



I Want Happiness Now!

By Dr. Henry Brandt with Phil Landrum

LESSON 7: YOUR INNER LIFE: FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

TWO COUPLES

It's remarkable how differently people respond to the same set of circumstances. A supervisor of volunteer summer workers shared an experience that illustrates what I mean.

He placed two couples on an island populated with disadvantaged people. Each couple was to take a specified area and establish a recreational program for the children and a Bible study program for the adults. When the supervisor visited the island two weeks later to see how the work was progressing, he found the first couple disgusted, sullen, and depressed.

"We hate this place," they said.

"The children are wild, unmanageable. They swear and have lice in their hair. The adults are unfriendly. They come to our meetings an hour late or not at all. Most of them sleep through the meeting.

We hate the taste of the water and can't stand living in this dump. We want out."

Then the supervisor visited the second couple. When they opened the door, he was greeted warmly by two people whose faces were covered with soot.

"Come on in," they said.

"Our oil stove just exploded. A few minutes ago everything was clean, and then: 'BANG!'

Look at this mess, come on, help us clean it up."

As they worked on the cleanup job, this couple went on to describe their experience.

“We found out that when we tried to teach these people about love and responsibility and cleanliness, they didn't know what we were talking about. The kids are wild, and the adults won't cooperate, so we got mad at them. We stayed away from them for a few days and just tried to justify our own nasty attitudes.

Then, it dawned on us that we weren't loving and responsible either—just clean. We recalled our studies about Jesus:

He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him (John 1:11).

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

We thanked God for showing us what we were like, and asked Him to forgive us and give us a loving, responsible spirit. He did, and what a change. Now, we love it here. What a challenge." Then, the husband said:

“Hey, do you want to go fishing? A week ago, I spotted some men getting into a boat, so I jumped in, too, and asked to go along. They didn't like it, but before the day was over, they quit ignoring me. Now, they even invite me to go along and have taught me how to filet the fish, and have showed me where the fishing holes are. I think my new attitude made the difference.

The kids still don't want our program, and the adults ignore our Bible studies, but we keep at it and we love it.”

Two couples—living in the same place with the same people. What sharply contrasting reactions.

THE MOST IMPORTANT SUBJECT—REACTIONS

Reactions involve *your inner life*.

The management of your inner life is, to me, the most important subject in this book.

Every day you will either reveal or conceal feelings, emotions, attitudes, intentions and thoughts stimulated by people and events. Either way, whether you reveal or conceal them, there they are, coming from within you.

You can't control what other people do around you. Neither can you control all the events of the day. How you respond will either build up or chip away at your self-respect and self-love, depending on how you manage what goes on underneath your

skin.

PLEASANT, POSITIVE FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

When psychologists write about the inner life, they refer to pleasant and unpleasant feelings, or positive and negative emotions. There are two kinds of pleasant feelings and emotions.

First, when there is a highly pleasurable and satisfying response to people or circumstances, we describe ourselves as excited, elated, thrilled, ecstatic, or exhilarated.

Recently I heard a TV advertisement inviting people to experience a “new high” at a certain resort. Along with such pleasant responses come some bodily changes like a pounding heart, increase in respiration rate, or muscle tension. Such responses are easily experienced at an athletic contest, a suspense drama, a concert, when anticipating some event, on the arrival of a special friend or relative, in the presence of someone, or while participating in something challenging.

It takes a lot of energy to sustain such a condition and there comes a point when this excitement, pleasant as it is, must cease, or it becomes unpleasant.

Second, a person can be described as living heartily, joyously, and happily when the inner life is described as calm, still, or quiet.

Muscles are relaxed, heartbeat is normal, and digestion is normal. There is freedom from nervousness. All these words describe an inner condition that can be summed up in one word: *peace*.

Feeling good and pleasant *today* is not a sure test of whether the feelings are built on a firm foundation. One can be filled with elation, pleasure, and joy over successfully cheating, stealing, lying, deceiving, sensuality, breaking the law, going through a divorce, expressing cruelty and selfishness.

In the long run, good feelings not based squarely on God's commandments will turn to ashes.

UNPLEASANT, NEGATIVE FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

The person who experiences unpleasant feelings and negative emotions can be described as being filled with tension, restlessness, anxiety, or frustration. He probably has tense muscles, a pounding heart, faulty digestion and nervousness.

These words describe an inner condition also, and can be summed up in one word: *misery*.

The pace of modern-day living is crisis upon crisis—rapid, unpredictable change in people and circumstances.

