

Don't Follow Your Heart

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Brethren, there's a common saying in our culture and I think it's been around for many years. I've heard it all my life and it probably predates my birth. It's a common philosophy that says, "Follow your heart." What is typically meant by this is much more than just being aware of our inner thoughts and feelings about a subject, it's telling us that we should use our emotions and our feelings as the guide for how we make decisions and how we basically govern and plan our lives. We live in a culture today that has taken this particular philosophy to an absolute extreme. I've heard this statement my entire life, but today we live in a culture that is focused on making decisions with emotions, literally to the point that scientific facts and evidence are pushed aside with the philosophy that we should ignore that and we should follow feelings and emotions in terms of how we live our lives.

As we're going to see today, the Bible repeatedly warns us against this particular philosophy. It tells us that this can be disastrous. The title for today's sermon is,

Don't Follow Your Heart

We will see that the Biblical advice given is that just following our emotions and feelings in terms of how we govern our lives often results in disastrous consequences.

First of all, I'd like to illustrate the extreme to where our current culture has gone with this particular subject. One of the ways to see this is an issue we often see in the news and being talked about in media, and that is what is referred to as "transgender." It's the idea that gender is something fluid that can be changed at will. We find reference to what gender a person identifies with. In other words, what do their feelings, their emotions identify with in terms that we should acknowledge them as being that gender regardless of the biological facts involved. Demonstrable biological facts tell you which gender a person is, even from the time a baby is born. Unless they have some severe birth defect, you can tell from a baby's anatomy that this is a boy and that is a girl, because our anatomy is very different, not only externally but internally. Our internal parts are very different. Not only that, the proportions of hormones in our body are different. Men and women both have estrogen and testosterone in their bodies, but in different proportions depending upon which gender an individual is born with.

Today in our culture where we have this idea of transgender, often people that want to change their gender may have themselves surgically altered to try to change their anatomy. They may even go to the point of taking hormone supplements to change the proportion of estrogen and testosterone in their body in an attempt to change their gender. However, we are different on a chromosomal level. You get down to every cell in your body. If you're female, that's going to be XX chromosomes, and if you're male, it's X and Y chromosomes. You simply cannot change that. What I'm getting at is that

these are simply demonstrable, scientific, biological facts, but we live in a culture today that says to ignore the facts and ignore the evidence. What are your feelings telling you? You should go with whatever your feelings say. It's gets not only to the point of ignoring absolute facts as if they're irrelevant, it's often put across that you're a bad person if you think with facts and logic. In other words, if you demonstrate the fact that someone is born with gender with scientifically provable evidence, whether they're male or female, and you acknowledge that, you are insensitive and you're a bad person and you're transphobic. You're an evil person because you think with facts and logic rather than letting emotion be the guide of how you make decisions.

Another way to demonstrate the severity of this subject is the issue of abortion. Today in the United States, we have not only culturally but legally defined the issue of abortion as a women's rights issue. What I mean by that is, legally speaking, the mother of the child is the only one who has any legal rights whatsoever on the issue of abortion. Fathers are considered irrelevant. If he doesn't want his child murdered, there's nothing legally he can do about it. It is solely the mother's decision. Also consider in our culture, what determines whether there's a child on the way, something we can be excited about or if a woman just has a lump of cells that can be surgically removed like a cancerous tumor and thrown aside with no consequences. If you get down to it, it's feelings and emotions. Think about it. You have two different women and they're both pregnant. One is excited about being a mom and all the things she will get to do with her child. The family is excited about having a new addition to the family. She is very clear about what is in her womb. It's a little human being growing there. Her friends and family are also very clear about what's growing in her womb. They all know it's going to be a baby and something to be excited about. In my own work environment, this past week we had a lady going on maternity leave because she is about to have her baby, and there was a shower for her. It's an exciting time and everyone is happy and no one has any questions about what is in her womb. It's a human being.

However, consider the other woman. She's looking at the situation and she is not excited about being a parent, and she feels it is an interruption to her life right now. She decides that it's not really a baby, it is just a lump of cells that can be removed like a tumor. Oftentimes her friends and family will then see it in a similar way. The biological facts involved in both of these situations are not in any way different at all. What determines the difference of one from the other are emotions and feelings. We have a culture today that exalts that above facts and evidence, of thinking with provable, logical facts, and you're often put across as a bad person if you don't fall in line with this.

It's no big surprise that our culture has reached to this particular point. The reason I say that is because, for the last several decades, we've had an educational system that has literally indoctrinated people from elementary school going forward with this very mindset, that the most important thing is your feelings. Facts and evidence and logic are often considered irrelevant when evaluating a subject.

To demonstrate this, I'd like to quote from a book entitled Inside American Education, The Decline, the Deception and the Dogmas. It's written by Dr. Thomas Sowell, and I'm

going to quote some sections from pages 3 to 6. Keep in mind as I'm reading this, that this book was published in 1993. That's almost twenty-five years ago. The things he is saying were not only true then, they are much truer today. A lot of the predictions he made about where all this was headed is demonstrable in our culture today. I am skipping over certain paragraphs just for brevity, but I'll let you know when I'm doing that.

