

I'm in My Feelings

Dr. Dharius Daniels

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CHAPTER ONE | *Hung Up By Hang Ups*

Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people made their plans how to have Jesus executed.

So they bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate the governor. When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility." So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself. - Matthew 27:1-5

Human beings are a compilation of three dimensions. We have a spirit, we have a body, and we are a soul. Genesis 2:7 confirms this truth with these words: "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Our body is the case that comprises our corporeal exterior. Our bones, our organs, and our physical composition are all parts of the anatomical case we call the body. Our spirit is the God-breathed part of us that connects us to the Divine. Our spirit is the element of humanity that gives us the ability to have an intimate relationship with God. The soul,

however, is one area that is not so easily understood. When the Bible speaks of the soul, it is speaking to one or all of the following components. Our soul is our mind, our will, our emotions, our imagination, and our affections. God is concerned about every part of us, including the soul; and when our soul is unhealthy, that is an indication that our emotions are unhealthy.

This is the primary purpose of this resource guide. We want to help you get healthy in your soul. We want your soul healthy, your body healthy, and your spirit healthy. None of us are perfect. None of us are God, so we will inevitably have imperfect emotions. But just because we have imperfect emotions doesn't mean we have to have an unhealthy emotional life. In other words, we all have feelings but our feelings don't have to have us. We should live with feelings but not be led by them. Why? Because our feelings are indicators and not dictators. Feelings shouldn't be ignored because they point us toward something that needs our attention, yet at the same time they shouldn't be idolized. Just because the feeling is real...doesn't mean that the feeling is right.

STUCK IN MY FEELINGS

When we allow our feelings to lead our lives, we are most literally living in our feelings. We become trapped by the box of our emotions. We get stuck between where we are going and where we have been. Here is the larger problem. When we become entrapped by the claustrophobic box of

our emotions, we can move around with limited mobility but there will come a day when we will want to enter through a certain door, and we will not be able go through it. The box that we are in, is too big to fit in the door, and we then find ourselves stuck. Have you ever been stuck in your feelings? Have you ever allowed an emotion to keep you away from God's best for your life? Have you ever wrestled with bitterness, regret, guilt, paranoia, anger, comparison, envy, or insecurity? Who are you not listening to that you should be listening to, but you won't listen to him or her because you listened to the wrong person before...and now you're paranoid? Who aren't you allowing to help you today because someone who claimed to help you yesterday destroyed your trust? When you live in your feelings and when you allow your feelings to control you, you not only inhibit yourself from entering into the door of destiny; you also stop individuals who are called to your life from getting to you, because of you. What if I told you that help has been trying to get to you but you can't see it because you're in your feelings? What if I told you that encouragement, love and truth are trying to get to you but they can't because you're in your feelings?

LESSONS FROM JUDAS

If you are in your feelings today, let me encourage you with these words: you are not alone. There is a man in the Bible by the name of Judas who can testify to the derailing destruction that can befall a well-meaning person if he or

she gets caught up in his or her feelings. Many churchgoers are familiar with Judas in the gospels. He is the disciple who betrayed Jesus. But the circumstances surrounding his betrayal are important. Judas was no stranger to Jesus. Judas walked with Jesus in close proximity. He learned from Jesus. He heard all of the teachings and he worked with Jesus every day, on the ground. He saw people healed. He fed the hungry. He clothed the naked. He exorcised the demon-possessed. He witnessed miracle after miracle after miracle. And when he finally takes his life after betraying Jesus, the Bible says he has remorse. His remorse is an indicator of the degree of love he had for Jesus. But just because you walk with Jesus, learn from Jesus and work with Jesus doesn't make you incapable of betraying Jesus.

Love wasn't the only thing in Judas. He had love and he had some other things in him that were keeping him boxed in. Instead of cultivating the healthy emotion of love, he decided to cultivate other things that ultimately led to his demise. Like many of us, Judas ignored the signs. He chalked it up to this statement (and I am paraphrasing), "This is just who I am." What Judas didn't realize was this: just because this has been you, doesn't mean it is you. Just because you are hurting doesn't mean you were always hurt. Just because you experienced pain doesn't mean you personify pain. But when you accept dysfunction as part of your identity, then you will never know who God really intended you to be. I like to say it like this: when you accept dysfunction as a part of who you are, then you

are identifying with your first birth more than your second. Jesus came that you might have life. He tells Nicodemus, “you must be born again,” because there is a second birth that leads to life. The first birth may have led to sin. The first birth may remind you of your pain. You may have been conceived in sin and shaped in iniquity, but that is not who you are. In Christ, all things are made new. Old things are passed away. You are a new creation in Him. This is what Judas failed to realize because his feelings blinded him from who he really was in God.

THE BOX OF ARROGANCE, GREED, AND ENTITLEMENT

When you look at the life of Judas, you will see 3 areas where his feelings got the best of him. Judas was arrogant, greedy and entitled. We see this proven in several different situations. In John 12, the Bible says, *“Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.”* In this text, we see that Judas was arrogant because he offered his opinion without anyone asking him for it. There is a thin line between confidence and arrogance, and that thin line is stenciled with a pen called humility. Confidence smiles. Arrogance smirks. Confidence confirms. Arrogance

adds unwanted and unwarranted opinions. Judas was arrogant. Here we have a woman worshipping Jesus, and Judas is found objecting. He's found interrupting worship in order to insert his opinion. Arrogance will convince you that your perspective is more important than His presence. But that's not the only thing we see in this text. Judas was also greedy. Greed is an insatiable craving for more than you need, and an unquenchable desire for more than you can handle, even when you can get done what you need to get done with less. John 12:6 tells us the motive behind his objection of this woman who is found worshipping. The Scriptures inject this parenthetical: *Judas did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief*. Judas was the treasurer among the disciples. He was used to count the money and to manage the funds. But just because you are used by God to work with God, doesn't mean you can't be trapped in greed, or any other emotion that keeps you blocked from God's best. Judas wasn't really concerned about giving to the poor. He was concerned about what he was concerned about. When people are operating in their feelings, they often tell you that the issue is one thing, when the heart of the issue is something else.

