

# Your Emotions Are a Compass, Not Your Enemy

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 30 March 2025

Preacher: Trevor Wentt

[ 0 : 00 ] Oh, that's love. I appreciate y'all. So in one of my 15 former lives, I was the star wrestler on my high school team. And my senior year, I spent the vast majority of the year undefeated in matches and unvictorious in so many different other aspects of my life.

On the top of the struggles that come from growing up poor and a single parent, six child household, my late maternal grandmother was struggling with some health issues and I wasn't getting accepted in any colleges.

I was. Yeah, I was going through a lot. I was I was struggling to control my anger at home. And that led to some tension between me and my family.

And yeah, that much and so much more was building daily. And that all hit this breaking point at this point at the end of of that year, right after New Year's, where I lost my first match of the season by an air of my own.

And then I had gone to this New Year's celebration with some homies or someone decided that it would be a really great idea to tell me that one of my resolutions should be to stop talking about wrestling so much.

[ 1 : 22 ] And so if you think about the context of this, there's so much that's going wrong in my life. And the only thing that I was winning at at that point was wrestling.

And so that was the straw that broke the camel's back. I broke. And the depression, it was deep. I don't think I smiled for a month. I had no answer for it, no outlet to talk through it with.

And the only thing that was holding me up was this dream of winning a state title, being a state champion. But that didn't stop the walls from closing in, yo. One particular afternoon, I really just had nothing left to give.

I came out of class and I went straight to the locker room before anyone else. I walked into the wrestling room. I laced up my shoes, put my headphones in, hood up, and I just started running. Just started running.

And wrestling was usually the spot that I had that release from where everything else was going wrong in my life. I forgot about the hells that were surrounding me, the poverty, the grades, my struggles of the realities of having an absent father.

[ 2 : 32 ] Too many things that I can name in a single sermon. But now the weight of those feelings were beginning to breach that sacred space, too.

And this day, I was just cracking. I couldn't handle it anymore. I couldn't do it anymore. I was the first to the locker room, like I said. I came in. I started running. Teammate after teammate came in to greet me.

T went. What up, Trev? Rev Trev in the building. Yeah, they called me Rev Trev. There were a lot of nicknames, y'all. And so for me, I like nodded in acknowledgement.

But I knew that if I said anything, that my voice box was this dam that was holding back all of this pain and emotion that I was feeling inside.

And they knew something was wrong. I was a vocal captain. I was the thermostat of this room. And I knew that it couldn't go on for long. But I was playing the game while I could.

[ 3 : 30 ] And so the room continued to fill. And I kept running. And I kept running. And I kept running until two of my teammates were kind of sick of it. They ran up on me and they grabbed me.

I'm like, Trevor, what's wrong? And then the dam broke. And I found myself with tear-soaked cheeks following my coach, Coach Senzik, to his office.

So he sits me down. He says, so what's going on? And so I told him. I told him about the family, the financial, the personal, the relational, all the stuff that was going on.

And Coach listened to every single word. And then he looked up at me. He said, you know what will make you feel better? So what, Coach?

Go back in there and beat the crap out of somebody. I promise. This is a true story. I promise. And let me just clarify that he meant, like, not to go punch somebody, but to win in wrestling, to beat people up in wrestling.

[ 4 : 32 ] So what's up with y'all? My name is Trevor Wendt. I use the pronouns he, him. I am on the preaching team here at the Table Church. And we're within a series in the middle of it called Sacred Self-Care, where we're encouraging folks in this Lenten season to take care of ourselves, to take care of ourselves and consider self-care from a theological perspective, from a spiritual formative perspective, and in practical ways, right?

The ways that we might normally hear that. Or to paraphrase the former NFL running back, Marshawn Lynch, take care of y'all bodies, take care of y'all mentals, take care of y'all spirits. So today I'm preaching on the topic of honoring our emotions, our feelings. So we're going to explore a little bit of scripture and see how King David honored and dishonored his own feelings. And then we're going to talk a little bit about how our emotions work in our brains. And then we're going to connect all that stuff together with spiritual and physical lives, our personal spiritual and physical lives.

