

EMOTIONAL and SPIRITUAL MATURITY



DO YOU feel *deeply* about things or circumstances that are *moving* or important? Did you ever check your emotional responses to know whether you have attained emotional maturity and stability?

Most people give little or no thought to this matter of their emotions. We humans start life as little babies. We have to grow up. But to fulfill life's real PURPOSE and mission, we must grow up not only physically, but mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. Did you ever stop to realize how many people think primarily only of attaining physical maturity? If it were not for compulsory public school education for children in our Western world, how many would take the initiative to develop their minds? How many, in each hundred, have done so in such nations as China and other countries?

But what about *spiritual* development? The average person, the world around, automatically accepts the established religion of his parents and his country. WHY are most Chinese Buddhists or Confucianists? Why do most people of India follow the Hindu religion? Why do most of the Japanese embrace Shintoism or Buddhism? Why do most Arab peoples follow the Moslem religion; most Jews follow Judaism; most Italians, Spaniards, and Frenchmen — as well as South Americans — embrace Roman Catholicism; a majority of northern Europeans, Britons and Americans call themselves Protestant Christians? How many give any real thought to *why* they believe the religious ideas they hold sacred?

Do these run-of-the-mill hundreds of millions of people ever give serious thought to *spiritual growth*? Yet no person attains true maturity unless he attains spiritual maturity, as well as physical growth.

But fewer still ever give so much as a passing thought to the need for *emotional* development.

Just what do we *mean* — EMOTIONAL MATURITY? Few know the meaning of the term. DO YOU? Yet it is one of the real secrets of human happiness.

But, if none is truly *grown up* — really mature — until he attains not only physical, mental, and spiritual adulthood, but *emotional* maturity as well, *where* will you find it taught?

Do you know any school or college which offers a course in “EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT”? It most certainly is something we *need* to be taught. Few will ever teach it to themselves.

No one is born with it. It must be learned — developed. We need, continually, to realize that we are born as helpless little babes, knowing NOTHING at birth. We do not come equipped with *instinct*, like the dumb animals.

Ever see a little calf born? The mother cow doesn't go to a hospital to have her young delivered by an obstetrical physician, attended by white-capped and gowned nurses. She has no delivery table. No one helps her. The little calf comes into the world by an instinctive, natural process. Almost immediately it struggles to its feet. It finds its legs a little wobbly — but in a few minutes it stands on all four. No one teaches it to walk — and it doesn't have to wait a year to learn. It starts walking at once. No one teaches it where to go — it knows! It has *instinct* built automatically into its brain. It goes after its dinner. No one tells it or teaches it *where* the dinner is located. The mother cow simply stands stupidly by, waiting for the calf to find its dinner.

No newborn human knows that much. Yet the human infant has something the dumb animals do not possess — human MIND. Humans, however, have to GROW UP. They have to LEARN — to be TAUGHT.

And one of the basic things every human *needs*, so vitally, to learn, is the right use of the human emo-

tions. So you see, the human MIND has something vital to do with human emotions. Yet most people never give thought to *controlling* emotions with the mind!

But our emotions need to be *understood*, taught, trained, and controlled *by the mind!*

OUR MINDS WERE GIVEN US FOR A PURPOSE!

Where is the logical and proper place to begin such training? It ought to be taught to one-, three-, and six-year-olds, and in the early primary grades in school. That means this teaching ought first to be taught by PARENTS in the home. But how can parents teach children when they themselves are still emotionally immature? How can elementary schoolteachers disseminate what they have never learned, themselves?

Just *WHAT IS* emotional maturity? One author defines it this way: development from a state of *taking* to a state of *giving and sharing*. There's also a spiritual principle involved — development from natural impulses and responses of human nature to the principle of loving one's neighbor as himself. Few realize it's a recipe for happiness. It is something that must be learned — by the MIND — and developed by self-discipline. As I said, it's something you were not born with. Human nature is totally contrary to it.

