



GOING DEEPER

DISCUSSION GUIDE

SEPTEMBER 30, 2018

Discussion Guide

EMOTIONAL WRECK

CONNECTING:

45 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A WAY OF CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER SO THAT YOU MIGHT PARTNER IN THE WORK GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIVES.)

- IN WHAT WAYS DID GOD MOVE IN YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS DID YOU RESPOND TO HIM?
- WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DID YOU INVITE GOD INTO THIS CHALLENGE?
- HOW HONEST HAVE YOU BEEN WITH US? (GRACIOUSLY THANK GROUP MEMBERS FOR THEIR HONESTY IF THEY STATE THEY HAVE HELD BACK.)

GETTING STARTED:

10 MINUTES

- OF ALL THE EMOTIONS YOU EXPERIENCE, WHICH ONE, IF ANY, SEEMS LIKE IT MIGHT NOT BE HELPFUL ON THE FAITH JOURNEY? COULD YOU ELABORATE?

DIVING INTO THE TEXT:

60 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A SIMPLE ROAD MAP THROUGH THE TEXT. FEEL FREE TO USE THESE QUESTIONS IN WAYS THAT BEST FIT YOUR GROUP AND THE DYNAMICS OF YOUR OWN MEETING.)

- USING THE NOTES, DISCUSS THE NATURE OF DESIRE AND HOW OUR DESIRE UNDERGIRDS ALL OF OUR FEELINGS.
- READ EXODUS 20.17, ISAIAH 26.8-9, 1 TIMOTHY 6.10, 2 TIMOTHY 3.1-5, AND 1 JOHN 2.15. YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO DO THIS AS A GROUP OR BY BREAKING

UP INTO SMALLER GROUPS WHICH THEN COME BACK TOGETHER TO DISCUSS WHAT THEY HAVE DISCOVERED.

- IN WHAT WAYS DO THESE TEXTS REFLECT DESIRE RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY ATTACHED? WHAT IS THE RESULT?
- IF YOU COULD SUMMARIZE THE IMPACT OF THE EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE OF DESIRE ON THE FAITH JOURNEY, HOW MIGHT YOU DO SO?
- IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DO YOU SEE DESIRE FUNCTIONING IN THESE WAYS IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS?
- IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DO YOU SEE DESIRE FUNCTIONING IN YOUR LIFE? COULD YOU ELABORATE?
- HOW MIGHT OUR DESIRES REVEAL TO US WHO WE ARE AND WHO GOD IS? WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE TO USE OUR DESIRES IN THIS MANNER?
- CONSIDER CONCLUDING AS A GROUP BY DISCUSSING SOME OF THE KEY INSIGHTS YOU HAVE GLEANED IN THIS SERIES ABOUT THE ROLE OF FEELINGS ON THE FAITH JOURNEY. YOU MIGHT CONSIDER PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER AS YOU EACH SEEK TO INTEGRATE YOUR EMOTIONS INTO YOUR FOLLOWSHIP OF CHRIST.

