

Transforming the Mind (Part 2): Spiritual Formation and the Transformation of Our Emotions and Feelings

Read Key Scriptures:

Romans 14:17 — “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

Galatians 5:24 — “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

Big Idea of the Session:

Transformation is not eliminating emotions — it is retraining how we interpret them so that truth governs feeling, not the other way around.

Understanding Emotions and Feelings

The Difference

Emotions – Immediate, biological, physical reactions (automatic). See figure 1.

Feelings – The interpretation or story we attach to those emotions (conscious).

Same stimulus. Different outcomes.

- Priest & Levite → Emotion of fear/disgust → Feelings of avoidance → Justified inaction.
- Samaritan → Emotion of compassion → Feeling of empathy → Action of love.

Reflection:

- What made the Samaritan different?
- How can we cultivate compassionate interpretations rather than fearful ones?

Key Insight:

Between the emotion and the outcome, there is a sacred space — and in that space lives your freedom.

Why Feelings Matter Spiritually (see figure 2)

The Danger of Letting Emotions and Negative Feelings Rule

Common rationalizations: “You made me angry.” “I had no choice.” God understands why I did it.” “This feels right.”

When feelings outrank truth, commitments are broken. Anger becomes justification. Temporary relief leads to long-term bondage.

Discussion:

- What cultural messages encourage living by feelings?
- Where have you seen your feelings override wisdom?

How Do We Retrain the Feeling Mind?

1. Commit to a New Self-Vision (Read Colossians 3:1–5)

- “I am raised with Christ.” My life is hidden with Christ.” “I am becoming Christlike.”

2. Reject the Old, Put On the New (Read Colossians 3:9, 10; Galatians 5:13-25)

How is the old man different than the new man? How do we practically put on the characteristics (fruit of the Spirit) of Christ?

Key Principle:

You may not control the first emotion — but you can choose the interpretation.

3. Reframe Through Curiosity

Instead of:

- “What an idiot” “Why would you do that?” Try: I am just curious why you did it that way?” Curiosity lowers hostility, encourages compassion, and understanding =reduced conflict.

Practice Exercise:

Think of a recent conflict. How could reframing it through curiosity avoid judgmental or criticism?

4. Look Beneath the Emotion

Anger often masks: Fear, Loneliness, Rejection, Insecurity, Past wounds

Questions to ask: What am I really feeling? Where am I hurting? What past story is being triggered?

Possible actions steps to deal with difficult emotions, feelings and hurts: Journaling, Prayer, Letter to God, talking to a mature believer, pastor, counseling support

5. Scripture Practice: Meditate on Love, Joy, and Peace

We replace negative patterns by dwelling on truth.

Suggested passages to meditate on:

- Love — Romans 8:28–39
- Joy — John 15:9–17
- Peace — Philippians 4:4–9

6. Do Good Regardless of Feelings

We should not be governed by moods rather by obedience.

- Am, I governed by moods? Do I only serve when I “feel like it”? What would obedience look like right now?

Freedom grows when we act according to truth, not impulse.

Practical Group Application

Reflection Questions:

1. What negative feeling most frequently influences your decisions?
2. What truth from Scripture speaks against it?
3. What new interpretation could you practice this week?

Weekly Practice Challenge:

- Identify one recurring negative feeling.
- Pause in the “sacred space.”
- Reframe it or challenge it through truth.
- Meditate daily on one Scripture (i.e. Love, joy, peace)
- Journal what changes.

Closing Encouragement & Prayer

Over time:

- Fear becomes trust. Anger becomes compassion.
- Resentment becomes forgiveness. Anxiety becomes peace.

True freedom is not controlling every emotion — it is repeatedly training your response in partnership with God.

Closing Prayer Prompt

- For awareness of destructive feeling patterns.
- For courage to pause before reacting.
- For the Spirit to produce love, joy, and peace.
- For renewed minds and renovated heart

Correlation of the Thinking Mind and Feeling Mind (figure 1)

Stage	What's Happening	Example: Public Speaking
1. Stimulus	An external or internal event occurs.	You walk onto a stage.
2. Emotion	Physical, chemical signals	Adrenaline spikes; heart rate increases.
3. Feeling	Mental interpretation	You think, "I am terrified" or "I am excited."
4. (a) Influence of Feelings	Focusing on terrified thought reinforces the physical state.	Thinking you're "terrified" causes more adrenaline.
4. (b) Influence of feelings	Replacing "terrified" thought with "excited" or consciously deciding: "I am not terrified; I am energized for this purpose".	Thinking you're "excited" causes body to relax, better performance

Value of Feelings: What Would Happen if We Only Had Emotions? (figure 2)

Category	Emotions Only (The Biological Response)	With Feelings (The Human Experience)
Nourishment	You eat purely for fuel because your glucose is low.	You savour a meal because it tastes like "home" or "tradition."
Work	You perform a task to avoid the "stress" of lacking resources.	You pursue a career because you feel " ambition " or " contribution " to society.
Mistakes	Physical recoiling to avoid a repeat error.	Feeling " remorse " and seeking forgiveness .
Rest	Sleeping to conserve caloric energy.	Feeling " rejuvenated ".

Figure 3:

The Progression from Stimulus to Emotion to Feeling

Stimuli (The Trigger)	Basic Emotion (Physical)	Typical Feelings (Mental Labels)
Physical threat, uncertainty, loud noise	Fear	Anxiety, Terror, Insecurity, Panic, Dread
Injustice, goal blockage, personal attack	Anger	Frustration, Resentment, Irritation, Fury, Bitterness
Contamination, offensive smells, moral violation	Disgust	Revulsion, Loathing, Contempt, Aversion, Nausea
Achievement, social connection, comfort	Happiness	Joy, Contentment, Gratitude, Elation, Peace
Loss of a loved one, failure, rejection	Sadness	Grief, Loneliness, Despair, Melancholy, Heartache
Unexpected event, sudden change, novelty	Surprise	Amazement, Astonishment, Shock, Confusion, Startle