So my big idea for today, if y'all remember nothing else that I say, remember this. That your emotions are not your enemy.

[ 5 : 44 ] They are a compass to your remedy. Say it one more time. Your emotions are not your enemy. They are a compass to your remedy. So if you got a Bible, slide to Psalm 63.

That's where we finna be today. If not, it's going to be on the screen. So while all y'all do that, let me set the scene. So this is a Psalm that is, you know, Psalms are either a song or a poem or that's kind of what they stand for.

And this joint is attributed to King David, who was the king of Israel for both negative and positive reasons. Like he was famous as a king for both negative and positive reasons.

And so at the time of this situation, this moment that we find him in, David is on the run because David's third son, Absalom, said, Daddy, I'm gonna need that throne. And so he's trying to kill him straight up.

I'm serious. This boy is wiling and trying to take his dad's phone or take his dad's throne. Not his phone. They didn't have phones back then. And so David is in his feelings, y'all, as you can imagine.

[ 6 : 49 ] And in this spot of despair and vulnerability, we find this joint credited to his perspective in this moment. So let's jump into it. Verse one. Oh, God, you are my God.

I seek you. My soul thirsts for you. My flesh faints for you as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory because of your steadfast love or because your steadfast love is better than life.

My lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live. I will lift up my hands and call on your name. My soul is satisfied with a rich feast and my mouth praises you with joyful lips.

When I think of you on my bed and meditate on you in the watches of the night, for you have been my help. And in the shadow of your wings, I sing for joy.

My soul clings to you. Your right hand upholds me. But those who seek to destroy my life shall go down into the depths of the earth. They shall be given over to the power of the sword.

[ 7 : 53 ] They shall be prey for jackals. But the king shall rejoice in God. All who swear by him shall exult. For the mouths of liars will be stopped.

Let's pray. Jesus, I thank you for tonight. Holy Spirit, I invite your presence into this place. I ask that you would meet us where we are at. Help us to learn from your word, from these concepts of honoring our emotions.

Learn from the example of Jesus. I pray God that you would give us what we need tonight and help us to continue to walk forward in alignment with you, in health in ourselves, and caring for ourselves each and every day.

In the name of Christ, through the power of the spirit. Amen. So in this passage, we see the psalmist evoke deep emotion to give idea of what King David might have been thinking or feeling in this moment.

And so he's on the run and in despair, probably, because how else are you going to feel if your kid's trying to murder you, right? And David writes this psalm with some really deeply emotional language.

[ 9 : 13 ] The psalm breaks down into three sections, verses 1 through 4, verses 5 through 7, and then verses 8 through 11. So verse 1, it says, like all these joints break down into these statements about David's soul.

And so verse 1, it says, And in Hebrew, each of these statements, the language is becoming increasingly intense, is becoming increasingly like passion, right?

And so my soul clings to you. That statement is like kind of the crux of it all. And the reason why is that that word cling in verse 8 in Hebrew is this word daveg.

Everybody say daveg. Stop it. Look at y'all, Hebrew scholars. And so this is like straight up marriage language. If we break down the Hebrew a little bit, it's used to describe the close community between a married couple.

And in Deuteronomy, it's used to describe the loyalty of or the fidelity of Israel to God. And so this level of intensity of feeling and of emotion that the psalmist wants us to understand about David's relationship with God is what's being put on display here.

[ 10 : 34 ] To the point where we're seeing this displayed in the deepest human connection that a person can have. And God supports this. It says, your right hand upholds me in verse 8.

Meaning that God is supporting David and surrounding him. Now this could be read that God is supporting his impassioned turning to God's self.

Because as Dr. Shaniqua Walker-Barnes says, who wrote the book that this series was inspired by, emotions are critical to our experience of God.

In fact, scripture is filled with emotion. Elijah's depression, Peter's anger, Martha's jealousy, Rahab's courage. The list goes on and on and on.

