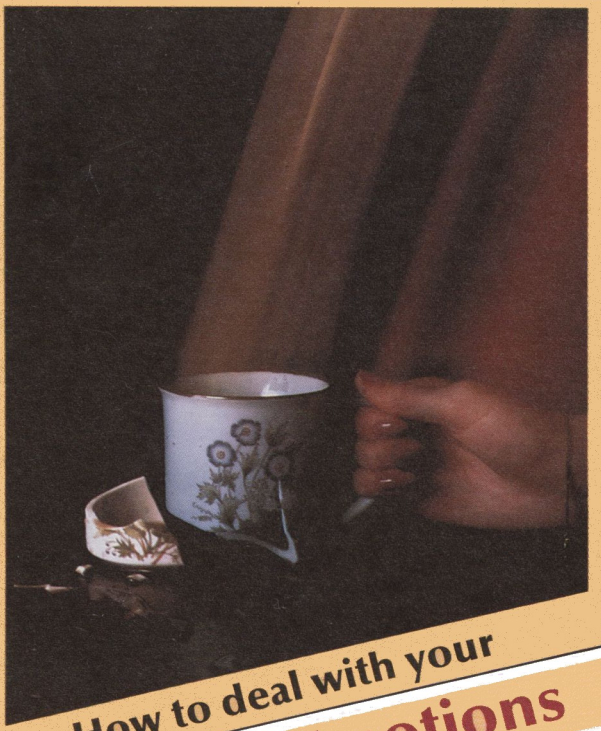
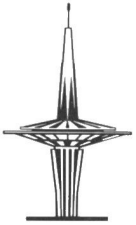
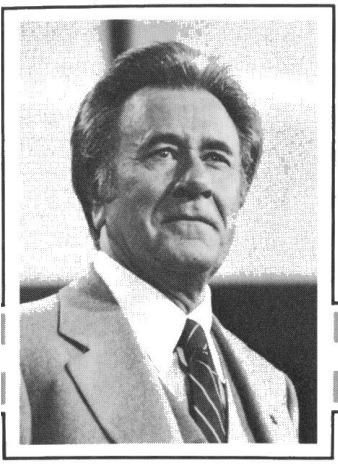


How to deal with your Negative Emotions

by Oral Roberts



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How to Deal With Your Negative Emotions

Every day I receive letters from people who need help in controlling their emotions. Many of them are desperately

hurting because they—or someone they love—have become the victim of their own deadly negative emotions. One letter I received said:

> Brother Roberts,
>
> I have a prayer request for you—for inner healing of all unforgiveness, hatred, bitterness, guilt, fear, worry, self-pity, self-hatred, and an inward struggle with living in the past. My husband and I, our son and two daughters all want to be blessed with love and forgiveness. I don't think we can go on much longer like this.

Maybe you too are facing some of these same problems and needs in your life, because built into you and into every one of us are emotions, our ability to feel. How we deal with our emotions determines the kind of person we are. Either we stay in control of our emotions, or else we permit our emotions to control us and thus determine our actions for us.

I'll never forget staying with a family whose little five-year-old son would rush to

the brick fireplace and butt his head against the wall whenever he was reprimanded, or if anything happened that he didn't like. His little head was battered and blue. I've done that, only in a different way. Probably you have too.

Isn't there a better way to deal with our emotions? Yes, there is ... by controlling them instead of letting them control us. And we *can* control them! The Bible says, **"God ... has given us a spirit ... of calm ... and self-control"** (2 Timothy 1:7, *Amplified).*

The emotions I want to discuss are some of the major ones that touch all of our lives: self-pity, guilt, anger, resentment, self-hatred, depression, hatred, fear, and bitterness. But I believe that through the power of the Holy Spirit working within you, you can find the strength and help you need to deal with *any* emotion in your life and bring it under control, in Jesus' name.

Self-Pity: The Problem is Self

Don't just think about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too. —Philippians 2:4, TLB

The emotion that often can hurt you the most is self-pity. We all have to fight this one.

