

Emotions



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *2 Samuel 13, Gal. 5:22, Col. 3:12–14, Luke 19:41–44, John 16:20–24.*

Memory Text: “I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy” (*John 16:20, NIV*).

Emotions are a vital part of the human personality. They can be powerful motivators, both for good and for evil. And, depending on the emotions, they make us happy, sad, fearful, or joyous.

Positive emotions can bring a feeling of satisfaction and well-being; negative ones tend to cause pain and anguish. Though the first ones can promote mental health, a prolonged exposure to negative emotions may bring about behavioral and relational problems. Thus, emotions can play an important part in our overall well-being.

God wants us to enjoy the effects of positive emotions. However, because of sin, we often face the adverse effects of negative emotional experiences. Bible characters were not immune to emotional ups and downs either. Some succeeded in gaining control over them; others, losing control, allowed negative emotions to lead them into wrong actions.

The relationship between emotions and behavior is not clear and direct. At times painful emotions may drive us to our knees to seek God as the ultimate Source of help and support. At other times struggles may cause people to give up faith entirely.

How crucial, then, that we learn more about our emotions and how they impact our lives.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 1.*

Negative Emotions

Read 2 Samuel 13, a story packed with adverse emotional experiences. In the midst of this turmoil, people ended up inflicting much physical and emotional pain on one another. The consequences of their behavior touched the entire royal family, impacting even future generations.

What emotional states can be identified in the following participants?

Amnon _____

Tamar _____

David _____

Absalom _____

Amnon’s “love” for Tamar could not have been true love, but rather a strong sexual drive, because as soon as he achieved his goal he “hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her” (*vs. 15, NIV*). Amnon’s experience illustrates emotional extremes: uncontrolled passion (in the context of an incestuous relationship) and hatred. Behaviors performed under such emotional states almost always will be unbalanced and cause serious consequences. Amnon’s “love” turned almost instantly into hatred. He disdained his sister’s final plea and drove her out of his quarters by force.

Tamar was truly the victim. She did not permit any of Amnon’s advances, which frustrated him. She served her brother in obedience to the king. And when Amnon’s intentions became clear, she did her best to dissuade him and to outline the devastating consequences of such a wicked act. Being determined to do what he wanted, Amnon was not ready to seek sound advice. So, he proceeded with his plan.

As any woman who has suffered rape or abuse, Tamar must have felt angry, humiliated, and used; she surely suffered with significantly lowered self-esteem. Her brother Absalom did not offer much relief but instead advised her to keep silent. However, Absalom devised a plan to kill Amnon in order to avenge her rape. (Besides, getting rid of Amnon increased his chances to sit on the throne of Israel.) David, father of all involved, experienced anger and grief over these events.

When have you experienced hatred, sadness, fear, rage, or jealousy? How did you deal with them? What do you wish you had done differently?

Positive Emotions

Negative emotional states, such as hatred, worry, fear, rage, and jealousy, produce immediate physiological responses: a pounding heart, tense muscles, dryness of the mouth, cold sweat, “butterflies” in the stomach, and other physical manifestations. Longtime exposure to these symptoms has been associated with cardiac and digestive complications.

In contrast, positive emotional states, such as compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, are associated with a sense of well-being, a positive outlook, and an optimal relationship with others and with God. Positive psychology, a newly developed and widely accepted branch of psychology, aims at the promotion of positive emotions in order to obtain happiness and to prevent mental illness. In fact, there is evidence that harboring certain negative emotions will adversely affect health and longevity; in contrast, the promotion of a positive outlook can promote health and longevity. In other words, the more positive your outlook and emotions, the better overall health you can enjoy.

Read Galatians 5:22. How should the fruit of the Spirit make a difference in the way people experience life?

Read Colossians 3:12–14. What is the most outstanding positive emotion according to Paul? What is the meaning of “clothe yourselves” (*NIV*) as expressed in this passage? What consequences follow when someone puts into practice Paul’s words in this passage?

Though love is more than an emotion, it is still the supreme emotion. God is love, and it is His plan for His children to experience love for others and from others; He wants us to know what it means to love God and to be loved by Him. Love brings about an array of other positive feelings and emotions that can be translated into highly desirable behaviors.

What has been your own experience with how your emotional state impacts your actions? Why is it wise not to make important decisions amid a flurry of emotions, be they positive or negative?

