

Jonathan Edwards and the Human Heart

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[0 : 00] Thank you, Kyle. What Kyle didn't mention is when I've been in the library, I've actually been reading the complete works of Jonathan Edwards, so I've finished those. That's a joke. But it is really good to be here this morning. I know I'm in the company of people whose not only spirituality far advances mine, but knowledge and probably affection for Mr. Edwards advances mine as well.

So please make comments, make criticisms, add to the discussion as much as possible. We're going to be looking mostly at his religious affections.

And one caveat before I begin, you might be tempted to say, he doesn't sound like he's from Texas. Well, before walking you through the effectual signs of what someone from Texas sounds like, I can just remind you just mildly that the population of Texas is close to the population of Canada.

And so lest you call me an un-Texan-like person, I should not call you an un-Canadian-like person. So with that, let us begin.

How can we know who in fact is a genuine convert? Or more particularly, can we even know if someone is a genuine convert?

[1 : 22] I think the need to provide solid answers to this question is what led Jonathan Edwards to write his religious affections in the mid-1740s while pastoring a congregation in New England.

Can we actually know who is genuinely converted? As a consequence, both to large-scale and small-scale revivals in New England, there arose a great debate regarding the role of affections or enthusiasm or external manifestations in revival and Christian practice.

And on one hand, some celebrated these displays as perfect evidence that God was at work in the countryside and in individuals. While there are others on the other side who criticized these as excessive, enthusiastic, and just grand deluding.

Edwards, who both vigorously supported the revivals, thank you, Kyle, and believed that God was powerfully at work, tried to walk a middle way. He wanted to create a solid biblical foundation for what actually was the place and role of religious affections or external manifestations.

And he wanted to do this by clearly articulating what the biblical evidence of true conversion is. And so his efforts became what we're going to be looking at today, his work, the religious affections.

[2 : 48] Now, this is just an old issue because clearly these things don't affect Christians today, right? We never debate the role of enthusiasm or charismatic practices in worship.

We're never concerned with what constitutes saving faith or what defines a true church. We never wonder about the assurance of our own salvation. And we certainly are never tempted to wonder if those around us are genuinely converted.

And even more particularly, we wonder if some of our religious experiences are genuine. And wonder what to make of seemingly spiritual leaders who have sudden falls from grace.

What do we do with these things? How do we make sense out of these things in our world and in our lives? For me, I became interested in the religious affections about eight years ago when a mentor of mine suggested that I read this before starting in university ministry.

And there were several times that I got to about page 20 and then had to quit. Edwards is a tough go. He's not just a kind of armchair reading.

[3 : 55] He is tough. And not only is his logic dense, but Edwards, as any good Puritan should, piles clause upon clause and phrase upon phrase to drive home a powerful argument.

And he doesn't always give the clear signals of where he's heading either. So when I had the opportunity to speak at Learners' Exchange, I took this as the perfect accountability to finally read Religious Affections.

So now I consider it, after reading through the whole work, I consider it one of my great life achievements of actually making it through. So here I am.

A few other reasons that I wanted to read Edwards. One, after being in ministry for six years, that I had a hard time understanding why it seemed like some people would start really strong and then not finish.

Or some people would have clear affections, clear seeming evidences of conversion, and then seemingly walk away from the faith. I had also been involved in a few different charismatic groups.

[5 : 00] And while I really appreciated a lot of the enthusiasm in a positive way and the focus on having a true encounter with God, that I looked at some of my friends' lives and I just had questions.

Because I saw that they would have these really high experiences with God and seemed to have a clear vision and a clear perspective of what their life was to be about. And then a couple months later would be down in the gutters again, having no idea what God wanted for them, having no idea how to fight this sin that they were struggling with, and really just confused about what God was doing.

And the third reason was Edwards is an American. He's my people. And I couldn't foresee making it through seminary without actually dealing with the most significant American philosopher and theologian in our history.

It's unfortunate he's not from Texas, but we can't fault him for that, can we? So I want to read a few things that some other people say about Edwards to kind of give us an idea of why he's a big deal.

First, here is something from Martin Lloyd-Jones. My advice to you, read Jonathan Edwards. Stop going to so many meetings. Stop craving for the various forms of entertainment, which are so popular in evangelical circles at the present time.

[6 : 26] Learn to stay at home. Learn to read again. And not merely read the exciting stories of certain modern people. He continues on talking about the need for reading Edwards in terms of revival.

He says, He says, He's a brave man.

It is certainly true that they helped me more than anything else. If I had the power, I would make these two volumes compulsory reading for all ministers. Also, this is here what John Piper says about Jonathan Edwards, who has obviously influenced him in tremendous ways.

John Piper's a pastor in Minnesota. What Edwards saw in God and in the universe because of God, through the lens of scripture, was breathtaking. To read him, that is Edwards, after you catch your breath, is to breathe the uncommon air of the Himalayas of revelation.

And the refreshment that you get from this high, clear, God-entranced air, does not take out the valleys of suffering in this world, but fits you to spend your life there for the sake of love, with invincible and worshipful joy.

[7 : 45] Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. God, we stop again to remark and to confess that you are the purpose that we're here, that you are the ultimate good, you are the sovereign, wise, and holy God, and we long for this time to be saturated with your presence and to be something that pushes us to know you more deeply.

