

## Life Compass Pt1: The Ups & Downs of Emotions (1-8-20)

This new series is about decision-making & the best way to make life's many decisions. The series' goal is to help you make the best decisions for your life for now, for the future & for eternity. Decision-making is a very tough process & can have good, bad or ugly results. The decisions we make today can literally affect our life for years, decades, even forever. And the effects of those decisions can be anywhere from great to disastrous or anywhere in between. Life has an incredible number of decisions to be made & there are all sorts of factors, feelings, motives, desires, inputs & sources that people use to guide them to make their personal decisions. Tonight we're going to concentrate on emotions and how they affect our decision-making. A great movie concerning the power of emotions is *Inside Out*. In the film, a happy, young girl named Riley is uprooted from her Midwest life and moves to San Francisco with her parents. But something goes wrong when her emotions- Joy, Fear, Anger, Disgust & Sadness- conflict on how best to navigate a new city, house & school. Riley's emotions begin to take over & they make her behave in ways that damage her relationship with her parents. Her emotions even make her forget her loving childhood & lead her to run away from home.

*Inside Out* is a really thoughtful look at the changes and challenges that every teenager experiences. But what can we learn from it? Can emotions take over & lead us into bad or destructive decisions? Are emotions a good thing to guide us or a bad thing? Well, we humans are all created in the image of God (**Gen 1:27**). We have emotions and God has them too: love, anger, joy, pride, regret, hope, sadness; so there's nothing wrong with emotions in and of themselves. God feels & He created us to feel too.

But God is perfect and His feelings & emotions are perfect. His actions or decisions related to His emotions are perfect. We, on the other hand, are not perfect. **1.)** We have fears, insecurities & desires that are not from God. They play havoc on our emotions & lead us to make poor decisions. **2.)** We have a world that places emotions & feelings as the #1 source of life guidance & decision-making. says, "*Be true to your feelings*", "*Follow your feelings*" or "*If it feels good, do it!*". **3.)** We have sin that twists our emotions & thoughts to make us act in hurtful or harmful ways. **4.)** We have an enemy (the devil) that seems to use our emotions in any way he can to drag us down. When our God-given emotions come into play with our fears & insecurities, the emotion-centered philosophy of the world, our own sin and the devil's schemes, emotions and feeling become a terrible compass for making decisions. If we allow our emotions to be hijacked by these things, rather than inspired & guided by God, we are only setting ourselves up for a massive disaster.

But remember, emotions in-and-of themselves aren't bad or destructive. But just like everything in this world, we need to be seeking God, His guidance, His will, His word. So how can we have healthy emotions & feelings? How can we recognize unhealthy emotions & feelings and not fall victim to following them in decision-making? Here are a few questions to ask yourself.

**1.) Do my emotions & feelings and the actions they cause align with God's Word & His commands or go against them?** If your emotions, feelings and the actions they inspire go against God, then they aren't good or healthy. They won't help you make good decisions, but will lead you to make terrible ones. This is why knowing God's Word & having it in our hearts is so important (**Ps 119:11**). For instance, God's Word says to watch out for the emotion of bitterness and anger (**Heb 12:15, Eph 4:31, Eph 4:26-27**). God says this because feeling bitter is an emotion that grows into anger, hatred, violence & even death. And making decisions based on the emotions of bitterness & anger leads to all sorts of trouble, pain & destruction in life. **2.) Do my emotions & feelings and the actions they cause hurt to me, to others or to God; or do they promote God's love?** If your feelings & emotions cause actions that lead you into destructive behaviors that hurt you, others or hurt your relationship with God, these feelings & emotions are not a good guide for your decisions. Our emotions should promote God's love as exemplified in Jesus Christ & in His life and sacrifice for us. Our emotions & feelings should stem from God's love & spur us on to love others (**1Cor 16:14**). Jesus experienced emotion on earth: joy, compassion, sadness, disgust, anger. But these emotions didn't divert Him from His mission to lovingly follow God & lovingly sacrifice Himself for humanity. Rather, Jesus' emotions spurred Him on to good, loving & righteous acts (i.e.- welcoming children, healing the sick, raising the dead, fighting the devil & ungodliness.) So emotions or feelings based on God's heart, His will & His Word are good & healthy. These God-derived emotions & feelings help motivate us to help others like Jesus did.

We all struggle with emotions & the flawed decisions that result from them. But we aren't alone in our thoughts: God gives us some great help in this area. He promises His Holy Spirit to help you deal with the stress of harmful emotions (re: **John 14:26-27**). He gives us His Word that He will always be there (**Heb 13:4b**). And we have His Word to guide us (**Ps 119:105**) that says stuff like: God search me, take away my fears, anxieties & anger, & control my thoughts (**Ps 139: 23-4, Phil 4:6-7, Eph 4:26-27, 2Cor 10:5**). Folks, trust in God, let Him sort out your emotions & feelings, and He will guide you along His path of goodness now & through eternity.

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### SCRIPTURES

**Heb 12:15** Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.

**Eph 4:31** Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior.

**Eph 4:26-7** Don't sin by letting anger control you. Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

**Ps 119:11** I have hidden Your word in my heart, that I might not sin against You.

**Ps 119:105** Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.

**Ps 139: 23-4** Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

**Jn 14:26-27** But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you. "I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid.

**1Cor 16:14** And do everything with love.

**2Cor 10:5b** ...we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

**Phil 4:6-7** Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

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### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**1. What do you think about the movie *Inside Out*? Is it a good representation of where emotions can lead? Explain.**

**2a. "EMOJAM" Pt. 1.** God has feeling & emotions, and He wired us to have them too. But as *Inside Out* and Dan's message illustrated, feelings & emotions can lead us to make very poor decisions about our life. In the following exercise, let's list human emotions/feelings in the left-hand column & draw an emoji relating to it next to it. In the right-hand column, let's list important decisions that people face in life. These could be current or future decisions.

**2b. "EMOJAM" Pt 2.** Emotions & feelings can lead us to make very poor decisions. For instance, God warns us about the emotions of **bitterness & anger**. Let's read Heb 12:15, Eph 4:31 & Eph 4:26-27 & discuss how these two emotions (**bitterness & anger**) could negatively impact some of the decisions in the right-hand column?

**2c. "EMOJAM" FREE-FOR-ALL Pt 3.** Now let's look at the other emotions/feelings in our left column & discuss how they could impact the life decisions on the right.

**3. Emotions/feelings are tricky things. Have your emotions ever lead you to make a poor decision? What happened?**

**4. Let's get honest: do you struggle with letting your emotions or feelings dominate your thoughts, your life & your decisions?**

**5. If you struggle with emotions & feelings, God wants to help you deal with your emotions/feeling & help you make the best decisions for your life. One at a time let's read & discuss the following verses & see what God is trying to teach us about aligning our emotions/feelings & decisions with Him: Ps 119:11, Ps 119:105, Ps 139:23-24, Jn 14:26-27, 1Cor 16:14, 2Cor 10:5b, Phil 4:6-7**

**CLOSING PRAYER:** Lord God, we know You love us & we thank You for making us in Your image. Like You, we have feelings & emotions. But we need You- we need Your help in dealing with our feelings & emotions. Help us recognize unhealthy & ungodly feelings & emotions & help us rely on You. Help us to make wise life decisions. We love You & thank You in Jesus' Name, Amen.