

# Learning the Biblical ABCs of Emotional Intelligence

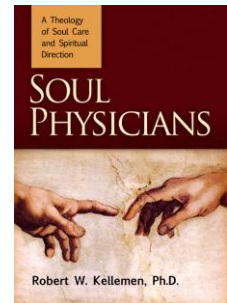
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*Changing Lives with Christ's Changeless Truth*

## Introduction

I've developed this series from material in my book *Soul Physicians: A Theology of Soul Care and Spiritual Direction* (<http://bit.ly/2Ha4Am>). *Soul Physicians* is the remedy to secular psychology. It examines God's answers to life's seven ultimate questions.

If you would like to read this material in its original blog format, follow these links.



- Part 1: *Emotions: God's Idea* <http://bit.ly/edldAF>
- Part 2: *Why We Feel What We Feel* <http://bit.ly/eq6Zgc>
- Part 3: *Good News about Good Moods* <http://bit.ly/fTw2jc>
- Part 4: *What Went Wrong?* <http://bit.ly/hZ02yc>
- Part 5: *Dust and Divinity: Our Emotions and Our Bodies* <http://bit.ly/h9mqbL>
- Part 6: *How's Your Emotional Intelligence?* <http://bit.ly/hbU7FT>
- Part 7: *How to Help Others with Their Emotions* <http://bit.ly/gzg2O3>
- Part 8: *Emotions Gone Mad and Bad* <http://bit.ly/dUvzje>
- Part 9: *What's Wrong with Stuffing Our Feelings?* <http://bit.ly/dGXQfW>
- Part 10: *Holding Onto Hope* <http://bit.ly/ecJQGi>
- Part 11: *Learning the ABCs of Emotional Maturity* <http://bit.ly/hnuLOS>
- Part 12: *Five Tools for Your Emotional Toolbox* <http://bit.ly/eVI06K>
- Part 13: *A Dozen Emotional Intelligence Lesson Plans* <http://bit.ly/f4XiU4>

## Part 1: Emotions: God's Idea

### Emotions: Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

In many Christian circles, emotions are viewed as the “black sheep” of the image bearing family. In other words, we accept that God created us with a soul to relate, with a mind to think, and with a will to choose. But somehow we act as if emotions were not God's idea.

We often see emotions more as a cursing than a blessing. “More harm than good.” “Suppress them.” “Ignore them.” “Don't have them.” If emotions are so distressing, then why did God create us with feelings?

Somehow we've forgotten that when God paused to ponder His image bearers, he pointed out that they, emotions included, were “very good.”

Feelings were God's idea. Not only did He give them to us; He experiences them Himself. God is an emotional being. Read that again. Don't dodge it. *God is an emotional being*. God the Father gets angry. God the Son weeps. God the Spirit grieves. The Trinity emotes.

If we are to live godly lives—Christ-like lives—then we need God's perspective on emotions. We need a biblical theology on emotionality. Consider the present blog mini-series to be our Emotional Primer 101—the ABCs of Emotions.

### Emotions: Windows to the Soul

It's so typical that it has become trite, “How do you feel about that?” We even mock it, “I feel your pain.” We are awash in an emotionally shallow society. Do we throw the baby out with the bath water? Or do we realize Satan's counterfeit and choose Christ's real deal, the genuine article?

The real deal is *imago Dei* emotionality. The real deal is *coram Deo* emotionality. Like our Creator, we are emotional beings who experience deeply (*imago Dei* emotionality) and all of our feelings are in-relationship-to-God feelings (*coram Deo* emotionality).

Emotions are windows to the soul. All emotions, positive or painful, open doors to the nature of reality. Emotions link our inner and outer world. But we want to escape the reality of both. The Scriptures teach that the suppression of feelings is a refusal to face the sorrow of life and our hunger for heaven. It is not a mark of maturity. Our refusal to embrace our feelings is an attempt to deal with a God who does not relieve our pain.

Our emotions reveal our deepest questions about God. They vocalize the inner working of our souls. Listen to and ponder your emotions in order to discern what your heart is doing with God and others. They are a voice that can tell us how we are dealing with a fallen, hurtful world. Emotions force open the stuck window of our soul, compelling us to face how we are facing life.

### Emotions: Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Emotions are God-given. They are not satanic. Adam had them before the Fall. God has them. Christ has them. In and of themselves, they are not sinful. They are beneficial, and yes, even beautiful.

The Psalmist understood this. In the classic passage describing God's utmost care in creating us, Psalm 139, emotionality is the one aspect of our inner personality specifically referenced. "For you created my *inmost being*; you knit me together in my mother's womb" (Psalm 139:13, emphasis added).

"Inmost being" is kidneys. In Psalm 73:21 and Proverbs 23:16 the kidneys are the place of sorrow and rejoicing, respectively. In Old Testament thinking, the kidneys prompt or urge to action by aroused emotions. Hans Wolff notes that the Semitic languages used terms for kidneys, reins, stomach, bowels, and womb to describe the feeling states (Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, pp. 62-63).

As we literally experience and feel an emotion in our physical being, so we feel an emotion in our psychological being. That's why we say things like, "*I have butterflies in my stomach.*" God created your inmost being, your kidneys, your emotions. Your emotions are fearfully and wonderfully made—by God.

### **The Rest of the Story**

Knowing that God designed us with emotions is the beginning of the story. The rest of the story teaches us what emotions are. In *Why We Feel What We Feel*, we define emotions and develop a basic formula for understanding emotions.

### **Join the Conversation**

Why do you think Christians fear feelings? How does it change your thoughts about your feelings when you realize that emotions were God's idea?

## Part 2: Why We Feel What We Feel

### Defining Emotions: Our God-Given Capacity to Experience and Respond

What are emotions? Emotions are our God-given capacity to experience our world and to subjectively respond to those experiences. This capacity includes the ability to internally react and experience a full-range of both positive (pleasant) and negative (painful) inner feelings.

The very root of the word *emotion* is *motere*, the Latin verb “to move,” plus the prefix “e” meaning “to move away.” This suggests that a tendency to act is implicit in every emotion. All emotions are, in essence, inclinations to react, the instant plans for handling life that God has instilled in us. God designed our emotions to put us in motion. They represent a quick response that motivates action—emotions signal the mind to go into high gear.

Emotions play a crucial editorial role that force us to do a double-check, to look outward and inward. Emotions are our “psychological sentinel” that connect us to our inner and outer world.

Once connected, then we react to our external and internal world. What we desire (relationally), think (rationally), and choose (volitionally) (our inner world) determines our emotional reaction to our external situation (our outer world).

