



FEELING IS HEALING

Introducing Our Emotion

The measure of healing in our emotion will dictate the degree of intimacy we enjoy in our relationship with God. The more controlled and damaged our emotion is, the harder it is for us to let God draw near, or for us to feel God's presence or hear His voice.

When we speak of 'healing of emotion' we are referring to the truth that much of the damage in our lives directly effects our emotional state. Specific events and experiences in our past will either embellish our emotional growth or inhibit it. Because we do not pay much attention to the care of our emotion and because the rigours of life continue to hammer against our feelings, we dismiss the value of our emotion and ignore the true role of our feelings in our lives. When they are damaged, we have further justification for ignoring them and more reason to fear them.

God intended that our emotion should be at the very centre of our human make-up and as such be the vehicle of healing and continued enrichment to our lives and to those around us. Furthermore, it is through our healed emotion that we will grow in intimacy in our relationship with God, hear His voice and begin to move in anointed spiritual gifting. But instead of living this way, we have relegated our emotion to the fringes of our life and in pride sought God on our terms through the arrogance of our intellect, without allowing our emotion its rightful place. For the healing and exercising of our emotion will always invite brokenness, a new sense of our sin, of His greatness and the healing of our past, so we can move into our future unencumbered.

We need therefore to redress these follies and expose a number of other lies, to encourage us back along a path of inner healing that allows us to re-discover all our feelings, damaged or otherwise. Our feelings are the conduit of much of God's Truth, for we feel God's presence often long before we hear or know His ways. We feel His power before we know it in our minds or lives. By suppressing our emotion, therefore, we walk crippled into the Christian life.

No Healing Without Feeling!

What much of the church does not accept about spiritual and emotional healing is that it is essential the individual must accept personal responsibility for the damage in their lives, particularly in the area of their emotion. Most of us arrogantly expect God to heal us without any effort or responsibility on our parts. But before God can begin to release us from the damage done by the Enemy through our personal sin, through others and our bloodline, we must first acknowledge truthfully the existence of such damage in our lives. The first truth we may well have to accept is that coming to Christ has not automatically freed us from our past. We must be prepared before healing can begin, to admit that we do have emotional and spiritual damage in our lives. It is only when we accept this basic truth that the Lord can begin to remove such hurt and damage that we may carry.

The human spirit is central to our human make-up and our emotion is rooted in our spirit. As human beings we have majored on our mind and have acquired an intellectual faith, but failed utterly to give our

spirit and our emotion their rightful place in our lives and that of the church. Our mind looks on our spirit and emotion with contempt: untidy and embarrassing. We lock our feelings away, and in so doing lock away much of the person we were created in Christ to be.

Coupled with this is the extraordinary teaching proliferated by the Enemy in many churches that we should not trust or give any freedom to our emotion. We have been taught that our emotion should be treated at best with cautious indifference and at all times be tightly controlled. Let us look at some of these follies :

- A woman gets emotional in a church meeting so we rush over to her to calm her down, rather than eagerly encouraging her to welcome the trauma she may be touching into. Instead of trying to pacify her we should begin asking why it is that the Holy Spirit is bringing these feelings to the surface, and what is the root issue these feelings are exposing that we should, with her co-operation, be seeking to release her from.
- We pray with a person and they begin to 'manifest'. We automatically call it demonic and go cavalier-like against it, encouraging the person to control themselves and get rid of the 'demons'. Much of the time we fail to distinguish between trauma, raw emotion and demonic defiance. So often we give credit to the Enemy when it could well be a work of the Holy Spirit releasing shock and trauma from the person.
- He was knocked off his bicycle and lay in the road trembling and shaking uncontrollably. Rather than asking the Holy Spirit to take all this trauma as the body seeks to shake it off, they give him an injection to 'calm him down' and lock in all the trauma. His physical recovery is slow.
- She knew it was going to be a hard delivery, but no one realised how hard. For several hours after the birth she just lay on the bed shaking uncontrollably while her husband held her hand. Twice the doctors told her she should let them give her something for the 'pain', but she knew she needed to just let it go.....
- While they were kissing he had noticed at times she would glaze over in her eyes and then begin shaking. He felt he should back off. But tonight was different, their honeymoon and they were going to make love. He began foreplay and she quickly went into a trauma shaking violently and fighting him off. For the first time he learned about the rape that she had thought she had dealt with.
- He had totally lost control, laughing loudly, but not like the other folk at the end of the service. Someone discerned it was wrong and challenged the mocking demon. He fell on the floor almost instantly, groaning. Everyone began to now realise how his mocking had disrupted the meeting.

