

Welcome to the most uplifting title of this series:

The Baby is Proof, that God Cries Too! ;-)

Wow, THAT sounds like fun!

A baby crying—who doesn't love THAT sound?!

The idea of Jesus the man crying—anything more unsettling than listening to a grown man cry? Disturbing...(whisper: "Not a fun time...")

This morning, I want to start biblically with the truth that God cries.

We're going to start there, but we're going to go somewhere else with this.

So I promise: we're not doing 30 minutes on things that makes us cry. (Although you never know when the Holy Spirit's going to make you cry—you're on your own with that!)

At the center of this idea that God cries, is this name for God: Immanuel. The prophet Isaiah first uses the name Immanuel in 735 B.C. It's two Hebrew words combined.

**Immanu** which means **with us**.

**Ei** which means **God**. So literally it means **God with us**.

The great Xmas song, "O Come, O come Immanuel!" O come, O come, God with us!

This is the theological concept we've been threading through this whole series: God manifested Himself in flesh—the Incarnation—to literally be with us—Immanuel. To literally put on human flesh—to know what it is to feel what we feel.

In no other world religion does god put on human flesh. In no other religion could a god be called Immanuel.

(SELAH)

How many of you have seen a baby being born?

What's the first sound they make? CRYING.

When Jesus was born, He cried, and no doubt cried many more times throughout His infancy.

And let's look at a passage where Jesus cried as an adult.

## Let's look at **John 11:17-38 NIV**

In this passage we see Jesus interacting with three grown up siblings that were His close friends. Mary, Martha and Lazarus, their brother, who had been sick and finally died.

<sup>17</sup> On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. <sup>18</sup> Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, <sup>19</sup> and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. <sup>20</sup> When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

<sup>21</sup> "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

<sup>24</sup> Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; <sup>26</sup> and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

<sup>27</sup> "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

<sup>28</sup> And after she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you."

<sup>29</sup> When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. <sup>30</sup> Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup> When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

<sup>32</sup> When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

<sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, **he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.** <sup>34</sup> "Where have you laid him?" he asked.

"Come and see, Lord," they replied.

<sup>35</sup> **Jesus wept.**

<sup>36</sup> Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

<sup>37</sup> But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

<sup>38</sup> **Jesus, once more deeply moved**, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance.

*John 11:17-38 NIV*

From there Jesus tells them to roll away the stone that sealed the tomb and commands Lazarus to walk out. And he does; wrapped in strips of burial cloth and four days' worth of "death breath."

(somebody needs a testaMINT—hay-O!)

Check this out: Here's Jesus:

He KNOWS He's going to raise Lazarus from the dead.

He KNOWS how this is going to end.

He could have so been very stoic.

He could have been like, "Whoa—Mary—Martha—girls, get a grip. I AM the resurrection—I am so gonna fix this.

There's NO need to get worked up! Take a pill! ... *'For the love of My Dad,' I'm JESUS!*"

But that's NOT ANYTHING like He responded. Look at these verses:

<sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, **he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled**. John 11:33

**Jesus wept.** John 11:35

<sup>38</sup> **Jesus, once more deeply moved**, came to the tomb... John 11:38

Here's Jesus—**He knows He FULLY has this situation in hand.**

He **KNOWS Lazarus will WALK out of that tomb.**

But when Jesus saw Mary and her friends crying over Lazarus...it broke his HEART. He knew the outcome, but Jesus' HEART was so soft and compassionate-- that it jacked Him up seeing his friends grieving—Jesus' HEART was moved to tears...  
(*soak that in...*)

Jesus crying is NOT about the physical act of crying.

Jesus crying reveals a soft, compassionate, and healthy HEART.

Jesus is displaying for us that if our heart is soft, compassionate and healthy—another way to say that is—if our heart is in tune with the Holy Spirit—that even

though we may know things are going to be ok—our heart should break, out of compassion for our fellow man.

That fact that Jesus wept, was moved, struggled and was troubled; models for us, the HEART, that you and I should have.

(SELAH)

Let me share why I think this passage jumped out at me this week and why God led me to Jesus' heart in the passage we just read.

When I went through the ordeal in Haiti last month with the other thirteen people on our team; there were a lot of emotions to work through initially. It was the closest near death experience of my life. It was miraculous.

