

Today, we continue our sermon series “All the Feels: How God Created Me.” This series explores the connection between faith and emotions, helping us better understand our emotions and find ways to draw strength and wisdom from Scripture.

For this, we are using the movie *Inside Out* from Pixar to navigate the different emotions we experience as humans. For those who haven’t seen it, *Inside Out* is an animated film that delves into the mind of a young girl named Riley, where five emotions—Joy, Sadness, Anger, Fear, and Disgust—navigate her through life’s challenges. Today, our focus is on the fifth and last emotion: Disgust.

Here is a short clip about her: [Watch the clip](#).

In the movie, Disgust is honest and opinionated and helps Riley avoid physical and social poisoning. Disgust has always been proud of her refined tastes, keeping an eye on the people, places, and things Riley encounters. For over a decade, her expert judgment has protected Riley from gross broccoli and helped her avoid icky boys. After all, her job is to keep Riley from being poisoned, physically or socially. Her colleagues view her as a bit of an elitist, but Disgust refuses to lower her (and Riley’s) standards for anybody. The world is a disgusting place and it is her responsibility to say so. In short, Disgust takes over when life gets messy and can advise on social life or other issues.

What do people (you) find disgusting? I am aware everyone has their own list of things they find downright disgusting, and it is subjective. But here are some universal examples, in my opinion. The combination of ketchup on mac and cheese or the mere thought of mayo on pizza. How about pickles dipped in peanut butter, French fries dipped in ice cream, or raw oysters? Disgusting. All of it. And who hasn’t had a run-in with a forgotten laundry basket or the odor of rotten milk lurking in the back of the fridge? Now, disgust isn’t just about food, either. It can be triggered by a dirty public restroom or an overflowing trash can on a hot summer day infested with worms. In general, we can experience disgust by taste, smell, or sight. Mostly, they serve an important purpose in keeping us safe and healthy.

But disgust serves more than only keeping us safe from food poisoning or smelly asphyxiation. It also involves a deep-seated repulsion to actions and behaviors that are ethically and spiritually wrong. It leads a person to reject deceit, exploitation, and corruption, among other evil deeds.

Years ago, I learned a great lesson about disgust from a mentor of mine. While I was dealing with some conflicting people, he told me, “Pigs like to wallow in mud. And when you wallow with them, two things happen: you get dirty and they enjoy it.” (I have nothing against pigs; as a kid, we used to have a little ranch, and my job was to feed them. Besides, they are delicious when crispy!) Nevertheless, my friend explained that I struggled to relate to and understand some people’s behavior because I couldn’t comprehend their way of thinking and acting. If I could, I would be just like them. This made me realize that not everyone responds with compassion and kindness in challenging situations; some may even want and enjoy chaos. Soon after that, I stopped trying to understand their mindset and instead felt disgusted, meaning I saw their behavior and actions and rejected them; I did not want to become like them.

This experience made me realize how much I detest lies, manipulation, scheming, and bullies. Which, in turn, taught me how disgust is also a spiritual and moral emotion. Spiritually, it moves you to reject evil; morally, it moves you to reject wrongdoing.

Have you ever felt disgusted by a situation that went against your moral values? How did you react? How did it make you feel?

The Bible teaches about this emotion of disgust in various ways, illustrating how it can be a powerful tool for maintaining spiritual and moral integrity, a sort of defense mechanism.

In Proverbs 6:16-19, we see a clear example of things that are detestable to God,

There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him, haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that hurry to run to evil, a lying witness who testifies falsely, and one who sows discord in a family.

These verses highlight behaviors that are detestable to God and attitudes that should invoke a sense of disgust within us as followers of Christ: haughty eyes (pride), a lying tongue (deceit), hands that shed innocent blood (violence), a heart that devises wicked schemes (malice), feet that are quick to rush into evil (eagerness to sin), a false witness who pours out lies (perjury), and a person who stirs up conflict in the community (discord).

Consider gossip and slander, for instance. Imagine you are in a conversation where others begin gossiping about a colleague or neighbor. This can trigger a sense of disgust within us, highlighting the harm in participating in or even listening to such talk. Furthermore, in Romans 12:9, Paul encourages believers to “Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.” Along with Proverbs, this verse emphasizes a clear moral stance: we are to reject and despise all forms of evil while steadfastly holding on to and embracing what is good.

Jesus himself demonstrated this moral and spiritual disgust during his earthly ministry. In the Gospels, we see him express righteous indignation towards the money changers in the temple, who were exploiting worshippers,

Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it a den of robbers.” (Matthew 21:12-13)

Jesus’ reaction was not merely anger but a profound rejection of their corruption and defilement of a sacred space. Similarly, Jesus frequently confronted the hypocrisy of the religious leaders, showing that their outward displays of piety masked inner moral decay,

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful but inside are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of uncleanness. So you also on the outside look righteous to others, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. (Matthew 23:27-28)

Jesus said this to respond to the spiritual and moral corruption of those who claimed to represent and serve God but were instead corrupting the faith and oppressing the vulnerable.

The apostle Paul also gives us an insight into how to respond to this in Ephesians 5:11-12, “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness; rather, expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly.” Here, we are encouraged not only to reject and be disgusted by evil and moral corruption but also to bring it into the light and stand against it—as Jesus did. It shows that moral disgust should not only move us to distance ourselves from wrongdoing but to actively oppose it in our lives and communities. In other words, let your disgust against evil and wrongdoing give you the courage to stand against deceit, violence, bullying, perjury, discord, corruption, and abuse.

Disgust is a God-given emotion that helps us discern and reject what is harmful and wrong physically, morally, and spiritually. It calls us to maintain purity in our hearts and actions, aligning ourselves with God’s holy standards.

Consider these scenarios where you can practice your God-given gift of spiritual and moral disgust. If you overhear colleagues planning to deceive a client at work, let your disgust prompt you to speak up or distance yourself from unethical practices. For students, witnessing bullying should evoke moral disgust, motivating you to stand up for the victim or report it to a trusted adult. On social media, if you see hurtful comments or false information, let your moral disgust drive you to report the behavior and support the victim. Among friends, if someone makes a sexist, racist, or homophobic joke, your spiritual disgust should lead you to speak up and reject such comments. Even in everyday situations, like seeing someone litter in a park, let your moral disgust inspire you to pick up the trash and remind others to keep our environment clean. These actions reflect a commitment to living out God’s values in practical, everyday ways.

With this in mind, here is a challenging question: Will you be disgusted in the face of spiritual and moral wrongdoing, including recognizing thoughts and actions in your heart and life that don’t align with God’s standards? Or will you wallow in the mud?

Disgust is not merely about avoiding unpleasant tastes or smells; it is a profound, God-given emotion that helps us discern and reject what is harmful and wrong. It calls us to maintain purity in our hearts and actions, aligning ourselves with God’s holy standards. Whether it is speaking out against deceit at work, standing up to bullying, reporting hurtful behavior on social media, rejecting discriminatory jokes among friends, or picking up litter to keep our environment clean, let us embrace our spiritual and moral disgust as a powerful tool for maintaining our integrity and living according to God’s will.

Remember, disgust is a defense mechanism that keeps us safe, not just physically but also spiritually and morally. Let us commit to this path, seeking God’s help and guidance as we strive to live lives that honor him in all we do. May our hearts be ever sensitive to what displeases God, and may our actions reflect God’s love, truth, and justice. Amen.