

Healthy Emotions

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Emotions are a vital part of being human. We feel things. Our senses stimulate feelings, and it is not wrong to have feelings. God gave us these things so that our praise and worship of Him would bring about a result. When we are rightly related to the Lord and to His Word, our emotions will operate in a healthy way. They will respond, which is what they were created for. Our responses will be true, honest, lovely, and pure (see Philippians 4:8).

The problems that we have with our emotions are really problems of order. What we feel should never take the lead in our decision-making, for we have been equipped with a mind and a heart. Right thinking produces right responses. Our responses are really the result of our choices. God equipped us with volition, which is the power to choose. The information we receive and store in our minds and hearts should provide right counsel for right choices. Right choices will lead to right feelings and healthy emotions.

Right thinking is thinking with God accord-

ing to the Scriptures. But in today's world, emotions and feelings have been exalted above right thinking. This has produced trouble in many hearts. Depression has debilitated so many. So few really know the true love of God, so they follow the guide of their emotions and often wind up defeated and discouraged.

This booklet will examine how emotions must be put in context. It will reveal the God-designed place emotions are to occupy so that they can serve and not rule the believer in his worship and walk with Jesus Christ.

Chapter One

DEPRESSION, REACTION
AND RESPONSE

“Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

“For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.

“For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

“I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

“Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:

“Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me” (Philippians 2:25-30).

In this chapter in Philippians, we get a picture of Epaphroditus and his situation. I believe that this pastor was suffering from a bona fide depression. His depression had nothing to do with anger, self-image, personal sin, or resentment. His feelings at this time were the result of the purity of his love and a broken heart because of a longing to be with people he loved.

Various forms of depression develop from various behaviors, and all behavior is the result of certain choices related to certain causes. I am explaining these categories very generally. Please don't take these definitions in a medical or clinical sense. But I am describing these forms of depression to provide you with a measure of spiritual understanding.

There are natural causes, supernatural causes, and multiple causes for depression. One form of depression represents an inability to function socially. Clinical depression reveals a possibility that something is wrong in the chemical balance of our bodies. A person's body chemistry can be affected when he experiences something tremendous and traumatic.

Any one of us may experience some form of depression because of a wrong focus if we simply center ourselves on something outside of Christ and His Word. This distortion continues until we refocus ourselves on the right object of

our faith.

A poor self-image may spring up in people when they internalize a sense of rejection, and their feelings and emotions are allowed to assume control. Perhaps we feel that we are not as successful as we would like to be. This feeling is very often the result of wrong ambition.

Depression is often caused by wounds—the strokes that hit people in the unconscious and subconscious mind (Isaiah 30:26). When these strokes fester into wounds, they paralyze capacities to function in the receptivity of grace and truth. A person who is easily angered in his emotions is most likely a very wounded person. His wounds probably are very deep, and he does not know how to regulate his responses. This brings feelings of guilt and defeat. These issues must be resolved by the grace and love of Christ.

Corporate Reactions

To leaders, I want to say this: When you begin to be blessed in your ministry, be watchful for momentum tests. Your success is noticed by the enemy, and his program is one of distraction, hindrance, and perversity. The devil wants to get you off track and out of the plan of God. My charge to you is this: Don't get foolish, don't get careless. Watch for momentum tests. After great victories, there can come great temptations.

We need to lead people into decreasing so that Christ may increase by faith. Christ increases in whatever growth He gives us. Our churches should be made up of people who grow together in grace. Success should be a humbling thing. It should prompt us to decrease in the flesh and increase in Christ. Any victory we experience comes by grace through faith. It should be as water upon the soil of our hearts. There should be great growth.

No matter how spiritual I am, I am always very close to deception. My heart is deceitful. It is desperately wicked. Even at my best, I am just a decision away from turning toward evil and being driven along by feelings and emotion. You would be shocked at how circumstances could distract us into betrayal through sight and emotions. We can fall into human evaluations very easily. Therefore, we must learn to guard our hearts and keep them from being deceived.

