

BEING SPIRITUALLY AND EMOTIONALLY LIKE CHRIST

This is Mother's Day, and I want to applaud all of you who are mothers, whether you have raised children, or whether you are still now raising children. It is a great job, a hard job, but a most important job, one that is essential for God's work in the church, for the good of our society, and for the blessing God wants to bestow upon us.

- I am very thankful for the mother God gave me. She was a very good mother, a mother of 7 children, 7 children who were born in just a nine-year time period of time. But my father died when the youngest was 2 and the oldest was 11. And so my Mom had to raise all 7 children by herself. Now she was a very hard worker, taking care of all of us, making sure all our needs were met, and I never once heard her complain. And so I am very thankful and grateful to God for the mother that He gave me.

Now my Mom was a quiet Mom – and she didn't show her emotions very much. And there's no doubt that had an affect on me, for I was more of a quiet, reserved, and shy person growing up, and not very emotional, at least not outwardly so.

- And our subject today is emotions. Now the emotional part of a person can seem somewhat mysterious. How do we get emotions? Where do feelings of fear, anger, hope, hate, joy, peace, sadness, courage, etc. come from? And how do they relate to our spirit, our soul and our mind? And how are they affected by our personality, background, experiences, and relationships?

I must admit, I do not know all the answers. What I do know is that God is an emotional being, and He made us in His image, and so we are like Him in that we are emotional beings. Each of have this emotional component that is part of who we are, part of our personhood, part of what makes us human beings. And what each of should want is to have godly emotions, and the only way to have godly emotions is by having a relationship with God.

When I was 18, by God's grace, I was born again, I became a Christian. The most amazing miracle and transformation took place in my life - I became a child of God, a new person in Christ, a temple of the Spirit, and I had this relationship with God, which is called eternal life. My whole life was now different, dramatically, wonderfully and eternally so.

- Before I was saved, I experienced fear, guilt, loneliness, sadness, emptiness, selfishness, and emotions that go with that, emotions felt in my soul that then affected my mood, and came out in my words and actions.

But now I knew Christ, and I was saved, forgiven, justified and loved, and this had a great and positive affect on me. I began to know and feel the presence of Christ, and the love and joy and peace of Christ. I wasn't guilty anymore, and didn't often get lonely or sad anymore. I had this personal relationship with God that influenced my relationships with people. I was by no means perfect, but I was changing and growing, with new thoughts, new desires, new emotions, and a new love for God and others.

The key in all this was God's truth and God's Spirit. In John 8:32, Jesus said, *"You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free."* In John 14:16-17, He said, *"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth."* I had been more of a quiet, sad, lonely, unfeeling kind of a person. But knowing the truth, that is, knowing Christ and knowing the truth of the gospel changed me, set me free from my sins, and from negative emotions. Proverbs 23:7 tells us, *"As a man thinks, so he is."* The way we think is so important, and as a Christian, I was learning to not be led by my circumstances, experiences, and emotions, but to be led by the truth of God.

Let me give you some examples. Let's talk about being sad. Now I don't want to say a person can't ever be sad, but if that is how he is feeling day after day, if he is consistently and overly sad, then something's wrong, and he is not experiencing the truth and power of God in His life. He has all these sad thoughts in his mind, resulting in sad feelings, feelings that will be seen in what he says and does. And what he needs to do is to think about the truth, that God is good, is loving, is forgiving, is sovereign, and has future plans for his life – and knowing these truths should help take his sadness away.

Let's say a person is lonely and feels lonely, and severely so. He needs to think about the truth that God is with Him, that the Holy Spirit is in him, that he has a relationship with God, and can have fellowship with God, and communicate with God. Once he knows and believes these truths, he will see he's not alone and he won't feel lonely. In Matt. 28:20, Jesus says, *"I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

Now I could go through all the different emotions a person may have, but I just want to say that the key in all this, the way to be spiritually encouraged and emotionally encouraged is by having a relationship with God, is by being filled with His word and Spirit. And what God wants to do is to powerfully change your life, to make you Christ-like, and He does this by His word and His Spirit, and by changing and affecting the way you think and feel.

