

Set Free to be What God Made Me
A Course on Marriage and Family
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Session 3: Managing Your Responses

Introduction

Main text:

Romans 7:14-19, "We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing."

I. Define me: Am I an emotionally healthy individual?

2 factors that characterizes a healthy individual:

- Do I have the ability to make my own choices?
- Do I have the ability to make the right choices?

2 Basic Principles:

- In what you do, do it because you want to, not because you have to. 1John 4:19
- In all you do, let the Lord guide you. Prov 3:5-8

Note regarding Intervention: In extreme cases, intervention is needed. This is when a person no longer can distinguish between right and wrong, and is already in a destructive downward spiral that most likely harm him/her and others.

II. Do I exhibit healthy/unhealthy Patterns of Behavior?

- Do I tell you what you want to hear and not what I really think or feel?
- Do I have to give up being me (who I am) in order to be loved by you?
- Do I often make choices based on emotion and then regret it later on?
- Do I depend on someone else to tell me how to think, and what to do?
- Do I see myself as a victim, not having any choice over my situation, and unable to change my situation?
- Do I easily get stressed?
- Do I get emotional when I am stressed?
- Am I rigid and inflexible, unable to adapt to changes going on around me?
- Are my relationships based on need (I need you and you need me, so let's use one another) rather than choice (I want you and you want me)?
- Do I do things for others so they will love me?
- Do I do for others what they can do for themselves?

Note: We all exhibit these characteristics in varying degrees. What makes it unhealthy is when it becomes a pattern of behavior.

III. The Differentiation of Self

Definition: Differentiation means the capacity of an individual to determine his/her own identity, (sense of well being, goals, values, likes and dislikes) independent of other people around him. It involves the ability to make choices and take responsibility for one's own destiny. This is a God-given gift.

For followers of Jesus, this means being able to exercise the right to follow Jesus and be like Him, regardless of the consequences.

A healthy community is a group of well differentiated individuals who have common values and have chosen on their own accord to encourage one another in those values. For followers of Christ, its called Church, and their values are based on the bible.

Two important concepts in understanding emotional health:

Choice: A person must have the ability to determine his/her choices.

Joshua 24:15, "Choose whom you will serve... But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"

Process: It takes time for a person to determine what is right and what is wrong. There is a learning curve. Understanding and applying the bible is a process of growth.

Matthew 7:24, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock."

IV. What is a healthy relationship?

Characteristics:

A. Acceptance

(something that is given to you freely)

Eph 2:8, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast."

Opposite: Judgment, Rejection

B. Responsibility

(something that you are held accountable for)

Eph 5:22, 25, "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.. ..Husbands, love your wives..."

Eph 6: 1, 4, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.. ..Fathers, do not exasperate your children..."

Opposite: Defiance, Coddled, Pampered, Spoiled

C. Trust and Respect

(something that is earned)

Matthew 25:14-30, Parable of the talents

Opposite: Control

D. Forgiveness

(something that is given)

Ephesians: 4:32, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

We need to give and receive forgiveness, because we live in a broken world.

Opposite: grudge, bitterness, resentment

Problem: It's hard to forgive repeat offenders.

Some may say, "I thought you have forgiven me. Don't you trust me?"

Answer: Forgiveness is given, trust is earned.

V. The four styles of interaction between people.

Passive and Aggressive (dysfunctional styles); Assertive; and Responsive.(healthy styles)

A. Passive:

1. Characteristics:

- a. Let others step all over you, doormat
- b. Often feel like a victim, "poor me"
- c. Disregard own needs and rights in the guise of sacrifice (Martyr complex)
- d. Feel responsible for others' responsibility
- e. Self-esteem is low
- f. Feel guilty about the past and anxious about the future
- g. Fear saying "no"
- h. Angry at self
- i. Depression prone
- j. Angry at others they perceive are abusing them but don't say it
- k. Deal with chronic anxiety and stress
- l. Psycho-physiological & psychosomatic problems

2. Why be Passive?

- a. Avoiding conflict
- b. Praised for being selfless
- c. Avoid responsibility for your own decisions.
- d. Smaller load of responsibility in life
- e. Entice others to rescue and protect them

B. Aggressive:

1. Characteristics

- a. Emotionally and/or physically abusive
- b. Feel superior to others

- c. Easily damaged/offended – Emotionally fragile, take things personally
- d. deals with low self esteem by abusing others to feel powerful
- e. Judgmental
- f. Uses anger to manipulate
- g. Vengeful, bitter
- h. Think people are against them
- i. Use guilt trip to manipulate others
- j. May feel sorry for his/her actions
- k. Emotionally isolated

2. Why be Aggressive?

- a. Immediate results
- b. May be more materially successful and effective
- c. Able to protect themselves
- d. Feel they are in control
- e. Does not internalize, uses anger as a form of relieving tension
- f. Addicted to Anger

Notes:

1. The key point here is that the passive and/or aggressive person feels stuck. They do not feel like they can do anything else other than what they have always done (being passive or aggressive).
2. In some situations, a generally passive person can become aggressive and vice versa, thus passive-aggressive.

C. Assertive

Definition: Having the ability to say what they think and do (or not do) what they want in a manner that respects both their rights and the rights of other people

1. Characteristics:

- a. Ability to choose
- b. Takes personal responsibility for self, choices
- c. Lets others take responsibility for themselves
- d. Has the freedom to choose to reveal self (to people they trust)
- e. In touch with their emotions and what is behind them
- d. Open, honest, direct, appropriate
- e. Practices the art of forgiveness
- f. Does not wait for life to happen to them, pro-active
- g. Accepts self
- h. Respects self
- i. Practices good communication skills

2. Why be assertive?

- a. Healthy regard for self and others
- b. Exercises Self control
- c. Healthy relationships with others
- d. Better chance of being healthy emotionally, spiritually, and physically

D. Responsive:

Definition: Having the ability to freely choose to put my needs and desires on hold for the moment, so I can put others' needs and desires first, doing it because I want to, not because I have to. To be capable of loving, caring, and sacrificing, not out of guilt or compulsion, but out of a genuine selfless attitude.

1. Characteristics:

- a. All the characteristics and benefits listed under assertiveness apply
- b. Having the ability not just to choose but also to choose to do right

2. Why be responsive?

- a. Visionary - Able to live for a higher purpose or meaning in life, not just self actualization but also have purpose and meaning, a sense of destiny and calling
- b. Altruistic – Practices benevolence, able to sacrifice or surrender one's own benefits and privileges and comfort, for the sake of others

Ultimate example: Christ. Philippians 2: 1-11

vs. 5-7, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing..."

Important Note: We all, regardless of what our dominant style of interaction with others is, are capable of expressing any of the four styles.

VI. How Assertiveness Training is done

A. Unless we are dealing with biological or biochemical problems, all behavior can be viewed as having five parts.

1. Event: Something bad happens
2. Interpretation: Event is interpreted through a grid in your subconscious and associated with your past experience which then determines your emotional response
3. Feelings: Primary emotion - fear, anxiety, anger, aggression
4. Process: Re-interpret with a biblical worldview (feelings follow what you believe)
5. Intended Response: Truth Encounter - Godly feelings lead to godly behavior (actions)

Philippians 4:6-8

B. In assertiveness training we try to take a specific act and slow down the process that produces the impulsive behavior so that the “interpretation” can be challenged; the “intended response” can be deliberately thought through; and the skill (verbal and non-verbal) to pull off a more constructive response can be learned.