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YOU'RE NOT  
THE BOSS  
OF ME

HOW TO TAKE BACK CONTROL  
OF YOUR EMOTIONS

JIM PUTMAN & CRAIG MILES

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# YOU ARE NOT THE BOSS OF ME

Taking back control of your emotions

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## Foreword

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Emotions are a complex issue. And in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the American culture runs rampant with them. People are looking to their emotions for every decision they make, from their relationships to their purchases, from where they live to who they love, emotions are king.

But should they be? Can we trust emotions to steer us in the direction that is best for us and our future? Before we allow emotions to rule our decisions, maybe we should take a deeper look at them. Where do our emotions spring from? Are they affected at all by our past life experiences or our upbringing? Are emotions impartial revealers of truth or could they be influenced by our patterns of thinking?

*Can we trust emotions to steer us in the direction that is best for us and our future?*

In this book our desire is to help you get beneath the surface of your emotions and see how they direct your thoughts and actions. We want to help you discover where your emotions are coming from and how to know if they are giving you an accurate representation of the situations you face.

*(This ebook was adapted from the Real Life Ministries sermon series “You Are Not The Boss Of Me”)*

## Undercover Boss

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We live in a culture right now that's on edge, would you agree with that? It seems like everyone is hitting the last straw. And you want to know what that usually means? It means that we haven't done a very good job of dealing with issues as they come up. Because in order for something to be the last straw there is a whole foundation of straws packed in under it.

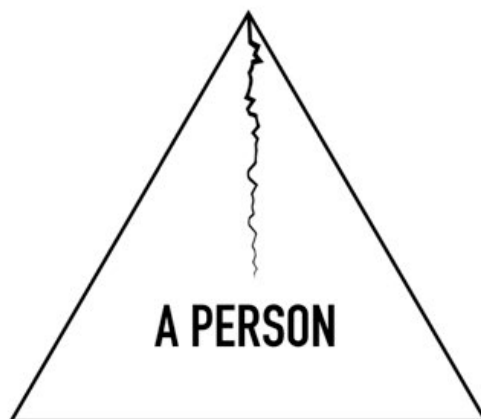
For most of us that means there is something we need to look at in our own heart about the ways we have dealt with conflict, with forgiveness, and with taking offense to something. This book is called "**You Are Not The Boss of Me**" and in it we are going to be dealing with emotions that can destroy if they are left unchecked.

God created us with emotions, and emotions are good things when they are used correctly. But like most other things on the planet, if you take something that God gave us and you misuse it, it usually has a downside. Emotions left unchecked and unrestrained, can destroy relationships. Let me just say this: Emotions are terrible bosses when you allow them to control and dominate your life. Emotions are unreliable, they can be changed by what you eat or don't eat - how many of you have ever been "hangry?" Emotions are also impacted by how much you sleep or don't sleep. They are influenced by so many things in our lives, and if they are not controlled we have a problem. So, what does it look like to keep our

emotions under control? I don't really want my flesh in control. I want the Holy Spirit in control.

*Emotions are terrible bosses when you allow them to control and dominate your life.*

WHAT DOES it look like to allow the Holy Spirit to dictate the terms of our emotions and how they are used and what part they play? When you allow your emotions to control your life, it means that Jesus isn't in control. If you allow your emotions to control your life it can damage your relationships –not just your relationship with God, it damages your human relationships. If we get this part of our life in the wrong order, we can leave behind an absolute mess.



IMAGINE the graphic above represents a person. You will notice that there is a crack starting from the top down. With does that tell you? The Bible tells us that you and I are broken. Can you agree with that fact? **You** are broken... It is not your wife that is broken, it is not your kids that are broken – your situation is not one where everyone else out there is wrong and you are the only one doing things right. The truth is everyone is broken – all of us. But the only one you can change is you.

The Bible makes it clear that we have all fallen short of the glory of God. We have all chosen sin, there are none righteous – no not one – the Bible says that we all have a problem in the inner person. Everyone.. It wasn't always that way, the Bible tells us that in the beginning we were in relationship with God. We were connected into a personal relationship with God and we were unbroken. In a sense God had a heart for us and we had a heart for him – we were connected at the heart level.

Now here is what I want you to understand about the heart when it comes to the Bible. When it comes to our current American vernacular. if I say that you have my heart, what that typically means to us is that I feel something for you. I am in love in some sense, or I have an emotional attraction – or I can say I love my dad or my mom which might mean that I have feelings for them. But when the Bible talks about heart, when it says to love the Lord with all your heart, he is not talking about just your feelings.

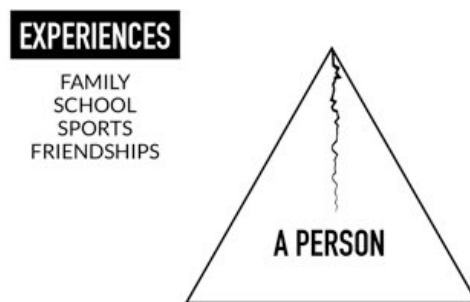
From a biblical standpoint, the word heart primarily refers to to the ruling center of the whole person. The spring of all your desires or your appetites so to speak The heart is seen as the seat of the will – the intellect, and the feelings. So we talk about love as though it's a feeling, and love does have a *sense* of feeling or value for the other person. But loving someone from the heart means to love them with your intellect and your will, AND your feelings.



So, biblically speaking, the heart has to do with all of those things. In the Garden of Eden before there was sin, God walked with us, he talked with us, he wanted our hearts. And we gave them to him. But a decision was made – remember God gave us the ability as relational beings to be in relationship with him. He said you're free to eat from all of these things. You are free to do all of these things, but there is one thing that you are not free to do, and if you choose to do it you will surely die. So, let me be who I am. I'm God. I want you to trust me and to love me and to look at everything I've given you and I want you to choose to be in relationship with me as well.

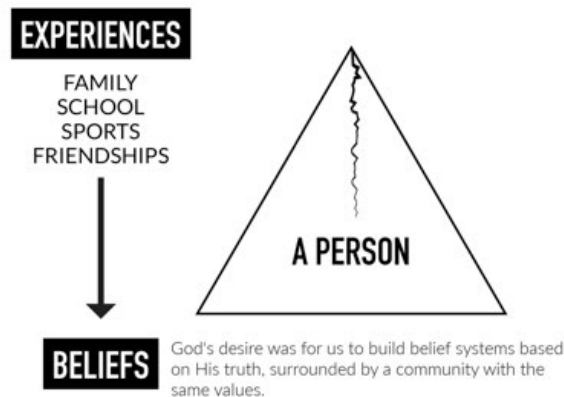
Well, you know the story, the Bible says that we chose to rule our own lives, at the seat of our will, our intellect, our emotion. We chose to not love God with our whole hearts. We chose to do things our way. And so what you have is a person who is broken. Now I want you to understand this, that God didn't leave us that way. God continues to pursue us and if you know the whole story of the Bible – he didn't destroy us – he *came* for us. He came and showed us who he was, he gave us his laws and his commands because he loved us. He wanted to protect us from ourselves. He interacted on our behalf multiple times.

God gave us a family – and the role of the family was to oversee our life experiences, to protect and guide and teach through all of the things around us, to teach us the truth.



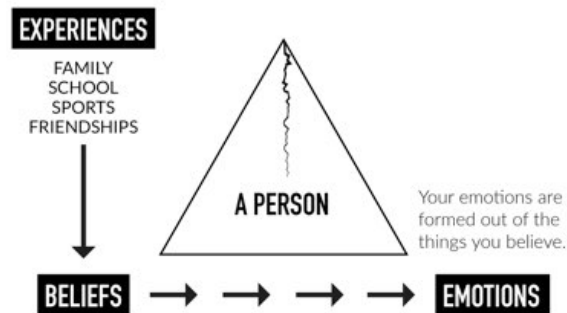
God chose to put us in families so they could help us filter our experiences through a Biblical Worldview.

God wanted the family to teach the children about where they came from. About what was important about what life was about. His value systems about ways of living and about being kind to one another, not cheating one another, being a servant to one another. God wanted us to understand that he is a loving caring God. He said separated from me you are broken, but I want you to have a family system—a community, a church, a group of people around you to teach you specific truths about life. To give context as to where we come from and what life is about.



NOW THESE BELIEFS about God tell the story of how the world was created in perfection, but we choose self. We acted on our emotions, our desires. But rather than destroy us, God allowed us to live in the brokenness. But he never stopped pursuing us. He wanted us to hear the stories about who he is and pass them on from one generation to the other from the family outwards. He set up the family to create a community built on these belief systems but, from these belief systems now comes emotions. When we think and believe in a specific way, we develop a culture built around our belief systems and there are emotions that come

from that. For instance, when we love one another and care about one another we have feelings for our family and we support each other.



We are all born broken with a sin nature. The first words that my children learned as they grew up was "mine" and "no" I didn't have to teach them how to say these words. Somehow, they just knew! I had kind of forgotten that part as my kids grew up but guess what –now I have grandkids!

They know what to say and they know how to fight for things they want. They know how to be selfish, their behaviors are somehow wired into them. Right? The job of the family is to teach them about the behaviors that come from these emotions. When one of my grandsons takes something away from my granddaughter she is offended, she is angry and she says "it's mine!" She gets emotional, and my job is to say... "Here is the behavior, here is the emotion, there are certain things that a little child is born believing in their very DNA.

The Bible makes it clear that we're born broken. The family's job is to create beliefs and truths that will dictate emotions that result in certain behaviors. Now as we behave in a certain way, notice what that does. It creates new experiences. If we behave in the right way, what kind of family does it create? What if we behave in a wrong way?