Because we're made in the image of God, in the likeness of God. And God is emotional. God came as a human because God cares.

[ 11 : 33 ] God gets angry at feeling betrayed by God's people. God feels joy in creation and calls it good. God be feeling, y'all. And we feel because God feels.

Because our emotions are essential to the human experience. Because our emotions are essential to our experience of God. Your emotions are good.

Your emotions matter. Your emotions are of God. Rest in that. So if we acknowledge that our emotions are both integral to our physical and spiritual experiences, how do we then honor our emotions?

So if you're taking notes, I'm going to break this thing down into five ways that we can do this. Ways that we can regularly go and check in on ourselves. Evaluate how we're feeling. And then develop our relationship to ourselves, God's self, and to others.

And so number one, allow yourself to feel your feelings. Two, identify what you're feeling. Three, process your feelings. Four, identify where those feelings are coming from.

[ 12 : 47 ] And five, act on our emotions or your emotions healthily. So we're going to jump right in. Number one, allow yourself to feel your feelings.

For a million different reasons. I don't know what my beard is doing, but we here. So allow yourself to feel your feelings. For a million different reasons, you might be suppressing, feeling what you feel.

You may have grown up hearing that boys don't cry. Or be a man. Stop crying. I'm going to give you something to cry about. You may have heard women are too emotional. Or when you express your emotions, they were invalidated.

You might have heard that those urges and feelings about your attractions or body chemistry don't matter. You may have suffered abuse or trauma. And you can't feel the same way that you once did.

And you need help of someone to walk through those things with care. And safety so that you can feel healthy again. Regardless of the situation, regardless of the circumstances, your emotions matter.

[ 13 : 52 ] And allowing yourself to feel is the first step to honoring your emotions because your emotions are not your enemy. They are a compass to your remedy. This is all of your emotions.

Your sadness, your joy, your happiness, your anger. Your emotions help to direct you to what you need to maintain your health and to improve your health. They help to direct you to the things that you enjoy and connect with as much as they help to direct you to things that you may need to create boundaries within.

Or for situations to remove yourself from. Emotions are integral to all these things. So number two, identify what you're feeling. We all feel, but we all don't necessarily know how to identify what that feeling is.

And that's okay. A way to practice this is to practice naming our emotions. So in the moments that you feel strong feelings, to take a moment.

To be present with yourself and present with your body and allow yourself to feel and try to identify what that emotion is.

[15:00] So tools like emotion charts, which look like this, can help us with starting to understand. So they start off with base emotions like happy, sad, bad, disgusted, angry, right?

And then they, as they go out, they get more complex. So courageous stands from, or stems from happiness. Dismay stems from surprise. Excluded stems from fear.

Jealousy stems from anger. And so on. Identifying the emotions you have will help you to better understand yourself and to honor yourself and to care for yourself.

So you can also practice doing something called making an emotion journal. So with an emotion journal, when you feel a strong feeling at some point through the day, you can take time to journal and just try to name what that emotion is.

And then give some sort of ideas what's going on in that situation of kind of why that emotion might have came up. And then reflect on it on like a weekly basis so you can kind of see if there's any sort of rhythms or patterns that you sort of see these emotions coming up within.

[16:10] So number three, process your feelings. This could be through journaling, through conversation, through self-talk, through therapy. But questions that you might ask yourself to help you kind of work through and process your emotions and like what they are.

Ask yourself stuff like this. How would you describe the emotion that you're feeling? How intense is it? How is it affecting your thoughts or your decisions? How does your body feel right now?

Is there an event, person, place, or thing that might have caused this sort of response within you? How did you react to that emotion? What message is my body sharing with me right now about what it might need?

What does this tell me about myself? What action might I need to take? These are just some ideas of ways that you might process the things that you're feeling inside. So this isn't just for some sort or some emotions of indicating what's hard or challenging, but also what brings you life and purpose. They can help you to know what you need more of in your life as much as they can kind of help you to know what you might need less of in your life. Because emotions are good. Your emotions matter.

