



## Do you lose your cool at work?

*Six Pointers for Handling Emotions on the Job or at Church*

By Kurt von Schleicher

Emotions are a complicated thing, especially in the workplace. We can experience a variety of so many emotions that demand our attention and instant action—feelings of sadness, emotions of bliss, emotions of infatuation, emotions of anger, whimsical carefree emotions. Emotions can even lie to you—they are very fickle. Some emotions, if we wrongly act upon them, can be very dangerous in your workplace or wherever. Yes, they can get out of hand so quickly. So when it gets hot keep cool. As Christians, we are not to allow emotions to dictate our decisions. We are not to let our feelings lead us. We are to know the facts of the Word of God and walk by faith. God’s Word and Spirit—they are to lead us and they never disagree with each other. The enemy tries his best to lure us into reacting in the flesh when people behave with the wrong attitudes, words or gestures, but we are never to lose our cool with people. The enemy knows that if he can draw us into responding in the flesh, he will eat our lunch so to speak!

That’s why we are to sow diligently to the Spirit daily and walk in love, in victory and in the Spirit. Anger that is people-ward or God-ward—man, that’s the foundation of pride! This type is contagious. You can learn it, you can catch it, you can pass it on if you want. But the Bible says, **“Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul”** (Prov. 22:24-25 nkj). James commands, **“So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls”** (Jam. 1:19-21 nkjv).

Often times anger reveals an unyielded right in a person. They feel that they have a right to something, someone, some place etc. But the meekness that Jesus wants us all to exhibit consistently means having all rights yielded to Him. Ever read about a bond slave having rights? Jesus who was strong and meek is to be our Lord and Master and He has a right to all of you. Meekness isn’t weakness as some suppose, it has to do with strength under control. It’s a very winsome and desirable character quality for anyone wanting to become an effective witness—a fisher of people! You remember how Moses got angry at God’s people one time and he then wasn’t allowed to enter the Promise Land with the other Israelites, but for the most part Moses was a very strong witness for the Lord. In fact, the Bible says, **“Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth”** (Num 12:3 kjv). Don’t you want to be like that? I do.

We are called to be truly meek, humble, submissive to those in authority, to look at the facts of the Word and be led by the Spirit. The Word of God should have the final authority—the highest authority in what we decide to do, rather than our feelings or the circumstances of life!

Now emotions are not a bad thing in and of themselves, but we must be careful with them. Emotions can help you land the job of your dreams or prevent you from reaching your full potential. But what's the difference between being inordinately emotional and simply displaying your passion for the work you are trying to accomplish? It all depends on how you view your emotions and the value you place on them. It's good to keep your thoughts in check and meditate upon the truth, for your thought life will determine you're the direction of your emotions. You can act your way into a feeling, or feel your way into an action, but the former is better. Yes, we are to be honest with the Lord and obey God regardless of how we feel—the proper feelings will follow. It's so helpful pray for people in the workplace and over your emotions regularly.

**Here's Some Memory Verses:**

*“Runaway emotions corrode the bones”* (Prov. 14:30 mess).

*“The hotheaded do things they'll later regret; the coldhearted get the cold shoulder”* (Prov. 14:17 mess).

*“A fool is hotheaded and reckless”* (Prov. 14:16 niv).

*“An angry man stirs up strife, and a furious man abounds in transgression. A man's pride will bring him low”* (Prov. 29:22-23 nkj).

*“So get rid of your feelings of hatred”* (2 Pet. 2:1 liv).

*“A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back”* (Prov. 29:11).

*“Churned milk turns into butter; riled emotions turn into fist fights”*  
(Prov. 30:33 mess).

*“Starting a quarrel is like a leak in a dam, so stop it before a fight breaks out”*  
(Prov. 17:14 ncv).

*“Stop your anger! Turn off your wrath”* (Ps. 37:8 Liv).

Here are six tips to help you keep your emotions in the "safe zone" between inordinately passionate and too passive:

**Tip 1: Take a step back.**

There are bound to be times when you are going to feel angry at work. It's biblical to get angry at sin, wrongdoing and evil, but how we express this is crucial. We are to love sinners and hate sin—love all wrongdoers wisely and wisely hate all wrongdoing. Christians are to be people without any sinful compromise.

