

The High Calling

a bimonthly publication of The Francis Asbury Society

Sanctified Emotions

By Stan Key

How does full salvation affect our emotions? That's a great question!

Some Christian traditions seem to think that the *presence* of intense emotions is the evidence that God is working in a deep way in someone's life. Tears, joy, ecstasy, or just old-fashioned goose bumps prove that the Spirit of God is present. No feelings? Then obviously, you don't have the Spirit. But other Christian traditions have just the opposite conviction. True spirituality is measured by the *absence* of intense emotion. Self-control is the authenticating evidence of the Spirit's work, and Christian maturity is measured by a kind of unflappable serenity and calm. So which is it: passionate ecstasy or serene composure? How *does* full salvation affect our emotions? I'm so glad you asked!



This issue of *The High Calling* is devoted to the emotions. While sin has done great damage to our emotions and distorted them in many destructive ways, salvation intends to restore them to their God-ordained place and purpose. The holy life should make us neither emotional maniacs nor passionless stoics. Rather, one

Continued on page 12

Feelings: Good Servants but Disastrous Masters

By Dallas Willard (1935–2013)



Writing from a "spiritual formation" tradition, Willard recognizes the importance of believers developing a biblical understanding of the emotions. The following is a slightly edited abridgment of a chapter subtitled "Spiritual Formation and Our Feelings" taken from his book, *Renovation of the Heart* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002): 117–139.

Feelings are a primary blessing *and* a primary problem for human life. We cannot live without them and we can hardly live with them. Hence they are also central for spiritual formation in the Christian tradition. In the restoration of the individual to God, feelings too must be renovated: old ones removed in many cases, or at least thoroughly modified, and new ones installed or at least heightened into a new prominence.

Our first inquiry as we greet people for the day is likely to be, "How are you feeling today?" Rarely will it be, "How are you thinking?" Feelings live on the front row of our lives like unruly children clamoring for attention. They are, with a few exceptions, good servants. But they are disastrous masters.

Now, one thing quickly becomes clear when you think about the power of feeling. No one can succeed in mastering feelings in his or her life who tries to simply take them head-on and resist or redirect them by "willpower." To adopt that strategy is to radically misunderstand how life works.

Those who continue to be mastered by their feelings—whether it is anger, fear, sexual attraction, the desire to "look good," or whatever—are typically persons who in their heart of hearts believe that their feelings must be satisfied. To such persons, the idea that they should not honor their feelings is an insult. "Their god is their belly" (Phil 3:19). They are enslaved to their feelings and have no place to stand in dealing with them.

Those who let God be God get off the conveyer belt of emotion and desire when it first starts to move toward the buzz saw of sin. They do not wait until it is moving so fast they cannot get off of it. Their aim is not to avoid sin, but to avoid temptation—the inclination to sin. They plan their path accordingly.

Continued on page 8

Giant Despair

By John Bunyan (1628–1688)



Imprisoned for preaching the Gospel, John Bunyan knew first-hand what it meant to struggle with discouragement, depression, and doubt. In his allegory of the Christian life, *Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan's description of Doubting Castle and Giant Despair is one of the most insightful works of pastoral theology ever written. For the discerning reader, one can discover in this wonderful story, the cause, the symptoms, and the cure for doubt and despair. Taken from *The Pilgrim's Progress in Modern English* (Alachua: Bridge-Logos, 1998, 153–161).

The path was rough and their feet were tender because of their travels, so Christian and Hopeful grew impatient on the way. As they continued on, therefore, they wished for a better road. A short distance in front of them was a meadow on the left-hand side of the road. There was a set of steps constructed over the fence bordering the meadow, which is called By-Path Meadow. "It is just as I hoped," said Christian, "here is the easiest going. Come, Hopeful, and let's go over."

"But what if this path should lead us out of the Way?" asked Hopeful. "That's not likely," said Christian. "Look, doesn't it go along by the wayside?" So, being persuaded by his friend, Hopeful followed him over the steps. After they had gone over and had gotten into the path, they found it very easy for their feet; and with that, looking ahead of them, they saw a man walking as they did (and his name was Vain Confidence). So they called after him and asked him where the path led. "To the Celestial gate," he said. "Look," said Christian, "Didn't I tell you so?..."

[That night, a terrible storm breaks over the pilgrims. Vain Confidence falls into a pit and is never heard from again. Lost and confused, Christian and Hopeful try desperately to find their way back to the right path but their efforts are all in vain. Being weary, they lie on the ground and fall asleep. In the morning, Giant Despair discovers the pilgrims asleep on his property and accuses them of trespassing.]

They were forced to go with him because he was stronger than they. They also had very little to say, for they knew they were at fault. The Giant, therefore, drove them before him and put them into his castle in a very dark dungeon, which was nasty and stinking to the spirit of these two men. There they lay from Wednesday morning until Saturday night without one bit of bread or a drop of

drink, and without light or anyone to ask how they were doing. They were, therefore, in a pitiful situation...

[Giant Despair and his wife Diffidence work to make life as miserable as possible for Christian and Hopeful; verbally abusing them, beating them, and encouraging them to kill themselves. At first, the pilgrims spend all their time "doing nothing but sighing and bitterly wailing." But finally, after four days of torment and despair, the situation takes a dramatic turn!]

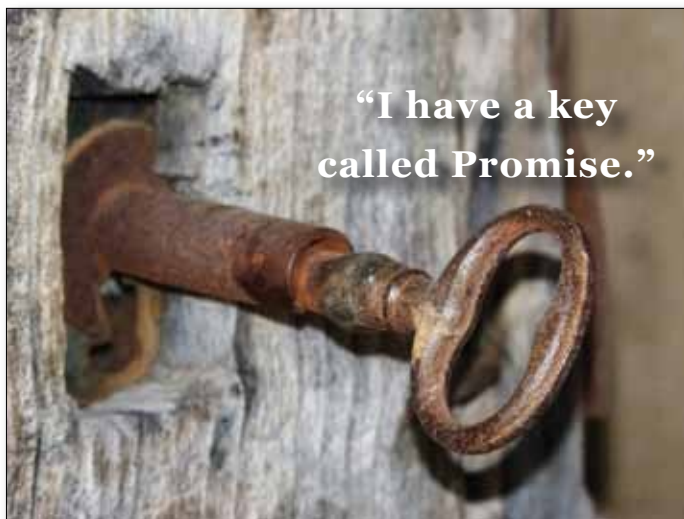
On Saturday about midnight the prisoners began to pray, and they continued in prayer until almost daybreak. A little before dawn good Christian, as someone half amazed, broke out in this passionate declaration: "What a fool I am," he exclaimed, "to lay here in a stinking dungeon, when I could just as easily walk at liberty! In my coat, next to my heart, I have a key called Promise.

