

Upright Woman



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Tears

by: Alana May



Alana May has been married to her husband, Branyon, for almost 20 years. Together, they have three precious daughters. Alana holds a B.S. degree in Physics from Angelo State University and an M.S. degree in Astrophysics from the University of Alabama. Currently, Alana has the privilege of encouraging her daughters to explore God's creation through their homeschooling. She also teaches astronomy classes, allowing her to share these explorations with others. In her spare time, she enjoys being outside, reading, and relaxing with her family.

Did you know that you make about 10 ounces of tears per day just to keep your eyes moistened (Patel, Levin, and Patel 2022)? That's about 30 gallons of tears each year! Throw in the statistic that women cry for emotional reasons about five times more frequently than men, and that's a lot of tears (Collier and Van Hemert 2023)! Whatever the cause of our tears, God gave our bodies the amazing ability to produce them.

Science Behind Tears

God designed the body to store tears in the lacrimal glands. (There is one above each eye.) Whether it's due to emotion, dry eyes, or cutting an onion, when your brain gets the signal to release tears, they are carried through a system of small tubes down to the nasolacrimal ducts (commonly known as the tear ducts). As you blink, the tears are spread across your eye, lubricating the surface (Mukamal 2016).

Three Types of Tears

According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, there are three types of tears that your eye produces: basal, reflex, and emotional. Basal tears are meant to be the constant lubrication for your eyes. They also nourish and protect your eyes from dirt and debris. If some foreign body (like dirt or debris) does get into your eyes, your body creates reflex tears. These are released in greater quantities and contain more antibodies so as to quickly flush out the irritant and help fight off any lingering bacteria. As the name implies, emotional tears are produced in response to overwhelming emotion. Joy, sadness, pain, and fear are among some of the causes for emotional tears. While all three types of tears have the same basic composition (mucus, water, and oil), scientists have suggested that emotional tears have additional hormones and proteins not found in basal or reflexive tears (Mukamal 2016). Some have hypothesized "that the release of stress hormones...might help regulate the body or bring it back to a homeostatic level" (Mukamal 2017).

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There is still ongoing work to help scientists understand more about emotional tears. Whatever the case, we know that our bodies are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 119:14) and reflect the amazing Designer’s handiwork.

Is Crying Good for You?

Have you ever felt like you just needed a “good cry”? Or maybe in the midst of weeping, you find yourself feeling unable to stop. You might wonder, “Is crying good for me?” Psychologists have found that when a person holds in emotion (known as repressive coping), it can be bad for their health. When a person cries, they allow for those feelings to come to the surface, which can in turn contribute in a positive way to the rest of the body and even strengthen relationships between friends and family (Newhouse 2021). One of my favorite Bible verses is Psalm 30:5: “His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning.” Even in our times of grief and sadness, we can know that there is a Light at the end of the tunnel. God is with us in the good times and the bad.

Communication Through Crying

In the creation account, we read in Genesis that God made humans a special creation, different from the animals. One of those differences is our ability to emotionally communicate with each other, sometimes without the need for words. A newborn baby’s primary form of communication is through crying. Just by the different sounds of her child’s crying, a mother can know if the baby is hungry, hurt, or in need of comfort (Ex. 2:6; 1 Pet. 2:2-4). What about when you see a friend sad and crying? Without even knowing the cause of the tears, we know they are distraught and need comfort. Oftentimes, we will shed mutual tears over their grief (John 11:33). Think back to our recent baptisms. Did you get tears of joy? I know I did. As a church, we are overjoyed with the decision the person made and are so excited for them to begin their new walk in Christ. If the new convert looked out into the audience, they would have seen eyes glistening with joyful tears, and they would recognize they have a new family who cares deeply for them (Acts 20:37).

Even if the full extent of the physiology behind our tears isn’t fully understood by scientists yet, God provided us with tears as a way to express emotion. God knows our sorrowful times and our joyful ones. As a Christian family, we have the benefits of our local church family and those abroad to share in our woes and joys. We look forward to the day when, “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21:4).

