

Life in the Word
Class 7
“Reading with an Honest Heart”

Erik Reymond (*Gospel Coalition*) – “Ever since I have been exposed to the Doctrines of Grace I have wondered aloud as to why those who are theologically reformed tend to be the most unemotional...I am simply wondering afresh why those who hold to such a God-exalting, man-humbling view of God, tend to be the more stiff, cold and unaffected. Why do so many of us love to talk about, defend, and study doctrine but then stand relatively unaffected when singing songs that reflect such glorious truth? ...There are many possible answers here, and I do not offer any. But my goal in posting this is to challenge those of you with a similar theological stripe as me to examine your own emotion. Do you tend to downplay or diminish emotions? Why?”

Emotions of God

- **Joy or rejoicing** - Isaiah 62:5 – “For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.
- **Pleasure** - Matthew 3:17 “...and behold, a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’”
- **Anger** - Exodus 32:9–10 – “And the LORD said to Moses, ‘I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you.’”
- **Love** - Isaiah 54:8 – “‘In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,’ says the LORD, your Redeemer.”
- **Grief, sadness, or sorrow** – Genesis 6:6 – “And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.”

Emotions of Christ

- Peter Sczerro (*Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*) - “Scripture portrays Jesus as one who had intense, raw, emotional experiences and was able to express his emotions in unashamed, unembarrassed freedom to others.”
- **Anger, indignation, turmoil** - John 11:33. “When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.”
- **Grief, sadness, sorrow** - John 11:34. Jesus says, “Where have you laid him? They said to him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept.”
- **Joy** – Luke 10:21 – “In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, ‘I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.’”
- **Pity or Compassion** –Mark 1:41 – “Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, ‘I will; be clean.’”

- **Great Distress** - Mark 14:32 - “And they went to a place called Gethsemane...and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, ‘My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.’”
- **Fear** – “Father, take this cup from Me!” (Lk 22:42)

Emotions in the Psalms

- John Calvin (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*) – “What various and resplendent riches are contained in this treasury, it were difficult to describe... [It has been my habit] to call this book, not inappropriately, an anatomy of all parts of the soul; for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror.”
- Dan Allender and Tremper Longman (*The Cry of the Soul*) - “The Psalms provoke us to move out of denial. Christians are particularly adept at numbing themselves against painful emotions. ‘After all,’ we reason, ‘we should be joyful because we know that God is in control.’ Negative emotions such as fear, anger, or depression are stigmatized as inappropriate because God is love and grants us peace. But our spiritual songbook of Psalms does not contain 150 hymns of joy. As a matter of fact, a close look shows that the psalms of complaint and songs of accusation—the music of confusion, doubt, and heartache—significantly outnumber the hymns of joy. We may seek to flee from the feelings inside of us, but a look into the Psalms exposes them to our gaze.”
- Psalm 25:16 - I am lonely and afflicted.”
- Psalm 25:17 - “The troubles of my heart are enlarged.”
- Psalm 42:5 – “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?”
- Psalm 73:2-3 – “But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. ³ For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”
- Psalm 6:6-7 – “I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping. ⁷ My eye wastes away because of grief; it grows weak because of all my foes.”
- Psalm 88:8-9 – “You have caused my companions to shun me [loneliness]; you have made me a horror to them [shame]. I am shut in so that I cannot escape [trapped]; ⁹ my eye grows dim through sorrow [sadness]. Every day I call upon you, O LORD; I spread out my hands to you [longing, desperation]?”
- Psalm 88:18 – “...my companions have become darkness.” [Despair, loneliness, grief]
- Psalm 109:1-5, 21-22 - “Be not silent, O God of my praise! ² For wicked and deceitful mouths are opened against me, speaking against me with lying tongues. ³ They encircle me with words of hate, and attack me without cause. ⁴ In return for my love they accuse me, but I give myself to prayer. ⁵ So they reward me evil for good, and hatred for my love... ²¹ But you, O GOD my Lord, deal on my behalf for your name’s sake; because your steadfast love is good, deliver me! ²² For I am poor and needy, and my heart is stricken within me.” Psalm 109:9-14 - “May his children be fatherless and his wife a widow! ¹⁰ May his children wander about and beg, seeking food far from the ruins they inhabit! ¹¹ May the creditor seize all that he has; may strangers plunder the fruits of his toil! ¹² Let there be none to extend kindness to him, nor any to pity his fatherless children! ¹³ May his posterity be cut off; may his name be blotted out in the second generation! ¹⁴ May the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the LORD, and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out!”

Dan Allender and Tremper Longman (*The Cry of the Soul*):

- “Ignoring our emotions is turning our back on reality. Listening to our emotions ushers us into reality. And reality is where we meet God... Emotions are the language of the soul. They are the cry that gives the heart a voice... However, we often turn a deaf ear—through emotional denial, distortion, or disengagement. We strain out anything disturbing in order to gain tenuous control of our inner world. We are frightened and ashamed of what leaks into our consciousness. In neglecting our intense emotions, we are false to ourselves and lose a wonderful opportunity to know God. We forget that change comes through brutal honesty and vulnerability before God.”
- “To be aware of what we feel can open us to questions we would rather ignore. For many of us, that is precisely why it is easier not to feel. But a failure to feel leaves us barren and distant from God and others.”
- “One explanation for why we avoid our feelings is that it’s painful to feel. To feel hurt, hurts. To feel shame, shames. To feel any loss only intensifies sorrow. In one sense, that’s true. But then why do we try to avoid good feelings? One woman told me that she always feels a slight dread whenever she begins to feel hope. Perhaps a better explanation for why it’s so difficult to feel our feelings is that all emotion, positive or negative, opens the door to the nature of reality. All of us prefer to avoid pain—but even more, we want to escape reality.”
- “Another way to dull the intensity of our inward groaning is by attempting to avoid our emotions. For many, strong feelings are an infrequent, foreign experience. Their inner life is characterized by an inner coolness, bordering on indifference. Unfortunately, this is often mistaken for trust. In many circles, passionate emotions are discouraged as unspiritual. You are considered godly if you can handle difficult trials with a detached and apparently unruffled confidence. But this conclusion is wrong. There are times when lack of emotion is simply the by-product of hardness and arrogance. The Scriptures reveal that this absence of feelings is often a refusal to face the sorrow of life and the hunger for heaven; it is not the mark of maturity, but rather the boast of evil (see Isaiah 47:8; Revelation 18:7).”

Fear

Lonely

Anger

Sad

Hurt

Shame

Guilt

Glad