

EQ skill: regulation. FTAs. (June 26, 2025)

Galatians 5:17 says that “the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.” As many Bible teachers have noted, Paul tells us that the flesh comes against the Spirit first. This would be true to our experience. Under pressure, our first reactions and impulses are often not “the things that you wish;” instead, they are the things we regret later.

If we want to grow to be more healthy and loving, the first thing we need to learn is how to regulate ourselves so we do not react impulsively. When properly regulated, we can respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and deny the desires of the flesh. Bringing ourselves under control will allow us to contribute value in all situations so the light of Jesus Christ can shine through.

One process I have found to be most helpful is the Feeling-Thought-Action exercise to bring every thought captive to Jesus Christ. That exercise goes like this: take a few minutes to be quiet, name the feeling that comes to me first or strongest (feel your feelings), honestly connect that feeling to the thought that is driving that feeling, ask the Lord what to do with that thought, and then resolve to do what God is speaking to you as soon as possible.

So many people make the mistake of simply trying to turn off their unpleasant feelings, when in fact a feeling is an indication that there is something else wrong. To ignore, suppress, or mask an unpleasant feeling is to miss the opportunity for inner transformation. And as we know, suppressing a feeling doesn't make it go away. These unresolved feelings lead to unwanted fleshly reactions. When internalized, unpleasant feelings produce stress, anxiety, fear, depression, and immune-system compromises. However, when those suppressed feelings finally erupt to the surface, they often appear as uncontrollable anger, irrepressible sorrow, and unhealthy lust.

The unpleasant things of life cannot be ignored. God never asked us to lie or pretend. But He is willing to deal with whatever we experience, and He can transform anything for His glory. Let us give more of ourselves to Him more often...and then watch to see what He makes of us.