So ask that you'd be with us in our dialogue, in my speaking, and that you would shine forth. We ask this in Christ's name. Amen. So to get our minds going, I have a few questions, maybe some fun questions we can deal with to start.

So we have a pop quiz of sorts. I think these things are more fun when you shout out your answers, so please don't be shy. Okay, question four. What year was Edwards born?

1699, 1703, 1710, or 1776? I'm not hearing shouting out. Okay, 1703 is correct.

And he died at the age of 54, so 1957, from a smallpox vaccination shortly after accepting the presidency of the College of New Jersey, of the College of New Jersey, which ended up becoming Princeton.

[9 : 20] So he didn't live until the American Revolution, which makes, I think, his life interesting for what maybe he didn't be a part of, or wasn't a part of. Okay. Which is greater, the number of children Edwards had, or the number of hours he would spend in his study on a daily basis?

Yes. Children. Children, hours, children. Eleven children, I think. Eleven children is correct.

Unfortunately, though, he spent about 13 hours in his study on a daily basis.

So apparently he was a loving family man as well, and often would go on rides on a horse. But he was a very, he was an introverted person who studied a ton, and who set his mind to his work.

He wasn't necessarily the most gregarious or outgoing person, but he did have a sharp and clear intellect that he honed quite well, and was an incredibly disciplined man. Okay.

True or false? As a revival preacher, Edwards often preached extemporaneously, charismatically, and without notes, as his grandfather Solomon Stoddard did. Okay, I'm hearing some falses.

[10:28] Not yellings, but I hear your falses. That's correct. That he would often use a manuscript that he would write out, even though he'd basically memorized it. And here's one, something that Dr. Packer said about Edwards' preaching.

In Edwards' sermons, riveting expository skill combines with a wide thematic range, a wealth of evangelical thought, and a pervasive awareness of eternal issues, and a compelling logical flow to make them arresting, searching, devastating, and Christ-centeredly doxological to the last degree. His preaching style, though quiet, was commanding, and by all accounts, was almost hypnotic in its power to fix his hearers' minds on divine things. That's my praise.

For that reason, as we get towards the end of our talk, I will be using much more of Edwards' words than my own. Okay, next question. Did he serve as a missionary in Scotland or to Native Americans?

You know, he's a Calvinist. I was hoping someone would say that. No, he actually served as a missionary to Native Americans in Western Massachusetts. But the question is, and he, one of the things is, he had a passion for the Native Americans, even though he was a prolific writer and author, that he did have a passion for missions.

[11:52] And one of the things that he did is that he published the life of David Brainerd, who was a missionary to the Native Americans and who was very close to Edwards' family.

True or false? Edwards left his church because he sensed a call to be a missionary. This is indeed false. He was fired from his church.

Yeah, you know. Fortunately, these things don't happen in our day where people get fired for wrong reasons. And to get a sense of why he was fired or why he was kicked out of his church, I want to share some context about churches in New England at the time.

So this takes us into New England congregational life. So the majority of New England churches were founded by Puritans who wanted a pure church that would be a pure society.

This ended up in setting up a congregational state church in much of New England and, as one might expect, became the center of town life. One town, one church, one people. However, the churches didn't remain as pure as their founders might have hoped.

[13:04] Mark Knoll comments that the hegemony of Puritan rule endured only because its Puritan leaders were willing to relax their early stress on conversion as a prerequisite for church membership in order to preserve the structures of a comprehensively Christian society.

So Puritans wanted to uphold both the totality of the church or of the Christian society, but also place a significant role on individual personal conversion and holiness.

So consequently, many... And so what happened over time is that many of those in the church had actually not been truly converted. They hadn't expressed faith in Christ. And so what happened was that the church was...

There was a question of what do we do with these people who haven't confessed or professed faith in Christ and shared a genuine conversion experience? What do we do as a church? One innovation was called the Halfway Covenant in 1662, which what this did is made the provision for the children of non-professing members, so people who were part of the church but hadn't professed, for those children to be baptized into the church.

And so in a sense, it grew the numbers and the members of the church, although the communion was restricted only to those who were genuinely converted or at least who had a clear profession of faith.

[14:27] So that in some ways, there kind of became a two-tiered scheme of church membership, which obviously couldn't last, but that's the way they did things for the time. And what happened is that Jonathan Edwards' grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, who this is important, just kind of a tangential piece of information because it will come up, who pastored a large and influential church in Northampton, Massachusetts, and who was even called by some of his detractors the Pope of the Connecticut River Valley.

Here's, can I, Northampton here, Boston, here, Connecticut River Valley, down with his blue lines. What he did is that he believed that communion was a converting ordinance, which means that he

believed that people might be converted in the taking of communion, so that as long as people had morally upright lives, they were invited to take communion.

So there was plenty of disagreement with this, but this is what stood in the church in Northampton. And this is significant because this is the church that Jonathan would come to pastor when he was in his mid-twenties, and he had pastored there for over 20 years.

And it's because that Jonathan opposing this practice is what ultimately put him on the wrong side of the congregation and got him fired. Politics, I guess. So as I said, Jonathan Edwards arrived in Northampton to pastor in 1727 at the age of 24.

