

Emotional Margin September 25, 2016

Introduction

⁴ Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again – rejoice! ⁵ Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. ⁶ Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ 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.

⁸ And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. ⁹ Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me – everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:4-9 NLT)

God has lovingly bestowed upon us a variety of emotions that, when employed properly, help us to experience the fullness of life. Anger (when tempered in a Godly fashion) can be useful to evoke change. Sadness, while oftentimes dark and painful, can be a bridge to restoration. Joy is a balm for our souls that frees us to delight in all He has given us. This week we will be talking about ways in which we can honor God as we attempt to manage the intricacies that exist within the complex walls of our emotions.

Digging Deeper

Emotional Margin comes through the way...

We TREAT others.

- “Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do.” (Philippians 4:5 NLT) Why do you think this is an important behavior to model?
- Social experiment time: Kindness is contagious. Discuss a few random acts of kindness that you and your family/friends could carry out this week. When you meet again, share your experiences with the group.
- You've probably heard the expression: “Life is 10% what happens to us, and 90% how we react to it.” While we can't control our surroundings, we can control how we react to them. Can you recall a time when you allowed someone else's temperament to affect your own (for better or worse)? Discuss practical ways that you can implement the directives found in Paul's letter to the Philippians to maintain a Godly perspective on the things of this world?

We TALK to God.

- How does talking to God change your mood? After all, He is the greatest (and most reasonably priced) therapist in the world. If you don't already do so, make a commitment to start every morning with a minimum of 5 minutes of prayerful conversation with Him. You might discover that starting your day in this way will completely change how you react to the people around you and circumstances you may face.

We THINK about ourselves and our world.

- A friend once told me that when she felt herself getting upset with her children, she would stop and think (or sometimes shout out loud), “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!” This allowed her to calm down, think before she spoke, and redirect those chaotic thoughts to Jesus. This inevitably led to a gentler approach to diffusing the situation. Do you have a “go to” Bible verse or phrase that helps steer your emotions in this way?
- Has someone ever told you, “It’s all in your head!” Well, yes it is! But what kinds of things are we allowing to run around in there? As Paul instructs in Philippians 4:8 (NLT), “Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.” Talk about ways this scripture can be utilized to build a habit of positive thinking that will encourage right thoughts that produce right words and yield right actions.

Conclusion

You and I live in a world filled with all sorts of sin and evil that eats away at us like a cancer that can leave us feeling overwhelmed and defeated. But it doesn’t have to be that way. Our defense is emotional and spiritual margin that is created through the way we treat others, the way we talk to God and the way we think. With God’s help, nothing we face in this world can touch our heart and soul.

Let’s tell God what we need and thank Him for all He has done (and will do).