Rather than running to your boss fuming, take a step back to identify the real issues that are making you feel angry and develop an understanding of the biblical solutions. Present them to your supervisor or manager with calm reserve and enthusiasm for their potential positive outcomes. Presenting the situation in a loving

manner on a rational level with the problem and solution clearly defined, will encourage your manager to see you as a mature professional and to view the situation clearly. Be careful not to be or verbalize things with some self-righteous or religious manner. This can be tough on and for many people – especially those who aren't accustomed to holding back their emotional energy or their mouths. Be real and act normal. Contrary to what many secular people think, the Bible will teach you what that's all about even in the workplace. But it's important that you wait on the Lord – wait until the smoke clears to see the total picture. There might be important information that you do not yet have, that would show you that this issue shouldn't be taken personal. If you don't wait, you run the risk of being viewed as someone who flies off the handle or is out of control—a loose cannon.

**Tip 2: Read signals carefully.**

If you are one of those people with boundless energy and enthusiasm for most tasks, ask God to help you wisely direct or channel it so to speak—that emotional energy for the furtherance of God's Kingdom and know that this will also be in your best interests. But do proceed vigilantly so as not to hurt anyone. You want to do God's will His way with His timing and with the right kind of ambition and motives! There's nothing like healthy ambition and eagerness to energize a project. Just be sure that your passion isn't over the top and at another worker's expense. You want to be a good representative for Christ at all times.

*Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be. —Thomas a Kempis*

In a recent issue of *Harvard Business Review*, Colleen Barrett, president and COO of Southwest Airlines, said, "I rely on calmer people around me to give me those raised eyebrows that say, 'lower the passion a little bit.'" We don't live to please people, but it's good to be aware of the wise people around us. I don't know where Colleen Barrett stands spiritually, but we can learn a lot in any work setting. Remember to fear God, discern and assess accurately as you read the signals around you. You don't have to be the president of a company to read signals that say you're over the top—you are currently rating high on a co-worker's irritation scale. Chill out a bit.

Now, Christians can't have too much passion for Christ, but you can miss the details in how God wants this to be expressed and applied. We all need to carefully observe the body language of the people around us too whether they be saint or sinner. We want and aim to be a blessing for saints and sinners in the workplace. Discernment, common sense and body language can be good indicators that you are expressing your emotions wrongly.

**Tip 3: Provide supporting facts.**

When you're working on a project that you really feel passionate about, back it up with facts and figures. Pray over it out loud at home and silently at work. Why make some stupid show before people? Be impartial and pragmatic. Not only does providing objective data and solid rationale make good business or ministry sense, once you see the checks and balances in black and white you'll see if your emotional investment in the project is worth the energy you are expending on it.

**Tip 4: Never let them see you sweat ...so to speak.**

The abilities one must possess to work as part of a team – or head one up – are critical skills that you'll need to succeed. In a professional environment, the team's success will largely depend on the give-and-take that will occur among members as the team works hard toward its goals. Team meetings can become emotionally charged as members share their God-given convictions, vision, opinions and beliefs. But you need to keep going back to the Word for God's opinion and vision. As a team leader, department head or pastor, the ability to prayerfully manage your own emotions is a crucial skill. This is an imperative of imperatives. This must come before helping others. And God longs to use you in helping those under you with this. Why not

live in such a way that sinners become curious and want to become more like you... and want to inquire about what you have that they do not have? God wants to use you in helping even peer-level-leaders to properly deal with their emotions. One of the best ways to help other people with their emotions is to simply listen to them, to show empathy for how they are feeling and to pray in faith with them over these feelings if they are open to this type of thing, but be wise as to where you pray. You might be foolishly breaking company policy—or the handbook that you signed—by doing this on the company’s campus. Beware that many lost employees have actually sued their company later on, saying they didn’t get that desired promotion because they personally didn’t “convert” or pray with their Christian department head at his prompting, while on company grounds. I personally know of one Fortune 500 Company that regularly tells its new workers they can be fired if they even sympathize with a hurting worker by invite that coworker more than once to a church event or even a marriage encounter away from their church. If that worker later complains to HR, the company will call this harassment. Companies do not like paying out fifty thousand dollars from these court cases, so read your company handbook thoroughly.

