

Jesus Wept: The Bible and Human Emotions Relationships

Lesson #4 for January 22, 2011

Scriptures: 1 Samuel 25; Ephesians 4:1-3; 1 Peter 3:9-12; Luke 17:3,4; 23:34; James 5:16.

1. There is no doubt about the fact that a great deal of human emotions—both good and bad—are related to our interpersonal relationships. At its best, Christianity is defined by the word *love*. Would that all Christians were known for that! Satan's kingdom is defined by the word *selfishness*. That is why Satan's government would never work. God even made it possible for us to relate to animals as pets.
2. Why is it that across cultures and in every country of the world it seems to be people that make us happy, or people that make us miserable?
3. Jesus said, "Do for others what you want them to do for you: this is the meaning of the Law of Moses and of the teachings of the prophets." (Matthew 7:12, *GNB*). The Law and the Prophets was the early name for the Bible. If you look in ancient documents back to some of the very earliest recorded things, you will discover that very early human laws included a somewhat similar bit of advice: "If you don't want someone to treat you badly, don't treat them badly." No doubt, that advice has been given by every mother to every child! It probably started with sibling rivalry! It seems to be almost inherent with humanity. Why are these two commandments/laws so different?
4. Have you ever really tried to implement Matthew 7:12 in your own life? It takes some growing up to really understand others well enough to do for them what they would really like to have done to/for them. So often, even when giving gifts to family members or friends, we tend to give them things that we would like. How often do we really try to understand what they would like and reach out to meet them where they are?
5. But Jesus changed all of that. He changed the negative—"Don't do unto others what you don't want them to do unto you"—to a positive—"Do unto others what you would like them to do unto you." Why is the positive so much different from the negative expression in this case? That was a revolutionary new idea. If we were really afraid to do anything for others that they might not want done to/for them, we would be almost paralyzed.
6. Jesus suggested that this idea was summed up in the Old Testament; or even, that it sums up the Old Testament. Would you come to that conclusion if you had just read the Old Testament from Genesis to Malachi? Where did Jesus find that in the Old Testament? (See Leviticus 19:18; Deuteronomy 6:5)
7. In Paul's circular letter to the churches which we called Ephesians, he spelled out the steps necessary to build up the Christian church. One of those steps is summarized in Ephesians 4:1-3: We are to be humble and gentle, patient, loving, tolerant people who seek unity and peace. What would happen if every Christian church were described by those words? What would happen if each individual Christian was described by those words? Have you tried? Is this only possible through the Holy Spirit? Is that why so few families in our day are truly Christian in behavior? Don't forget that by beholding we become changed.
8. A few weeks ago, we had a Sabbath school lesson dedicated to the story of Abigail. Read 1 Samuel 25. This chapter is noteworthy in that David was respectful, Nabal was

disrespectful, and Abigail was very diplomatic. One wonders how different the story of David might have been if it had not been for the intercession of Abigail on that occasion. Which of those characters is most like you?

9. How do we respond when we are hurt, angry, or afraid? Do we follow biblical principles? Do we ever turn the other cheek? (Matthew 5:39; Luke 6:29) Do we follow biblical principles even in our intimacy? In the confession of our faults to one another and forgiving others? How do we deal with people who we believe have wronged us in the past? When did the Bible cease being the moral compass for our country? Those people who enter heaven will be motivated 24/7 by a desire to do good things for others. Selfish people would not be comfortable there at all.
10. We have recently gone through a political season. What is it that causes us to disagree, sometimes almost vehemently? Why is politics such an acrimonious business? Do you know any political party that completely follows biblical principles?
11. How did Christ relate to His neighbors in Nazareth? (Luke 4:16-30) To church leaders? With His quarreling disciples? With the Pharisees and Sadducees in Jerusalem? (John 8:44 - Did the Pharisees and the Sadducees really recognize that Jesus was telling the truth?) With difficult crowds? Who were Jesus' closest friends? (Luke 8:1-3; Matthew 10:1-4; John 11:5,35,36; DA 326.4)
12. The Old Testament spells out on repeated occasions the principal of an "eye-for-an-eye." (Exodus 21:23-27; Leviticus 24:19-22; Deuteronomy 19:21) This principle came to be known under Roman legislation as the *lex talionis*. It seems to be fair and "just" although perhaps a little violent! Does God ever act like that? Does selfishness work like that?
13. Read 1 Peter 3:8-12. This passage is taken from the *Septuagint* translation of Psalms 34:12-16. Can church members learn to treat others like brothers and sisters? Can we learn to be kind and humble in all our relationships, especially within the church?
14. Jesus took the *lex talionis* rule and radically changed it by saying, "Turn the other cheek." (Matthew 5:38-42) In our world where almost everyone seems to be trying to climb over someone else to reach the top, is it even feasible to practice turning the other cheek?
15. Can you think of some experiences in your own life where kindness melted anger? Or where someone repaid evil with blessings and changed the whole tenor of a relationship?
16. A young couple with children put play equipment in their yard and let the children play outside—sometimes somewhat noisily. The neighbors kept complaining, and they spoke to the couple in a harsh tone. Then, on one occasion, the young wife baked two fresh apple pies and gave them to the neighbor. The relationship changed completely.
17. We know that Saul pursued the youthful David for some 10 years, trying to kill him so he could not become the next king of Israel. During that time there were at least two encounters when David had the opportunity to kill Saul but did not because he respected "the Lord's anointed." (1 Samuel 24:6,10; 26:9-23) Who might be among the Lord's anointed in our day? Do we give respect to whom respect is due even if we may disagree with attitudes and behaviors taken by those in authority?
18. "I love humanity; it's people I can't stand!" So said Linus, a character in Charles Schultz' "Peanuts" comic strip. Linus was a fictional counterpart to the frustrated idealist in all of us. We have high standards for ourselves and

others, especially others. We open our eyes in the morning with every intention of spreading mercy, patience, peace, and love. (*Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p. 45)