And so after the dust settled and I started getting into a normal routine again, I've been noticing something about my heart.

On this side of that event, my heart is softer. It is more compassionate.

I am moved to tears easier—not about scared or negative things about the ordeal in Haiti—but about tender, compassionate, loving things, like the realization of the simple blessings of friends and family.

The other day I drove to Indy and as I got to the stop sign at an off ramp there was a man with a sign. I didn't think about it at all—quick as I could, I grabbed some cash and stuck it out the window.

Normally I would think about it. Weigh it out. Maybe I'd look. Maybe I'd just act like he wasn't there.

In some counseling sessions in the past couple weeks I've been more in tune with the pain of people I'm talking with and in tune with the Holy Spirit. My heart seems fully engaged with people and the Spirit in a new way.

I couldn't let a waitress get passed me the other day without looking her in the eyes and asking how she was doing.

Anatomically I'm unclear how this works, but somehow being shot in the leg has decalcified my heart.

And I am now so critically aware that the life you and I lead has a tendency to harden our hearts.

And I am so biblically aware, that if God, knowing all He knows and having seen all He's seen—can be moved to compassionate emotion—so should we.

Let me ask you some simple questions. Take this as a simple indicator of whether your heart is leaning to the soft compassionate side; or the hard disconnected side of life: **(Heart Exam)**

1. When you check out in retail stores or go out to dinner, how aware are you that the person waiting on you has a complete life outside their job and is loved by God?
2. When Sunday morning rolls around, is going to church something you look forward to? Or is it something you just do...because you should?
3. Is it easy to talk about other people?
4. Is it easy to not make a quiet time where you read the Bible and pray-- because you're just too busy?
5. Is it easy to walk passed people in need because they could just get a job if they wanted one?
6. Is it easy to blow past prayer requests because you know other people are praying?
7. Is it easy to live life focused on what you don't have instead of what you do have?
8. Is it easy to be a critic?

Those are really simple things...but how we answer those questions reveals the condition of our heart.

**Let me speak specifically to people who've been doing church and God for a while:**

Following God and living the Christian life is hard. It's a long hard road.

Over the years it's hard to see people come and go, on the staff and in the Body.

Over the years we can get less excited about Sundays,  
Less excited about serving (I did my time—it's younger people's turn)  
Less excited about giving

Less excited about loving those in need and those who make their own messes

Over the years you see God heal some things but not others...and it can be discouraging.

Sometimes over the years, that new soft heart God gave us when we accepted Christ starts to take on plaque...gets a little crusty...

(Pray...) If that's where you are, hold on—there's hope. I'll show you the way back in a few minutes.

(SELAH)

Let's understand the word "heart" biblically:

The word heart is used over 900 times in the Bible and it hardly ever means our physical heart.

Something mentioned that many times is something God cares a great deal about.

Biblically, the heart means the seat of our affections, intellect and will—our heart is our innermost being.

It is the place where a human being relates with God.

Let's look at this passage about the heart from **Ezekiel 11:18-20 NLT**

"When the people return to their homeland, they will remove every trace of their vile images and detestable idols. <sup>19</sup> And I will give them singleness of heart and put a new spirit within them. I will take away their **stony, stubborn heart** and give them a **tender, responsive heart**,<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>20</sup> so they will obey my decrees and regulations. Then they will truly be my people, and I will be their God.

*Ezekiel 11:18-20 NLT*

Ezekiel was a priest and prophet. He's speaking about the Jews living in exile after they left Egypt and their soon-to-be Promised Land or homeland.

And so he's saying when the people were in exile they had idols and ungodly ways of living; they had hard hearts.

But when they come into to their homeland or Promised Land, God will give them tender hearts, and live in fully God-honoring ways.

Even though we're talking Old Testament, this totally applies to us!

**Exile** is a **metaphor** for our **life before Christ**.

The **Promised Land** or **homeland** is a **metaphor** for a **life we've surrendered to God**.

And just like the Jews wanted to take idols and ungodly habits into the Promised Land; we who are saved, consciously and subconsciously cling to our old ways before Christ.

We're saved but we don't totally want to live the way God wants us to.

We still have those unsurrendered areas of our life.

We too, take idols and ungodly ways of living into the Promised Land.