A common response to the pace is misery: tension that invades the soul and even the nervous system.

We can't endure misery. Something must be done about it. Peace must be restored.

There is general agreement among physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, and ministers regarding the destructive effect of the so-called unpleasant feelings and negative emotions that result from the absence of peace.

OUT OF CONTROL EMOTIONALLY? SO'S YOUR BODY

O. Spurgeon English, then chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at the Temple University Medical School, wrote once of a long study of the relationship between mind, the emotions, and the body.

He said there are certain emotional centers in the brain linked to the entire body through the autonomic nervous system. He described charges of emotions that are relayed from the brain, down the spinal cord and through the autonomic nerves to the blood vessels, muscle tissues, mucous membranes, and skin.

Under emotional stress, he points out, all parts of the body can be subject to physical discomfort because of a change in blood nourishment, glandular function, or muscle tone.

You may have asked, "How can thoughts and feelings going through my mind cause pain in some part of my body far from my brain?" Dr. English explains: An emotion such as fear, he says, can cause the mouth to become dry. This means that the blood vessels have constricted and the blood supply and glandular activity have been reduced. This dryness will occur, for example, in someone who must make a speech and is afraid.

Laboratory tests show that under stress of emotion, the same decrease in glandular activity occurs in the mucous membrane and various parts of the digestive tract.

Not only does the blood supply change markedly, but secretions of various types increase or decrease in an abnormal manner. Changes in muscle tone in the digestive region can occur, causing painful cramps.

It has also been proved that emotional stress will increase the size of the blood vessels in the head, and this can produce pain because of the stretching of the tissues around the blood vessels and their pressure on the nerve endings.

Of the heart, Dr. English says:

“Without the presence of any heart disease whatever, psychosomatic patients are prone to increased heart rate, irregularities of rhythm, unusual sensation about the heart such as oppression, tightening, pain, and numbness sometimes accompanied by shortness of breath and the feeling of faintness and weakness, possibly giddiness. Along with this so-called 'spell' there may be a general 'all-gone' feeling, free perspiration, accompanied by a sinking sensation and the feeling as if the patient would fall in a heap.”

THE BODY PICKS UP UNSOLVED PROBLEMS

“For decades,” he says, “it has been known that a personality problem which cannot be solved by the mind itself is prone to be 'turned over' or 'taken up' by some other part of the body.

When an irritating friend or a troublesome family member cannot be coped with, the patient becomes 'sick,' he can't 'stomach' it or it 'gripes' him. The physician knows that the cause of these gastrointestinal disturbances is emotional conflict. He knows it is the attitudes of generosity and responsibility struggling with an opposing wish to escape them.”

Dr. English then lists the emotions involved. Here they are:

Hatred, resentment, rage, frustration, ambition, self-centeredness, envy, jealousy, sorrow, love need, fear.

These are the emotions that describe reactions to someone or something that gets in your way. They are unpleasant and cause disturbing bodily changes.

“WORN, TIRED...ALMOST HELPLESS”

Two psychologists, Strecker and Appel, describe the relationship of emotions and bodily changes:

“If aroused to a high pitch, shame, distress, hate, envy, and jealousy all strike to the very core of our being. They leave us worn, tired, incapable, and almost helpless.

The blush of shame, the haggard countenance of distress, the consuming burning of

jealousy and envy, and the facial and vocal expressions of hate are striking testimonials to the deteriorating effect of these emotions upon the body. We may jump with joy or droop with sorrow.”

THE EFFECTS OF HATRED

S. I. McMillen, a physical skillful in writing as well as in practicing medicine, speaks of the devastating effect of hatred:

“The moment I start hating a man, I become his slave. I can't enjoy my work any more because he even controls my thoughts. My resentments produce too many stress hormones in my body, and I become fatigued after only a few hours of work. The work I formerly enjoyed is now drudgery.

Even vacations cease to give me pleasure. It may be a luxurious car that I drive along a lake fringed with the autumnal beauty of maple, oak, and birch. As far as my experience of pleasure is concerned, I might as well be driving a wagon in mud and rain.

The man I hate hounds me wherever I go. I can't escape his tyrannical grasp on my mind. When the waiter serves me porterhouse steak with French fries, asparagus, crisp salad, and strawberry shortcake, smothered with ice cream, it might as well be stale bread and water. My teeth chew the food and I swallow it, but the man I hate will not permit me to enjoy it...

