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# Emotions in Our One Anothering

## One Anothering Series: Selected Texts

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### Introduction

[Psalm 103: 6-14] *6 The Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. 7 He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel. 8 The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. 9 He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. 10 He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. 11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; 12 as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. 13 As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. 14 For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.*

[Matthew 9:35-36] *And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

As many of you will recall, we are continuing this morning in a series on One Anothering. Different than our usual approach to the Word, we are intentionally surveying all of Scripture to appreciate its focus, as broadly as we can, on the call to God's people to be actively engaged in one anothering. Our purpose is to maintain and strengthen the strong culture of one anothering that we enjoy here at the Chapel and in doing so bring evermore glory to God.

The particular angle that we will take up this morning is that of the *emotions* and their involvement in one anothering. You see, unfortunately, there is a tendency, and perhaps more so in reformed circles such as ours, to be comfortable with a wooden doctrinaire approach to body life that is always correct, but never right. Many times, we wrongly assume that we can please the Lord with a kind of one-anothering that DOES what it is supposed to DO but hands out a pass when it comes to addressing the emotional or more subjective aspects of one-anothering.

There are many ways we can illustrate this. Spouses, it's the fresh cut bouquet that comes without any warm expressions of affection. It's the packed lunch that is created out of obligation and deposited dutifully into the departing's hands without a farewell or a meeting of eyes. It's exactly what Pastor Tim preached on several weeks ago from 1 Corinthians 13:1-7. Anything without love is nothing. Even as we prepare to look at the challenge the Scripture sets forth this morning, it is important that I commend you. For here at the Chapel, as at the church in Thessalonica, we often hear reports that, *the love of every one of you for one another is increasing* (2 Thessalonians 1:3).

Before we consider the Scriptures that call for more than mere *doing* in our one-anothering, we need to get our heads wrapped around several fundamental observations that will ground our thinking together.

First, our Creator God, whose image we bear, is a God who feels, who has emotions, and those emotions range widely and are documented by his Word regularly. The passages we started out with this morning were meant to exhibit just this. God the Father showing tender compassion to us as an earthly father does to his children. God the Son having compassion over the harassed and helpless crowd who were like sheep without a shepherd. The emotions of God are used as key vehicles of both his love and his wrath. They are essential to who he is.

Likewise, and second, *our* emotions are essential to who *we* are. As with God, you will see men and women consistently portrayed by the Scriptures as creatures who are fundamentally created to emote. You will see God both interact with and lay claim to those emotions. Never buy the line, "I'm just not a very emotional person." You *are* an emotional person. Day in and day out from you is flowing emotion. It may be portrayed in ways that are a little or a lot different from others, it may be portrayed in ways you don't even understand, but just as sure as you have a heart, you have emotions. Which brings us to our third point.

At the root of your emotions, is a heart. In the Scriptures we are treated as wholisitic beings – we are not carved up into separate little pieces of existence and experience that somehow are independent of each other. To be human, the Bible says, is to act, to do, to behave, to want, to believe, to judge, to feel, to sense, etc. All of this, ultimately, is lived out of our hearts (Proverbs 4:23, Luke 6:43-45). Our hearts function in two main ways – they believe and they want. From this believing and wanting flow our lives. Emotions are the "feelings" component, if you will, of what is coming out of our hearts. In some sense, these emotions are more important than our actions – because they function as our secret betrayers. Our emotions will rat us out almost every time even if it is only to ourselves, revealing the unrighteous condition of our hearts while we engage in "correct" behavior.

Key to understand here is this: We are producing our emotions. They are not simply happening to us. They are reflecting the condition of our hearts. Sinful hearts cannot yield God-pleasing emotions and sinful emotions cannot come from God-pleasing hearts. We'll circle back around to this at the end of this sermon this morning, but before we do – this is important to understand for two reasons – A: You are accountable before God for your emotions and B: Through the cross, Jesus has come to change our hearts meaning he can change our emotions. If this were not so, what would any of us do with a command like, *...love one another deeply, from the heart* (1 Peter 1:22) as this surely requires our emotions? If we are to be obedient to God in our one-anothering, to bring him glory through the life of this body, then we must understand and value this emotional aspect of our obedience for it is part and parcel to all that he calls us to.

