

3. Handling Emotions



Emotions. As is so well described in this lesson, many men have been taught the wrong ideas concerning how to handle emotions. However, the Bible can give us much better guidance on this topic.

The Bible is filled with stories about men who struggled with handling their emotions.

In the 4th chapter of the book of Genesis we read about how jealousy drove Cain to kill his brother Abel. And you've probably heard of David, the young man who killed the giant Goliath. As a grown man and king he had such a strong desire for the beautiful Bathsheba that he arranged for her husband to be killed so he could have Bathsheba as his own wife. Fortunately David came to realize that his actions were wrong and displeased God, so he sought God's forgiveness, and eventually became known as a "man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22).

It should not surprise us that we can have strong emotions. After all, one thing that is very clear in the Bible is that God himself also has strong emotions. For instance, one of the most important ideas that we can learn from the Bible is that God loves us. The most famous verse in the Bible is John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave His only son, that whoever believed in him would have eternal life." And Jesus said that the two greatest commandments were to love God, and to love others (see Matthew 22:36-39). We can also know that God gets angry at times. We see that in Matthew 21:12-13 where Jesus got angry at people that were not honoring the temple, a place that was supposed to be used to worship God. The Bible even says that God laughs (Psalm 2:4)!

So if it's okay for God to show emotions then it's okay for us to have emotions and to show them, as long as we handle them the way that God would want us to. And how is that? Well in Psalm 103, verse 8, we read "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love." And as we can read in the book of Galatians, chapter 5, verses 22 & 23, God will help us develop feelings of love, joy, patience, kindness, self-control, and other good feelings.

God can also encourage and help us as we deal with difficult emotions such as worry and fear. In Matthew 6:28-30 we read: "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown away, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" And when God told Joshua and the Israelites to conquer the promised land God said that they should not be afraid because He would help them to do it.

So when it comes to strong emotions we have to be careful. Sometimes they can help us to do the right thing when that might not be easy, like when we do something to help someone that we love very much. Or we might get angry when we see someone being treated badly simply because of the color of their skin or the clothes that they wear. At times like that our anger can cause us to help that person. Let's always seek to use God's wisdom in how we handle our emotions.

Once again God's wisdom can guide us:

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.

James 1:19-20

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Colossians 3:15

Questions for thought and discussion:

- a. What are some stereotypes placed on men about expressing their emotions? Are the expressions of emotion demonstrated in our lesson good or bad?
- b. Is God an emotional being and how does He express them?
- c. How should we express ourselves or handle our emotions?
- d. How should they be displayed before our family members (spouse, children, parents, etc.)?