
Scripture quotations marked (KJV) are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

CONTENTS

Introduction 7
1 How Not To Be Led by Your Feelings 13
2 Healing of Damaged Emotions, Part 1 43
3 Healing of Damaged Emotions, Part 2 65
4 Emotions and the Process of Forgiveness 97
5 Mood Swings 121
6 Understanding and Overcoming Depression 141
7 He Restoreth My Soul 167
8 Rooted in Shame 189
9 Understanding Co-Dependence 215
10 Restoring the Inner Child 249
Conclusion 273
Endnotes 275
Bibliography 279
How Not to Be Led by Your Feelings

There are several definitions of the word “emotions.” According to Webster’s dictionary, the root source of this term is the Latin ex-movere, meaning to move away.¹

I find that definition very interesting because that is what carnal, uncrucified emotions try to do — to move us to follow them away from or out of the will of God.

In fact, that is Satan’s plan for our lives — to get us to live by our carnal feelings so we never walk in the Spirit.

The dictionary also says that emotions are “a complex, usually strong subjective response…involving physiological changes as a preparation for action.”² That is true. Because of their complexity, emotions are not easy to explain, which sometimes makes dealing with them difficult.

For example, there are times when the Holy Spirit is leading us to do something, and our emotions become involved, so we get all excited about doing it. The emotional support helps us feel that God really does want us to do the thing. We perceive the emotional support to be confirmation of God’s will.

At other times, the Lord will move us to do a certain thing, and our emotions will not want anything to do with what God is revealing to us and asking us to do. They give no support at all.
MANAGING YOUR EMOTIONS

At those times it is harder to obey God. We are very dependent upon emotional support. If we lack understanding about the fickle nature of emotions, Satan can use them — or the lack of them — to keep us out of God’s will. I firmly believe that no person will ever walk in God’s will and ultimately in victory if he takes counsel with his emotions.

EMOTIONS OR GOD?

The wise also will hear and increase in learning, and the person of understanding will acquire skill and attain to sound counsel [so that he may be able to steer his course rightly].... Proverbs 1:5

Because there are times when we are allowed to enjoy our emotions and the support they give us, and there are also times when our emotions work against us, it is often hard to teach people how to know when they are hearing from God and when they are listening to their emotions.

Just because we have a “gooey” feeling we are supposed to give something away does not necessarily mean it is the will of God. I love to give things to people. It is really one of the greatest joys of my life, but I have had to learn that giving to people doesn’t always help them. Actually, it can hurt them by hindering what God is trying to do in their life.

If, for example, they are not doing their part to take care of what they have, God may let them remain needy until they learn to take care of what they have. But the person who operates out of emotions will see a need and just be moved to meet it without seeking wisdom.

The Bible teaches us in the very first chapter of Proverbs that we are to operate in wise thoughtfulness. If we don’t follow this
scriptural advice, we can keep a person from growing up and learning to accept personal responsibility.

The other side of the situation also needs to be considered. There may be someone who is not fully mature in the Lord and has much to learn. He is in need, and his need may be the result of not knowing what to do. God may still lead us to help someone in this state, because we all need encouragement while we are growing in the Lord.

We all make messes in our lives through ignorance of God’s ways. Even when we begin to learn His ways, it still takes a lot of time to see all the negative situations in our lives turned into positive ones. We can benefit one another greatly by being sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s leading to help in various ways. Just being moved emotionally is not being led by the Holy Spirit. *Emotions should always be submitted to wisdom!* If wisdom agrees, then we can go forward with our plan.

Here is an example: We all love our children and know how difficult it is to see them do without things they want and need. If we have the ability to provide those things, most of us want to rescue them out of any difficult situation they are in. This may be very good most of the time. It is good to help our children and to let them know that we will be there for them when they need us. However, rescuing them out of every difficult situation may prevent them from growing up. Struggle is part of the process all of us need in order to mature.

In researching material for a seminar a while back, I read that a baby eaglet, while he is still in the egg, develops a tiny sharp tooth on the end of his beak. He uses this tooth to repeatedly hit the shell until it finally cracks open. This process takes a long time and requires a lot of tenacity. Sometimes well-meaning people
try to help by breaking open the shell. When that happens, often
the eaglet dies.

Like baby eagles, young people need the experience of the
struggle to help prepare them for life. We should help our
children, but not to the point of hindering their maturity.

