

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 from 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 these emotions? What do you wish you had done differently?

The Lesson in Brief

▶ **Key Text:** *John 16:20*

▶ **The Student Will:**

Know: Examine the variety of human emotions and their effects on our behavior and on our health.

Feel: Sense the humanity of Christ's emotions.

Do: Trust God's plan to turn our sorrows into joy.

▶ **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: Emotional Responses to Life

A To respond emotionally to life's situations is an important aspect of our human nature. Why might God have created us with emotions?

B How do emotions enrich our lives? How can they cause devastation? What makes the difference?

C How do positive and negative emotions affect our bodies and our health?

II. Feel: Tempted as We Are

A How did Christ respond emotionally to the various challenging events He faced? What distressed Him? What brought Him joy? How can we empathize with His emotional responses?

B How do His reactions to life's challenges help us understand and relate to Him better? How can they help us understand and accept our emotional selves better?

III. Do: Sorrow Into Joy

A Emotions are powerful, whether they are negative or positive. What is God's plan to help us deal with not only the various circumstances of life but the strong emotions that they elicit?

▶ **Summary:** Positive and negative emotions have a great impact on our health. While Christ experienced both types of emotions, He also modeled God's plan on how to handle the emotions that He created to be such an important part of human nature.

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?

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1—Motivate**

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: God created us with the capacity to feel a wide range of emotions. Our emotions have strong links to behavior and health. Because God created us with this capacity, we can look to Him for healthful ways to handle our emotions.

Just for Teachers: Use the following exercise as a fun way to help your class connect with the wide range of emotions we all have in common as humans.

Opening Activity: Ask each of your class members to think of an emotion that starts with the first letter of their names. Instead of saying what the emotion is, ask each person to demonstrate the emotion by a facial expression and/or by acting it out. Ask the rest of the class to identify the emotion and write it on a chalkboard.

Discuss the wide range of the emotions demonstrated by your class. How many of the emotions were positive? How many were negative? Was it relatively easy to identify the emotions by the person's actions?

Consider This: Make a list of emotions Christ displayed and compare the emotions the class demonstrated with the list of Christ's emotions. (See *Matthew 26:37, 38; Mark 3:5; 9:36; 10:21, 22; 8:1–3; Luke 19:41–44; John 11:32–38.*) What emotions do we experience that Christ experienced, as well? What negative emotions might we have that Christ did not display? Was He tempted to have these negative emotions? Why, or why not?

► **STEP 2—Explore**

Just for Teachers: Help your class see Jesus as our Brother with emotions like ours yet with the power to help us reach beyond ourselves to connect with His divine, perfect nature.

Bible Commentary

I. Feelings and Behavior (Review *Mark 10:13–31* and related passages from *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 511–523.)

As you read the stories of Jesus and the children and of Jesus and the rich

CONTINUED ►

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 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 produced more terror and pity than 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), but it's another to express it by way of concrete deeds. How might you through words and deeds better reveal the compassion you feel for those who are hurting?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

young ruler, list the emotions the people are feeling, as well as the ones Jesus is feeling. The mothers bringing the children were tearful and timid. The disciples, trying to protect Jesus, must have been rather stern and forbidding, impatient with the anxious mothers who longed for Jesus to touch and bless their children. Rather than being displeased with the mothers, however, Jesus was displeased with His disciples. He showed such sympathy and gentleness with the children that the mothers were comforted and encouraged to go home and work for their families with hope and cheerfulness.

Consider This: What feelings did Jesus have in this story? How did He show both His displeasure and His care? What feelings were awakened in the mothers' hearts as Jesus blessed their children? How did this affect their later work with their children? What are we drawn to conclude about Jesus and His feelings toward us?

At first the rich young ruler was just observing the scene of the disciples, mothers, and children. But the tenderness Jesus showed with the children and mothers touched his heart. "He saw the love that Christ manifested toward the children brought to Him; he saw how tenderly He received them, and took them up in His arms, and his heart kindled with love for the Saviour. He felt a desire to be His disciple. He was so deeply moved that as Christ was going on His way, he ran after Him."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 518.

Note the young ruler's response when His emotions were touched; he ran, and, the important man that he was, he knelt, asking what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus, too, was moved. The Bible says that Jesus "loved him." He longed to fill the young man's heart with love and joy and peace as He had when He blessed the children and their mothers. But the young ruler's story did not turn out so well. Despite being moved so deeply by Christ's love, he was not willing to give up self in order to follow Christ. What started out as a great "love" story ends in tragedy as the young ruler turns back to his riches and away from the feelings of divine love that had newly awakened in him.