The man I hate may be many miles from my bedroom; but more cruel than any slave driver, he whips my thoughts into such a frenzy that my innerspring mattress becomes a rack of torture. The lowliest of the serfs can sleep, but not I. I really must acknowledge the fact that I am a slave to every man on whom I pour the vials of my wrath.”

EMOTIONS THAT DESTROY US

The emotions that cause tension, anxiety, and frustration, as noted by the four authors—a psychiatrist, two psychologists, and a physician—are:

hatred	self-centeredness
resentment	ambition
rage	envy
frustration	jealousy
love need	sorrow
shame	fear

Their presence, whether expressed or held in, leads to misery and tension. No one needs to learn how to respond this way. It comes as naturally as breathing. Such responses begin at birth, as anyone can testify who has tried to quiet a baby or a small child.

Take a look at some Bible verses that describe the same responses as violations of God's commandments and therefore, when they exist within, this condition chips away at your self-respect and self-love.

You will note that modern-day research has only confirmed what this ancient book has described centuries ago.

GOD'S VIEWPOINT

Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Fret not yourself, it leads only to evil doing
(Psalm 37:8-9).

Do not be eager in your heart to be angry, for anger resides in the bosom of fools
(Ecclesiastes 7:9).

I am benumbed and badly crushed; I groan because of the agitation of my heart
(Psalm 38:8).

Better is a dish of vegetables where love is, than a fatted ox and hatred with it
(Proverbs 15:17).

A tranquil heart is life to the body, but passion is rotteness to the bones
(Proverbs 14:30).

Fret not yourself because of evildoers, Be not envious toward wrongdoers
(Psalm 37:1).

Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another
(Galatians 5:26).

The wicked flee when no one is pursuing, but the righteous are bold as a lion
(Proverbs 28:1).

For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing
(James 3:16).

Even the simple details of life will stimulate such reactions if they are within us. Why must we find a way to eliminate them? Because they are intolerable, too unpleasant to

live with, and the bodily changes that go along with them are too painful and uncomfortable to ignore. We are forced to find relief, peace, and quiet.

Let me share a few incidents as described by my clients.

HOW ANGER, HATE, AND BITTERNESS RUINED A VACATION

Alton and Joan, his wife, went on a skiing vacation. It was to be a pleasant, relaxing time. No problems. They arrived, checked in at their motel, and were even able to change their reservation from a more expensive room to a cheaper room, which pleased them. They had a pleasant week with evenings spent around the fireplace after a day of skiing.

Finally, it was over. Reluctantly, they went down to check out—only to run head on into an unexpected complication: they had to pay the more expensive rate for their room. They argued, but the management stood firm:

“You reserved a room at the expensive rate, so we're charging you that rate whether you stayed in that room or not.”

Alton bitterly paid the more expensive rate and went muttering to the car. As they drove away, he fumed and fussed.

Their entire week was ruined. Suddenly, they couldn't find one thing positive about the whole week in spite of the fact it had been a perfect week until checkout time.

That glorious week of skiing was clouded by what was really a dirty trick.

What had really ruined their week?

The decision of the management?

No. It was the couple's reactions to that decision. They were filled with hateful, angry, bitter emotions that wiped out a beautiful experience.

THE EMPTINESS OF POPULARITY

Joe came to see me because his marriage had collapsed. He was depressed, disillusioned, and a flop as a salesman.

It wasn't like this a few years back. Joe, from a small town, enrolled in a major university and went out for football. He hardly expected to make the team. Then the

regular fullback broke his ankle, and Joe was picked at random to run some plays. To everyone's surprise, he became the starter.

What followed was three years of weekly headlines, interviews, the roar of the crowd, and autograph seekers. He was allowed to choose easy courses, and his teachers gave him good grades for very little work.

Joe loved every minute of it. He was completely and happily taken up with the attention and popularity that was his, and his choice of pretty girls on and off campus.

NEXT...THE WORLD

After graduation, at age twenty-three, Joe was sobered to realize he was unprepared for any kind of work. His reputation got him into an executive training program, but he quickly dropped out for lack of basic knowledge.

All he knew was football. When he was stripped of the glamour of being a varsity football player, all he had left was a big body going soft. He was no longer sought after, and his big body became a liability.

Without any knowledge or skills, and a badly mismatched marriage, Joe suddenly had to face the fact that he had been on a glamorous, pleasant, sensuous road that led to a dead end.

Now, his life was empty. Three happy years of incredible popularity turned to ashes, and he was miserable, bitter, and frustrated.

