

# To Know Him is to Love Him

Dr Jon Garvey *contrasts modern preaching styles*

**F**or a long time now, *Prophecy Today* has been pointing out that there is little interest in studying the Word of God amongst many Christians nowadays. If anything that lack of concern has increased, not diminished, since we first drew attention to it.

As someone whose main ministry is the teaching of the Bible, this sometimes seems inexplicable to me. It astonishes me that a speaker can minister for an hour with scant reference to the Word, abuse its sense when he *does* refer to it, and yet be hailed by all as a mighty preacher of God. On the other hand, a speaker who explains what the Scripture actually *means* is likely to find himself dismissed as irrelevant, impractical and, as likely as not, incomprehensible.

## Head Versus Heart

**I**f he were to ask his congregation the reason for their obvious preference, such a man would probably be told, "Well, he preaches to the *heart*, but you preach to the *head*." If this were only a comparison between two particular preachers, it might be a reasonable criticism. But I have been around long enough to see that it's the whole *approach* to preaching that is meant by such comments. If a speaker uses many anecdotes, recounts his spiritual experiences, and quotes just enough of the Bible to support what he wants to say, then he seems to be described as a heart-preacher. If he expounds Scripture and applies its detailed meaning to life, he's a head-preacher. The

distinction is so widespread that, depending which Christian conference you go to, you can be pretty sure to hear only one of the two types.

I believe that behind this division is a misunderstanding that's actually very recent and also very unbiblical. There are quite a few people who make a big (and not especially historically valid) distinction between Hebrew and Greek thought. But there is a much

understanding with the mind, but check out the Hebrew, or the Greek, and you'll find they are translating the word for *heart*, pretty well every time.

Why do both love and knowledge belong to the heart? It is because the Bible, unlike the modern Christian, doesn't accept that you can have one without the other. And that's obvious from experience too. If I love anything or anyone, it's because of what I

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more important difference between *biblical* thought (whether Greek or Hebrew) and *modern* thought.

Being modern ourselves, we are likely not to notice when we are thinking as modern people, rather than as biblical people.

Where the modern idea of a separation between the intellect (seated in the head) and the emotions (seated in the heart) comes from I don't know, but I *do* know that there's no such separation in the Bible.

## Love and Knowledge

**L**ook it up and see. Where does love come from? The heart (*Deut. 6:5, 1 Tim. 1:5, 1 Pet. 1:22*). Where do thought, knowledge and understanding come from? The heart (*Prov. 2:2, Eccles. 8:5, Jn. 12:40, Heb. 4:12*). Modern translations like *NIV* hide this sometimes by linking

know about them. And if I love them, I want to know more.

I love 60's rock music, and must have spent hundreds of hours working out who was in what group when, and hundreds more boring everyone I know by telling them about it (or singing the songs). One of my fellow-elders loves Manchester United Football Club, and could probably tell me everyone who ever played for it, and when. It would bore me stiff, because I don't love Man. U. But both of us love our families, and can tell you more about them than anyone else could, I guess.

In fact, nobody in his right mind learns about something unless he loves it. This is little understood nowadays. Anybody who wades through some thick and detailed book about, say, philosophy is thought to be dull. But in fact you've really got to be excited

about something to go into such depth. Dull, uncommitted people are the ones who can't be bothered. Does that say something about Christians who decry the need for studying and understanding the Word of God?

### *Selective Hearing*

**I** can think of only two exceptions to the rule that knowledge and love must go together. The first is if you study something you *don't* love for the sake of something that you *do*. I've never been very interested in diseases, as diseases. I found learning about them all in my medical training a real chore. But I did it anyway, because I *did* love getting people well from them. In a similar way, I have met people who study Scripture not because they love God, but because they love arguing, or love ancient history, or some other reason. Such people would certainly call religion that involves the emotions "fanaticism". But they don't show any spiritual understanding of what they read, either. They neither love, nor truly know.

The second exception is when you don't *want* to know more about what you think you love. I have wonderful memories of music I used to listen to when I was very young. If I happen to see some long-unheard song on a CD, all those nostalgic feelings flood back. Part of me wants to buy the record. But another part knows that the magical feelings will disappear for good if I do, so it stays in the shop. Someone else might hate to be told on a TV documentary that their childhood hero was in fact a wife-beater or a drug addict. In both cases the reason for avoiding knowledge is that we don't actually love the music, or the role model, at all – we simply love our feelings about them.

### *Easy Listening*

**T**hat is the real danger of a faith that falsely separates

"love" from "knowledge"; "head" from "heart". We end up not believing in the Lord as he is – as he reveals himself in Scripture. We prefer to believe in the God who fits in with our feelings, rather than the God whose ways are higher than ours. We prefer the Jesus that we hear about from preachers who make us feel good, rather than the Jesus who surprises and constantly challenges us. We prefer the Spirit who floods us with a warm glow, rather than the Spirit who wrote and who interprets the Bible – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.

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The problem is that even an appeal like this article – an appeal to listen to what the Word of God has to say about itself, and to let that word transform our understanding, our emotions and finally our will – is likely to be met by the protests of human feelings. "But these preachers have been greatly used of God." "But this movement has an anointing of the Spirit." "But God is greater than his Word." The fact is, people prefer what they feel to what God's Word tells them.

### *What Will we do in the End?*

**B**ut this is not new. The prophet Jeremiah said (5:30-31):  
*A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land:  
The prophets prophesy lies* ("well, as always there is a mixture of flesh and Spirit"),

*the priests rule by their own authority* ("if you haven't heard this teaching from me, you've probably not heard it from anybody"),  
*and my people love it this way* ("you have to meet people where they are").  
*But what will you do in the end?*

What *will* we do in the end? If history is anything to go by, we will find ourselves wandering farther and farther from God. Let us not say that God didn't warn us.

**PT**