



# GOING DEEPER

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

SEPTEMBER 16, 2018

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## Discussion Guide

### THE POWER OF PASSION

#### CONNECTING:

45 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A WAY OF CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER SO THAT YOU MIGHT PARTNER IN THE WORK GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIVES.)

- IN WHAT WAYS DID GOD MOVE IN YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS DID YOU RESPOND TO HIM?
- WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DID YOU INVITE GOD INTO THIS CHALLENGE?
- HOW HONEST HAVE YOU BEEN WITH US? (GRACIOUSLY THANK GROUP MEMBERS FOR THEIR HONESTY IF THEY STATE THEY HAVE HELD BACK.)

#### GETTING STARTED:

10 MINUTES

- WHAT WOULD YOU SAY PLAYS THE BIGGEST ROLE IN YOUR LIFE, YOUR MIND OR YOUR EMOTIONS? COULD YOU ELABORATE?

#### DIVING INTO THE TEXT:

60 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A SIMPLE ROAD MAP THROUGH THE TEXT. FEEL FREE TO USE THESE QUESTIONS IN WAYS THAT BEST FIT YOUR GROUP AND THE DYNAMICS OF YOUR OWN MEETING.)

- USING THE NOTES, DISCUSS THE MEDITERRANEAN UNDERSTANDING OF A PERSON.
- READ MATTHEW 22.34-40 ALOUD. PAUSE. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE.
- IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DO THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS INVOLVE THE EXERCISING OF OUR MIND?

- IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DO THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS INVOLVE THE EXERCISING OF OUR EMOTIONS?
- WHICH APPEARS TO TAKE A DOMINANT POSITION IN HONORING THESE COMMANDMENTS, OUR MIND OR OUR EMOTIONS? COULD YOU ELABORATE?
- WHICH IS GIVEN THE DOMINANT POSITION IN PRESENT CHRISTIANITY, OUR MIND OR OUR EMOTIONS? COULD YOU ELABORATE?
- WHAT IMPLICATIONS, IF ANY, DOES YOUR DISCUSSION CONCERNING JESUS' EXHORTATION TO LOVE GOD AND OTHERS HAVE ON THIS PRESENT EMPHASIS IN CHRISTIANITY? WOULD YOU EXPLAIN?
- WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH BOTH EMOTIONS AND OUR MIND ARE VALUED WITH REGARD TO FAITH?
- WHAT HINDRANCES, IF ANY, MIGHT WE FACE IN SEEKING TO CREATE SUCH AN ENVIRONMENT?
- YOU MIGHT CONSIDER CLOSING BY DISCUSSING WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE TO CREATE SUCH AN ENVIRONMENT IN YOUR OWN GROUP.

