

# You Are ENOUGH

Learning to  
Love Yourself  
the Way God  
Loves You

A 30-Day Journey

Jonathan Puddle

Foreword by Aundi Kolber

## PRAISE FOR YOU ARE ENOUGH

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*"You Are Enough* is a daily invitation to enter that sacred space where you are reminded of the freedom that comes in being undone right here, right now, in the depths of God's love. With this book, Jonathan Puddle has created a wise companion for the lifelong journey of becoming who you were meant to be." — Morgan Harper Nichols, artist and poet

"There is no better time or more important topic than this explosively lovely book by Jonathan Puddle. Practical and poignant, personal and scriptural, this devotional packs a punch! Ultimately this book will help anyone know and experience God's love, which will be transformational! I highly recommend this book—get it and use it and pass it on!" — Danielle Strickland, spiritual leader, speaker, justice advocate and author of *Better Together: How Women and Men Can Heal the Divide and Work Together to Transform the Future*

"I'm convinced that one question haunts almost all of us: 'Am I enough?' In his new devotional, not only does Jonathan Puddle answer that question, but he walks the reader through a process that will soften and heal the heart from the wounds accumulated by chasing its answer. There is good, life-giving Jesus-centered theology here, paired with daily practices and meditations (including audio meditations), all offered with grace, vulnerability and gentle care. If a person commits to working through this devotional, following the practices and using the daily meditations, I firmly believe it will change the state of their hearts, how they see themselves and even their ability to sense the nearness of God." — Marc Alan Schelske, pastor and author of *The Wisdom of Your Heart: Discovering the God-Given Purpose and Power of Your Emotions* and the *Untangle Workbook: A Guided Journaling Process for Untangling Emotions and Finding Wisdom*

"In his book, *You are Enough*, Jonathan Puddle takes us day by day into a deeper connection to God and learning to love ourselves. It's a simple devotional that is easy to digest, yet profound as it pulls the curtain back and reveals unhealthy thinking, replacing it with truth. If you are looking for a tool to help you grow in love, this is a good one!" — Kim Walker-Smith, Jesus Culture

"I rarely meet anyone who is *not* too hard on themselves. For all of the trendy talk of self-love and self-care, what we need are accessible, transforming practices that are contemplative and therapeutic. Jonathan Puddle's book makes "You are enough" more than a motivational platitude. It will help that truth get from our rational minds into the wounds and needs of our hearts. For those who put his gentle meditations into practice, I anticipate some deep-level healing and a new sense of wholeness." — Brad Jersak (PhD), author of *Can You Hear Me? Tuning In to the God Who Speaks*

"Jonathan has created a valuable resource of personal formation that pursues holistic health of mind, body, and spirit. The rhythms waiting to be discovered in *You Are Enough* are life changing to those who interact with the depth of his reflections and meditations. You owe it to yourself to embark on this journey." — Rohadi, author of *Thrive: Ideas to lead the church in post-Christendom* and *Soul Coats*

"Jonathan's devotional is packed full of wisdom, practical meditations, tools to help you get in touch with your heart, and ways to find healing & wholeness for your life. We are so blessed to have him as a part of our pastoral team; he is an empowering man of God who truly cares about what is going on inside of people. He benefits all who know him with his wisdom and care. This devotional will change your life as you delve into the places within you that God deeply cares about." — Adam & Amy Ryan, lead pastors, Catch The Fire Church, Kitchener, Ontario

"Neuroscience has proven our brains can change. Neuroplasticity is real. It has also proven the process of change requires novel and repeatable practices; one could even say we need daily liturgies. Jonathan Puddle has provided us with a tangible resource that is not only rooted in proven science, psychology, professional counseling and therapeutic modalities, but, most importantly, his own lived-experience of seeking wholeness. Jonathan's devotional compassionately provides us with practical resources to continue our own healing journey." — Dr. Jerome D. Lubbe, author of *The Brain-Based Enneagram: you are not A number*

"This is just what the Christian world needs! If you've been struggling to love God more, and beating yourself up about not making progress, Jonathan shows you that trauma-informed psychology and Scripture actually go hand in hand. You don't need to struggle against yourself. Learn instead how to be kind to yourself, and let God heal you so that you can grow." — Sheila Wray Gregoire, author, speaker, and blogger at *To Love, Honor and Vacuum*

"God created humans with bodies and to need other humans. He was the first to call his human creation "Good" and the first to say it was "Not good" to be alone. We need leaders who show us the way to navigate these sometimes seemingly confusing truths. Jonathan is a practical and wise leader for the journey out of theological constructs that preach we don't need anyone or anything but God. This book is a helpful addition to the correctives we need." — Lore Ferguson Wilbert, author of *Handle With Care: How Jesus Redeems the Power of Touch in Life and Ministry*

“Jonathan has combined theology & psychology in a way that is as accessible as it is beautiful. These pages have healing to offer to anyone who wants it.” — Robert Vore, therapist & suicide prevention instructor, host of CXMH, a podcast at the intersection of faith & mental health

“Jonathan Puddle reminds us that we are not fractured beings: body, soul, spirit, emotions, etc., but rather we are all of these things combined. In *You Are Enough*, Jonathan helps us see ourselves as God sees us—as his beloved children. Through devotional experiences, Jonathan connects our full selves in practices meant to engage every part of who we are, to discover that—in Christ—who we are is enough. I heartily encourage you to allow Jonathan to lead you to experience a new pace, new practices and a renewed awareness of who you really are.” — Natalie Frisk, pastor and author of *Raising Disciples: How to Make Faith Matter for Our Kids*.