Even though we're adopted into God's family and have a new identity; like the Jews—we sometimes live like our old self—not the new creation.

And Ezekiel gives us a barometer, if you will: he says that the **ways of God** give us a **tender, responsive heart**. And that the **ways of self** and **the world** give us a **stony, stubborn heart**.

And let's look at Jesus himself, using this same terminology as He's quoting Isaiah ch 6. And here he's describing people who don't really get God because of the **condition of their heart**.

For this people's heart has become calloused;  
they hardly hear with their ears,  
and they have closed their eyes.  
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,  
hear with their ears,  
understand with their hearts  
and turn, and I would heal them. **Matthew 13:15 NIV**

So based on Jesus' Words, here are our two tough questions:

**1. Are our eyes willing to see the things that move God's heart?**

Or do we look the other way because there's too much need in the world and we have a lot to do today?

Every time we look away, our heart hardens a little bit.

Every time we open our eyes, our heart more resembles the compassionate heart of Jesus.

## **2. Are we willing to listen to people in need, hurting people, broken people?**

Or do we choose not to listen because there's too much brokenness in the world and we can't fix everything?

Every time we choose not to listen our heart hardens a little bit.

Every time we listen and let ourselves grieve with those who grieve, our heart more resembles the compassionate heart of Jesus.

The way that God is Immanuel today in our world is through US!

Immanuel manifests his presence in this world when our eyes, ears, mind, heart and soul are open daily to the things and people God wants each of us to minister to.

It's EASIER to look away.

It's EASIER to turn a deaf ear.

It's EASIER to ignore the multitude of need in this broken world.

But our God—the one who cries too—NEVER CALLED US TO **EASY!**

We are **not** a church committed to **easy**.

We are a church committed to being the **individual vessels** through which IMMANUEL FLOWS.

It is impossible to live the life God calls us to, with a **hard heart**.

A **tender, responsive heart** is the **path** through which, **God flows**.

**And just like hardened arteries restrict the flow of blood in our bodies, A hardened heart restricts the flow of the Holy Spirit through our life.**

God's plan is for US to be the vessels through which IMMANUEL FLOWS!

It is THROUGH US that GOD is WITH US. IMMANUEL.

(SELAH)

If you didn't do well with my heart questions earlier, I want to leave you with the biblical path to the tender heart that God longs for you to have.

**1. Christ must SAVE our heart.** He has to first come into our life, ransom us from our sin, be allowed to be the leader of our life. And He will GIVE us a tender responsive heart as [Ezekiel 11:19](#) says.

**(Roman's Road: Romans 3:23, 6:23, 10:13)**



- a) For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.
- b) For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.
- c) For "Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.

## **2. Christ must TEACH our heart.**

They said to each other, "Didn't our hearts feel strangely warm as He talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?" **Luke 24:32 nlt**

Here's what I call the "3 Rs" of how to read God's Word:

**1. READ.** Simple: hang out predominantly in the New Testament. Even simpler, start a [YouVersion.com](http://YouVersion.com) reading plan. READ DAILY. If you can't read daily—you have a heart problem!

**2. REFLECT.** Simple: what is God saying in this passage? Think about it.

**3. RE-ORDER.** Simple: re-order your life based on the words you read in the Bible.

(Play: How do you read the Bible? "READ, REFLECT, RE-ORDER")

## **3. Christ must be the LORD of our heart.**

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord... **1 Peter 3:15 NIV**

In other words if our relationship with God is based on salvation and not also based on submitting to His will in our life, re-ordering our life...that will lead to a self-directed life, which as we know now, is the path to a hard heart.

## **4. Take your heart to CHURCH every week.**

Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. **Colossians 3:16 NLT**

We cannot have a tender responsive heart without EACH OTHER. God designed our heart to need each other, to teach and counsel each other. We are wired to worship together and to be thankful to God together.

Sundays +2\* (more than passive attending)...

*(\*Sundays +2 means attend every Sunday, plus SERVE somewhere and get in a GROUP. +2 is serving & community)*

The church is God's idea and if we're not committed to it weekly and fully in a +2 way--- that says something about our heart.

(review)

- 1. Christ must SAVE our heart.**
- 2. Christ must TEACH our heart**
- 3. Christ must be the LORD of our heart.**
- 4. Take our heart to CHURCH every week.**

Pray out