

Emotions and Parenting, Part 1

I. God's Use of Emotional Words

- It often refers to emotions using pictures that ancient cultures would understand. The “heart” and the “bowels” are two examples.
- Ecclesiastes 3:4 says, “*A time to weep, and a time to laugh.*” Both of these actions (neither of which are emotions) are purely motivated by what we feel, and God has scheduled those times of high emotion into our lives.
- But we must observe that most of the direct commands concerning specific emotions are in the negative. Here are just a few token examples:
 - “Be anxious for nothing.” Philippians 4:6
 - “A hot-tempered man stirs up strife.” Proverbs 15:18
 - “Do not be frightened.” Joshua 1:9
- What do we take from this? Well, just like a gun-safety class, most of the information you learn is what *not* to do with the gun, followed secondly by how to *carefully* do the right thing with the gun. Why? **Because guns are dangerous!** Warnings never accompany innocuous things. In the same way, emotions can be so destructive that God spends more time talking about their dangers than their merits.

II. God's Design for Emotions

- Emotional responses requires three things: an external experience, an internal physiological response, and an external behavior. Emotions are simply chemical *reactions* to stimuli.
- Emotions are subjective responses because they are ultimately controlled by our worldviews, philosophies, and belief-systems.

III. God's Job for Emotions

- **Emotions make our lives more meaningful.** This one's easy. Praise God for genuine happiness, passion, excitement, and exhilaration!
- **Emotions make it easier to accomplish tasks.** Like in the example of the oral report, adrenaline is often inappropriately interpreted as fear. It's also labeled anger, passion, and a panoply of other feelings because it appears in so many high stress situations and is interpreted so many different ways. But in reality, it's just a tool to help us deal with the situation at hand. You may interpret it as fear or delight as you careen down a roller coaster, but the reason God gave it to you was to help you handle the experience - whether to fly or fight - as it were. And what you believe about the feeling will dictate how you use it.
- **Emotions warn us when there's a spiritual problem.** Let's say I'm doing something, and I feel a rush of adrenaline that leaves me feeling excited and exhilarated. But, let's say, the stimulus is that I'm having an inappropriate interaction with a girl. Because our world puts so much stock in their emotions, whatever they feel becomes right. If they feel good doing it, it must be okay. But the fact that I'm happy doing something God condemns reveals a much deeper heart problem. It's just like feeling sad when God wants me feeling glad? If sin makes us happy, we should notice the fact that our emotional response is not lining up with God's Word . . . and that should concern us enough to seek change.