

Emotional Security And Maturity

Being emotionally secure and behaving in an emotionally mature manner is vital to healthy living and mutually satisfying relationships.

How about you? Are you emotionally secure? Do you behave in an emotionally mature way? Do you feel good about yourself? If you profess to be a Christian, are you secure in Christ? Is your emotional life mature and Christlike? Have you lined up your soul (mind, will and emotions) with God's Word?

I don't know about you but I like feeling emotionally secure. I can become pretty uncomfortable when I feel insecure. I also enjoy being around people who are emotionally secure. Immature, emotionally insecure people make me feel uneasy. I like myself better when I am emotionally mature verses being immature. And I really have a problem tolerating emotionally immature people for very long.

It is true in life that security breeds security and insecurity breeds insecurity.

God-Given Emotions Are Powerful

Where do emotions come from? **God created our emotions.** Feelings and emotions are part of God's being. God is love...and love is a powerful emotion. Because we are made in His likeness (Genesis 1:26), human emotions are a reflection of God's emotions.

The Bible is a true saga of men and women, no different from you and me, who walked with God by faith. Their lives were punctuated with powerful emotions. Page after page of God's Holy Word confirms that human beings are emotional creatures.

When studying the Word of God, especially the life of Jesus, we find expression of every possible emotion.

Jesus Christ was the most emotionally healthy person who ever lived on planet earth. His emotional life was balanced and stable. The Son of God was emotionally secure and acted maturely because He knew He was. He was secure in His identity as God's Son. Jesus' emotions were always appropriate. Jesus expressed joy, happiness, gladness, sadness, anger, compassion, firmness, grief, and some depression. Read through the Gospels and you will discover a very emotionally secure and mature Savior.

Feelings are part of our emotional make-up. And we all know they are very powerful. Emotions can move us mightily. Sometimes in the right direction. At other times, in the wrong direction. Some feelings are healthy. Others unhealthy. Emotions can work for us or against us.

Feelings by themselves can never make us emotionally secure or mature. Quite the opposite is true. Feelings are fickle and fleeting. They come and go like the wind.

Emotionally insecure/immature people live life riding a roller coaster of feelings. Highs and lows, twists and turns describe the life of people who feel their way through life. Emotionally secure/mature people have learned to balance their feelings with facts and faith. Feelings alone are not the foundation for their lifestyle. Faith and facts form the basis for their attitudes and behaviors. Faith and facts must dictate to feelings, not the other way around.

Our soul is made up of our mind, will and emotions. To be emotionally healthy, I must think (my mind) about my feelings and keep them in check. I must then decide (my will) that feelings will not run my life. Then, I must determine to maintain emotional balance and stability to be emotionally secure/mature.

Emotionally secure/mature individuals choose to make right choices in life regardless of feelings. Right decisions have very little to do with emotions. Our heads must keep our hearts in check from time to time. We can follow our heart, and should as God leads us, but following our heart doesn't mean cutting off our heads!

Feeling Based Culture

Let's face it: You and I live in a feeling based society.

Life in our fast lane world revolves around how you and I feel. Statements like "I am feeling it" or "I am just not feeling it" or "If it feels good do it" or "How do you feel about this?" reflect our societal obsession with emotions. Our emotion based culture preys on people's feelings.

Madison Avenue marketing targets feelings and emotions. Advertising is focused on making us feel good about a product. Consumers purchase products they can't afford because somehow the product makes them feel good. Blockbuster movies move us because of how they make us feel. Reality TV is totally based on touchy-feely responses.

With intense pressure from every facet of our culture (churches included) to feel life and make decisions based solely on emotional responses, is it no wonder that we are raising up emotionally crippled and relationally dysfunctional citizens?

There are whole industries that cater to caring for (and often taking advantage of) emotionally unhealthy, dysfunctional individuals and families. It is interesting, to say the least, as to how we medicate to arouse feelings or to suppress feelings. We have assigned scientifically impressive sounding titles to conditions of emotional insecurity to make us feel better about ourselves. If I am labeled ADHD or Bi-Polar, I am off the hook. Why? Because therapists and physicians armed with an arsenal of prescription drugs and emotional antidotes will intervene on my behalf. *If I choose, I can relieve myself of personal responsibility for my emotions if I am diagnosed with what I call a feeling disorder.*

It is a well established, but not well known fact, that 70% of all organic illness can be traced back to emotional issues in a person's life. Chew on that for a while.

Unhealthy feelings dissolve marriages, break up homes, fuel crimes of passion, plunge people into debt, feed depression, and hype people up to hold on to unrealistic expectations.

Spiritual and emotional immaturity is a major factor in the lives of dysfunctional people. Emotionally immature people think and behave in a childish manner. Children wear their emotions on their sleeves and scream for satisfaction. Feeling fits and emotional tantrums are employed to sway others to fulfill their needs. Many adults have not grown up emotionally and have become very good at throwing emotional tantrums to get their way.

