

## How to Handle Uncomfortable Emotions

*But even if we don't feel at ease, God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything. —1 John 3:20 CEV*

How are we to deal with emotions? How can they help us?

Emotions are both natural and neutral. In some ways they have a life of their own, but they become self-perpetuating when they become the foundation for our belief system. Our erroneous beliefs will affirm and give nurture to our feelings, which can be rooted in error.

Emotions themselves are not right or wrong. We often hear people say, "I shouldn't feel this way." The feeling is an indicator of a right or wrong belief. The feeling works as a warning system to invite the Lord to examine our thoughts and beliefs. If I feel loathing towards someone, I need to ask what I am believing about the person, God, and myself. If I agree with my feelings that I loathe that person, then I will perpetuate feelings that support my wrong belief. If on the other hand, I recognize that I am a forgiving person in Christ, and I have Godly love for this person, my attitude and behavior toward this person will line up accordingly. Here's another example:

I FEEL... unloved, unacceptable, and unworthy.

Because I FEEL this way, I BELIEVE... that I am unloved, unacceptable and unworthy.

Because I BELIEVE my feelings are accurate indicators of truth, I ACT... as if I am unloved, unacceptable and unworthy.

Because I FEEL, BELIEVE and ACT this way... saying, "I AM unloved, unacceptable and unworthy", I send this message to others, and make it circumstantially real in my experience.

How do we do this? How is it possible to turn feelings into reality? It is accomplished by allowing feelings to be bearers of truth. You see, feelings either are or are not. They are experienced or they are not. They are present but they are never true or false. Beliefs alone possess the quality of truth or falsehood. So, if feelings tell lies about us, they do so because an incorrect or deceptive belief is attached to them. The deception is accomplished by the belief, not by the feeling. Thus Satan's method is:

**FEELING → FAITH/BELIEF → ACTION → IMPACTS REALITY**

### **Other Facts About Emotions:**

- 1) We can accept our emotions without being ashamed (1 Cor. 2:3). It's a fact—if you don't feel, you won't heal. Instead, you will be callous.
- 2) We can face our emotions and share them, seeing them as a gift from God. Be vulnerable. Give up the right to control the outcome.
- 3) You can't change feelings using your flesh. However, you can change the underlying thoughts, and feelings will often change as a result.
- 4) God doesn't desire for us to be "controlled" by our emotions. Live out of scriptural truth, not what "feels true".

The following is called the "Turtle Technique" for helping kids process difficult and uncomfortable emotions. Some of us "adults" would be wise to become again as little children.



### Exercise: Two-Way Journaling/Prayer

- 1) When triggered emotionally, realize there may be a lie in your belief system causing the emotional reaction.
- 2) Find a quiet place to pray when possible.
- 3) Journal answers to the following questions:
  - God, what am I feeling?
  - God, when have I felt this before? What is the origin of this feeling?
  - God, what lie(s) am I believing that feels true in this place?
  - God, what is Your truth concerning this lie?

Thus God's order becomes:

**FEELING → GOD'S TRUTH → FAITH/BELIEF → ACTION → FEELING**