“*You Are Enough* blazes a path toward self-love we all need and rarely find. Like any exercise routine, reading this devotional isn’t a piece of cake, and muscles we didn’t know existed are seen and strengthened. Day by day, a spiritual practice emerges from Jonathan’s words: the practice of reminding ourselves that God is enough, we—his creation—are enough, and we learn to bravely “face ourselves honestly, to feel and to know what lies within” in order to find healing and wholeness. Reading *You Are Enough* taught me much about my own self, the important-even-if-awkward steps I have yet to take toward self-love, and how those steps not-yet-taken affect my relationship with God, others, and myself. I truly look forward to sharing this gift of a book.” — Gena Thomas, author of *Separated by the Border: A Birth Mother, a Foster Mother, and a Migrant Child’s 3,000-Mile Journey* and *A Smoldering Wick: Igniting Missions Work with Sustainable Practices*

“In *You Are Enough*, Jonathan takes readers on an intimate self-reflective journey into our innermost being, and gently walks with us deep into the inner workings of our body, mind and soul connection. This devotional shines a powerful light into the hidden places of our heart and shows us the way to wholeness by learning to love ourselves as God first loved us. With Jesus’ love as his guidepost, Jonathan creates a safe place for us to work through our past pains, mistakes and traumas. This is not a fluffy devotional, this is raw, poignant and genuinely reflects the fierce redeeming love of Christ.” — Sarah E. Ball, author of *Fearless in 21 Days: A Survivor’s Guide To Overcoming Anxiety*

“This unique devotional is unlike anything I’ve read before. Jonathan invites us on a journey of discovering the spectacular treasures that can be ours if we invest some loving-kindness on ourselves. Our lives are intertwined and this devotional creates personal and communal spaces that lead us to a greater dimension of growth and discipleship. This is an adventure of personal discovery and self-awareness, an adventure that will leave behind a legacy of realization that we are enough.” — Gricel Medina, pastor and community developer, Evangelical Covenant Church

“Jonathan Puddle had me from the very beginning, after all, this self-admitted right-brained feeler doesn’t run from speaking simple and profound truths all of us need to hear. By being who he is at his deepest core, Puddle naturally invites readers to do the same: to be safe, “floating in an endless ocean of God’s perfect love,” and to be captured by “vibrant channels” of this same love that believes we humans are already enough. I can’t recommend his message enough.” — Cara Meredith, author of *The Color of Life*

“What an amazing and holistic book! Jonathan does not simply talk about a holistic approach to emotional wellness or identity in Christ, he explains the internal mechanisms that keep us from living and loving as our true self. It’s full of the love of God, the mystery of creation, and the wonder of who we were created to be while simultaneously being accessible to everyone and offering a practical walkthrough to healing. On top of that, Jonathan is a skilled author and storyteller; a blessing not often found in this genre.” — Doug Crew, Shiloh Place Ministries

“With great skill, tenderness and sincerity, drawing on a wide amount of material and research applied in simple and profound ways, Jonathan has given us a wonderful devotional that will lead us into Jesus’ heart. As you read it and take time with the exercises you will deeply encounter Jesus, the one who describes himself as “gentle and humble of heart.” When you find Him, you will find rest and healing for your soul. I highly recommend it.” — Murray Smith, Lead Pastor, Catch The Fire Church, Raleigh-Durham

“*You Are Enough* has transformed and reshaped my life. I am deeply grateful.” — Tiffany Meaney, a reader from Seattle, Washington

“Honestly, I feel like this is the devotional I’ve waited for my whole life.” — Sarah Sanderson, a reader from Oregon

“By day 9, I knew that this book had come to me at the perfect time and was exactly what I needed. I have been a Christian for over 25 years but never was able to feel God’s love for me. In fact, no relationships felt safe to me. *You Are Enough* is the first book I have come across that helped me connect to God in a way that felt safe. It has put into words exactly what I need to come to God and feel safety and connection for the first time in my life. I see myself re-reading it on an endless loop and using it as a regular part of my daily devotions for the rest of my life. I can’t thank you enough!” — A reader from New Brunswick

# You Are ENOUGH

Learning to Love Yourself  
the Way God Loves You



Jonathan Puddle

You Are Enough: Learning to Love Yourself the Way God Loves You  
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## FOREWORD

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While in graduate school to become a mental health therapist, I first read the words of Henri Nouwen in his profound book, *Life of the Beloved*. In it, he invites the reader to see themselves as God's Beloved. Though all of my counseling studies pointed toward the importance of experiencing secure and safe relationships in order to flourish, I never recognized how incongruent it felt with my faith. Though I wanted to experience God as good and safe, at the time I could not totally do so. Certainly, I had experienced glimpses—but those moments felt a bit like sand slipping through my fingers.

Nouwen's framing of our identity with such tenderness cracked something open in me. I realized that I longed to experience God as compassionate, rather than as an unsatisfied parent for whom I had to perform. I finally came face to face with the reality that I was exhausted from all the ways I had learned to perform for love. Yet, through this lens of Belovedness I found that God was not shaming me for the pain—instead, he was inviting me to a truer story. Though it would take years and much of my own therapy, I began to unravel theology that framed God as angry and wrathful. I also experienced safe relationships and those connections allowed the scales to finally fall from my eyes: God was—and is—as loving as I had hoped.

In these sacred spaces, I began to experientially understand what it means to know God not just as holy, not just as a rescuer—but as the safest, kindest, gentlest, parent we could have. Little did I know at the time just how essential

this shift in my experience would become to my own personal healing as a survivor of trauma, but also in my work as a trauma informed therapist.

I have found that along the path of my own story, I have had the opportunity to meet some absolutely gorgeous souls. Jonathan Puddle is one of these people. It has been a privilege to witness some of the work Jonathan has been doing both in his own life and in the lives of others.

