

Jesus Wept: The Bible and Human Emotions
Partnership with Jesus

Lesson #13 for March 26, 2011

Scriptures: Mark 1:21-35; Luke 4:31-42; Matthew 6:14, 15; 25:34-46; 26:36-44; Psalm 31:24.

1. There are many reasons to believe that being a partner with Jesus is the key to the best kind of emotional health. Few of us would doubt God's ability to solve any problem. If we are truly on God's side and in close working relationship with Him, there should be no question about our success as partners.
2. There are many Scriptures that point out the power of God. Isaiah 40-55 makes it very clear that God's ability to create sets Him apart from all others—all the pretend gods. His ability to predict the future far in advance also distinguishes Him. But, He can also work miracles in the present. Experiences like the flood (Genesis 6-8); the plagues on Egypt (Exodus 7-12); and then, the experience at Sinai certainly suggest that God is all-powerful.
3. Even while here on this earth, Jesus—while fully human—was fully God. He performed various kinds of deeds, miracles, and teachings that amazed the crowds and His disciples. They were amazed at His teaching with authority. (Mark 1:21-35) They were amazed at His ability to cast out demons. (Mark 1:21-25) They were amazed at His ability to perform many miracles of healing. They were amazed at His command of the winds and waves—and they were fishermen who had spent their lives on that very lake at night! (Matthew 8:27) The Greek words used to describe those various experiences range from *surprise* to *amazement* to *shock* and *being terrified* even to *trembling* and *being afraid*. Human beings standing in the presence of that kind of authority and power were speechless. Often in Scripture, when men realized that they had met angels or God in human form, they fell to the ground with their "faces in the dust"!
4. At the very end of His ministry after the Pharisees and Sadducees had questioned Him and had been defeated by every one of His answers, Matthew 22:22 indicates that they simply turned away in defeat! How do you suppose they felt? They thought their questions were impossible to answer.
5. But, it was not just the teaching, authority, and power of Jesus that amazed people. When He told the demon-possessed men of Gadara to go home and tell their friends what had happened to them, even the story that those men told amazed the people who heard it. They were the first Gentile missionaries. Today, could we tell our Christian story in such a way as to amaze people? Are people surprised by the way we live our Christian lives? Are they surprised by the contrast between our behavior and the behavior of worldlings? Those demon-possessed men were well known. To have such a change in them attracted people.
6. It has been demonstrated repeatedly that spirituality, faith, prayer, forgiveness, hope, and even church attendance can have a great beneficial effect on health—including mental health. Now, doctors are being taught about this benefit which has support in research studies. But, it is also true that these benefits come primarily to those who are deeply committed to their Christianity. A partnership with Christ is perhaps the greatest safeguard against mental illness.
7. So, after developing such a partnership, how do we maintain it? Clearly, there are several steps: 1) Prayer and Bible study; 2) Worship; 3) Living the Christian life including the forgiveness of those who have wronged us; 4) Serving others in a Christian way; and 5) Faith and trust in God. Witnessing to and working for others in genuine Christian service is one of the most important ways to turn our minds away from our own real or supposed

problems to activities that will benefit us and the church. When people really come to Jesus, it changes them! Could we have a Jesus-like experience?