CONTEXT, BACKGROUND, AND COMMENTARY

DESIRE

DESIRE IS THE EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE OF LONGING TO POSSESS OR EXPERIENCE SOMETHING OR, IN SOME CASES, SOMEONE. DESIRE IS ONE OF THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN EMOTIONS, OFTEN UNDERGIRDING AND GIVING RISE TO OTHER EMOTIONAL RESPONSES. SOME HAVE CLAIMED DESIRE IS THE EMOTION FROM WHICH ALL OTHER EMOTIONS MANIFEST THEMSELVES, INCLUDING LOVE. IN SUPPORT OF THIS IDEA, IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, LOVE IS OFTEN USED IN WAYS WHICH ITS RANGE OF MEANING OVERLAPS WITH THAT OF DESIRE (1 JOHN 2.15-16; 1 TIMOTHY 6.10; 2 TIMOTHY 3.2-5). OTHERS HAVE NOTED DESIRING IS SO ESSENTIAL TO THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE THE ENTIRE HUMAN EXPERIENCE IS ESSENTIALLY AN AGGREGATE OF DESIRES. THAT DESIRE IS IMPORTANT TO THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE IS EVEN SEEN IN HUMAN PHYSIOLOGY. THE HUMAN BRAIN HAS SPECIALIZED NEURAL SYSTEMS AND PLEASURE/PAIN RECEPTORS WHICH GOVERN BOTH THE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL EXPERIENCE OF DESIRE.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF WORDS THROUGHOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT AND NEW TESTAMENT WHICH ARE BEST TRANSLATED WITH THE ENGLISH GLOSS "DESIRE." IN MANY CASES, THESE WORDS ARE USED SYNONYMOUSLY THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE. HOWEVER, EVEN THE MOST CURSORY STUDY OF THESE WORDS IN THEIR CONTEXTS REVEALS THAT DESIRE, WHILE CENTRAL TO THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE, IS NOT ALWAYS GOOD. THERE EXISTS IN SCRIPTURE BOTH GOOD DESIRE AND BAD DESIRE. GOOD DESIRE IS A LONGING TO POSSESS AND EXPERIENCE GOD AND THE THINGS OF GOD BAD DESIRE IS A LONGING TO POSSESS AND EXPERIENCE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT OF GOD. IT IS COMMON PRACTICE TO TRANSLATE THESE WORDS USING VARYING ENGLISH GLOSSES ACCORDING TO THE NATURE AND OBJECT OF THE DESIRE FOUND IN SCRIPTURE. GOOD DESIRE IS OFTEN TRANSLATED AS "DESIRE" OR "LONGING" WHILE BAD DESIRE IS OFTEN TRANSLATED AS "COVETOUSNESS."

COVETOUSNESS (BAD DESIRE) IS CONDEMNED IN THE 10 COMMANDMENTS (EXODUS 20.17; DEUTERONOMY 5.21), AND IS IDENTIFIED IN THIS CONTEXT AS INORDINATE DESIRE FOR THINGS WHICH BELONG TO OTHERS. HOWEVER, THE MEANING OF COVETOUSNESS IS EXPANDED THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE TO INCLUDE ALL FORMS OF DESIRE WHICH ATTACH THEMSELVES TO THINGS WHICH ARE NOT OF GOD (PSALM 10.3; PROVERBS 6.20-25; ROMANS 1.18-32). DESIRE WHICH IS

COVETOUSNESS IS CONDEMNED BECAUSE, AT ITS CORE, IT IS THE SPIRIT OF IDOLATRY (COLOSSIANS 3.5). THIS FORM OF DESIRE OFTEN GIVES RISE TO OTHER SINS SUCH AS ENVY, JEALOUSY, AND LUST (MATTHEW 5.28; LUKE 12.15; PROVERBS 6.20-25). ULTIMATELY, THIS FORM OF DESIRE OPENS ONE TO AN UNRIGHTEOUS LIFE DEPRIVED OF GOD'S PRESENCE AND POWER (1 TIMOTHY 6.10; 2 TIMOTHY 3.2-5).

HOWEVER, ONE NEED NOT SEEK TO AVOID THE EXPERIENCE OF DESIRE SIMPLY BECAUSE IT CAN BECOME WRONGLY FOCUSED. THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE, DESIRE WHICH IS RIGHTLY FOCUSED IS PRAISED. THAT DESIRE CAN BE GOOD IS SEEN IN GOD'S OWN EXPERIENCE OF DESIRE. THIS PROPER DESIRE OF GOD IS FOCUSED UPON BEING WITH AND HAVING HIS PEOPLE (PSALM 132.13; LUKE 22.15). IN THE SAME MANNER, PROPER DESIRE ON THE PART OF HUMANS IS DESIRE WHICH IS FOCUSED UPON HAVING AND EXPERIENCING GOD AND THE THINGS OF GOD (ISAIAH 26.8-9; PROVERBS 10.24).