THE FRUSTRATIONS OF DEALING WITH REBELLIOUS BEHAVIOR

Mr. Somers provided his family with a beautiful, roomy home and plenty of money. But the children drove him wild.

For instance, one evening, while the family was having a delicious meal, one of the children refused to eat the peas on his plate. Mr. Somers was determined that the child eat them.

The child flatly refused, so his father threatened a spanking.

“STOP PUSHING HIM!”

Mr. Somers' wife told him to stop pushing. Angrily, he continued the issue, finally

slapping the child. Mrs. Somers started a heated argument with him.

Finally, he stormed out of the room, and they ended up not speaking to each other for a week.

We would think that two college graduates could resolve such a simple issue. Mr. Somers had no problem with his wife or the child when they did what he asked. Nor did she have any problem when she got her own way.

They both agreed that hostility and stubbornness over so simple a matter was an inappropriate response, and it turned their lovely home into a battleground.

THREE SIMPLE CONFLICTS

Kelley was enraged because he couldn't take two glasses of orange juice instead of one as he went through a cafeteria line.

His wife was furious when their preschooler spilled her milk.

Pete became highly agitated when two people pressed in ahead of him in a ticket line. On the way home, he was angry because the traffic moved slowly.

Strange, isn't it, that simple, normal details of life can stimulate emotions that are as intense as if we were facing a major crisis.

What can be done about it?

TWO KINDS OF PEACE

When speaking to His disciples, Jesus once said:

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives . . .
(John 14:27).

He says there are two kinds of peace:

1. The kind Jesus gives.
2. The kind this world gives.

We will examine both.

THIS WORLD'S PEACE

Jesus said that in this world we can find peace, but He made it clear that it's not His peace. In this world we can find release from tension in mind and body.

EXERCISE

Golf courses, tennis courts, paddle, racquet, and handball courts, swimming pools, running tracks, bicycle and hiking paths, various kinds of health clubs, water skiing, snow skiing, and bowling alleys are available everywhere.

Anyone who lives heartily, joyously, and happily, who is calm, still, and quiet should have some kind of exercise program to keep the body in shape.

This is clearly not the same as a person who has an exercise program in order to work off tensions, restlessness, and anxiety—or one who exercises to find relief from mental, emotional, and bodily stresses and strains.

MUSCLE RELAXATION

There are many study courses offered by high schools, colleges, and professionals that teach us how to relax our muscles from head to toe.

Recently, I watched a television program that featured a Hindu swami giving a relaxation demonstration. He sat for fifteen minutes without moving a muscle while an announcer described the philosophy behind what the swami was doing.

Many years ago, I worked for a maternal health foundation. We had a division that pioneered in the field of teaching pregnant women how to relax during pregnancy and childbirth. The program worked wonders. This is now common practice all over the country.

Multiplied thousands of women are grateful for such help which gives them a more comfortable, less painful pregnancy.

QUIET ACTIVITY

There is an endless supply of books available on every conceivable subject. We can lose ourselves by watching television, listening to the radio or recordings.

There are hundreds of table games available and an endless variety of hobbies, many

college and professional athletic teams to watch, and many varieties of entertainment.

BUSINESS

There is a kind of elation, joy, fascination, and pleasure that comes from working, promotions, making money, success, praise, use of a skill, meeting people, entertaining, romance, travel, civic or church work, and getting an education.

CHANGE

We can remove ourselves from certain people, change jobs, change fields, move to another location, or run away from an unacceptable task.

There is private therapy and group therapy available that enables us to explore the mind and emotions. We can change our philosophy, our standards, and morals.

Multitudes today seek peace by kicking over the traces, living it up, asserting their independence, doing their own thing, or discovering themselves.

CHEMICALS

We are a pill-popping society. We can buy uppers and downers...or a chemical to put us to sleep. Thousands use the hard drugs. A major source for calming us down is the use of alcohol. Long ago, Shakespeare said:

Oh God! That men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains.

What a fascinating list of ways to deal with today's tension. Yes, it's a great world, with endless ways to find peace.

WE DON'T NEED TO TRY EVERYTHING

King Solomon, who is described in the Bible as the wisest and richest of men, wrote of his efforts to taste of everything life has to offer. He sampled wisdom, mirth and pleasure, wine and folly; he built houses, vineyards, orchards and gardens.

He had servants and maidens, silver and gold. The Book of Ecclesiastes contains twelve chapters describing his quest. He concluded:

Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I

had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun (Ecclesiastes 2:11).

Sooner or later, all our efforts to find peace from this world turn to ashes. When we slow down or are trapped by circumstances and people, the tension, restlessness, anxiety and frustration return.

