



GUARDING RIGHTEOUS RELATIONSHIPS

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Vertical Before Horizontal Jacob's Life in Genesis

Proposition: Your personal relationships can only be as good as your private relationship with God.

I. Jacob's Shortcomings (Genesis 25:29-33).

A. Jacob lived a life of deception.

- The name "Jacob" literally means "he that grasps the heel." When used figuratively the name means "deceiver."

B. Jacob was a poor husband (Genesis 29:25).

- Jacob thought his right to happiness was greater than his commitment to marriage.

C. Jacob played favorites with his children (Gen 37:3-4).

- The unfaithfulness of a father will be surely reflected in his children.

II. Jacob's Strong Points.

We wouldn't have an accurate picture of Jacob if we looked only at his mistakes. There are many glimpses into Jacob's life in which God blesses.

A. He had a desire to serve the Lord (Genesis 28:10-22; 32:9-12; 22-32).

- God chose Jacob. He didn't seem like the ideal choice. Yet, God had great plans for him.

B. He recommitted himself to the Lord and led his family to the Lord (Genesis 32:22-31).

- After 20 years of hard labor under Laban, Jacob returned to Bethel and to the commitment he made there years earlier. **Going back to Bethel** was a time of renewal for Jacob.

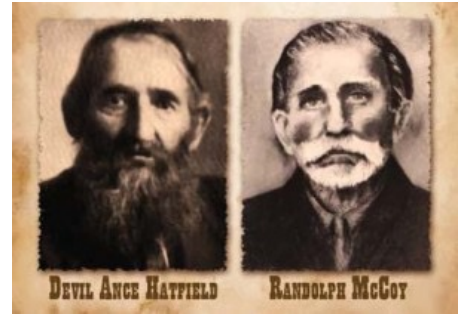
C. He prepared his children for his death (Genesis 49).

- Even with all of his mistakes in life, Jacob succeeded in raising sons that became the foundation of the nation of Israel.

Conclusion: In the New Testament we read the epitaph on Jacob's headstone.

Hebrews 11:21 - By faith Jacob, when he was a dying... worshipped the Lord.

Perhaps one of the most famous family feuds in history is the Hatfields vs. the McCoys. Between 1880 and 1891, the feud claimed more than a dozen members of the two families, becoming headline news around the country and compelling the governors of both Kentucky and West Virginia to call up their state militias to restore order. Finally, in 1891, the families agreed to stop the fighting. Are any of us guilty of such a conflict?



Proposition

Unresolved conflict with a Christian brother is not Christ-like.

Biblical Formula 1: 1 John 4:20-21

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

Biblical Formula 2: Matt. 5:23-24

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Question #1: Do I have any unresolved conflict with another Christian?

Conflict is a part of life. There is simply no way to get away from conflict with other people. We all are born into sin and therefore have conflict at the center of our very nature (Romans 3:10). The imperative responsibility for the Christian is managing, handling, responding, and dissolving the conflict in a Biblical manner.

- ☉ James 1:19-21 - Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

THE MIME

When placed into conflict, the Mime may show some outward signs of discomfort, but he will rarely say anything with the hope that the conflict will simply go away.

- ☉ David avoided dealing with his son, Absalom (2 Samuel 14:1-15:37).
- ☉ Samson ignored his conflict with Delilah (Judges 16:6-20).



THE PYROTECHNICIAN

When placed into conflict, the Pyrotechnician puts on the grandest of all fireworks displays that the world has ever seen. He typically has a short fuse, makes a public scene, and has been known to blame his actions on his ethnicity. (“I can’t help it, I’m Irish.”)



- ☉ Peter cut off the ear of Malchus in the Garden (John 18:10).
- ☉ Moses struck the rock in the wilderness and forfeited his right into the Promised Land (Numbers 20:1-13).



THE WARDEN

When placed into conflict, the Warden logically weighs all the evidence available to him. He then plays the roll of the judge, jury, and executioner to enact the punishment that he deems necessary with the intention of teaching a valuable lesson instead of reconciliation.

- ☉ Absalom murdered Amnon for the sin against Tamar (2 Samuel 13).

- ☉ Cain killed his brother Abel out of jealousy (Genesis 4:1-15).

THE SPRINTER

When placed into conflict, the Sprinter hears the starting pistol and attempts to be the world’s fastest man in an attempt to get as far away from the conflict as he can. He is often heard saying, “I am taking my ball and going home” as he runs by.