I'm persuaded it will open any lock in Doubting Castle." "That's good news, brother," said Hopeful. "Take it out and try."

Then Christian took it from his heart and began to try it on the dungeon door. As he turned the key, the bolt on the door gave way, and the door easily flew open. Christian and Hopeful both went out, and then Christian went to the iron gate, for it had to be opened too. Well, that lock turned

very hard, but the key opened it. Then they threw open the gate to quickly make their escape. However, that gate creaked so much as it opened that it woke Giant Despair. As he rose up to pursue his prisoners, he felt his limbs failing. He started to have one of his fits again, and so he could not by any means go after them. They went on and came back to the King's Highway, where they were safe and out of the Giant's jurisdiction.

After they had gone over the steps at the fence, they began to formulate between themselves what they should do at the steps to prevent those who would come after them from falling into the hands of Giant Despair. So they decided to erect a pillar there and to engrave upon the side of it this sentence: "Over these steps is the way to Doubting Castle, which is kept by Giant Despair, who despises the King of the Celestial Country and seeks to destroy his holy pilgrims." Many who followed after them, therefore, read what was written and escaped the danger. ✨



"I have a key called Promise."

Why Are You Angry?

By Brian Fast



Dr. Fast is a licensed psychologist with over thirty years of experience in counseling. His unique integration of psychotherapy and spiritual direction has been a source of encouragement, healing, and blessing to his clients. He is the Clinical Director for CCAHope, a multidisciplinary team of mental health professionals with evangelical faith convictions in Albany, New York.

Imagine what it must have been like when Jesus took a whip and cleansed the temple. The day before, he had entered the temple and “looked around at everything” (Mk 11:11). Then he went back to where he was staying and slept on it. The next day he returned and cleaned house! It would be wrong to say that he “lost his temper.” Rather, he gave passionate expression to his emotions in a manner that advanced his Father’s purposes. He made room for something to happen in the temple which probably hadn’t happened for years: genuine worship.

On another occasion, Jesus was angry with his disciples for preventing children, who represent something essential to what his kingdom is all about, from coming to him (Mk 10:13–16). Many imagine that when Jesus said, “Let the children come to me,” he was serenely encouraging his disciples to think differently. But his manner was anything but serene! The Bible says that Jesus was “indignant” (v. 14). Probably, his eyes flashed and his voice had an edge to it as he spoke: “You guys are missing what my kingdom is all about! Don’t come between me and my children!” (my paraphrase).

It is shocking to realize that Scripture actually commands us to be angry! “Be angry” Paul tells the Ephesians; and then he adds “and do not sin” (Eph 4:26). He urges us not to procrastinate but to deal with anger issues before the sun goes down because when we deny our anger or try to avoid dealing with it, the emotion goes underground and the potential for harm becomes much greater (Eph 4:27). Paul goes on to insist that the purpose of this powerful emotion is the edification of those around us. “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up [edification], as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear” (Eph 4:29).

Jesus is our model. The things that make him angry and the manner in which he expresses his anger are to be imitated. In his popular song “Reckless Love,” Cory Asbury sings, “Your love *fought* for me” (emphasis added). This is what sanctified anger looks like: Jesus fights for us. He gets passionate and zealous concerning those things that hinder our well-being. Holy anger means battling for another’s good, being zealous to promote God’s purposes in the lives of those around us. Such godly anger is motivated by love.

The first time I experienced sanctified anger, I was on the receiving end! My spiritual director was working diligently to help me see the hurtful ways in which I was relating to my wife. She actually called me a “relational consumer” and explained how my attitude and actions were causing pain to the person I loved the most. Then, with a facial expression and tone of voice that showed



anger, yet with eyes that reassured me of her loving support, she said, “I wonder how your wife feels about your cool-boy, pleasure-seeking, self-absorbed way of relating to her.” Ouch! But her bold and passionate confrontation made space for the Spirit of God to work in my life so that I’ve never again been the same.

Two examples from the Old Testament will help us to further understand what sanctified anger looks like. The story of Cain is a story of unsanctified anger (Gen 4:1–16). When his brother’s offering of a firstborn from his flock is pleasing to God but his offering of fruit is not, Cain becomes “very angry” (v. 5). God sees the potential for evil in this situation and comes to Cain, encouraging him to express his feelings and deal with the issue: “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?” God asks. Then God gives a solemn warning: “Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.” (vv. 6–7). Rather than talking things over, Cain seethes in silence and says nothing, giving the devil an opportunity (see Eph 4:26–27). This is unsanctified anger. In his passion, Cain murders his own brother and, presumably, hopes to hurt God in the process.

Continued on page 5

Singing the Blues

By Stan Key



Former missionary and pastor, Stan now leads the Francis Asbury Society. Dealing with suffering and loss is not just of theological interest for Stan and his wife Katy. Recent encounters with life-changing health issues and the loss of loved ones has made the issue of grief intensely personal. The following article is an adaptation of Chapter 9 of his book *Jeremiah: Fire in His Bones* (Anderson: Warner Press, 2017, 121–132).

Most of us can remember where we were and what we were doing on September 11, 2001. The images and emotions of that day when the Twin Towers fell are seared into our memory. What is true for us regarding 9/11 was immeasurably more true for Jews living in 586 BC when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonian army. The trauma went much deeper than the siege, famine, plunder, and violence. The real crisis was caused by the unfathomable reality that the city of God was in ruins and the throne of David vacant. The Temple was a pile of rubble and the Ark of the Covenant was missing. The chosen people were now exiles in Babylon. It seemed that all the promises of God had failed.

