



## Episode 3-20: Handling Emotions Biblically

### Resources:

#### Books

[Untangled Emotions - J. Alasdair Groves, Winston T. Smith](#)

[Managing Your Emotions - Amy Baker](#)

[Feelings and Faith - Brian Borgman](#)

#### Podcasts

[Thinking and Theology - Joyful Journey](#)

#### Handouts/Articles

[Emotions Wheel](#)

[Emotions are a Language - Ed Welch](#)

#### Websites

[Biblical Counseling Training Conference](#)

### Transcript:

Jocelyn: I don't just need to feel better. I need the truth. And ultimately that will make me better.

Janet: I just want to make it as totally simple as possible for ladies to see that the Bible is really applicable to their everyday life.

Jocelyn: When they understand theology, the application flows out of it quickly with joy.

Janet: It is a journey, but even the journey itself is joyful when I'm doing it, holding the hand of my savior and trusting him all along the way. This is the joyful journey podcast, a podcast to inspire and equip women to passionately pursue beautiful biblical truth on their journey as women of God. When you choose truth, you're choosing joy.

Janet: Okay, welcome back. This is Janet once again here with my trusty co-host, Jocelyn.

Jocelyn: Hi, friends.

Janet: And today, Jocelyn's gonna be leading us in a discussion about our emotions. And I am so excited because for some of us, emotions are something that's bad and we try not to have them. For some of us, emotions are what guide everything we do and it's the only way to be authentic.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: But really, how should we think about those biblically? So Jocelyn, take it away.



Jocelyn: Yeah. I'm so excited to talk about this topic. I think it's really important and I think that it's something that a lot of people, even Christians, are really confused about.

Janet: I completely agree.

Jocelyn: And I, and just personally, I did not understand them well for a long time. And so studying this and just organizing my mind around what the Bible says about this, has been really helpful for me. I think there's kind of two camps that sometimes people fall into and the one would be like emotions are everything. I think there's a big segment of our culture who base their decisions on how they feel or the feelings that will result from doing something.

Janet: And think they should do it that way.

Jocelyn: Right. Like you should follow your heart.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: You should live for what makes you happy. And like we might look at them and say, what kind of thought or decision making went into making that choice? What were you thinking? What logic led you to that? And so we see people making decisions all over the board with, without like really much rhyme or reason. Definitely not a lot of foresight into the consequences or how that would shape the future, but they made those decisions cuz they were chasing some sort of emotional experience, which, like you said, our culture has really amplified.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: That's the point of being alive.

Janet: It's the only way to be true to yourself.

Jocelyn: Yes. Then there's this other camp where emotions are nothing. And so if we're gonna contrast cultures, I would say like the worldly culture is, emotions are everything. And sadly, sometimes the Christian culture is emotions are nothing, if we're not careful. Especially if you grew up in a kind of a background where feelings or emotions we're seen like an irrelevant, unimportant thing.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: You might be in the emotions are nothing camp. So what I mean by that is we do what we do because it's right and we don't take into account emotions whatsoever.

Janet: Yeah.



Jocelyn: It's just robotic, almost like feelingless existence. And in both cases I don't think those are accurate understandings of emotions or a proper application of how God says He wants us to view emotions or use emotions. So on the one hand, God didn't make humans to act like a bunch of animals, and on the other hand, He didn't make humans to act like a bunch of robots. So we're gonna look at that topic today and see what God says about it and how it affects our lives.

Janet: So why don't we start with you explaining to us what are emotions exactly.

Jocelyn: That's a really good place to start and I really appreciate what Ed Welch says about emotions. I think it's helpful to think of emotions as a language. They say something about reality. I've been thinking of it like emotions are a vocabulary. They help you to state what's really going on. So they say something about reality and then our job is to figure out what they're saying. So it's like they give us a status report on reality. So for example, Ed Welch explained that if someone says, I'm really afraid. The status of her reality is that something threatening seems to be looming over her. And if we hear that status of her reality, then we can be a good friend to her in that moment. We can learn more about the thing that she feels is threatening her, and we can bring God's truth into that equation. Sometimes emotions are easy to see or understand, and sometimes they're a little bit more complicated, but ultimately they're just a vocabulary.

Janet: Yeah, and I'm thinking as you say that I'm thinking about that because some of my emotions are not in line with God's values. But even that fits cuz it's, my emotion is I'm mad cuz somebody cut me off in traffic. So there, there is a reality.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: But I'm not viewing that reality with God's values.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: Therefore the emotion. So it's, I'm thinking it through. It's okay, that's true.

Jocelyn: It's true.

Janet: It's true. It doesn't make every emotion Godly. It just means

Jocelyn: It's just what, what's real?

