

EMOTION

There are two extremes in regards to emotion within the religious world. One extreme, formalism, is the attempt to avoid and refrain from any emotion at all. The other extreme, emotionalism, attempts to base all conclusions upon emotion rather than upon facts and evidence. As is the case most of the time, the truth finds itself somewhere in the middle of these two extremes.

The Bible teaches that emotion must be a part of a Christian's life and worship.

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| 1. | The Christian is to LOVE | John 13:34 |
| 2. | The Christian is to HOPE | Romans 8:24 |
| 3. | The Christian is to REJOICE | Philippians 4:4 |
| 4. | The Christian is to HATE | Matthew 6:24 |
| 5. | The Christian is to SORROW | 2 Corinthians 7:8-10 |
| 6. | The Christian is to FEAR | Matthew 10:28 |

Thus, the first extreme of formalism is false, as is evidenced in the list of Scriptural emotions above.

However, the second extreme, emotionalism is just as sinful. The Bible commands emotion, but not emotion just for the sake of having emotion. There is a purpose for each of the emotions listed above. Love leads man to obedience (John 14:15), Hope leads man to endure (Romans 8:24-25), Sorrow leads man to repentance (2 Corinthians 7:8-10), etc. The Bible never commands emotion to be a result, rather emotion is a catalyst which leads the Christian to bear fruit for the Lord. Many in the religious world, and sadly, some in the Church of Christ look at emotion as if emotion itself were the goal. They practice a "better felt than told" religion. They would rather sit and talk about themselves and their experiences instead of *examining* themselves to see if they are faithful (2 Corinthians 13:5). Many desire to practice what they *feel* rather than what is taught in God's Word. According to the Scriptures, "there is a way that *seemeth right* unto a man, but *the end thereof are the ways of death*" (Proverbs 16:25, emphasis B.G.). The goal is obedience to God's Word, not emotion. Emotion is that which can lead man to the goal if it is done Scripturally. Jeremiah stated, "O LORD, I know that the way of man *is not in himself*: it is not in man that walketh to *direct his steps*" (Jeremiah 10:23, emphasis B.G.). Many direct their own steps based upon what they feel and ignore the Truth of God.

Let us avoid both of the extremes of formalism and emotionalism. They will lead to destruction. Let us instead pattern our lives according to God's Word and express emotion Scripturally as it will lead us to bear fruit for God.