- ☉ Jonah decided to be fish bait (Jonah 1).
- ☉ Jacob ran away from Esau (Genesis 27:1-36).

THE SIDEWINDER

When living life in a normal fashion, the Sidewinder acts like one of the U.S. Military’s most effective weapons – the heat seeking missile. The Sidewinder looks for, causes, and finds contentment in conflict. The Sidewinder is truly not happy unless he is causing conflict.



- ☉ The Pharisees thrived off of conflict to elevate themselves above other people (John 8:44).
- ☉ Saul of Tarsus was a religious zealot who took great pride and pleasure in persecuting Christians (Acts 7:58-8:2;9:1-2).

THE BIBLICIST

When placed into conflict, the Biblicist uses the Bible, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as his guide to solve the conflict. He is known to pray patiently, study faithfully, and seek the Lord's will to resolve all conflict.



Question #3: How does a Biblicist resolve conflict?

1. **In Reality.** Is the conflict simply a personality conflict or a sin causing the agitation? If the conflict is not sin, we need to grow up and love our brother.

- 🕒 **Romans 12:10** - *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another;*
- 🕒 **Romans 12:18** - *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*
- 🕒 **Ephesians 4:32** - *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

2. **In Purity.** An impure Christian has absolutely no grounds for slinging mud at his Christian brother. This principle is demonstrated multiple times throughout Scripture.

Matthew 7:3-5 - *And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*

3. **In Humility.** Pride, a superiority complex, and arrogance have no place in the believer's life. God wants His children to be humble.

- 🕒 **Proverbs 8:13** - *The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogance, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.*
- 🕒 **Psalms 10:3** - *For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth.*
- 🕒 **1 John 2:16** - *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

4. **In Love.** Love is not a mushy emotion that always leaves a warm, fuzzy feeling. Love is a action demonstrated by a choice.
- 🕒 1 Peter 1:22 - Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:*
 - 🕒 2 Peter 1:5-7 - And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.
5. **In Obedience.** The Christian's greatest duty is to obey the commands of God through the Scriptures. Since God prescribed a solution for conflict between people, we had best observe his statutes.

Matthew 18:15-17

- 🕒 **Verse 15:** 1 on 1 alone (letter writing/email/texting is not mentioned).
- 🕒 **Verse 16:** If not resolved, now bring a witness or two with you to resolve the conflict.
- 🕒 **Verse 17:** If not resolved, the church must now become involved.
- 🕒 **Verse 17:** If not resolved, the offender is to be treated as an unsaved person and separated from (not shunned).

GRR: DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

Where there are people, there is conflict. This is because all men are sinners who are focused on their own self-preservation. Only Christ was able to break sin's pattern, and demonstrate how Christians can be loving servants. Make no mistake, however, Christ still had conflict because he had to deal with sinners. Have you ever had a conflict with another Christian who has sinned against you? How did you deal with it? Does the Bible say anything about dealing with difficult people?

Proposition

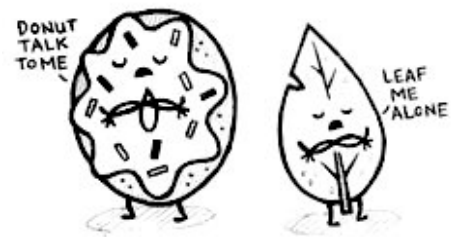
We must treat difficult people as Christ would treat them.

Question #1: What is the purpose of Biblical confrontation (Galatians 6:1-5)?

1. Restore the erring _____ (Galatians 6:1a).
2. Preserve the purity of the church (Galatians 6:1b).
3. Bear each other's _____ (Galatians 6:2).
4. Maintain self- _____ (Galatians 6:3-5).

Question #2: What is the Biblical method (Matthew 18:15-17)?

1. _____ Reproof 1-on-1 (Matthew 18:15).
2. Private Confrontation 3+-on-1 (Matthew 18:16).
3. _____ Confrontation (Matthew 18:17a).
4. Public Exclusion (Matthew 18:17b).



Question #3: What is a Christian?

1. A Christian is a person who believes in the _____ (1 Corinthians 15:1-11).
2. A Christian is a _____ Christ (Colossians 3:1-11).

Question #4: How did Jesus react to difficult people?

