

SF 2.4 – Understanding Emotions and their Contexts

The place of emotion is a hotly debated element in evangelical circles. Some theologians tend to downplay emotion in preference to the security of intellect and reason which we employ to control our emotions. Other theologians place a high regard on being in touch with our emotions noting that Biblical characters such as King David and the Prophets exhibited high emotional reactions. It is clear that emotions and reason are definitely involved in the life of a disciple.

While most Christian leaders would argue that we cannot allow our feelings to dictate our actions, our emotions do play a role in our life and decision making. Emotions are a complex integration of EQ [emotional quotient] and IQ [intellectual quotient] coupled with individual experiences amid a wide combination of events. What we often refer to merely as feelings can be viewed in a number of ways. Scholars have taken a variety of approaches to categorizing human emotions including the following systems. These are listed as a means of understanding and for contemplation rather than a systematic resolution.

A) Thoughts 1 and 2 listed below are from noted Christian theologians who have developed a more comprehensive approach to the role of emotions in Christian experience:

1. Western Seminary Professor Dr David Ekman suggests an approach to understanding how emotions affect us. He differentiates “moods” and “appetites” as follows:
 - a. Moods are the emotional wash that comes upon an individual. These may be influenced by physical, mental or spiritual stimulus. These moods create an internal “feeling” that then triggers an appetite.
 - b. Appetites are each person’s normal response by which we have learned to satisfy the mood we are experiencing. Thus a mood of loneliness may be satisfied positively by calling a friend or engaging in a relational approach to fill the void; or negatively by isolation which sharpens the pain and then retreating into substance abuse to dull the pain. Appetites are learned processes, and with God’s help we can become victorious over them instead of a victim from them.
 - c. Each person would have their own preference of response, some constructive and others destructive. When the mood occurs we have a choice as to what we will do with it... respond as programmed or seek another approach.
 - d. The important part of this insight is in recognizing the mood that comes upon us and engaging the Spirit in prayer before we automatically respond in satisfying the appetite that is triggered by the mood. The recognition-pause-prayer reaction is a means of employing the power of the Spirit to break the cycle our thought-reaction process. It allows the Spirit to master our basic instincts rather than simply being a victim of repeated weakness and sin.
 - e. <http://whatgodintended.org/> is Dr Eckman’s website where this life changing approach can be explored.
 - f. Dr Ekman suggests that emotions and feelings despite their general distrust by many contemporary theologians were intended to help the believer validate their conscience and spiritual health before God. This concept has great significance for contemporary discipleship:
 - i. In this view “IQ” [intelligence quotient] and “EQ” [emotional quotient] work together in a balanced and supportive manner.

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1. IQ unsupported by EQ often leads to legalism... where relational connection and interaction with God are virtually ignored. In this approach the disciple is validated by what they do and the life of the Spirit is quenched.
 2. EQ unsupported by IQ often leads to emotionalism... where feelings blow the individual around like a sail boat without the rudder and center board. In this approach the disciple is validated by what they feel and the guidance of the Scripture is quenched.
 3. Properly balanced in a sailboat analogy... the Spirit is as wind in the sails, the centerboard is the grounding of Scripture, and the rudder is the emotional confirmation. The combination provides guidance, power, direction, and confirmation.
- ii. This balanced approach can also be viewed another way:
1. The IQ is Biblical Literacy where the disciple develops the “Mind of Christ.” Knowing the Bible... what it says, how it communicates, and how to apply it are foundational for the Christian disciple.
 2. The EQ is Spiritual Formation where the disciple develops the “Heart of Christ.” Knowing and loving God... enjoying a close and vital relationship with God and other disciples is foundational for the Christian disciple.
 3. When the Mind and Heart are balanced and the Spirit is leading the disciple will follow Jesus and learn to lead like Jesus. Such Christo-centric disciples will find their ministry focus and mission, and do the things that are important to Jesus with whom our identity is closely integrated with.
- g. This process may be viewed visually as a sailboat:
- i. The Keel is Biblical Literacy – it forms the mental discipline that stabilizes the boat in rough waters. Without the stability of the keel we are tossed about without control.
 - ii. The wind in the sail is Spiritual Formation – it provides all the power and energy necessary to move the boat. Without the power of the Spirit we are dead in the water.
 - iii. The tiller or rudder are the Spirit induced emotions – it allows us to purposefully cooperate with what the Spirit is doing in our lives. Without the tiller we are unable to purposefully move across the water.
2. The Spiritual Formation Ministry of “THEODYSSEY” seeks to put Christians in touch with what is going on emotionally within them. This approach is a more holistic approach with mind and heart attentive, responsive, and submitted to God.
- a. In this approach, there are 4 major categories of emotional response and their derivatives:
- i. SAD – depressed, exhausted, overwhelmed, abandoned, trapped, desperate, hopeless, victimized, crushed, empty, miserable, fragile, helpless, needy, used, lonely, disappointed, remorseful, misunderstood, upset, regretful, alienated, worthless, humiliated, inadequate, disgraced, failure, embarrassed, wounded, chastened, resigned [in the defeated sense of giving up].
 - ii. JOY – love, content, compassionate, relieved, excited, alive, joyful, satisfied, calm, peaceful, serene, accepted, committed, understood, strong, healthy, encouraged, patient, respected, confident, competent, important, whole, free, valued, secure, worthy, receptive, resigned [in the active sense of courageous].

