

## **Emotions: Can You Trust Them?**

### **Dr. James Dobson**

As the summer rolls to a close, I want to share a thought with those of you who are struggling with your faith at this time. Some have encountered life-altering physical illnesses. Others have offered prayers that were seemingly unanswered. Still others have suffered financial setbacks and frustrations. As your troubles accumulated, you have wondered if God is really there and if He cares about you and your family. If that has been your experience in recent days, I have some good news for you. It comes from my book, *When God Doesn't Make Sense*. You may be a victim of your own confusion about what the Lord is doing in your life. Let me explain.

I wrote another book many years ago entitled, *Emotions, Can You Trust Them?* It took me 200 pages to say, "No. You can't believe everything you feel." Your emotions are suspect at best and often lie to you with a straight face, especially about spiritual matters.

Here's the reason why: the mind, the body, and the spirit are very close neighbors. One usually catches the ills of the next. If a person is depressed, for example, his mood typically affects not only his emotional wellbeing, but his spiritual life too. He may conclude, for example, "God doesn't love me. I just don't feel His approval." Likewise, the first thing an individual is likely to say when diagnosed with a threatening physical illness is, "Why would God do this to me?"

This understanding becomes extremely important when evaluating our relationship with God. Even when He seems a thousand miles away and disinterested in us, He is close enough to touch. A wonderful illustration of this unseen presence is described in Luke 24, verses 13 and 14, when two of Jesus' disciples were walking toward a village called Emmaus, approximately seven miles from Jerusalem.

They had seen their Master horribly crucified three days earlier, and they were severely depressed. Everything that they hoped for had died on that Roman cross. All the dramatic things Jesus had said and done now appeared contrived and untrue. He had spoken with such authority, but now He was dead and His body was placed in a borrowed tomb. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, yet they had heard Him cry in His last hours, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46). The

disciples couldn't have been more confused. What was the meaning of the three years they had spent with this man who claimed to be the Messiah?

What they didn't realize is that Jesus was walking that dusty road with them at that very moment, and they were about to be given the greatest news ever heard by human ears. It would revolutionize their lives and turn the rest of the world upside down. At the time, however, all they saw were contradictory facts that could not be harmonized. They had, I submit, a problem of perception.

In my work with families in crisis, I have found some of them confused rather like the disciples. While they trudge along in deep thought, there is no evidence that Jesus was in their part of the universe. Because they don't "feel" His presence, they don't believe He cares for them. Since the facts don't add up, they are convinced that no rational explanation exists. Their prayers bring no immediate relief, so they presume they're not heard. When God doesn't appear to make sense, they often become angry and "give up" on Him. They hit what Dr. R.T. Kendall refers to as "the betrayal barrier." But they are wrong. It is my firm conviction in these instances that too much confidence is placed in what people see or feel, and too little on what is written in the Word. They forget His promise to supply all our needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19).

If you find yourself on a dusty road to Emmaus today, and the circumstances in your life have left you confused and depressed, I have a word of counsel for you. Never assume God's silence means He is uninvolved. Let me say it again. Feelings about His inaccessibility mean nothing! Absolutely nothing! His Word is infinitely more reliable than our wobbly emotions.

Rev. Reuben Welch, minister and author, once said, "With God, even when nothing is happening—something is happening." It is true. The Lord is at work in His own unique way, even when our prayers seem to echo back from an empty space.

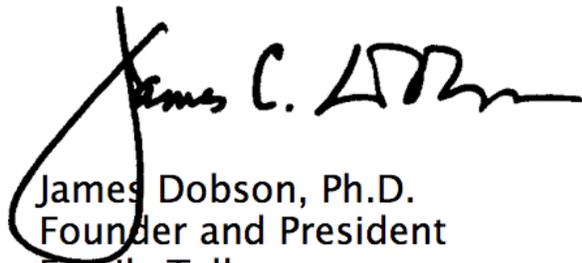
Establish your foundation not on ephemeral emotions but on the authority of the written Word. He promised never to leave us (Matthew 28:20). He said, "For where two or three come together in My name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:20). He is "a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24). We're assured that "the eyes of the Lord are on

the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer" (1 Peter 3:12).  
David said:

*Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence? If I go up to the heavens, You are there; if I make my bed in the depths, You are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there Your hand will guide me, Your right hand will hold me fast. (Psalm 139:7-10)*

If we at Family Talk can pray with you about your circumstances or help to answer your questions, we would be pleased to do so. [We have prayer warriors at the ministry who want to assist you and your family.](#) Call us when you want to talk, or just drop us a line. This ministry exists for the purpose of strengthening you and those you love. And if you don't know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, let us introduce you to Him. That would be our greatest joy!

From Shirley and me and the entire staff of Family Talk, we extend our love and prayers to you and yours.



James C. Dobson, Ph.D.  
Founder and President  
Family Talk

Permission granted to reprint

<https://www.drjamesdobson.org/news/commentaries/archives/2017-newsletters/august-newsletter-2017>