Jesus' Emotional Manifestations: Part 1

In Mark 8:1–3, “compassion” was the motivator that led Jesus to devise a plan for feeding the multitude. Nobody else had thought of the practical needs of these people, who had eaten little or nothing in three days. Jesus observed that some had traveled far; thus, He knew that they could collapse if sent home without anything to eat.

Apart from taking care of nourishing the crowds, what other acts of Jesus were performed out of compassion? *Mark 1:40, 41; 6:34.*

Lepers often were treated with disdain. There was no other illness or condition that would produce more terror and pity than would leprosy. Individuals with this visible malady were banned from any social interaction and often were forced to live in a designated camp. Whenever others came near, they were obligated to shout “Unclean! Unclean!” in order to warn people to move away and avoid infection. Because Jesus felt compassion for this man, He cured him instantly and then sent him away with instructions not to tell anyone. But the cured man could not keep this wonderful act of love to himself, and he started to share it with everyone.

Jesus felt compassion, not only when people lacked the basic physical necessities but also when they were without leadership, direction, or aims. Thus, before providing food for them, He felt their deep spiritual needs and proceeded to teach them about the kingdom of God.

Christ’s compassion can be seen, too, in Mark 9:36, where Jesus emphasized physical touch. He held children and showed love and affection for them. He also reached out and touched diseased people in order to communicate divine healing power.

In the encounter with the rich young ruler (*Mark 10:21, 22*), Jesus loved him even though the young man did not follow the Master’s directions. In an instant, both men experienced strong emotions—love (Jesus) and sadness (the rich young ruler).

What are ways that you express compassion? That is, it’s one thing to feel compassion (most people do that), but it’s another to express it by concrete deeds. How might you through words and deeds better reveal the compassion you feel for those who are hurting?

Jesus' Emotional Manifestations: Part 2

Read Luke 19:41–44. What led Jesus to shed tears over Jerusalem? No doubt it was over the sorrow He felt as He looked into the future and viewed Jerusalem's fate. But even more so, He felt sorrow for the many city dwellers who had rejected Him. "The tears of Jesus upon the mount, when he overlooked the city of his love and care, while in the midst of the rejoicing and hosannas of thousands, were the last pleadings of rejected love and compassion."—Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 3, p. 20.

The Gospel writers record two occasions on which Jesus wept. People usually cry for themselves, but on these occasions Jesus' sorrow came from a deep feeling for others.

What were some of the painful emotions Jesus experienced in the following contexts? *Matt. 26:37, 38; Mark 3:5; 8:12; John 11:32–38; Mark 11:15, 16.* **What** caused the emotions He experienced?

The first few verses of Isaiah 53 confirm that Jesus was a man of sorrows. Even though He experienced many moments of joy, He also felt severe emotional pain. Much of Jesus' suffering had to do with feelings of frustration when His followers did not grasp His message. In spite of the abounding love of Jesus and His supernatural signs, many did not understand that Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus also suffered greatly as He observed the results of sin upon humankind.

The events around Lazarus' death caused Him great sorrow too. John tells us that Jesus groaned in the spirit (*John 11:33*). This is a translation of the Greek word that indicates a very strong display of emotional turmoil, accompanied by an audible sound from the throat and nose. Greek playwright Aeschylus (525–456 B.C.) uses the same word to describe the snorting of horses. The word is used five times in the New Testament, four of them to describe Jesus' emotion.

Contemplating the emotional experiences of Jesus can help us understand how much He can relate to our own emotional turmoil. Look at this text: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses" (*Heb. 4:15, NIV*). How can the message of this text bring us into a closer bond with Jesus, especially in times of suffering?

God's Plan for Painful Emotions

Read John 16:20–24. What is Jesus' promise in regard to pain and grief?

The passage offers great hope to anyone going through physical or psychological pain. Here are a few things that can be learned from this text:

- *The world seems to be full of joy.* Often the believer looks around and is reminded of the unfairness of life. Wicked people seem to enjoy themselves, while many committed to God are in pain. But Jesus assures us that this will not go on forever. Besides, appearances often are deceiving. We naturally tend to view others as being happier and more successful than we are.

- *Grief, sorrow, and anguish will turn to joy.* This is the core of Jesus' promise. Believers must treasure the idea that sorrow will not only pass away but give way to joy.

