**The Voice of Emotions: Recap**

**1. What are emotions?** Latin *emovere*: to move out or to move through; living, changing movement

We need structure and form to hold them; we need a soul with healthy reflective emotions so we can enjoy life.

The voice of emotions: “I feel; I’m stirred; I’m moved by…”

False voice: either stoic repression or neurotic, dramatic reaction.

Emotions are indicators, responses, based on deep beliefs. They are not a source.

They give voice to what’s going on in our souls and make us feel alive.

We never have a feeling without symbolic meaning; our feelings mean something within.

Some of the primary emotions: anger, anticipation, joy, trust, fear, surprise, sadness and disgust, contempt, shame, guilt.

These are like measurements on a thermometer, indicators, but thermostat is our will!

Emotions are interior reactions to stimuli from an inner thought or an outer experience.

Emotions operate in tandem with thoughts. When our thoughts are not based on truth, our emotion are darkened. Thoughts and emotions are interconnected and feed each other.

Ask: what is this emotion reflecting within me? Is it appropriate and healthy?

Often, we conceal our negative emotions of anger, sadness and fear and end up in anxiety and depression or apathy. But the heart forgets nothing. Must name our emotions, acknowledge them. Must discard our ideal self, and rework our distortions.

Emotions are central to our life. Healthy well-ordered ones are essential to a good life.

**2**. **Idolatry of emotions**. We may believe emotions must be satisfied, so they have mastery over us. We may feel we should honor all our emotions, but in transformation we must realize that every emotion does not have to have pre-eminence.

“Feelings are good servants. But they are disastrous masters.” Dallas Willard

Many live out of just feelings – that’s not our true center! Would keep us immature.

2 dangerous polarities: undue attention to emotions or too little functional understanding.

Sometimes we can’t even imagine what it would be like to live without fear or anger or depression or elation (from drugs/alcohol/food) dominating us.

**3. Need divine objectivity**.

“Emotions don’t validate truth; they validate what we believe. Our emotions are always

affected by what we perceive as reality.” Wendy Backlund, *Victorious Emotions*

If we can’t distinguish between our feelings and our will, we will mistake our feelings for reason. We have often learned to make decisions on the basis of feelings.

Emotional life may be driven by diseased images we’ve stored from our memories.

If there are unresolved psychological/spiritual difficulties they will keep pushing up into our soul, sometime in inappropriate ways, demanding attention and relief.

If our emotions are intense, it is a signal to pay attention to something in our soul.

Emotions don’t just exist on their own – connected to something deeper.

Much more subjective than we realize. Beliefs, thoughts, judgments inform our emotions.

Emotions are beautiful, we are created with them, but can be so out of order in us.

Need to be brought back to the truth of how we are created and how to express them.

Early modeling by our parents has shaped our emotional expressions, perhaps distorted.

Need to pray for order to our emotions, asking God to set them in order within us.

**4. Repression, a defense**

We may repress feelings because they were so painful at the time of the event. But the power to feel pain is itself a vital part of the healing.

We have to be willing to feel, and to let the Lord bring up any repressed emotions. Then replace them with transformative truth.

If we shut them down, we harden. It’s just our defense, our attempts to be safe by not letting things affect us.

Emotions are like a circuit, intended to be beautifully blended – so if one goes out, all affected. Can choose not to have pain, but don’t feel joy then either.

In transformation, our feelings must be renovated – old ones removed or modified if their intensity and expression are not healthy and new ones installed or heightened.

Jesus is our example in his manhood. He lived with his heart and emotions fully open.

He is the human face of God. Expressed emotions so appropriately – without self-protection, without hiding, without passions out of bounds.

Jn. 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. He was *touched* with “the feeling of our infirmities” and “tempted in every way, just as we are” (Heb. 4:15).

We are created in His image and likeness – Gen. 1:27 - and must allow His humanity to come into our being.

**5. Renovation and Order** (Prov. 25:28, 16:32; Eph. 1:6)

Growing up in all aspects in Christ – one of those aspects is emotional self-mastery.

