

EMOTIONS

REVEALING OUR VALUE SYSTEMS

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For my children
that they may understand their hearts

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Preface

Let me refer you to my previous work, *God's Value System*, which I strongly recommend you read prior to this present work on emotions. Without the theological foundation of God's Value System, there will be a danger of misunderstanding the purpose and goal of changing your value system. Without first understanding what your value system ought to become you will have no way of determining if you are changing according to God's will.

This work is intended to complement the previous study by helping you gain insight into your own value system. It is also a tool with which the counselor might understand the values the counselee holds through an examination of his emotions. In order to prepare you, let me briefly address God's value system.

The Gospel of the Kingdom reveals God's value system. Jesus Christ died on the cross because of his sacrificial love for us. As members of Christ's Kingdom we, too, are to share this same value of sacrificial love in how we act toward others. The values that motivate all of our ac-

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tions and desires—and ultimately our emotions—must be like the values in God’s own heart. Christ came not only to save us from the penalty of our sin, but from the relational consequences of it as well.

The invitation to participate in Christ’s Kingdom has always required changing one’s value system. It is important to understand that adopting God’s value system of sacrificial love is not an issue of our justification, but one of repentance and sanctification. Repentance is change that occurs within the believer regarding how he thinks of God. Sanctification is the transformation away from our sinful values and the adoption of God’s value system.

In Christ’s Kingdom the rule or law of the Kingdom is love, and the consequence for breaking that law is forgiveness. Neither this law nor its consequence can be enforced in any earthly kingdom. They both require the willingness of the participant. God has done both for us at the cross: he has loved us and forgiven us. He now calls us to live by this same value system from which we have gained the relational benefit of knowing him.

1 Emotions Reveal Values

Emotions are like the lights on the dashboard of a car. They indicate information about something happening elsewhere. Smashing or covering up a light does not address the real issue. Eventually we will suffer for thinking the problem was the light on the dashboard and ignoring its message. People who seek only to *control* their emotions do not deal with the real issue. They are determined to make the light on the dashboard change regardless of the underlying problem in the engine. In order to have emotional responses that honor God, we need to focus on changing our value systems.

Your value system determines how you evaluate each part of your life. If you value pleasure over reputation, you will act for pleasure regardless of what people think of you. If you value money over reputation, you will act to gain wealth even if it gives others a negative perception of you. If you value power more than you love others, it will be demonstrated by your exploiting, manipulating, and controlling people rather than serving them.

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Before we can understand our emotions, we must first be aware of our value systems and the desires that flow from them. The main areas of desire are pleasure, power, wealth, and reputation. All of the desires in our lives are a combination of these basic elements. Sometimes the values driving these desires are so deep within us that we have difficulty being conscious of them. Fortunately, emotions can be used to help us identify these values.

Emotions are like the tip of an iceberg. They are the visible portion of what resides hidden within the heart. Our emotional reactions are what we, and sometimes others, can see. In order to change or understand our emotions, we need to go beneath the surface and address the issues of the heart.

Everything we say and do in life flows from our hearts.¹ Perhaps the heart could be described as a person's value system. The desires we have flow from what we value, and they demonstrate what is important to us. Our values are what really drive our will and emotions. *A person's mind, will, and emotions all flow from his value system.*

Although we have many desires within us, we live by our strongest desires. We feel frustration during the times we are considering which value we should follow, but ultimately one prevails over another. Even if we believe that we are not doing what we really want to do, we always are. For example, you may want something enough to steal it, yet you do not steal it. Your desire to avoid prison or the shame of being caught overrules your desire to have that which

¹ Luke 6:45 The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

Proverbs 4:23 Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

you covet. Our actions reveal our deepest values.

We always live by our desires, but we have many layers or levels of values producing those desires. Some of our values are good, and thus we do what is good. Even when we have less than noble desires, we are often prevented from following them because we have deeper desires of commitment or fear of consequences. Our goal in adopting God's value system is to do what is good because it flows from a right value.

Truly knowing our hearts requires examining all of our desires—yet those desires are formed through a complex blend of many values. Conflicting desires make it difficult for us to discern what is transpiring within us. However, our emotions can give us the ability to see into our hearts and discover the particular values that drive us. By understanding what is important to us, we become better equipped for good relationships because we will use our emotions as God intended. Instead of experiencing negative feelings toward others because of sinful value systems, we will have positive feelings as we adopt God's value system.

There is a simple connection between emotions, desires, and value systems. Our value systems first determine our desires: We desire that which we believe will bring good into our lives; and we shun that which we believe will harm us. Emotions, then, are the *responses* we experience when our desires are either fulfilled or thwarted. Our emotions are *reactions* to whether or not we receive what we desire. *Emotions reveal whether or not our value systems are being fulfilled or denied.*

The desires we have are not emotions; rather, they are *preliminary* to emotion. We describe desires in terms of hope, anticipation, yearning or longing. Three famous

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stories demonstrating values, desires, and emotions are recorded in the Old Testament. The first two stories share some similarities and involve Joseph and Potiphar's wife,² and David and Bathsheba.³ The third story is about Joseph and his brothers.

The first story involves an Egyptian official name Potiphar. He was Joseph's master, after Joseph was made a slave in Egypt. Potiphar's wife had physical desire for Joseph and was willing to deceive in order to obtain it. When Joseph refused her advances, she became very angry with him. They did not share a common value in terms of what is right and wrong in relationship. Had they shared a similar value, they would have had no conflict with each other, although conflict would still have arisen later between them and Potiphar.

When our desires are not met, we experience emotions. The more important the value, and the stronger the desire, the more powerfully we feel the emotion. Potiphar likely experienced shame and anger, his wife became angry when rejected, and Joseph probably felt fear, anger, and shame as well. However, the reasons why each one felt those emotions were different because the values that produced the emotions were different. The intensity of their emotions, and why each person felt them, reveals to us what was valued in each heart.

Consider, also, the story of David and Bathsheba. Both of them shared values that allowed them to commit adultery. This was most likely driven by more than physical attraction, with David desiring relationship and Bathsheba desiring power. After David sinned, he became afraid of

² Genesis 39

³ 2 Samuel 11

being discovered, and therefore plotted the death of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah. Conflict in relationship stems from people possessing different value systems, and in the case of David and Uriah, this conflict ended in murder.

The emotions of happiness, jealousy, fear, and envy were at work in this story. David and Bathsheba both experienced happiness while they were sinning, but emotions do not teach us what is right or wrong: they only reveal whether or not we are having our desires fulfilled. David's murder of Uriah demonstrated how much he valued himself over the lives of others, and that he would rather have someone other than himself die for his sin.

In both of these first two stories there were desires for physical pleasure. In each, the desires revealed the value system of the individuals even before any emotions were felt. Strong emotions occurred and relationships were affected because of the differing value systems at work. Consider also how bad decisions flowed from ungodly values. The source of trouble and conflict in life is living apart from God's value system.

A third example can be found earlier in the life of Joseph, when he faced great conflict with his brothers because of a struggle for control and power.⁴ As always, the desires revealed the value systems even before the onset of emotion. The brothers all shared a similar desire to be the one chosen to inherit their father's "kingdom." From that desire sprang the emotions of jealousy and hatred, and, for some of the brothers, a willingness to attempt murder. Even though ten of Joseph's brothers agreed in their opposition of him, they yet had conflict among themselves since they did not all agree on murdering him. These events and values

⁴ Genesis 37

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produced many emotions, including great sorrow in their father when he learned he had lost something very valuable to him: he believed Joseph to be dead.

A value system unlike God's will always lead to corrupt desires. Those wrong desires often lead to emotions that destroy relationships. If we fail to recognize that our value systems are the source of all our desires, which in turn are the wellspring of all our emotions, we will be unable to resolve emotional issues and their relational effects. Fortunately, even if sin in our value systems is not revealed to us by our desires, our emotions can be useful in determining the values we need to change.

In order for us to have emotions in line with God's emotions, we must begin with having God's value system of sacrificial love for the benefit of others. Values produce desires, and desires produce emotions. To have desires like God's, we must first value what God values. From that will naturally spring godly emotions.

2 Emotions and Relationship

Emotions provide insights that allow us to understand all that we value and desire. They reveal what we truly believe is important to us—even though we might not be able to identify this consciously. What we value determines what we desire, and what we desire determines our emotional responses to life and relationship.

If we are to be successful in relationship, we need to conform our value systems to the value system of God. Conflict and the negative emotions it produces find their source in values that diverge from the purposes for which God created us. All conflict in relationship is ultimately a conflict over values. This is true whether the relationship is with God or with people since all relationships are based on whether or not the participants share a common value system. In order for our relationships to be successful, they must be based on God's value system of sacrificial love for the benefit of others.

With the philosophical foundation that all theology is relational, we can correctly understand God, ourselves, and

how we ought to interact with others. God created us for relationship, sin broke that relationship, and Jesus died on the cross to restore us to relationship with himself.¹ As we consider emotions, we cannot neglect their relational aspect. Unless we evaluate the relational impact of emotions, we will fail to understand them and their proper role in our lives.

God created us for relationship and he gave us emotions to benefit and enhance our relationships. Since we choose value systems that are different from God's, our emotions often contribute to the destruction of our relationships. To keep us from damaging them, we must focus our attention on using emotions to strengthen relationship.

For example, we do not like to be around people who produce negative feelings within us. We prefer to be with people who make us happy and not with those who generate fear, anger, or sadness. Even as children, we quickly learn to associate our emotions with the people who cause them. We gravitate toward people who make us feel good and avoid those who make us feel bad. Emotions are powerful forces in establishing, maintaining—and damaging—relationships.

Therefore, we need to consider our actions in terms of relationship and how our actions affect those around us. If I consistently produce negative emotions in others, then perhaps there is something about me that needs to change. If I deliberately say or do that which constantly produces negative feelings in others, they will avoid me completely, or at least in the areas in which I produce negative emotion for them. Unless I change the reasons for my words

¹ For an extended treatment of this topic, refer to my book *God's Value System*.

and actions, I will fail to create and maintain meaningful relationships.

On the other hand, if people feel good around me, they will gravitate toward me. They will enjoy my presence and enjoy relationship with me. Having this effect on people should never be done to manipulate; it should be the natural consequence of being like Christ and having his value system. True Christ-likeness is very attractive.

We must also not confuse personality with sin or Christ-likeness. Personalities differ from one another, and it is never the personality of a person that drives other people away: it is something he values. It is an inattention to others and an ignorance of how his actions are affecting others negatively. If he would consider each of his manners and act in terms of love toward others he could be guided to use self-control and no longer say or do that which is bothersome.

For example, it is personality and not sin to be talkative. However, if you talk incessantly, or if you are not cautious about how interesting your conversation is to another, or if you do not provide others an opportunity to be part of a conversation, then your personality will produce negative feelings in others even if what you are doing is not sinful. It is not sinful to express your thoughts and ideas, but the *manner* in which you do it may be relationally destructive. Since other people value their time or desire an opportunity to be part of the conversation, your value to speak your way conflicts with their value of time or participation.

One hazard we face in relationship is an ignorance of what we do that bothers others. Our problem is not one of refusal to change; it is simply ignorance of our mannerisms. Ultimately, something in our value systems is driving us to

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act as we do even though it harms relationships. For most people, it is very difficult to tell others that something they say or do is annoying, especially if it is not overtly sinful. Therefore, we must seek to become aware of such issues in our lives through honest and open relationships.

If we are to experience the joys we desire in relationship, we must understand our emotions and the effect they have on our relationships. We must know what causes us to become angry, sad, or frustrated so that we might be transformed into people who enjoy relationships as God intended—relationships based on God's value system.

3 Conflict in Relationship

Relationships characterized by God's value system will necessarily have less conflict than those based on selfish values. God's value system is sacrificial love for the benefit of others, and truly loving others involves seeking their good and never exploiting them. Since values that are selfish and unlike God's produce conflict in relationships, we must identify and remove any values that motivate us in ways opposed to God's value system.

We all make the mistake of thinking that the freedom to make our own choices will result in happiness and fulfillment. When confronted for sinning, we often make the excuse that our sin "only affects me." But how we live affects more than only ourselves—it affects those around us. The bottom line is that deciding right and wrong for ourselves does not bring fulfillment, because there are often many unexpected consequences to living by values that are not like God's.

Adam and Eve learned this in the Garden of Eden.¹

¹ Genesis 2-3

God created them in perfect relationship with himself and with each other. This relationship was unhindered by sin and any difference in value system. God gave Adam and Eve only one prohibition: they were not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Eating from the tree was an issue of whether or not they would obey God and continue in relationship with him, or disobey and break relationship. The moment they ate the forbidden fruit, they chose for themselves value systems to replace God's. They succumbed to the serpent's tempting words, "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."²

When Eve was tempted to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil it was through a process of desire. Our desires reveal what we want to happen and what we do not want to happen. The areas of temptation that Eve was subject to are mentioned throughout the Bible. John describes these as the desires of the eyes, the desires of the flesh, and pride in possessions.³ The fruit could satisfy the physical appetites of Eve's body, it pleased her eyes, and, most importantly, it could allow her to choose her own definition of good—the ultimate in power and control.⁴

The Tree is about me choosing what I think is good and what I think is good for me. When I am focused on pick-

² Genesis 3:5

³ 1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world.

⁴ Genesis 3:6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

ing what is good for me, I will not always be picking what is good for those around me. Basically, it is a value system that promotes what I want over what God wants for me. This affects my relationships with God and others because it is the opposite of God's value system. He wants me to do what is good for others rather than merely choosing good for myself.

The moment Adam and Eve picked the fruit and ate it, they chose a value system that was different from God's. They chose for themselves right and wrong and good and evil rather than learning it from God. Any time we choose to do what we desire rather than what God desires, we are like Adam and Eve in the Garden picking our own value systems. *Sin is refusing to live by God's value system of sacrificial love for the benefit others, and instead living according to selfish desires—in spite of their effects on others.*

What Adam and Eve did not realize was that common value systems are the basis of relationship. Having a value system that is different from God's cuts one off from relationship with him and from those who live by his value system. Adam and Eve's relationship with each other began to suffer immediately since they both chose value systems that served self rather than each other.

Serving sin does not make a person free. Jesus made this point when he said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin."⁵ When we do what is wrong we become slaves to evil desires. Practicing our new value systems often requires that we attempt to hide from God and others even as Adam and Eve hid from God after they sinned. We need to hide our sin because we are ashamed of it.

⁵ John 8:34

The emotional consequence for Adam and Eve was fear of God. Where previously they had loved him, they were now afraid of him, and the love they had for him diminished. They also became angry with each other: Adam blamed both Eve and God for the problems in his life. Sinful values produce sinful desires that can produce negative emotions and damaged relationships.

