

Chapter 1



**The Freedom to
Feel**

Introduction

Many of us have been conditioned to present only our finest versions to God, concealing the anger, sadness, grief, fear, anxiety, and numbness we've been taught to deem "unspiritual." Yet, inspired by the raw and heartfelt prayers found in Psalms, this study beckons us to abandon the act and arrive just as we are. Each section is a powerful journey, filled with scripture, profound teachings, body awareness prompts, and simple practices—each illuminating a singular, profound truth: your whole emotional self is not just accepted, but celebrated in the embrace of God. Finally, each section ends with journal prompts to help you examine your own beliefs about “feelings” in light of God’s Word.

Whether you are grappling with anger you don’t know how to express, burdened by grief that clings relentlessly, wrestling with questions that haunt you, or joy that feels too fragile to hold - this study meets you in that raw, vulnerable space. Acceptance is not surrender; it is the powerful beginning of a profound encounter.

Permission to Feel

Somewhere along the way, many of us have been conditioned to believe that it's unacceptable to feel certain emotions – or at the very least, to acknowledge them. Instead, we wear a mask of smiles through our grief, stifle our anger, and apologize for our tears as if they are a burden. We've been taught that true faith equates to having everything perfectly in place, that doubt lurks as a perilous enemy, and that despair is a mark of weakness. It's time to reclaim the full spectrum of our humanity!

*⁸ Trust in him at all times, you people;
pour out your hearts before him.
God is our refuge. Selah
Psalm 62:8*

But the Psalms reveal a profoundly different narrative. Here, we witness God's people laying bare their souls – exposing every raw and unvarnished emotion, not merely the polished highlights. They voice their complaints with fervor. They unleash their rage in tempestuous waves. They grapple with their questions in fervent searches for truth. They weep with aching hearts. And in this sacred space, God does not impose silence or inflict shame upon them. Instead, He warmly invites them to bring their heartfelt turmoil directly to Him, embracing every part of their human experience.

"Pour out your heart before Him," cries the psalmist. Not, "examine your heart and present only the polished fragments." No, pour it out - the entire chaotic, conflicting, intense reality of your emotions.

Your emotions are not barriers to God; they are the vibrant language of your soul, and God speaks it fluently. When you feel the scorching fire of rage, He is not bound by it. When despair grips your heart, He doesn't look away in indifference. Even in those moments when you feel utterly numb, He does not ask you to conjure feelings you do not possess; instead, He embraces you as you are, with all the tumult and silence of your being.

Acceptance is not about surrendering or succumbing to a life of despair; it is a powerful commitment to begin from your true reality instead of the fantasy of where you believe you ought to be. It's the courageous declaration, "This is the raw truth of my heart in this moment," and it's about having unwavering faith that God will meet you precisely where you are!

What if the emotions you've been taught to conceal are, in fact, the sacred spaces where God longs to embrace you? What if it's your raw authenticity—your unabashed honesty, rather than your ability to perform—that truly captivates His heart?

*¹ I cry aloud to the Lord;
I plead aloud to the Lord for mercy.
² I pour out my complaint before him;
I reveal my trouble to him.*

Psalm 142:1-2

Body Awareness:

Take a moment to breathe deeply and truly immerse yourself in the sensations within your body. Where do you feel that undeniable tension when you contemplate being honest with God? Is it your jaw, tightened with unspoken words? Your chest, heavy with emotion? Or perhaps your stomach, swirling with anxiety? Just take note of it, embrace it fully, but resist the urge to fix it.

**record this on the worksheet located at the end of this chapter*

Reflection:

What deep emotions have you been led to believe are "unspiritual" or deemed unacceptable when standing before God?

Practice Today:

- Set a timer for 2 minutes.
- Sit quietly and simply make note what you are feeling.
- Don't label them as good or bad, even if you feel nothing, take note of it.

Deeper Reflection: Psalm 62:8 & Psalm 142:1-2

Trusting God with your emotions means being honest about them, not hiding them. These two passages encourage a "soul dump"—pouring out every messy, raw thought because He is a safe place to land.

