

Practice 3: Emotional Awareness

Overview

Human beings are emotional creatures. We *feel*, deeply at times. Sadly, American church culture can be quick to write off “feelings” or “emotional health.” But Jesus puts on display a high level of emotional awareness. For Jesus, emotions - positive or negative - are places to meet with God. The goal of practice three is to grow our awareness of our own feelings and practice processing each one with the Father.

Prayer

As you begin, take a few moments to pray as an MC and invite the Holy Spirit to lead and guide your time together.

Debrief *10 min*

Talk through the following debrief questions:

1. How have you been keeping up with your practicing silence and solitude?
2. What did you experience in silence and solitude?
3. What was the best part? The hardest part?
4. What barriers did you experience? What would help you better navigate those?

Open to the Bible together *10 min*

Have somebody read Luke 22:39-46

Talk about the following questions:

1. What did Jesus do with his deep emotions of sorrow and dread? What kind of example does that set for us who want to be with Him?
2. What was the result of Jesus recognizing his emotions and then giving them over to the Father in prayer?
3. What are some of the reasons that we, like Jesus' apprentices in the story, have a hard time meeting God in our emotions, specifically our negative emotions?

The Explanation & Prompt *15min*

A few notes before beginning:

- Notebook/something to write could be helpful this week
- You will get into groups of 2-3 for "debrief". Go ahead and select who/where before you start the video prompt.
- It will be helpful for people to be able to have a physical copy of the guide both for practice and the debrief questions after.

1. Put away your phone or any other distractions, settle into your time/place

2. "Breathing prayer": this is meant to help us slow down and disconnect from distractions

- Close your eyes; Take long, deep, slow breaths; Release the constant chatter in your mind. Let each thought go as quickly as it comes.

3. “Abide”: God has given followers of Jesus the Holy Spirit. Abiding is acknowledging and tuning our own hearts and mind into the reality that God is here with us in this moment.

4. “Self-awareness”: Ask yourself a few questions: “What am I experiencing now?”; “What have I been experiencing lately?”; “What is/has been going on in my heart and mind?”.

- What emotions rise to the surface, big or small?
- You might feel joy, gratitude, sadness, emptiness, fatigue, worry, shame, conviction, or any number of perceived positive or negative emotions.
- Name “the good, the bad, and the ugly” of your emotional state. Don’t run away from what you’re feeling.
- If you find this exercise to be difficult, you may find it helpful to jot down a few prompts and then finish the sentence. Here are few examples:
 - This week I was happy when ...
 - I felt angry this week when ...
 - I’m discouraged or disappointed about...

- I am feeling...

5. Pray: Get it *all* off your chest. Give whatever you are feeling over to God - the good, the bad, and the ugly. No filter. The point here isn't to be good, but to be honest.

- Different emotions call for different kinds of prayer.
- If you're happy - celebrate! Sing! Dance!
- If you're grateful, tell God what for with specificity.
- If you're anxious, give your worry over to the Father and ask for his peace in return.
- If you're sitting in unanswered questions about your life or future, hold that tension before God. Tell him how it feels not to have an answer. Don't force clarity where there is none. Just be patient before God with all that is unsolved in your heart.

Close in a prayer of gratitude to the Father (simple version: thank Him that he is near to us)

A few things to note:

1. Emotions are not inherently "good" or "bad" but do offer clues to how we are experiencing God and the world around us.
2. Having a journal to write some of the things you are feeling can be really helpful.

The Practice *15 min*

Dismiss everyone to go find a spot to be silent and “do” the practice. (The leader will set a timer once everyone has found a place). Take a notebook/pen with you. When the timer is up, go to your “smaller group”.

Work through these discussion questions in groups of 2-3 *10-15 min*

1. Would you say you are able to name your emotions readily? Or is it difficult for you? Why or why not?
2. Was emotional awareness a part of your upbringing? How did your family deal with emotions? How has that shaped your life today?

Close in prayer *5-10 min*

Tips for the Coming Week

Continue taking time throughout your week to be in silence and notice the emotions that are rising up within. For now we are simply naming these emotions and recognizing that they are neither “good” nor “bad”.

1. This is the type of practice that might take some time. Emotions can be hard, and naming them can be confusing. If you are having a difficult time putting a name to your emotions try using a [“feelings wheel”](#) to better define your emotions.
2. Keeping a journal can also be helpful for learning to name and understand emotions.

