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The Bible and Human Emotions*

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Principal Contributor

Julián Melgosa

Editor

Soraya L. Homayouni

Publication Manager

Lea Alexander Greve

Contributing Editors

George Belser

Esther M. Doss

Nicholas Fox

Editorial Assistant

Sharon Thomas-Crews

Art and Design

Lars Justinen

Pacific Press® Coordinator

Wendy Marcum

Illustrations

Matthew Bosley

E. G. White Estate Consultant

Ivan Leigh Warden

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Introduction

Jesus Wept

As humans,¹ we have the ability to reason, or think about things clearly. Frogs, dogs, caterpillars, and donkeys are amazing creatures. But they do not have our ability to reason.

But, as humans, we are also emotional² beings. One could argue that emotions³ rule our lives more than reason does or ever could.

Emotions are good. Without them we would not be human. (What kind of person does not know love, mercy, fear, or sorrow?) Robots might be able to work without feeling any emotions. But we never could.

Of course, living in a world of sin, our emotions often bring us great pain. Sickness, disease, war, being poor, floods, fires, plane crashes, worrying about money, and family problems cause fear, sorrow, and sadness.

Think, too, about the emotions that Jesus had. “Jesus wept” (John 11:35). “Jesus looked around at them in anger” (Mark 3:5, Nlrv). Jesus said, “My soul is very sad. I feel close to death’ ” (Mark 14:34, Nlrv). “Jesus saw her [Mary] crying. He saw that the Jews who had come along with her were crying also. His spirit became very sad, and he was troubled” (John 11:33, Nlrv). “Men looked down on him [Jesus]. They didn’t [did not] accept him. He knew all about sorrow and suffering” (Isaiah 53:3, Nlrv).

Hebrews shows a wonderful truth about our Lord: “We have a high priest who can feel it when we are weak and hurting. We have a high priest who has been tempted in every way, just as we are. But he did not sin” (Hebrews 4:15, Nlrv). Jesus experienced all the pain and sufferings that we do. And we know that these sufferings can hurt very much.

Sadness, pain, sorrow—these are not wrong. These are not sinful. We do not show a lack of faith or trust when we face life’s troubles with such emotions. After all, Jesus felt emotions too.

Today, we are 6,000 years from the tree of life (Genesis 2:9). The DNA⁴ is wearing thin. We are damaged by sin. Evolution⁵ says we are getting better. But, really, we are getting only worse.

It is no surprise that sin has harmed our emotional health. Our emotions often control us. They push us into making wrong choices that cause us even more

1. humans—men, women, and children.

2. emotional—having strong feelings, such as love, anger, joy, hate, or fear.

3. emotions—strong feelings (such as love, anger, joy, hate, or fear).

4. DNA—a substance that carries genetic information in the cells of plants and animals. Genetic information controls or influences the appearance, growth, and so on, of a living thing.

5. evolution—a theory (set of ideas) that the differences between modern plants and animals are because of changes that happened by a natural process over a very long time.

grief and sorrow. That does not need to be true. But the good news is that the Lord has something better for us.

The lessons this quarter are about human emotions. They give us principles (rules) from the Bible that show how we can understand our emotions and ask the Lord to give us power to bring them under His loving control. We will study how characters⁶ in the Bible dealt with their problems. And we will focus on their reactions, both good and bad. We will ask ourselves the important question: what can we learn from their experiences that can help us with ours?

Of course, some people's emotional problems are caused by a physical problem, such as a chemical imbalance. Such people may need professional help. But this fact does not mean that we should limit the power of God to bring healing to any life.

It is our prayer that the lessons this quarter will help us better understand our emotions. In doing so, they will help us reach out to the Lord, who has given us the greatest emotion of all: love. Finally, may each of us learn to depend on that love, especially when we feel bad. Then, through God's grace,⁷ we may reflect (make something known) that love to others. Because, in the end, no matter our sorrows, "love never fails" (1 Corinthians 13:8, NIV).

Dr. Julián Melgosa is dean of the School of Education and Psychology at Walla Walla University.

6. characters—people who appear in a story.

7. grace—God's gift of forgiveness and mercy (kindness that is not deserved) that He freely gives us to take away our sins.