## CONTEXT, BACKGROUND, AND COMMENTARY

### *MEDITERRANEAN THREE-ZONE PERSONALITY*

IN THE ANCIENT WORLD, THERE WERE TWO MAIN VIEWS OF WHAT CONSTITUTED A PERSON. IN GRECO-ROMAN THOUGHT, A PERSON CONSISTED OF TWO SEPARATE AND DISTINCT PARTS: BODY AND SOUL. HOWEVER, MEDITERRANEAN THOUGHT SAW THE PERSON AS A WHOLE WITH VARIOUS ZONES WHICH MADE UP THE HUMAN PERSON. THESE ZONES WERE NOT SEPARATE PARTS OF A PERSON BUT DIFFERENT WAYS THE PERSON INTERACTED WITH THE WORLD. THE FIRST ZONE OR WAY IN WHICH A PERSON INTERACTED WITH THE WORLD WAS THE ZONE OF EMOTION-FUSED THOUGHT. THIS ZONE INCLUDED A PERSON'S WILL, INTELLECT, PERSONALITY, AND EMOTIONS. IT WAS THE PART OF A PERSON WHICH GUIDED AND DIRECTED THE PERSON AND WAS OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH THE HEART AND THE EYES (MATTHEW 6.19-24; 22.37). THE SECOND ZONE WAS THE ZONE OF SELF-EXPRESSIVE SPEECH. THIS INCLUDED THE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE AND LISTEN. THIS ZONE WAS OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH THE MOUTH, EARS, TONGUE, THROAT, AND TEETH. HOWEVER, IT WAS INFLUENCED AND GUIDED BY THE ZONE OF EMOTION-FUSED THOUGHT (MATTHEW 12.34). THE FINAL WAY THE ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN WORLD UNDERSTOOD A PERSON TO INTERACT WITH THE WORLD WAS THROUGH THE ZONE OF PURPOSEFUL ACTION. THIS ZONE INCLUDED ALL EXTERNAL BEHAVIOR AND WAS ASSOCIATED WITH THE HANDS, FEET, FINGERS, AND LEGS. HOWEVER, THIS TOO WAS INFLUENCED AND GUIDED BY THE ZONE OF EMOTION-FUSED THOUGHT (MATTHEW 5.27-30). BECAUSE ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN THOUGHT UNDERSTOOD THE PERSON AS A UNIFIED WHOLE, TO REFER TO ANY OR ALL OF THESE ZONES WAS TO REFERENCE A PERSON'S EXPERIENCE OF AND INTERACTION WITH THE WORLD AND NOT A DISTINCT, SEPARATE PART OF A PERSON. THEREFORE, WHEN JESUS SPOKE OF ACTION HE WOULD REFER TO A PERSON'S HANDS OR FEET (MATTHEW 5.29-30). WHEN HE SPOKE OF COMMUNICATION, HE WOULD REFER TO ONE'S MOUTH OR EARS (MATTHEW 11.15), AND WHEN WE REFERENCED HOW A PERSON FELT OR THOUGHT, HE REFERRED TO ONE'S HEART OR EYES (MATTHEW 6.19-23).

## THE TEXT

### *MATTHEW 22.34-40: THOUGHT AND FEELING*

JESUS' STATEMENT OF THE TWO GREATEST COMMANDS IS THE THIRD OF A SERIES OF FOUR ANSWERS GIVEN TO QUESTIONS POSED TO JESUS. EACH OF THESE QUESTIONS HIGHLIGHTS THE DEEP OPPOSITION JESUS FACED FROM THE RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES AND THE LARGE GAPS IN THESE LEADERS' UNDERSTANDING OF JESUS' PERSON AND MINISTRY. THESE QUESTIONS AND THEIR ANSWERS FOLLOW AN ANCIENT PRACTICE CALLED CHALLENGE-RIPOSTE. IN THE ANCIENT WORLD, HONOR AND STATUS WERE THE MOST SOUGHT-AFTER CAPITAL AS THEY PROVIDED ACCESS TO POWER, RECOGNITION, AND WEALTH. HOWEVER, HONOR AND STATUS WERE UNDERSTOOD TO BE LIMITED GOODS. THEREFORE, TO GAIN HONOR ONE HAD TO TAKE IT FROM ANOTHER BY SHAMING THEM. THESE QUESTIONS WERE POSED TO JESUS AS ATTEMPTS TO SHAME HIM. HOWEVER, HIS ANSWER (RIPOSTE) IS HIS ATTEMPT TO NOT YIELD BUT TAKE HONOR FROM THESE LEADERS, SOMETHING WHICH HE DOES WITH EASE AS INDICATED BY THE ASTONISHMENT OF THE CROWDS AND THE SILENCING OF THE LEADERS (MATTHEW 22.33-34; 46).

