



Learning to Feel

Each week for 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. At our next meeting, on January 26@ 6:30, 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

Anger

Numb - the feeling of not feeling

Language for feeling Numb -

“I don't care anymore”

“whatever”

“silence”

“I'm done”

I think feeling numb is how I've coped with my anger for far too long. If I keep myself busy, work myself to the point of exhaustion, blame others for not noticing, I can live in a state of survival but never really living and thriving as God intended. I can even feel justified in my anger and not have to confront what is underneath it all. Feeling numb is the weight of heaviness in my throat and chest as I go through the motions of work and life without connecting with God, my family or his people. It's the countless conversations playing out in my head that will never actually happen. For me, feeling numb is dangerous. It usually means I have closed my heart trying to avoid what I'm feeling. It means I am not accepting God's invitation to come and meet with him in these places that feel overwhelming or maddening or confusing or any one of a thousand other things that I'd rather not admit are under the surface.

I DON'T OFTEN FEEL NUMB. IT'S A DANGEROUS FEELING FOR ME AS WELL. WHEN I DO FEEL NUMB, I CAN BE VERY SELF-DESTRUCTIVE. NUMB IS WHEN I REALIZE HOW MUCH I NEED TO FEEL THINGS. WHEN I FEEL NUMB I REALIZE JUST HOW IMPORTANT OUR EMOTIONS ARE. WHEN I FEEL NUMB, I TRULY DON'T CARE WHAT HAPPENS TO ME OR ANYONE ELSE. THIS IS NOT A GOOD PLACE FOR ME. I AGREE, THIS IS A BIG, FLASHING, WARNING LIGHT THAT I NEED TO GET BACK TO GOD.

This place of feeling numb is like a warning to me that I have wandered from the loving embrace of God. I've sought to find comfort in some place other than at His feet, but I can choose to find myself here and turn toward Him. I can find myself sitting at his feet pouring out what I hold

within my body and then waiting for Him to show up. Lord, help me, help us all to turn our hearts, pouring them out before you and then wait for you to speak.

Skeptical- questioning the honesty of a person's actions or intentions

Language for feeling Skeptical -

"I'm not buying it"

"You can't trust people"

"pffff"

"Prove it"

Skeptical- I so easily ignore this feeling, forgetting that God gave me this feeling, this intuition, to protect myself, my family, my community. I know that many people are skeptical of other people's motives and intents, and I can understand that, but I typically fall on the opposite side of the coin where I so want to believe the best about the other that I ignore warning signs and allow behaviors and patterns that should be addressed to continue unchecked for far too long. Often, when we find ourselves in a hard spot, I have to admit that I tried to communicate my intuition and when I met any resistance to my thoughts I immediately backed down. God has been convicting me lately that this feeling is not only an invitation to come and meet him, but that it is also an invitation for me to act, to open my mouth and speak. Far too often, I remain quiet for fear of being wrong, or of hurting someone's feelings, or of being rigid and judgmental rather than full of grace and compassion. God, as I feel this feeling I pray that my heart would be turned toward you, and that there you would give me courage to know when to simply sit at your feet seeking to know your heart and when to act upon this feeling to display your heart to the world around me.

SKEPTICAL IS A FUNNY EMOTION FOR ME. I AM SUPER SKEPTICAL OF NEW IDEAS. I LIKE EVIDENCE AND PROOF. I'M A SCIENCE GUY AND I LIKE TO SEE SOME STUDIES TO BACK WILD CLAIMS. I AM VERY SKEPTICAL OF SYSTEMS, ESPECIALLY SYSTEMS OF POWER AND WEALTH. I ASSUME THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS ALWAYS AFTER MORE POWER AND THAT COMPANIES ARE ALWAYS AFTER MORE MONEY AND NO ONE HAS OUR BEST INTEREST AT HEART. I FEEL LIKE I AM A TRUE SKEPTIC. BUT ALL OF THOSE WELL HONED SKEPTICAL ALARM BELLS FAIL ME WHEN IT COMES TO PEOPLE. I GET TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF REGULARLY BECAUSE I'M NOT SKEPTICAL ENOUGH. IN FACT, I HAVE A TENDENCY TO BE JUDGMENTAL OF PEOPLE WHO ARE TOO SKEPTICAL OF OTHER PEOPLE. I FEEL LIKE

THEY ARE THE JUDGMENTAL ONES AND THEY SHOULD GIVE PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT. I DON'T THINK I HAVE LEARNED HOW TO PROPERLY USE THIS EMOTION AND I'M NOW TRYING TO ALLOW GOD TO USE IT.

Furious- feeling out-of-control anger

Language for feeling Furious -

“I'm going to kill someone”

“I'll burn this whole thing down”

“Growl of rage”

“Get out of my way!”

I feel this, and it scares me. Someone has hurt me in ways that I cannot make sense of and I have moved beyond anger to the blind rage of fury. I want to throw things and hurt people. I want to scream and rage. I want this feeling out of my body. I don't want to feel this out of control. How do I get out of this place? How can this feeling ever bring glory and honor to God? Why would God allow this to happen when He knows I am not capable of responding with anything other than rage? God, I don't want to take out this feeling on others, but it feels so all-consuming and painful. These are just an example of the thoughts that literally race through my head when I find myself so angry that fury swoops in and takes over. Clearly, I don't like feeling this way.

