



## CELL GUIDE

**TOPIC** Forming Healthy Emotional Habits

**SPEAKER**

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**THEME** Developing the Inner Life

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# MESSAGE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

Uncontrolled emotions can control us in many negative ways, so we need to learn from God's Word about guarding our hearts, because the springs of life flow from our hearts (Prov 4:20,23).

## FORMING HEALTHY EMOTIONAL HABITS – HOW CAN WE GUARD OUR HEARTS?

### 1) Avoid Toxic Emotions

Examples of toxic emotions include lust, guilt, shame, resentment and hatred. We must not get involved in these emotions; do not dwell in them because they will corrupt us. The Bible teaches us to flee from lust and run from temptation, instead pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, and with those who call on the Lord with a pure heart (2 Tim 2:22).

### 2) Manage Fallen Emotions

Fallen emotions are all normal human emotions that we will inevitably experience on earth. We must learn and equip ourselves to manage emotions such as anger, grief, sadness, hurt, disappointments, and unforgiveness, so that they do not manage us.

- *Anger*: The Bible warns us against letting anger lead us into sin (Eph 4:26-27). We are exhorted to not let anger grow uncontrollably because the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God (James 1:19-20). Do not give in to the destructive power of prolonged anger, and seek reconciliation. To practically help us choose understanding and self-control over impulse, we can try to calm down first by distancing ourselves from what made us angry, until we are more collected and able to respond more objectively.
- *Grief*: Grief is intense sorrow due to the loss of a person or a routine such as loss of a job, friendship, health, retirement etc. Wisdom is needed to manage grief. Allow ourselves time to grieve in the Lord, with hope (1 Thess 4:13, 17-18). Some myths about grief such as "time heals", "give them space", "replace the loss", "keep busy" may be posited as solutions by the world, but these are all untrue – only God heals. As a church, we can be a healing community for one another to journey together in the Lord with those who are grieving.
- *Sadness, disappointments and hurts*: The Bible says that crying is normal (Psalm 6:6, 42:3). In Asian culture, some of us are uncomfortable with tears, but tears are a healthy expression of something hurting. Psalm 56:8 is a great comfort because it tells us that God is beside us

collecting our tears in His bottle. We need to give appropriate space to cry, and we have the assurance that even when we are crying, God is with us.

- *Unforgiveness*: Matthew 6:12 tells us to forgive our debtors. This is because unforgiveness is like taking poison ourselves while hoping that the other person will die. Forgiveness is not a feeling but a choice and act of will.

### 3) Form Healthy Emotions

We need to develop healthy emotions such as love, joy, peace, compassion, serenity, awe, gratitude. We should start with developing a heart of gratitude because it is only then that the other positive emotions can grow. The Bible tells us to pray with thanksgiving (Phil 4:6), rejoice always, pray without ceasing and in everything give thanks (1 Thess 5:16).

### 4) Reframe and Release Buried Emotions

There may be some experiences and emotions which have shaped our lives without us realising it. In John 21:1-11, Peter wanted to go back to being a fisherman after Jesus had died on the cross, and Jesus met Peter and the disciples at the shore after they had fished all night and caught nothing. Earlier in Luke 5 before Peter became a follower of Jesus, Jesus had also met Peter at the shore. John 21 and Luke 5 are similar– they caught nothing after fishing all night, but they had a miraculous large catch of fish after Jesus told them to cast the net again. It was then that they recognised that Jesus is Lord. Through the repeated incidents, Jesus wanted to reveal to Peter his hidden emotions. Jesus asked Peter three times if Peter loved Jesus (John 21:15-17) – whether Peter loved Jesus for Himself, more Jesus’ miracles and deliverance. Peter had started following Jesus because he believed Jesus was the conquering Messiah against the Romans, but Peter’s hopes were dashed when Jesus died on the cross. Peter, disappointed with both himself and with Jesus, returned to fishing. So, in John 21:15-17, Jesus reframed Peter’s hidden motivation to tell Peter to follow Him out of love for who Jesus is.

In doing so, Jesus dealt a decisive blow to Peter’s hidden motivation and set Peter free to follow Him, purifying Peter’s purpose and motivation. Jesus wants to do the same for all of us, to reframe and release any buried pain/trauma and heal us.

## CONCLUSION

By giving us some practical biblical guidance on avoiding toxic emotions, managing fallen emotions, forming healthy emotions, and reframing and releasing buried emotions, SP encourages and exhorts us to seek the Lord’s revelation, healing and release so that we can be free to become all that God wants us to be.

# QUESTIONS

1. Share an instance where you experienced strong feelings (e.g. anger, grief, sense of injustice) in a difficult situation. How did you react and what happened as a result?

2. A heart of gratitude helps other positive emotions to grow in us. What emotions have you seen develop from having much or little gratitude towards God and how has that affected you? How can you develop a heart of gratitude towards God? (refer to appendix)

3. We are called to love Jesus for who He is, not solely for His signs and miracles. In your journey with God, how has He reframed your thoughts and feelings about Him, and brought healing in your life? How can you help others in their journey in learning how to love God for who He is instead of what He has done?

## APPENDIX

# Gratitude Exercise

\*Be intentional –  
*Feel* the feelings of  
Gratitude

Sun	<b>God's character</b> → Thank God for His faithfulness.
Mon	<b>God's Word</b> → Thank God for a sermon takeaway.
Tues	<b>Family</b> → Thank Him for each specific person.
Wed	<b>Friends</b> → Thank God for how they've blessed your life.
Thurs	<b>Work</b> → Thank God for the chance to use your gifts.
Fri	<b>Mentors</b> → Thank God for their influence.
Sat	<b>Growth</b> → Thank God for 3 moments of growth.

## Reframe and Release Buried Emotions: Understanding Why We Feel and Behave in Certain Ways

