotional release that happens when they confess the lyrics of the songs. They know by experience that in God's presence there is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11). Think of one of the first songs you learned as a new believer. When you hear or sing it now, what does it evoke in you? Why?

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## 4 | Stay connected in your church community.

*<sup>23</sup>Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup>And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, <sup>25</sup>not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

### HEBREWS 10:23-25

Cultivating emotional health does not happen in a bubble; it happens in community. This is obvious, not just in the field of psychology and sociology but especially in theology. The New Testament shows this by the repeated *one another* commands scattered all throughout the epistles. Not a single *one another* command can be obeyed in isolation; they all demand community.

How did you get connected in your church community?  
What is one thing you do to remain connected?

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## 5 | Live for God's purposes.

*<sup>26</sup>Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." <sup>27</sup>So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.* **GENESIS 1:26-27**

Humanity is made in the image of God. This means at least two things. First, that we bear within our person the image of who God is. Our attributes and characteristics in the original

creation are a reflection of God. Our nature is given by God as a partial reflection of who He is. When we recognize this, we honor the God who created us.

Second, that we are given the job of reflecting God to the world. This is our functional aspect. Through our God-given roles and responsibilities, we are called to be His image throughout the world. The plan was to fill the earth with His glory by “imaging” Himself through us who are made to serve as His little glory reflectors. This means we make Him known as we fulfill His mission.

In other words, the purpose of our humanity boils down to honoring God and making Him known to the world. And unless we are pursuing the purposes of God for our lives, our souls will not be at rest. How do you think living for a greater purpose changes the way we view ourselves, our situations, and our emotions? How has God’s purpose and a dedication to His mission allowed you to grow in your personal life?

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## APPLICATION

- How do you think you would evaluate your personal emotional health? What's one thing you realized today, and what are you willing to do differently, starting this week?
- What's one practice you stopped doing but realized you should do again? What is the value of this practice?
- What does it mean for you to live out God's purposes? Who in your community can you begin reaching out to and introducing to Christ?

## PRAYER

- Thank God for His love, mercy, and grace that reaches out to us and allows us to commune with Him. Pray that you would cultivate a healthy emotional life as your relationship with God grows every day.
- Ask God for strength and His ability to incorporate these practices in your life. Surrender your current situation and emotions, and ask Him to mold you as He sees fit.
- Pray that you would live for God's purpose, bearing His image and reflecting Him in the world. Pray that more people would know God through your life and example.

*<sup>6</sup>... do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7*

God created us with emotions because He wants to relate with us on a personal level. He wants us to understand what joy, peace, love, and all other wonderful emotions feel like. He wants us to know the depth of His love for us.

**Our Emotional Well-Being** covers some of the emotions we experience, some regularly and others due to personal and global crises. Through the truth of God's word, we can learn not only why we have emotions, but also how to appropriate the victory we have in Christ over every area of our lives, including our emotions.

## TOPICS

- God Made Emotions
- The Past, Present, and Future of Emotions
- Beyond Fear and Anxiety
- No Bitter Root
- Facing Disappointment
- Overcoming Loneliness and Isolation
- Learning to Rest in God
- Cultivating an Emotionally Healthy Life



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