Not only was Judas arrogant and greedy, but Judas was also entitled. Dr. John Townsend talks about the four Faces of Entitlement, and in his explanation, he says this about entitlement. First, entitlement is an attitude that assumes you are exceptional and special; therefore,

you should be treated this way. Second, entitlement is an attitude of being owed something, so much so that you will demand what you think you deserve. Third, entitlement refuses to accept responsibility. Do you know anyone who refuses to own up to their wrongdoings? In their mind, someone else is always the problem. Ask Adam who is wrong, he will say Eve. Ask Eve who is wrong, she will say the serpent. Entitled people rarely say I'm sorry, and if they do apologize, they say things like, "I'm sorry if this offended you," instead of just saying "I'm sorry, I was wrong." Fourth, entitlement denies one's impact on others. Have you ever struggled with one of these emotions? Have you ever encountered someone who was arrogant, greedy, or entitled (or a little bit of all three)? How often did you stay around them? Chances are, these emotions pushed you further away from these individuals, instead of embracing them for the gifts they brought to the table.

Judas not only had these challenges but these challenges had him. Judas was blind to what had him until he behaved in a way that derailed his life. He ruined the most important relationship in his life and destroyed his destiny because he did not know how to deal with his emotions. Like Judas, many of us are unaware of our emotions because we are blinded by their impact. We don't know what is blocking us from getting through the door, and we can't see the greater implications these inhibitors have on the grand scheme of our life.

In a wonderful book titled *Emotional Intelligence*

2.0, research corroborates that two-thirds of people are typically controlled by their emotions and are not yet skilled at spotting them and using them to their benefit. Are you blind and you don't know it? Do you have a unique ability to see in others what you are unable to see in yourself? Are you able to identify and correct yourself, or do you often have the "aha moment" after the ball has dropped, after the job has been eliminated, after the relationship has been compromised, and after your life has been turned upside down?

WHERE IS THE HURT, THE HOLE, AND THE HAZARD?

In order to begin the hard work of taking dominion over your feelings, you must be willing to face what needs to be fixed. Judas got hung up by his hang ups because he didn't know how to handle his emotions. He was remorseful but he didn't repent. It's possible to feel bad for what you've done without changing your behavior. How sorry are you if you won't tell the person you hurt that you are sorry? Here are three ways to avoid being Judas.

First, ask yourself, "Where is the hurt?" As you reflect on your life, there is no way to do so without stumbling up on pain at some point in your life. Hurt is something done to you that shouldn't have been done to you. Where is the hurt? It's possible to hurt even if you are not hurting. It's possible to be in pain and not feel it. Where is the hurt and what have you done about it?

Heart healing doesn't happen automatically. Heart healing requires intentionality. Proverbs 4:23 says this: *Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.* If you haven't intentionally done the work, then you may not be hurting but you probably aren't healed either.

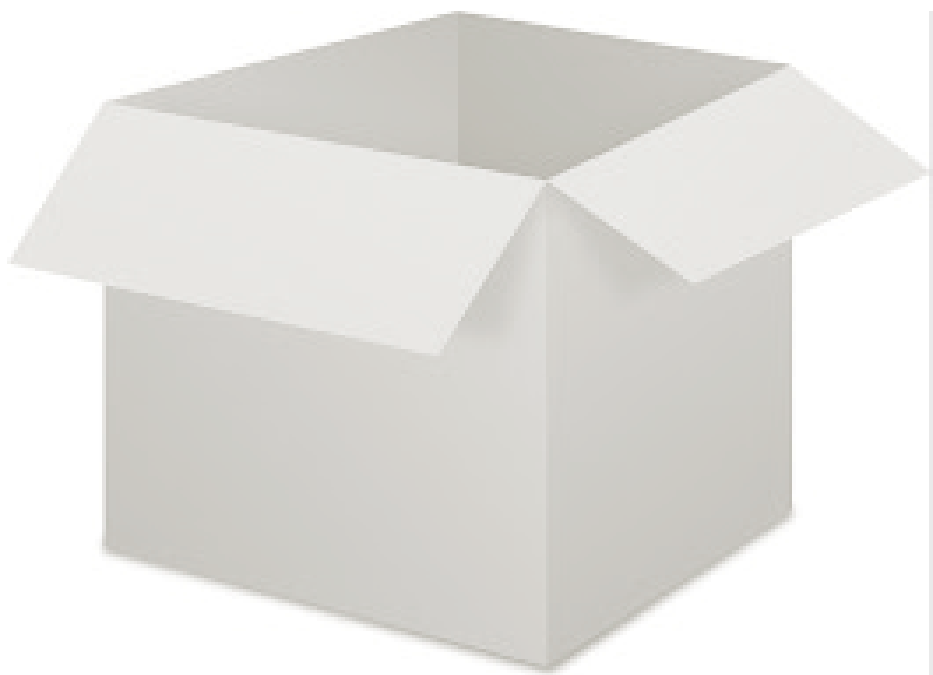
Second, you must answer the question, "Where is the hole?" If hurt refers to what was done to you that shouldn't have been done, then holes refer to what wasn't done for you that should have been done. Where were you neglected? As a child or as an adult, where are you leaking? What do you wish you had that you never had growing up? What do you long for in your older years that is a sign of emptiness from your childhood? When we refuse to investigate the holes in our lives, it is hard to receive love. It is hard to accept change. Patching up the holes is necessary for you to move forward, because if you don't, people may be pouring their best into you, but because of the holes, you can't benefit from it. It's as if they haven't done a thing.

Finally, ask yourself "Where is the hazard?" In other words, where do you keep tripping up? If the issue were a spiritual issue only, then you would've been able to stop the behavior. But hazards require more than prayer; they require a change in behavior. They require the identification of a pattern, a proclivity, or an idiosyncrasy, and the honesty to admit the issue and work toward changing it. Remember, Judas walked with, learned from and worked with Jesus. Still, he ended up hanging himself

because his feelings were dictators instead of indicators. In order to avoid making the same mistakes Judas made, we must assertively and aggressively explore these areas in order to confront where we are right now, so we can manage ourselves until we heal.

Introspective Questions

1. All of us have a box. All of us have something that could potentially hinder us from getting through the door of destiny. Some boxes are labeled *insecurity, fear, anger, regret, guilt, unworthiness, envy, jealousy, unforgiveness, discouragement*. In the box below, write down some of the feelings that are keeping you from God's best.



2. Why did you choose the word(s) listed on the box? How has each word kept you from getting through the door of destiny?

3. Reflect on your life, and answer this question: where is the hurt? What was done to you (at any point in life) that caused you pain? Take a moment and reflect on the hurt below.

4. Now that you've named the hurt, what have you done about it? Have you confronted it? Have you suppressed it? Evaluate what you've done about the hurt below.