Pouring Out Your Heart (Psalm 62:8)

- The Full Pour: If you turned your heart upside down right now, what specific emotions would spill out first? List them without judging them.
- The "At All Times" Check: Is there a "messy" emotion (anger, doubt, jealousy) you feel you have to hide from God? Why does it feel unsafe to show Him?
- Defining Refuge: What does a "refuge" look like to you? Describe a mental or spiritual space where you feel completely safe to be weak.
- Trust vs. Suppression: How is "pouring out" actually an act of trust, rather than a lack of faith?

Giving Your Pain a Voice (Psalm 142:1-2)

- The Honest Complaint: Write out a "holy complaint." Start with the phrase, "Lord, it feels unfair that..." and don't hold back.
- Vocalizing the Internal: David "cried aloud." If your current internal struggle had a sound or a single sentence, what would it be?
- The Audience of One: How does it change your perspective to know that God isn't overwhelmed by your "trouble" even when you are?
- Breaking the Silence: What is one thing you've been silent about lately that needs to be "told" to Him today?

Key Takeaway:

God would rather have your honest complaint than your fake "fine."

The Gift of Anger

Anger is perhaps the very emotion we dread bringing before God. It has been drilled into us that anger is a sin, that rage has no place in our spiritual journey. Yet, the Word of God boldly grants us not just permission, but a divine command to embrace our anger! It's time to recognize the power of this emotion and understand it as a vital part of our relationship with the Divine.

²⁶ Be angry and do not sin. Don't let the sun go down on your anger,
Ephesians 4:26

Notice: anger itself is not a sin; it's a powerful emotion that we wield. What truly matters is how we channel that fire within us. God passionately invites us to embrace our anger, to feel it deeply, to lay it at His feet, and to find stillness in His presence.

*¹ How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
² How long will I store up anxious concerns^[a] within me,
agony in my mind every day?
How long will my enemy dominate me?*
Psalm 13:1-2

Notice here that the psalmist does not merely whisper polite concerns; he cries out with fervent urgency: How long, O Lord? Will You act? This is the anguished prayer of a soul who feels utterly abandoned, a heart whose pain has erupted into raw rage. And yet, God does not rebuke him for this outpouring. This prayer is enshrined in God's Word because He honors su

Your anger is a powerful signal, an urgent call to recognize an injustice that demands to be named, a boundary that has been brutally violated, a core value that has been cruelly trampled. Alternatively, it may be the desperate cry of a nervous system that has endured too much for far too long. In any case, remember this: it's not a message of condemnation, but a crucial piece of information meant to ignite change and awareness.

Many of us bury our anger deep within, paralyzed by fear—fear of its power, fear of the actions it could incite, fear of the truths it might expose. Yet, this suppressed fury doesn't simply vanish; it festers and erupts in insidious ways: through the shadows of anxiety, the heaviness of depression, the ache of physical pain, and the sharpness of passive-aggressive behavior.

God is unafraid of your fury. He embraces it. When you lay your anger before Him, a profound transformation occurs. In the presence of One who stands undaunted by your wrath, you discover the freedom to experience it completely and then release it with a powerful sense of liberation.

Body Awareness:

Where do you feel the fierce surge of anger in your body when it arises? Is it the heat that flushes your face, the tight grip of your fists, the pounding of your racing heart, or the knot that twists in your stomach? Embrace the raw intensity of what anger feels like physically and let yourself truly notice its powerful presence.

**record this on the worksheet located at the end of this chapter*

Reflection:

How might God be inviting you to passionately bring your anger—whether it stems from injustice, deep pain, or disappointment with Him—into His divine presence?

Practice Today:

Write a raw and unapologetic prayer to God, pouring out your anger about something that has been weighing heavily on your heart. Let your words flow without restraint; no sugar-coating, just the truth of your emotions. Once you've laid it all bare, read it aloud to Him, then take a moment to sit in stillness and reflect.