In this gentle, groundbreaking devotional, Jonathan has carried on the work of other healers as he reminds us in practical and tangible ways: God is with us. God is for us. God's posture towards us is relentlessly kind. God created our bodies with beautiful resilience. And God is always, always inviting us toward deeper wholeness as we are held by His steadfast love.

My experience as a therapist has taught me many folks know *about* the love of Jesus, and many of us may know all the Bible verses that support God's love for us as well. Yet, because of our stories and the ways in which pain can get stuck in our physiology, there are many reasons we are kept from fully embodying the truth of this love.

What I especially appreciate about the work Jonathan offers us here is that he presents tools to not just know about these concepts, but instead—how to practice them. He shares his own valuable insights into his healing journey, but also leaves room for the reader to honor their own stories and experiences, too.

Dear ones, in the pages ahead may you feel profoundly known and cared for by Jonathan's words. And may you come to find you are as deeply loved as you ever dared to hope.

With gratitude,  
Aundi Kolber MA, LPC  
Therapist & author of *Try Softer*

## INTRODUCTION

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One evening a few years ago, while sitting in my living room, a question bubbled up from somewhere deep within, “What would your life be like if you didn’t believe every good thing was about to be taken away from you?”

I tried to ignore it and move on with my night. I didn’t believe that, did I? Mine had been a happy childhood, full of exploration and adventure. I was raised by missionary parents and we had traveled the world together with my brother. I had never been abused or neglected or exposed to serious tragedy. Where was this question coming from?

It persisted, the words growing louder, rattling around in my head and my heart until the thin veneer of calm denial began to crack. I considered that from birth to age 30 I had lived at more than 20 addresses across five countries. I had learned to make new friends quickly... only to lose them in a few months and have to start again somewhere new. In my mind’s eye, I recalled how I tended to dominate interactions, squeezing every last ounce of emotional energy out of my encounters with friends, family & colleagues, terrified that each would be my last. Tears trickled down my face as I realised how much of my emotional and psychological landscape was driven by the fear that every good thing was about to be snatched away from me.

As I pondered this discovery over the next few months, I asked God to show me how to deal with it. Some months later, I felt a still small voice within

me speak along these lines, “Jonathan, I love you, and I have surrounded you with people who love you. You struggle to believe it and yet you are the only one who can bring your heart to believe it. It is no one’s responsibility but yours. You need to own the love in your life.”

Over the three years that followed, I did a deep dive into understanding my emotions, my mental health, the connection between the body and the brain, how trauma affects it all and where God fits into the picture. I learned that, whether you had an unstable upbringing or a peaceful one, each of us experiences things that overwhelm our ability to cope. When that happens, we adopt certain behaviours and beliefs in order to survive. Connections are made in our brains, and our subconscious treads and retreads these pathways billions of times until they feel like they are a part of us. We become masters at whatever it is we learned was best for avoiding pain and staying alive. And then life moves on. While some parts of us get stuck in the past.

Like the part of me that believed every good thing was about to be taken away. Or the part of you that believes you will never amount to anything, or that everyone is trying to manipulate you, or that you must earn the love of others, or that you will always be in conflict, or that you will never be seen for who you are.

With one simple—but very loaded—question, God had revealed to me what lay inside my own heart and mind. I don’t know what hidden fears and traumas drive your life but I have experienced healing and growth I never dreamed was possible. Using a variety of tools and methodologies, I learned how to love myself back to wholeness. This devotional is my attempt to bring all those tools together for you in one simple, easy-to-digest package.

After all the years of feeling like we are never enough...  
After all the emotional chaos boiling just under the surface...  
After the depression and the anxiety and the panic attacks...

## INTRODUCTION

After the marital dysfunction...

After the fractured identities and the voices in our heads...

After the numbness...

After the failure...

We can learn to love ourselves the way that God has always loved us.

As I learned to approach myself with compassionate love and grace, my fight-flight-or-freeze reflex began to calm down. It became much easier to be present in the moment, to myself and to others. My inner mental and emotional landscape became clear to me: my patterns of behaviour, coping mechanisms and pain avoidance strategies laid out for me to see. This allowed me to excavate dark corners of my soul and revealed deep wounds that were ready for healing. I began to feel emotionally cohesive, steady and whole. To my greatest surprise, deep within myself, where I feared that I would find only wretchedness and evil, I found a loving God, smiling back at me. By the end of three weeks I felt like a completely different person. By the end of a year, my life and my marriage had been utterly transformed, and ripples of healing were spreading out across my community.

The devotional you are reading is a synthesis of a number of distinct Christian inner healing modalities, clinical psychology practices, and various other forms of wellness and care. I begin by teaching you some simple breathing exercises to relax your body and mind. Next, I show you how to sense your own inner emotional and thought life, as well as how to sense the presence of God in a way that feels uniquely safe to you. You'll then use those practices yourself to gently explore your psychology and allow gracious love to meet every broken fragment of yourself and welcome it home. I have spent some years practicing each of these tools though I am not necessarily an expert in any one of them. At the end of this devotional I suggest some further resources so you can explore any of these subjects in greater depth. This should not be considered an exhaustive healing or

counseling resource but a starting point for a holistic healing journey that integrates your mind, body, soul and spirit, just as God always intended. It is made up of 30 daily readings, each one consisting of a story or reflection, followed by a guided prayer meditation. You need to read the story to understand the context for the meditation. You need to do the meditation in order to actually experience and embody any change or growth in your life. I know it can be difficult to enter a calm, meditative space while also reading instructions, so I've made all the daily meditations available in audio and video, at [jonathanpuddle.com/meditations](http://jonathanpuddle.com/meditations). There's also an official Spotify playlist with songs for each day. On average, you'll need to set aside 10 minutes for the reading, and another 5–10 minutes for the meditation, though I will frequently encourage you to take as long as you need.