What we believe (Romans 12:1-2) (rational direction) about what quenches our thirst for relationship (Psalm 42:1-2) (relational motivation) provides the direction we choose to pursue (Joshua 24:15) (volitional interaction) and determines our experiential response (emotional reaction) to our world.

### A Formula for Understanding Our Emotional Responses

Consider a basic formula for understanding emotions: *E.S. + I.P. = E.R.* *Our External Situation plus our Internal Perception leads to our Emotional Response.* Picture our emotions like this:

- Negative Situation (ES) + Biblical Belief (IP) = Legitimate Painful Emotion (ER) (Sorrow, Sadness, etc.)
- Negative Situation (ES) + Unbiblical Belief (IP) = Illegitimate Painful Emotion (ER) (Hatred, Despair, etc.)
- Positive Situation (ES) + Biblical Belief (IP) = Legitimate Positive Emotion (ER) (Joy, Peace, etc.)
- Positive Situation (ES) + Unbiblical Belief (IP) = Illegitimate Positive Emotion (ER) (Pride, Self-Sufficiency, etc.)

Your boss says to you, “You blew it.” Your emotions react to this external event *and to* your internal images and ideas. What if you believe, “I must have my boss’s approval”? Then you will respond with illegitimate negative emotions such as anger, depression, hopelessness, or hatred.

If, on the other hand, you believe that “I would like my boss’s approval, but I know that I am accepted by God,” then you will respond with legitimate painful emotions such as sorrow, disappointment, or remorse (if you were truly in the wrong).

The key to our emotional reaction is our belief or perception about the meaning behind the event. Thus, events determine whether our emotions are pleasant or painful, while longings, beliefs, and goals determine whether our emotional reaction is holy or sinful.

Obviously, our emotions are useful, beneficial, and very good (Genesis 1:31). Just as obvious, our emotions often are hurtful, harmful, and very bad. We are to be angry, but not sinfully so (Ephesians 4:26). Anger can be good (Mark 3:5); it can be evil.

So it is with all emotions and moods. Designed for mood order (Creation), we experience mood disorders (Fall), and can experience reordered moods (Redemption).

### **The Rest of the Story**

This is not your father's view of emotions! No—we've been sold a lie that says emotions are all bad. Yet, designed by God, God says emotions are very good. In fact, our moods can be very good. That's also not what we've been taught. When we think "mood," we think, "He's so moody!" "She's in such a mood!" We need God's view of moods. We'll find it in Part 3: *Good News about Good Moods*.

### **Join the Conversation**

Ponder a current situation you are facing. Use our "formula" to assess the situation and your emotional response. *E.S. + I.P. = E.R. Our External Situation plus our Internal Perception leads to our Emotional Response.*

## Part 3: Good News about Good Moods

### How God Designed Our Moods to Work: Mood Order

We tend to develop rather patterned approaches to life. Relationally, we pursue *affections* that motivate our actions (Psalm 42:1-2). We cling to our Creator or to created realities—pure or impure affections, lovers of the soul or idols of the heart. Either we worship God our Spring of Living Water, or we dig broken cisterns that can hold no water. We enjoy intimacy with Christ or we weary ourselves pursuing false lovers.

Rationally, we develop *mindsets* that persist over time (Romans 12:1-2). Either we direct our lives according to the mindset of the spirit/Spirit or we pilot our lives off course according to the mindset of the flesh. Either we guide our lives along the narrow path of wisdom or along the broad road of foolishness.

Volitionally (our will), we develop *purposeful pathways* of intentional interacting (Joshua 24:15). We trod a path toward what we perceive will satisfy the hunger of our heart. We habituate ourselves either toward willing God's will or willing our own will. "Your will be done," or "My will be done."

Emotions are no exception. We not only experience instantaneous emotional responses, we also encounter ongoing *mood states*. A mood is a background feeling or emotional state that persists over time. It is less intense and longer lasting than emotions. My mood is my prevailing tone or coloring, my state of mind, frame of mind. In a sense, it is my emotional outlook that occurs both at a particular time and settles deep inside me over time.

As with emotions, moods are the intersection of our emotional/feeling responses and our rational attitude/perceptions. My mood reacts both to the external events of my life and to the internal longings, images, ideas, goals, and actions of my soul.

Created by God, moods, like emotions, were a very good thing. Our heavenly Father intricately fashioned His image bearers to experience a variety of positive emotional states, the most optimal moods. Our moods and emotions have a purposeful function or they would not exist.

Emotions and moods contain vital signals of readiness not simply for action, but for interaction, and rest from interaction. They signal when we need to interact and when we need to come apart (before we fall apart). Jesus identified within Himself moods that led him to seek solitude (Mark 1:45; Luke 5:16) and that led Him to engage in intimate interaction (Luke 5:15; Mark 3:1-6).

Our moods guide us to mobilize our resources for wise relating. They work with our self-awareness so that we can become attentive to our emotional states as our inner person interacts with our outer world. Moods motivate, or better, moods jolt us into awareness, promote pondering, and motivate us toward appropriate interaction. Taken together, we can define mood order as:

- My God-given ability to feel my own feelings, to sense my own life experiences, and to become self-aware of my prevailing emotional mood state(s).

- My God-given thermostat that quickly gauges the relational temperature outside and my personal temperature inside.
- My God-given capacity to courageously, lovingly, and wisely respond to my inner and outer world. I perceive what I feel and I choose how I respond.

### **Moods in the Garden**

What was the mood process like for Adam and Eve? All order ultimately arises from connection. So when Adam felt happiness and joy in the presence of Eve, his entire being became focused on connecting, attaching. “I like being with her. I want to be with her. When we are together, I am outrageously happy.”

Sinless Adam and Eve also could have experienced legitimate sadness—a sadness due to absence that impelled them to reconnect. Adam is working in one part of the Garden. Eve in another. Happy in her work, but aware of a growing sense of sadness, of a developing mood of aloneness, Eve stops. She ponders. She recognizes the source—she misses her hubby. She runs to him, throws her arms around him, kisses him impetuously. “Just wanted you to know how much I missed you!”

Separation, whether physical or psychological, is a basic cause of human sadness. Sadness provides a driving force to restore attachment, in the same way that hunger impels us to eat.

This ancient, biblical sense of mood corresponds to how other pre-modern people understood mood. Before AD 900 in Middle English, mood meant “spirit, courage, mind.” In the Old Saxon, mood meant “courage and spirit.” Mood had a very positive connotation. It was always correlated with courage, movement, spirit, aliveness, passion, and energy.

That’s so different from our modern or post-modern thinking. “He’s so moody!” “She’s in such a mood!” That could be a dynamic compliment, depending on the nature of the mood.

