

A BIBLICAL REFLECTION OF EMOTIONAL HEALTH

BASED ON THE DISNEY PIXAR FILM INSIDE OUT

GROUP GUIDE WITH LEADER SCRIPT



introduction

As Christians, we believe each person is created in the image of God and has the unique ability to feel and express emotions. How you think about, experience and behave in response to an emotion can play a key role in defining who you are.

It's not always easy or comfortable to name and discuss our emotions, but it is an important part of cherishing God's gifts and nurturing our well-being.

Emotions can be short-lived or long-lasting. They can motivate you to take action or make decisions. They can help you survive, thrive and avoid danger. If effort is made to understand them, emotions can allow a better understanding of the people we interact with.

The emotional expressions of those around us provide a lot of social information. When we learn to respond appropriately, we can build deeper, more meaningful relationships with family, friends and loved ones. We can also communicate more effectively in a variety of social situations and better reflect Christ in our world.

how to use this guide

The Pixar movie *Inside Out* (2015) follows the emotions and experiences of 11-year-old Riley as her family goes through the transition of moving from Minnesota to San Francisco. The film provides a framework to have important discussions with families or other social connections about faith and emotions. This discussion guide can be used as you see fit in your context. You do not have to follow the questions exactly or engage in every section. Rather, it is a tool available for you to encourage natural conversations about emotional health and faith.

Family Guide

The family section can be used with children of any age. It may be helpful to read through and adjust questions based upon the ages of those involved. Consider the developmental levels of younger and older children as they experience new emotions and are learning how to communicate them. We hope you will find value in creating a safe place for conversation and exploration using this tool. While this guide is titled "Family Guide," it can be used in any household structure.

Group Guide

The group section outlines weekly discussions and includes sections on community building, scripture reference, recommended movie clip(s), reflection, guiding questions, at home spiritual practices, closing remarks and prayer. We recommend watching the movie together as a group prior to starting the discussion. Once you complete this study, you might also take it a step further in your community through a sermon series or larger group gathering. Approaching these topics with grace and understanding, for yourself and others, will foster a safe environment and a more positive experience. Some conversations may be uncomfortable, but it helps in remembering we are all children of God created with a full breadth and depth of emotional capabilities. We can reflect and learn together how to process emotions so we can live a full life in community.

preparation and supplies

preparation

- Leader(s): read through and familiarize yourself with weekly outline and appendix resources. Leaders should plan to read sections but could ask for group participation on parts such as reading the scripture or closing prayer.
- Make copies of the introduction, family guide and at-home practices for each participant.
- Help set up a group covenant and remind each other weekly.
- If a group is new, consider working through some get-to-know-you activities prior to starting the discussion guide.
- We recommend watching the whole movie together as a group prior to starting the discussion guide. To play the movie for your group, you will need to purchase a CVLI license. To get a price estimate and purchase the license, visit <https://us.cvli.com/about/pricing/>.
- Recommended: ask pastor, prayer team member, or counselor to be available following weekly discussions for participants who need added support.
- Optional: Supply questions to participants each week, i.e., write on whiteboard or poster, print out and share.

supplies

- Copy of the Introduction (one per participant).
- Copy of the Family Guide (one per participant).
- Copy of At Home Practices/Activities (one per participant).
- White board or poster for writing group covenant.
- Pens or pencils.
- Sheets of paper or journals for notes.
- CVLI License to play Inside Out for your group.
- Optional: refreshments, walking prayer labyrinth (available to check out from Conference office).

lesson one: joy

creating community

Have everyone in the group introduce themselves. Afterwards, turn to your neighbor and greet them with the words, “You are created in the image of God and I’m so glad you are here today.”

icebreaker question

*What is one word that describes how you are feeling as we begin this learning journey together?” “How do you want to grow through this study?”

If you don’t already have one, now is a good time to set up a group covenant that will frame expectations of your norms and behaviors during your time together. Below are a few basics you can consider in creating common ground. Feel free to amend or add to the list to fit your group needs. When the conversation is done, make sure to get verbal agreement from everyone and then write your covenant down where it can be a reminder.

cov·e·nant

noun

An agreement expressing group practices, expected behavior and shared values.

**Use the Feelings Wheel located in the appendix as a resource for this discussion.*

lesson one: joy

sample covenant

Listen first: Focus on truly hearing what your neighbor is saying rather than immediately thinking about your own response.

Step up/step back: Pay attention to whose voices are being heard. If you find yourself speaking several times in a session, consider stepping back; alternatively, if you are a more reserved person consider whether you should step up and share something that may be helpful for the group.

Confidentiality: Do not share personal stories outside the group without consent.

scripture

Read Galatians 5:22.