Emotional insecurity and immaturity is most often learned from our family of origin. Children fly out of the nest looking and acting much like their parents! How a family operated emotionally, whether healthy or unhealthy, is how the offspring set up their own nest. Adult children tend to think that this is the way to handle emotions because that's the way my parents did it. Good or bad, a parent's emotional imprint on their children is incredibly profound and difficult to overcome if it is negative and unhealthy.

Emotional security and maturity can be learned. We do not have to remain helpless victims and prisoners to emotional insecurity and immaturity. We can change how we think and act emotionally. As Robert Schuler has said "It takes guts to leave the ruts." Courage and determination is required if we are to leave the ruts of emotional insecurity and immaturity.

Emotional Survey

- Circle **YES** or **NO** in response to the following questions.
 - Do you focus often on your feelings? **YES NO**
 - Do your moods swing up and down regularly? **YES NO**
 - Do you find yourself easily offended? **YES NO**
 - Do you personalize what people say or don't say? **YES NO**
 - Are you oversensitive to how people respond to you? **YES NO**
 - Does how you feel dominate your decision making? **YES NO**
 - Do you make decisions only after taking other people's emotional pulses about what they think you should do? **YES NO**
 - Do you find yourself emotionally high one moment and emotionally depressed the next? **YES NO**
 - Do you expect people to sympathize with your feelings? **YES NO**
 - Would those who know you best say you are overly emotional? **YES NO**
- If you circled **YES** three times or more, you need to take an honest look at how your feelings affect your personal life and relationships.

Characteristics Of Emotionally Insecure/Immature People

The following are common characteristics of people who allow emotions to play a major role in their lives.

- Life is all about feeling.
- Always looking for a feel good experience.
- Possess unhealthy, negative self-esteem.
- Seldom feel good about themselves.
- Want everyone else to know how they are feeling. It's all about "me".
- Expect others to understand and accept their moods.
- Manipulate people with their emotions.

- Suck their thumbs and drag their emotional blankies around to elicit sympathy.
- Associate with people who will commiserate with them and support how they feel. They love to hook up with people who enable them to remain emotionally dependent and weak.
- Blow off and burn bridges to people who don't understand how they are feeling
- Always deny that they are emotionally insecure!

Characteristics Of Emotionally Secure/Mature People

The following are common characteristics of people who manage their emotions in a positive manner

- Possess healthy, positive self-esteem in Christ.
- Life changes don't rock their emotional boat.
- Emotionally disciplined when feelings try to take over a situation.
- Recognize emotional weaknesses and work to minimize them.
- Make decisions based on principles, not feelings, the mood of the moment or hormones!
- Subjugate their feelings to the facts of a situation before responding.
- Do not have to take the emotional pulse of other people.
- Not co-dependent upon other people's emotions.
- Faith, not feelings, guide and directs their life.
- Bring stability and security to challenging life situations when others are falling apart because of their free-falling feelings.
- Other people benefit from being around them. It is okay to be ourselves when we are in an emotionally safe and secure environment.

Sanctified Emotions

Sanctification is a word used throughout scripture. To sanctify means to set apart for holy service. It means to use something for a special purpose. Sanctification also means that something has been made pure, whole and healthy.

In I Thessalonians 5:23, Paul prays *“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify your entirety; and may our spirit and soul and body be preserved complete without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Note Paul prays that our whole being, spirit, body and soul be sanctified, or set apart as complete, whole, and healthy and for God's service. Our entire being belongs to God and is set apart for His service.

Our soul is made up of our mind, will and emotions.

Sanctifying our soul means that our thinking, decisions and feelings line up with Christlikeness. Note again that Paul says God Himself is the one who sanctifies. We don't heal and make our own emotions whole and complete. God does.

The first step in becoming emotionally secure is to surrender our emotions and feelings to our Savior. Releasing our emotional life to the Lord delivers and rescues us from unhealthy emotions and insecurity. God, through His Word and the Holy Spirit, can then begin to heal our emotions when we let go of unhealthy emotions. Insecurity gives way to security when we surrender our emotions to the healing, restoring and sanctifying power of God.

**** If you are feeling emotionally insecure, stop right now and surrender your feelings to God. Pray. Ask Him to heal your hurt and to bring wholeness to your heart. Surrender anger, resentment, bitterness, envy, strife, control, intimidation, manipulation, distrust, jealousy, envy, low-self-esteem, disappointment, grief and whatever other unhealthy emotions have handicapped you to Him. Let them go. Release their grip on your heart. Open your heart to receive God's healing love.*

By His stripes we are healed...and the healing He purchased includes our emotions (see Isaiah 53:1-6 and I Peter 2:21-25).

By an act of faith, not feelings, receive God's healing power that was provided through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Pour out your heart to God. Vent. Release your unhealthy emotions. God can handle them!

Take a moment right now to thank God for healing your emotions and making you emotionally secure in Christ.

Security in Christ sets us on the path to maturity in Christ.

Managing Emotions

Management of our feelings is a key factor in achieving emotional security and maturity. Here are some rubber-meets-the-road steps you can take to experience and maintain emotional security/maturity in your life.

