

Emotions

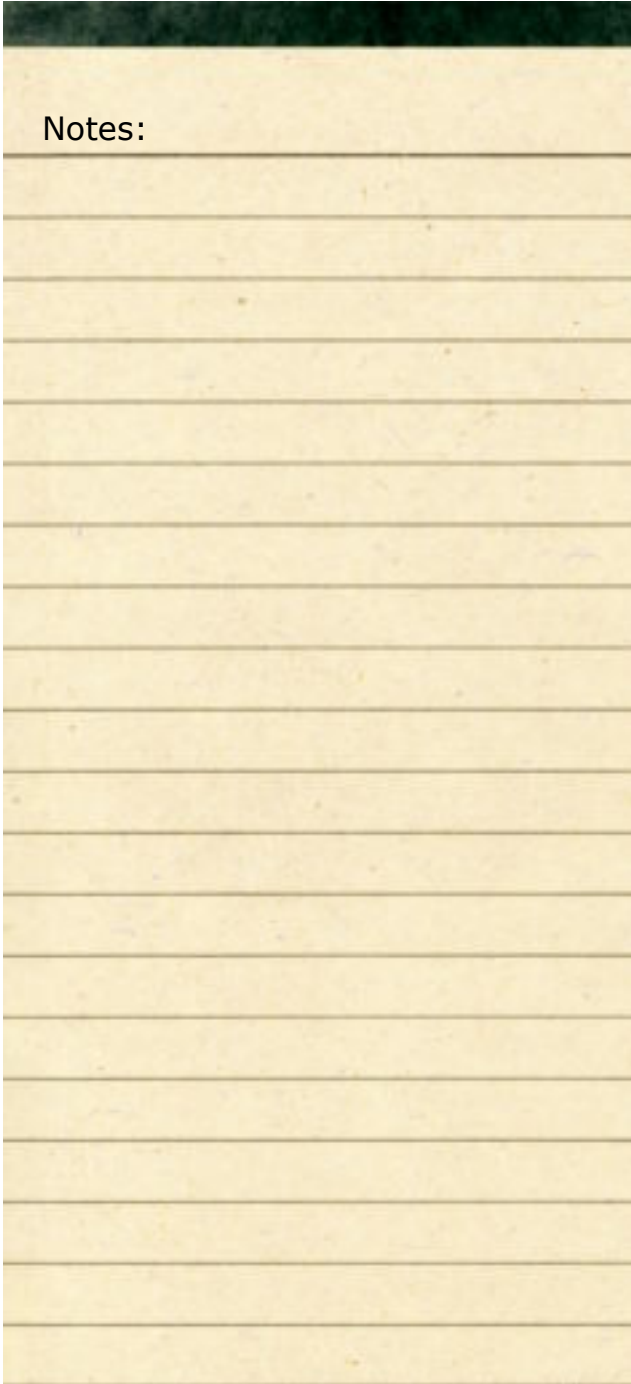
Many people seek the help of a counselor to deal with what they would describe as emotional problems. These problems can range anywhere from anger, fear, worry, guilt, and shame to panic, anxiety, paranoia, despair, and more. The goal of those seeking help is usually to figure out how to get rid of the unpleasant feelings so that they can experience more pleasurable emotions.

While emotions can sometimes feel like more of a nuisance than anything helpful, we must remember that we are made in the image of God, and the Bible ascribes a number of emotions to God. The conclusion is that God is an emotional being; and since we are made in His image, that is why we have emotional capacities. Our finite emotional capacity is a reflection of God's infinite emotional capacity.

But problems arise when our emotions—how we feel about something that's happening in our lives—get stirred up and we feel “bad” about something. When people feel bad, they usually respond in one of two ways. They either simply dump whatever they are feeling on those who are closest to them without any regard for the impact it will have on others. Or, they just stuff their feelings way down deep and bury them so that no one would ever know that anything was troubling them. Neither response is healthy.

Rather than stuffing or dumping our feelings, they need to be explored so that we can discover what is giving them power and strength. Ironically, when carefully explored with a trained counselor, what is often discovered beneath so many emotional difficulties is an underlying spirit of entitlement. Entitlement is a deeply held belief that I'm entitled to a certain kind of experiential reality that makes me feel good about being me.

Notes:



Our personal commitment to feeling good is wholeheartedly reinforced by society at large as the culturally mandated birthright of every human being. Emotional health is seen as feeling good all the time, rather than having feelings that track with the normal ups and downs, joys and sorrows, successes and failures of life.

Exploring what we feel, when we feel it, and why we're feeling it is an important process in discovering what in the world God is up to in our lives. Ignoring our emotions or indiscriminately venting them ultimately gets in the way of building meaningful relationships with others. Exploring the early warning signs of our feelings allows us to tap into a better understanding of how we are interacting with God and our world.

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