

**INTRO**

- What's the toughest physical challenge you've ever done?

**READ**

Deut 6:4-5; Matt 22:37-39

**REFLECT & RESPOND**

If Jesus sums up our life's purpose as to love God with our entire being, the question for us then is:

*Qu: what does it look like to love God with my body, mind, and emotions?*

**Embodied Spirituality** is an answer to this question. It is a Christian faith that values and incorporates the whole person—body, mind, emotions—towards the worship of God. Embodied Spirituality takes seriously our self-care, mental & emotional health towards our spiritual maturity. This week, we focus in on emotional health.

**EXAMINE YOUR LENS**

One major challenge towards emotionally healthy spirituality is that we have distorted views regarding how we should view or handle our emotions. Potential reasons for this could be:

- Avoiding painful or unpleasant feelings
- Personality
- Cultural & Gender Expectations
- Family Context

*Qu: tell us a bit about how emotions and emotional health was modelled for you (or not) growing up through your culture and family.*

**ADJUSTING YOUR LENS**

A big reason many Christians fail to value emotional, mental & physical health alongside spiritual maturity is because of faulty ideas about the separation of the spiritual/physical, soul/body. Therefore, we don't see self-care (nutrition, sleep, exercise) as spiritual acts of stewardship

& worship. Or, we tend to spiritualize away emotions like anger, fear and sadness as “of the flesh”. However, this compartmentalism towards our spirituality is neither biblical, scientific nor healthy.

Rather, here are 3 foundations that make the biblical case for an embodied spirituality:

**1. Understanding Your Soul**

Biblically, your soul refers to your whole being. To love God with all your soul means to value and express your entire physical existence in worship to God: physically, mentally, and emotionally. (For more on this [checkout Bible Project's 4min video Soul](#))

**2. Being Human**

God made us as embodied creatures in his image with intellect and emotions. Creation, the Incarnation, Resurrection and Re-creation all speak to God's value of our material world and embodied existence. Being fully human isn't the problem; our sinfulness is.

**3. Jesus' Example**

Jesus represents and is our example of what it means to be fully human, and in his humanity displayed a wide range of appropriate emotional responses to people and situations.

What all this underscores is that, when we think of ourselves as spiritual souls trapped inside a body, we discredit God's creation. We are embodied creatures. Notwithstanding our battle with sinful desires and impulses, our spiritual task is to attend to, interpret and appreciate our emotions in healthy and appropriate ways.

*Qu: in light of this discussion, what challenges/encourages you the most?*

**RESPOND & PRAY**

- Pray for one another's needs especially as it relates to this topic.

**RECOMMENDED BOOKS**

Why Emotions Matter: Recognize Your Body Signals. Grow in Emotional Intelligence. Discover an Embodied Spirituality — Collins & Collins

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: It's Impossible to Be Spiritually Mature, While Remaining Emotionally Immature — Peter Scazzero

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry: How to Stay Emotionally Healthy and Spiritually Alive in the Chaos of the Modern World — John Mark Comer

**QUOTES**

“The glory of God is a human being fully alive.” — St Irenaeus

“How can you draw close to God when you are far from your own self? Grant, Lord, that I may know myself that I may know thee.” — St Augustine

“In neglecting our intense emotions, we are false to ourselves and lose a wonderful opportunity to know God. We forget that change comes through brutal honesty and vulnerability before God.”  
— Peter Scazzero

“Self-care is never a selfish act—it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer others. Anytime we can listen to true self and give it the care it requires, we do it not only for ourselves, but for the many others whose lives we touch.”  
— Parker Palmer

“People who are truly emotionally intelligent are in tune with what’s happening inside—they allow themselves to feel sadness, anger, fear etc—but they aren’t swept away by them or driven to impulsivity. They’re able to express their feelings when it’s appropriate and helpful to do so, and they’re able to step outside their feelings and exercise self-control when that’s the wiser choice.”  
— Collins & Collins

“Ignoring our emotions is turning our back on reality. Listening to our emotions ushers us into reality. And reality is where we meet God.... Emotions are the language of the soul. They are the cry that gives the heart a voice. In neglecting our intense emotions, we are false to ourselves and miss a wonderful opportunity to know God. We forget that change comes through brutal honesty and vulnerability before God.”  
— Dan Allender & Tremper Longman, *The Cry of the Soul*