

4 Responding to Your Difficult Emotions

Be angry, and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger.

- Ephesians 4:26

It is very easy to think that some emotions are bad and others are good. We can hear about someone getting angry and make the judgement that the person is wrong. However, there are times when it is appropriate to be angry about certain things; for example, racism, bullying, injustice, etc. How we respond to our emotions, however, can be good or bad.

God gave us emotions to experience life, not to destroy it.

- Lysa Terkeurst

The way we respond to our emotions has a great impact on people and the world around us. Our actions will either produce great things and repair broken things, or they will corrupt and destroy. So, how do we learn to appropriately respond to our difficult emotions?

Align your emotions to the truth of God's Word.

Jesus tells us in John 8:32 that the truth will set us free, and this includes emotional freedom as well. Instead of responding right away to what we are feeling, we should take time to reflect and align our emotions to what is true about us, God, and others.

Emotions reveal what's in our hearts—what we believe, love, value, and understand. We may feel anger, but it may be true that we do not have the right to be angry. Jonah is a classic example of this.

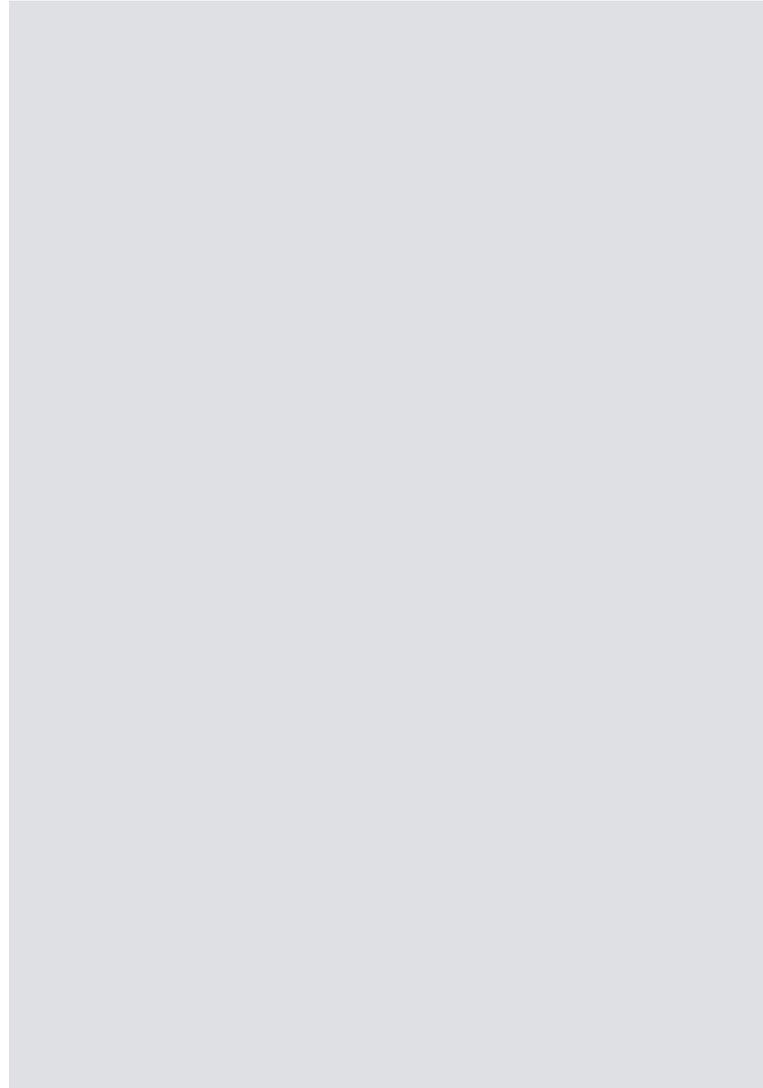
READ JONAH CHAPTER 4

The Lord was trying to guide Jonah back to the source of his anger and help him answer the question, "Is it right for you to be angry about this?"