He left Yale behind where he graduated at the top of his class and later tutored after writing his master's thesis in Latin, as most of us do. And later that year, he was married to Sarah Pierpont, who had caught Jonathan's eye four years previously when she was just 13, for her model spirituality, a quality that Jonathan held to be vitally important.

[16:20] So he came to Northampton in 1727, but let's talk about what happened there. Let's talk about what happened that encouraged him or made it necessary for him to write religious affections.

First, we have to remember that because the Puritans lived under a sense of being, to quote Mark Knoll again, under the direct inspection of God, New England at this time was a religiously tender place.

Also, as we mentioned, that in the church, there were many people who weren't truly converted or who hadn't made professions of faith in the church. Quite a bit different than Vancouver, where only 2% of the population goes to church.

There is a state church that most people, the vast majority, were a part of the church, so to speak. And that Northampton itself was a spiritually active place, and renewings and revivals were not uncommon.

In fact, that Solomon Stoddard, Jonathan's grandfather who preceded him in Northampton, had experienced several harvests during his 50-plus years of ministry. However, that what would occur in the mid-30s, and especially what happened throughout New England and much of the American colonies in the early 40s, differed dramatically in scope and intensity.

[17:33] Speaking of, to get some idea of what happened in the 1930s, or sorry, in the 1730s when Edwards was there, I'd like to read a few quotes from a work that he wrote, which was a faithful narrative concerning the revivings that had happened in Northampton.

There seemed to be a lot of factors that came to a head. One of the most significant ones was the shocking death of a young man in the community, which Edwards, as a pastor, turned to help people look at the fleetingness of their own lives and the eternal nature of the human condition. So, what Edwards reports, this is what it said, it seemed to be almost like a flash of lightning upon the hearts of young people all over the town and many others.

Those persons amongst us who used to be farthest from seriousness and that I most feared would make an ill improvement seemed greatly to be awakened with it.

And soon, he says, a great and earnest concern about the things of religion and the eternal world became universal in all parts of the town and among persons of all degrees and all ages.

[18:45] All other talk except about spiritual and eternal things was soon thrown by and the conversation in all companies and upon all occasions was upon these things only, unless so much as was necessary for people carrying on their ordinary secular business.

Religion was, as Edwards continues, with all sorts the great concern. The only thing in their view was to get the kingdom of heaven and everyone appeared pressing into it.

The engagedness of their hearts in this great concern could not be hid. It appeared to their very countesses. It then was a dreadful thing amongst us to lie out of Christ, that is, not to have put one's faith in Christ.

And what persons' minds were intent upon was to escape for their lives and fly from the wrath to come. All would eagerly lay hold of opportunities for their souls and were accustomed very often to meet together in private houses for religious purposes and such meetings were appointed, and such meetings when appointed were apt greatly to be thronged.

So Edwards talks about this commotion in the town of all these people having renewed and restored religious affections, of coming to want to speak about religion, of wanting and yearning to make sure that they were in the kingdom and all that was associated with that.

[20 : 03] And that this was a great movement of God in Northampton. And so we have a lot of Edwards' writings about it because he wrote what happened and then it was published widely, not only in the colonies, but in Britain as well.

And that many, many, many people read it. And it became an instant classic. And actually that his writings spurred even more revivals to happen later on.

So one of the people who read it was an Anglican priest named George Woodfield, who you may have heard of, who, when he was about 25, came to the American colonies and began preaching a message of repentance and faith.

And over the next two years, he would preach hundreds and hundreds of sermons to crowds numbering past the thousands, stirring them up to give their lives to God.

And that he, he did this both through clever marketing and he was an entrepreneurial sort, which made him very close with Benjamin Franklin as an interesting sort of pairing.

[21 : 08] But also that he, he achieved great celebrity status and great fame for his preaching so that people would, would flock to hear him, to hear him speak. And it seems that, that Whitfield's preaching catalyzed, if not kickstarted, the great awakening in the colonies in the U.S.

and that there followed from him many more itinerant preachers and evangelists who would go from town to town preaching and often with great oratory skills and great demonstrations of emotion and enthusiasm encouraging people to come into the kingdom.

That also in this and not surprisingly, there, in the churches, there, the role of enthusiasm and affections took on a greater and greater and greater role. and that there were many, many who were converted in all the American colonies and especially in New England.

And so, in light of this, it's not surprising that many who denounced the revivals as being, or that many, that many denounced the revivals as being either antinomian, so against the law, or filled with enthusiastic excess.

Charles Chauncey, a Boston area pastor and leader of these old lights, considered what was sweeping the land to be a, quote, grand delusion and the error of the present day.

[22 : 22] So there's contention over these things. Some radical new lights, like James Davenport, actually, though, made Chauncey's case for him. Davenport was known for whipping up mass hysteria and disregarding authority and tradition, including one of his worst offenses of organizing a book burning of Christian classics in order to prove the decisive break with the old order and tradition.

Although he later repented of this, actions such as these did a lot of damage to the revival's credibility, and in Edwards' view, it did a lot of damage to the revival's continuance.

So although a new light himself, Edwards lamented the factioning in New England that was very much owing to the imprudent management in the friends of the work and a corrupt mixture with Satan has found means to introduce and our manifold sinful errors by which we have grieved and quenched the Spirit of God.