The work of paying compassionate attention is, in a sense, learning to steward for ourselves what God already believes about us—that we're valuable and loved. In a way, this work is about giving ourselves permission to receive the love that is available to us. It's less about "arriving" and more about paying attention to ourselves in the compassionate way we've always deserved. — Aundi Kolber, *Try Softer*

The journey inward requires us to face many things that most of us would rather ignore. You will be stretched. You may be prompted to reconsider things you believe about yourself and about God. I will invite you to feel pain that you may have worked hard to suppress or run from. I won't force you to recall any specific painful memories but I will ask you to face yourself very honestly. In doing so, it is possible that traumatic memories from your past may come to light. I know how upsetting and destabilising this can feel, so I have intentionally prepared the material in a way that moves slowly and helps you increase your emotional capacity before you are likely to face anything that might overwhelm you. That being said, you are unique and your journey is your own; it is not possible for me to predict exactly how you will respond or to cater to every possible scenario. While I have laid

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out 30 readings, by no means should you force yourself to undertake this journey in 30 consecutive days. Move at the pace of your own heart and take all the time you need.

Also, I am not a therapist or a doctor and nothing you read here should be construed as medical advice. I cannot guarantee any outcome for you. It is possible that you will uncover things during this process that you need to take to a professional counselor or therapist. If that happens, please do not consider it a failure. To face yourself honestly, to feel and to know what lies within—regardless of the help you need in doing so—is part of your healing journey. For some of you, simply pausing your reading and picking things up again when you feel ready to do so may be sufficient to avoid overwhelm. For others, returning to an earlier reading and moving forward more slowly may be all that you need. If what I ask you to do or consider does not feel safe enough for you, please don't proceed until you are ready. You are allowed to reinterpret my instructions in any way that feels safe and life-giving for you. The whole purpose of this devotional is to give you tools to help you become more aware of yourself in order that you would see your beauty and grow in love for yourself. I'm sharing what has worked for me and what I have learned about God and humanity in the process but this is your journey and you are allowed to direct your own course.

With all of that being said, if you are to discover your heart and learn to love yourself, facing pain is unavoidable. The good news is that the heart and mind can build capacity and grow. You can reframe your own memories and experiences and grow beyond them. Your story is not finished! The path to abundant life may pass through death but trust me when I say it is a path worth taking. The life that is possible on the other side of your pain is better than you could possibly imagine.

One last thing to consider. In my experience, personal growth and discipleship are easier and more fruitful in community. If you have flesh and



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blood people to journey with, get a copy of this devotional for them and do it together. If you don't have anyone around you, then join my community online. You'll have access to other people who have already taken this journey and you'll have access to me as well. You can join us at [patreon.com/jonathanpuddle](https://patreon.com/jonathanpuddle).

God began my healing journey with a question, so I will ask one of you as well, as quoted from an anonymous source: If I asked you to name all of the things you loved, how long would it take before you named yourself?

Let's get started.

## DAY 1

# Your God

*In the beginning, God... — Genesis 1:1*

Welcome! I am glad you're here. For this, our first reading, we will consider the fundamental goodness of God. We'll spend the next few days considering more good news about God and about ourselves. We'll use our thoughts about the goodness and generosity of God as a grounding point, to which we will add breathing exercises in order to relax our minds and bodies. Let's begin.

Imagine, if you can, a time when there was absolutely nothing. A time before time itself. The empty nothingness before creation was brought into being. There exists only one thing: the divine mystery of potential life.

Can you sense the vibration, the hum, the radiation of this mystery? The presence of something or someone intrinsically good and generous that pre-dates and supersedes our understanding of life itself. The cosmic progenitor of life and love. Some people refer to it simply as "the Universe" and imply a basic goodness to the arc of existence with language like, "I am waiting

for the Universe to show me the way.” I think these people are closer to the truth than many of us realise but I find this language to be a bit impersonal, at the very least.

The ancient Hebrew scriptures describe in poetic verse how God created the heavens and the earth. They describe this God creating light before any *sources* of light existed. Modern science confirms this: cosmic microwave background radiation has been identified as light that was cast in all directions at the moment of the universe’s creation, and continues expanding to the outer boundaries of existence today.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.  
— John 1:5

God is this light and life itself and God is present within all that God made. Holding all things together is the kind, generous energy that willed all things into being in the first place. Underneath, within and surrounding the substance of the universe you and I are so familiar with is an energy and a consciousness that is good and is personally knowable. This God is *a* being who loves you while it is also *Being Itself*.

For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. — Colossians 1:16–17

The Hebrew Bible records the name of this God who is *Being Itself* as “I am.” What a perfect name for a relatable, personified cosmic mystery. As the scriptural narrative continues, metaphors and language are expanded, until this conscious, loving energy is spoken of as being three persons: the Father, the Spirit, and the Son. They say these three persons make up a single God, a triune being, who is neither male nor female but who encapsulates

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all potentials and possibilities within itself. A God who blesses reality to burst forth from the void, creating life and light and planets and stars to house our existence.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. — John 1:1–4

Imagine a time when there was absolutely nothing. Against the nothingness, imagine the Trinity of God, where love flows between Father, Spirit and Son, each of whom endlessly empties themselves into the others. Imagine the undulating channels of joyous energy that flow within this community. Now picture creation itself bursting forth from this family of selfless love: space and time originating in the heart of the Father, flowing outward by the Spirit, manifesting through the Son of God. Envision their divine life birthing our universe simply to embody more joy and more love.

The Hebrew scriptures go on to say that that same God made you and me in its own image so that we would be like God and reflect God's nature. God gave you a body and declared it good. God surveyed the entirety of creation and declared it very good. God made your body and this world holy and good. God's presence sustains it and holds it all together, moment by moment. This universe—and everything in it—is a beautiful, sacred temple that reflects and welcomes the glory of its creator.

