# **Feelings and Beliefs**

God created humans with the capacity to feel. Without feelings, we would function as mere robots. Without emotion, we wouldn’t be able to connect with the heart of God or empathize with people around us. Without our feelings, we cannot live fully, as God intended, free to experience both the good and bad aspects of life. Whether positive or negative, feelings bring depth and color into an otherwise one-dimensional world.

Feelings are often regarded as “the window to one’s soul” in that they reveal and reflect a person’s thoughts, perceptions, and beliefs at any given moment. While feelings will not necessarily tell a person what is true, they will reflect what one ***believes*** is true based on that person’s perception. If our perception of something is false, our emotions will reflect something false.

We are often unaware of our false perceptions within our subconscious mind. Life happens; we feel something, and those feelings trigger further beliefs and actions. Consequently, identifying negative emotions can help us look below the surface of our conscious mind to discover the lies and false perceptions buried there. Scripture calls this “taking every thought captive” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Positive and negative feelings get stirred as one experiences positive and negative life circumstances. However, most of what we identify as feelings are not “vulnerable feelings.” Vulnerable feelings relate to our **God-given needs**: **love**, **value**/**worth**, **security**, **adequacy**, and **acceptance**. Many feelings we sense are emotional reactions that cover up vulnerable feelings. When the risk or perceived loss of any God-given needs exists, a vulnerable feeling will be triggered: unloved, rejected, unacceptable, inadequate, insignificant, unimportant, discarded, abandoned, exposed, helpless, and insecure.

For the most part, feeling vulnerable is very uncomfortable; consequently, we use emotional reactions to cover up vulnerability. Emotional reactions tend to be easier to identify: feelings such as anger, hurt, disappointment, anxiety, sadness, depression, and the like.

People work hard at producing and sustaining positive feelings and avoiding negative ones. There are dozens of ways in which a person might try to avoid negative emotions: denial, suppressing or stuffing, eating, shopping, pornography, depression, etc. These are only distractions that keep one’s mind occupied on something other than the pain felt inside the soul.

By sidestepping feelings, we obstruct the healing process in our lives. God created us to feel to gain a healthy perspective on self, God, and others. Recognizing and dealing with negative feelings provides an opportunity to depend on God and experience His redemptive work through the pain and sorrow that living in a fallen world will produce. Allowing ourselves to feel and process our emotions will bring greater depth and intimacy to our relationship with God. Processing our emotions will also bring greater authenticity to our experiences.

Jesus experienced a full range of emotions as a man and did nothing to mask them, even when faced with tremendous anguish. Some of the emotions Jesus experienced were:

Joy:

John 15:10-11, Hebrews 12:2

Grief:

Isaiah 53:3

Anger:

Matthew 23:33

Disgust:

John 2:13-17

Compassion:

Matthew 9:20-22

Feelings are not facts. But we can live like they are facts if we don’t recognize how feelings motivate and influence our choices.

Living according to your Feelings:

I *feel* unloved, unacceptable, or unworthy. Because I *feel* unloved, I may *act* unloved, unaccepted, or unworthy. Because I *act* and *feel* this way, I reinforce my belief that it’s true.

We tend to allow our feelings to determine what is true. In actuality, my feelings are based on my perceptions of life experiences. In other words, I feel the way I do because of what I already believe about the situation.

There is a natural progression that precedes every choice:



When our choices are based on false beliefs (lies), we tend to live out of self-strength (flesh).

Instead, when our choices are based on the truth, we can choose to live by faith.

We can partner with God in renewing our minds by taking the time to identify false beliefs and understand our feelings (Romans 12:2). As our minds are renewed, we are freed up to make different choices and, thereby, live differently. On the other hand, if we ignore our feelings, we do ourselves a disservice by staying stuck in our current thinking and behavior cycles.