Deeper Reflection: Ephesians 4:26 & Psalm 13:1-2

Feeling anger can be overwhelming, but these scriptures offer a safe space to process those emotions honestly. Use these prompts to bridge your current feelings with biblical reflection.

Psalm 13:1-2

- **Honest Lament:** If you were to ask God "How long?" regarding your current anger, what specific situation or person would you name?
- **Internal Echoes:** The Psalmist mentions taking "counsel in my soul." What are the repetitive, angry thoughts or "counsels" your mind is looping right now?

- Feeling Forgotten: Anger often stems from feeling unseen or unheard. In what ways do you feel "hidden" from God or others in this moment?
- The Weight of Sorrow: Anger is frequently a mask for deep sadness. What is the "sorrow in your heart" that might be fueling your frustration?

Ephesians 4:26

- Validating the Spark: Paul acknowledges that anger happens ("Be angry"). What is the "just" or "right" reason behind your anger? What boundary was crossed?
- Defining the Line: Where does your anger shift from a feeling into a "sinful" action (e.g., bitterness, lashing out, silent treatment)?
- The Sunset Rule: "Do not let the sun go down" implies urgency in processing. Is there something you can release or address today to prevent this anger from turning into a long-term grudge?
- Healthy Expression: How can you express your anger to God or others in a way that is honest but doesn't cause harm?

Key Takeaway:

anger is a valid human emotion that should be brought to God honestly but managed with urgency.

Permission to Grieve

We inhabit a culture that fiercely shuns sadness, urging us incessantly to focus on the silver linings, to tally our blessings, and to swiftly push past our pain. In certain so-called "Christian" communities, enduring sadness is scorned as a sign of feeble faith, as if genuinely trusting God demands that we never confront the profound burden of our losses.

*⁶ I am weary from my groaning;
with my tears I dampen my bed
and drench my couch every night.*

*⁷ My eyes are swollen from grief;
they grow old because of all my enemies.*

Psalms 6:6-7

But witness the Psalmist: "My tears dampen my bed and drench my couch..." This is no fleeting sorrow. This is a profound, embodied grief—nights upon nights spent weeping until his very eyes grow dim with anguish. Yet, even in this heart-wrenching prayer, we find it in Scripture. God has preserved it, honored it, and bestowed it a place within the sacred narrative of His people.

God does not hasten your grief; He doesn't pressure you to move on or simply shake it off. No, instead, He draws near to you, enveloping you with His unwavering presence and love.

*The Lord is near the brokenhearted;
he saves those crushed in spirit.*

Psalms 34:18

Your sadness does not push Him away - it draws Him closer. Grief is love in its rawest form, revealing itself when the object is absent, shattered, or transformed. It is the soul's heartfelt declaration, "This meant everything. This loss is profoundly felt." To dismiss your grief is to belittle the depth of what you cherished.

Acceptance of your sorrow does not mean surrendering your hope. It means embracing the raw truth of this very moment; you are grieving, you have experienced loss, and it's perfectly okay to admit that you are not alright. It means placing your trust in the divine, knowing that God stands beside you in the depths of your pain, not in the façade of your perceived strength.

Your sadness is far from failure; it is the profound and authentic expression of your heart grappling with the harsh realities of a fractured world. God does not demand restoration before He draws near to you. He is already present, enveloping

Body Awareness:

Notice where you hold that aching sadness in your body. Does your throat constrict painfully? Does your chest feel like it's weighed down by the very essence of your sorrow? Do tears spring forth even when you're not consciously dwelling on what you have lost?

**record this on the worksheet located at the end of this chapter*

Reflection Question:

Where in your body do you sense the fierce resistance to embracing the deep, heavy weight of your sadness or grief?

Practice Today:

Light a candle today for five minutes. Allow it to symbolize the profound loss of something or someone dear to your heart. Do not rush to pray or seek solutions; simply embrace your grief and invite the Lord's presence to accompany you in this moment of vulnerability.