Perhaps nothing so captures what is wrong with American schools as the result of an international study of thirteen-year-olds which found that Koreans ranked first in mathematics and Americans last. When asked if they thought they were good at mathematics, only twenty-three percent of the Korean youngsters said yes, compared to sixty-eight percent of the American thirteen-year-olds. The American educational dogma that students should "feel good about themselves" was a success in its own terms though not in any other terms.

What he's demonstrating here is, this whole emphasis resulted in, yes, they felt good about their abilities. Their abilities were dead last compared to others. What it resulted in was actually delusion. Their abilities are terrible in comparison, but they feel good about themselves. The facts and evidence became irrelevant, and what becomes important is their feelings.

Going down several paragraphs.

Science is not the only field in which American students are lacking in knowledge, and more importantly, in the ability to tie what they know together to form a coherent chain of reasoning. Many American students seem unaware of even a need for such a process. Test scores are only the tip of the iceberg. Professor Diane Ravitch, a scholar specializing in the study of American education, reports that professors complain about students who arrive at college with strong convictions, but not enough knowledge to argue persuasively for their beliefs. As Professor Ravitch concludes, having opinions without knowledge is not of much value. Not knowing the difference between them is a positive indicator of ignorance. In short, it is not merely that Johnny can't read or even that Johnny can't think, Johnny doesn't know what thinking is. Thinking is so often confused with feeling in many public schools. The phrase, "I feel" is often used by American students to introduce a conclusion rather than say, "I think" or "I know" much less, "I conclude." Unfortunately, "I feel" is often the most accurate term and is regarded as sufficient by many teachers as well as students. The net result, as in mathematics, is that many students are confident incompetence, whether discussing social issues, world events or other subjects. The emphasis is on having students express their opinions on issues, having those opinions taken seriously, enhancing self-esteem, regardless of whether there is anything behind them. When a reporter spent months in a Los Angeles high school, asked graduating seniors what they had learned, he received this reply from a boy described as the smartest student in the class, "I learned that in the Viet Nam War, North and South Korea fought against each other and there

was a truce on the Thirty-Eighth Parallel and that Eisenhower had something to do with it.” The reporter asked, “Would it bother you to know the things you learned were wrong?” The answer was, “Not really, because what we really learned from Miss Silvern was that we were worth listening to, that we could express ourselves and an adult would listen, even if we were wrong. That’s why Miss Silvern will always be our favorite teacher. She made us feel like we mattered, like we were important.

Now, it’s certainly a valuable thing for there to be a positive relationship between teacher and student, and for students to be taught with respect in the process. But what I want you to notice is what this student got out of this whole process. The most important thing was that he felt good about himself and that his emotions felt good about it all. It was irrelevant that he didn’t know what he was talking about. It was irrelevant that his facts were completely off base. What was most important is, “I feel good and she gave me self-esteem.” That is basically what our education system has turned into. Now skipping down several more paragraphs.

The Los Angeles reporter’s observation, however, was that the students he saw know little in the way of organized thought processes or even basic ways of solving intellectual problems. While the reporter noted the sincerity or intensity of the teachers, he nevertheless concluded a human being who has not been taught to think clearly is a danger in a free society.

You see, that’s what happened. The whole focus on emotions and feelings has literally gotten to the point just like we see with the transgender issue, where gender again can be clearly scientifically demonstrated. That’s been understood for years. Again, down to the chromosomal level, they think, no, ignore all of that, it’s just how you feel. It’s all subjective and it’s all based upon emotions. Once that happens, facts, evidence and logic is considered irrelevant. In fact, often it’s put across that you are insensitive in your meaning and you’re a bad person if you insist on acknowledging facts and evidence rather than following emotions.

As you can see, this is a dangerous way to approach life. The Bible repeatedly warns us about this very thing. Of all things, we certainly should not be trusting our emotions. Often, it’s not even our own human reasoning in logic of and by itself. In Proverbs 14, we can notice what Solomon warns us about regarding this particular subject.

Proverbs 14:12. *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. (NKJV)*

In other words, what can feel right to us, what sounds good to our carnal minds can be very destructive and dangerous. In blindly following that because it’s what our heart tells us and it’s what we feel, it oftentimes has very disastrous consequences. But while we’re doing it, we’ll feel like, “Well, my heart says that. I need to follow my heart.” That can have disastrous consequences if we’re not using God’s word as a guide for our lives. Trusting in ourselves can be a disaster.

To understand more clearly, turn to Jeremiah 17.

Jeremiah 17:9. *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?”*

10) I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings. (NKJV)

What this tells us is if we trust our own hearts, our own feelings about subjects, that is often disastrous because we can be completely off base, and in our minds, we think we're doing a good thing because we are following our hearts. This is particularly true when it comes to just following emotions. Our own reasoning and logic can get us off track as well if we're not using God's word as a guide to show us how to live our lives. Particularly with emotion, it's fickle. It can be one thing today and something else tomorrow or next week. That leads to absolute chaos if you live your life that way, or to govern a society in that regard. It leads to chaos. This entire philosophy of following your heart is typically based upon what's called “value neutrality.” It's the idea that everything is relative. There is no concrete right and wrong. There is no truth or error. It's just how you feel. It's just your perspective. Everything is subjective in that regard. That just leads to chaos in the long run. It may sound nice and friendly and sensitive and caring on the short end, but it ends in disaster.

