

# How Do You Feel Today?

The Emotional Wellness God Intends For You

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# Introduction

Recently I was reading about Hagar, Ishmael, and the Lord in Genesis 21. I was amazed as I read how the Lord was interested in Ishmael. As the young boy cried, the Bible says that “*God heard the voice of the lad.*” God was interested in the cries of a child! The Lord instructs Hagar to pick up her son and show love to him, impressing upon me the truth for this booklet: The Lord is interested in our emotions. Ishmael felt all alone, and he most certainly was. He was hungry and thirsty, and with his physical needs not being met, he also had some emotional needs. His emotion as a “lad” was crying. God instructed Hagar to stop his crying and meet his emotional needs. Hagar had no food or drink for her son, but she could wrap her arms around him in comfort. After this occurs, the Lord provides their physical needs.

This booklet is intended to help people in various stages of life with some of the BIG questions that may arise. While you may be past a stage or may one day be in one of these stages of life, you can take the practical helps in these pages and encourage other people. Some of these issues will never be a problem with you, but you could be prepared to help someone with the issues they may be dealing with.

Over the years of my walk with the Lord, I have observed many people from deacons and Sunday school teachers to everyday Christians who give up on God, other people, and life in general, simply because they *felt* like giving up. I have witnessed believers of all ages allow their emotions to control them to the point of depression. Some become so discouraged that they no longer teach, serve, or even attend church. What a sad testimony it is to the cause of Christ. This booklet is not all-inclusive; there are many other areas that could be addressed. I do not claim to have all the answers – but my God does. This is simply a jump-start to point you in His direction.

As you read these pages, my prayer is that you will have emotional well-being. How you think and interact on every level of relationships is directly connected to how you are feeling. For example, a person in pain may lash out and hurts others, while a person that is sad may become defensive and not listen to reason which can injure a relationship.

As you increase your level of emotional well-being the better your relationships will be. All of us can grow spiritually and emotionally and we can impact the emotional well-being of others. May the Lord bless you as you read these few pages.

# CHAPTER ONE

## What is Emotional Well-being?

*Unstable souls are easily influenced for evil.*

“...beguiling unstable souls...” II Peter 2:14

*Emotional stability is possible.*

“A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

James 1:8

“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.  
Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your  
hearts, ye double minded.”

James 4:8

We all want emotional well-being, but what exactly does that mean? Is it possible to have stability in our emotions? There are many factors that could calculate into a person's emotional wellness. The physical needs of the body can impact how a person feels. Experiencing physical pain, such as an intense headache, may not allow you to see life in a good light. Having relationship issues can cause emotional pain. Having people around you who constantly belittle you can also cause emotional distress.

Oftentimes the pain we feel is physical, caused by pain to the body, and sometimes the pain we feel is psychological, such as the way an unkind word can influence our mind. Both can impact our outlook.

The disappointment of the snow outside on a bitterly cold day or the rain on a dreary morning could cause us to become discouraged. Sometimes people will treat psychological issues with a physical solution such as medication. Medication many times relieves a person's symptoms, but if the root of the problem is psychological instead of biological, it would be best to try to find a solution by adjusting thinking and perspective.

Emotional wellness begins with your walk with the Lord. We walk by faith, not by sight. If you do not have a relationship with Christ, confess your sins to Him today and begin a new life in Christ. (See the last page of this booklet to learn more about having eternal life.) Salvation



is based on fact, the fact of the Cross and the Resurrection of Christ, not feeling. Christians can rejoice in this great truth! We are saved by God's grace, and then we live the Christian life by God's power working in and through us.

The Lord created us to be emotional beings. Emotions can be great, yet some people live such a rollercoaster emotional life – up one day, down the next – that they are easily identified as unstable. Our salvation is not based on emotions. There may be days a Christian does not “feel” saved, but it is often due to sin in his life such as an improper lifestyle or a faulty way of looking at life. If a person is unstable emotionally, you can be sure they are unstable spiritually. Remember as you read this booklet that none of us have “arrived;” we all can grow more in our relationship with the Lord.

Can you help your thinking? Yes! Read the Bible and apply God's Word to your relationships and your circumstances. God's Word will change your thinking for the better! God's Spirit can guide your thoughts to what is right.

Can you help another emotionally unstable person have victory? Yes, you can! They make their own choices, but you can influence a spouse, child, or another Christian and cheer them on to emotional wellness. You can make your home a place where stable emotions are promoted and growing instead of diminishing.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **“Will I Ever Get Married?”**

#### The Emotional Well-Being of Singles

In Sunday school they were teaching how God created everything, including human beings. Little Johnny, a child in the kindergarten class, seemed especially intent when they told him how Eve was created out of one of Adam's ribs. Later in the week, his mother noticed him lying down as though he were ill, and said, "Johnny, what's the matter?" Johnny said, "I don't feel well, I think I'm having a wife." (*Ministry 127*)

It is the dream of most boys and girls to be married one day. Children play "house" with their dolls, Legos, and other toys. Families where love, acceptance, and proper discipline are found are homes where this desire is nurtured, and how to be a good spouse is modeled and taught.

As children grow into their teens, their minds and bodies become increasingly aware of the opposite gender. Parents, please be sure to give instruction, and follow up with that instruction for healthy thinking concerning the goal of courting/dating (marriage), and how to remain pure.

Dr. Jim Schettler says: “It is better to wait and know it, than to date and blow it.” Dating is not just a pastime or entertainment proposition: emotions of the heart are not to be toyed or played around with. Date with intention. The goal of dating or courting is to determine if marriage is God’s intention for you and the other person.

