

Hi all,

I wanted to give you an update as many have written, emailed, FB Messenger'd and Skyped me for updates and to let me know they are praying for me - thank you! On Wednesday, August 9 at 7:30-8:30 Central Time (USA) I will undergo a 'cardioversion' to try to restore the normal electrical pattern in my heart. This is done by knocking me out with anesthetic and then while the heart is still beating, electrically shock the heart (think emergency paddles 'clear', zap, listen for heart beat 'as seen on TV') - the hope is the Atrial Fibrillation (AFib), which for me is the upper left quadrant of my heart that has had basically static electricity due to a nerve that went crazy, continually firing, will stop that and get back in line with the rest of the heart. My cardiologist described the electrical charges in that upper left quadrant as 'a room full of kindergartener's let loose in a room without supervision' - so we'll try to bring it back into order. I appreciate your prayers and will update you in this space next week. (Also, my regular Wednesday morning Facebook Live teaching will be on Tuesday the 8th (next week only) at 8am Central Time rather than Wednesday the 9th) It is hard to believe at times, but emotions are a gift from God and part of what makes us in His likeness. But they sure can cause us problems!

Even the definitions of emotion vary from dictionary to dictionary indicating we humans struggle with wrapping our minds around what they are. Definitions from various sources include: "A state of mind derived from one's circumstances", and 'a state of consciousness in which joy, sorrow, fear, hate and the like is experienced', and 'emotion is a complex reaction to situations around us.' Really...a complex reaction to situations....?

We know what emotions are, but we can't find a definitive description upon which to agree! That makes me so mad! Wait...that makes me laugh...wait...that makes me frustrated...wait...oh, emotions. God-given but often used by the devil to make our lives miserable with a skill that makes us at times feel like puppets on his string.

Emotions can be affected by hormones, circumstances, by the sugar level in our blood, by a movie we are watching or a great night out with friends. From funerals to births, weddings to touches from the Lord that sweep from our spirit outward to overwhelm our emotions, and so much more. That said, much of church culture has substituted emotion for the anointing which has resulted in Christians not knowing the voice of God from their own thoughts and emotions

I describe the anointing as the presence of God which may be felt in our spirit. - and many Christians act out of the emotion (or even the) spirit of fear but call it faith.

Why did the Father give us emotions?

From the perspective of God who created human beings, in order to make us totally free-

willed beings He had to endow us with the ability to think (reason) and the ability to feel (emotion) in order to properly understand Him and His creation and to function well in both realms - spiritual and natural. We are emotional because our Creator is emotional, which I'll show later.

Intellectually we understand art, but it is our emotion by which we feel what the art is communicating. Intellectually we understand the sun low on the horizon means its light is being sent through layers of dust, but we lay that aside to ooh and ahh as we stop everything to watch the fleeting beauty of a sunset. A baby has a way of turning the most cerebral man or woman into a babbling idiot making all sorts of weird sounds and scrunching their faces as they interact with the child.

We need our emotions as they are to balance our thought processes. Without emotion we become robots, more logical than Spock from the Star Trek series, too cerebral to feel emotions, therefore too insensitive to be able to feel God's presence in our spirit, to feel passionate love, too unfeeling to give emotional support to a spouse. Yet if we are all emotion we make decisions ranging from financial to relationships and everything in between without thinking them through which leads to heartache and misery. It is the balance between controlling emotion and thinking through things that cause us to prove the will of God in our lives with the resultant blessings and peace.

There is a line from the song "I do" by the singer "Jewel" that says "Life can take a long time if you make the wrong choice", that is so true. When Paul lists the 'works of the flesh' and the 'fruit of the spirit/Spirit' from Galatians 5: 19-23, many of each are emotions, or are at least manifest emotionally:

"...adultery, hatred, strife, jealousy, rage, envy, love, joy, peace, the giving of grace, goodness, self control..."

It is that mix of emotion and spiritual flow that we are interested in. How do we control our emotions, how do we think through decisions and find God's will as we balance emotion and logic? What is our part and what is God's part? How much common sense does He expect us to use and when we experience fear of what might happen or what could go wrong how do we find His assurance in our emotions (or spirit) He won't let the worst case imagination bouncing around our emotions happen?

The balance between intellect and feelings

In Genesis 3:21 we are told the Lord Himself killed animals in order to make clothing of skins for Adam and Eve, in the first direct instruction and prophecy about a future sacrifice covering our sin, even doing away with sin that had entered the world. Clothing therefore is meant to glorify God and remind us clothes are a type of His covering for mankind and His sacrifice for our sin. Too bad so much of the fashion industry has been perverted to make clothing sexual and that which glorifies His creations rather than the Creator.