[17:27] Your emotions are of God. So number four, identify where those feelings are coming from. So part of this is addressed in that processing of our emotions with questions like, is there an event, person, place, or thing?

Is there something that might have caused this sort of response within me? But this can also help us gain clarity on things that we might want to make a pattern of in our life. Like we talked about a second ago with our relationship with God, our relationship with others, or our relationship with ourselves.

Things that we might want to keep in step to help us to flourish. But we can also get an understanding of how our brains process emotions, which can help with understanding ourselves, processing places where we have heightened emotions, or address traumas that we might be working through and battling through.

So I'm no neuroscientist. I might have fooled y'all, but I'm not a neuroscientist. So this is a very elementary understanding of these parts of the brain, but I'm going to do my best.

I read some stuff and watch some YouTube videos. So we got the prefrontal cortex, y'all. Woo! Prefrontal cortex.

[18:41] So the prefrontal cortex, this is where your rational thinking comes from, your decision making, your impulse control. Those sorts of things. And so for people who have endured complex traumas, may have reduced activity here, which can make it harder to regulate emotions and concentrate or make decisions in stressful situations.

Then we got the amygdala. Everybody say amygdala. I just like the way that joint sounds. So the amygdala is our fear center of our brain.

It's where the fight, flight, or freeze type situations and reactions come from. So when it senses danger, it heightens your emotions and your physiological abilities to get you out of danger.

As you can imagine, this is really helpful when stuff starts going down. But when we also hit moments of trauma, it can also become hyperactive. So this means that your brain will become more alert.

And it's scanning in all sorts of situations that might not be dangerous if something is dangerous. It's looking for potential threats, trying to get you out of situations. Next up, we got the hippocampus.

[ 19 : 52 ] So this is what's responsible for helping us to process and store memories. Trauma can also affect this joint and shrink it. Extended depression can also affect this and shrink it.

And so this could lead to disrupting the ways that our memories are stored. The traumatic event or events can become distorted in our heads and intrusive.

They can get stuck to where the points you might hit, like, vivid flashbacks or nightmares. All these sorts of things start to become possible in this sort of situation.

So if you're in a place where you feel beyond your threshold, emotionally and mentally, where panic and anxiety and depression, like the triggers are too much in you, I want you to know that there's hope.

There's this concept called neuroplasticity. And with it, it's this concept that our brains have the ability to form new neural pathways, new connections.

[ 20 : 55 ] So those spaces where stuff has gotten smaller from trauma or whatever, that doesn't mean it's stuck there. It doesn't mean it's staying there. It means that it can continue to adapt and learn and grow.

So there's hope. And there's hope in the direction that this can also help you to identify the things that you need.

In the words of Dr. Shanika Walker-Barnes, emotions are not the enemies of reason. They are the companions to it. They can help you to gauge that you're beyond your threshold in a moment.

They can help you to gauge that you need to talk to your therapist or you need to take your medication or you need the support of a friend or you need the support of God. So number five, act on our emotions healthily.

So when we get a sense of what our emotions are, we name them, how our body's feeling. We have to respond to those joints healthily. So the psalmist, he frames David as doing the opposite of this at the close of this passage.

[ 22 : 02 ] So David feels this deep connection to God's self, but his reaction to that is to proclaim the death of his enemies. That seems a little bit off base, David.

So it says, But those who seek to destroy my life shall go down to the depths of the earth. They shall be given over to the power of the sword. They shall be prey for the jackals. But the king shall rejoice in God.

All who swear by him shall rejoice for the mouths of liars will be stopped. Like, I'm going to need you to chill, big Dave. See, this is one of the moments we call a descriptive moment in scripture. This is not a prescriptive moment. This is trying to give you an idea of what's going down, not what you need to do. So if your core prayer is, Kill them dead, Lord.

If that's your core prayer, like the king in this section, Hey, that's how you feel. No judgment here. That's where your heart is at. We will also have members of the prayer team in the back to pray for you and your top of me.