Janet: It's a reflection of something that seems real. I might be afraid of something that isn't even real. But in my mind I think it is. And you even said that.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: It seems to be looming. Okay. That's really good.



Jocelyn: Yeah. When I first read that, I was like I don't know what I think about that.

Janet: Yeah. I have to think about that.

Jocelyn: Yeah. I had to think about it and the more I think about it and the more actually I apply what I've learned from this, from his teaching on that, the more I found it true time and time again, and I think I grew up in, the emotions are nothing category. If there had to be an extreme, that would've been it.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: Definitely not the emotions are everything category, and so one of the side effects of that is like you squelch your emotions.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Which is not helpful because then you're just saying it's not true. It's not true. It's not true. When it's reality, but we just need to learn how to deal with whatever is going on.

Janet: So then why do you think emotions are such an important part of life? Why does it matter so much?

Jocelyn: Yeah. Ed Welch goes on to say in that article that scripture identifies emotions as a matter of the heart, and if that's true, then it's really important to pay attention to them because they're important. They help reveal what's really going on inside of us and there's the passages like Luke 10:27. If we're told to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our strength, all of our mind, and to love our neighbor as ourself, then it matters what's happening inside of us. God wants us to be single mindedly wholeheartedly devoted to Him, and He wants us to love Him with everything, all of our heart. So if there's any time we can get a look into our heart and have an opportunity to see what's happening, we can evaluate whether it's wholeheartedly devoted only to God and to living our lives for His glory.

Janet: Yeah, it makes me think about, I love the book Untangling Emotions. I'm sure we're gonna link that in our show notes. But Winston Smith calls our emotions windows into our worship, which I love. And he says in there that they're an expression of what we value or what we love. And that's exactly what you're saying too.

Jocelyn: Absolutely.

Janet: And that's really important.

Jocelyn: Yeah. Ed Welch also goes on to say that part of the loving your neighbor as yourself section of that verse includes then being moved to action if someone expresses strong emotion



around us. So part of loving other people in a way that mirrors God's love for us includes being moved to action by the emotional expressions of others, which I mean, think about the way that you love your friends and family, if they did not exhibit emotions, you sometimes would not know what to do.

Janet: Right. I don't know someone needs comfort.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: If I don't see sadness.

Jocelyn: Right. Yeah. So emotions are an important part of how we interact with each other. God tells us in 1 Peter 1:22 that we're supposed to love each other deeply from the heart, and that includes entering into the realities of others, especially other believers. So when my daughter takes the time to feel her emotions and allows them to be understood, and then she expresses them to our family, we are moved to action because we love her deeply from the heart. And so one of my daughters, Shelby, has shared publicly that her life was dominated by fear for a period of years. When she struggled with that and she really tried hard to force it to not be true, she stuffed it down. She avoided it. The problems behind that fear just grew out of her control.

Janet: Yeah. They get bigger.

Jocelyn: Yeah. And when she allowed the reality that she was experiencing to be understood and then used our common language to communicate those emotions to us, we were moved to intervene and fight through those problems with her and as the chief source of help was using God's word. That was what was true.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And that was the solution to all those problems that were building up in her. Her emotions revealed truth that was happening inside of her, and all of that needed to be dealt with.

Janet: Yeah. Yeah.

Jocelyn: So as Shelby allowed her emotions to give her a better glimpse inside of her own heart, she was able to evaluate where her heart was in her relationship with God. And then to make adjustments to how she was thinking and to face the reality that God had given her. He really grew her through that period of those years of fear. And the revelations about her heart helped her to do business with God that we still see the fruit of now. So she was able to grow in her trust of God's care, and she was able to grow in her commitment to being holy and living rightly and as a divine side effect. As her heart grew in holy devotion to God, her emotions began to transition from being full of fear, to being full of joy, because that was her new reality. The new reality was she had dealt with the issues and was now living in a different place of trust.



Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: So they had to be fear turned into joy.

Janet: Yeah. Which is far more powerful than if there had been no fear even.

Jocelyn: Totally. Totally.

Janet: Okay. I have to share another quote. Can you tell I love that book?

Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: Untangling Emotions. He says this, I love this. At the core, dealing with difficult or absent emotions always comes back to growing in love for what God loves, hate for what God hates, and an ever deepening relationship with God through every emotion.

Jocelyn: Absolutely.

Janet: And that's exactly what your precious Shelby was experiencing.

Jocelyn: Totally. Totally. Again, from that book by Alistair Groves and Winston Smith, Untangling Emotions. They say emotions reflect what we love. And that's important because what we love, we worship. We know there were some early Christians like Clement and Origen who believed that the perfected Christian would be free of emotions.

Janet: Wow.

Jocelyn: I know. Isn't that kind of...

Janet: Crazy.

Jocelyn: Terrible? Like they would feel nothing. But even a cursory reading of scripture shows that's not true.