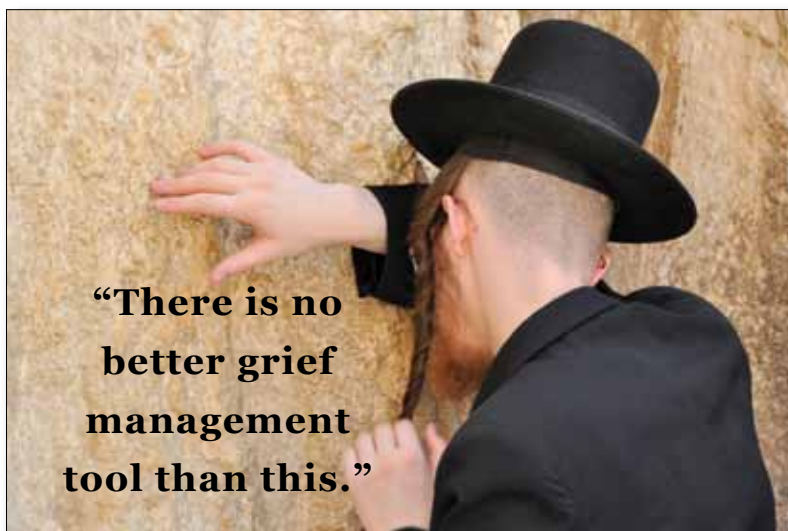
What do you do when things fall apart? How do you respond when all appears to be lost and God seems to be absent? Some may choose to curse God and die in cynicism and self-pity. Others may get drunk or become atheists. Still others may look for ways to alleviate the pain or seek counseling. The prophet Jeremiah chose a better way. He responded to tragedy and loss by writing the Book of Lamentations. Rather than denying his pain or looking for relief, he opted to *express* his pain in poetic form so that it could be sung! Jeremiah dealt with pain by learning to sing the blues.

The first thing to notice about the Book of Lamentations is that it comprises five poems (songs) corresponding to the five chapters in our English text. Each poem is an acrostic, meaning each stanza of each poem begins with a successive letter of the alphabet. Because the Hebrew alphabet has 22 letters, each chapter has 22 verses, except the third chapter, which has 66 verses (an acrostic with a triple application). As the book progresses, we notice some variation in the pattern: chapters 1 and 2 have stanzas of three lines each, chapter 4 has stanzas

of two lines each, chapter 5 has stanzas of one line each, and in chapter 3 each stanza has three verses.

Perhaps the best way to learn how to sing the blues is to survey this short book by walking through it chapter by chapter and listening in as Jeremiah grieves his losses one at a time. Because of space, we can touch only on some of the more poignant verses.

*How lonely sits the city that was full of people!
How like a widow has she become.... She has seen
the nations enter her sanctuary, those whom you
forbade to enter your congregation.... “Look and
see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow....” (Lam
1:1, 10, 12)*



The Lord has become like an enemy.... My eyes are spent with weeping; my stomach churns... infants and babies faint in the streets of the city.... Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions.... (Lam 2:5, 11, 14)

[The Lord] is a bear lying in wait for me, a lion in hiding; he turned aside my steps and tore me to pieces... he bent his bow and set me as a target for his arrows.... I have forgotten what happiness is. (Lam 3:10–12, 17)

The children beg for food, but no one gives to them.... The hands of compassionate women have boiled their own children; they became their food during the destruction of the daughter of my people. (Lam 4:4, 10)

Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, our homes to foreigners.... Slaves rule over us.... Women are raped in Zion.... Princes are hung up by their hands.... [O Lord,] why do you forget us forever, why do you forsake us for so many days? (Lam 5:2, 8, 11–12, 20)

In these heart-wrenching words, Jeremiah is giving us a model for how *we* should respond to suffering and loss. There is no better grief management tool than this. When things fall apart, the Book of Lamentations reminds us

Continued on page 11

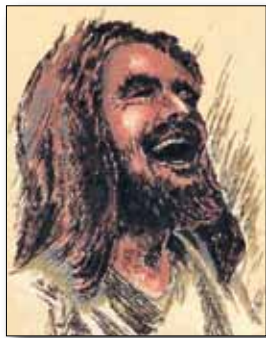
The Laughing Jesus

By Elton Trueblood (1900–1994)



Quaker theologian and author, Elton Trueblood, served as chaplain at both Harvard and Stanford Universities. In one of his lesser-known books, he highlights what is perhaps the most unrecognized aspect of Christ's teaching and personality: his humor. This article is a slightly edited abridgment of the first chapter of Trueblood's book *The Humor of Christ* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964, 15–32).

The widespread failure to recognize and to appreciate the humor of Christ is one of the most amazing aspects of the era named for him. Anyone who reads the Synoptic Gospels with a relative freedom from presuppositions might be expected to see that Christ laughed, and that he expected others to laugh, but our capacity to miss this aspect of his life is phenomenal. We are so sure that he was always deadly serious that we often twist his words in order to try to make them conform to our preconceived mold. A misguided piety has made us fear that acceptance of his obvious wit and humor would somehow be mildly blasphemous or sacrilegious. Religion, we think, is serious business, and serious business is incompatible with banter.



Recognition of Christ's humor has been surprisingly rare. In many of the standard efforts to write the Life of Christ, there is no mention of humor at all, and when there is any, it is usually confined to a hint or two. Frequently, there is not one suggestion that he ever spoke other than seriously. One exception to this tendency is the English scholar

T. R. Glover, who, in his book *The Jesus of History* (1917), gives the following example. Commenting on Jesus' statement that the Pharisees, in their obsession with ritual cleanliness, strain the gnats from their drinks but swallow the camel (Mt 23:24), Glover writes:

He (the Pharisee) sets about straining what he is going to drink—an elaborate process, and the series of sensations, as the long hairy neck slid down the throat of the Pharisee—all that amplitude of loose-hung anatomy—the hump—two humps—both of them slid down—and he never noticed—and the legs—all of them—with the whole outfit of knees and big padded feet. The Pharisee swallowed a camel and never noticed it. It is the mixture of sheer realism and absurdity that makes the irony and gives it its force. Did no one smile as the story was told? Could anyone, on the other hand, forget it?

