

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1 ♦ Why Talk about the Emotional Life of a Christian?

1. Would you say that you have been suspicious of emotion? Do you know others who are suspicious? Tell why or why not.
2. Is it difficult for you to discuss emotions? Explain your answer.
3. Have you heard the common statement, “Love is not an emotion, it’s an action”? If so, tell what you think the speaker was trying to get at. What do you think of the statement?
4. The author says that “if we have learned anything from the close relationships we have in our lives, we have learned that our friends and family don’t want our duty; they want our affection.” Has this been your experience? Give an example from your life.
5. The author says that “to learn the most from the Bible, we need to engage it both cognitively and emotionally. Anything less than this sets us up to misunderstand and disobey.” Do you agree or disagree? Tell why.

2 ♦ How Emotions Work

1. Before starting to read this book, what was your perspective on how emotions work? Has your perspective been affirmed, challenged, or changed? Explain your answer.
2. Explain in your own words the cognitive theory of emotion.
3. Reflect on the statement “Emotions can be evaluated.”
4. Reread Ezra 3:10–13. In those verses the history of different people resulted in their experiencing different emotions. How would you say that your own history influences the emotions at work in your life today?
5. In your experience, are facial expressions a reliable way to discern someone else’s emotion? Tell why or why not.
6. Unpack in your own words what is important about Jesus being both completely sinless and always virtuous.

3 ♦ The Fruit of the Spirit Is *Joy*

1. The author says that, “normal human rejoicing is good.” Do you agree or disagree? Tell why.
2. Have you heard of the opinion that says, “Christian joy has nothing to do with circumstances, that it is a continuous 24/7 experience, and that it is an internal conviction that might not be seen on the outside”? What do you see as the advantages of such a perspective? What are the disadvantages?
3. Reread the short section taken from Epictetus, the pagan philosopher (under the section “A Different View”). What is your reaction to his perspective? Do you find his perspective surprising? Explain.
4. Explain in your own words what it would look like to rejoice with those who rejoice (Romans 12:15). Have you experienced it?
5. Share with the group your biggest joy killer. Seek their help in dealing with it.

4 ♦ If I'm Forgiven, Why Do I Feel *Guilt and Shame*?

1. In your own words, tell what you think is the difference between guilt feelings and shame feelings. Are they totally different? Do they overlap?
2. Which one of these two—guilt or shame—would you say that you experience the most? Explain your answer.
3. Have you ever asked yourself the question, “If I am forgiven, why do I feel guilt and shame?” Give an example of a time you did this.
4. Read Jeremiah 20:1–18. Explain, in your own words, what brought Jeremiah to such emotional pain.
5. Weakness, vulnerability, and foolishness: which one of these is typically the cause of your shame feelings? Explain.
6. The author says, “Far too often I am ashamed because I would like to be more capable, be smarter, more efficient, and more successful. When this happens, I have ceased to worship and trust God. Instead I am worshipping and trusting myself; I have become my own idol.” Do you agree or disagree? Discuss.

5 ♦ In My Family, We Never Talked about *Anger*

1. Describe how anger was handled and expressed in your family while growing up. Tell how those early years either help you or hinder you in the present.
2. Discuss what it means for anger to be a “secondary” emotion. How does this understanding help us to deal properly with our anger?
3. Do you agree or disagree and tell why: “God gave us anger because it prepares us for action.”
4. Ponder your last episode of unrighteous anger and ask the following questions of it:
 - a. Did my anger come from a desire to be seen as powerful or competent, or a desire to be honored by others?
 - b. Did my anger come from a desire to avoid fearful or embarrassing situations by controlling people and things?
 - c. Did my anger come from a desire to obtain justice for myself now, rather than patiently waiting?
 - d. Did my anger come from a desire to accomplish personal goals at the expense of others?
5. Ephesians 4:31–32 seems to prohibit all anger. On the other hand Ephesians 4:26 commands anger. How should we reconcile these two?

6 ♦ What If I'm Angry *with* God?

