

PEAK AND PIQUE EMOTIONS FINDING THE BALANCE

Attitudes and Emotions

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We're in a three part series on Attitudes and Emotions. We looked at Grate attitudes – attitudes that put you on the nerve and on the defensive. We also looked at Great Attitudes. Tonight we're looking at Peak and Pique emotions. The emotions that are full throttle and well expressive and healthy and wholesome – peak. And pique emotions – the emotions that are detrimental both to us and to someone else. Actually the word means to create offense or resentment.

How we use our emotions really determine whether they'll be *peak* or *pique*. We cannot divide the emotions up and say, Here are the good emotions – the peak emotions. And here are the pique emotions. It would be nice if we could do that. We could do that with attitudes and say that's a bad attitude and this is a good attitude. But emotions are not that way. Because most emotions can be either good or bad. Even the emotion of hate can, in its proper context, be good if we are hating the right thing.

Anger can be a very good and whole some thing. Anger can cause us to act against something that is wrong and motivate us to be very strong in our involvement in a matter that is a moral offense or an injustice. Anger has been a positive thing in the hands of social reformers. Evangelical Christian social reformers. Anger can be good or bad.

Joy can be a bad emotion if used at the wrong time. There are sometimes when it's more appropriate to be sad. I found that people who try to put on a false sense of joy when the most devastating thing of life has happened to them, are maybe setting themselves up for a delayed kicker that comes down the road. Whether an emotion is good or bad really depends on how we use it.

The word "emotion" comes from a French word. It means to stir up. And it comes from the Latin that means to move away, to disturb. Therefore an emotion is simply that which stirs us. It doesn't come about as a result of rational thinking. Emotion is more a response of stirring up to an action that impresses itself against us. Therefore it's easy to call emotions, "feelings."

Charlie Brown's cartoon had a frame one-day on emotions. Snoopy and Charlie were pictured together. Snoopy the dog, the first frame he is lying face up on the top of his doghouse. Serene and happy, lying feet up in the air on his dog house. Charlie says to him, "I envy you Snoopy." The second frame Snoopy has come to attention. He's flipped over, put his nose and paws out over the edge and he's listening as Charlie says, "You always seem so relaxed." Then the third frame Charlie has left. Snoopy is alone left to ponder. Laid out, tummy down on top of the dog house thinking, "I'm glad I give that impression." The fourth frame: Snoopy is back on his back on top of his doghouse. In contemplation he is thinking, "Unfortunately on the inside I'm a ragging turmoil." Sometimes it's that way. We outwardly give a cool, calm, reflective, non-emotional image. Inside there's a lot of different things can be taking place.

I want to look at this message on emotions from several different vantagepoints. I'd like to share with you first of all on the line why God created us with emotions. What insight we get from scripture therefore on our use of emotions. God after all is the one who created us and it pleased him to give us emotions. It was he who caused us to love, to laugh, to feel pain, to hurt, to weep,

PEAK AND PIQUE EMOTIONS FINDING THE BALANCE

Attitudes and Emotions

to long, to despair, to fear, to become angry, sad, happy, enthused. Some of those were only after the fall. But in the ultimate plan of God he allowed us to have those things. What we see tonight can be very positive things in our life.

He did not make us like a machine. I've gotten mad at my car, a machine. There are times in my relationship with cars when something has gone wrong that I have got out of the car and kicked the tires. I don't know what that was supposed to do. Energize it?

But God did not create us like an automobile to simply run without emotion. You kick somebody else and they're going to feel a little bit of emotion related to that. Why did God make us with emotions?

One, God wanted to make us with emotions because He wanted to make us like himself. I've always had problems with one of the catechisms of the church, which says God is without body parts or passions. The part of "God is without body" I agree with. God is Spirit. We who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth. But I'm not so sure about passions. Because as I read the scripture I find God is a very emotional God. Read the prophets for example and feel God's emotion over the plight of the migrant. Over the widow. Over the orphan. Over the poor. God feels a lot of emotions about them. God feels emotion through the prophet Hosea when Hosea is wrestling with the infidelity of his wife and that is likened to the picture of adulterous Israel with God. God does feel anger.

And he feels jealousy. The scripture says that he is a jealous God. He is a God who takes delight. He is God who loves.

