

THE HEALTH NUGGET



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Highly Flavored

I am emotional. I cry easily at the recitation of a touching moment or a catastrophe. I will uproariously burst out in laughter if something strikes me as funny. I often feel passionate about things that are significant to me. I have to watch my internal feelings of frustration and impatience, as they want to naturally flow out. I emotionally tag much of life's experiences. Vanilla is not my flavor.

Being "emotional," I place value on emotional states and responses. But I have learned much in regard to their proper place in cohabitation with the other functions of the mind, largely as the result of God's inspired Word, and through trial and much error. I have had to learn how to temper them. Unfortunately, it is our imbalance in this area that has led to a prevailing sentiment that devalues emotions. Generally, when people tell me that I am pretty emotional, I don't think it is intended as a compliment. But in my estimation, emotions give zest to life and can make life feel worth living. Yet, emotions can cripple our days and damage relationships. They can also be the alleged basis and motive for wanting life to end.

The word emotion is derived from the Latin *emovere*, where the *e* means "out" and *movere* means "move." Emotion can be seen as the out-moving of inner workings of the mind; the expression of feelings and responses to thoughts, situations, and even other emotions. Emotions can be revealed through our facial expressions or can be repressed, visibly un-discerned. Emotions are

not stagnant or concrete as fact. They are like the clouds, in a somewhat constant state of ebb and flow, sometimes gentle, other times stormy.

Much philosophizing has been done throughout the centuries on the subject of emotions. Supposedly, Plato saw emotions as a part of the soul separate from thought and evaluations. Aristotle linked emotions closely with judgment and belief. He saw the advantage of cultivating them through moral education in developing a virtuous character. The Stoics sought to diminish the role played by emotions. They held that emotions, such as fear, envy, or passionate love arose from false judgments and that the sage, a person who had attained to moral and intellectual perfection, would be free from them. The James-Lange theory of emotion says that first chemicals are released into the blood stream as a result of a stimulus. Our emotions are then our response, a decision we make as to what the chemicals mean. Emotions have been thought of as the story you tell yourself about what just occurred; the brain's interpretation of facts. Some have viewed emotional reactions as completely separate from intellectual reaction. They argue that the brain can only use one function at a time. Therefore if you are being emotional it is an unintelligent moment. In their eyes, emotion precedes thought. "Science has emphasized the physiology of emotion, focusing on aspects of our chemistry and the molecular process of the emotional part of our being."

But what does it mean to have healthy emotions? And how can we possess them? Are certain emotions good for us to experience while others are not? What is their place in a Christian's experience?

I believe that the process of sanctification must pierce even this realm of our being. "Now may the God of peace sanctify you wholly; . . . your whole spirit, soul, and body . . . (1 Thessalonians 5:23, NKJV). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus took the principles of His government, His law and brought them home to the heart, including the realm of our emotions (Matthew 5).

Jesus' mission for humanity as summarized in Isaiah 61:1-2, and quoted by Christ in Luke 4:18, embraces the healing of emotional wounds. "He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted . . . to proclaim . . . the opening of the prisons to them that are bound, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to comfort all who mourn, to give them . . . the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, and they shall raise up the former desolations, they shall repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations."

We don't have to look far to see evidence of the ruined cities, the ruined dwelling places of the mind and emotional desolation that has been passed down generationally. If we don't see it in the mirror then at least it is obvious in society's quest for emotional stimulation and fulfillment—in the world and also in the church. Emotional revivals that confuse feelings with faith, the pursuit of emotional excitement as evidence of the Spirit's presence and blessing, are false and ultimately fleeting. But an experience of biblical sanctification that ignores the emotional component of our spirit is not the genuine article either.

Bible sanctification involves the whole man. "A sound heart is the life of the flesh" (Proverbs 14:30, KJV). A sound heart embraces possessing a stable mind and balanced emotions.

When we yield ourselves to God and His Spirit works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure, our whole nature will be restored to the original beauty and 'soundness' God intended.

Emotions can inform, illuminate, and motivate. Our emotions are often what we are first aware of in response to a situation. They can also be the most powerful means of self-deception. I believe that emotional health can be rallied as one of our greatest assets in harnessing our strengths and allowing other functions of the mind to operate at their peak.

Contrary to the theories of evolution that ascribe feelings to natural selection, we know that God created man with the capacity of experiencing emotions. In His Word we will look for answers to our emotional issues, find the power to have them sanctified (made healthy), and be able to celebrate the fact that we are highly flavored.



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