The activities available to us can help relieve the effects of unpleasant feelings and negative emotions, but can't remove them. Multitudes of retired people will testify to that.

GOD'S KIND OF PEACE

There is a deeper kind of peace than the kind that simply relieves body and mind. It comes when you yield yourself to God and let His peace invade your soul. At various times, Jesus said:

Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls (Matthew 11:28-29).

These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full (John 15:11).

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

The apostle Paul, too, points us to God's peace.

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).

Strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously (Colossians 1:11).

King David, also one of the wisest of all men, learned of God's advice to...

Cease striving and know that I am God (Psalm 46:10).

HOW TO TAP GOD'S PEACE

How do you approach God? Jesus said about Himself:

I am the way, and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me (John 14:6).

Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me (Revelation 3:20).

There was a man named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. You can read an account of him in John 3.

This man came to Jesus one night and said to Him:

"Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him: "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God . . ." (John 3:2-3).

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

We stumble over the simplicity of this simple step. You are born again—or saved—when you believe Jesus. He said that you have access to the peace of God through Him.

The starting point is when you ask Him to invade your life...when you open the door and invite Him in.

He said: "I will come in." You either can or can't point to a moment in your life when you made that decision.

Yesterday, I proposed this step to a disturbed client. He became more disturbed.

"Don't hand me that stuff," he said. "I've asked God for help many times, and it doesn't work."

"When did you ask Him to come into your life?" I asked.

"I've been a Christian all my life," he said. "I grew up in church."

I persisted. "When did you ask Him to come into your life?"

“I can't remember,” he said.

To make this step more clear to Him, I asked if he remembered when he purchased his last car. That he could remember. He also admitted, when I asked, that he purchased the car by a specific action. He didn't purchase it by simply thinking about it...or about its construction...or by considering all the standard equipment, etc. Only when he agreed to the deal did he purchase the car. He definitely remembered that.

He also remembered exactly when he got married, when he accepted airplane tickets for his last flight, when he accepted his present job.

You are born again when you ask Jesus to invade your life. Otherwise, it's no deal. Jesus is the way to God's peace.

To let Him into your life gives you access to the resources of God: peace, joy, hope, and patience.

Then you can put everything and everyone into His hands. You need not be in a dither over anything. You can stop striving and let His peace guard your heart, mind, and body.

It does not follow that because you have access to strength from God that you will give Him your troubles, injustices, hates, hostility, conflicts, or ill will. You can, but you can also nurse them within your body.

Let me share with you a struggle that I went through even though Jesus was in my life.

MY BOSS...THE SELF-MADE MAN

An unavoidable confrontation with my own reactions occurred during World War II. I was an engineer in a department responsible for designing some of the tools necessary for the production of vital airplane engines. We were under great pressure to get our work done. There was a good deal of bickering and jealousy between us.

My boss was a mean, tobacco-chewing, self-made man who had worked himself up from the production line to chief engineer.

THE SPITTOON

There was a large window in the wall of his office facing our department, so we could see each other. Inside his office was an odd arrangement. Beside his desk was a piece of rubber matting three feet in diameter.

In the center of the mat sat a highly polished brass spittoon.

Frequently, we engineers would spot the boss loading his jaw with tobacco. When he finished, his jaw looked like he had an apple in his cheek. When he started to chew, we all braced ourselves because we knew someone was in trouble.

“BRRRAAAANNNNNNNNNNDDDDDDDTTT!”

Then, he would spit in the general direction of the spittoon (he seldom hit it) and shout someone's name with all the ferocity of an Indian war cry:

“Brandt! Brraaaannnnnnnddddttt!”

I instantly became furious. One word from him and I was fighting mad. I hated him, and his messy, ugly spittoon.

Of course, you don't tell the boss off. I developed the art of entering his office with a friendly smile on my face and talking to him in a cordial manner, all the time hatefully seething within and contemplating his chin.

AN ACT YOU CAN'T PLAY FOREVER

No man can keep up an act like that twenty-four hours every day, so I would take out my frustration on my wife and child at home.

“Turn down that radio!” I screamed at my wife.

“Get out of my way.” Or: “Pick up that toy, now,” I'd yell at our three-year-old. If he didn't jump when I thought he should, I'd swat him all out of proportion to what he'd done.

I'd always be ashamed of myself and determine over and over again not to talk and act (really...it was reacting) like that. But it kept happening.

There were some very tense evenings created by my spirit and my tongue. I dreaded going home because of the scene I might create there.