Paul offers an image of what those living in Christ should expect to see flowing from their lives when led by the Holy Spirit. Joy is part of the “fruit of the Spirit” and is the result of God working in our lives.

recommended movie clips

00:04:20-00:07:20 - Happy Core Memories

00:08:40-00:11:20 - Riley’s New Home

leader script

The passage comes from near the end of a larger letter the Apostle Paul wrote to his fellow Christians in the region of Galatia. He is trying to communicate there is an opportunity for them to live differently as disciples of Jesus. Paul expresses that, in many ways, Jesus came to set them free. Instead of fighting about this or that or trying to prove themselves through an action, they should embrace the freedom given to them through Jesus and seek to serve each other "humbly in love." Paul goes on to say that if you lean in on grace and freedom and consider ways you can serve others, you are going to reflect this on the outside just as tree with good roots, leaves, and branches bears fruit. The fruit you will bear is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Paul argues this is all rooted in God's extravagant grace, the power of God working in us to transform us, as we seek to serve humbly and walk faithfully.

An emotion is a physiological experience, this means that your emotions are largely subconscious reactions and will be felt physically. For example, some people experience an elevated heart rate when they're nervous. This is your body telling you physically that something is different in response to your emotion. A feeling is your conscious awareness of the emotion. For example, you have the emotion of being nervous, you recognize your heart is beating quickly, then you feel a range of responses. These could include curiosity as to why your heart is beating faster, increased nervousness about how to calm your heart down, or agitation as to why you're nervous at all.

You can have multiple emotions from a situation and multiple feelings about each emotion. Throughout the movie Joy believed the best thing for Riley was to always be happy. Her journey in saving the core memories faced many obstacles and provided examples of less than healthy coping mechanisms, such as emotional suppression with the "circle of Sadness."

leader script

Ultimately, the journey helped Joy learn the roles the other emotions served in Riley's well-being. Throughout Riley's experiences, we also receive clues as to how joy is different than happiness. Joy is more enduring and based on an internal feeling of contentment, able to exist even while a person is suffering or having difficult experiences. It can be accessed deeply, even when the world is chaotic. We can be fulfilled knowing who God is, what God has done and what God can do.

Happiness is shorter lived and based on getting what you want in the moment, like scoring a goal in hockey.

We might relate to a big life moment that evokes joy, sadness, anger, fear, or disgust, just as Riley experienced. We might even have more than one emotion at a time. It's not bad to have these emotions, but our response to them can shape our experience. Allowing ourselves the space to kindly observe the emotion without judging it as right or wrong can support greater chances at choosing a healthy response. We offer this exercise as a tool for managing emotions:

**Emotionally evocative situation →
Emotion → Feeling → Naming → Engaging
with the emotion → Acting on the
information the emotion provides OR
deciding not to act because the situation
does not require action.**

As we seek to reflect Christ in our world, we celebrate the love and mercy of God's grace, and the freedom given freely through Jesus that allows us to bear the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

guiding questions

- Can you relate to any of the challenges Joy faces in the movie? How?
- How can God provide joy?
- What other feelings or emotions do you experience with joy?
- What do you think brings God joy?
- What are Christian responses to joy?
- Where else can joy be found in the Bible? What do we learn from that example?

recommended at-home tools

See Appendix: Prayer of Thankfulness (Body Prayer), Prayer Labyrinth, Gratitude Journal.

closing remarks

Through God's grace and freedom and looking to serve others, we can experience great gifts of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

prayer

Gracious God, we rejoice in the fruit of the Spirit. In experiencing your gifts of joy, love, patience, kindness, goodness, and faithfulness, help us to use these gifts in the service of others. We trust that you are with us during times of different emotions and can help us learn about the emotions and responses of our siblings in Christ. Let your grace and freedom continue to inspire joy in our lives. It is in your name that we pray, Amen.

lesson two: anger

creating community

Greet your neighbor with the words, “Let the grace of the Lord be your joy. I’m so glad you are here today.”

icebreaker question

Take a minute to go around and reflect on your week and review your experiences from the last lesson on the emotion of joy.

Did you find time to try a spiritual practice? How was that experience? If you were able to discuss parts of the family guide with family or friends, how was that experience?

scripture

Read James 1:19-20.

James calls those who trust in God to give up trying to control the world with their words and anger. They humbly receive the word of God, listen to it and respond with action.

recommended movie clips

00:26:40-00:30:10 - Dad Puts the Foot Down

00:45:00-00:47:10 - Hockey Tryouts

leader script

This is potentially one of the most quotable passages of Scripture concerning anger. This is for good reason; these two verses pack a powerful punch and are worthy of further consideration. James makes it clear that our actions, when taken in anger, do not produce the results that God desires in our lives or in the lives of others. Maybe you can think of a time when anger caused you to say or do something that you did not mean. Because we all can have this shortcoming, James calls us to be slow to speak and quick to listen. It's easy to become absorbed within an emotion and forget to connect with the other person and listen. James offers us that listening should be the primary posture of a Christian life.

