

Proverbs 19:11-12

Everyday Wisdom: Wise Emotions

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Emotions are everywhere! You have the ability to **express** what you are feeling perhaps more easily **now** than any other period in **human history**. When I was growing up we had **texting**, but you had to create the **smiley face** at the end of your sentence. For example

- I hope you have a great weekend. :-)

The person receiving this text was encouraged by your **happy little smile**. But you could also write this:

- I hope you have a great weekend. :-(

A **frowning** face implies the exact **opposite feeling**. You're **not wishing** them **happiness**. You're telling them you're **upset** for **leaving you out** or **doing their thing** instead of yours. But today?

- I hope you have a great weekend. 🙌🎉🌟🦄😄🎆😬

Emojis: **clapping**, **party popper**, **star**, **unicorn**, face with **tears of joy**, **fireworks**, and **creepy clown**.¹ That is going to be one **exciting weekend**! As of **October 2019** there are **3,178 emojis**.² Did you know that “5 billion emojis are sent daily on Facebook Messenger”?³

On the **news feed Facebook** encourages us to “**react**” to what we read or see posted. They’ve even given us **six** different ways to express our reaction: **like**, **love**, **haha**, **wow**, **sad**, and **angry**.⁴



Facebook needs a **react option** that symbolizes a **carefully thought out** and **non-reactionary response**, like a little emoji of **the thinker**. It'll mean, “I haven't done the **research necessary** to respond to this post in a **thoughtful** way, but I want to **communicate** to you that I **engaged** with your **ideas**.”

It's **not wrong** to **feel emotion**. **God created** emotions. He created **feelings**. But it is **wrong** to be **ruled by** our emotions. All around us we are told our emotions are what **matters most**. The book of Proverbs, which contains our **Creator's plan**, has a **different perspective**.

It's easy but foolish to let your emotions rule you.

Here again we find a **contrast** between the **way** of the **foolish** and the **way** of the **wise**. Proverbs **contrasts** these **two paths** over and over again, continually **encouraging** us to **walk** in the **way of wisdom**.

Proverbs 12:16 (NIV)

Fools show their annoyance at once,
but the prudent overlook an insult.

It's easy to “**react**.” It's much harder to **patiently respond** and yet that's what the **prudent** do. As we learned in our [sermon on prudence](#), prudence **means** “thinking through all the options and their potential outcomes.” **Stopping** and **thinking** requires **energy**, **effort**, and **wisdom**.

It's hard but wise to reign over your emotions.

My first two points go together. *It's easy but foolish to let your emotions rule you... and it's hard but wise to reign over your emotions.* What I want to do now is go through the emotions Proverbs touches on and contrast foolish emotions with wise ones. Proverbs **encourages**:

Not anger but patience.

Proverbs warns us against **anger**, against **hostility towards others**.

Proverbs 29:22 (NIV)

An angry person stirs up conflict,
and a hot-tempered person commits many sins.

The Bible does tell us elsewhere that it is possible to be angry and not sin.

Ephesians 4:26a “In your anger do not sin”... (NIV)

So there are some things that we perhaps have the **right** to get angry over, things like **murder, greed, social injustice**, and **brokenness** in our world. But we need to read the **second half** of the verse.

Ephesians 4:26 “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, (NIV)

Proverbs gives a **short window for acceptable anger (one night)**. Why? What's the harm to **holding onto anger**? Read the next verse.

Ephesians 4:26-27 “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold. (NIV)

Satan uses anger to get a **foothold** in our life. How many of us have felt anger for **days, weeks**, or even **months**? I know I have. Anger is **addictive**. After a while you almost **don't** want to **let it go** because it keeps **you going**. **Every day** we **hold onto** our anger is another opportunity for **Satan to gain ground** in our **heart**. Anger turns into **bitterness** and **rots away** at our **souls**.

Proverbs 14:30 (NIV)

A heart at peace gives life to the body,
but envy rots the bones.

