

How Does God Feel?

Here's a question: How does God feel most of the time? Is He bored? Worried? Blasé? Happy? Concerned? Detached? Engaged? Mad, glad or sad? It sounds lighthearted, but it's one of the most important questions of our entire spiritual journey.

How does God feel when He looks at you? I have asked many people this question over the years, and they usually respond in one of two ways: (1) God is mostly mad; (2) God is mostly sad.

And in both cases, they think it's their fault. Many Christians believe very strongly that God is angry and grieved with us. They view Him as distant, angry, sitting on the throne and spending the bulk of His emotional energy being disappointed in mankind.

We picture a weeping God who beats His breast and turns His eyes away from us in shame. But Scripture tells us the very opposite. Our God smiles and rejoices. His emotions fall into a third category: God is mostly *glad*.

Moses, under the prophetic anointing, made a stunning declaration about the Lord's gladness: "The Lord your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand. ... For the Lord will again rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers" (Deut. 30:9, NKJV).

In this passage, God is telling Moses that at the end of the age He will break forth with rejoicing over His people. He will reveal Himself to them as the glad God who overflows with delight and enjoyment. Instead of cowering at the feet of an angry God, the body of Christ will bask in the sunshine of His gladness.

This is the day we are living in! If this picture of God seems impossible to you, scan the Word. Passages about God's

gladness abound throughout the Bible. For example, Zephaniah 3:17 reveals Him as One who rejoices: “‘He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.’”

Imagine that! He will sing and rejoice over His people with gladness. He will quiet our stormy hearts with the revelation of His love. God’s songs over His people are not songs of anger but of rejoicing and tender love.

In this passage, God is not just exhorting people to be glad; He is promising to sing songs that *make* us glad. The rest of the book of Zephaniah lays the backdrop for this divine promise. It describes the scenes at the end of the age when everything that can be shaken is being shaken.

In that day, men will literally die of heart attacks because of fear (see Luke 21:26). Fear will be one of the predominant emotions worldwide.

But God promises that He will comfort and quiet His people by releasing songs of His affection and gladness. Intimacy with a glad God will sustain the church in the midst of unprecedented calamity.

I believe the greatest dimension of God’s glory is His emotions, and central to His emotional life are His gladness and joy. This is what God communicated to Moses when Moses asked to see His glory. God promised to make known His glory and goodness to him by revealing His compassion (see Ex. 33:18-19).

Notice that when God reveals His glory, He emphasizes the glory of His emotions. As we enter into the reality of His happiness and joy, our hearts discover other emotions that abound in His heart. We begin to experience His desires for us, His beauty and His pleasures. But we cannot skip the foundational step of understanding His gladness.

We will not easily believe that God burns with desire for us or that He is exceedingly beautiful if we do not first believe that He is *glad*. It must be the foundation of our theology: Our God is a God who smiles.

Mike Bickle *is the director of the International House of Prayer in Kansas City, Mo., a 24/7 prayer ministry. He is also the chancellor of the International House of Prayer University and the author of several books, including After God's Own Heart (Charisma House), from which this column is adapted.*