EMOTIONAL PEOPLE

An emotional person is someone who is easily affected with
or stirred by emotions. It is good to know ourselves and our
personalities. Some people are more emotionally led than others,
and knowing this can prevent lots of heartache and pain in life.

Even if we do not fall into the category of an “emotional”
person, we each have emotions and are in danger of being led by
them. We may get up one morning feeling depressed and follow
that feeling throughout the day.

The next day, we may wake up angry — feeling like telling
somebody off — and that’s what we end up doing. Other times,
we may wake up feeling sorry for ourselves and sit in a corner
crying all day long.

If we allow them to do so, feelings will stir up problems that
will cause us to move out of the will of God and into the will of
the deceiver, Satan.

I spent many years of my life following how I felt. If I awoke
feeling depressed, I was depressed all day. I didn’t know at the
time that I could resist these emotions. Now I realize I can put on
the garment of praise as the Bible teaches in Isaiah 61:3. I can sing
or play good Christian music — and in doing so — fight against
the negative feeling that desires to control me all day.
We must learn to be aware of our emotions and know how to manage them correctly. One way to do that is by recognizing different personality types and knowing how they react differently to similar situations.

FOUR BASIC PERSONALITY TYPES

Just as it is often said that some personality types are more emotional than others, women are thought to have a stronger tendency toward emotionalism than men. According to a teaching that goes far back into history, there are four basic personality types, each of which has an identifying name.

The first type is called choleric, which happens to be the category into which I fall. Cholerics are born leaders. Their strong personalities want to be in control. One of the strengths of those who have a choleric personality is that they usually get a lot accomplished. One of their weaknesses is that they have a tendency to be bossy.

Cholerics are normally strongly goal-oriented and motivated by new ideas and challenges. When the Lord gives me a project, I get all stirred up about it and rush to my husband, who has a completely different personality from mine.

Dave is part of the group called phlegmatic. Phlegmatics usually show little or no emotion at all. What is interesting is that a choleric often marries a phlegmatic.

In our marriage, our personality differences used to drive us crazy until we saw God’s plan in it. Dave is strong in areas where I am weak, and I am strong in areas in which he is weak. I now believe that God brings opposite types together to complement
one another, but it took Dave and me a while to learn to accept and operate compatibly with our differences.

To illustrate, I would go to Dave all enthusiastic about something, and his response would be, “We’ll see.” At times like that, I just wanted to hit him, until I learned to understand him. I was being emotional, and he was being logical. I was looking at the excitement side, and he was looking at the responsibility side of the issue. I used to yell at him, “Can’t you ever get excited about anything?”

We would go into dynamic Charismatic churches, and I would emerge from the service saying, “Wow! Did you feel the presence of God in that place?”

Dave would say, “No, I didn’t feel a thing.” He knew God was present, but he was not basing God’s presence on his feelings. For a long time, I thought the man was emotionally dead.

Both of us have changed after years of God’s working with us, and we are more balanced now. I am not so emotionally driven, and he shows more excitement when I am genuinely excited about something.

One thing that is good for the people with phlegmatic personalities to remember is that they need to exercise their faith and make an effort to show some emotion. It can be very dull living with an individual who is bland about everything.

If you are a low-key person, you need to stretch yourself on purpose for the sake of others with whom you are in relationship. We are operating in love when we sacrifice ourselves and do what others need us to do.

On the other hand, if you are more like me and tend to get aggressively excited about new things you are involved in, you
may need to learn to tone down your emotions and become more of a balanced person. Remember, it is difficult for a more serious and sober person to relate to you because he truly does not feel what you feel. The answer, of course, is balance, as we will discuss later on.

The third personality type is called sanguine. This is the most emotional type of all. The sanguine personality is bubbly and seems to bounce through life. It is easy to tell when a sanguine comes into the room. His voice can be heard above everyone else’s: “Oh, I’m so excited to be here!”

The sanguine has a tendency to get on the nerves of a choleric — especially mine! I am the serious, goal-oriented type who always has a plan and am moving toward it. When a sanguine comes bouncing in, it often disturbs me. But the sanguine may not even notice. Because he is so full of fun and energy, he is usually oblivious to anything other than having a good time.

Sanguines often marry the fourth type, called melancholy. As you can guess, melancholics are those who have the most trouble with depression. They are the deep people — the thinkers — the organizers. They are the ones who are so organized they alphabetize their spice racks. They tie their shoelaces and put them inside their shoes before carefully placing them in the closet. They believe there is a place for everything, and everything should be in its place.