Although we must be careful not to allow the demonic to exploit our desire to co-operate with our emotion, we must nevertheless be emphatic about giving emotion its rightful place. The above illustrates how far we have veered from the healthy Biblical view of caring for our emotion.

What is not realised is that by looking with such arrogant contempt at our emotion we are in fact cutting ourselves off from probably the single most important avenue for our Lord God to talk to and heal us. We have swallowed, without question, one of the cleverest demonic lies in the Enemy's arsenal. By conveniently believing we should ignore and suppress our feelings, which suits many of us well, we give ourselves the excuse to never deal with the pain of our pasts. While at the same time we choose to cut

ourselves off from one of the principal means of inner healing available to us. By choice, we continue in our sterile, haughty, mind-centred religion for which Evangelicalism is renowned.

This lie is allowed to proliferate in both the church and our own lives because we are unprepared to see in Scripture that we worship and love a very passionate and emotional God, who is transparent in His feelings towards us, our world, sin and His Son. Emotion is His nature and a chief means of communicating His ways to us. Words spoken without passion are not possible from our Lord God. It is no accident that Hebrew is rich in such words describing all manner of feelings. We worship a living God, alive in His passion, who is freely able to demonstrate emotion, even those which in our pride we consider negative, like anger, jealousy and hate.

So not only do we fail to give the prominence we should to our emotion; we have systematically divided our feelings into good and bad. So love becomes good, but lust is not. Worry is bad but compassion is OK. We are not allowed to show rage or hate, but permit ourselves to be 'troubled' over people's problems. By thinking in such a way, we have segregated our emotion, giving consent to that which we like but suppressing and ignoring that which we do not consider clean or wholesome. What we refuse to accept is that all feelings are God's gift to us, and that all feelings have a good and a bad side. All feelings can help in bringing us healing.

Suppressed And Buried Emotion

Many people live in fear of their emotion. We do not feel we have control over our feelings like we do our minds. But in fact the opposite is true, for our mind, being the Devil's playground, easily and often deceives us. While our emotion, rooted in our spirit, always speak to us honestly, even though it may not always be objectively accurate. It always speak what we 'feel'. Our feelings are an honest response to what we are discerning, experiencing or anticipating. Unfortunately, like our instincts, we ignore our emotion to our peril.

But before we can look at our own plight we should look at the author of emotion, God Himself. God has feelings that He freely expresses. Scripture is full of illustrations of God's emotion (Psa 2.12, 77.9, Zec 1.15, Exo 4.14, 2Kgs 21.6, Gen 6.6, Neh 8.10). In a similar way the Psalmist expresses feelings in spontaneous openness before the Lord. Such passion, whether expressed in anger, anguish or awe releases faith, hope and frequently healing (Ps 55.4-5). Feelings are intended to play a major part in our Christian life, particularly in our relationship with God (Ps 98.4,66).

The golden rule seems to be that feelings must not merely be collected and stored, for they can then become toxic and poison us. They must be expressed spontaneously, whether they feel good or bad.

Feelings are who we really are. Our mind can create a fictitious dream world of our own making aided by the Enemy, but our emotion, being spontaneous, is who we are now, at this very moment. This is a good reason why many of us do not like our feelings. We are not prepared to live with truth now.

The personal tragedy for us all is that because we fear our emotion and the pain and hurt it may give us, after a painful event we quickly repress the feelings and pretend the hurt is not there. But buried emotion is like a time capsule. The emotion may lay there for twenty years, but when recalled will feel as fresh as the moment it was buried. By constantly suppressing our feelings we begin to associate any emotion with those negative events and experiences. Instead of facing up to them as they come we press them inside and pretend they never happened.

