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Chapter Sixteen  
**With All Your Mind—Emotions**

*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23a)*

1 - In considering the five components of the human person outlined by Jesus in Mark 12:29-31, we now seek further understanding of the mind.

2 - We are viewing the mind as being composed of thoughts and emotions. In this chapter we explore human emotions. They too must be re-formed.

3 - God has emotions. The Scriptures speak of characteristics of God which are accompanied by emotions. God:

1. is love (1 John 4:8)
2. knows joy (Nehemiah 8:10)
3. creates peace (Hebrews 13:20)
4. exercises patience (Romans 2:4)
5. is kind (Psalm 145:17)
6. is good (Psalm 107:1)
7. is faithful (Psalm 31:5)
8. is gentle (2 Samuel 22:36)
9. can be pleased (1 Kings 3:10)
10. can be grieved (Genesis 6:6)
11. can become angry (2 Samuel 6:7)
12. can lay down his anger (Amos 7:1-3)
13. is forgiving (Psalm 86:5)
14. initiates reconciliation with his enemies (Romans 5:10-11)
15. shows mercy (Psalm 103:4)

4 - Human beings are created in God's image. We too have emotions. God intended that we experience our emotions to be healthy, beautiful, delightful.

5 - The fruit which characterizes the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23a) gives insight into God's emotions. The Spirit forms these in people who allow him to do so.

6 - The components of this one fruit (singular) are best understood as conditions of a person who is walking with God. They are accompanied by emotions.

7 - Take love for example. Love is more than a feeling. It is a condition, a quality of relationship that one person chooses toward another. Certain feelings accompany it.

8 - But some of our emotions may not be in the state God intended for them. Sin damages. Wounded emotions can be very strong and frightfully uncontrollable.

9 - In our current cultural environment in the western world, emotions are considered to be valid simply because they exist.

10 - If I feel it, I have the right to express it. How dare you even suggest that I don't have the right to express what I am feeling!

11 - This idea is rooted in a belief system that sees humans as autonomous. There are no absolutes except what man, beginning from himself, arbitrarily selects.

12 - It lacks any appreciation of potential danger in life. Acting autonomously can feel good in the moment, but can result in real damage to me and others.

13 - Contrast this with the belief system Jesus taught: Man is created by God to be like him. Some choices result in life functioning well; some choices harm.

14 - The engine of my car is designed—created—for oil. If I keep the oil topped up, the engine will function well. If I drain the oil I will ruin the engine.

15 - It is my car. I can do with it whatever I want! True enough. But if I choose to treat it in ways for which it was not designed, I will damage it—even ruin it.

16 - So it is with my emotions. God is the manufacturer of my person. If I choose to act in ways contrary to how I was designed, I can damage myself—and others.

17 - How can we seek deeper insight into our emotions? In Matthew 5:21-48 Jesus tells us seven behaviors to avoid. They negatively impact emotional health.

18 - **Anger.** My anger is aroused when my will is crossed. I feel a strong desire to hit back. But I can learn that I am not required to give in to every feeling.

19 - Jesus placed anger in the category with murder and contempt (Matthew 5:21-22). All three are behaviors of violence toward others.

20 - Anger negatively marks all who experience it—perpetrator, victim, bystander. It is not pleasant to be around someone habitually venting anger.

21 - There are better strategies for achieving my desired ends than anger. Whatever I think I can achieve by anger can be better achieved without it.

22 - We were not created for anger. It is death-producing rather than life-giving. The way of Jesus is a different way.

23 - So what do I do with my anger? Stuff it? No! It will only gush out in some unguarded moment. God's way is not to suppress emotions—but transform them.

24 - **Contempt.** I treat another person with contempt when I speak about him, or to him, or relate to him in ways that dishonor, despise or dehumanize him.

25 - Contempt typically begins with speech. We call others “fools” or “idiots” or much worse. We search for terms that will inflict the greatest hurt.

26 - Hateful speech gives permission for hateful acts. Here are the roots of racism, slavery, misogyny, ethnic cleansing and hatred of those who are the “others.”

27 - Sadly, contemptuous speech can become “normal” in political life. Jesus’ followers can hold differing political views and discuss them respectfully.

