



Feelings? Should we live by them? By Rev. John J. Smid

Ephesians 4:22 – 32

You were taught with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that is may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, which whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

This passage is all about feelings! The center of this passage speaks of anger. Anger is commonly known as a catchall feeling, or a secondary emotion. When we don't know what to do with our passionate feelings, anger seems to work to vent them. Frustration, confusion, and hurt all get caught up in anger. While there is such an emotion as "righteous anger" it is not likely that we often really experience this type of anger. Most often, we are experiencing angry feelings in our hearts that is misunderstood by us and by others as we express it.

The other interesting fact about this passage is that it speaks to letting go of unhealthy and destructive habits that we get into. It talks about the ways we wound ourselves and others and calls us to account regarding these inappropriate actions.

The instruction in this passage is this:

- Put off our old lives that have been corrupted by deceit.
- Renew our minds.
- Be honest with others because we are one body.
- Acknowledge our feelings rather than stuff them.

After we have done this:

- Quit the addictive habits we have gotten in to as a result of lying to ourselves and living in dishonesty with others about our feelings.

God gave us two places in our brains that stimulate our eyes to tear up. One place stimulates a cleansing tear when we get dust in our eyes, while the other place starts the tears flowing when we feel strong emotion.

I believe firmly that God gave us a visible sign of our feelings so that others could see we have them and share them with us. These can be tears of joy, pain, hurt, or just frustration. All of which God designed to be shared so that His body could be one. As you think if this biological reality, here is a tool to help you to bring others into your emotions.

I Feel; about; because; simple, but complex.

I feel _____

About _____

Because _____

This format has worked to free men and women for many years in secular and Christian settings. It is so clear that following it can be done easily. The difficulty stems from the fact that it works so well that we become vulnerable to intimate places in our hearts. Many of us have spent years hiding our feelings in self protection from the potential vulnerability of sharing them.

This can be a written tool for sure but the most effective way to use it is when speaking with others. Again, the passage in Ephesians challenges us to not withhold that truth from others and to be honest to sharing our feelings with others is vital to the success of this tool.

I feel:

Describe a feeling that you are experiencing about something tangible that is going on in your life, or attached to something you experienced in the past. This may be one feeling, or it could be many at the same time. As scripture calls us to honesty in this, it is very important that you work to find the most honest feeling you have.

Typically, men have not learned to identify feelings at all or only to a place of a few simple words like; mad, glad, sad, or bad. As a part of this tool, we have a feelings list of over 250 words. It is very helpful to see a list that prompts us further into descriptive words that accurately attach what we are truly experiencing.

Generally, women struggle differently. They can experience something we affectionately call the “tangled ball of emotions”. This is where there are so many feelings whirling around that it is too hard to pick out just a few. It is important to work with tangible feeling words that can express clearly some things going on. The feelings list again, helps to sort this out for our ladies.

We don't use the word "**like**" or "**that**" in this part of the tool because these words can deflect the feeling! "I feel that" often goes right into a finger pointing. To say "I feel like" is not a feeling statement. It is more valuable and accurate to stay with the basic, "I feel frustrated", rather than "I feel like you just....."

It is also important not to say, "I don't know." This may block the process and allow you to remain stuck in a dysfunction of hiding your feelings. Allow others into your process to help you by asking for their help instead of saying "I don't know".

So, in summary, on the line showing; "I Feel" put in a feeling word that clearly expresses your feelings about a situation.

About:

Next, it is very important that you figure out specifically the situation you are having strong feelings about. This is very important to you and to others you might be talking with about this situation. What has gone on, or what are you going through right now that you are trying to sort out? Was it attached to something someone said? How about something you went through in school when you were 10 years old? Or, it may be an experience with your spouse yesterday. We all encounter our feelings all through the day. Developing emotional intelligence is very important in living an overcoming and victorious life! But, this may take some work on your part.

The "about" part is vital because it helps you set the stage for your own understanding as well as those you are speaking with. This is the very heart of the matter that your feelings are attached to and if you don't separate this out than it can lead to great confusion and a lack of finding the solution.

In the blank next to "About" simply place a description of the situation.

Because:

This is where it gets real. This section is where you share your true heart concerning the matter. It's one thing to talk about a situation you are having strong feelings about but underneath this is a very vulnerable place that lets others into your life in a very significant way.

You might share a past situation that ties in to the current one. You might talk about a wound that has plagued you and causes you to be ultra sensitive when something pokes into it again. This may be a place where you share about a value that you esteem highly or a personal conviction that is really important to you which produces passionate feelings in your heart.

If these feelings stem from a relationship concern, this may call you to a level of honesty with that person that you were afraid to approach but your strong feelings and subsequent behaviors have popped out and you can no longer ignore them.

This model of communication begins with a very stringent format that can feel awkward and stiff. Consider it this way. When you were young you were taught to write letters of the alphabet inside two lines with a dotted line between them. This too felt awkward and stiff and your teacher likely required a very specific pattern of control in order to meet her approval. This tool is like that. At the beginning it must be very specific and clear but in time you will learn to assimilate it into your natural communication and thinking process.

You might also find that when a relationship challenge becomes really sensitive this tool can become really valuable to keep the communication clear, succinct, and healthy. It can keep you honest in your motives and help greatly in working through the challenge successfully.

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