Sanguines are frequently not very disciplined, and this is, of course, very difficult for the melancholy types to handle. Melancholics are really neat people. They always have a plan, but they usually end up married to sanguines who couldn’t care less whether there is a plan or not. Even if they did have a plan, sanguines wouldn’t remember it for more than five minutes. They
are the ones who park their car in a parking lot or garage, and then can’t remember where they left it!

Do you think a sanguine would worry about that? Not the lady I knew who did it. She thought it was funny! Now she has a new story to tell at the parties she bubbles into.

As you can see, how you and I react to emotions depends to an extent upon which of these four types best describes our individual personality: choleric, phlegmatic, sanguine, or melancholy. Most of us are a blend of two or more of the personality types.

It really helps to know yourself. There are some good Christian books available on the subject: *Spirit-Controlled Temperament* by Tim LaHaye and *Your Personality Tree* by Florence Littauer.

Always remember that we can learn to control our weaknesses through the power of the Holy Spirit and in doing so become well-balanced individuals who cannot be controlled by Satan.

**Emotionalism**

The term “emotionalism” is used to describe “a tendency to rely on or place too much value on emotion.” Often it is defined as an “excessive display of emotion.”

An “emotionalist” is “one whose conduct...is ruled by emotion as opposed to reason.”

One project or assignment I always give those who attend my seminars on this subject is to read the book of Proverbs and find all the verses in it that compare emotion to wisdom.

In doing this, they usually learn that one of the differences between wisdom and emotion concerns proper timing.

Wisdom always waits for the right time to act, while emotion always pushes for action right now! Emotionalism is rash. It calls
for immediate action. While wisdom calmly looks ahead to
determine how a decision will affect the future, emotions are only
concerned with what is happening at the moment.

How many times have you said or done something in the heat
of emotion, then later experienced deep, deep regret for your rash
action?

“Oh, if I had only kept my mouth shut!”

It is amazing the damage that can be done to a relationship by
one emotional outburst.

One time, when I was trying to learn to control my mouth
and not talk back to my husband, I got so emotional the Lord
had to say to me, “Joyce, that’s enough! Don’t you say another
word!” I hurriedly left the room, ran down the hall, and locked
myself in the bathroom. I was so upset I buried my face in a
towel and screamed into it! Sometimes the strongholds in our flesh
become so ingrained, it takes some pretty determined action to
break them down. That’s why we need to learn to fight against
our undisciplined emotions and bring them into submission to
the will of God.

FIGHTING EMOTIONS

[Therefore, I do not treat God’s gracious gift as
something of minor importance and defeat its very
purpose]; I do not set aside and invalidate and
frustrate and nullify the grace (unmerited favor) of
God....Galatians 2:21

At first it won’t be easy to overcome emotions. It never is. When
you and I initially begin to break ourselves of any habit, we have
a struggle on our hands. We have to fight within ourselves, crying
MANAGING YOUR EMOTIONS

out to God, “Lord, help me, help me!” It is so wonderful to know that the Holy Spirit is always with us to help us all the time.

If you know you have given yourself over to some bad habit like emotional eating, when you sit down to the table you have to say within yourself, “Holy Spirit, help me not to overeat.” In a restaurant where everybody at your table is ordering dessert, and you can feel yourself starting to waiver, you can cry out inside, “Holy Spirit, help me, help me!”

I have found that if I depend upon my flesh through sheer willpower or determination alone, I will fail every time. But if I am determined to resist temptation by calling on the power of the Holy Spirit, I find the strength I need for success.

I have discovered that the Lord is not going to do everything for us in this life. We can’t just find someone to lay hands on us and pray for us to be set free from all our bondages. There is a part we must play with our minds and wills. It takes a combination of faith and action.

The Apostle Paul said that he did not take the grace of God in vain. (Gal. 2:21.) He meant that he did not expect God to do everything for him without doing his part too. God gives us the ability to do what we need to do, but we must choose right action.

The writer of the book of Proverbs tells us: The beginning of Wisdom is: get Wisdom (skillful and godly Wisdom)! [For skillful and godly Wisdom is the principal thing.] And with all you have gotten, get understanding (discernment, comprehension, and interpretation) (Prov. 4:7.) In other words, we need to be able to see through the lies Satan speaks to our mind and past the feelings he stirs up within us. We must keep our eyes on the Word
of God and do what it says — not what the enemy causes us to feel like doing.

If you are going to be a person who is committed to the Word of God, you will have to learn to be led by the Spirit and not by your emotions.