### **The Rest of the Story**

We would be naïve to stop at “mood order.” We all know and experience the “disordering of our emotions and moods.” So in the next post, we’ll explore *Emotions: What Went Wrong?*

### **Join the Conversation**

How could you use this good news about good moods to enjoy and benefit from your emotions and moods, rather than fearing and fleeing them? What legitimate mood could you enjoy right now?

## Part 4: Emotions: What Went Wrong?

### Mood Bent Out of Shape: Mood Disorder

Separated from the life of God, we demand that we become like gods for one another. When our fellow finite beings fail us, then we face personal dis-integration. We're shamefully exposed as false trusters. Thus, all disorder ultimately arises from a state of disconnection. The emotional result is disordered moods:

- My inability to accurately sense and experience my own inner and outer world and my failure to maintain a healthy self-awareness of my prevailing emotional mood state(s).
- My inability to accurately read my emotional thermostat so that I inaccurately gauge the relational temperature outside and my personal temperature inside.
- My inability to respond to my inner and outer world courageously, lovingly, and wisely.

In mood order, we perceive unpleasant or distressful moods as messages sent from the soul to the body (from the mind to the brain). The message is communicating: "Necessary changes requested. Please reply ASAP! Thank you."

The symptom (the distressed mood) is thus seen as a potential gift. It is like the warning light in our cars reminding us to "check under the hood."

In mood disorder, we misperceive our distressed mood and respond in non-God ways. We attempt to manage our misperceived moods self-sufficiently. (Later in this blog mini-series, we'll explore more about mismanaged moods.)

### Mood Reshaped by Christ: Mood Reorder

Satan wants our moods to overwhelm us, control us, and direct us away from God. Or, at least he wants us to respond to them by entering survival mode.

Remember this principle. Overwhelming moods lead to survival mode.

Jesus came to give us life, and that abundantly (*perisson*). "Abundant" means beyond what is necessary, surplus, left over, greatly enlarged. It is used of the abundance left over after the feeding of the 5,000. Spoiling! Jesus came to spoil us.

Resurrection power allows us to do more than survive. We can thrive (2 Corinthians 1:3-11; Philippians 3:7-15). We can move from anger to love, from despair to hope, and from fear to faith. Resurrection power offers fresh, creative energy, and a reawakening of courage—of mood. As Paul Tournier insightfully describes it:

"The person matures, develops, becomes more creative, not because of the deprivation in itself, but through his own active response to misfortune, through the struggle to come to terms with it and morally to overcome it—even if in spite of everything there is not cure . . . Events give us pain or joy, but our growth is determined by our personal response to both, by our inner attitude" (Tournier, *Creative Suffering*, pp. 28-29).

Remember this principle. In reordered, redeemed moods, intense moods lead to a thriving mode.

Later in this mini-series, we'll learn more about managing our moods. Here's my desire now: recognize how marvelous moods can be when managed in Christ and recognize how pernicious they can be when mismanaged under Satan. Appreciate your moods as God-given sources of instant insight into your inner and outer world. Enjoy the usefulness of reordered moods in a disjointed world, which include:

- My God-given ability to become aware of my moods, whether pleasant or unpleasant, and to accept that I am experiencing that mood.
- My God-given ability to face and feel whatever mood I am experiencing, allowing it to grant me insight into my inner self and my external situation.
- My God-given ability to bring rationality to my emotionality by coming to understand the sources of my moods and my resources to manage my moods (responding to my inner and outer world wisely).
- My God-given ability to bring volitionality to my emotionality by choosing how I will manage my moods instead of allowing them to manage me (responding to my inner and outer world courageously).
- My God-given ability to bring relationality to my emotionality by allowing my moods to motivate me toward deeper connection or reconnection with God, others, and myself (responding to my inner and outer world lovingly).

### **The Rest of the Story**

So, all we need to do is work on our inner life and all “negative” emotions will flee? No, there's more to it. There are other components involved, including our physical body. In Part 5, *Dust and Divinity: Our Emotions and Our Bodies*, we briefly explore the connection between our bodies (we are physical beings) and our feelings (we are emotional beings).

### **Join the Conversation**

Reread the five bullet points under reordered moods. Select at least one and ponder how you might apply that principle to a current emotional issue you are facing/feeling.

## Part 5: Dust and Divinity: Our Emotions and Our Bodies

### A Defining Question

In a CCEF *Ask the Counselor* video, biblical counselor David Powlison addressed the question, “Do you believe that there is a biological basis for depression which may endure, despite the fact that heart issues have been successfully addressed through biblical counseling? If so, is there a place for long-term use of medication?”

In his nuanced, loving, balanced response, Dr. Powlison noted that, “this is one of the defining questions of our age.” Listen to David’s full response at *Is Depression Purely Biological?* (<http://www.ccef.org/depression-purely-biological>)

In 1,000-words, I can never provide the final word on this defining issue. Instead, consider these words simply an introduction to the Bible’s teaching on the complex inner-working of our body/soul, brain/mind connection.

### Jars of Clay

In the beginning, God designed us as body-soul beings. “The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7). Even before the fall, we were more than inner person—we ere and are embodied beings.

Our bodies are works of art fashioned by our heavenly Father who fearfully and wonderfully handcrafted us (Psalm 139:13-16). We are works of God’s hand; made, shaped, molded, clothed with skin and flesh, and knit together with bones and sinews (Job 10:3-12). We are not to despise our physicality.

After the fall, the Bible teaches that we inhabit fallen bodies in a fallen world (Romans 8:18-25). Paul calls our fallen bodies “jars of clay” (2 Corinthians 4:7). As one commentator has mused, we are *cracked pots*! Paul also describes our bodies as a mortal earthly tent—perishable, weak, flesh and blood (1 Corinthians 15:42-47).

Paul is not saying that the flesh is bad or evil. He *is* saying that our bodies are weak and natural, prone in our fallen state to disorder and dysfunction.

Some modern Christians seem to take a hyper-spiritual approach to the brain/mind issue. They act as if inner spirituality eliminates all the effects of outer bodily maladies. Some seem to imply that giving any credence to the fallen bodies influence on our emotional state is something of a Trojan Horse that sneaks secular, materialistic thought into Christian spirituality.

### Not So the Puritans

The Puritans would have been shocked by such a naïve perspective on the mind-body issue. Puritan pastors and theologians like Robert Burton, William Ames, and Jonathan Edwards recognized that problems such as scrupulosity (what we might call OCD) and melancholy (what we might call depression) might, at least in part, be rooted in the fallen body. They warned that such maladies sometimes could not be cured simply by comforting words or biblical persuasion (see *A History of Pastoral Care in America*, pp. 60-72).

