

# Managing Your Emotions

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Keeping Your Feelings from  
Running the Show

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*Yesterday, I started thinking about what my brother did to me when I was eight. All the old feelings of shame came flooding back, and I couldn't focus on anything else. -Ali*

*I missed class three times last week after my boyfriend and I broke up. I feel so depressed. All I want to do is sleep and try to forget about how bad I feel. Nothing has ever hurt so much in my life. -Kaitlin*

*That stupid driver just cut me off. Who does he think he is? I feel like teaching him a lesson. -Jasmine*

*No one talked to me at church on Sunday. I feel like an outsider. -Donna*

*My four-year-old threw a tantrum in the middle of the grocery store today. I was so embarrassed. I feel like I'm a failure as a parent. -Kathy*

*My professor wants me to revise my thesis. I've spent hundreds of hours on it. I feel like quitting. -Mei*

**F**eelings, or emotions, are a powerful part of our lives. So powerful, in fact, that they can control our very being. Have you ever been overwhelmed by shame? Exhausted by depression? Consumed with anger? Dominated by rejection? Devoured by bitterness? Most of us can say yes to at least a few of those negative emotions. But do we have to be controlled by our emotions?

There is a better way to live than being constantly in the grip of your emotions. You don't have to be trapped by negative emotions and let them run your life. Instead of being dominated by your emotions, you can learn to understand them, turn to God for help

and hope, and even make your emotions work for you instead of against you. It starts by understanding how God made you and your emotions.

### **Emotions Are Part of God's Good Creation**

God intended for emotions to be a good part of our makeup. After creating Adam (with emotions), God looked at what he had created with great satisfaction and proclaimed his creation of Adam, “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Feelings are a good part of who we are created to be. God created us in his image, and God has emotions. God grieves, God rejoices, God weeps, God exults, God is angry, and God loves.<sup>1</sup> Because we are made in his image, we too experience emotions.

Emotions enable us to laugh, to rejoice, and to enjoy. Emotions allow us to experience affection, love, passion, and ardor. Emotions allow us to be glad, to delight, to know elation, and to be passionate. Emotions are a good part of God's creation.

Surprisingly, we could also argue that the capacity to experience “negative” emotions was also part of God's good creation. Because it can be difficult to see value in negative emotions, we might conclude that all negative emotions—sadness, loneliness, frustration, fear—are the consequences of sin. However, when no suitable helper was found for Adam and God declared it was not good for man to be alone, we can probably safely assume some negative emotion was attached to this evaluation—perhaps sadness, loneliness, or frustration. But sadness didn't turn to depression, loneliness didn't turn to despair, frustration didn't turn to