A good way to demonstrate that is to turn to the Book of Judges. We're not going to take the time to go through the whole book, but if you read it, it's a story of a lot of chaos. There's a lot of instability and chaos during the time of the Judges. In the final verse here, we see exactly summed up in a sentence, why that is the case and why they had so much trouble during this time.

Judges 21:25. *In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (NKJV)*

This is specifically referring to human leadership within the nation, but again there's the same principle here. There's no anchor to show them a guide to follow. Everyone is just doing the whim that strikes them and what sounds good to them at that moment. If you read through this story in this book, it's a lot of chaos and instability, and that's what that results in if everything is subjective and everyone just does what sounds right to them at the moment, particularly with our emotions. Emotions can be fickle and an unstable guide.

We live in a society today that tells us that we have to be true to ourselves. We've got to be true to our feelings and what we think about things. I'm not advocating that not acknowledging our emotions are not a part of our life. I'm not advocating that we should be automatons and out of touch with our feelings. That's not what I'm saying. But if you use that as a guide, it often leads to disaster. We have a culture that constantly tells us that we should always acknowledge and accept our feelings and express our feelings. Again, that's very bad advice.

Proverbs 29:11. *A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back. (NKJV)*

In other words, a wise man acknowledges his feelings. It's not like he's a robot that doesn't feel anything in life. That's not what I'm advocating, and that's not what the Bible advocates. It's saying that a person with wisdom doesn't follow whatever emotional whim that strikes them or how they feel at the moment. They realize that feelings can be very deceptive. Our hearts and our emotions can lie to us and we can do very dumb things if we just react off of that and don't have a standard to govern and compare ourselves to. That's the key to all of this. We've got to be able to use God's word as our guide.

We live in a society that thinks that everything is relative. You often hear the concept of, "Well, your truth versus my truth." The actual truth and facts are all relative and it's all based on opinion. That's simply not true. There are absolute rights and wrongs that we have to govern our life with. The key we should follow is in Proverbs 3.

Proverbs 3:5. *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;
6) In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. (NKJV)*

What it's telling us here is we should always look to God and God's word as a guide to tell us how to live our lives, regardless of what our human reasoning tells us, regardless of what our feelings and emotions tell us. We should always look to God's word to make sure what we're thinking and how we feel is right. We live in a society that thinks everything is relative, everything is equal and all points of view and opinions are all equal. No, they are not. God's way is right. Every other way is wrong. It's just that simple. If we see that God's word tells us to go the different direction than what we want to go or how we feel about something, it's a simple answer, we're wrong. It's just that easy. When we follow God's word, we have to use that as a way to govern our lives regardless of how we feel.

We have a deceptive nature that will tell us sometimes what we want to hear. If you think about it, oftentimes as human beings, we tend to reverse engineer decisions that we want to come to. We will emotionally come to a conclusion that feels good to us, even if it's completely irrational, even if it doesn't match up with any of the facts or what we know to be true. If our feelings want to tell us that this is the case, we will come to that conclusion emotionally and then we will reverse engineer a logic to convince ourselves that we made a smart decision, and really what we did was work backwards. We started with the conclusion we wanted to come to and then we developed a reason to convince ourselves that we were doing right.

As members of the Church of God, I'm sure that most of us don't fall for the idea of value neutrality, that there is no right or wrong. If you're pursuing being a Christian and trying to follow God's way of life, you obviously acknowledge that the Bible is the source

that we should be looking to and we should look to God for direction. But how do we apply principles in our lives from the Bible in terms of not letting our emotions and feelings govern our life? What basic principles should be followed to make sure that we are keeping ourselves on the right track?

We're going to read a familiar section of scripture. For those of you who have heard me speak on subjects like this a number of times, you hear me referring to Matthew 7 and Galatians 5 as the Biblical criteria for assessment. In other words, when you're learning how to assess things and how to make judgments on issues, putting these two together is a key to doing this in a Godly Biblical fashion.

Matthew 7:15. *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.*

16) You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?

17) Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

18) A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

19) Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

20) Therefore, by their fruits you will know them. (NKJV)

It's telling you from a Biblical perspective, the key to making decisions is examining the fruits, whether we're talking about dealing with specific individuals or larger issues of society, like policy issues that affect social issues and things of that nature. The basic principle we should follow is examining the fruits.

For the definition of fruits, again, you have to put this together with Galatians, chapter 5. I'm not going to take the time to turn there today, but if you look in that chapter, you have what I refer to as the good list and the bad list. You have the list of the fruits of the spirit and you have the list of the works of the flesh. That's a guide we can use in putting these two together to evaluate situations.

There's another principle in this section of scripture that I want to focus on today. Notice the analogy it's talking about here is that of a fruit tree. The way you know if it's a good tree or not is by the fruit it produces. Well, think about that particular analogy. If you're assessing a fruit tree, unless you just happen to walk up to it right at harvest time, any other time of the year you can't make a quick judgment on it. You've got to evaluate it over time. Often when we make emotional decisions on a subject, regardless what the subject is, what you will typically find is that often emotional decisions are arrived at quickly in haste, where we kind of jump to a conclusion. Often, they are not well thought through. We didn't really think through the issue, we didn't examine it in detail and analyze it. We had an emotional feeling and then jumped to a quick conclusion about it. That's very often what happens with an emotional decision. Think about this again from the context of evaluating a fruit tree. Unless you're right at harvest time, any other time of the year you may see a tree, but if you have to see the fruit to see how well it's going to produce, you can't impulsively do that. You have to

evaluate over time what the results are, because the concept I want you to see here is that fruits are evaluated over time.