So that in a lot of ways, Edwards views these excesses and things that were done out of a fleshly heart rather than a spiritual heart as being a large part of the reason that the revivals cooled and that the Spirit was quenched.

And this was, for anybody, much less a pastor like Edwards, this is a very significant thing. So I think it's helpful here not to view, and I know this has been a very brief and quick overview and a lot that's been left out, but I think it's helpful here not to view Edwards as a political figure who was trying to assert his opinion in the old light, new light controversy and was trying to kind of create a name for himself, but he was a concerned pastor who had seen what had happened to his people and his congregation and those close by and was very concerned that truth went out over emotion or over enthusiasm and that he wanted a clear picture of what it actually looked like for people to be genuinely converted.

[24 : 16] So as we read the religious affections, we're not going to read the whole thing, don't worry, that it's helpful not to see him as an ivory tower intellectual who has kind of brought this treatise from on high, but a pastor who's deeply engaged in the conflict himself and is bringing this to help people.

In fact, the book, Religious Affections, actually started as a sermon series that he gave first to his congregation. So that's where it comes from. So what we're going to do in a second is we're going to look at religious affections and look at what Edwards does three things in this work.

One, he defends the place of affections in Christian life. Two, that he's going to identify outward manifestations that show nothing about one's conversion, that someone who's converted could show these manifestations as well as someone who isn't converted could show these manifestations.

And then we're also going to look at how he distinguishes the true signs, the true affections that distinguish someone who's indeed been converted. But before we do that, I'd like to go ahead and open the floor for questions or comments about the historical context, about Edwards himself, and then we're going to take a short break and then when we come back, we'll dive in to religious affections, whole hog, as you might say in the South.

So, any questions, comments, things you would add about Edwards or Puritan New England, the Great Awakening? Yes?

[25 : 47] I have to confess that my only acquaintance with Jonathan Edwards is from a long ago survey textbook, probably in a literature course, with a passage entitled Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.

American and I have to say that the Jonathan Edwards that you were talking about sounds like a rationalistic philosopher compared to my recollection of that and to the image that most people probably have of Jonathan Edwards.

Would you comment on that? Only if you allow me to ask questions back. In thinking about that, because obviously there's a lot of cultural gap, and so I'll kind of turn this to everybody.

So, clearly that was a sermon that he preached, that's what most people know him for, talks about even as a spider would dangle over, incredibly evocative language. Ironically, the first time he preached that sermon got kind of no response in his congregation than when he went to preach in infield, Massachusetts, that he could barely finish the sermon because of the hysterics that were going on in light of the sermon.

So, what, I'm curious, culturally, why might that have been more acceptable or more common in his day than in ours? What do you mean by that?

[27 : 14] So, how might the preaching have been different in his day than in our day? The expectations of what, expectations and themes? I'm not sure it was.

Might you be referring to just the awareness of what the Bible said and that people have it more of a spiritual, like it was inbred or implicated, people kind of knew what the Bible said and they were more willing to accept it and now it just seems so foreign?

Is that what you're maybe referring to? Maybe. Oh, yes. I'm very glad that you mentioned about this because I have to say, I'm very ignorant over these things, but I was just reading a book very quickly about church history and then it talked about the Puritan movement into the, you know, the new continent.

And then I happened to download this sermon. Uh-huh. And I was, you know, in this audio book. And I was listening and I was distraught to the point I missed, I was driving on the freeway and I missed the exit.

So I had to go on to the, you know, the bridge to pay the fee. I was going to go pull him to Ikea. And I just, I was, I was like, whoa, how dare you?

[28 : 42] Like, how can you for such a sermon? And he still thinks that he would have people sitting here listening. But anyway, and after I calmed myself down, and I thought, yeah, well, I guess cultural background and historical background, I guess it's all different.

But it seems that it constantly comes to being on my mind what health is all about. Yeah. Yeah, Harvey, yeah, go ahead and then I'll jump in with thought.

Well, yeah, Edwards is famous for this sermon and he shouldn't be. people like Robert Jensen point out, a great Edwards scholar at Princeton, actually.

And he points out when he was a young man, Edwards read the Middle Spring Kipia, evidently absorbed it, understood it, made copious notes to demonstrate that he understood the greatest mathematical genius who had had to that point in history had lived, absorbed it, and probably overcame it in Christian terms.

He was a brilliant thinker, Edwards. I mean, astonishingly brilliant. So you've got to see that before you start talking about, well, was he a backwoods crazy who preached beer-ridden sermon?

[30 : 03] So anyway, that was, I just wanted to put that on the table. Yeah. And I think that's helpful that probably that we shouldn't see sinners in the hands of the angry God, or of an angry God, as the center of Edwards.

That certainly it is part of who he is, but it's probably more not like secondary or tertiary than it is primary. But I think it's one thing that I would like to push back on, which I think is helpful for me to say, or helpful for me to hear, because I don't know how much I actually kind of believe this deep down, is that, so we can think about preaching about hell in a couple different ways.

One would be kind of scare tactics to emotionally rile up people so that they make a decision out of fear. But I think that it's fair to also think about it in terms of love, to not actually think that the person is just being manipulative, but what if they actually love the people who they're preaching to, or at least love God, and because they love God, want to communicate his word clearly.

