

REED: Learning to Deal with Emotions Biblically

Emotions are Manageable

We need to take our messy emotions to God. We do not have to be enslaved to the dictates of our feelings. God desires to help us handle our emotions. The Psalms are evidence that David and others felt free to approach God with their emotions. Psalm 13, 55, 73 are all good examples of how we can do this. The acrostic “REED” helps us remember how to manage our emotions.

Recognize our emotions.

We need to acknowledge them, not ignore them. We need to learn to verbalize how we feel. Some people have to develop a vocabulary to express how they feel. Sometimes a friend or Biblical Spiritual Advisor can help by giving us objective feedback about the emotions that we are experiencing but can't identify (See chart at end of lesson)

Express our emotions to God.

Many people are afraid they may offend God if they tell Him how they feel, especially if it is about Him. However, He knows about our feelings and is not offended by them. Our feelings do not change the character of God! When we read Psalms, we realize that He has heard everything many times before.

We must avoid denying or repressing our feelings. If we deny our feelings and turn them inward, we are essentially lying to ourselves, God, and others. “Stuffing” our emotions can result in physical illness, intense and explosive emotional outbursts, disjointed thoughts and words, or destructive behavior. Besides, we can't suppress our emotions forever. Eventually they will emerge and will be even harder to address.

On the other hand, expressing our emotions to others can potentially wound and damage our relationships. We may get our feelings off our chest and feel some temporary relief, but we are not addressing the issues behind the emotions.

God cares about how we feel, and more importantly, why we feel the way we do. When we express our emotions to God, we are being honest with ourselves and with Him. His Spirit and His Word can then direct our thoughts, beliefs, behavior, and eventually, our feelings.

Evaluate what our emotions are telling us.

We need to reflect how our emotions, behavior, and thinking are related. Just as David asked himself, “Why are you in despair O my soul?” (Psalm 42:5, NAS). We need to ask God to show us what wrong beliefs or thoughts are feeding our emotions.

Decide to replace our thinking and behavior with God's Truth.

Questions we ask ourselves: How does what I think and how I behave compare with God's Word? What needs to change? Remember we have a new identity and destiny. We do not have to stay stuck in the old patterns of living. We can choose to act and react according to

our new Biblical thinking. This adjustment of thoughts and beliefs in the light of God's truth is the "renewing of the mind" process that is commanded in Romans 12:2.

Do not be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world, but
Be transformed by the renewing of our mind.

Romans 12:2 NIV

Renewing our thinking according to God's reality results in our being transformed. As our thinking and beliefs are corrected, our emotions eventually change also.

One word of caution, "REED" is not "four easy steps" to managing your emotions. It is a springboard for interacting actively with God about your deeply felt personal desires and needs. It is important to remember that, as Christians, we are in a vital moment-by-moment relationship with the living God. We often try to define the "Christian life" as a series of principles to be followed rather than as a constant conversation with, a total dependence upon, and active trust in God Himself.

God truly wants to be involved with us in our emotions, in our concerns, in our personal life—more so than our closest friend. He is so much more than a friend, because not only does He empathize, comfort, and advise, but He also transforms us through His Spirit and His Word!

Conclusion: The world around us is clamoring for good feelings while indulging emotions in its search for happiness. Yet, people are not satisfied. They are never quite fulfilled. They are always wanting more. We must live by faith rather than feelings, remembering Jesus' words:

*Blessed and fortunate and happy and spiritually prosperous...
Are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,....for they
Shall be completely satisfied.*

Matthew 5:6 Amplified

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| Left out | LONELY Isolated | Separate | Popular | BELONGING Important | Influential |
|-----------------|---------------------------|----------|---------|-------------------------------|-------------|

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|---|--|---|--|---|--|
| Friendless Forsaken Lost | Withdrawn Lonesome Insignificant | Rejected | Famous Needed | Well known Accepted Attached | Valuable Worthwhile |
| ANGRY | | | PEACEFUL | | |
| Furious Hacked off Aggravated | Mad Hard Irritated Distant | Frustrated Boiling Indignant Annoyed | Calm Quiet Serene | Collected Sedate Content | Composed Cool Tranquil |
| SAD | | | HAPPY | | |
| Dejected Unhappy Dreary Woeful | Depressed Cheerless Blue Grieving | Gloomy Glum Downcast Heavy | Joyful Ecstatic Cheerful Upbeat | Glad Pleased Delighted Light | Bright Vivacious Elated Bouncy |
| AFRAID | | | SECURE | | |
| Anxious Frightened Alarmed Jumpy | Fearful Shocked Unnerved Tight | Scared Terrified Timid Shaky | Safe Protected Stable Courageous | Optimistic Sure Poised Relaxed | Hopeful Confident Assured |
| HATEFUL | | | LOVING | | |
| Hostile Unfriendly Mean | Critical Quarrelsome Nasty Shameful | Jealous Spiteful Harsh | Tender Affectionate Warm | Accepting Kind Devoted Forgiving | Loyal Sympathetic Caring |
| INADEQUATE | | | POWERFUL | | |
| Weak Small Useless | Bashful Meager Deficient | Inept Powerless Vulnerable | Strong Energetic Assertive Upbeat | Great Dominant Pushy Assured | Sure Aggressive Confident Intoxicated |
| GUILTY | | | INNOCENT | | |
| Ashamed | Damned | Judged | Pardoned | Set free | Naïve |
| Criticized | Doomed | Trapped | Pure | Released | Acquitted |
| Cursed | Dirty | Embarrassed | Forgiven | Exonerated | Justified |
| | | | Clean | Fresh | |