Relationships are based on common value systems. All conflict is a disagreement over value system. We were created for relationship according to God's value system of sacrificial love for the benefit of others. Each value we hold that is different from another person (including God) causes division in relationship. Therefore, for each choice we make we must ask, "Is getting what I want more important than relationship? Is having *this* more important to me than the relationship that will be affected by this choice?"

When we choose to live by a value system other than God's, we prioritize that "freedom" over our relationship with God. When we choose a different value system than our wife, husband, parent, or child, we are making a choice between values and relationship. The more our value systems differ from each other, the more our relationships will suffer.

Not every difference in value is sinful. It is quite natural for each of us to find pleasure in a wide variety of things, but not always share an equivalent level of enjoyment for each one. However, the foundation for how we treat one another in relationship must be sacrificial love, otherwise both moral and non-moral desires will divide us. Loving someone sometimes requires giving up one's own desire in order to grant the other his.

Good value systems produce good relationships, and

evil value systems produce broken relationships and conflict. The reason for this is simple. If two people both have value systems that serve self first, they will always be in conflict with each other since neither will be focusing on doing good to the other person.

James wrote that anger and quarrels—relationship problems—come from our desires.⁶ Those desires flow from value systems that are different from God's. The value system of the world seeks to gain according to one's own selfish desires rather than to live and give sacrificially. This conflict of values affects our relationships not only with others, but also with God.

Our sinful desires produce anger and fighting, ultimately destroying our relationships. We were created for relationship, but we foolishly act as though we were created only to pursue our desires of the moment. We may believe that happiness is bound up in having our selfish expectations fulfilled, but true happiness comes from good relationships. When our desires for blessing in relationship are either thwarted or fulfilled, we experience emotion. Yet emotions that enhance relationship only flow from living by God's values and not our own.

Interpersonal conflict is a result of failing to achieve our own desires. Relationally destructive emotions result from our sinful desires and selfish value systems. If we want

⁶ James 4:1-4 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

good relationships that are emotionally fulfilling, we must have godly desires that flow from God's value system. The essence of sin is doing our own value systems rather than God's, and desiring to have self served rather than serving others. Selfish living produces conflict that always has a negative effect on our emotions.

There are many places in the Bible that describe this truth. John taught that the root of all our sinful desires is a worldly value system, and that relationship with God requires adopting his value system.⁷ If you are not loving him in relationship and becoming like him, then you are becoming more like the world. Worldly desires flow from a sinful, worldly value system, but godly desires proceed from adopting God's value system.

Paul demonstrated extensively how our godless values lead to relational failure.⁸ The result of rejecting God's value system is the embracing of our own value systems. Many call this wisdom, while it is in fact foolishness. It results in our hearts being filled with impure lusts because the final result of turning away from godly love and toward our own wisdom is relational destruction. Paul described the outcome of sinful value systems with these words: unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice, envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness, gossip, slander, insolence, haughtiness, boastfulness, disobedience to parents, faithlessness, heartlessness, and ruthlessness. *These are all relational terms.*

⁷ 1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

⁸ Romans 1:18-32

James taught that temptation to sin proceeds from the sinful desires within us.⁹ Sin ultimately leads to death, which is loss of relationship.¹⁰ Remember, all conflict in relationship is conflict over value system: We experience some degree of loss every time we fight with one another, but we grow closer when we agree on values.

The three areas of desire that Adam and Eve faced during their temptation are natural parts of life, but they must not rule us. We must prefer to be good rather than pursue tempting desires, or else we will destroy our relationships. The natural desires we have only become sin when they are driven by value systems that are unlike God's.

⁹ James 1:14-15 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

¹⁰ Death is an issue of relationship. When Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they died. Their relationships with God and each other were both affected. Since relationship is based on a common value system, the moment they ate and chose value systems different from God's, they brought death to their relationship with God.

Physical death is about the loss of relationship. That is why losing someone through death is so painful. That loved one is now permanently (in this world) removed from relationship with us. Spiritual death is our loss of relationship with God. Eternal death is being permanently separated from God and others in terms of relationship. The true horror of hell is being a creature created for relationship who is permanently cut off from relationship with others. Hell is never again experiencing that for which one was created.

4 Examining Value Systems

The conflict we have in relationship is conflict over value systems. The negative emotions we experience in relationship are because of selfish values. The sinful desires we have derive from our selfish value systems. In order to resolve conflict, limit negative emotions, and remove sinful desires, we must understand the selfish values that reside in our hearts so that we can change them. Without a change of value system, our lives and relationships will not improve.

In order for us to understand temptation and its underlying values, we need to study Jesus' successful response during his temptation by the devil.¹ For Jesus, temptation did not arise from a sinful value system, but externally. Since Jesus is perfect in his value system, he cannot be tempted to sin by his own desires. However, he was tempted to sinfully express *natural values* according to the same desires we all have. We are far more susceptible to yielding to temptation because we have already lost the battle in terms of value system. Since we already value the *result* of the temptation, we

¹ Matthew 4

rapidly succumb to the lure placed before us.

The devil ordered his attack against Jesus with three different desires—and those three desires are extremely significant. Each of the three temptations was related to Christ's mission and had the potential to disrupt it, yet they were also linked to the desires that Adam and Eve faced when they were tempted. However, the underlying values are much easier to understand by examining Jesus' temptation rather than Adam and Eve's. Furthermore, as we conform our values to those of Christ, we will be transformed to become like him and gain new ability to overcome temptation.

First, Jesus was tempted to transform stones into bread. This occurred while he had been in the wilderness fasting for forty days, so of course he was hungry. The nature of this temptation is the fulfillment of bodily appetites and physical pleasures. There is nothing wrong with eating or satisfying any of the body's natural appetites as long as they are fulfilled in the way God prescribes. In other words, it is better to be good than to have a full stomach. Jesus knew that it is better to be good than to satisfy the body's appetites in a way that God does not intend for us. Our natural desires for food, drink, touching, and sexual intercourse are all good and given by God, but they must also be satisfied according to God's time and place. The emotions associated with these desires are dangerous because we prefer to act by what feels good in the moment even when our actions are sinful and relationally damaging.

The second temptation Jesus faced was for him to jump from the temple in full view of the crowds. This was definitely *not* God's intended method for Jesus to gain a following. But Jesus knew that it is better to be good than to have people like us or for us to look amazing in the eyes of others.

This temptation relates to how we appear to others, either by looking attractive or by appearing right, smart, or wise. Jesus knew that he must face rejection rather than manipulate the situation for personal recognition.

Jesus' third temptation was to obtain the kingdoms of the world by bowing down and worshipping the devil. However, Jesus knew another principle of obeying God: It is better to be good than to be powerful, to have an earthly kingdom, or to have our own will be done. This temptation focuses on whether we will have a value system of being served or one of serving. Jesus knew his Kingdom was not an earthly kingdom but rather a spiritual one. Anyone who serves himself and seeks his own earthly kingdom is ultimately bowing down to and serving the devil.

The areas of temptation that Adam and Eve faced are like those of Jesus. Adam and Eve chose to eat the fruit and satisfy their physical desires rather than to obey God. They chose to have what looked good rather than to be good. And they chose to establish their own kingdoms with their own ideas of right and wrong rather than to remain under God's authority.²

All of our values are connected to relationship. Our desires for physical pleasure, the approval of others, and to be in control of and be served by others are addressed by the three temptations that Christ faced—temptations to choose

² If we consider Satan's rebellion as related to the temptation he presented to Adam and Eve, we can also see it in terms of kingdom. Satan desired to be served rather than to serve. He wanted to impose a system apart from the command and will of God. He wanted his own kingdom because he thought he had a better system of values than God. Anyone who seeks to build his own kingdom apart from God finds that he is bowing down and serving Satan. He is succumbing to the same temptation as Adam and Eve.

our own desires over the will of the Father. Jesus' temptations are representative of every temptation we face, and they reveal the underlying values that affect our relationships with God and others. Being adept in understanding these three areas of temptation will help us understand our emotions and, more significantly, give us deep insight into our values.

Prior to evaluating our emotions with regard to these three areas of Jesus' temptation, we need to examine in more detail some worldly loves that relate to these three desires. This will help us understand the values that drive our desires and produce our emotions. Success in overcoming temptation and having godly emotions begins with a change of value system within our hearts.

Love of bodily pleasure

The love of pleasure has many facets to it. Any pleasure can become a source of a twisted, selfish value system. Bodily appetites that produce pleasure often become sources of slavery to gratification. If we become angry when we must stop doing something that we wish to continue, or if we refuse to quit doing something an authority in our life has prohibited, it shows how strong our desire is. The value we place on a pleasure can be measured by how its loss or denial affects us. Perhaps the strongest measure of love for pleasure comes from determining if we would sin or hurt others to enjoy it. If our practice of any pleasure is so excessive that it damages relationships, or if we engage in foolish risks to fulfill it, we are no longer being motivated by sacrificial love.

The love of pleasure is not complex nor is it difficult to identify. We often have strong emotional reactions when anything interferes with the pleasures we seek. The danger

of being driven by pleasure is that it results in an unwillingness to suffer in sacrificial love. Pleasing ourselves becomes such an ingrained habit that we find the idea of suffering for others in any way almost insurmountable. We must be motivated by being good rather than by fulfilling our bodily appetites.

Love of the approval of men

Another area of life that reveals sinful value systems is the importance we place on what other people think of us. It is not wrong for people to think well of us or approve of us. However, when we make choices based on what others will think of us rather than by choosing to do what is good, it reveals a sinful value behind our desire. Peer pressure is the essence of love of approval, whether in clothes, activities, language, or anything else.

There were people who wanted to follow Jesus but were afraid of losing status through being associated with him.³ Jesus also condemned those who used outward religious signs as a source of status when they had no inner reality or likeness to God.⁴ We like to have people *think* we are good, even when we know in our hearts that it is not real. This is the essence of lying: wanting others to think we have one value system when, in fact, we hold another.

When we specifically act to gain the approval of others

³ John 12:42-43 Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

⁴ Matthew 23:5-7 They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others.

we cannot be living sacrificially. We are focusing on doing that which will help ourselves rather than focusing on how we might help others. Furthermore, service should not be motivated by how it makes us appear before others or solely to gain approval of people.

This sinful value resides in our hearts if we are constantly concerned about what others think about us. If we fear what people will think of us based on whether or not we do something, then we will not be free to love sacrificially. Instead, our lives will be tainted by a deep love of self that seeks the admiration of men rather than a transformation to Christ-likeness. If we associate ourselves with Christ, we can be assured that the world will not approve of us.⁵

Love of kingdom power

People love power. They value control over others and will manipulate or exploit them in order to keep it. Yet having power and authority over others is not the problem. The problem is loving power and control in order to have people serve you instead of serving others in sacrificial love. Jesus taught that the love of power over others was not part of the value system of his Kingdom, and he linked service for others to his cross and to sacrificial love.⁶

⁵ John 15:17-21 These things I command you, so that you will love one another. If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

⁶ Matthew 20:25-28 But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great

Love of power is not limited only to those with great power or authority. It is also demonstrated through a lack of submission to authorities or an attempt to manipulate those in authority over you. We also reveal our love of power every time we demand that those in our families serve us rather than taking joy in serving them.

Deep inside the person that loves power are fear and selfishness. He might be able to hide these from others; however, he will not be able to hide his lack of sacrificial love. Jesus taught that greatness flowed from sacrificial service, and that earthly power and wealth should be used for extending God's Kingdom and not our own.

Anyone who loves power is really seeking an earthly kingdom and is certainly bowing down to the devil in order to obtain it. No one can bow down to the devil without becoming like him, and no one can live the value system of Christ's Kingdom while seeking an earthly kingdom of his own. The value systems conflict and cannot be pursued simultaneously.

Love of kingdom wealth

The love of money is a desire that always reveals a sinful value system. It demonstrates how much we prefer the idol of wealth, and the security and blessing we believe it provides, to living God's value system. Love of money manifests itself through hoarding money, stealing, and exploiting others for gain. To understand the depth of our love for money, consider what people are willing to do, compro-

ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

mise, or lose in order to achieve great wealth.

How much money must we have for it to be enough? At what point will we begin using it for the benefit of others? While seeking more wealth, do we even honor God with the money we already have? These questions are important because they reveal how different we are from God. There are many people in churches today that have wealth far beyond the average income. Unfortunately, they use it for their own pleasures and security rather than investing it in the Kingdom of God. Not only do they not live sacrificially, they do not even live generously.

The false teachers in Ephesus sought to gain wealth rather than live sacrificially.⁷ Their pursuit of wealth revealed that they did not share God's value system of sacrificial love. No one who uses religion as a means to gain great wealth shares God's value system. Paul could easily identify those who were false teachers because they did not adhere to the Gospel. The Gospel of the Kingdom is founded upon God's value system, which is sacrificial love for the benefit of others. Anyone who teaches love of pleasure and pursuit of wealth instead of sacrificial love is a false teacher.

What should we love?

Instead of living by these earthly values, we should love God instead. This is the first and greatest commandment.⁸

⁷ cf. 1 Timothy 6:9-10 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

⁸ Matthew 22:37-39 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like

Putting anything else before God is an issue of idolatry. Jesus taught that love *for* him is demonstrated by loving *like* him.⁹ That is why we must love those in need as we would want to be loved if we shared the same need.

It is interesting that obedience *to* God and love *for* God are inherently relationship-building. This should not surprise us since all theology is relational and God's value system is inherently relationship-oriented. The pursuit of relationships must come before our sinful loves, which are our idols. Our love for money, pleasure, approval, and power diminishes our ability to have, pursue, maintain, and enjoy relationships.

When two people in relationship seek to live God's value system, they will become freer from love of self, love of pleasure, love of wealth, love of approval, and love of power. Their relationship with God and each other will be meaningful, beautiful and desirable—and it will result in lasting joy. Their natural desires will also be fulfilled in ways that please both them and God.

Pleasure, approval, wealth, and power are to be used for building healthy, loving relationships. Any use of these that is detrimental to others or to relationships reveals how far our value systems are from God's. Pleasure, approval, and power can be used to enhance relationship, but when we are sinfully controlled by them, they work against us rather than for us.

As you consider each of the emotions discussed in the

it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

⁹ John 14:15 If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

John 15:12-13 This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends.

remainder of this book, attempt to understand the desires behind your emotions and the values that ultimately drive them. By constantly considering the issues of life according to the three areas of desire and the temptations that Christ faced, you will gain insight regarding your value system and be able to have it transformed to the value system of God. Remember, although it is normal to have these three types of desires, we must never pursue them at the expense of being good. Being good is being like God and living his value system of sacrificial love for the benefit of others.

5 Positive and Negative Reactions

Before we can fully understand our emotions, we must first understand the nature of emotional reaction. Usually, a single value within us drives at least two emotions. We feel the positive one when our value is achieved and we feel the negative one when it is thwarted. That is why I have chosen to link emotions together in the following chapters by my view of how they relate to one another.

