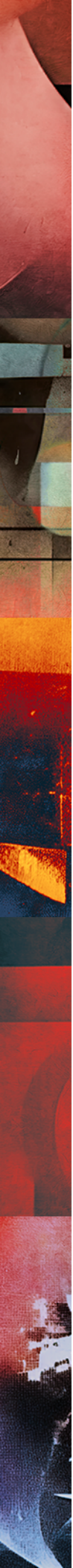




I'M ONLY  
*human*

DISCIPLESHIP  
GUIDE





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# Emotions & Jesus

Jesus is the most truly human person who has ever walked the earth. In order to know what it is to be human, we can look at Jesus as He is revealed in the Bible.

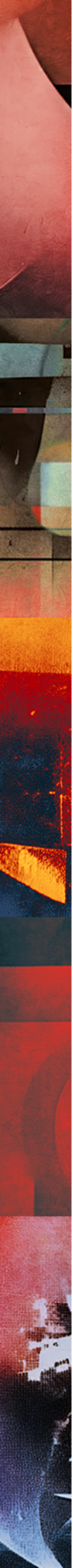
Jesus was conceived by the Spirit, grew in His mother's womb, crawled, learned to talk, got dirt between His toes, needed sleep, and felt emotions. B.B. Warfield, one of America's brightest theologians, wrote this about the emotions of Jesus:

"Our Lord's emotions fulfilled themselves, as ours do, in physical reactions."<sup>1</sup>

In other words, Jesus felt deeply and it showed. Why is this important? Some Christians may think that emotions should simply be rejected or ignored. But if Jesus, who is truly God and truly man, experienced and displayed emotions, then Christians who are being renewed by the Holy Spirit to *think* and *act* like Jesus are being renewed to *feel* like Him too. Not only this, but to deny or dismiss our emotions is to ignore the fact that God created us with needs.

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<sup>1</sup> B.B. Warfield, *The Emotional Life of Our Lord*, pages 96-97.



In other words, ignoring emotions is often an act of pride or autonomy. Jesus's emotions didn't drive Him away from the Father, but to the Father and to other people (yes, Jesus needed His friends during His earthly ministry - see Matthew 26:36-38).

We've titled this series "I'm Only Human" because it is a straight-forward fact: we have limitations and weaknesses; we can fall prey to experiences outside of us and emotions running wild inside of us. Rather than deny or dismiss our emotions, we need to learn how to properly navigate them.

And since God gave us emotions in order to further connect with Him and others, our prayer is that this series can serve as a step for you to better know and navigate your own emotions so that you can better connect with God and others.

# A Strategy for Expressing

If you are like most modern Americans, you likely struggle to helpfully express your emotions to God and others. Below is a simple strategy for expressing emotions. This isn't a therapeutic resource; rather, this is a way for us to humble ourselves before God and others by admitting our needs.

1. Start with the phrase,  
**"I feel \_\_\_\_\_ (emotion word)."** Don't know what you're feeling? Search for an emotion wheel or emotions list online.

2. Then express your needs,  
**"I need \_\_\_\_\_."**

3. Then take responsibility by choosing how you'll navigate your emotions and needs,  
**"I choose \_\_\_\_\_."**

In order to utilize this strategy you need to build margin/space into your life so that you can gain clarity through thinking and recognizing emotions. When you gain clarity, then you're ready to live for Christ with more intentionality.

# Further Reading

The following books may be helpful if you're interested in reading more about emotions from a Christian perspective.

## **Beginner**

*"The Voice of the Heart: A Call to Full Living"* by Chip Dodd. Published by Chip Dodd Resources.

This book is a practical resource for understanding your own emotions. In the author's words, "Feelings are not impulses that need to be controlled; they are tools that we need to learn how to use well so that we do not behave impulsively."

## **Intermediate**

*"Feelings and Faith: Cultivating Godly Emotions in the Christian Life"* by Brian S. Borgman. Published by Crossway.