Consider This: Feelings are important. Feelings caused by witnessing Jesus' love moved the young man to run after Jesus; Jesus loved him too. He wanted the young man to follow Him as a beloved fellow worker and disciple. Why did this story turn out to be so tragic? What can we conclude about the relationship between Jesus' feelings for us and our feelings and behavior toward Him?

While feelings can draw us toward a compassionate Savior, we also must

CONTINUED 

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?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

make the choice to surrender our will to Him and do what He asks us to do.

II. A Sorrowing Savior (Review Isaiah 53 and John 11:33 with the class.)

While Jesus showed much compassion and tenderness while on earth, He also was weighed down by distress and sorrow. With your class, list the feelings attributed to Jesus in Isaiah 53. Compare these feelings with the terrible grief Jesus suffered in John 11:33. Jesus was not sad about Lazarus; He knew He would be raising Him up soon. His deep sorrow and indignation were expressed as *embrimaomai*, a Greek term that could be interpreted as a snort of anger, a pant, a groan caused by a great disturbance of mind.

Jesus was indignant that the hypocritical mourners around Lazarus' grave were even then planning His death. In poignant language Isaiah foretold how Jesus would be despised and rejected. Because they rejected Him, many of these unbelieving people would soon close the door to any hope of salvation. In the judgment that was to soon fall on Jerusalem, they would lose their lives with no hope of even lamentation for their deaths, except for the tears Jesus shed over them.

Jesus wept, but not for Himself. He felt the pain of the entire human race. "Looking down the years to come, He saw the suffering and sorrow, tears and death, that were to be the lot of men. His heart was pierced with the pain of the human family of all ages and in all lands. . . . He longed to relieve all their distress."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 534.

Even today, many of the human race despise and reject Him. Many still rebuff His offer to take on Himself our sorrows and to accept His life, given on our behalf. How much He longs to save us. How He must yearn for us to acknowledge His great work on our behalf and to offer our gratitude for His sacrifice.

Consider This: In picturing Christ's grief and deep distress at the human plight, what emotions are awakened in our hearts? How does this description of Christ endear Him to our hearts and help us understand Him better? How does it illuminate our hard-heartedness and our need for the Holy Spirit to teach us of Christ's goodness?

► **STEP 3—Apply**

Just for Teachers: Help your class recognize the need we all have to turn to Jesus for help in dealing with our emotions.

CONTINUED ►

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 from their clients' present life. Jesus assures us that, just as a woman gives birth and forgets 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?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED**Application:**

Even babies display their emotions on their faces. (If possible, show some pictures of babies with various emotions on their faces.) One of the important tasks in early childhood is for young children to learn to identify what they are feeling and learn how to handle their strong emotions appropriately before they spin out of control. For example, a parent can help a child identify when his frustration level is rising and help him choose to go to a special “time out” place to regain control of his emotions. Learning to turn his thoughts to Jesus at such a time is important; a picture of Jesus or a picture book about Him can help. This use of “time out” is not a punishment but a means of positive behavior management.

Many of us who are grown up still have lessons to learn about how to handle our emotions. What steps can we take before we lose control to strong emotions of anxiety, anger, or depression? What can we do to turn our hearts and minds over to God at these times?

► **STEP 4—Create**

Just for Teachers: Suggest these ideas as possibilities for service and as ways to creatively explore and reinforce positive emotions.

Jesus’ gentleness and care did much to comfort and encourage those around Him and renew their hope and cheerfulness. What can we say and do in the week ahead to bless the hearts of those around us?

Examine the list of positive emotions in Galatians 5:22. Choose an emotion to focus on this week. Research Bible texts regarding this emotion to study each day and create a felt or cloth banner depicting this emotion to hang in your home. If others in your class elect to do this activity, you might exchange banners and texts, studying a different emotion each week for the next nine weeks. This might be a good women’s ministry project for a quilting or an embroidery club. Men might choose to create wooden or metal plaques and share their texts and experiences at a weekly breakfast or lunch hour.

Alternate Option: Choose an emotion to focus on this week, researching Bible texts that describe it. Share what you learn from the texts about the emotion in class.

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?