We can learn to order our feelings. By God’s grace we can begin to cultivate the feelings that should be prominent – joy, hope, etc. This, then, transforms our disposition, our character. It is the positive movement into these emotions that eliminates destructive feelings – it is replacement, not trying to focus on and root out the negative

Our task is to:

1. Come to honest terms with our feelings (huge task – may need help).

2. Where aren’t able to name and express our emotions, we need to learn to do this.

1. Repent of hiding, repressing and disowning our own emotions.
2. Recognize the reality of destructive feelings, agree with the Lord to abandon those that are destructive and lead us in wrong directions.

2 Cor. 10:5 (Mess) and Gal. 5:28 (Mess); Col. 3:2; Phil 4:8; Prov. 23:7

1. Receive healing for wounds on which destructive feelings and thoughts are based.
2. Recognize their place, and don’t give them greater significance than they deserve.
3. Don’t get into false guilt about what you do or do not feel.
4. Replace them with other thoughts so the feelings will follow.
5. Trust the Lord who is within you to supply the feeling as you choose Him.

**Assignment**

Sometimes when we are reared in households that haven’t helped us to understand our own emotions, one of the best things we can do is develop greater self-awareness of our responses. The Holy Spirit is always ready to help us develop this as He is the One who searches our hearts and knows all our “within” (Ps. 139).

What’s really going on in our hearts? What needs must we acknowledge and invite the Lord into? We are going to have to deal with our hearts to come free.

A practical way to start this process is to keep a self-awareness journal to help us reconnect with our feelings. At the end of the day, sit with the Lord and just write for a few minutes so you can articulate to yourself and God: What happened today that made me feel uncomfortable? What situation or encounter left me uncertain, ashamed, confused? Write that out and the particular emotion or combination of emotions. He will help you know what that emotion is and if you need a list of emotions, start with these

Now that you have defined your emotions, what response did that evoke in you? How did my heart choose? What choices were based on these responsive feelings? We begin to see that our thoughts, which come from deep beliefs, inform our emotions and we are responsible for these. This gives us a chance to look at what we are believing and feeling, inviting the Lord right into those places. Where are you really hurting? For instance, is it pain of past rejection that keeps being reinforced? Then we can encounter the Lord there.

From: Shame-bound lies and Shame-free truths (*Released from* Shame, Wilson, 1990).

Identify which lies have been significant in your life by placing a check.

Can you begin to embrace the truth? Personalize the truth for yourself and write it out.

*Shame-bound lies about emotions Shame-free truths*

Emotions are unnecessary, bothersome Emotions are a gift from God and an integral

and embarrassing. part of my human nature which reflects his image.

Emotions are bad and dangerous, so I Emotions can be expressed appropriately,

am safer when I avoid them. and I can learn to do that. I am less of what God created me to be when I avoid feeling emotions.

If I begin to feel my emotions, I will go When I am able to feel my emotions, I will crazy. become more authentic and alive.

It is stupid to get upset over things that It is appropriate for children to feel happened years ago. It is best to “let confused, afraid, sad, or angry when their

sleeping dogs lie.” parents neglect or abuse them. Those feelings did not go away just because I had to learn to deaden and disown them. They are still inside; they are affecting my life now. It’s best to face and feel them honestly.

When I felt sad as a child, no one was I have resources now as an adult that I

there for me. I couldn’t stand to feel that I did not have as a child. I can find more

despair and loneliness again. reliable (although not perfect) human comforters. And I know (or can know) God personally and have his comfort. It will be painful to grieve childhood losses, but I can stand it.

I was told as a child I should never be It is appropriate to feel angry about what

angry, and I know God is angry about angers God. Misleading or abusing children

my anger – both my anger about the angers God. I can learn to express anger

past and current situations. appropriately and without sinning.

Unless I explode with anger, people I can learn appropriate, boundary-setting will walk all over me. responses so that I don’t have to hide

behind my shield of anger.