Not everyone is called to be married. Paul challenges some of the believers in Corinth to give their lives solely to the Lord so that they could “attend upon the Lord without distraction.” The “Gift of Singleness” is found in I Corinthians 7. The Lord has equipped some people so well that they may not need a helpmeet, and their service to the Lord may be just as effective or more so because of their marital status. For example, there have been unmarried men who serve in mission fields where one cannot take a family. Verse 33 (*I Cor. 7*) states: “*But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.*” If you have a burning desire for marriage, ask the Lord to bring the person He for you into your life.

1 Corinthians 7:2 informs us: “*Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.*” It is better to get married than to “play house” with another adult and act like you are married. Many people are in sinful relationships today, when God is calling them to legitimize their relationship.

What are some qualities I should work on while waiting for marriage? This is a great question! In Genesis 24, we read about Isaac and Rebekah. Here are two people who desired to someday be married, but were not pushing or rushing to marriage. They were consistent to work on their personal and spiritual qualities that would later help their marriage.

Genesis 24:62-67 tells this marriage story. “*And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi; for he dwelt in the south country. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a vail, and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife;*”

*and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.”*

As Isaac was waiting to be married, two main qualities stand out: Isaac was hard-working and was involved in healthy worship of the Lord. We can also discover qualities Rebekah possessed as a single person that later enabled her to be a good wife: Rebekah was considerate of others and she was modestly clothed. Let's look at each of these qualities...

Hard Working. Some people work at their play, play at their work, worship their sleep, and sleep in their worship. Isaac was not like that. Isaac was in the fields working when he first saw the love of his life. He was consistent in the tasks of the family business in herding sheep and digging wells. He was not like the Prodigal Son who, in the New Testament, went and spent all he had on “riotous living.” Isaac was working, serving, and being faithful to his jobs and daily obligations.

Healthy Worship. Did you notice how Isaac was meditating in the evening? The word *meditate* involves musing and praying. As his thoughts were turned to the Lord, the Lord answered his prayer for a wife. While meditating, he heard some people traveling his way. He looked up from his moments with the Lord and saw his father's servant coming back from the journey to search for a bride for Isaac. Abraham was encouraging Isaac to

be married and sent this servant to find a bride of the same faith to be the wife of Isaac. Our custom today may be different, but the direction of whom to marry is not. By God's grace, determine today to only date or marry a person who is a Christian actively growing and serving the Lord. Proverbs 18:22 encourages, "*Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.*" This word *find* does not necessarily imply looking and searching, but rather to "come upon." Some young people are so infatuated with the idea of a date or the prospect of getting married that they force an effort to "find" a spouse. It would be better to work on being who God wants you to be than to look for a person to marry. As you trust the Lord, He will bring that person into your life.

You don't want to date just anyone – there should be more qualifications besides being the opposite gender. "One of the most famous naval battles of history was the Battles of Actium, fought September 2, 31 B.C., between the fleets of Mark Anthony and Cleopatra on one side, and the fleet of Octavian, afterward Augustus Ceasar, on the other. In the midst of the engagement, the war galley of Cleopatra withdrew from the battle, and the infatuated Anthony deserted his fleet to follow the Queen of the Nile. Thus, Anthony relinquished his great leadership for a vain woman." (*Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations: Signs of the Times*)

Isaac was actively working on his relationship with the Lord. Before texting, sending an e-mail, or calling that significant other you may be interested in, have you met with God? Make sure worshipping the Lord is at the top of your priority list. Had Isaac been a rebel to the Lord or run after a life of sin, the story would have been much different. Abraham had brought Isaac up to fear God and serve Him. You may or may not have a Christian family background, but you can determine to have a Christian family if the Lord gives you a spouse.

Consideration of Others. The first glimpse we get of Rebekah is a beautiful one. She is helping a total stranger by drawing water from the well. She not only gives water to Abraham's servant Eliezer, but she also draws water and gives it to the camels. This is no small task! Camels drink a lot of water! She had a genuine servant's heart to be so considerate of this man and his animals. (Read all of Genesis 24 to learn more of this story.) She went above and beyond what most people would have done.

Most people could grow in this area of consideration. Do you do just barely enough to get by, or do you go the extra mile to serve? This characteristic says much about your determination to succeed and what it would take you to quit. Some people fulfill the least expectation and then expect terrific results. Rebekah exceeded expectations yet did not expect anything in return for herself. After the servant Eliezer sees the Lord has blessed his journey and

answered his prayers, he gives Rebekah earrings and bracelets. Nearly every girl loves receiving beautiful jewelry, and Rebekah was no different.

Later, Eliezer gives the family treasures and gifts, giving a sort of dowry to display his credibility and proving the groom Isaac was a hard worker and man of ability and substance. Showing wealth was not the goal, but proving that Isaac was prepared for marriage was important. Proverbs 24:27 elaborates on this: “*Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house.*” If a man cannot hold down a job, he may not be ready for marriage. If a girl does not know how to show consideration and service to others, she may not be ready for marriage.

Selfishness rooted in pride has destroyed many marriages. Rebekah was definitely not selfish but totally considerate of others. “Be the right one rather than looking for the right one.”

Modest Clothing. Before Isaac and Rebekah met, Rebekah covered her face with a veil. Even today, the wedding veil is a symbol of modesty. When she knew the man walking towards her was the man she was to marry, she covered herself up more. This would be a strange proposition to most people today. The world shouts to take clothes off, yet God says to show respect for yourself and your future spouse by remaining covered.