Over the years, for most of us, this becomes a habit pattern that builds up inside us a huge backlog of hurts, fears and pain. Like rotting fish in a barrel it propagates a poison that will fester and turn rancid every area of your life. We will eventually become the victim of the very feelings we have sought to bury.

But in the early years, with a fine mind, quick wit and lots of friends we can manage with ease this growing menagerie inside us, sometime even forgetting it is there.

As you grow older however, the cauldron inside begins to stir and take its revenge. The volcano wakes up. You begin to suffer bad back pains, particularly in the lower back. You find yourself with migraine-type headaches and soreness of the limbs. Skin rashes or eczema begin and your temper seems to be on a short fuse. For all of us the way the feelings begin to creep out may be different, but the result will be the same. The suppressed feelings will take their revenge in physical, mental and emotional sickness. This is common in middle-aged people who no longer have the resources to manage and control this awakening eruption inside them.

This practice of suppressing and controlling our feelings is one of the ways both we and Satan block our own healing. With no immediate cost the practice becomes a common way of life. People believe that the control of their emotion is mature behaviour. The stiff upper lip is spiritual. Very few of us have learnt how to welcome and enjoy our feelings. Sexual pleasure, laughter, enthusiasm, anger and inner pain are all true feelings which must not be suppressed but welcomed into our lives.

The truth is that the spontaneous flow of our feelings is an essential element of healthy living. We cannot begin to experience inner personal healing without feeling our feelings! God gives us permission and even requires us to get in touch with them. For instance, crying, weeping, sobbing and tears are one of God's marvellous ways of releasing damage from our lives, but in manageable amounts. A few tears a day while getting in touch with your true self is a relatively painless healing experience. So much so that God places a special value on tears and collects them! (Rev 21.4, Ps 56.8).

When people first get in touch with a strong emotion like anger, that they have buried, they must always be reminded that it is the root that is the issue, and not the volume. Any feeling is nearly always related or tied to a specific event or relationship. So as we welcome back a feeling we will no doubt be able to tie the pain and trauma to an incident or relationship in our past. Many historic feelings will only be found as we allow ourselves to let go of the control, and expose the source. Remove the root and the volume becomes manageable - that's spiritual surgery at its most effective.

People often fear being overwhelmed by the volume they might feel. This is a red herring, for as they declare they want to let go of the root by repentance, they will not need to feel the whole army of trauma that goes at the same time. Sadly we have all been falsely tutored to equate our feelings with negative pain, guilt and uncleanness. We must learn to honour and welcome the gift of our feelings, not falsely judge and deny them.

The Purpose Of Emotion

Emotion, as God created it in us, serve a three fold purpose; as a healthy response to life's events; a message of communication to us; and the 'colour' for our lives.

A Healthy Response

As we walk the road of life we are always being confronted by events that shock, surprise or even overjoy us. We can either confront these circumstances with a controlled coldness or react in the spontaneous way we were intended to. Because men are often told not to show feelings, they are more often the cold fish than the 'hot' passionate male they were all created to be. Again, many women despise their emotion. In fact very few people anywhere in the world have that uncluttered spontaneity

in their emotion we should all have. Even though culturally some ethnic groups are more 'outgoing' than others, most of us are controlled in our emotional response to life's events. For instance:

- Shocking news prompts us to put our hand to our mouth to stop inappropriate uncontrolled reactions. It gives us the seconds needed to plan a response. Then we break into a scream or bite our lips.
- Similarly, we hear gun shots and are frozen to the spot for an instant, until we have gathered our options. We then react in blind panic or an outward controlled calm.
- We are told a close friend has died and out comes a scream, followed by floods of tears, which we quickly control.
- For five years we have been trying to get pregnant and have given up, only to be told at a routine smear test that we are three months along. We scream with delight. Everyone in the clinic stops and stares. We cower with embarrassment - we won't do that again!

In all the above instances the expression of feelings is outwards. Then we check ourselves. But in every situation, with every flood of emotion, we have a choice. Do we give our emotion spontaneous freedom or do we hold back and control our response?

The healthiest response always is to exhale the feelings or shock we are receiving. Our emotion can be like railway lines taking away the shock, trauma or ecstasy we are feeling. Our emotion give us the means to let go of the strain or toll of the news or event, giving us the opportunity to release and let go of what is being laid on us. Our emotion is created to be a natural spontaneous cleansing mechanism for the spirit and body .