BECAUSE DESIRE LIES BENEATH OUR MANY EMOTIONS, IT CAN BE DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE WHAT WE DESIRE AND WHETHER THIS DESIRE IS PROPERLY OR IMPROPERLY FOCUSED. ONE WAY TO DETERMINE WHAT DESIRES ARE PRESENT IN ANY EMOTIONAL RESPONSE IS TO ASK THE QUESTION, "IN THIS SITUATION, WHAT COULD I NOT LIVE WITHOUT?" WHILE PHRASED NEGATIVELY, THIS QUESTION POINTS ONE TO WHAT IS MOST SIGNIFICANT, WHAT ONE SURELY MUST HAVE; THAT IS, THIS QUESTION POINTS TO WHAT ONE DESIRES.

THE TEXT EMOTIONAL TABOOS?

AS EMOTIONAL BEINGS, OUR EMOTIONS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE ON THE JOURNEY OF FAITH, INTENDED BY GOD TO BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH OUR RATIONAL MIND TO BRING US TO AN EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S PERSON SO WE MIGHT BECOME MORE LIKE HIM (JONAH 4). HOWEVER, ONCE THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR EMOTIONS IS REALIZED, IT IS NOT UNCOMMON TO BEGIN SEEKING TO CATEGORIZE EMOTIONS AS RIGHT/WRONG OR GOOD/BAD. THE INTENTION IS TO DISCOVER AND THEN CATEGORIZE WHICH EMOTIONS BEST SERVE US ON THE JOURNEY OF FAITH. HOWEVER, THIS MOVE, THOUGH RIGHTLY INTENDED, IS WRONGLY FOCUSED. THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE, NO SINGLE EMOTION IS EVER CONDEMNED. RATHER, WHAT IS CONDEMNED IS THE WRONG USE OF EMOTIONS.

THAT EMOTIONS ARE IN THEMSELVES NOT CONDEMNED CAN BE SEEN IN PASSAGES LIKE 2 CORINTHIANS 11.2 AND EPHESIANS 4.26. IN THE CORINTHIAN LETTER, PAUL NOTES THAT HE IS FILLED WITH JEALOUSY, AN EXTREMELY STRONG EMOTION WHICH IS OFTEN UNDERSTOOD TO BE NEGATIVE. HOWEVER, PAUL DESCRIBES HIS JEALOUSY AS GODLY JEALOUSY THEREBY MAKING THIS SEEMINGLY NEGATIVE EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE A POSITIVE ONE ON THE FAITH JOURNEY. IN THE LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS, PAUL ACTUALLY COMMANDS THE EPHESIANS TO EXPERIENCE THE EMOTION OF ANGER AND TO DO SO WITHOUT SINNING. IN BOTH PASSAGES, WHAT MIGHT BE CLASSIFIED AS NEGATIVE EMOTIONS ARE RECORDED AS BEING OF GREAT BENEFIT ON THE JOURNEY OF FAITH. HOWEVER, IN THESE PASSAGES IS THE IMPLICATION THAT THESE VERY SAME EMOTIONS CAN TURN DARK. GODLY JEALOUSY HAS A TWIN IN UNGODLY JEALOUSY, AND ANGER WITHOUT SIN IS PERHAPS MORE RARE THAN ANGER WHICH LEADS TO SIN (EPHESIANS 4.31). IN THESE PASSAGES, THERE SEEMS TO BE AN IMPLICIT UNDERSTANDING THAT EMOTIONS THEMSELVES ARE NEUTRAL. HOWEVER, THERE IS SOME COMPONENT WHICH IS PART OF OUR EMOTIONAL RESPONSE WHICH CAN TURN EMOTIONS IN A POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE DIRECTION.

