

HANDLING THE EMOTIONS

Emotions are feelings or affects. All feelings are not emotions. Pain, drowsiness and hunger are somatic feelings that alert us to bodily conditions. Emotions are psychic responses to experiences of our inner or outer worlds, thus a sudden noise may make you afraid, an insult make you angry or the sight of a person in deep need may cause you to feel pity. The response that we experience in such situations is accompanied by feelings.

The emotions are psychic motors. They move us or we are moved by them to action or reaction. The way in which we respond emotionally to a situation depends largely on the way our mind interprets it. If our perceptions are wrong our emotional reactions may be mistaken. If our perceptions change, our emotional responses may change.

The pain of emotional hurt is often more intense than physical sickness or diseases, and is often the cause of such disorders. Not all unpleasant emotions are hurtful. They may produce growth responses. But when the stresses are more than the personality can cope with at the time, there can be hurt or damage, so that the emotions either react without sufficient stimulus, cause excessive pain in their experience, or are repressed so that there is little feeling content at all.

Evidence of emotional hurt includes difficulties in personal relationships, a poor self-image, a negative outlook, a lack of feelings, compulsive thoughts and sometimes severe attacks of doubt regarding spiritual truth.

Common sources of inner hurt are traumatic, emotional experiences, long periods of persistent negativity, frustration in attaining goals we see as essential to our fulfillment, and childhood hurts at critical formative stages in our growth. The result, particularly in the case of childhood hurts, is the stopping of emotional growth so that we face adult life with varying degrees of emotional immaturity.

Inner healing depends on the work of the Cross and the work of the Spirit. On the Cross Jesus bore our emotional pains (grieves and sorrows), while the Holy Spirit is the One who binds up the broken hearted.

The process of emotional healing necessitates the opening up of the emotions to God, the surfacing of buried feelings to conscious awareness, and the handing over of hurts to Christ.

Often wrong attitudes have to be dealt with, with resentment and bitterness given away, and people who have wronged us forgiven, it is in struggling with these issues that often the whole hurting mass is brought to the surface where it can be cleansed and healed.

Because the result of such hurt is almost always some form of immaturity, recovery involves a time lapse. Although the blockage can be removed in a moment, growth is a process.

Crucial to maturity in these areas is the understanding that God has fully met our two essential needs: those for significance and security. Crucial to this is the need to experience the Fatherhood of God in order to live as sons and daughters of God.
