



April 10 – May 9, 2021

Discussion Questions

Discussion questions for week 1: Owing Our Emotions

1. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What did you find uncomfortable?
2. How would you describe your own normal emotional state of being? Do you tend to be very expressive of your emotions or more restrained? In what ways does this relate to your personality? In what ways would you like to change?
3. How would you say your emotions affect your relationship with God?
4. Read the following passages about Jesus and identify the emotions he is expressing:
 - Luke 19:41
 - Mark 14:34
 - Luke 22:41-44
 - Luke 10:21
 - Mark 3:4-6In what ways can you identify with Jesus in these situations?
5. How would you describe the emotional “climate” in your family growing up? How do you think this has affected you positively and/or negatively?
6. Describe a situation in your life where you strongly felt very positive emotions. What was happening on the inside to evoke these emotions? Then describe a situation in your life where you strongly felt very negative emotions. What was happening on the inside this time?
7. Share how you are feeling emotionally right now and why. Just be honest and don’t judge or evaluate. Then take some time to pray for one another.

Practice for the week – The Welcoming Prayer

The Welcoming Prayer is a prayer practice that helps us let go of unhealthy responses to certain emotions we are experiencing, while helping us to embrace more of God’s love.

Step 1: Awareness

Sit quietly and notice how you are feeling. Focus and sink into your emotion. Go toward it rather than suppress or resist it. Stay with this step of noticing and sinking in until you really experience a connection to the feeling. You may feel it in your body, and it can help to place your hand there as a way of connecting with the emotion more deeply.

Step 2: Welcome

Welcome this emotion as a friend that is going to help you discover something about yourself rather than as an enemy to be defeated. Don’t judge yourself, but simply accept how you are feeling right now. Name the emotion and say, “Welcome... fear/anger/worry/sorrow etc.” Repeat it, and sit with the feeling until you experience a genuine sense of owning and accepting it in this moment. Then allow

yourself to honestly discern where this emotion is coming from. Usually this is from a thwarted desire for one or more normal and basic human needs:

- Safety and security
- Esteem and affection
- Power and control

Step 3: Let Go

When you have allowed yourself to name and accept the feeling, let it go by saying, "God, I give you my fear/anger/worry/sorrow, etc." Consciously let go of

- Your demand for safety and security.
- Your demand for esteem and affection.
- Your demand for power and control.

Sit quietly and invite God's loving, affirming and totally accepting presence.

Discussion questions for week 2: Anger

1. What stood out to you from the message this past Sunday? Was there anything that seemed particularly relevant to you at this time? Was there anything you found difficult or disagreed with?
2. What comes to mind when you think of the word "anger"? How do you feel about anger in yourself? In others? In what ways have you experienced anger in a positive way? In what ways have you experienced it in a negative way?
3. Read John 2:14-16.
 - What do you think was going through Jesus' mind during this incident?
 - Imagine yourself as a bystander: what would you think of Jesus, based on this incident?
4. In Ephesians 4:26 we read: "In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry". What does this tell us about anger?
5. Which (if any) of the following do you struggle with:
 - Denying or suppressing anger
 - Becoming aggressive, manipulative, or otherwise negative in your words or behavior in response to anger
 - Holding on to angerWhy do you think this is a struggle for you?
6. Share briefly any specific contexts or relationships where anger is a problem for you. Then take some time to pray for one another.

Practice for the week – The Welcoming Prayer for Anger

The Welcoming Prayer is a prayer practice that helps us let go of unhealthy responses to certain emotions we are experiencing, while helping us to embrace more of God's love.

Think of a situation or relationship that makes you angry in a way you feel may be unhealthy.

Step 1: Awareness

Sit quietly and reflect on the situation for a moment. Notice how you are feeling. Focus and sink into your anger. Go toward it rather than suppress or resist it. Stay with this step of noticing and sinking in until you really experience a connection to the anger. You may feel it in your body, and it can help to place your hand there as a way of connecting with the emotion more deeply.

Step 2: Welcome

Welcome the anger as a friend that is going to help you discover something about yourself, rather than as an enemy to be defeated. Don't judge yourself, but simply accept how you are feeling right now. Say, "Welcome anger." Repeat it, and sit with the feeling until you experience a genuine sense of owning and accepting it in this moment. Then allow yourself to honestly discern where the anger is coming from. Usually this is from a thwarted desire for one or more normal and basic human needs:

- Safety and security
- Esteem and affection
- Power and control

Step 3: Let Go

When you have allowed yourself to accept the anger, and identified its source, let it go by saying, "God, I give you my anger." Consciously let go of

- Your demand for safety and security in this situation/relationship.
- Your demand for esteem and affection in this situation/relationship.
- Your demand for power and control in this situation/relationship.

