



## “Calling All Emotions”<sup>1</sup>

Many of you might see the title of the sermon for this morning and you’re wondering, “What is this sermon going to be about? Well, clearly this sermon is about our emotions. And, given that this sermon is a part of our psalm series, the sermon today is about how our emotions are to relate to our corporate praise of God.

The big idea of the sermon today is **God designs for all our emotions to be expressed in worship**. But when I say this, some of you might be very concerned. You see, we live in a culture that seems to over-highlight emotions. Emotionalism is, in many ways, the standard of all things. Logic no longer matters. All that matters is how you feel. This emotionalism has taken roots in secular and religious culture. Test yourself in this. How often do you say, “I feel like. . .” instead of “I think that”? I don’t think it’s always wrong to express feelings; however, the word “feel” and the word “think” should not be interchangeable. Yet, in our day, what we feel seems to reign supreme. So, practically, if you feel in love, then you’re in love. But if you feel out of love, you must not love anymore. This is emotionalism at its peak of insanity. So, please hear me now, this sermon is not a sermon about how we can raise up mere emotionalism.

Some of you might be thinking, “Phew, that’s good! I’m not an emotional person; so. . .” Oh wait. I said this sermon isn’t going to raise emotional-ISM. But this sermon is going to emphasize the need for our emotions to be engaged in our worship. If that confronts you, you might be tempted to pendulum-swing from emotionalism into mere intellectualism. You think that all that matters is thinking correctly. If you think correctly and sing correct words in the correct sequence, then you have worshipped God. You’ve controlled negative emotions and have barred yourself from feeling. But, the extreme of this is just as dangerous. This person says, “Love isn’t just a feeling.” And then they conclude that they never need to feel love. I recognize that I may not *feel* love for my wife, but if I was always stoic with her, that would be a problem. Love is intended to affect mind and emotions. The same goes with all other emotional words like joy or delight. “Joy isn’t a feeling. It’s a state,” they’ll say. Well, it may not be *only* a feeling, but feelings are manifested if you have love and joy.

We need to recognize that both our minds and our emotions have been affected and tainted by sin. The Scriptures say we are to bring our minds into conformity with the Word – and we need God to conform our emotions. In Jeremiah 17:9-10, we read, **“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? “I the Lord search the heart and test the mind. . .”**<sup>2</sup> The heart is the center of the will and emotions. And then we read that God tests the mind. God wants our whole selves to be made whole in Christ. Therefore, it’s no surprise when Jesus says, **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your**

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<sup>1</sup> This manuscript is still in the rough draft phase. I recommend you utilize these notes in conjunction to the sermon to gain greater insight and clarity.

<sup>2</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Je 17:9–10.

**heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind. . .”<sup>3</sup>** Since Jesus says this, we should see how our emotions should be rightly engaged in all of life – including our corporate worship.

This brings us back to the psalms and the main point. God designs for all our emotions to come before him in worship. Hear some words from other people regarding the psalms and human emotion:

- **For the early Christians the Psalms were also the unique emotional handbook for personal use of what might be termed “psalmno-therapy. . .”<sup>4</sup> – Waltke, Houston & Moore**
- **We can’t read the Psalms without an emotional response. As the psalmists cry out in joy or grief, they stir us as we identify similar emotions in ourselves.<sup>5</sup> – Tremper Longman**
- **I have been wont to call this book not inappropriately, an anatomy of all parts of the soul; for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror.<sup>6</sup> – John Calvin**

But you may be thinking, “Why emotions?! What if they get out of control? We don’t want to be like those ‘crazy churches’ where people act like ‘x’ or ‘y.’” I recognize there are legitimate concerns when it comes to emotions, but we cannot let the emotion of fear control us as we evaluate what the Scriptures say regarding our emotions in worship. Worship is a high and holy privilege that God has given to us, and we should take this as a serious joy set before us. I’m being utterly serious when I say this. Before you came to faith in Christ – if you are a follower of Jesus – the Bible says that you were bound in sin and you were an idolater. Meaning, you valued and worshipped all types of other things – and not God. Yet, when you came to faith in Jesus, you have now been set free to worship and serve the Creator! Worship – knowing, rejoicing in and living out the infinite worth of God – is what you have been saved to! And corporate worship is to manifest the privilege of worship with other believers! This is a serious joy! And, we don’t want to miss the opportunities God has before us.