But Adam and Eve were instructed on the types and shadows in the animal sacrifice which

allowed their sin to be covered, and they passed this knowledge to their children, including Cain and Abel. Abel offered a sacrifice of blood, submitting himself to the righteousness of God.

No respect - the first conflict of emotions

Cain however rebels against the pattern of blood sacrifice as an offering and recognition of God covering their sin, and instead offers vegetables from his own efforts, from his own strength, setting the pattern for all false religions to follow. Any religion, or any effort within even Christianity which attempts to approach God from that which we have done, is in the same spirit as Cain's religious efforts to come to God on his own terms.

It doesn't matter whether that religion requires certain clothing to be worn, washing in a particular river, making gifts to dead relatives, going door to door seeking converts, saying set prayers at set times, or any other man-made formulas, they are all rejected for they are like Cain's sacrifice from his own efforts.

This is why in the Old Testament when they made an altar for sacrificing an animal to God, His instructions were to not try to shape the stones in any way, but to use them as they found them in the ground - nothing related to salvation could be of man's efforts. This is why God instructed men to remove their shoes in His presence in the Old Testament, because shoes are man-made and no one comes to God out of His own efforts - God insisted they come bare-footed as they were created.

The clash between thoughts, emotions, and God

When Cain's vegetables are not received he is angry, sad, and angry at God. He will soon take out his anger on his brother, though the Lord made several attempts to have Cain deal with his thoughts and emotions before he took action - but Cain like so many of us, blew right through God's efforts to appeal to right thoughts and feelings, and murdered his brother. That process is a road map to this day, for God has not changed in the way He deals with us when we are conflicted between our thoughts and our swirling emotions.

And that is where we'll pick it up next week, until then, blessings,
John Fenn

Controlling your emotions #2

8/12/2017

Hi all,

I opened this series last week setting the stage for the first recorded in-depth passage that details the mix of human reasoning and emotion, and God's dealing with us in these things. We pick it up with Cain being angry at God because He did not accept Cain's offering of vegetables from the cursed ground.

Emotions boil out of control

Genesis 4:5 tells us Cain was angry with God for not accepting his offering, and his face was downcast - he was angry, sad, frustrated. Rather than submit to the righteousness of God, he chose to stubbornly dig in his heels and stand his ground, insisting he come to God in his own strength - and then had the nerve to be angry with God for not accepting his efforts.

This is SO human isn't it? We fast for days on end for an answered prayer, then wonder why God hasn't moved? Trying to impress Him as we insist on foregoing food that we might manipulate Him into moving on our behalf, we have become Cain, and like him become angry when heaven doesn't answer. Fasting moves us into greater sensitivity as our drive for food gradually diminishes so we can focus on spiritual things, but it doesn't move God.

We give time and money thinking 'look at the good I'm doing Father, now won't you return the favor and answer that prayer I really need the answer to' - we have become Cain once again, approaching God based on things we have done, trying to manipulate Him to move on our behalf.

Abel simply walked with God and humbly did what God expected and desired - and God accepted him.

The pattern of God's intervention into our emotional control

What happens after He rejects Cain's efforts to come to Him on his own terms sets the pattern for the Father dealing with our emotions to this day - we see the same pattern, the same methods, the same attempts He makes to reach us before our emotions take control of us. He asks Cain 3 separate questions yet Cain answers not a one: "Why are you angry?" "Why are you sad?" "If you do right won't it be accepted?" (Genesis 4: 6-7)

We read those in 1/2 a second often failing to realize this was a conversation and God as would anyone, expected an answer after each question: Why are you angry?

Right there - that is the point where God the Father reaches us today - Why are you angry? Examine your heart, examine your motives, examine your situation intellectually before you let your emotions take control and have the preeminence in this situation. Why are you angry? Look inside yourself, take a step back and examine the situation intellectually. Why are you angry?

Jesus would later say in Matthew 5:22 that if a person is angry with his (spiritual) brother without cause he places himself in danger of various degrees of discipline and consequences. Anger justified is not sin. Anger without cause is sin. We are expected to cool our emotions and be honest and truthful with ourselves and God and do what is right as we think through the reasons for our anger. If we see the sin in our heart we repent in acknowledgment our anger is not justified. If it is justified we have not sinned.