8. How did Jesus Himself maintain a balanced relationship with God through His incredible stresses and all the demands that were placed upon Him in life? Read Mark 1:21-35 and Luke 4:31-42. How much time did Jesus spend in sermon preparation? Did He have daily communication with heaven? He amazed the scholars at age 12. In these verses we see one clear instance in which Jesus spent a very busy Sabbath preaching in the synagogue, healing a demon-possessed man, then returned to Peter's house and healed his mother-in-law. Of course, that was followed soon after sunset by crowds of people coming and being healed, ministered unto, talked to, etc. Although Jesus was up until very late, nevertheless, He arose before dawn to travel out into the countryside and hold communion with His Father. What gave the sermons of Jesus such authority? His simple illustrations had obvious meanings and implications. Jesus told stories.
9. Did Jesus ever feel stressed by the demands on His time? Did He feel stressed by the fact that the people of Israel—despite all that He had done for them—were rejecting Him? (John 1:11) It is at times of stress that we most need to turn to God. Our natural human instinct might be to postpone prayer and communion with God at such times. But, those are the times when we need Him most. Have you ever felt unwanted? Imagine having the chance to hear the prayers and sermons of Jesus in 3D living color. We will someday!
10. How would you rate your prayer life? Do you instinctively turn to God when you face problems or questions that you cannot answer? Was Jesus constantly in an attitude of prayer? (1 Thessalonians 5:17) Prayer is “thinking toward God—talking to God as to a Friend.”
11. Review in your own mind what factors are the main ones to help us maintain a good relationship with God.
12. Read Ephesians 4:15,16. Compare 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. In these passages it is clear that God intends for each one of us to contribute to the Christian body. Our job may not be the same as the work of the pastor or the choir director or the pianist or the Sabbath school teacher, but each one of us is given talents and abilities that can be used for the cause of God. And although our talents may be different from those of others, it is God's intention that we all fit together just as the different parts of a body work together to make a whole.
13. Just as we need physical, spiritual, and social health, every one of us needs emotional health. To maintain excellent emotional health, we need to have the hope and peace which God gives along with the trust and faith in our relationship to God. And when things do not go well, we need forgiveness. Forgiveness is important not only for the forgiver but also for the forgiven. Holding grudges is incredibly harmful. Our life's focus needs to be turned outward.
14. Read Luke 4:16. It is clear that Jesus attended religious services weekly on the Sabbath. Although we do not know exactly what those services consisted of in Jesus' home synagogue, it is clear that we all need community. A lot of research has gone into the benefits of attending religious services on a regular basis. Some of those benefits include:
 - Less likely to suffer from substance abuse;
 - More likely to be sexually responsible;
 - Less involved in risky behaviors;
 - More likely to practice business and work-related ethics;
 - More likely to enjoy a richer social network and group support;

- More likely to display higher levels of self-esteem and personal efficacy;
 - More likely to cope better with losses (death of dear ones, calamities, health complications, and so on);
 - More likely to harbor positive emotions (love, forgiveness, contentment, and so on);
 - Less likely to harbor negative emotions (guilt, fear, hostility, anger, and so on). (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for March 21)
15. We are not so naïve as to think that everything is perfect in every church. We know that churches—especially when they are functioning properly—are hospitals for sinners and not clubs for saints. Galatians 6:2 makes it clear that we are to help each other and carry each other’s burdens. Colossians 3:13 agrees. What is your relationship to your local church? Do you believe that you are an essential part of your Sabbath school class? Are you a giver or a taker? What do you do to support church activities? If we all did our best, would the church be a better place?
 16. It is very easy for us as human beings to get wrapped up in our day-to-day responsibilities and cares. It is easy for us to reach the place where we feel that the only thing that is important is the here and now. However, if we step back a little and recognize that our lives here on this earth are no more than an instant compared to the potential lives we can have with God for eternity, we should recognize that providing for our needs and wants right now should take a secondary place to providing for and planning for eternity. Some of us study for almost half of our useful lives preparing for what we will do for the rest of our lives!
 17. Read Matthew 6:14,15. Do these verses terrify you? Is it true that God only forgives us to the same extent as we forgive others? How does that fit with Luke 23:34 which describes that Jesus forgave and asked His Father to forgive the very people who were crucifying Him? Did they ask Him for forgiveness? They were busy nailing Him to the cross! Forgiveness did not save them! But, if you are not “healed,” you are not “saved!” (Healing = Saving)
 18. Those of us who have espoused the great-controversy, trust, healing model of the plan of salvation have come to believe that God is Forgiveness Personified. So, how could He limit His forgiveness to the same level that we exercise?
 19. Is this a call for us to be more forgiving? Certainly, it must be that. Why is forgiveness such an important part of Christianity? Those who hold grudges and who are unwilling to forgive have a cancer eating in their soul. Forgiveness is probably an even greater benefit to the one forgiving than it is to the one forgiven.
 20. Studies have been done on groups of people who have individually gone through divorce. It was demonstrated that those who extended forgiveness to their former spouses enjoyed much better mental health than those who were not willing to do so. They had more well-being, greater religious satisfaction, and lower levels of anger and depression. Clearly, forgiveness reduces depression and anxiety and improves our overall emotional well-being.
 21. Do you find it difficult to forgive those who have wronged you? What factors make it difficult to forgive? Is it easy to pray and try to maintain a growing relationship with God while you are holding grudges against your neighbor? It helps if a little time has gone by.
 22. We know that Jesus’s life was a life full of prayer. How can we as feeble, frail human beings need less prayer? Don’t we need the Father’s partnership as much as Jesus did? Or, even more? Is our Christianity on display? Before our neighbors? Before the universe?
 23. There is much evidence in Scripture showing that Christianity is not a solo enterprise. The better we relate to others around us, the better we will be at relating to God.