5. If hurt is something done to you, then your hole is something kept from you. What has life (or people) deprived you of that may be a hole in your life? Which emotional/physical/spiritual needs were not given to you as a child, that may be impacting you today? List them below.

6. Name a time when you’ve been betrayed by a “Judas,” yet like Jesus, you had to love them anyway? How did it make you feel?

7. Here’s a hard question. Name a time when you betrayed someone else because you were in your feelings like Judas? How did the situation resolve itself? What did you learn from it?

CHAPTER TWO | *What's The Real Problem?*

But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. He prayed to the Lord, "Isn't this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." But the Lord replied, "Is it right for you to be angry?" Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. Then the Lord God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live."

Jonah 4:1–8

Here is a scenario with which many of us are familiar. Husband is upset. He had a stressful day at work. Wife is home cooking dinner. When husband arrives, wife tells him, "Dinner is on the stove."

When husband gets in the kitchen, he starts yelling about the food being cold or the food being too salty, or the food being too bland. Wife responds in anger about how long she sacrificed to make the food, and the least he can do is be grateful and appreciative. Wife is still upset from last night. Husband forgot their wedding anniversary. Husband is upset because of the horrible day at work, which has been a horrible week at work (which is actually why he forgot their anniversary because he's been so stressed). They start arguing. They argue for two hours about food. The food was too hot. The food was too spicy. The food isn't something the husband had a taste for. The food is worse than the local fast food chain down the street. Hours and hours are spent talking about food, but food isn't the real problem. They've now wasted the entire night arguing over something that is, in actuality, symptomatic of larger issues: *neglect, burnout, indifference, inconsideration*.

In life, all of us need to ask, *What's the real problem?* Are you upset at your children because they didn't score well on the test, or are you projecting your perfectionism onto your children, without them knowing it? Are you upset because you are single, or are you jealous that your best friend got married before you? Are you angry that life has dealt you a bad deck of cards, or are you struggling with unforgiveness because half of these cards were dealt to you by an abusive parent? What's the real problem? What's the real issue?

In the first chapter of this guide, we discussed an important conclusion about our feelings. Our feelings should be indicators, not dictators. God created us with feelings so that we could live with them, but we are not to be led by them. And whenever we let our feelings lead us, we end up like Jonah. Jonah's story paints a powerful picture about emotional wellness (or the lack thereof). Jonah was written to warn us. When we don't manage our feelings, our feelings will manage us; and when our feelings manage us, we will inevitably mismanage our destiny.

THE PARADOX OF JONAH

Jonah was a prophet in the Old Testament. God gave him specific instructions, and told him to deliver a word to Ninevah, but Jonah ran away from the Lord and went, instead, to a place called Tarshish. Jonah 1:3 gives insight into information that must be discussed as we think about the purpose of our feelings. It says, "But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. *He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord.*" Notice that Jonah goes down to Joppa. Then he goes down on a boat that he shouldn't have boarded, and eventually he goes down to the bottom of the sea where a whale is waiting for him. In all of this, Jonah goes down, because whenever we avoid instruction from God, no matter what direction we go, it's always down.

Jonah also pays a fair to get on a ship he shouldn't have gone on, to head to a place he shouldn't have gone to; because whenever we ignore divine instruction, it costs us. Disobedience costs us time, energy, and money. Time is a gift we can't get back. Energy is a limited resource, and money doesn't grow on trees. When we go in the opposite direction of God, it always costs us. Thankfully, the Lord loves us enough to give us a second chance.

Jonah ends up on a ship. This ship is filled with people and cargo. But because Jonah isn't supposed to be on the boat, the boat is too heavy to contain everyone. So the men start throwing precious cargo overboard. This cargo was obviously valuable to them. But the men began to throw what was valuable to them overboard in order to keep Jonah on. When we are in our feelings, people have to violate their values to "keep us on." While this is happening, Jonah is asleep. People are changing things because of him and accommodating his presence. Meanwhile, Jonah is unbothered. He is asleep. They are working but Jonah is sleeping; because when we are in our feelings, we are oblivious to the impact our actions have on others.

But this is just the beginning. The Bible says that the men try to row Jonah back to land and they can't get him back, so they have to throw him overboard. Jonah should've thrown himself overboard. He knew he was in the wrong, but the people have to throw him over. When he is overthrown, a whale is waiting to swallow Jonah up.

The whale wasn't assigned to take his life. It was assigned to save it. That is the beauty of our God. When we go in the opposite direction of his will, he still protects us with his grace. God had a whale travel in the same direction that Jonah was going, proportionate to the direction the boat was going, so that when Jonah was thrown off he was swallowed up. While in the belly of the whale, Jonah is confined. Jonah is in a dark place. But thank God, there is insulation during his season of isolation. Jonah sits in the whale for three days and three nights, and finally, when he is released, Jonah goes up to Nineveh and preaches what God tells him to preach and the city repents.

Here is where it gets interesting. Jonah does what the Lord tells him to do (eventually) but while he is doing what God said do, Jonah is still in his feelings. How do I know? Because Jonah 4:1-4 reveals the truth. Jonah was upset that God spared the Assyrians. The Assyrians had historically hurt Israel and Jonah wanted to see them harmed for the hurt they inflicted on his people. He knew God to be gracious and compassionate and slow to anger and abounding in love, but Jonah was so in his feelings that he lost sight of the big picture. It is impossible to be in our feelings and in purpose at the same time. Jonah was so in his feelings that he says, "I wish I were dead." Jonah wanted to die because God spared the Assyrians in Chapter 4, but the irony is that Jonah almost died in Chapter 2, and God spared him in spite of his disobedience, too! When we are in our feelings, we want grace for us but judgment

for others. When we are in our feelings, we don't just do unwise things, we also say unwise things. Jonah had just finished prophesying. But moments after he prophesied, Jonah became petty. When you are in your feelings, you can go from prophet to petty in the blink of an eye.

The entire time that all of this is happening, God is trying to get through to Jonah. Jonah 4 shows us that God loves the prophet enough to deal with his anger. God consistently asks Jonah, "Why are you angry?" Jonah can't really answer the question with a simple answer because emotional unhealthiness makes us illogical. The emotional side of the brain overwhelms the rational side. But God doesn't let Jonah off the hook. Instead, he leads Jonah into an awareness of what's happening with him, and that self-awareness is the exit door out of the box of his feelings.

