



Learning to Feel

Each week for the next 6 months we will send out a couple thoughts and a journal prompt to guide us through this process of learning to love God with the emotions that He created us with. Each month we will focus on a different core emotion and we will look at it from multiple different angles, because though core emotions are foundational, we experience them very differently in different situations. These mini devotionals are meant to be used as tools to help each of us continue practicing the 4 questions we've just spent the past month learning. Our hopes are that we, as a church, will find ourselves learning how to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, AND to love our neighbor as ourselves.

As you work through these thoughts and prompts, remember to ask yourself...

What am I feeling?

Where am I feeling it in my body?

When did I first feel this?

Who am I going to share this with?

There will be times where you are not feeling the emotion we are talking about, but I would encourage you to think about times in the past where you have felt that emotion. Allow yourselves to be drawn into that memory and meet God there. Allow yourself to be pulled closer to God in those feelings. Once a month, we'll gather to talk and process what God does in us as we learn to feel.

For the sake of this devotional, Esther's words will look like this...

AND CHRIS' INPUT WILL LOOK LIKE THIS

Disillusion

Disillusion - disappointed that someone or something is less good than you had believed

Language for feeling Disillusioned -

“I just wasn't expecting that”

“I hoped things would be different”

“It's starting to feel like nothing ever goes my way”

“People just can't be trusted”

This feeling is always shocking to me. I want to blindly trust people. I want to believe they always have my best interests at heart. I want to believe that everyone will always make what I believe is the right choice all the time. But, that is not the way the world works. When someone inevitably makes a choice that hurts me, I really do feel hurt. How dare they not be loyal to me? How dare they make a decision without considering me? If I'm honest with myself, I feel anger

and rage and that scares me. I want to lash out at them and make them understand the consequences I face because of their choices. I don't like feeling this way. I don't like seeing what lies under the surface of my calm facade, what really lies in my heart. I want to continue living in the lie that I am always kind and loving and trustworthy, but I am not.

DISALLUSION FEELS HEAVY TO ME. IT FEELS LIKE A REAL WEIGHT ON MY SHOULDERS AND BACK. IT FEELS LIKE FATIGUE. I AM SKEPTICAL BY NATURE. I GENERALLY EXPECT TO BE LET DOWN. I DON'T USUALLY EXPECT THINGS TO GO MY WAY. WHEN THINGS DO WORK OUT FOR THE BEST... WHEN PEOPLE DO COME THROUGH FOR ME... I AM SURPRISED AND FEEL INCREDIBLY BLESSED. BUT WHEN PEOPLE DO FAIL ME AND WHEN SITUATIONS DON'T WORK OUT FOR THE BEST, IT JUST SEEMS TO CONFIRM ALL OF MY NEGATIVE ASSUMPTIONS AND THIS FEELS HEAVY. IT FEELS LIKE I'M DRAGGING ALL OF MY SKEPTICISM BEHIND ME LIKE A PHYSICAL WEIGHT.

I am broken. I am human. My heart's condition has been laid bare, and I have to admit what is in my heart is not good. I am desperately in need of God's loving hand to change and heal me. I want to honor God with all that I am, but this feeling is hard. I find myself sitting in this feeling asking God to take it away. I don't want to feel this way, but I am slowly realizing that even this feeling is an invitation to come and meet with Him. I want to choose to turn my eyes back to the God who loves me. Even here, I can come and sit at his feet and allow him to do the work of untangling me. I meet him here, in the hurt and anger. I meet him here in my body that feels wound tight like a spring that is about to explode. I ask him to gently unwind me so that I don't explode, so that I don't hurt others the way I have been hurt. God, pour your grace and forgiveness on me in this place. Help me turn to you and to lay this feeling at your feet where you give beauty for my pain.

THE WORST PART OF FEELING DISILLUSIONED IS THAT IT MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE TO FEEL HOPE. HOPE IS ESSENTIAL TO OUR FAITH. SO MUCH OF WHO WE ARE AS BELIEVERS IS ROOTED IN HOPE, BUT MY SKEPTICISM WARS AGAINST MY HOPE. WHEN I FEEL LET DOWN, LIKE IN MY BONES, LET DOWN... IT ALMOST FEELS INEVITABLE AND THAT'S NOT HOPE. MY PRAYER IS THAT NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES THINGS DON'T GO MY WAY, NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES PEOPLE LET ME DOWN, I WILL WAKE UP FULL OF HOPE... FULL OF TRUST THAT MY GOD IS IN CONTROL AND HE IS GOOD.

A Prayer for Feeling Disillusioned-

Father, I don't realize how much I desire to be in control... how much I try to play god... Until people don't do what I think they should do... Until things do work out the way that I think they should... this feeling of being let down and disappointed shows me what's in my heart. I think I like freedom, but not when other people use theirs. Help me to let you be God even when it means that you might choose to let people make bad choices. Help me to surrender.

Shocked

Shocked - the result of a sudden upsetting or unsettling event or experience

Language for feeling Shocked -

“I did not see that coming!”