Modest clothing and a spirit of purity are needed in our families, churches, and society today.

Rebekah was showing Isaac that she treasured their relationship and was looking forward to sharing a pure life with him. This action of covering also suggests that she was not one to flirt or take relationships lightly. I heard one young preacher say: “If you are not for sale, don’t advertise.” That is good advice, particularly for young women and their clothing choices. Respect yourself. Respect your future relationship. Isaac could trust Rebekah in marriage because she was trustworthy before they were married.

Has God called you to marriage? One day, He may bring your path across the path of another and show you that this is the one to marry. Until that day comes, work at being the Christian God wants you to be, developing these Godly characteristics in your life. Having these 4 characteristics will help you to have stable emotional well-being.

In my life, the Lord blessed the desire for marriage only after I stopped “looking” for a wife. When I buckled down to what the Lord had called me to, the Lord brought my wonderful wife into my life. Let Psalm 37:4 be true in your life: “*Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*” Marriage is such an important God-given institution. It can make

your life grand or make your life a disaster if entered into flippantly. Be patient, wait on the Lord, and seek His will.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **“Keep Sharing The Chocolates!”**

#### The Emotional Well Being of Spouses

What happens when the last grain of rice is thrown?  
“After every wedding comes a marriage.”

“During a friendly argument, a husband asked his wife why she married him in the first place. ‘I was just stupid,’ she teased. When he said he was happy to hear that, she requested an explanation. ‘People get divorced all the time because they fall out of love,’ he said. ‘But I've never heard of anybody falling out of stupid.’” *(Fresh Illustrations)*

Is there a way to keep your marriage vows fresh, your commitment strong, and your love growing? Yes! Marriage is more than a one-time event; marriage is daily work that both spouses labor together in.

Solomon, who knew a lot about weddings and marriages, was inspired of the Lord to write Ecclesiastes 9:9. “*Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the*

*life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.”*

The word “joyfully” is connected with “approving, considering, and enjoying” the other person in the marriage. Your marriage relationship should be settled on the joy and blessings of marriage.

I enjoy pre-marital counseling sessions. The meetings before the wedding are always filled with excitement, laughter, and anticipation. On the contrary, when couples come in for “post-marital counseling,” the atmosphere many times takes on a completely different tone.

If you are like most people in post-marital counseling, you will tend to see the faults and failures of your spouse in a magnified light. Seeing evil instead of good will damage your perception of your spouse. Love overlooks the faults. Love never fails.

Imagine a gushy-eyed young man looking in the face of his beautiful bride-to-be. They are talking about how much they love one another and how wonderful life is with each other. As she is intently gazing into his eyes he suddenly presents a HUGE box of chocolates. This is the biggest box of Russell Stover chocolates this girl has ever seen! She smiles in amazement at this gift as he hands the box to her. She loves fine chocolate – what a thoughtful gift! A box this big must have cost a lot. She thinks

momentarily, “He must really love me.” As her hands wrap around the box, he says: “This was the best candy I have ever eaten. Your favorite peanut crunchy pieces were so tasty.” She opens the box, and to her amazement, it really is empty! Her man had eaten all of the candy in the box.

Imagine a similar scene. The gift is a small, heart shaped box containing three delectable chocolates. As the girl opens the box, the rich aroma of fine chocolate touches her senses. She reaches in and enjoys a creamy taste of heaven, appreciative of the thoughtful gift from her man, then offers one to him. While there are only three pieces, these are pieces that they share together.

Which man is really showing love toward his bride-to-be? Obviously, the one who gave the box that actually had candy in it.

Many times, we say we love someone, but they are empty words. The love we may really display is selfish love; loving ourselves rather than loving others. We are born selfish – it is our sin nature. It is easy to choose to love yourself. It is something divine to show real love to other people. Showing true love is a necessity for the emotional well-being of you and your spouse.

Love is a choice that touches our emotions. Love is more than a feeling or expression. Love is giving to other people. Let’s open up the box of chocolates and discover

what real love is. These three truths will help your emotional well-being and must be practiced on a daily basis...

Love is Comprised of Actions. In John 14:15, Jesus says *“If ye love Me keep my commandments.”* This action is needed to demonstrate love for Him. The same is true in our relationships. If we love someone, we will show actions of love toward them. Love could be taking out the garbage. Love could be sharing the last doughnut. Love could be making coffee early in the morning for your spouse. What are some actions that can show love?

*Giving* is a great place to start. In *John 3:16*, we find that *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.”* God’s agape love toward us is a giving love. We could emulate the Lord by giving of our time, talent, or even treasure to others.

*Sharing* is a tremendous way to show love. Jesus is the eternal God Who shares everlasting life and Heaven with those who trust Him for their salvation. Romans 5:8 tells us, *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* John 10:28 teaches, *“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”* Could you share time with others, sharing

the blessings of your life with others? Share special moments and make memories together.

*Caring* is also an evidence of love. The Lord cares for His people. “*Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*” (1 Peter 5:7) God’s love is experienced by seeing His care for us. The word “careth” has to do with taking care, concern, and having an interest. One person said it well: “It matters to Him what matters to you.” The Lord is interested in our lives, thoughts, and emotions. We, too, can show love by showing an interest in other people. Listen to others. Learn what is going on in their lives. Know their favorite things to eat, activities to be a part of, and the cares they have in life.