So, let’s learn together what God has designed for our emotions in corporate worship. Today we will see 1) The results of involving all emotions in corporate worship, 2) The emotions God encourages in corporate worship, and 3) The application for congregational worship.

Be ready. This sermon will be a challenge to the emotional and the emotionless. Yet, I hope it’s a challenge that unites your heart to fear the Lord.

### **1. What are the results of involving all emotions in corporate worship?**

In Isaiah 29:13, we read, “this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me. . .”<sup>7</sup>

God detests corporate worship that simply gives lip service to the Lord. God also describes detestable worship as a worship that is merely spoken but it doesn’t flow from the heart. This word for heart doesn’t

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<sup>3</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Lk 10:27.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore, [The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 10.

<sup>5</sup> Tremper Longman III, [How to Read the Psalms](#) (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 76.

<sup>6</sup> Tremper Longman III, [Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary](#), ed. David G. Firth, vol. 15–16, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2014), 50.

<sup>7</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Is 29:13.

only mean emotions, but it does refer to what I believe the 18<sup>th</sup> century theologian Jonathan Edwards would have referred to as religious affections, which includes our most basic desires of the soul.

If we gather together in emotionless, distracted, heart-drained “worship,” it’s not worship. Jesus came to rescue us in our entire selves, including our emotions. Therefore, as we gather in worship, we should come with our emotions and lay them at Christ’s feet.

As I think about this, I think of how we would relate to a doctor when we’re sick. If you scheduled an appointment with a physician and then the doctor said, “Ok, let me take a look at your mouth,” and then you said, “Oh no, you can’t! You’ll see what’s inside and it’s pretty nasty.” The doctor’s going to say, “Well, that’s the point. I need to see.”

Jesus said that as the great physician he came to heal the sick, not the well. And in the psalms, we’re told that, **“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”**<sup>8</sup> In our corporate worship, when we gather together, this is the starting point – brokenness. This word signifies humility before God – a recognition of your need for him. And, if you recognize your need for the Lord, then you know all of your emotions are in need of being brought into line with God and his ways.

This could actually be somewhat scary for some of you because if this is what God designs in corporate worship, that means you have to take off the mask. People are going to know that you are weak. If you start crying in a song, people may know something’s wrong. In an effort to self-protect, you feel comfortable keeping your mask on.

I need to take a moment to address you. I believe this contradicts the gospel message itself. The essence of our faith is that our sins were so heinous in God’s holy sight that we were cut off from his eternal goodness. We recognize that our sins are personal attacks against the character of God himself – speaking to our desire to be gods. And yet, many of us in this room found God’s rescue. At some point in our lives, God led us to understand and then trust in Jesus as our Savior. Through Jesus, and him alone, who took our punishment of God’s wrath, we found freedom and reconciliation with God. But that freedom and reconciliation came *through repentant faith*. When we turned from our self-salvation project and turned from our sins to Jesus for forgiveness, we experienced salvation. When we admitted, confessed and were open before the Lord, in our brokenness, we found salvation!

Now, even though many in this room believe that to be the case, some here might be tempted to think that God only works this way in coming to faith in Jesus at the beginning. We don’t need to be transparent or show brokenness in our worship. But that’s contrary to our faith. The apostle Paul says that as we received Christ, so walk in him! And the psalmist says that the sacrifice God does not despise is a broken heart. Humility, transparency as opposed to lips without emotion is what God designs to see.

If we live this way in our daily lives as well as our corporate worship, then Jesus, the master physician brings healing. One verse in the psalms that has intrigued me for years is Psalm 40:3: **He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.**<sup>9</sup> The psalmist speaks of waiting on the Lord, being in a pit. And then the psalmist speaks of God’s rescue! He then says that he has a song of praise. The result of this song of praise is that “many will see” and will “put their trust in the Lord.” He says many will see. I thought we heard songs. We don’t see songs.