You look at track records, whether it's an individual's behavior or even an issue of a social policy or something, what is the evidence over time repeatedly demonstrated in terms of how it turns out in the end? Think about it like this. Often in our society today, we tend to define good and bad or whether something is love or not. Often, it's from a short-term perspective of how it feels and what the immediate impact is.

If you look at this from a Biblical perspective, even on the issue of deciding whether something is Godly love or not, we often tend to associate the subject of love with feelings, with emotion. Think about this from a Godly perspective, from what the Bible tells us. If you look at it this way, the way you determine if something is of love or not is a logical, analytical decision. That probably sounds unusual, but think about this. Read John 3:16, a very commonly quoted scripture.

John 3:16. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (NKJV)

God the Father was willing to sacrifice His Son, Jesus Christ to be the Savior for mankind. This is basically the ultimate expression of love. Now think about that from a feelings perspective. We often think of love in that regard in terms of something that feels warm and fuzzy and positive and comforting at that time. Who, in that equation, on the front end is having a warm, fuzzy and positive day? Nobody, because you have the Father who is giving His Son to be falsely arrested, brutally tortured and murdered. If you read through Matthew 26, you'll see exactly what Christ was experiencing, knowing that was going to happen to Him. He was quite familiar with what Isaiah had prophesied about the graphic details of what was going to happen. It was an excruciatingly painful experience for Him. He did not want to go through this. What parent, as a father, wants to watch their child be falsely arrested, tortured and murdered, having the power the entire time to step in and stop it and doesn't? The reason this is such a loving act is how it ended. In other words, the long-term results of Jesus Christ doing this results in Him being able to open the door. He's the mediator of the New Covenant. He enables us to have this covenant with the Father and enables us to have this opportunity to be offered salvation. That's why it's such a loving act; it's the long-term results. In the long run, everybody won. In the short term, it was an ugly and painful event. So, again you have to look at it from that perspective because if we just look at it emotionally, this is ugly and painful and unpleasant. What could be loving about this? If you look at it from the big perspective, that's why it's loving. Fruits are evaluated over time.

Let's see some specific examples of this. If you look at this in terms of human interactions, with specific decisions we might have with other people that we interact with, there's a good example of that in Judges 16. We're going to look at the example of Samson.

One of my favorite statements and I'm kind of a broken record in saying this is, "the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior." This is all based on the concept of examining a track record, examining fruits over time. I work in the recruiting industry where I interview people all the time, and that's kind of the philosophy that we work on. Your past work history is the indicator of what your future work is going to be. We're going to see a clear example here that if Samson had utilized this principle, he could have saved himself a great deal of grief, but what he winds up doing is making an emotionally-based decision with feelings of the moment with disastrous consequences, when the evidence before him was clearly obvious. If he had just analyzed the situation, it's obvious what he should do. As we see, Delilah has a clear track record of behavior and Samson ignores it.

Judges 16:4. *Afterward it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.*

5) And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, "Entice him, and find out where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and every one of us will give you eleven hundred pieces of silver." (NKJV)

They're basically bribing her to do this. If you notice her actions, she obviously thinks that is an attractive offer and she is going along with this.

6) So, Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me where your great strength lies, and with what you may be bound to afflict you."

7) And Samson said to her, "If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, then I shall become weak, and be like any other man."

8) So, the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, and she bound him with them.

9) Now men were lying in wait, staying with her in the room. And she said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he broke the bowstrings as a strand of yarn breaks when it touches fire. So, the secret of his strength was not known.

10) Then Delilah said to Samson, "Look, you have mocked me and told me lies. Now, please tell me what you may be bound with."

11) So, he said to her, "If they bind me securely with new ropes that have never been used, then I shall become weak, and be like any other man."

12) Therefore, Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And men were lying in wait, staying in the room. But he broke them off his arms like a thread.

13) Delilah said to Samson, "Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me what you may be bound with." And he said to her, "If you weave the seven locks of my head into the web of the loom"—

14) So, she wove it tightly with the batten of the loom, and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he awoke from his sleep, and pulled out the batten and the web from the loom. (NKJV)

Notice here, three different times she has asked him for the secret of his strength. Every time he gives her an answer, she promptly uses it to try to ruin him. It's not rocket science to see where this was headed. If he was paying attention and thinking with logic, it's not hard to project that forward. "Okay, what's going to happen if I give her the right answer?" It's not rocket science to figure out what's going to happen. Notice the rest of the story.