Any alleged Christianity which fails to express itself in gaiety, at some point, is clearly spurious. The Christian

is merry and loves a good laugh, not because he is blind to injustice and suffering, but because he is convinced that these, in the light of the divine sovereignty, are never *ultimate*. Though he can be sad, and often is perplexed, he is never really worried. The humor of the Christian is not a way of denying the tears, but rather a way of affirming something that is deeper than tears. The consequences of Christ's rejection of the dismal are great, not only for common life but also for theology. If Christ laughed a great deal, as the evidence shows, and if he is what he claimed to be, we cannot avoid the logical conclusion that there is laughter and gaiety in the heart of God. ✨

Why Are You Angry? *continued from page 3*

Jonah is yet another picture of anger gone bad. After spending time in the belly of the great fish, the reluctant prophet finally goes to Nineveh with his prophetic message; "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (Jon 3:4). But when the godless Ninevites repent and find God's forgiveness, "it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry" (Jon 4:1). Unlike Cain, Jonah enters into a conversation with God about his feelings, but only in an attempt to justify himself. This is yet another picture of unsanctified anger. Jonah is passionate about getting his own way; he wants his enemies to be destroyed—not redeemed! He would rather die than see the Ninevites as recipients of God's grace and mercy. He cares more about a plant that God has provided for shade than about a city of 120,000 people! Though God had shown great mercy and love toward him, Jonah is unwilling to show mercy and love toward Nineveh!

Scripture does not tell us whether or not Jonah responded to his conversation with God by humbling himself in contrition and repentance. But we have reason to believe that the outcome was good because Jonah is likely the one who told this story and made sure that it was printed and had wide circulation! Promoting a book that makes him look bad is a pretty good indication that Jonah eventually saw the light and asked God not to *remove* his emotions, but to *sanctify* them!

In the lives of both Cain and Jonah, we see how God, at a pivotal moment, steps into the picture in an effort to sanctify their emotions. Once with Cain (Gen 4:6) and twice with Jonah (Jon 4:4, 9), God asks the *reason* for their anger. He invites thoughtful conversation about *why* they are angry and what they intend to do about it. God's purpose is to prevent them from doing something really stupid and also to enhance their internal capacity to be moved by what moves him. ✨

Fig Leaves and Emotional Honesty

By Stephen A. Seamands



For many years professor of Christian Doctrine at Asbury Theological Seminary, Dr. Seamands has thought long and deeply about the place of emotions in the Christian experience. This article is taken from his book *Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005, 127ff.). Seamands himself edited and prepared his article for this issue.

In the beginning, Adam and Eve were “naked and unashamed” (Gn 2:25), but their sinful disobedience caused them to try to cover themselves with fig leaves to hide from one another and to crouch behind a tree to hide from God. We do that, too! Filled with shame and fearful of rejection, we try to hide our naked selves from God, from one another, and even from ourselves.

We do this by constructing a false self to hide us from our true self. This begins in our formative childhood years. As a result of a dysfunctional family, a lack of unconditional love, or experiences of personal trauma, we try to cope with our emotional pain by constructing a false self in the hopes that this will meet our needs for love, intimacy, affirmation, and acceptance. As Simon Tugwell says,

We hide what we know or feel ourselves to be (which we assume to be unacceptable and unlovable) behind some kind of appearance which we hope will be more pleasing.... And in time we may even come to forget that we are hiding, and think that our assumed pretty face is what we really look like.

Just as God called Adam to come out of hiding, he calls us. He loves us—naked, vulnerable, and fragile—just as we are. Fig leaves and makeup don’t make us more presentable to God. But to respond to his call, we must first turn away from the false self that we have created. This explains why the call to holiness and the work of sanctification must of necessity deal with “fig leaves.” To be holy, we must

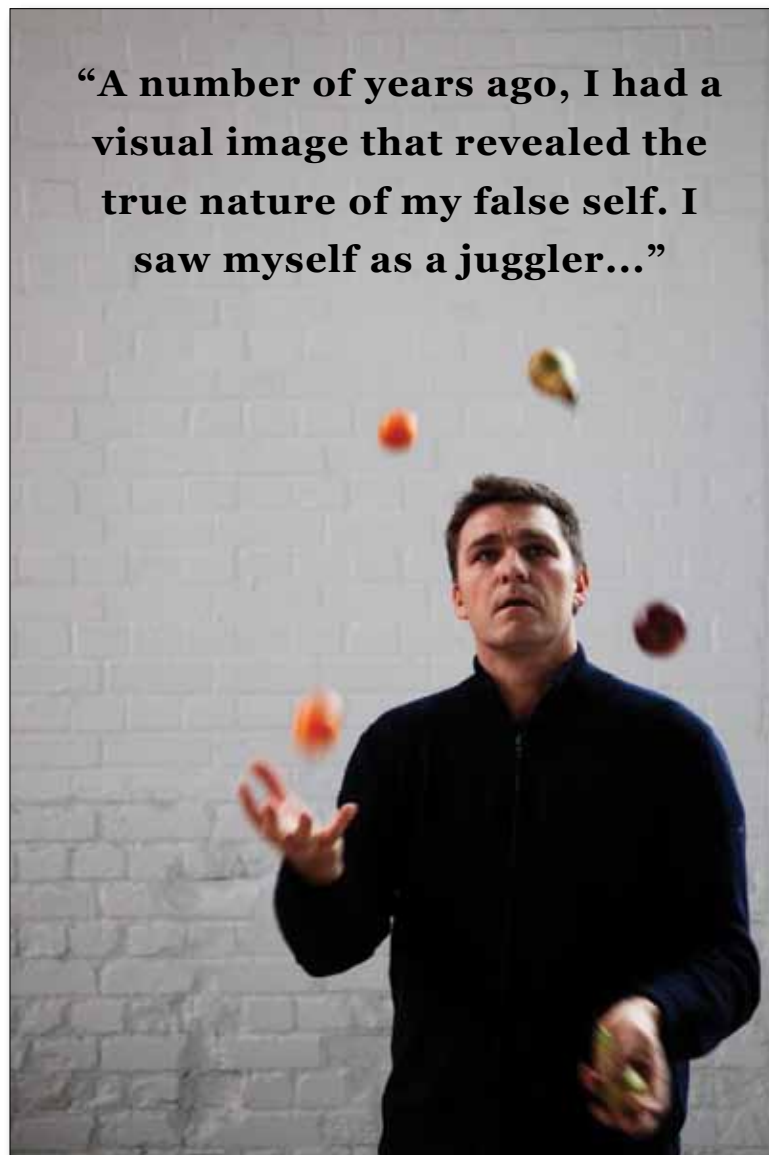
become real and transparent—naked. As the apostle Paul explains, “You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self... and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph 4:22–24).

