



HEART: Emotions



The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart.
- Helen Keller

Definition: Emotional wellness is the ability to process, express, and receive emotions in a healthy way; acknowledging and honoring feelings as a part of being human.

Verse: *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.* - Romans 15:13

1. Our God is Emotional - It's Okay if We Are!

Scripture is rich with emotional language: the joy and anxiety of the psalmists, the despair and loneliness of the prophets, the peace and agony of Jesus Christ, even the sadness and vengefulness of God... The very idea of the incarnation is emotional. God comes because God cares, and because God comes, God suffers the burdens of human life. - Sacred Self-Care by Dr. Chanequa Walker-Barnes

There are over **2,100 emotion words** in the Bible:

Emotion Words	#	Emotion Words	#
Love, Loving or Loving-kindness	605	Groan, Mourn, Sorrow or Sadness	221
Fear, Anxious, Anxiety or Terror	434	Compassion or Compassionate	111
Anger or Angry (mostly OT)	364	Encourage, Encouragement or Comfort	128
Joy, Enjoy or Rejoice	258	TOTAL	2,121

We find in Scripture that our Lord is emotional Himself:

- **Genesis 6:6:** *The Lord grieved and His heart was filled with pain (sadness/grief).*
- **Deuteronomy 6:14:** *The Lord is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you (jealousy/anger)*
- **Zephaniah 3:17:** *He will take great delight...will rejoice over you with singing (happiness/joy)*
- **John 11:35:** *Jesus wept (grief/compassion)*
- **Luke 22:44:** *And being in anguish, he prayed... his sweat was like drops of blood (anxiety)*

God even gave us the **Psalms of Lament** (e.g., Psalm 13) to give us a faithful way to express sadness and frustration to Him. There are about 60 Psalms dedicated to "complaining" or "lamenting" to God. This gives us permission to be honest about our pain.

2. Jesus Models Emotional Wellness

Jesus in the Midst of Grief (John 11:32-37)

³² When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ³⁴ "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. ³⁵ Jesus wept. ³⁶ Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ³⁷ But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Reflection

- Jesus knew He would raise Lazarus, yet He stopped to weep with Mary and others in the midst of their grief. Why is it important that our Savior is "deeply moved" by our pain?
- Our society often prefers to "shush" away big displays of emotion. How does Jesus' reaction to Mary's weeping challenge the way we treat people who are hurting? Which emotions do you struggle to acknowledge in yourself or find hard to sit with when you see them in others?
- Jesus demonstrates the ability to be comfortable with what some consider "difficult emotions." Why do we have difficulty at times sharing our pain, anger or grief with God?

3. Trusting Our Emotions (excerpted from Sacred Self-Care by Dr. Chanequa Walker-Barnes)

Human beings were created in the image of God, who feels deeply. Emotions are part of our creation and serve a vital role in our survival. They can help us bond with others. They can help us avoid danger. Emotions are not the enemy of reason; they are companions to it.

Emotions help us to make sense of experience and to determine what to do. The same thing is true of all emotions, whether we think of them as negative or positive. Being whole, then, means having congruence between our emotions, our thoughts, our behaviors, and our bodily experiences.

Therapists sometimes facilitate this by using feeling charts to help people to recognize and name their emotional experiences. It is also why we [therapists] repeatedly ask, "How did that make you feel?" We're not stalling. We are trying to help people integrate head, heart, and body by connecting with and honoring their emotions. (See Handout #1)

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

- **Develop Your Emotional Vocabulary:** Use the Feelings Wheel and practice identifying and naming your own emotions throughout the day. Look out for thoughts or judgments that may be disguised as feelings - for example, "I feel I didn't get a fair deal," which conveys a thought, not a feeling.
- **Practice Presence:** Commit to "sitting at the feet" of someone who is hurting this week. Instead of trying to fix their pain, simply sit and listen with them, just as Jesus did with Martha and Mary.
- **Pray a Lament:** Find a Lament Psalm (like Psalm 13) and pray it word-for-word, inserting your own feelings. (See Handout #2)