I DON'T FEEL THIS OFTEN. I AM AFRAID OF IT. BEING A BIG GUY, I LEARNED A LONG TIME AGO THAT I HAVE TO BE CAREFUL "THROWING MY WEIGHT AROUND". WHEN I YELL, IT'S MORE THREATENING THAN WHEN OTHER PEOPLE DO IT. WHEN I GET PHYSICAL, I CAN DO REAL DAMAGE. SO I TRY TO AVOID FEELING OUT OF CONTROL. BUT I DO OFTEN FEEL THIS EMOTION NIBBLING AT THE EDGE OF MY CONSCIOUSNESS. I CAN FEEL IT WANTING IN. I KNOW IT'S THERE AND I SUPPRESS IT. I DON'T KNOW IF I'M SUPPOSED TO LET IT IN AND OFFER IT TO GOD, OR IF I'M SUPPOSED TO AVOID IT AND RESIST GIVING IN TO IT. MOSTLY I JUST PRAY OVER AND OVER THAT GOD HELP ME NOT LOSE CONTROL. I KNOW FEELINGS ARE DESIGNED TO BE FELT, BUT THIS ONE IS TOO MUCH FOR ME.

As I sit here thinking of the ways in which Jesus responded to the injustices he faced, I'm struck with the way in which he was somehow able to never lose control. In fact, when I read the accounts of his trial before his accusers, he was silent. He was somehow able to absorb the abuse and outright lies they were spewing at him. Somehow he could see beneath the surface into their

hearts. Somehow he was able, on the cross, to pray, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they are doing." I know He was able to do this because He is God, and I am not God. I feel defeated in this feeling, as though I have somehow lost. But, I am his daughter, and He calls me to follow in Jesus' footsteps. God, in this feeling, help me to not only turn toward you, but to also allow you to open my heart and use this place as a beacon of your strength where I am weak. Use this place as a reminder to me that my heart desperately needs to be seen and known by your love even when I feel out of control with anger and fury. This place is a place where I don't have to be afraid, for you are not afraid of my feelings. You understand and make space for the storm that rages inside of me and you speak, "Peace. Be still." You ask me to bring to you my feelings and thoughts in all their rawness. And then suddenly something happens and I find myself grateful that you know me better than I know myself, that you see me and know me and still call me beloved. You can somehow use this place to draw me closer to you.

Lazy- not wanting to attend to the life you've been given

Language for feeling Lazy -

"I don't feel like it"

"I don't have it in me today"

"Long deep sigh"

"I just want some me time!"

Lazy- I strive to not be lazy. I try to work hard all the time. I don't want to be viewed as anything other than a hard worker, but I am learning that just working and staying busy isn't really how I keep from being lazy. What if being lazy is also avoiding the tasks God has set before me because they make me uncomfortable, or scared? What if this laziness is really just a symptom of my anger that I am being called upon to do things that I don't want to do? Am I filling my time with an endless stream of seemingly "good" things while neglecting what I am really called to do? God, you have called me to come and meet with you, to come and allow my relationship with you to change me from the inside out. God, when I feel lazy, help me to turn to you and not just fill my time with endless "tasks," so that I don't appear to be lazy. Help me to be honest with you and with myself about the state of my heart and my life.

I DON'T KNOW IF I EVER FEEL LAZY, BUT I GENERALLY ASSUME I AM LAZY. PART OF ADHD IS STRUGGLING WITH "TASK SWITCHING". THIS MEANS THAT WHEN IT'S TIME TO TRANSITION FROM BED TO THE MORNING ROUTINE, I CAN LAY IN BED ALL DAY JUST BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO START THE MORNING TASKS. WHEN I NEED TO SWITCH FROM MORNING TASKS TO LEAVING FOR WORK, I CAN DRAG THIS OUT FOR WAY TOO LONG. BTW, I NEVER ACTUALLY LAY IN BED ALL DAY, BUT I COULD AND IT WOULD BE CONSIDERED LAZY EVEN THOUGH IN MY HEAD IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH WANTING TO LAY AROUND, IT HAS TO DO WITH NOT WANTING TO SWITCH TASKS. I WASTE A LOT OF TIME IN THESE TASK SWITCHING MOMENTS AND THEY SEEM VERY LAZY. BUT WHEN I READ THE DEFINITION OF "LAZY", I DO ADMIT THAT THERE ARE TIMES WHEN I DON'T WANT TO DO THE THINGS I NEED TO DO. I SHOULD PROBABLY GET BETTER AT RECOGNIZING THAT LAZY IS WHAT I'M FEELING.

Psalm 141:1-4

I call to you, LORD, come quickly to me;
hear me when I call to you.

May my prayer be set before you like incense;
may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.

Set a guard over my mouth, LORD;
keep watch over the door of my lips.

Do not let my heart be drawn to what is evil
so that I take part in wicked deeds
along with those who are evildoers;
do not let me eat their delicacies.