- 1.) He did not tolerate _____ (Mark 11:15-19).
- 2.) He never stopped _____ (John 13:1).
- 3.) He never stopped forgiving (Luke 23:34).

GRR: DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

Question #5: What did Jesus say?

He said things that I do not want to _____ when I am _____
(Luke 6:27-31; Matthew 19:30; 1Corinthians 13:1-8a).

Anger is a feeling that makes your mouth work faster than your mind.

Question #6: How can I get revenge on my enemies?

1. Be _____ (Romans 12:3).
2. Be a _____ (Romans 12:19-20).

Question #7: What if the difficult person is a relative?

1. _____ your mother and father (Ephesians 6:2).
2. Husbands, live with your wife according to _____ (1 Peter 3:7).
3. Wives, _____ to your husbands (Ephesians 5:22, 25).

Question #8: What are the steps to victory?

1. Examine _____ first (Matthew 7:1-5).
2. Immediately & consistently pray for the difficult person (Luke 6:28).
3. Memorize Scripture to _____ Satan (Matthew 4:1-11).
4. What _____ Jesus Do?
5. Evaluate your response (Psalm 139:23-24).

CONFLICT:



RESOLVED

CONTINUED

There is no doubt that stress is a part of life. We all experience it to a point where it becomes uncomfortable, annoying, impeding, and downright painful. Perhaps we can state it this way: **Stress fractures**. It can fracture your physical life, spiritual life, relationships, and unity. This is a fact whether a person is a believer or not.



Proposition

Christians need to cope with stress by instituting the Philippians 4:8 filter.

What is stress?

The term “stress,” as it is currently used, was coined by a Hungarian scientist named Hans Selye in 1936. He noticed that experiments on laboratory animals subjected to unpleasant physical and emotional stimuli all exhibited physical changes such as stomach ulcerations, shrinkage of lymphoid tissue and enlargement of the adrenals. He later demonstrated that persistent stress could cause these animals to develop various diseases similar to those seen in humans, such as heart attacks, stroke, kidney disease and rheumatoid arthritis.

Definition 1: Stress is the body’s or mind’s response to pressure.

Definition 2: Stress is the human body’s natural response to any change in the environment that requires an action, reaction, or adjustment to what’s normal.

Definition 3: While the Bible does not mention the word “stress” directly, it certainly does use words to describe stressful times:

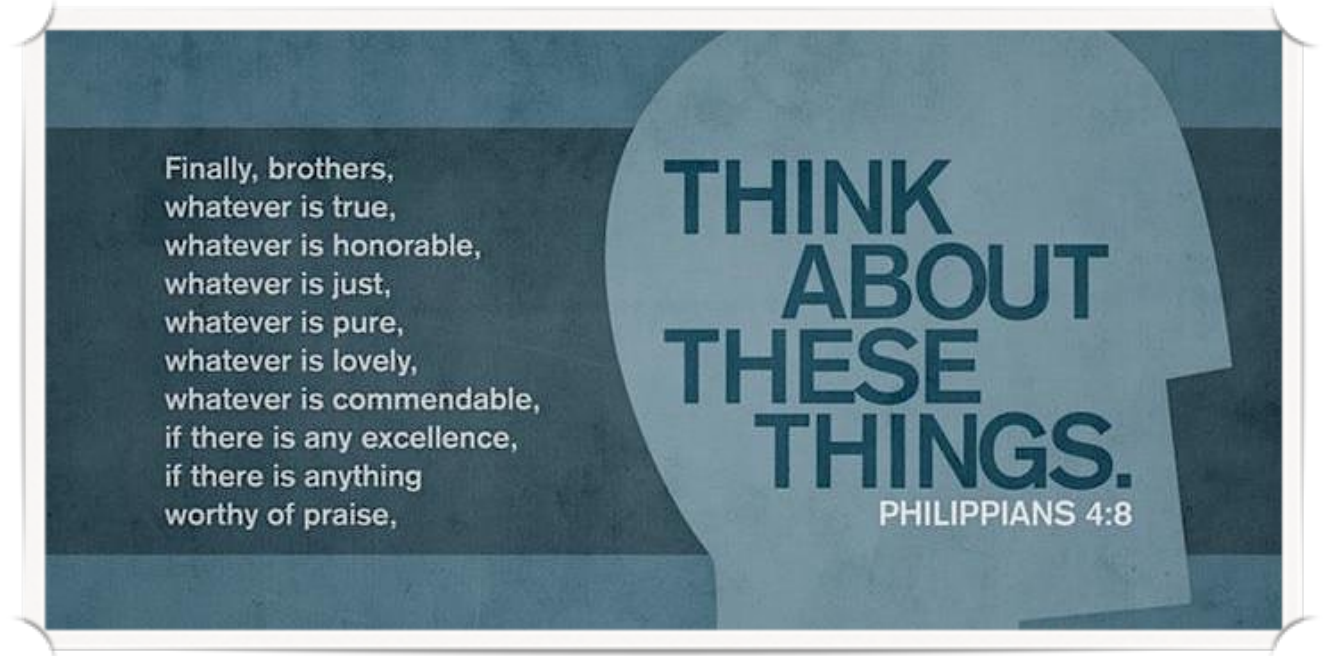
- 🕒 Circumstances - Phil. 1:2; 4:11
- 🕒 Trials - James 1:2; I Pet. 1:6; 4:12
- 🕒 Tribulations - Jn. 16:33; Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3; 8:35
- 🕒 Troubles - Ps. 86:7; Job. 5:7
- 🕒 Hardships - Job 10:17; I Thess. 2:9
- 🕒 Ordeals - II Cor. 8:2; I Pet. 4:12
- 🕒 Difficulties - II Cor. 12:10
- 🕒 Distresses - Rom. 8:35; II Cor. 6:4; 12:10
- 🕒 Persecution - Jn. 15:20; II Cor. 12:10; II Tim. 3:12
- 🕒 Affliction - Job 36:15; II Cor. 6:4
- 🕒 Suffering - Phil. 1:29; I Pet. 4:12,13
- 🕒 Adversity - Job 2:10; Ps. 49:5; Eccl. 7:14
- 🕒 Pressure - Job. 33:7; II Cor. 11:28
- 🕒 Disaster - Job 30:24; Jere. 17:1
- 🕒 Discipline - Job 5:17; I Cor. 11:32; Heb. 12:6

