

Worshipping God Through Emotions

I. The Notion Of Emotions

- A. God Is An _____ God** – Loving (Eph 2:4-5; 1 Jn 4:9-10); Wrathful (Ps 7:11); Jealous (Dt 6:15; Nah 1:2); Joy (Zeph 3:17)
- B. God Created Man In His _____ With Mind, Will & Emotions** (Gen 1:26; Ps 139:14)
- C. Christ _____ How We Can Rightly Express Emotions** (Isa 53:3; Jn 11:35-36; Lk 19:41; Heb 5:7; Jn 2:13-17)
- D. The Holy Spirit _____ Our Emotions From Self-Centeredness To Christlikeness** (Gal 5:22-23)

II. The Motion Of Emotions

❖ *An "Emotion" is a reaction that moves one to action*

- A. Emotions Are Morally _____** (Eph 4:26)
- The Reason For Our Emotion Is A Moral Determiner
 - The Response For Our Emotion Is A Moral Determiner
- B. Emotions Are Motion _____** (Jn 14:15, 23-24; 21:15-17; Jas 1:20, Prov 1:7; 9:10)

III. The Devotion Of Emotions

- A. Emotional Experiences Are Not Goals, But Are _____ Of Worship**
- Love Is The Greatest Commandment (Mt 22:37-40); Praise Is The Greatest Expression (Ps 101:3)
- B. Emotions Are To Be _____ To The Standard Of God** (1 Thess 5:23)
- C. Emotions Are To Be _____ By The Spirit Of God** (Prov 25:28)

Conclusion:

1. There are reasonable reasons for emotions
2. When we allow our feelings to carry us away from God then we have undermined God's purpose for our emotions to carry us to Him.
3. Emotions are not the end goal to experience, but are means of worship
4. When our emotions are anchored and directed by Christ, they will fly in a proper worship to God.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can denying our emotions be hinder our spiritual growth and worship?
2. What emotions are your biggest hindrance in helping you grow closer to God?
3. How can our negative emotions (sadness, anger, fear, worry, doubt) be an "up periscope" opportunity to connect with God more deeply?
4. What would our emotions look like when we're spiritually mature versus when we're spiritually immature? Give examples.

Worshipping God Through Emotions

I. The Notion Of Emotions

- A. **God Is An Emotional God** – Loving (Eph 2:4-5; 1 Jn 4:9-10); Wrathful (Ps 7:11); Jealous (Dt 6:15; Nah 1:2); Joy (Zeph 3:17)
- B. **God Created Man In His Image With Mind, Will & Emotions** (Gen 1:26; Ps 139:14)
- C. **Christ Models How We Can Rightly Express Emotions** (Isa 53:3; Jn 11:35-36; Lk 19:41; Heb 5:7; Jn 2:13-17)
- D. **The Holy Spirit Transforms Our Emotions From Self-Centeredness To Christlikeness** (Gal 5:22-23)

II. The Motion Of Emotions

❖ *An "Emotion" is a reaction that moves one to action*

- A. **Emotions Are Morally Neutral** (Eph 4:26)
 - The Reason For Our Emotion Is A Moral Determiner
 - The Response For Our Emotion Is A Moral Determiner
- B. **Emotions Are Motion Activators** (Jn 14:15, 23-24; 21:15-17; Jas 1:20, Prov 1:7; 9:10)

III. The Devotion Of Emotions

- A. **Emotional Experiences Are Not Goals, But Are Means Of Worship**
 - Love Is The Greatest Commandment (Mt 22:37-40); Praise Is The Greatest Expression (Ps 101:3)
- B. **Emotions Are To Be Conformed To The Standard Of God** (1 Thess 5:23)
- C. **Emotions Are To Be Controlled By The Spirit Of God** (Prov 25:28)

Conclusion:

1. There are reasonable reasons for emotions
2. When we allow our feelings to carry us away from God then we have undermined God's purpose for our emotions to carry us to Him.
3. Emotions are not the end goal to experience, but are means of worship
4. When our emotions are anchored and directed by Christ, they will fly in a proper worship to God.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can denying our emotions be hinder our spiritual growth and worship?
2. What emotions are your biggest hindrance in helping you grow closer to God?
3. How can our negative emotions (sadness, anger, fear, worry, doubt) be an "up periscope" opportunity to connect with God more deeply?

4. What would our emotions look like when we're spiritually mature versus when we're spiritually immature? Give examples.