THE THIRD CHALLENGE-RIPOSTE BEGINS WHEN A SCRIBAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PHARISEE ATTEMPTS TO DO WHAT THE SADDUCEES HAD UNSUCCESSFULLY ATTEMPTED, TO SHAME JESUS. HE DOES THIS BY POSING A QUESTION WHICH HAS NO RIGHT ANSWER CONCERNING THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT IN THE MOSAIC LAW. WHILE THE QUESTION SEEMS SIMPLE, BY ASKING FOR A SUMMARY OF THE LAW IN A SINGLE COMMANDMENT HE LEFT JESUS EXPOSED TO THOSE WHO MIGHT OFFER AN ALTERNATE AND BETTER COMMANDMENT. HOWEVER, JESUS ABLY DIFFUSES THE ATTEMPT BY OFFERING NOT ONE BUT TWO DISTINCT AND YET EQUAL COMMANDMENTS WHICH APTLY SUMMARIZE THE LAW AND THE TEACHINGS OF THE PROPHETS.

JESUS BEGINS BY QUOTING DEUTERONOMY 6.5. THIS COMMANDMENT INVOLVED THE EXHORTATION TO LOVE GOD WITH THE TOTALITY OF ONE'S BEING. WHILE THE MODERN READER IS TEMPTED TO SEE JESUS' ANSWER AS AN ATTEMPT TO DEFINE THE DISTINCT PARTS OF THE HUMAN PSYCHE, THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY NOT THE CASE. THE TERMS HEART, SOUL, AND MIND WERE NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE IN THE ANCIENT WORLD BUT SEPARATE TERMS REFERRING TO THE INNER ZONE OF EMOTION-FUSED THOUGHT WHICH GUIDED AND DIRECTED A PERSON. BY USING THESE THREE SEPARATE TERMS JESUS IS MAKING AN EMPHATIC STATEMENT THAT THE TOTALITY OF ONE'S DEVOTION WAS TO BE

GIVEN TO GOD, THE ENTIRETY OF ONE'S THOUGHT AND EMOTION DIRECTED TOWARD GOD. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT JESUS ASKED FOR THE ENTIRETY OF THIS INNER PART OF A PERSON AND NOT JUST AN ASPECT OF IT; THAT IS, JESUS ASKS THAT BOTH RATIONAL THOUGHT AND EMOTION BE DIRECTED TOWARD GOD.

SECOND, JESUS QUOTES LEVITICUS 19.18, INVITING HIS AUDIENCE TO CONSIDER THAT GOD NOT ONLY DESIRED A PERSON'S ABSOLUTE DEVOTION BUT SIMILAR DEVOTION WAS TO BE GIVEN TO ONE'S FELLOW PERSON. THIS WAS DONE BY LOVING OTHERS AS ONE LOVED HIMSELF. SOME HAVE TRIED TO INTERPRET JESUS AS ASKING FOR OTHER-CENTERED LOVE WHILE DISREGARDING SELF-LOVE, BUT THE TEXT DOES NOT SUPPORT THIS ARGUMENT. ACCORDING TO JESUS, THE LOVE OF OTHERS IS DEFINED AND KNOWN FIRST BY THE LOVE OF ONE'S OWN PERSON. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT LOVE FOR ONE'S OWN PERSON INVOLVES BOTH RATIONAL AND EMOTIONAL ELEMENTS; THAT IS, TRUE LOVE FOR ONESELF INVOLVES ACTIONS BASED ON REASON AND THOUGHTFUL CONSIDERATION, BUT IT ALSO IS ROOTED IN EMOTIONAL RESPONSES SUCH AS FEAR, JOY, AND LONGING.

HAVING NOTED THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS, JESUS THEN DRAWS THE CONCLUSION THAT SHOULD ONE FOLLOW THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS THEY WOULD IN FACT FIND THEMSELVES KEEPING THE ENTIRETY OF THE LAW. IN LIGHT OF OUR PRESENT FOCUS ON THE ROLE OF FEELINGS ON THE JOURNEY OF FAITH, ONE MUST PAY CAREFUL ATTENTION TO THE ROLE ONE'S EMOTIONS PLAY IN WHAT JESUS HAS STATED. JESUS IS QUITE CLEAR THAT RATIONAL THOUGHT AND EMOTIONS ARE NEEDED FOR ONE TO LIVE AS GOD DESIRES. LIVING AS GOD DESIRES REQUIRES THE FULL ENGAGEMENT OF GOD AND OTHERS WITH BOTH THOUGHT AND FEELING. WHAT JESUS MAKES PLAIN IS EMOTIONS HAVE A CENTRAL ROLE IN THE FAITH JOURNEY FOR THEY ARE REQUIRED TO LIVE AS GOD DESIRES. HOWEVER, HE IS SILENT ON HOW EMOTIONS FULFILL THEIR ROLE. HERE ONE MUST TURN TO OTHER PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE.