24. During the ministry of Jesus, His time was divided primarily between two main outreach activities: teaching/preaching and healing/helping. (Matthew 9:35; Acts 10:38) Seventh-day Adventist Christians have recognized these two outreach ministries and have largely institutionalized them. The ordinary Christian who may not be a physician or a minister may believe that he cannot teach, preach, heal, or even help. But, that is not the message of Scripture. God intends for every one of us to reach out to help others and in so doing to help ourselves.
25. Read Matthew 25:34-46. How does that fit with Ephesians 2:8,9? Once again, we need to remember that good Christian works are never the means of our salvation. Our salvation comes through a working partnership—called faith—with the Lord Jesus Christ. But, that working partnership is just that; it works. So, good works—reaching out to help others—is the result of our salvation and never the cause of our salvation. We sometimes teach our children an acronym, JOY—1) Jesus first, 2) Others second, 3) Yourself last. Do we judge others on this basis? This is the Christian way, and this is the way to produce real lasting joy. Most of the people who are unsatisfied, unhappy, disheartened, discouraged, even hopeless are in that condition because they are focused too much on self.
26. We need to remember that forgiveness does not imply that we believe that no wrong was done. Both the one forgiving and the one being forgiven need to be honest about the wrong that was done. But, real Christians can set that aside and go on with their forgiving.
27. If we can experience all these Christian aspects in our lives, very likely, we will experience the hope and trust which God intends for us. (Psalm 31:24) It is hard to make progress in any direction emotionally without hope. Depression is primarily from a lack of hope.
28. Religion at its best is the ultimate source of hope. Jesus was our Example. Read Matthew 26:36-44. Although He was deeply distressed, troubled, sorrowful, heartbroken, and essentially abandoned by His friends, nevertheless, He was able to reach out in hope and place His trust in His heavenly Father. Thus, He overcame the worst stress that one can possibly imagine.
29. Our lives are supposed to be organized with God as the controlling Partner and ourselves as junior partners. Look at some verses supporting this idea:
- Controlling Partner:** Genesis 1:1; John 3:16; 5:27; 14:1-3,15-18; 15:1-3; 16:7-8; Deuteronomy 5:6; Isaiah 9:6-7; 35:4,10; 44:6-8; 53:1-12; 55:3; 65:17-18; Amos 3:7; Psalm 139:1-6; 1 John 3:20.
- Junior Partner:** Luke 9:23-27; Romans 1:1; 12:1,3-6; Matthew 19:13-15,16-21; 22:37-39; Acts 2:38; John 14:15; 21:17; Deuteronomy 5:7; 6:1-7; Micah 6:8.
30. Do you find that your relationship to other Christians and to God is a positive force every day of the week? Are we embarrassed about our Christianity? Do we have difficulty speaking to others about it?
31. Those of us who believe in the great-controversy, trust, healing model of the plan of salvation are convinced that God has already won the great controversy. There is no way that He can lose. We need to take courage from this fact and join the winning side. As we do so, we will not only strengthen our own hope but also will have opportunity to reach out to help and encourage others.

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