So what does the “old self,” the false self, look like? Perhaps it will help if I tell you my story. My false self is a perfectionist who insists that I measure up to his demands. His three major “fig leaves” could be named accomplishment, acceptance, and acclaim. As a teenager, I began to believe his lies. I tried to compensate for my deep-seated fear of being exposed as inadequate by overachieving. When I was a senior in high school, I was voted “Most Likely to Succeed” and, in the years that followed, I did everything in my power to ensure that I did. As a student, a pastor, and a professor, I set high performance standards for myself. My identity and sense of well-being were bound up with accomplishing them. When I fell short, I would get angry with myself and sometimes depressed.

My perfectionist false self says that I have to be loved and accepted by everyone. According to his standard, no one can criticize or disapprove of me. Everyone has to like me and hold me in high esteem. Not only do I have to make myself worthwhile by performing well, other people have to be impressed by what I do. I have to be admired and applauded for my accomplishments.

A number of years ago, I had a visual image that revealed the true nature of my false self. I saw myself as a juggler in a crowded circus tent. Intently focused on keeping all the pins I was juggling in the air, sweat was pouring off my forehead. I noticed that the crowd in the bleachers was indifferent about my performance. I was afraid that if any of the pins fell

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Continued on page 8

Unhealthy Spirituality

By Peter Scazzero



"It's impossible to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature," says Pastor Peter Scazzero in his ground-breaking book *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006). Writing out of his own experience of emotional dysfunction, Scazzero shows how emotional health and spiritual maturity are inseparable. The following article is a slightly edited abridgement of Chapter 2 (pp 23–37).

Let's clearly identify the primary symptoms of emotionally *unhealthy* spirituality that continue to wreak havoc in our personal lives and our churches. The following are the top ten symptoms indicating if someone is suffering from a bad case of emotionally *unhealthy* spirituality.

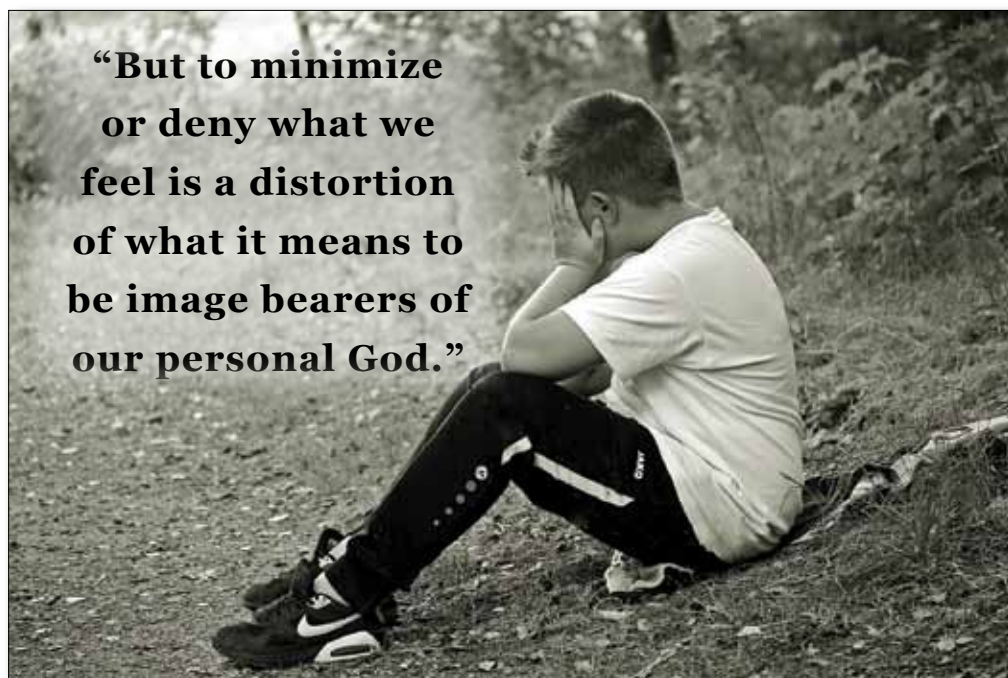
1. *Using God to run from God.* Few killer viruses are more difficult to discern than this one. On the surface all appears to be healthy and working, but it's not. All those hours spent in one Christian book after another... all those many Christian responsibilities outside the home or going from one seminar to another... all that extra time in prayer and Bible study. At times we use these Christian activities as an unconscious attempt to escape from pain. In my case, I used God to run from God by creating a great deal of "God-activity" while ignoring the difficult areas in my life God wanted to change.

2. *Ignoring the emotions of anger, sadness, and fear.* Many Christians believe that anger, sadness, and fear are sins to be avoided, indicating something is wrong with our spiritual life. So what do we do? We try to inflate ourselves with a false confidence to make those feelings go away. We quote Scripture, pray Scripture, memorize Scripture—anything to keep ourselves from being overwhelmed by those feelings! But to minimize or deny what we feel is a distortion of what it means to be image bearers of our personal God. To feel is to be human. To the degree that we are unable to express our emotions, we remain impaired in our ability to love God, others, and ourselves well.

3. *Dying to the wrong things.* Yes, Jesus did say, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Lk 9:23). But when misapplied, these words can result in a narrow, faulty theology that says, "The more miserable you are, the more you suffer, the more God loves you." Yes, we are indeed to die to the sinful parts of who we are as well as the more obvious sinful behaviors described in Scripture.

But God never asks us to die to the healthy desires and pleasures of life—to friendships, joy, art, music, beauty, recreation, laughter, and nature. God never asks us to annihilate the self. The very opposite is true. God intends our deeper, truer self, which he created, to blossom freely as we follow him. Part of the sanctification process is to strip away the false constructs we have accumulated and enable our true selves to emerge.