According to Psychologist Diana Raab, listening is one of the primary building blocks of deep, authentic relationships. These are the types of relationships that God calls us to. We are often reminded the value of other people throughout Scripture. In fact, when asked about the most important commandment, Jesus replies (paraphrasing) "Love God, love your neighbor and love yourself." James builds the case that anger creates a barrier to intentional listening, and we can all probably come up with an example that would prove him right.

In the dinner scene from *Inside Out*, Disgust, Anger, and Fear are finding it hard to respond to questions from Riley's mom and dad. They can't answer with Joy because she is gone. Anger takes over and quickly responds to Riley's dad. With Anger driving the controls, Riley tries to manage her irritation but ends up in an argument with her dad. If you look at Riley and her parents' control panels, each person has a different emotion in the driver's seat. Regardless of which emotion is in control, watching Riley and her dad shows us that neither person handled the angry conversation very well.

So, does this mean we ignore our anger? No. It has been said, "feelings that get buried alive never die."

leader script

These words emphasize the potential power our emotions can hold over our lives. So, what is the Biblical response to anger? In Psalm 4 David tells us to “Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds and be silent.” If you’re getting heated in an argument, find some space to reflect on your own emotions and how you’re choosing to respond. In emotional situations it takes work to make our reactions thoughtful and Christlike.

David calls us to hold our tongue and search our hearts. Anger can be a sign there is a perceived injustice that either affects yourself or someone else. A place to start your response can again be the naming tool in lesson one, as well as reflecting on these questions, “I feel angry, am I actually angry? (Anger can mask other emotions such as fear)” “Why is this situation causing this reaction within me?” “How can everyone, including me, be heard?” These conversations along with prayer can guide us through a Christian response to our anger.

guiding questions

- If the control panels were not visible in the movie scene, would that change the viewpoint of the situation? How or why?
- Which emotions are in your control panel? Which one is in the driver’s seat?
- What causes anger for you and why?
- How do you currently respond to situations that evoke anger?
- Does anger mask any of your other emotions? Which ones?
- Can anger ever be used in a good way? Why or why not? How?
- Where else can anger be found in the Bible? What do we learn from that example?

recommended at-home tools

See Appendix: Prayer Practices of Self-Examination or Kything, Exercise, Massage Tension.

closing remarks

We have talked a lot about anger and how we react, and how Christ desires for us to pursue a posture of listening and being slow to anger. In those moments, think about the value of the other person and the commandment to “Love God, love your neighbor and love yourself.”

If anger or resentment has been holding a place in your heart, remember God is there for you. There are spiritual practices, people and resources that can help you navigate a resolution that may lead to peace, grace, or a new action to remedy a social ill or injustice.

prayer

Gracious and forgiving God, we come to you today as we are. We might be reflecting on a moment this week where our emotions responded before we listened. Help us to remember to stop, listen and let your words guide our reply. We might also be reflecting a held feeling of anger or frustration. Help us to prayerfully approach processing the memory and crafting a Christian response that offers in peace. It is in your name we pray, Amen.

lesson three: fear

creating community

Greet your neighbor with the words, "I'm praying that God will fill your cup. I'm so glad you are here today."

icebreaker question

Take a minute to go around and reflect on your week and review your experiences from the last lesson on the emotion of anger.

Did you find time to try a spiritual practice? How was that experience? If you were able to discuss parts of the family guide with family or friends, how was that experience?

scripture

Read Matthew 25: 14-30.

Parable of the Talents. This passage compares the kingdom of heaven to three servants who have been entrusted with their master's resources while he is away.

recommended movie clips

00:22:00-00:24:15 - Fear Prepares for First Day of School

00:50:00-51:30 - Fear Tries to Quit

leader script

The passage compares the kingdom of heaven to three servants of a wealthy master. While the master was going to be away for a while, he entrusted the servants with his assets and commanded them to do business. The servants knew the master would return, but they did not know exactly when. The first two servants went to work and doubled their resources, but the third buried his out of fear that he would fail and upset the master. He wanted to protect himself. When the master returns, he praises the first two servants for using their abilities and condemns the third servant for his lack of action.

Jesus shares this story with his disciples to prepare them for the times when their faith will be tested.