Whenever an emotion rises up on the inside of me, I test it to see if it is in line with the Word of God. If it is not, the Holy Spirit reveals it to me, and I resist it.

That’s how we fight against our emotions — by using our will to make a decision to follow God’s Word rather than our feelings.

**Emotionless**

Someone who is *emotionless* is "lacking emotion — unable to show emotion; one who feels no emotion, or very little emotion."⁵

Many times when people have been hurt badly in their past, they develop a hard core within and build up high walls without to protect themselves. They may have all the same feelings that others have, but they are unable to show them. Sometimes they may even be so hurt they become callous and unable to feel anything. In either case, there is a real healing needed.

**Hardened and Unbridled Emotions**

So this I say and solemnly testify in [the name of] the Lord [as in His presence], that you must no longer live as the heathen (the Gentiles) do in their perverseness [in the folly, vanity, and emptiness of their souls and the futility] of their minds.

Their moral understanding is darkened and their reasoning is beclouded. [They are] alienated
estranged, self-banished) from the life of God [with no share in it; this is] because of the ignorance (the want of knowledge and perception, the willful blindness) that is deep-seated in them, due to their hardness of heart [to the insensitiveness of their moral nature].

In their spiritual apathy they have become callous and past feeling and reckless and have abandoned themselves [a prey] to unbridled sensuality, eager and greedy to indulge in every form of impurity [that their depraved desires may suggest and demand]. Ephesians 4:17-19

The Lord called my attention to this passage about unbelievers and showed me two things about it. First of all, it says unbelievers are so callous and hard they are past feeling. But in the same verse it says they live by their feelings in sensuality and carnality.

As I meditated on that statement, the Lord showed me that such people are past doing what they should be doing with their feelings.

God gives us feelings for a specific purpose and use in our walk with Him. These people have been hardened to the place they are past using their feelings for the right purpose. Satan has moved them into an area in which they are living riotous lives, doing whatever they feel like doing.

What is the world’s philosophy today? “If it feels good, do it!” You and I are not to live that way.

Jesus and Emotions

For we do not have a High Priest Who is unable to understand and sympathize and have a shared
feeling with our weaknesses and infirmities and liability to the assaults of temptation, but One Who has been tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sinning. Hebrews 4:15

According to this verse, Jesus experienced every emotion and suffered every feeling you and I do, yet without sinning. Why did He not sin? Because He did not give in to His wrong feelings. He knew the Word of God in every area of life because He spent years studying it before He began His ministry.

The Bible says that as a child Jesus ...grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom...(Luke 2:40) so that by the time He was twelve years old, He thought He was old enough to go to the temple in Jerusalem and “be about His Father’s business.” (Luke 2:41-52.) But He still had years of learning before He entered His full-time ministry.

You and I will never be able to say no to our feelings if we don’t have within us a strong knowledge of the Word of God. Jesus had the same feelings we do, but He never sinned by giving in to them.

When I am hurt by someone and I feel angry or upset, it is such a comfort to me to be able to lift my face and hands and voice to the Lord saying, “Jesus, I am so glad that You understand what I am feeling right now and that You don’t condemn me for feeling this way. I don’t want to give vent to my emotions. Help me, Lord, to get over them. Help me to forgive those who have wronged me and not slight them, avoid them, or seek to pay them back for the harm they have done me. Help me not to live under condemnation in thinking that I shouldn’t be feeling this way.”

It is not a matter of just thinking, “I shouldn’t be feeling this
way.” It is a matter of crying out to God and functioning in the fruit of the Spirit called self-control. (Gal. 5:23.)

You and I don’t have to feel condemned because we have bad feelings. Jesus understands. His main concern is that we come to the point where we are like Him: humble, gentle, meek, and lowly. He wants us to develop compassion, understanding, and softness of heart.

Because I was hurt really badly in my childhood, I developed a hard core and built up high walls around myself for self-protection, just like those I have mentioned. I became hard and calloused on the inside. But I learned and am still learning that any kind of personality, no matter how hurt or hurting, can be presented and projected in a kind, gentle way.

No matter what our past experiences or our present feelings, we are to be compassionate toward others. We are to rejoice with those who rejoice, but we are also to weep with those who weep. (Rom. 12:15.)

One of the things Jesus imparted to people and imparts to us today, and one of the things we need to impart to others, is not hardness, but understanding.