Worshipping God Through Emotions

Introduction:

1. Pixar studios produced a movie on emotions called "**Inside Out**" showing how emotions interrelate with each other. Sadness was seen as a negative emotion that should be devalued, but Sadness was actually important to put the other emotions in context.
 - Negative emotions, such as fear, anger and depression, have been put in the "penalty box" because we might categorize them as sin. But even negative emotions have a key role in our understanding of God.
2. Negative emotions can become **barriers** to our Christian faith.
 - Emotions become a big block to us in worshipping God because:
 - We're **fearful** about serving Him
 - We're **angry** that we're going through a difficult time
 - We're **stressed** out about God's plan for our future – college, dating
 - We're **jealous** of someone at church
 - We're **depressed** over our failures or the
 - Have you ever gone through a crisis of faith:
 - When you know you're saved, but you don't feel saved?
 - When you know God's love will never be removed but you don't feel He loves you?
 - When you know God's sovereign, but you're worried?
 - When you know God's powerful, but you're afraid?
3. But in this series, we are going to demonstrate how Negative Emotions can become **avenues** for growth in our Christian faith.

Goal: God created us with **emotions**, will and intellect so we can worship and love Him with our heart, soul and mind (Mt 22:37). For much of our Christian lives, we focus on an **intellectual** understanding of God or appeal to the **will** submitting to His Lordship, but we don't always understand how our **emotions** are given by God for us to also relate to Him and His **attributes**.

Emotions are **indicators** (like a thermostat) to tell us how we need to relate and trust God. When we are submerged with worry, depression or fear, these emotions "**periscope up**" to see God and connect to Him and His attributes.

4. **Connecting** with our emotions will enable us to **connect** with God.

- Dr. David Eckman: “The inability to connect emotions to the truth is one of the most tragic circumstances facing the church today.” (*Becoming Who God Intended: A New Picture for Your Past, A Healthy Way of Managing Your Emotions, A Fresh Perspective on Relationships*, Becoming What God Intended Ministries. Kindle Edition. P. 17)

I. The Notion Of Emotions

A. God Is An Emotional God

1. Loving (Eph 2:4-5; 1 Jn 4:9-10)

Ephesians 2:4-5 “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)”

1 John 4:9-10 “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

2. Wrathful (Ps 7:11)

Psalms 7:11 “God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day.”

3. Jealous (Dt 6:15; Nah 1:2)

Deuteronomy 6:15 “For the LORD your God is a jealous God among you”

Nahum 1:2 “God is jealous, and the LORD avenges; The LORD avenges and is furious. The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies”

4. Joy (Zeph 3:17)

Zephaniah 3:17 “The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet *you* with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.”

B. God Created Man In His Image With Mind, Will & Emotions (Gen 1:26; Ps 139:14)

Genesis 1:26 “Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

- “Image” – Heb. *Selem*
 - used in OT to describe form and shapes of idols (1 Sam 6:5,11)
 - describe reliefs (Ezek 23:14 “*images* of Chaldeans portrayed in vermillion”)

Q: If God is spirit and has no physical image, what image of God do we bear?

A: moral image (capacity to make moral decisions)

- mind, will, emotions
- “The term...figuratively describes human life as a reflection of God’s spiritual nature...Consequently, humans have spiritual life, ethical and moral sensitivities, conscience, and the capacity to represent God” (Allen Ross, *Creation & Blessing – Genesis*)

Q: Why does God want us to bear His image?

A: ie/ ancient kings set up statues of themselves throughout their land to show their sovereign domain, in the same way God uses us as His image bearer to establish His sovereignty on the earth

- “Likeness” – Heb. *demut*, similarity
 - explains meaning of image
- God’s personality is imparted to us – mind, will & emotions

ie/ Some men try to be like Mr. Spock of the first Star Trek series – be devoid of emotions
- emotions is not a weakness, it’s a creation of God

- We should be thankful for emotions

Psalm 139:14 “I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well.

- God’s personality is imparted to us – mind, will & emotions
- ie/ Some men try to be like Mr. Spock of the first Star Trek series – be devoid of emotions
 - emotions is not a weakness, it’s a creation of God
- We should be thankful for emotions

C. Christ Models How We Can Rightly Express Emotions

1. Jesus Was Weeping (Isa 53:3; Jn 11:35-36; Lk 19:41; Heb 5:7)

Isaiah 53:3 “A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.”