SCRIPTURE DEFINES THIS "X-FACTOR" WITH REGARD TO WHETHER OUR EMOTIONS BENEFIT OR HINDER OUR FAITH JOURNEY AS ATTACHMENT. THIS IS MOST CLEARLY SEEN THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE WITH THE EMOTIONAL RESPONSE OF DESIRE. THE EMOTION OF DESIRE IS ONE OF LONGING. DESIRE IS ONE OF THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL EMOTIONS IF NOT THE SINGLE EMOTION FROM WHICH ALL OTHER EMOTIONS SPRING. THE HUMAN BODY IS HARD-WIRED TO EXPERIENCE DESIRE, AND MUCH OF WHAT WE CALL "LIFE" IS NOTHING MORE THAN AN AGGREGATE OF OUR DESIRES. WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTICE ABOUT DESIRE IN SCRIPTURE IS THAT IT CAN BE NEGATIVE OR POSITIVE. WHAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE IS THAT TO WHICH IT IS ATTACHED OR DIRECTED. WHEN IT IS ATTACHED TO SOMETHING OTHER THAN GOD OR THINGS OF GOD IT IS DEFINED AS COVETOUSNESS (ACTUALLY "DESIRE" IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT) AND IS STRONGLY CONDEMNED (EXODUS 20.17; DEUTERONOMY 5.21; PSALM 10.3; LUKE 22.15). THIS FORM OF DESIRE IS CONDEMNED BECAUSE TO ATTACH DESIRE TO SOMETHING OTHER THAN GOD IS TO ENGAGE IN IDOLATRY (COLOSSIANS 3.5). JESUS IS CLEAR THAT DESIRE RUNS IN ONE DIRECTION; THAT IS, AS HUMANS, WE ARE ONLY CAPABLE OF ATTACHING OURSELVES EMOTIONALLY TO ONE THING

AT A TIME (MATTHEW 6.24; 1 JOHN 2.15-16). TO ATTACH ONE'S DESIRE TO SOMETHING OTHER THAN GOD OPENS ONE TO A LIFE THAT IS DEPRIVED OF GOD'S PRESENCE AND POWER (1 TIMOTHY 6.10; 2 TIMOTHY 3.1-5).

HOWEVER, NOT ALL DESIRE IS BAD. IN FACT, SCRIPTURE STRONGLY AND REGULARLY EXHORTS PROPER DESIRE WHICH IS DESIRE THAT IS ATTACHED TO GOD AND THE THINGS OF GOD. (ISAIAH 26.8-9). THIS FORM OF DESIRE IS BASED ON GOD'S EXPERIENCE OF DESIRE WHICH IS DIRECTED TOWARD HIS PEOPLE (PSALM 132.13; LUKE 22.15). DESIRE WHICH IS FOCUSED UPON GOD AND THE THINGS OF GOD LEADS ONE TO THE LIFE GOD DESIRES (MATTHEW 22.34-40).

REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

AS I AM LEARNING TO GIVE MY EMOTIONS THE CENTRAL ROLE GOD INTENDED THEY FILL, SOMETIMES, I GET SCARED OF MY EMOTIONS. WITH PERMISSION TO FEEL, I AM BEGINNING TO REALIZE HOW STRONG AND PERSISTENT MY EMOTIONS ARE, AND MANY OF THEM JUST FEEL WRONG. I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN DESCRIBE EXACTLY WHAT IT IS THAT GIVES ME THE SENSE THAT THESE EMOTIONS ARE WRONG. I THINK SOME OF IT COMES FROM BEING TOLD IT IS WRONG TO FEEL. HOWEVER, SOME OF WHAT I SENSE COMES FROM THE YUCKY FEELING I GET WHEN I EXPERIENCE THESE EMOTIONS. I DON'T KNOW IF YUCKY IS A VERY SPIRITUAL TERM BUT IT IS THE BEST ONE I HAVE. FOR SOME REASON, SOME OF MY EMOTIONS LEAVE ME FEELING GROSS (ANOTHER GOOD SPIRITUAL TERM) AND I WONDER IF I HAVE JUST EXPERIENCED A "BAD" EMOTION, ONE WHICH IS OF LITTLE BENEFIT ON MY FAITH JOURNEY. TYPICALLY, I RUN INTO THESE WONDERINGS WHEN I EXPERIENCE MY MORE POWERFUL EMOTIONS LIKE ANGER, JEALOUSY, FRUSTRATION, AND THE LIKE.