WITH PERMISSION FROM JESUS TO UNDERSTAND EMOTIONS TO HAVE A CENTRAL ROLE ON THE FAITH JOURNEY, ONE CAN SURVEY SCRIPTURE WITH NEW EYES, EYES WHICH LOOK FOR AN INTERPLAY OF THOUGHT AND EMOTION AS THEY PERTAIN TO GOD AND OTHERS. A QUICK SURVEY OF SCRIPTURE REVEALS MANY SUCH INTERACTIONS WHICH MIGHT BE HIGHLIGHTED. EMOTIONS SEEM TO PLAY A ROLE IN MOTIVATING GOD'S PEOPLE TO LIVE THE LIFE HE DESIRES THEM TO LIVE (JAMES 1.2-4; 1

JOHN 3.11-18). ONE'S EMOTIONS CAN SERVE TO PROPEL ONE TO STEP TOWARD A PROPER RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND OTHERS (PSALM 21; ESP. VERSE 7; 1 CORINTHIANS 13; 1 PETER 4.8; ROMANS 12.9-21). EMOTIONS CAN LEAD ONE TO THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S PRESENCE (PSALM 42; ESP. VERSE 8). THROUGH EMOTIONS, ONE CAN DISCOVER THE TRUE CHARACTER AND NATURE OF GOD (PSALM 100). WHILE THESE ARE BUT A FEW EXAMPLES, UPON CONSIDERATION, TWO CLEAR PATTERNS DO SEEM TO EMERGE REGARDING THE ROLE OUR EMOTIONS ARE MEANT TO PLAY ON THE JOURNEY OF FAITH. FIRST, IT IS OUR EMOTIONS WHICH EMPOWER AND LEAD US TO THE LIFE WHICH OUR MIND KNOWS GOD DESIRES FOR US. SECOND, IT IS OUR EMOTIONS WHICH HELP BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN WHAT OUR MIND KNOWS OF GOD AND WHO GOD IS IN OUR EXPERIENCE. WHILE THERE MAY BE ADDITIONAL ROLES OUR EMOTIONS MIGHT PLAY, WHAT IS CLEAR IS THAT OUR EMOTIONS ARE MEANT TO WORK IN CONCERT WITH OUR MIND, NOT SUBSERVIENT OR DOMINEERING, BUT WITH FULL PARITY WITH THE MIND.

## REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

IF MY FEELINGS ARE MEANT TO PLAY A ROLE ON THE JOURNEY OF FAITH, I SUPPOSE I NEED TO DISCOVER WHAT THE OPTIONS ARE. AS I SIT BACK AND CONSIDER THE VARIOUS ROLES MY EMOTIONS MIGHT PLAY, IT SEEMS THAT I HAVE BEFORE ME SOMETHING OF A CONTINUUM. ON ONE END OF THE CONTINUUM LIES THE ROLE OF MY EMOTIONS BEING EVERYTHING, EVERY FEELING BEING EVERYTHING FOR ME. ON THE OTHER END LIES EMOTIONS HAVING NO PLACE ON THE JOURNEY OF FAITH BUT LOGIC AND REASON GUIDING ME TOWARD CHRIST. SO, WHERE ON THE CONTINUUM IS THE RIGHT ANSWER? WHAT I AM COMING TO LEARN ABOUT CONTINUUMS IS THE ANSWER IS USUALLY SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE.

