

Emotion is necessary. Feeling your feelings is part of being healthy. Being able to distinguish between disappointment, anger, frustration and pain are part of maturity. Those who never cry are emotionally crippled... so why then do we apologize for crying? Those who stuff their emotions end up being numb...why then, do we feel uncomfortable when someone around us grieves? The happier emotions seem to be more, well, acceptable. Why then, do we believe emotion, either high or low, has no place in public life?

Many are taught that emotion has no real place in church either. We are not to get too enthusiastic about anything, thus clapping along with a song has been seen as suspect... and applause for a well done piece of music or personal message has only recently become allowable. When I was young, I was told we were to take church seriously... thus, no laughing in church. This is sad, of course. Because God is anything but emotionless... so why should our lives? I thought we were created in God's image! And even more, why should God's church not reflect God's self? If God takes delight in creation, calling it "Very good." Then "taking delight" in something must be a godly attitude. God is angry time and time again at the disobedience of the Israelites. We ought to be angry about injustice, oppression and greed. Jesus wept at the death of his friend Lazarus.

Emotions have their purpose. They are signposts along the road of life, giving us clues about "where we are" in our relationships with others and the world around us. We choose our road according to the destination; the goal we want to achieve. Emotions help us know how to get there. Their task is to move us along the way. Thus they are motivators. You see, their purpose is to prompt us to action. When we discover we take delight in someone or something, we are moved to protect it. When we find ourselves angry, we are prompted to do something to correct the situation. We are instructed to weep with those who weep.

I have been enjoying the discussions about character on Sunday mornings between worship services. It is important to know emotions are different from character, but they are part of the whole behavioral mix. Emotions are motivators but they are not mandates. It is important to know that we are obligated to be honest if we want to be known as an honest person... that is character. We cannot be obligated to feel happy or mad or any emotion. They come and go. And there is not only one response to any particular emotion. A person must choose what to do about anger or envy or grief, and the “right answer” will depend on the situation, the relationship and your character.

Blessings to you from Pastor Karla

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