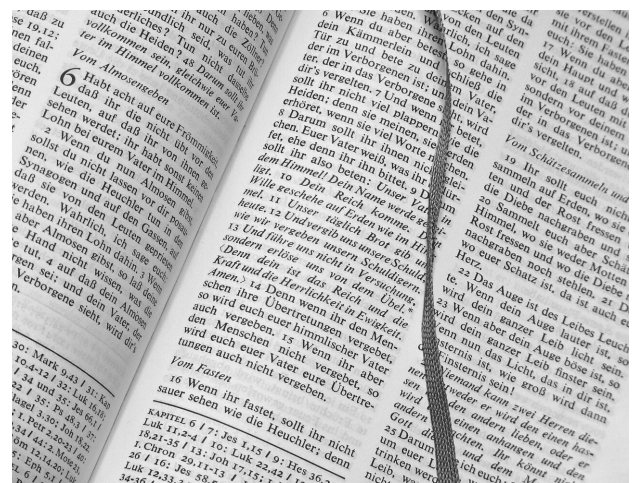
*See page 8 for references

Godly Sorrow

by: Summer Haffner

Some of the most bitter tears are the ones cried over my sin. To “sorrow after a godly sort,” as Paul put it in 2 Corinthians 7:8-12, is not only appropriate but necessary for restoring our relationship with God after sin has affected our lives. When we look deeper at the concept of godly sorrow, we find not only the sweet forgiveness that God offers but the numerous blessings provided in the process. These offer hope on the other side of our tears. Look at the long list the apostle gives of the positive outcomes of the godly sorrow of the church in Corinth:

First, godly sorrow in general works “repentance to salvation” (2 Cor. 7:10). It’s what creates the desire in our hearts to change our behavior. Feelings of guilt or remorse that do not lead us to repentance are worthless for securing our forgiveness, so Paul points out that they only “work death.” The Christians in Corinth were provoked to change by the words Paul wrote earlier. He told them clearly that although the brother in need of discipline would have to destroy the desires of his flesh, if he chose to repent it would be for the saving of his spirit (1 Cor. 5:5). Paul’s words to the Corinthians created godly sorrow within them for the way they had been handling the situation, and their new behavior and words toward the erring brother were enough to provoke the same in him, so that by the time of the writing of 2 Corinthians it was time to forgive and comfort the man (2 Cor. 2:7).



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"...weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning"

Psalm 30:5

Paul next said that the Corinthians' godly sorrow had worked carefulness, earnestness, or diligence within them (2 Cor. 7:11). This Greek word *spoude* means speed and shows eagerness to do God's will in the matter. Once their minds were made up, the Corinthians needed no further persuasion; they were now fully committed to taking action without delay. We as Christians are not to "lag" in diligence to obey God's instructions (Rom. 12:11) but to abound in it (2 Cor. 8:7).

The Corinthians also had the benefit of "clearing" themselves. This is the Greek word *apologia* and means plea, answer, or defense. The church in Corinth had this opportunity to prove whose side they were on—and what an answer they had given! Godly sorrow can help us be convicted that what the Bible teaches is the best course of action, come what may.

Paul also mentioned the Corinthian church had the spiritual benefit of "indignation" through their godly sorrow, a word that conveys strong grief, displeasure, or affliction. The picture Paul painted for them of the problems in the church were unsettling to them and led them to take action. When King David was rebuked for his sins with Bathsheba and against her husband Uriah, he mentioned his grief and what he desired to follow it when he wrote, "Restore to me the joy of your salvation" and "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit" (Ps. 51:12, 17). Let us not be weighed down into inaction by these feelings; rather, let us allow them to motivate us into readiness to return to God.

Godly sorrow wrought fear in the church of Christ at Corinth. They could be assured that every thought and intent of their hearts could be seen by the omnipresent, omniscient God in heaven. We are to fear God (Matt. 10:28), and undoubtedly that helps us act according to His will even when the assignment is uncomfortable. The restored brother now knew that his church family would do hard things to protect him and love his soul, because of their fear of God. Can this also be said of us?