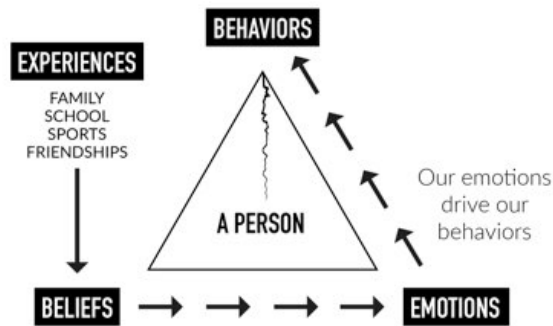
Your experiences reinforce or teach new belief systems which create new emotional outbursts of positivity or negativity – which create

different behaviors. The Bible makes it very clear that we were supposed to learn about God's values and truths in the context of the family culture. But we said no. We said; God isn't going to dictate my life - God is not going to tell me what to do. God is not going to tell me what to believe. I am going to dictate. So what happens is that our families teach the belief that there is no God, or that if God is there but what he says is just a suggestion. Or maybe he is there, but should we actually listen to him? No! We should get to make up our own rules. And here is one of the most important rules that you learn in our culture – are you ready? – “Follow your heart.”

*“Your experiences reinforce or teach new belief systems which create new emotional outbursts of positivity or negativity – which create different behaviors.”*

Follow your heart? Why is that? Well, because there are so many different belief systems, so many different things that are true. I don't know what to believe and what not to believe but here's the truth about this was true for you is true for you, what's true for me is true for me – so here is what you need to do decide whatever makes you happy whatever makes you happy whatever makes you feel good and pursue that. And whatever makes you unhappy can't be good right?

So if you live your life with whatever you feel like doing, that's the most important thing. Because this belief system is “maybe there isn't a God at all” then that means there isn't actually truth that transcends. Truth is seen as subjective-not objective. And if truth is not objective, that means you get to pick and choose whatever you want, whatever feels good you do that. And that has led to certain kinds of behaviors.



For instance, "my wife doesn't make me happy anymore" "I don't really feel anything for her" but you know what, I've got to make myself happy first. I've got to take care of number one. So, rather than stay in my marriage I'm just going to bail out – that is going to be my behavior. I'm just going to get out of this right now even though it hurts other people. What's true for me is true for me, and if I don't take care of myself, who is going to take care of me?

With this attitude, I just do whatever I want because how I feel dictates my truth. The problem with this is when we start trying to tell other people that what they are doing is wrong and they shouldn't do it. We just got done professing that whatever is true for you is true for you – and that there is no objective truth. Now what happens when I try to dictate what behaviors other people have? Since I have told them there is no truth, and whatever makes them feel good is good enough for them, everyone is doing what they want to do. Pretty soon we live in a world where there is no objective truth and people are not accountable to God, in fact there is no accountability. That leads to a world that is filled with anger and anxiety. A world that doesn't want to listen to anybody in authority. A world that doesn't want to submit to authority. People just want to do what they think is best for them no matter who else gets hurt. Which leaves us with lots of hurt people. And hurt people, hurt people - wouldn't you agree?

If all truth is subjective and I need to feel good at all times, then I will try to get rid of any pain or mask it with drugs, with alcohol, with addiction. You see when emotions start to control, and what's right for you is right for you and what's right for me is right for me, and I feel one way and you feel another way - How does this line us up in relationship? How can we get anything done for the purposes of God? Why should I submit myself to you? Why should you submit yourself to me? Do you see what it does to relationship? If feelings are what matter and there is no objective truth, then the most important things on the planet Earth go away. Commitment, till death do us part, through sickness and in health... We live in a world where we have taught people emotions are the most important thing. And it leads to brokenness.

What does scripture say about this? Romans 1:21 –*"for although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened."* Their foolish hearts were darkened, what does that mean?

If our heart is the seat of the will, meaning the place in which you make your decisions, the place where your emotions and appetites reside – if your heart becomes darkened, what does that mean? That means that the intellect, the emotions, the will, everything gets so convoluted, so upside down that foolishness reigns. Darkness reigns. Romans goes on to say *"although they claim to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortals – human beings and birds and animals and reptiles – therefore God gave them over in their sinful desires in their hearts, to sexual impurity, to the degrading of their bodies with one another,"* and in verse 25 *"they exchanged the truth about God for a lie."*

They exchanged the truth for a lie. Again, we live in a culture that makes it very clear that what our hearts are following is the most important thing. Jeremiah 17:9 says: *"The heart is deceitful above all*

*things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"* In a world that says follow your heart, the Bible tells us that your heart alone, your heart without God in your life, is the most wicked of all things. Not just **your** heart, **my** heart too. Left to myself, broken without God in my life without him bringing light to what is true without him being right kinds of thinking with my emotions and my will and all that convoluted it leads to this dark confusing place.

*"In a world that says follow your heart, the Bible tells us that your heart alone, your heart without God in your life, is the most wicked of all things."*

Philippians 3:18 says it this way – *"For as I have often told you before and now tell you again, even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ, their destiny is destruction and their god is their stomach."* Their stomach. What does that mean? Does that mean that they just eat all the time? Does that mean that this group of people would just be obese? No, remember the heart is the seat of the appetites. The feelings, the emotions that are driven by your fleshly appetites. Here's what Paul is saying. Peoples "god" will be their emotions, their feelings, and their feelings will direct them towards their appetites. Notice what he says. *"Their glory is in their shame, their mind is set on earthly things, but our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ."* I want to get a picture of the Scriptures long before it actually happened – in our culture he Scriptures, given by the Holy Spirit of God, tells us that there will come a time when people will be controlled by their feelings and their appetites. And it will lead to their destruction.

Jesus understood this concept of the heart, the feelings, the emotions. Jesus understood the true root of the problem when it came to our behavior. Jesus one time was with his disciples and his disciples had eaten

without washing their hands. Now the Scriptures don't say you have to wash your hands a certain amount of time – but the Jews taught that if you touched anything unclean, including food, that you are defiled by something that may have touched you. For instance if you are walking along the road and you brushed up against the tax collector or a prostitute you were unclean, so they were always really concerned about the outside. But Jesus says, "no, no that's not true" and then Peter asked him about this parable and Jesus said: *“Are you still so dull?”* Jesus asked them *“Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then goes out of the body? But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defiled them, for out of the heart comes evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander, these are what defile a person but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them.”* Matthew 15:11-20

In Luke 6:43 Jesus said it this way *“No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit – each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes, or grapes from briars, but a good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart and an evil man brings out evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.”*

In Matthew 23 Jesus said *“woe to you teachers of the law...”* He is speaking to the religious people and he says... *“ you hypocrites. That means you're an actor. Some of us think if somebody fails we go well they are a hypocrite – no – there is a difference between being a failure – somebody who fails at something tries but fails and somebody who is an actor – somebody who pretends would you agree?”*

How many of you have failed in your Christian walk before? Me too. Multiple times today – but there is a difference between being somebody who wants to do the right thing, and does the wrong thing, and someone who knows full well that their motives have nothing to do with honoring



God, they are doing what they're doing to be seen by men – they are actors they are pretenders. You see there is a difference, In Matthew 23:25-26 Jesus is speaking to those pretenders and he says "*You hypocrites, you clean the outside of the cup, the dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisees. First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.*"

Jesus is saying that what you do on the outside yes, it defiles you – it can defile you, your behavior, sinful behavior is what defiles you, but where does the start? That is the important thing. Well it starts on the inside of the cup. As you look at these behaviors often times they are driven by emotions that come from wrong sinful beliefs. As Christians, we are not called on to say: “my heart gets to go where it wants” meaning my feelings dictate what's happening. My job as a believer, my responsibility, is to say “Lord Jesus come into my life and start to clean the inside of the cup. Start to change who I am from the inside out.” That's what Jesus is really saying – is he is saying a lot of us were focused on people's behavior – we wish people would just stop. The problem is we don't understand that the problem lies much deeper than just behavior. Sometimes even if they did change their behavior, there still would be something wrong on the inside. Jesus said change the inside of the cup. Change what is going on inside of your life. And then that changes what happens on the outside.

Let me give you an example of this in my life. Last week I had some things happen that frustrated me beyond belief. I mean I felt betrayed. I felt lied to. I got to the point where my interactions and behaviors were over the top in dealing with the people I was offended by and frustrated by.

Have you have ever had a week like that? Maybe you have more emotional self-control than I do! – I am glad for you. But I was angry, I was hurt, I overreacted, I said things I didn't mean and then I actually said some things I did mean, but I shouldn't have meant it. Anybody ever say

anything that you shouldn't have meant? And I was spending time with the Lord, and I was talking with him and in my devotion time – this question kept coming up in my mind. Jim, why are you so mad? Why are you so hurt? Later in that week I was sharing with a friend and said: “I'm not in a good place. I'm not in a good place at all.” And he said well what is going on? So I shared with him and the guy – he's a good friend – he said you know that's a bummer that you feel that way – let me ask you this question why do you feel that way? And I said, well they did this and they did that. He said, well let me ask you a question – because we are all broken, because we are all a mess, because we have a sinful nature- sometimes we perceive the wrong things. Have you talked to this person? Did you ever ask them whether that's what they meant or ask why they did that or did you just accuse them? I said- well I know why they did it. I don't care what he says – I know why he did it. And my friend said do you really? Did you ask?

Then he said, even if all that is true, why did it hurt you so badly? What are you believing about their actions? And is that true? Well what it means is that they made a complete mess. And he just kept asking me - is that true? Then he said: So, do you believe God can step in and fix even the most broken things? See I was believing some things that were causing emotion in me that led me to behaviors. Emotions reveal to you false beliefs that you have. I remember when my son was in jail and my wife and I we were concerned and worried about what would happen next. We were playing the future out in our imagination.

Thankfully some wise people in my life said, where is God in that process? You are thinking, if this happens it's going to mean this, or it's going to cause this. Are you praying? Do you believe God loves you? Do you believe God sees you? Do you believe God hears your prayers? Do you believe your God loves your kids more than you do? I see all of these

thoughts that are causing anxiety and fear and anger in you – I don't see God in this at all.

ROMANS CHAPTER 12:1-2 says

*“Therefore I urge you brothers and sisters in view of God's mercy to offer your bodies as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”*

The renewing of your mind means you take your emotions and compare them to Biblical truth – and when you renew your mind it changes your behavior.

HOW MUCH OF what we do is fueled by false beliefs? Yet we allow our emotions, which are broken and impulsive, to dictate our behaviors rather than saying, "no God, I bring my emotions to you and to your Word and I work through what is true and what is not true." Sometimes I'm even doing the right thing but the intensity and the frustration with which I am doing it makes it harder for someone to hear what I am saying. Sometimes I, the messenger, get in the way because I'm not trusting God – I'm not looking at things through his perspective and so my emotions get out of control.