Emotions reveal one's value system, but we must be careful to understand that a right value system does not only result in positive emotion and a sinful one does not only produce negative emotions. We label our emotions as either positive or negative depending on how they make us feel. Negative emotions are those we generally associate with pain, frustration, or sadness. Positive emotions are usually associated with happiness or love.

Regardless of whether we do or do not like the emotions we are feeling, both positive and negative emotions can have good and bad results. For example, sinful anger can destroy relationships and righteous anger can lead to

positive change in relationships. Both are forms of anger with exactly the same feeling but with entirely different sources and outcomes.

Do not confuse the outcome of the emotion with whether or not the emotion is positive or negative. We can act in relationally destructive ways while having “positive” emotions. Emotions only reveal the underlying values in the heart. A person can desire and take pleasure in that which is evil or selfish.

The end result of all negative emotion is depression. I do not think depression is an emotion in itself; rather, it is an eventual outcome of several different emotions. It occurs when we feel overwhelmed by negative emotions that have become constant in our lives. All negative emotions ultimately bring depression because we find the relationships around us unfulfilling and empty. We were created for relationship and when those relationships (with God or people) do not bring us the joy that they should, we succumb to more and more negative emotions with less experience of positive ones.

The end result of positive emotions, if they are associated with good things, is healthy, positive relational growth. We can, however, have positive emotions about desires that are not good. Some sinful actions produce positive emotions, if only in the short term. This is dangerous because it reinforces negative behavior simply because of its association with a positive feeling. But again, this is an issue of value system.

We experience positive emotions when our value systems are fulfilled, and negative emotions when we do not get what we want. Emotions are only a *response* to the underlying values and do not indicate whether the values are

good or bad. We must never measure our values by how they make us feel. The only acceptable standard of measuring the goodness of an act is how it relates to sacrificial love.

My categorization of emotions and labeling them as negative or positive is certainly debatable. You also may not agree with my description or definition of each emotion. However, if you only focus on that aspect of my discussion, then you will certainly miss my point. The main idea I wish to convey is how each of our emotional reactions is actually connected to and flows from our value systems. God intends for us to use our emotions as indicators so that our value systems can become like his.

6 Boredom and Apathy

Although boredom and apathy are not emotions they are closely related to emotions. They are, in fact, the opposite of emotional experiences. Since emotions serve a very important role in our relationships, absence of emotion is a significant indicator that must not be ignored. It is a sign that something is wrong with us.

Boredom

We all become bored from time to time. Boredom signifies a loss or absence of desire. Boredom's role is to move us toward the pursuit of positive emotion. Generally, positive emotions are feelings such as happiness or love, and negative emotions are feelings of fear, sadness or envy. Boredom reveals the abnormal condition of one who is not being driven toward *positive* desires.

We may be bored simply because we are not seeking the good desires that will bring positive emotional pleasure. This might be because we wish to pursue desires we know to be wrong, but have thus far successfully resisted temptation.

However, boredom without a move toward the pursuit of sacrificial love opens one to seeking desires that flow from wrong values. The saying, “Idle hands are the devil’s playground” did not arise without reason.

If we are not pursuing positive emotions for doing what is good, we will eventually pursue positive emotions in doing what is evil. Where there is boredom, there is an absence of positive emotion which reveals the absence of desires flowing from the right value system. Part of the Gospel is *doing* God’s value system. Lack of positive emotion flowing from doing God’s value system can lead either to boredom or to seeking positive emotions in sinful values. Both are worthless and corrupting.

We can experience boredom in relationships, work, free time, play, or even ministry. The cure to boredom is seeking positive emotions through becoming a sacrificial lover. Of course, this will fail if we are only attempting to *mimic* virtuous behavior and have not first changed the values of our hearts. True joy is found in being like Christ and requires a faith-filled adoption of God’s value system. If we practice sacrificial love for others in relationships by serving them, we will be freed from both boredom and self.

Apathy

I express apathy by saying, “I don’t care” when something happens. Sometimes when I say this, it is a conscious form of apathy. It is not that I *truly* do not care, so much as I do not consider an issue worth investing in. But when we say it, we need to make sure that our “I don’t cares” line up with God’s “I don’t cares.” Otherwise, it betrays that our value systems are not like his and need to change.

Genuine apathy is different. Apathy is the non-emo-

tion. Apathy tells you that something means nothing to you. It is the absence of an emotional reaction concerning what is happening, and it reveals that we do not value its outcome.

If we experience genuine apathy for people from time to time (or worse, continuously), it is very serious since it betrays a selfish, evil value system. If we see someone suffering or in need and it really does not bother us, we are unlike Christ.

The cure for apathy is the same as the cure for boredom. Our value systems must change and we must act according to sacrificial love. We must believe the Gospel and act according to that belief. We can never have apathy where others have true need because the Gospel transforms us to care about others in a way that takes action. If for some reason we are unable to act to meet that need, we should at least have emotions that reveal we do care.

We will experience positive emotions if we adopt and live God's value system, for that is how we are designed. When we serve others in sacrificial love, our relationships with them will improve and we will have even greater blessing in relationship. Apathy and boredom both reveal that we should be pursuing positive emotions through living God's value system. Their presence indicates selfishness in our value systems that we need to address.

7 Pride and Envy

We have all felt pride and envy and have often already used them to evaluate our value systems. They serve as a good first example of the way two emotions flow from the same underlying value. They also are some of the easiest emotions to help us understand the connection between values, desires, and emotions.

Pride

Pride is not usually thought of as an emotion, and there are certainly significant uses of the word “pride” that are clearly not emotion. However, we do speak of being proud of ourselves. This is the emotional aspect of pride. It is the feeling we experience when we think we have done something well. It is being happy with ourselves for a particular reason.

The cause for this feeling can either be right or wrong. We feel pride when we have done something good and have done it well. But we can also be proud of ourselves when we have done something selfish or evil. Either way, the emo-

tion is the same but the source is different. That is, the good feeling is present but the reason for it can be either good or evil. This emotion should make it easy for us to understand what is happening in our hearts.

Let us consider what happens when we succeed at something, from getting a great score on a math test, winning a race or game, or being promoted at work. We are proud that we did well and we feel good. There is nothing wrong with this as long as the activity we are proud of is a noble one. Doing well at something that is good *should* make us feel good; it is our emotional reward for doing what is right.

However, being proud because we did something better than *others* is a different matter. We must not feel good or proud because we consider ourselves better than others. Pride seeks to reduce others to a servant's role while exalting self, but Jesus taught that greatness in his Kingdom comes from serving.

Once we begin taking pleasure in placing ourselves above others, we reveal that our value systems are not like God's. God's value system serves others and helps them, but taking pleasure in the subservience of others diminishes them. Rather than helping others to succeed or helping them achieve something, we internally gloat over our own superiority. It is not difficult to see why this is relationally damaging.

Pride often reveals the desire to be served by others, to be greater than others, or to look good in the eyes of others. It is the temptation to jump from the temple as a spectacle in order to gain acclaim. The value system underlying these desires is one that destroys relationships. If we seek to promote ourselves above others or to look good by being better

than others instead of serving them, ultimately we will find that we will be neither happy nor liked. But if we can excel while serving others along the way, we will be rewarded by having many recognize the glory of God shining through us.

Envy

We are usually more aware of our negative feelings and emotions than the positive ones that make us feel good. Where we may have a difficult time recognizing the value system behind pride (especially because we are so busy feeling good that we do not think about values), we give much more attention to envy. Our pride often does not allow us to see the true effect we have on others because pride is a focus on self. Envy, on the other hand, screams out at us, making it difficult to ignore.

The type of envy I am addressing here is the feeling we experience when we are envious of others. This is not jealousy, which will be the subject of a later chapter. Envy is the negative counterpart to the feeling of pride. It is the opposite of feeling good when we have done something well. It occurs when we feel bad or upset because someone else has done something better than we have. This emotion flows from the *exact same values* as the good feeling we get when we come out more favorably in our comparisons to others. When we “win” we feel good, but when we “lose” we feel terrible.

We can often learn more from envy than from pride because when we win we become so focused on self that we tend to ignore what is in our heart. However, when we lose we are much more aware of our emotional state. If we are unaware of our pride, we certainly cannot fail to notice our envy. They both flow from the same values dwelling in

our hearts. If we have a problem with envy, we *also* have a problem with pride.

Envy is feeling bad because we received a mark of ninety-nine percent on the exam and someone else achieved one hundred percent. Envy is feeling bad when we finish in second place. Envy is feeling bad when someone “less” than us does better than we do. We might measure them as being lesser because they are younger than we are, not as smart as we think we are, are of a different gender, or perhaps for some other reason. The problem is that we have placed them beneath us, and we believe that they should have to serve us or be second to us.

These feelings flow from a wrong view of ourselves. Achieving ninety-nine percent or finishing in second place demonstrates that we have done well. But an ugly value system can destroy the moment of success. Instead of seeing what was actually achieved, there is a comparison of self to others. In that moment we feel envy at another’s success. Sometimes envy leads us to make excuses about why we lost or why the other won. We complain, if only internally, and in that moment the value system we truly possess is revealed.

Pride and envy can be felt according to the three areas of temptation and desire that Christ experienced. We can envy the pleasures that others experience, how they look or succeed, or the amount of power and wealth they possess. Pride exalts self over others, flaunting its idea of success; envy complains that life is not fair.

When we desire to look good in the eyes of others, we leap from the pinnacle of the temple to be noticed by all. We want everyone to notice how great we are, but in the process we destroy our relationships. Pride and envy are

both relational killers because they focus on self rather than on others.

God calls us to be like him and to compare ourselves only to him. His value system is the only true path to greatness. To be like him is to find fulfillment not in the accolades of the world but in service to others. To be like him is to take joy in the success of others.

One reason why it is so easy to be successful in serving others is because so few people are trying to do it. Yet if we are surrounded by sacrificially loving servants, we will find they want to help us also become greater servants. They will never attempt to eliminate us from competing in the service of others.

Our emotions reveal our desires, which reveal our value systems. Our value systems, when they are unlike God's, betray our love of pleasure, our love of attention and self-glory, and our love of power and having an earthly kingdom. We must learn to see how our emotions are either confirming our likeness to Christ or revealing areas that need to change. Our problems with pride and envy can be eliminated when we serve others by helping *them* become successful. The true path to success in God's eyes is being like Christ and having his value system of sacrificial love for the benefit of others.

8 Sadness and Happiness

Two of the simplest and strongest indicators of whether or not we are achieving our values are sadness and happiness. Our responses can be subtle or sublime, but we would be foolish to ignore how much these emotions can teach us about ourselves. Whether we are amused or disappointed, our values speak to us.

Sadness

We have all experienced sadness. There are genuine feelings of sadness from legitimate sources, and there are times when we deliberately try to punish ourselves with sadness. Sometimes we sulk and throw a “self-pity party.” Occasionally, we punish ourselves by deliberately remaining sad and refusing to be comforted because we believe we deserve to feel bad.

There seems to be various levels or stages of sadness—or at least different manifestations of it. Let me present an arbitrary scale of sadness along the emotional experiences of melancholy, disappointment, grief, and despair.

Although melancholy is a description of the feeling of sadness, I prefer to think of melancholy as a feeling we get “for no reason.” That is, occasionally we feel sad but we are not sure why. Of course, there is always a reason even if we are not aware of it at a conscious level. For instance, when I become very sleepy I can easily become sad or depressed. In that case, I know that a good night’s rest will remove that feeling. Similarly, such feelings of sadness can also be induced by indulging in substances with after-effects that produce melancholy. Some well-known examples of this are sugar, caffeine, and alcohol.¹

Disappointment is connected with an expectation of self, others, or a situation. We become disappointed when what we wanted or desired to happen did not occur. For example, Cain brought his offering to God with the expectation that God would be pleased with his gift.² But God was not satisfied; and so in turn, Cain was not satisfied with God. For Cain, what began with disappointment soon turned into anger. Disappointment often precedes anger, and an angry person usually begins as a disappointed person.

Jonah is a classic example of disappointment.³ Even though he experienced God’s patience and mercy for himself, he could not anticipate joy at the prospect of Nineveh’s repentance. Instead, he was disappointed when God forgave them and became angry at God for not judging them. Jonah certainly did not share God’s value system.

Grief is experienced over the loss of something. At this stage of sadness we experience emotion strong enough that

¹ See Appendix: Emotions and Our Bodies

² Genesis 4:5

³ Jonah 3:10-4:2

memories and special occasions (such as anniversaries or important recurring events) become painful. In the Bible, grief is often expressed by the tearing of clothes, either at the death of a loved one or from some other great loss. In the New Testament, Jesus is recorded as weeping on several occasions: once at the death of Lazarus,⁴ once over Jerusalem,⁵ and once in the Garden of Gethsemane when he anticipated separation from his Father.⁶ Jesus was well-acquainted with grief.

Despair is the feeling we experience when we believe that life will never be good again. If our experience of sadness becomes overwhelming or constant over a period of time we sometimes begin to forget how life was without it. Despair is the loss of hope, and people who have lost hope often say, “I will never be happy again.” When people lose hope they become very susceptible to temptation because they believe nothing really matters anymore. Despair, if it is not resolved, ultimately ends in depression.

In Psalm 42-43 the writer asked himself, “Why so downcast, O my soul?” It is common for people to ask questions like this during the times they feel God has rejected them or when they imagine his absence in a time of need. Prolonged periods of sadness often indicate an inner struggle of faith. It is important during these times to gain a clear understanding of the promises of God and his purposes for our lives.

Sadness can also be felt for others: empathy is feeling the emotions of others. However, we need to be aware that we feel emotion based on *our own* value systems and not

⁴ John 11:35

⁵ Luke 19:41

⁶ Hebrews 5:7

the other person's value system. We assume that someone must feel as we would feel should we experience the same difficulty. However, a person can be in a situation that we might consider to be sad, but he does not actually feel sad. This is because he has a different value system than we do, either formed previous to his hardship or because of it.

The source of sadness

When we experience sadness we need to ask ourselves, "What is it that I desire and what value drives that desire?" Sadness should cause us to pause and think about what is happening within our hearts, for this emotion can result from unfulfilled desires over issues of bodily appetites, personal admiration, and control.

When our bodily appetites and desires are not fulfilled in the way we anticipate, we often become sad. Regardless of the appetite, we can be disappointed when it is not satisfied because that which we value is actually deeper even than the appetite. The degree of our sadness indicates the degree of how important the underlying issue is to us.

If our desire to be admired or adored or loved goes unfulfilled, or if people do not treat us as we want to be treated, we might become sad. Similarly, if our status is not at the level we desire, or if we have been mistreated, snubbed or hurt by others, we might become sad or depressed. The desire to have people like us, and value us as much as we value ourselves, often leads to disappointment in our relationships. We need to be able to appraise ourselves as God does and find our joy in how much we are like him.