First attempt at controlling emotions: Examine the situation logically and intellectually - control your feelings

Cain was angry at God first, and angry at his brother second. He failed to answer God's first question: Why are you angry? That was an attempt by the Lord to get him to examine his heart intellectually and cause his emotions to submit to logic. Ouch - there's a thought - some people have never mastered that skill. Some people allow in the majority of times and situations, their emotions to immediately flare up and burst forth in an explosion over someone(s) without filter, without any thought first as to if they are just in their anger. These are spiritual babies and in fact, as human beings emotional babies, or at least emotional children.

I know many a man and woman who though mature in the years they've been alive, are emotional 10 year olds, pouting and demanding their own way and willing to show the world their temper tantrum and that they are upset. That's like a toddler...temper tantrum, yep, adults behaving like children - emotionally stunted, they can only reach a point of limited success in life, in relationships, in career, in God because they've chosen never to master their emotions. I'm sure the reader knows a few adults who are emotional toddlers, emotional 8 year olds, emotional 10 year olds, emotional 12 year olds - people become stunted in emotional growth at all ages. The ones who allow their emotional life to mature as they mature physically rise to the top and are able to walk with God and see success in life.

After the Lord asks Cain why he is angry, yet getting no response, the Lord tries to reach him another way. Cain knew full and well as did Adam, Eve, and Abel, the meaning of the covering of blood for their sin, but he was unwilling to be honest, so the Lord takes another approach, this time directly to his emotions: "Why are you sad?"

The root of God's expectations and our abilities

In the Hebrew it literally says "Why has your face fallen?" The root word for 'fallen' is 'panah' which means 'to turn'. In other words, the Lord could see the expression of Cain's face change when the sacrifice of his own sweat was not accepted by God whereas Abel's blood sacrifice was accepted. Cain's face mirrored his emotions. He was hiding nothing. The first question was directed to Cain's intellect. The second to his emotion - why are you showing such sadness in your face and emotions Cain?

Again, Cain refuses to examine his emotions. This shows us a person CAN have authority over what they feel, over their emotions. This shows us a person CAN examine their feelings intellectually and determine if what they feel is justified, and therefore if what they feel is 'real' for that situation. Yes his feelings of anger and sadness were real in terms of their feelings, but not real in terms of being justified - therefore he was expected by God to take control over his emotions by his thoughts, by the foundation of whether what he was feeling was right or not for that situation.

When Cain does not answer 'Why are you angry?' and 'Why has your face fallen?' - that is Cain refuses to examine himself intellectually or emotionally, the third time the Lord goes right to the heart of the matter, again appealing to logic:

"If you do what is right, won't it be accepted?"

Notice the way God expects us to approach life's situations - logically, intellectually, to do what is right because it is right, and therefore to examine our emotions and keep them under the control of our thought processes - at least in terms of right and wrong. You're going to cry at the end of that sad movie - that's not what I'm talking about. But finding ourselves in a situation where our emotions flare up, we are expected as Cain was, to first examine ourselves and our motives by right thinking to discover if our emotions are righteous emotions for that situation. If not, we are to take control over them by reasoning and think of the situation the right way, God's way.

Our lives are to pivot around right and wrong, just motives and just actions, not feelings. Cain didn't feel happy, but he was to have taken authority over his feelings in favor of doing what is right. If he did right his emotions would have changed to the positive. Cain's uncontrolled emotions are about to bring death to Paradise, just as many people today through their unbridled emotions have brought death to friendships and job, marriages and relationships with family members - and we'll pick it up there next week. Until then, blessings,

John Fenn

Controlling your emotions #3

8/19/2017

Hi all,

Consider how the culture of the world encourages people to live by emotion rather than reasoning: Advertising is designed to get specific emotional responses from us whether it be a cute ad, a funny ad, or a sexy ad, they are all designed to stir emotions more than logic. Consider auditorium church culture. The beautiful building, the raucous start to most worship services are with songs designed to get a person up and moving around, pleas for money or to volunteer in an program, or a soul-stirring message designed to motivate the congregation - as I have said, much of auditorium church culture has substituted emotion for the anointing. (Manifest presence of God). The world tries to train people to live by emotion. (And many 'Christian' web sites link with a spirit of fear to cause believers to keep turning to their site out of fear, under the guise of 'I just want to see what is happening in the alternative media', but it is really masking the spirit of fear)

God created us to live in balance with our reasoning and logic working together to walk with Him through life.