What does it look like for us to say that emotions are not going to be the boss of me? To say my feelings are not going to dictate what I do. When you give your life to Jesus, he pays the price. Then the Holy Spirit

moves inside of you. You may not have a family that taught you the truth, but you hopefully have a spiritual family that helps you not only know what the word says, but reminds you of it and helps you walk through it. What does it look like to see things from God's perspective so that our emotions don't get in control and lead to behaviors that create new experiences of pain in our family, in our workplaces? What does it look like to say God do a work in me, I'm going to test, I'm going to take captive every thought making it obedient to Christ? (2 Corinthians 10:5)

Unless you have a relationship with Jesus Christ, you are left to your own devices and your broken understandings. You are left to a heart that's completely out of control and darkened. But when you say "yes" to Jesus you are also saying Lord: Thank you for the light that you give me for my path. Thank you for other believers around me that shine the light. And God shines his light by the power of his Holy Spirit into our hearts and it starts to reorder things in such a way He is in control. And wherever God is in control, it leads to life.

## Apathy

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When we are talking about emotions that destroy there are two things we need to remember. The first thing is this: Emotions don't see the future, although when we are caught up in emotion we act like they can. Our mind starts saying "I just know things are going to go this way" and "This is what is going to happen." When we get wrapped up in our emotions we allow our mind to forecast what will happen in the future, and 99% of the time it is incorrect! But we allow our minds to go there, and then we have even more emotion rise up in response to our thoughts about something that might not even happen. Do you see how that kind of cycle can destroy?

Here is the second thing I want you to know about emotions. Emotions don't read minds. Emotions CANNOT read other people's minds. I don't know what's going on in someone else's mind. Something that we tend to do in our brokenness is fill in the gaps. Something happens or is said and rather than going to the person and having a conversation about it, we start a dialog in our head about what they must have meant, what they were probably thinking, what their motivation was. And usually we are off base. And then we respond emotionally to what we have imagined that person is thinking, which often leads to more negative emotion and often the destruction of relationships. We also have a spiritual enemy that is

constantly try to get us to fill in the gaps with lies which leads to more brokenness.

*“Something that we tend to do in our brokenness is fill in the gaps.”*

In this book, I want to deal with some specific emotions that destroy. Emotions like anger, condemnation or guilt and fear. I want to start with the emotion of apathy. Now some of you might be thinking “Isn't Apathy actually an absence of emotions?” That is one part of the definition – but apathy by definition is an absence or suppression of passion, emotion, or excitement. So, it is not just an absence it is also a suppression.

In other words, you might start to feel a conviction to do something, but the apathetic feeling will come against that and actually suppress this thought or motivation of the heart to act. So, when you are talking about apathy, you are talking about this feeling of being apathetic, which is feeling and action together that leads to inaction. It's a feeling and action together that leads towards an inaction when we are talking about the things of God.

Now every one of us deals with apathy and it's not always negative. For instance – I feel apathetic about Kale –not only do I not desire to eat it but the thought of eating it, doesn't even appeal to me. So if anyone would even try to tempt me to eat it I would say I choose not to. I am also apathetic towards skiing. My first time out on a ski trip one of my youth group kids took me out at the knee and I had to have knee surgery – and now that I am old just the thought of falling down doesn't sound good, therefore I am extremely apathetic about snow skiing. It hurts when I think about it.

The apathy I want to talk about is apathy towards the things of God. Now before I proceed anymore though I have to clarify a couple of things.

Before I start talking about being apathetic towards things of God I want to talk about depression. There was a time when I didn't really understand depression because I had never had it, even though it is prevalent in my family. Well when I look back at my lack of knowledge, I think about the stupid things I said to people who struggled with depression. Things like: "Just think about more positive things" and "If you were more spiritual you wouldn't be depressed." I didn't understand until I discovered that depression is an absence of a chemical. If you have clinical depression – actual depression – it is due in part to a lack of a chemical in your brain.

It frustrates me to see Christians respond when somebody has a tumor or cancer or diabetes by saying something like: "Well, you know, if you prayed about it in faith – it would be gone, you wouldn't have it anymore." As if God doesn't have the ability to use negative things in our lives to grow us and as if God didn't say we are all going to die because of sin – even believers are going to die. Yes we should and we have prayed for diabetics as an eldership, and I have seen God do all kinds of miracles. But I've also seen God say "no..." a lot. He does have the right to say "no." Correct? So if you have a tough enough form of diabetes you'll have to take insulin. God uses doctors to give you something that you need to have. You don't look at a diabetic and go "if you would just think more correctly, then you wouldn't be a diabetic." That would be dumb! You would just recognize that your body is broken and you need insulin. In the same way if you are genetically predisposed to depression - that means that has been passed on to you some brokenness in your genetic code. Maybe you have had some experiences and fallen into some patterns of thinking. There might be some medical things you have to deal with as well.

I get so tired of Christians not understanding what's really going on when somebody is depressed and therefore not being willing to go to the doctor themselves, or telling someone else they shouldn't go to the doctor,

when they are dealing with something that should be medically diagnosed and dealt with. So, I'm going to say this – depression can cause apathy if it's a medical condition. If you are depressed and you've been depressed for a long time, you might be apathetic towards going to another doctor even though your friends and family are encouraging you to do so. I would tell you that that kind of apathy can kill you. You need to listen to the wise counselors around you and go to the doctor.

I am talking about apathy in the sense of being apathetic towards the things of God, for the person who is not dealing with depression. See all of us, whether we have depression or not, deal with feelings of apathy towards the things of God. Why? Because we are broken – remember we are broken – we have emotions that are broken, we have thoughts that are broken, we have all kinds of issues and apathy that keeps us from doing things God would have us do if we don't deal with it.

Here is what God's word says in Proverbs Chapter 1:32 *"For the waywardness of the simple or the foolish will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them."* So the Scripture is very clear in that when you're complacent or apathetic towards the things that God would have you do, it can destroy you. See sin is not just doing the opposite of that which God tells you to do. Sin is also not doing what God calls you to do. In James 4:17 it says *"For the man who knows the will of God and does not do it, it is sin."* Apathy is problematic. Apathy works contrary to the things of God.

Now we all feel apathy in our emotions towards some things. But acting on that apathy, living out that apathy towards the things of God is destructive to you and it is destructive towards your relationships. Notice Matthew Chapter 24:12, this is Jesus speaking of the end times, he says this *"Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold. But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved."* I want you to notice he says the love of most will grow cold. Now how does that have



anything to do with complacency or apathy? Well, love by definition is not an emotion of lust or value alone—love is an act of the will to lay down your life for another. How many of you take people for granted from time to time? When God commands us to love he's not commanding us to feel. He is commanding you to put on the mind of God and see that other person as valuable to God. Even though intellectually I know that, when it comes to my feelings it is a different story. Sometimes I might feel that person is valuable, but sometimes I will feel they are problematic because they get in the way of what I want to do.

Feelings can be dependent on what you eat, what you sleep, and how often you sleep. Feelings will come and go, but my role is to love. That kind of love creates action. It is a choice that I make to care for the other person. Back to Jesus's passage, he says the love of most will grow cold. In other words, the word love will be used, but it won't do anything. It will be just a word. *“Because of wickedness the love of most will grow cold.”* It's just a word. It doesn't mean anything anymore. That's the way it will be – the Bible says most people will live that way.

Most people will just give in to their emotions. They will follow their emotions rather than their intellect, rather than choosing to do what God wants they will go with what makes them feel ‘happier.’ “I feel happier over here - no I feel happier with that job – no I feel happier with that spouse – that person doesn't make me feel good anymore – I'm going to follow after whatever I feel”. Which leads to cold love.

But they are missing what God would have for them and it leads to destruction. Revelation 3:15 says *"I know your deeds that you are neither cold nor hot, I wish that you are either one of the other, so because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot I am going to spit you out of my mouth."* This is God speaking and he's saying listen I wish that you were hot, meaning you were a follower and in a relationship with me – I wish that you would pursue me in the things that lead to love. Or - I wish that

you were cold which means that you didn't take on my name at all, you didn't even fake it. But because you are lukewarm, kind of in the middle, kind of complacent, kind of apathetic towards me – I will spit you out of my mouth. Now why would God rather you be cold than lukewarm? Because a lukewarm person claims to be something they are not and they give Jesus a black eye. He is saying I wish you wouldn't just fake it, I'd rather you just go off and do your own thing – I want you to be hot or be nothing at all.

Jesus is not talking about our feelings here. The number one commandment is “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul mind and strength.” I can't command my feelings to do anything – I feel what I feel. But I can choose to say, I will do your will, I will choose to put on the mind of Christ rather than my own mind. I will choose to say God give me the ability to empathize with them the way you do. When we accept Christ in our hearts he moves in and he starts to work. We recognize that we have broken emotions, and that our beliefs get messed up and that leads to bad behaviors.

In order to stop this cycle, I have to recognize that I have thoughts that are in opposition to the promises of God. I have to see that something is going on in me that is opposing God's will for my life– I've got emotions that are built on wrong beliefs and it's being exposed by my behavior.

At this point in my life, I am not the same person I used to be. But I can still have what I call a flash storm. A flash storm is what I call those times when there is way too much of the ‘old me’ going on. My wife says wait a minute – that's the old Jim! My wife always tells me – “Remember Jim, no one can make you be in idiot, we just get to expose that you are one. I hate it when my own words come back to haunt me.

If you are feeding on the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit is living within you, and there is a conflict going on, it is God who works in you – Philippians 2:12 says “*It is God who works in you both to will and to do*

*his good works*” So I am not at the mercy of my emotions – God can help me think through this and I have people in my life to help too. Thank God for people who help me, thank God for God's word, thank God for his Holy Spirit that doesn't leave me at the mercy of my brokenness.

Sometimes I think through this stuff and I pause and I work through it and then with God's help I make some good decisions. But sometimes I don't. Then in my devotion the next day or in my conversation or just from the Holy Spirit speaking to me, I realize I have to go back and go back and ask someone: Please forgive me. Though I disagree with you on this, my emotions and my actions are not consistent with God's word, will you forgive me? I've had to say sorry a lot.