My conduct around my boss and family is clearly described in the Bible:

His speech was smoother than butter, but his heart was war; his words were softer than oil, yet there were drawn swords (Psalm 55:21).

Even in laughter the heart may be in pain, and the end of joy may be grief
(Proverbs 14:13).

A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated
(Proverbs 14:17).

At the time, I had no knowledge of the Bible, so these verses were unknown to me.

With my stomach in knots and under constant tension, I had to do something. My choice was to seek a solution out of the Bible. My search led me to some disturbing verses. For example:

Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger
(Ephesians 4:26).

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger, and clamor, and slander be put away from you along with all malice (Ephesians 4:31).

What's wrong with being angry and bitter and malicious toward my boss? I argued with myself.

And, how can I turn off my anger at sundown? Besides, if he didn't yell, and if my wife were more understanding, and if our child would behave, I wouldn't be angry in the first place.

These verses struck me as unrealistic, unreasonable, and the source of more tension. But another verse was even more disturbing:

And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you (Ephesians 4:32).

I had no intention of responding that way toward my boss, or toward my wife when she was indifferent to my problems. After all, I felt I was entitled to nurse my grudges.

But my misery continued. I finally concluded that when my body was filled with tensions and hostility and my mind was loaded with ugly thoughts, my inner condition surely wasn't affecting my boss, my wife, or my child. They didn't live underneath my skin.

The Bible was right. To be kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving made sense. I would crank up my will power and determination and push the hate, anger, bitterness, and self-pity out of my body. What a relief that would be.

GOOD INTENTIONS GONE BAD

A few days later, however, came a bitter disappointment. The boss had finished loading his jaw with tobacco and was getting ready to spit.

Somehow, I just knew my name would follow the spit and found myself tensing up. When he yelled “Brrraaannnddt,” I was as furious as ever. This was disappointing and frustrating to me. I was trying to live up to what the Bible said and couldn't do it.

And I was still a growling tyrant around the house. I went through a period of time being bitter toward God and sputtering about the Bible. *Here was a book that described a way of behaving that couldn't be lived up to.*

But I continued my search, and one day came upon some verses that gave me the answer and changed my whole inner life:

And such confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God (2 Corinthians 3:4-5).

That verse stopped me. It just wasn't true. I was not inadequate. I had gotten an education without God's help. I got a job, some promotions, made some good investments, engaged in sports, lived up to the etiquette book, and controlled myself without God's help.

I mention this because I see many people who isolate Bible verses and reject them or are guided by them without considering the verses that precede or follow the one in question. Instead of reading on, they react negatively as I did.

After a few days of rejecting that verse, I read the next one, which contains a life-changing key:

Who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Corinthians 3:6).

Consider that thought. Anyone can obey the letter of the law. *It's a man's spirit that he can't control.* I could do whatever my boss asked, while at the same time rebel inwardly.

It was the rebellion I couldn't eliminate. I could speak with him in a cordial manner. It was my hostility, anger, and hatred that I couldn't eliminate. I could even control my temper at home if I tried hard enough. It was the temper itself I couldn't eliminate. Even my three-year-old child could make me angry. I could refrain from whomping him, but I couldn't eliminate the anger.

Living up to the letter of what was required of me was killing me. That's where the inadequacy was. That truth was like a shaft of light.

I asked God to help me love my boss, my wife, and child—to keep my body quiet when things didn't go right. A few days later my boss was again loading his jaw with tobacco. He aimed some at the spittoon and let out his war whoop:

“Brrrraaaaannnnnddddtttt!”

I heard it, but I was quiet. This was unbelievable.

I wasn't angry.

My inner life matched my manner for the first time. What a relief! His antics began to amuse me. I had a new spirit whenever I would let God give me quietness—at work, at home, anywhere. This simple relationship with God changed my life and even my profession. God would quiet my spirit whenever I let Him. Gradually, I have learned to lean on God's peace more and more.

I've spent the last thirty-five years helping thousands of people find peace in the inner man by tapping into the Spirit of God who gives us quietness that can't be interrupted by people or circumstances.

IT WORKS FOR OTHERS, TOO

I was telling this story to a group of people recently at a conference. The next day, a lady told me her story.

She had had continuous headaches for several years. Medical tests and x-rays could not isolate the cause. Medication didn't help. After listening to my story, she went to her room and told God how she hated the snake of a husband she had divorced several years ago.

She realized she was only punishing herself nursing hatred toward someone who was 3,000 miles away. She asked Jesus to come into her life and give her His Spirit and take the hate away.