GOD'S LAW is based on the GIVING principle. Its basis is LOVE. Love is outgoing concern. Human nature is a magnet — a PULL, in the direction of *self*. But the way of GOD'S LAW, which is the way to peace, happiness, and everything good — ah, that is a way humans must be *taught*. Giving, sharing, serving, helping have to be *learned*.

But humans *are* equipped with EMOTIONS. And, from babyhood, all humans are actuated more or less by their emotions. Emotions are *feelings* — disturbances — departures from a calm state of rational right thinking and acting. Emotion is an *impulse* toward action or expression of feeling, unapproved — unless taught and controlled otherwise — by the mind. Among the emotions are such feelings or expressions as fear, anger, resentment, jealousy, hatred, grief, sorrow, surprise, desire, elation, joy.

Emotions have a first-cousin — our moods. The emotionally immature usually are moody, and have not learned to control their moods.

More and more I am impressed with a *most important* TRUTH we humans are prone to overlook. While animals are guided by instinct into the course

intended for them by the Creator, man is given powers and potentialities infinitely higher. The spirit in man imparts to the brain the powers of the human MIND — an intellectual and even spiritual quality. Dumb brutes cannot appreciate a Gainsborough, a Rembrandt, or a Goya painting; a Beethoven sonata or a Schumann concerto, or the literature of great authors. They cannot acquire scientific knowledge, weigh facts, make decisions, render judgments, exercise self-discipline, develop character. They cannot attain access to and union with Almighty God, become begotten of Him as His very child, enjoy actual communion with the Eternal Creator, have their minds opened and enlightened by His Spirit, come to comprehend spiritual truths and, finally, become BORN as a son of God in His very divine Family!

Man was put on earth to develop and attain to *something infinitely higher than animal destiny*. Man was intended to develop spiritual CHARACTER — to become like the Supreme GOD. This all comes through the marvelous human MIND. One comes to knowledge of God through the mind. One realizes sin and repents of it *in the mind!* God's Spirit entering is the Spirit of a *sound mind!*

Not only spiritual development, but also emotional maturity is developed through the MIND. It comes by right knowledge, creative thinking, right decisions, the use of will, self-discipline. To *rightly* direct his actions is man's purpose in life.

Yet most people seem to assume humans to be merely the highest of the dumb brutes! They fail utterly to comprehend the magnitude of human potentiality! They allow themselves to act thoughtlessly, on impulse, with feelings, moods, emotions being swayed and buffeted into troubles, tragedies, and sufferings, through irrational actions.

I once knew a tragic example. It was a man highly educated, a teacher, who readily assumed the responsibility of teaching youths when he, himself, had never learned this central truth of life.

His mind was stored with knowledge about *things* — geology, astronomy, mathematics, literature — but he had acquired little knowledge about himself: his moods, feelings, drives, impulses, desires. As a child he had been pampered, petted and spoiled, permitted to have his own way. He had not been taught self-restraint, self-control, or how intelligently to divert

his moods and desires, and guide them according to wisdom.

He was married to a beautiful and intelligent wife, had a fine family, an honored position. But, allowing feelings, impulses, moods, to lead his actions instead of sound judgment and wisdom of mind, his home was broken by divorce; and in the grip of his moods and tendency to run from his problems, instead of facing and solving them, he fled in blind fear from his high position and brilliant future. He wrecked not only his own happiness, but his marriage, his home, and forced great sorrow, suffering and unhappiness on many others.

He had allowed his emotions and moods, instead of his mind, to lead his actions. He had come to see circumstances through the eyes of his feelings, and his understanding had become warped and distorted. He had grown up physically. He had developed mentally. But emotionally he was still a very young child — and, as a sad accompaniment, his spiritual age was no older.

One is not really mature until emotionally and spiritually grown up, as well as physically and mentally. Parents should realize it is their responsibility to STUDY their own children — teach them right direction and control over tempers, impulses, feelings, angers, moods. Teach restraint of selfishness and vanity. Teach love and outgoing concern for others. Teach *giving*, instead of *taking*.