When we speak of God having jealousy we recognize that jealousy in its right form is a mark of caring. It's a mark of saying, I stand enough for integrity and right that I care about what you do. And I care that you're slipping away from me into another's possession or into attitudes and lifestyles that will ruin you and destroy our relationship. There can be no successful relationship exist in human bonding if there is not a solid healthy quality of jealousy present. Jealousy can be an unbalanced emotion but God created us to be like himself. When we feel jealousy in its right form its mark of caring.

Another reason why we have emotions is emotions help us to communicate. God made us as communicating people. We communicate not only verbally but we definitely communicate with emotions. Jesus for example in the synagogue and they defy him in Mark 3 to heal on the Sabbath a man with a withered hand. The Greek text of Mark says Jesus looked around with indignation or anger. He was incensed spiritually and morally that anyone would object to his doing good on the Sabbath and saying that was wrong. So he eyeballed across the room everybody in the audience. He forcefully communicated his passion for what was central and important over that which was preventative of a relationship with God.

He showed emotion when he cleansed the temple. He lets John show emotion when John leaned on his chest. He lets a woman dry the tears on his feet with her hair. He lets a woman dump oil on his head. He knew that John and the women who reached out to him were wanting to communicate with all they had how much they cared for him. He didn't push them off. He received that as a form of communication.

PEAK AND PIQUE EMOTIONS FINDING THE BALANCE

Attitudes and Emotions

If we repress our emotions or hyperventilate them – which are the two bad ways to express emotions – we fail to send the message we want. A person who sits on their emotions, trying to play it cool, may miss great opportunities. There are scenes in my life when I look back and realize I tried to play big and strong because my idea of a man was a man always has a grip and a man doesn't cry.

I'm glad I've learned that's not the case. I missed some wonderful opportunities. A meaningful sharing in my life if I could have let go and let my emotions at that moment freely communicate what was in my heart. I think we men ought to have as a goal to be more able to show emotion in the tears and weeping.

The other thing is if we're not using emotions correctly we can over ventilate our emotions and get into trouble.

Emotions in communicating help us to develop a sense of intimacy with people. Paul and the Ephesian elders, when they were saying good bye to one another, they all wept, Acts 20:37 as they embraced and kissed him. Don't think of Paul as intellectual and cool and doesn't feel. But he talks about being in homes and weeping and when he's parting with people there's weeping and hugging and kissing. They show through their emotions how much they really care.

Emotions help us communicate.

A third thing that God knew when he created us with emotions is that emotions help others find acceptance and strength. It's when we reach out emotionally to other people that we give them a sense of their being received and accepted by us. That's why I think the New Testament among the believers places such an emphasis on the phrase "Greet one another with a holy kiss." It is in that act that an emotional communication is being made and a sign that says I reach out enough to bond myself to you in a significant way. I don't think the handshake quite replaces it. I'm not sure in our culture we're much into kissing as a form of greeting except among family and very, very close friends. So I think probably "hug" is a middle ground. It's an important way of showing others acceptance.

It is important that we touch. It is important that we weep with those who weep. It is important that we laugh with those that laugh. Emotions help others find acceptance and strength.

The fourth reason why God created us with emotions is that emotions protect our wholeness as persons. If we didn't have strong emotions we could not have a chance of being whole. For example, fear is a very protective emotion. There are many aspects offer that are not bad. Fear is a good thing when it can save our life. We teach children "Don't you dare cross the street!" we try to instill that fear. "Don't touch the hot iron. Don't touch the hot stove." Fear is protective.

Laughing and weeping are also release valves. Persons under a great deal of pressure often find this is a great emotional escape valve – to find something to be rejoicing over. Or laughing over. We never read that Jesus himself laughed but we do read in the New Testament the continual admonition to rejoice. If we're just going through life with our feelings all inward we become very constricted persons.

PEAK AND PIQUE EMOTIONS FINDING THE BALANCE

Attitudes and Emotions

Another way that emotions protect our wholeness as persons is for example, anger can do a lot of damage in our life if we don't use it wisely. It seems to me that anger is one of those chemicals that sets in a laboratory beaker. It must be used properly or it's going to blow some things up or burn and singe some things rather badly. Repressing anger can be very harmful. Sitting on it day after day and being steamed without expressing it can get you in a lot of trouble emotionally. That's why the scripture says to us in Ephesians "Don't let the sun go down on your wrath." Deal with anger on a daily basis. Ventilate it. But don't over ventilate it either. That can be harmful.