1. In your view, is anger with God right or wrong? Explain your answer. For either answer (yes or no), tell how the answer affects what you can say to God in prayer.
2. The author says, "People can only become angry with God if they have good theology." Do you agree or disagree? Explain.
3. What's the difference between *angry with* and *angry about*?
4. What have you typically done with your anger toward God? Would you say that this has been a helpful or unhelpful strategy?
5. Read through Psalm 44 and discuss how the writer resolves anger with God.
6. I heard a Christian friend say, "My church often sings songs taken from the happy Psalms but never a song from the lament Psalms." Has this been your experience? Discuss.

7 ♦ Is Love Only An Action?

1. Has it been or is it now your opinion that “Love is not an emotion, it’s an action”? Explain where your opinion came from.
2. Discuss: “We typically do not want action without proper emotion.”
3. Read and discuss the connection between love and action seen in Exodus 20:6; Deuteronomy 5:10, 7:9, 11:1.
4. React to this definition of love: “Love is an emotion that has to do with the perceived worth of something; we put a positive emotion onto what we consider valuable.” How would you improve the definition?
5. Would you say that you have experienced God’s love both intellectually and emotionally? If so, share examples. If not, tell why.
6. Reread 1 Thessalonians 4:9–11 and Titus 2:3–5. What skills do you need in order to love in a godly and wise way?

8 ♦ *Fear: A Good Kind and a Bad Kind*

1. Reflect on this definition from early in this chapter: “Fear is a negative emotion in the present—call it dread, or anxiety, or worry—that has to do with perceived future pain” (either literal physical pain or emotional pain).
2. Evaluate this statement: “All fear has to do with failure to trust God.”
3. The author says, “Jesus was sure of His future and Jesus was afraid.” In your own words explain how it is that both certainty and fear can exist at the same time. As a help, reread Matthew 16:21, 17:23, 20:19, and 26:37–39.
4. How do you typically react when a Christian expresses fear? Explain why you react that way.
5. Have you ever asked questions about your fears? If not, why not? If so, what answers have you come up with?

9 ♦ *Contentment and Holy Longing*

1. How did you define contentment before reading this chapter? How does that definition compare to, or contrast with, the definition given here?
2. Read Ephesians 5:5 and Colossians 3:5. Explain in your own words how Paul can call greed idolatry. Since greed is idolatry, what other sins can be idolatrous? Explain.
3. The author asserts that the fruit of the Spirit is joy (and that joy has emotional content) and that the Spirit produces in us godly groaning. Explain how, in your view, joy and groaning can go together.
4. Evaluate this statement: "If I do not have a longing for heaven, then an eternal home where righteousness dwells means nothing to me; instead, I have become satisfied with life on a sin-filled planet."
5. In your own life, in what areas should you be more content? In what areas should you be groaning more?

10 ♦ The Loss of *Sadness*

1. Evaluate this statement: "Sadness is normal."
2. Do you think that knowledge of the future will keep you from pain? Explain your answer.
3. The judgment coming on Jerusalem was deserved. Jesus knew that better than anyone and yet He wept over it. How do you react when people get what they deserve?
4. From your own life, give an example of godly sorrow and of ungodly sorrow.
5. Evaluate this statement: "Christians shouldn't be sad because it will hinder their witness for Christ."
6. How are you doing with the command of Romans 12:15: "Weep with those who weep"?

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Emotions and Spiritual Transformation

1. How did you define “transformation” before reading this chapter? How does that definition compare to, or contrast with, the definition given here?
2. In your own words explain *orthodoxy*, *orthopraxy*, and *orthokardia*.
3. Have you noticed that at times your own motivation to be godly comes from hypocrisy? If so, give an example.
4. Why must Christian affections be based on the character of God?
5. The statement “Christian affections are strong not weak” might strike some readers as extreme or threatening. Describe your own reaction.
6. What implicit knowledge do you think you need to unlearn? Explain.
7. Reread Revelation 21:1–4 and give your own reaction.