[ 23 : 07 ] But for real, for real, Acknowledging and honoring our emotions means to respond to them healthily. You might need to go for a walk. You might need to praise and worship God.

You might need to take your meds or engage in your hobbies, Establish a boundary, get coffee with a friend. Or, hey, if you're wrestling with complex trauma, Your emotions might tell you, Hey, I'm not ready to go this deep yet.

This doesn't feel safe yet. I need someone to walk through this with care and intentionality. And all of this stuff relates to self-care.

Self-care is the act of taking steps to maintain or improve your physical, emotional, or mental well-being. The effort requires an ongoing commitment.

This is from Dr. Tracy Marks, who is a psychiatrist. And so when we allow ourselves to feel our feelings, Identify our feelings, process our feelings, Identify the places that they're coming from, And act on our feelings healthily, We can stir ourselves and push ourselves into these moments.

[ 24 : 17 ] This is a regular rhythm for our lives. This is not just for the moments where you feel overwhelmed Or something bad happens to you. To care for yourself in this way is an important rhythm of our life.

And we honor our emotions by incorporating healthy rhythms To maintain or improve our emotional well-being. Because your emotions are not your enemy.

They are a compass to your remedy. So I'll echo the words of Dr. Wathor Barnes once again.

Emotions are critical to our experience of God.

We see this in Jesus. There's this moment, right, where Jesus' homie Lazarus dies. And he knew the whole time that he was about to raise this dude from the dead.

He was going to resurrect him. But he rolls up and his homegirls, Mary and Martha, And their homies are grieving. And Matthew, the Gospel of Matthew, Says that Jesus was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.

[ 25 : 19 ] He's been talking this big resurrection game this whole time. You read this passage, he is talking it up. I'm going to raise him up. Like this is for the purposes that God has set before.

Da, da, da, da. But when he sees his homie dead, The scripture tells us that he wept. Even though he knew he would raise him from the dead, His feelings of loss, the feelings of his friends, the empathy, The feelings of his homegirls, They matter.

Because your emotions matter. Just like you, God feels. All those feelings that you have connect you to God, To your growth in your faith, To your experience with the body of Christ.

Your emotions matter. Your emotions are good. Your emotions are of God. So when we're in touch with our emotions, We expand the opportunities to grow in our intimacy with God's self.

We can sense the presence of God, And how God might be communicating with us, And how we best communicate with God. So you might best communicate with God in nature, Or through liturgy, Or prayer.

[ 26 : 32 ] Liturgy is a fancy word for like, These sort of rhythms of kind of spiritual practice. So you know how we do a communion liturgy. We say the same stuff over and over every week.

That's a liturgy. So you might connect with God best through prayer, Or community, Or conversations, Through music, All these sorts of different ways.

And when we can touch base with how we're feeling, And our relationship with God's self, And be able to voice that in prayer, And community with others. Like, Our emotions help and aid with that.

They can help us to discern if we're in the right church space, Or job space, Or relationships.

Emotions can help us to wrestle with scripture, And evaluate spaces that we can show up within, In our community.

Emotions are critical to our relationship with God. Now when we're out of touch with our emotions, We create barriers to intimacy in our relationship with God. Just like in our relationships with other people, Emotional connection is the foundation of a healthy relationship.

[ 27 : 35 ] When we aren't connected to our emotions, We aren't opening up. We aren't sharing things that we need, And exposing our inner world. We're sort of capping this trust that we're placing in God, And the depth that we're willing to explore with God.

And knowing and being known in that sort of space of, Allowing God to know us, And aiming to know God. So we might struggle in this space of, Discerning how God is speaking to us, Figuring out how God is speaking to us, And how God might be showing up in our lives, And in other people's lives.

But we also gotta throw in the caveat, Like I know emotions have been abused in churches, I've been in them spaces. One of those examples might be, False teachings like prosperity gospel, Name it and claim it.