Depression can even be helpful to protect our wholeness as persons. What depression is, is a sense of loss. We've lost something. When you lose something you're depressed about it. Whether it's a loss because of death or a loss of a goal or a loss of a dream. Whatever it is. Depression is something that naturally happens when we've lost something. Therefore when we feel a sense of loss we need in that moment to kind of flow with it and say, There is a time to weep. If we stifle that and set on it, again, we may be asking for trouble.

The fifth thing we might say as to why God made us with emotions is that emotions certainly help us to achieve. They give that added spark, that hidden dynamic. I notice when I feel something very deeply and it begins to reflect itself in my teaching, the congregation is more tuned in and more appropriate what I say because they know I feel it deeply. There are some things I feel more deeply than others. Emotion deepens that aspect.

David found this in his life. He said in the psalms "By my God I leap over a wall." He faced an obstacle one-day that he didn't have the strength on his own to handle. But as he faced it he got stirred up which is an emotion. He conquered it.

I think a sixth thing that emotions do for us and why God made us with emotions is that they open us to God. Some people are admittedly uncomfortable with the expression of emotion in worship.

Paul says I want man everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer without anger or disputing, the wrong emotions, but lift them up! The early disciples partook of food with glad and generous hearts. Paul said he would sing and pray with his understanding. And sing and pray with his spirit. He would open both his rational and his emotional life to God in prayer and adoration, in confession and song. Emotions powerfully open us to God. That's why Jesus knowing we respond to life so much emotionally told stories so much of his ministry. He could have given a theological treatise of the love God has for mankind. But it was the story of the lost son that anchored us emotionally and helped us understand the passion with which God cares for us.

Damaged emotions, if you take these six reasons why God made us emotional persons, when they're damaged or unbalanced they will then make us less like God, they will prevent us from communicating to our potential, they will cause us to be less helpful in communicating strength and acceptance to others. Damaged emotions will result in our inner life being less well and less whole. Damaged emotions will mean that we do not achieve as much in life and we will not be as open to God as we could be. God made us with emotions. Let us celebrate the God who made us that way.

PEAK AND PIQUE EMOTIONS FINDING THE BALANCE

Attitudes and Emotions

Second major facet of this message is to make another statement. That is because of sin in our life our emotions will always tell us the truth about ourselves but they do not always tell us the truth by which we are to live.

Perhaps the greatest Bible example of this is Saul. His anger and depression told him the truth about what was going on inside of him. Emotions so often are like sticking a thermometer into your life. You can kind of tell where you're at by seeing what's there. Saul had raging anger. So often anger is coupled with depression. There was in his life. That anger and depression tell us the truth about what was going on in his experience but they did not state the truth by which he was to live. For God had a plan whereby he could overcome that anger and depression. In Saul's case it would have been overcome had he had forgiveness and acceptance toward his enemy, David.

Another emotion that told a person the truth about themselves was David and Bathsheba. They were in love. They had strong feelings toward one another. But those emotions did not tell them the way by which they were to live. The emotion of love which they felt was love. We may call it lust. But looking back they would have said, We're madly in love with one another. Their actions acted out the experience was suggesting. But their experience did not reflect the truth by which they ought to live.

There must be an ability in our life to separate the "I feel" from the "I ought". That'll help us keep the balance from peak emotions rather than the other kind. There are many emotions that overwhelm us. We say, "I feel..." but if we act out of that feeling we may be acting contrary to what the Lord would have for us. So we always need to underline the I feel with I ought.

Think for a moment and identify an emotional experience you have had which told you the truth about how you really felt. But which did not tell you the truth by which you were to live. We've all probably had that conflict.

As Christians we often struggle with emotions which come close to sin or involve sin. We may pray, "God take those emotions away." But what God will often do is want us to redirect and channel the emotions. We find ourselves still coping with the emotions but we need to bring a direction to them. Is there any area of your emotional life where you are listening to your emotions rather than God's truth about your life? God would have you make that most serious commitment of all to obey his word rather than to obey your feelings. There is a higher standard than my feelings. I must live by this standard and not what I feel. If I will bring my life to God and line it up with what he is saying God will give me a right and wholesome emotional experience. But if I let my life be governed by my feelings then I'll be unproductive for God and I will never get around to doing his will.

I think in terms of Christian involvement in service to the Lord. There are many opportunities we miss in serving the Lord because we want our feelings to be generated. This is the temptations of us in the ministry. We know people will respond better if we appeal to the feelings. So we'll do practically everything we can to get emotions manipulated to somehow get you to a point where you will feel motivated enough to respond. It would be a far more mature church if we let our life be governed more by God's will than simply reading sometimes our emotion of apathy and "I don't *feel* like doing that." Let our emotions come in line with God's truth which says Care for others, minister, serve.

