

FRUSTRATION

Overcoming futility by finding purpose and direction for your life.

The Bible warns us that a “double minded” man is unstable in all his ways (James 1:8). Frustration always comes of trying to do too much at once. It also comes when we feel thwarted. Anyone who has ever been caught in a major traffic jam knows all about frustration!

Frustration comes when we keep running into obstacles that demand more than we can deliver at that moment. More than anything else, the frustrated person needs to control his feelings and find direction for life.

Don't Become a Victim of Your Feelings

Feelings are a normal part of everyday life. At a football game, we get excited; at a funeral, we are usually sad; at the grocery store, we often get frustrated; at a family reunion, we are filled with joy. Feelings affect, and often control, the greatest part of our lives. They represent our perception of our physical and emotional condition. Thus, we often say, “I feel great!” or, “I feel lousy.” We even stretch the word feeling to include attitudes, judgments, and convictions. “How do you feel about our foreign policy?” some asks. The answer is not a statement of one's feelings, but one's beliefs.

We live in a feeling-oriented society. “If it feels good, do it!” is the existential motto of our age. Everyone seems to be giving in to their feelings and setting aside their convictions. Traditional beliefs yield to the narcissistic pursuit of self-gratification. Feelings are everything – a principle that has betrayed many a Christian into outright sin. Excuses are legion: “But I feel so much better when I'm with her.” “Can't I do this and still love God?” “Doesn't God want us to be happy?” What we are really questioning is often God's revealed Word.

Feelings Are Symptoms

Our emotions tell us what is really going on inside us. They are often by-products of our thinking. If, for example, we think a human being dies at death, then the death of a loved one will leave us empty inside. If we think that we are ugly or inferior, we will feel ugly or inferior. Inferiority in itself is not a feeling; it is a value judgment we make about ourselves. Guilt, likewise, is a feeling – one that comes from behavior. If you do something you think is wrong, you will feel guilty.

Some people do not feel saved. That should not surprise us, since the conviction that one is saved is not an emotion. Assurance is not a feeling, but a belief. Distinguishing between our feelings and our beliefs and behavior is essential to solving our problems. Our attitudes reflect our true inner beliefs about ourselves and our problems. “I can't” really means “I won't!” Anxiety, hatred, envy, grief, fear – all reflect how we think. Non-biblical thinking will always result in non-biblical actions. For example, non-biblical thinking tells you that you have a right to do whatever you want, and if someone tries to stop you, you will retaliate. Biblical revelation, however, tells you not to strike back (1 Timothy 3:3) and to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:39)

Feelings Can Be Dangerous

Our feelings are but symptoms of our true inner thinking. They are changeable when our thoughts and beliefs change. Feelings are guides to help us better understand what's occurring within our personality. They are not good guides for establishing a permanent course of action. To encourage people to impulsively follow their feelings rather than God's Word is the worst advice any Christian could ever give another. To deny your feelings and resolve to do what is right is not hypocrisy, but character. Consider – at least once every day of your life, you defy every feeling in your body: You get out of bed!

Irresponsible people are perennial victims of their own feelings. You may feel like skipping school, robbing a bank, shooting your neighbor, or running away. That does not mean that any of those feelings are the right thing to do. Christian morality (behavior) is clearly outlined in the Word of God. The Bible itself is the final authority for our lives – not our feelings.

Deny Your Feelings

Self-discipline comes only when we learn the art of self-denial. We are in a lifelong struggle against our feelings. In order to live the Spirit-controlled life, we must die to ourselves. The Scripture admonishes: "...present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God... . And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..." (Romans 12:1-2). We have to learn to think like Christians in order to behave like Christians. We need to think biblically in order to behave biblically. Right thinking and right behavior will then result in right feelings. You will feel right when you know you have done right.

Emotional people let their feelings rule every aspect of their lives. While we need to understand how we really feel and why we feel that way, we can never let our feelings become the final standard of right and wrong. One woman may feel good about her abortion, while another feels guilty. A husband may feel his divorce is of God, while his wife feels that it's the devil! Who is right? Are all feelings relative to each person's own experience and perception? If they are, then the statements and commands of Scripture are meaningless and can be quickly dismissed by those who feel they do not apply to them.

The ultimate standard by which we must judge our feelings is the Word of God. No matter how I feel, God's Word gives me an unbiased declaration of His truth. Remember, Jesus said, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). God's truth liberates us from our feelings. Truth sets the soul free for fellowship with God. It is His Word of truth that sanctifies the believer and equips him for life and service. No matter how you feel, one truth stands paramount above all others – God loves you!

Dealing with Life's Frustrations

Frustration is a part of life. Nobody ever went through life without experiencing some frustration. Problems come into our lives which try our faith and sometimes even push our very limits. But in every problem, no matter how frustrating, God is at work in your life. Scripture tells us to "let the peace of God rule in your hearts" (Colossians 3:15). Others may be upset, disturbed, erratic, emotional, violent, or even bitter. You can remain calm in the midst of the storm, because God is in control.

Peace does not come naturally. We must allow His peace to conquer our deepest frustrations. How? “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.” (Col 3:16). One can only allow the Word of God to control his life when he is reading it and living it. The implication is that the Word of Christ does not automatically dwell within us. We must read, meditate upon it and memorize it. The Scripture does not automatically dwell in your heart. You must put it there.

When problems come into our lives, we tend to react emotionally, without ever considering that we may be reacting in a totally non-Christian manner. By so doing we fail to let the truth of God’s Word capture our souls. Therefore, we are not living under the control of the Holy Spirit. The result is invariably an explosion of emotional frustration.

Finding Direction

The will of God is revealed in the Word of God. The two are never contradictory. God will never lead you to do something contrary to His revealed Word. Nor will His Word ever contradict His will for your life. God has a wonderful plan for your life, but you will only find it by submission to His will.

Frustration always comes from doubting or denying God’s will. If you have gotten off the track, get back on again. You will never find peace outside God’s revealed will for your life. If you find yourself stalled in one of life’s lanes, then learn to accept your “life-jam” as a divine halt on the road of life. Stop trying to run, if God wants you to sit and listen. In time, the master traffic director will have you going again when you are ready to navigate properly.

Life’s frustrations are but divinely appointed delays. They are time-outs giving God a chance to work. Don’t give up the race. The last lap has yet to be run....