THAT THE ANSWER LIES SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE IS FOUND IN JESUS' EXHORTATION TO LIVE BY LOVE. ACCORDING TO JESUS, IT IS IN LOVING GOD AND OTHERS THAT WE FIND OURSELVES LIVING AS GOD DESIRES (MATTHEW 22.37-40). HOWEVER, THIS LOVE WHICH JESUS CALLS FOR INVOLVES BOTH MY EMOTIONS AND MY RATIONAL MIND. JESUS DOESN'T SAY WHICH ONE TAKES THE FORE. HE JUST INDICATES THEY ARE BOTH NEEDED. THIS SEEMS TO INDICATE, AT LEAST TO ME, THAT MY RATIONAL MIND IS NOT MORE IMPORTANT THAN MY EMOTIONS AND MY EMOTIONS ARE NOT MORE IMPORTANT THAN MY RATIONAL MIND. I NEED THEM BOTH, AND I NEED THEM TO WORK TOGETHER IF I AM TO LIVE AS

GOD DESIRES. BUT, HOW DOES THAT WORK? I CAN'T SAY I HAVE THE ANSWER YET. SOME OF THIS IS BECAUSE SO MUCH OF MY EMOTIONAL BANDWIDTH HAS BEEN STUNTED BY YEARS OF SUPPRESSION. WHAT I DO KNOW IS THAT I SEE A STRONG SCRIPTURAL TRADITION TO THESE TWO WORKING TOGETHER. JAMES TELLS ME THAT MY EMOTIONS CAN MOTIVATE ME TO DO WHAT MY MIND KNOWS IS BEST FOR ME (JAMES 1.2-4). AND, I SEE IN SCRIPTURE THAT MY EMOTIONS CAN PROPEL ME INTO A RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS WITH GOD AND PEOPLE, RELATIONSHIPS I KNOW ARE GOOD FOR ME BUT ONES WHICH I FIND DIFFICULT. WHEN I CONSIDER THESE TWO SCRIPTURAL TRADITIONS, I SEE THAT SOMEHOW MY EMOTIONS WORK WITH MY MIND LEADING ME TO THE LIFE GOD DESIRES FOR ME. MY MIND DOES THE KNOWING PART. IT KNOWS AND UNDERSTANDS THE LIFE GOD HAS FOR ME, BUT THIS KNOWLEDGE IS NEVER ENOUGH TO LEAD ME TO LIVE IT. IN FACT, THIS KNOWLEDGE OFTEN WORKS AGAINST ME BECAUSE MY KNOWLEDGE EXTENDS TO KNOWING THE CHALLENGES AND DIFFICULTIES OF LIVING THIS LIFE. HOWEVER, MY EMOTIONS MEET ME WHERE MY MIND FAILS ME, ENCOURAGING AND EMPOWERING ME TO PRESS TOWARD WHAT GOD HAS FOR ME.

THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING, I SEE IN THE PSALMS THAT IT IS MY EMOTIONS, WHEN USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH MY MIND, WHICH CAN LEAD ME TO A FULL EXPERIENCE OF GOD (PSALM 42; 100). WITH MY MIND I CAN COMPREHEND GOD. I CAN KNOW HE IS PRESENT. I CAN KNOW HE IS GOOD. I CAN KNOW HE CARES FOR ME, BUT KNOWING IS OFTEN NOT ENOUGH. IN TIMES OF TRIAL OR DIFFICULTY, MY MENTAL KNOWING ONLY GOES SO FAR. IN FACT, MY KNOWING IS UNDERCUT AND DEMOLISHED BY MY EXPERIENCE. IT IS HERE THAT MY EMOTIONS COME TO BEAR, BRINGING TO ME THE VERY REAL EXPERIENCE OF THE GOD I HAVE HENCEFORTH ONLY KNOWN WITH MY MIND. I FIND (AS DID THE PSALMIST) IT WORKS THE OTHER WAY AS WELL. SOMETIMES, MY MIND CAN'T WRAP ITSELF AROUND GOD. HE IS TOO BIG, TOO VAST, TOO MAGNIFICENT FOR ME. IT IS HERE MY EMOTIONS MAKE UP THE DIFFERENCE, LEADING MY MIND TO A BETTER AND DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF GOD.

