



Bloom

Untangling Emotions #2

5 September 2020



1. Why think about emotions?

a. Misconceptions

b. A good gift from God

c. The good news of the gospel

d. Loving God with all we think, do and feel

Matthew 22:37 *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*

2. Engaging God with our emotions

3. Engaging our emotions

a. Identify

b. Evaluate:

1. What do I v _____?

2. What do I b _____?

"...our formal beliefs about God don't always match our functional beliefs—our everyday working beliefs—about God. We sing in church that he is all powerful, but then we doubt he can rescue us from our difficult situations. We talk about his love to others, but then we secretly wonder if he really loves us. The wider the space between what we say we believe about God and what we really believe about God, the more room there is for sinful emotions to fester." (Mahaney, True Feelings)

3. Does it line up with _____?

Hebrews 4:12 *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

c. Right action

Discussion #1: Dealing with Emotions

1. In the past, have you seen emotions as good or bad? Important or unimportant? How can emotions play a positive and useful role in a Christian's life?
2. How do you usually deal with your emotions? Do you often go to God with your emotions? Why or why not?
3. Are you in the habit of evaluating your emotions? From what you have heard today, why do is it so important to do so?
4. What will you find personally challenging about engaging your emotions?

4. Difficult Emotions

a. Fear

(i) Identifying fear

(ii) Evaluating fear

- *What things, people or situations are causing me fear and worry? What does this tell me about what I value?*
- *Are you loving the wrong thing? Should you even value or care about this?*
- *Are you loving the right thing too much? Has a right value become an idol?*
- *Are you seeking safety, control and certainty at the expense of obeying God and loving others?*
- *Are you destroying more important things to save at all costs whatever you fear losing?*

(i) Taking right action

b. Anger

(iii) Identifying anger

(iv) Evaluating anger

- *Why do you get angry, frustrated or irritated at people? What wrong are you perceiving?*
- *What does that show about what you believe or value?*
- *Are you upset about what God is upset about? Is it right for you to be angry about this? Is your anger a selfish or a righteous anger?*
- *And if you are rightly angry, are you trying to make things right in a self-controlled and godly way?*

(v) Taking right action

Discussion #2: Difficult Emotions

Which do you experience more often: fear or anger? Choose one and spend some time on your own evaluating the beliefs and values behind this emotion. Come back together and take turns sharing what this emotion reveals about:

- a. What you believe and think?
- b. What you value and desire?

The table below has been provided as an example.

EMOTION: *Frustration/anger at Zoe* [Who or what am I angry at?]

What do I believe? <i>She should meet my standards of behaviour.</i>	What do I value? <i>Competence and success</i>
Sinful response (if any) <i>Quick to be frustrated with her Critical of her Yelled at her</i>	What right action should be taken? <i>Repent of wrong thinking and values Apologise for yelling at her Value her godliness more than competence</i>

EMOTION: _____

What do I believe?	What do I value?
Sinful response (if any)	What right action should be taken?

5. Changing Emotions

Romans 12:2 *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Colossians 3:1-2 *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.*

- Meditate on God's word

Psalm 143:5

I remember the days of long ago;

I meditate on all your works

and consider what your hands have done.

Psalm 1:1a-2 *"Blessed is the man...² but his delight is in the law^[b] of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.*

- Respond to God

- Speak truth to yourself

Psalm 42:5

*Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you in turmoil within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my salvation^[a] 6 and my God.*

- Our need for church

Hebrews 10:24-25 *“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”*

- Act to feel

Discussion #3: Changing Emotions

1. Which of the spiritual disciplines mentioned above do you most need to grow or persevere in? In what way/s do you think it make a difference to your beliefs, values and emotions?

2. How do you feel knowing that the emotional life of a Christian is essentially one of mixed emotions?

3. What is one thing you have heard today that will have the biggest impact on the way you think and deal with your emotions?

4. Write a prayer to God:
 - a. Confess a sinful belief or value that lies behind one of your emotions
 - b. Ask him to help you give up believing a lie or valuing an ungodly desire
 - c. Ask him to help you to persevere in one of the spiritual disciplines in order to change and nourish godly emotions

Appendix: Guilt and Shame

(i) Identifying guilt and shame

Guilt is when you realise: “I’ve done something wrong.” Shame is when you realise: “Something is wrong with me and others can see it.”

Guilt and shame can actually be helpful in telling the truth. If I have sinned, then guilt and shame are like good signals, alerting me to the wrongness of my behaviour.

We often see guilt and shame in a negative way. Our world would say people should not be made to feel guilty because it’s a negative emotion that just gets us down and stops us from achieving in life. But guilt in the Christian life actually has a positive and helpful role. It signals to us that something is wrong – in our heart, in our relationships with God or with others. Guilt can be a godly emotion if it leads to the right actions of confession, repentance and reconciliation.

However, guilt and shame can become warped and lead to self-condemnation and self-hating. However, the purpose of guilt is not to beat down on you and tell you are unable to live rightly or have no hope of change. It just simply tells us we have failed to do so.

There is a difference between subjective and objective guilt. Objective guilt means you really have done something wrong; you have sinned against God or man. Subjective guilt is a perceived wrong that comes from something other than God’s law or Word – maybe like what’s culturally acceptable or family’s expectations.

(ii) Evaluating guilt and shame

Have I really done something wrong or have I just taken on someone else's expectation of disappointment?

Example: I feel guilty because I know I could or should be doing more to serve God and love others.

Why do I feel this way?

The reality is I could be doing more. Maybe I have been slack and have lacked zeal in serving God and his people.

But the reality could also be that I'm already actively serving people, yet I still feel guilty. Do I feel guilty about not doing more because I believe that God would be more pleased with me if I do more for him or conversely, that he is less pleased with me if I do less for him? Do I feel shameful because I don't want to look like I'm not doing as much as others?

(iii) Taking right action

Most of us would avoid dealing with these ugly emotions. It's easier not to face them so we escape. Either we dull our consciences with denial and distract ourselves with other things. Or we escape by fleeing relationships, not getting too close to people because we are ashamed of what they will discover when they get to know us better.

The most necessary right action that guilt and shame should lead to is confession. To step fully into the light and tell the truth about your wrong, is so freeing and so good for your soul. God has given us the feelings of guilt and shame to move us towards him and others.

Rather than leading to self-condemnation, self-hate, blame-shifting or hiding from people, these feelings are meant to drive us towards God's over-flowing grace, the free and full forgiveness he offers to us in Christ and the promise of reconciliation and intimate fellowship with Him.

Recommended Reading

Emotions: living life in colour by Graham Beynon

Untangling emotions: J.Alasdair Groves & Winston T. Smith

True Feelings: God's gracious and glorious purpose for our emotions by Carolyn Mahaney & Nicole Whitacre

Teach me to feel: Courtney Reissig