The parable represents how the disciples are supposed to show their faithfulness to the Lord as they await Christ's return. In Matthew's Gospel, faithfulness should mirror Jesus' ministries of feeding the hungry, curing the sick, blessing the meek, and serving the least. Those who are faithful may hear from the Master, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

Fear is a complex emotion; it is our response to real or perceived physical or emotional danger, and it can either motivate or paralyze us based on our approach. Our response to assess the situation is driven by our amygdala. The amygdala is a part of your brain, located in the temporal lobe. This part of your brain plays a big role in processing memory, decision-making and emotional responses. The right side of the amygdala is associated with negative emotions, especially fear and sadness. The left side is related to positive emotions, such as joy.

Our fears can be associated with a desire to control the outcome and may interact with feelings of worry or anxiety. This was displayed in the movie when Joy asked Fear to come up with a list of everything that could go wrong on the first day of school.

leader script

His list highlights quicksand, spontaneous combustion and getting called on by the teacher. The dangers being physical injury or social embarrassment. Of course, this is exactly what happens; Riley is called on by the teacher. Fear's response in this moment is important: first he tried avoiding the situation, then panicked when Riley is overcome with sadness in front of the whole class. In the Parable of the Talents, fear of what could happen- failure to protect the master's assets and the resulting reprimands- kept the third servant from doing anything with his resources.

The servant experienced the paralyzing fear that turned his focus away from God. He perceived upsetting the master as worse than doing nothing, so he chose the latter. God blesses us with many "talents," such as skills, abilities, assets and money. If fear exists, earnestly praying and trusting in God can help us see these resources as opportunities to reflect Christ in our world. As faithful servants we can work to multiply our talents and resources while we await God's action.

guiding questions

- What do you fear?
- How might fear affect the way we live? (i.e., Does it cause us to have feelings like worry, anxiety, does it make us want to control others, etc.?)
- Is God compelling you to do something that evokes fear? What seems to be the danger? How can you process this?
- What encourages you amid fear?
- How would a renewed fear (awe, reverence) of the Lord encourage you to live out the gospel in your own life? (Eph. 4:1)
- Where else can the concept of fear be found in the Bible? What do we learn from that example?

recommended at-home tools

See Appendix: Breath Prayer, Prayer of Thankfulness, Creative Release.

closing remarks

God has created each one of us uniquely with different talents, dreams, opportunities and interests. Some of us will want to start a business or adopt a new ministry focus.

If we allow our response to fear to be worry, anxiety, or nothing, we will not live into God's calling. Allowing our faithfulness to guide us, we can recognize that God is alive in each of us and will enable us to do anything.

prayer

Gracious God, help us to overcome the fear that may keep us from growing closer to you. Help us to identify the talents you have provided us and explore how they can be used for your glory.

Sometimes we think there might be danger in trying something new, but help us rejoice in recognizing you are calling us to this space. You will equip us to be more like Jesus and serve our communities. It is in your name we give thanks, Amen.

lesson four: disgust

creating community

Greet your neighbor with the words “Trust in the Lord. I’m so glad you are here today.”

icebreaker question

Take a minute to go around and reflect on your week and review your experiences from the last lesson on the emotion of fear.

Did you find time to try a spiritual practice? How was that experience? If you were able to discuss parts of the family guide with family or friends, how was that experience?

scripture

Read Malachi 3:6-12, John 2: 13-16, Matthew 23:37-39, Revelation 3:15-16.

recommended movie clips

00:26:35-00:28:06 - Hockey Tryouts

01:00:00-01:01:13 - Riley Plans

01:13:30-01:15:30 - Riley Runs Away

leader script

Disgust can be experienced when you face something you don't want to come in contact with because you suspect it is bad for you. This might occur in a couple of ways; repulsion of something physical like rotten food, dead animals, or bodily fluids. Our five senses fuel this response as it tries to protect us from substances that might cause illness or death. Disgust can also be triggered by something more abstract, like certain ideas or behaviors, we find offensive. This is considered moral disgust. Throughout the movie, Disgust protects Riley from physical and social poisoning with her honesty and high standards. Much of what we learn about her character comes from her interactions with the other emotions. She has confidence in how Joy leads Riley, so she becomes doubtful when it is left up to her, Fear and Anger to keep Riley happy. Her annoyance with Fear and agreement with some of Anger's responses gets Riley in a few sticky situations. Their collective inability to act as Joy at dinner leads Riley to respond with an annoyance and apathy to hockey, an activity that was once her love and passion.

At first glance, you might think it hard to find examples of disgust in the Bible. However, we see a few moments in today's passages where a moral disgust has been triggered. Several emotions bubble up at the same time as we see people settle for something other than God's design.