As we come to the Word to consider several of the passages that lay claim to our emotions in the work of one-anothering, let us pray and ask God for help. [pray]

Very different than our usual practice, we are going to be moving speedily through four different passages this morning. The main point here is to demonstrate that one anothering is an act of our emotions as much as it is an act of anything else. To help us all keep up, I've included the verses in the slides on the screens. While we won't be doing more than waving at the context for each of these passages as we hurry by, I do want to strongly encourage you to check these passages out more thoroughly over the course of the week in your personal reading of the Word. Every single one is full of treasure – more richly explaining and describing what God wants us to know.

## Exposition of the Texts

### Love One Another

Appearing over 20 times in the New Testament,<sup>1</sup> the command to love one another is given by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as they quote Jesus, and by Paul, James, and Peter as they write to the church. In the instances of quoting Jesus, it sounds like this:

[John 13: 34-35, 15:12, 17] *34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just **as I have loved you**, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another... 12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you... 17 These things I command you, so that you will love one another.*

In this context, Jesus is preparing his disciples for a time when he will be gone and he is also preparing them to understand what is about to take place at the cross – namely a kind of love that, lays down its life for another (John 15:13). But when not physically dying for another, what does this love look like? Love is, as we recently learned, consciously assigning value, worth, to someone else in a manner that is characterized by patience and kindness, without envying and boasting, arrogance or rudeness. It is not insisting on one's own way, it is not irritable or resentful, it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Sometimes in our emphasis on the idea that love is an action, not a feeling, we run the risk of suggesting that true love can be displayed without the accompanying sincere emotions that validate it's genuineness. Can kindness, patience, rejoicing in truth, etc., be truly shown without the involvement of our emotions? I would argue, not if it is real.

### Show Brotherly Affection to One Another

Paul, in transitioning out of an in-depth doctrinal discussion in Romans, calls his listeners to live in light of the truth he has just set forth:

[Romans 12:1-2, 10] *1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, **by the mercies of God**, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spir-*



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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 22:37-39; Romans 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 3:23; 4:7-8, 11-12, 21; 2 John 1: 5, etc.

*itual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is **the will of God**, what is good and acceptable and perfect... 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.*

This idea of brotherly affection means to love tenderly ([philostorgos](#)) and was primarily used to describe the reciprocal tenderness that is shared between parents and children. There is not a day that goes by that I do not place my hand on my sons' faces say to them, "I love you" with a genuineness that is not hard to muster. There is not a night that goes by that I do not go into their bedroom after they are asleep and kiss their heads, pull their blankets up, and whisper my plea that God would save them. And as I watch my parents age, I take more time to touch them, to let them know I love and appreciate them, and to look at them, knowing my moments with them are numbered and likely winding down. Now many of you have children and all of you have parents – and while none of these relationships are perfect, I pray that you have experienced something of the precious nature of the emotional exchange that takes place between family members. Paul calls us to this same level of genuine and emotional intimacy in the body as part of our one anothering. It is brotherly affection that allows me to put my hands on the shoulders of another man, even a manly man like Michael Engle, look him in the eye, and say, "I love you" with sincerity. And while the expressions may be different from person to person, familial affection will be obvious. This is what the Lord calls us to. *[illustration of the "family" of believers becoming more dear than the "family" of blood]*

## Be Tenderhearted to One Another

In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul is giving specific instruction about the church and how God has designed it to function. As he distinguishes the church from the world he makes a series of contrasts, many of which include the emotional aspects of how people live with one another.

[Ephesians 4:22, 24, 31-32] *24 put off your old self... put on the new self, **created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness...** 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

We noted earlier that the Bible does not carve us, as humans, up into little chunks of being as if our emotions are one thing, our thinking is another, our acting is another, and so forth. It takes a holistic view of us. The language of the ancient writers reveals much of this same kind of thinking – the idea of "tenderheartedness" literally means having strong bowels – that is, you physically experience the desire to carefully care for another. You are moved. No separation between how you *feel*, that is what your emotions reveal, and what you are *doing*. I believe that *we still* intuitively see things much the same way as the ancients. No one believes you are really very excited over that birthday gift if there is no emotional display of pleasure or happiness. *[illustration: "heart hurts" gesturing to chest, etc.]* Similarly, being kind to one another (doing helpful things for one another) can be an obviously empty façade if it is not accompanied by tenderhearted-

ness. When you are engaged in one another, is there a tenderheartedness? Are you “moved” to help, eager to care, anxious to serve, concerned to come alongside?

## Comfort One Another

Let’s consider one more instance in which we see the necessity of our emotions being fully engaged in the fulfillment of our call to one another one another. In Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, we are called to comfort one another.