19. Christians believe that having a correct and meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ will be the solution to most, if not all, of their problems. What happened to Paul? How does having a good relationship with Jesus Christ affect our relationships with others? What did John say about people who claim to love God but cannot get along with their "brothers"? (1 John 4:19-21) Would you invite Jesus into your house if He knocked on your door?
20. How many of our daily relationships are affected mostly by our need to maintain appearances rather than by genuine love, respect, and kindness? Are we kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving because it is the right thing to do and it is becoming a natural part of our characters? Or only to keep up a good "Christian" appearance?
21. Talking is perhaps the essential human characteristic that separates us from the animals. Health professionals have recognized for some time that many problems can be lessened by the right kind of talking. This is the basis for the counseling profession. At one time, psychologists and psychiatrists believed that spiritual principles were bad for mental health. They believed that reading the Bible just led to feelings of guilt and fear. But, today, more and more therapists are recognizing the power in prayer, spiritual journaling, memorizing key Bible texts, and various protocols using forgiveness following biblical principles.
22. Is it true that genuine forgiveness comes only from God? How do you understand this passage from Ezekiel 36:26-28 (*GNB*) which quotes *Yahweh*?

²⁶"I will give you a new heart and a new mind. I will take away your stubborn heart of stone and give you an obedient heart. ²⁷I will put my spirit in you and I will see to it that you follow my laws and keep all the commands I have given you. ²⁸Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors. You will be my people, and I will be your God."

Compare Jeremiah 31:31-34? How does God give people new hearts?

23. Read Matthew 5:21-26 and Luke 17:3,4. Clearly, Jesus was telling us that we need to practice forgiveness. It could keep us out of a lot of trouble.
24. In Luke 23:34 Jesus said, "Forgive them, Father! They don't know what they are doing." What was happening in this verse? What can we learn from the context? Why was Jesus praying this prayer? It is often taught in Christian circles that we need to confess our sins before we can be forgiven. Did the Roman soldiers at the cross ask Jesus for forgiveness? Did Jesus Himself have to forgive them before He could ask His Father to forgive them? What does this passage teach us about confessing our sins? More importantly, what does it teach us about the forgiveness of God? Does God only forgive those who ask for forgiveness?
25. Immediately after their sin, Adam and Eve were already afraid and pointing fingers of accusation at each other. Where did those selfish attitudes come from? What kind of guidance did those few people who were trying to follow God's will go by before the giving of the Ten Commandments? What did Abraham know about the law of God? (Genesis 26:5)
26. As we know, the Israelites were given the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. How did that affect their future behavior?

27. Read James 5:16. How do you understand this verse? Which sins are to be confessed to other human beings? Which are not? It is always safe to confess our sins to the Lord. But, what are the dangers of confessing our sins to others? If we have directly sinned against another, is that the right time to confess to him/her? Should we only confess the sins that he/she already knows about? Is there ever a time to confess sins to other people—even perhaps sins that we have done against them—which they do not know about?
28. What is the relationship between confessing our sins to one another and the Christian sacrament of anointing the sick? (James 5:14-16)
29. Read Ephesians 4:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Romans 14:19. Do we make a daily practice of using kind, helpful words? Do we always aim to produce peace by what we do and say? How often do we tear others down by our words and our deeds, thus damaging the entire Christian community?
30. Read Psalm 17:8. Does God protect us as He would His Own eye? Do we act as if we were a chosen nation, a royal priesthood? (Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9) Do we practice saying words of encouragement and approval, emphasizing the positive and acting in humility with a joyful attitude?
31. Jesus gave a special blessing for those who are peacemakers. (Matthew 5:9) How often do we try to exercise that skill? Are Christians known as peacemakers?
32. How often do we disadvantage ourselves in order to help others? Wouldn't that be true *agape* love?
33. A Chinese farmer was tending his rice paddy up in the mountain terraces overlooking the valley and the sea. One day he saw the beginning of a tidal wave—the sea retreated, leaving a wide portion of the bay exposed—and he knew that the water would return with force, destroying everything in the valley. He thought of his friends working in the valley and decided to set his rice field on fire. His friends immediately ran up the mountain to put the fire out and thus missed being killed in the tidal wave. As a result of this spirit of helping one another, their lives were saved. (*Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p. 49)
34. Turn once again to Paul's counsel to the churches in Asia Minor, and read Ephesians 4:25-32. How often do you practice those skills?
35. Is it really possible for us as Christians to live the kind of lives recommended by Jesus and the writers of the New Testament? Or, is that just an ideal for which we need to "strive"? Does this have anything to do with the fact that Jesus has not come back yet?

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