- *Past pain will be forgotten.* Memories of the unpleasant past often cause much distress. Many psychotherapists work painstakingly to remove the effects of the past in their client's present life. Jesus assures us that, just as a woman gives birth and forgets about the pains at the sight of the newborn, His followers will one day move beyond the pain of the past.

- *No one will take away our joy.* The type of joy Jesus offered is not the same as we now understand it. Jesus is offering us total happiness, an eternal condition that no enemy can take away from the saved.

- *There will be no needs.* Jesus affirms that the righteous will no longer ask anything. They will not need to make requests and supplications to Jesus, because all their needs will have been met.

How can you hold fast to the promise that your sorrow will turn to joy? How can this assurance help you pass through the adversities of life? How could you use Jesus' promises to encourage someone in grief?

Further Study: “As the piercing look of Jesus swept the desecrated court of the temple, all eyes were instinctively turned toward him. The voices of the people and the noise of the cattle were hushed. Priest, ruler, Pharisee and Gentile all looked with mute astonishment and indefinable awe upon the Son of God, who stood before them with the majesty of Heaven’s King, divinity flashing through humanity and investing him with a dignity and glory he had never before displayed. A strange fear fell upon the people. Those nearest Jesus instinctively drew as far from him as the crowd would permit. With the exception of a few of his disciples the Saviour stood alone. All sound was hushed; the deep silence seemed unbearable, and when the firm, compressed lips of Jesus parted, and his voice rang out in clarion tones, there was an involuntary groan or sigh of relief from all present.

“He spoke in clear accents and with a power that caused the people to sway as if moved by a mighty tempest: ‘It is written, My house is the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.’ He descended the steps, and, with greater authority than he had there manifested three years before, with indignation that quenched all opposition, in tones that rang like a trumpet through the whole temple, commanded, ‘Take these things hence.’”—Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 3, pp. 23, 24.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 How would you describe the emotions of Jesus as expressed in the above passage? What lessons can we learn from this about how many emotions, if properly channeled, can be a source of good?
- 2 How can negative emotions be compensated with positive ones? Consider the experience of Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, who went to look at Jesus’ tomb, and were “afraid yet filled with joy” (*Matt. 28:8, NIV*).
- 3 Jewish communities celebrate Purim to remember the time that “their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration” (*Esther 9:22, NIV*). Discuss with your class ways to make sure we do not forget the many times our sorrow has turned into joy. Share with the class times you have experienced this emotional change.
- 4 How can we learn to cling to God’s promises when, for now, they seem so distant and unattainable?

What is it Worth?

What is your faith worth? What would you be willing to give up to follow Christ today?

At a recent evangelistic series held in Kenya, several young people made decisions for Christ that may cost them everything.

Dorcas is 19 and recently graduated from high school. She wants to be a doctor. Her family attends church every Sunday.

She overheard some young people talking about the evangelistic meetings being held in town. They described the singing and the movies being shown.

Dorcas decided to go, even though she had heard that the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which sponsored the meetings, was a cult. She was impressed by the young people who talked about health and family life before each meeting, and the speakers who preached from their open Bibles, explaining each point carefully. Dorcas sensed that these pastors were teaching God's truth, and she wanted to know more about what Adventists believe.

At first her parents didn't mind her attending the meetings. But when they saw her deepening interest, they became worried and demanded that she stop attending the meetings. Her mother and other relatives put pressure on Dorcas to stop attending the meetings, and her father told her that her education was over if she became an Adventist.

But Dorcas had discovered God's truth, and she wasn't willing to give it up. She was determined to follow God, no matter what the cost. "Truth is more important to me than a family or an education," she says. Dorcas continued studying the Bible and was baptized. Her family has told her to leave their home, so she is now staying with an Adventist family in town, where she can continue attending the follow-up meetings.

"I don't think I made a mistake," she says. "I know God has a plan for my life, and I must be patient and let God work that plan out."

Dorcas isn't alone. Several other young people have made similar decisions. But for some, like Brenda, the story ends differently. She rejoiced when her parents began attending the meetings, and today that family looks forward to baptism together.

In many places faith isn't free. Please pray for these youth who are willing to give up so much for God. And thank you for giving your mission offerings, which help make evangelism, especially in difficult places, possible.