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<sup>8</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 51:17.

<sup>9</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 40:3.

Unless the psalmist is saying that God so radically changed him that the song was in his heart. The worship was flowing from the core of his being. As a result, others saw that change in his countenance. They too then wanted the Lord and they trusted him.

When we are open with our emotions, or even like last week when I said that we need to fight for joy in joy and in trials. When we reveal this complexity in our worship and lay ourselves corporately at the Lord's feet, God shapes us and he also shows the world around us how great he is! So, if we truly want to worship, let's lay out our whole selves to the Lord corporately, together. The world will see the difference and the church will be edified.

But at this point, you could say, "What emotions does God want in our corporate worship?" That's the next point.

## 2. What emotions should be expressed in corporate worship?

You might be wanting to get off the hook a little here. And so, I need to say, "all." Now again, hear me that God doesn't merely want emotionalism – a detachment of your brain from what you're singing. God wants your whole selves engaged – mind, emotions, will, strength. But today, I'm highlighting emotions. And when we look into the psalms, we see the vast array of emotions expressed.

So, I want to share 20 emotions expressed in the hymnal of the Bible. And, keep in mind, all of these songs were intended to be sung corporately. In addition, the psalms are commanded for us to sing in this New Testament era; so, all these emotions would then be encouraged to be sung in order to align our hearts and mind to the Lord. So, as I read these verses, imagine singing words like these corporately! Some could sound quite shocking, but God wants us to bring our whole broken selves to him for greater healing and grace.

By the way, while I could preach at length on each emotion, I'm not going to. I am going to comment on the emotion and then read the passage. After reading through, I'm going to share examples of out the expression of those emotions actually brought about greater trust and growth in the psalmist.

- **Loneliness** (Psalm 25:15-16): "My eyes are ever toward the Lord, for he will pluck my feet out of the net. Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted."<sup>10</sup>
- **Love** (Psalm 18:1): I love you, O Lord, my strength.<sup>11</sup>
- **Awe** (Psalm 33:8): Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!<sup>12</sup>
- **Sorrow** (Psalm 31:30): For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away.<sup>13</sup>
- **Contrition** (Psalm 51:17): The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.<sup>14</sup>
- **Turmoil** (Psalm 42:5): Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 25:15–16.

<sup>11</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 18:1.

<sup>12</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 33:8.

<sup>13</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 31:10.

<sup>14</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 51:17.

<sup>15</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 42:5.

- **Shame** (Psalm 44:15): All day long my disgrace is before me, and shame has covered my face <sup>16</sup>
- **Exultation** (Psalm 21:1): O Lord, in your strength the king rejoices, and in your salvation how greatly he exults! <sup>17</sup>
- **Marveling** (Psalm 118:23): The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. <sup>18</sup>
- **Joy** (Psalm 16:11): You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. <sup>19</sup>
- **Gladness** (Psalm 9:2): <sup>2</sup> I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High. <sup>20</sup>
- **Anger** (Psalm 4:4): Be angry, and do not sin. . .<sup>21</sup>
- **Peace** (Psalm 4:8): In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. <sup>22</sup>
- **Grief** (Psalm 6:7): My eye wastes away because of grief; it grows weak because of all my foes. <sup>23</sup>
- **Hope** (Psalm 33:22): Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you. <sup>24</sup>
- **Brokenness** (Psalm 34:18): The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. <sup>25</sup>
- **Gratitude** (Psalm 35:18): I will thank you in the great congregation; in the mighty throng I will praise you. <sup>26</sup>
- **Zeal** (Psalm 69:9): For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me. <sup>27</sup>
- **Pain** (Psalm 69:29): But I am afflicted and in pain; let your salvation, O God, set me on high! <sup>28</sup>
- **Confidence** (Psalm 27:3): Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident. <sup>29</sup>

These emotions range on the spectrum: from delightful to painful. All are expressed and expressed for differing reasons. All of these emotions reveal that we are humans in need of God. I went through each of these verses and looked around the immediate verses for context and discovered, at least in a small way, how these emotions actually were spoken in order to draw nearer to the Lord.