Apathy. You are going to be apathetic toward the things of God because you are broken. The question is when you are feeling apathy do you go to God's word? With God's help, I have a choice – when I am reading a Scripture that is talking about forgiveness and all of a sudden someone's name comes to my mind and apathy says “No, I'm going to suppress that feeling of saying I'm sorry or forgiving.” Do I then ask “God what do you say? I will do what you say – give me the courage and the wisdom. Help me Father.” As you start to walk in Christ it changes your life. It changes your direction. And you start to experience the effects of God ruling your life rather than your emotions.

## Shame

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One thing that is true about emotions is that they take a great deal of energy. Some people definitely feel more deeply than others too. My wife feels things far more deeply than I do. Things that make her squeal like a schoolgirl and dance a jig will barely raise my pulse by a couple beats a minute. Now I get sad when people are struggling, but my wife actually feels it with them. Sometimes I'll be walking around the house and she'll stop me and she'll take my pulse – because she wants to make sure that I'm actually still among the land of the living. I typically have about one emotion a year.. and I try and reserve that for our anniversary. That is just kind of how I roll. We have been talking about emotions that destroy, but here's the thing, emotions are a gift from God. Emotions help us experience life more deeply – they help us connect what is going on inside of us with our circumstances in the world. They are incredibly influential in our life – but they are also incredibly unreliable.

Emotions can change quickly, in fact for some of us emotions change so quickly we have a hard time understanding why we're feeling what we are feeling. Sometimes we have a hard time even naming what we are feeling. Our emotions can change many times when going through an experience or circumstance. What happens is when we get into circumstances that hit us hard we get squeezed. For instance, somebody

did something to us or something happened that we didn't expect, and when we get squeezed - just like tomato – stuff gushes out. And sometimes when we get squeezed, the stuff that gushes out is not the stuff that we would want everybody to see. Some people want to blame their bad behavior on their circumstances, saying that “if that person hadn't and said what they said” or “if that thing hadn't happened” then I wouldn't have felt what I felt and I wouldn't have behaved badly.

*“Some people want to blame their bad behavior on their circumstances”*

The Bible says the opposite of that. Listen to what Matthew 15:19 says: *“for from the heart come all evil thoughts; murder adultery, all sexual immorality, theft, lying and slander –these are what defile you – eating with unwashed hands will never defile you”* The context of this is the Pharisees were trying to convince Jesus that if he didn't do all the right things it was going to make his heart bad. And Jesus is saying that isn't true - the stuff in your heart is already there, sometimes circumstances just squeezes it out. In the previous chapter Jim said "no one can make us act like an idiot – our circumstances just point to what was already there” We also learned that our heart is more than just our feelings. The Biblical word for heart is the seat or the center of our emotions – but also our intellect and our desires. Our heart is incredibly complex. When we are going through emotions that destroy it's not like we can just flip off the switch and say I'm not going to feel that thing anymore.

All of this points to the fact that we have to pay attention to what is going on inside of us. Proverbs 4:23 says *“Guard your heart above all else for it determines the course of your life.”* Think about that. Of all of the things that you could guard – guard your heart above all else. Your heart is going to dictate how you live your life. It's not OK for us to just ignore

what is going on inside – we don't get to just shove our emotions down and hope that they don't affect us. If we aren't careful we end up hurting ourselves others.

In this chapter I am talking about shame – and how we should not allow that emotion to hijack our life. I want to preface this by saying that shame is an incredibly huge topic. Therapist and counselors make their entire careers out of helping people deal with their shame. Volumes and volumes have been written about it – there is no way that we can tackle everything there is to tackle in regards to shame in one chapter of a book. As we talk about shame we need to talk about guilt as well. You might be thinking they are basically thinking they are the same thing but they are different. – the best way I can explain it is this. Guilt tells us “I did something bad or I did something wrong” Shame says “I am bad or I am wrong”.

This is a subtle difference that has huge implications. All of us have experienced guilt and shame. As we talk about guilt there are two different definitions. One talks about a state of being – like I am guilty – you would hear that word used in that way by a jury who is determining the person's guilt. Are they guilty or are they not? I am going to look at the second definition today, it has to do with an emotion we feel when we've done something wrong. Using the word in that way would be “He was wracked with guilt over what he had done” It is an emotion that we feel.

Guilt in and of itself is not bad, it can actually be good. There are a lot of people out there promoting that you should never feel guilty about anything, that it is an emotion that's not really needed. There are entire segments of society trying to make sure nobody feels guilty about anything. Do you not agree that when we've done something wrong and we hurt somebody that we should feel bad about that? That's what guilt is – guilt means we feel sorry. There are instances of false guilt where we take on something that we shouldn't be taking on or other people try to put

something on us that's not ours to carry. That is not what I am talking about. Guilt is be sorry for something that we've done - guilt helps us regulate our sinful nature - that's a good thing.

When I have done something wrong and I end up feeling guilty because I understand that I hurt somebody – guilt can cause me to say "hey, I don't think I will do that again." That's a good thing. In fact, when I was talking with Jim this week about it – he gave this great analogy he said guilt is a lot like the pain receptors in our body. As we get close to fire – we feel pain and it says stop doing that or it's going to hurt you physically - in the same way guilt tells us that same thing spiritually. Stop doing what you're doing its going to hurt your soul. It's going to hurt you spiritually – guilt is the spiritual pain receptor for us. Guilt is designed to move us away from sin, away from that thing which is hurting us and towards God – that's the function of guilt.

God is the only one that can forgive us of our sin in the way it needs to be forgiven. King David is a well-known character in the Bible, he was actually called a man after God's heart. Most of the time he was doing well in following God, but he also experienced huge failures in regards to sin. One time he saw a beautiful woman and he took her into the palace and slept with her even though she was married to one of his loyal subjects, who was probably a friend. When she ended up pregnant, David chose, rather than admitting his guilt, to cover it up and he had the man killed. Then he took her as his wife – and took that child as his own.

After he came back to God this is what he said when he had finally acknowledged his guilt. He was confronted with it and repented and said in Psalm 51:4 “Against you and you alone oh God have I sinned – I have done what is evil in your sight you will be proved right in what you say in your judgment against me is just.” How could David possibly say against you and you alone have a I sinned oh God? He committed murder, we don't know the circumstances that brought Bathsheba into the palace – it

may very well have been against her will – which means he probably committed rape is well – how can he say against you and against you alone have I sinned oh God? It is because it was against God's authority that he, and we, rebel when we sin. He wasn't saying I haven't hurt anybody else – he was just saying “God I have to have your forgiveness because it's against you that I sinned, if I don't get your forgiveness, my guilt doesn't go away.” The problem was David was justifying his guilt. And we do the same thing when we won't acknowledge what we've done wrong, and when we make excuses for it. That always hurts us – and often hurts others as well.

This is why, unresolved guilt creates a debt/debtor relationship. When we've done something wrong to somebody and we don't acknowledge that – we know we owe them something. That is why we say "I owe somebody an apology." I have done something to hurt them. I owe them an apology. And to walk around with this debt/debtor relationship all the time doesn't foster health. In fact, we experience guilt as a weight. That's why after guilt is resolved when we have admitted what we have done and have received forgiveness we say – it's like a weight was lifted off our shoulders. And that weight can become unbearable if we don't allow God to take it from us.

When we allow guilt to do what it's designed to do it brings us back to right relationship with God, and others. When we try to ignore our guilt, that sin starts to become a weight to our soul and it starts to impress itself on us and this is where shame steps in. Remember guilt says I did something bad. Shame says I am bad – has that been your experience? Have you ever had something that you did wrong and now it's starting to feel like it's become a part of you?

Sometimes when there are things I felt guilty for, small things I have done, I need to ask for forgiveness I need to make it right. and when I do it's okay. But there are other times when there are such gross violations of



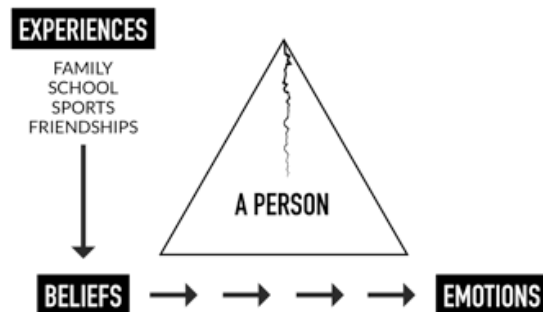
God's law and I have been so hurtful to people, often times the people that I love the most, that I have a hard time not allowing that to become part of that my identity. And when I'm feeling guilty about something and I refuse to recognize that and I refuse to acknowledge my guilt, at some point it starts attacking my identity.

This is where much of shame comes from. Not all shame— sometimes we feel shame for things that have been done to us by somebody else. But here's what you need to hear, shame always attacks our identity. Very few things damage us as much as shame does. The philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre called it the hemorrhage of the soul – a picture like our soul was bleeding out. There is a Christian author named [Dan Allender](#) and he wrote a book called "[The Cry Of The Soul](#)" and in it he says this “Shame drains us of energy and withers our desire to exist.”

Like other emotions of flight, fear and despair, shame is a withdrawal from engagement. Shame's typical posture is eyes downcast, shoulders slumped, heart disengaged. I know for me one time I got into an argument with a guy at church and we both were at fault. It was bothering me and I just said okay, God forgive me for my part, but I didn't go to him and acknowledge my guilt. What do you think I did with that? Every time I saw him in the lobby – I was making sure I was on the other side of the lobby. Anytime that there might be a place where we could come into contact I tried to make sure we weren't coming in contact. That is what shame does. It distances itself, it isolates. Have you done that before? Sometimes we do that with the people we are closest too. And here is the thing – finally I listened to the Holy Spirit tapping on my shoulder saying "Craig, you need to do something about this obviously it's not okay." So I went to this person and I said “I need you to forgive me for my part of this “ Fortunately he said the same thing, he said I need you to forgive me too. From that moment on our relationship was reconciled. I could see him in the lobby and go over to him and we could talk and we could laugh and we

could pray for each other. Shame wants to isolate and when we will not acknowledge our guilt that is what happens. It becomes a vicious cycle.