*[2 Corinthians 1:3-4] 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and **God of all comfort**, 4 **who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.***

In life there are so many difficulties that cannot be “fixed” by *doing* something... a broken relationship, an unexpected diagnosis, the loss of a job, a wayward child, an unbelieving spouse... In these times, our one anothering will be so much more about *how we are who we are* than what we do. Comforting one another is coming along side and strengthening, encouraging, being present. How we use our emotional expressions are key in these times. Paul is not speaking to a special group of believers here with special gifting – he is speaking to the whole Corinthian church – they are to comfort one another. This comforting will require an effort that is often primarily carried along by our emotions. Consider that God does not often “fix” our problems – yet he comforts us – by walking closely with us as a compassionate father. Similarly, we are to comfort one another.

We could go on and talk about patience with one another (Colossians 3:12-13), bearing one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2), looking to the interests of one another (Philippians 2:1-4)<sup>2</sup>, and a myriad more of commands that require us engage our whole persons in serving those around us, but we must move toward our conclusion. Hopefully, the four examples we briefly discussed have sufficiently made the point.

## General & Particular Application

As we close, I want to make a few final observations. First, this sermon is not a call to some kind of manufactured emotionalism that is contrived and acted out. At the end of the day, it is a call to loving people as God has loved us. Genuine God-like love is sincere – meaning it comes from our whole person. It is not merely an act. It is also an emotional expression, an affection, a concern, a tenderness, a hope, toward one another that endows that *act* with great value because the recipient realizes that this one anothering is not obligatory, but

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<sup>2</sup> (Colossians 3:12-13) - 12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. (Galatians 6:2) - 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Note carefully context – all you can do is listen... (Philippians 2:1 – 4) So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy... 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

from the heart. *[example of renting vacation homes – pictures vs. reality]* I'm doing what I'm doing, I'm being who I'm being, because the gospel has deeply changed me and I am living out of that change. If your heart has not been changed by the gospel, then the vast majority of this sermon should be shelved in the library of your mind lest you be tempted to a legalistic humanitarianism.

If your heart has been changed by the gospel but you struggle with one anothering in this way, two words for you to hear: Repent and learn. Repent: For many of us, failing to bring an emotional component to our one anothering that is reflective of what the Scriptures call us to, is simply the effect of sin from which we have not turned away from. I'm not tender toward my sister because I really don't want to be tender toward her. She is in the way of me reaching my self-serving objective. Seek forgiveness from God. Ask God, your Father, to give you grace to change and to love as he loves.

Which brings us to our second observation as well as the second word I set forth: Learn. What does it mean to love others as God loves us? How should our one anothering be shaped by the character of God? The example of Christ? If you were listening carefully, you will have noted that in each of the Scriptures we read to highlight the emotional aspects of one anothering, we backtracked into the passage to earlier verses and started there. The purpose in doing this was to catch a glimpse of how the character and activity of God shaped his commands to us: it is because he loved us that we are to love others [John 13:34]; it is the will of God and by the mercies of God that we show brotherly affection to others [Romans 12:1,2,10]; it is because we are [re]created after the likeness of God that we are to be tenderhearted toward others [Ephesians 4:24, 32]; and it is the God of all comfort who comforts us so that we might comfort others [2 Corinthians 1:3-4].

Do you see and hear the rhythm here? In our effort to grow in this area of loving others with *all* of ourselves, we are not called to contemplate ourselves, to psychoanalyze, to rehash our personal histories endlessly, to take pills to make us nicer, no, we are called to contemplate God the tender Father who cares for his children deeply and fully. And we are called to contemplate the forever ultimate expression of that care in his Son, who in humility, counted others more significant than himself and... *made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant... he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross [Philippians 2:7,8] because of the great love with which [God] loved us... made us alive together with Christ... [so that he] might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us... [Ephesians 2:4-10].*

So, I say to you, study God your Father, study Christ your brother, see how it is all throughout Scripture their emotions are ever present in their actions. Judge your own emotional responses on the basis of theirs. Trace the roots of your emotions, whether right, wrong, or indifferent back to your heart. Ask God to make your heart like his. *[illustration: how many of you are not who you use to be? The gospel is true.]*

It is in coming to fully appreciate the gospel story and all of its implications that we are transformed from the inside out into truly emotional people – who learn to use our whole selves, as created in the image of God, to live with one another in a way that gives grace to

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one another, blesses God, and displays to the world the truth of the incarnation and the credibility of the cross.