No matter what anybody does or has done to us, we need to convey to them the message: “I understand what you are going through. I understand how you feel. But also let me tell you what the Word of God says. You don’t have to stay the way you are.” Hurting people hurt people, but love can heal and change them.

It is obvious what Satan wants us to do. He wants us to develop hardness and callousness within us so that we cannot feel or be sensitive to the needs of others.

God wants us to be more sensitive to the feelings and needs of others and less sensitive to our own feelings and needs. He wants
us to deposit ourselves in His hands and let Him take care of us while we are practicing being kind and compassionate and sensitive to other people.

As believers, we are not to be led by our feelings, but we are to be moved by them to show compassion and understanding to those in need. That is the right purpose and use of feelings and emotions, ...so that we may also be able to comfort (console and encourage) those who are in any kind of trouble or distress, with the comfort (consolation and encouragement) with which we ourselves are comforted (consoled and encouraged) by God (2 Cor. 1:4).

**Feelings or Decision?**

...being in an agony [of mind], He prayed [all the] more earnestly and intently, and His sweat became like great clots of blood dropping down upon the ground. Luke 22:44

Remember, feelings are part of the soul which is often said to be composed of the mind, will, and emotions.

When we are born again, we are not told to stop thinking. We are just told to start thinking a new way.

When we are born again, we are not told to stop deciding, to stop desiring, we are just told to surrender our will to God and decide to do what He desires, according to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The same is true with emotions. When we are born again, we are not told to stop feeling. We are just told to learn how to express those feelings in the right way.
Jesus did not feel like going to the cross, but He resisted against operating by His feelings. He subjected His emotions to His heavenly Father.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus went through agony of soul in His efforts to resist the temptation to do what He felt like doing rather than what He knew was God’s will for Him.

**Testing the Emotions**

Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish the [uncompromisingly] righteous [those upright and in harmony with You]; for You, Who try the hearts and emotions and thinking powers, are a righteous God. Psalm 7:9

Here in Psalm 7:9 and also in Revelation 2:23 (...I am He Who searches minds (the thoughts, feelings, and purposes) and the [inmost] hearts...) we read that God is a God Who tries emotions. What does the word try mean in this context? It means to test until purified.

A few years ago, as I was praying, God said to me, “Joyce, I am going to test your emotions.” I had never heard of anything like that. I didn’t know these Scriptures were even in the Bible. So I went on my way.

About six months later I just suddenly seemed to become an emotional wreck. I cried for no reason. Everything hurt my feelings.

I thought, “What is the problem here? What’s going on?”

Then the Lord reminded me of what He had said to me earlier, “I am going to test your emotions.” He led me to Psalm 7:9 and Revelation 2:23 and caused me to understand what He was doing for my own good.
No matter who you are, there will be periods of time in which you feel more emotional than usual. You may wake up one morning and feel like breaking down and crying for no reason. That may last a week or it may last longer. You may think, “What is my problem?”

During those times you have to be careful because your feelings will get hurt very easily. The slightest thing will set you off. There were times in my life when I would go to bed praying, feeling as sweet as could be, then wake up the next morning like I had stayed up all night eating nails! I would get up in such a foul mood that if anyone came near me or crossed me, I felt like hitting them on the head!

What should we do when we start feeling that way? First of all, we shouldn’t start getting under condemnation. Number two, we shouldn’t even try to figure out what is happening. What we should do is simply say, “This is one of those times when my emotions are being tried. I’m going to trust God and learn to control them.”

How are you and I ever going to learn to control ourselves emotionally unless God allows us to go through some trying times?

Remember, the Bible says that God will never allow any more to come upon us than we are able to bear. (1 Cor. 10:13.) If the Lord does not allow such testing times to come upon us, we will never learn how to deal with Satan when he brings them upon us — which he will sooner or later.

Trying times are learning times.

EMOTIONS AND FATIGUE

But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a lone
broom or juniper tree and asked that he might die. He said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am no better than my fathers.

1 Kings 19:4

I have often heard that after a person goes through a real emotional high, he will usually bottom out with an emotional low.

We see this in the life of Elijah the prophet in the book of 1 Kings. One day he is on Mt. Carmel making a fool of the priests of Baal, calling down fire from heaven, at the height of his emotion. The next day we see him out in the desert sitting under a juniper tree asking God to let him die because he feels so depressed.

In my own life, I have noticed when I minister in a series of meetings, I spend everything I have spiritually, emotionally, and mentally, praying for people and meeting their needs. I get so excited when I see what God is doing through those meetings, my radio and television broadcasts, and other outreaches we are involved in.

