

Volume 4, Day 8: Passion

The human heart moves us by emotion to do nearly, if not everything, we do. We become people pleasers in order to receive the admiration of others. We do things for applause and recognition. We often do even dishonest things in order to be accepted in one crowd or another. This happens in every aspect of our lives. Yet, many of us feel as though we cannot be our true selves and still be embraced by others. And in many cases we are correct. Many people only hang out with others of like mind or talent or vocation.

The quest of humanity pulls us in myriad directions. Yet we long to be free from the tyranny of the **should** of others. And we make this even worse by tyrannizing those around us with our opinions and **shoulds**. All the while the secret longing to be loved “as-is” with no changes, goes unsatisfied as we continue to hide behind what we think are expressions which will endear us to another.

One thing that is common to all humanity is the desire to be the object of another’s passion. We know that those we treat the best are the ones we care deeply about. We may not realize, however, that we are the greatest obstacle to finding the love we crave. We tend to be negative and critical. At the same time we expect others not to return that negativity. Is this not a bit less than sane?

The crux of the Gospel is that Jesus’ passionate love for us compelled Him to suffer our punishment. He did not give up His life as the noble or right thing to do. His love for us is nothing short of passion! God likely suffered even greater agony than Jesus, in watching mankind brutally beat and crucify His Son naked on a cross.

“...God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life.” – John 3:16

Volume 4, Day 9: Faithful: the Fire of Desire

Many people pursue a life of virtue. And virtuous living is respected by all. It tends to give us a sense of goodness. And it certainly helps us live peaceably in community. There are banners in most schools and places of worship with words of character. Yet with all of this, the focus on the **what-to-do** aspect of character rarely gives one those traits. We can manage our behaviors by sheer determination, but ultimately we run out of strength and fail in one area or another. The song lyrics below are an example of the religious version of the character for living to which most of us subscribe.

There is a general consensus about the behaviors which are to be sought after in order to treat each other well. However, the missing piece of the puzzle is the **how-to-be** a person of character. We are born with a healthy sense of self. We are taught to look out for number one or no one else will. Yet this need to protect, prosper, promote and be powerful is often the very thing that causes us to fail in our attempts to be persons of character.

When we exchange the fire of our devotion for the fire of desire for relationship with one another, good character becomes a by-product of our love. In short, genuine affection (love) for another compels us to do good to them. The more you love them, the less likely you are to hurt them!

“O may all who come behind us find us faithful.
May the fire of our devotion light their way.
May the footprints that we leave, lead them to believe,
and the lives we live inspire them to obey.
O may all who come behind us find us faithful.

— Keith Green

Volume 4, Day 10: Sin Defined by Love

There was a time, not too long ago, when darkness was defined as the absence of light. We have discovered through science that darkness is a substance of its own. But for the sake of simplicity, let's use the original thought as a pattern for defining sin. To many, there is no such thing as sin. But if we define sin as "having my needs or desires met by anything that causes harm to another," likely all would admit to having done this more than once. In a similar fashion we might also say that "hatred is the absence of love" or "rejection is simply the absence of acceptance." We could go on with several of these analogies. This simple paradox of opposites, by count of such expressions in a person's life span, account for the lion's share of human experience.

Let us consider the simplest of paradigms. Let's look at life as a stream of events which are **either/or** on the scale of emotions. This might be over simplifying or trivializing life itself. But if we observe our interactions with each other from the perspective of **various shades of either/or** we might find that anything less than the most positive feeling toward others is also sin. If we consider anything less than the highest positive feeling will hurt them, we can only remedy the problem of wrongful behavior by achieving the most loving feeling for others. Without God's help, this cannot happen.

God's commands were summarized by Jesus as "Love God fully and love your neighbor as much as you love yourself." This has been boiled down today to say, "Love God. Love Others." But Jesus' example and command was even more difficult to obey. Jesus' only command to His disciples is, "Love others as much as I love you!" — John 13

Consider this. Sin is anything less than an unconditional love for God and others! If you are sinless, raise your hand!

My Confirming Scripture:

My Aligning Experiences

DEEPER Every Day -- John Henry Alan

Volume 4, Day 11: "Be Angry and Sin Not..." - Part 1 of 10

Anger arises in the soul, when a specific emotion has been **'hurt.'** Anger management is what the scripture calls for. However, you cannot manage anything which eludes your understanding. Simply screaming expletives or striking out at others can only be curbed when we determine what triggers our outburst. Anger management requires "discovery through analysis" of the root emotion which causes these extreme expressions (anger as a weapon of manipulation or warfare). **God's way:** Jesus Christ was treated more unfairly than any other human being! Yet, **Jesus did not strike back!!!**

I separate anger from emotion since I now know that anger is the **volume of expression** that indicates that some **underlying emotion** is being **hurt.** I found my way out of my anger prison by letting God reveal the specific emotion that was hurt and letting him heal that wound permanently. After several emotions were resolved and released to his care, I released the rest of them on the same basis. Anger is the result of my insistence on having my emotional desires satisfied.

