



SERIES: MY LIFE WITH GOD

The Power of Tears

Life Reference: Psalm 30

Focus Verse:

"Let tears run like a river day and night." (Lamentations 2:18)

Like the rivers of our earth that flow from the highest mountains and forge their way through the deepest valleys, our tears cut a path through the highs and lows of our emotional life." ("The Healing Power of Tears" by Paula Becker)

At a community hospital in a Chicago suburb, an eight-year-old girl scheduled to have a leg amputated asked, 'May I cry or should I be brave?'" ("Have a Good Cry" by Victor M. Parachin)



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Life Reflection:

Have you ever wanted to ask that question?

What did you do . . . cry or act brave?

When you were a child, what did you hear most often when you cried?

- Big boys/girls don't cry.
- If you keep that up, I'll give you something to cry about.
- It's OK to cry.
- Crying never fixed anything.

How has that shaped how you handle your emotions?

Kinds of Tears

There are three distinctive types of tears, each with a different chemical make-up.

1. Basal tears are the type that are constantly lubricating the eye.
2. Reflex tears happen when something irritates the eye.
3. The type that occurs when we cry for sadness or happiness are emotional tears.

As far back as 1957, it was known that emotional tears are chemically different from tears that result from eye irritation. Emotional tears contain more beta-endorphins, some of our bodies' natural pain relievers, and protein.

Victor Parachin in "Have a Good Cry" wrote that according to Dr. William Frey, a biochemist and director of the Dry Eye and Tear Research Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota, one reason people might feel better after crying could be because they are "removing, in their tears, chemicals that build up during emotional stress." Frey's research indicates that tears, along with other bodily secretions like perspiration, rid the body of various toxins and wastes.

Tears are one of God's unique ways to wash poison out of our emotions and our bodies.



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Researchers also are discovering that people who cry frequently enjoy better health overall. Margaret Crepeau, Ph.D., professor of nursing at Marquette University, believes healthy people view tears positively, while people plagued with various illnesses see them as unnecessary, even humiliating.

"I find," Crepeau says, "that well men and women cry more tears more often than men and women with ulcers or colitis."

Consequently, at Marquette's School of Nursing, students and professionals are urged not to automatically provide tranquilizers to weeping patients, but to let the tears do their own therapeutic work.

"Laughter and tears," Crepeau says, "are two inherently natural medicines. We can reduce duress, let out negative feelings, and recharge. They truly are the body's own best resources."

In *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens, Mr. Bumble, the parish beadle, realized that crying "opens the lungs, washes the countenance, exercises the eyes, and softens the temper."

Often people report that a good cry can make them feel better and more at peace. In one survey, 85% of women and 73% of men reported feeling less sad or angry after crying.

Life Reflection:

How long has it been since you had a good cry?

The last time you cried was it because you were

- Frustrated?
- Grieving?
- Angry?
- Heartbroken?
- Disappointed?
- Other?

Which of the following is the main reason you cry?

- Anxiety
- Sadness
- Happiness
- Fear
- Anger
- Sympathy



Which is your least cause for tears?

The results from a survey that Dr. Frey took among subjects who kept tear diaries showed:

- Sadness accounted for 49% of tears;
- Happiness, 21%;
- Anger, 10%;
- Sympathy, 7%;
- Anxiety, 5%;
- Fear, 4%.

The Dam Bursts

When we refuse to let the tears flow, we build a dam that shuts down our emotions. As the pressure from suppressed emotions builds, the dam eventually bursts—quite often in a dangerous flood of anger.

Johnstown had been built into a river valley on the Appalachian Plateau. About once a year the Little Conemaugh and the Stony Creek Rivers overflowed into the streets sending the town's residents into a scurry to protect their homes and belongings.

Some fourteen miles above the city, the South Fork dam created a lake that was little over two miles long, a little over a mile wide at its widest spot, and sixty feet deep at the dam itself. May 31, 1889, men worked frantically to strengthen the dam, which was on verge of collapsing. But their efforts were in vain.

Those who saw the flood coming described it as a rolling hill of debris about forty feet high and half a mile wide. But most only heard the thunderous rumble as it swept into the city to add Johnstown to a wake that already included bits and pieces of the communities of South Fork, Mineral Point, Woodvale, and East Conemaugh.



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Some waited out the disaster in their houses; others were picked up by the flood wave for a wild ride through the town to the Pennsylvania Railroad Company's Stone Bridge where debris piled forty feet high and over thirty acres, then caught fire. Still others were shot down the Conemaugh River to die or be rescued at Nineveh, Bolivar, or other communities downstream.

The dead were lined up in morgues throughout the city and in communities further down the Conemaugh River until survivors in search of loved ones came to identify them.