But then when I return from something exciting like that to normal, everyday life, it is almost too much to bear. Who wants to go from casting out demons one day to normal household chores the next?

Often we get the idea, “Oh, if I could just stay on this emotional high forever!” But God knows we couldn’t stand it. A lot of emotional highs and lows wear us out emotionally as well as mentally and physically.

When I came home after those ministry trips, I couldn’t understand what was wrong with me. I would go through the house rebuking Satan, when the only thing wrong was that I was
tired — physically, mentally, and emotionally drained. Like Elijah in the desert, I didn’t need to fight the enemy, I needed to rest and recuperate.

When you get like that, don’t do like Elijah and get down on yourself. Don’t start thinking what a miserable person you are. Don’t moan and groan about how happy you were yesterday but how terrible you feel today. Don’t start complaining to the Lord about how worthless you feel.

Do you know what I do when I get like that? I say, “Lord, I’m feeling down right now, so I’m going to have to just rest and build myself back up again. I’m going to spend time with You, Lord, and let You strengthen me.”

MANIC DEPRESSION

The psychological term used to describe people who go from one emotional extreme to another is “manic depressive.”

A young woman in one of our meetings once told me that her husband was a manic depressive. She said that for three months he would be on an emotional high and be really creative. In his business, he would buy and sell, invest large sums of money, and be tremendously successful. When he came down from that emotional high, he would go into deep depression that might last for as long as six months!

Medical science at one time only tried to bring up the emotional lows for people with manic depression. When they were enjoying an emotional high, nothing was done for them. According to an article I recently read, it has now been discovered that the attempt must be made to bring down the extreme highs. Health experts are learning that balance is the key.
MANAGING YOUR EMOTIONS

We have always applauded high emotions and been critical of lows. Actually both extreme ends are wrong.

Most of us will never have problems with manic depression, but we can learn a principle from how they are treated, and we can understand that it isn’t good enough to simply resist depression, we must also resist the temptation to get so emotionally high that it leaves us exhausted and open prey for the devil.

None of us can live on the mountaintop all the time. There are going to be days when we are up and days when we feel down. Emotions are fickle, and they fluctuate frequently for no apparent reason. What we need to learn is how to manage both ends of the extreme.

One thing that is important for stable emotional health is honesty — with self and with others. People who are close to us can sense when we are struggling emotionally. I have found it is best for me and my family if I am honest with them about what is going on with me. At those times when I have felt myself sliding toward anger, depression, or any negative emotion, I have told my family, “My emotions are going haywire today, so if I’m quiet, just don’t pay any attention to me for a while.”

We must remember that what we hide still has power over us, but when we bring things out in the open, they begin losing their grip immediately. John 8:32 teaches us that the truth will make us free. James 5:16 encourages us to confess our faults to one another so that we may be healed and restored to a spiritual tone of mind and heart.

I found that if I tried to protect my spiritual reputation by pretending that nothing was wrong with me, all it did was bring confusion to my entire family. They might begin to imagine that
I was angry with them for some reason. Then they would become upset, trying to reason out what they might have done to upset me. We were all a lot better off if I simply told the truth.

I tried to learn to be quiet during those times.

We have a tendency to say things when we are emotionally upset that we regret later. We have a responsibility to our family members and others with whom we spend a lot of time to avoid keeping them guessing about what’s going on with us.

Here is a good example: One of the members of our road team who is normally very talkative and bubbly suddenly became very quiet and almost withdrawn. Several of the other team members noticed it and came to Dave and me saying, “What’s wrong with ________?” They thought she was angry about something or with someone on the travel crew.

When I spoke with her, she was simply having some health problems. She had recently gone for some medical tests and was anxiously awaiting the results. She said, “I always get quiet and just pray when I’m dealing with something like this.”

I told her that getting quiet and praying was the thing to do, but that it might be good the next time to just mention to everyone that she was dealing with something personal and not to think anything about it if she seemed quiet. By doing so, we can prevent the devil from placing negative things in other people’s imaginations about the situation.

People respect us if we are open and straightforward. I learned this truth with my family, and it saved all of us a lot of anxiety.