That God wants you to be rich, And that sickness or infertility or disability, Are signs that you're outside of the will of God. Like the emotions that you have within you, Still matter in these spaces. That prefrontal cortex that we was talking about earlier, That logic and reasoning part of your brain, Matter here. You might feel emotions, In some sort of large gathering, Or something like that, That's telling you to do something, But you can healthily react and say, Hey, Where is this coming from?

[ 28 : 55 ] Is this of God? Is this from God? Is this for the benefit of God? Or the benefit of the people? Is this, Or is this for the benefit of, Someone's selfish desire? One of Jesus' closest homies, John, Told us this joint in, 1 John 4, Test the spirits, Because not everyone comes from God.

So, How do we do that? How do we test these spirits? Well, We hold it all together. Dr. Walker Barnes sums it up like this, Being whole then, Means having congruence between our emotions, Our thoughts, Our behaviors, And our bodily experiences.

Honoring our emotions means keeping them in communication, With all of these parts of ourselves. Touching base with ourselves regularly, And weaving all of these parts together, In relationship with both God, And the people of God, Because your emotions are not your enemy, They are a compass to your remedy.

And I started to learn that lesson that day, In the wrestling room. I did what coach said, And I went back in the wrestling room, And I beat the crap out of somebody. I did not punch them.

I want to make that very clear, I wrestled, And won. No one scored on me that day, And for the year for that matter, But, As practice ended, And I found myself riding, On that activity bus, Everything gets pitch black dark, And it's just me, And my thoughts, And my feelings again, Everything started to surge back.

[ 30 : 27 ] And I learned, That wrestling was a helpful release, But it was temporary. And if I didn't honor my feelings, If I didn't face them, If I didn't process them, And address them, They would meet me right where I left them.

So one night, I found myself again, At a breaking point, Headphones in, Saying near, Walking down Lynn Haven Parkway, In Virginia Beach, Virginia. And as those, Orange tinted streetlights flickered, I bawled, Praying, Rescue by the Michael Gunger band, I need you Jesus, To come to my rescue, Where else can I go?

There's no other name, By which I am saved, Capture me with grace, I will follow you. That night, I honored my feelings, And I prayed that God would rescue me, Intuitively, Or by unction of the spirit, I don't know, I released, What was building up within me, Through those months, Through those years, Or at least in that time period, By saying it, And sharing it with God, And acknowledging, That I needed help, My emotions, Directed me to what I needed to do, In that moment, What I needed to feel, And became this release, That broke me out of that rut, That I was in in that season, Because your emotions, Are not your enemy, They are a compass, To your remedy, So this is what I want to do, For three minutes, Give me just three minutes, Of y'all's time, Even though y'all just gave me, More than three minutes, Of y'all's time, I want to lead us through, A grounding exercise, So, I want y'all to just,

Kind of get a sense of, Where you might be feeling, Emotionally, What you might need from yourself, And what you may need from, God, As we walk into communion, So I'd like to ask, Our production team, To put that emotion chart, Back on the screen, And, Help that kind of, Be a guide for you, To answer what you might be feeling, If you're not great at, Identifying what you might be feeling, So everybody get in a position, That feels comfortable for you, You can close your eyes, You can keep them open, Whatever works for you, Feel free to open them, And look at the chart, If you need it, So I want everybody, To take a deep breath in, And out, Deep breath in, And out, And ask yourself, How you feeling?

Are you angry? Are you happy? Anxious? You have peace? Sad? Tense?

[ 33 : 13 ] Calm? How you feeling? Is there something, Or someone, That has caused this feeling, To go down? How you feeling about God, Right now?

You feel close? You feel far? You feel angry? Comforted? Frustrated? How you feeling?

What might you need, From God today? What might you need, From the people, Of God today? What might you need, From the people, Of God today? How you feel, so now as we walk into this communion liturgy i encourage you to come before god today with the things that you need from god's self the things that you need to believe in god for trust god for open god for and hold these feelings in your heart and mind as you partake the communion me cherish i promise you all the night that your emotions if not your enemy they are a compass to your remedy rest in the truth today that your emotions matter your emotions are good your emotions apar ga you