“I just had the rug yanked out from under me”

“I wasn't prepared for that”

I still remember the phone ringing. I still remember the voice on the other end, “They're gone, They're all gone.” How? Why? What was happening? I couldn't make the words make sense in

my brain. They couldn't really be gone. They were just here last night. We needed them. But they were gone, in the blink of an eye, in the drifting of a minivan onto the shoulder of the highway. One moment they were on their way home to celebrate a birthday, and the next they were sitting at the feet of Jesus.

I can still feel the way it felt; like the world was crumbling out from under my feet. I remember the lump in my throat, and the way I wanted to avoid saying the words. The way I wanted to call Chris and tell him what had happened and the way I stood staring at the phone wishing I didn't have to call him. I remember the heaviness in my legs as I went upstairs to the boys' room to gather all the kids and try to explain to them that our entire world had just changed. I remember their faces, their questions, their pain and confusion. I remember them looking at me and honestly asking if this could somehow all be a mistake. I remember knowing they were looking to me for answers and strength, and I felt I had nothing to give them. I remember wanting to feel something steady and sure, and so I reached for work. I could work hard. I could manage details and food and cleaning. I could hide in those places and not have to be seen. I could be alone in my thoughts and avoid facing my feelings.

WHEN MY MENTOR AND TWO BEST FRIENDS DIED IN THE SAME CAR WRECK, I LEARNED WHAT SHOCK REALLY FEELS LIKE. I COULD NOT HAVE EVER IMAGINED SUCH AN ALL ENCOMPASSING EMPTINESS. BEFORE THIS EVENT, I WOULD HAVE DESCRIBED SHOCK LIKE BEING SURPRISED OR EVEN SCARED. LIKE SOMEONE JUMPING OUT FROM BEHIND A CORNER AND SHOUTING, "BOO!". BUT THAT'S NOT SHOCK. WHEN I FELT REAL SHOCK, IT WAS LIKE FORGETTING HOW TO BREATHE. IT WAS AS IF ALL THE THINGS THAT SWIRL AROUND MY BRAIN AND ALL THE THINGS THAT I WORRY ABOUT ON A REGULAR BASIS JUST VANISHED AND IN THEIR ABSENCE, I FELT LOST AND ALONE. IT'S A VERY DISLOCATED FEELING. I SEEM TO FEEL IT IN MY HEAD, AS IF ALL THE SAME STIMULI COMES INTO MY MIND, BUT I CAN'T MAKE SENSE OF ANY OF IT.

Years later as I unpacked this season in our life, I realized how my shock crept out in unexpected ways. I found it hard to enjoy life because I was constantly trying to outrun the pain that is inherent in grief. I still feel anxious when I remember just how shocking that phone call was. Chris and the kids will tell you how I still overreact when they drive tired or distracted or sometimes just drive at all. I don't like this feeling.

Today I feel God gently nudging me to come and meet him here in this place where there is no control and only uncertainty. I find him asking me to let go and allow him to comfort and heal in the places today where there is shock and confusion in me. He is not shocked. He is steady and true when the world crumbles around me. He is faithful when I have nothing to give. He is full of love when I want to blame and be angry. He is truly strong where I am weak. God help me rest in you and your strength. I want to hear your voice and not avoid this feeling. I want you to help me find you here waiting for me.

I TRY TO LEVERAGE AGAINST SHOCK. I TRY TO EXPECT THE WORST AND EVEN OCCASIONALLY IMAGINE AWFUL THINGS HAPPENING SO THAT WHEN THEY DO, I WON'T BE SHOCKED. SHOCK JUST FEELS SO OUT OF CONTROL. IN FACT, IT REVEALS JUST HOW OUT OF CONTROL I REALLY AM, AND I THINK THAT'S WHAT I DON'T LIKE. I THINK MY DEEP DESIRE TO AVOID EVER GETTING SHOCKED IS A DISCOMFORT THAT IS ACTUALLY AN INVITATION FROM GOD TO MEET HIM IN THIS FEELING AND CONFRONT MY DESIRE FOR CONTROL. I DON'T WANT TO BE GOD, BUT I ALSO DO. I NEED GOD'S HELP TO SURRENDER.

A Prayer for Feeling Shocked-

God, I need you. It's not that I want to be close to You, or that I want to be in relationship with You, it's that I need you like I need air. I can't seem to feel anything and I feel way too much, all at the same time. I don't feel like I can't stand up unless you hold me... more than anything, I need to know that you aren't shocked right now. I need to know that You not only

know what is happening, but You are in control and You are good. I need you to be my gravity. Nothing else is holding me in place right now.

Psalms 18:1-6

For the choir director: A psalm of David, the servant of the LORD. He sang this song to the LORD on the day the LORD rescued him from all his enemies and from Saul. He sang: I love you, LORD; you are my strength. The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection. He is my shield, the power that saves me, and my place of safety. I called on the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and he saved me from my enemies. The ropes of death entangled me; floods of destruction swept over me. The grave wrapped its ropes around me; death laid a trap in my path. But in my distress I cried out to the LORD; yes, I prayed to my God for help. He heard me from his sanctuary; my cry to him reached his ears.

(Psa 18:1-6)