If you have allowed past hurts, fears, and anger to dam up your emotions, learn from the Johnstown flood.

It is worth repeating. When we refuse to let the tears flow, we build a dam that shuts down our emotions. As the pressure from suppressed emotions builds, the dam eventually bursts—quite often in a dangerous flood of anger.

**“Tears are the safety valve of the heart when too much pressure is laid on it.”
(Albert Smith)**

Life Reflection:

Has your emotional dam ever burst and resulted in a flood of anger that has hurt others?

Life Response:

Reasons to Cry

Jesus did. He wept at the tomb of His friend Lazarus, even though He knew that in a few minutes He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead. So why did He weep? You figure that one out. (Read John 11:35.)

He wept in sorrow over the city of Jerusalem, knowing that in a few days the Jews were going to reject Him and seeing that in a few years they were going to face a devastating destruction. (Read Luke 19:41.)



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Queen Esther wept in intercession. Her tears got the attention of the king. (Read Esther 8:3.)

King Hezekiah wept in grief because he was dying. His tears got God's attention, and God added fifteen years to his life. (Read II Kings 20:5.)

The prophet Jeremiah wept in anguish as the Jews rejected God's Word, continued in their idolatry, and were eventually led into captivity. (Read Jeremiah 9:1.)

The sinful woman wept in worship, and no doubt contrition, as she washed Jesus' feet with her tears. (Read Luke 7:38.)

Jesus' disciple Peter wept in repentance. (Read Matthew 26:75.)

The apostle Paul wept because of his love and concern for the souls under his care. (Read Acts 20:31; II Corinthians 2:4.)

We don't want anyone to see us crying (or even know that we cried). They might think we are weak. So we hide our face in our hands, pretend we have something in our eye, make strong efforts to choke them back, or even throw a temper tantrum. Often we stuff our tears behind a watery smile because we don't want to "ruin our face."

Ladies, take note of this. Alan Wolfelt, PhD, University of Colorado Medical School, wrote, "In my experience I have observed changes in the physical expressions following the expression of tears. Not only do people feel better after crying, they also look better."

Tears are equated with weakness because they reveal the soft spots of our soul and can make us feel unprotected. Yet tears are a way to mend the pain and suffering of life.

They are neither something to be ashamed of nor something we must force or flaunt.

Tears of joy or sorrow, tears of awe and pride can make life richer, giving us a natural expression of the pool of emotions that flows through our being.

What soap is for the body, tears are for the soul. (Jewish proverb)



Life Reflection:

How could crying make a person look better?

Do you find it hard to cry because:

- "Big girls don't cry."
- "If you don't stop crying, I'll give you something to cry about."
- "Get that crying kid outta here before I do something you'll regret."
- Or (you fill in the blank) _____.

Are there hurts in your life that need healing? In your relationships?

Have you "cried out" to God for help? If not, what is stopping you . . . Pride? Fear? Anger?

God Understands

Tears Are a Language God Understands

So often you've wondered why
Tears come into your eyes
And burdens seem to be
Much more than you can stand
But God is standing near
He sees each falling tear
Tears are a language God understands



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God sees the tears
Of your broken-hearted soul
I know He sees those tears
And hears them every time they fall
God weeps along with man
And then He takes him by the hand
For they are a language that God understands

By Gordon Jensen
1971 Jensen Music
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741 Cool Springs Blvd., Franklin TN 37067)

**“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy” (Psalm 126:5).
“Weeping may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psalm 30:5).**

Now it is time to apply what we have talked about to your life. Pick one of the following commitments to do in the coming week.

My Commitment (1)

This week I will find a quiet place and talk to God aloud about my fears, hurts, and anger. I will be honest with God and myself.

(Opening your mouth and confessing pours our negative emotions and cleanses your emotional system, making room for positive emotions like love, joy, and peace.)

My Commitment (2)

This week I will write a letter to God. (Tell Him anything you want to. He already knows and understands so anything you tell Him will not shock or anger Him.)

Then I will take that letter to the river (or a stream of water) and let the water carry it away.



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My Commitment (3)

I will designate one chair in my house as “the crying chair.” Anyone in our family who needs to cry can sit in that chair and cry. Other family members will respect that person’s privacy and right to cry. I give myself permission to sit in the crying chair and cry anytime I need to.

And don’t be surprised, if the tears flow.

My Prayer:

Thank You, Lord, for the cleansing, healing power of tears. I long to sit in Your presence and let the tears flow. Help me release my fears, anger, pain and give my hurts to You. In Jesus name. Amen.

More Life with God References:

Luke 6:21

Romans 12:15

Job 16:20

Psalms 56:8

Joel 2:17

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Bible study written by Barbara Westberg



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