If I was God and if I was thinking about you, I would think that you were just like me.

I would think you are pretty freaking amazing.

I would love you.

And I would hope that you knew and believed just how incredible and worthy of my love you are.

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And if I was talking to you right now, I would tell you that you are allowed to love yourself the same way God loves you. You are allowed to pour out love upon yourself in endless extravagance because you carry the very image of God inside you and that's exactly what God does. I would tell you that you are allowed to receive and enjoy that love, basking in it, revelling in it, savouring it, every day, forever. And not only are you allowed to, but since you were created on the template of a being who is conscious, loving energy itself, it is actually your nature to love yourself too. It is how your humanity is meant to work.

You are meant to love yourself and you are meant to love others and you are meant to embody love itself.

But we shall start with loving you.

Without any of your accomplishments or your identities, or achievements or your failures, you are enough to be loved by yourself and by God.

You are enough.

How could you be anything else?

Park all of your thoughts about righteousness and sin and all the times you've hurt your spouse or yelled at your kids. Park all the things that make you feel like you've never been enough for anyone. Park your knowledge that we do genuinely need one another. We'll address all that later. For now, let us return to the quiet emptiness before time and space began where God is alone and God is love and God is enough. It's here in the quiet, sacred emptiness that a dream takes form in the mind of God. A dream called you.

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## MEDITATION

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Let's start this exercise by sitting comfortably in a chair or on the ground in a neutral position. Close your eyes and take a deep breath in through your nose, hold it for a moment, and then breathe out slowly through your nose or mouth, whichever is more comfortable.

Take another deep, steady breath in through your nose, hold, and release it.

Continue breathing this way for 30 seconds as you feel your mind and body relax.

As you breathe, consider that you are the dream of God. God imagined you and wanted you to exist. Having no form, not having become anyone or achieved anything, you were seen, known and loved by God. In every way, you are enough for God.

As you breathe, consider that God created all of existence in order to house you. So that you could experience life and so that God could treasure you doing so. God gave you life so that you could enjoy it and enjoy God who gave it to you. You don't have to do anything to please God.

God is present in everything and holds all of creation together. With each breath you take, draw the presence of God into your lungs and belly. Imagine the divine, life-giving energy of love, who gently but firmly holds all things together, entering your lungs, mixing with your blood and flowing out to every part of you.

## YOU ARE ENOUGH

Imagine your body filling up with God as you breathe in. See God's golden light trickle through your arms, your hands, your fingers, your chest, your belly, your groin, your legs, your feet, your toes.

Feel God's goodness, God's joyous energy, all throughout your being. Feel the peace that God's presence brings you. You are allowed to spend as much time here as you like. We'll continue tomorrow.

## DAY 2

# Your body

*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. — John 1:14a ESV*

Once upon a time God became a human being. The creator of the universe was implanted into the uterus of a young girl and for nine months God was nourished by the blood and oxygen of God's own creation. The placenta of a human woman ensured God's survival. When the time was right, the woman's muscles contracted and after a few painful hours, God was pushed out of her vagina, covered in mucous and amniotic fluid. His tiny lungs breathed air for the first time. His tiny nostrils smelled the scent of dung and animal feed, and he nosed his way to his mother's breast, where he drank milk and felt safe.

Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel even before he was conceived.  
— Luke 2:21 NLT

Before all that happened, a young girl got her first period. Her hips started to widen; she was becoming a woman. Every month she would have to sit



on a bundle of rags and, when her bleeding stopped, visit a priest to make a sacrifice and be deemed ceremonially clean. One day an angel appeared to her and told her she would have a baby and that her baby would be the son of God.

That baby would grow up into a young man, who tasted food and drank wine, who inhaled the dusty smell of first-century village life. A dark, lean, hairy man with kind, safe eyes and strong, gentle hands who was God in the flesh. A man who discovered his body and partnered with it to build things and to love people and to enjoy being human.

Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all the people.  
— Luke 2:52 NLT

I don't know how you feel about your body. Maybe your body feels young and strong. Maybe you are thankful for the benefits it has afforded you. Maybe you are scared about what will happen as it ages. Perhaps you feel your body has been a liability, exposing you to the unwanted attention of bullies or perverts. Maybe your body doesn't work quite as it should. Maybe you have an uneasy truce with your body. Maybe you've worked hard on your body, and you are proud of your upgrades.

Sit for a moment and let your body feel itself. Take a deep breath. Release it. How does the air sit in your lungs? Do they expand easily and confidently? Does your chest puff out? Do you take up space with ease? Or is the air constricted, held within a ribcage that does not want to take up any more space in this world than absolutely necessary?

Feel the emotions held in your body, if you can. Is your body happy? At peace? Does your body appreciate the way you drive it? Or does it resent you? Do you feel tension or tightness anywhere? We'll be practicing feeling

## DAY 2: YOUR BODY

our bodies a lot but for now I just want you to consider the baseline of how your body shows up in this world.

Whatever your relationship to your body is, your body is more precious to God than you can possibly imagine. The creator of the entire universe, who called each new thing “good” didn’t call anything “*very* good” until it was finished, which includes your human body. And having made human bodies for us, God saw fit to inhabit one too. The divine source, the progenitor of existence, I Am, the one that is *Being itself*, took on a human body that eats and drinks and pees and poops just like you and me.

Close your eyes for a moment and imagine Mary, the mother of Jesus, feeling life moving inside her womb. She places her hands on the sides of her belly and feels the gentle fluttering within. Enclosed within her flesh, kept warm and safe in the darkness, a tiny human being is growing. Picture his little mouth opening and drawing amniotic fluid into his fetal lungs, stretching their capacity, testing their capabilities, exercising their muscles. See his wee chest expand ever so slightly. Feel his heartbeat, rapid but steady. Each day he grows larger and stronger.