And if they would say that the most important thing for people is that they know God, and that they not spend eternity away from God, but they actually spend eternity with God, that the most loving thing I could do is warn them of what they might be going into, of warn them from this dire strait that they're in.

and again, that in any biblical way, that would need to be coupled with the even higher mercy and grace of God. But I think that there is something about that of, that this was more common in the period to New England than it is in postmodern Vancouver.

[31 : 44] Yes? You were talking about a cultural context, and this may not be what you had in mind, but all of those areas that you have on your map there were originally people by non-conformists.

It wasn't just Puritans there and there. It was Baptists in Rhode Island, it was Catholics in Baltimore and Maryland and so on, and you didn't get really a big influx of people from the established English church, the state church, until you got to the Carolinas, I think.

Is that about right? Virginia. Virginia, thank you. I will agree to confess my ignorance and not have an answer. But we know that Anglicans were not really taught their faith in England, you know, not really.

Yeah, well. There was the assumption that, you know, this was the state religion, we all belong to it, even the ministers were not routinely trained in a standardized way that would make them good teachers or good preachers.

They bought books of sermons that other people had written, you know, to be able to preach from. And so here we have somebody who's coming with the truth and with a message that may have fallen new on the ears of many of those people.

[33 : 02] So the major problem I would think for him, and maybe even for us, is who's in and who's out? Do you believe in an exclusive church or an inclusive?

You know, get them in here and then convert them. Yeah. A lot of questions, a lot of historical kind of, and yes, Dr. Facker. One thing that ought to be remembered about sinners in the hands of an angry God, and actually this applies equally to all the Edwards servants that have survived, is that Edwards was an expository preacher.

He took a text or passage and laboured to spell out what it said as from God for everyone to take note of.

And the text for this sermon was the word actually of Moses, talking about his destiny of Israelites right at the end of Deuteronomy.

the text is, their feet shall slide in due time. Whose feet? The feet of people who in this life disregard God.

[34 : 19] And that's your theme. That's your frame of reference. That's why Edwards is talking about this subject at all.

The Bible talks about it, and it's part of God's teaching for all of us that we all of us need to hear and internalise.

So one must talk about Edwards as if perhaps this Lurie's stuff came from an overheated imagination or something like that.

it came out of the texts out of which came his servant. That's great. I'm going to stop us right there. We're going to have time for dialogue at the end.

But we're going to take a quick break because once we come back, I'm going to be reading a lot of passages from religious affections which require all of our attention, focus.

[35 : 20] So let's take a three minute break and grab coffee if you want to. And if you want to think about what might constitute religious affections, go for it. I'm going to figure out how to turn this off.

I have no idea what to do. I have no idea what to do. I don't see them in the I see.

I see.

I see.

I see.

[38 : 23] I see.

I see.

I see.

I see.

So for the rest of our time, what I'm hoping to do is to walk through Edwards' basic argument, and I will sprinkle in as much of his masterfully crafted prose as I can.

[40 : 35] So please stay with me. I understand that it's probably not going to be the most super exciting of things, but I hope that we can hear what he says and at the very least have a deep appreciation for Edwards by the time we finish.

So the first question is, what are affections?

The mind, will, and the mind, will, and the mind, will, and the will. So this is to give a basic kind of sense of this.

The difference between affections and beliefs.

Holy affections.

[42 : 38] So holy affections and unholy affections. So holy affections, love for God and others, hatred of sin, hunger for God and others, hatred of sin, hunger for God and divine things, joy, gratitude to God.

I'll get to that in a second. I'll get to that in a second. So just a picture of affections versus things that aren't affections or unholy versus holy affections.

So as I stated before the break in religious affections, Edwards wants to defend the place of affections in Christian life against those who say that affections just distract and mislead us.

And that what only matters is the enlightened mind. Edwards wants to say that the enlightened mind and the affections have to go together.

They're not separate. Edwards' paradigm verse that he uses to start off religious affections is 1 Peter 1.8, which is up on the screen. And you can hear the affections that are in here, part of the reason why Edwards chose it, talking to a group of persecuted Christians.

[43 : 59] Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.

I trust that as you look at this verse and think about other commands in the scriptures that call for our affections, that you'll see that affections do play a vital role for the genuine believer.

And if you still want to debate that, we can talk about that at the end. When Edwards moves on to part two, that he identifies the outward manifestations that say nothing, that give no definitive evidence either way, whether that someone has been converted or not.

Whether they are saved or not, whether they have the Holy Spirit who's worked transformatively in them or not. The list that I'm going to give here is from Sam Storm's book, which is sort of an abbreviated and modernized version.

But hearing from Edwards himself, this is what he says about affections being both true and false.

He says, There are false affections and there are true. A man having much affection does not prove he has any true religion.

[45 : 10] But if he has no affection, it proves that he has no true religion. The right way is not to reject all affections, nor approve all, but distinguish between affections, approving some, rejecting others, separating between the wheat and the chaff, the gold and the dross, the precious and the vile.

So let's begin to look at affections that Edwards says don't give any definitive sign. And we're going to go through these quickly so we can get to the true signs or the true affections at the end.

So signs that show nothing. Intensified or raised affections in the person. Excitement doesn't necessarily mean anything one way or another. Oh, and there's a comment I meant to make before these.