Deeper Reflection: Psalm 6:6-7 and Psalm 34:18

Giving yourself permission to grieve is an act of self-compassion. These prompts use the imagery of weary tears and a broken heart to help you process your emotions.

From Psalm 6:6-7

- The Physical Weight: Where in your body do you feel your grief today? Describe the sensation of being "worn out" by your emotions.
- The Night Watch: What thoughts or memories tend to surface when the world is quiet at night? Write a letter to the version of yourself that feels "drenched" in tears.

- A Weary Perspective: Grief can change how we see the world. How has your "vision" or outlook shifted since your loss, and what would it look like to let your eyes rest?

From Psalm 34:18

- The Proximity of Peace: If you imagine a comforting presence sitting right beside you in your sadness, what does that presence say to you?
- Defining "Crushed": What specific parts of your spirit feel heavy or flattened right now? Give yourself permission to list them without trying to "fix" them.
- Safe Spaces: Psalm 34:18 suggests we don't have to be "whole" to be worthy of closeness. How can you create a "safe space" in your daily routine where it is okay to stay brokenhearted for a while?

Key Takeaway:

You do not need to rush your healing to prove your strength.

Bringing Your Confusion

Faith DOES not mean having all the answers.

Did you read that? FAITH DOES NOT MEAN HAVING ALL THE ANSWERS!

It is not merely an act of pretending that everything aligns perfectly when, in truth, it defies human logic and reason.

*“Will the Lord reject forever
and never again show favor?
⁸ Has his faithful love ceased forever?
Is his promise at an end for all generations?
⁹ Has God forgotten to be gracious?
Has he in anger withheld his compassion?” Selah
Psalm 77:7-9*

The psalmist asks God questions that sound almost blasphemous: "Has His faithful love ceased forever?"

These are not the prayers of someone adhering to tidy theology. No, these are the anguished cries of a soul adrift, grappling with confusion and overwhelmed by the chaos of life. Yet, in this turmoil, God does not condemn him for his questions. Instead, these very questions resonate as Scripture, for doubt, when offered up to God, transforms into a fierce hunger for understanding and truth.

Many of us have been conditioned to believe that questions are perilous, that uncertainty equates to disbelief. We've been taught

to have answers at the ready, to staunchly defend our faith, to never reveal our lack of understanding. Yet, this façade of certainty is merely a defensive shield—a means of safeguarding ourselves against the raw vulnerability that comes with not knowing.

Real faith doesn't demand that you mask your doubts or pretend that everything makes sense when it clearly doesn't. It beckons you to bring your turmoil into God's embrace and cry out, "I don't understand this! Please, guide me!"

*When I tried to understand all this,
it seemed hopeless
¹⁷until I entered God's sanctuary.
Then I understood their destiny.
Psalm 73:16-17*

Notice the profound action of this psalmist: when understanding feels utterly elusive, he rushes into the sacred sanctuary of God. He doesn't wait to unravel the complexities of life before seeking the divine; instead, he boldly embraces the presence of God, allowing faith to guide him through the fog of confusion.

Your doubt is not a mark of weak faith; it is a testament to your profound engagement with God. It shows that you are brave enough to wrestle with Him, rather than succumbing to simplistic answers that ignore the reality of your experience. Acceptance is a powerful act; it involves declaring, "I am perplexed. I cannot fathom why this is happening. I struggle to make sense of this." It is about placing your trust in God—even when everything seems shrouded in uncertainty—knowing He will embrace your "I don't understand" without any judgment or rejection.

Body Awareness:

Notice the intensity of confusion sweeping over you. Does your mind race with a wild array of thoughts? Does a thick fog envelop your head, clouding clarity? Does your chest constrict under the heavy weight of uncertainty and the distress of the unknown?

**record this on the worksheet located at the end of this chapter*

Reflection Question:

What burning questions about God, faith, or your own life have you held back from voicing due to their raw honesty or the risk they carry?

