

EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY LEADERSHIP

Rockbridge Seminary Chapel
Dr. Ken Baugh – March 18, 2021

“Be transformed by the renewal of your mind.”
Romans 12:2

I. CHRISTIANS ARE STRUGGLING EMOTIONALLY

The Reveal survey results:

- 26% described the condition of their spiritual lives as stalled or unsatisfying.
- 27% of those surveyed confessed to a variety of addictions including overspending, gambling, alcohol, pornography, and overeating.
- 16% of those surveyed admitted to having affairs or inappropriate relationships that pulled them away from God.
- 48% admitted to struggling with emotional issues such as depression, anger, and suppressing painful emotions.
- 89% of those surveyed acknowledged that they were not making their spiritual growth a priority.

Further evidence that Christians are struggling emotionally:

Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation refer to a *LifeWay* research survey in their book, *Transformational Discipleship*. The survey included 4,000 Protestants in North America and discovered that “the daily lives, aspirations, and desires of many people in our churches mirror those who do not claim to know Christ.”¹

George Barna maintains that millions of people who consider themselves born-again Christians respond to surveys indicating behavior that is little different than people who are not born-again.²

According to a survey conducted by ChristianNet.com, out of 1,000 participants, 50% of the men and 20% of the women admitted they were addicted to pornography.³

Christian psychologist Catherine Hart Weber reports,

17% of adults fall into the category of languishing or being mentally and emotionally unhealthy. Other studies reveal that women in particular are languishing and becoming more unhappy. They report feeling empty and lost, lacking purpose and fulfillment, struggling with transitions and changes. Stress, anxiety, and depression loom epidemically.⁴

II. WHY CHRISTIANS ARE STRUGGLING EMOTIONALLY

In a world infected with sin, _____ is a universal human reality.

The human brain has the capacity to store all the good, the bad, and ugly life experiences you have ever had!

Thoughts can produce _____ emotions!

Caroline Leaf writes:

“Thoughts deep within the mind—along with their corresponding minute, biochemical reactions—have a massive impact on emotional and physical wellness. The mind and body are integrally connected.”⁵

III. A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THE HEART

The word most often used throughout Scripture to describe our “*inner being*” or “*spirit*” is the **heart**.

“Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.” Prov. 4:23 (NLT)

“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil.” Matt. 12:34-35 (ESV)

Jesus said the Great Commandment is lived out from the heart (Mk.12:30) and in the Sermon on the Mount, he blesses the pure in heart (Matt. 5:8).

Paul maintains that the presence of Christ resides in the heart (Gal. 4:6).

Robert Saucy writes:

The heart is the control center of life. It is the place where God works to change us and the place we also must work if growth is to take place. . . . God works his renewal in and through our heart. . . . The heart is who we are. It is the seat of our thoughts, emotions, and actions. Understanding the heart will help us grasp the process of our transformation.⁶

The three dynamics of the heart include:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

¹ Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation, *Transformational Discipleship* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2012), 16.

² George Barna, *Think Like Jesus* (Brentwood, TN: Integrity, 2003), 26.

³ ChristianNet, “Evangelicals Are Addicted to Porn,” accessed June 25, 2015, <https://bit.ly/3eRV0vE>

⁴ Catherine Hart Weber, *Flourish: Discover Vibrant Living* (Franklin, TN: Carpenter’s Son, 2013), 22.

⁵ Caroline Leaf, *Who Switched Off My Brain* (Southlake, TX: Switch On Your Brain International, 2007), 5.

⁶ Robert Saucy, *Minding the Heart* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2013), 28.

IV. THE BIBLICAL EMPHASIS ON THOUGHTS

The Bible places a lot of emphasis on our thought life.

“Be transformed by the renewal of your mind.” Rom. 12:2 (ESV)

“We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.” 2 Cor. 10:5 (ESV)

“Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, **let the Spirit renew your thoughts** and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy”
Eph. 4:21-24 (NLT)

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” Phil. 4:8

“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” Col. 3:2 (NIV)

What you choose to think about may be the single greatest factor for emotional health and quality of life.

V. DAVID AND GOLIATH: A BIBLICAL CASE STUDY

The Israelites were “dismayed and terrified.” 1 Sam. 17:11 (NIV)

“You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD’s, and he will give you into our hand.” 1 Samuel 17:45-47

David believed:

Yahweh “determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name. Great is our Lord and mighty in power” (Ps. 147:4-5, NIV).

Yahweh was the one who delivered him from the paws of the lion and the bear when he defended his sheep from attack (1 Sam. 17:37) and that Yahweh would do the same in regard to Goliath. David believed that “The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me” (Ps. 28:7, NIV).

David allowed his knowledge of God and his experience with God to inform his thinking, and it changed the outcome of his life forever.

VI. PRACTICAL TOOLS THAT CULTIVATE A HEALTHY THOUGHT LIFE

1. BIBLICAL _____ .

Old Testament scholars Edward Curtis and John Brugaletta write:

What a person regularly thinks about strongly influences what he or she does and, in many instances, also determines what the person becomes. . . . Meditation helps focus the attention on things that are consistent with God’s order and thus helps to produce behavior and character that are consistent with God’s truth.⁷

“You **must** commit yourselves **wholeheartedly** to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” Deut. 6:6-9 (NLT)

“I will meditate on your precepts.” Ps. 119:15; 78

“Oh how I love your law! it is my meditation all the day.” Ps. 119:97

“This book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.” Josh. 1:8

“We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God.”

A.W. Tozer

2. SCRIPTURE _____ .

Dallas Willard wrote,

Bible memorization is absolutely fundamental to spiritual formation. If I had to choose between all the disciplines of the spiritual life, I would choose Bible memorization, because it is a fundamental way of filling our minds with what it needs.⁹

HOW TO MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE BY ACCIDENT (ALMOST)

1. Memorize _____ rather than single verses.
2. _____ the passage you are memorizing.
3. _____ the passage.
4. _____ the passage three times a day.
5. _____ the passage out loud.
6. _____ yourself reading the passage.

⁷ Edward M. Curtis and John J. Brugaletta, *Discovering the Way of Wisdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2004), 165.

⁸ A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: HarperCollins, 1961), 1–2.

⁹ Dallas Willard, “Spiritual Formation in Christ for the Whole Life and Whole Person,” *Vocatio* 12, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 7.