Once, you were an unborn child just like Jesus. Your body grew inside your mother’s womb where, hopefully, it was safe. Whether born via C-section or the old-fashioned way, your infant body came out into the world and began taking up space among us all. You grew taller and stronger. Your body began to decide things about the world. Maybe it decided that the world was good and safe. Maybe it decided it was dangerous and painful. Whatever your body’s experience of life has been, loving yourself the way God loves you requires you to embrace the space that you take up.

No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. — Ephesians 5:29 NLT

## YOU ARE ENOUGH

A long time ago, God became a human being. Just like you. Your journey to loving yourself and believing that you are enough starts with learning to see and love your body the same way God sees and loves it.

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## MEDITATION

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Sit or stand comfortably in a neutral position. Close your eyes, and take a deep breath in through your nose, hold it for a moment, and then breathe out slowly through your nose or mouth, whichever is more comfortable. Take another deep, steady breath in through your nose, hold it, and release it.

Continue breathing this way for 30 seconds and start to feel the way the air travels into your nose, down the back of your throat, into your lungs and your belly. Feel the way your body and mind relax as you breathe.

Feel your lungs expand with each breath. Give your lungs, your chest and your belly permission to expand and take up more space.

With your hands below your tummy, interlace your fingers, and—as you breathe in—trace the outline of an imaginary beach ball in front of your belly, until your hands are palms down around chest level. As you breathe out, push your palms down towards the ground until your arms are fully extended downward. With your fingers still interlaced, breathe in as you swing your arms forward and upward all the way over your head until your palms are facing the sky. Split your arms apart and breathe out as you bring

## DAY 2: YOUR BODY

them down on each side of you, fully extended, tracing a large circle all the way around you.

Repeat the beach ball exercise as you breathe in. Push your hands down once more as you breathe out. Swing your arms up as you breathe in again. Trace the space around you as you bring your arms down and breathe out. Repeat this three or four times.

Breathe in and take up space.

Breathe out and release the space back to the world.

This is *your* space.

Your body is your own private, personal piece of existence that no one is allowed to interfere with. As you breathe, consider that this is you and that you are safe and you are entitled to take up all the space that your body needs.

Place your hand on your heart.

Take a breath and feel your chest rise with it.

This is you.

You are an exquisite, unique, wonderful creation.

You are beloved by God.

Your body is a gift. God has one too.

You and your body belong here. This is your space.

You are allowed to be here and take up this space.

Stay in this quiet moment, breathing in and feeling your body, for as long as you feel comfortable. If you enjoy dance or yoga or tai chi other physical embodiment exercises, feel free to tune in to your body in that way as well. We'll talk more tomorrow.

## DAY 17

# All emotions are good

*I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at  
night my heart instructs me. — Psalm 16:7*

How is your body feeling today? Is it carrying any tension? What might that sensation relate to? What name would you give to those emotions? Do you think they are positive or negative emotions?

Starting to feel everything that's going on inside can be rather scary. If you've felt overwhelmed or come close to it at any point, I certainly understand. Popular culture talks a lot about negative emotions and depression and spiralling into despair. It's not uncommon for Christians to encourage others not to hang around too long in so-called negative emotions. Get angry if you need to, sure, but don't stay there. The insinuation seems to be that we might get stuck in an emotional state which somehow becomes permanent, or that we might fall into a bottomless pit of misery. I wasn't really conscious of that fear when I began to face my own emotions but as the floodgates opened and I stared into the maw, I quickly realised that I was terrified of falling into an endless abyss of

anger and sadness. I knew from experience that depression wasn't simply sadness on overdrive but I still had a powerful fear that if I really engaged all my emotions, the negative ones would suck me down into a deep dark hole that I might never climb out of.

The good news is that this isn't true at all. It's not even remotely how emotions work. As we've discussed, emotions are a complex relationship between physical and chemical signals working together to keep you alive and bring your attention to what's happening around you. Provided that you have not had a brain injury, your body is not going to latch on to any one emotion and keep you there. Emotions are not fearsome creatures with claws that hook themselves into us and refuse to let go. For the majority, with some awareness and practice, you can learn to smoothly lane switch from one emotion to the next and to peace itself. You don't need to fear a bottomless pit.

It is worth pointing out that some kinds of trauma can manifest in the brain as a physical brain injury. Whether from a specific event or from prolonged exposure to circumstances that kept you outside your window of tolerance, injuries within the brain can indeed occur. Sometimes the emotional circuitry is damaged and starts to send the wrong signals, releasing the wrong chemicals, or not releasing any at all. This is often what causes clinical depression, anxiety attacks, bipolar disorder and so on; the unique physiology of your body combined with the events of your life result in damage to the emotional and memory circuits of your brain. But there is hope! Finding a good doctor and the right medication can help to get the proper chemicals flowing once more. Given time, and above all, safety, permanent healing of the wounded parts of your brain is possible.

In my experience, going down the path of feeling and accepting all my feelings has only led me back to God.

Jonathan: “Oh, hello... I didn’t expect to find you here.”

God: “That’s understandable, people have told you all kinds of crazy things about your feelings and your soul and so on. But I made you in my image. I put my goodness into your very DNA. You look like me. Of course, I’d be here.”

Jonathan: “Well, that changes everything.”

I no longer use the label “negative emotions” because God didn’t give me anything negative. Everything with God is motion, growth, life, and life abundantly. That means anger is a part of abundant life. And grief is a part of abundant life. Feeling these emotions, accepting them, honouring them, and letting them flow through you is the way to release the energy they carry so that you can find out what lies on the other side. Psychologists often use the analogy of a train tunnel. Staring into the void ahead is scary. It looks all-consuming and there’s no guarantee that the black hole goes anywhere good. It’s only by getting on that train and riding it to its destination that you discover the hole is in fact a tunnel, and before long you’ll pop out the other side into daylight once more.