*Bearing* demonstrates love. Like caring, Galatians 6:2 instructs: “*Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*” The law of Christ starts with loving God above all else, then continues by loving your neighbor as you do yourself. You can help a person through a tough time by “feeling their pain.” What a blessing you can be in bearing a burden by helping them up! Perhaps a person feels rejected; you can help them. Maybe they feel all alone; you can let them know that they are not alone. Many people have difficulty formulating right thoughts and looking at situations in a Biblical way. They may be depressed or discouraged due to faulty thinking. You can bear their burden by helping them think right.

Love Is Committing to Forgive. Love covers sin. “*Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.*” (Proverbs 10:12) This does not mean that justice should not be sought or that civil law should not be enforced. If someone is being hurt, that sin must be accounted for. Committing to forgive has to do with personal relationships and how you look at other people. Adam Clark said of this verse: “Hatred stirreth up strifes—It seeks for occasions to provoke enmity. It delights in broils. On the contrary, love conciliates; removes aggravations; puts the best construction on every thing; and pours water, not oil, upon the flame.” Anyone can look for the wrong in a person. We must decide every day to forgive other people. Love is actively looking for ways to forgive and let that forgiveness be known.

*Forgive With Your Mind.* Hebrews 8:12 tells us how God sees our sin as Christians, “*For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.*” Again in Hebrews 10:17... “*And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*” God knows everything, but He chooses not to think about some things! *Following God’s example,* you will not think about the person’s wrongdoing, but will focus on how to help them do right. You will not be fixated on a hurt, but will center your mind on their good attributes. The human mind is greater than the best computers. The human mind cannot forget. We may have a hard time remembering



some things from 5 days ago or even 5 minutes ago, yet the human mind does not really forget. What we experience, hear, say, and do is etched in our minds forever. When we forget something, it is still in our minds, we are just having trouble bringing it out of the filing system, so to speak. Like a library book system, if we can file things in an effective manner, we can bring back that information when we need it. You might say, “So you want me to forgive, but I will never forget?” The point is this – you may never be able to forget, but you can choose to not remember. If you continually think about a past hurt or pain that someone caused you, it is hard to forgive them. If you choose to control your mind and push those negatives to the back of your mind and not focus on them, you *will* be able to forgive, because you are modeling your thoughts like God thinks towards you and your sin.

*Forgive With Your Mouth.* When we control what we say about others, it makes forgiveness more possible. Proverbs 17:9 continues this truth by declaring: “*He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.*” Do you want to destroy a relationship? Go around telling other people everything that other person ever did that was wrong. List his sins; give an account as if you were the one committing the sin. Expose the fact that he is a big sinner. You will destroy that relationship. Love, on the other

hand, does not do any of that. If we verbally repeat wrongs, not only are our minds in error, but we are also changing others' thoughts to think less highly of that person. Marriages, parent/child relationships, and classrooms have all been affected by evil speaking such as this. Some people pour kerosene on fires to keep the fire going. Some people pour gasoline, yet it is hard to pour gasoline on a fire and not get burnt. When we keep talking about other sinners, we are playing with fire – it will surely come back to hurt us.

*Forgive With Your Motive.* My first question when someone wants to tell me something negative about another is this: “What is your motive?” “What is your point for telling me this?” Usually I get one of two reasons, either pride or pain. In pride, they are pointing out that they are better than that other person, sometimes with the attitude of “I would never commit a sin such as that.” In pain, they may be lashing out in an attempt to strike back or injure another as (they believe) they have been injured. Be reminded of Christ, who, when He was reviled and struck, did not revile or strike back. When we speak of someone's sin, we can actually taint their image in the sight of others. Some wives may speak negatively about their husband. When they do so, they are damaging him and destroying their relationship with him. Parents have done this with their children. What a tragedy! We must have the motive of restoring people as

Galatians 6:1 says, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

*Forgive With Your Message.* Every day you convey something to others. We communicate by both verbal and non-verbal communication. Verbal communication includes everything we say and even some things we do not say. We may not say “I hate you,” yet by not saying, “I love you,” some may not feel loved. Non-verbal communication can also speak volumes. Spending time together shows love, so avoiding time with a spouse or a child can communicate a lack of love. If there are people you intentionally avoid, you may not have really forgiven them. (Of course, if there is potential for abuse, you should not be around them; it would be best to stay away from a situation threatening your life.) But in a general sense, you convey acceptance or unacceptance to others with your words and actions. Self-examine: What do I convey intentionally or unintentionally to others? Am I intentional about encouraging healthy emotions in my spouse? Every day you and I must purpose to be forgiving of others.

Love Seeks Victory Each Day. The love of God conquers and is victorious every day. As Romans 8:35-39, emphasizes: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or

*famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* Nothing in life can change God’s love for us! What a wonderful truth! Our relationships can have victory like this as well.

I like the old Gospel song by Avis Christiansen, “*Love Found a Way.*” It goes like this:

“Wonderful love that rescued me, sunk deep in sin,  
Guilty and vile as I could be—no hope within;  
When every ray of light had fled, O glorious day!  
Raising my soul from out the dead, love found a way.

Love brought my Savior here to die on Calvary,  
For such a sinful wretch as I, how can it be?  
Love bridged the gulf ’twixt me and Heav’n, taught me to pray,  
I am redeemed, set free, forgiv’n, love found a way.

Love opened wide the gates of light to Heav’n’s domain,  
Where in eternal power and might Jesus shall reign.  
Love lifted me from depths of woe to endless day,  
There was no help in earth below; love found a way.