Self-pity hits me worse when I have worked hard and given of myself until I am worn out in my body and maybe can't sleep. Or, I pick up something negative that somebody I admire has said about me. Or, I take a cold that gets worse and goes into a sore throat or a hurting chest, and I'm not able to take time out to rest and get well.

But whatever the cause of it, self-pity is an emotion all of us indulge in at times. Even the stoic often seethe within because they feel they are not getting treated fairly.

We have every right to feel appreciated, wanted, and loved. But we need to realize that there will be times when we won't feel that

way. And at those times, self-pity is not the answer. Because once it's unleashed, self-pity can quickly become a deadly emotion. It can destroy everything God has for us and wants us to be.

A close business friend of mine told me that at one time self-pity almost ruined his life. It was when he came against a great financial crisis.

"Oral, I got to feeling sorry for myself," he said. "I felt that nobody in the world had ever faced what I was facing. I didn't know where to turn.

"Then it dawned on me that there was One I could go to. So I got down on my knees and renewed my relationship with God. When I got through praying I felt like a new man. I got up, squared my shoulders, and said, 'With God's help, I am through with self-pity. I am going to stop thinking only of myself and start thinking of others.'"

He did, and it changed his life. The whole

problem with self-pity is the "self." We become so bound-up with ourselves and our own affairs we don't even think of anyone else. So the best cure I know of for self-pity is to ask God's forgiveness for selfishness. Then go out and find someone less fortunate than you are and do everything you can to help that person. Take seriously the Bible's advice in Philip- pians 2:4.

The cause of your self-pity will become amazingly unimportant when you are absorbed in helping others.

Guilt: Cause for a Fresh Start

I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.—Jeremiah 31:34

If there is anything that can rob you of your faith and happiness, it's the most common of all human emotions: nagging guilt. Feelings of remorse over your mistakes and failures.

Two of Jesus' disciples, Judas and Peter, became burdened under the crushing weight of guilt. Both denied their Lord, both betrayed Him, and both suffered remorse because of it. Yet guilt destroyed Judas (Matthew 27:3-5), while it brought about the beginning of a whole new life for Peter (Matthew 26:75, John 21:15-19).

Why? Because Peter discovered God's answer for guilt—he turned back to Jesus. He not only felt sorry for what he'd done, but he stepped through the doorway of repentance and accepted God's unconditional love and forgiveness. He received a brand-new beginning!

Peter's discovery of the healing power of love reminds me of a modern-day story by the famous author, John Steinbeck. In his novel, *The Winter of Our Discontent,* Steinbeck tells of a man who stepped on other people and cheated to get ahead in business. One day he discovered his son had cheated to win an essay contest, and he confronted him.

"Everyone is doing it," the son told him. "Just like you, Dad."

Guilt overwhelmed the man. He saw the awful mess he'd made of his life, and he decided to commit suicide. The man's teenage daughter, sensing his great despair, told him of her love for him despite what he had done, and she slipped a special stone into his pocket.

Later, alone, the man dug into his pocket for the razor blades he had taken to slash his wrists. Instead, he grabbed the little stone. It reminded him that someone loved him, no matter what. His daughter's unconditional love helped him see that his guilt was not a signal to quit but to begin.

When the guilt of a mistake or wrongdoing is threatening to destroy you, remember: *God's love for you is infinite.* He wants to free you from guilt to enjoy life and to reach your highest potential. When you repent and confess, God forgives and forgets! He is ready to begin where you are at this moment, to give you a fresh start!

If a man is in Christ he becomes a new person altogether—the past is finished and gone, everything has become fresh and new. (2 Corinthians 5:17, *Phillips).*

Anger: Use It for Good

Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.—Ephesians 4:26

Each of us has an explosion point—that point when we run out of patience and lose our tempers. Someone rubs us the wrong way, everything goes wrong, or the unexpected happens, and we become angry.

Now there's nothing wrong with anger in itself. In fact, I don't believe a man is worth the salt of his bread unless he gets angry *in the right way* once in a while. I'm not referring to fits of madness during which he becomes violent or destructive, but I'm referring to anger directed at things that are not right in

this world. Men have to be moved by that kind of anger; they have to become dissatisfied with this world's evil systems before changes are made.