Another spiritual blessing the Corinthian church enjoyed is described as "vehement desire." This Greek word means a longing for or earnest desire. The brethren took action out of a desire to please Christ and help their brother. If we find ourselves struggling to care, more time sorrowing for sins may help us rekindle our desire to serve Him faithfully. Consider how Jeremiah's work in Lamentations could benefit the Jews struggling to come to grips with the Babylonian captivity as a consequence of their sins. He cried to the point of being sick alongside Jerusalem as she wept "bitterly in the night" (Lam. 1:2; 2:11). These tears would also help future generations have an earnest desire to never return to idolatry but seek only the Lord.

Paul said godly sorrow had created zeal in the Corinthians, a word properly meaning "heat" and figuratively fervor of spirit in pursuing something. This emotional heat fueled their ability and commitment to do the hard work of church discipline in a situation that previously had been a boast of theirs (1 Cor. 5:2, 6). We have to do what God asks regardless of how we feel about it; nevertheless, our emotions can be a help or hindrance to the task at hand. Sorrowing over sin can help us to feel the necessary excitement of mind required to get busy addressing the problem.

The KJV renders the final blessing of 2 Corinthians 7:11 as "revenge," from a Greek word that involves doing justice to all parties. It includes the ideas of requital and vindication. What justice did the Corinthian church owe to all parties involved? To God, their obedience; to the erring brother, care for his soul; to each other, trustworthiness and mutual spiritual protection from sin; and to Paul, their faithfulness in continuing to obey the message the apostle had brought. Their godly sorrow was the impetus to act in each direction. As a result, all parties were able to rejoice (see 2 Cor. 7:7, 9; 2:7,8; Luke 15:10). After my godly sorrow leads me to repent, I can rest in the assurance that my relationship with God has been restored and enjoy the consolation of God "who comforts those who are cast down" (2 Cor. 7:6).

Getting to Know... Rachel Garza

By: Carol Tisdale

I recall when Rachel Nash Garza first arrived at SW to attend SWSBS. She was fresh out of high-school and at times had that 'deer in the headlights' look but all the while exhibiting the sweetest servant's heart! She was always kind and ready to work in whatever capacity – we fell instantly in love with her.



Fast forward a few years and here we are, Rachel and her husband John are back at SW working and fellowshiping with us and we are delighted! And the really lovely part is that they now have the most precious little son, Jack, blessing all of us with his ever-ready smile and cute personality.

Backing up a bit to more insight into Rachel: She was born in Abilene, Texas to Jim and Diana Nash. Jim is a preacher and graduate of our SWSBS. She is the oldest of four children and many of us know her brothers Caleb, David and Zachary. Caleb is a recent grad of SWSBS.

Rachel and John will celebrate their 5th wedding anniversary this summer and many of us well remember watching them express their vows to each other in a beautiful wedding ceremony held outdoors at the SW building where we have a most beautiful park-like setting. Following their marriage, John became preacher for the congregation in Johnson City and they worked with the Christians there for almost 4 years and now, they are here! John is our Associate Preacher.

I asked Rachel about how becoming a Mom for the first time has changed her and if there are scriptures in the Word that she now understands more fully because of her new role. I love what she had to say: "Being a mom is the most precious blessing I could ever have imagined. God blessed me with a soul to raise, nurture, invest in, teach, care for, learn from and be renewed by. There is no better gift or higher responsibility in this life than to raise a child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. I never want Jack to be spiritually unprepared and I believe that training starts right now! Children really are the future of the church and the biggest goal I have in my life outside of finishing the race myself, is to teach my children how to run so they have the endurance to finish the heavenly race."