GRR: STRESS FRACTURES

Question #1: How does a Christian cope with stress?

Romans 12:2 - And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Question #2: What is the Philippians 4:8 filter?



Whatever things are true

While the word “truth” certainly gives the essence of being truthful, but the meaning is much deeper. It focusses on those things that are authentic or genuine. In modern terms, we would call something “the real deal.”

There is also a quality about truth that is not relative. Truth demands a standard, a constant, or an absolute. Beliefs are true when they correspond to God’s understanding. All truth is grounded in the reality that God is true and his Word is always true (John 17:17).

Whatever things are honorable

As believers, we are to live like men and women with dignity thinking about things worthy of God’s worship. Christians are citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, and there are certain behaviors and thoughts that are simply below us and not reverential to our King.

We are not to entertain thoughts that are insulting to our dignity and integrity as holy ones who have been called out of this world and into God’s marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). Inasmuch as God is a marvelous God, our thinking should reflect his holy image.

GRR: STRESS FRACTURES

Whatever things are just

This word “just” is also the common word “righteous.” Since believers have been made innocent by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, our thoughts should reflect those things that are righteous.

We are to be in harmony with God’s standards. We are to think about what is just and right. We are to think about how to do the right thing. We are to think about when we are to do the right thing. We are to think about who we are (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Whatever is pure

We are to dwell on things that are chaste and free from carnality. Purity is not simply a right thinking. It is right thinking that is connected to right actions. Clean thoughts lead to clean actions.

Purity must be linked to the human senses. Just like today, the early church lived in an era of human sensuality. The depravity of sin has corrupted God’s moral and perfect design. Anything that is outside of his perfect standard is an abomination to him. All believers have the responsibility to think purely so their actions can match (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5).

Whatever is lovely

Something that is lovely typically refers to outward beauty in our culture, but the compound Greek word signifies those things that are winsome, friendly, or pleasant in conduct and conversation. This means we are to dwell on things that are beautiful and attractive.

Beauty is not relative, that is, beauty is not in the eyes of the beholder. Beauty is absolute in the eyes of the Creator. Our thoughts should dwell upon those things that God deems as beautiful, and not upon our tastes, preferences, or opinions.

Whatever is admirable

There are things that are worth talking about, and then there are things that are unfit to hear. We are to dwell upon those things that are useful, profitable, and have a good reputation.

