

WEEK 7: Why You Don't Have to Worry About Splitting Head from Heart; *Or, How Thinking Welcomes Feeling* (Ch. 6)

Review from last week: “We *may* ignore our hearts’ motivations and just try to do what’s good, because that’s how we do what we *must* do as responsible moral agents, stewards of the talents God has given us. . . . To love your neighbors means to seek their good. So it would be perverse to wonder whether you had the wrong motivation for seeking their good. If what you’re trying to accomplish really is good for your neighbor, then that’s good enough. For Christian love is about the good of your neighbor, not how good your heart is. (It’s not about you)” (82-3).

1 | An Imaginary Split

- Do you worry that you think too much? Do you assume that there’s a difference between your head and heart? If the Bible discusses “the thoughts of your hearts”, what does it mean?
 - Note that the Old Testament Hebrew has no separate word for “mind”, it’s just “heart”. When we say “I feel in my heart” we really just mean that we’re thinking in some way, and our feelings go along with that. “Feeling and thought go together” (98).
- **Common Warning - Don’t think too much!** “What are people trying to accomplish when they say you have to avoid splitting your head from your heart? You might think that they want to keep you from separating your thoughts from your feelings, but I’ve come to the opposite conclusion: what they’re actually afraid of is that you’re thinking too much—and especially that you’re thinking too much about your feelings” (99).
 - Why? Consumerism! “It requires you to be afraid of engaging in critical thought, so that you’re easily manipulated and easily pressured into wanting to feel what everyone else feels” (101).
- **Freedom** - if the split itself doesn’t exist, then it’s not something to worry about!

2 | Engaging our Feelings

- **“Because feelings are perceptive**, we have to pay attention to them if we want to think well. Our feelings or emotions often perceive truths that reason is slow to recognize, like how badly someone is suffering or how awful a particular injustice is. It would be stupid and unreasonable not to listen to our feelings—and our thinking ought not be so stupid” (102).
- **“Reason needs emotion in order to think well, but emotion needs reason, too**, because our emotions want to be understood. You don’t protect your emotions by refusing to think about them; you starve them of attention. When that happens, they behave like neglected children: they start shouting and screaming and getting out of control. Your heart becomes

like a disordered household . . . reasoning about our emotions is a way of welcoming them in our hearts, so that they know they have a place in our life and don't have to yell and scream to get our attention" (103).

- **"We should welcome even our 'negative' emotions.** What I mean is that we shouldn't try to deny how we're feeling, but should let ourselves notice what's going on in our hearts and try to understand why. What is this feeling trying to tell us about ourselves and the world we're in?" (104).
 - "Precisely when you don't welcome your emotions, they catch you by surprise" (108).

3 | Head Knowledge & Our Fear of Questions

- Like memorizing information for a test, head knowledge "has no effect on any of your thoughts, feelings, or actions apart from the act of putting down your answers on the test. It's not really knowledge in the head, it's just knowledge that's completely superficial . . . it doesn't even change how you *think*" (110).
- **The "God makes no sense" move** - have you ever said or heard, "I can't explain it, it must be God" or "It makes absolutely no sense, you just have to believe it" or "Faith means you have to let yourself believe in something crazy and illogical that you can't understand"?
 - **"Thoughtlessness makes you easier to manipulate,** so that you'll buy the product as advertised. Consumer culture is all about experience and emotion, not thinking" (112). And if church is entertainment, then church will be about increasing market share through feelings, rather than engaging with the truth.
 - Why do we make the "God makes no sense" move? What are we afraid of or anxious about? If God is Truth, then we ought to love truth, search it out, and not be afraid of asking questions, even about our emotions.
- **Our modern world is obsessed with the "faith vs. reason" question**—is faith against reason, above reason, is it illogical, a blind leap in the dark? By no means! The best biblical synonym for faith is "trust" because it is primarily defined in contrast with "sight" or "works." WCF defines saving faith as "accepting, receiving and resting" in Christ.
 - We live now by faith, *not by sight* - yet one day we will no longer need faith because all will be by sight!
 - We are justified by faith alone, *not by works* - because through faith we are united to Christ, whose works we trust to stand in our place.
 - Therefore, stop worrying about whether you think too much, or that your faith should be more irrational if you were *really* trusting God. We don't believe in spite of the darkness; rather, we believe in the midst of darkness because we trust that God's light has overcome and will overcome the darkness, despite it's appearance now.