As a busy mom and wife, Rachel is like all young women in these roles and there is rarely time left for her to enjoy all by herself. But when this opportunity becomes available to her, she would love to spend the day in the sun weeding and managing her garden. She says she really REALLY enjoys gardening!! She also savors time in her kitchen making "(or attempting to make)" food from scratch. Especially now that little Jack has started eating solid food, Rachel has experienced a lot of joy from cooking a meal for the family to eat together.

There are many women in the Bible that we as women read about and most of us have our 'favorites' who either set godly examples for us or who perhaps teach us through their weaknesses. It's interesting to read what our sister Rachel has to say about this:

"I was named after the Rachel we find in scripture. As a child I was fascinated with the story of Jacob and Rachel and I wanted to be just like her. As a young girl I couldn't wait for the 'Disney Movie romance' that Genesis 29 makes their relationship look like. That is often the sum of their story and what young girl doesn't dream of being loved that much? When I was in high-school I began to see the account from Leah's perspective and the more I studied the chapters documenting their story, the more I realized that I did NOT want to be just like Rachel."

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As Rachel's and Jacob's true colors were revealed, I realized I wanted to be more like Leah. Even in the worst of situations God saw her (Gen. 29:31) and blessed her continually. She praised the Lord when He blessed her. With each blessing she received, Leah was optimistic, always giving Jacob the benefit of the doubt, thinking that 'now he will love me'. Rachel treated Leah as if they were in competition, especially when it came to Jacob, and Leah lost often. However, as a whole, she did so with grace. She took the circumstance she was in and made the best of it and raised the children the Lord blessed her with. Leah taught me that in times of trial I want to see the blessings God has given me and praise Him for it. And I too, through the storms, will strive to handle things with grace."

**"Love one another with brotherly affection.
Outdo one another in showing honor."
Romans 12:10**

Tears of Struggle

by: Erin Moore

February 1, 2023. Planning to start fresh with the new year, I opened a prayer journal that had been collecting dust for some time. I didn't even realize I had written in it at one point. As I turned back the pages, I landed on an entry dated eight years ago. The entry took me back to a time when my heart was heavy, my mind was weary, and my tears flowed often. Tears of defeat, disappointment, discouragement, and—if I am being honest—maybe some distrust in my God. My heart was heavy with grief over years of infertility and the loss of two babies. My mind was weary and exhausted from fighting feelings of jealousy and comparison to other women who so easily were able to bear children. For almost four years, I battled bitterness and heartache, and I struggled to trust in God.

Over recent years, discussion and awareness of infertility and miscarriage have increased. I am so thankful for the women who encouraged me through our journey by their experiences. One woman for whom I am thankful is one that lived some 3000 years ago on the other side of the world, in a place called Shiloh.

In First Samuel, we read about a woman named Hannah, and her heart longed desperately for a child. Hannah and Elkanah tried for many years to have children and yet they had not received the blessing of children. Elkanah also had an additional wife, Peninnah, who had been blessed with children. Though the Bible does not explicitly say this is the case in this family, it was not uncommon for a husband of a barren woman to take a second wife to bear children in his name. Not being able to have children often brings feelings of inferiority; imagine how much more defeated and "less than" Hannah must have felt because her inability to conceive possibly led her husband to find someone who could give him children.

Not only does Peninnah have children by Hannah's husband, but Peninnah also "provoked her severely, to make her miserable because the Lord had closed her womb" (1 Sam. 1:6). As if the struggle of barrenness was not enough, Peninnah added harsh words, "year after year" (1 Sam. 1:7) to the point that Hannah was so distraught she did not eat. The Bible tells us that Hannah wept, did not eat, and her heart was grieved (1 Sam 1:8). She was bitter in her soul and she wept in anguish (1 Sam 1:10).

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When we face trials such as the loss of a loved one, a lasting disease or illness, financial struggles, and fall on hard times, infertility or loss of a child, unfaithful children, marital problems, or loneliness, what is our default reaction? When we have prayed for years on end and have not seen the answer we are seeking, how do we see God at that time?