She said, “This is the first day in several years that I didn't have a headache.” Four days later, she was still free from her headache.

About a year ago, another lady approached me about her husband. They had been married some twenty years. They were active in religious circles. He was even an elder in the church. But he kept a bottle of vodka in his office and was usually tipsy

when he came home. He demanded a hot meal every night, even though his arrival time was unpredictable. Then he expected her to sit with him to watch television and pour his drinks for him.

SHE HAD ENOUGH

Since the children were out of the house, this relationship had become unbearable. She had never complained to her husband, she said, and faithfully served him. But, she was consumed with rebellion and resentment and anger. She couldn't stand it much longer!

I pointed out to her that she had two problems. Her husband was obviously one of them. He was inconsiderate, selfish, and demanding. But her most serious problem was what went on underneath her skin.

“But I have served him faithfully,” she protested. It did appear that her behavior was beyond criticism. She doggedly was living up to the letter of the law. But, God's Spirit was missing.

“But, my husband just thinks about himself.”

I listen to this line of reasoning constantly. “My inner life is caused by people or circumstances. How else do you expect me to respond? Am I supposed to enjoy such treatment? Haven't I put up with this long enough? Don't I deserve some consideration, too?”

This dear lady was convinced that her inner life was in the hands of her husband. Several months later, I received a letter from her. It is printed here (in part):

Nothing has changed in our marriage, but I am contented. I felt so angry with you for what you said to me about myself—but you were right!

Before that I hadn't really recognized my own sin. God had to do some throwing down in my life, and that is never easy at the time, but the result is beautiful if you are submissive to the strong hand of God.

He has forgiven and cleansed and filled my heart with joy. I praise Him for this mercy and grace. Once again, I want to say “thank you” from the depths of my heart.

This letter comes from a lovely young lady who had a breakdown, and when I saw her, she was a nervous wreck. Parts of her letter tell the story:

I told you my problem was not being invited to join the Junior League, and I really

had a hangup about this.

I'd never been interested enough to do all the work and buttering up to League members that it took to get in, so I didn't make it. I was extremely disappointed. I've never felt as crushed or deeply hurt over anything. Most of my friends are members of this group, and I felt completely rejected. I felt guilty that I let my family down and especially my daughter.

I cried and cried over this for hours at a time. So many people could have helped me, and I got mad at them. You helped me to see that I even had the audacity to get mad at Almighty God. Even though I have a Christian husband, a lovely family, and most every material thing I want, I was miserable. I had told God to just take my life.

I kept telling you my problem was getting left out of the League, and you kept telling me my problem was my attitude toward what happened.

During my second session with you, I asked God to give me his perfect peace. I can't tell you exactly how it happened. The situation remained the same, but God erased all the hurt feelings from me.

I literally felt as if a huge weight had been lifted. Then, I wondered if the peace would last. He brought to my mind that part of John 14, where he says: "My peace I give unto you. Not as the world gives give I unto you."

I'd always thought this verse was just for funerals! Only a couple of times in these three years have I felt a little pang of the old hurt, but each time I immediately thanked God for the peace He'd given me and claimed it.

God even changed my "wants" so that I honestly can't imagine how I ever desired this. Hope this doesn't sound pious.

Another letter tells the same story:

Several years ago, I came to see you for help with my resentment over my husband's insistence on my working in his store when I wanted to spend my time in church work.

You dealt with me about my wretched attitude and I didn't like it. But, I thought it over and came home determined that my work in the store would be a labor of love.

Of course, you know that God filled me with His peace and joy as I worked in the store and worked at being a better wife. It surely is true that our joy is dependent

on our relationship with Christ rather than our circumstances or other people— isn't it?

My husband changed his mind about a year ago and agreed that I should get involved in ladies home Bible studies. It's a fine ministry. I thank the Lord that you were honest enough to tell me my faults.

NORMAN LOOKED LIKE A WILD MAN

When Norman first came to see me he looked like a wild man, with sharp, piercing eyes. The muscles in his face were all tightened up; he drummed his fingers on the tables and jerked his knee constantly. He was a hard, unyielding man. No one crossed him without getting a blast of his vicious temper: His big, strong, heavy-set body made him look dangerous indeed.

But underneath all that was a soul that longed for peace and a quiet heart. Oh, he argued with me for many months, but today—four years later—this man has quieted down, has a compassionate spirit, and has become increasingly considerate of others. He let God come into his life and clean out that nastiness and replace it with quietness.