Recent studies show the average attention span of people (Millennial age group) have dropped from 12 seconds at the turn of the century to just 8 seconds today. That's right, you have 8 seconds to capture that person watching your TV commercial, or reading your

print ad or article - that departure from logic explains so much doesn't it? It explains why politics has become so nasty in the US at least. My generation was trained to attack ideas, not the person. Today it is the opposite.

(Here is a link of just one such report if interested: <https://www.prlog.org/12654134-freelance-writer-kimberly-blakers-blog-to-help-businesses-address-declining-attention-spans.html>)

So does church culture

I noticed emotions taking over rather than the study of God's Word and Ways back in the 1980's, and it became more pronounced in the 1990's to the point in the late 1990's many people equated emotion with the Holy Spirit. To stir the emotions was equivalent to feeling the Holy Spirit for many churches. Wrong. Wrong spirit.

I saw Word of Faith teachers taking verses (especially about money) so far out of context and building doctrine I thought no one in their right mind would believe that - yet millions did. When I went to work with another ministry that associated itself and promoted ministers who built intercessory prayer and personal prophecy up to an unhealthy level, and saw many lives ruined by 'personal prophecy' without any reasoning or common sense applied, I thought surely we are close to the end of days!

And now with the Internet connecting people who have given themselves over to everything from a commonly held spirit of fear to every stray and weird belief out there, all in the name of God, I wonder where did the ability to reason go? When did we get to the place we sacrificed the brains God gave us in favor of emotion-based beliefs wrapped in spirituality that causes people to completely abandon all logic and common sense? Common sense isn't too common any longer. Don't confuse me with facts, my mind is already made up. People want to be right more than they want the truth.

Back to Cain...

After the Lord asked him 3 questions and received no answer: "Why are you angry?" "Why has your face fallen?" "If you do right, won't it be accepted?" the Lord lays out His plan. His method of dealing with emotions, which in this case as is so often with us if not dealt with properly, can lead to sin and error in decisions: "If you don't do what is right, sin is crouching at your door and it desires to have you. But you must rule over it." (Genesis 4:7)

We've lost that backbone today - the concept of ruling over the sin desire. We want counseling, we want an instant deliverance, we want someone to make it all go away, remove that temptation from us once and for all! Wrong! We are on the earth, the devil is loose, your body wants to sin, and you must use discipline (that's almost a curse word for some people I think - discipline, ooh, I said it again. discipline). "Sin lies at your door and wants to have you. You must rule over it!"

Emotion is the door for blessing or curse

Notice the connection with emotion as the doorway by which Cain would either keep the devil on the outside of his life, or let him in. God said to him, 'If you don't do right sin is at your door...' Grab hold of your hurt Cain. Grab hold of your disappointment and anger Cain. Pull in the emotion and THINK...reason it out, do what is right!

Right there - right at that moment, the decision to do right or do wrong, is the first defense - logic. Reasoning. But it is the combination of turning away from the truth and the giving of himself to wrong emotions that opened the door for murder. James would later write in 3:14 in his passage about being intellectually honest with our own heart, "don't lie against the truth" (when you see something in your heart that isn't right, instead of hiding it, admit it to God and deal with it). Don't lie against the truth.

That is what Cain was doing - lying against the truth. He knew his heart, he knew what was right to do, but he didn't want to. It is wrong thought that opened the door to wrong emotion that led to sin. He set his will to do things the way he wanted, he insisted.

We aren't taught that emotions can change direction like a flag on a flag pole blowing with the changing wind, but that is the truth. If you focus on what you don't like about your spouse, or about your life, then those wrong thoughts will lead to emotions turning away from them and give rise to wrong thoughts (lies) like how much better off you'd be on your own, or how so and so would make a better spouse...and the death spiral begins. Death to relationships, death to what you have that is good and right.

If a person arrests their emotions by stepping back intellectually to look at the larger picture, let us say that spouse in this situation, and intellectually search for why they first fell in love, want what IS right about their life and marriage, then the emotions will start to swing towards the favorable. The instruction of Matthew 7:12 & Luke 6:31 that we call 'The Golden Rule' is actually a road map of healthy thought followed by healthy emotion:

"Do to others what you want them to do to you." Think that through. That is a command to take the initiative, to be on the offensive to actively do as a lifestyle to others what you would want them to do back to you. You don't wait for them to come around to see things your way - you do to them what you would have them do to you.

You want your husband to take you to a romantic restaurant - you take the initiative to take him out. You want him to stop treating you with disrespect when in public, then you find ways to treat him with honor and respect in your statements to your friends about him. Men - you want her to be more loving at home, then you start treating her with love, finding special ways to do good to her that you would love for her to do to you.