PEAK AND PIQUE EMOTIONS FINDING THE BALANCE

Attitudes and Emotions

God made us with emotions. Emotions may tell us the truth about ourselves without necessarily telling us the truth by which we are to live.

The third thing we want to focus on is how to find balance in the expression of our emotions from peak to pique.

We do not want to sit on our emotions. Nor do we want to explode with them. How do we find balance in expressing emotions? I think there are several steps.

One is we need to be honest with ourselves and other people. This is out of Ecclesiastes "There's a time to weep and time to laugh." We need to realize that when it is an appropriate time to use an emotion we want to be open enough to God to have the emotion that corresponds to the event.

Perhaps the emotions that gets most out of control is anger. If you are exploding at other people, exploding within family verbally, physically abusive, your anger is not in balance. You need to be honest and say I do not have control of my anger at this point in my life. Be honest about where you're at.

Second, we must make a conscious decision to change if we need to change.

I think a third step in finding balance in our emotional life is we should expect a process. Things do not happen overnight. We sometimes expect overnight to harvest from seeds we have planted years ago. There is often a process at work in becoming a more emotionally balanced person and we should give ourselves time.

I think a fourth step in becoming a stronger person, more balanced emotionally is we can profit from entering into prayer and worship in a more dynamic way. Rather than having mental prayers, coming to the Lord and kneeling and being quiet and not verbalizing anything I encourage you to verbally pray to the Lord and sing to the Lord and worship the Lord. Paul tells us in Ephesians 5 that we're to stay filled with the Spirit. And how is that filling applied? It's singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord. God can bring some release and break up of our relationship with him that will free us in our relationship with other people. It's great that when I'm at rest with the Lord Jesus Christ, I'm at relationships rest with the other people around me. When that relationship is going through stress or estrangement I have stress and estrangement with others.

Enter into prayer and worship in a more dynamic way.

Fifth, find somebody who's a good role model, a good pattern for the Christian life and model after them. Barnabus was such a person in scripture, a man who was an encourager who stimulated people to faith and to belief.

The last thing about finding balance in emotions is that we can substitute a positive use of emotion for a negative one. That kind of brings us to a maturity in our emotional life. There are times of life we need to honestly express what we're going through. But there are occasions when our emotions and our response will get out of hand. Somebody has done us a tremendous

PEAK AND PIQUE EMOTIONS FINDING THE BALANCE

Attitudes and Emotions

injustice. And the emotion of anger will get out of hand. It shows we're alive if we're mad. If somebody can do it to you and you not get a little bit touched by it, maybe you're not all alive. But the anger has to be kept within bounds. We need to ask the Lord on those occasions to provide for us a positive use of emotion for the negative one that we're feeling. Jesus does that very thing when he says, "When you're persecuted rejoice." And Paul says in Romans 5 "That we rejoice in our sufferings." What he is doing is in a moment when tremendous pressure is building up on his lie he's admitting the pain and the pressure. But he's also saying along with that admission, I will nevertheless release a song of praise and thanksgiving to God.

There are great moments to do that. To say I will not respond in kind. I will respond in a way that will be pleasing to the Lord.

I hope this look at emotions and finding the balance is of some help. I'm not suggesting I have all the answers but I know how important emotions are in my life and in yours. I know the damage they can do in our life and the wholesomeness they can do. I want God to use them for good and positive value in our life.

Praise your name Lord. Lord, we want now these concluding moments to be a service of the ministry of the Holy Spirit bringing healing to our life, helping us to find balance in our life. We want to open ourselves to your Holy Spirit who alone has access to the deepest levels of our being and to show us what is the mind of God for our personal life. Lord, there are friends here this evening in this service who have been beaten down with the emotion of depression. Some maybe even bordering on suicide. And there are others who have let the emotion of anger become so strong and steady in their life that it has become a root of bitterness and it has imprisoned them. I pray, Lord Jesus, in these moments of worship and adoration you will begin a freeing process, a healing process. I remember friend who described that experience as an invasion of yours into the deepest levels of his life. Until you came there he had not realized how much emotional hardness he had built up. When you began filling him it was like great blocks of ice were melting within his inner core because your Spirit completely brought him an inward release. We want that to happen in us, Lord. We want you to flow through us. We open our lives to you right now in praise and worship. Come Lord Jesus, we pray.

[end of tape]