Edwards described his sense of pastoral helplessness in the face of the melancholy of his uncle, Joseph Hawley. He noted that Hawley was “in a great measure past a capacity of receiving advice, or being reasoned with” (see *A History of Pastoral Care in America*, p. 73). Eventually, Hawley took his own life one Sabbath morning. Shortly thereafter, Edwards advised clergy against the assumption that spiritual issues alone were at work in melancholy.

### **Emotions: Bridging Our Inner and Outer Worlds**

Emotions truly are a bridge between our inner and outer world. Think of the word “feeling.” Feeling is a tactile word suggesting something that is tangible, physical, touchable, and palpable. “I feel the keyboard as I type. I feel the soft comfortable chair beneath me. I feel my sore back and stiff wrists as they cry out, “Give it a rest!”

We also use this physical word—feeling—to express emotions. “I feel sad. I feel happy. I feel joy. I feel anger.” It’s no surprise that we use this one word in these two ways—physical and emotional. We know what the Israelites understood—our body feels physically what our emotions feel metaphysically (see my Th.M. thesis *Hebrew Anthropological Terms as a Foundation for a Biblical Counseling Model of Humanity*).

When I’m nervous, my stomach is upset. When I feel deep love, my chest tightens. When I’m anxious, my heart races. When I’m sad, my entire system slows.

We know much more about the brain than the Israelites knew. It is a physical organ of the body and all physical organs in a fallen world in unglorified bodies can malfunction. My heart, liver, and kidneys can all become diseased, sick. So can the physical organ we call the brain.

### **Embracing our Weakness/Embracing God’s Power**

It is important to realize that every emotion involves a complex interaction between body and soul. Therefore, it is dangerous to assume that all emotional struggles can be changed by strictly “spiritual means.”

For some, spirituality includes embracing physical weakness. In fact, this is the exact message Paul communicates when he calls us “jars of clay.” Why does God allow us to experience physical weakness? “To show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (2 Corinthians 4:7). It’s the same message Paul personally experienced in his own situational suffering (2 Corinthians 1:8-9) and in his own bodily suffering (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

We can act as if we are more spiritual than the Apostle Paul. However, in actuality, pretending that our external suffering and our physical bodies do not impact us emotionally involves an arrogant refusal to depend upon and cling to Christ alone.

Certain emotions, especially anxiety and depression, involve physiological components that sometimes may need to be treated with medication. When we ignore the importance of the body, we misunderstand what it means to trust God. It is wrong to place extra burdens on those who suffer emotionally by suggesting that all they need to do is surrender to God to make their struggles go away.

On the other hand, it would be equally wrong to suggest that medication is all someone needs. That would be like a pastor entering the cancer ward to talk with a parishioner who was

just told that she has cancer. “Well, take your medicine. Do chemo. You’ll be fine. See ya’ later.” No! That pastor would support, comfort, talk with, and pray for his parishioner.

Sickness and suffering are always a battleground between Satan and Christ. So, while medicine may sometimes be indicated for certain people with certain emotional battles, spiritual friendship is always indicated. Physicians of the body (and the brain *is* an organ of the physical body) prescribe medication. Physicians of the soul (and the mind *is* an inner capacity and reality of the soul) prescribe grace.

### **The Rest of the Story**

So how’s your EQ—your Emotional Quotient? In our next post, we’ll summarize and apply what we’ve said so far by presenting an EI Test: an Emotional Intelligence Test.

### **Join the Conversation**

Today’s post is controversial. What’s your take? Where do you stand on the issue of causes and cures for emotional distress? Does the body potentially play a role? Is medicine ever part of God’s ordained treatment?

## Part 6: How's Your Emotional Intelligence?

### IQ or EQ?

People talk a lot about IQ—Intelligence Quotient. However, we all know that “book smarts” and “people smarts” are two different skills. Today, we’ll summarize and apply what we’ve said so far about emotions by taking an Emotional Intelligence Test.

### What's Your EQ?

Evaluate yourself using 10 as “Emotionally Mature” and 1 as “Emotionally Immature.”

1. I'm aware of my feelings and moods as they occur.
2. I'm able to recognize and name my feelings and moods.
3. I'm able to understand the causes of my feelings and moods.
4. I maintain a sense of ongoing attention to my internal mood states.
5. I'm aware both of my mood and my thoughts about my mood.
6. I actively monitor my moods as the first step in gaining control of them.
7. I soothe my soul in God—I candidly take my feelings and mood to Christ.
8. I have a sense of self-mastery—frustration tolerance and anger management.
9. I self-regulate my emotions—self-control.
10. I can harness my emotions in the service of a godly goal.
11. I can stifle my impulses (“passions of the flesh”) and delay gratification.
12. I'm a hopeful person.
13. I turn setbacks into comebacks.
14. I'm resilient and longsuffering. I demonstrate perseverance.
15. I practice Christ-centered hopefulness: “I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me.” “I can meet challenges as they arise.” “I'm competent in Christ.”
16. I'm learning contentment in whatever state I'm in (external situation or internal mood).
17. I'm attuned to others, not emotionally tone-deaf. I have the ability to sense another's mood.
18. I have empathy built on self-awareness. I'm open to my own emotions and, therefore, skilled in reading the feelings of others.
19. I practice the creative ability of perceiving the subjective experiences of others.
20. I make another person's pain my own.
21. I can take on the perspective of another person.
22. I forgive.
23. I'm emotionally nourishing toward others.
24. I leave others in a good mood.
25. I'm effective in interpersonal relationships.
26. I help others to soothe their souls in their Savior.
27. I can initiate and coordinate the efforts of a group of people—helping them to move with harmony and synchrony.
28. I can negotiate solutions—mediation, preventing or resolving conflicts.

29. I can make personal connection—ease of entry into an encounter along with the ability to recognize and respond fittingly to people’s feelings/concerns.
30. I’m a good team player.
31. I’m skilled at social analysis—being able to detect and have insights into people’s feelings, motives, and concerns. Ease of intimacy and rapport.

### **The Rest of the Story**

In this post, we focused on personal application. In our next post, we focus on ministry application: *How to Help Others with Their Emotions*.

### **Join the Conversation**

So, how’d you do? How’s your EQ or EI? What biblical principles could you follow to grow in emotional areas where you are currently not quite as mature?

## **Part 7: How to Help Others with Their Emotions**

### **Help People to Face Their Feelings**

Of course emotions are God-given because God created us in His image, including His emotional image. As John Piper notes, “God’s emotional life is infinitely complex beyond our ability to fully comprehend.”