Janet: And Jesus had emotion and He was perfect.

Jocelyn: God doesn't teach us anywhere in the Bible to either embrace positive emotions or push away negative emotions. Don't you think that's helpful?

Janet: Oh, absolutely.

Jocelyn: I think it's super helpful to know that there's no place in the scripture where we can find a list. Here's all the emotions that are sinful and you should not feel.

Janet: Yes.



Jocelyn: That's so helpful.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: So they say in that book that all emotions are good in their proper place. And there are times when it's appropriate to feel any emotion.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: The tension we have is that we want to feel about things the way that God wants to feel about them, not the way that we naturally feel.

Janet: Yeah. I liked how you said that there are times when it's appropriate to feel any emotion. And when I think about that, I mean it's true and Jesus showed so many different emotions, but I frequently show and have emotion about the wrong thing at the wrong time.

Jocelyn: Which reflects what we love.

Janet: What I worship. Yes.

Jocelyn: Yeah. What we love and what we worship.

Janet: Yep.

Jocelyn: For example, when I feel angry that my friend is being oppressed and justice is being kept from him. That's an appropriate emotion for that situation. I shouldn't give anger an opportunity to incite me to sin, but the emotion of anger in that situation is appropriate.

Janet: It seems very unloving if it didn't bother you.

Jocelyn: Right. Where's the justice in that? Or like you should feel nervous or slightly scared if you're operating a chainsaw because you know it has the capacity to cause harm.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: If you don't use it right.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: So there's right emotions, even things that we would initially maybe react to. Oh, I shouldn't feel that way. I shouldn't be afraid of things. God is with me all the time.

Janet: Yeah.





Jocelyn: A slight fear of that dangerous tool makes you be super careful when you're using it. So there's all sorts of emotions. There's all sorts of context where that emotion is appropriate and godly, even hard emotions that we might tend to shy away from.

Janet: Yeah. One of the things that they said in that book, *Untangling Emotions*, that I know is true, but it was, it's frustrating to me.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And it's that our emotions don't come out one by one. I'm not righteously angry because my friend is not getting justice, and then I'm, it's like they're, he, they call it in that book a big paint bucket. Where all the emotions are mixed up at the same time.

Jocelyn: I think that's helpful to know because it wouldn't life be grand, if they came out in an order.

Janet: One at a time.

Jocelyn: And then I could go deal with them one at a time. One of the things that complicates the situation is that so many emotions are felt all at the same time.

Janet: Yep.

Jocelyn: And those authors say one reason we can have so many varieties of emotions, sometimes even conflicting emotions, is because there are so many things that we love.

Janet: Oh, that is so true. And that's a reason why it's just so important to learn how to respond to emotions.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Both our own emotions and the emotions of the people around us.

Jocelyn: Absolutely. So we talked about the ditches of extremes and in the case of emotions, we can have the same thing. We can't fall into either ditch of believing that either emotions are everything so embrace all that you feel. Or emotions are nothing so suppress all that you feel. The authors of that book, *Untangling Emotions*, just simply advise to engage our emotions.

Janet: Okay. That's an intriguing thought. Engage. So how do you engage your emotions?

Jocelyn: First we need to identify what we're feeling. I think you know that I'm a word junkie.

Janet: Yes.





Jocelyn: I think this is so important because if you come from the mindset that emotions are unimportant, or if you're from a family or a culture where emotions are suppressed, you may find yourself now in this place where you feel emotions, but you don't even know how to identify them. So my first recommendation is to put a vocabulary to how you feel. So when my daughter and I talk about it, we say, feel what you feel like don't push it away. Feel it.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And then learn how to name it appropriately. Learn to identify the emotion that you're experiencing. There are all sorts of ways to do this. But one that I use a lot is just an emotions wheel, and we're happy to put a link to that in our show notes. I use that in the year two of our four year Mom2Mom curriculum. When we talk about emotions and handling emotions in a biblical way, we print off a color copy of that and laminate it. And it's just something that you look at that helps you to identify what it is that you are feeling. It gives you a vocabulary for what you're experiencing. It's just important, first of all, to communicate and identify what it is you're experiencing emotionally.

Janet: I think that's really important because there are a lot of times I think, I don't even know how to say what I'm feeling right now, and if I can't come up with a word, God still meets me there.

Jocelyn: I get that. Totally.

Janet: But it can be really helpful to know, do I need to repent? Or is this appropriate? I gotta know what I'm feeling so that I know what to do with it.

Jocelyn: And sometimes I get stuck and I really need my husband's help, which is one reason why it's so important for our marriage to be a safe place.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: For me to talk because sometimes when I'm talking through something hard, I can't. I cannot identify what it is.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And my husband can be a safe place where we can communicate about it without the temptation of getting to a sinful place about it. Like we're discussing what's going on and he's helping me to identify it because I gotta do something about it.