THE BRILLIANT ENGINEER

Ellery is a brilliant engineer. But he didn't come to see me because he had a sprawling home nestled in 200 acres of rolling hills, a jet plane, and a prosperous manufacturing plant that produced more money than he knew what to do with.

He came because he was tired of being an “old crab.” His explosive temper made life miserable for his family and employees.

Golf, tennis, good food, travel, and elite surroundings didn't help. He needed to be born again and then allow Jesus to give him His peace.

He couldn't buy it. He had to reach out an empty hand and receive salvation like everyone else. He struggled a long time over this simple proposition, clinging to his insistence that business pressures were his problem, and he was searching for a way to manage himself.

He finally gave up, and reached out that empty hand to receive from God the gift freely given through Jesus.

WHAT ARE THEY SAYING?

There is a common thread winding through all these stories. In each case, the person involved had (1) done something unacceptable to someone else, (2) someone else had done something unacceptable to them, (3) the person was required to do something he or she didn't want to do, (4) things didn't turn out the way the person wanted them to.

The reactions in each case were similar: anger, bitterness, stubbornness, rebellion, and hate which became intolerable.

In each case, the idea that the people and circumstances involved merely revealed, rather than caused, their reactions was firmly rejected. The possibility of becoming a loving, peaceful, joyful person without the people or circumstances changing was an unpalatable option. If nothing changed, they preferred to be mad rather than glad.

Isn't it strange that it's so hard to let Christ come into our lives and then let Him change us? We tend to resist Him like a tiny baby will resist its mother's efforts to give it life-providing food.

Strecker and Appel describe this struggle as they observe it in their clients: "Countless people at every corner unnecessarily deprive themselves not only of pleasure, but actual necessities in order to assuage the goading of a troubled conscience and fulfill a need for punishment. Feelings of unworthiness, or undeservedness, result at every hand in conspicuous neglect of health, comfort, and peace of mind."

"The man who, unprovoked, insults his best friend, the man who fails to show up at an important business conference, the girl who refuses an invitation to a party she would very much like to go to, the man who declines to propose to the girl he loves and remains unmarried, the woman who spends endless hours in unnecessary house-keeping drudgery, who 'works her fingers to the bone,' the brilliant man who insists upon engaging in a petty, monotonous routine, a drab, colorless existence, people who seem to court accidents and have always a tale of hard luck, those who repeatedly make plans which seem inevitably to lead to failure—all may be motivated by guilt, the need for punishment or self-directed anger. Added to this are countless hours of sleepless worry, or self-recrimination, self-accusation, bitter regret, which also may be traced to the same source."

Why do we do this to ourselves? Jesus, who knows all about us, says:

And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God (John 3:19-21).

The prophet Jeremiah gives us another glimpse of the human heart:

The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways... (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

There it is. We are at least vaguely aware of our evil inner life, but we hate to admit it. We tend to turn away from such light. The more brilliant and educated we are, the more we are capable of coming up with endless varieties of ways to justify ourselves.

THERE IS A WAY

Enough of this gloom. There is a brighter side. There is hope. When we finally quit running, the Lord will search our hearts, show us our evil ways, clean us up, and fill us with His strength.

Like any other agreement, this step is taken at a point in time never to be forgotten or confused with other times. But such a crisis works itself out from a point to a line.

It involves a continual drawing upon His resources as each occasion for it comes, just as a decision to maintain an exercise program must be renewed day by day.

In conclusion, take a look at the riches available to you in the inner man—which will build your self-respect...your self-love.

THE POSITIVE SIDE

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you (Ephesians 4:32).

And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you (Colossians 3:12-13).

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful (Colossians 3:15).

In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy (James 3:17).

What credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But, if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God (1 Peter 2:20).

Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails... (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

Here are some of the qualities contained in these verses, laid out on an imaginary cafeteria counter:

kindness	peace
tender-heartedness	thankfulness
forgiving	reasonableness
compassion	merciful
humility	unhypocritical
gentleness	not jealous or envious
patience	

Help yourself. It's all free. The more you take, the farther along you will be on your way to becoming indestructible.

Review Questions

1. What do your reactions involve?
2. Negative emotions cause tension, anxiety, and frustration. The Bible describes the same responses as _____.
3. Jesus says there are two kinds of peace. Name the two kinds:
 - a. _____.
 - b. _____.
4. There is a deeper kind of peace than the kind that simply relieves body and mind. It comes when you _____.

5. To what does letting God into your life give you access?

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