While our emotions are not infinitely complex, they are complex. So, in ministering to others, let people have their feelings. Face people’s feelings, don’t fear them, don’t run from them.

Since emotional maturity includes experiencing life deeply and acting on feelings wisely, help people to face their feelings. Point them out. Explore them. Think about them.

### **Help People to Learn Emotional Maturity**

Explore where your spiritual friends learned how to handle their emotions. Trace their emotional education to its roots. Then help your spiritual friends to unlearn (put off) unhealthy emotional living and learn (put on) healthy emotionality.

Bring rationality to emotionality. Explore the Scriptures with your spiritual friends to discern how they can respond to their emotions and to understand how their emotions reveal their deepest attitudes toward God.

### **Help People to Understand That Spiritual Discipline Is Vital to Emotional Health**

Help people to tune their whole person—body and soul, mind and emotion—to be ready recipients of God’s grace. Teach the spiritual disciplines—like prayer, biblical meditation (Psalm 1), silence, solitude, simplicity, submission, service, etc.

Help people to understand that the Psalms are “emotional mentors.” Meditating on, applying, and paraphrasing psalms help us to face our feelings face-to-face with God.

### **The Rest of the Story**

In our next post, we shift gears considerably as we move from God’s design for our emotions to sin’s distortion of our emotions, feelings, and moods: *Emotions Gone Bad and Mad*.

### **Join the Conversation**

Of the foundational principles of helping people with their emotional maturity, which one do you most want to add to your tool box of spiritual friendship?

## Part 8: Emotions Gone Bad and Mad

### Mood Disorder: Emotions Gone Mad

So far in our series on emotional intelligence, we've focused on how God designed us as emotional beings. We've called this "Mood Order."

However, we'd be quite naïve to imagine that our emotions and moods are always well-ordered. Because of our fall into sin, we're not the way we're supposed to be—we are depraved and disordered. For emotions, we call this "Mood Disorder."

In Ephesians 4:19, Paul chooses a very rare Greek word, *apēlgēkotes*, to describe mood disorder. The word literally means "past feeling." We cease to feel and care. Tired of feeling, we shut ourselves down to the messages that pain sends. As a result, we lack emotional intelligence, sensitivity, and awareness.

Designed to be responsive to the world, others, and God, we close ourselves off. We think we're too smart to smart anymore. In our folly, we decide that hurt is too painful, even if reflecting on hurt enhances our relationships. We become obtuse to emotional messages—emotionally dense, relationally stunted.

### Refusing to Need God: Emotions Gone Bad

What is the essence of fallen emotionality? Instead of using emotions to experience deeply the life God grants us, we misuse our emotions to forget the pain in our soul and the sin in our heart. We pursue whatever pleases us for a *season*. We live *as if* this world is all there is.

We also pursue whatever pleases us for a *reason*. We live to survive, to make it somehow—without God. You see, facing our feelings force us to face the fact that we must live face-to-face with God to survive.

In our refusal to depend upon God, we pinball between two self-centered, self-sufficient survival modes.

- Out-of-Control Emotional Expression
- Over-Controlled Emotional Repression

Both styles share the refusal to listen well to our emotions, the refusal to use our emotionality to evaluate where we are spiritually. We refuse to face our feelings because we refuse to need God.

### Using Our Feelings as Spears: Out-of-Control Emotional Expression

Paul further describes sinful emotions in Ephesians 4:19 as "giving themselves over to sensuality." We're ungoverned. Out of control. We've taken the brakes off our emotions.

We decide that we want nothing to do with managed moods. If we feel it; we express it. If it hurts others; so be it.

Consider King Saul. He massaged his jealousy toward David. When the women of Israel met Saul and David with dancing and song, they sang, “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands” (1 Samuel 18:7). Saul was enraged. This refrain galled him. “And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David” (1 Samuel 18:9).

Caressed anger leads to expressed anger.

“Saul had a spear in his hand and he hurled it, saying to himself, ‘I’ll pin David to the wall’” (1 Samuel 18:10b-11a). Saul perfectly pictures imperfect, sinful emotions—we use our feelings as spears to hurt others.

Like all unmanaged moods, Saul’s resulted from a foolish internal evaluation of a difficult external situation. No doubt it would be emotionally distressing for most leaders to hear subordinates praised to the extent people praised David.

Experiencing this, Saul kept thinking to himself, rather than talking to God. “They have credited David with tens of thousands,” he thought, “but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?” (1 Samuel 18:8b).

Saul catastrophized. Imagining God to be a Hoarder, Saul could not imagine that there was enough respect and responsibility to go around for both David and himself. This town was not big enough for the both of them because God was not big enough for Saul.

Emotional sensationalists wear their emotions on their sleeves and hurl their feelings like a spear. They will not be controlled. They refuse to be inhibited. Their feelings become their god.

Yet, their feelings never direct them to God. They may feel their feelings, indulge their feelings, but they never engage their feelings, never use their mood states to detect their spiritual state.

## **And Us?**

I know. We’re all thinking about people—*other* people. People who have treated *us* like this.

But what about *us*? Am I, are you, are we ever guilty of indulging our feelings? Do we ever use our feelings as spears to harm others? Do we refuse to face our feelings face-to-face with God?

## **The Rest of the Story**

Some may wonder, “Well, yes, I do this—so how do I cling to God so I can change?” Great, honest question. We’ll address that later.

Others may say, “Well, that’s not my style. I do the opposite. I stuff my feelings.” In our next post, we’ll examine that mood disorder in: *What’s Wrong with Stuffing Our Feelings?*

## **Join the Conversation**

If you’ve used your emotions as a spear to harm others, what is God’s Word calling you to do?

## Part 9: What's Wrong with Stuffing Our Feelings?

### Stuffing Our Feelings

In Part 8, we explored the first of two typical ways that emotions go bad: using our emotions as spears—out-of-control expression of our feelings that end up harming others.

For most people, especially Christians, this “spearing of emotions” seems like the worst possible scenario. Additionally, many Christians seem to assume that the opposite extreme is actually a healthy emotional response: “stuffing our feelings”—over-controlled repression of our feelings. Such is not the case.

### Emotional Stoics Versus Emotional Poets

God calls us to be emotional “poets.” We are to manage our moods the way the psalmists did—facing our feelings face-to-face with God and soothing our soul in our Savior.

Instead of being passionate poets like the psalmists, we become apathetic stoics. We try to live without pathos, without passion and feeling. Mr. Spock of *Star Trek* fame was a stoic. He tried to repress his emotions, deny them, if he could, eradicate them.

It's easy to understand stoicism's attraction. Hatred, despair, and terror are not exactly the most attractive experiences. When they sweep over us, we flee them like an invading army.