On a podcast I heard the story of **how anger and bitterness destroyed Richard Nixon**. For those of you who haven't studied **Nixon** yet he was the **President** of the **United States** but he did some really **questionable** things that **ended** in his **resignation**. The one being interviewed, **Stephen Mansfield**, said this:

The soul has a memory like an **elephant**. It remembers everything. Unless you deal with the offenses against you, unless you deal with the things that make you bitter, your soul will hang onto it. [...] **Richard Nixon** is there, he's in his **sixties**, and he's in the **White House** and he is going through **Watergate**, but he get's down on his hands and knees and starts beating on the floor with **Henry Kissinger** in the room and what's he talking about? The **Democrats**? The **FBI**? Something going on in Watergate? Oh no! The way his **Quaker** family was treated back in **California** when he was a **little boy**. He's **still bitter**. He's **still ticked**. It's **still shaping his soul**. And when you **feel bitterness**, you begin to allow yourself to **feel entitled**, you begin to want to **medicate**. [...] If I'm bitter against you, it doesn't really matter how I treat you. [...] In Nixon's case the attitude was a

kind of **paranoia**. They're **coming for me** and they're **wrong** because that's what they were in his **childhood**. They were **wrong** to treat his **family** that way. But the **Democrats** or the **other side** or the **FBI** or the **special prosecutor**, [...] they were **not wrong**. But that had been **coded** into **Nixon's soul** so he dealt with every **enemy** as though they were coming to **destroy him** and **they were wrong, morally wrong, wrong before God**, and that's **why** he responded the way that he did, and it **destroyed him**. (EntreLeadership Podcast #218)⁵

Anger turns to **bitterness** turns to **self destruction**. Who are you **angry with right now**? **Anyone**? Have you sent an **angry email** or **text** or made an **angry phone call** recently? For your own sake **bring your anger** to **Jesus**. If he can **bear God's wrath** he can **handle your anger**.

Is it **possible** to be angry and yet not sin? **Yes**. But is it **likely**? **No**. James warns us.

James 1:19-20 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20 because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. (NIV)

Our anger stirs up **trouble**, but God provides an **alternative**. **Patience calms the storm** (Prov 29:11).

Proverbs 19:11 (NIV)

A person's wisdom yields patience;
it is to one's glory to overlook an offense.

It is your **glory**, your honor, to overlook an offense. Our culture tells us it's our glory to "**clapback**." A couple weeks ago I taught you "**spilling tea**" is the **new hip phrase** for **gossip**. To clapback is the **new hip word** for a **comeback**. When you have a strong comeback you're clapping-back. Well, just like the **Bible** says to **resist spilling tea** it says to resist **clapbacks** and instead **practice patience**. *Not anger but patience*.

Not pride but humility.

Pride is when we see ourselves as **more important than God**. The **opposite** of this is the **fear of the Lord**.

Proverbs 3:7 (NIV)

Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the Lord and shun evil.

Pride is **also** anytime we see ourselves as **more important than others**. The **opposite** of this is a **teachable heart** (1 Pet 5:5).

Proverbs 26:12 (NIV)

Do you see a person wise in their own eyes?
There is more hope for a fool than for them.

Most of us **aren't going to say** we're **more important** than God or others, but we **implicitly** say it when we **go to the Bible to prove it agrees with our pre-formed opinions** or **when we surround ourselves with friends and people we know agree with us and affirm our point of view**. That's **pride**. What we need is a **teachable heart**. We need the humility to **come to God's Word** caring more about what it **actually** says than what we **think it should say**. We need the humility to **hear others out** who have a **different perspective on life, not judging them** in our hearts, but **listening for wisdom, wherever** it may be. The Bible tells us **humility** and a **teachable heart** leads to **honor** (Prov 11:2; 16:5).

Proverbs 18:12 (NIV)

Before a downfall the heart is haughty,
but humility comes before honor.

Olympic athletes still need **coaches**. Famous **movie stars** still need **directors**. **Bestselling authors** still need **editors**. **Humility** comes before **gold** (Prov 16:18; James 4:6). *It's hard but wise to reign over your emotions. Not anger but patience. Not pride but humility.*

Not anxiety but joy.