With loneliness, the psalmist shows that God sees our loneliness. With love, the psalmist points to God as the one he loves most and God is his strength. Awe came because the psalmist pondered God as the Creator! Sorrow was a response for sin and need for forgiveness. Shame was expressed as a cry in the midst of confusion. But in crying out to God, the psalmist is confessing that God will make things plain someday. The direction of the psalms is always to go back to God and his marvelous ways that we can trust.

<sup>16</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 44:15.

<sup>17</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 21:1.

<sup>18</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 118:22–23.

<sup>19</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 16:11.

<sup>20</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 9:2.

<sup>21</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 4:4.

<sup>22</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 4:8.

<sup>23</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 6:7.

<sup>24</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 33:22.

<sup>25</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 34:18.

<sup>26</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 35:18.

<sup>27</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 69:9.

<sup>28</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 69:29.

<sup>29</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 27:3.

As Christians, we should see this even more clearly. So, let me pick out one psalm in particular that I just read. Psalm 118:23: the stone that the builders rejected. . . this is marvelous in our eyes. Do you know the next verse? The next verse is “This is the day that the Lord has made. . .” I’ve heard many people use that verse to say, “God made today, so I’m going to rejoice.” Now, God did make today (and everyday). And that is a good reason to rejoice. But the psalmist is actually prophesying Jesus in these verses. There’s going to be the Messiah coming someday, who will be rejected. It will be marvelous in our eyes, though. And that day, the day of the Lord, is the day God made! So, let’s marvel and rejoice in that! While I’m grateful God *made* today, today could have many difficulties. How can I make it through? Look to Christ, who was rejected but who also ascended and gave me salvation!

In all the psalms, our emotions are drawn out. And in giving a list of 20 emotions, I hope you see that God doesn’t want one emotion hidden from his care. Even in the psalms of lament, most of them end on a note of trust and waiting on the Lord.

This goes back to my previous sermons in this series. God’s goal is that we would recognize, in all of life, in all of circumstances, that God is the answer. It’s not simply that God gives answers. He *is* the answer. He is the sustenance when we’re hungry. He is the Peace when we’re in turmoil. He is our hope when hope feels lost. Listen to the psalms. The point of the psalms aren’t merely to tell you that God is in control and you’ll be fine. The point of the psalms is to take you, with all your struggles and joys, to God himself! God wants you to know *him*, not merely know about him. Do you understand the difference? I can talk about the beauty of Hawaii, but I’ve never been. I can speak on the greatness of Mt. Everest, but I’ve only seen pictures. But I can tell you about the Caribbean waters, from experience. I can share with you about the time I went halfway up Mt. Rainier in the state of Washington. God has designed for us to know him. This is what Jesus purchased for us. He gives us eternal life – which is knowing God! And, as a part of this life, he has designed for us to know him *together* in our congregational singing.

Through singing out in the plethora of emotions we experience, and honestly laying them at the Lord’s feet together, we together learn more of who God is and also how God is working in our own midst. So again, let me quote from Psalm 86:11: **Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.**<sup>30</sup> As we sing, may God unite our hearts to the truth so that we worship him with our whole selves!

Now, with this, you could say, “What does this look like?” And that’s the final point this morning:

### **3. How should our congregational worship be affected by emotions?**

When I was in college, I had the opportunity to listen to a lot of good classical and classical-type music. Musicians of all sorts would give concerts throughout the year, and there were times that I would have to listen to musicians for class credit. Now, in going to the concerts, there were rules of etiquette for the audience. Obviously, we had to be quiet and respect the musician. But when the musician was done with the piece, there was a rule to decipher whether you should clap or refrain from clapping. If the piece was a secular piece, you could clap. If the piece was sacred, you were to be silent.

