

“Head and Heart, the Role of Emotion in a Biblical Faith”

Week 2: The Dangers of Following Your Heart

Lesson Outline

Introduction

- Recap from last week
- Defining terms: **Faith** is assurance, conviction, understanding of objective rational truths revealed in Scripture and nature (**Romans 1, Hebrews 11**)
- Defining terms: **Emotion** is the “visceral RESPONSE” to whatever occupies our thoughts. Emotions expose and give energy to the motivations of the heart.
- In the relationship between faith and feelings: “Faith is the master. Feelings are the servant.”
- The overtly emotional Christian must bear that principle in mind. You can’t rely on feelings to interpret or lead faith. Strong passions aren’t necessarily evidence of strong faith.
- And the Stoic Christian must bear this in mind: God didn’t give us only an intellect and a will. He also gave us an emotional capacity (example: in Paul- **2 Corinthians 2:4**). Sometimes we can mistake the accumulation of doctrinal knowledge with spiritual maturity. (**Revelation 2:4-5**)
- This morning’s objective- lay the biblical framework for understanding the role of emotion in faith...starting with a caution about “following your heart”
- The world’s advice: “10 Reasons to Follow Your Heart”
- Q: What assumption does the world make about emotions and the heart?
- What Scripture says about following your heart: **Proverbs 28:26, Matthew 15:19**

The Depravity of the Human Heart

- “Total Depravity”, what is it, and why is it crucial in understanding emotion and the heart?
- **Ephesians 2:1, Titus 1:15-16, John 3:3**
- Potential objections: 1) “Good” unbelievers, and 2) “sanctified emotions”

- Q: How would you answer someone who believed that their salvation meant that they could now trust their feelings?
- **1 Corinthians 6:11, Romans 5:1, Romans 6:19, Proverbs 3:5-6**
- There is no emotionally led “personality type”. Emotional instability is a problem of spiritual immaturity, not personality.
- Even if you’re exercising self-control and moderation on the outside, what goes on in your heart is what matters.
- Following your feelings is not a new phenomenon- **Genesis 4:1-16, Luke 22:54-62**
- However, in the last 50 years, the Church in America has adopted a man-centered, feelings-based view of faith.

A Brief History

- Modernism was the dominant feature of the culture from the mid-19th Century through 1960
- Many mainline Christian churches became liberal during that time, trying to please the culture, Fundamentalism rose up in response to theological Liberalism
- Fundamentalism started well but eventually lapsed into legalism, and moved away from sound doctrine and speaking truth to the culture
- “New Evangelicalism” then arose intending to be a gospel witness to the culture, but it minimized all but very basic gospel truths
- The result was the minimization of biblical doctrine and the rise of sensual Christianity. They increasingly became more self-focused than Christ-focused, and biblical thinking suffered
- This led to a low view of God, and a focus on the happiness of man rather than the holiness of God

God Wants You to Be Happy?

- Q: What work did God begin in you from the day you were saved? What is He doing?
- Lie #1: God wants us to be happy

- **Colossians 3:8-10, Psalm 37:4, John 16:22**
- Q: How do you know when happiness is rooted in carnality?
- **2 Corinthians 4:16-17, 1 Thessalonians 5:16**
- Much heartache and destruction have come from people seeking their own happiness

I Can't Help How I Feel!

- Lie #2: You can't overcome your feelings
- Q: How would you respond to someone who says they can't obey God unless He changes how they feel?
- **2 Corinthians 5:17, 2 Peter 1:3-4, Romans 6, Colossians 3, Genesis 4**

Is it Hypocrisy if You Act in Obedience, Even When You Don't Feel Like it?

- Lie #3: I can't obey God unless I feel like it, because that would be hypocrisy
- Story of Pastor Ichabod Spencer witnessing to the young man

Homework

- What are those areas in your life where your feelings are running counter to your faith? Identify them. Are you obeying God, or are you waiting for those feelings to change?
- Do you rely on your personality to dictate how you handle your emotions?
- If you consider yourself an emotional person, do you struggle with sinfully judging those that are emotionally reserved? Are prone to seeing them as "cold"?
- If you consider yourself to be an unemotional or very emotionally reserved person, do you struggle with pride over your personality? Do you see yourself as spiritually strong because of your personality?
- What is your attitude toward serving in the church body to which you've committed yourself? Do you allow your passions and feelings to dictate how and when you'll serve?