This point is a **little different** than the previous two because **anxiety**, **fear**, and **depression** are all **different** than **anger** and **pride**. When Proverbs talks about anger or pride it **speaks of** our **ability** to **restrain** those **emotions**, but when it talks about **depression** and **darkness** it talks **less** about **control** and **more** about their **reality** and **power**, their **crushing presence**.

Proverbs 18:14 (NIV)

The human spirit can endure in sickness,
but a crushed spirit who can bear?

Physical sickness can be **very bad**, but so can **sickness** of the **mind** and **heart**, **depression**. I take **great comfort** in knowing that Proverbs **does not underestimate** the **power** of **mental illness**. This is **God's Word** and God is saying **depression** is **real** and it is **serious**.

Proverbs does **have some wisdom** for how to **deal** with the **darkness** on the inside. It describes how we often **keep to ourselves** what's really going on and that's **not helpful** (Prov 14:13; 15:13).

Proverbs 14:10 (NIV)

Each heart knows its own bitterness,
and no one else can share its joy.

This Proverb speaks of **isolation** and **loneliness**.⁶ That **rings** true. It doesn't matter who you are. You **can have a sadness** inside that you're **not telling anyone**. Can I encourage you to **open up**? **Share** what you're going through **with someone**? **Not Facebook** because Facebook will just **tell you** what you want to hear (it's an **echo chamber**) but a **real living-breathing face-to-face person** who can **encourage** and **challenge** you.

Proverbs **doesn't say** we can **easily replace** our fears, anxieties, and depression **with joy**. But something we can do is **let others** have the **opportunity to speak joy into our lives**.

Proverbs 12:25 (NIV)

Anxiety weighs down the heart,
but a kind word cheers it up.

Remember a time when you were **feeling down** and someone you love was able to speak a **word of life** into your **heart** at just the right moment. If you're not an anxious person, **be that person**.

Did you know that **cats can't taste the flavor of sweetness**? That's right. **Felines** cannot taste **sweet**. It's like their tongues are **color blind** to **sugar**. No wonder cats are so **grumpy** all the time! They can taste **sour** and **bitter** and **saltiness** and **meatiness** but not **sweetness**.⁷ Are you a **cat**? Maybe you should get a **dog** in your life. Maybe when **dogs** are **barking** at cats they're just trying to **cheer them up**! If you're a **dog**, use your **bark** to **cheer up a cat**. And if you're a cat who **struggles** to taste the **sweet things in life**, **find a dog to be your friend**. I know dogs can be **really annoying** but they're **good for your soul**.

It's easy but foolish to let your emotions rule you. It's hard but wise to reign over your emotions. Not anger, but patience. Not pride, but humility. Not anxiety, but joy. But why? Why do we care?

Wise emotions are good for your body and good for your soul.

Today it seems like **common knowledge** that how we are feeling can have a **direct effect** on our **bodily health**. For example, **chronic stress** can cause “**high blood pressure** (and subsequently **heart disease**), **damage to muscle tissue**, **inhibition of growth**, **suppression of the immune system**, and **damage to mental health**.” ([wikipedia](#))⁸ But **long before** we ever **figured out** the **connection** between **healthy emotions** and a **healthy body** the **authors of Proverbs understood**.⁹

Proverbs 3:7-8 (NIV)

7 Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the Lord and shun evil.

8 This will bring health to your body
and nourishment to your bones.

To live humbly before your God and humbly with your fellow person can lead to good health.

Proverbs 17:22 (NIV)

A cheerful heart is good medicine,
but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

Good emotions are like **good medicine**. Not only are wise emotions good for your body, they're **good for your soul**. For example, **humility**, not pride, leads to **honor** (Prov 15:33).

Proverbs 22:4 (NIV)

Humility is the fear of the Lord;
its wages are riches and honor and life.

The way of wisdom and **wise emotions** leads to **praise before God**, but the way of the foolish and being **controlled by your emotions** leads to **shame** (Prov 3:35). *Wise emotions are good for your body and good for your soul.*

But here's the problem. Isn't it **kind of difficult** to do all these things? Isn't it **harder for some** than others to **rule** over their own **emotions**? This is **why we need the Holy Spirit**.