In Malachi, God challenges the Israelites to trust promises of provision. In John, Jesus is "consumed by zeal" as he confronts those who are seeking profit rather than worship. In Matthew, Jesus is overcome with disgust towards the religious leaders of the day. Rather than pointing people in the right direction, they have worked to make the outside look clean while the inside is vile. Jesus however, he says in a desperate breath, longs for Jerusalem. Finally, speaking to a group of people who are trying to keep their distance in Revelation, God makes it clear that God wants more.

leader script

In all these passages, disgust walks closely with other emotions and responses: apathy, anger, disappointment, throwing ones hands up in the air, etc. Yet, at the root of each of these is a frustration on the part of God for people to see God's pursuant love and faithfulness. In Revelation God says, "buy gold from me refined in fire." In Malachi it says "...test me in this...and all of the nations will call you blessed." Collectively, disgust seems to stand on a line in Scripture between giving up/giving in or trusting that God is in control.

guiding questions

- When can disgust be helpful? When can it be inhibiting?
- What other emotions or feelings have you experienced with disgust?
- Disgust is an innate reaction, but the things that trigger it are mostly learned. Discuss how this plays out in how we experience disgust. (Think across different contexts and cultures.)
- What is God disgusted by? Why?
- What are healthy ways to process and respond to disgust?
- Disgust, anger and fear are considered negative emotions. Is it possible to still achieve positive outcomes with these emotions? Why or why not?

recommended at-home tools

See appendix: Prayer of Adoration, Welcoming Prayer, Finding Humor.

closing remarks

Disgust can keep us away from something potentially dangerous or damaging. We can check-in with this emotion as it relates to other emotions and our behaviors as we strive to live a life abundant in God.

prayer

Gracious God, we give thanks for your enduring love and grace, that you knew us before we ever were and that you sent Jesus Christ to pay the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. Help us to continue naming and engaging with our emotions so we can be in Christian community with one another. To know and trust you are in control and will lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. It is in all this we pray your name, Amen.

lesson five: sadness

creating community

Greet your neighbor with the words “God is with you always. I’m so glad you are here today.”

icebreaker question

Take a minute to go around and reflect on your week and the emotion of disgust.

Did you find time to try a spiritual practice? How was that experience? If you were able to discuss parts of the family guide with family or friends, how was that experience?

scripture

Read John 11:35.

Jesus had left Jerusalem to avoid hostile religious leaders. While gone, he receives word that his friend Lazarus is sick and dies before Jesus’ return. Jesus weeps with Lazarus’ mourning sisters, Mary and Martha. He weeps for their pain and for the lack of faith in Him. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead in a spectacular miracle.

recommended movie clips

00:47:15-00:49:37 - Bing Bong Loses Rocket and Sadness Comforts

00:12:15-00:15:36 - Joy Cheering Sadness Up

01:18:50-01:23:40 - Sadness and Joy Bring Riley Home

leader script

In the passage, Mary and Martha are weeping for their brother's death. Early on they believed in Jesus and the miracles he could perform, but after a few days they lost hope in Jesus returning to heal Lazarus. Jesus was intentionally waiting to heal Lazarus to bring glory to God, whose willingness and pursuant desire is to overcome death, sin and illness. When Jesus arrived and saw Mary and Martha mourning, he wept for their pain, even though he knew Lazarus would soon be healed. Jesus genuinely cares for and loves us. God takes our pain seriously, even knowing we will be restored. God does not want to see us in pain, even if a greater good may come of it.

As Riley and her family make the big move, she starts to experience more sadness. In the Control Panel, Sadness touches Core Memories and begins to turn them from yellow (Joy) to blue like her. Joy does not understand the role of Sadness and tries to contain her actions with the "circle of Sadness."

As their quest to save Riley's core memories unfolds, Joy starts to realize the importance of the other emotions in Riley's overall well-being. When Bing Bong becomes sad the rocket is dumped into the Memory Dump, it is Sadness who helps process the experience. Joy tries to distract Bing Bong with positive and funny things, but Sadness sits down and listens to Bing Bong's feelings and memories with Riley.

She validates Bing Bong's emotions and expresses empathy. Sadness is not a bad emotion; it's meant to be temporary and a way for us to signal we need help or comfort. It's a response to emotional upset or pain. (*see definitions) When we care about someone and we see them in pain, we feel that hurt, too. We can comfort them with our presence and acknowledge their pain, just as Sadness did for Bing Bong.

leader script

When we experience sadness ourselves, we can reach out to God. God will meet us in our grief or despair and can share the burden of our pain.

de·pre·ss·ion

noun

Depression (major depressive disorder) is a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, the way you think and how you act. Depression causes feelings of sadness and/or a loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed.

sa·dd·ne·ss

noun

A normal human emotion a person might experience during stressful or somber times.