Think with God and learn to make right decisions in grace and faith.

Chapter Two

THE KEY TO GUARDING YOUR HEART

“Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name’s sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went.

“And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.

“For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give

you an heart of flesh.

“And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

“And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

“I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you.

“And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen” (Ezekiel 36:22-30).

Let me begin this chapter by talking about what the heart is and what it is not. I need to be able to examine my heart without entering into condemnation. I need to allow God to reveal my real motivations, for the heart is the supreme center of all motivation.

The heart is also communicational center for all of my thoughts, all of my responses, and all of my experiences in word and in deed. It is the place where my emotions respond, appreciate, or depreciate. It is the place where my decisions are made.

You may look up some little commentary and find another definition for the heart. Some refer to it as the seat of affections. But that is en-

tirely too narrow a definition. The heart is so important and so vital to all that we are.

When you received Christ, God gave you a new heart and new spirit. It comes in this order because the Word of God produces the substance and abundance in our hearts that will develop the God-consciousness of our human spirits. Therefore, it is very important that we keep our hearts covered and protected.

Clear, Doctrinal Thinking

First of all, a believer must develop a thorough understanding of positional truth and recognize this as the wall of fire that it is for us (see Zechariah 2:1-5). God has purchased us by His blood. He saw us in Himself from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). He will never leave us nor forsake us (Joshua 1:9; Hebrews 13:5).

Next, always remember that Bible doctrine is the mind of Christ on every subject. It is the inspiration and power of God's Kingdom. When I have the mind of Christ and live in the inspiration of God's Kingdom, I am not double-minded. My heart is not divided.

"Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made

goodly images.

“Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images” (Hosea 10:1-2).

“A double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8).

Keeping fear out of the equation is so important. Fear freezes people from going on with their lives. We are human, and we do fail. When we fail, we must not accept thoughts of condemnation and intimidation. Ignore the projection that comes saying, “Surely, you will do this again.” The law of fear has been overcome by the law of life and love that comes to us from Christ Himself.

Perfect love casts out fear. If you do find yourself failing again in the same area, refuse the condemning thought and confess it to God. Isolate the failure, rebound, and go on, keeping the truth of your position in Christ in view.

Godly Relationships

Have fellowship with positive people. This is so important. We should avoid negative people unless, of course, we are counseling and ministering in some way. Negative people bring in an atmosphere, a field of influence. Their fields are fields of unbelief or, worse, carnality. We certainly can love negative people. We pray for them and

go as far as God leads in helping them. We never want to hurt them any more than they have already been hurt. Judging them does no good, so we should avoid that. Still, we must not receive the negativity that they project and confess.

Faith-filled people bring in faith-filled fields and atmospheres. These are the people I want to be around. Positive fellowship helps me keep my volition positive. In these circles of friends, I learn to confess positive Christianity with integrity and without rationalization. Humility is present and Christ lifts me out of emotional cycles that come from negative circumstances, sicknesses, or trials.

How Old Are You?

Personally, I need to recognize that God's mercies are new every morning. Every day is brand-new. Purpose never to become familiar with yourself, with Christ, or with the people that you know and love. Cast down the vain imaginations of mid-life crises. Pride is at the root of such an attitude.

People really don't know how old they are so they talk of having a "mid-life crisis" and the problems of getting older. People who are over-occupied with growing old have heart problems, their self-esteem suffers, and their self-evaluation sinks lower and lower. Negative measures

of self-consciousness cause them to withdraw into their emotions and toward diverse forms of sublimation that become available.

Please remember that seemingly young people may be very close to the end of their days on earth. Guard your heart against the wrong estimate of the “now.” This moment is all that’s guaranteed. Live in it with Christ. Experience the Holy Spirit’s joy right here and right now.