1. Build your self-esteem upon the rock of your relationship with Jesus Christ.

See yourself the way God sees you. Build your value and worth upon how God values you. Live your life not on what you feel God thinks about you, but what His Word declares about you.

Faith, not feelings, led Jesus Christ to die on the Cross for our sins. Jesus surrendered His emotions to the will of God (see Matthew 26:36-46). Jesus was emotionally secure in His relationship with the Father even though He was tortured to death. By faith, as Jesus felt horrific personal physical and emotional pain, the Son of God declared *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do”* and *“It is finished.”*

Jesus managed His powerful emotions by surrendering His feelings to His faith and trust in God.

2. Stop taking your emotional pulse all the time.

Why is it that we evaluate life on the basis of how we feel? The compass of many people’s lives is their feelings. Unfortunately, feelings seldom point to true north. Too often they point south. Emotion based living turns our life south and sours our relationships.

Do you “check in” with your feelings often and listen to them? I am not talking here about a healthy check up on our emotions. We need to do that from time to time. I am referring to obsessive focus on the current state of how we feel. Some people won’t make a move in life without first taking their emotional pulse.

Manage your emotions by not giving them more attention than they need.

3. Refuse to ride the emotional roller coaster.

You can say no to being an emotional Yo-Yo. It is your choice, and yours alone, to be ruled by your feelings or to rule them. Decide each day to put feelings on the back burner of your life. Walk by faith, not by sight (which includes feelings).

You know where your favorite emotional coasters are. So make a good decision for yourself. Quit going to the park. Don’t purchase a ticket for the ride. Step back from the platform. Let others pass by to ride if they want to. But if you want to be emotionally healthy and secure, refuse to ride anymore.

Just don’t go there. You know what I mean.

4. Minimize using the phrases “This is what I am feeling” “I am feeling this” “This is how I feel” etc.

Watch your words. The Bible tells us that life and death is in the power of our tongue (Proverbs 18:21). Focus less and less on how you feel by not giving your emotions so much attention and verbal expression.

Ask yourself “How much of my daily vocabulary is feeling driven?” You might be surprised by what you discover about your words.

Remove your feelings from center stage of your life. Emotions belong in the wings of life’s drama. Manage your emotions by refusing to be a “drama queen” or “drama king”.

5. Flee from people who live according to their feelings.

Run as fast as you can from those who allow emotions to run their lives. Immunize yourself from their emotional dysfunction by distancing yourself from them. Avoid pity-poor-me-parties at all costs! Resist with all your might being sucked in to becoming an emotional basket case.

Another person’s problem is not your problem. If your extended family has a history of emotional security, you be the one to stop the generational influence of emotional insecurity and dysfunction.

Manage your emotions by taking management of your relationships.

6. Be emotionally secure so the people you love can be secure around you.

Don’t put your friends between an emotional rock and hard place because your emotions are unpredictable. Loved ones and friends don’t know what to do when fickle and ever-changing feelings run the show. Relieve people from feeling they are walking on egg shells when with you.

People we care about and who care about us can be themselves when we are emotionally secure.

Manage your emotions so that the people you love want to spend time with you.

7. Regularly feed your feelings and emotions with positive truth, thoughts, principles and promises from God’s Word and godly people.

We reap what we sow. So if you want to reap continual harvests of emotionally secure and healthy relationships, sow emotionally healthy seeds into your life. Plow up and plant the soil of your heart with God's truth about how special you are to your Heavenly Father and how valuable you are to the Kingdom of God.

Emotional security is not automatic. Be wise and on guard. Nurture your emotional life. Study your Bible. Learn about being secure in Christ. Memorize and meditate upon key scriptures that help you maintain emotional wholeness and well being.

Keep your emotional life healthy by keeping your spiritual eyes focused on Jesus Christ who is your security. Manage your emotions with the goal of being like Christ.

Scriptures That Promote Emotional Security And Maturity

“To the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us as we are accepted in the Beloved, in Him, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished on us in all wisdom and insight.”

Ephesians 1:6-8

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loves us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

Ephesians 2:4-6

“But now in Christ Jesus, you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace.....”

Ephesians 2:13-14a

“That in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

Ephesians 4:22-24

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and delivered Himself up for me.”

Galatians 2:20

“I urge you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God which is your spiritual service of worship. 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.”

Romans

12:1-2

“I am the Good Shepherd; and I know My own, and my own know Me. Even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.”

John 10:14-15

“Whenever a woman is in child birth she has sorrow; because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she remembers the anguish no more, for joy that a child has been born into the world. Therefore you too now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one takes your joy away from you.”

John 16:21-22

By the grace of God I am what I am and God’s grace did not prove to be vain in me.”

I Corinthians 15:10

“For He Himself has said, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you, so that we may confidently say, the Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid. What shall man do to me?”

Hebrews 13:5-6

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth should change. And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea. Though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy dwelling places of the Most High. God is in her midst, she will not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered; He raised His voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our stronghold.”

Psalms 46:1-6

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, “For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.

But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 8:31-37

There is no need to feel insecure or to act immature when we are secure and mature in the Lord Jesus Christ!

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