

This week Dr. Randall Pannell presents the third installment in the Essentials for Personal Growth series. Beginning with Mark 12:30 (“And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.”), Randall helps you understand some things about your “soul.” He points out that frequently people misunderstand that you don't “HAVE a soul” so much as “you ARE a soul.” A large part of your soul finds expression through your emotions.

God created you in His own image, and He too has emotions. Your emotions are a part of you by design, and God has a purpose for them. Dr. Pannell says that the degree to which you allow your emotions to find expression as God intended can be thought of as your “emotional wellness” or your “emotional intelligence.”

Emotions that are out of control can bring ruin to your life, as they did in the case of King Saul. His jealousy and pride prevented him from leading Israel as God has planned. His life ended in ruin, and God replaced him as king with David, a man after God's own heart. David too was an emotional man. But, when David sinned or failed to perform God's best, David responded with sincere repentance and a love for God.

Dr. Pannell explains those characteristics that define an emotionally well person. A fruit of the Holy Spirit is self-control. Dr. Pannell points out that anger, for example, an emotion everyone is very familiar with, does not have to be a negative influence in your life. Since God created you in His own image, He too experiences anger. God has created you to handle your emotions just as He does.

God designed anger as a tool for survival, a response to pain, and a source of energy in times of danger. Unchecked anger becomes unhealthy for your body when it is prolonged or repressed. How does God expect you to handle your anger and the rest of your emotions in a healthy way?

Begin by accepting the fact you are an emotional being. Denying your emotions does not make you more spiritual than the next person; neither does allowing your emotions to control you help fulfill God's plan for your life. Be sensitive then, and identify the source of the feelings you are experiencing, and then deal with them as God directs. You can take charge in this way by becoming more self-aware and by yielding and submitting your emotional health to God. As a follower of Christ, He means for you to employ your emotions to identify with others and to put yourself in their place. God wants you to be an effective, compassionate believer and to reach out to others who need Him. If you want to love God with all your heart, trust Him to teach you how to use your emotions. Are you ready to take that step?