WHEN I AM in my shame, when I am believing the lies of the enemy that I am broken that I am not worthy of being loved, and that I'm flawed, I need to remember the promises of God. The problem is I'm too steeped in my own shame – I can't hear the promises of God – what do I need? I need somebody else to speak the promises of God and speak life into me but I have isolated myself. It creates this vicious cycle. We have been talking about the relationship between our beliefs our emotions and our behaviors.



When my belief system is that I am unloved – I am not worthy to be in relationship. When I believe that I'm broken beyond repair – how else could I be feeling anything except for hopelessness and self-loathing? And when I feel that way do I want to be around people? No! I'm going to isolate. That is the behavior that happens – it's a vicious cycle that our enemy loves to get us into.

In his book "Healing the Shame that Binds You," John Bradshaw says "To have shame as an identity is to believe that one's being is flawed. That one is defective as a human being." Now for sure God doesn't want us to feel flawed, but in general, humanity is flawed. God created us in his

image, but when sin entered the world and when we sin personally we now understand that we are flawed, that we are no longer in that original design of God's.

The Bible says that the whole earth is groaning because we long for perfection, for the way that God had originally designed us and we feel that most deeply when we sin. This side of glory we will never be completely free of shame. In fact the Bible says the people who are completely free of shame are the people that are the most arrogant and God hating. Philippians 3:18 says *“For I have told you often before and I say it again with tears in my eyes that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ. They are headed for destruction. Their God is their appetite”* (that doesn't mean they're hungry, it means their God is their desires) *they brag about shameful things and they think only about this life here on earth.”*

Again, feeling ashamed of doing shameful things is normal. Allowing that shame to become our identity is a lie from Satan. And I cannot say this strongly enough – do not underestimate the depth of spiritual attack that comes along with guilt and shame. From the moment that we sin – we feel that guilt and the enemy is there whispering lies because he does not want us to believe the identity that we have in Christ. The enemy wants us to believe that our identity is our shame.

And he starts out by saying a lie like this, “hide what you've done. No one will know. It will go away that way” The next lie he says is usually something like, “I can't believe that you would do that.” And then the lies start to subtly shift. The next one usually sounds something like this. “If people really knew what you are like they would despise you. They wouldn't want to be around you.”

Did you hear that shift from what we've done to what we become? Then he begins to pile it on – you are a horrible person – you are a fraud – you are broken beyond repair – not even God can forgive that you are

horrible – people would be better off without you in their lives. That's the progression of the lies of our enemy.

Shame is highly correlated with aggression, addiction, depression, violence, bullying, eating disorders and suicide. Shame is attached to all of that. Because when we believe the lies of the enemy instead of listening to what God says to us the pain is so great – we have to turn to other gods. We turn to other little "g" gods. The problem is those things can't take our guilt away. In fact, just the opposite, they pile more guilt and shame on. So far this is bad news.

So how do we stop shame from controlling and ultimately destroying us? Again we allow guilt to do what it's designed to do – point us to God. And I think a reason that we struggle with admitting our guilt is this – we then stand condemned. We admit our guilt – we admit that we've done something wrong and we know that we deserve the consequences of our condemnation.

The problem is and always has been we need a way to not stand condemned. And only God can provide that. Even prior to Christ coming and taking care of our sin problem God provided a way for people to deal with their guilt – it was the sacrificial system. I used to believe that the sacrifices were simply to make amends with God, and they are designed to do that. Remember David's prayer "against you I have sinned"

We do need to make amends with God, but God created the sacrificial system for humanity. So that we could recognize our guilt, so that we can ask for forgiveness and we could be brought back into right relationship with the Father. That sacrificial system was not the fullness of God's plan. Jesus is. But God in his goodness provided even the people of the Old Testament with a way to deal with their guilt.

Here is why you don't have to be defined by your past, and you don't have to deny your past. Jesus sees us. With all of our flaws, all of our failures, and he still loves us he forgives us and he redeemed us. That word

redeemed means to gain or regain possession of something – but it doesn't stop there. We are the something in this scenario – God created us we belong to him but we sold ourselves into slavery through sin. He redeemed us, he regained possession of us for a price. That was not free. And that is the key to all of it – we can't pay for our own sin.

We can't get rid of our own guilt. God determines what the cost was for our sin. 1 Peter 1:18-19 says “For you know that God payed a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.” That was the cost of our redemption. The blood of Christ.

It doesn't do any good to hide our guilt from God. He already knows. And through the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ he took care of it and he paid the price. I love what the Apostle Paul says in Romans 8:1 he said; “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” God is the one who gets to decide what's wrong right and wrong – he is the one that gets to decide what the penalty for that right and wrong is, and he is the one that gets to decide what the payment is for our sin. He decided it was the blood of Christ, and it has already been paid for you and for me.

Unfortunately, sometimes I forget about this and I believe that God condemns me even when he doesn't. Maybe you are believing the lie that Satan is telling you about your shame and you are thinking, Craig you don't know what I have done, you don't know who I am. You don't know what I am.

I would say that Paul, the guy who wrote Romans 8:1 “*There is no condemnation in Christ*”, had reason far more than most of us to feel guilt. My guess is when he was preaching that he was preaching it to himself. Before Paul became a Christian he actually persecuted Christians. He threw innocent people into prison for being a Christian. Think about

this, when we hear about somebody that gets thrown into prison who didn't deserve it doesn't that just press every justice button inside of you?

That was no small thing. He had people beaten and whipped that were innocent. He stood by and watched people who were innocent being murdered because they were Christians. If that wasn't enough guilt for him, he then joined that very group of people after he became a Christian. Think about that, I can't prove this biblically, I would bet my life's savings on this that Paul ran into people that he had thrown into prison, had beaten, or the parents or siblings or the children of people he had done that to, can you imagine that guilt? Paul stood guilty before God. He stood guilty before the church – but he was not condemned.

The bad news for you is you stand guilty of doing things wrong – the bad news for me is I stand guilty of doing things wrong. The good news for us is just like Paul we don't stand condemned if we are in Christ Jesus. Paul talked about this in 1 Timothy, he said “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has given me strength to do his work – he considered me trustworthy and appointed me to serve him – even though I used to blaspheme the name of Christ in my insolence I persecuted his people. But God had mercy on me because I did it in ignorance and unbelief. Oh, how generous and gracious our Lord was. He filled me with the faith and the love that can come from Christ Jesus – this is a trustworthy saying and everyone should accept it, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and I am the worst of them all.”

I think Paul on some level believed that. Here is the thing I wish. I wish that once I got my beliefs right on this topic they would never change. But we have an enemy that is lying to us all the time, the Bible says it's his native language. He is the father of lies and he wants you to believe that your identity is wrapped up in what you've done and shame instead of believing the fact that God has an identity for you that is different.

Don't let your guilt turn to shame – don't believe the lie that you are your sin. I like what pastor Andy Stanley (North Point Church) has to say about the kind of relationship that we get with God. One where we have been forgiven, one where we don't stand condemned. He says there are four implications to that kind of relationship, and the first one is this: You forfeit the right to condemn yourself because you are now no longer yours to condemn. Christ purchased us – he regained possession of us – the only one that has the right to condemn us is Jesus and Romans 8:1 tells us that he doesn't. The second implication is this: Your guilt will remind you but it will not define you. As somebody who stands in front of people and tells them a this is right and this is wrong – I am constantly reminded of my own guilt – most of the time I'm preaching to myself at least as much as everybody else. I am reminded of that guilt but I am not defined by it.

The third implication is this – you forfeit the right to condemn others because that would make you a hypocrite. If you don't stand condemned and judged for all the things you've done – how could you possibly condemn other people for the things that they have done? What I find is that the most judgmental people are the people that are the least in touch with their own sin. They are the least aware of their own sin. And that was me when I was a young guy. I was a cocky self-righteous person. I could not have been fun to be around let me tell you. The older I get I'm so much more aware of my own sin – it causes me to be less condemning and less judgmental to others. The fourth implication is this: You are free to make restitution without expectations and excuses. You don't have to make excuses anymore, we have already knowledge our guilt. We have already put it out there, there is nothing to hide. I want to say this – not owning up to our sin because we have been forgiven – that's not Christianity. As Christians, we make restitution and we ask for forgiveness as far as it is up to us – we own what we have done. That's Christianity.

Maybe your shame has kept you from being in a relationship with Jesus – maybe you have said I am too bad – I am not good enough I have to somehow clean myself up before coming to God. Well that is not how it works. We bring our guilt and we bring our shame. We allow the only one that can take it from us to do that and we allow him to give us a new identity in Christ.

He wants to take that stuff from you. He wants to give you an identity that is one that is free from shame and condemnation – one that is being loved and redeemed and a child of God. Maybe you are a believer – and you have started believing the lies of the enemy. Maybe you have unresolved guilt and now that's become shame. Do you have people in your life that you are allowing to speak the promises of God – have you isolated yourself from those life-giving relationships? We are not designed to do this life on our own. We need each other to help encourage each other.

And lastly, is somebody waiting for you to make that first move of restitution and reconciliation? Maybe somebody has bitterness and anger growing in them because you harmed them and you have not made that first step of restitution, you have not asked for forgiveness. Make that first step. It may very well be the thing that unlocks what they are feeling and going through and helps them be able to be reconciled with God as well. I promise you it will be good for you and it will be good for them.



## Anger

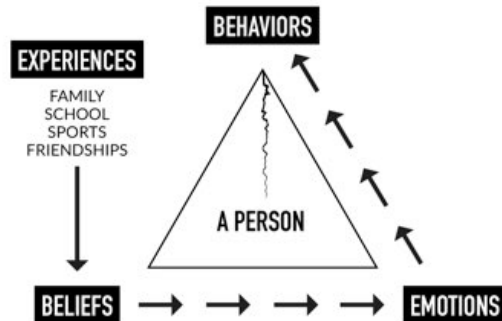
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We live in a world that is obsessed with emotion. Our culture says that you are entitled to your feelings and you should follow them. You should just be you. Follow your heart, do what you feel. That is the road to happiness. You can't make anybody else happy if you're not happy. Who you are and who you want to be is all internal. The problem is, that leads to people running over the top of each other. It is like people are running around in the dark going by what their perceptions are, and they keep running into walls and stubbing their toes. And when they run into each other it makes for a very painful world.