All of these things are things that Edwards encourages to be in believers. He's not saying, oh, these are things that only non-Christians do. He's saying, no, these are things that can be true both of believers and non-believers.

And should be true of believers as much as possible. Intensified or raised affections. Two, affections that have a great influence on the body. So there might be affections that cause people to do things, whether raise their hands or kneel or whatnot.

[46 : 27] Inclinations to talk at length about one's spiritual experience. So mere talkativeness doesn't mean anything necessarily. Four, affections awakened in a certain manner.

So at the time, some thought that if you could trace how affections were awakened or the process or order, or if someone could kind of say the right process and order that proved that their affections were genuine.

Where Edwards would say, no. And conversely, or on the other hand, he would say that if you can't say where the affections came from, that doesn't necessarily mean that God gave them to you. That affections could come from other places.

Other spirits, one's own kind of inner imagination, common grace. As we know that, for example, Balaam was given a prophecy to give to the people of Israel, but he wasn't converted.

Okay, number five. Affections experienced because a scripture text suddenly comes to mind. Linking affections with passages of scripture doesn't necessarily mean anything.

[47 : 33] Obviously, yeah, you know what I'm saying. Okay, number six. Affections characterized by a feeling of love. And here, I think he means feeling of love. So, for example, when Jesus is coming into Jerusalem and everyone is laying things down, saying, Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna.

They clearly have a feeling of love for Jesus, but later will trade Hosanna for crucified. Number seven. A wide variety of religious affections experienced together.

Which is a following point of the first. Of someone they feel kind of love and thankfulness and lots of other things at the same time. That doesn't necessarily mean that they might be a true Christian.

Number eight. Affections experienced in a particular order or sequence. I alluded to this before.

Number nine. Fervency in the normal affairs of worship and religious duty.

So, passion and worship doesn't necessarily mean one thing on either side or either role. Vocal praise of God. That someone who is unconverted can still vocally praise God.

[48 : 37] As Christians get to and should. Number eleven. Deep and profound assurance that one is saved. So, for Edwards to say that just someone feels assured of salvation doesn't necessarily mean that they've received it.

And number twelve. External behavior and lifestyle that impresses and attracts true Christians. And this last one especially, I think we see part of why this is such a big concern for Edwards.

Because these things are hard to figure out. And that one could look at many of these things and say, oh, that must be a genuine believer. That must be a genuine convert.

But I think Edwards saw in his life and his ministry as well as in the scriptures. That there are many that start well but don't end well. And that there are many who seem to be glowing saints in the beginning.

And even prize such who don't finish the course. And we can think of lots of people in the Bible and hopefully not too many people in our lives who have seen this to be true of. So, maybe you read this and think, well, gosh.

[49 : 41] It seems like it's possible for non-Christians to look more Christian than even Christians are. Edwards couldn't agree with you more. This is what he's getting at and why this is so important for him to lay out clear biblical groundings for these things.

Okay, let's move on to the signs of authentic affection now. Things that are only true of true believers. But before that, I need to make a couple of comments.

Four of them, actually. So, one is that Edwards was, as you probably have gotten a taste of and will see some more, he was masterful at diagnosing the human heart as a spiritual doctor in a sense.

But he also intended these signs to be immensely instructive for believers. And that it was exhorted to push believers on to fullness in Christ. So, please, don't hear these things as Edwards auditing your life.

Saying, if you don't have all of these things, get out. Or, if you can't, kind of check, check, check, check, check. The point isn't to make sure your life is pristine, but rather let his words deeply challenge us.

[50 : 54] And related, that if you were to read Religious Affections, which, as again, I would highly commend to you, or to read one of the other books, you would notice that, on several occasions, Edwards offers pastoral statements to qualify what he says, admitting that these 12 characteristics,

though the 12 characteristics we're going to look at, though they will always be true in believers, it doesn't mean that they will always be perfect or in their full form.

That instead, that Edwards wants to be sure that there is both, there's presence, progress, and perseverance, but he's not advocating perfectionism. So, presence, progress, and perseverance, not perfectionism.

So, he does believe that we will all be perfected in Christ, but knows that these things grow in believers as they mature. Number three, in quoting Storms here, and this is him taking Edwards' language, we must recognize that there will never be a time or system or standard of analysis of such issues that will yield infallible results.

To claim that we are able, without error, to determine who is a true believer and who is a hypocrite is to fall prey to the very arrogance we have labored in the previous chapters to expose.

Yes, God has indeed given signs in Scripture to help us, but as to the final and ultimate say, it was God's design to reserve this to himself as his prerogative.

[52 : 29] Number four, I've tried to limit the quotations as much as possible, but it's Edwards, so you can't do too much. But I trust that you will be richly rewarded, and this will be far better than hearing my words.

Okay, so, true signs. Number one, authentic affections arise from spiritual, supernatural, and divine influence and operations of the heart.

That should be abundantly clear what that means, so let's go on to number two. Right? Let me read what Edwards has on that. He talks about where authentic affections come from, what their sources.

And he says, The witness of the Spirit is far from being any whisper or immediate suggestion or revelation, but that gracious, holy effect of the Spirit of God in the hearts of the saints, the disposition and temper of children, appearing in sweet, childlike love to God, which casts out fear or spirit of a slave.