4. *Denying the past's impact on the present.* When we become Christians, we are born again (Jn 3:3); "The old has gone, the new has come!" (II Cor 5:17). But this does not mean our past lives won't continue to influence us in different ways. My wife and I went to a counselor to



help us figure out why our marriage wasn't working as we knew it should. We discovered, to our shock, that even though we had been committed Christians for almost twenty years, our ways of relating mirrored much more our dysfunctional families of origin than the way God intended for our new family in Christ.

5. *Dividing our lives into "secular" and "sacred" compartments.* It is so easy to compartmentalize God to "Christian activities" around church and our spiritual disciplines without thinking of him in our marriage, how we raise our children, or how we spend our money. One of the greatest scandals of our day is that evangelical Christians are as likely to embrace lifestyles every bit as hedonistic, materialistic, self-centered, and sexually immoral as the world in general.

6. *Doing for God instead of being with God.* As a young Christian, I was taught that praying and enjoying God's presence for no other reason than to delight in him was a

Continued on page 10

Feelings... *continued from page 1*

For one who is still at an early stage of spiritual formation, it is a major step forward just to sincerely *desire* to have different feelings—feelings that lead away from sin. At this early stage, one has to strongly want to *not* want what one *now* wants, and to *want* to want what one does not now want. One has to feel strong revulsion toward the wrong feeling one now has and at the same time strong attraction to the good feeling that one does not now feel. This is surely at least part of what Paul means when he tells us to “put off the old person” and “put on the new person” (Col 3:1–17).

Now, if we have destructive feelings—and everyone does sometimes—we should not deny that we have them or try to repress them. That is not the answer to our problem. The proper course of action is to replace destructive feelings with others that are good, or to subordinate them (anger and sexual desire, for example) in a way that makes them constructive and transforms their effects.

Here is some practical work that we can do. For many of us, just coming to honest terms with what our feelings really are will be a huge task. Paul says in Romans 12:9, “Let love be without hypocrisy.” That is, let it be genuine or sincere. To do only this will require serious effort, deep learning, and quantities of grace.

Our ordinary life and our religious associations are so permeated with insincere expressions of love that it is hard not to feel forced into hypocrisy in some situations. But we can learn to avoid it, and we shall immediately begin to see what a huge difference that alone makes. ✦



“Those who let God be God get off the conveyer belt of emotion and desire when it first starts to move toward the buzz saw of sin.”

Fig Leaves and Emotional Honesty *continued from page 6*

to the ground, they would simply stand up and walk out. God’s message to me through that image was clear: “Steve, that’s you—always trying to find your worth by working hard, proving that you’re competent, afraid of being rejected and desperate for the approval of others.”

Yes, accomplishment, acceptance, and acclaim have been the fig leaves of my false self. Removing them has been such an important part of the work of sanctification and growth in holiness in my life. It amazes me how God has often used circumstances—particularly difficult ones—to expose and then to strip me bare. For example, once when I was a pastor, I found myself caught in the crossfire of criticism. I was trying to lead the congregation in some new directions, but some were not happy. That was when I began to see my “acceptance” fig leaf for what it really was. For the first time, I saw with devastating clarity what an idol I was making of others’ acceptance and approval! I wasn’t an alcoholic, but I certainly was an “approvalholic.” One day, as I was driving alone in my

car, the Lord asked me a penetrating question: “Steve, isn’t my love and approval enough? Do you have to have everyone else’s too?”

Ouch! In that moment, I saw myself as Adam in the garden, and I realized what I had been doing: making fig leaves! Hiding behind my false self. Realizing the utter sinfulness of my actions, I cried out, “Lord, forgive me; cleanse my heart and set me free; tear off this approval fig leaf I’ve worn for so long!”

In the months that followed, God answered my prayer. He brought me to the place where his approval was enough. I no longer needed everyone else’s. I discovered that I could even give people permission to not like me!

What about you? Are you trying to cover yourself with the fig leaves of a false self? Are you willing to let God strip them away? Before Christ can clothe you with a new self, he must first get you to put away the old self! Only then will it be possible to be made righteous and holy. ✦

The Emotions of Jesus—and Why We Need to Experience Them

By G. Walter Hansen



As a scholar, pastor and theologian, Dr. Hansen has authored commentaries on Galatians and Philippians. For many years he has been on the faculty at Fuller Theological Seminary. The following article first appeared in *Christianity Today* over 20 years ago (February 3, 1997). It has been abridged and slightly edited.

The Gospel writers paint their portraits of Jesus using a kaleidoscope of brilliant “emotional” colors. Jesus felt *compassion*; he was *angry, indignant, and consumed with zeal*; he was *troubled, greatly distressed, very sorrowful, depressed, deeply moved, and grieved*; he *sighed*; he *wept and sobbed*; he *groaned*; he was *in agony*; he was *surprised and amazed*; he *rejoiced very greatly and was full of joy*; he *greatly desired*; and he *loved*.

In our quest to be like Jesus, we often overlook his emotions. Jesus reveals what it means to be fully human and made in the image of God. His emotions reflect the image of God without any deficiency or distortion. When we compare our own emotional lives to his, we become aware of our need for a transformation of our emotions so that we can be fully human, as he is.

Compassion. The Gospels tell us that Jesus “felt compassion.” The Greek word speaks literally of a sensation in the guts, but was used to speak metaphorically of an emotional sensation—just as we speak of “gut-wrenching” feelings today.

For whom did Jesus feel compassion? For people in need: a leper (Mk 1:40–41), a widow by the coffin of her only son (Lk 7:13), and two blind men (Mt 20:34). He also felt compassion when he saw crowds starving for bread (Mk 8:2). His compassion was stirred by physical and spiritual needs. His heart broke when he saw people who were distressed and downcast, like sheep without a shepherd (Mt 9:36).