THE BOX WITHIN THE BOX

You may be upset about one situation, but what's the real problem? Jonah thought he knew what was wrong, but he was oblivious to the real problem. In Jonah 4, Jonah says I'm angry. But anger isn't a primary emotion. Anger is a secondary emotion. If you only medicate the anger, you haven't dealt with the real problem. What is the box within the box that is informing your anger? What is beneath the fear? What is beneath the self-sabotaging behavior? For Jonah, he could see his anger but he couldn't see his arrogance. Jonah was arrogant because he assumed he

knew how to deal with the Assyrians better than God. Jonah was also entitled. He thought it was anger, but entitlement was peeking out beneath the box of his anger. He was entitled because he felt he deserved a grace that others did not deserve. Jonah couldn't see his entitlement. Jonah couldn't see his arrogance, and Jonah also couldn't see his bitterness. He became bitter after everything happened, and his bitterness caused him to become graceless. It left him hesitant and suicidal. Jonah teaches us that when you don't deal with the pain that came from what people did to you, then the pain will turn into bitterness and the bitterness will metastasize into a different kind of problem.

HOW TO IDENTIFY THE REAL PROBLEM

If I want to see the real problem, what does the Bible teach me to do? In order to get out of the box of your feelings, you must accurately identify your feelings. You can do this by implementing one of three methods. First, you must do an internal assessment. Look at yourself in the mirror and tell yourself the uninhibited truth. Believe it or not, sometimes the person we are most dishonest with, is ourselves. Sometimes the person we are most harsh with, is ourselves. Sometimes the person who tells you off better than anybody else can, is you! When you take an internal assessment, you examine yourself. This is what the Apostle Paul encouraged the church at Corinth to do in 1 Corinthians 11:33. He writes, *“But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come*

under such judgment.” In other words, Paul says that every day, we should pause and reflect on how I am doing emotionally. Life is busy and sometimes we don’t have time to process our emotions so we suppress them and keep on moving. But the more you sweep your emotions under the proverbial rug, the harder it will be to get to the root of your problem. Paul tells us to discern the truth from the lie. In 1 Corinthians 11:33 Paul is not talking about the discerning of spirits. He’s talking about the skill of discernment. Not everyone has the discerning of spirits but everyone can develop a skill of discernment. People who have gifts of healing may have the discerning of spirits so they can discern if the issue in front of them is a physical malady or a spiritual stronghold. People who have gifts of intercession may have the gift to discern spirits because they need to see if they are praying for something that is a natural occurrence or a satanic infiltration. Discernment is important. If you don’t develop your inner discernment skill, you could be going through a situation and blaming it on the devil, when, in truth, it’s God. Or, you could be blaming something on God that is simply a life situation. Discernment helps you to figure out what you are fighting. It helps you to figure out which angle you need to use in order to counteract the problem.

When Paul writes this letter, he says that if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, then we would not come under such judgment. There are some things that we can prevent ourselves from going through, if we

simply developed our discernment. The way you prevent yourself from unnecessary pain, is by taking the time to have internal assessments as often as possible. Take the time and ask yourself, “How am I today?” Analyze what happened today and assess if you’re mad, sad, disappointed, frightened, on edge, etc. Remember you can’t fix what you don’t face. And denial is the ultimate expression of weakness. It takes strength to see the truth. Hence, internal assessments are needed every day.

After you conduct an internal assessment, then you need to be willing to have an external evaluation. You need to identify someone who is a “safe person” so they can “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15) and allow you to see yourself objectively. There is no way to see yourself simply by only looking at yourself. A doctor doesn’t do surgery on his own body. In the same way, you must learn to allow other trusted voices to give you their perspective about what they observe about you. There is no such thing as an unexpressed emotion. You aren’t hiding what you think you are hiding. We may not see what you are hiding but we can see things you don’t see.

External evaluations are uncomfortable because you allow people into your private space emotionally. But they are necessary. If you love your destiny, then give somebody permission to go there with you. Find someone who is not impressed by your gift. Find someone who is unimpressed by your degrees on the wall and the money in your account. Nathan was sent by God to give David

an external evaluation. Look at what happens in 2 Samuel 12:1-8 with David when Nathan shows him the truth.

2 Samuel 12:1–8 The Lord sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, “There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. “Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him.” David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, “As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.” Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man! This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master’s house to you, and your master’s wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more.

All of us need a Nathan in our lives. David was a man after God’s own heart, but still, he couldn’t see the ramifications of his own actions. The only way David could be free from his feelings, was to allow Nathan to show David his true self. Who in your life can tell you the truth, even when you don’t want to hear it? It took

an external evaluator to help David see the box that was keeping David from destiny.

Finally, we need to commit to unyielding investigations. No matter how difficult it may be (at times), and no matter how tedious the task may feel, we must be relentless in our desire to unpack boxes until we discover and address what needs to be addressed. Proverbs 25:2 says this, “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings.” Searching is hard work, but it is worth it. Never get to a point where you assume you have reached perfection. Insofar as you do life with people, you will always encounter offense. We live in an imperfect world filled with imperfect people. Therefore, offense will happen one way or another. Either God is going to allow something you don’t like to happen, or people are going to do something they shouldn’t. Either way, your job is to constantly open up these boxes, and confront what you want to see changed in your life. If you don’t, your boxes will accumulate. It won’t be easy at first, but you can do all things through Christ which strengthens you. My prayer is that God will give you the courage to keep going. I pray for an eternal relentlessness that comes from above, because the enemy will be relentless in using your feelings to destroy you. But God knew that you would need a resource to help you over the hump of your most troubling season. There is a door of blessing before you. At the same time that you open your boxes and begin to face it, the door is going to swing open for you. Glory to God, Amen!