The whole Bible is filled with truth that is necessary and useful for you in becoming who God wants you to be. And the book of Psalms which, at 150 chapters, is the longest book in the Bible, is one of the best books to help you do this. It's my favorite book in the Bible because, more than any other book, it explains how you can have a close relationship with God, and can be encouraged, comforted and strengthened by Him. When you read the Psalms, you will see that it is filled with stories about David and others, their problems, emotions, and how God came through for them when life was hard, was troubling, was difficult, was discouraging. Here are some examples:

Psalm 13 - *"Will you forget me forever?"* David felt like God had forsaken him, had left him, had hid His face from him. He felt all alone and had sorrow in his heart. But then David trusted in God, remembered his salvation, and believed that God would show His love to him. Not only that, but after recalling how God had blessed Him, he determined to sing to God.

Psalm 37 - *"Do not fret because of evildoers, be not envious..."* David was thinking about the enemy's *"success,"* and how they were against him, and he was fretting, envious and angry. He is instructed to trust in the Lord, do good, be faithful, delight in the Lord, rest in the Lord, be humble, have God's law in his heart, and believe that the enemy would be defeated, and that he would *"inherit the land,"* a promise stated 5 times, a promise for you too. Matt. 5:5

Psalm 42 - *"Why are you in despair, O my soul?"* David was in despair, his soul was troubled and disturbed, he was *"mourning because of the oppression of the enemy."* David knew God was his only answer, his only hope, and he says, *"My soul pants for You."* And he prayed to God, hoped in God, believing that He would once again show him His love. And He was going to praise God, for he says to himself, *"Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him."* Psalm 43

Psalm 55 - *"My heart is in anguish with me... fear and trembling have come upon me."* David was afraid because the enemy was after him, was against him, and he wished he could fly away. And so he prayed and called out to God, casting his burdens upon Him, believing that He would hear him, save him, and defeat his enemies. David's final words were, *"But I will trust in You."* Indeed, God blessed David's faith.

Psalm 69 - *"I have sunk in deep mire... I am weary with my crying... I am in distress."* Life was hard for David, especially in the early years, for he was hated, dishonored, shamed and opposed by his enemies, and in great distress. His only solution was God, and so he sought Him, prayed to Him, and believed the truth about God, that He was good, loving, and compassionate. I like how David concludes, *"I will praise the name of God with song and magnify Him with thanksgiving."*

Psalm 73 - *"I was envious of the arrogant as I saw the prosperity of the wicked."* Asaph was a godly man, but he still had troubles, for he observed those who were wicked and proud, who seemed *"successful"* and were *"always at ease,"* and he became envious and bitter. Then Asaph came into the *"sanctuary of God"* and realized that God was with him, was near him, and would keep him safe, guide him, and bring him to heaven, whereas the wicked would never be blessed like that, but would be destroyed, would forever perish.

Psalm 77 – *“My soul refused to be comforted... I am so troubled that I cannot speak... Will the Lord reject forever?”* Asaph was troubled, was disturbed, felt rejected by God, felt like God didn't love him, like He wasn't compassionate. Asaph was spiritually and emotionally out of it. What did he do? He cried aloud to God, he sought the Lord, and he remembered the deeds of the Lord. And he meditated on these deeds, these works of God, and saw that God was holy, great and gracious, and so he was encouraged and comforted.

Psalm 88 - *“My soul has had enough of troubles... darkness is my closest friend.”* This is one of the darkest Psalms, for the writer feels forsaken, afflicted, rejected, and cut off from God, like he's *“about to die”* - and he has no friends. The only answer that's given is that he prayed, he cried out to God, but the Psalm doesn't tell us how things turned out. The lesson is that sometimes praying and waiting on God is all we can do, believing that sooner or later God will help, will come through with the answer, with the victory.

Psalms is a most important and wonderful book, a book needed by every Christian, especially when you are feeling sad, lonely, unloved, oppressed or forsaken by God. I encourage you to read and study this book so you know the truths and promises in it. - This should be your handbook when you are going through trials. Hopefully, you will know this book so well, that once symptoms of sadness, fear, anger, discouragement, or whatever appear, then you will know exactly what to read. And by the truth, grace, and Spirit of God, you will be restored and revived in your relationship with God. Psalm 23 - God's goal for you isn't that you feel good. And I am not saying you should focus on how you feel, on your emotions, but you should focus on knowing God, and knowing the truth in His word, and on being filled with His Spirit, and then you will be what God wants you to be, and will be spiritually strong, and will have godly emotions. 1 Samuel 30:6

In the Christian life there will be difficult days in your life, and in the years ahead. You will need the Psalms to help you be a mature and complete Christian, one who's spiritually, mentally and emotionally strong, and I mean strong in the word and Spirit, so that you have faith, love, hope, joy and peace, resulting in God being greatly glorified. *“Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever.”* Revelation 7:12