This book is a practical and theological resource for understanding emotions from a biblical perspective and applying relevant Bible passages to your personal growth in your emotional life.

## **Advanced**

*"The Emotional Life of Our Lord"* by B.B. Warfield. Published by Crossway in the "Crossway Short Classics" series.

This book is a biblical exploration of Jesus's emotions. Warfield writes more academically and observationally about Jesus's emotions.

# Shame

## MAIN POINT

Shame can drive someone to believe they are worthless and totally defective.

When we experience shame, we long to hide. But those who have trusted in Jesus have already been hidden in Christ; therefore, we are free to acknowledge our sins and sins against us knowing that they do not define us.

## GROUP INTRO

In this series we will explore what the Bible says about certain emotions or experiences that we have as human beings in a fallen world. This means that we need to pursue vulnerability.

In your own life, can you think of a time when you were able to be vulnerable with someone? What helped you feel safe enough to be vulnerable?



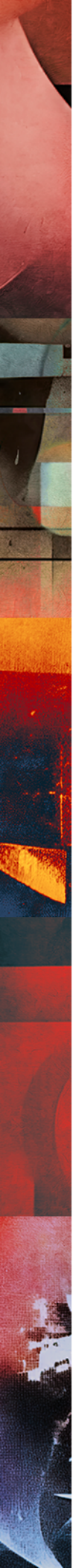
## KNOWING SHAME

1. Shame shows up early in the biblical story. Read Genesis 3:1-8. This is the first recorded instance of shame. What prompts the shame of Adam and Eve?
2. In Genesis 3:1-8, how do Adam and Eve try to relieve the shame they feel?
3. Read Genesis 3:21. After announcing the curse of death, what does this verse say is God's first act? What does this tell us about God?

## NAVIGATING SHAME

1. Because Jesus obeyed perfectly, we no longer have to hide when we sin or are sinned against. Read Colossians 3:1-3. How does being "hidden with Christ" help you deal with shame?
2. Instead of belittling us or rejecting us, because of Jesus, God welcomes us with celebratory love. Take turns reading Luke 15:11-32. What about God sticks out to you from this parable? What did you feel as you heard the parable?



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3. Shame grows more powerful as we live in isolation and secrecy. There is no pressure to share but if anyone is experiencing shame, group is a good place to take the first step toward freedom and healing. Is anyone experiencing shame and willing to share why?

### **PRAYER**

Call upon God to help you believe and act upon the goodness of His grace.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Psalm 86:15***

Thank God for hiding you in His Son forever, and the hope of always being accepted.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Romans 10:9-11***

Ask God to heal your shame and empower you to live in the freedom He has bought with Christ's blood.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Isaiah 53:5***

# Anger

## MAIN POINT

Anger is natural to us because we are made in the image of God. This emotion arises most often when something we value is threatened.

Jesus shows us God's righteous anger, revealing that beneath God's wrath is a love that is righteous and pure.

## GROUP INTRO

Where do you most often express anger? Where do you hold back from expressing your anger even when you feel it?

## KNOWING ANGER

1. Read Mark 3:1-5. What is happening in this scene? Why does Jesus get angry? What does Jesus's anger reveal about His priorities/cares?
2. Read John 11:33-38. In verses 33 and 38, the phrase "deeply moved" could be translated as "moved with anger". One author even writes that "Jesus approached the grave of Lazarus in a state of irrepressible anger."<sup>2</sup> What's motivating Jesus's intense anger?

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<sup>2</sup> Warfield, *The Emotional Life of Our Lord*, page 63.

## NAVIGATING ANGER

1. In Ephesians 4:31, the apostle Paul exhorts Christians to “let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.” How can we do this without dismissing or ignoring our anger?
2. God’s anger is motivated by love for others and a desire to uphold justice. How is your own anger unlike God’s anger? What are some helpful ways to deal with this sin?
3. A more vulnerable question: how was anger expressed in your home growing up? Do you think this has impacted you today? If so, how?