We can understand stoics by contrasting them with poets. What should biblical poets do with their anger, hatred, and rage?

#### 1. Option One: Acknowledging Our Moods or Trying to Eradicate Our Moods

We should not try to eradicate our feelings. Paul tells us to be angry but sin not; he does not tell us never to be angry (Ephesians 4:26). Emotional poets acknowledge their moods to themselves (candor) and to God (lament).

Psalms 73 is a classic expression of a believer's struggle to comprehend and control his envy, jealousy, and hatred. Asaph is dismayed that a good God could allow bad things to happen to good people and good things happen to bad people. He faces his envy *coram Deo* (face-to-face with God) telling God all about it. He doesn't wait to be rid of his envy before he dares enter his Father's presence. He takes himself, all that he is, including his envy, to God.

Stoics, on the other hand, try to eradicate their hatred. “If I don't think about it, it's not there. If I repress it, it will go away.” They choose denial over candor and lament.

#### 2. Option Two: Seeing Our Feelings with Spiritual Eyes or with Eyeballs Only

As emotional poets, God wants us to explore our moods with spiritual eyes. Asaph enters the presence of God to gain perspective on his perspective. “When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny” (Psalm 73:16-17). God calls us to view our external situation and our internal moods from His eternal perspective.

Those who repress their moods try the opposite approach. When a mood doesn't vanish, they mull it over and over and over again with eyeballs only—from a worldly perspective. Asaph was once trapped there, seeing only the prosperity of the wicked. We're doomed to defeat whenever we look at our situations and our feelings only from a temporal perspective.

### **3. Option Three: Confessing My Sinful Anger or Playing the Pharisee with My Sinful Anger**

Third, emotional poets confess their sinful anger to Father. “When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you” (Psalm 73:21-22).

Of course, not all anger is sinful. But sinful anger—anger that is self-centered and self-protective, anger that pushes us away from God and others—we confess that anger.

Stoics, on the other hand, don't confess their mismanaged moods to God. They don't believe that they could come to God unless they perfectly, serenely suppress their rage. They play the emotional Pharisee—trying to deal with their emotions through the flesh, through works, and through self-sufficiency.

### **4. Option Four: Facing Feelings with Grace or with Works**

Fourth, poets receive grace. “Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand” (Psalm 73:23).

Not so the emotional stoic. In self-righteousness, they never receive grace. They think, “Why do I need grace? I manage quite well on my own.”

### **5. Option Five: Choosing God-Sufficiency or Self-Sufficiency**

Fifth, poets recognize that only God is enough. “Whom have I in heaven but you, and earth has nothing I desire besides you” (Psalm 73:25). Godly emotional poets choose God-sufficiency.

Emotional stoics choose self-sufficiency by denying and attempting to repress their feelings.

Why? *Facing moods forces us to face our insufficiency.* Nothing makes us feel punier than being overwhelmed by feelings. No one wants to hear the derogatory comment, “He's so moody.” “She's so emotional!”

When feelings overpower us we feel powerless, impotent. In our flesh, we would rather stuff our moods, would rather survive self-sufficiently, than admit that we need help managing our moods.

That's why stuffing our feelings is sinful—it is a work's orientation. It displays a self-sufficient denial of our need for God. Though more subtle than out-of-control expression (spearing) of our feelings, suppression is equally sinful.

## **The Rest of the Story**

We've explored mood order—how God designed our emotions to function. And we've probed mood disorder—how sin mars God's design for our moods. We never want to stop at sin.

Where sin abounds, grace super-abounds (Romans 5:20). In our upcoming posts, we begin to discuss mood reorder—how does our salvation in Christ bring wholeness and holiness to our emotions?

### **Join the Conversation**

How surprised are you that repressing, suppressing, and stuffing our feelings is just as harmful and sinful as using our feelings as spears?

## Part 10: Holding Onto Hope

### Nancy Guthrie's Story

When Nancy Guthrie endured the death of her two babies to Zellweger Syndrome, she was tempted to anesthetize her feelings. Ponder her testimony after her second child, Hope, died.

“The day after we buried Hope, I understood for the first time why so many people choose to medicate their pain in so many harmful ways. That day I tried to sleep it away. And in the days that followed, I discovered that I could not sleep it away, shop it away, eat it away, or travel it away. I just had to feel it. And it hurt. Physically. I realized I had a choice—I could try to stuff the hurt away in a closet, pretend it wasn't there, and wish it would disappear, or I could bring it out into the open, expose it to the Light, probe it, accept it head-on, trudge through it, feel its full weight, and do my best to confront my feelings of loss and hopelessness with the truth of God's Word at every turn” (Guthrie, *Holding Onto Hope: A Pathway Through Suffering to the Heart of God* <http://amzn.to/ffzFzs>, p. 12).

Nancy lives poetically. Nancy knows how to grieve, but not as those who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Nancy models for us mood reorder—she shows how our salvation in Christ brings wholeness and holiness to our emotions.

### Emotional Maturity: Alive to Life

In Christ, we are enlivened to honestly experience life in all its grief and hope. We are not ashamed of our emotionality. We don't consider emotions the “black sheep of the image bearing family.” We don't hide from our feelings. We are alive to life in all its external vicissitudes and internal joys and sorrows.

What a reversal from our fallen emotionality where we feared feeling anything deeply, honestly, and ended up living for shallow emotional highs and avoiding personal pain at all cost. We practiced either: emotional stoicism (repressing our moods) or emotional sensationalism (expressing moods without control or concern for others).

The Bible teaches that mature emotionality enables us to face our feelings and manage our moods. We learn candid honesty with ourselves about our feelings. Like Jeremiah, we identify our mood states, “My soul is downcast within me” (Lamentations 3:20).

We learn to courageously express our feelings to our heavenly Father and to soothe our soul in our Savior. “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7).

We learn to bring rationality to our emotionality. “In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold” (Ephesians 4:26-27).

Emotional maturity should permeate every aspect of our new person in Christ.

- Spiritually, we can soothe our soul in our Savior.
- Socially we can, empathize with others, helping them find God's sustaining comfort and healing hope.

- As self-aware beings we can admit, understand, accept, and manage our moods.
- Rationally, we can bring rationality to our emotionality by understanding with wisdom the causes and nature of our feelings, and by envisioning with spiritual eyes imaginative ways to handle our moods.
- Volitionally, we can consciously and courageously choose to creatively respond to our emotional mood states.

### **Of All People...**

Of all people, Christians should be the most emotionally mature—for all the reasons mentioned above. Yet, often Christians seem to be the least emotionally mature and the most emotionally tone-deaf. Which of us hasn't shaken our head in dismay, disbelief, discouragement, and disappointment after an interaction with a Christian leader who just doesn't get it emotionally? And, if we're honest, which of us hasn't shaken our head in dismay at *our own* emotional immaturity?