Janet: Good. So is that it then? We learn to identify our emotions properly. We use the correct terminology and then we're good to go.



Jocelyn: Wow. Wouldn't that be nice? Identifying what you're feeling is only the first step. Because when you've identified what you're feeling, then you can examine why you're feeling it. And that's important for us to see that our feelings are not ever just random.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: They're always tied to what we're thinking or wanting or how we're acting, or how others are acting related to us. Our emotions are always tied to our heart in some way. And so when I was really struggling with panic and anxiety after I had my first baby and I was experiencing some postpartum depression, it always seemed so shocking, like literally so out of nowhere.

Janet: And it probably was stronger than it typically would've been.

Jocelyn: And it, because I had never worked through this before, it did feel like it was coming out of nowhere. But with a little bit of practice, I started to be able to see that there was always a why behind my panic.

Janet: Interesting.

Jocelyn: It wasn't like it just threw itself on me. If I could look back to what I had been thinking about right before I started getting scared, I could see what I was thinking about. And sometimes those thoughts were like scary.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And so I was feeling scared because I was thinking about scary things.

Janet: And I think that's really helpful because a lot of times our emotions feel very arbitrary.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And it's helpful to know that there really is gonna be a why, even if you're not conscious of what it is yet, cuz you haven't thought about it. There is something there.

Jocelyn: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. When you have what you feel are random emotions is, it feels really out of control and arbitrary I don't know why I started feeling that thing. Which leads you to then think I don't know why I might start feeling this thing later. And that's scary.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: That's super debilitating.



Janet: Or I go into the camp of my emotions or nothing. I don't know where they come from. I don't know why they're doing it. I'm just gonna ignore it.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And then I don't deal with whatever caused it.

Jocelyn: Yeah. So that leads to the next step, which is to evaluate the good and bad aspects of emotions and then to act according to that evaluation. So if we go back to my panic emotions during my postpartum depression days, when I realized that my feelings of panic were tied to thoughts that I'd just been thinking about, I could evaluate whether those thoughts and beliefs were honoring to God and were full of righteousness or whether they were not honoring to God. So I'm gonna give you a couple of examples cuz sometimes when we live in theoretical land, it doesn't really hit home and it's not helpful. So for example, if I was feeling panicked because my baby was about to fall off the changing table, I'd need to evaluate whether it's a righteous thing to be afraid at the possibility that my baby could be hurt and then act on it.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: So it's obviously righteous to be concerned that my baby stays safe from injuries that I can prevent. So that would lead me to act in a way that's righteous, I will change my baby's diaper in a way that is wise and loving. Like I'm not gonna leave her on the changing table and then be, just be like, stop feeling scared about it. She's fine.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: I'm not gonna be careless.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: I'm not gonna be do dumb things. However, if I was feeling panic because my baby was fussy, I'd evaluate, is it righteous to feel panicky? That I can't control every aspect of my baby's existence enough to never have her fuss. And that's not righteous. God's goal for my baby is not bliss, with no discomfort or need to grow, so that can't be my goal. So if it's not righteous or good to be panicking when my baby fusses, then I need to act on that evaluation and it helps my thinking to not be so consumed with making sure my baby is never unhappy. So it was the same emotion.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Panic.

Janet: Yes.



Jocelyn: Or fear, but there were different causes and by looking at the emotion and identifying it and then looking what was behind it, I was able to see what to do with it. Which is what's important. So in both of those cases, the emotions forced me to look at what was happening in my heart and it forced me to engage my relationship with God. So that's why it's important. Feel what you feel, look at what's going on, and then engage your relationship with God.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: My emotions push me toward God, push me toward His care and wisdom. And this is why it's important to see God gave me my emotions as a valuable part of my relationship with Him and others. If I squelch my emotions, it's gonna put me in this place where I don't need to engage with God because I don't feel anything. If I don't feel anything, then I never need God's help with anything. And hyper engaging my emotions is gonna put me in this other place where I don't need to engage with God because emotional experiences was my goal and it became my God. Emotions really are an important tie to our heart and our worship of God.

Janet: Hence you said we need to engage them.

Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: We don't need to ignore them. They actually control us more.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: When we try to ignore 'em.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And we don't need to bow to them or follow 'em. We need to understand them and then respond appropriately, which sometimes means I'm gonna go against them.

Jocelyn: Yeah. There's a lot of times that I've engaged my emotions, put a vocabulary to them, and then still had to just work right through them. Like I've had so many conversations this, especially as I get older and older, where I start crying and I can't just engage with my sadness and hang out there. I have to actually continue talking while I'm crying.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: Like I can't just say, I'll deal with it and when I'm not emotionally anymore. You just deal with it.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And be emotional at the same time.



Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: So we love Amy Baker. She's our dear friend.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: She's one of our podcast guests, and she wrote a little booklet called, "Managing Your Emotions", which is superb.

Janet: Oh, yes.

Jocelyn: And we will link in the show notes in that booklet. She really laid out some great help in understanding the value of emotions, and she helps us to see that emotions are a good part of God's complex design for humans. And they were present at creation. They didn't appear after the fall, which I find helpful to remember.

Janet: That's so good.

Jocelyn: That's like it didn't show up after we messed up. They were there from the beginning. So of course, the fall complicated what God had created was good, and God looked at His human creation and declared Him to be very good. Emotions are not a result of the curse of sin.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: Praise the Lord. It's helpful to know that. Additionally, emotions help us accurately bear the image of God. He intended us to use our emotions as a part of the mandate to bear the image and likeness of God accurately. God himself has emotions. That's helpful for me to know.

Janet: Yep.

Jocelyn: We're told in the scriptures. In Ephesians 4 and Psalm 78, God grieves.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: In Isaiah 62 and 65, God rejoices. In Isaiah 16, God weeps. In Psalm 60, He exalts. He even gets angry, we see that in Romans 1. And He loves, we see that in John 3:16. God designed humans to bear His image and that included accurately reflecting the likeness of Him. In all the ways that are able to be shared, including our use of emotions.

Janet: That's really hard. That's hard for me to imagine what emotions were like.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Before the curse of sin.



Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And to think how would they have affected us? What would they have looked like? Because before the curse of sin, our emotions only made life better.

Jocelyn: Isn't that amazing to think about?

Janet: Wow. They only enriched our lives. God's gift of emotions caused our lives to be richer and more enjoyable. I love that God created us to be able to enjoy.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Both Him and the world He created for us and the ability to love, to have passion, to be glad, to delight, to know elation and be passionate allows us to fully enjoy the life God created for us. Without emotions, our existence would be flat and robotic. And you mentioned that earlier.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: They really are a gift from God and we get tastes of that now. When we rejoice in someone coming to know Christ, there's an enjoyment that is not, but I need more. It's just satisfying. We can taste how our emotions magnify God's goodness, but we also mix it with a lot of sinful worship of things other than God. And so it gets confusing.

Jocelyn: It does get confusing. And it's also confusing because some emotions are just hard.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: The thought of being jealous of my husband.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: I have this tendency to think, ooh, jealousy is wrong. Jealousy is right in the context of wanting my marriage to be pure. Or the emotion of like feeling mad when injustice happens.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: That strong difficulty motion pushes us toward action that we would not maybe engage in, but is necessary.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: In a world that's cursed by sin.



Janet: And it may be like when we think about emotions before the fall, there probably was not mad.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: Because there was no sin.

Jocelyn: There was nothing to be mad at.

Janet: It is a bummer that we need to deal with that anger, but in a broken world, things make God angry too.

Jocelyn: Yes, and it's righteous to feel mad about the things that God feels mad about.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: Another thing that's crazy to think about is that. Even before the curse of sin entered the human experience, God records in the Bible that Adam experienced what we would call negative emotions. Doesn't that blow your mind?

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: When God declared it was not good for man to be alone, Adam likely experienced incompleteness and loneliness, and we think like what in the Garden of Eden before sin? But those negative emotions didn't push Adam to sin. That's the difference.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: So he experienced frustration at not being able to find a fitting companion. His sadness made him appreciate the beautiful gift God gave him.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: When he gave him Eve. So Adam was completely delighted in every way to receive the gift of from God. And his delight was magnified because God had allowed him to experience the quote unquote negative emotions previously. So emotions just expanded Adam's ability to rejoice when God gave him Eve as a fitting helper for his need.

Janet: And I love that God. This is not gonna sound right. Set him up cuz God didn't know anything wrong. But He orchestrated is a better way to put it, that He could have just made Eve right away.

Jocelyn: Could have just been.





Janet: But He wanted Adam to recognize.

Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: The negative emotion so that Adam could even more rejoice and appreciate in what He did.

Jocelyn: Absolutely.

Janet: I love that.

Jocelyn: Absolutely.

Janet: I love that.

Jocelyn: Absolutely.

Janet: But unfortunately for all of us now we're only gonna be able to figure out this topic post fall where our emotions are now impacted by sin.

Jocelyn: Not that emotions are sinful, but every experience we have with emotions are affected by the curses of sin.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: It taints our experience with emotions.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And that's really just challenging. Before sin entered the world, humans could experience emotions and never sin. I think about that every time I get sinfully angry. Like before sin entered the world, we could experience emotions and not sin.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: And I'm really looking forward to that.

Janet: It's going to happen.