But emotional maturity does *not* mean emotion-less maturity. The truly emotionally mature *control* the emotions. THEY DO NOT ANESTHETIZE THEM! They *do* express, at the right time, and in proper degree, enthusiasm, happiness, joy. They *do* feel deep gratitude for blessings, and also they deeply *feel* reverence, adoration, in the worship of God. They sincerely feel compassion toward others — a feeling of true outgoing concern. They express sympathy and have mercy.

Emotional maturity does not crucify emotions — it controls and guides them with right knowledge and true wisdom.



Emotional maturity develops hand-in-hand with physical, mental and spiritual growth — the four blending, finally, into the perfect spiritual character which is the true human destiny and the very purpose of life. It can bring very great and rewarding and lasting happiness.

Now, finally, let me describe the three categories into which people generally, and thoughtlessly, fall. And then let us see a few examples of the *correct* use of the emotions.

First, many, let go to an emotional extreme. They are mere babes, emotionally. It never occurs to them to put any check or control on their emotions. They become highly emotional over non-consequential things, like a little child. If these people drove their automobiles as they guide — or fail to guide — their emotions, their cars would run wild and create disaster.

Their *feelings* are worn on their shirt cuffs. They are upset over trifles. Their tempers fly, uncontrolled. They flatter, they gush, they exaggerate their compliments and their praise of others. They gossip, they slander, they speak evil of others behind their backs. They continually *feel* jealousy, resentment, or excessive jubilation.

Some religious sects attract deliberately the overly emotional. In religious meetings their preachers work on the emotions of their congregations, encouraging uncontrolled outbursts of emotional response. They “work it up” — they generate increasingly energetic and noisy displays of out-of-control emotion. But Jesus Christ set no such example. Nor did any of Christ’s own original apostles.

Then there are those who go to the opposite extreme. Often these are the intellectuals, and the highly educated — though usually MIS-educated. They have controlled emotions with their minds to the extent that their emotions have been stifled and put to death. They no longer feel deeply about anything. They are utterly devoid of real sincerity, any depth of gratitude, any feeling of compassion or real sympathy. Their emotions never grew up to maturity — their emotions DIED in infancy.

Then there is the middle ground, equally unprofitable and tragic. These

are those who neither choke off their emotions with mental control, nor exert energy generating them. They are just listless — indifferent. They feel no purpose in life. They have no ambition. They have no spark. They do not radiate — they are like dead fish. In an introduction to another, they extend a cold, clammy, sweaty hand with no grip whatever. They merely let *you* grip *their* hand — and it’s like taking hold of a damp, dead fish. They have no personality. They are nonentities. There isn’t enough life in them to generate any noticeable emotional response.

WHICH of these three are *YOU*? If you are any one of them, you are wrong.

Now look at some *RIGHT* examples!

WHERE will you go to find the right teaching on emotional response? You’ll find it where you find the true *WAYS* of *LIFE* — in *GOD’S WORD TO MAN*!

The Bible teaches us that our relationship with God must completely dominate our lives — until it simply *IS* our life! It teaches us to feel *deeply*, though always intelligently, about it.

Look at God’s instruction through Joel. A tremendous worldwide time of trouble is now generating — such as the world never experienced before. Joel prophesied the coming famine and disease epidemic. He foretells the *PLAGUES* of the “Day of the *LORD*.” He foretells the next, and nuclear, all-out *WORLD WAR* — the most frightful trouble ever experienced by man.

Then God inspires Joel to instruct us how to escape and find protection. Does He say we should go through some routine motions, repeat by rote some prayer already written for us, which we recite without feeling or emotion? *NO, NEVER!* Here is what He says:

“Therefore also now, saith the *ETERNAL*, turn ye even to me with *all your heart*, and with *fasting*, AND WITH *WEEPING*, and with *mourning*: AND *REND YOUR HEART*, and not your garments, and turn unto the *ETERNAL* your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness. . . . Let the priests, the ministers of the *ETERNAL*, weep . . . and let them say, Spare thy people, O *ETERNAL*, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them . . .