MY FIRST RESPONSE WITH THESE EMOTIONS WAS TO CONDEMN MYSELF. "I AM A TERRIBLE PERSON FOR FEELING _____!" THIS WAS QUICKLY FOLLOWED BY ASSERTIONS THAT I SHOULD SEEK TO AVOID THIS EMOTION ALTOGETHER FOR IT WAS NOT "GODLY." HOWEVER, THREE PROBLEMS SOON AROSE. FIRST, I BEAT MYSELF SPIRITUALLY BLACK AND BLUE BECAUSE I EXPERIENCE THESE EMOTIONS ON A REGULAR BASIS. SECOND, I FOUND MY EFFORTS TO AVOID THESE EMOTIONS ONLY LED ME TO MORE SELF-CONDEMNATION BECAUSE I WAS NOT ABLE TO SUCCEED, MOSTLY BECAUSE MY EFFORTS TO STOP ONLY LED TO THINGS LIKE MORE FRUSTRATION! THIRD, I BEGAN TO NOTICE

THAT MY LIST OF "ALLOWABLE" EMOTIONS WAS GETTING SHORTER AND MOSTLY WAS MADE UP OF THE "HAPPIER" ONES. LAST TIME I CHECKED, WE WERE PERMITTED TO FEEL MORE THAN HAPPINESS.

I AM SLOWLY LEARNING MY EMOTIONS ARE NOT THE PROBLEM. GOD GAVE ME MY EMOTIONS. MANY OF MY EMOTIONS GOD HIMSELF EXPERIENCES. THE ISSUE ISN'T THAT I FEEL BUT IN HOW I DIRECT MY FEELINGS. UNDER ALL OF MY FEELINGS LIES ONE SINGLE FEELING, THE MOTHER OF ALL FEELINGS, DESIRE. EVERY EMOTIONAL RESPONSE I HAVE IS UNDERGIRDDED IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER BY MY DESIRE; THAT IS, MY EMOTIONAL RESPONSES ARE REALLY ABOUT WHAT I DESIRE AND WHETHER I OBTAIN WHAT I DESIRE. THE THING ABOUT DESIRE IS IT CAN BE GOOD OR BAD. DESIRE ITSELF ISN'T WRONG. WE ARE LITERALLY HARD-WIRED TO EXPERIENCE DESIRE. WHERE DESIRE GOES WRONG IS WHEN WE ATTACH IT TO SOMETHING OTHER THAN GOD OR THE THINGS OF GOD. SIMPLY PUT, MY EMOTIONS ARE REALLY ABOUT WHAT I WANT AND MY WANTING GETS ME OFF TRACK WHEN I WANT SOMETHING OTHER THAN GOD. ACTUALLY, SCRIPTURE CALLS THIS FORM OF WANTING IDOLATRY AND NOTES THAT IT DENIES ME OF GOD'S PRESENCE AND POWER, NOT SOMETHING I AM REALLY AIMING FOR. SO, I CAN FEEL AND LEAN INTO MY FEELINGS. . . ALL OF THEM. I SIMPLY HAVE TO DISCERN WHICH WAY MY FEELINGS ARE BENDING MY "WANTER." I KNOW. I AM FULL OF DEEP THEOLOGICAL TERMS THIS WEEK.