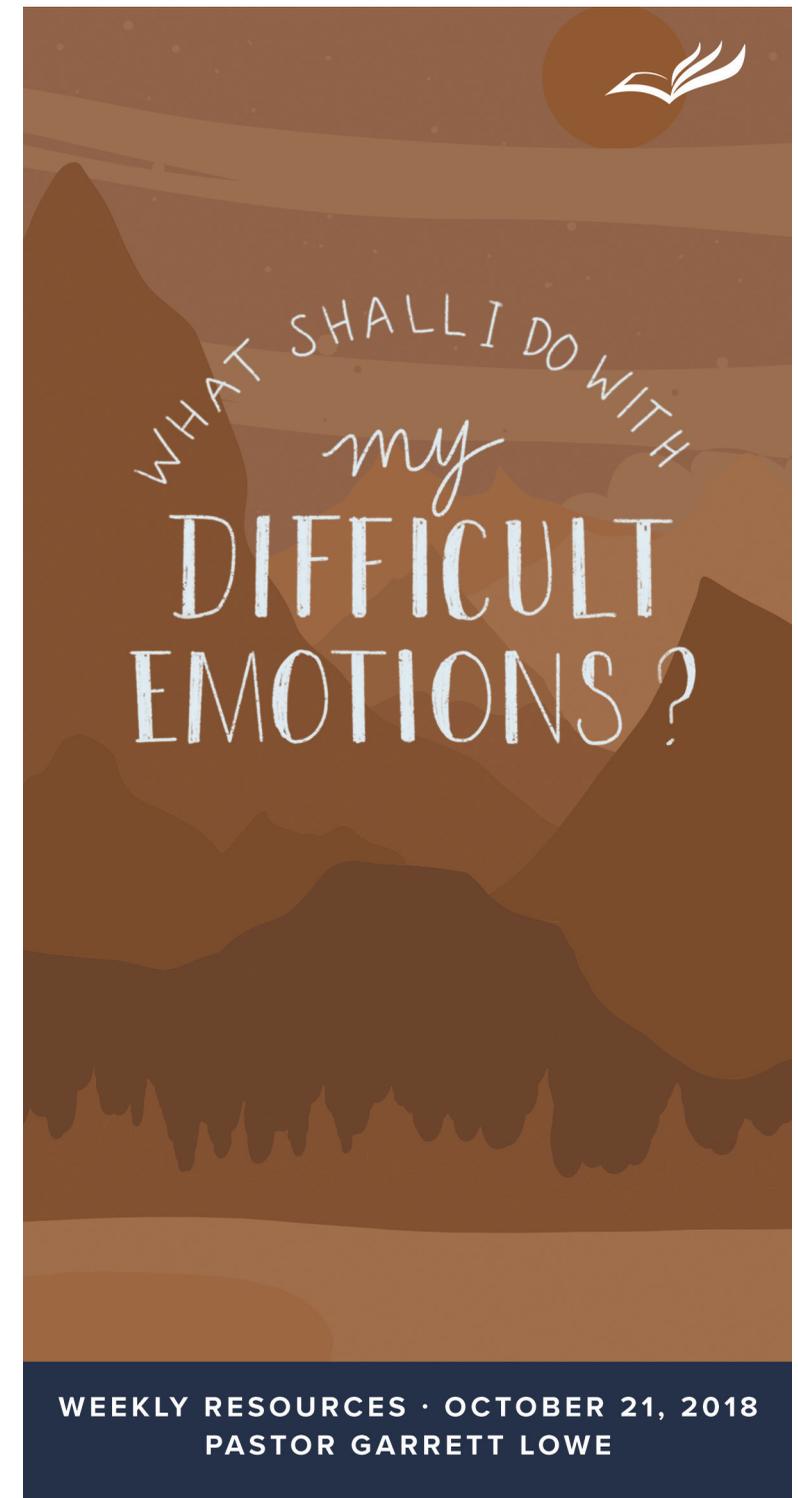
REFLECTION:

Anger is just one of the difficult emotions. Think back over this past week and identify what you've been angry about, saddened over, or frustrated with. What was the source? According to what is true about God and his word, did you have the right to feel that way? How will you respond in the future?

MESSAGE NOTES



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1 Finding Your Difficult Emotions

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why the unease within me?

- Psalm 42:5

Some days our inner world feels like a giant maze. We can often feel emotionally lost, stuck, and confused. How did I get here? What am I feeling? Why am I feeling it?

Difficult emotions can be hard to identify—what they are and where they're coming from. The writer of Psalm 42 shares this feeling. So, what does he do? He actually starts talking to his own soul and asks the question, "Why are you discouraged and sad? Why are you in such turmoil?"

Maybe that is a good place for us to start. We should ask ourselves that very simple question. Where is this coming from?

It is wise for us to regularly create space in our schedule to pay attention to our inner life. We need to take counsel with ourselves and ask some thoughtful questions about our emotions.



READ PSALM 42

Pay attention to the emotional language the writer is using. Pay attention to the direction the writer gives his own soul. What direction would you give your soul?

REFLECTION:

Take time to be alone. Begin to identify and write down the emotions you are feeling or have felt over the last few days, and ask yourself some questions to discern why you are feeling what you feel.

2 Engaging God with Your Difficult Emotions

Listen to my words, Lord, consider my lament. Hear my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray.

- Psalm 5:1-2

One of our natural tendencies when we start feeling those difficult emotions is to try our hardest NOT to feel them. Suppressing or avoiding your emotions is not helpful, but can very quickly become extremely harmful.

God wants you to not only feel your emotions, but to express them. Of course, we have to learn how to do that in healthy and transforming ways.



All through the Psalms we see the different writers pouring out their emotions to God through songs, poetry, and prayer. They actually took time to feel, process, and engage God with their feelings. Jesus did this on the night he was betrayed, and God wants us to do the same.

READ AND REFLECT:

Maybe you don't feel like you have the words to express how you feel. Read Psalm 6 and copy down the words and phrases that you feel. As you get comfortable, begin to write your own words. Be encouraged that God is listening and his ear is bent toward you.

3 Engaging Others with Your Difficult Emotions

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

- Romans 12:15

God created us for community. None of us are meant to move through life alone. This includes times of sharing our emotions with one another, times when we are rejoicing, and in times of sadness and other difficult emotions.

Not only did Jesus cry out to the Father on the night he was betrayed, but he invited close friends to be with him, pray with him, and share in his emotional turmoil.



This requires a level of vulnerability that can feel risky. Any time that you open your heart to someone else, there's the risk of further hurt. And Jesus experienced that as well. However, God's design is for us to engage one another for comfort and wisdom as we process our emotions.

REFLECTION:

Who would you say knows and cares about you the most? Have you been intentional about building community in your life?

ACTION:

Contact a close friend this week to share your heart. Consider joining a Growth Group here at Living Word. Consider the Counseling Center if you need deeper help.