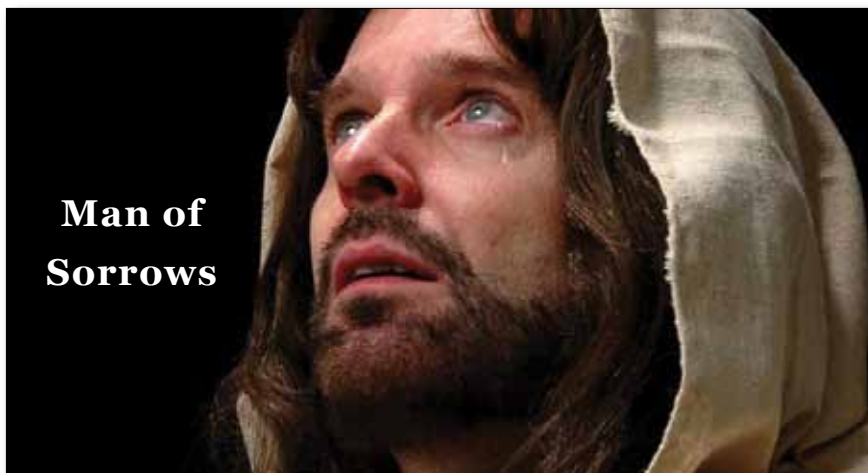
Anger. Compassion moved Jesus not only to heal but also to anger. In a dramatic scene, Mark portrays Jesus “looking around in anger” at religious leaders (Mk 3:5). They were concerned only to see if Jesus would break their rules by healing a man on the Sabbath. When Jesus did, they immediately plotted to kill him. But though Jesus was angry with these religious rulers, he was also “grieved by their hardness of heart.” While the cruelty of their callousness deserved his anger, the condition of their stony hearts caused him grief.

We note that Jesus also felt “indignant” (Mk 10:14) when his disciples did not allow mothers to bring their children to him for his blessing. In yet another instance, crass

commercialism in the temple inflamed the zealous anger of Jesus and moved him to violent action. The words of the prophet were like fire in his bones: “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Mk 11:17, quoting Isa 56:7). Jesus’ anger was motivated by “zeal for your house” (Jn 2:17, quoting Ps 69:9) and directed toward the positive purposes of the worship of God and the mission to all nations.

Our anger is often sparked by a threat to our own self-interests and usually results in bitter hostility. We need to heed Paul’s warning: “Be angry, but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil” (Eph 4:26–27).

Grief. When Jesus made his “triumphal entry” (Lk 19:41–44) in Jerusalem, he rode on the colt of a donkey. A motley parade of peasants and children cheered him



on his way as their long-awaited king. The emotion that best describes Jesus’ state as he rode was grief. Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem as he rode down the Mount of Olives into the city. His words describing the impending catastrophe were hyphenated by sobs. He wept, he wailed with grief over the coming desolation of Jerusalem.

Jesus also wept at the tomb of Lazarus. Witnesses said, “See how he loved him” (Jn 11:36). When Jesus saw Mary weeping, “he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved” (Jn 11:33). When he stepped near to the tomb of his friend, “again he was greatly *disturbed*” (Jn 11:38). When the word “disturbed” was used for animal sounds, it denoted the loud, angry snorting of horses. When used for human emotions, it emphasized the mixture of anguish and rage. Jesus wept. His groans welled up from the depths of his spirit, racked his body, shook the tombs, and echoed back from them. He raged against death, that terrible enemy that had attacked this, and every, family.

Continued on page 11

luxury we could enjoy only after we got to heaven. For now, there was work to be done. People were lost and the world was in deep trouble. God had entrusted to us the good news of the gospel! But we must remember that we are “human beings” not “human doings.” Work *for* God that is not nourished by a deep interior life *with* God will eventually become contaminated and unhealthy.

7. *Spiritualizing away conflict.* Nobody likes conflict. But the belief that following Jesus means we should sweep all disagreements “under the rug” continues to be one of the most destructive myths alive in the church today. This explains why so many communities continue to experience the pain of unresolved conflicts. Jesus shows us that healthy Christians do not avoid conflict. His life was filled with it! Out of a desire to bring true peace, Jesus disrupted the false peace all around him. He refused to “spiritualize away” conflict.

8. *Covering over brokenness, weakness, and failure.* The pressure to present an image of ourselves as strong and spiritually “together” hovers over most of us. But the Bible does not spin the flaws and weaknesses of its heroes. Moses was a murderer. Peter rebuked God! Noah got drunk. Jonah was a racist. Jacob was a liar. John Mark deserted Paul. Elijah burned out. Jeremiah was depressed and suicidal. Thomas doubted. All these people send the same message: we are all deeply flawed and broken; there are no exceptions.

9. *Living without limits.* I was taught that good Christians constantly give and are always ready to care for the needs of others. To say no to an opportunity to serve or a request for help would be selfish. But there are limits to what we can do. We are not God. We cannot serve everyone in need. We are human. Even Jesus did not heal every sick person in Palestine or feed all the hungry beggars. He didn’t do it, and we shouldn’t feel we have to.

10. *Judging other people’s spiritual journey.* I was taught it was my responsibility to correct people in error or in sin and that it was my job to always counsel people who were mixed up spiritually. Thus I felt guilty if I saw something questionable and did nothing to point it out. This has always been one of the greatest dangers in Christianity and can easily turn into a sense of ugly moral superiority.

Conclusion: Christian spirituality, without an integration of emotional health, can be deadly—to yourself, your relationship with God, and the people around you. ✨

Monthly Giving—Why?

By Charlie Fiskeaux

When you support the Francis Asbury Society, you take part in our ministries: speakers presenting the gospel message, books published that enhance a person’s understanding of Christian values, retreats that encourage people in their pursuit of Christlikeness, and Bible studies that enable people to incorporate Scriptural principles in their life. All of the various ministries of FAS have one common foundation: the General Fund, which provides for central coordination, oversight, and administration of all. While the central administration of any organization is “behind the scenes” and not very glamorous, it is critically important in that it supports much of the structure that enables specific ministries.

The operating expenses of our Ministry Center continue on a regular, monthly basis. It is the regularity of these expenses that creates a funding gap when income is either less than needed or irregular in timing. Thus, the ideal is, as much as possible, to match the income stream with the schedule of expenses.

Our goal this year is to strengthen our consistent funding, so we invite you to support FAS on a regular, monthly basis. We are seeking persons who will commit to a “Leadership 100” level of giving, which is \$100 per month in support of the General Fund, but please give as the Lord leads you. Your regular support in any amount will enhance our efficiency and enable more consistent ministry—all for the cause of telling the gospel message that we can be “wholly devoted to God” with an undivided heart. Details for various methods of giving are available on our website at: francisasburysociety.com/support.