But unfortunately for most of us, instead of this healthy type of reaction, we bite our lips, let go a weak moan, control the flood of feelings, brace ourselves and get on with life. Even in the privacy of our own bedroom we let go of none of the trauma, shock and pain. We force it all down and control it.

We tell ourselves we are strong enough to take it all - 'man' enough to handle it. Even the joy of the moment is stolen as we rapidly think of the dozens of things that could go wrong in the next six months. We steel ourselves for the worst and do not allow ourselves to get excited prematurely. The emotion is and remains buried.

The choice is ours; we control and suppress our feelings thereby delegating to them the power to begin writing our future sick history, or we touch the vibrancy of them now and let them go in all their passion. Are your responses healthy or a personal health hazard?

Emotion As A Message

We have looked at emotion as a healthy and helpful response to external events, but they also play a major part in giving us messages. These messages or information come into our spirit all the time from both our surroundings and all those around us. But it must be said that this is happening at a subliminal level where we are not consciously thinking or feeling this information. Let us look at some typical examples :

- We see him walking towards us and immediately feel uneasy in our spirit as he gets closer to us. Fear grips us but we do not know why.
- She is in a deep sleep and feels a cold sweat coming over her as she wakes and catches the last moments of drowning. She can feel the cold sea all around her. She has always feared the sea.
- The preacher is talking on in his monotonous style when suddenly he says a phrase and we go into shock. That word was for us. We felt God talking to us through those words.
- We are driving along late at night and see flashing blue lights ahead of us and feel a chill as we slowly pass an accident involving a car and a lorry. As we get closer we see it is a Ford just like ours, also with a woman in it. We suddenly feel vulnerable and lonely. We realise that could have been us in that car if we had not stopped for a coffee. We shudder.
- The phone rings and even before we pick up the receiver we know it is mum telling us the results - dad is dying of cancer.
- We are praying with someone who has a stiff shoulder when we have this sudden urge to cry. We try and hold it back but to no avail. We weep bitterly and the person we are praying for begins doing the same. Then just as suddenly we stop, though John, who we have been praying for, continues for over an hour, until all the pain is gone from his shoulder. He had been trying to get in touch with the pain for weeks.

For most of us the link between emotion and sickness has never been seen. So the whole idea frightens us. But it is a fact of life that as we grow in Christ we should also grow into our feelings - that is, if we equate our maturing in Christ with our relationship with the Holy Spirit, and not merely an increasing knowledge in our minds. As we grow in Christ we will be able to interpret these flowing feelings with wisdom and be able to empathise with where they are coming from and what the Holy Spirit wants to do with them.

Our emotion is seated in our spirit and this is the centre of our human make-up. Because our spirit is open to the spiritual world we are able to live in both worlds, this physical world and the spiritual world. This means we are able to pick up messages from the spiritual world as well as from the material world around us.

But our mind, being arrogant and prideful as it is, does not like this rival, so seeks to control and block the information flow our spirit offers. So we, being led by our minds as we are most of the time, ignore our spirit and the spiritual database it eagerly wants to share with us via our emotion.

Our problem is that the seat of our emotion, being eternal like God's, is in our spirit. So our mind, fearful of losing control, consistently refuses to let our spirit and emotion have their place in our being. We use our minds to suppress our emotion and thereby ignore its message.

One of the many things Christians discover when they begin to grow in the Lord is the need to hear the voice of God more clearly. Here the frustration begins as they discover God says very little to them, or so they think. They try hard to listen and redouble their efforts by talking to Him even more, but only silence or gobbledygook is heard. What they have not yet learnt is that God, moving as He does by His Spirit through our human spirit, is ignored. God does not always talk to us like everyone else does, through the audible words of our minds. For our mind, by using words, can cut itself off from God. Much of the time God, using our feelings and His, is talking to us at another level.

So it is only as our feelings are healed and welcomed by us that we can begin to dip into this super-computer database of spiritual knowledge lodged in our spirits, but which our mind fears, chooses to ignore and controls. Until our spirit and His have taken authority over our minds, this will remain the case.