We can become sad and disappointed when our desires to have power, control, and our own kingdoms are not met. It may be as simple as not reaching the goals we have set for

ourselves, regardless of whether or not they are realistic. We can experience despair any time we feel powerless within a situation that we do not like, such as a relationship or a job.

The cure for sadness depends on what is valued apart from God's value system of sacrificial love. Be aware that possessing God's value system does not guarantee that we will be happy all the time. Remember that Jesus' sadness, weeping, and suffering were all experienced *because of* his value system.

Sometimes we are sad because of other people's situations and circumstances; we are sad because we want better things for them. Even in this the issue might be one of control. We erroneously believe that if we were more powerful we could fix the problems in this world. But sadness over the circumstances of others can have a positive outcome if we work to make the lives of others better. It can motivate us to stop living in luxury and meet the needs of others less fortunate than we are.

Avoidance of sadness often leads people away from God's value system since sacrifice can sometimes produce temporary sadness over personal loss. Unfortunately, we often prefer happiness to goodness. We need to realize that sadness is not always a sign of having the wrong value system and is not always to be avoided.

We must also be careful never to allow sadness to overwhelm us. Jesus' sadness in facing the cross was balanced by his hope and joy in the result of his suffering. He acted in spite of sorrow to achieve the good end for which he suffered. When we endure sorrow while practicing sacrificial love, we must keep our eyes focused firmly on the good that it produces and not on the cost to ourselves.

Most often, sadness enters our lives because we are

seeking happiness in what is ultimately not part of God's value system. We seek happiness in our bodily appetites, in what people think of us, and in power and possessions. This, in itself, is not wrong. However, when we seek these as more important than being good⁷ and more important than being like Christ, we place ourselves into a dangerous situation.

Happiness

Happiness is one of the prime motivators of all people. We desire to be happy and we do that which we believe, at least in the moment, will make us happy. We also want those we love to be happy. Feelings of happiness are usually described with words such as amusement, contentment, satisfaction, peace, and elation. Where does happiness come from and why do we experience it? Again, we need to examine the three areas of desire presented to Jesus when he was tempted.

A person can be happy if his bodily appetites are fulfilled. This is the initial source of addictions. Basically, addictions are a way of seeking happiness in a bodily appetite. For example, eating food makes us feel happy, so we often eat more food and more frequently than our bodies have physical need for. As with any bodily appetite, the positive feeling we receive from its fulfillment is only temporary. If we are covering up issues in our value systems with the pleasure we obtain from bodily appetites, it is only a matter of time before the appetites to which we have become slaves begin to damage our relationships.

⁷ Remember, this is the point of Jesus' temptation. It is better to be good than to have your appetites met, to have people like you, and to have your own kingdom.

Being “in love” also produces chemicals within us that make us feel good and happy. Unfortunately, many people chase after this feeling even when it means abandoning current relationships. Others become discouraged once the “in love” feeling diminishes and their happiness with the relationship begins to fade.

We become happy when we believe people like us. We feel good if we are admired and adored. If we knew we could land safely, many of us would throw ourselves off tall buildings in order to gain attention. We seek to fulfill this same desire in many different ways any time we act primarily to cause others to like us or approve of us. This can be through giving others what we think they want from us, whether it be a friendly look or a generous gift. The “class clown” acts as he does in order to receive attention and to hopefully be liked for his antics. Athletes can be motivated by prestige, while academicians like to be known for how intelligent they are.

Consider how much we do that is governed by what other people—even strangers—think of us. Many of our behaviors are motivated by the desire to be part of a group. Sometimes the temptation is to participate in an activity for the sake of approval rather than for doing what we know is right. Godliness requires doing what is good regardless of how others respond to us or treat us.

Happiness can also be felt when we are obtaining that which we desire in terms of our personal kingdoms. We seek our own earthly kingdoms through accumulating possessions, wealth, and power, and by having people serve us according to how we feel we deserve to be treated. Shopping makes us happy because it satisfies our current desires for new clothes or toys. However, happiness in earthly king-

doms is transient, which explains how some people never seem to have enough money, possessions, or power.

Ultimately, when we are happy it is because we are achieving our value systems. In other words, we are getting what we desire or want. Our value systems are most often revealed by what makes us happy. But, as it is with pride, we are often too busy being happy to think about our value systems, especially when what is making us happy is not a good thing. Contrary to popular thought, it is better to be good than to feel happy.

Much of the time, given the choice between being happy and being good, we choose to be happy. But happiness found in values that are contrary to God's value system will never bring permanent happiness. We were created for relationship and need to find happiness in relationship. The happiness we can have with one another is dependent on our having and living God's value system.

Life will disappoint us and we need the source of our happiness to be the right one. Once we begin to see life from the perspective that God intends for us, we will find more happiness in the blessings of God's value system than anything else. If we are motivated by God's value system then the experiences of bodily appetite, human relationship, and personal possessions will begin to function in ways that will bring deep satisfaction and contentment.

Do not confuse feeling good with being good

We need to pause for a word of caution. *Emotions do not teach us anything about whether our values are right or wrong.* We can be happy about what is wrong and sad about what is truly good. The emotions we experience only reveal whether or not something is *important* to us. *They only re-*

veal whether or not we are receiving or achieving the desires that flow from our value systems.

Do not use a feeling to determine what is right or wrong. Feeling good about something does not make it right, and feeling bad about something does not make it wrong. The emotions are positive and negative, but that does not determine whether the underlying value is positive or negative in the eyes of God.

Our value systems are composed of what we *think* is right or wrong. The beliefs behind our values are formed through what we have been taught about good and evil or about what God wants us to do. But what we believe or have been taught may not be an accurate representation of God's value system. Thus, our value systems might be causing us to be happy or sad, but the emotions we are experiencing are actually very different from what God would have us experience, even though we might be trying to please him.

Some versions of the Bible translate the word "blessed" as "happy." For example, Psalm 1:1-2 says, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night." The blessing of God does bring happiness, although blessing and happiness are not exactly the same thing. God's blessing often results in happiness, because when we know and do his value system, we become like him. When we live according to why we were created it produces happiness in us.

The primacy of relationship

People look for happiness in bodily appetites, relationships, power, and wealth. Yet the most important of these is

relationship because we were created for relationship. This explains why relationships bring us more happiness and sadness than the other areas. When we live by God's value system, which is primarily relational, our relationships will bring us more happiness than if we practice our own value systems. Of course, the fullest extent of this happiness can only be experienced when those we are in relationship with are *also* attempting to practice sacrificial love.

Unfortunately, our ability to function in relationship is one of the most damaged parts of us. We see this recorded in the case of Adam and Eve. Immediately after eating from the forbidden tree they began fighting with each other.⁸ Once we choose our own value systems over God's, we tend to do that which is relationally destructive. Our sinful value systems invite death, which is relational separation. Eternal death, or hell, is permanent relational failure. The day Adam and Eve ate the fruit, part of their relationship with one another died; and part of their relationship with God died, too. The primary death they experienced that day was a relational death.

Whenever we live selfishly it is as though we are deciding to take from the Tree and choose our own definitions of good and evil. Each time we choose to put our sinful values ahead of God's, our relationships experience death. Because dying relationships cause us to experience more sadness than happiness, we instead turn to bodily appetites, power, and possessions for happiness. Ultimately, because of the pains we suffer in relationships, we close off portions of our hearts to those we love.

⁸ In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve began hiding from one another as indicated by covering their nakedness. When God confronted them for their sin, Adam blamed both God and Eve for his problems. Eve in turn blamed the serpent that God had created.

Since we were created for relationship we can only experience the fullness of happiness that God intends for us by living a value system that enhances relationship. When two people both practice sacrificial love for one another they will be happy together. But once one or both individuals begin seeking happiness in what is forbidden (desires in defiance to God's value system) the relationship suffers and begins to die.

We need to be fully aware of what we are seeking as the source of our happiness. If our lives are dominated by seeking happiness in appetites and having our own way more than in pursuing good relationships, it indicates that we have areas of relationship that are in need of restoration. We must also consider whether or not our lives are characterized by sadness. If they are, we are not pursuing God's values and are being disappointed in our pursuit of worldly values.

However, if our happiness is in becoming like Christ and adopting his value system then we will find joy in serving others and watching them be transformed as well. If serving others and sacrificing for them does not sound like the pathway to happiness, it reveals how unlike Christ we truly are. We might believe that we have his value system, but if we are not finding happiness in the practice of it, then we probably have not adopted it. It may be something we are attempting to do without an inner transformation by the Spirit, or it may be that we still cherish our own value systems deep within our hearts.

We were created for relationship and God wants us to enjoy good and happy relationships. Happiness and sadness are powerful indicators revealing how we feel about the relationships we are in, and they can be used for discovering

the parts of our hearts that need to be transformed. Of all the emotions, happiness and sadness most clearly express how we feel about the quality of our relationships—a quality that depends on how well we are practicing God's value system.

9 Love, Loneliness, and Jealousy

Christians often avoid talking about the feeling of love, but not because we do not enjoy it, for we are glad when it is present. Rather, it is because we often hear Christian teachers say that love isn't a feeling. This is true, insofar as we have many different uses for the word love. The truest form of love is sacrificial *action* for the benefit of others.

However, many of us are strangers to the emotion we call love. That does not mean that we have not experienced it, but rather that we do not experience it often or continuously. This feeling of love may also be described as romance: It is how we feel when we are "in love" with someone.

The emotion of love has two parts to it. First, there is the emotion of being loved; that is, how we feel when someone loves us. Second, there is the emotion of loving someone; that is, how we feel when we believe we love someone. They are related but different.

We experience the feeling of being loved when someone does something to us or for us that pleases our desires. There are different levels of the emotions we experience

when we feel love. At the most intense level, we can have a “madly in love” feeling and at the lowest level we might simply be pleased that someone, even a stranger, let us ahead of them in the grocery line. These emotions flow from the same source but are obviously two extremes.

There are also many aspects to this feeling of being loved. Feeling loved can relate to our safety and security. It can be having our physical appetites and our emotional needs met. With love, different parts of us are touched, both internally and externally. However, we do not truly feel loved unless there are actions to prove the words. There must be something done to us that makes us *believe* we are loved; the emotions of love require actions in order for us to feel loved.

The second emotional part of love is the emotion we feel when we love someone. This can be an extreme feeling of love for another person, or simply a self-satisfaction that we did something that was kind to someone in need. Loving someone can result in a person being flustered and overwhelmed by emotion when in the presence of the object of the affection. It can also be a subtle feeling of affection as toward a child, or simply goodwill to a neighbor. The kinds of emotions and the extent to which we feel them depends on the nature of the relationship. We have one type of emotion toward a spouse, another toward our parents and children, another toward friends, and still another kind toward strangers for whom we have empathy or pity.

Strong feelings of love toward someone we hardly know can often be confusing. What we feel is a combination of happiness and hormones that we commonly refer to as “being in love.” We can feel the emotion of “being in love” even if the other person does not know we exist. Thus, it can oc-

cur only in our minds regardless of any actions, reality, or reciprocation. Knowing this helps us understand the true nature of this emotion.

Because many people equate love with the emotion we call love, they also speak of losing “that loving feeling.” They may say that they have “fallen out of love” or “I don’t love him anymore.” Of course, what they often really mean is that the strong emotion is no longer present. This explains why Christians continuously stress the idea that love is not a feeling but an act of the will.

However, if emotions reveal what is important to us, we cannot avoid this emotion that plays such a large role in our relationships. We must understand why we have these emotions of loving and being loved. Gaining understanding of them gives us insight and clarity into why we feel “in love” or why we no longer feel our relationship is as romantic as it once was.

Love and value systems

Unsurprisingly, our emotions about love have everything to do with our value systems. Remember, relationships are built on common value systems. Our emotions flow out of our desires which flow from our value systems. We desire to have our values fulfilled for our benefit and we want people to do for us what *we* value. Therefore, we feel loved when others do what we desire. The more important a fulfilled value is to us, the stronger our emotional feeling of being loved.

When we feel loved, it is because someone is fulfilling our values on our behalf. When another person does *our* value system *to us*, we feel loved. Conversely, when the opposite of what we value is done to us, we feel unloved.

When someone acts against our value systems, it hurts us. The depth of that injury is directly related to the importance we place on the value connected to it.

The three areas of Jesus' temptation are also the three aspects of life that are important to us, whether it is fulfilling our bodily appetites, our desire to be adored, or our desire to be in control. Our value systems are fashioned from those three areas, so whatever is valuable to us in those three areas affects our feelings of love. This explains the commonality we all share in what it means to feel loved, but also the differences. There are certain values for which we share a common need, and there are other values on which we do not agree.

We feel loved when someone meets our value systems in the three areas of desire, but of the three areas, our need for recognition and adoration has the most bearing on relationship. Although the other two areas are significant, knowing that we are loved and adored for who we are counters feelings of rejection produced by differences in other parts of our value system.

The desire for recognition is a huge part of the human value system. That is why we need to hear so often that we are loved, adored, and special to other people. It is why we typically do not believe others admire us if we cannot confirm it in ourselves. And it is why we must first *believe* someone loves us before we can gain the emotional benefit of feeling loved by him or her. In other words, *it is much easier to feel that you love someone than for you to feel that they love you.*

Our emotion of being loved is dependent on someone doing our value systems to us. I feel loved when someone fulfills my bodily appetites in the way I desire. I feel loved

when someone adores me and likes me. I feel loved when someone meets my desires for power, control, and possessions. When they do all this for me (meeting my value system for me), I feel happy, and being happy in relationship is the emotion we call love.

When we do another person's value system to them, they feel loved. However, when we do *our* value system to another person they may or may not feel loved. It all depends on whether or not we share the same values. The closer two people are in value system, the more easily it is for them to love one another and the more consistent their feelings of loving and being loved. Romance is all about shared value system in relationship.

Let us examine a typical person's value system regarding the emotion of "being in love" and consider what happens when a person begins to have that "loving feeling." To make it more interesting, we will use an imaginary couple, Tim and Karen. When they first meet, they will have little understanding of each other's value system.

Initially, Tim imagines that Karen meets the desires of his value system. Tim also believes that Karen will think that he can meet her desires. Finally, and most importantly, Tim believes that he and Karen share many of the same values. Without knowing much about Karen, except perhaps her physical appearance, Tim already sees the two of them as a match *in value system*. Tim's feelings of being "in love" are pure imagination at this point, and time will dissipate his illusion.

The biggest part of Tim's value system that he desires to share is Tim. He wants life to revolve around him. He wants his needs met. And he wants to be happy. Unsurprisingly, Karen has those same values, but about Karen instead

of Tim. As each one discovers that the other person's value system has a lot more to do with self rather than the other, they begin to lose some of that loving feeling.