Sadness may seem all-encompassing, but you should still be able to find moments of happiness or comfort. This is different from the mental illness of depression, which tends to affect all aspects of life. It becomes difficult to find comfort or enjoyment in usual activities or relationships. Symptoms of depression may include constant feelings of sadness, irritability, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, changes in sleep or eating patterns and more. If you are experiencing these feelings, reach out to your healthcare provider.

recommended at-home tools

See appendix: Home Altar, Mindfulness.

closing remarks

Jesus wept because he wanted to take away Mary and Martha's pain. Jesus wept for the lack of faith he saw around him. Jesus wept as he was preparing to pay the ultimate price to show God's love for us. It is a reminder that no matter what hurts or pains us, God is right there with us. It is okay for us to signal for help and allow God to meet us in our times of darkness.

prayer

Loving God, you know our hearts and the things that cause us pain and hurt. Remind us that you are here and can bear the burden with us. Help us to recognize the loss or injustices that cause sadness for those around us and open our eyes to the opportunities to listen and empathize with Christian love. We thank you for the ability to share this emotion with others. It is in your name we pray, Amen.

lesson six: where do we go from here?

creating community

Greet your neighbor with the words “God knows your heart. I’m so glad you are here today.”

icebreaker section

Take a minute to go around and reflect on your week and the emotion of sadness.

Did you find time to try a spiritual practice? How was that experience? If you were able to discuss parts of the family guide with family or friends, how was that experience?

recommended movie clips

01:23:45-01:26:10 - Expanded Control Center

leader script

As you have used this movie to usher in a safe place to discuss and process emotional experiences, how are you feeling now? Were the conversations challenging? Were some of them uncomfortable or scary?

[This can be an opportunity for spiritual reflection time with those questions, suggested time of five minutes.]

lesson six: where do we go from here?

leader script

Maybe you had some fun reminiscing on your own childhood memories or experiences with changing emotions. Hopefully, the conversations have also been encouraging in recognizing you are not alone. We all are not alone in the feelings and emotions we experience. God created us with the ability to experience and feel. Jesus freely expressed emotions and used them to show compassion for others.

It is important we revisit these conversations often as life will keep happening. Emotions will continue to exist, and we will keep responding with feelings and actions. Families will move, children will start new schools, neighbors will pass away, injustices will occur and we will feel called to unfamiliar places. How will we respond when our emotions show up in these instances? How will we help our friends, families, coworkers, and neighbors as their emotions might show up? Fully entrusting our lives to God brings gifts of joy, peace, kindness, guidance and gentleness. At those times when we feel sadness and sorrow, or see our neighbors feeling hopeless, God is present. Walking alongside us, sharing our emotional burden. We cannot end our emotions, but we can entrust them with God and pursue an abundant life.

Here are some questions and examples you might reflect on as you recap your journey through this Bible study:

- How has your view of emotions changed during this study?
- What spiritual practice(s) helped you the most with processing your emotions? How?
- During which moments did you find your emotions responding first? How did that affect your experience?
- In which moments did you find yourself listening first, then responding? How did that affect your experience?
- What are ways we can respectfully check on the emotional health of our friends and neighbors?

lesson six: where do we go from here?

leader script

Here are some questions and examples you might reflect on as you prepare ways to continue the conversation:

- What are ways we can further our learning on this topic?
 - Offer an Emotionally Healthy Spirituality course and take the assessment to evaluate emotional health. You can learn more from the Learn and Lead Podcast.
 - Work through the United Methodist Women's study Finding Peace in an Anxious World.
- What is one thing we can do within our church practices to promote emotional health or emotionally healthy conversations?
 - Celebrate joy: remember your baptism, have a visual, interactive display that people can add to or comment on
 - Dedicate a special service to emotions and feelings.
 - Invite a professional or local mental health/well-being organization to give a presentation annually.
 - Create a safe space for youth to explore emotions through conversation, art, activity, etc.
- What is one thing we can do externally to promote emotional health in the community?
 - Think creatively, this does not have to be delivered as a traditional Bible study, support group, or summer long program. This could be done in a multitude of ways: a pop-up joyful event, a community memorial service acknowledging loss or grief, a running club who might take a few minutes each time they gather to check in on each other, handing out journals to local high schoolers, etc.
- How do we take what we have learned out into the community?
 - Think about the populations that might be in your surrounding area. Are there certain events or lifestyles that might affect their emotions or ability/opportunity to connect with other community members or God?

lesson six: where do we go from here?

leader script

- Examples:
 - Do we have industries that people are moving in/out for?
 - What short term ministry opportunities could we provide?
 - Have we had a traumatic community event that has affected our collective emotions?
 - What healing ministry opportunity could we provide?
 - Are there single parent homes or non-traditional homes?
 - What added emotional/spiritual support could we provide or sponsor?

closing remarks

Emotions can be a powerful force in our lives, which is why we can guide our responses with listening, naming and engaging. We can work together to process emotions and the associated experiences so we can live a life that reflects Christ. May this guide be a resource and tool for the betterment of individual, group, and community health.