Practice Today:

Write down one burning question that has held you captive, one you have been too afraid to voice to God. Today, summon your courage and say it aloud to Him, embracing the vulnerability without the weight of expectation for an immediate answer.

Deeper Reflection: Psalm 77:7-9 & Psalm 73:16-17

Psalm 77:7-9 reflects the raw pain of feeling forgotten by God, while Psalm 73:16-17 reveals the clarity found by seeking His presence. These verses provide a safe space to process confusion and the hesitation we often feel when approaching the Divine with hard questions.

Moving Through the Silence

- **The Unspoken Fears:** Write out the "worst-case scenario" questions you are currently afraid to ask God. What makes these questions feel "unsafe" to vocalize?

- The Memory Gap: As the Psalmist asks if God has "forgotten to be merciful," look back at your own history. When was a
- Honesty vs. Disrespect: Do you view sincere questioning as a lack of faith or as an act of intimacy? Describe how your upbringing or past experiences shaped this view.
- The Abandonment Narrative: In what specific area of your life does it feel like God's "unfailing love" has vanished? Describe the physical and emotional weight of that feeling.

Finding Clarity in the Sanctuary

- The Limit of Logic: Identify a situation that "troubles you deeply" because it doesn't make sense logically. How much energy are you spending trying to "figure it out" on your own?
- Your Personal Sanctuary: What does "entering the sanctuary" look like for you today? Is it a physical place, a specific song, or a quiet moment of prayer?
- Perspective Shift: How does looking at your current confusion through the lens of eternity (the "final destiny") change the urgency or the weight of your problem?
- Surrendering the "Why": If God gave you peace without giving you an answer, would that be enough? Explore what it would take to be okay with the mystery.

Key Takeaway:

Your questions aren't a sign of a failing faith; they are an invitation to a deeper intimacy that moves beyond logic and into trust.

The Weight of Fear

*When I am afraid,
I will trust in you.*

*⁴In God, whose word I praise,
in God I trust; I will not be afraid.
What can mere mortals do to me?*

Psalm 56:3-4

Notice that the Psalmist does not declare, "I will never be afraid because I trust in You." Instead, he begins with the raw truth of fear, acknowledging its presence before transitioning to trust. Fear is the initial, undeniable feeling. Trust becomes the powerful response, an act of defiance in the face of our insecurities, not merely a substitute.

*My heart shudders within me;
terrors of death sweep over me.*

*⁵Fear and trembling grip me;
horror has overwhelmed me.*

Psalm 55:4-5

The second psalmist expresses a profound intensity: "...horror has overwhelmed me." This is no faint anxiety. This is a visceral terror, a shaking dread—the raw sensation that death itself is looming ever closer. And this, too, is a form of prayer. This, too, finds its place within the Word of God, for God embraces the unvarnished truth of our deepest fears.

Many of us have been ingrained with the belief that fear stands as the antithesis of faith, that our anxieties are mere reflections

of insufficient trust in God. Consequently, we stifle our fears, bury them deep, and even find ourselves apologizing for their existence. We wrestle with guilt as our hearts race, our thoughts spiral into chaos, and our bodies refuse to find peace.

But your nervous system is not bound by theology. When it perceives a threat—real or imagined—it unleashes a primal wave of fear. This is the magnificent design of our Creator. Your fear is not a moral failing; it is an intrinsic part of your biology. And God, the very artisan who crafted your being, deeply understands this truth.

Accepting fear does not mean remaining frozen in its grip. It means boldly declaring, "I am afraid right now," without layering shame upon it. It means offering your quaking body and whirlwind thoughts to God and passionately proclaiming, "I am afraid. I need You."

The pathway isn't about leaping from fear to trust by bypassing fear itself; it's about journeying from fear to a profound connection with God right in the midst of that fear. And then, often a slow and deliberative process, it transforms from fear alongside God into a vibrant trust in God. He doesn't require you to conquer your fear before He stands by you; He is already present, unwavering and steadfast, right in the heart of your trembling moments.