Over time, it becomes apparent that each one had projected his or her own value system on to the other. That is, they assumed that their value systems were alike but became disappointed with the other person as they discovered the differences. Since relationship is built on a common value system, it was easy for Tim to enter that relationship when he presumed Karen's value system was like his. However, when he discovered the reality of her different values, the relationship began to break down, and the emotional feelings shifted from positive to negative.

If you have ever heard a discussion about the "five love languages" you will realize that this is a deeper understanding of what is being described with them. The "love languages" are only expressions of our value systems that produce happiness and other emotions. But, instead of focusing on doing certain things, we need to see into our own hearts and the hearts of others and understand that it is our value systems that produce those desires for expressions of love.

When I feel that I love someone, I will do *my* value system to her more naturally than I do her own value system to her. Thus, I can *feel* that I love her and I may even be doing loving actions toward her (according to my definitions) but she may still not feel loved by me. This is because my actions are based on what makes *me* feel loved according to my value system rather than the other person's value system.

In order for two people to connect and both feel the emotion of love they must have a clear understanding of *both* of their value systems. Each must not only know his

own value system, but also the value system of the other person. Two people may share many of the same values but still not have the emotion of love. Although I will discuss this more thoroughly in a later chapter, the cause of the loss of emotion stems from a growing knowledge of the *differences* in their value systems.

When we hurt one another in relationship because of conflict over value system, it produces pain and sadness. If we feel misunderstood or rejected, we learn to hide our true values which denies us the possibility of having those values met by the other person. When we feel or believe that another person is not meeting our value system, we are measuring how well they are caring for our physical needs, how well they demonstrate their adoration of us, or whether or not they are giving us our own way and the things we desire. Even though we may share many common values, if the most important values in these three areas are not addressed we will lose the emotion of love because of the conflict that arises between us over our differences. Relationship and emotions are all about value systems.

For example, a husband and wife may share many common values regarding life goals and morality. However, there can still be other values not held in common that destroy loving feelings. One may be continually bothered by something another person does—even by relatively unimportant acts such as dirty laundry on the floor, toothpaste “incorrectly” squeezed, cupboard doors left open, or lights left on. Agitation produced over years can diminish positive emotions and adversely affect the relationship.

Unless there is greater happiness from other positive experiences in the relationship, one or both people will begin to lose their loving feelings. If this can occur because

of minor issues, even more permanent damage is caused by fighting, arguing, and extreme conflict. The issues that cause the anger and frustration must be dealt with through confession, repentance, forgiveness and restoration.¹ Most importantly, sinful behavior must be replaced with consistent loving action or the relationship will slowly die.

Even little issues of value system can destroy loving feelings. Any difference in value system creates some degree of tension or conflict. When things are not done the way we prefer, we feel that we are not loved. Instead, we begin to think that the other person is more concerned with himself than with doing this one small thing for us.

We become more disappointed with another person as we discover how dissimilar we truly are and how we really do not share all the same values. Over time, all relationships experience these disappointments. That is why it is easier to *feel* more in love with those whom we do not yet know very well. We are still unaware of how different they are from us and we have not yet experienced much, if any, disappointment with them.²

¹ See *God's Value System* Chapter 4: Restoring Relationship for a discussion of these relational tools.

² A new parent bonds to her baby by projecting her value system onto the infant. As the child grows, his selfish value system is demonstrated. This conflict brings pain to the parent. At that point, the goal of parenting is establishing the parent's value system into the heart of the child. The quality of the relationship the parent and child will ultimately share is dependent on which values they hold in common.

In adoption and foster care of non-infant children, there can be issues of an emotional feeling of love for the child because there is often significant conflict produced from the child's value system. The normal time of projecting one's value system on the child is lost, along with the positive emotions. Until the child conforms to the parent's value system, many emotions may be negative rather than positive.

Some of what we desire is neither right nor wrong. There is no right or wrong way to squeeze the toothpaste tube, yet our belief about it is a part of who we are. However, the real issue is how we treat others. What is right or wrong is how willing we are to serve another person in love. What is right or wrong is how much we seek to maintain a loving relationship when we have a conflict over non-moral values.

Restoring loving feelings

In order to repair the damage done to relationship, both participants must begin to focus on adopting God's value system of sacrificial love for the benefit of the other person. They must also learn what is important to the other person and seek to serve him or her in those areas. Each one must have a clear understanding of what he desires and believes is important, and he must communicate it clearly. From that understanding, they can begin to love the other person sacrificially.

When I love sacrificially, it means that I seek to do what I know makes another person feel happy and loved. It means I change my own value system if there are portions of it that are selfish. I must modify my behavior if I know I regularly do something that annoys the one I love. I also need to focus on what is most important in my value system that the other does for me rather than focus on the trivial items that are bothering me or left undone.

If a husband and wife want to restore romance to their relationship they must both seek to have sacrificial love for each other. If only one is pursuing sacrificial love while the other remains selfish the relationship problems will not be resolved. Where damage has been done to the relationship by sin, these issues must be confessed and repented of so

that the big problems and hurts can be resolved. A couple will never solve issues of annoyance and restore romance if one or both partners have not adopted God's value system and continue to bring conflict to the relationship.

As both begin to live according to God's value system they will both naturally do to the other person what they want done in return. Since they share the same value system, what one does is what the other also desires. This will not encompass every desire and interest in life, but it will solve most relationship issues. Two people both seeking to sacrifice for each other will form a beautiful relationship.

Without honest and open discussion regarding the desires each has in terms of bodily appetites, being adored, and how each wants things done, a couple will not learn which of their desires is reasonable and which is selfish compared to God's value system. If something can be done to serve the other according to what she deems important, he must be willing to do what makes her happy in the relationship. However, as he does her value system to her, he needs to act only insofar as it is not in conflict with God's value system. He must not create a selfish monster out of the other person or allow himself to be exploited.

When the little aspects of life begin to bother us, we have a few options. We can choose to experience a lot of negative emotion, such as anger or sadness that relate to not getting our own way; or we can overrule our value systems with a more powerful value or desire. Instead of focusing on our value in the area of frustration, we keep our minds on something more important to us: the relationship we desire to achieve with the other person and our desire to be like Christ and to have sacrificial love.

Loving our children

Most of my previous illustrations relate to husband and wife relationships, but these ideas of love apply similarly to all other relationships. If we want to make our children (or anyone else) feel loved, we need to follow the same steps. We need to demonstrate love to our children in these same three areas that are important to us. Parents must meet the physical needs of their children, including hugging and holding them. Parents must let their children know that they are proud of them and enjoy them. And parents must also create strong family bonds by giving each child a role in the family's "kingdom."

Our children need to be held, touched, hugged, and fed. They must experience these bodily needs being fulfilled by their parents. Children also need to know that we are pleased with them and that we think they are special and wonderful. They need to feel that we love them by our words, encouragement, and our applauding their successes. Our children need to know that we also value what they believe is important in life and the goals that they are pursuing. They love it when we listen to their dreams and share the excitement they have for their activities and future. We must demonstrate how much we value what they value and encourage them to speak freely about what is in their hearts.

If you fail to meet the legitimate values of your child, she will seek to have the values of her heart fulfilled by people outside of your family. She will be susceptible to exploitation, mistaking true love with the inadequate replacement of the world. If you do not take your child's dreams seriously, someone else will come into her life who will. And that someone will have more influence in her life than you because he is forming a relationship with your child over a

value system that you have rejected. This is most serious when non-moral values become a bridge to ungodly moral values.

The value systems of our children are as complex as ours. There are aspects that are good and desires that are evil, and it is not always easy for us to understand all that transpires within their hearts. Guide them toward sacrificial love and the desire to meet the needs of others. We must meet the needs of our children, but we must also train them to love sacrificially so that they can learn godly ways in which to meet the needs of others.

Loneliness

With a clear understanding of love, loneliness becomes very easy to understand. Loneliness develops from a sense of loss. The loss may be imagined, or there might be something truly missing. Nostalgia is a mild form of this sense of loss, but it is usually broader in scope than loneliness, which has to do with relationship.

Personal loneliness springs from a feeling of being unloved. We feel it when we sense the loss of loving emotions. Loneliness occurs when we feel that those closest to us do not truly love us according to our own value systems.

Even within a relationship we can experience feelings of loneliness. We may feel alone in what we value, forcing us to hide the deepest parts of who we think we are. Loneliness is believing that we have no one in our lives to love us and to meet our value systems for us at the deepest level. Being loved is having someone know, accept, and do our value systems to us, while loneliness comes from a real or imagined rejection of us and our values.

Loneliness can be solved by adopting God's value sys-

tem. The natural outcome of loving others sacrificially is involvement in their lives. This change in us also produces common ground among all those in the Kingdom of God, which gives us a true community in which to belong. Values that produce loneliness are often sinful; and once we repent of them, we find happiness and freedom in godly relationship.

Jealousy

Jealousy is not purely negative; however, the experience of it is negative. That is, there can be good reasons for being jealous, and positive outcomes from it, but the feeling of jealousy is not pleasant. Jealousy is a fear of losing one's place in another's life. This fear of being replaced has two aspects to it.

First, jealousy fears that someone else will take our place in fulfilling the value system of the one we love. The deepest feelings arise when we fear that our replacement will fulfill our loved one's needs better than we do. Jealousy elicits feelings of being unacceptable in being able to fulfill the loved one's value system.

Second, jealousy fears that the love we receive will diminish or cease with the loss of our role in the life of the one we love, resulting in loneliness. With jealousy, we may not only fear losing the object of our love—we may fear the loss of being loved. It makes us feel unlovable and unworthy, and it screams out to us that our values will not be fulfilled. We feel jealous because we believe that we can be replaced and our replacement will receive the love that we currently enjoy. Thus, jealousy is an emotion that flows from our desire to be loved.

Jealousy is also about us not wanting to share the per-

son we love with another. This is the manner in which God is a jealous God. He does not want his people seeking other gods. One of the core values in an exclusive relationship (e.g. a marriage) is a desire to be the one who meets the needs of the other. Each one enjoys, desires, and needs to be the one who makes the other person feel happy and loved. Jealousy is about exclusiveness. We feel jealous if we are not the one meeting the needs of the one we love, and if we believe that someone else is meeting those needs. This makes us feel insecure, inadequate, and worst of all, fearful.

How does a lover prevent jealousy in the one he loves? He must cultivate within the loved one the knowledge that she is loved and will never be replaced. Even though there may be aspects of a different friend that are found to be lovely, the loved one will never be replaced or experience a diminishing of love. He needs to let her know that she alone meets his needs in ways that no one else ever can or will. She needs to know that she makes him feel loved.

Jealousy can be prevented by seeking to increase the depth of the relationship. If all of the most important values a person has are being met by his loved one, there will be no desire to have them met by anyone else. Without honest and open communication, along with a desire to change to meet one another's desires, we cannot be sure that we are moving toward each other instead of away from each other.

We feel loved when someone does our value system to us. We feel loving when we do our value systems to others. The concept is simple but understanding the depth of our hearts is not. The emotions of love, loneliness, and jealousy help us understand our desires. Our desires help us understand our true values. Once we understand our desires and values, and openly share them in our relationships, we learn

how to become better lovers. We will also be able to successfully cultivate the emotion of love in others.

As we use our emotions to reveal our desires and our value systems, we must be careful to evaluate whether what we desire and value matches God's standards. It is better to be good and to be like God than to have the emotion of being "in love." Unfortunately, many people would rather have this feeling than be like Christ. However, if our relationships are focused around God's value system we can have good relationships as well as good feelings.

10 Anger and Disgust

Anger and disgust are negative emotions. They do not feel good to us, but they can be very powerful motivators for good in our lives. However, if we do not understand them, or if they flow from evil desires, they can destroy our relationships very quickly.

There are many different kinds of anger, most of which are related to an offense against ourselves or someone else. Anger can also be a reaction to disappointment at not getting our own way. We have many concepts relating to anger, and the following is a list of several forms of anger.

Of the emotions and words related to anger, perhaps the mildest is frustration. Anger is easy to deal with at this point, yet it still reveals our value systems. We often do not pay attention to it because usually the emotion is not strong enough to cause us to stop and think.

Righteous indignation is the form of anger that occurs when we are bothered about something that we believe to be an injustice. Christians like to claim righteous indignation when they are bothered about something they believe

God is angered by, whether or not he actually is. Sometimes it is convenient to be angry if we can claim that our anger is in solidarity with God.

Rage is anger that is out of control. At this point, our emotional reaction is extreme, which leads to words and actions that precede thinking. A person who is full of rage has trouble controlling himself.

Resentment is a form of anger residing within the mind. It occurs when we keep thinking about an offense and continue to dwell on it. These thoughts may also be accompanied by evil ideas of how to injure the one with whom we are angry.

Bitterness is a feeling of being angry “all the time.” Although it may be a low level anger, it is the bitter person’s constant companion. When a person is bitter, his anger often overflows to other people and situations, and he has difficulty acknowledging the connection to the original issue. Almost everything in a bitter person’s life can become bothersome.

Hatred is a strong form of anger that is directed specifically against another person. When a man’s heart is full of hate, he desires bad things to happen to the object of his anger. Hatred is wanting another person to suffer and be miserable. Enmity is mutual hatred between two people or groups.

Each one of these emotions is a form of anger. The details of defining them are, again, not as important as the fact that they all flow from the same source. They are only different degrees of expressing a person’s value system.

Why do we become angry?

Anger arises when we have a strong feeling that something is not as it should be. We experience the elements of anger when we think an aspect of life is not the way it *ought* to be, or another person is not acting in the way he ought to act toward us or someone else. The crucial element to remember is that the feeling of anger flows from our value systems. It flows directly from what we desire and how we believe life should be. Anger comes as a result of our beliefs about rightness or justice, especially when we believe something is wrong.

Anger usually contains hope that the problem can be fixed. Whereas despair causes us to believe that the problem will not change, anger seeks to work toward a solution. Unfortunately, angry people do not always attempt to fix problems according to God's value system. Their goals might be similar to God's, but their methods are often very dissimilar. Although they might want good to be accomplished, they may not work toward it in a good way.

Ultimately, the emotion of anger revolves around having our appetites satisfied, being right, being in control, or appearing positively in the eyes of others. Anger flows from thinking that we are wiser than others and that they should obey us in our kingdoms. It involves wanting things to be done our way and arises when life is not happening according to our value systems.

Therefore, in order to understand our anger, we need to look for the *difference* between what is happening and the values we hold. Anger reveals what we believe is wrong and what we think needs to be changed. Our belief about what life should be like reflects the values in our hearts and directs us toward the problem we want corrected.