## PRAYER

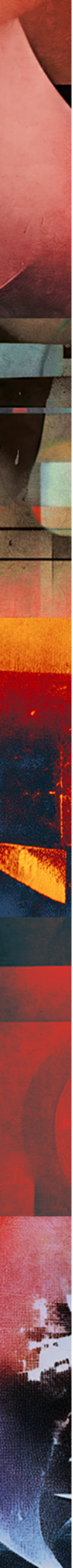
Praise God for His holiness and love that shows up as anger against injustice.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Psalm 5:4-6***

Confess the ways you have fed and expressed sinful anger.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Colossians 3:7-9***





Ask God to help you see and know what fuels your anger and ask Him to help you put to death sinful anger.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Romans 8:31***

# Loneliness

## MAIN POINT

Loneliness is experienced when we perceive or believe that we are socially isolated.

Since we are created as relational beings - meant to connect with God and others - loneliness is one of the most painful emotions we endure. And since God is compassionate, we can turn to Him in faith and pour out our hearts, asking that He meet us in our pain.

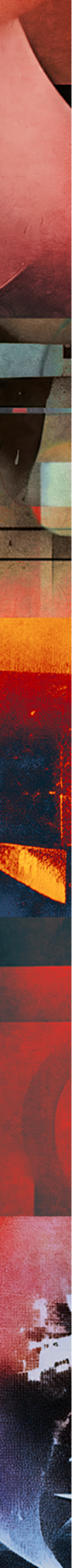
## GROUP INTRO

Author Dane Ortlund writes that, "[Jesus] offers us friendship that gets underneath the pain of our loneliness. While that pain does not go away, its sting is made fully bearable by the far deeper friendship of Jesus."

How has Jesus been a good friend to you?

## KNOWING LONELINESS

1. Read Psalm 25:16-18. What words does the psalmist use to describe his emotions? What might be some of the benefits of expressing emotions to God like the psalmist does here?

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2. Read Psalm 142:1-4. How does David's experience of loneliness and being pursued by his enemies shape his perspective? Why does he turn to the Lord in his loneliness?
  3. Jesus experienced the ultimate loneliness, being cut off from many of His closest friends and feeling abandoned by God. Read Matthew 27:45-46. Can Jesus's experience of loneliness on the cross bring comfort to us today? If so, how?

## NAVIGATING LONELINESS

1. Read John 15:15. Jesus loves bringing sinners close and befriending us. In your own life, can you identify any unhealthy or sinful ways you try to cope with loneliness? What are some practical ways you could turn to Jesus instead?
2. Read Ephesians 2:19. How can we help make our group and our church more like family that notices and helps those feeling lonely?

*Note: Asking God to make this happen and then acting in personal humility and vulnerability are two ways to begin this.*



## PRAYER

Thank God for His compassion and mercy.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: James 5:11***

Ask God to minister to those who are experiencing loneliness.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Romans 8:26***

Ask God to give courage to your church so that humility and honesty about weaknesses and pain are common.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10***

# Sadness

## MAIN POINT

"That's life"; "time heals all wounds"; "others have it worse". These are just a few of the ways we attempt to avoid or dismiss sadness. Sadness, however, arises from a place of love as we face loss. If we value those made in God's image, we will experience sadness, ultimately because of the reality of death.

Jesus comes to us not as a life coach promoting positive thinking but as the ultimate redeemer and comforter. It is the Spirit of Christ in us who helps us honestly and hopefully navigate sadness.

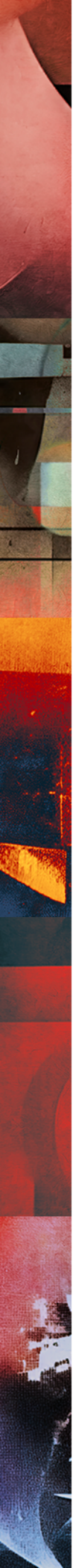
## GROUP INTRO

What are some unhelpful or unholy ways you have seen people attempt to deal with sadness?