A thought life that invests time into things that are valuable to God is a quality that prevents thoughts and conversations from deteriorating into useless jargon. Instead, we are to think on the things that are kind and likely to win people. In turn, we are to avoid what is likely to give offense.

Whatever is excellent and praiseworthy

The verse takes a shift in thought. The previous six words are compound words that combine the word “whatever” with the specific idea Paul chose. Paul did not employ this grammatical tool for the words “excellent” and “praiseworthy.” In fact, Paul gets very broad in his application instead of being specific.

GRR: STRESS FRACTURES

- 🎧 **Excellent** - Paul did not suppose that he gave a full catalogue of the virtues which he sought the Philippians to cultivate. He added that if there was **anything** else that had the nature of excellence, the church should be careful to cultivate that also. The Christian should be a pattern and example of every that is excellent.
- 🎧 **Praiseworthy** - Paul then included **anything** that will bring God honor and glory. We must strive for high standards. That which is outstanding and exceptional is to draw our attention. Those things that are commendable and exemplary are to draw our attention.

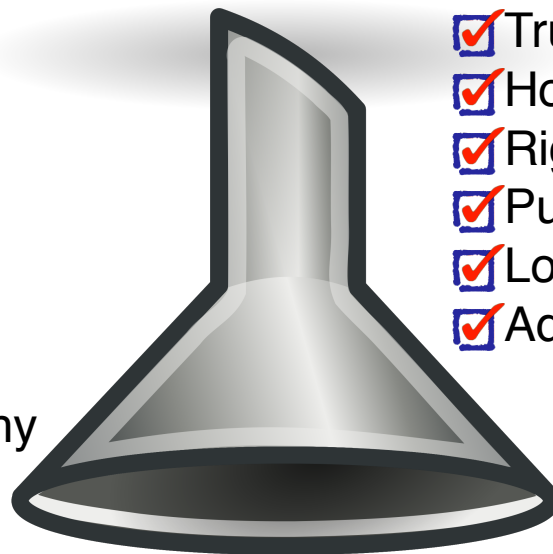
Conclusion

Mark Twain wrote, "What a wee little part of a person's life are his acts and his words! His real life is led in his head, and is known to none but himself. All day long, the mill of his brain is grinding, and his thoughts, not those other things, are his history." I would modify this idea by adding God into equations as One who is omniscient and knows our thoughts.

When it comes to stress management, there is no better solution than using the Word of God to cope with the stresses of life. The majority of Christians have not trained themselves to turn directly to Scripture when stress arises. Instead, they allow emotional responses to develop. If those emotions are corrupted by sin nature, then a train wreck is certain.

If stress is not dealt with in a biblical manner, it will fracture your relationship with God and with other people. Christians need to cope with stress by instituting the Philippians 4:8 filter.

- Anything Excellent
- Anything Praiseworthy



- True
- Honorable
- Right
- Pure
- Lovely
- Admirable

🎧 Dwell on these things.

Life would be a lot simpler if we didn't have emotions. While many people try to ignore them, the fact remains that emotions are part of man. God created man in His own image, and man's emotions are patterned after a perfect Creator. To deny, cover, or put off God-given emotions is a mistake. The Psalmist said, "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: marvelous *are* thy works; and *that* my soul knows right well" (139:14).

God did not make a mistake when he gave you emotions and patterned you after himself.

While our emotions are sculpted after God's emotions, sin has corrupted us. The Christian is to live a life patterned after things that are spiritual (Ephesians 5:18; 2 Timothy 1:7; Galatians 5:22-23). Far too many Christians live as slaves to their emotions rather than servants of the Most High God. Unchecked emotions cloud judgement, take the place of God, cause foolish thinking, and tempt us to sin. Without submission to the Spirit of God, a Christian can never gain victory over being a slave to sin-corrupted emotionalism. Having control over your emotions is not only possible, God empowers Christians to win.

The Problem

Authors who write about emotions can rarely define them. Dictionaries do not help because they usually include words such as "feeling" or "subjective" that are too closely identified with "emotion" to offer a concrete understanding.