15) *Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and have not told me where your great strength lies."*

16) *And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death,*

17) *that he told her all his heart, and said to her, "No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man."*

18) *When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up once more, for he has told me all his heart." So, the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hand.*

19) *Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him.*

20) *And she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" So, he awoke from his sleep, and said, "I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!" But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him.*

21) *Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison. (NKJV)*

This had a disastrous end to it. She had a very clear track record, if you would analyze the situation. Three times she illustrates what she's trying to do. It's easy for anyone using analytical logic what's about to happen next if he gives her the right answer. What happens? She pulls the age-old manipulation on him. "Well, if you really love me, you would do what I want." She didn't say this once, she relentlessly came at him with this. What does he do? He gives in and makes an emotional decision. She plays upon his guilt, his emotions, and I'm sure his hormones had an influence in his decision as well. He makes an impulsive decision with that rather than sitting back and thinking, "Wait a minute. Let me analyze the track record of behavior." It's pretty clear from multiple attempts what she's trying to do. Again, he's not thinking with logic. He's thinking with emotion and it brought him to a disastrous outcome. He winds up a prisoner with his eyes gouged out. He could have saved himself a lot of trouble by just thinking with logic.

This principle doesn't just apply to situations like this with specific individuals, we can also apply this principle to larger issues. The whole point I want you to see here is if we

evaluate something logically, fruits are evaluated over time. You look at the evidence of a track record over time. Whereas often we tend to make decisions, and our society today glorifies this, very emotionally based with shallow thinking and impulsively making a decision simply because it feels good at the moment. Too often it will have disastrous consequences.

Let me give you a common example of a larger issue that has caused great pain throughout history to the very people that it often is intended to help. You've probably seen over the last few years on the news, especially in the United States, there's been a push to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. This has been pushed in the fast food industry, and also as a general policy to make these laws. Often when these ideas are pitched, it's emotionally based. This is about compassion and about loving and caring for these people, and if you have a heart and care for them, you're going to want to increase their wages. However, if you look at this analytically over time, it's very easy to demonstrate from not only in this country, but countries all over the world, when this type of policy is implemented, what happens? I'm saying this as an almost twenty-year H.R. professional. If you take the minimum wage basically across the board and want to raise everyone's wages, here's what you've done; every product or service that labor produces, you've now significantly increased the production cost. The long-term affect is going to be an increase in inflation. You're going to raise the cost of everything over time. What more likely happens in the short term is when a company is forced to do something like this, to raise the basic wage of everyone across the board, now they've increased their operating cost of whatever they are producing and it's now more expensive. In the short-term what they're going to do is try to find ways to cut costs. They either have to charge higher prices for what they're marketing or they need to find a way to cut their overhead. You know how they're going to try to cut overhead? They will figure out ways to eliminate the very jobs that you've just made more expensive. If they can automate it and have fewer employees, you're going to increase unemployment across the board. That's what happens every time this type of thing occurs. If you just look at it with basic math and logic, it's not hard to see.

To further illustrate this, I'd like to read an article from a site called nationalreview.com. This was posted on March 18, 2015. This is also by Dr. Thomas Sowell. I quote this guy fairly often. He has a Ph.D. in economics. He's a famous economist in the U.S. He's in his late 80s now and has recently retired. He was a college professor for a number of years and has written dozens of books on social issues and economics and race issues and a number of other things as well. He's a very well thought out individual in the research that he does. The article is titled [Minimum Wage Laws – Ruinous Compassion](#).

It is fascinating to see brilliant people belatedly discover the obvious — and to see an even larger number of brilliant people never discover the obvious. A recent story in a San Francisco newspaper says that some restaurants and grocery stores in Oakland's Chinatown have closed after the city's minimum wage was raised. Other small businesses there are not sure they are going to

survive, because many depend on a thin profit margin and a high volume of sales.

At an angry meeting between local small-business owners and city officials, the local organization that had campaigned for the higher minimum wage was absent. They were probably some place congratulating themselves on having passed a humane “living wage” law. The group most affected was also absent — inexperienced and unskilled young people, who need a job to get some experience, even more than they need the money.

It is not a breakthrough on the frontiers of knowledge that minimum-wage laws reduce employment opportunities for the young and the unskilled of any age. It has been happening around the world, for generation after generation, and in the most diverse countries.

It is not just the young who are affected when minimum-wage rates are set according to the fashionable notions of third parties, with little or no regard for whether everyone is productive enough to be worth paying the minimum wage they set. You can check this out for yourself. Go to your local public library and pick up a copy of the distinguished British magazine, The Economist. Whether it is the current issue or a back issue doesn't matter. Spain, Greece, and South Africa will be easy to locate in the table near the back, which lists data for various countries. Just look down the unemployment column for countries with unemployment rates around 25 percent. Spain, Greece, and South Africa are always there, whether or not there is a recession. Why? Because they have very generous minimum-wage laws.

While you are there, you can look up the unemployment rate for Switzerland, which has no minimum-wage law at all. Over the years, I have never seen the unemployment rate in Switzerland reach as high as 4 percent. Back in 2003, The Economist reported: “Switzerland's unemployment neared a five-year high of 3.9% in February.” In the United States, back in what liberals think of as the bad old days before there was a federal minimum-wage law, the annual unemployment rate during Calvin Coolidge's last four years as president ranged from a high of 4.2 percent to a low of 1.8 percent.