Remember that the devil will use our emotions to bring us under guilt and condemnation, but God often uses them to test or try us so that we come forth from our emotional upheavals stronger and better able to control them than ever before.
MANAGING YOUR EMOTIONS

The trick is to learn not to give in or cater to emotions. I spent many years being up and down emotionally, but now I am very stable. God helps us as we continue trusting Him and following the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

THE PRICE FOR CATERING TO EMOTIONS

So then those who are living the life of the flesh [catering to the appetites and impulses of their carnal nature] cannot please or satisfy God, or be acceptable to Him. Romans 8:8

The Amplified Bible tells us that to live by the flesh is to cater to the appetites and impulses of the carnal or fleshly nature.

Now we have all been at banquets and other events which were catered. It is always fun to be catered to, to have our wants and needs met immediately and fully by someone else. But there is always a price to be paid for that kind of service.

The same is true in the area of emotions. There is a price we must pay for falling into the position of catering to the desires and demands of our emotions — what the Bible calls our “flesh.”

Now the mind of the flesh [which is sense and reason without the Holy Spirit] is death [death that comprises all the miseries arising from sin, both here and hereafter]. But the mind of the [Holy] Spirit is life and [soul] peace [both now and forever]. Romans 8:6

This means that if you and I follow the dictates and demands of our flesh — our unbridled emotions — we will have a price to pay. Why?

...because the mind of the flesh [with its carnal thoughts and purposes] is hostile to God, for it does

34
not submit itself to God’s Law; indeed it cannot.
Romans 8:7

Part of the price we must pay for catering to our emotions is not being able to live the Spirit-filled life:

For those who are according to the flesh and are controlled by its unholy desires set their minds on and pursue those things which gratify the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit and are controlled by the desires of the Spirit set their minds on and seek those things which gratify the [Holy] Spirit. Romans 8:5

The Bible clearly teaches that the flesh is opposed to the Spirit, and the Spirit is opposed to the flesh. They are continually antagonistic to each other. This means that we cannot be led by our emotions and still be led by the Holy Spirit, so we have to make a choice.

Now when the Bible says that those who cater to their emotions cannot please or satisfy God or be acceptable to Him, it does not mean that God doesn’t love them.

You and I can be in a terrible emotional mess and still be loved by our heavenly Father. The fact that we are having emotional problems does not mean we are not going to heaven. It just means God is not pleased with our lifestyle. Why? Because it puts Him in a position in which He cannot do for us what He would like to do.

As I have mentioned previously, we all want our children to be blessed and to share in our inheritance. But if one of our children chooses to follow a lifestyle of unbridled sensuality, we will not be inclined to entrust our inheritance to him because we know he will just squander and waste it on “riotous living,” fulfilling
the “lust of the flesh.” When the Apostle Paul says God is not pleased with those who live by the flesh rather than by His Spirit, I believe Paul means they cannot be trusted with God’s best.

ORDINARY IMPULSES

For you are still [unspiritual, having the nature] of the flesh [under the control of ordinary impulses]. For as long as [there are] envying and jealousy and wrangling and factions among you, are you not unspiritual and of the flesh, behaving yourselves after a human standard and like mere (unchanged) men? 1 Corinthians 3:3

In his letter to the church in Corinth, the Apostle Paul called the Corinthians unspiritual because they were living not by the Spirit of God but by their own human nature, which was under the control of “ordinary impulses.”

Notice Paul did not say these people were unspiritual because they had ordinary impulses, but because they were under the control of ordinary impulses. Instead of controlling their impulses, they were allowing their impulses to control them.

I define impulse as a sudden urge that compels a person to take action, or an inherent, irrational tendency. I think an impulsive person is one who tends to act on emotion rather than on logic or wisdom.

We often speak of “impulse buying,” which, of course, refers to buying something without really giving careful thought to the purchase.

Paul says that being impulsive, being led by ordinary impulses rather than by the Spirit of God, leads to all kinds of evils such as
jealousy, envy, strife — in short, all the things that cause divisions and factions among us.

**EMOTIONS AS THE ENEMY**

Watchman Nee made two important statements about emotions in his book, *Spiritual Man:*

1) “Emotion may be denominated the most formidable enemy to the life of a spiritual Christian,” and
2) “He therefore who lives by emotion lives without principle.”

What he was saying was the same thing Paul is saying in this passage. We cannot be spiritual — that is, walk in the Spirit — and be led by emotions.

Emotions will not go away, but we can learn to manage them. We all have emotions, and we must deal with them, but we cannot trust them! Why? Because emotions are our greatest enemy. More than anything, Satan uses our emotions against us to keep us from walking in the Spirit.

We know the mind is the battlefield — the place where the battle is waged between the Spirit and the soul. I have read that when emotion pulsates, the mind becomes deceived, and conscience is denied its standard of judgment.