We need the Holy Spirit to shape our emotions.

In the New Testament book of Galatians we find **the fruit of the Spirit**. Just by its very name the “fruit of the Spirit” implies that the **fruit** is from the **work of the Holy Spirit**, **not the work of the tree**.

Galatians 5:22-23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (ESV)

One of the ways we know we're **saved by Christ** is through the **Holy Spirit developing wise emotions** in **our lives** (love, joy, peace, patience, etc.). But does this mean we **do nothing**? See the **next two verses**.

Galatians 5:24-25

24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. (ESV)

We **recognize** the Holy Spirit **bears fruits** in us even as he **calls us to keep up with him** (Phil 2:12-13). If the Lord is **giving us opportunities to learn patience**, and **not get angry**, let's try to **embrace** those opportunities, and **not run away** from them. If the Lord is giving us **opportunities** to learn **humility** and **not pride**, let's **embrace** the humility. If the Lord is **giving us joy** through **brothers and sisters in Christ speaking words of encouragement**, let's **accept** that **joy**. *We need the Holy Spirit to shape our emotions.*

The word for **Spirit** in both the **Old Testament** and **New Testament** is the same word for **breath**. This week when you feel a strong emotion you know will **lead nowhere good**, take a **big breath** and as you breathe in ask the **Holy Spirit** to fill your **lungs** with his **peace** and **guide** your response.

Let's take a **moment** and be **honest** with **ourselves**. We all have **emotions**, emotions **aren't bad**, but we can all think of **times**, maybe even **this week**, when we **let our emotions get the best of us**. That's **sin**. Let's call it what it is. Let's **repent** and **receive forgiveness afresh**. God sees our sin but he doesn't **condemn** us. Because of **Christ Jesus' death** on the **cross God doesn't pour out his anger** on you but his **love and compassion**. Jesus knows what it's **like to get angry**, he experienced the **full range of human emotion**, but he managed to do so **without sin**. That both **validates having emotions** and **challenges us** to not let them **control us**. **Jesus felt** but he **didn't let his feelings didn't rule** him. That means Jesus has the **power to deliver you and me out** of our **emotions** that **threaten to run away** with us.

This week when you're **tempted to "react"**—to get **angry**, or **prideful**, or **anxious**—**remember Jesus**, remember the **cross**, and may the **Holy Spirit fill you with his peace**.

Pastor [Jonathan Romig](#) preached this message at Cornerstone Congregational Church. You can download a PDF copy of this sermon above, which includes endnotes and references, or share it through [Apple podcasts](#) or [Google Play Music](#). Read the [story of our church here](#).

¹ These emojis come from the iPhone.

² How many emoji characters are there? <https://emojipedia.org/faq/> Accessed 11/1/2019.

³ Emoji Statistics: Number of Emojis. Accessed 11/1/2019. <https://emojipedia.org/stats/>

⁴ Casey Newton, *Facebook rolls out expanded Like button reactions around the world: Haha wow*, published Feb 24, 2016. Accessed 11/1/2019. <https://www.theverge.com/2016/2/24/11094374/facebook-reactions-like-button>

⁵ EntreLeadership Podcast #218: Stephen Mansfield—Avoiding the Fall. Accessed 11/1/2019. <https://www.entreleadership.com/blog/podcasts/stephen-mansfield-avoiding-leadership-fall>

⁶ Tremper Longman III. *Proverbs*, pg 568. See section on Psychological Insight.

⁷ David Bielle, *Strange but True: Cats Cannot Taste Sweets*, *Scientific American*. Published August 16, 2007. Accessed Nov 1, 2019. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/strange-but-true-cats-cannot-taste-sweets/>

⁸ Wikipedia contributors, "Chronic stress," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Chronic_stress&oldid=922986673 (accessed November 2, 2019).

⁹ Tremper Longman III writes in his *Proverbs* commentary, "The ancient sages had an understanding of the relationship between what we call mental health and bodily well-being. Difficult emotions can make the body sick, while positive ones promote health:" (p. 558).