prayer

Gracious God, we give thanks for your gift of emotions and experiences. For the joy we find in you, for the fear we can overcome, the disgust that can light our fire, for the sadness we can use in our empathy and for the anger we can dissolve. Help us to connect with those around us who are experiencing the same emotions but in diverse ways. Help us to foster safe places for conversation and encourage healthy ways of coping. Guide us in showing others how to live a joyful life devoted to you, God. In your name we give thanks and praise, Amen.

appendix

other conversation starters

- There is an element of sacrifice in this movie when Bing Bong stays back in the memory dump so Joy can get back to the Control Panel to help Riley. How do you make a parallel with our faith? Are there times when we must make sacrifices? Why or why not?
- In the scene at the dinner table where Riley's parents are asking about her first day at the new school, you will notice the mother's Control Panel is led by sadness and the father's is led by anger. Discuss how this plays out in the movie and where it might lead to differences or challenges.
- What other emotions do we meet in the Bible? What type of directions do those examples provide in pursuing a life in Christ?

at-home practices

spiritual practices

Breath Prayer

Can also be called the "gut prayer." The breath prayer is a short prayer, usually just a few words, that can fit in the moment of a breath. It can be used in an immediate moment of need or for long-range desires. Breath prayers can change depending on our life's seasons. One may fit for a while, then change its words or name for God depending on the season. (Brown, 2003, 76-77) Imagine Jesus calling you by name and asking, "_____, what do you want?" How would you answer him?

appendix

spiritual practices

Choose your favorite name or image for God as you are relating to God right now, in this season of your life. It could be simply “God” or “Jesus” or “Holy Spirit” or “Creator” or “Mother” or “Father” or “Lord” or “Shepherd” or... You get the idea...

Combine your name for God with a few words or a phrase that captures your heart’s desire. Arrange the words in the phrase so it fits easily into the rhythm of your breathing. Something like, “Jesus, heal me; Spirit, lead me.”

Home Altar

“Make your own home altar. To get into the mood, light a candle or put on some music. Gather some items that you love, items that remind you of an answered prayer or a yearned-for request, items that make you feel close to God. Then on a cloth or scarf, arrange the items in a place in your home that feels right, perhaps on a mantle, table, ledge, or shelf. As you spend time with your altar, you develop a sense of what works for you and what else you might add.” (Brown, 2003, pg. 257-259)

Kything Prayer

Kything prayer engages the imagination to focus on the interconnectedness between all people, all creatures, all creation, and God. It calls the person praying to a stance of transformative love in relation to “the other.” For many people, this form of prayer may be indispensable for building a truly just peace. (Dreitcher, A., 2005)

- Consider an individual or group that you are with or soon to be encountering. Hold them in your imagination.
- As you focus on them, imagine yourself being surrounded by a vital, God-filled light.
- Now imagine the other person or group being surrounded by a similar light.
- As your imagination holds both these images, allow the lights gradually to merge into one.
- Rest in this image for a time.

appendix

spiritual practices

Prayer of Adoration (Brown, 2003, pg. 164-165)

The prayer of adoration included here captures the spirit of the Berulle French School practice.

Move into a kneeling position with your arms out and palms facing up or choose any body position that demonstrates adoration. Closing your eyes may help you focus. Pray the prayer that follows in “‘awakened contemplation.”“ This means that you are alert and fully conscious of your prayer, not dull or in a relaxed stupor.

STEP ONE: Say aloud the word ‘Look.’ Then pause for two or three minutes and be silent in the presence of Jesus. Contemplate the face of Jesus as you imagine it, and as he appears in others (such as your children or parents or friends).

STEP TWO: Say aloud the word ‘Unite.’ Again, pause for two or three minutes and be silent as you unite your desires and needs with the will of Jesus. This is the movement of the heart to the beloved, an immense longing. It is the mysterious pouring out of one’s own being into the beloved thou. Feel the presence of Jesus as your companion. Consciously feel the companionship of others in your life, whom you also love.

STEP THREE: Say aloud the word ‘Power.’ Pause for two or three minutes of silence one last time as you open yourself to accepting Jesus’ power to live enriched and whole, joyous, and free. Accept the holy, silent mystery that fills any emptiness in your life. Remember that you are loved, and that the Spirit frees you to live out your life in a God-conscious way. The strong arms of God’s divine strength lift you to a higher place. Use this reflective prayer (from Mechtild of Magdeburg) to end your prayer time:

Lord, you are my lover,
My longing,
My flowing stream,
My sun,
And I am your reflection.

appendix

spiritual practices

Prayer Labyrinth

See attachment for finger labyrinth or contact MOAC to check out the full-size walking labyrinth

Prayer of Thankfulness (Body Prayer) pg. 55 (Pagitt & Prill, 2001)

Lord, in this prayer I thank you for my body. May I use all the abilities in my head to praise you, may I see the lives through which you are active in this world, may my hands further your story of creation, may I walk in the ways you have established. For this body, I pray. Prayer Posture: Stand. Begin this posture from either your head or your feet. Touch your head, eyes, hands, and feet, each time curling your whole hand around that part of your body. Let the warmth or coolness merge from your hands to the body part; hold the touch as long as necessary to feel the interaction between skin touching skin, muscles acting against muscles, cells interacting to make up your body. If you traveled up your body as you prayed, now travel from the top down- or vice versa. Thank God for the gift of life and for the opportunities to participate in the continuing story of God.