But then you ask, "What about Jesus' anger expressed toward the religious leaders of his day?" Okay, then, "What about it?" To be sure there were several occasions when the Pharisees were verbally corrected by Jesus! However, we tend to think that He did it with malice. **He did not!** Jesus' "righteous" anger was neither punitive nor malicious! His retorts were necessary to set the expression of truth straight. Jesus never expressed Himself strongly toward anyone over opinions that differed from His. He definitively **set the record straight** because our lives and eternal destinies were at stake! Jesus could not let falsehood stand just so that He would not offend or embarrass anyone. Jesus' anger was not directed at people. His anger was directed at false teachings that would hurt His people.

Jesus even asked His Father to "forgive the Pharisees who crucified Him and mocked Him as He died...**for them too!**" Thus Jesus was angry and did not sin! Love like Jesus Loves and you will be angry and NOT sin!!!

Volume 4, Day 12: “Be Angry and Sin Not...” - Part 2 of 10

Anger arises in the soul, when and only when, some other emotion has been hurt. Anger management is what the scripture calls for. However, you cannot manage anything which eludes your understanding. ...

Most people have likely heard that you should count to 10 before you respond when you are angry. And some can do that and actually refrain from expressing their hurts violently (with anger volume). However, in my experience, most people cannot do that. Most will have already verbally or physically reacted before they can count to ONE.

I was personally involved in a counselor training session where this issue was being addressed. As the leader moved in the direction of “wait” before you express anger, the Holy Spirit whispered to me. This will not work with you, so listen to the teacher with one ear while I teach you what you must do. After all, John Henry, in retrospect you will see that you have always immediately reacted (responded) before you even thought about what you were expressing or why! I admitted that this is true of me and others with a similar personality.

[ADMITTING the truth about myself is essential.]

This is what the Holy Spirit revealed to me, “John Henry, when someone kicks your can over, what spills out is what is in your heart. Since you spill out immediately without thinking, you need to change the contents of your heart such that what spills out is ‘love and compassion’ rather than your ‘self-serving attitude’ (acids, toxins, poisons, hurtful stuff)”. This made perfect sense to me. And it will also work with the 1 to 10 counters who manage to remain inexpressive. Actually, it works best for all because a loving expression is always cathartic. Silence may be golden, but it cannot compare to caring encouragement. So I embarked on a quest to remove the hurtful stuff and replace it with the ‘Love of God.’ Try it! You’ll like it!.

**My Confirming Scriptures:
Aligning Experiences.**

My

Volume 4, Day 13: “Be Angry and Sin Not...” - Part 3 of 10

Anger arises in the soul, when and only when, some other emotion has been hurt. Anger management is what the scripture calls for. However, you cannot manage anything which eludes your understanding. ...

So now you ask, “How exactly did you, or could I, eliminate the hurtful, normal human reactivity and replace it with a love which is not natural for us?” Thanks for asking! Unless and until you ask this question and sincerely desire to make this exchange, you will continue to hurt those who hurt yourself or those near you.

Let us ponder for a moment the manner in which we change anything we do. Everything we do is based on feelings. We may have developed habits which express themselves even when we don't think about it. However, those habits were formed initially by our reaction to some feeling. Repetition makes it happen seemingly automatically, but it began in response to a **hurt** feeling. [Let me clarify 'hurt.' Hurt means to damage or distort something. When that something is a 'feeling,' we immediately set about to correct the damage or distortion.] So in order to manage my angry responses to hurt feelings, I need to isolate the specific feeling and how that feeling became sensitized to the stimulus that triggers my rage (expressed as verbal or physical retaliation or silence or inaction but a definitive rejection of the source of the stimulus).

As we explore ourselves by identifying memories which have pain (embarrassment, inconvenience, and so forth) associated with them, we can uncover why we react, when others might not, to the same stimulus. As God's Spirit enlightens us as to why we feel hurt (a specific emotion), we can surrender that to Him. Once surrendered, peace ensues and freedom from that particular hurt in the future. If we refuse to surrender it to God, we will writhe in misery and continue to rage on!

My Confirming Scriptures: My Aligning Experiences:

Volume 4, Day 14: "Be Angry and Sin Not..." - Part 4 of 10

Anger arises in the soul, when and only when, some other emotion has been hurt. Anger management is what the scripture calls for. However, you cannot manage anything which eludes your understanding. ...

Many psychologists believe that anger is NOT a feeling. Rather it is a strong (maybe even violent) expression of 'hurt' feelings. I personally believe that Anger Management is a valid pursuit, only because anger is NOT an emotion, but rather an exacerbated expression in reaction to fear or pain. To that end I have been able to help many overcome anger (that is 'sin' which follows outbursts of anger). You cannot manage feelings. They are as natural and unstoppable as breathing. But you can change feelings. And this is why.

Relationship is a 'feeling' business. Rationale is an 'efficiency or expediency' business. There is a progression in humanity regarding all expressions between beings. The progression follows this pattern. Feelings follow beliefs. Thoughts follow feelings. Actions follow thoughts. Therefore, every expression of human beings begins with what they believe. And beliefs can be changed by choice. And choices are affected by new understandings.

Children may be afraid of 'boogey men' or 'ghosts' and so forth. But once they understand that there is no such thing, the associated fear goes away, forever! So consider the possibility that your over reaction in anger might very well be triggered by a wrong belief. Consider also that much of what you believe is relative truth because you learned it from your relatives and their circle of influence. Children are great recorders of events, but often lousy interpreters of these events. For example, my Sister and I have the same parents who treated us alike. She thought they were abusive (until a few years before she died) while I thought they were terrific parents!