Anger is a God-given emotion, divinely implanted in us, to be used for constructive spiritual purposes ... to energize us and motivate us to change those things that need changing ... to do what we are supposed to do for God.

The Bible says that even Jesus became angry. Once He physically drove the moneychangers out of the temple because they were cheating the people in their trading and selling, and making a mockery of His Father's house (Mark 11:15-17). But Jesus' anger was not merely an outburst of uncontrolled carnal temper. It was righteous indignation directed at the very root of sin itself, not at the "sinners." Jesus' anger was never directed at another human being, and neither should ours be.

Yet how many times in a moment of

anger have we done just that—vented that anger at the people we love the most, and in that moment destroyed or damaged a relationship or something we cherished.

Our youngest daughter, Roberta, and her husband, Ron Potts, shared one such incident with Evelyn and me. It involved their five-year-old son, Randy.

Some time ago Roberta and Ron painted Randy's bedroom and put up pictures of circus animals. One was a tiger and it was Randy's favorite. He loved that tiger.

Now Randy had a habit of getting out of his bed at night and quietly slipping into bed with Mommy and Daddy. Each time he did, Ron would scold him and tell him he had to stay in his own bed. Randy would promise to obey, but each morning there he was in their bed again.

Early one morning Ron woke up to find Randy getting into their bed. He said, "Randy, you go back to your own bed right now and

go to sleep. And Daddy is going to spank you if you don't stay there!"

Randy got so mad he could hardly see straight. He stomped back down the hall to his room. They heard him mumbling to himself for a while. Then all of a sudden he started crying, "Daddy, come quick! I've torn up my tiger!"

Roberta and Ron both got up to look. Sure enough, Randy had torn his tiger completely off the wall. In a moment of anger he had destroyed the thing he loved the most.

That's a good picture of many of us adults as well, isn't it? Only we end up ruining things far more valuable to us than paper tigers when we allow our temper to control us, instead of us controlling our temper.

I'm not saying that controlling your temper is always easy, because it isn't. In fact, I really don't believe you and I can do it by ourselves. We need God's help. And we can get that help any time we ask for it. Jesus said,

"Remember, your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask Him" (Matthew 6:8, *TLB)*.

The next time you're having trouble keeping your temper under control, do these four things:

1. First, be honest with God. Tell Him that you're having trouble in this important area of your life.

2. Then, admit that you cannot control your anger by your own strength.

3. Next, ask for God's forgiveness, and ...

4. Finally, ask Him to give you the self-control you need that your temper might be cleansed and directed only toward those things that are really worthy of your anger.

Then, the anger you *do* experience will help make you a productive Christian instead of a destructive one who hurts those he loves.

Resentment: High Cost of Getting Even

If ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.—Matthew 6:14,15

All of us struggle at times with resentment. Sometimes we offend someone; sometimes someone offends us. The result is, we begin harboring resentment against the person, and we get into a bad spirit. God tells us not to allow ourselves to get into that position.

Instead of spending weary days and sleepless nights brooding over our resentments, trying to find ways to get even with the one who has wronged us, the Bible says to *forgive* them. **"Be as ready to forgive others as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you"** (Ephesians 4:32*, Phillips).*

Why forgive?

One reason is because God promises us that when we forgive others, He forgives us. But there's also another reason that may be just as important.

God alone is capable of bearing the awful power of vengeance. **"Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord"** (Romans 12:19). God does not permit us to take vengeance. For example, if Oral Roberts would take vengeance upon somebody, vengeance would come back at me with such terrifying force that it would literally destroy me. I'm not capable of bearing the awful power of vengeance. No one is.

Lawyers will bear out this truth as they deal in courts with people on the level of their legal rights. I doubt if any lawyer has ever had a case where someone who tried to take vengeance ever won anything. Somehow we must all understand that vengeance is God's and we must commit it to Him and forgive those who despitefully use us.

But how can you truly forgive someone when you don't feel forgiveness in your heart?