Introspective Questions

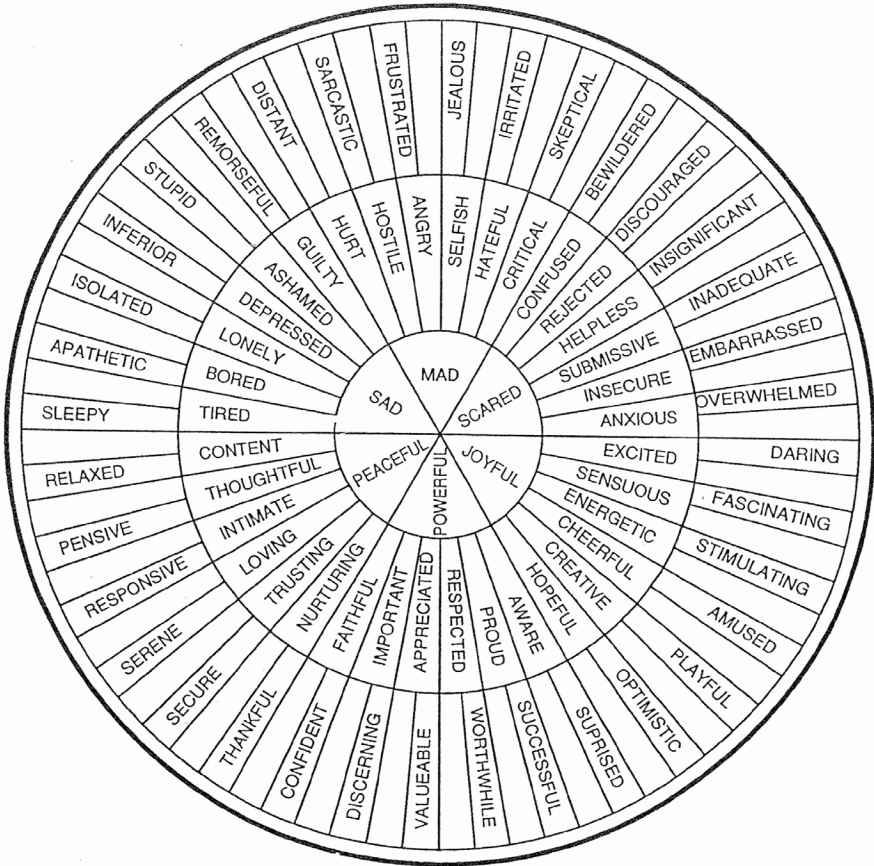
1. In Jonah 4, Jonah says I'm angry. However, anger is a secondary emotion. If you only deal with anger, you don't really deal with the real problem. Jonah could see his anger but he couldn't see his arrogance. Jonah could see his anger but he couldn't see his entitlement. Jonah could see his anger but he couldn't see his bitterness. Think back on the word(s) you wrote on your box in Chapter 1. Now ask yourself, "What is the REAL PROBLEM?" What are underlying things that may be informing your pain?

For example.

- *Anger is on the outside, but on the inside, there is also Unforgiveness.*
- *Low Self-Esteem is on the outside, but on the inside, there is also Envy.*
- *Promiscuity is on the outside, but on the inside, there is also Unworthiness.*

Write down a few words to describe the box within the box. Take your time and assess your feelings. Peel them apart like an onion—layer by layer.

2. Use the emotion wheel on the next page to do an internal investigation of your feelings. You may revisit this activity for the next seven days, or for the next 30 days. The timeline is up to you. But ask yourself, “How am I feeling?” How was my day? Why do I feel the way I feel? Write down your responses after you have selected a word or a number of words from the emotion wheel to describe how you are feeling today.



THE FEELING WHEEL

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3. Who is your Nathan? Who in your life can tell you the truth? How do you know? If you don't have someone who can help you to do an external evaluation, why? How can you change your life so that you can identify your Nathan within the next few weeks?

4. In what way have you been Jonah? What have you run away from, and who are you avoiding because of your feelings?

5. Now that you are aware of the real problem(s) that are connected to your feelings, what is one thing you can do to change how you respond when those words (written on your box) show up in your life?

CHAPTER THREE | *Keep Jack In The*

Box

Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe. As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know what a beautiful woman you are. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will let you live. Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you." When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians

saw that Sarai was a very beautiful woman. And when Pharaoh's officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace. He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

But the Lord inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai. So Pharaoh summoned Abram. "What have you done to me?" he said.

"Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!" Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had.

Genesis 12:10–20

Abraham's story in Genesis 12 offers some incredible insight into an area we've been exploring in each chapter of this book. In Chapter 1, we learned that our feelings are indicators, not dictators. In Chapter 2, we learned how to locate the real problem. In Chapter 3, I want to help you acquire a greater understanding of your triggers. In order to exit out of the box of your feelings, you must learn how to recognize your triggers, and avoid the temptation to give in once familiar buttons have been pushed.

To begin, let's answer this question. What is a trigger? Emotional triggers are thoughts, feelings, and events that generate an automatic response from us. The word "trigger" is important though, because the idea is that our reaction occurs automatically. It might seem as if your emotional *reaction* is completely involuntary. But the truth is, this *reaction*, like everything else we do, is a choice. We choose to respond after someone raises his or her voice. We choose to walk away when someone demeans us publicly. Everything we do, begins with a *choice*. We choose to shut down. We choose to show out. We can choose to pray about it. We can choose to cry about it. Nonetheless, the trigger is what causes an automatic response similar to a Jack-in-the-Box.

If you've seen a jack-in-the-box toy, it is a square box that children play with. It has a crank on the outside of the box, and when that crank is turned, usually a clown will pop out to the melody, "pop goes the weasel." If the

toy isn't wound up, the jack won't come out of the box. But the moment someone turns the crank, "Jack" is destined to come out of the box sooner or later. Why? Because the right buttons have been pushed. In the same way, the enemy wants your "Jack" to come out of the box. He wants to get you cranked up, and wound up so that your feelings can cause you to lose the battle. But if we take our cues from Abraham, it will help us to keep Jack-in-the-box.

LESSONS FROM ABRAHAM

When we first encounter Abraham in Genesis 12, we are told that he is a man of faith. We know this because he leaves everything he knows to pursue the unknown. Surely, it takes faith to leave what is comfortable in order to pursue what is uncomfortable. Surely, it takes faith to follow a voice you've never heard, to go into a land you've never been. Abraham has a promise from God. He is faithfully pressing toward the fulfilment of the promise. But on his way to possess the land, he bumps into a slight problem in the promise.

Not many days into Abraham's journey, he encounters a famine in the land. As a result, he has to move. A famine is God's way of moving us. It is often his way of communicating that it is time to make an adjustment. So, Abraham and his family get up and move, and they end up in Egypt.

While there, the King hears about their arrival and calls for Abraham's wife. The king didn't know that Sarah

was his wife, because Abraham said that she was his sister. By doing so, Abraham exposes his wife and puts her in harm's way. He puts the king at risk, and he loses credibility with his wife. He tells her to lie for him, and she does it; but just because someone lies for you, doesn't mean they have respect for you. This happens in Genesis 12. But look at what happens just eight chapters later.