CHECKING MY "WANTER" IS NOT ALL THAT DIFFICULT. I JUST HAVE TO ASK WHAT IT IS I WANT. THE PROBLEM IS WHAT I WANT LIKES TO HIDE. SO, I AM LEARNING TO COAX IT OUT OF HIDING BY ASKING WHAT I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT. TYPICALLY, THIS QUESTION GETS ME A GLIMPSE OF WHAT IT IS I TRULY DESIRE. WHEN I FIND MY DESIRE ATTACHED TO GOD, I AM VERY CLOSE TO COMING FACE TO FACE WITH THE HEART OF GOD. AFTER ALL, THIS IS THE POINT OF USING OUR EMOTIONS. HOWEVER, I AM DISCOVERING A DESIRE WRONGLY ATTACHED IS FAR FROM WORTHLESS, SOMETHING TO BE AVOIDED. I AM COMING TO DISCOVER THAT A DESIRE WRONGLY ATTACHED LEADS ME THAT MUCH CLOSER TO CATCHING A GLIMPSE OF WHO I REALLY AM. THIS IS IMPORTANT AS WELL, BECAUSE IT IS THIS PERSON WHO NEEDS TO BE BROUGHT FACE TO FACE WITH GOD SO HE CAN BE CHANGED.

REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

OUR EMOTIONS ARE IMPORTANT, BUT SOMETIMES THEY SCARE US. OUR EMOTIONS ARE POWERFUL AND RAW. MANY TIMES THEY LEAVE US WITH RESIDUAL EMOTIONS, NOT ALL OF WHICH "FEEL" GOOD. WHEN THIS HAPPENS, WE SOMETIMES WONDER IF THE EMOTIONAL RESPONSE WE JUST HAD WAS RIGHT OR GOOD; THAT IS, WAS THAT EMOTIONAL RESPONSE SOMETHING WE SHOULD LEAN INTO OR BACK AWAY FROM ON THE FAITH JOURNEY? ACTUALLY, ALL EMOTIONS ARE USEFUL ON THE FAITH JOURNEY TAKING US FACE TO FACE WITH GOD OR OURSELVES.

EVERY SINGLE ONE OF OUR EMOTIONAL RESPONSES IS ROOTED IN THE SINGLE EMOTIONAL RESPONSE OF DESIRE. DESIRE CAN BE GOOD OR BAD DEPENDING ON THAT TO WHICH IT IS ATTACHED. DESIRE IS GOOD WHEN IT IS ATTACHED TO GOD. DESIRE GOES SOUTH WHEN IT IS ATTACHED TO ANYTHING OTHER THAN GOD. IN ANY SITUATION, THAT TO WHICH OUR DESIRE IS ATTACHED WILL GUIDE OUR EMOTIONS AS BEING PROPER OR IMPROPER EMOTIONAL RESPONSES. PERHAPS THE BEST WAY TO DETERMINE THAT TO WHICH OUR DESIRE IS ATTACHED IS TO ASK IN EVERY SITUATION WHAT WE CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT. IF IT IS NOT GOD, THEN THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE OUR EMOTION IS NOT IN KEEPING WITH WHO GOD IS OR WHAT HE DESIRES TO DO. HOWEVER, THIS DOES NOT MEAN THIS DESIRE IS SOMETHING WE SHOULD RUN AWAY FROM. IF WE LOOK DEEPLY AT IT WE CAN DISCOVER WHO WE ARE, WHO WE REALLY ARE. WE CAN THEN TAKE WHO WE REALLY ARE BEFORE GOD SO WE MIGHT EXPERIENCE TRANSFORMATION IN HIS PRESENCE. THIS REQUIRES US NOT TO JUDGE OR CONDEMN OURSELVES BUT TO ADMIT AND CONFESS WHO WE ARE AND OUR NEED FOR GOD. THIS WEEK, WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO ENGAGE IN THIS PRACTICE AND TO CONSIDER JOURNALING AND SHARING YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH A SOUL FRIEND.



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