First, *decide* to forgive—to forgive completely, no matter how great your hurt is. I use the word *completely* because when it comes to forgiveness, many of us are like the man who wrote the Internal Revenue Service: "I can't sleep at night, so I'm enclosing $100. P.S. If I still can't sleep, you'll get the rest." We forgive in part but we don't want to go all out and forgive the whole offense. Jesus knew this tendency in human nature. That's why He said that we must forgive **"seventy times seven"** (Matthew 18:22). He was thinking not only of our souls but also of sparing our minds and bodies from the terrible emotional, spiritual, and even physical toll that unforgiveness would take upon us.

Second, *act* upon your decision. Reach out to bless the one who has wronged you. Pray for him. Do specific acts of love for that person. Remember that love is more than just a feeling, it's something you do.

Third, once you decide to forgive and you act on your decision in love, God will give you by His Holy Spirit the power to truly *feel* forgiveness in your heart. The feeling comes after you decide and act to forgive.

Self-Hatred: See Yourself as God Sees You

Thou shalt love thy neighbor AS THYSELF.—Mark 12:31

I recently received a letter from a young woman struggling with feelings of self-hatred. She had fallen into a trap that many of us have been in at one time or another. She said:

> Brother Roberts,
>
> I have a very serious problem—I hate myself. And because I hate myself I am bent on destroying myself. I am not talking about suicide or anything drastic like that, but my life is miserable and I am an outcast. I feel that people hate me and I hate them too ….

> I don't want to spend the rest of my days on Earth bitter and hating myself. But I really see nothing to like about myself. I can't really blame other people for hating me either. But I wish there was something I could do to change my negative image. I honestly don't believe that I *can* until I find God's purpose for my life and until I can like myself, or at least accept what I am.

That letter really tore me up … to think that this young woman had lived literally years of her life that way. But what saddened me even more is to know that she is only one of many, many people who don't know how important it is that we love ourselves. For, according to the Bible, until we love ourselves, we cannot truly love anyone else.

If you're struggling with feelings of self-hatred, one of the best ways I know to start loving yourself is to see yourself the way God sees you.

You are His masterpiece—the crowning

glory of His creation. He gave His only begotten Son to die for *you.* You're the apple of God's eye. You are so precious to Him that He is always thinking about you and watching everything that concerns you.

THAT'S HOW GOD SEES YOU! That's the image the Creator of the universe has of you. And it's really the image you should have of yourself.

God loves you. But the devil's trick is to deceive you about God's love for you and about your own personal worth. God is a giver (Luke 6:38). God is a rewarder (Hebrews 11:6). God promises NEVER to leave you or to forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). I believe that. And as I write this, I'm praying that you will come to the point where you believe it too. Despite how you may be feeling right now, you have a wonderful God-given will. And you can *will* to believe God loves you, that you are special and irreplaceable, that God will meet your needs.

Today, through Jesus, you can stand up on

the inside and not give up, but accept the love and care God has for you and be delivered from self-hatred.

Depression: Tie a Knot and Hang on

Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.—Psalm 30:5

Depression. Psychologists say it is the most common emotional problem in America. It has risen to epidemic proportions in this nation, and not one of us is immune. What is depression? In short, it is getting down emotionally until you can't get up. It is not necessarily a willful fault or a sin. It is a signal that something is wrong.

Most of the depression that you and I suffer is only temporary. The Bible says: **"At present you are TEMPORARILY harassed by all kinds of trials"** (1 Peter 1:6, *Phillips).* Depression often comes to us when we have gone through a traumatic experience that

sends us reeling. Or it comes when we are overloaded with work and stress—when we begin allowing negative thoughts to occupy our mind. Or it comes for what seems to be no reason at all.

Depression—whatever its cause—is an emotion, a feeling. And feelings are not always a true reflection of how things really are. Besides that, feelings change. What seems impossible today may not seem so bad after a nutritious meal or a good night's sleep. Psychiatrists point out that the tragedy of many suicides is that if the person had only hung on a little while longer, the terrible hopeless feelings would have passed.

But is there really anything you can *do* the next time you feel depressed to help get you out of the emotional state you're in? I believe there is.

First, remember that God cares very much about how you feel, and He wants to help you. Ask Him to reveal to you what is causing the depression. Does it have a physical, spiritual,

or emotional cause?

