



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

Confused

Confused - unable to think clearly, uncertain

Language for feeling Confused -

“I don't get it”

“Slow down and say that again”

“Wait, what?”

“I'm lost”

I dislike the uncertainty inherent with confusion. I want to be in control. I want to know what to do and how to do it, and when I can't see the path forward I find myself feeling trapped. Often this is because the choices I can see are all hard or seem awful. I want God to give me another choice that isn't hard or painful. I want to see the end result and not have to sit in the tension of the in between. I don't like the way my body feels tense and tight with everything on edge.

I CAN FEEL TIME WHEN I AM CONFUSED. I CAN'T NORMALLY FEEL TIME BUT WHEN I'M CONFUSED IT FEELS LIKE TIME IS MOVING TOO FAST. IT'S LIKE MY THINKING IS A FEW NOTCHES SLOWER THAN IT NEEDS TO BE. I RARELY FEEL LIKE I CAN'T FIGURE SOMETHING OUT, BUT WHEN I'M CONFUSED IT FEELS LIKE I CAN'T FIGURE IT OUT QUITE FAST ENOUGH. I FEEL LIKE IF EVERYTHING WOULD JUST SLOW DOWN FOR A SECOND AND LET ME THINK, I'D BE ABLE TO FIGURE THIS OUT. IT FEELS A LITTLE DIZZY.

Recently, Chris and I had to have a discussion about some situations in our life that are full of confusion. As we talked, I could feel my neck and back muscles tightening and my chest feeling heavy and constricted. The longer we talked the more I knew that there were no good solutions, and only really one that we could see that might produce good fruit in the future. I don't want this to be the path forward, and yet I feel like it might be what God is asking of us in this season. My heart hurts. I have spent so much time trying to think of better ways to move forward, yet seeing nothing new. I know that God is asking me to slow down and sit with Him in this confusion. He is not shocked or surprised that I feel this way, nor is He late to show up. His hand and His faithfulness are the same in this situation as they always are. He has not changed. God, I want to know you in this place, and I want to honor you even in this place where the road seems unclear. Help me to trust you even here and to wait as you move and write this part of my story.

IN THE SITUATION THAT ESTHER IS TALKING ABOUT, IT SEEMED THE CONFUSION CAME IN BECAUSE WE WERE LOOKING FOR A GOOD SOLUTION. IT FELT LIKE THERE SHOULD BE A GOOD OPTION AND ONE OR MORE BAD OPTIONS. GOOD AND BAD. RIGHT AND WRONG. WE WERE CONFUSED ABOUT WHY WE COULDN'T FIND THE GOOD OPTION. SOMETIMES THERE ARE NO GOOD OPTIONS, ONLY LESS AWFUL ONES. THE SECOND WE UNDERSTOOD THAT EVERY OPTION ON THE TABLE WAS AWFUL, THE LEAST AWFUL OPTION WAS OBVIOUS. THE CONFUSION WAS GONE. WE STILL WEREN'T HAPPY. WE WERE HEARTBROKEN. WE ARE HEARTBROKEN. BUT WE

WERE NO LONGER CONFUSED. CONCUSSION IS LIKE BLINDNESS OF THE MIND. IT FEELS LIKE FUMBLING AROUND IN THE DARK LOOKING FOR A LIGHT SWITCH. SOMETIMES IT'S BETTER TO SIT IN THE DARK WITH GOD AND WAIT FOR HIM TO TURN ON THE LIGHT.

A Prayer for Feeling Confused-

God, I am lost. I know there's a right answer but I can't find it. I don't want to stop hunting because I know that means that I'll have to just trust you even if I don't understand everything that I want to understand. I'm also afraid that you'll send me in a direction I don't want to go. If I can just find a rational explanation to justify what I already want to do, then I won't have to surrender. But I know I need to surrender. Help me even if that means I won't know everything I want to know.

Awkward

Awkward- Feeling uneasy or uncomfortable

Language for feeling awkward -

“Cringe!!!”

“My skin is crawling”

“Hide me please!?”

“This is so uncomfortable”

“Awkward!!!”

Growing up I was sick a lot. In and out of the hospital sick. Missing weeks of school and getting really behind, kind of sick. Kids can be cruel when you are different than they are. I remember the day I went to school early after being sick for a few weeks. There was a group of kids waiting

in the gymnasium to be sent to our classrooms when it was time for school to start. A group of popular girls were sitting behind me whispering about how weird I was. I sat there overhearing them talk about me as though I wasn't sitting right there. I felt unseen and invisible. I wanted to crawl under the bleachers and hide. It would not be the last time I felt that way. In fact, to this day when I say something wrong or inappropriate, or when I feel like I have somehow upset someone, I can still feel the uncomfortable feeling of awkwardness. I even feel it when I know I need to say something to someone that I don't want to say. This feeling feels familiar. I know it well, and it makes me want to hide so that no one will see me.