Your emotions are good. They are trying to help you. Every one of them is a good gift. Permitting yourself to feel your emotions is a righteous, wise, mature thing to do. Letting others see your emotions is a precious gift. How could it be otherwise? Emotions are the outflow of a human heart, a heart made in the image of God.

Next time you find yourself crying in a public space, you don’t need to apologise for it. If you’re going to cry it’s because your body and brain need to, it’s the right thing to happen, and you don’t need to apologise for doing the right thing. When you freely emote in a way that doesn’t cause fear or harm to others around you, you’re giving them a precious, counter-cultural gift: the gift of your humanity.

Let me clarify once more that feeling and honouring your emotions doesn't mean doing the actions they tell you to do. You're in charge, not your inner child. Honouring that little one and hearing them out doesn't mean obeying their dictates. When you were a child, honouring your parents looked a lot like being obedient to what they told you to do. As adults, honouring our parents looks more like listening to them and giving them time and showing we care, rather than obedience. It's very similar with our emotions. When we were children, we obeyed our emotions, we did what they told us to do because we didn't know any better. As adults though, we listen to our emotions, we respect them, we value them and learn from them. But we don't have to do everything they tell us to do. And we can also be sensitive that the expression of some emotions can be triggering for others.

Your emotions aren't the totality of who you are. *You* aren't your emotions. You're so much more than biochemical reactions! But without your emotions, you're not what you could be. You're not the fullness of who you are. Your emotions are a beautiful, passionate, important piece of the whole picture that makes you, you. Every one of them is good.

If any part of you still knots itself up inside when I say that all emotions are good, consider that you and I have often only seen destructive examples of the most powerful emotions, like anger. If you had a parent or other figure who was explosively angry, it's not crazy to adopt the belief that anger is bad. That's very understandable and if you're terrified of anger (or any other emotion), please don't feel any shame about it. Consider what those emotions could look like if they were cleansed and purified by the God of love.

Anger exposes the truth that something we hold dear has been violated. This helps us recognise what is precious to us. Anger is an advocate!



Sadness lets us know that something we expected to happen did not happen (or vice versa). This helps us recognise our expectations. Sadness clarifies our vision!

These are two examples of emotions that I used to run from, that God baptised for me, and which I can now experience without shame or fear. Understanding that all emotions are good, that all emotions are a gift from God, that my emotions are not the fullness of who I am, that my emotions informed me and that they will pass in time, has transformed my life. May you find the courage to face the black hole, enter it, and discover it is actually a passage with a brighter life on the other side.

Who gives intuition to the heart and instinct to the mind? — Job 38:36 NLT

For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will fill you with joy.  
— Proverbs 2:10 NLT

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## MEDITATION

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Close your eyes and begin your breathing exercises.  
Put your hand on your heart and let yourself come to peace.

This is you.

You are safe.

You are enough.

You are floating in an endless ocean of God's perfect love.

## YOU ARE ENOUGH

Your heart has good gifts to give you. You can receive them any time you are ready.

Using your own name, say this to yourself:

"\_\_\_\_\_, I want to receive the gifts you have for me. Some of the things you hold scare me a little, but I want to learn what they are and for what reason God has given them to me. Jesus, I need you to baptise my emotions. I need my anger, my sadness, my disgust, to go down into the waters with you and come out new. I want to see every part of me as a gift. At the right time, I will welcome the advocacy of my own anger. At the right time, I will welcome the cleansing clarification of my own sadness. I am not inviting more anger or sadness to come into my life but when the time is right, I want to feel all that I have bottled up within myself. \_\_\_\_\_, I love you and I want to feel everything you have for me."

Allow your feelings to flow. Continue breathing and remain present to the emotions for as long as you feel you need to.

## DAY 18

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# Grief is praise

*Grief is praise, because it is the natural way love honors what it misses. — Martín Prechtel, The Smell of Rain on Dust*

Fear of what lies inside keeps many of us from ever slowing down enough to risk feeling it. That was certainly the case for me. Such fear isn't totally unfounded! We know we've experienced things that we'd rather not remember, let alone re-live. Rubbing up against the deep well of sadness that our inner child holds is often enough to scare us away from the process and not delve any deeper. Admitting that we have this sadness, admitting that we have needs that have gone unmet, requires us to grieve what was lost or what never was. Today we're going to talk about the beautiful, precious gift of grief.

As I explained on Day 16, I tried very hard to skip over the feelings of sadness and loneliness that welled up early in my meditative journey. When I started feeling so-called negative emotions, I tried to rebuke them. I thought they were demons trying to oppress me. I used all the tools I had for dealing

with sin and temptation and I applied them to the emotions I didn't want to feel. And my own heart called me out on it!

My inner child raged within me, accusing me of lying when I said that I loved myself, and of having no integrity or willingness to listen to what it was trying to tell me. I was like the proverbial ostrich putting its head in the sand to avoid hearing something painful and scary. I feared that owning up to my feelings of sadness and loneliness, acknowledging the needs that had gone unmet in my life, would be too devastating to admit. I did not want to risk admitting that my marriage wasn't satisfying me in the way I thought it should, or that my friendships might be codependent, or that I had a chronic problem with emotional boundaries. I didn't want to risk discovering that I had been self-sabotaging my entire life, that the fulfillment and acceptance I had blamed others for not giving me might have been my own responsibility all along.

Here's the good news wrapped in irony: A heart that feels sadness about pain and loss is a heart that is healthy. Sadness is the appropriate and right response to loss, just as anger is the appropriate and right response to violation.

