

Head and Heart: The Role of Emotion in a Biblical Faith

Week 1 Outline

- Everyone seems to have an opinion when it comes to emotion. Secular bookstores are filled with “self-help” books that offer contradictory advice, and Christian bookstores often aren’t much better.
- Though you can find some good books on dealing biblically with specific emotional issues, it’s very hard to find a book that gives you a biblical perspective on emotion as a whole.
- So our goal these next 8 weeks is to build a biblical framework that will help us answer this question: What is the role of emotion in a biblical faith?
- Our goal is not to promote emotionalism (**Jeremiah 17:9**), but neither is our goal to belittle the role emotion plays in the life of a believer. Rather our goal is to become more biblically informed and discerning about the role of emotion.
- We don’t have the natural wisdom to understand our own hearts (sorry Freud!), but God does (**Jeremiah 17:10**). He makes this wisdom accessible to us through His Word and He desires that we should ask for it (**James 1:5, Hebrews 4:12-13**)
- Defining terms: How does the world define faith?
- Does the world’s definition sound right to you? (**Romans 1:18-20**)
- How does the Bible define and describe faith? (**Hebrews 11:1-3, Ephesians 2:8-9, Luke 16:19-31**)
- What is emotion, then?
- A principle to remember: Faith is the master, and feelings are the servant (**Genesis 4:1-8**). Faith does not wait for feelings, nor is it dependent upon feelings.
- The problem of emotion: Our emotional capacity is a gift of God, but emotions can be both good and bad, and are sometimes difficult to control.
- Many believers “solve” the problem by relying on their own natural personalities for wisdom, so they either tend toward Emotionalism or Stoicism. Neither of these “solutions” are biblical.
- The right solution: Develop a biblical framework for understanding the role of emotion in a biblical faith, one that teaches the right perspective and guides us in the right practice.

- The biblical framework in action (**Galatians 5:16-24**)
- We're in a war and the battlefield is the mind (**Romans 12:1-2**)
- Why is it so difficult to deny feelings and do what we know is right? After all, God has provided all that we need (**Ephesians 2:10, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Romans 8:1**)
- What we feel strains against what we know, and our faith is tested.
- The lust of the flesh is relentless (**Galatians 5:17**), so don't underestimate its power, and don't overestimate your own spiritual maturity. We have to be engaged full time in the battle.
- This is normal for the Christian life.
- What this battle looks like when it's fought well (**Romans 7:21-25**), and what it looks like when it's not (**James 4:1-2**)
- We are assaulted by specific lusts. You need to fight with specific truths.

Homework

- Godly emotion, confessing Christ, godly behavior, sound doctrine, and spiritual fruit are all marks of genuine faith. But only spiritual fruit validates faith, because only God can produce spiritual fruit. How does that impact how you think of the above list as you work out your salvation (**Philippians 2:12**)?
- What is your own emotional tendency? Do you struggle with being driven by emotion, or do you struggle with being emotionally aloof? Do you see the inherent dangers in both?
- Take a few days this week and make a note of your emotional responses to your circumstances. Begin looking at what makes you angry, irritated, happy, or anxious. Then look beneath your emotional response at the underlying root in your heart. What do you find?
- What things tend to make you fearful, angry, or anxious? How do you usually handle those emotional responses? Do you make a habit of examining yourself?