Jocelyn: In the future, it's gonna happen when we are glorified. After the curse of sin entered the world, emotional experiences sometimes produce misery and despair. So where in the past, negative emotions would be a catalyst for greater enjoyment of positive emotions. Now, negative emotions could motivate unbiblical and sinful desires and actions. So like Adam after the fall, if that was his situation, he could have pouted because he was lonely.



Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: Where in the past positive emotions would motivate greater worship for God and enjoyment of His love. Now, positive emotions could become idolatrous.

Janet: Ah, frequently do.

Jocelyn: I know. Just think about how many times you get something great and you're like, oh, I need more of it.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: I'm never satisfied. While old pre-curse emotions, both the positive and the quote unquote negative, became twisted and warped new, never before seen emotions started to be experienced. And this is what makes me really sad at a level of visceral sadness. Shame, grief, depression, anger, paranoia, sinful fear and discouragement. We were built to not understand those things.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And so now that they're a part of our experience, it's like it's a big bummer that we have to experience something that we weren't built to have to know, but now we do.

Janet: Well so then how can we learn to enjoy emotions without being ruled by them?

Jocelyn: That's a great question, and one honestly, that I'm still learning for myself and applying for myself. Living by the truth frees us to enjoy emotions or use emotions appropriately without being ruled by them. The human experience after salvation includes concerted efforts to be motivated to act based on the unchanging truth of God's word and not the ever-changing experiences of sin cursed emotions. And only Jesus makes us able to live by truth, even when old habits and experiences of emotions urge us to live for ourselves or our manipulative desires. So habits based on skewed emotions will have to be reshaped by the truth.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And we only find that in the word of God. We're often tempted to think that we must first feel right before we can think or act right. But because of self-focus revealed by many of our emotions after the curses of sin, we find that our emotions often do not tell us the truth or motivate us purely.

Janet: For sure.



Jocelyn: The Bible teaches us that our thoughts guide our actions and our actions result in emotions. So if we would like to have positive emotions, then we must first have Godly thinking and godly actions.

Janet: And Jesus helps us live by the truth. And over time as I grow to agree that he alone is worthy to be worshiped, then over time my emotions are gonna be growing to be engaged by the right things.

Jocelyn: Totally. Jesus enables us to begin living by the truth instead of our feelings. And Jesus example demonstrates how to have endurance while living obediently, even when our desires may help us to be tempted to live for emotional experiences or. Even the relief of emotional anguish.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: Jesus example teaches us how to obey even when our emotions scream out against it. And I really love the words of Matthew 26 that teach us how to do that. It says Matthew 26: 36-39 says, then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane and said to His disciples, sit here, while I go over there and pray. And He took with Him, Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. Then He said to them, my soul is deeply grieved to the point of death, remain here and keep watch with me. And He went a little beyond them and He fell in His face and prayed saying, my father, if it is possible, let this cup pass for me, yet not as I will, but as You will. Our ability to live by truth and not our feelings and emotions is a result of our redemption. Jesus using His blood, purchased us out of the kingdom of darkness, and places us into the kingdom of light, where we'll be able to successfully live out the mandates given by our Creator.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: Romans 6: 5-7 says, if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection. Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him in order that our body of sin might be done away with so that we would no longer be slaves to sin. For he who died is freed from sin.

Janet: I love that. As you were reading that Matthew 26 passage, one of the things that just strikes me is Jesus, the emotions He was feeling were incredibly painful emotions. And it wasn't part of His goal to distract from that.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: To get drunk the night before He died.

Jocelyn: Yeah.



Janet: To party with His friends.

Jocelyn: Yep.

Janet: He felt what He felt right. And took it to the Lord and I think, wow. Sometimes we don't want to feel the hard things.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: And Jesus shows us. You run to your father in that, and the goal is not to not feel a hard thing.

Jocelyn: And it says He was grieved and distressed.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: He was grieved to the point of death. So it's not like He prettied it up. And the grieved and distressed was a vocabulary that expressed his reality.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: He was praying because He knew what was about to happen.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: He was about to be separated from the face of His father for the only time in His existence.

Janet: Yep.

Jocelyn: That's grieving and distressing, but He took the reality and He did something godly with it.

Janet: I love that because when I have something really painful, I want to be able to think about it for a little bit and then I wanna just get busy.

Jocelyn: Be done. Yeah.

Janet: And not think about it anymore because it hurts so bad and no, I don't need to sit.

Jocelyn: Right.

Janet: But I do need to not make it my goal to avoid it.

Jocelyn: Yeah.



Janet: And I just, the fact that He engaged it.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Like that I think is really powerful.

Jocelyn: And we live in a culture that says to medicate yourself out of any emotion you don't like.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: So we're just surrounded by.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: We're surrounded by propaganda that says it shouldn't be this way. Jesus is such a great example of showing us to live what is real.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: And to engage it and to let that point us to our Father.