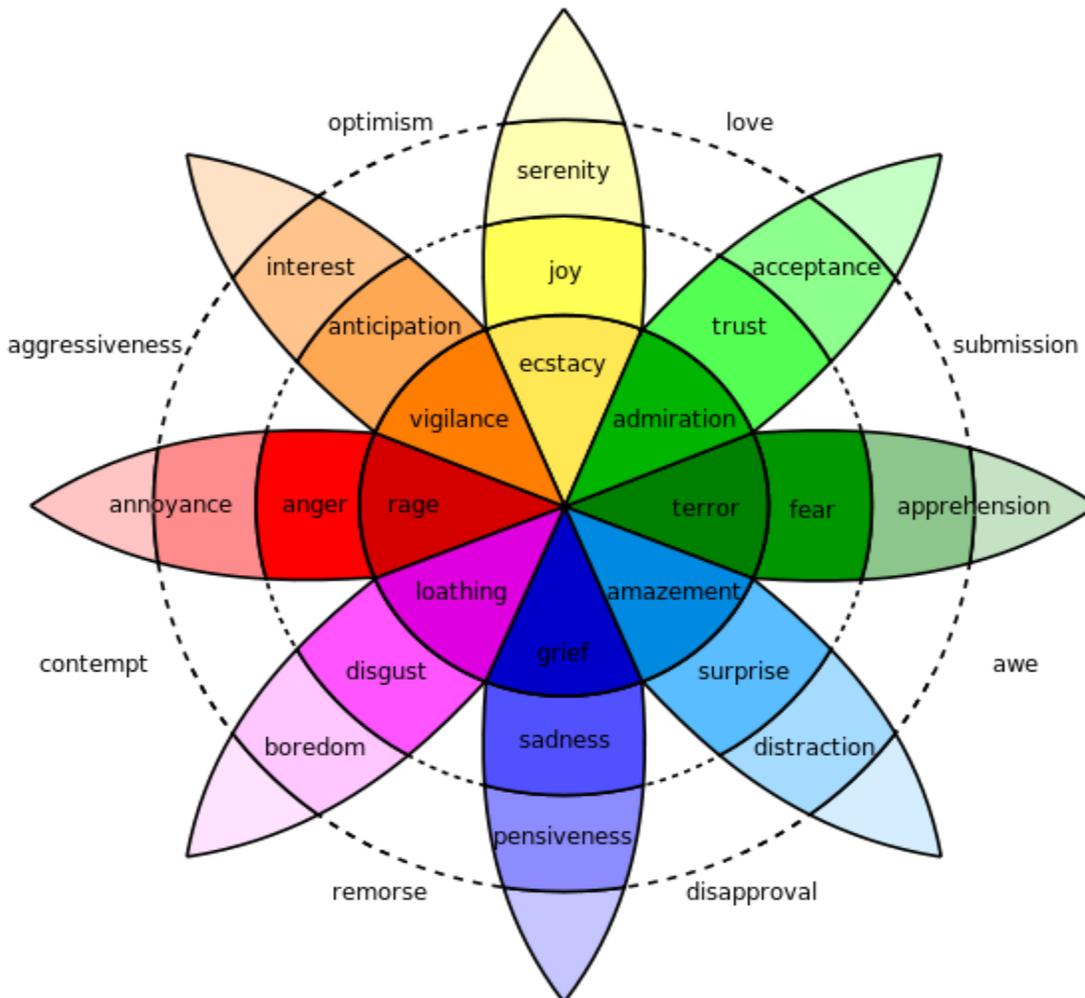
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- iii. **ANGER** – offended, irritated, provoked, uptight, impatient, displeased, bothered, critical, furious, enraged, hostile, vengeful, hateful, rejected, wounded, agitated, judged, unappreciated.
 - iv. **FEAR** – terrified, panicky, desperate, frantic, vulnerable, tense, anxious, apprehensive, suspicious, perturbed, unsafe, cowardly, timid, undecided, pressured.
- b. **Reflections:**
- i. Grace is not a one-sized-fits-all proposition with God. He meets us where we are and communicates in ways appropriate for us. God’s purpose is to form the nature and character of Jesus in every disciple. It doesn’t mean we cease being “human” but instead we are less broken as a result of sin and the Fall. Sanctification the process of becoming more like Jesus is a life-long process that finds fulfillment in Heaven.
 - ii. How does one catch up with what the Spirit is already doing in us? How do we embrace God and His gift of love for me? Asking questions and looking for answers is my “normal.”
 - iii. Vulnerability leads to intimacy. Attentiveness leads to engagement.
 - iv. Leadership and followership go hand in hand with the Spirit. Leaders who feel compelled to impose their will and see life as a contest of wills are often just mini-tyrants. Followers who don’t ask questions of their leaders intentions and evaluation of their actions are often “lost sheep” who will consent to following anyone. Jesus states that “My sheep know my voice.”
- c. **Spiritual Transformation is not about “self-improvement” or “making life work.”** Spiritual Transformation is about becoming someone who is radically better and profoundly different than what we can accomplish on our own. To be human is to be a spiritual creation living in a material world... we are a physical and a spiritual being. Spiritual Transformation includes the mind and the heart, which plays out in our emotions, our will, and our conscience.