Two brothers, Cain and Abel, brought their offerings to God.¹ God accepted Abel's offering but did not accept Cain and his offering. Cain's response to this was anger² and, ultimately, the murder of his brother. Instead of changing himself (and thus the real problem), Cain focused his anger toward Abel. His brother was not the problem and killing his brother could not provide a solution.

Unfortunately, that is how we often deal with problems when we are angry. Instead of solving a problem with the other person, we see the other person *as* the problem and seek to fix or remove him. The people around us to whom we direct our anger are not really the problem, but we attack them as though they are. Sometimes the problem involves other people, but killing them is not the right way to solve differences. Instead we must seek to fix the problem together with the other person.

The problem for Cain was the difference between his value system and God's value system. The solution to the problem, in that case, was Cain changing his value system in order to make it like God's. When we become angry, the solution to the problem requires a change in value system, either with our own or another person's. If the person with whom we are angry is God, we can be sure that ours is the value system that must change.

Cain needed to either change reality to match his value system or change his value system to match reality. His choice of killing his brother was a complete failure. It did not solve his problem; it only created more problems. If we

¹ Genesis 4

² Genesis 4:4-5 And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.

inaccurately identify the source of trouble we will not correct it, and thus not solve our issue of anger and its underlying sinful values. Anger often destroys relationships, and Cain did the ultimate destruction of relationship when he murdered his brother.

James specifically addressed the issue of anger and conflict in relationship.³ Desires flowing from our value systems are the source of conflicts and anger. Instead of reshaping our desires in order to have sacrificial love in relationship, we seek to reshape other people. Anger then becomes destructive to relationship rather than constructive in changing us. Change can be positive if we work together and deepen our relationships by discussing our value systems, hopefully achieving similarity in the end.

If there is a disagreement of values between you and me, I usually assume that you are the one who is wrong. Anytime we assume that the other person and his value system is the problem to be fixed rather than evaluating our own value system and seeing if the problem lies within us, we will damage our relationships. If we often find ourselves becoming angry it is likely that there is something wrong within our value systems.

The fault is either internal or external. If it is inside of us, we need to change our value systems. If it is outside of us, then we need to fix the problem. Sometimes that problem is the value system of another person and sometimes it is a difficult life experience. Either way, we must attempt to fix the problem while not destroying relationships.

³ James 4:1-2 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.

If we have suffered pain or injustice and it is impossible for us to change the value system of the sinner, we must be content to accept that God has allowed us to suffer so that we might be used more significantly in his Kingdom through it. In such a circumstance our value systems must be conformed to his and we must put away any anger or bitterness we might be hiding in our hearts. We must remember that God values our being good over the fulfillment of our bodily desires, our being adored by people, or our having earthly kingdoms full of our own will being done.

Jesus and anger

If we examine the occasions when Jesus became angry we can see how he used that energy to fix the real problems that were occurring. Jesus focused his anger toward changing the offending issues. When Jesus cleared the temple of those who were exchanging money and selling livestock,⁴ his anger was channeled at resolving how people were being treated in the temple. The problem was that the Gentiles were not able to worship God peacefully because a marketplace resided in the area set aside for them to worship. Jesus' anger sought to fix the immediate problem by clearing the worship area, but he also sought to teach the Jews how their value system was different than God's.⁵

Jesus also became angry on an occasion when he was confronted for healing on the Sabbath. The Pharisees questioned whether Jesus was right in what he was doing, so he asked them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to

⁴ Matthew 21:12 And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.

⁵ Matthew 21:13 He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers."

do harm, to save life or to kill?”⁶ But they refused to answer him. Jesus was angry because of the hardness of their hearts,⁷ for healing on the Sabbath *was* doing God’s value system. The problem was that the religious leaders had rejected God’s value system and were teaching people to follow one of their own making. This difference between the two value systems produced Jesus’ anger. Jesus healed the man in order to highlight the difference between his value system and theirs.

However, he did not attack his opponents. If we were in that situation, and had Jesus’ power, many of us would heal the man and then cripple our opponents. I assume this to be true because that is often how we act when we are angry. We cripple with words and actions. We seek to do good, but we also seek to harm. But Jesus did not attack. He helped the man in need regardless of the consequence to himself.

Throughout the Bible we read that God becomes angry and that he has fearsome wrath.⁸ God’s wrath is against the problem of sin. His plan in dealing with sin was to provide a solution to our problem while preserving and extending relationship with us rather than destroying us. God the Father allowed the temporary disruption of his relationship with his Son in order to provide the permanent establishment of relationship with us. Jesus received God’s wrath while removing the wrath against us.

⁶ Mark 3:4

⁷ Mark 3:5 And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

⁸ John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

God's anger—his wrath—is about a problem. To be like God we must act as he does. We must seek to preserve relationship by dealing with the problem of sin rather than by attacking the sinner. Of course, when a person refuses to repent (that is, change his value system), relationship cannot always be restored and the problem cannot always be resolved.

Jesus knew the danger of sinful anger and how it demonstrated an unforgiving value system; therefore, he specifically warned his disciples about it.⁹ Our anger becomes sinful when we attack others rather than seek to solve problems. God intends for us to solve problems by changing our values or the values of others, but not by attacking them. Jesus taught us to be forgiving in his Kingdom, and forgiveness will always help us preserve relationship while we are in the process of changing value systems.

Disgust

Many people might consider disgust to be a negative emotion. Yet some things should disgust us, for disgust is a healthy response that often keeps us safe. Contempt, horror, and shock are emotions related to disgust.

Disgust is a reaction against something being out of place. When we see vomit, blood, or a broken bone sticking out of our flesh, we have a reaction to it. That reaction is our recognizing that something is wrong. Stomach contents, blood, and bones do not provoke negative feelings when they are where they are intended to be.

⁹ Matthew 5:22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

However, the disgust I want to consider has to do with a person's ethical system. We are disgusted when a person's value system is unusually different from the norm, or from society's, or from our own. We are disgusted by the practice of that person's value system because it seems so "out of place." We are shocked not only because he holds such values, but that he also acts on them publicly or privately. We feel disgust because of the great difference between our values and the other person's. When another person's value system is offensive to us, we experience disgust, shock, and perhaps even contempt. Their desires are so unlike ours that we are revolted by them.

Previously, I mentioned disgust occurring when a person's value system was radically different from the norm or from society's. The interesting reality behind this is how norms can change over time. Values that were once considered disgusting no longer have the same effect on the majority of people as they once did. This occurs when the value system of a culture changes.¹⁰

When a person or group of people are constantly exposed to something disgusting, they gradually experience less disgust over it. People who work around injured or dead bodies begin to stop thinking about them in the same way. They become accustomed to what most of us find shocking.

Similarly, cultural values change as people's experience and conversation regarding them become normal. Cultural values change when the disgust level drops. Where there

¹⁰ We often hear people say that they do not want us to force their values on them. However, in any culture, those who are seeking *change* are the ones who are forcing their values on those who hold to the current ideas. Instead, they should say that they no longer wish to live by the current values, admitting that they, rather than others, are demanding change.

is disgust, there will be no change; but when there is constant exposure to the disgusting, eventually no disgust will remain. Rather, there will be acceptance of the new value, followed by it being accepted as normal by the culture.

I once helped someone clean up their home, if one may use that word to describe their living conditions. I have never seen anything so filthy in my entire life! The entire place was wall-to-wall filth. Yet the people who lived in it were not bothered by it enough to clean it up. It became normal to them. The same thing happens morally to people.

In order to prevent the adoption of negative values in our lives and in the lives of those around us, there must be a continued level and expression of disgust for the values that we reject. If we do not habitually express disgust, we will eventually be overwhelmed by the numbing effect of being bombarded with the disgusting. If we do not express disgust, society will assume that we accept the value. Without resistance, society will collectively move toward a new norm. Afterwards we, along with our children, will be in danger of accepting it and allowing part of our own value systems to be molded after that which is revolting.

Value systems move from evil to good as people adopt God's value system. But once people abandon God, they also abandon his value system. It is only a belief in Someone higher and better than ourselves that causes us to pursue a value system other than our own. Otherwise, we will live according to our own desires which typically cause us to become selfish.

Anger and disgust are related because they both flow out of our belief that something is wrong. Disgust without anger will not have the strength to defend its value system. Anger without love will attack and kill rather than resolve

the problem while seeking to preserve relationship.

Differences in value systems produce conflict in relationship because they can produce anger and disgust. Understanding this will help us be careful not to sin in our anger, nor to become so accustomed to the disgusting that we embrace it rather than stand against it and see it as a problem.

11 Fear and Hope

Fear and hope are emotions relating to the biblical concepts of blessing and cursing. In the Bible, God promised the people of Israel blessing if they obeyed him and cursing if they disobeyed him.¹ The message of the Old Testament prophets centered on these two concepts. If the people would turn to God, the problems they were facing would diminish and be replaced by his provision. Blessing flowed from keeping God's covenant and resulted in experiencing God's face shining upon you,² which is an expression of fa-

¹ Deuteronomy 11:26-28 See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way that I am commanding you today, to go after other gods that you have not known.

² Numbers 6:22-27 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them, The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them."

avorable relationship.

Blessing and cursing are very strong motivators, and we use them to consider the benefits and drawbacks of each of our desires. Anything in life we desire to have for our own good is something we consider to be blessing, whether or not it really is in the eyes of God. And anything in life that we do not wish to happen, and fear happening to us, we regard as a curse. Ultimately, we define blessing as receiving our value systems and cursing as not receiving our value systems. Practically, this is the manner in which we all live.

Fear

Fear is the result of believing that harm will come to what we value. Being cursed means that I will lose what I value, and that which is important to me will be harmed or lost. Fear strikes when we believe that which is important or valuable to us can be lost or taken away.

We face the fear of loss in three areas. We fear that our bodily needs will not be met, or that something will happen to us physically, including sickness, death, and injury. We also fear that we will not be loved or that we will lose the love that we currently receive. This type of fear worries that we will not be treated according to our desires, or that we will not receive the praise or adoration we desire or deserve. The last area of fear is that we will not receive what we desire in life in terms of our own kingdoms. We fear that we will lose or not receive the power, wealth, and possessions that are important to us. Ultimately, it is a fear of not being in control.

These three types of fear usually move us to prevent them from becoming reality. How we view life, others, and happiness are all revealed in how vulnerable we feel.

Strangely, our happiness itself can be stolen away simply by the fear of losing that happiness. Worry and fear can have a power of their own, even if there is no current loss. Fear of *potential* loss can produce a real emotional loss and be powerful enough to steal away our happiness. Many of the emotions already discussed relate specifically to our desire for happiness and our fear of losing it.

We can experience strong emotional reactions merely by thinking about losing that which is important to us, such as someone we love. In terms of relationship, we can fear what might happen to our children or parents. We can fear for their safety, the outcome of their decisions, or for their relationships with God. We can fear that a relationship will fail, or that we will experience conflict with others.

Our relationships are where we experience the most numerous and most intense emotions. We were created for relationship, so naturally relationships are very important to us. Therefore, relationship is the place of some of our greatest fears. What will become of me? What will become of those I love? We fear the unknown and the future, but we dread the loss of relationship.

It was in the Garden of Eden, after eating from the forbidden tree, that man first experienced fear in relationship.³ We, like Adam, are afraid in relationship. Fear causes us to hide from one another, and it is usually a fear flowing from something we value. Our fears are tied to what we have done, or to something we are afraid will be found out. We are afraid of the negative consequences—the cursing—for our actions.

Our fears in relationship cause us to hide from one an-

³ Genesis 3:10 And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."

other. We are afraid to reveal who we truly are. Most significantly, we are afraid of revealing our value systems. The differences in our value systems lead us to relational pain that continues to produce fear. Adam hid himself from God because his value system was different from God's. He had no need to hide when his value system was the same. We hide our values because we know that once the differences are discovered it will lead to conflict or embarrassment.

Interestingly, Jesus told his disciples not to worry or be afraid.⁴ The areas he mentioned were matters of what they would eat, drink, and wear. These are important because they relate to our values of appearance, wealth, health, and security. Jesus said that if we sought first his Kingdom, and along with it the value system of the Kingdom, we could be free of this worry.

If we look again at fear in terms of the three areas of temptation Jesus faced, we recognize fear as an issue of our physical well-being, an issue of how people respond to us, and an issue of control. When we fear for our physical well-being or needs, we are actually worried about security and safety. Fears in this area produce anxiety, panic, and terror. When we fear that people will respond negatively to us, our security is shaken. Relational fear produces anxiety, shyness, embarrassment, and humiliation. Finally, when we fear losing control it produces in us worry, doubt, and anxiety about the security we desire for our future. We erroneously believe that if we could be in control then we would not be afraid.

In order to understand our fears, we need to know them in terms of loss of bodily health or unfulfilled needs. We need to know our fears as they relate to those we love,

⁴ Matthew 6:19-34

especially as to how it will affect us if we lose them. And finally, we need to know what we are afraid of losing in our personal kingdoms: our power, wealth, and control. Again, fear has to do with what we might lose, or fail to obtain or attain.

As God's value system of sacrificial love becomes our motivation, we can be free from all of these fears. Jesus was willing to lose everything for others. That is the essence of his value system. When we consider Jesus on the cross we see that he experienced the ultimate in being cursed. His bodily and physical needs were not met; instead, he was physically abused. His relationship with his Father was broken and he was humiliated and rejected by men. Finally, crucifixion was intended to be the ultimate proof that a man had lost all earthly power and control.

Jesus faced the ultimate loss and the ultimate cursing at the cross. The cross is the sum of all our fears: death, humiliation, rejection, and powerlessness. Yet, he endured it because of his value system. He sacrificed himself so that we might gain everything he lost. Jesus brought us acceptance with the Father and eternal life in God's Kingdom. With his death he met our deepest relational need.

Fear reveals that which we value as more important than serving Christ and living God's value system. It shows us what we refuse to give up for his Kingdom. Our fears dissipate as we learn to focus our values on what is truly important. Fear focused on losing that which is temporary (from an eternal perspective) distracts us from sacrificial living according to God's value system. Once we confidently live like Christ, we are released from our fears and striving for control.

Without faith we cannot extinguish fear.⁵ A fearful heart is one that is not filled with faith. Faith is required for sacrificial love, for it acts and believes that we can give up everything for the glory of God and his Kingdom.⁶ Fear seeks to control and hoard. Without faith we will be dominated by fear and unable to live by sacrificial love.

The danger in not dealing with fear is that fear then becomes part of our value systems. We become dependent on it and allow it to shape who we are. Instead of being free to live sacrificially we become so focused on the fear of loss that sacrifice becomes impossible. *Sacrifice is all about loss* even as fear is, but fear of loss is deadly to sacrificial living. The person who lives in fear cannot live a life of sacrificial love for others.