*Let us not look back  
in anger or forward  
in fear, but around  
in awareness.  
—James Thurber*

People need undivided wise attention. This communicates that they matter. They want to be listened to and heard in the workplace or at church, where they have a lot of time invested. To manage your own emotions, concentrate on remaining calm and know that those around you may eventually look to you as their “emotional guide” of sorts. Set a good example, continue to pray in the fear and wisdom of God. Yes, “be” a consistently good witness at work. If your emotional fires flare, so might theirs. When all else fails, suggest taking a break. A brief walk outside or to the water cooler will give everyone a chance to calm down. Then, while you are away from the group, identify what is upsetting your emotions or others' emotional balance and come up with a strategy or two to work through this stuff. Doing my best, I commit the rest. Here’s what I call the eleventh commandment for the office: *Thou shalt not sweat it!*

**Tip 5: Find a confidant to share your triumphs and frustrations with.**

Each workplace has a unique and intricate culture about it with many (sometimes longstanding) traditions that are considered valuable to some of the veterans there. Sometimes just talking to someone who understands office dynamics (while simultaneously maintaining love and loyalty for those in authority there) can do wonders for your emotional and spiritual outlook. Remember to respect all people, especially those in absentia, yes, respect them verbally as if they were there listening. Some candid "venting," when it’s done with a mature Christian leader, who doesn’t have the same emotional ties to your company, church or department, can be a healthy exercise because it hurts no one and allows you to release pent-up feelings paving the way for biblical counseling. For the most part at work, leaders need to share their weaknesses upward (first to God and then their human leader) and their strengths downward (to underlings). Choose your confidants wisely and think twice before you let off steam with a fellow coworker who may betray your confidence.

**Tip 6: Have a sense of humor and balance in your life.**

Life never gets so bad that you can’t find something to laugh at. Laugh at yourself as well. Relax, enjoy the journey and loosen up a bit. There is a time to dance, a time to sing a time to laugh.<sup>1</sup> Another way to enjoy a righteous emotional balance at work is to have Christian balance in your life outside of work. Pray without ceasing, enjoy everlasting joy! If your personal life is full and happy (blessed) in Jesus Christ, it's going to show at the office.<sup>2</sup> Real Christians are bright shining lights at work and other workers want to be around them, even if they do not yet know why they want to be around them. Is your faith and love infectious? It should be, no matter where you are! You might even feel like your workplace is some kind of jail, but you remember how Paul and Silas sang in their prison cell and enjoyed joyous freedom. The bars were blow off. Their job was to spread the Gospel as fishers of men and that is exactly what they did. The Bible says, *“But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to*

*them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, 'Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.' Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'" (Act 16:25-30 nkjv).*

With Jesus Christ as Lord in your heart and Master of everything, you will be better equipped to deal with emotionally charged situations and as you learn to depend upon Him, you will become better and better at responding appropriately. He is the most emotionally balanced Person in the whole universe and He wants to be your best Friend at work!

**Memory verses:**

***"In the last days, mockers are going to have a heyday. Reducing everything to the level of their puny feelings"** (2 Pet. 3:3 mess).*

***"The mouths of the wicked spew malice"** (Prov. 19:28 mess).*

***"Make a clean sweep of malice and pretense, envy and hurtful talk"** (1 Pet. 2:1 mess).*

***"Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking"** (nkj).*

***"Malice backfires; spite boomerangs"** (Prov. 26:26 mess).*

***"Learn to love appropriately. You need to use your head and test your feelings"** (Phil. 1:9 mess).*

***"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger"** (Prov. 15:1 nkj).*

***"Try my best to be considerate of everyone's feelings"** (1 Cor. 10:33 mess).*

***"Listen and help, O God. I'm reduced to a whine and a whimper, obsessed with feelings of doomsday"** (Ps. 64:1 mess).*

***"Never hide your feelings from Him [Jesus]"** (Ps. 34:5 mess).*

***"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their own sinful selves. They have given up their old selfish feelings"** (Gal. 5:24 ncv).*

Jesus said, ***"A genuine leader will never exploit your emotions or your pocketbook"** (Matt. 7:20 mess).*

*Jesus talked about fair-weather followers who respond to the Gospel with instant emotional enthusiasm saying, **"There is no soil of character, and so when the emotions wear off and some difficulty arrives, there is nothing to show for it"** (Matt. 13:21 mess).*

***“It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: ... a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage” (Gal. 5:19 mess).***

***“Tell the unmarried and widows that singleness might well be the best thing for them, as it has been for me. But if they can’t manage their desires and emotions, they should by all means go ahead and get married” (1 Cor. 7:8-9 mess).<sup>3</sup>***

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<sup>1</sup> Read Ecclesiastes chapter three Christian and dance unto the Lord rather than in the flesh or to draw attention to yourself!

<sup>2</sup> See Psalm one in the Bible that backs this up: *“BLESSED is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.”* Blessed means HAPPY, HAPPY!

<sup>3</sup> If you are a Christian who is called to be married, wait on God's timing and purpose to only marry a growing, on-fire, committed, born again Christian, instead of a lost person or some nominal Christian or a lukewarm, carnal or worldly Christian.