Emotions follow the thought processes and actions. Don't make your thoughts follow your emotions; that is what Cain did. Your emotions are to follow your healthy thought processes and healthy actions. Build a bridge, or build a wall. Sometimes you have to build that bridge several ways and times before a wall comes down and the other person starts building a

bridge from their side of things.

AFTER the murder, second verse same as the first

I've only covered Cain to this point, but because this is the first instance of the battle between logic and emotion played out along with how God deals with us in these things, it establishes a pattern we will see repeatedly throughout scripture and to our day. The Lord hasn't changed and He deals with us and has the same expectations on us today as He did on Cain way back then. He even uses the same methods of trying to reach us before we make a huge mistake.

All I've covered thus far with Cain was BEFORE he killed Abel. The Lord was equally gracious to him after the murder. He asked him a question: "Where is your brother?" to which Cain lied in the pattern of those who are emotionally wrong and intellectually wrong ever since. "I don't know! Am I my brother's keeper?"

The progression of Cain's downfall and how God tried to reach him lays out for us a roadmap of the ways of the Lord. He is tender and merciful, and approaches us with questions designed to point out erroneous thoughts and feelings, and laying out for us the right way - and urging us to take that right way.

We will look at other examples next week, until then...food for thought!

Blessings
John Fenn

Controlling your emotions #4

8/26/2017

Hi all,

Now that we've covered the Lord's ways dealing with Cain and with us, we can look at how He deals with His own emotions and how He interacts with us emotionally - that may sound strange, but consider Moses when the Lord wanted to wipe Israel off the map and start over with his family, from Exodus 32:10-14: "Now leave me alone that my wrath may burn hot against them and I will destroy them, and make of you a great nation!"

That is emotion! Wrath is to be distinguished from anger in that anger is abiding while wrath flares up quickly and dies down just as quickly. The Lord was experiencing the emotions of (justified) wrath against Israel for their hard hearts against Him. It was justified so it was not sin, whereas unjustified wrath would be sin the same way unjustified anger is sin, while justified anger is not.

How did Moses talk to the Lord in His emotional condition? "Why should your anger burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say 'It is with evil intent He brought them out, to kill them in the mountains, and to wipe them off the face of the earth?' Turn from your fierce anger and relent of your wrath against your people." Moses asked the Lord to step back and look at history, all they meant to one another, the big picture. Don't throw that away Lord. Look at what we've meant to one another, look at all the work and investment you made in the relationship with Israel.

Notice 'turn from your fierce anger' and 'relent'. Some versions mistakenly use the word 'repent', but the Hebrew means 'to turn from' and has nothing to do with feeling sorry for feeling that way, it just means turn from this emotion to logic. Moses appealed to reason, to bring His emotions back under the control of His reasoning processes. This is exactly what the Lord expected of Cain when He asked the 3 questions: "Why are you angry? Why has your face fallen? If you do right won't it be accepted?" The Lord tried to get Cain to step back and look at the big picture, the whole of their relationship and asked him to do what was right in spite of what he felt at that moment.

Moses continued, this time appealing to the integrity of the Lord: "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, 'I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land will I give to your offspring...' And the Lord relented of the wrath He had threatened." Moses appealed to the covenant, to the larger picture to cause the Lord to step back from the intense moment and the emotions that flared. Moses caused the Lord to take a step back and look at the big picture. That is what the Lord did with Cain, trying to get him to see the larger picture of just doing what is right in spite of how he felt at the moment.

The Lord told Barb something when she was very hurt by a friend who got offended at her and cut off their friendship: "Don't turn a moment into a life time. It's only a moment." She was able to step back from the emotions of hurt with that word - it still hurt of course and having been victimized by this friend's immaturity she won't allow herself to be hurt again by her, but it was just a moment, so she moved on, stopped looking in the rearview mirror of what was lost, and focused on the present.

Approachable in the midst of intense emotions

That the Lord would have the emotion of wrath and that He would be willing to be spoken to by a mere man reveals how humble and approachable He is and how literally we are created like Him - for we can see ourselves in His emotions. And we are to be like Him in this as well, approachable even in the midst of wrath.

This element of approachability in the midst of emotions that are swirling around threatening to explode over everyone in our path is something we must have in our hearts as well - think of that - Moses alone stood before God's wrath and a whole nation, and the Lord allowed Himself to be spoken to like that. He allow Himself to be calmed down, to be reasoned with

in the midst of His emotions.. We must be like that - certainly He allowed this incident to be recorded for our instruction and example!