- i. **Mind** – is the “IQ” which involves intelligence, reasoning, memory, values, character, and our perceptions. A healthy and well integrated mind engages all these function simultaneously.
 - ii. **Heart** – is the “EQ” which involves emotions – like sorrow, joy, anger, fear, worry, courage, and desire... which forms our longing, our appetites and our moods.
 - iii. **Intentional action** – is formed in the values and workings of our conscience – where motivation, moral & ethical judgment, integrity, inclination, resolve, and determination result from the interaction of the mind and the heart. The result is either peace and tranquility or the lack thereof.
- d. When all of these functions operate as God intended a holistic or integrated life emerges. As the Spirit continues its work in our inner-life, we begin to more perfectly reflect the nature and character of Jesus. As our Spiritual-life gains traction we become increasingly aligned with God will and purposes and do more consistently the things that please God.
- e. When these functions are out of sync due to mental, physical or spiritual issues we become increasingly dysfunctional. Depending on the level of problems or dysfunction, Christian care may help break the patterns and promote health.
- f. Seeking guidance and care is not a shame or an indication of weakness... instead it is an indication of maturity as we seek wholeness and peace in God.
- g. Please study the concepts presented in the authenticdiscipleship.org materials on Spiritual Maturity, and seek pastoral care when and where appropriate.