Rest in God's loving, affirming and totally accepting presence.

Discussion questions for week 3: Grief

1. What insights did you gain from the message on grief? Was there anything that particularly resonated, or with which you disagreed?
2. The speaker said that even those of us who have not lost loved ones to COVID are grieving losses this past year. How would you describe your biggest losses this year? In your response to these losses, can you identify with any of the traditional Kubler-Ross phases of grief? (Denial and shock; anger at God, yourself, the situation or someone else; bargaining or negotiating with God to change reality and endless questions of "What if" or "If only;" depression; and acceptance.)
3. Think about the biggest loss in your life, the situation that caused you the most grief.
 - Share your experience with the group if you are comfortable doing so.
 - Psalm 34:17-18 reads: "The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." How does this line up with your experience?
 - How did your time of grief affect your relationship with God?
4. The speaker on Sunday said that by moving through the full experience of grief, we confront our greatest fears, which allows us the freedom to live life to the full as Jesus intended—embracing all of life, the highs and lows, the joys and sorrows. How do you think you are doing embracing all of life and "living life to the full?" How could you live a more all-embracing full life?
5. Several potential "gifts of grief" were mentioned on Sunday, including moving closer to God and growing in compassion, gratitude, and joyful service. Have you personally experienced any of these or seen others grow in these areas after a loss?
6. We often feel powerless and overwhelmed in the face of loss and grief—our lives are shaken up and reshaped by forces beyond our control. But some of the changes are up to us. As we rebuild our lives after COVID, we have an opportunity to let some things go and try new ways of living. Take a few moments to share what you would like to let go or change in your life. Pray for one another concerning what you have shared.

Practice for the week – Welcoming our Weakness

This version of the Welcoming Prayer can help us let go of our unhealthy responses to our "weak," vulnerable, "not good enough" parts, and help us embrace God's love for us just as we are.

Step 1: Sit quietly and become aware of the parts of you that feel weak, needy, or vulnerable. Sink into your needy feelings until you sense a real connection to them. If you feel your weakness in a part of your body, you can place your hand there.

Step 2: Welcome your vulnerable self, embrace it and know that it has much to teach you. Don't judge it or push it away. It is a precious part of you. Say, "Welcome weakness, neediness," or whatever word seems to fit for you. Notice where the push-back is against this part of you. How do you feel towards

your weak self? Now try to honestly discern where this judgment is coming from. Usually this is from a thwarted desire for one or more basic human emotional needs:

- Safety and security
- Esteem and affection
- Power and control

Step 3: Let go. When you have identified any negative feelings toward your vulnerable self and discerned where they are coming from, intentionally release your demand for safety and security; your demand for esteem and affection; your demand for power and control. Then gently turn over your vulnerable and needy self to God's care. Sit quietly and invite God's love and affirmation of every part of you, just as you are.

Discussion questions for week 4: Anxiety

1. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What did you find uncomfortable?
2. Would you say you are an anxious person? Share a little about what makes you anxious in life. How does anxiety affect your relationship with God? Does your relationship with God ever make you feel anxious?
3. Read Matthew 6:25-34. Why do you think Jesus uses the imagery of birds and flowers when talking about how much God cares for us? What does this reveal about God? How might these images help us worry less?
4. How might thinking about our past be helpful? How might it be unhelpful? Do you tend to over dwell on the past? If so, how could you live more into the present? What about the future: how can thinking ahead be helpful and unhelpful? Again, is there any way you need to take a more balanced approach here? How might this passage help you?
5. Read Romans 8:14-16. The speaker on Sunday suggested that Jesus would have used the Aramaic word "abba" for Father in his teaching about anxiety. How do you relate to this intimate imagery of being unconditionally and absolutely loved as a child of God? How might growing in an experience of this kind of love affect how you worry about:
 - Your faults and failures?
 - Your struggles in life?
 - Your relationships?
 - Your past?
 - Your future?
6. The speaker on Sunday suggested that when Jesus says "you of little faith," he's saying he compassionately understands our struggles with anxiety rather than condemns them. How might this reality empower us to "seek first the kingdom of God" and center our lives on what really matters?
7. Spend some time praying for one another and the various situations that are making us anxious at the moment.