Chapter Three

VICTORIOUS LIVING

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

“Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Romans 8:28-30).

God is working His grace into us so that we can deny ungodliness and worldly lust. His design is for our lives to be filled with doctrine so that we can function by faith in this present evil world. The Lord must work grace and peace into me because nothing else will drive out the negative tendencies toward frustration, defeat, and rejection.

Without having a doctrinally oriented heart, it would be very easy for us to be carried away

by the various winds of influence that blow into our lives. Satan, who is a wily and crafty adversary, preys upon our weaknesses. His methods are developing constantly. He keeps attacking believers in their soft spots, promoting lasciviousness and sensual thought patterns. When our emotions latch on to these patterns, our behavior is affected, and we choose to do things in emotionally reactive ways.

God, however, can work into us the right patterns of thinking. We can see His work in us, and we can experience great deliverance.

God is love. We are under an eternal covenant. God is all-grace, all-mercy, and all-patient. He can wait me out. My emotional cries do not move Him. He knows why I am where I am, and He knows what the result of my situation will be.

The Lord works into me grace, mercy, and patience. My right choices to receive His truth regarding these areas establish me in the substance of His attributes. His quality of life now takes the place of what was in me before. Rivers of living water begin springing up in me. Problems are worked out and the characteristics of God's nature are worked in.

The result? I have healthy emotions that respond to truth—and *only* to truth.

The Process to Power

I am sorry to say that this is a process. It doesn't happen instantaneously. God leads us in a circumspect walk with Him. Refusing to receive condemnation in this process is the key for my emotional health. Condemnation only strengthens the grip of my weakness upon my emotions.

That's why I follow hard after God and walk in the light of Truth. That is the only way. It is how Christ led the apostle Paul, as we can see from reading Romans 7 as it leads into Romans 8. Paul did not condemn himself while being confronted with his weaknesses. Neither did he accept his weaknesses or let them control him. He hated the wretched old man and the sin nature attached to him. Still, Paul saw that there was no use in self-condemnation.

Our victory starts with grasping this reality: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). My sentence of condemnation was fulfilled at the Cross. The blood of Christ sealed my pardon under the New Covenant. Now the law of the Spirit of Life reigns where once the law of sin and death was in charge.

The righteousness of Christ has been fulfilled

in us, for it could never have been fulfilled *by* us. Our instructions now are to follow after the Spirit and to ignore the initiations of our carnal minds. We must let God lead us in Truth, and the Truth will fill our hearts as we operate in faith.

All Things Work Together

God promised that He will make all things work together for good (Romans 8:28). We may fall into trouble, but the Spirit groans for us, initiates toward us, and attempts to draw us back into full fellowship. Everything that we experience, the Father uses for our sake.

Allow me to close with those great verses from Romans 8. Let these words keep your heart and guard your mind. Let God's Truth speak to your emotions. Let this be the basis for all of your responses in life:

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

“As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

“Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:31-39).

CONCLUSION

You have read this booklet. It was put into your hands with an eternal purpose. What these truths from the Bible can do is transform your memory center. Your mind and heart have been renovated in some way. Perhaps the purpose of God has been reemphasized in your heart as never before.

But remember how fickle we can be as hearers. We are so forgetful sometimes. Things can be snatched from us because of moments of indecision and slothfulness. Meditate on what you have read and what you hear from your pulpit and what you get when you read the Bible for yourself. The Living Word stored up inside of you is what will keep your thinking straight and your emotions healthy.

All the communications of the Holy Spirit will make deep changes inside of you. You will grow into a living epistle of truth. Casual and foolish ideas will become very apparent to you. Reflection and meditation shall draw you into fellowship with the Spirit. Renewal and intense

rehearsal of truth will take you beyond yourself. It will give you peace that passes understanding. You will be fitted for all spiritual battles.

When trouble comes, practice the Truth and sing to yourself in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Those melodies will stabilize you and guide you. Joy will be your strength.