

Twelfth Grade- Emotionalism

This session focuses in on the idea of emotionalism, the idea that we can “follow our heart”. For a generation that grew up on Disney, this particular false doctrine sounds sweet and innocent, but it can ultimately be incredibly destructive. This session we will spend time with students assessing where we see this belief in culture and looking at what Scripture says instead!

Introducing the Topic

As always, we want to start off by assessing what students already know and think about the subject, and then turn to what Scripture says on the matter! Students have a unique perspective on our culture, so we want to give them time to process what they’re seeing together!

- What do you think our culture believes when it comes to our emotions?
- What do you think about the advice to “follow your heart”?
- What’s the truth in the phrase? Where do you think that idea goes wrong?
- Have you ever heard of the idea of “emotionalism”? What do you think it means? *(After your students have discussed what they think it means or what they already know about it, share with them this definition: emotionalism is the practice of making decisions or approaching situations primarily through the lens of our emotions, what we feel about things.)*

Scripture Study

As you transition to the Scripture Study portion of this session, remind students that Scripture is where we turn for truth. We want to continually reiterate that we study Scripture not just for the “Christian take” on a matter, but God’s revealed word, given to us out of love for our good.

-Read Jeremiah 17:5-10 together.

- What stuck out to you?
- How does this passage describe people who put their faith in people or in their heart? What is this passage saying about mankind and about our hearts? *(Let students discuss first, but then remind them that this passage is not saying to never listen to other’s advice, or to never pay attention to how they feel, it’s saying that these factors should not be the primary source of our direction in life.)*
- How does this passage describe those who trust in the Lord?
- What is the main point of this passage?

-Read Proverbs 3:5-6 together.

-What stuck out to you?

-What does the phrase “lean not on your own understanding” mean?

-What does it mean to “acknowledge Him”?

-What do you think it means when it promises that God will make your paths straight?

Practical Application

In this practical application, we want to help students internalize what they heard from Scripture today and be able to distinguish between a cultural heresy and biblical truth. We want them to cultivate a biblical view of emotion and its role in discernment.

-To whom or what does Scripture say we should turn to guide us through life?

-How would you summarize the Bible’s teaching on the role of emotions? *(The Bible doesn’t try to imply that emotions don’t matter, it’s simply clarifying that they shouldn’t be our source of wisdom or direction as we try to chart our course in life)*

-Explain this metaphor to students: When we think about decision making in life, we can think of it like this. Think of yourself as a ship at sea. The build, model, and material of your ship changes the way you’ll steer it, propel it, etc. In the same way, your unique personality, giftings, tendencies, and passions will weigh in to how you decide to navigate through life, as they should. Think of the wind and the waves as your emotions and your circumstances. You have limited control over your circumstances and your emotions, and they have a very real impact on your proverbial ship. And finally, think of the stars as the absolute truths we find in God’s Word. At sea, the stars are the fixed points in reality by which we navigate. In life, God’s perfect truth are the sure and steady realities by which we can successfully navigate. Trying to navigate by the wind or waves would be frustrating and futile, you would always feel like you’re going through ups and downs. However, the wind and the waves still matter in how you approach navigating, just like how your feelings and circumstances should still matter in how you approach making decisions, they should just be a factor as opposed to the means of navigation.

-Do you find yourself often led by emotion? In what circumstances are you more likely to make emotion-based decisions? Why do you think that is?

-Do you find yourself ignoring your emotions and circumstances and trying to power through without adjusting to endure them well? Why do you find yourself tend towards that?

-Do you find it hard to not lean on your own understanding? In what areas is it hard for you to trust God’s truth over your own instincts?