

Is Crying For Ourselves OK?

Sam Harley
November 12, 2023



We are told we need to cry for something bigger than ourselves. Father's example, of never crying for himself, is a worthy one. But however desperately I've tried to do that, it doesn't always work. We want to cry for ourselves, but then we stop. 'I'm not supposed to cry for myself.' We try to force tears for God, for others. But in my experience, nothing much happened. I could try to put a wobble in my voice when I prayed, use all the right words - 'I'm so sorry, comfort your heart, etc. - but it wasn't something that sprung up inside me.

My rigid self-discipline doesn't always work here. But at moments of strong, difficult, unbearable pain or anger - the point where I want to stuff it away somewhere because I simply don't know how to deal with it - at these moments, there is one small door to open.

When I'm incensed at how someone else is acting, and I can't stand it, it drives me up the wall, if it occurs to me to ask "God, have you ever felt this way? Did I ever make you feel this way"

I remember the first time I did this. My leader in my business mission was a man who was eccentric, driven and volatile. He would get angry when you couldn't read his mind.

One day we were to have a business meeting. We usually went to one of a couple of local restaurants for this. He jumped in his van and drove off without telling us where we were meeting. We stood there wondering what to do. This was before cell phones or pagers, so there was no way to contact him. So we stayed in the parking lot of our gallery. We could go to one place, but he might not be there. We waited.

After ten minutes, he drove up, yelling out the window, his face purple and his eyes bulging. He called us several kinds of stupid, why weren't we there, of course we were meeting at this place, what was the matter with us?

The injustice of this infuriated me. I felt wounded and indignant, outraged. I could barely be civil with him.

After several days of stewing this way, I was stuck. I wanted to blast him the way he'd blasted me, I wanted to complain about him to my fellow workers. I wanted to report him to our area leader. Yet I knew these were spiritually useless things to do. Worse than useless, destructive. I didn't want this negative emotional stew, but here I was up to my neck in it. What do?

It finally occurred to me to ask "Have I ever made anyone else feel this way? Have I ever judged someone

for not having the same thoughts as me?" When I looked honestly, I could say yes, I have. Plenty of times I've gotten angry when someone wasn't in sync with my 'spiritually advanced thoughts', that were so obvious I shouldn't have to explain them.

So, yes, I have made someone feel just the way he's got me feeling right now. Would I do the same thing if I was a leader? Yup. Does it feel good? No. So this is how I can make others feel. This is an important lesson for me, and he is my teacher. Even if he's teaching me exactly what not to do, I bow to him, because he is my teacher and I needed to know this. Thank you.

Later on in life, my children were furious at me for not doing what they wanted me to do for them, something I wasn't capable of doing alone, without their help, I found another small door.

"God, have you ever felt this way? Did your children ever hate you because they were waiting for you to do something for them that you could only do together with them?" Once I asked this question, the answer came right away. "Yes, I have, many times. They don't understand how much I love them, and they think I can magically make them better. They don't know I'm calling them to do the part that I gave to them." Oh, this is how you feel. I didn't know.

In that moment, my anger and indignation melted away. God and I were sharing a moment, feeling together. From there, I could see a way to deal with the situation while still loving my children.

That was the key. Not to deny the feeling, try to stifle it, but to ask God if he'd ever felt that way. It wasn't an intellectual exercise, this was sharing gut feelings.

Many times I've been inundated with anger so strong I thought I could only cut it off, put it in a box and stuff it away somewhere. But I've learned that there's a pivot point, a point where it can be turned around and instead of going with the flood and blasting someone, I can now have a conversation with God about it. I don't have to go with the first blind impulse to react, which we call our fallen nature.