When you've identified the cause, open up and share your problem with a trusted Christian friend or someone you know who can pray the prayer of faith for you. I believe Christian fellowship and prayer can be helpful at a time like this for many reasons. But especially because Satan would like to make you think that no one else has ever gone through the same type of depression you're going through. By opening yourself up to another Christian you can trust, you'll find this is just not true.

One of my co-laborers who went through a period of depression confirmed to me that the day the prayer of faith was prayed over her by loving, caring friends was the day her depression began to lift!

Once you have received the prayer of faith, start expecting God to do exactly what you've asked Him to do—to bring you out of your depression back into the mainstream of life. Get a "faith-image" in your mind of the

depression lifting and moving away—as if the fog that has been hovering over your life is now dissipating.

Your depression may not go away overnight. But God is faithful and He will finish what He has begun in you.

If you've been fighting depression but all your efforts to shake it have failed, tie a knot and hang on! Trust God. Remind yourself that soon your feelings *will* change. And things really are not as bad as they seem. There is hope!

Hatred: Love Covers It All

Hatred stirreth up strife; but love covers all sins.—Proverbs 10:12

Many a person is behind prison bars today because of permitting his emotions to go into hatred until he did something violent. Every prison I have ever visited struck me as being filled with a hatred you could feel.

I recall speaking in a large church once and I felt that a lot of hatred was there also. How could hatred be in a church? People. People who planted bad seed by misdirecting their emotions and becoming deadly negative toward each other.

In that situation I prayed while I preached that the Living Christ would speak through me and that the people would feel His love in me. Later the pastor of that church told me that something happened to his people through that sermon, and especially through what they felt coming out of me toward them. I realized that the good seed I had planted in my sermon had been multiplied in blessings to the people, and back to me also.

If any human being ever had a reason to hate, it was Jesus. The very ones He sought to help, rejected Him. Ultimately they wanted to take His life.

Being rejected and hated was no picnic even to Jesus because although He was fully God, He was fully human. He was *man,* an

emotional being like yourself. Yet He resisted hatred. He determined not to hate. It was a battle for Him to win over himself just as it is for us. He won by planting seeds of His love for them.

He knew that hatred, like acid, could do damage to the vessel in which it is stored just as it does to the object on which it is poured. Hatred, He knew, could blind your reason, send poison into your bloodstream, upset your digestive system, make your head hurt, cause you to be irritable—it can punish you until all you think of is punishing someone else. It is bad, bad seed and the hater gets his seed multiplied back in hatred for himself.

In studying Jesus' life, and in observing Him working in my life, I have concluded that love sown as a seed of faith is the only way to wipe hatred from your heart. When a farmer plants his seed he's doing something constructive. He's planting his seed for a desired result. When you see Jesus as He hung on the cross—suffering ten thousand times

more than you or I ever have—and yet in love saying, **"Father, forgive them,"** He is doing something constructive. He is seeing to it that the seed He is planting is the seed of love, not the seed of destruction of those who are against Him.

You and I can do the same thing today by allowing God to love through us ... by claiming the promise given to us in Romans 5:5, **"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."**

You may not be able to love someone who has hurt you, but God can through you!

Fear: Keep Your Eyes on Jesus

God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love, and of a sound mind.—2 Timothy 1:7

There is fear and uneasiness in our world today. I see and feel it in my mail. Recently

there has been a sharp rise in the number of calls the Abundant Life Prayer Group receives concerning fear.

People are afraid of living and of dying ... of losing their money or of not having enough to make ends meet. Some are afraid of losing their health. Others are fearful for their families. It seems that everybody is afraid of something.

But as the Bible tells us in 2 Timothy, *fear is not from God!* Fear is a force from Satan to paralyze the spirit and mind of God's children, to keep them from reaching out to God as the Source of their lives. Fear overtakes us when we look to people or things and try to make them our source, rather than looking to God. A powerful scripture in Isaiah 26:3 promises, **"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."**

The Lord does not want us to be afraid or to let fear dominate our lives. He came to deliver us **"out of the hand of our enemies**

[that we] might serve him without fear" (Luke 1:74). But in order for Him to do that, we must keep our eyes on Him.