Janet: Good. So then overall, how would you say our emotions can help us?

Jocelyn: Let's talk about us right now. After the curse of sin, just in reality, like first emotions can be a really helpful warning signal. Emotions point out when something in our heart is off base or where our desires or our thinking or actions.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: Have become sinful. So if I feel jealous for a un-godly reason, like that's a really good indicator that something needs dealt with.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Because scripture's clear that my emotions follow my thinking and actions. If I'm experiencing negative or harmful emotions, it might be because my thinking or actions have been sinful.

Janet: Yep.

Jocelyn: So that's really good. The negative emotion kind of functions like a warning light on my car's dash indicating there's a problem with the engine. So the warning light is not the problem. I don't spend a bunch of energy trying to figure out how to get the light to go off. Like I could take a hammer to it if I wanted. Like I could just.



Janet: Right. You can make it go away.

Jocelyn: I can make it go away. But that warning light. Only indicated that there was a problem with the engine, and as soon as that problem is resolved magically the warning light goes away.

Janet: You sound like you know this.

Jocelyn: I do. Oh, goodness. But equally importantly, emotions can help us enjoy God's blessings. So emotions properly under the control of Christ and guided by scripture can help us to have an enjoyable experience loving and worshiping God. And I'm just gonna assert even the hard emotions.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Why do I cling to God and see that He is my life? Because I needed to.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: So my difficult emotions force me to cling to God, force me to see that He's my life. So Psalm 5:11 says, let all who take refuge and you be glad. Let them ever sing for joy and may you shelter them, that those who love Your name may exalt in You. In Psalm 16:11, You'll make known to them the path of life. In Your presence is fullness of joy. In your right hand, there are pleasures forever. When I think about what forces me to the presence of God, where fullness of joy is found.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: It is a variety of emotions. Good.

Janet: True.

Jocelyn: And hard. Like we mentioned earlier in this episode, emotions can also help us enter in the lives of those around us. When someone expresses their emotional reality, it allows us an opportunity to love them deeply from the heart. Redeemed emotions guided by selfless love for others can also help us to passionately interact with other people around us and engage at more than a surface level. At the heart level, loving and being loved enhances our experience on earth, and it prepares us to more fully enjoy the perfect relationships waiting for us in heaven. Relationships with other believers enlarge our capacity to rejoice when unity is attained. 1 Peter 1:22 says, since you have in obedience to the truth, purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, and I think I'm gonna camp out here for a second and just talk about, I think that emotions just freak people out sometimes.

Janet: Yeah.



Jocelyn: Especially when you have a strong emotion and I'm like, oh dude, she's crying. Or she's hyperventilating. Or she's all worked up about something.

Janet: Panic attack.

Jocelyn: Or whatever. Yeah. Like big emotions are scary, and I think sometimes in relationships because they're so overwhelming. We just kneejerk react to calm and quiet. Like the goal is to get them to stop doing that big thing that they're doing. When really seeing the big emotions of other people gives us a venue to be able to love them in ways that we would never be welcomed to.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: If that large emotion hadn't been experienced. So I wanna encourage our listeners to not be scared of big emotions and to think it's just a vocabulary that's expressing reality. And I am given an opportunity to enter into their reality right now. I don't wanna squish it down. I wanna allow it to be real, and then I wanna love them in the middle of it.

Janet: Yeah, I think it can be freeing to know that your job isn't to make it go away.

Jocelyn: Yes.

Janet: Because if I feel like that's such a big emotion and she's saying it to me, I need to help her get over it then I'm overwhelmed. I don't know how to do that. But to realize that's not my job.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: I can just love her in it.

Jocelyn: One of the most freeing phrases that I tell myself as I serve other people or talk to myself or help my husband and kids, is that God will have an answer for every reality.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: God will help us. We have to know what's really going on for us to get appropriate help

Janet: Because He's a God of truth.

Jocelyn: He's a God of truth, and He has practical solutions in His word, not theoretical ones.

Janet: Yep. All right, so we've talked a lot about emotions, what they are, how they're helpful, how they can indicate problems, but okay, for the listener listening to this, where does she go from here?





Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: What do we do with all this?

