

How Holy Spirit Can Bring You Into Emotional Health Right Now

“Without body, parts or passions.”

That’s how the Westminster Confession of Faith describes God. Consequently, Christianity has warped this to mean that God is a distant, stone-cold deity without emotions or feeling. Many believe that when the Bible describes God’s anger, it is simply communicating the gravity of His justice. Or that His compassion for His children as evidenced in Scripture only speaks to a general love, the kind that a Creator would have for everything in His Creation whether it be people or blades of grass. This passionless, impersonal God has, sadly, extended to the person of Jesus. As a result, very little has been written on Jesus’ emotional life.

But in his latest book *Spirit-Filled Jesus: Live By His Power*, Mark Driscoll takes a chapter to address how Jesus had emotions, maintained perfect emotional health and how we can learn from His example.

“Everyone who is a believer has the potential for improved emotional health that increasingly manifests the character of Jesus Christ. How? By the power of the Holy Spirit,” Driscoll says.

As he points out, Jesus had a lot of reasons to be an emotional mess. The public gossiped about Him and His cousin, John the Baptist:

“For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a gluttonous man, a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners’” (Matt. 11:18-19).

“That’s a rough public relations nightmare for a homeless single guy trying to launch a brand-new ministry from scratch,” Driscoll says.

He writes on Jesus’s exhausting ministry. People swarmed Jesus at all hours, asking questions and seeking miracles. They wanted Him to cast out demons, raise people from the dead, give sight to the blind and heal all sorts of infirmities.

While taking a nap, Jesus was woken up by his followers who feared the storm would capsize their boat. After calming the sea, Jesus said, “Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?” (Mark 4:40).

His disciples were a source of exasperation. Judas stole money from the ministry and was bribed to hand Jesus over to the people who intended to crucify Him. Thomas doubted Jesus and Peter denied that he knew Him. James and John asked to rule with Jesus in heaven which was not received well: “You do not know what you are asking” (Mark 10:38b).

Whatever relationships or circumstances we have grappled with, Jesus has also endured. He dealt with enemies and difficult coworkers. He felt so fatigued that he could sleep through a violent storm in a boat. But more importantly, Jesus responded with displays of emotion that we experience. He was angry and called people sons of the devil, and He overturned tables in the temple. He was sad—the shortest verse in many Bible translations is “Jesus wept” (John 11:35). He experienced amazement when He witnessed the faith of the centurion, and many times Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit (Luke 10:21).

From the Bible, we can conclude that Jesus, like His Father, was not stoic. We can also infer from Jesus’ example that responding emotionally to something is not necessarily wrong. Rather, it’s how we manage our responses that indicates our emotional health.

Driscoll writes on how the source of Jesus’s power over His

emotions is the Holy Spirit. In fact, this is the key to perfect emotional health. Because of this, Jesus's externalizing of emotion, however harsh or abrupt it seemed, aimed to cause good change, not chaos or drama. Even when Jesus flipped over the tables at the temple and caused a scene, it was to put an end to His house of prayer being used as "a den of thieves" (Matt. 21:13b).

Driscoll distinguishes how having a Spirit-filled emotional life also means inviting the Holy Spirit to change our emotions. He points to the Bible verse where God not only directs how we should behave, but also how we should respond: "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15).

In studying how Jesus responded emotionally to what He faced, we can also learn how to do so in a way that glorifies God. Driscoll asks readers to consider where their emotions flow from: the Holy Spirit or the flesh? {eoa}

This article is based on Spirit-Filled Jesus: Live By His Power (Charisma House, 2018) by Mark Driscoll. Driscoll is a Jesus-following, mission-leading, church-serving, people-loving, Bible-preaching pastor and the author of many books, including Real Marriage and Who Do You Think You Are? With a skillful mix of bold presentation, accessible teaching, and unrelenting compassion for those who are hurting the most, Pastor Mark has taken Christianity into cultural corners rarely explored by Evangelicals. He has been grilled by Whoopi Goldberg and Barbara Walters on The View, gone head to head with Piers Morgan on CNN, debated the existence of evil with Deepak Chopra on ABC's Nightline, bantered with the gang on Fox and Friends, and explained biblical sexuality on Loveline with Dr. Drew.