Once there was a boy who wanted to be a great pianist. He studied very earnestly at the feet of many music professors until finally there were no others available to teach him more than he already knew. Then he heard of a great music master in another city. He went to him, and when he found the old man he learned that he was retired. He asked, "Sir, would you take me and teach me?"

The old white-haired man replied, "No, son, I am retired."

The boy asked, "Would you let me just strike a few chords on your piano?"

The old man said, "Sure." Then after he listened to the boy play a few minutes, he walked over and tapped the lad on the shoulder and said, "Son, I'll take you."

For months and years the old music master poured his soul into the soul of the

young man, teaching him that great music is the real story of the human race transmitted into the readable script of life.

One day he said, "Son, you're ready."

They rented a big music hall and announced his debut. That night the auditorium was filled. As the boy played the great pieces of music, wave upon wave of applause came from the assembled multitude. Then came the grand finale. The young boy leaned over the keyboard and poured his very soul into it. Before he had finished, the great strong men were crying like babies. Women were tossing money at his feet. But not once did he ever look at the crowd. He kept his eyes focused on the balcony because up in the balcony was the old white-haired music master. He was up there nodding his head and whispering, "You're on the right track, son. Just keep it up; just keep it up."

That's where Jesus is when you are surrounded by fear ... at the point of your need, whispering to you, "You're on the right

track. Just keep it up. I'm with you. I'll never leave you or forsake you."

You see, fear comes when we trust in people or we trust in things as our source. They let us down and we become afraid. We need Jesus—the only Man in history who ever calmed the seas with a spoken word. We need to make Him the Source of our very life, because He alone is qualified to carry all of our sins and needs and fears.

The next time you feel the hot searing pain of fear in the pit of your stomach, keep your eyes on Jesus for He is your **"refuge and strength, a tested help in times of trouble"** (Psalm 46:1, *TLB).* Rest in His love for you, and your fear will surely fade away. For **"there is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear"** (1 John 4:18).

Bitterness: Plant a Good Seed Instead

Watch out that no bitterness takes root among you, for as it springs up it

causes deep trouble, hurting many in their spiritual lives.—Hebrews 12:15 (TLB)

Bitterness springs from a root. A root is something planted. I used to say, "Oh, he makes me so bitter." But God revealed to me that no one else could force me to be bitter. I was planting a bad seed by permitting myself to become bitter.

One man had been especially awful to me. I fought and fought against bitterness ... unsuccessfully. Finally I fell upon a wonderful plan. It was to think not of the wrongs I felt the man had done to me, but of Christ in him. Several times I prayed, "O Lord, You are in this man and You are in me. Help him and help me." In one of those prayers I finally felt a release in my spirit. God whispered in my heart, "Oral, if you trust Me, no one can ever hurt you. You can only hurt yourself by planting the seed of a bad reaction."

I use this plan often and it works. It works because all of God's children are part of

Christ, and part of one another. The help we ask for each other is a good seed we plant that helps us to overcome bitterness. And it has an amazing health effect upon our entire being.

Now Let Me Pray for You

I want to pray for you now, that you will begin today to find in Jesus Christ the strength and help you need to control your negative emotions. Because Jesus walked on this Earth as a human being, He felt every emotion you and I feel. Yet Jesus controlled His emotions completely. He was their master, never their victim.

So as I pray, believe with me that from this moment on you are going to start controlling your emotions better than you ever have before. And by the power of Christ's Spirit within you, you will learn how to deal with your negative emotions and to become their master.

Dear Lord, I come to You now, not in my name or strength but in the mighty name and strength of Your Son Jesus. I thank You that

because of Jesus, we can know today that You have sat where we sit as human beings and felt every emotion we are capable of feeling. And I pray now for this dear one, Lord, who needs Your help in controlling their emotions —as all of us do.

Now, dear friend, I pray that you would feel the power of God go through you from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet. I pray that God would strengthen you by the power of the Holy Spirit, that you might develop the self-control you need to make your life count for God.

I pray that you would receive the miracle you need in your emotions ... in your body . . . in your mind . . . in your spirit. I believe, and I expect this miracle for you in Jesus' name. Amen and amen.

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