Jocelyn: The first application I wanna encourage is just to be honest with yourself about your emotions. We've said it a couple of times now. Feel what you feel. Don't try to squish it.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: Don't try to make it be something that it's not. I'm not sure where or when or how, but many Christians I know have fallen into this wrong belief that emotions are bad and should be squelched.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: It's like for some people, emotions have this really carnal ring to them. And I think that's especially problematic cuz I don't see anywhere in scripture that we're commanded to be feelingless robots and practically squelching your emotions leads to some really bad places.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: If God is truth, He commands us to live in truth. And when we're squelching our emotions, many times we're trying to convince ourself that something that is true, it's not true.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: But it is. It can be really troubling to have a difficult emotion that we don't know what to do with, but that doesn't make it untrue.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: It's just difficult. So if we just let it be true that emotion was being experienced, then we can cry out to God with candor that we need His help with it. But if I don't let it be true, then I'll never cry out to God for help dealing with it, and I won't have what I need in my time of distress.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: So emotional maturity is a good thing for believers. And there's all sorts of practical tools that will help you, like the emotions wheel that I talked about earlier. But I also used to use like little flip cards when I visited families in their home, when I worked in social services. There's lots of ways to identify what you're feeling, but figure out a tool that works for you so that you can just feel what you feel so that you can be honest and candid with the Lord.

Janet: Yeah.



Jocelyn: The second application I wanna encourage is to learn to examine why you're feeling the way that you are. Let it be true that you're having that emotion, and then examine where that came from. I remember talking about this a lot in our "Thinking and Theology" episode, so if this is something new to you to think about what you're thinking, you might go listen to that episode again.

Janet: Yeah, very good.

Jocelyn: Our feelings are connected to what I've been thinking, what I've been wanting and doing. So be willing to look at where that emotion is stemming from. I remember when I was working through postpartum depression, panic attacks, I learned the practical example of turning around and looking at what I just thought about, because to me, a panic attack felt like I was just walking forward and something snuck up behind me and was like tapping me on my shoulder.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: Don't forget, you're afraid. Don't forget you're thinking about something scary. And I would be like, no, I gotta get outta here and then panic attack. But I learned to say I am thinking about something scary and I'm not afraid to look at it. I'm just gonna turn around and look at it.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: I'm just gonna look at it. God has given us everything we need for life, including handling our emotions well.

Janet: Yep.

Jocelyn: A third application is to evaluate the good and bad aspects of that emotion and where it came from, and then act according to that evaluation. So if you see that a difficult emotion came from a heart that's harboring jealousy, then that action step is to deal with the jealousy. Like the world's action step is like just do something to stop feeling that yucky feeling. But a Biblical way of handling it is to say, that's not a godly feeling, and I've got to do something about what caused me to feel in that ungodly way. If you see anger coming from a heart of grasping at control that was only meant for God, then learn to live in light of God's sovereignty and providence. You don't just try to not feel angry.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: Deal with the source of your anger. So dealing with emotions biblically is really gonna require learning from God's word. Like we're just gonna keep on learning all the the days that we're alive.

Janet: Yep.



Jocelyn: It's gonna be confessing, repenting, and also sometimes living in discomfort as you allow God to control his world and you just obediently live in it.

Janet: Yep.

Jocelyn: It's something that is foreign. We have to learn sometimes to sit in the uncomfortable, like my life was not really designed for me to just be super happy all the time. That's not normal. I also wanna encourage you to ask for help. Sometimes emotions are more apparent to other people, like they're really apparent to my husband who's you seem to be crying a lot today.

Janet: You're like, I haven't noticed.

Jocelyn: So you might need to ask a good friend to help you see when you have an emotion or maybe even to ask you some good questions to figure out what it is you're feeling. I do this with my daughters is it this? Oh no. Is it this? No, not really. Is it maybe more this? And so it's just figuring it out together.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: And I think that's probably especially important if you've been committed to squelching your emotions in the past. So you might need some help might is such a loose word. You'll probably need help. You'll probably need help to have someone help you think through it or identify it or.

Janet: And hence biblical community.

Jocelyn: Right. Or even know what to do about it.

Janet: We have each other. Yeah.

Jocelyn: It's sometimes okay, I can sense that I'm feeling jealous, but I don't know what to do in this situation about it. I just need someone to talk to about it.

Janet: Yeah. And this podcast is not gonna be enough, especially if this is new. There are some really good books on this topic.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: That would also be a way to help if you need to study or read on that.

Jocelyn: Yeah. We've referred to this one multiple times now. *Untangling Emotions* by Alistair Groves and Winston Smith. That's a really important book on emotions.

Janet: Yes.



Jocelyn: We've also mentioned the booklet, "Managing Your Emotions", which was written by our friend Amy Baker. And then I also really like the book Feelings and Faith, which is a great book.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: And then in this episode, I've referred to an article that I read by Ed Welch on this topic. And we'll also link that in our show notes that will give you a more broad understanding of this topic.

Janet: Excellent. Hopefully you are as encouraged as we were as we got to talk about our emotions and see that they are a good gift from God. And I hope some of these resources are gonna help you to take whatever would be your next step.

Jocelyn: I feel like it's important to understand what emotions are because it takes some of the scariness out of them.

Janet: Yes. Praise God.

Jocelyn: Yep.

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