



Breaking The Hold Of The Past (Section Introduction)

God does not change our past but by His grace He enables us to walk free of it. In this section of the course we look at how we can take hold of what Christ has done for us in order to do just that. This section includes going through The Steps To Freedom In Christ.

SESSION 8: Handling Emotions Well

Focus verse: "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." (1 Peter 5:7-8)

Objective: To understand our emotional nature and how it is related to what we believe.

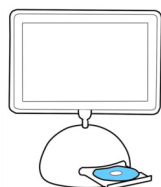
Focus Truth:

Our emotions are essentially a product of our thoughts and a barometer of our spiritual health.

- * We are to believe what God says is true whether it feels true or not. But feelings are not a bad thing.
- * We shouldn't deny our emotional nature because it was created by God. It is a barometer of the soul: it reveals the depths of our character & quality of our thoughts.
- * Failure to acknowledge our emotions can set us up for spiritual defeat.

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There are links between the inner (soul/spirit) & outer person (body)



The brain is like computer hardware.



The mind is like computer software.

There are hardware problems (the best software won't work on a computer that is malfunctioning). But the Bible emphasis is on the software.

WE CAN'T DIRECTLY CONTROL HOW WE FEEL

	<u>Voluntary</u>	<u>Involuntary</u>
<i>Brain</i>	Speaking Moving	Heart beat Glands
<i>Mind</i>	Beliefs	Emotions

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OUR FEELINGS CONTROL WHAT WE REALLY BELIEVE

What Are My Emotions?



Your emotions are to your soul what your ability to feel pain is to your body

- * Physical pain is for our protection. Emotions are the same for our inner person.
- * Feedback for the soul.

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'Although we can't control emotions directly, what we feel is in a general sense the result of what we believe, or choose to think.'

If what you believe does not reflect truth, then what you feel will not reflect reality.
 See Jeremiah's outburst in *Lamentations 3:1-11*. Feelings based on a wrong view of God. Then a change of perspective in verses 19-24.

- * His circumstances didn't change. God didn't change. What changed was how he looked at his circumstances.
 - * Life's events don't determine who you are and what you feel - it's your perception of the events.
- If what you believe does not reflect truth, then what you feel will not reflect reality.

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THE BIG QUESTION

If we are overwhelmed by difficult circumstances from the past or in the present, which cause real negative emotions, what can we do about it?

- See *1 Samuel 17* - The Israelite army saw the giant in relationship to themselves.
- David saw the giant in relationship to God.

Who saw the situation as it really was?

You are not so much affected by your environment and circumstances as by *how you see your environment and circumstances.*

Faith in God can make that kind of difference in our lives! **Not** blind faith, **but** simply recognising what is actually true.

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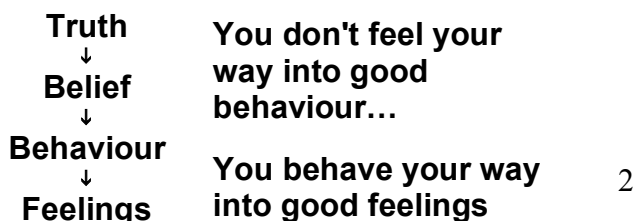
Past experiences/failures lead us to believe we are helpless/hopeless, which leads to stress. But as a Christian we are not helpless/hopeless. We 'renew our mind'. i.e. we understand what is really true about God, rather than what our experiences have caused us to believe.

A balanced, whole person!

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CHANGING HOW WE FEEL

"Now you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." (John 13:17)



'We start by choosing to believe the truth, which works itself out in our behaviour. This then over time leads to a change in our feelings.'

Immaturity ⇒ Maturity!

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Failure To Acknowledge Feelings Can Make Us Vulnerable

Anger
" "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold." (Ephesians 4:26-27)

Notes _____

Anxiety
"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." (1 Peter 5:7-8)

Notes _____

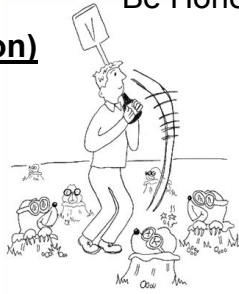
HANDLING EMOTIONS

Example: emotions are like the red warning light in a car. 3 possible reactions

- * Tape over the light Cover It Up (Suppression)
- * Break the light in a fit of anger Explode (Indiscriminate Expression)
- * Look under the bonnet Be Honest (Acknowledgement)

Cover It Up (Suppression)

- * Unhealthy
(Psalms 32: 3, 6; 39:1-3)
- * Dishonest
(Proverbs 10:18, 13:10)



Buried alive!

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'Suppressing our emotions leads to dishonest communication and is physically unhealthy.'

Explode (Indiscriminate Expression)

- * Unhealthy for others
(James 1:19-20)



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Be Honest (Acknowledgement)



* David's 'prayer'
(Psalm 109:6-15)

Acknowledgement begins with God

'You can't be right with God without being real. If necessary, God may have to make you real so that can be right with Him. Be honest with God. He's your closest friend.'

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HANDLING PAST TRAUMAS

* To a greater or lesser degree all of us have had traumatic experiences that have scarred us emotionally and left us with emotional baggage.

* **God does not want emotional pain from our past to influence us negatively today**

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* 'Mental strongholds distort our understanding of who we are and who God is.'

- **We remain in bondage to the past not because of the trauma itself but because of the lies we believed at the time.**

- **We are not primarily products of our past but of Christ's work on the cross and His resurrection.**

- **Nobody can fix our past but we can be free from it as we choose to forgive.**

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Go ahead, trust Him. His beauty for your ashes. Is that possible? It's the gospel.

In The Coming Week

Consider the emotional nature of the Apostle Peter. First, have a look at some occasions where he let his emotions run away with him and acted or spoke too hastily.: Matthew 16:21-23, 17:1-5; John 18:1-11.

Second, look at how Jesus was able to look beyond these emotional outburst and see his potential:

Matthew 16:17-19. Finally, see how that came true when Peter, under the power of the Holy Spirit, became the spokesperson of the early church: Acts 2:14-41. Nothing in your character is so big that God cannot make something good out of it!

Big Question (to consider before the next session)

Think of the worst thing anyone ever did to you (you will not be asked to share it). Why should you forgive that person? Can you think of any good reasons why you shouldn't forgive someone?