Low-income minorities are often hardest hit by the unemployment that follows in the wake of minimum-wage laws. The last year when the black unemployment rate was lower than the white unemployment rate was 1930, the last year before there was a federal minimum-wage law. The following year, the Davis-Bacon Act of 1931 was passed, requiring minimum wages in the construction industry. This was in response to complaints that construction companies with non-union black construction workers were able to underbid construction companies with unionized white workers (whose unions would not admit blacks).

Looking back over my own life, I realize now how lucky I was when I left home in 1948, at the age of 17, to become self-supporting. The unemployment rate for 16 and 17-year-old blacks at that time was under 10 percent. Inflation had made the minimum-wage law, passed ten years earlier, irrelevant. But it was only a matter of time before liberal compassion led to repeated increases in the minimum wage, to keep up with inflation. The annual unemployment rate for black teenagers has never been less than 20 percent in the past 50 years and has ranged as high as over 50 percent. You can check these numbers in a table of official government statistics on page 42 of Professor Walter Williams's book Race and Economics. Incidentally, the black/white gap in unemployment rates for 16 and 17-year-old blacks was virtually non-existent back in 1948, but the black teenage unemployment rate has been more than double than white teenagers every year since 1971. This is just one of the many policies that allow liberals to go around feeling good about themselves while leaving havoc in their wake.

What he's getting at here is often these decisions get looked at emotionally, from an immediate perspective of how people perceive it will affect someone right now. They're not looking at the long-term affect. Just throughout history, you can easily demonstrate how this tends to turn out, and not just in this country, but all over the world in terms of the results. The very people that it's intended to help are typically the people it hurts the most. It winds up backfiring on them because it wasn't thought through well. Often these subjects get looked at very emotionally. Not only that, but often when there are discussions about things like this and someone wants to bring up facts and logic and evidence of history of where this is headed, often they're pushed aside and told, "You don't have any compassion. You don't care. You're a racist or a sexist." In some way, they make it an emotionally based argument. Then someone is punished and looked down upon because they think with logic and facts.

Another way that emotions can affect us in how we live is not just in decisions of this nature, but also in our personal interactions with others. It's inevitable in human relationships that we get into conflict at various times. One party does something that hurts the other or someone misunderstands something that someone else does. In one way or another, we wind up in conflict with each other. The Bible gives us a protocol to follow in such situations to help manage this type of thing.

Matthew 18:15. *"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16) But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' 17) And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. (NKJV)*

Notice here he's basically giving a multiple step process of how to deal with conflict. Emotions often play a part when we have human conflicts, regardless of what the original situation was. Often if someone upsets or hurts us, then our emotions get involved. That can distort the facts of what took place because, as human beings, we're

going to see ourselves as the good guy and the other person as the bad guy. If we follow this process, this enables us not only to be able to discuss the issue, but to also find out what the other person's perspective is. It's a guide to check our own perceptions, because sometimes we misunderstood the issue or we've imputed motives to the other person that they never intended. We took their actions or words in a way that wasn't what they meant at all. Maybe we misperceived things, but if you play through this process, again, it doesn't always end in a successful outcome with people being reconciled with each other. If you get to a point where someone is just belligerent and they won't try to work with another individual, well then you get them out of your life.

Here's what often happens, even in Church of God circles. If you talk with numerous ministers throughout the Church of God, you'll often hear agreement on the fact that one of the most ignored scriptures in the Bible amongst the church is this section of scripture that I just read. To talk about the subject of conflicts and relationships and mention Matthew 18, everybody immediately knows what you're talking about. But then watch the situation happen where this becomes a relevant issue and there's a conflict or disagreement and you mention this to people, and invariably what you're going to hear is, "Well, yeah that's good advice, but let me tell you why it doesn't apply to me. My situation is unique." In one way or another, they're going to be exempt from it. Regardless of what the details are, you're typically going to hear a reason why it just doesn't apply to them. They can jump right to the end and cut off relationships with other people, never having to deal with it or talk about it because for one reason or another, they're going to be the exception. That is one of the most commonly ignored scriptures in the Church of God. It's not like people are not aware of this. Just talk to other church members and mention Matthew 18. Even though there's other stuff in this chapter, that's immediately what will come to people's mind, the instructions of how to deal with conflict. Again, watch what happens when an issue comes up. You'll typically find that it's completely ignored. If you mention it, what you'll hear is, "Here's the reason why it doesn't apply to my situation, and I don't have to practice it." It's a human nature thing and a common phenomenon in the Church of God.

When situations like this happen, there's also another side to this equation as well. Often innocent bystanders, who weren't a part of the original conflict, kind of get pulled into the situation. Someone that they know or care about is a person involved in a conflict and maybe shares their story and situation with their friends and family. Human nature being what it is, we're going to typically present the story of, "Here's what I did and here's what this dirty dog did to hurt me." I'm the good guy and they're the bad guy. What often happens is the innocent bystander who wasn't involved in the conflict hears one side of the story and emotionally feels, "This is my friend who I care about, and they've been wronged." They then emotionally jump to a conclusion in that regard as well without even understanding the full context of what took place.

The Bible also gives good advice on this.