Genesis 20:8–13 *Early the next morning Abimelek summoned all his officials, and when he told them all that had happened, they were very much afraid. Then Abimelek called Abraham in and said, "What have you done to us? How have I wronged you that you have brought such great guilt upon me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that should never be done." And Abimelek asked Abraham, "What was your reason for doing this?" Abraham replied, "I said to myself, 'There is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.' Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife. And when God had me wander from my father's household, I said to her, 'This is how you can show your love to me: Everywhere we go, say of me, "He is my brother."'*

When you are in your feelings, you ask people who love you to be O.K. with expressing love in a dysfunctional way. When you are in your feelings, you give ultimatums like this one: *if you love me you'll be dysfunctional for me*. If you love me, you'll become somebody other than your best self for me. The first time Abraham lies (and uses his wife), he is in Egypt. But the above scripture informs

us that Abraham has moved on from there. God spared Abraham from the first lie in Genesis 12, and now, in Genesis 20, Abraham is found doing the same thing. This is a destructive pattern. Abraham keeps lying. But why? He is now in a place called Gerar. He said he was sorry in Genesis 12, but he obviously didn't learn his lesson because he puts his wife at risk once again.

Often, when we are in our feelings, we make a vow in our chapter 12 that we forget we made in our chapter 20. This doesn't seem to make sense, however. Abraham is a man of faith. How could Abraham be a man of faith and still tell so many lies? Because it is possible to walk in faith and in dysfunction at the same time. It is possible to do spiritual things and dysfunctional things at the same time. Clearly, we see a pattern in Abraham's emotions. Some would call him a liar, but that is only one box. The real reason he lies is because fear drives him to act dysfunctionally. Each time Abraham gets in a situation like this, he responds destructively. It's a pattern that something is being triggered.

Like Abraham, our triggers are unique to our personal history. It's our soul's way of reminding us of what happened in previous seasons of our lives. Hence, Abraham must have experienced something in his past that caused him to come to the conclusion that he had to care for and protect himself because no one else would do it for him. Maybe you've endured a hard season as well. Perhaps you had to fight for yourself, raise yourself, and

take care of yourself. But you are not where you once were. You have moved from there.

In the same way, what Abraham didn't realize was, he was in a new season. He is now in a season where he has a relationship with God. Old things have passed away. All things have become new. There was no need to compare this season to an old one. There was no need to place his fear over his faith. God was faithful to protect him and preserve him (even in the midst of a lie). But Abraham was triggered. And when we are in this space, the enemy becomes a puppet master and whenever he decides to do so, he will pull our strings. Our emotions are responses. When we are in our feelings, our actions are a response to those emotions. So how can we manage our emotions so we don't act out of fear when the enemy revisits us with a familiar situation in the future?

GOD HAS GIVEN US RESPONSE-ABILITY

God has given you response-ability. In other words, you have a God-given power to be able to respond even when you are wound up. When you find yourself between a “box and a hard place,” the first thing you must do is ask the Holy Spirit for assistance. It sounds simple but it is important. Take a moment. Count to five to gather yourself. Speak from a clear place, and say these words, “Holy Spirit, help me.” John 14:16 says, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever.” You are not alone in this. Just like Abraham

was triggered, we all know when we are being tempted to respond in a way that resurrects old behaviors. But when you ask the Holy Spirit for assistance, you open yourself to divine intervention or divine interruptions. When God intervenes, he will orchestrate an event that prevents us from responding the way we feel tempted to respond. The phone will ring. A customer will enter. A random situation will happen that proves God is trying to intervene on your behalf. Or, he will give you supernatural restraint to remain calm until the urge dissipates. God knows how to prevent us from responding destructively. When we call on him, he is faithful to intervene and interrupt.

Second, you must avoid assumptions at all costs. Often, we misinterpret the meaning of events. If our boss tells us that there may be a downsize happening in the company, many of us leave that meeting assuming that the downsize will happen to us. From there, we assume, “I’m going to lose my job and if I lose my job, then I’m not going to be able to pay the mortgage. If I can’t pay the mortgage, then we will have to move out of the district, and my children will have to be moved to another school system. When they move to another school system, eventually we will be homeless on the street asking strangers for money.” All of this derived from your boss saying that the company might have to downsize.

If you’re not careful, your trigger of assumption can cause you to misinterpret events. This can do more harm than good, and this is what happened with Abraham.

Abraham made assumptions that were inaccurate. Abraham thought Pharaoh would be taken aback by his wife's beauty, and he was. But Abraham also thought that he would be killed as a result, and he was wrong. Abraham never died, even though he lied twice. When we are in our feelings, we form inaccurate prophetic conclusions. We place a period where God has placed a comma. It's never as bad as you think it will be, so remove your assumptions and trust God to keep his promise.

