
Mastering Emotion

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*...in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. So the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it." Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him (**Genesis 4:3-8**).*

*Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!" Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself (**Matthew 27:3-5**).*

Recorded for us are two examples of human emotion and sin. Cain became angry and murdered his brother. Judas was grieved and hung himself. Emotions are immensely powerful things in our feeble lives. Men and women both can be quite emotionally driven, even if men don't want to admit it. **Proverbs 25:28** tells us that a man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without a wall. There is no safety to be found for him or those around him. Destruction is all you will see.

With that knowledge, sometimes we can see emotions as bad things. I, at the very least, tend to see them as troublesome. Our emotions are not, however, totally useless. One thing we can make our emotions do for us is reveal what our heart loves, treasures, and fears.

*"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings" (**Jeremiah 17:9-10**).*

The Lord knows where our heart is, and we're going to be judged by that knowledge. Yet, as humans, knowing our own hearts can be a challenge at times. We have this blessing of human emotion to give us clues as to where our heart truly lies. Can we spot a lack of trust in God where we feel fear? Can we find pride, a shortage of patience, or selfishness in our anger? Do we grieve over material things or spiritual things? Think about the emotion that arises in certain situations in your daily life. Does your chest swell with pride? Is your heart made light with happiness? Does your blood boil with anger? These are our indicators. Take advantage of them. Is your heart in the right place? Let emotions be your tool.

Too often we let our emotions make a tool out of us. We get angry and blow up at someone. We feel happiness, and we bask in it until we begin to neglect those around us. We can't allow our emotion to rule our decision-making process. Nor should we allow them to cause harm to others in our interpersonal dealings. Emotions are like those old mercury thermometers. In the glass the mercury was helpful — it told you the temperature outside, how you ought to dress, and what activities would be appropriate for the day. Outside that glass, however, mercury is deadly. We need to consider our actions and our dialogue before we implement them because we do affect others when we handle our emotions in an irresponsible manner. That's how our children end up in therapy as adults. This is a big deal. **Proverbs 29:11**, "*A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back*" (see also the ESV: "*the fool gives full vent to his feelings*").

Another thing we want to keep an eye on regarding our emotions is letting emotion dictate our mood. Things are going to frustrate us or make us sad, yet we should ever be searching for ways to deal with it and get it over with. Ephesians 4:26-27, "*Be angry (from the Greek word orge), and do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your wrath (from the Greek word parorgismos), nor give place to the devil.*" The word translated "wrath" in the Greek, means the stuff that comes along with the anger — the bitterness, the dark mood,

the sour disposition. Emotionally responsible people don't sulk in their negative emotions and allow them to fester. They do what is required in order to deal with them and move forward.

Let's strive to be responsible human-beings when it comes to our emotions and our emotional health. Use your emotions as a tool to know your heart; don't allow your emotions to use you. Let's work hard not to be emotionally driven when we interact with others so that we can continue to treat them as they ought to be treated.