Christians tend to be kindergartners when it comes to emotional maturity. We've barely learned the "ABCs" of emotional intelligence. That's why I've sub-titled this blog mini-series (okay, not so "mini" anymore!) *The ABCs of Emotions*. That's why we need...*The Rest of the Story*.

### **The Rest of the Story**

Here's what we'll learn in our upcoming posts on *The ABCs of Emotions*:

- A: How our emotions are of value to us.
- B: How our emotions are of value to others.
- C: How we can practice the hallmarks of emotional maturity.

### **Join the Conversation**

Why do you think Christians struggle with emotional maturity?

## Part 11: Learning the ABCs of Emotional Maturity

### The ABCs of Emotional Maturity

Christians tend to be kindergartners when it comes to emotional maturity. That's why we need to learn *The ABCs of Emotional Maturity*:

- A: How our emotions are of value to us.
- B: How our emotions are of value to others.
- C: How we can practice the hallmarks of emotional maturity.

### How Our Emotions Are of Value to Us: A God-Given Warning Light

Emotions serve as God-given “dummy lights.” That flashing red light on our dash that says, “Hey, dummy, you’d better pop the hood ‘cause something is haywire underneath.”

Emotions are our warning lights that say, “There’s something important going on inside, pop the hood of your heart and check it out.” Our emotions point to our goals, which in turn point to our beliefs. Emotions are a God-given means for discerning inner motivation and thinking.

### How Our Emotions Are of Value to Us: With Christ in the School of Emotions

Often we’re afraid of our emotions because we do not understand what is natural. Mark 3:5 helps us because it describes the emotional life of Christ. “He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.”

In this passage, we learn that *Jesus experienced strong emotions*. He experienced anger. This particular word for anger has the sense of “strong indignation and wrath.” He also experienced compassion which is “deep distress and grief.” Shouldn’t image bearers expect to experience strong emotions since Christ did? Don’t deny them. Don’t stuff them. Experience them.

We also learn that *Jesus experienced a full range of both “pleasant” and “painful” emotions*. He felt anger and compassion simultaneously. “While being grieved he felt intense anger” (Mark 3:5, author’s paraphrase). We, too, should expect to go through a full range of both pleasant and painful emotions. The lack of intense emotions has nothing to do with emotional maturity.

### How Our Emotions Are of Value to Us: What to Do with Our Emotions

When an emotion “comes,” what do we “do” with it?

First, admit it. Acknowledge to yourself and God what you are feeling.

Second, identify it, label it accurately. “I’m hurt, angry, content, nervous, etc.”

Third, courageously face and feel that emotion. This is not an academic exercise. It is deeply feeling what is going on inside.

Fourth, always share with God what you are feeling (Hebrews 4:15-16). When you're feeling an "illegitimate emotion" (hatred, etc.) confess it deeply, including confessing the goals and beliefs behind the feeling (1 John 1:8-2:2). When you're feeling a "legitimate emotion" (joy, sorrow, etc.) share it fully (Hebrews 2:18).

Fifth, use that emotion to probe and to examine your goals and beliefs. An acknowledged emotion functions as a clue to a spiritual malfunction just as an acknowledged physical symptom (i.e., a cancer warning sign) serves as a clue to a deeper physical problem.

When do we probe? Even a good thing can be misused or overused. Should we constantly probe and become compulsively introspective? No. No one (no one in their right mind at least) checks under the hood of their car before every trip down to the grocery store. No, you check periodically, before long trips, and when the light comes on.

The same is true with emotions. When the light of intense emotion flashes, then check your goals and beliefs. For most Christians, the problem is checking far too infrequently. We tend to be afraid of our emotions. Check periodically, and always check during times of extremely strong emotions.

### **How Our Emotions Are of Value to Others**

Jesus modeled a cardinal principle of emotional maturity when he purposely expressed his feelings to others in order to minister to them. The original language of Mark 3:5 is clear. "He chose to look around with angry glances, stopping at each one of them" (author's paraphrase).

Jesus made a volitional choice to express his emotional reaction. On what basis did Christ do so? On what basis should we do the same? I believe that we should express our feelings to others only when we can meet the following criteria:

- We can answer the question: "How will expressing my feelings increase the potential for the other person's growth in Christ?"
- We have previously established a strong relationship with the other person.
- We believe the person has the emotional maturity to handle and benefit from our sharing.
- We believe that sharing our feelings has the potential for healing the relationship.
- We are under control enough to think through the previous criteria. Or stated another way, we can govern/manage the release of our emotions.

### **The Rest of the Story**

We've summarized the A and the B of the ABCs of Emotional Maturity. In our next post, we highlight the C: How we can practice the five hallmarks of emotional maturity.

### **Join the Conversation**

Of the emotional lessons in today's post, which would you like to start putting into practice? How will you do that?

## Part 12: Five Tools for Your Emotional Toolbox

### How Can We Practice the Hallmarks of Emotional Maturity?

Emotional maturity consists of our ability to be managed by the Spirit so that we can manage ourselves and master the art of relating to others. The mature person has an emotional repertoire tailored to glorify God by showing God's majesty and beauty to a weak and ugly world.

God designed our emotions to put us in motion. However, living in a fallen world, inhabiting unredeemed bodies, and tempted by an unloving enemy (Satan), we dare not allow our emotions to manage us. God calls on us to manage, master, and govern our emotions.

The problem is not with emotionality, but with the appropriateness of emotions and their governed expression. The question is, "How can we bring spiritual maturity to our emotions?" As Aristotle said, "Anyone can become angry—that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way—that is not easy."

Without the Spirit's control, we are vulnerable emotional hijackings. Our emotions, being designed as bridges between our outer world and our inner life, scream at us, "Act! Don't think! 911. Emergency! Emergency!"

I tell people that "Our body has a mind of its own." The physical brain transmits urgent messages to act and react. However, as Paul teaches in Romans 6, spiritual maturity includes yielding our body, including our brain, to the service of God's will. Thus we must learn to control our physical brain with our spiritual mind. We need to bring rationality to bear on our emotionality.

Emotions are fast and sloppy. Our spirit/soul/mind/will/inner person is our emotional manager. We are to be our brain's emotional damper switch.