John 11:35-36 “Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, ‘See how He loved him!’”

- of course I don’t believe Jesus was crying over Lazarus since He knew He would raise Him, but of the unbelief of Lazarus’ family

Luke 19:41 "Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it"

- Jesus wept over the non-repentant city of Jerusalem

Hebrews 5:7 "He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear"

- Jesus prays with great emotional intensity

2. **Jesus Was Outraged (Jn 2:13-17)**

John 2:13-17 ¹³Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business. ¹⁵When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. ¹⁶And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" ¹⁷Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up."

- Christ demonstrates how we can be angry and not sin
- Christ was not concerned about man's glory, but God's
- Christ was not concerned about profiting for Himself, but about the righteousness of God

D. **The Holy Spirit Transforms Our Emotions From Self-Centeredness To Christlikeness (Gal 5:22-23)**

Galatians 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."

- the Holy Spirit is enabling us to respond like Christ
- David Eckman: "the management of the emotions is critical to the spiritual life. One of the ministries of the Spirit of God is to mold the human ability to have emotions into an instrument for the display of Christ's character. A very practical understanding of the Holy Spirit's role relative to our emotions will lead to a deeper understanding of the spiritual life." ("The Holy Spirit and Our Emotions," <https://bible.org/seriespage/10-holy-spirit-and-our-emotions>)

II. The Motion Of Emotions

❖ **An "Emotion" is a reaction that moves one to action**

- Latin *emotion* – lit. to move out, action
- Dr. Jim Cecy defines it this way: **e (energy) + motion = emotion**
- “Emotion is also closely related to motivation. Emotions make us more likely to act in certain ways.” (Paul Meier, Frank Minirth, Frank Wichern, Donald Ratcliff, *Introduction To Psychology And Counseling*, Second Edition, Baker Book House, 1991, p. 73)

A. Emotions Are Morally Neutral (Eph 4:26)

- so many feel that being depressed, having fear or being angry is a sin

Ephesians 4:26 “Be angry, and do not sin”
- you can express emotion without sinning

Q: Was Jesus sorrowful and fearful in the Garden of Gethsemane? Yes.
Was He in sin? No.

Matthew 26:38 “Then He said to them, ‘My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.’”

Q: Was the Apostle Paul outraged at the sin in the Corinthian church? Yes.
Was He in sin? No.

- Emotions are neutral = it is merely a reaction intended for action
- Jay Adams: “Clearly, all our emotions are from God; in and of themselves they are not negative. However, because of human sin, emotions may be aroused for the wrong reasons, released in the wrong ways, etc. Emotions become ‘negative’, i.e. harmful to others and to the one who exhibits them, under such circumstances.” (Forward in Ken Campbell’s *Those Ugly Emotions: How To Manage Your Emotions*, Christian Focus, 2001)

1. The Reason For Our Emotion Is A Moral Determiner

ie/ envy for someone else’s popularity is an immoral basis for jealousy
- but desiring your child’s moral purity is a moral basis for jealousy

ie/ greed concerning money, stock market – cause for fear is immoral
- but desiring to be good steward of God’s money, then fear is moral

- Discontentment is a sin leading to the emotions of jealousy

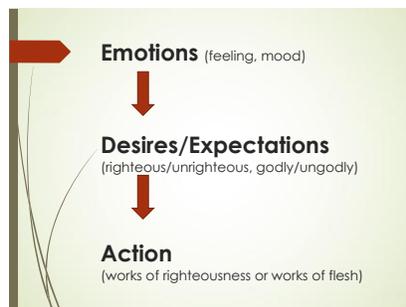
2. The Response For Our Emotion Is A Moral Determiner

ie/ respond to a sports team loss – riot, be grumpy the rest of the day
- vs. telling God you’re disappointed and then ask Him to help you move on

ie/ death in family (sorrow & doubt) – blame God and turn from Him or cry to God

ie/ difficult financial year – anxiety, worry – response: cheat on taxes or pray for God’s provision

