

Chapter One

The Best for Life

Abide in me [with spirit, mind, and emotions],
and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of
itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye,
except ye abide in me. John 15:4.

The lessons in this book contain lasting principles of great value to be learned and used in decision-making. Our focus is God's Word and the role that Christ has in establishing our thoughts.

The significance of emotional maturity and success came to this writer when I was a youngster. I was observing a cousin twice my age who supervised a hay baling crew. He was engaged to be married and had hired his girlfriend's brother to work on the crew, but the laziness of her brother hampered operations. He explained the problem to his girlfriend and then dismissed her brother. His overcoming the emotional impulse to keep the brother for fear of offending his girlfriend impressed me very much.

Happiness does not consist in the absence of emotions but in the mastery of them. As leaders, it is our responsibility to teach those under our care about their emotions. The failure to use our intellect to identify and reject misleading feelings is causing vital relationships to be torn apart. Great pain and sadness result when relationships go wrong.

God gives lasting success to the faithful through the principle of substitution. **By substituting the mind of God in place of our own limited perspective, we learn the truth.** Are we willing to trust God's ways rather than our own? By the substitution of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, repentant sinners are redeemed for eternity.

"Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's" (II Chronicles 20:15b).

What is our goal in decision-making? The goal is to accurately picture the short and long-term consequences of options available for action. We need the truth! To avoid the deception of Satan, the world, and our carnal nature, we must look to the living God and His Word.

God is truth. Emotional and spiritual balance are the foundation upon which truth becomes clear and reliable decisions rest. Christians who know God's Word can feel secure in their emotions no matter what others say or do. "Keep [guard] thy heart [the mind with its emotions] with all diligence; for out of it are the issues [decisions] of life" (Proverbs 4:23). The importance of diligence may be ignored, but the consequences cannot be avoided!

Biblical Christianity and worldly philosophy lead to two distinctly different roadmaps for life. The consequences of sin are sure. Justice is the counter force that places evil in its rightful place. But Christ makes it possible to experience God's forgiveness and healing. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God

3 / *The Best for Life*

sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:16-17).

“For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now [through repentance and faith in God’s provision] returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop [overseer] of your souls” (I Peter 2:25). “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I [Christ] am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).



* *

The battle for freedom from harmful decisions and emotional pain has been won; it is but for us to walk in its power. “And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:19-20).

The experience of Dr. Marcus Whitman and his wife Narcissa illustrates the impact of untamed emotions. Dr. and Mrs. Whitman were the first Christians to establish a mission to the Indians in the far Northwest near Walla Walla, Washington. Their mission compound is now a national historic site. Despite their hard work, the Whitmans received many carping letters, and their work was the subject of dissension at annual missions conferences. In time, a measles outbreak plagued the region. Because this disease attacked Indians more often than whites, the Indians assumed Dr. Whitman was at fault. A few emotion-driven Indians murdered the Whitmans on November 24, 1847.

Researchers concerned about productive relationships understand the importance of emotional balance. A good

4 / *The Best for Life*

temperament is the characteristic most common among the best corporate leaders. On a scale of 1 to 100, researchers rate the importance of temperament between 85 to 95. The impact that IQ has upon the success of exceptional leaders is much less, rated about 50 on the scale. The relation of technical awareness to success for the top corporate leaders is even less—about 25.

Some common traits of good leadership are as follows:

1. Exceptional leaders are grounded in moral values and proven principles. They study for self-improvement on a regular basis. Personal, social, and motivational skills are priorities. These leaders have a program to educate their people and to monitor progress. This program includes a list of common mistakes and how people will be held accountable. These traits are comparable to the characteristics found in believers who are consistent, who go to the Bible for answers, and who attend Sunday school and church.
2. Exceptional corporate leaders desire to serve others by solving problems without adding needless stress that is counter-productive to themselves and to others.
3. Good leaders are good listeners! They empathize with those above and below them in authority. Good leaders employ people who are qualified to work in phases of the operation in which they themselves are not experts.
4. Good leaders are firm in their leadership roles but are self-critical and seek the opinions of others when formulating strategy. They accept criticism in private without being offended, and are not arrogant.
5. Successful leaders are honest and keep notes where forgetfulness would undermine their credibility.

Research based upon a sample of 5,000 inhabitants of Alameda County, California, brings the importance of emotional peace into focus. Beginning in the 1960s, the researchers monitored and cataloged the people's behavior with relatives, with friends, at church and in other activities. In order to enhance the accuracy of

the study, divergent matters such as body weight, smoking and socioeconomic

5 / The Best for Life

status were discounted. The results were clear: individuals who were least socially integrated were twice as likely to die during the course of the study as were those who had the most stable relationships.

Untamed emotions lead people to believe non-truth. What prompted the writing of this book was the absence of a Bible-based overview such as this and the presence of grief and disfunction that are caused by untamed emotions. It is worth noting, however, that Karl Marx captured the minds of millions by stirring up their emotions of jealousy and hatred and promising a utopia. In the same vein, unprincipled politicians motivate unsuspecting and emotionally immature voters with factional allegations that divide and generate anger. They then seek to conquer the electorate by promising to give them what their emotions tell them they must have. People who do not understand their emotions may be energized by propaganda to sit in a tree for months to prevent the harvest of the tree.

Changes in public education over the last forty years have had an incendiary impact upon the emotions of millions of Americans. These changes include the removal of God from the classroom, the failure to teach established knowledge concerning matters of morality, maligning and distorting of American history, and the teaching of sex education that borders upon pornography in some instances. Most public school teachers are good people, but they have no more control over the above subjects than do parents. We detail the importance of parental choice in the matter of their children's education in chapters four and five in the "Bonus Book."

What is the solution to the havoc caused by untamed emotions? The solution is to ensure that all of our young people, families, and church congregations are taught about the predictable failure of emotion-driven decisions and the rational foundation upon which quality decisions depend.