The Bible says something different – the Bible says that your heart is the most wicked of all things – and who can understand it? Because we chose to do what we wanted to do in the Garden, the whole world has been given over to brokenness and sinfulness. The Bible tells us that people don't even really understand their own hearts. And our heart changes – how many of you have ever thought you knew what you wanted, and when you got it you realized you didn't want it.

That is what the Bible says is true about us – and our own experiences prove it to be right. Jesus said that human beings worry about behaviors and if there are right behaviors that we are to have. But he says the real battle lies in our hearts - sin starts in the heart and out of the heart comes

wickedness and sin and all kinds of problems. So, Jesus says the first battle has got to be in the heart and you have got to submit to the Lord Jesus in your heart - lean not on your own understanding but in your ways, acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

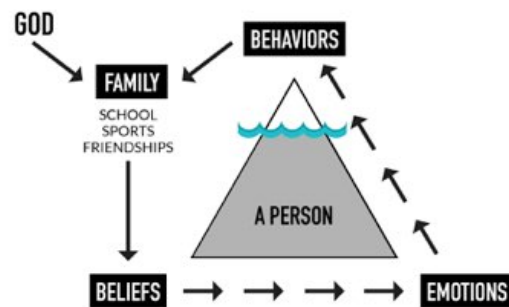


We have been looking at this diagram. It shows how we were broken and have a crack in us - we were born that way. The family's job was supposed to point us to God, tell us where we came from and what life is about.

Unfortunately, often times the family hands down the wrong message because they don't know God, or know anything about him. So we form beliefs that lead to emotions, which lead to our behaviors. Our behaviors, the way we act, are above the waterline. Like an iceberg, they are what people see on top of the water without seeing what is underneath, what is driving the behavior. We want everyone's behavior to be good, we have an expectation of that. That can lead to people living a secret life, where they appear as one thing on the surface, but there is much more going on underneath.

So sometimes people's behaviors are wrong and they don't care, and sometimes people push everything down underneath, and then behave like

everything is fine



This is how we are in the church sometimes. We put on the right behaviors on the weekends but underneath there are emotions and beliefs that control us. We don't want anger or shame or fear controlling our behaviors. What does it look like to take control back from our emotions?

In this chapter, we are going to talk about an emotion that I'm an expert on – anger. I have struggled with this emotion my entire life. Now I am much different than I used to be – God has done some miraculous things in me. But I still have this struggle inside of me from time to time. To be honest, sometimes it will be based on how much sleep I got, or on how much I eat. Anybody else ever get "hangry?" It can also be based on my not walking as closely in my abiding time with the Lord.

I consider myself an expert in this realm. Not necessarily in the positive sense of the word. But I think all of us struggle with anger. Can you ever remember a time when you lost your temper? Can you remember a time somebody you love lost their temper? It might be when you're driving – you know we got people moving to North Idaho from all over who do not know how to drive in the snow. Anybody notice this? Too fast, too slow, my wife actually won't even put a Christian sticker on her car because of how mad she gets when she drives!

If that isn't an issue for you, what about parenting? How many of you have gotten frustrated with your kids? There is something about kids that

can make us feel like we are losing our minds. What about sports? I know it was hard for me as a dad to deal with my kid's coaches. At times, I didn't feel like a coach was fair to my kid. That he didn't say the right thing and was crushing my kid instead of building my kid up. My wife had a particularly hard time with that – if she felt like someone hurt her kid-boy did Mama Bear ever come out! The bottom line is, I think we all struggle with anger at some point in our life.

I want to give you a key few truths about anger, that I think are important for us to point out. The definition of anger is: A strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure or hostility. So that is what it is. The other key truth about anger is that it is a secondary issue. It is like the iceberg – the top behavior might be anger but there may be many things under the surface that is driving that. For instance – there were times when my kids would do something that I thought could destroy their life, and my fear for them came out as anger.

Looking back now, after the years of good counseling and good friendship and walking with the Lord, I recognize that the underlying belief system inside of me that was driving much of my anger was shame. Shame. Because of what had been done in my life because of what I had done – I was ashamed.

My shame would come out in anger towards anything that threatened to get in the way of me achieving some goal that would help me not feel ashamed. I would tell myself, I've got to be the best. I've got to be national champion in wrestling because I have to prove that I am not junk. – I'm not garbage – I'm not ruined. Because of that, anything that got in the way of me getting away from my shame was responded to with anger.

When somebody has an anger issue sometimes we just want them to stop. But most of the time we don't even know what is really going on inside, we are responding to the behavior. And the person experiencing the anger may not even understand themselves where it is coming from. If

somebody asks you how you're feeling or why you were doing something, you might give them a surface reason but when you look deeper you really don't know. That is why the Scripture says your heart is the most wicked of all things – who can understand it? You can be depressed, disgusted, stressed, rejected, nervous, exhausted, unsure –and what does it look like? Anger.

Now let me say a couple other things about anger I think that are important – I believe that anger can be a positive thing. We all know of things that have happened that were unjust, and as a result of anger towards that there was a change. I think about Christians who helped put an end to slavery – when Christians saw injustice and they saw people being treated differently because of the color of their skin. I think about [William Wilberforce](#) in England - as a Christian he said “No that is not right” That anger led to something positive. Jesus himself got angry. When he turned over the tables at the Temple he was angry. He made a whip to drive out the cattle and he flipped over the tables. He said you have turned my house the house of the Lord a house of prayer into a den of thieves. They were abusing the people by overcharging for the animals that people had to buy so they could make the sacrifice. They weren't charging fair prices and they were abusing God's people, and Jesus was angry about that.

Anger can be used in a positive way. Something else about anger – it doesn't look the same for each of us. Some of you may not consider yourself an angry person, but I believe that every person struggles with anger in some way. When you think about somebody who struggles with anger you might think about visible hostility – but it isn't always visible. Some people internalize anger and then abuse themselves. The reality is that I am angry at myself – therefore I'm going to abuse myself. Sometimes we might sabotage a relationship because we don't think we are worthy of it.

Sometimes anger is outward but more deceptive. That is the case with passive aggressive behavior. You may not seem visibly angry, but you might use some sort of humor or side comment to leak your anger. Anger can look like a lot of different things. There are some who will withhold themselves—for instance in a marriage there are women who will withhold sex from their husband because they are angry. On the other hand, sometimes men will say I know you need me to talk to you but because I know you need it and I am angry at you I'm going to stonewall you. I am going to withhold what you need.

Now the Bible does give us plenty to be concerned about when it comes to anger. We ought to be thinking about this and processing it with the understanding that all of us are broken. Every one of us is broken because of sin. The Bible makes it clear that anger is something that we need to address. God says reconcile yourself to me through Christ, let the Holy Spirit come inside of you and do his work, the fruit of the Spirit is love and joy and peace. The fruit of our flesh or our sinful nature is anger and malice and sexual immorality and lust.

There are two different warring factions going on inside of a believer. When you give your life to Jesus, the Scriptures make it very clear that there is still this battle between our old sinful self and the spirit of God living within us. They are in conflict with one another. And that is why I can say I think that the Lord is changing me in huge ways, but I still struggle at times with that sinful nature. It still rears its ugly head in my life.

We are told that living out anger in a sinful human way is not who God would have us be. Here is what James Chapter 1:19 says “My dear brothers and sisters take note of this everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.” Now notice he didn't say anger does not produce— he says human anger doesn't produce the

righteousness God desires. I think we can make a clear distinction between human anger and godly anger, we know that Jesus got angry. God got angry.

But when God gets angry there is a difference. God knows the hearts of everybody involved – God knows what he has done in a person's life and he knows what is really going on. He takes all the factors into play. He has the right kind of anger and he reveals it in the right way. Human anger has wrong perceptions, brokenness inside that reads things the wrong way. How many of you have ever been angry about something and then you gave in to your anger, only to find out that you had a misperception of things?

*“Human anger has wrong perceptions, brokenness inside that reads things the wrong way.”*

We all have a [Limbic System](#) that sits at the base of our brain. If you have ever had somebody scare you and you react without even thinking about it that is a response of this system. We call it the fight or flight or freeze response. Some of us freeze when there is a problem, some of us flee and some of us fight. And our reaction might look or feel like anger.

I remember several years ago I took my kids to church camp. I was the cabin leader for my oldest son when he was in the junior high. I have no idea what I was thinking but I put all the kids to bed and actually thought they were all down for the night. I decided I was going to take a walk to the place where the food was because I needed a little midnight snack. I got something to eat and was heading back and it's really dark on this path and unbeknownst to me, the kids had decided they would sneak out, hide on the trail and scare me.

So, I am walking back and all of a sudden, my son jumps out on the trail and screams and they all scream and before I knew what was

happening I kicked him and he went flying! I didn't even think about it. Now if you'd asked them, initially they would have thought I was angry. But that would have been based on misperception – I wasn't really in danger but I thought I was. I misperceived the situation. How many of you have ever misperceived a situation? When we base what we are seeing on our own understanding, we come to incorrect conclusions and we get angry. That is not how God works. The reason God can get angry is because God has the right heart.

He understands all the conditions, He understands everything that's going on – and does exactly what he needs to do with the bigger good in mind. That is different than us. We have to be careful that we don't go around justifying our anger. We have to pause and ask ourselves if we are angry about the right things. Our perception tells us something, but we don't lean on our own understanding anymore. Because we know we have brokenness inside of us, we don't necessarily trust our emotions because they may not be based on truth. They can be based on our past experiences.

The Bible says be slow to become angry – because it doesn't produce righteousness. Human anger destroys rather than resolves. Just because you feel anger, it doesn't make mean it is godly or right. We should question it.

What do we do with human anger? Hebrews Chapter 12:14 tells us to *"make every effort to live at peace with everyone and to be holy, without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."*

When human anger is internalized it can create a bitter heart – we are actually poisoning our own hearts. What you see is poisoned, what you feel is poisoned. And it defiles. Proverbs 29:11 says *"Fools give full vent to their rage but the wise bring calm in the end."* There are people that proclaim: "well I'm just going to be honest and I'm going to tell how I feel



and you get what you get " but the Scripture says that you're a fool if you go around giving full vent to your anger. Proverbs 29:22 says "An angry person stirs up conflict. And a hot-tempered person commits many sins."