- Eckman: “Unmanaged moods (negative emotions) do more than just hurt inside—they lead people down a path to sin. They lead people down the path of the works of the flesh and into addiction. They lead people to death.” (BWGD, p. 29)
- **Emotions leads to Desires & Expectations which leads to Action**
- **Emotions** (Moods) Leads to **desires** (righteous or unrighteous) and **expectations** (realistic or unrealistic, godly or ungodly)
 - **Emotions** lead to **Desires** (Appetites) – which can be godly or ungodly
 - Follow Christ, imitate Christ, do His will
 - Or abandon Christ, God’s will and God’s Word
 - **Emotions** lead to **Expectations** (reward of faith or selfish entitlement)
- **Desires** Lead to **Action**: Works of the Spirit (righteous) or Works of the Flesh (sin)



B. Emotions Are Motion Activators (Jn 14:15, 23-24; 21:15-17; Jas 1:20, Prov 1:7; 9:10)

❖ An “Emotion” is a reaction that moves one to action

ie/ Light turns on with motion activators

ie/ Toilet flushes with motion activators

Eg/ Love Christ – moved to keep commandments

John 14:15, 23-24 ¹⁵“If you love Me, keep My commandments. ²³Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. ²⁴He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me.”

- John 21:15-17 – if Peter loves Christ – feed His sheep

- Love became the motive for action
- emotions brings us motivation and desire – otherwise we would be lifeless robots
- If you are apathetic in life or spiritually apathetic, you have not permitted your God given emotions to move you to react to what matters

- **Anger** moves us to motion

- Move to change situations to justice
 - Protect us from terrorist or bio-terrorism

Ie/ abortion, civil rights, environment, government
- Move us foul language, rioting, division

Ie/ riots – soccer, Superbowl, politics, court decision

Ie/ yell at someone we care about

James 1:20 "For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God."

- **Fear** = *phobeo* – put to flight – run
 - run from danger

- wise one uses fear to run to the Lord, the fool runs from the Lord in fear

Proverbs 1:7 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction."

Proverbs 9:10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."

- **Jealousy** = same word as "zealous"

- Wrong response – gossiping, envy, backstabbing
- Right response – energy protect, imitate

Ie/ guard your family

Ie/ your child gets beat up at school – go to school to do something about it

- **Doubt** – move us away from God or get us searching about God

Ie/ John the Baptist – Mt 11:3 – in prison, started to doubt a little – not turn from God, but sought reassurance from Christ

III. The Devotion Of Emotions

A. Emotional Experiences Are Not Goals, But Are Means Of Worship

- Ie/ so many people see their goal in life as a positive emotion
- The end goal: pleasure, love, satisfaction, joy, peace
- but then the convenient model of: “The ends justify the means” becomes improperly directed
 - To feel love – one will feel obligated to dispense sex outside of marriage
 - To feel pleasure – one will indulge in drunkenness, drug use, immorality
 - To feel satisfaction – one will adopt the philosophy of materialism and try to die with the most toys in life
 - To feel peace – one will compromise moral convictions

Ie/ “It can’t be wrong, ‘cause it feels so right” (from “You Light Up My Life”)

1. Love Is The Greatest Commandment

- The religious leaders arrived at 613 commands from the Torah – 365 negative and 248 positive commandments in their rabbinic tradition (2nd century) to obey.
- Jesus changes the **action** of doing to the **reaction** of love.

Matthew 22:37-40 ³⁷Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the **Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.**’ ³⁸This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Mark 12:30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your **heart** and with all your **soul** and with all your **mind** and with all your **strength.**’

- What we will learn this series is that our **EMOTIONS are a CONDUIT** or a **Path** to Worship God
- At church, we focus on learning (**intellect**) about God so we love Him with our **mind**
- At camp, through the preaching and meeting with our counselors, we are challenged to love God with our **heart** – give our **will** over to God
- May I open a new door for your this week: **Love the Lord with all your soul** which includes your **emotions**
- “heart, soul, mind” – there is some overlap with the meaning of these words – it means all of our being

- But we've always defined the parts of man that reflect His image as our mind, will and emotions
- John Nolland: "In the Gospel pericope, ' "Your **heart**" denotes a response to God from the innermost personal center of one's being; "your life" ("**soul**") conjures up the role of the life force that energises us; ... "your **mind**" signals the inclusion of the thinking and planning processes. The challenge is to a comprehensive engagement with God with the total capacity of all of one's faculties.'" (*The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC, Eerdmans)

a. With All Your Heart (Will)

- heart is the center of your being - place of your **will**
- from the heart that all issues of life proceed (Prov 4:23)
- William Hendriksen: "The *heart* is the hub of the wheel of man's existence, the mainspring of all his thoughts, words, and deeds." (*New Testament Commentary – Matthew*, Baker, 1973, p. 810)
- to love God with your heart is to submit to His will for your life
- those who do not love God fight with Him over control/reigns of their life

b. With All Your Soul (Emotions)