I THINK THE HARD PART IN LEARNING HOW TO USE MY EMOTIONS COMES WHEN I TRY TO USE MY MIND TO EXERT INFLUENCE OVER MY EMOTIONS. SOMETIMES THIS COMES AS I TRY TO SUPPRESS OR RATIONALIZE THEM. SOMETIMES, THIS HAPPENS WHEN I TRY TO SUBSTITUTE MY MIND FOR MY EMOTIONS. I AM LEARNING THAT IT IS BEST WHEN MY MIND AND MY EMOTIONS ARE GIVEN A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD. FOR ME, THIS INVOLVES NOT BEING TOO QUICK TO JUDGE MY EMOTIONS OR TO ACT OUT OF MY EMOTIONS. RATHER,

I AM LEARNING TO NOTICE THEM AND WELCOME THEM. THEY ARE IMPORTANT GIFTS TO ME, EVEN IF I AM JUST NOW DISCOVERING HOW WONDERFUL THEY TRULY ARE.

## REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

OUR EMOTIONS ARE MEANT TO PLAY A CENTRAL ROLE ON OUR JOURNEY OF FAITH. THEY WORK BEST WHEN THEY ARE GIVEN A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD WITHOUT MIND. WHEN OUR EMOTIONS ARE USED ALONGSIDE OUR MIND, ALLOWED TO WORK WITH OUR MIND, WE DISCOVER THAT OUR EMOTIONS BECOME THE HALF OF US WE NEVER KNEW WAS MISSING. OVER AND OVER AGAIN, OUR EMOTIONS CAN MAKE UP THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHERE OUR MIND LEAVES OFF AND THE LIFE GOD HAS FOR US BEGINS. THE TROUBLE IS LEARNING TO GIVE OUR EMOTIONS A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD WITH OUR MIND. NOT ONLY HAVE WE BEEN TAUGHT TO IGNORE OUR EMOTIONS, BUT WE HAVE LEARNED HOW TO SUBSTITUTE OUR MIND FOR OUR EMOTIONS. PERHAPS THE FIRST STEP IN LEARNING TO GIVE OUR EMOTIONS THE LEVEL PLAYING FIELD THEY NEED BEGINS BY MAKING ROOM FOR THEM IN OUR LIFE BY WELCOMING THEM. WHEN WE HAVE EMOTIONS, WE ARE OFTEN QUICK TO JUDGE THEM OR DISMISS THEM. "THAT WAS A SILLY EMOTION." "I SHOULDN'T FEEL THAT WAY." SOMETIMES WE REACT IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION BY IMMEDIATELY YIELDING TO OUR EMOTIONS. FOR INSTANCE, WE MIGHT GROW ANGRY AND FEEL EMPOWERED TO ABUSE ANOTHER VERBALLY. WHEN WE EXPERIENCE AN EMOTION, RATHER THAN SHUTTING IT DOWN OR LETTING IT GRAB THE REINS OF OUR LIFE, IT IS PERHAPS BETTER TO WELCOME IT. WE WELCOME OUR EMOTIONS FIRST BY RECOGNIZING WE ARE EXPERIENCING AN EMOTION, AND THEN BY TURNING TO OBSERVE IT. AT THIS POINT, WE DO NOT HAVE TO DO ANYTHING WITH IT OTHER THAN RECOGNIZE IT IS THERE AS A GIFT FROM GOD, A WONDERFUL GIFT MEANT TO LEAD US TO THE LIFE HE HAS FOR US. YOU MIGHT TRY WELCOMING YOUR EMOTIONS THIS WEEK AND JOURNALING WHAT THIS EXPERIENCE IS LIKE FOR YOU.



SENIOR  
PASTOR  
**BLAKE**  
SHIPP

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