*Love found a way, to redeem my soul,  
Love found a way, that could make me whole.  
Love sent my Lord to the cross of shame,  
Love found a way, O praise His holy Name!*

God's love found a way for our salvation! Love finds a way to win over every obstacle to a healthy relationship. True love will find a way to make your marriage work. Find a way to make that soured relationship work – find a way because of love. Love can win over sin, selfishness, distractions, past friends, Facebook, TV, former fiancés, and anything else you can think of. Love can win even when communication is silent, when you are not understood, and when things get dicey.

Love sees common ground. Don't fasten on your differences; instead, stick with complimentary features. Give compliments instead of complaints. Show consideration instead of criticism. Have compassion instead of coldness.

Love works things out when there is not much in the bank account or when the job is lost and foreclosure is in sight. Love works when feelings are hurt. Love works it out even after the most damaging things have been said, even when trust is lost. Love will find a way to restore trust.

The Bible has many good examples of this selfless love. One such example is the prophet Hosea. Hosea is called of God to marry a girl named Gomer. She is a stunningly

beautiful woman, yet there is a major problem - she is unfaithful in their marriage relationship. After starting a family, she runs out and has multiple relationships with other men to make money and live her own way. Today this would be considered human trafficking; yet in Hosea 3, Hosea buys her back. By this point, Gomer was a slave in this filthy industry. Hosea 3:2 says, “*So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley:*” Thirty pieces of silver was the price paid for a slave in ancient days. Hosea gave all he had to buy her from this life of sin she had chosen due to selfishness. He did not have enough silver, but he worked hard and had enough grain to make up the difference to buy his wife back – because of love. He bought her out of slavery and forgave her because of love! He gave everything he had to make their relationship work – because of love.

Dear lady or gentleman, if you are married today or hope to be married one day, decide now that you will do whatever it takes to make your relationship work. Be giving of your love, forgiving in love, and allow love to win over anything that hinders your relationship. You and I are to love others like God loves us. Make sure to give a chocolate box with *real* candy in it: no selfishness or pretenses, just real and giving –then share your lives together.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## **“It’s a Boy!”**

### The Emotional Well Being of Parents

Parent, remember the day your first child was born? What a miracle! Our first child is a girl, and we had all the pretty pink bows and cute little outfits you could imagine. Someone strung a sign on the door that said: “It’s a girl!” What exciting days in the life of a young couple! Yet, as we found out, after the child comes home with you, there is much work to do – even more than changing all of those diapers!

How you were “brought up” will impact your family, especially in the area of expectations as you raise children. What is normal for you, you may also expect to be normal for your spouse. Sometimes this is true, but it is not always the case. Conflicts can arise because of faulty expectations and flawed assumptions.

Columnist Ann Landers offered this advice: “Accept the fact that there will be moments when your children will

hate you. This is normal and natural. But how a child handles hate may determine whether he will go to Harvard or San Quentin.” Do not consider this good counsel, and here is why: How you parent can impact whether your child goes to college or prison, but it is not based on hatred. Our homes should be founded upon love. There may be times when a child will rebel or question you, but the loving parent who properly and Biblically corrects, can set the child on the right path again, oftentimes without hatred being involved.

There are a few emotional needs that must be met in parenting. For example: if you and your spouse have different opinions on how to discipline or why to discipline, you will cause confusion for the child. If one parent is consistent and the other parent is lax with enforcement of expectations, the child will lack confidence and character.

Parents, your emotional well-being will impact your children! A parent with emotional struggles many times produces the same anxiety in their offspring. They learn from you how to react to adversity, whether in anger or calmness. Children watch to see if you persevere or give up and quit at your endeavors. They learn much by watching us! You may have heard the old saying, “More is caught than taught.”



Ephesians 6:1-4 commands: *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”*

Both father and mother must meet each other’s emotional needs to be in a position to properly parent their children. Here are some areas to work on helping each other:

Teamwork. Every person that has ever lived (outside of Adam, Eve, and Jesus) is the result of a man and a woman. Both male and female are required to produce offspring; that is how God made us. The delivery of the child is tough, as part of the curse God placed on Eve and her part in the rebellion against Him in the Garden of Eden, but child-birth is only the beginning. After a child is born, the obligation of the parent continues. Notice how the Lord says “Children obey your parents.” Not one or the other, but both. The parents are a team dedicated to giving godly direction to their children.

It takes a real man to be a dedicated dad. It takes a real woman to be a marvelous mother. Parenting is perhaps the most important relationship and calling besides marriage itself. You are a team! Work together! Win at guiding your children. See victory while guiding your

children. Find success in guiding your children in the way God would have them to go!

There will be times of differing opinions: “What should be the punishment for this?” “How should I handle this situation?” Avoid letting your children see or hear the two of you discussing these issues. Every child should know that Dad and mom are unified on the sidelines of his life, cheering him on to love and live for the Lord.

Someone accurately said: “Teamwork is what makes the dream work.” Your dreams, goals, and desires should be to see your young people love the Lord and love others. Work together to achieve this dream.

Homework. The Lord commands children to “honour” their parents. This word “honour” is important because it deals with value, esteem, and respect. A son can obey with a bad attitude, and while he may have mowed the lawn, he has dishonored in his thinking or his speech.

One way to help your child honor you is to expect honor. Do not let them go around griping and complaining about you. They should have respect for you as the parent. (Be sure that you are a respectable person who deserves respect.) As you demonstrate that you value and respect your spouse, the child will model that behavior as well.