28 - But when we speak of a political opponent with contempt, one thing can be said with certainty—we did not learn to do so by being with Jesus.

29 - **Sexual lust.** God’s design is for a man and a woman to share a mutual, unique, committed intimacy. He made provision for this to be expressed physically.

30 - God further arranged for the physical, sexual expression of this one-of-a-kind intimacy to result in beautiful and deeply meaningful emotions for both persons.

31 - Bodily intimacy (sexual activity) apart from intimacy of persons (unique commitment), violates the intention of the Creator and those who engage in it.

32 - Sexual activity that is only physical can indeed generate strong emotions. But it is without integrity. It cheapens the persons who engage in it.

33 - The emotions it generates are short-lived and ultimately unsatisfying. They can transition quickly into contempt, even hatred (2 Samuel 13:14-15).

34 - What is superficial cannot meet needs that are deep. Sexual behavior without authentic, committed, mutual intimacy of persons wounds the soul.

35 - **Divorce.** It is crucial that we think and speak of divorce with tenderness and compassion. Few other experiences in life can wound so deeply.

36 - A fundamental personal violation in divorce is abandonment. The deepest of all human relationships is being severed.

37 - Those considering divorce do well to call “time-out” and seek help. Divorce is never a good option. Sadly, at times, it can be the better of two unhappy options.

38 - The circle of those affected goes well beyond the two whose marriage is ending. Divorce reveals how broadly we are all related—children, family, friends.

39 - Damaged emotions involved in divorce may take years to heal, but Jesus is a specialist in healing! Personal crises of all kinds beckon us to go deeper with God.

40 - **Oaths.** The central wrong in making an oath is idolatry of self. The oath-maker assumes control over circumstances he or she does not necessarily control.

41 - Jesus: “And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’” (Matthew 5:36-37).

42 - I am not self-determined or self-sufficient; only God is. I control neither the external nor internal circumstances of my life; only God does (James 4:13-15).

43 - Of course we must make commitments—life does not work without them. But we do so with humility, owning our limitations and relying on God’s help.

44 - **Retaliation.** When we respond to an offense, real or imagined, by wanting to retaliate, we assume a role God has not given us—the role of judge.

45 - To try to justify myself—to right every wrong—is unworkable. It leaves me frustrated. It wounds me further. The way of Jesus: I allow my Father to justify me.

46 - Only God has a fully accurate view of the wrong. What really happened? Who is to blame? Only God can judge with the proper balance of truth and mercy.

47 - **Love of enemies.** How can I possibly love my enemies? Not by greater “will-power.” I must become a new kind of person—the kind of person who forgives.

48 - How do I become the kind of person who forgives? An entire chapter on this is coming. This summarizes the answer: I become the kind of person Jesus is.

49 - Initial steps to becoming the kind of person who forgives:

- Forgiveness never denies or minimizes the wrong.
- Forgiveness speaks truth without assigning blame.
- Forgiveness leaves God to judge who the “bad guys” are and what punishment should be.
- Forgiveness results in the healing and freeing of the one feeling wronged.

50 - How do I pursue the re-formation of my emotions? Let’s look again at the fruit of the Holy Spirit and its components.

51 - These components are best seen as conditions of life that are accompanied by emotions. I pursue the condition (obedience). In time the emotions follow.

52 - The most immediate ways I have to regulate my emotions are my choices in placing my thoughts. I practice the Presence. I locate my thoughts in Scripture.

53 - What do I do with painful emotions? Jesus’ way is not to block them out or suppress them. Any relief this may yield will be short lived.

54 - God’s way is to heal painful emotions. Practicing his Presence, I bring my pain to Jesus on the cross. In my imaginative mind I “see” him dying there for me.

55 - I ask him to take my pain and administer his healing. He died for my sin; he also died for my pain (Isaiah 53:5). I rely on him; I trust him.

56 - It may be helpful at this point to review Chapter Seven: Inner Healing.

57 - I focus on learning how to love. Jesus said this was most important (John 15:9, 12-13). Here all qualities of Christlikeness converge (Colossians 3:12-15).