

Emotional Needs And our Emotional-relational Problems

by N. Dane Tyner

Introduction:

I trust that something in our time together will make this investment of precious time worthwhile. I will share some things today that have helped me understand the movements of my own heart and that of people I have been blessed to help over the past 30 years.

I am a grateful follower of Jesus Christ. I came from a pretty unwholesome family. Dad and both of my grandfathers were alcoholics. My parents had a terrible marriage that ended when my little sister graduated from H.S. That was a surprise to no one but Dad. I am still a work in progress. God is not finished with me yet. Praise His Name!

How many of you have seen (still pictures, or video, or even first-hand witnessed) poor people in 3rd world countries rummaging through garbage for something to eat? Maybe you've seen people drinking from a pool of water that looked and smelled disgusting. Thankfully, I would have to be **way** hungrier than I've ever been, **way** thirstier than I've ever been to do that. Think about this: Why do **they** do that? Isn't it because they have a physical need, a hunger or thirst, and they ARE that hungry or thirsty?

Now that I've messed up lunch for some of you, let me move to apply that picture probably stored in each of our minds. Human beings have real emotional needs. We attempt to get these needs met. The less available the wholesome supply of our emotional needs, the less emotional health we will possess. The less available the wholesome supply of our emotional needs, the more we are inclined to embrace destructive sources.

My presentation is intended to help us think through the issues of human emotional needs as they relate to our emotional and relational problems. I intend, in our time together, that we would see some conceptual connections perhaps we have never seen, or have merely lost sight of. I hope some of us will learn something new; I hope all of us will get re-focused in the work of helping people.

I will share with you what I have come to see as Four Basic Emotional Needs of Human Beings. I do not suggest that these are **all** of our emotional needs. Certainly we have others. These four are what I have viewed as foundational or basic human needs. I believe, therefore, these apply to all of us. Thus, the meeting of these needs is critical to emotional health.

I believe that our Creator created us with certain emotional needs. Just as my car was made to run on a certain kind of fuel and the TV in my home was made to run on a

certain frequency and voltage of electricity, you & I were created to live with certain emotional resources.

I created the emotional need matrix you have in the handout material in order to graphically present what I have seen about these needs. So, let's look at that together.

The first need is to be LOVED. Not just anything labeled "Love" will do. We need a kind of love that the Bible describes as God's. It is not a conditional love: "I love you if . . . or I love you when . . ." It is "I love you PERIOD." Rather than a love that is *because* of something about me, it's a love *in spite* of things about me.

No less than 40 times in the OT we find this phrase describing God's love: "His love endures forever". That's the love we were built to run on. It's a love that endures in the face of our imperfections and inconsistencies. My worthiness to be loved is not stable. I am up and down. God's love for me is steady. I so need that.

With Easter just behind us, we should remember Jesus with His Apostles in that upper room before His crucifixion where He washed their feet & celebrated the Passover Feast. John recorded these memorable words of the Master from that setting: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (JN 13:34,35 NIV)

The Apostle Paul said in Romans 5:5, ". . . God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." Notice: "His love . . . our hearts."

The love that God has *for* us is to be communicated *between* us.

You & I were designed to experience love on the vertical plane **AND** love on the horizontal plane. None of us experience this perfectly on either plane. Still, we were created to **experience** this love and to **express** this love.

Not only do we not experience this love perfectly in our world, at least at times, we experience the antithesis of this need. We experience hate. Instead of being loved, we are **hated**.

Now, the left-hand column on the Emotional Need Matrix indicates our emotional needs. This right-hand column indicates emotional experiences that none of us need or want, but all of us experience nonetheless.

The emotional need for love – as a felt need – is fairly narrow. I don't need to feel that everyone I encounter loves me. Most of us could probably only list a relatively small group of people we honestly feel deeply care about us, really love us. That's okay.

The next need is a little broader than this. It is to be **accepted**. In this seminar setting today, I didn't come expecting to feel loved by all of you participants here. I did, however, hope to feel accepted – and I have, so far. Don't mess this up, please!

Scripture addresses this need for acceptance. Let's look: "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." (RM 15:7) Notice – **this** emotional need is addressed on both the vertical and the horizontal plane in the very same verse. "Accept one another (horizontal) . . . as Christ accepted you (vertical)."

Well, though we all wish to feel accepted by others, sometimes we feel **rejected**, instead. Again, our need is for acceptance. We have no need or desire for rejection.

The next emotional need is to **belong**. This is also addressed in Scripture. A great reference on belonging comes from the Song of Solomon (7:10) where Solomon's wife says, "I **belong to** my lover, and his desire is for me."