I. Defining Emotions

- A. Emotions are easily described by various responses to circumstances: sad, mad, afraid, worried, anxious, fearful, distressed, angry, happy, dejected, despaired, gloomy, down, blue, furious, glad, surprised, outraged, steamed, troubled, and longing. All of these descriptions are portrayed in Scripture.
- B. The etymology of emotion provides some understanding. The Latin root has the idea of "action." The French root describes "to move out." The word "disturbance" is used in one definition. Emotions are "a disturbance of the person." Where does this disturbance take place? In the body (physical) or in the mind (spiritual)?
 1. Negative emotion is the disturbance within the mind (physical) caused by the discrepancy between perceived reality and one's desires (non-physical). Positive Emotion is the satisfaction found in the unity between reality and desire. (Frank E. Payne Jr., M.D.)
 2. Emotions are physical sensations combined with thoughts and beliefs about particular events and people. (Timothy Peck).

- C. While the Bible does not specifically define the word “emotion,” the concept of emotion is found throughout its pages.

God	Jesus	Paul
Grief - Genesis 6:6	Humanity - Hebrews 4:14-15	Affection - Philippians 1:7-9
Displeasure - Psalm 2:5	Anger - Mark 3:5	Joy - Philippians 2:2
Anger - Jeremiah 7:18-19	Sorrow - John 11:35	Contentment - Philippians 4:11
Joy - Isaiah 6:2-5	Grief John 11:38	Calmness - 2 Cor. 12:7-11
Hate - Deuteronomy 32:25	Joy - John 15:11	Anger - Acts 17:16

- D. One of the mistakes we make is imputing any kind of thoughts about God in the same mold as human passion. God’s emotions are not a caldron of passion that control his actions. God does not have mood swings. His emotions are perfect and holy (Isaiah 55:8).
- E. Since man was created in the image of God, all of man’s original emotions were holy and acceptable unto God (Genesis 1:31). Man’s sin corrupted his emotions making it possible for man to be controlled by emotions instead of holiness (Romans 8:7).

II. The Deception of Emotions

A. Ignore Your Emotions. Many Puritans attempted to deny the existence and need of control over emotions. This is an easy way to deal with the emotions, but it is unjust since man was created in the image of God and has functioning emotions. There can also be a real danger in ignoring emotions.

1. Emotions are warning signals of a disturbance taking place. To ignore them is not guarding the heart (Proverbs 4:23).
2. To ignore emotions is to ignore major parts of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
3. To ignore emotions is to ignore part of the image of God (Matthew 22:37).

4. To ignore emotions is to disobey Scripture's commands to control them (Galatians 5:16-23).

B. Blame Your Emotions. Pop psychology indirectly teaches that mankind can feel better about himself if he can figure out a way to shift blame. Some methods will elevate emotions to a point of non-criticism so that emotions can go unchecked, and man does not have to be responsible for his behavior. Nothing is ever actually anyone's fault, we are all just victims of our emotions.

1. God's Word clearly calls out every man to be responsible for his own behavior.
 - a. Ecclesiastes 12:14 - For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.
 - b. 2 Corinthians 5:10 - For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.
2. Worldly philosophy that is contrary to Scripture is vain.
 - a. Colossians 2:8 - Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.
 - b. Romans 1:21 - Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

C. Elevate Your Emotions. Some people live their lives through their emotions. Hollywood has effectively romanticized the notion of being controlled by emotions. What would an action film be if the hero didn't lose emotional control and conquer the world? Far too many people live their lives through fantasy or "in the heat of the moment" styled actions instead of self-controlled discipleship.

1. You become what you think (Proverbs 23:7).
2. Whatever you sow you shall reap (Galatians 6:17).
3. Be wholesome in everything you say (Ephesians 4:29).
4. Abstain from all forms of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

III. Taking Control of Your Emotions: The Issue of Responsibility

A. God will hold all people accountable for their thoughts.

1. Romans 12:3 - For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.
2. James 1:6-8 - But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

Question: Have you ever heard anyone say, “But I cannot change the way I think” or “I cannot help the way I feel”? What is the Biblical response to these statements?

B. God will hold all people accountable for their speech.

1. James 3:10 - Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.
2. Psalm 34:12-13 - What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

C. God will hold all people accountable for their behavior.

1. Matthew 25:45-46 - Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.
2. 2 Corinthians 5:10 - For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Conclusion: While there is no magic formula for success, consider Ephesians 5:18 where Paul tells the believers in Ephesus to not get drunk with wine resulting in dissipation and instead to allow the emptiness to be filled up by spiritual qualities. How do we do that? Verses 19-21 give the answer: 1.) sing, 2.) give thanks for everything, 3.) submit to others out of reverence for Christ.

