

EXCERPT



Mastering Our Emotions *Biblical Principles for Emotional Health*

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Psychologist Kevin Chapman draws on his therapeutic expertise to invite us into a deeper understanding of our own thinking patterns, emotional triggers, and avoidance behaviors—all viewed through the lens of scriptural truth and God’s power to change lives.

The Birthplace of Emotional Distress

The emotional effects of the fall have had a persisting impact on all of humankind. Despite whether you personally struggle with negative emotionality, the consequences of Adam and Eve partaking of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil are easily observable: wars, rumors of wars, difficulties within parent-child relationships, and the staggering statistics on emotional disorders. The shame, fear, and anxiety that were initially manifested in the Garden are among the primary negative emotional experiences that so many believers struggle with today.

Along these lines, consider for a moment the following questions: Do you struggle with worry about minor matters or perhaps worry about things that might happen in the future? Have you ever experienced a panic attack? Do you “clam up” when you are in social situations and become extremely uncomfortable when you must be in front of others? Do you dislike tight spaces? Do you often worry about your health and become uncomfortable when you experience unknown bodily sensations? Do you check Google when you feel a “twinge” in your body, hoping to find answers? Maybe you feel down and depressed while finding it difficult to enjoy activities that you used to enjoy. Do you experience “scary” thoughts that come into your mind, that then lead you to seek reassurance from others or attempt to block thoughts that may seem contrary to the Word of God? Do you “fly off the handle” over what other people would consider small things? Do you have a difficult time tolerating the unknown? Or maybe you avoid situations because they seem to trigger uncomfortable feelings in your body. Do you lie awake at night because of your thoughts? Do you have a difficult time praying or hearing from God due to your mind wandering to either the future or the past?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, do these symptoms cause you personal distress or impairment in everyday functioning (e.g., work, school, relationships, church, or social activities)? Some examples of distress and impairment in functioning include not being able to speak up in group settings out of fear of negative evaluation, not being assertive, missing out on leisure activities due to anxiety or depression, frequent panic attacks, your sleep being disrupted on a regular basis due to not being able to turn off your thoughts, or avoiding places and situations altogether due to feeling uncomfortable.

If you struggle in any capacity with what I just mentioned, then perhaps the tendency toward negative emotionality that initially occurred in the Garden is the culprit. Even if you are not high in this tendency to experience “big feelings” but some of these situations are difficult to manage, then you will benefit from this manual.

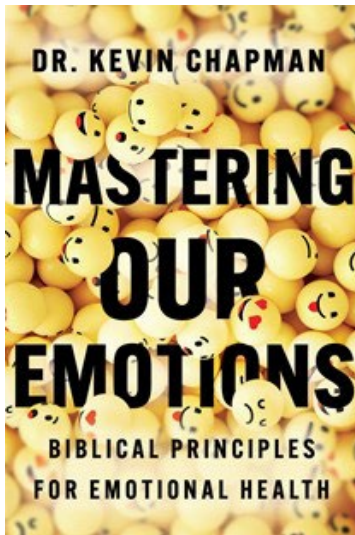


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“Truly a master class! With pastoral wisdom and therapeutic skill, Kevin Chapman reminds us that all our emotions are from God and are for our good if used wisely.”

—**Jason Cusick**, lead pastor at Journey of Faith in Southern California and author of *The Anxiety Field Guide*

Being Renewed

Learning to be renewed is a very important (and my favorite) skill that allows you to partner with the Holy Spirit in reprogramming your tendency to overreact in situations with intense emotions. The Word of God tells us that through renewing our minds, we can prove the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.

Interestingly, psychological science also supports the notion that our thinking patterns are influenced by our interactions with the world around us, which suggests that we can be conformed to the world based on what we allow ourselves to consume in the world. At an early age we develop core beliefs, based on our learning experiences with our family of origin/caregivers, in three interrelated areas: thoughts about ourselves, thoughts about the world, and thoughts about other people.