To this day, that response boggles my mind. I think the desire is to get people to ponder the holiness of God and to show great respect. But I don’t think that really communicated that when the consistent pattern was that if a sacred song played, don’t clap. . .ever!

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<sup>30</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 86:11.

Having said this, I think that we can carry these kinds of mindsets into the church context. We'll clap after an offertory, but it's a little crazy that Pastor Timothy claps after a song in the midst of the service, right? And have you ever heard his sister go "woo" in the service? Some of you may think there's a time and place for that, and it's not in congregational worship. And yet, in the psalms, we're encouraged to *shout* (Ps. 98). We're encouraged to clap (Ps. 47).

Why is it that some of us (or many of us?) tend to think we need to turn off our emotions when it comes to congregational worship. As a parent, I want my children to see a church family that loves, adores, worships our God. I want my children to hear words of sorrow and joy – all directed towards God and trusting that God is the answer.

But I don't want this kind of worship only for our children. I want this for all of us – so that God may be loved and praised all the more in our midst, for his glory! Therefore, since emotions are spoken of so often in the psalms – and the variety of emotions are emphasized – then I believe **1. we all *must* engage our emotions in our worship.**

As I say this, some of you might think, "This is just going to lead to chaos if everybody's emotions are put out there." But I'm not talking about emotional chaos. When I say engage the emotions, I'm saying to engage the emotions to align with God and his truth. In other words, let your mind preach to your heart. Psalm 103 starts with the psalmist telling himself what to do: "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" With his entire being, he is to bless the Lord. Whether his soul feels like engaging or not, he tells his soul what to do. So, whether my mind or my emotions feel like blessing God, the Spirit is at work in us, telling us what to do: engage in praising God.

But engage where you are. I've had many Sundays where I've started the day saying, "Lord, I don't want to do this. I don't feel like it." Have you ever felt that way? I remember one time when I was a youth pastor, and I had a teen who was on the worship team. For whatever reason, one day when that teen was supposed to lead, they came to me beforehand saying they couldn't lead because they didn't feel like they were in a place of worship. They needed to not lead. I looked at them and I think I said, "Then worship now and lead!"

Some of us are waiting for our emotions to align with the truth instead of laying our emotions out there and trusting the Lord to work while we wait on him and worship him. So, in our corporate worship, express those emotions to God. Sing in faith. Remind yourself who God is and trust in him.

**2. We all *must* engage our countenance.** The psalmist says that God put a new song in his heart, many will see it. Proverbs 15:13 says, "A glad heart makes a cheerful face, but by sorrow of heart the spirit is crushed."<sup>31</sup>

Growing up as a child, I can remember quite a bit about my church experiences. There was one lady in particular who, from a singers perspective, had at least a somewhat trained voice. Whenever we'd sing in church, she'd be singing. And, she wasn't only involved in the choir, but she led the choir. But do you want to know something sad? She was probably the sternest and most unhappy women in the church (at least from my perspective as a child). She sat right behind us in church. I don't think I ever experienced a glance of kindness from her.

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<sup>31</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Pr 15:13.

I obviously cannot judge her heart standing with the Lord, and I won't. But I will say that she wasn't a spokesperson for joy in the Lord. Far from it. Something was off. What she was singing was not being revealed in her countenance.

But I will say this, I have known others who may not have had the trained voice. They may not know how to read music. But the love of the Lord has drawn their hearts out, and they sing. When you see someone's whose face is changed by what they're singing, that at least means they're seeking to engage. "Many will see it and fear, and will trust in the Lord." If I look at you in congregational worship, will I see the song engaging your heart? Ventura, are we together compellingly pointing to our need for the Lord and also to the fact that he fulfills our longings?

As we worship congregationally, let's engage our emotions and then engage our countenance! I pray that we wouldn't merely "honor" God with our lips and neglect him with our hearts. **The congregational singing is a great privilege that God has given to only those who trust Jesus. It's a privilege that was once not ours when we were bound in our sins. Because of Jesus, it's now a privilege that strengthens us in faith as we navigate through the questions of our mind and hearts. Will you take up the privilege and sing with your emotions?**