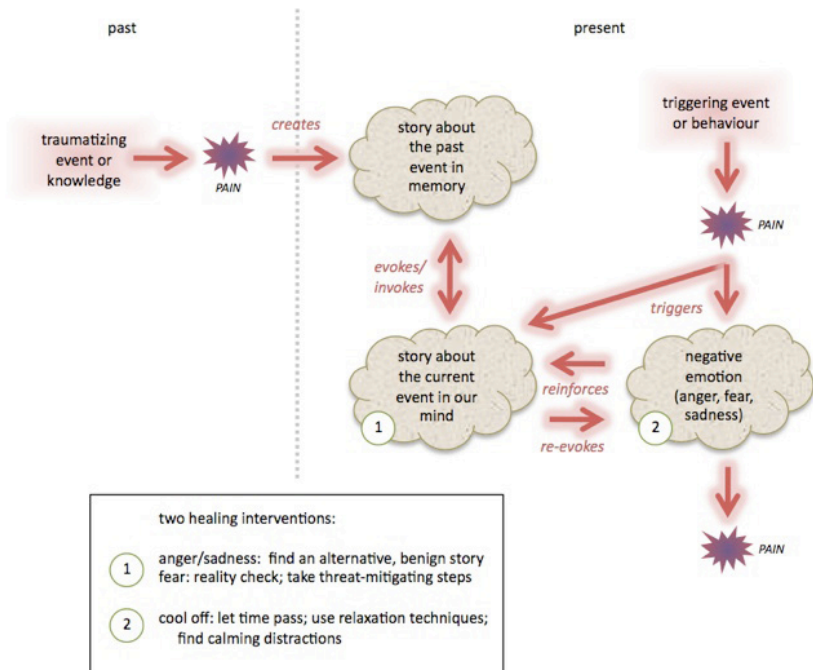
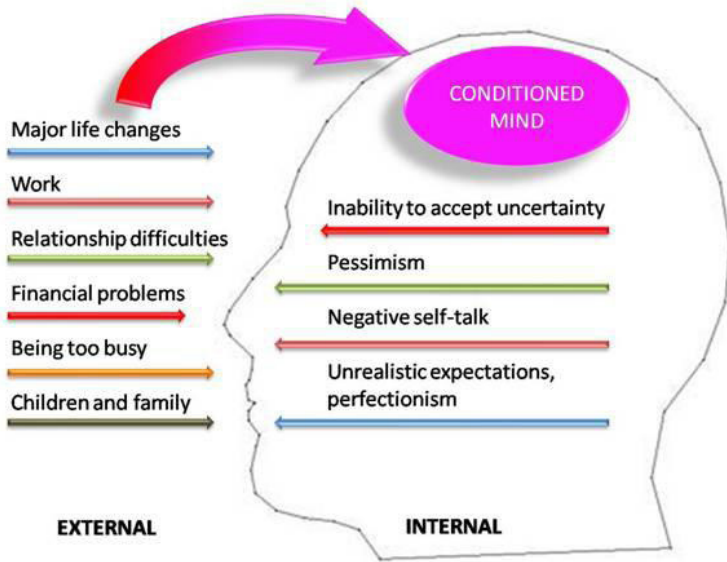
Third, you must audit your intake. Whatever you take in will one day come out of you. If you have two sponges and one sponge has been dipped in water, and the other sponge hasn't, eventually what has been deposited into the sponge with water will reveal itself after it has been squeezed. When you are squeezed in life, it is only a revelation of what you were previously "dipped inside of" in a previous season. But when you audit your intake, you decide not to subject yourself to people, places and things that will do more harm than good. We must be aware of how much of who and what we can take. What is your limit before jack comes out of the box? You have to know yourself. You have to know how much of what and how much of who you can handle.

Finally, always envision the consequences of your actions. You might not be able to control your triggers, nor can you control the incident that triggered you, but you are responsible for your actions. Be angry and sin not. Have your moment, but do not turn a moment into a monument.

When something triggers you in the future, think through your behavior and think through its consequences. Literally, play it out in your head. Most people act irrationally because they react to the current situation without thinking about the future consequences. Don't let the emotional part of your brain cloud the rational part of the brain. If Abraham had only paused to think through the ramifications of his actions, he would've never subjected his wife to such destruction and danger. But he didn't count the cost. He let his feelings lead him, instead of leading his feelings.

In all this, you have the power to fight back. God has given you love, power, and a sound mind. One translation says that God has given us self-control. You can do this. You can manage these emotions now until you are transformed into new behaviors later. The goal is transformation. Don't allow the enemy to trigger you into self-destructive activity. Giving him control of our triggers allows him to become a puppet master in our lives. And whenever he wants to, he can pull our strings when we are on the verge of stepping into something new. Today is the day we refuse to allow him to pull our strings any longer. Our future is too bright and our destiny is too great.

CAUSES or TRIGGERS OF STRESS & ANXIETY



Introspective Questions

1. In what place does your “jack” show up? Fear was Abraham’s trigger. What’s yours?

2. When you are triggered, what assumptions do you make? What is the consistent story that you keep telling yourself (whether true or false) and why do you think that way? Sometimes, understanding the why will help you to make a different decision next time.

3. Name a time when you made a decision (because of a trigger) that put someone you love in a difficult situation. How did the situation resolve itself?

4. Name a time when your trigger caused you to act out of character. What happened in the end?

5. Have you ever been triggered by a past memory, but you didn't respond the same way you used to? What did you do differently? Why did it work?

6. It is impossible to do this without the help of the Holy Spirit. In the space below, write a prayer to God for assistance with your triggers.

7. Audit your intake for a moment. Can you identify a few places where you have constantly subjected yourself to triggers in the past? It could be a place you visit, a television show you watch, or people you consistently hang around. Who or what is causing you to consistently fall back into destructive behavioral patterns. Remember: you can't fix what you refuse to face.

[illegible]

CHAPTERFOUR | 7 Deadly Emotions

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. -Ephesians 4:31–32

The goal of this resource guide was to help you to increase your awareness about what you are feeling and why you are feeling it. I also wanted to give practical principles so you can manage your feelings in a healthy way. In all of this, remember: God wants you to thrive. He wants you to experience the righteousness, joy and peace of an abundant life. Our feelings are not bad. In fact, they serve a wonderful purpose. But when they become the master of our lives, they inevitably lead us down a path of destruction.

Our feelings are like a check engine light in a vehicle. They tell us when things are going well and when things are not going well. The check engine light is never the problem. The light indicates that you need to give attention to something else; and that something else is the real problem. Learn to use your feelings in such a way that they guide you toward fixing the problem instead of perpetuating it. A feeling-led life is a life that keeps you

from experiencing God's best. Judas taught us that when we don't take authority over our feelings, we will hang ourselves, compromise our destiny, and sabotage the most important relationships we have ever cultivated. Jonah taught us that when we don't manage our feelings, they will manage us. And when our feelings manage us, we will mismanage our destiny. Abraham taught us that when we don't recognize our triggers, we will subject others to the dysfunction of our irrational behavior. All of this keeps you locked in a box that prevents you from walking through destiny's door.

Although this series appears to be about your feelings, the truth is, the box within the box is purpose. Everything you do, including how you feel, will directly or indirectly impact your purpose. If your feelings have you bound, you won't be free to do what God has called you to do. If your feelings have you confused, you won't be able to see what you need to see in order to say what you need to say. This is why we need to regularly submit ourselves to doctrinally sound teaching. Psalms 119:105 says that "the word is a light" therefore, it exposes us. It exposes us to truth, to freedom, and to power. The enemy knows that if you get a revelation about certain things, then your revelation will cause a revolution, and your revolution will change your life.

YOU CAN'T EVICT WHAT YOU DON'T IDENTIFY

In Ephesians 4, the Apostle Paul is having an important conversation with believers in Ephesus. In this part of the letter, he is encouraging, instructing, and admonishing them to live in a way that is reflective of their relationship with God. In the first part of the letter, he tells them about their calling and in the beginning of Chapter 4, he advises them to walk worthy of it. In other words, he wants their revelation to be more than just a conversation. He wants their revelation of God to cause a revolution in their behavior.