We also see this "belonging" in Jesus' teachings. He said, "I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you **belong to Christ** will certainly not lose his reward." (MK 9:41)

In the book of Romans, we read, "If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we **belong to the Lord**." (RM 14:8)

Now, this belonging issue is not just spoken of on the vertical plane, but on the horizontal, too. The Apostle Paul talked about this in the 12th Chapter of 1st Corinthians where he referred to those of us in the Church as individual members of a body.

We are not going to spend a lot of time on the material in this chapter; I'm sure with this audience it is very familiar. We will look at some highlights however. First Corinthians 12:14 says, "Now the body is not made up of one part but of many . . ." In this passage of Scripture, we clearly see "belonging" on the horizontal plane. The emphasis is this: Because we belong on the vertical plane, we belong on the horizontal. We belong to God **and** we belong to one another.

Remember in this text, Paul attacks destructive logic found in the church. It was in the church then. Unfortunately, you can see it today, too. It went like this:

Because (fill in the blank) I do not belong to the body.

Because (fill in the blank) you do not belong to the body.

The emphasis in the text is on: Belonging to the body, Belonging to one another.

This was the plan of God for the Church. It was supposed to be a place of belonging.

To belong is to have a legitimate place with others. The Swiss psychiatrist Paul Tournier wrote a great book entitled "A Place for You" which emphasized how important it is for us to have a place. He describes how distressing it is for a person to not have a place that he/she views as his own. Life consists much in movements from place to

place. But having a *place* is important to us, because God has made it so. Our place is where we feel we belong.

Now, the opposite of our need to belong is to be **Alienated**. You have perhaps found places where you wished to belong but were alienated instead.

The final basic need is to be **Praised**. I discovered the legitimacy of this need in the Proverbs. Here is what it says, "Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips." Certainly, the Bible is mostly about the worthiness of God to be praised. But, in this little verse, I saw that God had made you and me to receive praise. We are just not to be the one doing it for ourselves. "Let another praise you . . ." That says that God intends that you and I be praised. That says that we are supposed to be using the mouths God gave us not only to praise Him, but to appropriately praise one another.

In the parable of the talents, Jesus reported that the Master (who represented God) said these words to the two faithful servants who represent us: "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (MT 25:21,23)

Once a centurion came to Jesus because the centurion's servant was very ill. He wanted Jesus to help. Jesus offered to go with the centurion to minister to his servant, but the centurion objected. He spoke about his own authority over men. "I tell someone to do something and they do it. I know you have great authority, so just say the word and my servant will be well." Jesus was impressed with the man's faith and told the people so. "I have not found such faith in all of Israel. . ." (MT 8) That is affirmation, a word of praise for this man's faith.

I hope we can all see that from the time we were little children throughout our adult lives, our heart has yearned to hear others say affirming things about us, substantive affirming things about you.

"That was a thoughtful thing you did."

"I'm proud of the effort you put into that."

"I am impressed by your kindness."

Okay, on the opposite side of this need to be praised is the awful experience of being **Put Down or Cursed**. Again, none of us have any need for this, but we get it, nonetheless.

Let's re-visit what we have seen so far.

On the Left Column of the Emotional Need Matrix we have our four basic emotional needs.

To be loved, accepted, to belong, and to be praised.

On the Right Column we have the antithesis of those needs.

To be hated, rejected, to be alienated, and to be cursed.

When I encounter hurting, struggling people in my work as a counseling minister I can usually within a few minutes of history-taking discover places where they have experienced substantial things in this Right Column. They have been hated, rejected, alienated and/or cursed. Sometimes, this is in horrendous ways, by people as close as Mom and Dad, Grandma and Grandpa. It is no mystery that they are struggling with self-worth and having great difficulty feeling secure in relationships.

I did, however, encounter people who were a mystery to me. Their history did not show any significant experiences of the Right Column. Furthermore, their memory was pretty good. I say this because many people who have had an abundance of those Right Column experiences don't have a lot of memory of childhood. It has been blocked out. Even these folks have enough memory to give you the idea that they had substantial Right Column experiences in their formative years.

It was these encounters with people who seemed to have no reason for their pronounced emotional insecurity that revealed to me the middle column on the Emotional Need Matrix. This is a very important column of experience to recognize and appreciate. Let's look at it now.

We can – in fact – have experiences with people where we are neither loved nor hated. We are either **Ignored Altogether, Not Loved Meaningfully, or Loved Conditionally**. This experience still misses the meeting of the legitimate need in the Left Column (to be loved); it is just more difficult to identify than when a person has been actively hated.

We can also have experiences where we are neither Accepted nor Rejected. We are just **Tolerated**.

We can have experiences where we neither get a sense of belonging nor feel alienated. We merely have an Association.

And finally, we can have experiences where we are neither praised nor cursed. We are just **Not Affirmed** or **Taken for Granted**.