Emotions: The Colours In Our Bouquet

Most of us much of the time live in a monochrome world. Emotion may be the colour of life but we are very happy to live without it, thank you very much. But without feelings we are all merely shadows of our potential self. I will often liken emotion to a huge bouquet of flowers where each bloom is a different variety and colour. We have a huge yellow chrysanthemum (joy), a dark blue Iris (anger) and a giant white daisy (love), to name but a few. The trouble is that by our neglect these flowers are in danger of dying. Without attention they fade and lose their colour. With no life in our spirit (the water and vase) we let them wilt, becoming bland and lifeless.

Imagine an orgasm without feeling, or laughter without the noise. Think of anger without the energy, or fear without the trauma. Life would be an empty shell. Everything would be monochrome. Life would be reduced to an occasional snigger or strained smile. The deadly dullness of daily life will eventually kill us by its extreme boredom. This is not the way God created us to be but it is the way most of us live. We even begin to believe that the richness and life of our emotion is something to be feared and kept under control.

All of us have some emotion, but due to life's damage none of us possess the full bouquet. We must all begin to re-cultivate the blooms, welcome and caring for them in order to bring them back life.

"Feelings Are Healing!"

With such historic damage both in our emotion and our perception of our feelings it is not surprising we have such difficulty developing a relationship with God. We have an enormous capacity to learn about God but fail utterly at knowing Him. One of the keys to changing this is to see healing in our emotion. Indeed for many of us restoration of our emotion is both healing and brokenness.

How do we then receive healing through our emotion? Because all of us have been selective in using our emotion whole parts of our bouquet are not readily available to us any longer. In the burying of them is the sickness we now know.

- We fear being angry so we suppress it.
- We are always fearful so we create a whole range of social structures to ensure we do not need to fear.
- In our youth we are abused so we stay away from sex because we know it will hurt.
- We have always hated bright colours so we never wear them

We can go on endlessly with a whole range of mechanisms we put in place to avoid touching into negative feelings or best forgotten past experiences. Again, we may even be the type of person who was told they do not deserve to be happy so we no longer allow ourselves to be. We will then add to our sorrow by not even knowing good emotion!

As a result of such action we hide the truth about the way we feel. Our life becomes a lie and a self-deceit. Most of us do it so well we no longer remember consciously when it started. This makes our situation even worse. Say, for instance, we are convicted by the Lord for the hate we have for our

partner. We go ahead and repent, even laying down the anger and revenge. But it only partly helps and in time we pick it up again. What we have forgotten is that we first hated a grandparent for their abuse of us, but we have long since buried the feelings. The real healing for us will be in the 'time capsule' of the buried and forgotten feelings. It will often take the Holy Spirit to reveal such deep hurt. But by getting in touch with the feelings we will get in touch with the buried memories. No feeling, no real healing.

Again, for some of us, our minds have clearly told us that the feelings do not exist. For others, we have judged our feelings already and decided, for convenience, they are not all true. But we have used our minds, sometimes the Devil's tool, to do so. Some of us have spent such pain in our early years, having never known any peace of mind because of abuse. We now fear losing control, so we banish all our feelings and live in our heads, where we have so much more control.

What gets to most of us is that our feelings tend to be untidy. They are not our idea of a structured, disciplined and orderly Christian life. "Tidiness is next to godliness", we say. So the idea of a God who promotes feelings and all the 'out of control' consequences is unacceptable to us. This is one of the big lies and without a willingness to 'let it all hang out' we will never know breakthrough.

Many of us will find that in spite of our best efforts in controlling the breakout of our emotion, in our dreams and prayer life the Lord will bring things to the surface by one means or another. Once we have asked Him to bring us healing, using our emotion will in most cases be the way He will do it. So be warned.

Our spirit over the years becomes a cess-pit collecting and fermenting all the pain, hurt, shame and abuse we have experienced. This is because we did not deal with it promptly and correctly at the time. Now the only way of sucking up this turgid waste is by the conduit of our emotion. The hole is too deep for any other method. If this were not the case we would have dealt with it ourselves long ago. But we already know that the only way we can pump it all out is to get down on our knees and personally direct the pipe into the dark deep recesses of our spiritual pit - something we have never been willing to do ever. The humiliation alone of just taking off the cover is bad enough. But actually leaning into the pit on our hands and knees! The stench! The embarrassment! The fear! No way!