People are given over to anger and it causes a chain reaction of anger in the people around them. They stir up conflict rather than being a peacemaker. Ecclesiastes 7:9 says "*Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit for anger resides in the lap of fools.*" Psalm 37 says "*Refrain from anger and turn from wrath, do not fret, it leads only to evil.*" When you give in to human anger you lose your self-control which is fueled by the Holy Spirit if you're a Christian. When you lose your self-control and you react, it can lead to evil. Uncontrolled statements, being hurtful, overreacting.

I think we have all seen this. We live in an angry culture right now. Everyone is easily offended. Many people don't care if they offend other people, so it is just this constant interaction of harsh words and frustration. Much of our anxiety may be the product of this angry culture. We are trying to deal with emotions inside of us that we don't understand and we don't always deal with them correctly. What can we do about it? –In James 4:1 James is talking to Christians who are in conflict with each other. There is this brokenness that is going on within the body of believers and so he is doing a deep dive into the hearts of believers and he says this: "*What causes fights and quarrels among you?*" He is talking to believers saying there are fights and quarrels among you. What? I thought there were never fights and quarrels in church?? There are never fights and quarrels if you're Christian – right? The fact that he is having to say this means that Christians don't always understand – and it is something that needs to be dealt with in our lives. James goes on to say: "Don't they come from the desires that battle within you?"

Sometimes we are thinking – no, they come from the bad people around me, not me. The truth is they start within each one of us. The battle

starts within you. You have these desires that are still present in your sinful nature - the Holy Spirit has moved in but there are still these things going on inside of you, and rather than deal with what's going on inside of us we want to adjust other people so they don't make us angry anymore.

We want the other people to stop doing what they're doing instead of looking inside of ourselves first. James says: *“You desire but you do not have - so you kill”* James is using a metaphor here, he is not saying Christians were actually killing each other in the early church. He is saying you want something – but since you don't get it you decide I'm going to take it. You say you can't stop me, I'm going to get what I want, I'm going to kill the relationships in my home in my family I'm going to take a shot at getting what I want even if it means I have to go over the top of you. *“You covet but you cannot get what you want so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God, when you ask you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives.”* James 1:2

James is telling them when you ask God it's all about you. You are praying, Lord fix them – straighten them out. Not because you care about them or about God's glory, but because you want what you want. In verse 7 James says: *“Submit yourselves then to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you – wash your hands you sinful you sinners and purify your hearts you double minded. Grieve, mourn and wail - change your laughter to mourning, your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up. Brothers and sisters do not slander one another anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law you're not keeping it you're sitting in judgment on it.”*

If you go back to James Chapter 1:19- he says *“Be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to get angry, since the anger of man doesn't lead to righteousness.”* Here is another way to look at what he is saying. He means

slow down. First of all monitor your feelings. Just because you are feeling the emotion of anger, doesn't mean you have to act on it. First test it – remember there is a righteous anger. The right anger at the right thing for the right reason. But there is also human anger. Anger at the wrong thing for the wrong reason. You might even be angry at the right thing but you use your anger in the wrong way.

My dad used to always tell me: “You don't fight like the devil for the things of God.” There are a lot of things that might upset God, but we don't deal with them by fighting like the devil. As you start to understand this, you slow down, you pause – you say –What is going on inside of me? You don't vent it immediately, you test it, you ask yourself, what are my motives here?

I think back to my younger years with our kids, and some of the stupid things I said. I remember one time I came home and I've got little kids running all over. Now my wife has been with the kids all day, and I had a long day. I come walking in the house and immediately it's “daddy daddy daddy” then hugs. Well then I just want to go sit down. I want the power scepter of the man – the channel changer – and I just want to relax. But here is what's going on – the kids are all fighting the kids are all arguing they are doing what kids do and my wife is kind of tuned them out. I remember saying to my wife – “what are you doing? What have you been letting these kids do all doggone day long that's terrible parenting – you get over there – you get over there – you get over there – ” and I just kind of take over.

Now I am doing this because I am irritated, but then at the time I am actually thinking she's been a bad parent and those kids are rotten kids. I made the mistake of saying you let this go on all day? You have a job to do.... Well I am sure you can imagine what my wife's reaction was. Later on as I was getting some counseling for the problem I just caused – I finally recognized what was really going on inside of me. I will say I am

so thankful for my friends, and they have been so helpful and have changed my life. But sometimes counselors can get to the deeper parts, they can ask the right questions. I mean I think every Christian ought to have a Godly counselor. Mine is on speed dial.

My problem in this situation was that after working hard all day long I felt I deserved a break. And my kids were getting in the way of my break. Never mind that my wife has had to fight all day long with these doggone kids – I was more concerned with what was going on inside of me. Now here's the deal, were the kids not behaving well - did it need to be dealt with? Yes! The problem was that when I come at it the way I did, they only remember my anger. They won't remember what they were doing wrong, they didn't learn anything about their behavior because of the way I reacted – what they learned is don't make dad mad.

And what was I doing was not shepherding their hearts, I was punishing their behavior with anger. See the problem was inside of me. I had to go back later and say – honey I'm sorry – that's not right.

I also remember one time when we had not been married long and I was so frustrated with my wife. I called my dad and I said I don't have to put up with this! I am not doing this anymore! I will never forget the question my dad asked me. He said, “Well Jim, what is the percentage of this problem that you think is your part? And I said maybe 10%, (which only tells you I was delusional at the time) And I will never forget what he said. He told me - You are 100% wrong for your 10%. What does the Lord want you to do? What does God want you to clean up on your side of the street? You are only responsible for that.

I am not saying that there aren't things to be dealt with in the other person. Maybe God does need to do some things in them. But we are responsible for us. And James is telling us to use the power of the Holy Spirit to determine what is going on inside of you – test it. Are your emotions coming from selfish desires? Do you feel like something is

getting in the way of your plans or your own enjoyment? What is going on inside of you?

James is reminding us to slow down and become curious rather than angry. Pause to get a hold of yourself. That might mean you need to go for a walk. It might mean you go in and pray. It might mean that before you start reacting in the flesh you talk to godly friends who don't take sides.

My wife and I each have people that we can go and talk to if we are frustrated with each other. We know they're going to love the other person and not just take one side of the story. And they have the right to challenge me. To challenge her – to point us back to Jesus.

If you are so angry you can't pause, it means that you are probably out of control. He says listen be slow to get angry, slow to speak and quick to listen. Often times I am mishearing something – I am not hearing the person's heart. I'm just hearing what they're saying and those words mean something to me, but they don't mean the same thing to them down.

God is the one who brings us together with him and others – the devil is always trying to separate us from God and from one another and sometimes we forget that there is the devil doing his work dividing, causing confusion, anger and frustration... She is angry, I am angry, we needed to stop for a second and say Lord – We submit to you not to our feelings. We submit to you, we humble ourselves before you – and when we humble ourselves before our Heavenly Father, he tells us as we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship with one another. Humility is brought into the equation.

As we start to identify that the devil is actually working in this situation – we can come together and say: *Lord help us to hear each other. Push the enemy out Lord.* We humble ourselves before the Lord.

James 5 tells us to confess our sins one to another and we will be healed. James 5:16. Scripture says very clearly that if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us of all unrighteousness. Scripture also

says that if we confess our sins one to another there is healing. As we show humility, there is healing that goes on. Sometimes as I'm testing what I am angry at and how I'm acting, I do need to calm down, but I also need to go in deal with it after I have calmed down. Scriptures say in Matthew 18 that if there is a problem, if someone sins against you then you are to go to them calmly. Don't go to them with an anger that destroys, but with a love that restores.

“Don't go to them with an anger that destroys, but with a love that restores.”

The goal is never to destroy it is always to restore. To reconcile. In Ephesians 4:26-27 says *“Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.”* When you push anger down and you don't deal with it, it leads to bitterness in your heart. And by the way, if you have done things in anger– you have to say Lord Jesus give me the help I need to ask for forgiveness. Don't justify your anger, don't blame somebody for your anger. I have said this over the years – no one can make you act like an idiot. They just expose that you are one.

In other words when I get angry and act like an idiot it is not someone else's fault – nothing they did should cause me to act like a fool out of control. But once I recognize that I'm angry and I'm being ungodly about it I need to go the person and say I blew it. I shouldn't have reacted that way, please forgive me.

Let me just leave you with this. Human anger is a terrible counselor and a rotten boss. And we don't want human anger to be the boss of us.

## Anxiety

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We are in the last chapter of this book in which we have been talking about our emotions and not letting them be in charge. We live in a culture that is obsessed with feelings – culture tells us to follow our hearts. However, as Christians our worldview is based on something different. And the Bible tells us that because of sin and the broken world we are born into, our hearts are wicked and not to be trusted. God is not saying all feelings are wrong, but he is saying that we need to test our perceptions and feelings, bring them up against the truth of his word. Subjective truth rather than objective truth. The God who created the world is the one who created truth so we look first to him.

In this chapter I will be talking about the emotion of fear. And again, this emotion doesn't make a very good boss – it can be a terrible counselor on what to do with your life. Here is the dictionary definition of fear: It is an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat. I want you to know that fear is a very complicated emotion. God gave it to us as a protective agent. Learning to fear the right things in the right measure is a good thing. When a two year old wants to put their hand on the top of a hot stove, or to run out into a busy street, you want them to develop fear. Part of our job is

to teach them that there are things out there that will hurt them. So fear can be a good thing, phobia on the other hand is not.

“Learning to fear the right things in the right measure is a good thing.”

A phobia is an extreme or irrational fear. There are many things out there that bring out irrational fear in people. Many people have a fear of speaking in public. I grew up with 4 sisters and they had the common fears of spiders, snakes, and heights. When I met my wife I was pleasantly surprised to see her splatter a spider without a thought - that was when I knew that she was the one for me!