Now, this is what would cause believers to look to God and cry out, Abba, Father. That's what he's talking about here. Number two, the first objective ground of gracious affections is the transcendently excellent and amiable nature of divine things as they are in and of themselves, and not any conceived relation they bear to self or self-interest.

[53 : 57] To put it crudely, the true affections are based on who God is, not what I get. So it's the order of priority here. And so, this is hugely important for him.

This is kind of a long quote, but I think as long as you get the main essence that this is about priority and what's at the bottom, what's at the center, that's what Edwards is getting at, that it should be God and not our own self-interest.

Whereas, the exercise of true and holy love in the saints arise in another way, they do not first see that God loves them and then see that he is lovely, but they first see that God is lovely and that Christ is excellent and glorious, and their hearts are first captivated with this view, and the exercises of their love are one from time to time to begin here, and to arise primarily from these views, and then, consequently, as they see God's love and great favor to them.

The saints' affections begin with God, and self-love has a hand in these affections, consequently and secondarily only. On the contrary, those false affections begin with self, and the acknowledgement of the excellency in God and the attractiveness with it is only consequential and dependent.

In the love of the true saint, God is the lowest foundation, the deepest foundation. The love of the excellency of his nature is the foundation of all the affections which come afterward, wherein self-love is considered just as a handmaiden.

[55 : 37] On the contrary, the hypocrite lays himself at the bottom of all, as the first foundation, and lays God as the superstructure. And even his acknowledgement of God's glory itself depends on his regard to his private interest.

As an example of this, if you think about two men who both love the same woman, the first loves her because of her status and popularity, and he sees that she is a ticket to being in the social echelon that he wants to be in.

And so he might love her passionately and sacrificially and give himself to her happiness, but the root of his love is love of his own self that he wants to be made much of, he wants to advance socially, he wants to be in a certain position.

Or if you could picture the second man who loves this woman, that he loves her because of who she is, her character, her heart, her desires, what it means for her to be her.

And so while it may look to an outside observer that the first man loves the woman more because maybe he has more enthusiasm or more energy or sacrifices more at the beginning, to the woman it would be very clear that the second man loves her more.

[56 : 52] This is what Edwards is getting at, that we love because of who God is, that true affections are rooted in who God is, not what we get. There could be lots of questions here, but we're going to move on.

Okay, number three. A love for divine things, for the beauty and sweetness of their moral excellency, that is holiness, is the first and beginning and spring of all holy affections.

So that is, authentic affections are first and foremost for God's holiness. So Edwards is trying to get across that God's holiness is at the center of who God is.

And so if we love God primarily for who he is, then his holiness has to be the fount of our affections for him. So I think Edwards' point here is this.

The love that the true saints have for God is for the beauty of his holiness, for his moral perfection, as being supremely lovely in itself. Certainly we love God for all his attributes.

[57 : 59] They are each amiable and lovely in themselves. But when it comes to the regenerate, the true Christians, their love to God is for his holiness. But their love to God for his holiness is what is most fundamental and essential in their love.

So, again, these first few are a little bit more difficult, but as an example, that you have to think about if God was all-powerful but not holy, would we love God in the same way?

That actually his holiness, his moral perfection, enables us to celebrate the fact that he's all-powerful. Or think of it another way. We know that God is immutable, that God doesn't change, that God is constant.

But if God was immutably wicked and didn't change for wickedness, we wouldn't love him in the same way. It's because God is holy and morally perfect that his other attributes tie together and make sense.

So it's loving God's holiness. I promise the road gets a little bit easier from here. Number four.

Authentic affections arise from the mind being spiritually enlightened to understand divine things.

[59 : 10] So Edwards is concerned here for the development of a spiritual taste. that is that God would implant a taste within believers to love and appreciate and enjoy spiritual and true things.

I mean, a picture of this might be how a wine connoisseur can enjoy all of the different flavors and aromas and aspects of good wine and can call them out and celebrate them.

In the same way that God says that true believers will have a taste for the divine of an appreciation of love and affection for those things.

Number five. Authentic affections are attended with a conviction of the reality and certainty of divine things. So this isn't what he's saying here is that the conviction isn't based on one being able to kind of give all the arguments for something but one knowing with certainty in one's heart that it's true.

Such people are so assured of the reality of gospel truths that they are not afraid to venture their all upon that truth. Number six.

[60 : 30] Authentic affections are attended with evangelical humility. Godly humility is quote a sense that a Christian has of his own utter insufficiency despicableness and odiousness consisting in a disposition to abase themselves and exalt God alone.

So whereas people who Edwards calls hypocrites who aren't truly converted Christians might always be seeking the highest place and want others to be looking at them as such that he says the Christians want to abase themselves and exalt God.

Number seven. Authentic affections are attended with a change of nature. I think this should be clear that the scriptures representations of conversion do strongly imply and signify a change of nature such as being born again becoming new creatures rising from the dead being renewed in the spirit of the mind dying to sin and living to righteousness putting off the old man and putting on the new man a being engrafted into a new stock a having divine seed and planted in the heart a being made partakers of the divine nature.

So authentic affections always are attended or always have with them a change of nature. Number eight. Authentic affections produce and promote the same love meekness forgiveness and mercy that we see in Christ.