At this stage the Lord says : take it or leave it, it is our choice. This is His path of healing for most of us most of the time. No feelings, no healing.

In Summary

We all have emotion, good and bad. But it is only as we move into healed emotion that we begin to see the enormous importance it can play in our lives. The dilemma we all face is that until we begin to be honest with our emotion and let them heal, we will not know the truth and reality of this.

Without emotion we cannot know humility in our lives. One of the chief purposes of emotion, from God's perspective, is to ensure that if we move in our emotion in a healthy way we will know brokenness as a way of life. No healed feelings, no brokenness.

Our healed emotion therefore is our gateway into humility. And for all of us moving into the healing of our emotion will guarantee we will also move into humility. Imagine your healed and spontaneous outbursts of tears in a public meeting. Or feelings of sin at the evil he carries while everyone else is idolising him. You have been warned - you cannot have healed and Holy Spirit-led emotion without the vulnerability of brokenness.

Why this is a fact is not difficult to see. When we do not live in our emotion we live in our minds and when we live in our minds we can live in arrogant pride. For as we have said before, our minds can be the Enemy's playground and he will always inspire arrogant selfish hate and pride in us, teaching us to regress our emotion.

Releasing anger, pain and trauma is typical of the feelings we need to get in touch with as the Lord moves us into brokenness. Our sin is felt, for it cuts us off from God and others in making us 'feel' isolated. God promises us 'rest' in this life, but this is felt, not thought. We know when we are resting, but cannot describe it in our minds, only in our emotion. Our feelings will become one of the life-lines between God, our own bodies and our world. For emotion is an essential ingredient of relationship. We can never 'know' a relationship with God through knowledge, it has to be felt to be of value to us. Without healed emotion, therefore, we cannot grow in character in God, regardless of how much we know in our minds.

We often react to such teaching by defending the Bible alone as the Word of God for our lives. That is not in dispute, but we merely need to emphasise that without our feelings as part of our faith we have a book of dead letters, not a living relationship. We are in danger of worshipping the Bible, not its author, our Saviour. This we can only do in relationship and is felt, not just learned - an affair of the heart, not just the mind.

God will frequently seek to get our attention by giving us feelings of pain, sin, evil, joy, etc. For instance, worship is felt, emotion playing an important part. Again, we talk about 'passion' for God, - a feeling. Whether it is the gift of prophesy, or discernment or knowledge, the men and women of God in Scripture seem first to have felt what was on God's 'heart' and then interpreted and applied it by words and drama. God consistently gets our attention through our feelings, not so often as we like to think by words to our minds.

Even 'words' and 'pictures' are as much felt and interpreted, as seen. Watch someone struggle with what they feel God was saying. This truth is well-illustrated by the recent wave of laughter moving through the church. The Holy Spirit desires to release our choked-up and damaged feelings, in order to begin a freer flow of Himself in and through us. For by our feelings God gets our attention and through our feelings we initially discern either good or evil in people or the world around. Without healed feelings we are very blind to much of the spiritual world. For God may not speak to us in an audible voice as much as He wants to through our feelings.

One final aspect to the release, healing and renewing of our emotion, is that as we begin to get comfortable with our feelings, we will also become more sensitive by using them. One of the measures of greatness in the Kingdom of God is the intimacy of our relationship with Him and His intimate tenderness towards us. The more free we become in our feelings, the more sensitive we become to everything around us, particularly His Spirit and the demonic.

Our original intent in packing away our feelings was probably to avoid feeling the pain of our pasts. In facing the truth in our emotion and letting our spiritual baggage go, we become more able to touch pain, both ours and others. In Christ we become the healer to others, compassionate, sensitive and caring towards their needs. But we must be prepared to live with and welcome the greater sensitivity and pain such exposure will bring to us. Our healing becomes our gift of healing for others. It should be no surprise therefore that Satan will use almost any means to block us from moving into our healed emotion. We all learn, no longer to our surprise, that there is a direct parallel between our ability to feel in our emotion and our ability to hear with clarity and frequency the voice of God.