Body Awareness:

When you find yourself engulfed in fear or anxiety, pause for a moment and truly feel where it manifests in your body. Is it that shallow, frantic breathing tugging at your throat? The racing heartbeat echoing like a wild drum in your chest? Those shoulders creeping up, tense like coiled springs? Perhaps it's the relentless churning in your stomach that feels like a storm brewing inside. Just take a moment to notice those sensations.

**record this on the worksheet located at the end of this chapter*

Reflective Question:

What would it look like to bring fear to God without offering an apology or attempting to mend it beforehand? Embracing that raw, unyielding reverence could ignite a transformative power within us, compelling us to confront the depths of our beliefs with fierce authenticity.

Practice Today:

Set three powerful phone reminders throughout your day. When they chime, place one hand over your heart and passionately whisper, "God is with me in this fear." Feel the warmth of your breath and embrace the moment.

Deeper Reflection: Psalm 56:3-4 & 55:4-5

Psalm 55:4-5 describes the physical and emotional weight of fear, while Psalm 56:3-4 offers the bridge from that fear to trust.

Identifying the Shadows (Psalm 55:4-5)

- **Body Check:** Where do you feel "fear and trembling" in your body right now? Describe the physical sensations of your anxiety.

- The "Horror": What specific "what-if" scenario is currently overwhelming your thoughts? Write it out plainly to get it out of your head and onto the paper.
- Honest Lament: If you were to cry out to God about the "anguish" you feel, what would you say? Don't hold back or try to sound "spiritual."

Shifting the Gaze (Psalm 56:3-4)

- The "When" Clause: Notice the verse says when I am afraid, not if. How does it feel to know that fear is a normal part of the human experience, even for people of faith?
- Word Praise: List three specific promises or attributes of God's character from His Word (e.g., His presence, His sovereignty, His kindness). How do these truths directly counter your current fear?
- The Trust Exchange: Imagine physically handing your specific anxiety to God. What does "putting your trust in Him" look like practically for you today?
- The Mortal Perspective: In light of God's eternal power, how does the size of your "mere mortal" problem change?

Key Takeaway:

Fear is a physical and emotional reality, but it doesn't have to be your final destination.

The Freedom to Rejoice

We have poured our hearts into this study, delving into those tumultuous emotions that society pushes us to conceal—the ones that feel perilously overwhelming. Yet, let us not overlook joy, which can be just as challenging to embrace! Many of us have been conditioned to view happiness with skepticism, fearing to dream, hesitating to revel in the bright moments, as we brace ourselves for the inevitable fall that seems to loom just beyond the horizon.

Maybe you've endured such profound loss that it feels naive to embrace joy. Perhaps you've faced shame for daring to express delight. You've learned that revealing your happiness makes you vulnerable, leading you to believe it's safer to shield yourself, perpetually braced for disappointment.

*² Our mouths were filled with laughter then,
and our tongues with shouts of joy.
Then they said among the nations,
“The Lord has done great things for them.”*

*³ The Lord had done great things for us;
we were joyful.*

Psalm 126:2-3

But behold this psalm: mouths filled with laughter, tongues with shouts of joy! This is not a mere whisper of polite satisfaction; this is unbridled, visceral joy—the kind that ignites your entire being, pouring forth in raucous sound, exuberant movement, and pure celebration!

*God does not just tolerate your joy.
11 You reveal the path of life to me;
in your presence is abundant joy;
at your right hand are eternal pleasures.*
Psalm 16:11

He delights in it!

Not merely a fleeting joy, nor a measured delight, nor a joy with volume turned down -- but an overwhelming fullness! God's presence is not only a sanctuary for our suffering; it is the very wellspring of our deepest, purest joy.

Accepting joy is a bold declaration to embrace every joyous moment without guilt, without hesitation, and without the fear of losing it. It's about immersing yourself in the beauty around you—truly seeing it—and exclaiming, "This is a precious gift. I wholeheartedly welcome it. I receive it."