One of the worst issues in parenting is parents who show they do not value each other. If dad and mom do not

respect each other, why would a child continue to respect them? “In 1978, Thomas Hansen of Boulder, Colorado, sued his parents for \$350,000 on grounds of ‘malpractice of parenting.’ Mom and Dad had botched his upbringing so badly, he charged in his suit, that he would need years of costly psychiatric treatment.” (*Ministry 127*) We need to make sure that our children see us working on our home life and valuing one another.

Roadwork. Where will your home lead your children? Will it lead them to know Jesus at an early age in life? Will it lead them to surrender their lives to serve the Lord? God calls plumbers as well as preachers. Will your children know how to answer God’s call?

Every parent has “road construction” going on in their home. Ephesians 6:3 speaks about fathers not provoking their children to wrath. Angry parenting results in children getting off the road. Kids in an angry environment would rather blaze their own trail than stay on the road their parents are making in anger. A child who sees a father or mother shouting, fighting, even swearing will emulate that behavior. Many men today act like babies, yet they are only imitating what they saw in their fathers. Many mothers today are “yellers” without discretion in the home, and even outside the home. How sad. Believers are to be known for their gentleness and kindness. Correction should not be administered in rage.

If you discipline a child in anger, you will probably end up sinning against them.

The roadwork needed to detour anger is one of nurturing and admonishing. “Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” This is where “the rubber meets the road.”

Nurturing is the instruction, education, and discipline we provide for our kids. Children need boundaries and rules in order to thrive. Life is excellent with rules. For example: Would a basketball game be a basketball game if the players were allowed to go up and down the court without dribbling the basketball? No – if traveling was not called, the game would become chaotic! Football with no end zone would not be football. How would you tell if a touchdown was scored?

A modern education trend today is to teach children, but not quiz or test them. “Free thinking” and “free learning” rooted in new age philosophy is paralyzing our education system. Telling a child they did a “good job” can be fine, but it is foolish to tell them this if they did not do anything to begin with. Achievement praised should be achievement earned.

There must be rules, guidelines, expectations, and procedures in education as well as in our homes. If a benchmark is not expected in class, how can we say we are really teaching and a child is really learning? Along

the same line of thinking, if a child is not expected to follow rules or demonstrate a certain level of competency in the home, are we really parenting? If you are not inspecting what you expect, you are not really parenting your child.

Admonition is calling attention to a deficiency; it is warning with a future application in mind. A child needs parents to talk through the issues they face. Parents should meet these questions as they arise and can even, in a proactive way, anticipate the child's needs appropriate to their age. Friendships, fighting, abuse, dating, drugs, purity, finances, work, and other issues should be talked about, and godly advice given concerning each topic.

Recently we were driving on the interstate during a snow state of emergency. We saw nearly 50 cars in the median and sides of the road as we drove. Most of them were caused by overcorrecting the steering on the ice and snow. Overcorrection can often cause more damage. Let's compare this to admonition, a mild rebuke. A gentle correction for a child to keep them on the right road is needed on a consistent basis. Some parents react hysterically to their children's actions (screaming, yelling, name-calling, etc.) Over-reactions are an attempt to correct a child, but can and most likely will push them off the right road.

How are you doing with parental emotional well-being? Are you encouraging and consistent with showing you value your spouse? How is the teamwork lately? Examine your effort at homework today and determine to set a good pace for the roadwork that is required for your home. As Proverbs 29:17 blesses: “*Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.*” Emotionally healthy parents can produce emotionally healthy children who love the Lord and live their lives for Him.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## “Shhh...”

### The Emotional Well Being of Children

The following story caused me to chuckle and reflect: “After the dedication of his baby brother in church, little Johnny sobbed all the way home in the back seat of the car. His father asked him three times what was wrong. Finally the boy replied, ‘That pastor said he wanted us brought up in a Christian home, and I want to stay with you guys!’” (*Ministry* 127)

The following article relates the magnitude of proper parenting and meeting the emotional needs of children. “It is hard to replace a mother with a mother substitute. During WWII, mothers were allowed to care for their babies in Europe for three months, after which they were replaced with nannies who cared for 8-12 babies. They fed them and met their medical needs, but did not often play or mentally stimulate them. Within one year, 30 percent of them died of malnutrition. Most of the survivors could not stand, walk, or talk by the age of four

and had become mentally retarded.” (Adapted from *Introduction to Psychology and Counseling*) What a tragedy for a generation of young people! Spending time with our children, playing, hugging, and caring for them is just as important as food on the table and shoes on their feet.

The story that gave direction to the start of this booklet is found in Genesis 21:14 -21. *“And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.”*

A few observations from this passage can change how you parent your children for the better...



Hagar had given up on life. Sarah in jealousy had manipulated Abraham into sending Hagar and her newborn away. Hagar had been a faithful friend and servant to Sarah for many years. As Abraham was getting older, he tried to make sure God would fulfill His promise for a son, so he married Hagar and together had Ishmael. Ishmael was the result of Abe's human effort. Know this: when we take matters into our own hands instead of trusting God, problems will arise. Now with Sarah constantly fighting with Hagar, whom the Lord had blessed, Abraham decides to send Hagar away. Interestingly, a custom in their land was to give the handmaid of the wife to the husband, yet it was Sarah's idea in chapter 16.

Hagar had been kicked out by her husband Abraham. In a way, she became a single mother in an instant. She had run out of food and water and was now waiting to die. Overwhelmed, yet selfishly, she left Ishmael beside a bush and walked away; she didn't want to see him as he starved to death. She was tired of hearing his pleas for food and water. She simply gave up.

