

I CRY IN CORNERS

Embracing Your Feelings,
THROAT-PUNCHING ANXIETY,
and Managing Your Emotions Well

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How to deal with crying in corners

**Navigating emotions is hard;
navigating emotions without
Jesus *feels* impossible.**

| *Cry in Corners* started as a joke on Instagram. Someone asked me how I dealt with my emotions, and I replied, “That’s easy; I cry in corners.” They laughed, and I did not. Jesus cried in corners, and it was how I was actually working out my feelings.

That Instagram story spurred an idea to start a podcast about how to navigate being emotional in an emotional world inspired by the ways and truth of Jesus. So I jumped into the podcast world, all while keeping my day jobs of pastoring,

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writing, and creative directing. It's been a journey for sure, but it's been a journey that has taught me that emotions are a gift from God, and they are meant to be understood and stewarded well.

Sadly, I've acquired this revelation over years of navigating my emotions in unhealthy ways. For most of my life, I've been told that my emotions and my passions were too much, whether I was being ejected from a basketball game as a teenager or trying to speak up in a meeting about something I disagreed with. I've been told that my emotions were borderline offensive and that I needed to temper them if I ever wanted to be successful, if I ever wanted God to use my life.

Words matter, and these words spoken over my young heart and impressionable mind made me spiral. God's gift of a tender heart became calloused in that emotional spiral. As a young adult, I isolated myself from friends and family and went into the working world introverted and insecure. I then went into my marriage feeling unsafe, full of irrational fear and anxiety and way too easily angered. My twenties were spent with a skewed view of God formulated by people's perception of who I should be and what I should do with my emotions. And because I didn't know how to filter the opinions of others and my own broken perspective in a healthy way, my life and emotions became very difficult for me to navigate. Regardless of the circumstances, everything and everyone was a problem, and I was always the victim.

My calloused heart then produced a corrupted view of my

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emotions and how to use them. Like everyone else who is told they are too much, I felt unworthy and unseen, and I cried in real corners on the regular. At one point I Googled “what to do when you feel depressed,” and I went down the to-do list, and shocker, I was still depressed and overwhelmed by life afterward. The exercise didn’t help, the no coffee made me sadder as coffee is of the Lord, and regardless of what I did, I still felt like I couldn’t get a good grasp on my emotions. The Google search was an overall fail, and even though I was experiencing what everyone would deem personal and professional success, I still felt full of feelings, and I still felt like at any point I might explode. I tumbled out of my twenties and into my thirties, fearful, lonely, and still navigating emotions in an isolated and unhealthy way. I felt helpless. My boss at the time saw me struggling and suggested counseling, which offended me on a deep level. It didn’t make me feel seen or valued that this person suggested counseling. It made me feel inferior and like others deemed me emotionally unstable.

Even though I wish therapy had been sold to me in a different package, I’m thankful for that moment. I needed counseling to be pushed upon me or I would have never gone. And my boss was right. I needed to be able to see myself and my emotions past what had been spoken over me. After several years of counseling, as well as seeking Jesus, I felt better and on the come-up. I was doing my devos every morning, and the Sunday church thing was all good!

I then experienced a few bouts of extreme burnout and a

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couple of rounds of relational betrayal. Basically, I had zero boundaries and false expectations about community and friendships. All the therapy coping mechanisms seemed to vanish, so I went to more counseling sessions and continued to serve my local church.

Then I had a major emotional breakdown at the age of thirty-three. I'd done everything the world and the church told me to do to be whole, and yet I sat on the edge of my bed and contemplated taking my own life. There I was, happily married, working at what looked like a dream job in one of the fastest growing churches in the nation, sitting in rooms everyone wanted to be in, and I was miserable. I was lost in my emotions, and I couldn't find a way out. I needed Jesus, and not in a fifteen-minute devo or a churchy one-liner on social media kind of way. I needed the person of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, to walk into the room. I needed Jesus to step in and tell me what it looked like to truly be whole and to have healthy emotions. I needed Jesus to tell me I wasn't too much and that he could use my life even though everything about me screamed broken. And through the tears, I said, "Jesus, I know you're real, but I need you to be real right now."

And as those words left my lips, I felt the tangible presence of God hold me in that moment, and I knew I was going to be okay. Not because I went to church or called myself a Christian, not because I was in counseling sessions every week, but because Jesus had walked into the room, and I wasn't going to let him go.