The psalmist in Psalm 77:7-9 questions, Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? Has His mercy ceased forever? Has His promise failed forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Do we sometimes ask, "Why God? Why have You blessed her and not me? Do you hear my prayers? Do you not care about my heartache?"

When those thoughts of doubt and despair enter our minds, we must remind ourselves of all that God has done for us, as the psalmist did: This is my anguish BUT I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the Lord; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will also meditate on all Your works and talk of Your deeds. Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary; Who is so great a God as our God? You are the God who does wonders; You have declared Your strength among the peoples. You have with Your arm redeemed Your people... (Ps. 77:10-15).

How did Hannah handle this heartache, bitterness, longing, disappointment, and discouragement? Hannah arose after they had finished eating and drinking (1 Sam 1:9). She did not cause a scene in the middle of the meal by throwing hurtful words back at Peninnah. She waited, and then she removed herself from the situation she was in, and she prayed. She poured out her soul to the Lord (1 Sam. 1:15). Hannah gave us a wonderful example of how to handle emotions and turn our cares over to God.

Many different emotions and actions can lead to tears: heartbreak, bitterness, self-doubt, loneliness, comparison, disappointment, overflowing joy, gratitude. Tears should not cause us to draw away from God, but rather tears should cause us to draw nearer to God. In all these situations, the answer remains the same: turn to God in prayer, remember the works of the Lord, meditate on His works and His word, and talk of His deeds.

- God can heal the broken-hearted (Ps.147:3).
- God can sweeten a bitter heart, as He sweetened the bitter waters in Marah (Ex. 15).
- God's word can remind you of your worth (Eph. 2:10).
- God's love and His family can fill the void that brings loneliness (Matt. 28:20).
- God can encourage and strengthen you (Isa. 41:10).
- God is to be praised and thanked for joy and blessings (Phil 4:6).

Sometimes we tend to keep our heartaches and struggles all bottled up inside, afraid to inconvenience someone else with our struggles and afraid to become vulnerable. If your eyes have been wet with tears, if your heart has been hurting, if your trust in God has wavered, I beg you to turn to God and trust in Him. Allow His children to help you bear your burdens (Gal. 6:2) by reaching out to a trusted sister and asking for prayers and for a listening ear. We are not called to carry the weight of heartache on our shoulders alone. Do not rob your Christian family of the opportunity to love you, help you, comfort you, and most of all pray for you and with you.

God Shall Wipe Away All Tears

by: Gretchen Gerhardt

In Revelation 21:4 the apostle John records "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, for the former things are passed away." What a beautiful, tender image is brought before our eyes of our heavenly Father wiping away our tears!

Because we live in a physical world, in physical bodies, we sometimes suffer from sickness, disappointments, loss, consequences of our own sin, the sin of others as well as other circumstances that are outside of our control. These trials can bring great sorrow into our lives and no one living is able to escape the pain and tears they cause. The difficulties of this life and the tears we shed should cause us to long for heaven.

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However, any difficulties we might face in this life do not begin to compare with the pain, suffering and sorrow that awaits those who will spend eternity in hell. Jesus himself describes it as a place of outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 8:12) and in Matthew 25:41, we read that it is a place of everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Hell is a place where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:48), and in Revelation chapter 21 it is described as being a lake of fire and brimstone; which is the second death. Worst of all, there will be complete separation from God and His blessings for all eternity (2 Thess. 1:9). The reality of hell and the horrors of it should motivate us to be faithful in this life.

In contrast to hell, the Bible paints for us a beautiful image of a prepared place for the faithful of God—Heaven! Jesus told his disciples that He Himself was going to prepare a place for them, a place filled with mansions where God himself will dwell with His people (John 14:1-4). The apostle John was given a glimpse into heaven and uses physical imagery to describe to us an indescribable spiritual realm. In John's account of what he was shown we read of a city lit by the glory of God, with streets of pure gold, walls garnished with precious stones and gates of pearls. All of every nation whose names are found written in the Lamb's book of life will dwell there. Nothing will enter heaven that will defile it and there will be no night there. John goes on to describe a pure river of life proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb with the tree of life growing on its banks whose leaves will heal the nations. The most personal and touching image of heaven is the one of our heavenly Father wiping all tears from our eyes (Rev. 21:4). God knows our sorrows, He hears the cries of His children and stores their tears in a bottle (Ps. 56:8). He desires all to be saved and have their tears wiped away.