Practice for the week – The Welcoming Prayer for Anxiety

The Welcoming Prayer is a prayer practice that helps us let go of unhealthy responses to certain emotions we are experiencing, while helping us to embrace more of God's love.

Think of a situation or relationship that makes you anxious in a negative way.

Step 1: Awareness

Sit quietly and reflect on the situation for a moment. Notice how you are feeling. Focus and sink into your anxiety. Go toward it rather than suppress or resist it. Stay with this step of noticing and sinking in

until you really experience a connection to the anxiety. You may feel it in your body, and it can help to place your hand there as a way of connecting with the emotion more deeply.

Step 2: Welcome

Welcome the anxiety as a friend that is going to help you discover something about yourself, rather than as an enemy to be defeated. Don't judge yourself, but simply accept how you are feeling right now. Say, "Welcome anxiety." Repeat it and sit with the feeling until you experience a genuine sense of owning and accepting it in this moment. Then allow yourself to honestly discern where the anxiety is coming from. Usually this is from a thwarted desire for one or more normal and basic human needs:

- Safety and security
- Esteem and affection
- Power and control

Step 3: Let Go

When you have allowed yourself to accept the anxiety, and identified its source, let it go by saying, "God, I give You my anxiety." Consciously let go of

- Your demand for safety and security in this situation.
- Your demand for esteem and affection in this situation.
- Your demand for power and control in this situation.

Rest in God's loving, affirming and totally accepting presence.

Discussion questions for week 5: Disappointment

1. What stood out to you from the message this past Sunday? Was there anything that seemed particularly relevant to you at this time? Was there anything you found difficult or disagreed with?
2. The last year or so has been disappointing in many ways. In what ways have you experienced disappointment? How does this experience of disappointment influence your view of God?
3. Read John 21:1-17. Put yourself in Peter's sandals. How do you think he would have felt when
 - He caught nothing after fishing all night? (Note: a similar previous incident is recorded in Luke 5)
 - He realized Jesus was on the shore?
 - He saw Jesus by the charcoal fire?
 - Jesus asked him three times if he loved him?
 - Jesus entrusted him with the care of his sheep and lambs?
4. During the service on Sunday, Hannah and Charles spoke about some positive outcomes from a disappointing experience. Have you ever seen positive outcomes after a disappointment of your own? For example:
 - Using the opportunity to reassess your priorities
 - Determining to do better
 - Deepening your relationship with God or with other people
5. Read Proverbs 16:9 and Micah 6:8. In what way do you think God guides us or has a plan for our lives? How does your view impact how you respond to God when life brings disappointment?
6. The speaker on Sunday outlined three steps to dealing with disappointment:
 - Being honest about our feelings (including grief at the loss of things we hoped for)
 - Living in the present (and being grateful for all we do have)
 - Choosing love (extending grace to ourselves and others)Think about your own experience of disappointment: which of these three steps is most difficult for you? Take some time to pray for one another.

Practice for the week – The Welcoming Prayer for Disappointment

The Welcoming Prayer is a prayer practice that helps us let go of unhealthy responses to certain emotions we are experiencing, while helping us to embrace more of God's love.

Think of a situation, relationship or just an area of your life that is for you a source of disappointment.

Step 1: Awareness

Sit quietly and reflect on the situation for a moment. What emotion does this stir up in you (anger, shame, grief, etc.)? Focus and sink into your emotion. Go toward it rather than suppress or resist it. Stay with this step of noticing and sinking in until you really experience a connection to the emotion. You

may feel it in your body, and it can help to place your hand there as a way of connecting with the emotion more deeply.

Step 2: Welcome

Welcome the emotion as a friend that is going to help you discover something about yourself, rather than as an enemy to be defeated. Don't judge yourself, but simply accept how you are feeling right now. Say, "Welcome anger/shame/grief/etc." Repeat it, and sit with the feeling until you experience a genuine sense of owning and accepting it in this moment. Then allow yourself to honestly discern where the emotion is coming from. Usually this is from a thwarted desire for one or more normal and basic human needs:

- Safety and security
- Esteem and affection
- Power and control

Step 3: Let Go

Trusting that God is present (even if you don't feel it right now), allow the heaviness of the disappointment to fall on God's shoulders. Let God carry this burden. Let it go by saying, "God, I give you my anger/shame/grief/etc." Consciously let go of

- Your demand for safety and security in this situation/relationship.
- Your demand for esteem and affection in this situation/relationship.
- Your demand for power and control in this situation/relationship.

Rest in God's loving, affirming and totally accepting presence.