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The world has tons of remedies for wholeness, but I needed wholeness from the one who created me. I needed to experience wholeness, not as a destination I would arrive at one day but a road Jesus would walk me through daily. So I changed how I chased wholeness and healthy emotions. Not because the therapy was bad or because I stopped looking to professionals to give me guidance but because I was tired of allowing other people to tell me what they thought would make me better or more palatable to a broken world. I was tired of trying to fix *my* brokenness; I wanted to live in *Christ's* wholeness.

I knew I wanted to love God well, and love his people well, but I needed a clear way past all my feelings. So I took a deep dive into how Jesus navigated all the feels I was having, and how he responded. I needed to know how Jesus felt when he was betrayed or when he dealt with loss and disappointment. I needed to know if he'd ever felt lonely like me. Did he ever feel full of fear, and if he did, how did he respond? Did people ever think Jesus was too much, or was I all alone? If so, I needed a road map to navigating my emotions well. I needed the right tools to fight off anxiety, and I needed Jesus to walk me through it! Emotions are essential to who we are as human beings and who we are as followers of Jesus. They are the indicator lights that tell us something is wrong, and they are the spark plugs in our souls that ignite feelings of happiness, wonder, and awe. I found that Jesus experienced all the emotions and feelings you will ever have on a deep level, and

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he understood that in this temporal life, there will be a series of emotional corners that we can possibly get stuck in.

Have you ever been told that you were too sensitive, too emotional, or too much? How about too passionate, or too intense, or that you wear your heart on your sleeve? Yeah, me too. Nothing is more demoralizing to a person trying to pilot their feelings than constantly being told that their emotions are bad and can't be trusted. I'm not a therapist or a mental health specialist, but I have one of each. And I believe in getting extra help to navigate your feelings when life gets too hard or overwhelming. But what if, when life got tough, the help we ran to *first* wasn't our therapist, our friend groups, or social media? What if when life and emotions felt like they were trying to rob us of our peace, we ran to the Prince of Peace and asked him how to navigate it instead? What if we steered our feelings the way Jesus steered his?

Before you put this book down and roll your eyes: I know what I'm saying will feel like antiquated advice. I know that the advice to read scripture and seek Jesus in moments where life gets hard has been twisted and abused. I know this all too well as someone who has served in the local church for more than twenty years and currently pastors a community. But as the quintessential emotional person, I can say that even though I've seen the ways of Jesus being polluted and dumbed down, the ways of Jesus are still the only way: the only way to peace and the only way to true wholeness. The only way to really embrace your emotions well—all while throat-punching

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anxiety—is by navigating your feelings the way Jesus navigated his.

Before the days of online therapists, relaxation techniques, and medication, Jesus had to navigate difficulties and intense feelings. We see in the scriptures that when feelings got too real, Jesus turned to moments of solitude so he could hear his father's voice, the scriptures, and the power of the Holy Spirit. These things were how he navigated feelings of being overwhelmed, lonely, fearful, and anxious. He activated these things when life felt unsafe and when his identity was being shaken. He used these tools when he felt disappointment and betrayal and while dealing with unhealthy people and conflict. And this is how I also choose to live my life and how I navigate being an emotional being in a turbulent world where everyone has feelings about feelings and also about your feelings! When my emotions get to be too much, or I can't understand why I feel the way I feel, I go to Jesus first. When life gets too hard, I try to align my heart and mind to Jesus's ways and how Jesus modeled being an emotional being.

Have I always done it well? I mean, no. Not at all. I'm about to share how I royally screwed up living out the ways of Jesus because of my unhealthy emotions! But don't worry, I'm also going to pair it with how Jesus totally rocked at it. You're about to get a high-level perspective on managing your emotions well, but please note that I didn't write this book to fix our emotional brokenness. I wrote this book to inspire us into the fullness of all God has created us to be. And what

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he's created us to be his voice of reason in the garden, his message of peace in the wilderness, and his expression of love from Gethsemane to Golgotha. You may find yourself crying in a corner every now and then, but be encouraged; so did Jesus. His life, regardless of those corners, inspired hope and freedom, and so can yours. That's my prayer for you, for us, to express the love, and the way of Jesus in all we do, especially in our emotions.

See you on the other side.

Onward.