Here is the thing I want us to see. This Left Column indicates what our real needs are. We are driven to try to get these met. We want to be loved. If it is not available in places where God intended it to be – like our homes – we may seek it in destructive places. There is a country song by Johnny Lee entitled "Lookin' for Love." Listen to these lyrics:

"I was lookin' for love in all the wrong places
Lookin' for love in too many faces
Searchin' their eyes, lookin' for traces
Of what I'm dreamin' of
Hopin' to find a friend and a lover
I'll bless the day I discover
Another heart lookin' for love"

I know you have witnessed this plenty in your work with people, but it is still worth stating: Many people go “lookin’ for love in all the wrong places”, and they routinely get broken when they do. I did!

We crave acceptance in social settings. If we can’t find acceptance in wholesome places, we are prone to seek it in unwholesome places.

We crave to belong. When we do not feel like we belong at home, we may join a gang. If we don’t feel like we belong in a church, we may join a cult.

We crave praise. If we live in a place where the standards are so high that we can never reach them, we may choose associates whose standards are low enough anyone could reach them. “Man, Billy Bob can really hold his liquor. He can drink about anyone under the table.” Well, Billy Bob may be getting the praise his heart craves, but destroying his life in the process. A lot of destructive things we observe in the lives of people are their **illegitimate** attempts to get these **legitimate needs** met.

Now, notice this about that Right Column: Rather than meeting our needs, those experiences injure us. These experiences leave us wounded, and our real needs still unmet. Our problem is compounded. I still need my needs. And I now need healing.

Those Middle Column experiences leave our emotional needs unmet, too. These experiences leave us empty, isolated, and questioning our worth. I’ve seen many people whose lives were dominated by middle column experiences, and they manifest a level of struggle not substantially different from those whose lives were dominated by Right Column experiences. That was puzzling until I realized that middle column experiences left our true emotional needs just as unmet as right column experiences.

I will assume all of you are familiar with Dr. Gary Chapman’s *Five Love Languages* book. It is a powerful gift to the Body of Christ. He revealed how we receive love messages in those five different languages. Let’s review quickly. The five languages are: Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Receiving Gifts, Acts of Service, and Physical Touch.

The greatest insight that Dr. Chapman brought to our attention is the fact that – for most of us – those five languages are not equal in importance. Most of us can identify one or two of the five that are more important than the others. We hear love best in those languages. The point is that we must communicate love in all of these languages, but especially in those top languages if we want someone else to feel our love, to feel secure in our love for them.

He tells stories about marriages that are 15, 20, 25 years old that were on the verge of ending because love was not communicated in an effective way. Marriages can be profoundly transformed by honoring these principles with appropriate action.

The reality is, a lot of people are raised in homes for 15 to 20 years where love has not been communicated in a way it can be effectively felt. When I work with couples, I not only want to know about their love languages and how that works in their marriage, I want to know how each of them experienced love in their childhood related to those five love languages. What I often find is that one or both did not experience love effectively in those main languages.

Dr. Chapman also talks about our Love Tanks and how they can be filled. That is done by communicating love in those most powerful languages. But he does not tell us what I am about to tell you. Our Love Tanks Leak. Yours does. Mine does. My wife's does. My kids' tanks leak. This, I believe, is a part of our fallen condition. Every love tank leaks *some*.

Here is another important truth about this condition: Our tanks do not all leak the same. Some of us have experienced tank damage in the course of our relationships at home and in the community. Whether this is from Right Column experiences or Middle Column experiences, that damage must be repaired. If this is not repaired, we will encounter frustration with attempts to apply Chapman's material. We may try to apply the material and see some short-term improvement, but we may be pouring fuel in the top but it is pouring out the bottom about as fast as we pour it in. This situation will take the person who is trying to meet emotional needs to a point of frustration and exhaustion. It leads many people to just quit trying. This fact is found in a significant percentage of those disturbing divorce statistics in our culture.

The fact that we have love tank damage requires that we recognize where we were not loved, not accepted, didn't belong, weren't praised as we ought to have been. Then, we must do business with this: forgiving the ones who did not give us what we deserved. This statement deserves a little elaboration. Everyone in the church and many outside the church know that forgiveness is the answer. But many of those who know that it is the answer do not know how to use the answer.

Remember your math classes where the teacher required you to "show your work." Why did he or she do that? They wanted to know that you knew how to get the answer. You might look on someone else's paper and find the answer and write it on yours; but that is not the same as working the problem through to get the answer. Many people do not have a clue how to get from the great hurt of their heart to the answer of forgiveness. That is what we sometimes have to help people do.

Besides forgiving the people who failed to nurture us in our emotional needs as God would have had them, besides forgiving people who abused us instead of nurture us, we have to renounce the lies that we have believed about ourselves based on the false things others have said to us in words or actions.

That sounds simple in theory, right? But it is real work in the practical world of helping people. I appreciate your attendance and attentiveness today. May God bless you as you try to help the struggling sheep of your fold.

