

# **IN THE MARGINS: Embracing all your emotions the key to happiness**

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Let me ask you something: have you ever been so determined to avoid feeling bad that you end up feeling worse? I've been there. I used to think happiness was about banishing negative emotions like anger, sadness, or frustration. After all, who wants to sit around feeling miserable, right? But here's the kicker – happiness isn't about avoiding those emotions. It's about learning to observe and accept them.

Now, before you give me a side-eye, let's dig into this together. This idea isn't just some pop psychology mumbo jumbo; it actually aligns with a biblical truth about how God made us.

## **Fighting Negative Feelings Doesn't Work**

Let's start with the problem. Most of us have been taught to think of emotions as good or bad. Happiness, gratitude, and peace? Good. Anger, sadness, and fear? Bad. So when we feel those "bad" emotions, we might push them away, distract ourselves, or even try to pray them out of existence.

But what happens when you try to shove those feelings down? They have a funny way of sticking around. It's like trying to hold a beach ball underwater – it takes a ton of effort, and eventually, it pops right back up, often in ways we don't expect.

Here's what's wild: when we fight those feelings, we prolong the experience. It's like trying to put out a grease fire with

water – it only makes things worse.

## **A Biblical Perspective**

The Bible doesn't shy away from emotions. Take the Psalms, for example. David cries out to God in sorrow, anger, fear, and confusion. He doesn't sugarcoat his emotions, and God doesn't condemn him for it. Instead, those raw, honest prayers often lead David to a deeper sense of trust and joy in God.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 reminds us, *“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.”* That includes a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance. God gave us the full spectrum of emotions for a reason. They're not obstacles to happiness; they're part of the process.

## **Observing and Accepting Your Emotions**

So what does it look like to embrace your emotions rather than fight them? Studies show that people who intentionally notice and accept their emotions – even the unpleasant ones – experience more positive feelings overall.

Let me give you a real-life example. A while back, I had a frustrating day. I'd poured my heart into a project, and the results I got were less than stellar. I felt angry, embarrassed, and disappointed. My first instinct? Ignore it. I dove into mindless distractions – Netflix, snacks, anything to numb the feelings. But guess what? It didn't work. I still felt lousy, and now I was frustrated with myself for wasting time.

Then I tried something different. I sat down, closed my eyes, and asked myself, *What am I really feeling right now?* I let the anger wash over me without judgment. I told God exactly how I felt, no filter. “Lord, I'm mad, and I don't like feeling this way. Help me see what I'm supposed to learn from this.”

As I sat with those emotions, something shifted. The anger started to fade, and in its place came clarity. I realized the feedback wasn't an attack; it was an opportunity to grow. That perspective wouldn't have come if I'd kept running from the feelings.

## **Why Acceptance Leads to Happiness**

When you allow yourself to feel anger, sadness, or fear, you create space for those emotions to pass naturally. You stop adding fuel to the fire by resisting them. And here's the cool part: by accepting the "bad" emotions, you also heighten your ability to feel the "good" ones.

Think about it. If you're always on high alert to avoid pain, you'll also be on high alert against joy. You can't numb one side of the emotional spectrum without numbing the other. But when you let yourself experience the fullness of your emotions, you make room for peace, gratitude, and even happiness to grow.

## **Practical Steps**

So how do we put this into practice? Here are three steps to try the next time you're overwhelmed by negative emotions:

### **1. Pause and Name It**

When you feel something unpleasant, pause and name the emotion. "I feel angry." "I feel sad." Naming it helps you acknowledge it without judgment.

### **2. Pray Honestly**

Follow David's example and pour your heart out to God. He can handle your mess. Ask Him to help you understand what you're feeling and guide you through it.

### **3. Sit with It**

This is the hard part. Sit with the emotion without trying to fix it. Breathe deeply. Remind yourself, *This feeling is temporary.*

## **A Path to True Joy**

Learning to accept your emotions isn't about wallowing or giving up. It's about trusting that God is at work in all of it – the good, the bad, and the ugly. When we stop running from our feelings, we open ourselves to the joy and peace God wants to give us.

So the next time you feel like you're drowning in frustration, sadness, or fear, remember: God made your emotions, and He's not afraid of them. Neither should you be. Let them point you back to Him, and watch how He turns even the hardest moments into a path toward true, lasting happiness.

Until next time, keep looking up!