Emotional maturity includes at least five emotional management skills:

- Emotional Self-Awareness: Soul-Awareness
- Emotional Spirit-Mastery: Soothing Our Soul in Our Savior
- Emotional Motivation: Managing Our Moods
- Emotional Empathy: Recognizing Emotions in Others
- Emotional Savvy: Handling Relationships

### Emotional Tool # 1: Emotional Self-Awareness

Our first emotional management skill is *emotional self-awareness*. Emotional maturity begins with our awareness of our feelings as they occur. Are we able to recognize and name our own moods? Able to understand the causes of our feelings?

When we are emotionally self-aware, we give ongoing attention to our internal state. We are aware both of our mood and our thoughts about our mood. "I'm feeling down right now and it is frightening me." Actively monitoring our moods helps us to begin to gain control of them.

## **Emotional Tool # 2: Emotional Spirit-Mastery**

The capacity to soothe our soul in God (emotional spirit-mastery) is our second emotional management skill. It begins with our ability to take *everything* we are feeling to God.

It also involves our capacity for emotional self-regulation and responsibility. Thus it rejects the ventilation fallacy which teaches that catharsis—uncontrolled expression of what I am feeling and experiencing—is necessary for emotional health. Instead, what is necessary for emotional health is candor with myself about what I am feeling, candor with God about my mood states, and selective expression of my feelings toward others.

## **Emotional Tool # 3: Emotional Motivation**

Managing our moods (emotional motivation) includes harnessing our emotions in the service of a goal. It also involves stifling our impulses (what the Bible calls “passions of the flesh”) and delaying gratification (Romans 5 and 8).

Hope is a key to emotional self-motivation and delayed gratification. Hope produces resilience, perseverance, and longsuffering. It allows us to turn setbacks into comebacks. Optimistic hope in God is vital. It says, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” “I can meet challenges as they arise.” The result is learned contentment in whatever state I’m in (whatever external situation or internal mood).

## **Emotional Tool # 4: Emotional Empathy**

The fourth emotional management skill is empathy or the ability to recognize emotions in others. Empathy builds on self-awareness. When I don’t have to strain to hear my own emotional voice, then I find myself hearing others with crystal clarity. That’s empathy: fluency in others’ emotional language. The more open I am to my own emotions, the more skilled I will be in reading the feelings of others.

How attuned are you to others? Are you emotionally tone-deaf, or do you have the ability to sense another’s mood? Do you practice the artful, creative, aesthetic ability to perceive the subjective experience of another person? Can you make another person’s pain your own? Are you skilled at perspective-taking?

## **Emotional Tool # 5: Emotional Savvy**

The fifth emotional management skill—emotional savvy— is “the social art” or the art of emotional influence. It is the capacity to be emotionally nourishing, the ability to leave others in a good mood.

Emotional savvy involves interpersonal effectiveness that includes managing emotions in others, helping others to soothe themselves in God, and becoming an emotional tool kit for others.

The new you can manage your emotions, can govern your mood states. You can thrive by experiencing joy in the midst of sorrow, hope in the midst of grief, and peace in the midst of turmoil. The power comes through grace connecting. Only as we connect with God, soothing our

soul in our Savior, can we courageously choose to connect with our fallen world in an emotionally mature manner.

### **The Rest of the Story**

We're near the end of our journey. In our next post, we review by asking the "What?" question: "What are the key emotional lessons we've learned?"

And then we renew by asking the "So what?" question: "So what difference could all of this make in how we live, relate, and minister?"

### **Join the Conversation**

Of the five tools in your emotional toolbox, which one do you most want to sharpen?

## Part 13: A Dozen Emotional Intelligence Lesson Plans

### Reviewing God’s Lesson Plans for Emotional Intelligence—The “What?” Question

What are the key emotional lessons we’ve learned in the ABCs of emotional intelligence? In keeping with our “ABC” theme, I’ll review the “big idea” of each of our twelve posts using the first twelve letters of the alphabet.

- A: Accept that emotions were/are God’s idea—they are God-given. (Emotions: God’s Idea)
- B: Biblically break down our emotions before we have an emotional breakdown—learn the biblical formula for why we feel what we feel. (Why We Feel What We Feel)
- C: Creation shows us the good news about good moods. (Good News about Good Moods)
- D: Disordered moods result from disconnection from Christ, while reordered moods result from soothing our soul in our Savior. (Emotions: What Went Wrong?)
- E: Embrace the fact that our brains are a fallen organ in a fallen body in a fallen world—and embrace God’s all-sufficient strength. (Our Emotions and Our Bodies)
- F: Figure your EQ/EI: emotional quotient/emotional intelligence. (How’s Your Emotional Intelligence?)
- G: Give the gift of emotional growth by being a spiritual friend who helps others to grow emotionally. (How to Help Others with Their Emotions)
- H: Hurting others with out-of-control spearing of our emotions. (Emotions Gone Bad and Mad)
- I: Injuring ourselves and others by over-controlled repression (stuffing) of our feelings. (What’s Wrong with Stuffing Our Feelings?)
- J: Jesus is our only hope for...holding onto hope when life tries to crush us. (Holding Onto Hope)
- K: Kindergarten lessons in emotional maturity—all we ever needed to know about emotional maturity we can learn from Christ. (Learning the ABCs of Emotional Maturity)
- L: Learning five hallmarks of emotional maturity. (Five Tools for Your Emotional Toolbox)

### Renewing Our Emotional Maturity in Christ—The “So What?” Question

We review and we renew. We not only ask “What?” but also “So what?” So what difference could this blog mini-series make in your emotional maturity process?

- A: How does it change your thoughts about your feelings when you realize that emotions were God's idea?
- B: Ponder a current situation you are facing. Use our "formula" to assess the situation and your emotional response. *Our External Situation plus our Internal Perception leads to our Emotional Response.*
- C: How could you use the good news about good moods to enjoy and benefit from your emotions and moods, rather than fearing and fleeing them?
- D: How can you sooth your soul in your Savior in order to manage your moods in a healthy and whole way?
- E: How can you embrace your emotional and physical weakness in order to embrace Christ's resurrection power?
- F: What biblical principles could you follow to enhance your emotional intelligence?
- G: What principle of emotional mentoring do you want to offer others?
- H: If you've used your emotions as a spear to harm others, what is God's Word calling you to do?
- I: How surprised are you that repressing, suppressing, and stuffing our feelings is just as harmful and sinful as using our feelings as spears?
- J: How can you find hope when you're hurting by finding God's healing for life's losses?
- K: How can you learn from Christ in the school of emotions?
- L: Of the five tools in your emotional toolbox, which one do you most want to sharpen?

### **Join the Conversation**

Of the dozen posts in this series, which post most impacted your life and ministry? Why? How?



**RPM** MINISTRIES  
 CHANGING LIVES WITH  
 CHRIST'S CHANGELESS TRUTH