Self-Examination

A practice that facilitates spiritual awakening-an awakening to the presence of God as God really is and an awakening to ourselves as we really are. When practiced rightly, we develop a greater sense for God's loving presence, celebrate our created self, safely see, and name the places where we are not like Christ, and opens deeper levels of spiritual transformation. (Ruth Haley Barton, 2006, pg. 93, 108 – 109)

1. Preparation – Be still and know God's love for you.
2. Invitation – Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in reflecting on the day.
3. Review the day – Identify times throughout the day when you experienced God's love, presence, guidance, protection. Did God teach you something new about himself?

appendix

spiritual practices

4. Give thanks – Thank God for his presence with you throughout the day and the freedom you experienced to live in God’s love and walk in faithfulness as a disciple of Jesus.
5. Confess – Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any attitudes or actions that did not reflect the character of Christ or the fruit of the Spirit.
6. Ask forgiveness – Be assured of God’s forgiveness (1 John 1.9). “As God if there is anything you need to do to make things right relative to the situation you have confessed” (108).
7. Seek out spiritual friendship – Share your insights, points of confession, and desire to walk in faithfulness with a friend or members of the band of which you are a member.

Welcoming Prayer

The welcoming practice is a spiritual practice of welcoming the now, whatever it may be, so that our hearts might become more attentive and more able to accept whatever comes into our lives on this journey we are on with God. To develop your own welcoming practice, read the description below.

1. Focus, Feel, Sink In: Become aware of whatever is happening in your body and your soul. Sink in to truly allow and accept what you are feeling and experiencing, without judgment or attempt to change it. Notice deeply and with God.
2. Welcome and Name: Whatever you find, welcome it in words spoken or unspoken, even if it is something you find challenging. “Welcome, fear” or “Welcome, pain” or “Welcome, confusion” would all be fitting words of welcome. Fit it to whatever truth you are experiencing at the moment.
3. Let Go and Let God: Once you have felt, welcomed, and named the experience you are having, begin to release it in whatever ways are possible. Release yourself physically and emotionally. It can also help to use words of release to ease yourself out of the prayerful experience. Some recommendations include “I let go of the desire for security, affection, control” and “I let go of the desire to change what I am experiencing.”

*Excerpted from Finding Peace in an Anxious World, United Methodist Women, 2020, 46-47

appendix

activities

- Gratitude Journal: There is no wrong way to do it. Write down five things for which you feel grateful. The key to this exercise is to write them down, not just think about them in your head (Berkeley, n.d.)
 - Here are a few guiding tips: Be as specific as possible. Go for depth over breadth. Get personal and think about the people you are grateful for. Try subtraction, think about what your life might be like without something. See good things as “gifts” and try to relish or savor them. You can write about something more than once but focus on a different aspect. Record the unexpected or surprising. Write regularly and honor your commitment. Do not overdo it, writing 1-3 times a week can be beneficial.
- Exercise: Physical activity is a wonderful way to use up excess adrenalin
- Find a creative outlet: dancing to energetic music, building, fixing, writing, or drawing, painting, singing, etc.
- Stretch or massage areas of tension. Roll your shoulders if you are tensing them, for example, or gently massage your neck and scalp.
- Mindfulness: being completely aware of what is happening in the present—of all that is going on inside and all that is happening around you (NIH, 2021)
 - Take some deep breaths. Breathe in through your nose to a count of 4, hold for 1 second and then exhale through the mouth to a count of 5. Repeat often.
 - Enjoy a stroll. As you walk, notice your breath and the sights, and sounds around you. As thoughts and worries enter your mind, note them but then return to the present.
 - Practice mindful eating. Be aware of taste, textures, and flavors in each bite, and listen to your body when you are hungry and full.
 - Find mindfulness resources in your local community, including yoga and meditation classes, mindfulness-based stress reduction programs, and books.

appendix

activities

- Find your humor. Humor can be restorative. Being able to laugh can help relieve some of the heaviness of life. You can watch a funny movie or video on YouTube, check out a book of corny jokes, spend time with your partner or a friend and share jokes.

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