There is another kind of fear that we call anxiety. A chronic worry-filled fear. This is more serious. There is a study out called “Hardwired to Connect” by Dartmouth Medical School. It says that this anxiety can affect kids who don’t live in stable homes. The study, which is a secular one, says that much of the anxiety and fear that kids experience is because they don’t have spiritual meaning in their lives, they don’t understand who God is. We are at epidemic levels when it comes to anxiety and fear. It is severe enough that people need to go to a doctor or counselor. It is not the kind of situation where you can say just stop being afraid, just get over it. It doesn’t work that way. We need to de-stigmatize going to the doctor and getting help over this. As Christians, we need to look at it the same way we would look at taking insulin for diabetes.

There is another type of fear that we see in the Bible – and that is the fear of the Lord. Proverbs Chapter 1 says “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” There is a type of fear, reverence, that we would be wise to have when it comes to God. It starts with a belief in God, that he sees us and knows us. We can be



confident that he is the God of truth and the God of grace, but he is not the God of suggestions.

He tells us very clearly in scripture what he wants, and God is going to judge those who reject him. Jesus tells us in Matthew 10: 28 “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” Having an awe or respect for God is so important. Remember that a good father gives you both love and discipline.

Anxiety and fear is often looking ahead and worrying about what is going to happen, even though it hasn't happened yet. We are often missing out on peace and joy right now because we are thinking about what might happen in the future. God tells us to take all those thoughts captive and make them obedient to Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:5 “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

What this means is, once we have an emotion we take a minute to think about it. We search out what is really going on inside of us. We look at what is true and what is not true. King David wrote most of the Psalms – and a lot of his psalms were written while he was in the midst of anxiety ridden circumstances. This book was kind of like David's prayer journal. He is writing poetry and songs to God, and sharing his thoughts with him. As you read through his writings, you find that some days he is doing good, but some days he was in pain. He was always honest with the Lord.

As we look back on David's life, remember he was a shepherd. During that time he would fight bears and lions to protect his sheep. He was somewhat disregarded by his family, when the prophet Samuel came to his house his father didn't even send for him until Samuel asked. Later on he goes up bravely against Goliath, and yet is hiding in fear from Saul who is trying to kill him. The point is that he faced much in his life that would

cause anxiety and fear. If we look at Psalm 23 with all of that in mind, I think we can draw a lot from it.

*The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.*

*<sup>2</sup> He makes me lie down in green pastures,*

*he leads me beside quiet waters,*

*<sup>3</sup> he refreshes my soul.*

*He guides me along the right paths*

*for his name's sake.*

*<sup>4</sup> Even though I walk*

*through the darkest valley,<sup>[a]</sup>*

*I will fear no evil,*

*for you are with me;*

*your rod and your staff,*

*they comfort me.*

*<sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me*

*in the presence of my enemies.*

*You anoint my head with oil;*

*my cup overflows.*

*<sup>6</sup> Surely your goodness and love will follow me*

*all the days of my life,*

*and I will dwell in the house of the Lord*

*forever. Psalm 23: 1-6 NIV*

As I read through this I think that it is a picture of David taking his thoughts and emotions captive. I think he is dealing with fear and anxiety, but I also think he is reminding himself that he has those emotions in my life, but he is not going to focus on them. Instead he is declaring that he gave his life to God, and that God is his shepherd. That his feelings, emotions and thoughts don't rule over him – God does. He recognizes that

doesn't mean he won't go through struggles, in fact he says "even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." He is thinking back to times when God has been there for him and helped him through things, and believing that he is able to do so again. He declares that God is the one who restores his soul.

He restores my soul and he leads me in paths of righteousness for his namesake. I love that. That is so important - I don't know about you but when I'm dealing with fear and anxiety I think back to some of the times in my life when my plans weren't working, where I would come up with a formula that would fix things and it didn't work. I think back on when my son was dealing with addiction and I remember him being in a coma from a drug overdose. I dealt with anxiety and grief and thought about what mistakes I had made. I was under an onslaught of lies and even failures that I knew weren't true. I had thoughts of the future and what it was going to mean to my life and his life and to my wife's life and could she even handle it.

At that time God wasn't moving at the pace I wanted him to move at. I was just thinking maybe I should take matters into my own hands. But then realizing that I couldn't control any of this, so maybe it's better for me to escape. I hadn't had a drink for years – but I wanted to do whatever it took to get through the pain to escape. I thought maybe that's what I should do to restore my soul – maybe I should just run and start over – obviously I've made such a big mess that there is no fixing it. My thoughts and anxiety were out of control.

I think about when Jesus was dealing with the devil in Luke chapter 4. Jesus was starving and the devil comes and says if you're really the son of God turn these stones into bread. He is telling Jesus to just deal with it himself. Don't trust God to feed you when it's time – take matters into your own hands just escape the struggle. David was probably being tempted in the same way but he says: Here is what I know. I've done many

things that didn't restore my soul. I know the devil is lying to me. The answer to restoring my soul is more God - not less. He says I am going to walk through the valley of that shadow of death— because he'll go with there with me, he will be there with me through it.

I don't know about you but I tend to play out my fears and my anxieties and so I pray this or that happens because if that happens I just know it is going to lead to here, or it's going to lead to there. But God is saying that even if it leads to the things I am afraid of, he will walk through this with me. God says include me in your equation – don't play this out without me. As you start to walk through fear you stop to see what God does and you remember who restores your soul. You remember that God is there in the good and the bad times. I love what he how he says “*even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for you are with me – your rod and your staff they comfort me*” Psalm 23:4. If you are a shepherd, you use those things to reach down when your sheep aren't listening and grab them around the neck and to pull them away from the things that could harm them. God will actually get involved and pull you away if you just trust him— he will even protect you from yourself. He says in verse 5: “*You anoint my head with oil my cup overflows, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.*”

We have such temporary eyesight we can't see the spiritual realm. But David is saying I can get through this because my God has forever eyes not temporary eyes. Forever eyes means he does what he does with forever in mind. Even though it looks bad, if I will trust him he will take me to the other side of this here on Earth and in the next life. Forever eyes.

*“We have such temporary eyesight we can't see the spiritual realm.”*

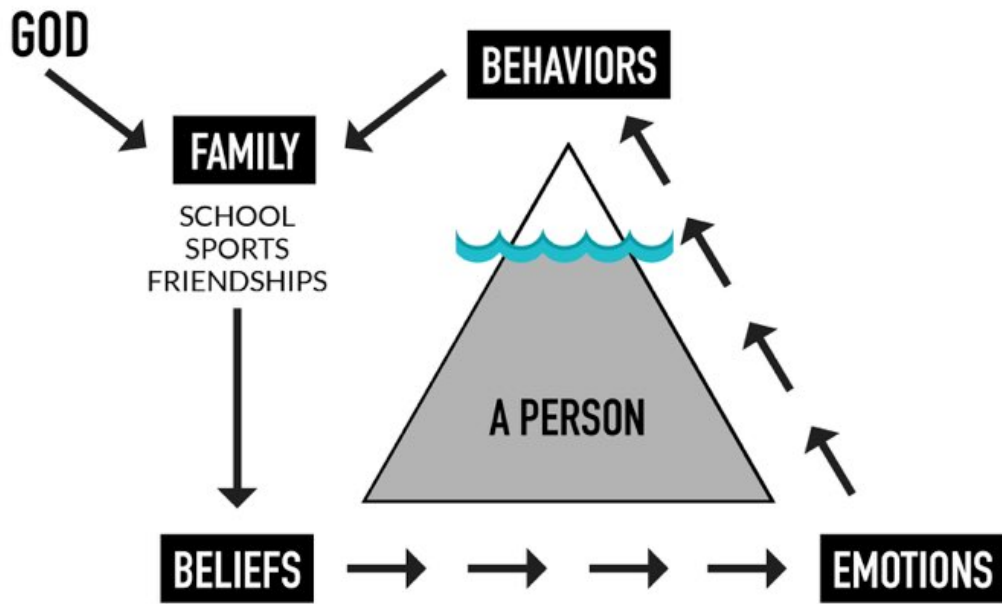
As I am thinking through this, the Bible is so amazing- it is unlike any other religious document. The New Testament tells about Jesus, and the guys who write about it are Matthew Mark Luke and John. These men are writing their own story but they don't make themselves the stars. They talk about their own fears and shortcomings. The only hero in their stories was Jesus. And in the same way David tells you his own story. The Bible is a book about a great God who works in spite of stupid people. David shares honestly in his life about his mistakes and his fears and the things that gets him through them.

Before I gave my life to the Lord – I had studied the evidences for Christianity and I came to the conclusion that Christianity was absolutely true. I gave my life to Jesus and I had this spiritual high that came over me. It was like nothing I'd never experienced as the the Holy Spirit simply entered my life. Suddenly strange things are happening. Some things I was doing that I never thought were wrong, now deep in my heart I thought “I know that's not right.” But I know how much God loves me and it was just amazing. But as time went on the honeymoon kind of goes away – I remember I was starting to struggle and I was having things happen. God was shifting my life around and taking me on a different path than I wanted. My whole life was about one thing and all of a sudden, my plans were falling apart and going in a different direction, and I started to doubt about whether God loves me and whether he's even real. Finally, my dad asked me what was going on. I was ashamed of what he might think if I told him the truth – I didn't want to tell him that I was doubting after everything God had done for me. I'll never forget - I just finally unloaded on him because he is so persistent. I told him there was something wrong with me and I don't even think I'm even a Christian. I said I don't think I have the Holy Spirit because the fruit of the spirit is joy and I'm doubting and struggling and I don't have any peace. I'll never forget what he said... He told me "yeah me too. Because that is how the battle goes. There is a

war on in your mind and you have the flesh – then you have the devil. That is why the scripture says talk resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:17).

He didn't tell me that there was something wrong with me, he didn't make me feel ashamed. He just told me every believer struggles in that way. I had thought I was the only one. The devil had me isolated – so it was just me and my thoughts. I was too ashamed or afraid to talk about what was really going on.

It is so important that we are honest and transparent and that when we are struggling we tell people. And when others share with us we let them know that we also struggle and that we all need people to lift us up and help us identify the devils lies. This is why God gave us the Holy Spirit and each other -to help encourage one another and support one another so that we all can finish the race.



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## Before You Go

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We would like to say thank you for reading through our book - we hope you enjoyed it! For more information on this and other topics go to [reallifeministries.com](http://reallifeministries.com)



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