

# Is Freud Filling Up Our Local Pulpits?

## Emotion: How the Church Gets it Wrong and Why it Matters

CAROL STREAM, IL—Psychology founders William James and Sigmund Freud described our emotions as merely physical sensations. Darwin believed they were animal instincts. Plato classified them as the lower part of our being, often at war with reason. Surprisingly, many of today's leading pastors and Bible teachers are often preaching the same message.

“For years we've been taught by our culture and in our churches that emotions are not to be trusted; that reason and knowledge and logic are the firm foundation on which to build our faith and our spiritual lives; that it's our attitudes and actions that matter, not how we feel about things,” says Dr. Matthew Elliott, a biblical theologian who has spent several years studying emotions and is considered one of modern-day Christianity's leading thinkers in the area of emotions.

In his new book, *Feel – The Power of Listening to Your Heart* (Tyndale House Publishers), Elliott reveals how many Christians have bought into a secular perspective that believes emotions are dangerous or bad. Oftentimes, Christians are taught that “emotions aren't trustworthy,” or “your feelings will get you into trouble.” But, says Elliott, this type of teaching can lead to emotional confusion or suppression. Many Christians, for example, hesitate to express intense joy in worship for fear of being branded “weird.” In contrast, other believers refuse to show emotion for fear of being labeled “weak.”

“God wants us to be emotionally mature with emotionally full lives,” says Elliott. “Becoming emotionally mature is not, as many teach, about becoming emotionally controlled. It is about becoming emotionally adept, emotionally wise, and emotionally skilled. It is about having lives that are chock-full of wonder and feeling—and then having the ability and practiced skill to live well and wisely in a richly emotional world.”

After years of intensive study, Elliott's research led to startling conclusions and a new awareness about the role emotions play in our lives and in the teachings of the Bible. In *Feel*, he shows how to experience freedom from legalistic, religious expectations, how to be liberated and really celebrate joyful occasions and blessings, how to achieve more authentic communication with your spouse and children, and how to transform the way you battle temptation.

With an entertaining style and stories of transformation, Elliott brings a fresh perspective to the question of “How do you feel?” and shows why the answer really matters to you and to God.

“When we neglect our feelings and teach that what we believe is all that really matters we are no longer teaching biblical Christianity which has to be felt and experienced according to Jesus,” says Elliott.



## About the Author

Dr. Matthew Elliott has a PhD in New Testament studies from the University of Aberdeen (Scotland) and serves as president of Oasis International Ltd., an interdenominational publisher and distributor of Bibles and Christian books. Oasis exists to make Christian literature available at very low prices in English-speaking Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean through local business owners. He has written two books, *Faithful Feelings* (Inter-Varsity UK/Kregel) and *Feel: The Power of Listening to Your Heart* (Tyndale House). Matthew and his wife, Laura, live in the Chicago suburbs with their three children.

## Now Available . . .

**Feel: *The Power of Listening to Your Heart***  
Tyndale House Publishers  
220 pages, 5½ x 9 softcover, \$13.99  
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## Meet Matthew Elliott

From the time he was a teenager, Matthew Elliott wanted to know what the Bible meant when it said to love God and hate evil. After earning a bachelor's degree in economics and master's degree in New Testament at Wheaton College, Matthew and his wife Laura decided to follow their passion and go to the University of Aberdeen in Scotland to study emotion in the Bible. He went on to earn both a Masters of Theology and a Doctorate of Philosophy in New Testament Studies and was ordained at College Church in Wheaton, Illinois under Dr. Kent Hughes.