As believers, our life experiences also influence our thoughts about God. Along these lines, our core beliefs about ourselves, the world, and others/God often sound as follows: “I am _____, the world is _____, and others are/God is _____.” Over time, if we have a tendency toward negative emotionality, have negative life experiences, or receive negative messages from our family of origin, we often develop core beliefs that conflict with who we are according to the Bible. When this negative learning occurs, we might think about ourselves in a negative light, think of others as “more put together” or untrustworthy, and think about the future as dangerous. Our thoughts about God are also shaped by similar experiences, and we can unfortunately learn to view God as condemning, distant, or angry. In addition, we often learn to view negative emotions as dangerous and think that we are unable to cope with them.

The good news is that you can change the way you think if you practice. Changing your thought life is not as simple as just thinking positively; it is more important that you learn how to be renewed in your thinking. This requires asking yourself if there are other ways to view situations that will lead to different emotional experiences, as well as studying the Bible and letting Scripture influence your thinking patterns.

Proverbs 23:7 states, “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.” If you have learned to think of yourself as not being a morning person, you will never be a morning person. If you think of yourself as type A, then you can’t be anything else (there is no such thing as a personality “type” by the way). If you think of yourself as a hothead, you will always respond to anger in a negative way. If you think of yourself as a “worrywart,” then you will always respond to anxiety with worry. The good news is that both the Word of God and cognitive behavioral therapy reveal the same truth: in order to change the way you think, you must initially be aware of these negative thoughts and then “think on” different thoughts. Along these lines, the method that I use with clients on a regular basis is to help them (1) identify the thoughts that lead to negative emotions, (2) identify the traps in the way they think about a given situation, (3) learn how to challenge their thoughts with truth (kingdom questions), and (4) replace these thoughts by “putting on” alternative thoughts.

—adapted from the introduction and chapter six, “In the Beginning” and “Being Renewed”



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Kevin Chapman, Licensed Clinical Psychologist

Kevin Chapman (PhD, A-CBT, HSPP) is a licensed clinical psychologist with a specialty in cognitive behavioral therapy. He is the founder and director of the Kentucky Center for Anxiety and Related Disorders. Kevin leads Sound Mind Ministries and hosts *The Sound Mind Show* (YouTube), which focuses on managing emotions from a biblical perspective.

Dr. Chapman completed his undergraduate studies at Centre College in Danville, Kentucky, where he majored in psychology with a minor in sociology. He received a Master of Science in clinical psychology from Eastern Kentucky University in 2002 where he received training in evidenced-based treatment of anxiety and related disorders.

Dr. Chapman obtained a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Clinical Psychology from the University of Louisville in Louisville, Kentucky, in 2006 where he received further training in evidenced-based treatment of anxiety and related disorders. He completed predoctoral training at the Jefferson County Internship Consortium where he treated anxiety and related disorders in adults, children, and families from both urban and rural treatment locations.

Dr. Chapman was an accomplished two-sport athlete at Centre College where he was an all-conference performer in both football and track and field. Dr. Chapman was an eight-time conference champion in track and field and named to the All-Anniversary team in the Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference for his performances in the 200 meters. He was a psychologist for the University of Louisville Athletic Department Sports Performance Team where he assisted both individuals and teams in performance enhancement through teaching mental toughness, enhancing self-talk, mental imagery, and other sports performance skills. Dr. Chapman regularly assists athletes who have become State Champions, All-Americans, Olympians, Pan American Champions, Junior Olympians, Professional Athletes, and other high-performing athletes.

Dr. Chapman regularly publishes, lectures, and presents research on the treatment of anxiety and related disorders. He was an associate professor at the University of Louisville and director of the Center for Mental Health Disparities, until he decided to devote his time primarily to clinical practice. Dr. Chapman is a member of the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies, the International Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Foundation, Anxiety and Depression Association of America, the Association for Applied Sports Psychology, and the Kentucky Psychological Association. He is the outgoing program chair for the Master Clinician seminars for the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies and the program chair for 2014.

Visit Dr. Chapman's website at drkevinchapman.com.

Learn more about the Kentucky Center for Anxiety and Related Disorders at kycards.org.



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