The immature Christian and their emotions

Here again we see the value of being in relationship with others in the faith who can speak into our lives. We could say Moses was on the same spiritual page as the Lord - their relationship was such they could each speak into each other's lives, for "the Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend." (Ex 23:11).

As I've said before, anyone can say they are born again, but whether they are or are not is impossible to prove. Therefore God designed His righteousness to be revealed and worked through within relationships. Salvation, being of the spirit man, remains unproven except as revealed outwardly in the relationships we maintain. We need others to speak into our lives, to sand off the rough edges, to be used by the Lord to cause us to see ourselves through the eyes of others. That is the tougher road to follow, the one of transparency and humility, the one in which a person looks at everything and everyone as God's handiwork able to speak into our lives, even if unintentionally, even if the devil is behind it trying to destroy us - we look for what God can make of a horrible situation and how what the devil intended for our destruction might be used of God to grow us and strengthen us.

When we offend, most often it was unintentional on our part but to them we were rude or sarcastic or had an attitude so they felt justified in throwing away the relationship. (In our high tech world this is made worse in that emails and texts don't convey emotions and tone, and therefore the reader can attach any emotion or tone they wish when they read the email or text. Emoticons were invented to convey the emotion and tone of a message because what is written in email or text cannot do so).

I've seen churches split because 1/2 the congregation was unhappy because the other 1/2 voted for dark green carpet for the sanctuary instead of burgundy. I've known friendships to be ended because one person said they didn't have time to talk right then and the other got so offended and hurt they dropped their friend like they had the plague. I knew of another church split because the new pastor moved the Communion chalice and bread plate table from the platform to the floor in front of the platform.

And yet those same people who are so quick to cut the relationship with you stay at their job when someone at their work offends them, or their boss yells at them, or their company has a health care plan covering situations they don't agree with, or they continue to go to movies which use the Lord's name in vain...but let another brother or sister say "I'm busy right now" or "I just can't deal with this now can we talk later" and they cut off the relationship.

They are not only hypocrites, but that hypocrisy is revealed in the fact they are emotions-led. Spirit-led reason doesn't throw away a long and good friendship, or walk out of a church because 1/2 voted for the color they didn't vote for.

What do you do with Christians who live their Christian lives being led by emotions rather than reason and a desire to grow in maturity?

And that's where we'll pick it up next week.

Until then, blessings,
John Fenn

Controlling your emotions #5

9/2/2017

Hi all,

What do we do with friends and family whose decision making skills resemble those of a squirrel trying to cross the street? (And for some reason they involve us as a passenger on their emotional roller coaster ride.)

At what point if any do we try to be that person who breaks through to be the one to speak into their life?

By getting our emotions stirred up we let our defenses down. Proverbs 25:28 says a man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without (defensive) walls. To live by and make decisions by emotion only opens a person to destruction. They are unstable and to those witnessing their life it is plain to see their decisions have no logic, and just don't make sense.

James 1:5-8 warns us that if we are seeking the Lord's wisdom then to do so fully committed - a double minded man is as unstable as the waves of the sea "and let not that man think he will receive anything from the Lord." In other words, if your emotions are like a roller coaster when it comes to seeking God's will, you will miss Him. You won't recognize His leading - you won't get the wisdom from Him you said you wanted. Serving God requires the whole heart, the whole mind, the whole body.

The problem of living by emotions

Because much of church culture equates emotions with the anointing it is no wonder people often equate God's direction in their life with how they feel at that moment. If someone says to you 'Last night I had peace but this morning I'm not sure' - it means they probably had God's peace and direction last night, but in the wee hours of the night and morning doubt and more importantly, fear, crept in and they allowed God's peace to fall into the background - by their choice not by His! Their lack of self-control of their thoughts and feelings leave them confused.

You see this especially in people who are single or unequally yoked in marriage who have no spouse or close friend to speak into their lives, for such a person would round off those rough edges and level out the roller coaster ups and downs of their emotions. Social media is full of people like that and you can tell by the intensity of their focus in what they post, for a person with others who speak into their life would not have posted what they do.

You don't have to feel that way! The concept of taking authority over one's emotions is foreign to so many people, in part because no one ever told them 'you don't have to feel that way', and part because it is also the world's culture to live by emotion. There is a saying often used for children, 'Boredom is a choice'. Boredom is an emotion that comes from lack of focus and activity. Boredom is a choice for if a person 'feels' like it they can get up and find something on which to focus.