Yea, the ETERNAL will answer" (Joel 2:12-19, emphasis added).

God says we should turn to Him IN DEAD EARNEST — fasting, rending our hearts — in deepest real feeling. This is no thoughtless giving way to uncontrolled emotion. This is full mental realization of PURPOSE — of NEED — and, with deepest intense FEELING; seeking God with all our strength and might.

In correcting Israel for their manner of indifferent prayers, God says of Israel: "They never put their heart into their prayers" (Hosea 7:14 — Moffatt translation).

Look at some of the sample PRAYERS quoted for us, as examples, in the Bible. Notice David's prayer of repentance, when he "came to himself" after his sin of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband. It is in the 51st Psalm. Notice how David, in dead earnest, put his whole heart into this prayer — with DEEP FEELING of remorse and repentance:

"Have mercy upon me, O God," David cried out. "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight. . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation. . . . O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. . . . The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

Notice Daniel's prayers. He was in *intense, dead earnest*. His was no light, casual, routine prayer. He put his whole HEART into it. Of it Daniel says: "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: And I prayed unto the ETERNAL my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God. . . . We have sinned, and have committed iniquity,

and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments. . . . O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day. . . ." and in this deeply earnest prayer Daniel continued on, beseeching God with his whole heart (Dan. 9:3-19).

Can you imagine these men of God praying in this manner dry-eyed? I can't. Surely tears were streaming down their faces. These were *intense* prayers — prayers of surrendered, yielded men to the GREAT GOD!

God has graciously granted, by astonishing miracles, many answers to my prayers. But never have I received an answer from God except when I prayed earnestly, from the heart. I have never known of a real answer coming from God of a casual routine prayer. Yet do not most people pray casually, perhaps as a matter of duty, and without feeling or emotion? Perhaps this makes plain the reason most people have never received an answer to their prayers.

Jesus gave us an example of two men praying. The one a respected Pharisee, the other a hated publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed, without emotion or feeling, in his own self-esteem and vanity: "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." The other, pounding his breast in his earnest, heart-rending, deep-feeling remorse and repentance, choked with emotion, could only say, amid his tears, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" Of this latter, Jesus said, "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other" — the self-exalting Pharisee (Luke 18:9-14).

Jesus Christ is our example. Can you comprehend what extreme deep feeling Jesus experienced when He looked out over the city of Jerusalem, whose deceived, erring, wrong-doing people He loved, and cried out: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt.

23:37.) Here was emotion expressed. But it was *intelligent* expression of feeling — not unthinking, unguided sensual impulse. It was filled with deep MEANING!

Of course Jesus had the divine power; He could have gathered the people of Jerusalem to Him BY FORCE! But, had He brought them to Him by FORCE, His whole purpose of character-building by free choice and free moral agency would have been defeated — so He *willed* that they, themselves, should make their own decisions. And He was grieved through His whole being that they rejected TRUTH and HAPPINESS and SALVATION and ETERNAL LIFE, and chose curses and suffering and death.

Should we ever feel deeply about things? About things which *should* be felt deeply about, we certainly should. JESUS DID! Just before the Judas-led murdering mob came to lead Him to trial and death, Jesus went apart from His disciples and prayed. "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44).

If we do learn to live by "every word of God" — by GOD'S INSTRUCTION BOOK — we will learn to guide emotions intelligently — but we shall not suppress them, neither let them run rampant and uncontrolled where they ought not.

Jesus Christ, at age 33½, was the most perfectly developed man, physically, mentally, spiritually, and *emotionally*, who ever lived. He was fully MATURE, these four blending harmoniously into the one PERFECT WHOLE MAN.

Let us study His life, follow His example, live as HE lived. And let us begin, *NOW*, to train our children, from their very first year of life on up — at whatever age they are — in the art of emotional growing up! □