People often ask me, “How can I know for sure whether I’m hearing from God or from my emotions?”

I believe the answer is to learn to wait. Emotions urge us toward haste. They tell us that we have to do something, and we must do it right now! But godly wisdom tells us to wait until we have a clear picture of what it is we are to do and when we are to do it.
What we all need to do is develop the capacity to back away and view our situation from God’s perspective. We need to be able to make decisions based on what we know rather than on what we feel.

Many times we say, “Well, I feel that God wants me to do this or that.” In reality what we are saying is we sense in our spirit that the Lord is telling us to do or not do something. We are not talking about operating by our own emotions, but by what we perceive spiritually to be the will of God for us in that situation.

Whenever we are faced with a decision, we need to ask ourselves: “Am I making this decision according to my feelings or according to the will of God?”

Let me give you an example from my own personal life.

**EMOTIONAL DISCERNMENT**

For we walk by faith [we regulate our lives and conduct ourselves by our conviction or belief respecting man’s relationship to God and divine things, with trust and holy fervor; thus we walk] not by sight or appearance. 2 Corinthians 5:7

My husband Dave and I have a certain way we handle our money. I get an allowance each week, and so does he. I usually save my money to buy clothes and other things I want or need.

One time I had about $375 saved to buy a good watch, which I had to do about once a year since I have a lot of acid in my skin. I wanted to buy a good, 14-karat gold watch, so the band would not discolor.

Because I had been shopping for a watch for a while and dis-
covered that the type I wanted would cost about eight or nine hundred dollars, I was saving my money toward that goal.

One day Dave and I were in the mall and happened to stop at a jewelry store where I saw a watch that was only gold-plated but was really very pretty. It matched my ring and seemed to be just what I was looking for. It fit my arm perfectly so it wouldn’t have had to have been cut down. Not only that, but the clerk offered to mark it down from $395 to $316. So my emotions said, “YES! That’s exactly what I want!”

But then my husband said, “Well, now, you know, it’s not 14-karat gold.”

So I asked the clerk, “How long do you think the gold-plating will last?”

“Well, it could last from five to ten years,” he said, “depending on how much acid you have in your skin.”

I turned to Dave and said, “Oh, my. I really like that watch. What should I do?”

“It’s your money,” he answered.

“I’ll tell you what I’m going to do,” I told the clerk. “You hold it for me for half an hour. I’m going to walk around the mall for a bit. If I want the watch, I’ll come back within thirty minutes.”

So Dave and I walked around the mall for a while. As we did so, we passed a dress shop. Because I needed a couple of new outfits, I went in and found a really nice suit. I tried it on, and it fit perfectly. I loved it.

“That’s a nice suit,” Dave said. “You really ought to get it.”

I looked at the price tag and saw that it read $279. “No wonder it looks so good on me,” I replied. But I really wanted that suit!

After a while I put the suit back in the rack.
“Aren’t you going to buy it?” David asked.

“No,” I answered. “I’m not going to buy it either. I’m going to think about it.”

Actually there were three things I wanted. I wanted the watch, I wanted the suit, and I wanted not to be broke. I wanted to have some money on hand to buy little things I needed from time to time and to be able to do some things I enjoyed like taking my kids out for lunch now and then.

What did I do? I applied wisdom. I decided to wait. The watch would have taken all of my savings and would still not have been what I really needed. The suit was beautiful, but it also would have taken most of my savings. Since it was long-sleeved, I wouldn’t have been able to wear it until the next fall. It would have hung in my closet for a long time.

The best thing, I decided, was to keep my money and wait until I was sure what I wanted most.

I really learned a lesson from that experience. I had peace about my decision. As much as I would have enjoyed either the watch or the suit, I knew I had done the right thing.

It turned out that later on my husband bought me both the watch and the suit — plus a ring to match! It all worked out beautifully because I was willing to listen to reason and apply wisdom rather than being controlled by my emotions.

If we are willing to learn to control our emotions, God will bless us.

I am not saying that if you will delay every decision, someone else will make it for you and you will get everything you want and more. I am saying that usually the wisest course is: when in doubt, don’t!
HOW NOT TO BE LED BY YOUR FEELINGS

When faced with any difficult decision, wait until you have a clear answer before taking a step that you may regret. Emotions are wonderful, but they must not be allowed to take precedence over wisdom and knowledge. Remember: control your emotions, don’t let them control you.