Be mature enough to lay aside differences in order to love one another.

The feelings will come if you do right, but you don't wait for warm and fuzzy before doing right. You just do it. Right emotions follow right thoughts and right decisions. You have in your heart that Jesus loves their sorry selves and you do too for that reason alone perhaps - but He died for them so there is a certain amount of respect and honor and well wishes that goes with Jesus' love for them - once you fall in line with Jesus' love and love them from your spirit to their spirit, perceiving the grace in them, then the rest falls by the way side. They could pick up the phone today and you'd pick up the relationship right where you left off before it went bad - but they are stuck in their backsliding mud and so live in the past, making the past current news to them while you've moved on and continued to grow in Christ.

How to handle such a friend?

II Timothy 2:23-26: "Foolish and ignorant questions avoid, knowing they only stir up strife. The servant of the Lord must not get caught up in other people's strife, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient. In meekness instructing those who oppose themselves if God perhaps will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, so that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil who are taken captive by him at his will."

The question I asked is this: What are we to do with people who live by their emotions?

Notice the 4 points I underlined above - "...instructing those who oppose themselves", "repentance to the acknowledging of the truth", "that they may recover themselves", and "... (from) the snare of the devil who are taken captive by him at his will."

Our part is to instruct. Period. Build a bridge to them showing them the path to right thinking

Galatians 6:1-5 says similarly that we are to 'restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted' - in other words, with understanding that we all sin, they are just sinning differently than we do. Paul goes on to say in Galatians 6:2 that if they hear us we are bearing one another's burdens.

But he says, if they won't hear us and instead reject our advice and think more highly of themselves than they should, then they must bear their own burden and walk it out, their decision revealing if they were right or wrong. (v3-5). He goes on to say God isn't mocked, He will give to each of us what we deserve or have sown, for that is right.

In his II Timothy 2:23-26 message to Timothy he told him to instruct those who oppose themselves (they are blind to the fact they are fighting against themselves when they are caught up in the emotions of things) but we shouldn't allow ourselves to get caught up in their own strife. Remain emotionally separate even though you feel for them, even though you see where they are headed, even though you want with all your heart to rescue them - once you instruct them they must make the right decisions, they must bring emotions under control.

As the saying goes, the first rule for getting out of a hole is to stop digging. Because they are used to making decisions by emotion some people cannot see they are digging their hole deeper. There is no spiritual rapture to get one out of the bottom of a hole to instantly standing on top of it at ground level, or to fill in the hole. God gives to us what we deserve, and undoing what we did can take years, but it is just.

Notice again what Paul said of them in II Timothy - 'repent to the acknowledging of the truth'. At some point an emotion-led person must calm down, start thinking, and admit their error. It's that simple. No real progress towards emotional health can be made until there is a clear certainty, a revelation, an epiphany they have about their life.

And the worst thing of that person who lives and makes decisions by emotions is that 'they are taken captive by (the devil) at his will.' Again, "that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil." No one can do it for them, they must do it.

We'll close it out next week,

until then, blessings,
John Fenn

Controlling your emotions #6

9/9/2017

Hi all,

I heard a joke the other day on an old TV show that I had not heard since my 6th grade teacher told it to us in an effort to get us to think 'outside the box' as we say - meaning to look for solutions beyond the obvious.

The joke is this: Every week a Mexican boy would ride across the Mexican/US border on his bicycle with a sack over his shoulder. Each week he was stopped by the same US Border Agent who inspected the sack, only to find it each and every week filled with sand. This went on for many weeks until one day the Agent on a day off was spending an afternoon in Mexico, and happened to see the little boy. He asked the boy to tell him what he was doing riding back and forth like that with a sack of sand over his shoulder. The boy replied:

"I was smuggling bicycles."

This is the way the devil works in our emotions - he gets us focused on the bag of sand while he smuggles his real purpose right into our lives - that thing screaming at us like fear, wrath, anger, arrogance, etc.

I could tell you story after story

Victims of those living by their emotions include most of us I would imagine. People regularly contact me about what to do with the friend who suddenly cut off their friendship and they have no clue why, or they cut off the friendship for some trivial reason. I've listed several experiences in the last couple of weeks, but the result is the innocent friend, family member, co-worker, fellowship church member, are hurt by the emotionally made decisions to kill friendships.