## KNOWING SADNESS

1. Read Psalm 73:21-26. What truths about God do you see in this passage? What truths about sadness do you see?

*Note: In verse 26 the psalmist normalizes human struggles, including sadness, when he says "my flesh and my heart may fail." All too often, Christians are unable to simply accept sadness as a reality.*

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2. God may allow the experience of sadness in our lives to grow our dependence upon Him and our compassion for others. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-5. What do you think it means that God is “the Father of mercies and God of all comfort”?

## NAVIGATING SADNESS

1. Read 2 Corinthians 1:7-10. Rather than avoid or dismiss our sadness, how does this passage suggest we can approach sadness?
2. What behaviors or words have been most unhelpful for you in your own experiences of sadness?
3. Read Psalm 56:8-11. How does knowing God sees and keeps track of your pain help you navigate sadness?

## PRAYER

Cry out to God and admit what has saddened you and how you need Him to help.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Psalm 56:8***

Ask God to help you hope in Him during sadness.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Romans 8:18***



# Anxiety

## MAIN POINT

We may call it “stress”, “feeling overwhelmed”, or “busyness”, but it’s all pointing to one core emotion: anxiety. We all experience it, perhaps now more than ever. As counselor Ed Welch puts it,

*“You have good reasons to be anxious. Something important to you is at risk, and you’re too small and weak to do anything about it.”<sup>3</sup>*

God has compassion on us. And He knows that the best remedy for our anxiety is true knowledge and experiences of His grace, strength, and protection.<sup>4</sup>

## GROUP INTRO

Which of the following experiences would make you the most anxious: standing on the edge of the Grand Canyon with no fence, meeting your new boss for your first performance review, or having \$10 in your account with a week until payday?

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<sup>3</sup> Ed Welch, “A Checklist for Your Fears and Anxieties” on [thegospelcoalition.org](http://thegospelcoalition.org)

<sup>4</sup> As a note, this guide is not intended to address the complexities involved in clinically-diagnosed anxiety. The truths of Scripture, however, are intended by God to provide us with comfort and strength, even when we are battling physiological diseases.

## KNOWING ANXIETY

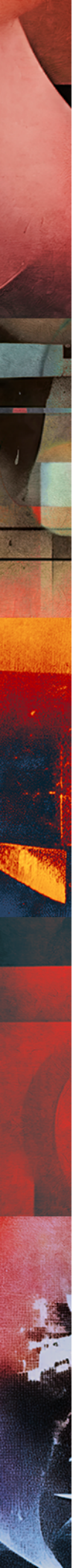
1. Read Psalm 56:1-4. What do you notice about fear/anxiety from this passage? What is the psalmist's response to his emotion?

*Leader help: Notice that the psalmist says "**When** I am afraid..." He is normalizing the experience of anxiety and fear.*

2. Read 1 Peter 5:5-9. What are the actions that Peter calls us to, especially when we are experiencing higher levels of anxiety and fear?
3. Read Matthew 6:24-26. When Jesus says "do not be anxious", He means, "do not perpetually worry". With this in mind, how are Jesus's words to us a gracious invitation? Where do you see His compassion toward the anxious in this passage?

## NAVIGATING ANXIETY

1. When does anxiety show up most in your life? Read Psalm 62:5-8. What would it look like to "trust in Him" and "pour out your heart before Him" in those times?



2. Growing our knowledge of God and meeting with Him regularly in prayer and corporate worship can help us navigate anxiety. Read Matthew 28:18-20. What truths or promises do you see in this passage?

## **PRAYER**

Thank God for who He is and all that He has promised for this life and the life to come.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Philippians 4:5-6***

Admit to God the specific things you are currently afraid of or anxious about, asking Him to help you in your anxiety.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: Psalm 118:6***

Lay hands on and pray for those in your group or church who are burdened by anxiety.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: John 13:34-35***