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B) Thoughts 1, 2 & 3 are emotional systems put together by psychologists and sociologists. These are more of an humanistic organizational structure of emotions, though they are still helpful in engaging the mind and heart in a rational and reasoned process.

1. Robert Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions:



- a. Robert Plutchik suggested a wheel approach to emotions. This wheel is used to illustrate different emotions... both compelling and nuanced. Plutchik first proposed his “wheel model” in 1980 to describe how emotions were related.
- b. He suggested “8 primary bipolar emotions” – joy versus sadness; anger versus fear; trust versus disgust; and surprise versus anticipation.
 - i. Additionally, this “circumplex” model makes connections between the idea of an emotion circle and a color wheel.

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- ii. Like colors, primary emotions can be expressed at different intensities and can mix with one another to form different emotions.

2. **Contrasting basic emotions** - The following table identifies and contrasts the fundamental emotions according to a set of definite criteria. The key criteria used include:

- Mental experiences that have a strongly motivating subjective quality like pleasure or pain;
- Mental experiences that are in response to some event or object that is either real or imagined;
- Mental experiences that motivate particular kinds of behavior.
- The combination of these attributes distinguish the emotions from sensations, feelings and moods.

<u>Kind of Emotion</u>	<u>Positive Emotions</u>	<u>Negative Emotions</u>
Emotions related to object properties	<i>Interest – curiosity</i>	<i>Alarm – panic</i>
	<i>Attraction – desire, admiration</i>	<i>Aversion – disgust, revulsion</i>
	<i>Surprise – amusement</i>	<i>Indifference – familiarity, habituation</i>
Future appraisal emotions	<i>Hope – upheld, sustained</i>	<i>Fear – engulfed, overwhelmed</i>
Event related emotions	<i>Gratitude – thankfulness</i>	<i>Anger – rage</i>
	<i>Joy – elation, triumph, jubilation</i>	<i>Sorrow – grief</i>
	<i>Relief – satisfaction</i>	<i>Frustration – disappointment</i>
Self-appraisal emotions	<i>Pride – as in achievement, self-confidence, sociability</i>	<i>Embarrassment – shame, guilt, remorse</i>
Social emotions	<i>Generosity</i>	<i>Avarice – greed, miserliness, envy, jealousy</i>
	<i>Sympathy</i>	<i>Cruelty</i>
Cathected emotions	<i>Love</i>	<i>Hate</i>

3. **A tree-structured list of emotions was described by Parrott (2001).** This approach list emotions in their primary, secondary, and tertiary components:

Primary Emotion	Secondary Emotion	Tertiary Emotion
Love	<i>Affection</i>	<i>Adoration · Fondness · Liking · Attractiveness · Caring · Tenderness · Compassion · Sentimentality · engaged</i>
	<i>Lust/Sexual desire</i>	<i>Arousal · Desire · Passion · Infatuation</i>
	<i>Longing</i>	<i>Longing-need/want</i>
Joy	<i>Cheerfulness</i>	<i>Amusement · Bliss · Gaiety · Glee · Jolliness · Joviality · Joy · Delight · Enjoyment · Gladness · Happiness · Jubilation · Elation · Satisfaction · Ecstasy · Euphoria</i>
	<i>Zest</i>	<i>Enthusiasm · Zeal · Excitement · Thrill · Exhilaration</i>
	<i>Contentment</i>	<i>Pleasure · satisfaction</i>

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	<i>Pride</i>	<i>Triumph · success</i>
	<i>Optimism</i>	<i>Eagerness · Hope</i>
	<i>Enthrallment</i>	<i>Enthrallment · Rapture</i>
	<i>Relief</i>	<i>Relief</i>
Surprise	<i>Surprise</i>	<i>Amazement · Astonishment</i>
Anger	<i>Irritability</i>	<i>Aggravation · Agitation · Annoyance · Grouchy · Grumpy · Crosspatch</i>
	<i>Exasperation</i>	<i>Frustration</i>
	<i>Rage</i>	<i>Anger · Outrage · Fury · Wrath · Hostility · Ferocity · Bitter · Hatred · Scorn · Spite · Vengefulness · Dislike · Resentment</i>
	<i>Disgust</i>	<i>Revulsion · Contempt · Loathing</i>
	<i>Envy</i>	<i>Jealousy</i>
	<i>Torment</i>	<i>Torment</i>
Sadness	<i>Suffering</i>	<i>Agony · Anguish · Hurt</i>
	<i>Sadness</i>	<i>Depression · Despair · Gloom · Glumness · Unhappy · Grief · Sorrow · Woe · Misery · Melancholy'</i>
	<i>Disappointment</i>	<i>Dismay · Displeasure</i>
	<i>Shame</i>	<i>Guilt · Regret · Remorse</i>
	<i>Neglect</i>	<i>Alienation · Defeatism · Dejection · Embarrassment · Homesickness · Humiliation · Insecurity · Insult · Isolation · Loneliness · Rejection</i>
	<i>Sympathy</i>	<i>Pity · Sympathy</i>
Fear	<i>Horror</i>	<i>Alarm · Shock · Fear · Fright · Horror · Terror · Panic · Hysteria · Mortification</i>
	<i>Nervousness</i>	<i>Anxiety · Suspense · Uneasiness · Apprehension (fear) · Worry · Distress · Dread</i>