

Our Emotions Matter to God

Feb. 24, 2019

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: Be Thou Thy Vision

(Here is a psalm/song to help your group as you worship.)

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art
Thou my best Thought, by day or by night
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise
Thou mine Inheritance, now and always
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art

Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one

High King of Heaven, my victory won
May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heav'n's Sun
Heart of my own heart, whate'er befall
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all

Icebreaker

What was your last Amazon purchase?

Text for Discussion: Psalms 46:1-2, 55:1-2; 56:3-4, 69:3, 73:21-26, 88:1-3, 94:17-19

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

If emotions are the cry of the soul, then the psalms give that cry a voice, teaching us the language of the heart. God is giving us the words to name the cries of our soul and a place to turn when we're otherwise lost. Through the psalms, we can learn to pray our emotions. They give us permission to stop denying or suppressing how we really feel. Because unfortunately, many of us have come to believe it's right to deny that we feel certain emotions – particularly darker ones. But the psalms aren't 150 songs of joy. They complain, doubt, accuse... allowing us to admit to ourselves how often we feel this way.

We can't use the psalms to heal our pain unless we are in touch with it. Our feelings don't define reality, so we shouldn't enthrone them... but that isn't license to deny them either. We can't be spiritually mature unless we're emotionally healthy, and we can't be emotionally healthy unless we work through painful emotions like anger, sadness, fear and shame. To be healed of pain, we must go through it. And that's what the psalms help us with: feeling.

What are some symptoms of being emotionally unhealthy? Avoiding healthy conflict in the name of keeping peace. Covering over brokenness, weakness and failure. Denying that we are all deeply flawed and frail. Being judgmental toward others. Being unforgiving and bitter. Ignoring anger, sadness and fear.

Our God is personal. He feels, and we are created in His image. Emotions touch every part of us: body, thoughts, feelings and motives. So we must listen to them. Because withholding our emotions means turning our backs on reality. Listening therefore ushers us into reality. And this is where we meet God, for emotions are the language of the soul. They are the cry that gives the heart a voice. Change comes through honesty before God. What then are we to do when these emotions come upon us?

Own the emotion // Observe it because we often will feel it before we're even conscious of it. We can also recognize an emotion by reflecting: Have I been fearful today? Angry? Anxious? Envious? Sad? Next, we must welcome whatever it is we feel. This is important because we're so used to feeling shameful and denying these emotions. To fully own the emotion, we must then name it. What is the emotion? This is where the psalms are so helpful as they give voice to the cries of our heart.

Examine the emotion // Look beneath it. Pull the emotions up by the roots and explore the motives and desires clinging to them. We naturally think the problem is outside and apart from us, when what needs to change is inside. Change requires targeting the heart, not the behavior. We can't constructively move forward without examining what's ruling our own heart.

Repent of it // Turn toward God and His promises. Without exception, this is what the psalms help us to do. Rather than enthroning or suppressing our emotions, we must pray them, pouring them out before God. By repenting we rethink how we're approaching things and reorient our hearts on God's promises. The psalms train us to turn – in whatever we are feeling – to God's presence and promises to receive Jesus' healing touch on our pain. That's what allows us to know God is good, even when our lives are not.

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

How do the Psalms give us permission to observe, feel, and own our emotions rather than deny or try to manage them?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- What do you think was the intended purpose of the Book of Psalms?
 - How do the Psalms give a voice to the language of our heart, our emotions?
- Name some human emotions, both positive and negative.
 - What is our natural response to emotions and why do you think we react to them in this way?
 - How do you think God reacts to our emotions?
 - Where in the Bible do you see God reacting to humanity's emotions?
- How do the Psalms give us permission to observe, feel, and own our difficult emotions rather than deny or try to manage them?
 - How do the Psalms propel us toward God's presence and goodness?
 - Since emotions are the cry of the soul and the language of the heart, what questions about God might they reveal?
 - Emotions touch every part of us...our body, our thoughts, our motives; explain how suppressing them is unhealthy both physically and spiritually.
- Which Psalm has helped you with complex emotional feelings in the past? present?
 - What practical steps can we take to ensure that all of our emotions find their final object of focus in Christ?
- How will you love the Psalms more and use them to deal with your emotions differently after today and this discussion?

Prayer

Use the Psalms as a prayer book. Spend prayer time both reading and praying through various favorite psalms.

Experiment of the Month

(A suggestion for engagement in following the way of Jesus this week)

Spiritual Formation Experiment - Once a day, take a few moments to think, talk, or journal through the emotions acronym SHAGSLAG - Shame, Hurt, Anger, Glad, Sad, Lonely, Afraid, Guilty - to identify how you are feeling. Do an internet search on the best Psalm for that emotion. Pray through that Psalm, naming the cares of your heart. Share the outcome of this experiment with your community group next time you meet.

Missional Experiment - What you would include if you were to tell a brief, concise, yet complete version of God's story to an unbelieving friend or neighbor if asked? Write the story and practice sharing it with your community group for feedback. Feedback questions to ask - Did this story make sense to you? What sticks out to you? What did you learn about God? What do you wonder about? Ask a friend if you can practice telling the story to them as you learn to share it from memory. Have the community group pray that God would give you the opportunity to share it with an unbelieving friend, neighbor, or loved one.