Ishmael was at least 13 years old, perhaps 14 by this point of the story. He was a young teenager, looking at starving to death and dying of thirst! Teenagers eat a lot; in this stage of life, they have growing bodies and growing minds. Many teens are physically active in sports and are full of energy. Ishmael was an avid outdoorsman and was

a terrific shot with a bow and arrow. Even so, Hagar had no food or water to give.

Now should parents allow their children to cry about everything? God heard the “voice of the lad.” The word “voice” has to do with crying, proclaiming, and yelling. Ishmael had reasons to cry. He wasn’t crying to manipulate. Have you ever seen a child cry to get his way? What a sad testimony and pathetic scene to see parents fall for the deception of a manipulative child. Parents, beware of allowing your child to control you. Sometimes a parent may catch a child in sin, and when informing them they must be disciplined, the tears and crying begin before any discipline has even occurred. Proverbs 19:18 instructs, “*Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.*” “No crying unless you are hurting” can be a good house rule when administered in love. Please obey God and give proper correction to your child, so his mind changes about his lying or direct disobedience, before it is too late.

That is not the exact crying Ishmael is doing here. Ishmael has a few reasons for crying, all of which Hagar can assist him in adjusting his outlook. As a parent, you are obligated to help your child through tough times and teach them how to navigate their thoughts when troubles arise.

Ishmael was Aware. He obeyed his mother and sat under the bush while she walked away. Seeing Ishmael is age 13, I am impressed that he stayed there after watching his mother give up and walk away. Our kids know when we are hurting or upset. They see the fights of parents and feel the pain of emotional discouragement. Kids observe more than you may give them credit for. If you allow your thoughts to wander to depression, they will be impacted by your selfishness and may develop similar outlooks. Ishmael and his mother had no clear place to go. Ishmael had no real direction in his life at this moment. Parents, help your child sense the direction God has for them. Realize that they will not be in your home forever and need to be prepared to follow the Lord's will in their lives when they leave the nest. Teach, guide, and "train them in the way they should go."

Children of divorcees will have similar emotions. Whether you project it or not, they will feel a sort of rejection from one or both parents when the divorce occurs. Emotional wounds can heal, but there will always be relationship scars that are taken into every relationship in the future. Parents, do everything you can to stick together.

Ishmael felt Abandoned. Perhaps his cries were tears directed to the Lord in prayer. Perhaps he was looking to God the Father since his earthly father had abandoned him. Put yourself in his sandals for a moment: He had

just been rejected and sent away by his own father. How devastating! These are tough emotions for people of any age. He had no real shelter, and after living with family for all of his young life, he suddenly had no family. Suddenly everything was changed. The life he was familiar with was turned upside down.

Ishmael felt Alone. He really was all alone. Hagar walked far enough away to not see him or hear his cries. As he looked around from under the bush, he saw or heard no one. There were no people to ask for help. There was nothing to eat. He may have looked for food growing in a tree or water from a stream, but there was none. He was alone in a desolate place. If he could find a well, his thirst could be quenched, but he had nothing and no one. A few days earlier he had been laughing and making fun of his new baby brother. Genesis 21:9 tells us about this. He had been the heir of Abraham's inheritance, but with Isaac being born, he no longer was. When Sarah saw his disrespect, it was the trigger that sent her into a rage to have Abe send him and Hagar away. Ishmael was not laughing now. He had no one to turn to.

There will be moments in your child's life when they feel they have no one to turn to. Be sure that your children know you are always available to talk. Part of talking is just listening to them. Sometimes our kids will not talk to us as parents, because we are always talking and not listening to their questions or concerns. The mental and

emotional development of children varies from child to child, and parents would do well to identify the stages of life and how best to “be there” emotionally for their children. One great way is to read the Bible and pray together. Listening to their prayers can give you great insight into the thoughts of their heart.

Every child needs the guiding mind, tender touch, and personal discipline reminders of a loving father and faithful mother. Ishmael not only needed food and water, he needed a perspective of the situation. He needed confidence in the consistent love of his mother and the assurance of a God in Heaven who loved him. Parents, we must demonstrate these things to our children every day.

Take a moment to give a hug and tell your child you love them every single day; they need this for their emotional well-being. Be available to talk and listen to your child. It should never be true that they are really abandoned or alone. Remember – they are aware.

## CHAPTER SIX

### **“I Can Relax Now.”**

#### The Emotional Well Being of Grandparents

I am thankful for the grandparents the Lord gave to me. My grandparents were people of faith who loved Jesus and the Bible. I remember my great-grandmother who, in her 90's, could no longer see very well, but she loved the Bible so much that she listened to Alexander Scourby read the Bible on audio cassette. The cassettes came with a replacement guarantee – she listened to them so much that she wore the tapes out, and many had to be replaced! Godly examples such as this are invaluable to the current and next generation of families. My wife was also blessed with Godly examples for grandparents.

2 Timothy 1:5 describes some faithful people: *“When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.”* Timothy's mother and grandmother were women of faith.

Lois had some qualities in her life that were so evident that Paul saw them, but more importantly, young Timothy saw them. Sometimes when people retire from the workplace, they believe they can retire from church. Let me encourage you – we should never stop living the Christian life no matter how old we become.

Moses led the children of Israel from age 80 to age 120! No matter your age, you as a grandparent (or if you do not have grandchildren, in the “grandparent stage” of life) have tremendous influence on the young people around you. In 1 John 2:13 we find this: *“I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.”* These children knew the Father with the help of the earthly fathers.

We want our grandchildren and the young people around us to overcome the wicked one, too. Satan loves to distract our children from loving the Lord. Just because you are in the “grandparent stage” does not mean you have surrendered your ability to influence others. If you have met with Jesus over your lifetime, then the people around you (including your grandchildren) need to see more of God the Father in you.

