

# EMOTIONS' PLACE IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN

## Lesson 1: Emotion Belongs

### Introduction

A understanding of emotions and their place in the Christian's life is very much needed in the church today.

Two extremes: religion that all emotion or religion that is cold, formal, with no emotions. Somewhere between these two extremes is the proper place of emotion in the life of the Christian.

### I. Emotion defined:

**A.** Emotion is not a Bible word, so must rely on English dictionary for meaning: "A departure from the normal calm state of an organism of such nature as to include strong feeling, an impulse toward open action, and certain internal physical reactions; any one of the states designated as fear, anger, disgust, grief, joy, surprise, yearning, etc." (Webster's) (we would add to this - love, hate, compassion, sympathy, etc.)

**B.** It is a chemical reaction, a mental response, as biological factors play a part in emotions.

**C.** How is emotion produced?

1. Emotion can be caused by drugs, such as uppers and downers. Or by changes in musical sounds, rhythm, and/or words. Or by simulated created effects in changing external factors.
  - a) To some degree we ought to be moved by external happenings - death, poverty, or good news, etc.
  - b) However we must be on guard against such playing upon our emotions to the point of removing our reasoning abilities to where we get caught up in an emotional frenzy and irrational behavior.
2. In the life of a Christian emotions are primarily based upon conviction.

**D.** Religious emotion defined - "the result of anything you deeply believe, love, and/or fear."

1. Emotion is the result, not the proof of religion. It is simply a by product of our convictions.
2. Deep conviction can move us to genuine emotional response.

### II. A study of the great characters of the New Testament reveals that they were emotional beings.

**A.** JESUS – one who is warm, loving, and kind.

1. One who weeps; on occasions when he shed tears:
  - a) At the grave of Lazarus - John 11:35
  - b) As he approached the city of Jerusalem - Matthew 23:37
  - c) In the garden of Gethsemane - Luke 22:44
2. His gentleness - Look at the manner in which he dealt with the Samaritan woman. John 4
3. His anger as He went into temple and found the place of prayer turned into a den of thieves.
4. His compassion – His miracles were performed out a heart of compassion. Matt.20:30-34 Lk.23:27-31
5. His love for His disciples – for Martha, Lazarus, John, and all the apostles.
6. His tenderness - towards the little children brought to Him – Matt. 19:14. Even on the cross He looked down at his mother and made sure she would be cared for – John 19:26,27.
7. When we read parables of Jesus, we find stories often filled with emotion.
  - a) Good Samaritan – Luke 10: 30-37 - there's wonderful emotion in that story!
  - b) Or the stories of the Prodigal son, the Rich man and Lazarus, the Hidden treasure.
8. The greatest single act of emotion in all history was His suffering and death on the cross. Romans 5:6-8; Eph.5:25

**B.** The Apostle PAUL - we might think of him as the hard, unemotional type; but Paul was an emotional man.

1. When he met with the Ephesians elders at Miletus we see his emotion.

2. On his third missionary journey when Paul was in Ephesus word came to him "concerning troubles in the church at Corinth.
    - a) This led Paul to write the letter we know as First Corinthians.
    - b) Upon reading First Corinthians it sounds like the writings of a man who is totally unemotional, hard, matter of fact.
    - c) But in Second Corinthians we see the attitude and emotions of heart of the writer.  
2 Corinthians 2:4
    - d) Paul was not only concerned in writing the first letter, but also how they had received it. 2 Corinthians 2:12,13; 7:5-7
  3. Acts 17:16 - "Paul's spirit was stirred in him." (KJV) When we get around people living in sin or taking God's name in vain, etc. we should be filled with righteous indignation.
  4. The letter of 2 Timothy is a book filled with emotion. As Paul was approaching death, he was overflowing with emotion, writing to this young evangelist, whom he had converted and loved deeply.
    - a) 2 Timothy 1:3-5 – He expresses his love, a desire to see him, remembers the tears.
    - b) 2 Timothy 1:6-8,12,16; 4:2,6-8 - Can you imagine Timothy reading those words, feeling the burden suddenly falling on his shoulders to carry on the fight?
  5. The Book of Philippians is an emotional response to the Philippians church for the abundant gift they had sent by the hand of Epaphroditus.
    - a) Notice 4:14 – Paul had been imprisoned, suffering affliction. Can you not imagine the joy Paul felt? vs.18
    - b) He writes this letter overflowing with thanksgiving for what they've done.
- C.** As with our Lord and with Paul, there are so many of those whom we admire.
1. Andrew - "We have found the Messiah" John 1:41
  2. Nathanael - "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the king of Israel." John 1:49
  3. Simeon - "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Luke 2:29,30
  4. Peter - "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man O Lord." Luke 5:8 We recall when he "wept bitterly" after denying the Lord three times. Luke 22:62
  5. John - "The disciple whom Jesus loved." Jn.13:23
  6. Thomas - "My Lord and my God." John 20:28
- D.** As emotion played a major role in the lives of the early Christians, it is badly needed today.
1. More deep, abiding love for our brethren.
  2. More tear stained cheeks over our sins.
  3. More sympathy for the lonely and distressed.
  4. More gratitude for Christ's supreme sacrifice.
  5. More hatred toward sin and false doctrine.
  6. More fear of hell.
  7. More longing for heaven.
  8. We need greater emotion on the part of every Christian.

### **III.** Three Warnings Must Be Heeded.

- A.** While emotion has a place in the life of a Christian, emotionalism does not. "Ism" is a suffix meaning devotion to, adherence to. What is the difference in emotion and emotionalism?
1. The one is genuine; the other is affected.
  2. The one is self-sufficient; the other relies on others.
    - a) Real emotion doesn't depend on others or what they are doing.
    - b) Whereas emotionalism is often excited by the crowd. (example: a religious revival)

3. The one is a means to an end, bearing fruit; the other becomes an end in itself.
  - a) Real emotion does something for us; it produces fruit: real love – obedience (Jn.14:15)  
hope - perseverance, joy - sacrifice, sorrow - repentance (II Cor.7:10), a hatred of evil - rejection, fear - a departure from evil.
  - b) Emotionalism - becomes an end in itself; and may even be considered the peak of spiritual attainment. This is the end that is being sought.

**B. While emotion has a place in the life of a Christian, it must be tempered with self-control.**

1. Often we see those who become too emotional or even hysterical in their emotional display, losing complete control of self. This is a weakness, a fault to be worked on.
2. Jesus was emotional, but there was never a time He wasn't in control of himself, even in the garden.
3. We should always exercise restraint and self-discipline, so in times of crisis, disagreement or even joy, we maintain control of self in those emotional situations.

**C. While emotion is good; it must not become the primary basis of conviction.**

1. Whenever we allow our emotions to modify our beliefs it becomes emotionalism. This is an example of abuse of emotion.
2. Such has long been the “emotional argument used by denominationalists, and is now sometimes used by our brethren.
  - a) Examples: "Suppose someone on way to the water to be baptized is struck by lightning." or "What if they are on their death bed?" "What about my mother?" - "I wouldn't trade this good feeling for a whole stack of Bibles.”
  - b) Emotion has become the foundation of their beliefs. Such people are being led in their convictions by whatever their emotions (feelings) dictate.
  - c) Even brethren use these kind of arguments: "Those people wouldn't even take a dime from the church treasury to feed a starving orphan."
  - d) These kind of emotional arguments cloud and confuse the issues and do not arrive at an understanding of what the Bible truly teaches.

## Conclusion

Emotions serve a wonderful role in the life of a Christian, but we must be careful always to keep them in their proper perspective.