Your joy does not diminish others' pain; instead, it shines a light on the possibility of hope amid suffering. Your delight in God's unwavering goodness does not mean you turn a blind eye to the brokenness of the world. It means you are embracing life in its fullness, embodying the beautiful balance of sorrow and gladness. What if God is inviting you not merely to endure the trials of today but to savor His goodness in this very moment, to experience the richness of His love and grace right now?

Body Awareness:

Notice the exhilarating joy and delight coursing through your body when you truly allow yourself to experience it. Is there a warmth blooming in your chest? A radiant smile breaking across your face? An invigorating energy surging within you? Embrace these sensations wholeheartedly, without any hesitation to shut them down.

**record this on the worksheet located at the end of this chapter*

Reflection:

Do you truly give yourself permission to embrace joy, or do you hold back, anxiously anticipating that something will inevitably go wrong? Why deny yourself the exquisite experience of joy?

Practice Today:

Notice three extraordinary things today that spark even the tiniest moment of joy or delight within you. Speak each one aloud to God as a cherished gift you are receiving, exclaiming, "Thank you for this!"

Deeper Reflection:

Shame and guilt can often act like shadows, trying to dim the light of happy moments. These prompts use the imagery of "laughter" and "fullness" to help you reclaim your right to joy.

Psalm 126:2–3: The Mouth Filled with Laughter

- **The Guarded Laugh:** When you start to laugh or feel lighthearted, what is the specific "guilt-thought" that interrupts you? Write it out, then counter it with the phrase: "The Lord has done great things for me."
- **Restoring the Tongue:** Shame often tells us to keep our joy quiet so we don't "jinx" it or upset others. What is one "song

- of joy" (a small win or blessing) you have been hesitant to speak out loud?
- The Source of Joy: If joy is a gift from God rather than something you have to earn, how does that change your permission to feel it?

Psalm 16:11: The Path of Life

- Eternal Pleasures: Shame is usually focused on the past. Joy is focused on the present and future. List three "pleasures" (small things like coffee, a sunset, or a conversation) that God is putting on your path today.
- The Fullness Filter: We often feel we only deserve "partial" joy because of our past mistakes. What would it look like to accept the "fullness" mentioned in this verse without filtering it through your shame?
- Presence vs. Performance: This verse suggests joy comes from being in God's presence, not from being perfect. Where are you currently trying to "perform" to earn the right to be happy?

Key Takeaway:

Joy is a divine gift rooted in God's presence and actions, not a reward you have to earn through your own perfection or worthiness.

Your Whole Self Welcomed

We have been passionately delving into the freedom to feel—unleashing our rage, our despair, our confusion, our fear, and our joy before God without an ounce of shame. We've discovered that our emotions are not obstacles to our faith; instead, they are profound expressions of our very souls. Acceptance, we've learned, is the vibrant beginning of a transformative encounter, and God eagerly embraces our entire emotional truth.

Now we land here.

¹ Lord, you have searched me and known me.

*² You know when I sit down and when I stand up;
you understand my thoughts from far away.*

*³ You observe my travels and my rest;
you are aware of all my ways.*

*⁴ Before a word is on my tongue,
you know all about it, Lord.*

Psalm 139:1-4

God already knows.

He has searched through the depths of your soul and knows you intimately. He comprehends every twist and turn of your journey, understands your thoughts as if they were His own, and is deeply acquainted with all your ways. Every emotion you fear to reveal to Him, He already perceives; every fragment of yourself you've tried to conceal, He knows fully.

*¹³As a father has compassion on his children,
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.*

*¹⁴For he knows what we are made of,
remembering that we are dust.*

Psalm 103:13-14

"He knows our frame; He remembers that we are of dust." This is profoundly affirming. God crafted you with a body that feels, a nervous system that vibrates with life, a heart that shatters and swells, that rages and rejoices. He doesn't demand you to be made of anything other than your very essence.