- descriptive of our **emotions**
- William Hendriksen: "**soul** ... is here probably the seat of man's emotional activity" (p. 810)
- John MacArthur: "The term **soul** is closest to what we would call emotion" (*Commentary on Matthew*)
- *agape* love is not cold and non-emotional
- passion follows the will
- to love God is to mirror what makes Him happy, angry, sad
- Rejoice in the Lord
- Grieve over the ruination sin produces

c. With All Your Mind (Intellect)

- Jesus intentionally switched "might" from Deuteronomy 6:4-5 to "mind" (*dianoia*)

- descriptive of our **intellect**
- The Greek word for “**knowledge**” is found **491x** in the NT while the Greek word for “**feeling**” is only found **twice**
- read about Him, meditate about Him, reason with Him
- not a blind faith
- Charles Spurgeon: “We are to love God with our intellect, with all the powers of our mind, bringing memory, thought, imagination, reason, judgment, and all our mental powers, as willing subjects to bow at God’s feet in adoration and love.” (*The Gospel of the Kingdom: An Exposition of the Gospel of Matthew*, Kindle Locations 5543-5544, GLH Publishing. Kindle Edition)

2. Praise Is The Greatest Expression

Psalm 101:1-3 ¹I will sing of mercy and justice; To You, O LORD, I will sing praises. ²I will behave wisely in a perfect way. Oh, when will You come to me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. ³I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not cling to me.”

B. Emotions Are To Be Conformed To The Standard Of God

1 Thessalonians 5:23 “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

- *Irene* (Gr.), *Shalom* (Heb) = wholeness, accept wholeness
- the proud person doesn’t want any emotional help from God
- God is viewed by the world as an “Emotional Crutch”

C. Emotions Are To Be Controlled By The Spirit Of God

Proverbs 25:28 “Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls.

- The previously mentioned Fruit of the Spirit is the Holy Spirit’s enablement to have self-control and to have your emotions controlled by God

Conclusion:

1. There are reasonable reasons for emotions

- The biblical goal is not about feeling good about ourselves in contrast to society, but feeling right about ourselves in our relationship with God.
- Separate **feelings** from **reality**
- David Eckman: "I struggled with the inability to connect my emotions to my beliefs. For example, when I committed a sin, I would ask for forgiveness, but not 'feel' forgiven. I would continue to ask and ask, even though I 'knew' that God answered prayers. So why didn't I feel forgiven?" (*Becoming Who God Intended: A New Picture for Your Past, A Healthy Way of Managing Your Emotions, A Fresh Perspective on Relationships*, p. 15, *Becoming What God Intended Ministries*. Kindle Edition.)

2. When we allow our feelings to carry us away from God then we have undermined God's purpose for our emotions to carry us to Him.

3. Emotions Are Not The End Goal To Experience, But Are Means Of Worship

Ie/ so many people see their goal in life as a positive emotion

- The end goal: pleasure, love, satisfaction, joy, peace
- but then the convenient model of: "The ends justify the means" becomes improperly directed
 - To feel love – one will feel obligated to dispense sex outside of marriage
 - To feel pleasure – one will indulge in drunkenness, drug use, immorality
 - To feel satisfaction – one will adopt the philosophy of materialism and try to die with the most toys in life
 - To feel peace – one will compromise moral convictions

Ie/ "It can't be wrong, 'cause it feels so right" (from "You Light Up My Life")

4. When our emotions are anchored and directed by Christ, they will fly in a proper worship to God.

Ie/ Kite – Christ is the holder of the string. Not rooted – like a kite that flies all over.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can denying our emotions be hinder our spiritual growth and worship?
2. What emotions are your biggest hindrance in helping you grow closer to God?
3. How can our negative emotions (sadness, anger, fear, worry, doubt) be an "up periscope" opportunity to connect with God more deeply?
4. What would our emotions look like when we're spiritually mature versus when we're spiritually immature? Give examples.

Join A Connect Group

- Sign up for a pre-set group in the foyer or with me (steve@fbc-belmont.org)
- Create your own Discussion Group creatively
- The series will last through May 12
- Discuss at a meal, over coffee, family devotions, in a home
- Connect with others in the church to help apply God's Word to our lives