There's a reflection of his character in the believer. Similarly authentic affections soften the heart and produce a tenderness of spirit and sensitivity towards sin.

[62 : 19] Edwards says that the true Christian here has the firmest comfort but the softest heart richer than others but poorest of all in spirit the tallest and strongest saint but the least and tenderest child among them.

I wonder if tenderness marks our lives and our hearts. Authentic affections have beautiful symmetry and proportion.

He means two things in this. One, that they reflect the whole person of Christ and so that they're modeled, patterned after the whole person of Christ but also they're in proportion.

So examples of disproportion would be someone who loves this side of the room but hates this side of the room. or someone who is a great Christian on Sundays but is a terrible Christian on Monday through Saturday.

So there's disproportion there, there's monstrosity or grossness in terms of how it comes out. He says that affection should be consistent, it should have symmetry and proportion both in how they reflect Christ but also in how they balance with each other.

[63 : 28] One of the particular things he comments on here is that how Christians should both love being in public but also love being in private. They should love being around God's people but also love being around only God himself.

That's proportion, symmetry. Number 11, we're almost done. Authentic affections, the higher they are raised, the more a spiritual appetite and longing of soul is increased.

Hopefully we experience this some of us by having a great cup of coffee. You're just like, yeah, I want more coffee. That's wonderful. Especially if I can avoid the jitters. But for Edwards says similar things about what happens to believers.

The more we meditate on and trust in God, the more we want to. Our appetites are encouraged and expanded and deepened as we're doing those things.

Number 12, and for Edwards, this is the chief of all signs and the most important. And because of that, there will be some more reading that goes along with it. That authentic affections always bear the fruit of holiness of life.

[64 : 38] You shall know them by their fruits. Wherefore, by their fruits you shall know them. Christ nowhere says, I love this passage, Christ nowhere says, you shall know the trees by its leaves, or flowers, or you shall know men by their talk, or you shall know them by their good story they tell of their experiences, or you shall know them by the manner and air of their speaking, and emphasis and pathos of expression, or by their speaking feelingly, or by making a very great show of abundance of talk, or by many tears and affectionate expressions, or by the affections you feel in your hearts toward them, but you shall know them by their fruits.

The tree is known by its fruit, every tree is known by its fruit, and as this is the evidence that Christ has directed us mainly to look for in others and judging them, so it is the evidence that Christ has mainly directed us to give to others, whereby they may judge us.

Commenting encouragingly about how this works in believers who have true grace, he says, and this is great, true grace is not an unactive thing, so true grace working in someone's heart isn't an unactive thing, there is nothing in heaven or earth of a more active nature, for it is life itself, and the most active kind of life, even spiritual and divine life, it is no barren thing, there is nothing in the universe that in its nature has a greater tendency to fruit.

fruit, if we're truly Christians, there is nothing in this world that has a greater tendency towards fruit, than the grace that God has put within our hearts, than the Holy Spirit within us.

I think that's good news. I'd like to share two implications, and then we'll have some dialogue, or quickly we need to get cake. one is that I think that Edwards very clearly instructs and encourages believers to meditate on the character and glory of God.

[66 : 47] I think about Kyle's talk a few months back on the beatific vision, and we often lose these things in our day, of meditating on the glory and grandeur of God, to stop and just be with God, and love God for who he is.

Number two, and this is kind of getting more to the topic at hand, that it can be immensely difficult for us to determine whether someone is a true believer or not, and that false believers, as Edwards has talked about, can potentially do great damage in a congregation.

I think we only have to think about what the New Testament says again and again about wolves in sheep clothing entering in. So I think that as Christians that means we have one clear option and one clear admonition, and that's to walk closely and alongside other professing Christians.

Not to just say, oh yeah, they're good, let's just go along their way, but walk closely and deeply with other professing Christians, deeply involved in their lives.

And here's the logic from the perspective that we've just been looking at. If the person is a true believer, you have the incredible opportunity to sharpen each other and both be mutually affirmed and assured in your faith.

[68 : 05] That's a great joy. That counts as a win. If the other person is not a true believer, you may have the chance to be a part of God converting them. As I was talking to a friend earlier in the week, got to be part of this with someone very close to them, was investing in their life and got to see them converted.

What a joy. Or, even if the person is not a true believer and doesn't become one, that you've been able to discern this reality effectively and not live with a false assumption for an indefinite period of time.

Beyond all this, and this is what Edwards calls us to, he's not trying to create a schematic so we can say, here are those we love, here are those we don't love. But he's trying to build Christians up, but also get the true place of affections in Christian experience.

So then this is what he says about our duty towards other professing Christians. Christians. And as you might expect, the gender inclusive language wasn't quite in vogue in his day.

Edwards, it is men's duty to love all whom they are bound in charity to look upon as the children of God, with a vastly dearer affection than they commonly do.

[69 : 18] As we ought to love Christ to the utmost capacity of our nature, so it is our duty to love those who we think are so near and dear to him as his members, with an exceeding dear affection as Christ loved us.

And therefore, it is sin in us not to love them so. May God do this among us. Thank you for your time. Please feel free to, thank you for having me here.

This has been great, especially for me. And I hope it's the same for you.