What this means is that the terrible sadness you desperately want to avoid feeling is actually the loving affirmation that you have loved and lost. One of the best words we can use to understand grief is the word praise. Grief is your heart singing songs of longing for that which it loved. It is the most beautiful and painful of sensations, perhaps the most precious emotion of all. The heart that has lived is a heart that has loved, and a heart that has loved has almost certainly also lost. If you have never allowed yourself to feel the things your heart has lost then I would like you to consider whether you have truly admitted what it is you loved at all.

“You have to weep over your lost pains so that they can gradually leave you, and you can become free to live fully in the new place without melancholy or home-sickness.” — Henri Nouwen, *The Inner Voice of Love*

I learned that lesson thanks to a girl in my Grade 12 English class. She was beautiful, kind, funny and smart and we became good friends. Since she came from a different religious background to myself I put no stock in pursuing a relationship with her, and after graduation we fell out of contact. Fast forward 10 years, I’m married with three kids and am living not far from where we went to school together. One day she came to mind. I tried to find her online but she didn’t seem to use social media. Over the next few weeks I developed something of an obsession, trying to discover where she lived, what had happened to her, what her story was. I was embarrassed to share this with my wife as I didn’t really understand it myself, but after a few weeks I was crying out to God to help me because she was constantly on my mind.

Then one day, while driving across town, it hit me: back in high school, I had fallen in love with that girl and I had never admitted it to myself. I said out loud, “I loved her” and then I burst into tears, salty truth spilling down my cheeks as I finally honoured what my inner child had been trying to tell me. “You loved that girl and you didn’t pursue her and I’ve been holding onto it ever since.” I was finally honest about what I had loved and what had not been and I grieved it. Within a day or two, the obsession was gone from my mind. I never found her but I also didn’t need to anymore. The emotion and the history were honoured and released.

Maija, my wife, had a similar experience regarding me. She is a naturally driven person with strong boundaries and a finely tuned sensor for control and manipulation. On our honeymoon I inadvertently said something

that triggered her sense of self-protection, and she put walls up to protect herself. We spent the next 14 years of our marriage stuck in a cycle where I felt emotionally isolated from her, pushing me to seek out emotional connection with other women, which reinforced the hurt I had caused and amplified her sense that she needed to protect herself from me. It took each of us dismantling our pain management systems and excavating our stories for her to finally admit to herself at a deep level that she actually loved me, and that if I left her, it would hurt her. She had never admitted it to herself because that would give me power over her, it would make her vulnerable in a way she didn't want to be. Committing to the risk of love and owning it required her to grieve what was lost but it also gave her the courage to let the walls down. Admitting to the pain I had caused her gave me the push I needed to develop the boundaries that will help prevent that pain from happening again.

The decision we will all come to eventually is whether to face this sadness or not. It feels horrible and our self-protective psychology will try to trick us into thinking the self-discovery process is hopeless. It is tempting to think that if we encounter the feeling of hopelessness during the process then the process itself must be hopeless. The irony is rich. The only way you will ever feel the sadness or hopelessness is because you have decided to feel what you've been carrying all along. Your emotions are always revealing the truth of what's in your heart. Here's the truth: you've been carrying sadness and pain your entire life. Why? Because life is hard and painful. Existence, while wonderful and worth embracing, is not without pain. The mind would rather not deal with that pain so it has developed effective systems of compartmentalisation. As you bring those systems into alignment with your adult willpower, you will feel what your body has been holding on to all this time and you will give it the gift of freedom.

If you are sitting in great sadness or feeling great grief, then let me encourage you: your heart is healthy and expressing exactly what it should

be expressing. This world is full of loss and pain. It hurts. It hurts God too. It's not the way God meant for us to experience life. But we must keep feeling it. It is the most precious gift you can give yourself and those you care for. The honesty of love. The love of honesty.

Grief is praise. Let your heart praise today.

To love at all is to be vulnerable. — C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*

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## MEDITATION

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Close your eyes and begin your breathing exercises.  
Put your hand on your heart and let yourself come to peace.

This is you.  
You are safe.  
You are enough.  
You are floating in an endless ocean of God's perfect love.

Without dredging up any specific painful memories, simply lean into the sadness and grief that is inside of you. Let it well up and don't hold it back.

As you breathe in, draw the sadness up from within as if you're pulling up a bucket from a deep well.  
As you breathe out, let your shoulders droop and let the weight of disappointment fall fully upon your shoulders.

## YOU ARE ENOUGH

Let the tears come.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

When you feel the floodwaters start to reduce, picture yourself getting down on one knee in front of your inner child and letting it cry on your shoulder. Speak words of presence and commitment over yourself.

"I see you. I feel this. I feel you."

"I am not going to leave you alone with this sadness. I am never going to leave you at all."

"Your emotions are beautiful. They are a gift. I am honoured to feel them and share them with you."

"I am so thankful that you are a part of me."

"I will honour my commitment to feel everything you have for me to feel."

"Your grief is praise. I love to watch you praise."

Continue breathing and remaining present to yourself for as long as you need to. If you feel overwhelmed at any point, look for Jesus and ask for his support.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jonathan Puddle is an award-winning writer, speaker, husband and father who hosts the popular interview show, The Puddcast. Having travelled the world and lived in many nations, Jonathan teaches from a culturally rich & spiritually inclusive framework. Before becoming a writer, Jonathan spent 10 years in charity leadership and administration, and he remains a visionary thinker with a strategic mind. He writes about freedom, hope and sacrificial love at [jonathanpuddle.com](http://jonathanpuddle.com). Jonathan loves dance music, science fiction, good food, dark beer, and long walks on the beach. He was born in New Zealand, so he does know a few things about beaches. Jonathan and his family reside in Guelph, Canada where they pastor families and children at a thriving community church.

**JONATHAN PUDDLE** 