Hope

Hope is the belief that we will receive what we value. That is, it is the belief that we will be blessed. Hope is the cure to fear—especially runaway fear. Fear and hope both look to the future: one optimistically and one pessimistically. Hope allows us to look beyond our fear to the future achievement of what we desire and long for. As Christ faced death, humiliation, and the ultimate loss of control at the cross, he did so because he had hope in what his sacrificial love would accomplish.⁷

Sacrificial love has its root in hope. Sacrificial love ac-

⁵ Matthew 6:30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

⁶ cf. *God's Value System* Chapter 5: Sacrifice Requires Faith

⁷ Hebrews 12:2 Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

knowledges there is a loss but believes the sacrifice is not the end. We sacrifice because we hope. Sacrifice without hope of a better future is insanity. Yet we have hope in a resurrection, an eternal life, and a reward. We also hope that this world will be better because of the way in which we have lived. We hope that we will have made a difference to those around us whom we have loved.

Hope is a powerful motivator. Fear motivates us to protect ourselves, but hope motivates us to achieve our value systems and that which brings us happiness. Hope enables us to live Christ's value system because it sees the blessing at the end of sacrifice and pursues it in spite of the fear of loss.

Our values can be discovered by examining our hopes and dreams. What do we desire and really want in terms of bodily appetites? How do we want people to respond to us? What kind of power and control, wealth and possessions do we desire? Not everything we hope for is good. Hope can even motivate us to fulfill our ungodly values. Hope is not positive if the value system underlying it is corrupt.

We can also hope for something without ever receiving it or working toward it, but that does not mean it is not part of our value systems. For example, a person might love money without having it or working for it. Many people desire blessing in their lives, yet they do not do anything to achieve it. Likewise, we can be controlled by our desires for sinful values even if we never achieve them.

Our dreams are what we want life to be like. We can imagine what we want and how we wish our desires to be fulfilled. We can dream of having our appetites pleased, allowing our minds to portray how we would have those cravings satisfied. We can imagine how we want people to respond to us. And we can imagine the quality of the king-

dom we wish we possessed. However, our true values are measured by what we *do* and not only by what we *dream*. Our hopes are part of our value systems, but they are always limited by the deeper desires of our hearts.

If we do what is right even though we dream of doing evil, we need to deal with the sinful pleasure we receive from the dream and replace it with dreams according to God's desires. Once our imaginations are filled with God's values and desires, we will focus the energy provided by hope that will allow us to act and achieve those positive dreams. We will not be burdened with conflicting values, but will have only God's value system driving our entire life.

Both hope and fear reveal our value systems by revealing our desires. Hope believes our value systems will be fulfilled and that our goals are obtainable, while fear believes they will not be fulfilled and that we will suffer loss. Hope in itself is not positive because we can hope for that which is not good and not part of God's value system. We can be driven by hope for our desires even if those desires are not according to sacrificial love for others. Fear itself is not negative, either. Fear can prevent us from doing some of our evil desires.

Hope and fear are only emotions. They reveal our desires and value systems. We must learn to use them for that purpose. We need not be overwhelmed by fear, but instead examine it to see what we desire and value. We can then evaluate what needs to change in our lives to free us from fear. We must examine our hopes and dreams, too. Hope is positive energy, but that does not mean it is from God. Our desires and dreams must be crafted to match those that are pleasing to God.

Do not underestimate the power of blessing and curs-

ing. We all desire blessing and avoid cursing, but these are merely another way of expressing our heart's desires. True blessing means being like God through adopting his value system, while the ultimate in cursing is being unlike God and permanently forsaken by him.

12 Shame and Regret

Guilt is a legal term. It describes what we have or have not done. We are either guilty or not guilty. We either broke a law or we did not. Guilt is a legal status that has nothing to do with how we feel. We can be guilty, yet experience no feeling or emotion. This may occur through ignorance that an act was wrong, or through being taught something is permissible when, in fact, it is not. It can also happen if we do not believe that the commandment is correct for determining right and wrong.

Shame, on the other hand, is the feeling associated with guilt. It occurs when we believe we have done something wrong, regardless of whether or not we have actually done so. This emotion is only a response to what we think is true. We believe we have done something wrong and thus feel shame.

There are several aspects to shame, and we use different words to describe the different emotions related to shame. Each one of them indicates different values, and each part of the value system that is revealed relates to Jesus' tempta-

tion in the wilderness. Our emotions of shame concern our bodily appetites, what people think of us, and our kingdoms (power, control, wealth, and possessions).

The first form of shame relates to the idea of modesty. Modesty is something determined by the culture in which we live. People in different areas and in different times have held different ideas of modesty. However, every culture has rules of modesty. We feel shame if we knowingly violate these cultural rules. We may even feel shame when we observe someone else violating those rules of modesty.

Shame is also part of the feeling of shyness. Shyness begins with our feeling uncomfortable with ourselves in the present situation. It is being nervous about what we imagine others are thinking about us. This feeling arises from our desire to have others think positively about us. We experience shyness when we are not sure how others are reacting to us and our value systems because we do not know what the others value and whether or not we fit their system. Shyness usually diminishes over a period of time with people we know because we grow to understand and be comfortable with our common values.

A third type of shame is a feeling of inadequacy. We experience this emotion when we believe we do not measure up to the value systems of others. In other words, we are measuring ourselves according to our understanding of the other person's value system. When we attempt to view ourselves as we think someone else sees us, and we feel that we do not measure up to that expectation, we feel inadequate. Where shyness was ignorant of the other person's value system, inadequacy knows what is valued and thus fears rejection.

Another type of shame is embarrassment. We usually

mean this when we talk about shame. It occurs when we do not measure up to *our own* value systems. Our value systems dictate what we should be, either in our actions, words, or attitudes; and embarrassment is believing we have failed to live up to that standard. We feel shame when we fail to achieve the ideals of our value systems in terms of body, relationship, and success. Shame can also flow from a contradiction between the values we profess and the values we actually possess.

Our efforts in evangelism are often hindered by shame. We know or imagine that those around us will reject what should be the most important part of our value systems: our love for our King. But we must not let fear of rejection keep us from pointing people to Christ. Otherwise, we claim one value of loving Christ, but live by a value that denies him.

We label others as having “no shame” if they possess value systems that allow them much more freedom than our own. A person may rarely experience shame if he has no difficulty measuring up to his value system because the standard to which he holds himself is not very high. Conversely, those who are plagued with shame (feelings of guilt) do so because they have a great sense of difficulty in living up to their professed value systems. They have expectations of what they should do, or be, or achieve, but they frequently find themselves unable to fulfill it.

Finally, there is self-pity. Self-pity is feeling shame while blaming others for it. That is, we feel emotions related to shame (inadequacy, embarrassment, etc.) and we think that it is someone else’s fault. We do not believe the problem lies within our value systems, but that it lies in another person’s. The problem with this thinking is that if our value systems are really correct, we will pity the other person be-

cause of his sinful value system. Feeling sorry for ourselves is the chief indicator that the problem is within our own value systems. We feel bad because we want to hold on to our sinful values and not adopt Christ's values.

The solution to shame

There are three aspects to resolving shame. One, we need to repent of any sinful values and replace them with God's value system. Of course, this presupposes a correct understanding of God's value system. Two, we need to correctly understand the Gospel and the forgiveness God offers us. And three, we must not be overcome by our emotions, but keep trying to know the truth.

First, we must make sure that our value systems are from God. We must remove that which is not from him and not like him. For example, if we know that one of our values is not Christ-like and yet pursue it, we will have both guilt and shame. If we persist in this action, we will eventually experience a ruined conscience. It should be obvious that if we act on conflicting values we will have inner conflict. All theology is relational and relationship is based on a common value system. How can we think we will not suffer if we internally attempt to live by two opposing value systems? We literally have a war within our own hearts.

Even as two people have conflict in relationship when they possess different value systems, inner conflict results when we attempt to *change* our own value systems. Until we resolve the issue of which values we will adopt and follow, we will continue in our troubled state. We have difficulty "living with ourselves" when we are violating our value systems. Temptation is the state of deciding which desires

you will follow.¹ Sin is letting the value win that should not win; doing good is choosing to live by the value that is like Christ's.

A good (and common) example of conflicting values within us is our eating habits, which is an issue of bodily appetite. I have the value of eating healthily and eating modest portions. I also have the desire to eat whatever I like and as much of it as I can. The reality is that the value that I really believe is the value that I actually *do*. When a person begins to diet, he enters a training process with regard to his value system. Likewise, our value systems can and must be altered to fit God's value system.

The second part of resolving shame begins with understanding grace, mercy, and forgiveness. The same grace and mercy that we extend to others we need to extend to ourselves. God has treated us with forgiveness and released us from our guilt, and we must not judge ourselves more harshly than he does. If we do, we are trying to live by a value system that is unlike God's. He does not require us to judge ourselves more harshly than his own value system has judged us. If he has forgiven us should we keep punishing ourselves?

Third, we need to pick ourselves up from any failure and try again. We cannot allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by our emotions. Some negative emotions can drain the energy out of us, leaving us feeling helpless. Emotions are there to reveal our values so that our values can be changed. If we change our ideas of how God views us and what he expects of us, and then live according to what he values, our feelings will change. Changing our value systems will result in changing our emotions.

¹ James 1:14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

Regret and remorse

Although many consider feelings of regret or remorse as negative, they can actually be very positive experiences because of the effects they produce. The feelings are definitely not pleasant, but the nature of regret is positive. Regret and remorse are effectively synonyms, although remorse is stronger and is usually accompanied by a sense of guilt.

Regret is a feeling directly related to shame. Shame is the embarrassment of a moment. It might linger or may even be felt again each time we remember an uncomfortable situation. We can regret feeling ashamed or we can regret the action for which we feel shame. This explains why someone can be sorry about being caught while not being sorry for what he has done. He regrets being caught but not what he was caught doing.

Remorse differs from shame in that it feels sorry for the *consequences* of an action. It is a desire for a different outcome in life. Whenever we wish we had acted differently—*by different values*—we are being moved by remorse. Remorse can provoke shame over an experience that initially produced no shame or embarrassment.

Regret is evaluative. It seeks to measure the outcome of my value system. It looks at life and considers what happened to me, to my status, or to my possessions. It asks why something happened: “Why am I like this? Why do people treat me as they do? Why is my kingdom such as it is?” Regret looks at the answers to those questions and does not like what it sees. Regret wants different outcomes.

Therefore, regret precipitates value change. At least, that is what it is supposed to accomplish. Otherwise, we are

doomed to repeat that which we now regret or we turn to self-pity and blame others for where we are in life. When we look at the outcome, we can also look at how we arrived there. We can see the turning points and the values that brought us to where we are now.

We usually regret what we have done if it has brought us bodily injury, relational failure, financial loss, or loss of power and control. Sometimes we regret the decisions that we have made that seemed good at the time. What was once “right” is no longer considered “right” now that we have succumbed to a different viewpoint. This reveals the shifting nature of our values.

Regret and remorse are powerful emotions intended to help us change our value systems, but they only truly work as God intended as we move toward better relationships by adopting God’s value system. When we regret having done what is good because we did not like the outcome of an action, it reveals that our hearts are becoming more like the world and less like Christ.

The three areas of Jesus’ temptation can reveal to us how unlike Christ we are in our value systems. For example, we prefer to fulfill our own appetites rather than say “no” to them for God and others. We regret the outcome of our overeating but we do not regret the pleasure we took in it. Rather than having remorse over our gluttony, we merely regret our weight gain. Our preference would be to indulge our bodily appetites and suffer no negative consequences for it.

We would also rather have the recognition of people than the role of the humble servant. We want people to like us and cheer for us even if our actions do not deserve it. We would rather have our own way even in the small things of

life than give up our rights, our power, and our kingdom in order to live in God's Kingdom. It is easy to claim that we value servanthood, but our real values are betrayed when we fight with our spouse or parents in order to have our own way at home.

The difference between Christ and us is revealed through *what* we regret. If we regret our failure and sin, then we value what he values because he died to free us from bondage to sin. However, if we regret not having indulged our appetites and our desires for recognition, or if we regret the loss of our own kingdoms, then we reveal that we are not like him at all. We reveal that our value systems have not been transformed to the extent we would like others to believe they have been.

Regret produces value change, but that change can be in diverse directions. It either conforms us to Christ-likeness or it drives us away from his likeness. It really depends on what we are regretting. If we regret sin and turn from it, the outcome is life rather than death.² Along with life comes positive change and blessing in relationship. Do we regret that we were not like Christ in some moment or situation? Or, do we regret that we did not receive the indulgence of the flesh, the indulgence of recognition and attention, and the indulgence of self-gain rather than sacrifice? Do we only regret the outcome of what we do and not the sinful value behind our action?

² 2 Corinthians 7:8-10 For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

Once we have truly adopted God's value system of sacrificial love for the benefit of others, we will not feel shame in doing it. We will experience the confidence of a likeness to Christ and his pleasure in all that we do. Knowing God's value system is simple, but doing it all the time is very difficult.³ Yet we must not be overwhelmed when we fail because God will never reject us.

³ cf. *God's Value System* Chapter 5: Sacrifice Requires Faith

13 Openness In Relationship

The more time we spend with another person, the more opportunities we have for emotional experiences. Because these emotions will sometimes be positive and sometimes negative, we need to understand the long-term effect of emotions in relationship. All long-term relationships, such as those between a husband and wife, a parent and child, or among long-time friends, are subject to this effect.

Over time, it is the positive emotions that bind us together and the negative emotions that drive us apart. Some relationships become so overwhelmed by negative emotions that there is eventually a complete breakdown of the relationship. Even when a relationship is relatively good and there is not constant conflict because the people share a similar value system, the closeness can diminish over time. This occurs because of times of negative emotion.

The negative emotions that people experience in relationship are the result of their different value systems, even in small degrees. For example, a husband and wife might be talking together and the husband expresses an idea,

thought, or dream that he has. If his wife makes a comment that causes him pain, either deliberately or in ignorance, it produces in him a painful, negative emotional reaction. Depending on the sensitivity of the person who is hurt, and by the depth of the emotional reaction, a choice may be made in that moment: "I will not speak of this subject again with her because it causes me pain." Throughout the years of marriage, many such circumstances may occur.

This results in more and more of the husband's heart becoming shut away from his wife. Although there are still many areas of positive emotion, these episodes of negative emotional reaction cause him to close off portions of what truly matters to him. In this case, the accumulation of negative experiences does not necessarily cause a total breakdown in the relationship, but it does hinder the closeness in relationship that they both desire.

When we put up walls between us to protect ourselves or close doors in our hearts to another person, we both lose. One loses the joy that comes from being open and loved for who he is, and the other loses the joy that comes from knowing him deeply. We all desire to be able to speak openly about what is in our hearts while still being accepted and loved, but negative emotions teach us to avoid it. This causes an inner struggle, usually accompanied with grief. Over time, relationships become boring because we hide important parts of ourselves from one another.