If you are a grandparent, thank the Lord for that. What a blessing! Proverbs 17:6 *“Children's children are the*

*crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.”* You have an opportunity that not everyone has to directly influence your grandchildren. Thankfully, you do not have to go through all the motions of parenting all over again! I encourage you to allow your children to fulfill the role of parenting – that is God’s calling for them (if they are able), not you. However, you do maintain a certain level of influence in your grandchild’s life. Here are three areas to help with your emotional well-being:

Emotional Stability. Every stage of life has its blessings and drawbacks. You may not be able to work in the same capacity as you once did, but you *can* do something productive. Getting emotionally down, being discouraged, or constantly complaining does not help you or others.

I have known some wonderful elderly people who become so bitter and would “bite” others with their words so much that no one wanted to be around them. If you ever feel people are avoiding you, you may want to check how your emotions are being conveyed to others. What you say and how you think you are being perceived may be read differently by the young people around you.

Extra Faithfulness. Over the years, I have noticed how young believers will watch and emulate the actions of those perceived as more mature in the faith. It is sad when a new believer loses his zeal for the things of God



due to being influenced by a spiritually stagnant believer who has been saved a long time. Some new Christians will start attending church faithfully, wanting to learn the things of God, not missing a single Sunday School or church service; however, they may start fellowshiping with adults who grew up in church or have taken Christianity for granted, and soon they too no longer attend Wednesday church services since the others don't either.

This same tragic pattern can also be seen in families. As the “matriarch” or “patriarch” of the family, you have people looking to you for a spiritual example. Will you display a weak effort to worship the Lord? Will your actions appear to not really be committed to the work of the Lord in His church? Or will your grandchildren see an unyielding love for God, His Word, and His people?

Enormous Respectability. I respect the grandparents reading this booklet. Your experience speaks volumes. The lessons you have learned and properly applied in your life can speak volumes: your life tells a story to a grandson or granddaughter. What we think we are displaying may not always be what our grandchildren see. You may have had tremendous success in the past, but your grandchild was not there to see it. You may have served the Lord in earlier years, but your grandchild was not even alive yet. Do what you can now to demonstrate

faithfulness to God, love for others, and service through the local church.

Who is the “Timothy” watching you? Can you relax from influencing others for Christ? No. Be challenged to demonstrate emotional well-being no matter how different things are in this life stage – you will influence others to the glory of God.

# Conclusion

Check your emotional well-being today. Are you walking with the Lord in a calm, consistent manner, or are you on an emotional rollercoaster that will not stop and may even be dragging other people along with you? These pages were intended to help you achieve emotional well-being in whatever your stage of life.

Emotional well-being truly begins with knowing Jesus Christ. If you are not yet a Christian, please read the final page of this booklet to learn how you can be saved from your sin and have a relationship with Christ today.

If you are a believer, your emotional victory comes from walking with Christ and choosing to claim the victory He daily makes available to you over your sin and sinful thinking. The Bible is the greatest Counselor, and the Holy Spirit can help you understand and apply it in your life.

Being present each week in Sunday School and church will also help your emotional well-being; acceptance and encouragement in a local church will support a person's emotions. Be sure to portray acceptance to others in church as that will affect how you feel received by other Christians. Some people pay to be in sports clubs,

children's clubs, etc, to help better their emotions, yet your local church can make a great impact on your emotional well-being on a weekly basis. Get on board with your local church, find ways to serve the Lord, help the pastor, and bless other members. Being focused on the Lord and helping others will benefit your emotional stability! Having an "other-oriented" mindset can go a long way in helping your thoughts. Frank Clark said it this way: "Kindness makes a fellow feel good whether it's being done to him or by him."

If you need a meeting with the pastor or a Christian counselor, take advantage of the aid they can give you to help achieve emotional well-being and emotional stability in your life. It will be worth it, and those around you will be blessed and helped by your example.

# About the Author

**Pastor Steve Harness** was saved at the age of seven. His father led him to the Lord in their home after a Sunday night service. The Lord has blessed Pastor Harness with many educational and experiential opportunities. Educational opportunities include a Bachelor of Bible, a Master of Ministry, and a Doctorate of Biblical Studies. He is currently pursuing a PhD in Counseling. Experiential opportunities include pastor, youth pastor, Christian school educator, school board president, teen evangelist, camp and conference speaker, radio broadcaster, and many others. He is thankful for each opportunity the Lord has given, and he desires to “serve the Lord with gladness” while seeing people saved and growing in their relationship with the Lord.

For more information, please go to:

[www.wiltonbaptistchurch.com](http://www.wiltonbaptistchurch.com)

or visit this Sunday at 11:00 AM

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# How Can I Be Born Again?

- ▶ **Recognize your need for the Savior.** I am a sinner; I cannot save myself with good works or religion. *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* (Romans 3:23)
- ▶ **Realize Jesus paid for your salvation.** *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* (Romans 5:8) *“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* (Romans 6:23)
- ▶ **Receive His gift of salvation.** *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”* (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Pray to receive Jesus as your Savior by faith:  
“Lord, I know I am a sinner. I know Jesus came, bled, and died on the cross, taking the penalty for my sin. I believe Jesus rose again, and I am asking You to forgive me of my sins. Please save me and give me a home in Heaven. I pray this in Jesus’ name, Amen.”

*Please let us know if you have trusted Christ for salvation. We want to help you grow in your new faith in the Lord.*