

A BIBLICAL VIEW ON

Emotional Health



Kerby Anderson



Emotional Health



Have you ever wondered how emotionally healthy you are? Have you ever wanted to know how to achieve better emotional health? Dr. Chris Thurman attempts to answer those questions in his book, *Emotionally Healthy Christianity*. He argues that Jesus was the only perfectly sane person to ever walk this planet. Therefore, we can learn so much about emotional health by looking to Him and by applying the many verses in the Bible that

talk about emotional and spiritual maturity.

He provides a list of twelve habits of emotionally healthy Christians. It isn't meant to be a comprehensive list, and he admits that none of us practice these habits perfectly. Before we look at that list, here are a few key points he makes in the introductory chapters. He explains that a broken soul can't fix a broken soul. Ephesians 4:31 warns us to, "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice." If we are going to be used of the Lord in our lives, we will need to deal with some of the attitudes and hurts in our lives.

He also devotes a chapter to the importance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enlightens us about things coming in the future and

also helps us sense what is coming down the road in our personal lives so we can make good decisions. As one pastor put it, “We can’t do God’s part, and He won’t do ours.” We need to do our part and also be dependent on the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Twelve Habits of Emotionally Healthy Christians

First, seek to serve. Proverbs 11:24-25 observes, “One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.” Jesus is our model, who “did not come to be served, but to serve (Matthew 20:28). We see this when Jesus knelt to wash the feet of the disciples. We see many other examples in the gospels and must also

remember there were likely many other times where Jesus served others but they were not recorded because “the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written” (John 21:25).

Second, view reality accurately. John 8:32 says, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” Jesus only thought about what was true, pure, and worthwhile. Philippians 4:8 provides an important perspective: “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

Third, take appropriate responsibility. Galatians 6:4-5 reminds us that “Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take

pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load.” Jesus took full responsibility for His thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Fourth, delay gratification properly. Galatians 5:16 commands, “walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” We see a picture of Jesus delaying gratification when He went into the wilderness and was tempted three times by Satan (Matthew 4:3-10). James 1:14 reminds us that each of us “is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.”

Fifth, listen wholeheartedly. James 1:19 reminds us to be “quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.” Chris Thurman says that Jesus listened with His third

ear. That is a phrase he heard in graduate school to point to the need for counselors to listen to clients on a very deep level. We see this in the interaction of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:7-26).

Sixth, forgive and seek forgiveness. Colossians admonishes us to “Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” Jesus did half of this command. He forgave others, even if they weren’t sorry for their actions. Because He was sinless, He never had to ask other people for forgiveness, but He taught that we should do so when we have wronged another person.

Seventh, face problems head-on. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus

instructed His disciples, “Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matthew 6:34). Jesus faced the problems of people’s disapproval and the hostile backlash from His teaching. Jesus faced the greatest challenge when He faced the cross. We should deal with our problems and encourage others (including our children) to face problems for themselves.

Eighth, anchor your worth in God. Unfortunately, our society teaches us and our children that our worth is based on how well or how poorly we perform. Jesus anchored His worth in the Trinity. The Bible teaches that we are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14) and that God created us a little lower than the angels (Psalm 8:5, Hebrews 2:7). We should an-

chor our worth in being created in God's image. And we should treat others well because they are also image-bearers.

Ninth, have compassion. Matthew 9:36 records that when Jesus "saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." Jesus had compassion for everyone, even those who mistreated Him. Colossians 3:12 says, "as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience."

Tenth, grow in self-awareness. We are warned in Jeremiah 17:9 that "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" Jesus had perfect self-awareness. He even told a story of two men in Luke 18:9-14

that illustrated the lack of self-awareness of a Pharisee compared to the tax collector.

Eleventh, handle anger well. We are warned in Ephesians 4:26-27, "In your anger, do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold." Jesus was angry at the right time, toward the right people, in the right way. We see this demonstrated when Jesus cleared the Temple (John 2:13-17).

Twelfth, agape-love neighbors. Jesus said, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34). Jesus met people's physical needs with food (Matthew 14:20) and with healing (Luke 17:11-17). Jesus met people's emotional needs (Luke 10:38-42) and spiritual needs (Luke 19:10).

Walking in Christ's Psychological Footsteps

How should we apply these habits and principles? James (1:22) admonishes us to “not merely listen to the Word and so deceive ourselves. Do what it says.” And we should be willing to repent and thereby change: “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorry brings death” (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Jesus perfectly walked the walk. And while Jesus did not need to improve Himself, He provides a model for us in how He interacted with others to spur them on to make significant changes in their lives. Emotionally healthy Christians are willing to admit when they sin (miss the mark) and begin the process of forgiveness and repentance.

The books listed as additional resources provide ample insight and information. The book by Chris Thurman includes a workbook that you can work through individually or with others in a group setting. Begin the process of becoming an emotionally healthy Christian.

Additional Resources

Dan Allender, *The Healing Path*, Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook, 2000.

Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992.

June Hunt, *Counseling Through the Bible Handbook*, Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2008.

Chris Thurman, *Emotionally Healthy Christianity*, Austin, TX: CT Books, 2023.



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Point of View Ministries · PO Box 30 · Dallas, TX 75221
pointofview.net · 800-347-5151

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