Paul wrote to a bunch of emotionally led believers in his first letter to the body of Christ in Corinth, saying the fact they were caught up in strife, envy, and divisions reveals they are mere babies in Christ. He said in I Corinthians 3:3 they were carnal, living like un-born again people. He said at this point they should be eating spiritual meat, but they are unable to receive it for they remain babies because they are emotionally caught up in strife, envy and divisions. He told them if they continued they would be saved, but all they were bringing with them to heaven would be wood, hay, and stable which would be burned up in judgement.

Did you notice...

Jesus did not chase after the Rich Young Ruler when he turned away from Jesus' invitation to sell everything and come follow Him. Did you notice in John 6:66-67 when many disciples stopped following Him because they didn't understand His parable and what He meant when He spoke of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, He didn't run after them?

Jesus puts before us a decision to make, a fork in the road, a revelation internal about doing what is right or doing what we feel we want to do. Then He watches. Like Cain, He encourages us in our spirit man to do the right thing, to gain mastery over sin and our emotions - but He lets us make the decision.

When a friend behaves badly we must realize they must correct themselves. Meekly try to help, and if they repent and acknowledge their error and give us thanks for the wise counsel -

praise God we've regained our friend. If not, they must walk it out and we are kicked to the sideline. No disaster is a single event, and it is true of life.

Okay, back to Cain...let's start at the very beginning of this series

Even after Cain murdered his brother, the Lord came to him - get that - the Lord came to him and offered him the chance to be honest, asking: "Where is your brother Abel?"

Cain dug in his heels as we say, rather than acknowledge outright what he had done he responded with a lie and question: "I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper?" In the very next verse, in Genesis 4:10 the Lord tells Cain that He knows what he did - look at the graciousness of the Lord! And He is like that for us, continually trying to reach us in different ways, different angles, trying to get us to be honest with ourselves and Him.

The underlying theme of this series has been personal responsibility, for this is what the Lord continually pulls us back to - be honest and take responsibility for what you think, what you feel, what you decide in life. An emotional person refuses to be personally responsible for their lives - they lie to others in little 'white lies', harmless they think, yet we can see they are plainly lies. They lie to themselves using emotions out of control to mask their fear and refusal to take responsibility.

You aren't a robot

Do not get the impression I am talking about being an emotionless robot, for that is not the case. Emotions have their place for it is by them we feel the facts that our intellect tells us. Our emotions therefore are to work in tandem with our intellect, each weighing against the other, but always our emotions are to be subject to the rightness of the Lord, whether we feel like it or not - we make our emotions submit to logic and trust.

In I Samuel 30:1-6 David and his men come home to Ziklag only to find the city burned and every single person taken away captive. Their wives and children were nowhere to be found, there wasn't a dead body in the city - and it says in v6 David's men wanted to kill him by stoning, but 'David encouraged himself in the Lord'. As you read Psalm 4 below realize David is talking to his men who want to kill him, trying to encourage them not to let their emotions take over, but to make them turn to the Lord.

David wrote Psalm 4 at this time, and it is a snapshot of how David came close to letting his emotions in this very emotional event almost take over. But it also shows him swing back to his faith and trust in the Lord, and in the end, the Lord showed them how to recover every single person. If he had let his emotions take over he never would have been in the position to receive the Lord's instruction for restoration.

"Hear me when I call O God of my righteousness: You have enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

(Can you hear his desperation - his men are talking of killing him, his wife has been taken captive, he is afraid and alone - so he speaks to his men)

"O you sons of men, how long will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you love

delusions and seek false gods? Know that the Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself (their wives and children, and themselves if they remain true to the Lord). The Lord will hear when I call to Him. Stand in awe of Him and don't sin, commune with your own heart and rest on your bed and be still. Selah (stop, think on this)"

"Off the sacrifices of righteousness and put your trust in the Lord. There are many that say 'Who will show us any good? Lord lift up the light of your face upon us! You have put gladness in my heart more so than at a time of great harvest of grain and wine. I will lay down in peace and sleep, for you Lord make me live in safety."

David and his men went on that emotional roller coaster, which was completely understandable, but they listened to their faith and brought their emotions under control, their thoughts and fears and worry under control and submitted to faith and trust in the Lord - and as David noted, he had peace. Allow yourself that emotion, but don't be like Cain who chose to live by his emotion and ended up making a very bad decision. Be like David who in the midst of fear and worry found peace and restful sleep

- because he trusted that God was faithful and would be faithful yet again in this situation. Amen! New subject next week,

until then, blessings,
John Fenn