The invitation is not to become someone different before you come to God; it's a call to embrace your true self! It's time to stop pretending, to cease performing, to unveil the very parts of your being that cry out for His transformative touch. Bring your entire self—the fiery anger, the deep fears, the swirling confusion, and the uncontainable joy—and have faith that every single part of you is cherished and welcome in His presence.

This does not mean you will never change or grow; it means you begin from your true self, not from some imagined ideal. Every facet of your emotional existence can be sacred – not just the beautiful moments. The fury and the joy, the doubts and the confidence, the sorrow and the happiness; all of it carries weight in the eyes of God because it is all part of who you are, and you are

Body Awareness:

Take a slow, deep breath and immerse yourself in a complete body scan from head to toe. Embrace your tenderness; be gentle with yourself. What are you feeling in this very moment, both physically and emotionally? Don't rush to change it—simply notice and acknowledge that it's a beautiful piece of your whole self, one that is wholeheartedly welcomed by God.

Reflection:

What transformative shift would occur in your relationship with God if you wholeheartedly embraced the belief that He welcomes your entire emotional truth, not merely the polished, acceptable fragments? Imagine the liberation of being fully seen and accepted, every joy and sorrow laid bare before Him, fueling a deeper connection that transcends superficiality!

Practice Today:

Before you drift into slumber tonight, take a moment to bare your soul before God—share one raw, true feeling that stirs within you, be it joy, sorrow, fear, anger, numbness, or confusion. Let that profound honesty resonate as your heartfelt evening prayer.

Deeper Reflection: Psalm 139:1-4 & Psalm 103:13-14

Psalm 139:1-4 reminds us that God has already searched us and knows our thoughts before we even speak. Psalm 103:13-14 highlights His fatherly compassion, noting that He remembers our "dust"—our human frailty and limitations.

Here are journal prompts to help you bring your rawest emotions to Him:

The God Who Knows

- Psalm 139 says God is "intimate with all my ways." What is an emotion you've been trying to hide or "fix" lately? How does it feel to know He already sees it and isn't shocked by it?
- "Before a word is on my tongue, You know it completely." If you didn't have to use "churchy" or "polite" language, what would you say to God right now about your current situation?

Permission to be Human

- Psalm 103 says God remembers "that we are dust." Where are you being too hard on yourself for having human limitations or feelings? Write a list of things you give yourself permission to feel today.
- God is described as having the compassion of a father. Imagine sitting with a perfectly loving parent while you are upset. What do you need to hear Him say to your heart in this moment?

Key Takeaway:

You don't have to "clean up" your feelings to be worthy of God's attention.

Body Awareness

Recognizing bodily reactions to feelings is vital for holistic Christian living, turning physical sensations into cues for spiritual reflection. Based on the “Body Action” prompts, use the following as a guide to help you recognize feelings. How do you recognize, in your body, each of the following:

Where do you feel that undeniable tension when you contemplate being honest with God?

Where do you feel the fierce surge of anger in your body when it arises?

Where do you hold sadness in your body?

Where do you feel confusion in your body?

Where do you feel fear in
your body?

Where do you feel joy in your
body?

Key Aspects of Linking Physical Feelings to God's Word:

- Emotions as Indicators: Physical sensations (like a tight chest from anxiety) are signals from our soul that prompt us to take our emotions to God, rather than stewing on them.
- The Body as a Temple: Caring for our physical selves by recognizing signs of burnout or stress is a biblical mandate, honoring God's creation.
- Processing vs. Suppression: Rather than suppressing emotions, Scripture encourages us to acknowledge them and surrender them to God, transitioning from "feeling" to divine truth.
- Discerning God's Presence: Recognizing physical reactions can help us become more attentive to the Holy Spirit's promptings, bringing us to a place of deeper dependence on Him.
- Anchoring in Truth: We are called to "feel the feels" while anchoring our emotions in the hope of Christ, using Scripture to govern our reactions rather than letting our reactions govern us.

By understanding that emotions are part of being made in God's image, we can use our physical reactions as a starting point to seek God's wisdom, leading to spiritual strength and emotional maturity.



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