Basic Human Emotional Needs Matrix

by N. Dane Tyner

Loved	Ignored Not Loved Meaningfully Loved Conditionally	Hated
Accepted	Tolerated	Rejected
Belong	Association	Alienated
Praised	Not Affirmed Taken for Granted	Cursed

Five Reasons to Refer
Your People to
Home Improvement Ministry, Inc.

1. **Your people will not be harmed.** In this work we cannot guarantee that people will be helped, but we *can* assure you that people will not be unrighteously harmed. Legitimate pain, sometimes quite intense pain, is associated with many healing processes. We call it “therapeutic pain”, pain which has a healing purpose. Hurting people are often vulnerable people. We respect that and assume responsibility in our work to protect ourselves and our counselees from potential harm. Our view of Christian service is that it should evidence the high moral standards of Jesus Christ Himself. This is our first and highest duty in Christian service.

2. **Your people will be served competently.** Counseling competence is a hotly debated issue. There are those who suppose that every Christian with a Bible is “competent to counsel” others, regardless of their understanding of the problem being presented. Others imagine that every person who has been thoroughly trained in psychology and licensed by the state as a “professional counselor” is competent to counsel. We question both assumptions. To imagine that people are struggling because they haven’t encountered or memorized the right Scriptures yet, is woefully simplistic. (Many folks know what they are supposed to do, they just don’t know how to do it.) On the other hand, to attempt to help struggling folks without a reverential regard for the Word of God is to risk treating a troubling surface symptom and ignore the deeper disease. The prophet Jeremiah rebuked the prophets and priests of his day for “[dressing] the wound of [God’s] people as though it were not serious” (Jer 8:11). May we not be guilty of that charge as we care for God’s sheep.

Though education and experience are important matters of equipping for this work, gifting of the Holy Spirit is *most* important. Counseling is more art than science. Our counselors are *not* credentialed by the state, but by the Church. Our staff has engaged in extensive formal studies in theology and psychology. We take education and personal development seriously, ever expanding our understanding of human problems and God’s solutions. We are involved in personal spiritual disciplines, including local church involvement. We diligently study that we might be known as approved workmen, not needing to be ashamed of our work, rendered in the name of our Lord (2Tim 2:15). Our most significant credential is the fruit we

produce, the lives of people we have touched and helped. Most of the sustaining supporters of this ministry are people who have directly or indirectly seen this fruit.

3. **Your spiritual authority will be respected.** We work with people of various denominational and non-denominational associations. We respect the honest differences that exist in doctrinal understandings and spiritual practices within the Body of Christ. Most of the distinctions that create the modern divisions to the Body of Christ are not significant to our work. At times we disagree with certain points of a counselee's theology, but these are not germane to our work in most cases. Our view of salvation is that it lies in our faith acceptance of the Perfect Savior, not in our acceptance of a perfect creedal form. Our view of the Church is not that one group is right and the rest wrong; instead, we believe we are all wrong - - just about different things. Three spiritual errors we do address are: ◆ legalism (the belief that God will accept me and all will go well if I just believe and do the right stuff), ◆ license (a distorted concept of grace that leads people to think they can sow to the flesh and reap of the Spirit), and ◆ obsession with or aversion to the miraculous (those who expect God to work in a supernatural way and refuse to engage in His natural ways or those who don't have faith to expect God to do anything supernatural on their behalf today).

4. **Your people will be served economically.** Almost every venture is an expensive proposition today. Ministry is certainly no exception. It takes a lot of money to cover overhead and reasonably compensate Christian workers. We have established reasonable rates for our services. Financial partners help underwrite expenses to enable us to do this. Support levels, thus far, have been such that we have been able to even reduce our regular fees for those unable to pay them. We hope never to have to turn anyone away on the basis of ability to pay. Even when you have folks who can afford to pay much more than our rates, good stewardship should question that choice. It is not a virtue to *spend* more unless you *get* more. Counselees who make donations, above their fees for service, receive the benefit of a tax-deductible contribution for it. Though we hope not to become stereo-typed as "*the place to send people who don't have any money*", we do work with such folks. Thus, we believe our ministry should be among your referral options for *everyone*, regardless of their financial status.

5. **Your people can explore working with us without cost or obligation.** We give a free first visit (one hour) to any family wishing to investigate the possibility of counseling with us. We go over our orientation material which helps them know what to expect of us, what we expect of them, and the details of our financial policies. They personally meet their counselor who will answer any questions they may have about our counseling services. Our staff will also explore the issues of concern and assess our ability to help. Usually in that first visit we are able to

discern whether or not we have a reasonable potential of helping and can negotiate a plan for working together. When we detect problems outside our area of expertise, we can usually assist folks in finding other help. Thus, an initial appointment with our staff is a great place to begin.