

Living with Authenticity

In a Christian worldview, human emotions are a core part of being made in the image of God, who himself experiences holy and dynamic feelings. Rather than being sinful or chaotic, the spectrum of human emotion reflects our design, modeled perfectly by Jesus Christ and mapped from profound joy to righteous sorrow. Some Christians operate under the false belief that the majority of the time we should be experiencing what are considered the more pleasant emotions such joy, peace, contentment, and cheerfulness but The Lord created us with the full range of emotions for a reason. **The goal should not be to feel any certain way but rather to be aware of and authentic about how we are actually feeling.** How do we know our emotions are of a divine origin? First of all consider the Imago Dei: Humans bear emotions because God feels. Scripture attributes joy, compassion, grief, and righteous anger to God. Next look at the Example of Jesus: Christ embodied the full human emotional spectrum. He wept at a tomb (sorrow), showed anger at injustice (indignation), felt deep compassion for crowds, and experienced agony in Gethsemane. Every aspect of our creation as humans is intentional. Emotions act as internal signals or indicators of our spiritual and relational state and are meant to connect us deeply to God and others. To truly live as God intended we need to allow ourselves to experience and express the entire spectrum of feelings including exalted and peaceful emotions such as joy, awe, gratitude, and transcendent peace. These human feelings are elevated in Scripture as alignment with God's goodness and the Fruit of the Spirit. We also need to allow ourselves to feel sorrowful and lamenting emotions including grief, weeping, and holy fear which are not signs of weak faith. The Book of Psalms models raw lament, proving that pain, disorientation, and sadness are safe to bring directly to God.

Well known Pastor Charles Swindoll wrote honestly about his experience of emotion: "I have found that my feelings often represent some of the most sensitive areas in my life touched by the Spirit of God. Not infrequently do my emotions play a

vital role in how and where the Spirit is guiding me, giving me reasons to make significant decisions, cautioning me to back off, and reproving me for something in my life that needs immediate attention.” Honest and helpful words. He continues, “We are strange creatures: proud of our brains, stubborn in our wills, but ashamed of our emotions—though we deny all three!” He states that one of the benefits of a life sensitive to the Holy Spirit is that it “**allows us to warm up to our emotions, which is nothing more than allowing ourselves the freedom to be real, to be whole. . . .**

Expressing one’s emotions is not a mark of immaturity or carnality.” The Spirit-inspired Psalms, packed with emotion of all kinds, affirm and illustrate this reality. The chart below was developed by Christian Counselor Brenda Pauken and shared on the Biblical Counseling Coalition website. It provides scriptural evidence to this information, please take time to refer to the scriptures listed here and to add others you are familiar with yourself.

<u>Emotion</u>	<u>God’s Expression</u>	<u>Man’s Expression</u>
Love	Jer. 31:3; John 3:16	Matt. 22:37-39
Pleasure	Luke 3:22; 1 Cor. 1:21	Ps. 16:11
Rejoicing	Ps. 104:31; Zeph. 3:17	Deut. 26:11; Phil 4:4
Delight	Num. 14:8; Ps. 18:19	Ps. 37:4
Compassion	Matt. 9:36; Rom. 9:15	Heb. 10:34
Confidence	Isa. 41:10; 2 Cor. 12:9a	Prov. 14:26; Heb. 4:16
Hope	Rom. 15:13; 1 Tim. 1:1	Ps. 33:22; Rom. 5:4-5
Grief/Mourning	Gen. 6:6; Eph. 4:30	Matt. 5:4; Rom. 12:15
Jealousy	Ex. 34:14; Ps. 79:5	Rom. 11:14
Hatred	Deut. 16:22; Ps. 11:5	Ps. 31:6; Rev. 2:6
Anger	Deut. 9:8; 2 Sam. 22:8	Eph. 4:26

<u>Emotion</u>	<u>Intended Expression</u>
Fear	Lev. 25:17; Luke 12:32
Tiredness	Matt. 11:28
Anxiety	Matt. 6:25; Phil. 4:6
Loneliness	Ps. 25:16
Shame	Ps. 25:20; Rom. 10:11
Guilt	Ps. 25:11; 1 John 1:9
Insecurity	Deut. 33:27; Prov. 1:32-3

All humans experience the entire range of human emotions. As Christians, we may feel the pressure to appear strong, not show vulnerability, and suppress our pain. Pretending you don’t have emotional pain and loss doesn’t make you more faithful, it makes you dishonest. **Lament isn’t the opposite of faith. Lament is faith that refuses to lie**

about how much it hurts. A false notion of strength can be misleading, as true resilience is not about pretending to be okay when we are not, but rather, facing our pain with honesty, trusting in God's grace, and growing through our struggles. It is through honest lamenting and sharing and being vulnerable with God and others that we make our way to hope. Throughout scripture we see that God's order is lament first then hope not the other way around. The Lord designed and created us with this entire range of human emotion for a reason. He uses difficult and uncomfortable emotions to draw us close to Him, to encourage us to open His Word, and to build a testimony of faith that serves as a witness to His love and faithfulness. So let's abandon attempts to live life at just one end of the spectrum and surrender to living with authenticity the full life that Christian living offers.