When the last day comes and we enter heaven's gates, we will lay our burdens down and enter a spiritual world where the former things will have passed away. There will be no more sin and no more sorrow. Our heavenly Father will tenderly wipe all the tears from our eyes and we will join the faithful of all ages in worshiping and serving our great God forever! Let this promise and this image be a comfort to us and help us through this life and the tears it sometimes brings.

As day by day I journey, I'm weary oft and worn,
But to my heart a message on wings of love is borne;
It tells me there is coming a bright and happy day,
When God, my heavenly Father, will wipe all tears away.
Look up, ye heavy hearted, look up and trust your King;
His dear ones are protected beneath His sheltering wing;
The dark clouds may gather, He'll send the sun's glad ray,
And in His word He tells us He'll wipe all tears away.

Tears of Joy

by: Ella Kennedy

We all cry; it is a part of life. We cry when we are sad or sorrowful, such as when a loved one passes away or when we feel mistreated. We also cry when we are joyful! Wait, tears of joy? Is that even possible? It is! Tears of joy are a part of our life just as much as tears of sadness and sorrow are. What are tears of joy? They are a special form of crying which can occur when a person is completely involved in situations in which they experience great joy. Now to understand that, we have to know what joy means. According to the Oxford dictionary, joy is a "a feeling of great pleasure and happiness." But I think joy and happiness are two completely different things. We often use the terms "joy" and "happiness" interchangeably. The way the world uses them makes them sound like the exact same thing, but are they really? Happiness is a feeling that comes and goes like anger and sadness, whereas, to me, joy is the feeling of knowing that one day, no matter what you are going through you will get to heaven. (You can see this in Philippians 4:4-8.) Let's look at some examples in the Bible of people that shed tears of joy.

Genesis 33:4 states, "But Esau ran to meet him (Jacob), and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept." Esau and Jacob had not seen each other in a very long time--not since Jacob had lied to their father and taken away Esau's blessing.

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Therefore, Esau was ready to kill Jacob. Yet we are told that Esau ran to Jacob, embraced him, and kissed him—all of which indicates his joy to see Jacob. Esau missed Jacob! He loved Jacob! Then the scripture says they wept together. Don't all those things indicate that they were shedding tears of joy?

Also notice Genesis 45:14-15: "Then he (Joseph) fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. Moreover, he kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him." Joseph was reunited with his brothers after a long period of absence from them. When Joseph had told everyone else to go out of the room, he wept tears of joy with his brothers. Remember that the last time Joseph had seen his brothers they were planning to kill him but instead sold him into slavery, Joseph missed and loved his brothers just like Esau missed and loved Jacob. In both situations, when they were reunited, they wept tears of joy.

In conclusion, tears of joy are not a bad thing; in fact, they are beneficial. They show that we are joyful through whatever hard times we face. Just like Jacob and Esau, when we see loved ones from whom we have been separated, tears of joy are appropriate. While we may not face the same difficulties that Joseph faced, we will go through times of trial. When God sees us through hard times, certainly tears of joy are appropriate.

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About Upright Woman

The Upright Woman publication is intended to educate, promote, and encourage the women of the church to strive for righteousness in every aspect of life. It is the mission of this publication to provide women an opportunity to study the word and share articles about various issues and topics to encourage us to be upright women in an upside down world.



**"FOR THE LORD IS RIGHTEOUS; HE LOVES
RIGHTEOUS DEEDS; THE UPRIGHT SHALL
BEHOLD HIS FACE." PSALM 11:7**

We pray that, with every issue and with every article, all glory is given to God.