Proverbs 18:17. *The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him. (NKJV)*

In other words, if you just heard one side of the story, and again human nature being what it is, we're typically going to slant the story to, "I'm the good guy, and I was done wrong and the other person is the bad guy." That often happens even when there's not a willful desire to try to mislead or deceive anybody. We're all just human and we see things by our own perspective and how we perceived it and we tell the story accordingly. As we read in Jeremiah, our minds and our hearts are deceitful, and we can be completely convinced that we're in the right, but that may not be the facts of what actually happened. I found this particularly in marriage counseling when there are two parties and a lot has transpired and there are hurt feelings and issues on both sides. As I often like to put it, there's three sides to the story. There's his version of the story, there's her version of the story and there's the objective truth of what actually happened. Normally the truth is somewhere in the middle between those two, because both parties are telling their skewed version of the story. Again, that's not necessarily because they were willfully trying to mislead anyone. It's often because they're human, and we perceive us as the good guy.

Another principle here to make sure we are exercising this right is in verse 13.

Proverbs 18:13. *He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him. (NKJV)*

That's what so often happens when we make an emotional decision. We don't have all the facts. We haven't analyzed the situation. We haven't gotten both sides of the story. Something strikes our emotions and then we jump to a conclusion in that regard, and again reverse engineer logic to convince ourselves that we did the right thing. That's what normally happens. The way we can avoid this is to follow these principles, not jumping to a conclusion until you've heard both sides of the story and having heard the matter and getting the facts before you try to judge it. As I mentioned, issues have to be evaluated over time. Often what you get at the immediate moment isn't the full story. Sometimes you have to look at the bigger picture to realize the full picture.

As I mentioned, emotions can very much affect how we make judgments of people in situations. We have to realize one of the idiosyncrasies of human nature and how our emotions are is that sometimes we like to look at things simplistically because it's comforting to our emotions. To further back this up, I'd like to once again quote from Dr. Thomas Sowell. He recently retired, but for a number of years he had a running column in a number of conservative websites and newspapers. Periodically, he would do a random thoughts column. In other words, there would be different thoughts on different subjects, but not enough for an article. This is from one of his random thoughts columns. This is again from nationalreview.com and posted August 26, 2008.

The reason so many people misunderstand so many issues is not that these issues are so complex, but the people do not want a factual or analytical explanation that leaves them emotionally unsatisfied. They want villains to hate and heroes to cheer, and they don't want explanations that do not give them that.

Often, we tend to look at subjects like that. Just to give you an illustration of this, think of this in terms of how we often make judgments about people. As we go through life, we make assessments of individuals that we deal with. More often than not, we tend to have what you might call a good box and a bad box. If we generally like a person and our personalities hit it off and we respect them for whatever reason, we tend to see them in our good box. We tend to have a filter in our mind of how we interact with them and we see things they do in a positive perspective. We give them the benefit of the doubt. Whereas if somebody rubs us wrong or they've hurt us in the past, or we have a negative impression of them, we have a bad box. We put them in the bad box, and sometimes they can't do anything right in our eyes, because no matter what they do or say, we're not inclined to give them the benefit of the doubt. We jump to a negative conclusion because that person just rubs us wrong for whatever reason.

Let's look at a Biblical example that can clearly illustrate this concept. We need to be able to evaluate subjects, looking at both sides of the story in complex issues. Typically, what happens with most of us is we're not in the good box or the bad box, we're somewhere in between. We're a mixture of the things we did right and the things we totally messed up on. Look at the life of King David for example. We often look to him as a Biblical hero. He fought for the armies of God, he took on Goliath, he had such integrity that he wouldn't raise his hand against the Lord's anointed, and he wrote many of the Psalms. That's all true. However, isn't he the one that committed adultery and murder and set up one of his own troops, literally sent the soldiers back to the battlefield with instructions for his own betrayal? That's pretty cold. But think of how you can look at this guy's life. We know how the story ends, and we know he will be in the Kingdom of God and king over Israel. So, we tend to put him in the good box. But imagine if you lived in his lifetime, particularly if you were related to Bathsheba and Uriah and how you could see this. They could see him as a dirty dog that set up and killed my friend, and see him in the bad box. We need to look at both sides of the story, not just emotionally jumping to a conclusion, but evaluating the subject.

This is not only true in how we deal with individuals. This can also be true and affect how we interact with God's word, with the truth. If we think from an emotional perspective, it can affect how we perceive the Bible and how we perceive God's word.

As an example, in the world's popular religions, not necessarily amongst the Church of God, there are preachers like Joel Osteen that are very popular. For those of you outside the U.S., you may not recognize the name, but he's a popular protestant preacher in Houston, Texas. He has a very large congregation. The area where they meet is nearly the size of a football stadium. He has a television program and has written a number of books. If you listen to the kind of things he puts across, it's really more of a health, wealth and prosperity gospel. It's more of a Tony Robbins type of motivational speaker approach wrapped in the façade of the Bible. The reason this message is so popular is because it sounds good. If you follow God, He's going to take all of your pain away. He will make you healthy, wealthy and prosperous. Who wouldn't want that message? It sounds great.