FOR ME, AWKWARDNESS IS POISON. I HATE IT. FOR A LONG TIME, I COULDN'T WATCH TV SHOWS THAT SPECIALIZE IN AWKWARD HUMOR. IT TOOK ME ABOUT 10 TRIES TO FINALLY WATCH "THE OFFICE" PURELY BECAUSE I COULDN'T HANDLE THE AWKWARDNESS. I THINK THE REASON I DREAD IT SO MUCH IS BECAUSE I FEAR BEING SOCIALLY AWKWARD. I REMEMBER BEING YOUNG AND ALWAYS FEELING "OUTSIDE" EVERYTHING. I NOW KNOW THIS IS A COMMON FEELING FOR KIDS WITH ADHD, BUT WHEN I WAS YOUNG ALL I KNEW WAS THAT EVERYONE ELSE ALWAYS SEEMED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS HAPPENING AND I WAS CLUELESS. IT WAS LIKE I WAS ALWAYS WALKING INTO A CONVERSATION THAT WAS ALREADY TAKING PLACE. I WAS TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT WAS GOING ON. IT WAS INCREDIBLY AWKWARD. I WAS AWARE THAT SOMETHING WAS OFF, THAT I DIDN'T REALLY GET WHAT EVERYONE WAS TALKING ABOUT, BUT I ALSO DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO ARTICULATE THAT. BUT BEING A SOCIAL PERSON, I WANTED DESPERATELY TO FIT IN AND UNDERSTAND THE SOCIAL RHYTHMS AND INSIDE JOKES THAT EVERYONE ELSE SEEMED TO GET. THAT FEELING OF AWKWARDNESS WAS THE ALARM BELL THAT I WASN'T "IN" YET.

This feeling is one where I am learning that God wants me to allow him to see me. He wants me to lean into his love and grace rather than seeking to avoid and hide. He loves me in this feeling, and desires for His strength to shine in the places where I feel the discomfort and fear that feel threatening to me when I feel this feeling. He sees me in my awkwardness, in my weirdness, in my

avoidance of hard things, and He loves me. I am not a disappointment or something that needs to be hidden. I can feel his voice tenderly speaking, reminding me of my value simply because I am his daughter.

God, pull us close to you in our feelings of confusion and awkwardness. Help us to turn to you.

Remind us that you are not surprised or alarmed when we feel unsure, but that you are always faithful, making roads through our own Red Sea straight to our hearts so that we can declare your goodness. Help us to recognize in these uncomfortable feelings your invitation to be loved and reminded of your grace that covers us and gives us value.

I STILL HATE AWKWARDNESS. IF I SEE SOMEONE IN THE GROCERY STORE WHOM I HAVEN'T SEEN IN A LONG TIME, I WILL OFTEN AVOID THEM NOT BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO CATCH UP, BUT RATHER BECAUSE I FEAR AWKWARD CONVERSATIONS. WHAT IF I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING TO SAY? WHAT IF WE SAY, "HEY, BEEN A LONG TIME!" AND THEN JUST STAND THERE LOOKING AT EACH OTHER. WHAT IF THEY EXPECT ME TO COME UP WITH SOMETHING TO SAY, TO BREAK THE TENSION? EASIER TO AVOID. THE ONE THING THAT I HAVE GOTTEN BETTER AT IS THAT I'VE LEARNED HOW TO LOVE THE AWKWARD PEOPLE IN MY LIFE. I THINK I WANT TO PROTECT THEM FROM FEELING "OUTSIDE". I FEEL DEFENSIVE OF THE WEIRDOS (LIKE ME). I WANT THE ODDBALLS TO HAVE A PLACE WHERE THEY FEEL THEY CAN BE THEMSELVES AND WE CAN ALL JUST BE SOCIALLY AWKWARD TOGETHER. THERE IS SOMETHING VERY SPECIAL ABOUT HAVING YOUR PLACE WHERE YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE LOVED AND SEEN AND WHERE THE REAL YOU ISN'T AWKWARD. HOW AMAZING WOULD IT BE IF WE GOT TO A PLACE WHERE GOD WAS THAT PLACE. WHERE NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE FEEL OUT OF PLACE OR UNCOMFORTABLE, WE KNOW IN THE DEPTHS OF OUR SOULS THAT WE ARE SEEN AND THAT WE PERFECTLY FIT IN THE ARMS OF OUR FATHER.

A Prayer for Feeling Awkward-

God, this is so uncomfortable. I am making a fool out of myself. I don't seem to fit in at all and I'm pretty sure everyone can tell. Help me remember, Father, that I don't fit in here. Help me remember that I should

be a little off. I wasn't created for a world of hiding and trying to fit in. I was made for transparency and authenticity and a world where those are liabilities is not my world. So while I still live in this world with all of its inauthentic exchanges, help me be who you made me to be and to know that that person is seen and loved by the creator of all things. If You be for me, who can be against me?

Psalm 66

Shout joyful praises to God, all the earth!

Sing about the glory of his name!

Tell the world how glorious he is.

Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!

Your enemies cringe before your mighty power.

Everything on earth will worship you;

they will sing your praises,

shouting your name in glorious songs."

Come and see what our God has done,

what awesome miracles he performs for people!

He made a dry path through the Red Sea,

and his people went across on foot.

There we rejoiced in him.

For by his great power he rules forever.

He watches every movement of the nations;
let no rebel rise in defiance.

Let the whole world bless our God
and loudly sing his praises.

Our lives are in his hands,
and he keeps our feet from stumbling.

You have tested us, O God;
you have purified us like silver.

You captured us in your net
and laid the burden of slavery on our backs.

Then you put a leader over us.
We went through fire and flood,
but you brought us to a place of great abundance.

Now I come to your Temple with burnt offerings
to fulfill the vows I made to you—

yes, the sacred vows that I made
when I was in deep trouble.

That is why I am sacrificing burnt offerings to you—
the best of my rams as a pleasing aroma,
and a sacrifice of bulls and male goats.

Come and listen, all you who fear God,
and I will tell you what he did for me.

For I cried out to him for help,
praising him as I spoke.

If I had not confessed the sin in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened.

But God did listen!
He paid attention to my prayer.

Praise God, who did not ignore my prayer
or withdraw his unfailing love from me.