Thank you for your participation with us in both prayers and gifts. ✨



“It is a great question whether those whom God cannot make mad have ever really existed for God... Authentic religion has to do with passion... Sadly, there are thousands who dispassionately ‘have religion.’”

(Soren Kierkegaard)

Singing the Blues continued from page 4

we must master five skills if we are going to learn how to sing the blues.

Be Real. Don't deny your pain or pretend it doesn't hurt. Don't put on a happy face and force yourself to say, "Praise the Lord." Unfortunately, many evangelical churches don't allow people the freedom to grieve but push them to a premature claim of joy and victory. Lamentations is written neither to explain your sorrow nor to cure your grief. It is written to help you *express* them!

Be Thorough. Lamentations is an acrostic, outlining for those who sing it a sort of alphabet of grief. As the singers work their way systematically through the alphabet, one letter at a time, they can grieve loss after loss after loss. After they have gone through the alphabet of grief once (chapter 1), they go through it again (chapter 2), and then again, and again, and again (chapters 3, 4, and 5). In other words, the mourners are being encouraged to grieve everything. Don't leave anything out. Don't look for shortcuts. The way to victory is not to go around grief but *through* it! But after going through the alphabet of grief enough times (perhaps five times through the five chapters), the mourner finally will be ready to say authentically, "I'm done now. With God's help, I'm ready to move on."

Be Connected. Few things are more dangerous and destructive than when someone grieves in isolation, cut off from contact with others. The Book of Lamentations was never meant to be sung alone! It is not a solo, but a song meant to be sung in the company of fellow pilgrims. This connectedness is what makes the Wailing

Wall in Jerusalem so powerful; a public place where people go to grieve—together!

Be Theological. Lamentations is a theological book, not a psychological one. It is about God. As they sing the blues, these grievers are taught to express their sorrow and loss not just to a counselor or to a friend but to God! In his lament, Jeremiah holds God (not Nebuchadnezzar, not Satan) fully responsible for all that has happened. But just as God is the ultimate one responsible for all the pain we feel, so God is also the only one who can truly comfort us and bind up broken hearts.

Be Hopeful. Most of the Book of Lamentations is a woeful recitation of pain, sorrow and loss. But right in the middle of the book is one of the greatest confessions of hope in the entire Bible!

*But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:
The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his
mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning; great is your
faithfulness.*

*"The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore
I will hope in him."*

*The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the
soul who seeks him.*

*It is good that one should wait quietly for
the salvation of the Lord. (Lam 3:21–26)*

Regardless how dark the night, how deep the pit, or how intense the pain, God is preparing for his people a future and a hope (Jer 29:11). ✨

The Emotions of Jesus continued from page 9

The Gospels portray Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane as one who is crushed by a heavy load of grief. He did not shrink from disclosing his deepest and darkest emotions to his disciples: "I am deeply grieved, even to death" (Mt 26:38). "Terror-stricken and in terrible anguish" (Mk 14:33), Jesus agonized over the awful choice to endure or to escape the cross. As he wrestled in prayer, he was drenched in his own sweat "which ran like blood to the ground" (Lk 22:44).

Jesus' familiarity with grief should give us pause. Too often we hear Americanized versions of the gospel that offer quick fixes, easy solutions, and suffering-free discipleship. We need the reminder that the man who knew God most intimately and fulfilled his will most completely was described by Isaiah as a "suffering servant": "Surely he has borne our grief and carried our sorrows" (Isa 53:4).

Joy. While Jesus was a "Man of Sorrows," Luke also paints a scene where Jesus "rejoiced very greatly in the

Spirit" (Lk 10:21)—which implies more than cracking a smile. And on the eve of his execution, Jesus told his disciples that all he had revealed to them was so that "my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full" (Jn 15:11; 17:13).

Conclusion. I am spellbound by the intensity of Jesus' emotions: not a twinge of pity, but heartbroken compassion; not a passing irritation, but terrifying anger; not a silent tear, but groans of anguish; not a weak smile, but ecstatic celebration. Jesus' emotions are like a mountain river, cascading with clear water. My emotions are more like a muddy foam or feeble trickle. Jesus invites us to come to him and drink. Whoever is thirsty and believes in him will have the river of his life flowing out from the innermost being (Jn 7:37–38). We are not to be merely spellbound by what we see in the emotional Jesus; we are to be unbound by his Spirit so that his life becomes our life, his emotions our emotions, to be "transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory" (II Cor 3:18). ✨

Sanctified Emotions *continued from page 1*

of the reasons God wants to fill us with his Spirit is so that our emotions can be sanctified! Only then can we be fully human. Only then can we begin to discover what it means to be like Jesus.


As you read the enclosed articles, think about your own emotions. What makes you sad? What triggers your anger? What keeps you awake at night? What makes you laugh? How do you express these emotions? Letting the Holy Spirit help you answer these questions will go a long way in helping you advance in spiritual maturity. As this edition of *The High Calling* goes out, we pray that the sanctifying Spirit of God will work in the depths of your being so that your sorrow, your joy, your anger, and even your humor can find their full expression in the beauty of holiness! ✨

The Francis Asbury Society

Jesus

THE ONE WHO SAVES US FROM OUR SINS

Featuring Dr. Chris Bounds



Hemlock Inn Retreats 2018

Our featured speaker is Dr. Chris Bounds, professor of Wesleyan Theology at Asbury University and chairman of the Board of Directors for the Francis Asbury Society. Come study the biblical understanding of sin and explore how Jesus saves us from it. Visit www.francisasburysociety.com/hemlock for schedule and session details.

The High Calling—May–June 2018

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- In this Issue:**
- Sanctified Emotions (Key)
 - Feelings: Good Servants but Disastrous Masters (Willard)
 - Giant Despair (Bunyan)
 - Why Are You Angry? (Fast)
 - Singing the Blues (Key)
 - The Laughing Jesus (Trueblood)
 - Fig Leaves and Emotional Honesty (Seamands)
 - Unhealthy Spirituality (Scazzero)
 - The Emotions of Jesus... (Hansen)

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