What ought to happen in relationship is a greater discovery of another person. Constant openness and discovery keeps relationships alive. When we have new experiences and are free to share our thoughts and reactions to them, the relationship grows deeper and more necessary for us. This presupposes that we are pursuing God's value system

and desire to be accepted in that pursuit, and not seeking confirmation in our sinful values.

Damage in relationship is always caused because of a difference in value system. There are reasons we do not honestly discuss our values. It may be because we are embarrassed, or that we are afraid we will not be accepted should our values become known. The person who has been hurt, and who is now afraid to be open, values self-protection over openness and relationship. He is unwilling to have sacrificial love and risk being open because of a past experience. He chooses to close sections of his heart and refuses to discuss how the reactions of others have hurt him.

We need to be careful and gentle with someone who is revealing his value system to us. We must not have an attitude of superiority or speak rashly against what we have heard. If we have said or done something that has affected another person, we need to let him know that we love him and do not reject him. To share the deep issues of the heart is to share value system. Rejection of my values is always perceived as a rejection of me.

When someone is unable or unwilling to speak openly in a relationship it is likely because each one has done something wrong. One refuses to be open while the other has previously been hasty or uncaring in his words. In a growing relationship, discussing the problem will cause short-term pain for both individuals. But remember, pain is normal as two people adjust to sharing a common value system. In this example, both people need to change their value systems. This is often a difficult process, for one must be sacrificial in being open and willing to risk pain in order to extend the relationship, and the other must be sacrificial and love the other person regardless of what is being

expressed. Love is open to hearing the value system of another.

We need to exercise wisdom in relationship. Wisdom is primarily relational, and the wisdom literature of the Bible¹ primarily discusses how to have good relationships with other people. One example of this wisdom is how a wise person can understand the deep issues of someone's heart.² The wise person is willing to discover and understand the other person and grow in relationship. Love desires to know the true person and accept him without condemnation. Love also desires to be open and share the matters of the heart. This explains why both people in relationship must have "risk-taking love" in terms of communication.

Negative emotional reactions in relationships are a cue that something very important is occurring. They notify us about a choice we must make to prevent destroying the relationship slowly over time or immediately in a great explosion. To build a strong and deep relationship we must understand and control our emotions by knowing our desires and the values we hold that drive them.

We feel crushed when our desire to be open is not met with acceptance. In close relationships we must always remember that the other person is not perfect, even as we are not perfect. When someone opens up and shares a part of himself that is not perfect, he knows it is not perfect. If she shares a desire or dream, she knows that it is a desire or dream. Be very gentle with that part of someone's value system, even as you want others to be gentle with what you value.

¹ E.g. the book of Proverbs

² Proverbs 20:5 The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.

If we want others to be open and grow in relationship with us, we must be receptive to all that they are. The value system that produces good emotions and strong relationships is God's. It is having love for one another that is open and accepting, not condemning and rejecting. It continues to be open even when it experiences hurt, and it accepts criticism even when mistreated. Otherwise, over time, the relationship breaks down, falls apart, or simply becomes boring. To have great relationships we must have a great value system, and there is no greater value system than God's.

It is always difficult and painful for people to move together in value system. One or both of them must admit that he has been living selfishly and lacking sacrificial love. Relationships often break down during conflict because people are *unwilling to admit this selfishness* even though they may be willing to change it. Restoration of relationship requires confession and forgiveness, not only repentance (transformation of action).³ It is not enough to change; one must change with an acknowledgement that his previous behavior was wrong.

Insecurity and openness in relationship

Insecurity is feeling a danger that we will lose someone's love for us. When a person is not doing our value system to us, we fear that we are not truly loved. Being open with another person is based on our feeling of security in the other person's love. Our emotions confirm our desire to be loved by the other person.

Therefore, when we are open and share the deep values and secrets of our hearts, we need to have the other person

³ cf. *God's Value System* Chapter 4: Restoring Relationship

treat those things as valuable, too. If I hold something to be very valuable and I take the risk to be open and share it, I need the other person to demonstrate by her words and actions that she takes very seriously the value I place on it. If she does not place the same level of value on it, it makes me feel hurt and unloved, causing me to want to close off that area of my heart.

The importance of openness is not only for husband and wife, but is especially crucial between parent and child as well. The issues our children face vary with their age, so we have to begin early on with them to cultivate an environment in which they feel safe sharing what is valuable to them. When their values need changing, we need to gently guide them toward sacrificial love. If we are abrupt with them, they will treat us as an unsafe audience and will keep their values a secret from us. We will then lose our influence with our children until we regain openness with them.

Finally, remember that emotions do not reveal right and wrong, they only help us realize the intensity of our desires. Emotions do not reveal whether or not we should have a desire, only that we do. In order to have the emotions God has, and the ones that he desires for us, we must relinquish our value systems and replace them with his.

To do that, we must discover our values. If we desire glorious transformation, we must understand both ourselves and our desires. If we do not know what drives us, we will fail in relationships and be left without answers as to why. As our values become more like Christ's, we will find great joy in being like him and in loving as he does. We will have greater expression of those values in relationship, and greater blessing because we do.

Our value systems must conform to the Gospel; there-

fore we must know God's value system. We must apply it to our hearts with a clear understanding of God's view of our desires. If we do not, we will be led away by our desires, driven on by our emotions, and given over to destructive decisions.

When our emotions are revealing our desires, we can wisely use them to discover what we want and what we value. If we do not use our emotions for this, we are fools—people who have an opportunity to become wise, yet deliberately choose our own value systems over God's.

God's value system is sacrificial love for the benefit of others and it most looks like Jesus on the cross. The value system of the Kingdom is the good news that God has expressed sacrificial love for us: He values that we become lovers like him, free from the lusts of our bodily appetites, our struggles to be accepted, our passion to control others, and the demands of obtaining wealth.

Appendices

Emotions and Our Bodies

We should not be surprised to learn that what happens to our physical bodies could have a significant impact on our emotions. Most parents quickly discover this about their children, and most husbands and wives can easily identify it in their spouses. There are many different physical factors that can influence our emotions. Understanding this is important so that we do not become confused by physical causes of emotion while we are attempting to discover our values.

First, and perhaps the most significant, is our diet. Our emotions are affected not only by what we *do* eat but also by what we *do not* eat. Foods and drinks that may have a short-term positive effect on emotions, such as sugar or caffeine, often have a downside later. Conversely, the lack of certain nutrients from our diets can have a negative effect on us. Dehydration caused from lack of drinking water also affects us even though we are usually preoccupied with the effects of food.

The second physical factor that affects us is our need

for adequate rest. People react differently to lack of sleep, but constant weariness certainly degrades our moods. If we are not receiving sufficient amounts of sleep, it can have a dramatic effect on how we act and treat one another. Short tempers often coincide with short nights.

A third negative cause is the amount of stress in our lives. Stress is not an emotion but it flows from several negative emotions. Even physical stresses such as pain, lack of sunlight, and temperature (extreme cold or heat) should not be overlooked. Stress can produce a circular cycle: negative emotions begin to have a negative effect on our physical bodies which then leads to having more negative emotions.

When trying to understand our emotions, we need to consider the physical environment we are in or have created for ourselves. We must not blame our environment for our sinful responses to others, but we need to understand its effect on us. For example, when I become very tired late at night, I will occasionally become sad. However, being sleepy is not an excuse for being depressed; it is only a sign to me that I need to go to bed. In the morning I know I will feel fine again. Emotions of this type are cues to us to change our environments and to take care of our bodies.

There can also be physical problems where the systems of the body are over-producing or under-producing natural chemicals, and the body's systems cease to be in their proper balances. However, one must be wary of immediately turning to prescription chemicals when the need for them is mere speculation rather than objective science. Otherwise, we might ingest drugs that allow us to continue in a sinful value system yet feel good about it anyway.

The classic biblical example of a physical state affect-

ing emotions is Elijah.¹ He engaged the prophets of Baal and called down fire from heaven; but when he heard that Jezebel was out to murder him, he sat down under a tree and said, “God, please kill me.” God’s response to Elijah was provision of food and drink, and allowing him to rest. No matter who we are, we still have physical bodies that need food, drink, and sleep.

We must be careful to understand ourselves, and those around us, in terms of how we react to environmental stimuli. We must recognize our need to take care of ourselves through adequate sleep, nutrition, and exercise. We must also remember to be more gracious to others when their mood may be affected by physical causes, such as when they are tired or hungry.

Not only do our bodies affect our emotions, they also *react* to our emotions. When we are afraid or angry, our bodies experience preparation for fighting or fleeing. Our bodies become enabled to deal with environmental stimuli. We know what it feels like to become tense or have our heart rate increase when we are in danger. We also know that when we are happy, our laughter really does do us good.² Positive emotions release chemicals within us that are good for us.

This positive physical reaction also occurs when we are around people who make us happy. The people we relate to really do produce within us physical reactions as they relate to our value systems. This causes us to gravitate toward people who produce positive emotions in us, and to shy away from people who produce negative emotions.

¹ 1 Kings 18-19

² Proverbs 17:22 A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

However, we must never use this as an excuse for neglecting those we need to love.

Our emotions concerning physical stimuli keep us safe and protect us from danger and trouble. They also cause us to continue pursuing the positive emotions that feel good to us. Because long-term negative emotion can have a physical toll on the body, we need to understand and control our emotions. The whole person—emotions, body, and mind—are all affected in an interrelated way.

Emotions and Memory

Emotions play a critical role in the production of memory. The more intense an emotional experience, the more memorable something is for us. In other words, our memories are more intense depending on the emotional impact an event has on us. Remembering can reproduce the emotion because it is still deeply tied to our value systems. The more profoundly something affects us by touching the most important parts our value systems, the more we will remember it.

Unfortunately, we often strongly remember painful experiences. Over time, our memories can become filled with many painful events. Remembering pain is part of God's design, for it serves to protect us and keep us safe. However, because of sin, this pain and self-protection has wreaked havoc in our relationships. Painful memories lead us to avoid relationship more and more. If our painful relationships cause us to avoid new ones, it can lead to depression since we are avoiding the very thing we were created for: relationship.

Negative emotions lead us to become self-protective. This becomes a problem if our self-protection inhibits our ability to serve others with sacrificial love. Instead of avoiding relationship, we must find ways to repair relationships and remove our hurt. Sometimes we can form new relationships unlike past painful ones that will permit us to become free from the fears related to past injuries.

Painful memories stay not only in the minds of individuals but also in groups. The memories are shared over and over again and passed along from generation to generation. The repeated stories, both positive and negative, become the family stories or the legends and myths of a people. They shape the attitudes of a culture and reinforce a people's value system.

On a positive note, when I have officiated at funerals, it is beautiful to watch a family remember happy events associated with a loved one. Certain events are so powerful that everyone remembers them. We remember most clearly that which corresponds to the deepest values we hold, positively and negatively.

Usually where there is a memory established by negative emotion, the only way of resolving the pain is through the relational tools of confession, repentance, forgiveness, and restoration.¹ Many painful experiences can finally be put to rest once those involved realize the source of the problem was one (or both) of their value systems, and forgiveness is offered by the injured party. However, sometimes we are unable to bring both parties together to resolve

¹ An incorrect model of forgiveness seeks closure but cannot promote relationship because it does not correct the underlying issues of value system. See *God's Value System* Chapter 4: Restoring Relationship for a discussion of these relational tools.

the problem and pain. It may not be possible because one person is no longer present or is unwilling to discuss the matter. What can be done for the person who is left with pain and no one with whom relationship can be restored?

While we wait for a relationship to be restored, especially because we are waiting for a sinner to repent, we must be like Jesus on the cross. We hang patiently in love, waiting for the sinner to respond to our love and proffer of forgiveness. Trusting that our Father in heaven knows what is best for us, we suffer the consequences of sin that is not our own rather than seek to put the sinner on a cross.

Forgiveness is the strongest evidence that we are adopting God's value system of sacrificial love. Although we endure the pain of broken relationship, we must remember that Christ died for us and waited for us to accept the forgiveness he wanted to issue. Until we confessed and repented of our sin, we left God in a state like the one we are now facing.

While we wait for a sinner to repent, or if we suffer pain and the sinner is no longer able to confess, repent, and have relationship restored, there are steps that we can take to free our hearts of the burden of pain. First, we can pray and ask God to help us be like him in forgiving and understanding. Even if the other person has not or cannot confess and repent, we can be prepared in heart to love as God loves. We can attempt to understand the process by which the other person himself may have become injured. Many people who damage relationships have first suffered through their own painful experiences. We can seek to be merciful and recognize God's grace that made us unlike that person.

Second, we can also pray that the other person repents and receives grace from both God and us. This is very much

part of the prayer that removes mountains.² When a person has sinned against us, he has also sinned against God and needs restoration with him. Ultimately, the restoration involves a repentance of his sinful value system and an adoption of God's loving values.

Third, we can ask God to take away the pain associated with the memory, and we can talk about the painful event with someone who loves us. This can work powerfully because it allows us to reveal hidden and secret sin done to us or by us. When the Bible mentions secret or hidden sin, I believe it means more than only what we have done. There is a power that sin, committed both by us *and* against us, continues to have over us as long as it remains hidden or secret. This power is often broken as we talk about the sin with a loving, trustworthy person.

The shame, disgrace, and pain that we feel can be alleviated. We receive power from God for dealing with sin because of our humility and the power that comes from bearing one another's burdens.³ Bearing someone's burden often involves helping her overcome the sin done *to* her. Some hurts and shame require an experience of openness, love, and special counsel because an injury is so deep that one cannot carry the pain alone.

This does not mean that we tell everyone these injuries. We should select a wise and godly person who can disciple us towards God's value system. As we adopt God's value

² Moving mountains is preparing someone's heart to receive Christ as King (cf. Matthew 21:21 and *God's Value System* Chapter 13: Faith Moves Mountains and Chapter 15: The King Revealed).

³ Galatians 6:1-2 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

system, our practice of it will transform how we view the injuries done by us and to us. As we begin serving others in sacrificial love, God's Holy Spirit works powerfully through us to heal and transform both others and us.

If we were the ones who sinned against someone, and we are no longer able to confess our sin to that person and ask his forgiveness, we may have to confess this sin to someone else in order to be free of the burden we carry because of it. Sometimes our consciences cannot be free until we have humbled ourselves before a trustworthy person who can assure us of loving acceptance. That person stands as God's representative to us of loving forgiveness.⁴

Dealing with our past emotional pains is important because we need to be free from sin and its effect on us. We must also never allow negative experiences from one relationship to adversely affect our other relationships. We must become people who are not enslaved because of past emotional pain. We can be set free by truth. The truth is that God loves us, others love us, and we can have relationships that bring us freedom and blessing.

⁴ Matthew 18:18-19 Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.