The problem is that it simply does not match with the New Testament. You will find in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, the blessings and cursing. You will find a picture there, in an Old Covenant setting, where it's a physical covenant and salvation is not offered. Yes, you will find a situation there where if you continually obey God, He takes all the pain out of your life and makes it wonderful. Read the New Testament and you see a very different picture. *Blessed are you when you fall into severe trials.* You're basically told that you will be glorified with Christ if you suffer as He suffered, enduring persecution, the whole development of character through adversity. It's fundamental to the process of salvation. That's an easy concept to prove. It's all throughout the New Testament. Does that appeal to emotions? Do I have to sign up for having to endure to the end and suffer and be obedient and deal with harsh trials? That doesn't sound like a lot of fun. That's how human nature looks at it. We like the idea that, "If I obey God, everything goes well with an easy slide into the kingdom. I get salvation on top of having an easy life." That sounds great, but it does not match the Bible. What you will often see when people are pitching this type of idea is that there are lots of antidotal stories, lots of use of the word "need" and "deserve," very short on evidence of scripture, because there's a mountain of scriptures that contradict that. We have to realize that we have to look analytically at the evidence of scripture, not just following our emotions and what we like to think.

Let me give you another example in Acts 17. I'm sure if I mention the term "the Bereans," that's something most all of you recognize. Those were the ones that searched the scriptures, and that's exactly right. Let's notice the context in which that comment was made.

Acts 17:1. *Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.*

2) Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,

3) explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ." (NKJV)

Notice he's not just preaching from his personal experience, he's demonstrating from the scriptures. He's demonstrating from the evidence of the Old Testament, all the prophecies, particularly from Isaiah that foretells Christ's coming and the role He would fulfill, and in graphic detail what He would go through. He's basically demonstrating this individual we know as Jesus Christ, He's the one being talked about here, and this is the Savior. Think about this from the perspective of the people who were hearing this at the time. This is radical teaching. This was something totally new for them. If you had been a Jew up to this point and you're familiar with the Old Testament, and now he's saying, "This Messiah has already come and He is who you have to accept for salvation." That's a new idea that they had to deal with.

4) And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.

- 5) *But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious [their actions are becoming motivated by emotion], took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.*
- 6) *But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.*
- 7) *Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus."*
- 8) *And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things.*
- 9) *So, Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.*
- 10) *Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.*
- 12) *These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica [notice what the fair-minded did], in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.*
- 13) *Therefore, many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.*
- 14) *But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds.*
(NKJV)

Notice what's happening here. Paul was introducing a new teaching. He's basically telling them that Jesus Christ is the prophesied Messiah. This was a new idea for them, but notice the different reactions. The Bereans searched the scriptures. They analyzed the subject. They searched to see if these things were true. Also, think about the effort they had to put into this. At that time, they weren't in a situation where they had multiple translations of the Bible or the internet, a laptop with PC study bible and all these easy ways to get this information. They had to go to the synagogue and get a scroll to read this to search this out. They put in some effort to analyze all of this to logically think this subject through.

Notice the Jews that are against him. Notice their reaction. Just to be humorous about this, and this struck me as I prepared this message, the Jews that were against him were quite frankly acting like college students at U.C. Berkley. If you've seen the news recently, at times there were conservative speakers there to lecture on a particular subject. What would happen is the students just revolted and violently rioted because someone is coming to bring a point of view that they don't agree with. They're so focused on emotion that they're not looking at it from the standpoint of searching out the truth. Instead what they're doing is violently reacting and not analyzing the subject.

Notice, this was happening in Thessalonica. Notice what Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica.

1 Thessalonians 5:20. Do not despise prophecies.

...
21) *Test all things; hold fast what is good. (NKJV)*

To fully understand what he's saying here, let me give you the meanings of some of the Greek words he used. When he's referring to prophecies, he's not just referring to foretelling the future. That's what we tend to think of when we hear that word, although that is included in the meaning. The Greek word is "propheteia." It's Strong's 4394, and Thayer's Greek Lexicon defines it as, *discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God, whether by reproving, admonishing the wicked or comforting the afflicted or revealing things hidden, especially by foretelling future events*. In other words, it can certainly apply to prophecy, but it's also referred to inspired teaching. He said, "Don't despise this."

Notice in verse 21 it says to *test all things*. The Greek word for "test" is "dokimazo." It's Strong's 1381 and again Thayer's Greek Lexicon defines it as *to test, examine, prove, scrutinize to see whether a thing is genuine or not, as metals*. In other words, what he's saying is the Bereans took the approach of searching out the scriptures to analyze a subject to see if the evidence of scripture proved it right or not. They didn't just have an emotional reaction and riot. They analytically approached the subject to study and see if it's correct. They didn't just accept something new because it's new. That's a dangerous approach to take. With every subject, you analyze through it to see if it factually matches up with the evidence of scripture or not. It's just like everything else that we've mentioned in this subject. Fruits are evaluated over time. You have to get all the facts on a particular subject and analyze and think it through to make an analytical thought-out decision, regardless of what subject we're talking about.

Our society today is very focused on reacting from emotion literally from the standpoint where if you hold up facts and solid evidence and that hurts someone's feelings or rubs someone wrong, then you're a bad person, because you should put feelings above facts. That is exactly the opposite of what the Bible tells us. The Bible tells us we have to use God's word, not only the principles, but the evidence of scripture in how we live our lives and the decisions we make. So, realize going forward, we live in a culture today that constantly tells us to follow our hearts, but if we're going to follow God's example and the advice He gives us from the Bible, His advice is the exact opposite. God's advice is don't follow your heart.