These years of research and ministry training equipped him to help people clarify what they feel and why that matters. Elliott's passion is to see Christ-followers renew their faith, refresh their spirits and return to Jesus. He has dedicated himself to creating life-changing resources that will:

- Help people find emotional and spiritual authenticity and wholeness
- Equip people to know how to listen to their hearts and respond biblically

- Lead people to experience the vital and life-giving emotional life that God has planned
- Help people learn how to live in, with, and through their emotions
- Provide pastors and counselors with effective ways to minister by integrating a biblical view of emotion and an effective approach to counseling

His first book, *Faithful Feelings: Retbinking Emotion in the New Testament* (Inter-Varsity UK/Kregel, 2006) was hailed as a landmark study. John Piper writes: “The most thorough study on emotions in the New Testament is now Matthew Elliott’s Faithful Feelings” (What Jesus Demands from the World, Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006, 52). His second book, *Feel* (Tyndale House, 2008), has been endorsed by people such as Randy Alcorn, Steve Brown, and Robert Yarbrough.

In addition to his work on emotion and the Bible, Matthew is President of Oasis International, a multinational distributor of books and Bibles into the English-speaking developing world. Oasis and their national partners in Africa have now distributed more than four million books and Bibles by harnessing the power of entrepreneurship and sound business principles ([www.oasisint.net](http://www.oasisint.net)).

Matthew is most at home when he is with his wife of sixteen years, Laura, and their three children: Jackson, Evan, and Cailin. Having lived in several different countries and states, they now reside near Chicago, Illinois. The Elliotts enjoy biking, camping, watching their boys play basketball and Cailin dance ballet. They are active members of their church where they are leaders in the small group ministry. Discover more at [www.faithfulfeelings.com](http://www.faithfulfeelings.com).

## Quotables from *Feel* by Matthew Elliott

Many peoples’ spiritual lives are actually killing them. They are living by duty, by rote, by fulfilling their responsibilities to church and family. Their goal is to get all their ducks in a row, to believe all the right things and know why they believe it, and to act according to God’s commands. They think perhaps if they can get it all right, they will finally be fulfilled. But eventually they find it doesn’t matter how well they can do “all the right things.” They still find themselves dry, cold, and empty. They do not live by love as God created them to. (46)

Reason and emotions are so totally intertwined and interdependent that anyone who tries to separate them will end up with spiritual dwarfism, never attaining true maturity or emotional fullness.

God made us emotional and rational beings. The two go hand in hand. They support, define, and clarify each other. Emotion and reason together are what makes us complete and make our lives full. (77)

Without passion, our lives become dependent on sheer will—the mental gift to persevere. A life that is an endless effort of sheer will is a life of drudgery, tedium, infinite list making. A life that makes relationship with God merely a process of logic, a rational understanding, is a life that “embraces”



God and “relates” to him only in mental concepts.

No wonder we get burned out. No wonder we become spiritually dead. (99)

It is easier to believe that joy in hard times has nothing to do with our feelings. It is easier to obey the command of Jesus to love our enemies if loving has nothing to do with God really changing our hearts. The Christian life is easier to conduct when it is separated from real emotional heart change.

Emotional transformation is hard, and for most people it's easier to avoid it. (102)

Without a worn Bible, we will never get through the troubles of life with a glad heart. (144)

We think if we force ourselves to do the right stuff, control our reactions, grit our teeth, and do our duty, it is godly. But it isn't. That kind of “will-power living” and control of our emotions is far from godliness. What can look like spiritual maturity to many is just really emotional repression—our deluded efforts to look good, assuming a form of godliness, without the truth being in us.

Living by a list of dos and don'ts won't get us where we want to be. (242)

Living in the heart of God means knowing him so well and believing him so much that we can live out and understand the truth through our emotions.

Yes, what we know about God is based in part on what the facts tell us—what theology tells us. But it's also based on what we know personally, relationally, and emotionally, because of how we have immersed ourselves in him. Our hearts can hold truth about God. (244)

## Feel by Matthew Elliott

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- Is it Love or Legalism? How to Discern the Difference
- Should Christians be Emotional? The Place of Emotions in the Life of the Believer
- Can Emotions Always be Trusted?
- Emotions: How the Church has Gotten it Wrong and What to do About it
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