

Emotions

Biblical wisdom for our feelings

Emotions are important

...in life

...in counselling

...in Scripture

'Scripture not only speaks about emotions, it also speaks to and through our emotions. The Bible itself is emotional literature, filled with emotional expression and designed not just to communicate with our rationality but also to stir us emotionally, thus affirming our emotionality'

(Benner, 1984 - "Emotion" - evangelical dictionary of Theology, p352)

Emotions in relation to God

Emotions in relation to Us

Dealing with unwanted emotions in a gospel-centred way

Definitions

Feeling

- Sense perception of internal/external event
- Binary
- Commonly use to describe emotions

Definitions

Emotion

- Personal and somatic response to internal/external event or feeling
- Includes thoughts, beliefs, judgements etc.
- Tends to be psychosomatic
- Motivate us to action

Definitions

Affection

- o Deep and abiding emotional/motivational trajectory of the soul
- o Involves moral evaluation
- o Strong and less inclined to change

Emotions in relation to God

"the doctrine of the knowledge of God implies a doctrine of the knowledge of everything"

(Frame, The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God, 1987, p.10)

God is an emotional Being

As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.
Isaiah 62:5

How often they rebelled against him in the wilderness and grieved him in the wasteland!
Psalm 78:40

From everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him,
Psalm 103:17

Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them.'
Exodus 32:10

For the Lord takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with victory. Psalm 149:4

When Jesus saw this, he was indignant.
Mark 10:14

'If God's intrinsic moral nature is unchangeable it must always and without fail express itself in ways appropriate to the moral state of any given situation. Thus when a human moral state changes (e.g. from rebellion to repentance) the immutable divine nature must now reflect itself in ways that are appropriate to this new situation. Hence, changes in God's attitudes and actions are naturally brought about as God consistently applies the standards and requirements of his constant moral nature in ways that correspond to the moral changes continually undergone by his creatures.'

Ware, An Evangelical Reformulation of the Doctrine of the Immutability of God, 439-440



Group Discussion

- Do we tend to think of God as 'emotional'? Why/Why not?
- How does what we have seen change or challenge our view of God and the way we relate to Him?
- How does this impact how we view emotions?

Emotions in relation to Us

1. Creation:

Our capacity for emotions is good, designed to bring glory to God

*The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground
- trees that were pleasing to the eye*

Genesis 2:9

"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh"

Genesis 2:23

Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame

Genesis 2:25

*"Love the Lord your God with all your heart
and with all your soul and with all your
strength and with all your mind"; and, "Love
your neighbour as yourself."*

Luke 10:2



Group Discussion

- In what ways do rightly ordered emotions bring glory to God? (think personally)
- How is this different to what the world sees is the purpose of emotions?

Emotions in relation to Us

2. The Fall:

As a result of the Fall, our emotions have become disordered and sinful

Emotions in relation to Us

2. The Fall:

Morally neutral?



Personal Reflection

- In what ways do you experience the fallenness of our emotions?
- What ungodly emotions do you need to repent of?



Group Discussion

- How do we determine whether an emotion is sinful?
- How does this view of emotion compare to how we usually think, or what culture believes?

Emotions in relation to Us

3. Redemption:

In Christ, our emotions can be wonderfully redeemed

But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator...Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Colossians 3:8-12

3. Redemption

- Conscience (e.g. Hebrews 5:11-14)
- Intellect and thoughts (e.g. Romans 12:2)
- Will (Titus 2:14)
- Emotions and affection (e.g. Philippians 2:1-5)

"Sometimes reason saves us from emotional craziness, but emotions can also check the extravagant pretenses of reason"

Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 1987, p336

Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. (James 4:9)

'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.' (Joel 2:12)

For I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him (Deuteronomy 30:16)

But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you (Psalm 70:4)



Group Discussion

- How does redemption in Christ give us hope for our emotions?
- How does redemption in Christ transform even 'negative' emotions for God's glory?
- In what ways do we think wrongly about emotions if we forget either Creation, Fall or Redemption?

Dealing with unwanted emotions in a gospel-centred way

1. Pray for help

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 4:16

Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. James 5:13

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2. Be compassionate

(Ephesians 4:32; 1 Peter 3:8)

- 1 Peter 5:7
- Psalm 56:8
- Romans 15:5
- Matthew 9:36

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3. Don't dismiss negative emotions

Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it – I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while – yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done.

2 Corinthians 7:8-11

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3. Don't dismiss negative emotions

- *Psalm 38*
- *Psalm 51*
- *Psalm 73*

Dealing with unwanted emotions in a gospel-centred way

4. Question emotions

- *Luke 12:22-34*
- *Psalm 42*

Dealing with unwanted emotions in a gospel-centred way

4. Question emotions

- *What is this emotion revealing about yourself?*
- *What is it telling you about our world and human experience?*
- *What is it reminding you about God?*
- *How can the way you feel right now be used to move you toward God?*
- *How might Satan seek to use it to move you away from God?*

Dealing with unwanted emotions in a gospel-centred way

5. Command emotions



Group Discussion

- What practical things arouse/change your emotions?
- How might we use them to help ourselves and those who we seek to help?



Personal Reflection

- Thinking through these 5 aspects, where do your strengths and weaknesses lie?
- How have you been impacted personally in the way you relate to your own emotions?