As you continue to read, you see a consistent trend in his words. Paul informs them that they have to give up in order to go up. He says quite clearly in verse 31 that there are some traits that they need to abandon and evict from their lives (traits like bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander, and malice). Many of these traits derive from an emotion. Many of these traits connect to our feelings, and if these deadly emotions aren't addressed, then they can completely derail you and in many cases, destroy others. Here is the takeaway for this chapter: *you can't evict what you don't identify. You can't address what you refuse to expose.* Therefore, I want to use this final chapter to investigate what Michele Borquez calls the 7 deadly emotions. These emotions are the root cause of all emotional anguish and turmoil. I believe that if we can address and overcome these emotions, then we will be able to get out of our feelings and walk directly into our purpose.

FEAR

Fear is an expectation for the worst. It is an outright lie or an exaggeration of the truth. Fear manifests in a number of expressions, such as manipulation or deception, but when fear enters, faith decrescendos. Consider the story of Rachel in Genesis 30. Rachel was afraid that if she didn't continue to have babies, then she wouldn't be loved by her husband. In the same way, what are you giving birth to in order to feel loved? What are you overcompensating for, in the name of fear? When you give in to fear, we fail to remember that God is sovereign, and because he is sovereign, God will always act in our best interest.

JEALOUSY

Jealousy is a lack of tolerance or resentment for someone else's success. It manifests in competitiveness, sadness over someone's achievements, and it leads to confusion about our own purpose. Jealousy is based on the lie that another's success comes at your expense. It is seen in biblical characters like Saul who tried to kill David with spears. In one season, Saul is inviting David to play for him and dine with him. But in another season, Saul wants to kill David. The root issue is that Saul is jealous of David's potential. He can't see that God has a unique purpose for him because he's blinded by the unique way God wants to use David. When we allow jealousy to cloud our vision, it also ruins our understanding of purpose.

LUST

Lust is an intense craving for self-satisfaction. It manifests in greed, lasciviousness, and addictions. Lust is based on the lie that God can't satisfy me. It is manifested in biblical characters like David. Whereas David's predecessor, Saul, wrestled with jealousy, David wrestled with lust. He was so addicted to women who belonged to someone else that he took Bathsheba, impregnated her, and then conspired to cover up his lie by ultimately having her husband murdered. Lust always takes more than it gives. It never satisfies the soul, but it tries to convince you that self-satisfaction is greater than God-satisfaction. When David did not resolve his lust issues, he birthed a son, Solomon, whose problems with women doubled. Lust only gets worse over time. The more power it has over you, the harder it is to focus on your purpose.

ANGER

Anger is a strong feeling of annoyance and hostility. It manifests in rage, dishonor, and bitterness. It is based on the lie that God isn't a vindicator. Anger is seen in biblical characters like Moses. Moses was handpicked by God to liberate God's chosen people. Moses parted the Red Sea. Moses performed multiple miracles in front of the Israelites, but anger was a consistent trigger that ultimately kept him from entering into the promised land. God told Moses to speak to the rock, but in anger, he hit the rock; and still water came out of the rock. The miracle happened

in spite of Moses, but just because God uses you to draw water from a rock, doesn't mean God is pleased with you. Anger was the root cause that kept him from walking into the door of destiny. The angrier we are, the harder it is not to sin in the process.

STRESS

Stress is pressure and tension. It manifests itself in fear, worry, and impulsiveness. When you are stressed, you can't think logically. When you are stressed, you can't see life from a pure perspective. Stress is based on the lie that if things are not in my control, then they are out of control. When we stress, we do things like Abraham and Sarah did. They rushed the process by trying to help God out. They allowed logic to become their lord, and they produced a child God never ordained, which created a problem that would not have happened if they had only waited on God. When we stress, we assume God is God for everyone else except me. We take matters into our own hands, and the result is always more painful and more problematic.

SHAME

Shame is a feeling of humiliation caused by the consciousness of foolish or wrong behavior. At its core, it is self-loathing. There are two kinds of shame. One is healthy and one is unhealthy. Healthy shame is what Adam and Eve felt in the garden after they disobeyed God. We should feel this kind of shame when we do wrong against

God, because this kind of shame (godly sorrow) will lead us to repentance. However, there is another kind of shame that shackles us into feelings of low self-esteem and hesitancy. This kind of shame makes it hard to bounce back from setbacks. This kind of shame is based on the lie that you are what you did. Shame always leads us backwards. Shame always exposes our fear. Shame always makes us see ourselves as a mistake instead of realizing, “I made a mistake but I am not a mistake.”

PRIDE

Pride is an overestimation of one’s self or one’s ability. It manifests itself in unteachable attitudes, presumption, and undisciplined opinions. It is based on the lie that my strengths cancel out my weakness. It is seen in David’s son Absalom who was proud of his hair, his looks, and his pedigree so much so that he forgot that all of this was a gift of grace. Pride goes before destruction. When we are prideful, we become vulnerable to destructive patterns that we can’t see because pride is in the way. One way to eradicate pride is to counter it with humility. Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord. Let another man praise you and not your own lips. Discipline yourself not to speak more highly of yourself than you ought. Ask others (whom you trust) to tell you the truth about yourself.

THE TRUTH SETS US FREE

These 7 emotions are roots that produce self-destructive fruit. In order to get out of our feelings once and for all, we must manage them so they don't manage us. We can do so by realizing that all of these emotions are rooted in lies and they can be overcome by God's truth. Scripture says, "you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." How do you start? Tell the truth. Investigate each chapter and each emotion, and tell yourself the truth. Pray the truth. Sing the truth. Journal truthfully and surround yourself with people who will speak the truth in love. It is the truth, not the lie, that will unlock you from the prison of your feelings. Welcome to truth! Welcome to freedom!

Introspective Questions

1. How has fear shown up in your life? What are you most afraid of? Why?

2. Have you ever been jealous of someone? Write about it. Why were you jealous? What did you learn?

3. Do you have an intense longing for self-satisfaction? In what way has lust impacted your life?

4. Who are you angry with? Who have you been angry with? Have you ever lost a friend/loved one due to anger and disappointment?

5. What are you most stressed about right now? All of us have stress, but how are you managing it? Do you see the impact it has had on your life?

6. Have you ever struggled with low self-esteem? Have you ever been ashamed in ways that aren't healthy? Describe one experience below.

7. How has pride complicated your life? When and where does pride show up the most? Remember, tell the truth.

8. How did this open dialogue with these very uncomfortable emotions make you feel? What is your action plan toward wholeness? Identify a safe person and share that plan with them.
