

PART II: Emotional Health and Community Temperature Reading

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READ THIS OVERVIEW

As the saying goes, “no man is an island.” This means all of us ache for connection, for intimacy, and for Community. Further, this means that our internal emotional world is deeply connected with our external relational world. For better *and* for worse, you bring all of who you are into every relationship you have.

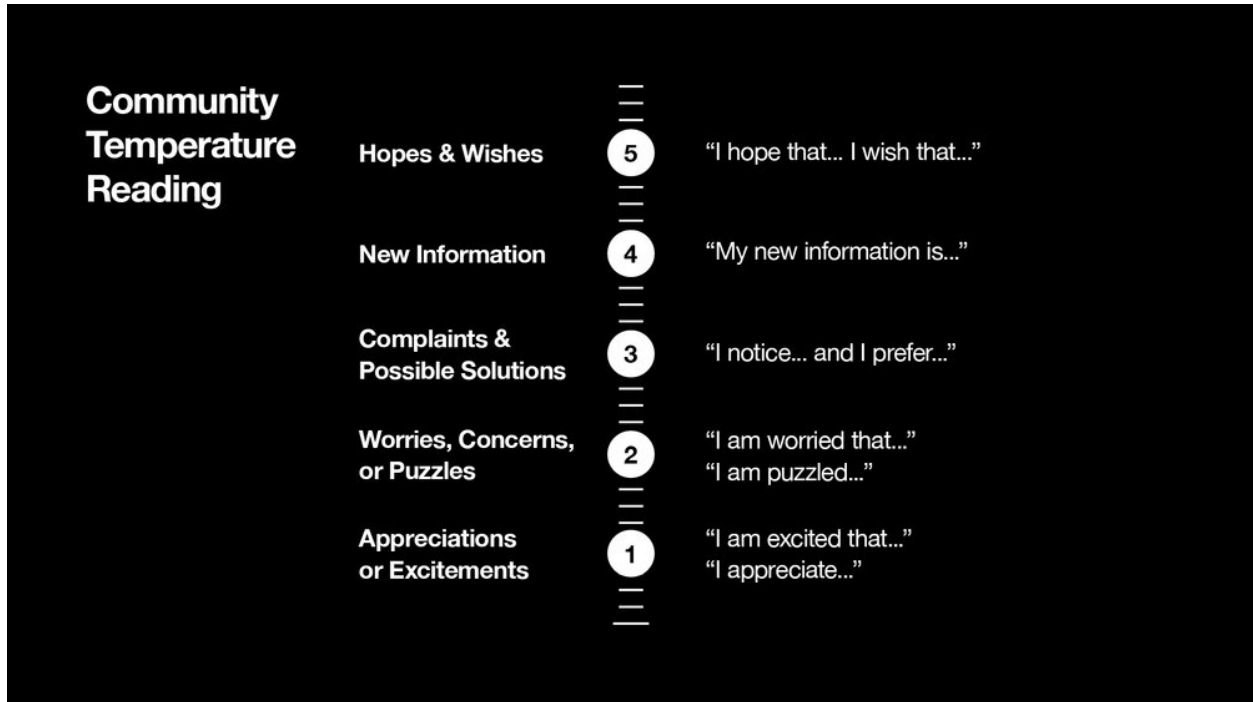
If we are going to live in loving Community as followers of Jesus, we will have to focus both on our internal world (our emotions) and our external world (relationships). If unaddressed, the pain, brokenness, and sin that lies beneath the surface of our lives will wreak havoc on our relationships; it all comes out eventually.

If you are tired, emotionally strung out, or anxious about your performance of work, it will show up with your family. If you are angry with your parents, it will spill into your friendships. If you are running from a wound in your childhood, it will leak out into your Community.

The invitation of Jesus is, with his help and the help of our Community, to bring all of the pain, brokenness, and sin of our lives to the surface so that we can heal, grow, and be transformed. Over the coming weeks, we will explore emotions, relationships, and practical skills for loving others well. This week we will begin with a discussion on love and then move on to a Community Temperature Reading: a set of prompts and phrases to create better clarity, communication, and relationship in your Community.

THIS WEEK’S PRACTICE

Below we have laid out the five components of a Community Temperature Reading. The goal of a Community Temperature Reading is to gain greater insight and clarity into your present relationships (or, as the name suggests, to get the “temperature” of people in your Community) and to proactively address areas of miscommunication that can hinder relationship.



(Note: At first glance, some of these components may feel forced or cheesy. We encourage you to suspend judgment and to give them a try so that you can build these relational skills into your life.)

1. Appreciations: If we pause and reflect, most of us can name the things we appreciate about the various people in our lives. However if we’re honest—whether because of cultural influence or an assumption that others already know how we feel about them—our gratitude often goes unspoken. But speaking the things we appreciate out loud is an integral part of healthy relationships. Some examples of appreciations could sound like:

- “I appreciate that you waited for me when I was running late yesterday.”

- “I appreciate you doing my dishes earlier.”
- “I appreciate you picking me up from the airport last week.”

Community Instructions: Pause and spend 5 minutes sharing Appreciations as a Community. You do not need to go in any particular order; simply encourage your Community to take this opportunity to express what they appreciate about one another.

2: Puzzles: If we’re not careful, we can make negative assumptions about people’s intentions or attitudes based on a single occurrence, especially when we do not have all the information. For this reason, it is important to channel our tendency to make negative assumptions into a more positive, less assumptive inquiry: a puzzle. By treating our assumption as a puzzle we haven’t solved, we are able to keep ourselves from jumping to conclusions, believing the worst of people, and making judgments. Some examples of puzzles could sound like:

- Instead of being upset and saying nothing, or being upset and angrily asking, “Why did you ignore my calls?”, consider saying, “I’m puzzled as to why you didn’t return my call.”
- Instead of thinking or saying under your breath, “Of course no one did the dishes. I live with a bunch of inconsiderate slob,” consider saying, “Could you help me understand why you left your dirty dishes in the sink last night?”
- Instead of jumping to conclusions about what your friend meant by a comment (“John doesn’t respect me!”), make an effort to simply ask (“I’m puzzled by the comment you made the other night. Can you help me understand?”)

Community Instructions: Have each person in your Community pair up with one other person—two if there is an uneven number. Drawing inspiration from the examples above, spend 5 minutes in pairs practicing puzzles by coming up with real or hypothetical examples and sharing them together.

3: Complaints with Possible Solutions: It’s ok to feel frustration in our relationships; that’s a normal part of life together. Some of us grew up believing that if you didn’t have anything nice to say, that it was better to not say anything at all. But, wrongly understood, this is a breeding ground for contempt or bitterness, which can reach a boiling point and have more relational impact than addressing the complaint in the first

place. Our job as followers of Jesus is to find the line between being critical and addressing legitimate complaints (rather than dwelling on them or holding them against the other person). It can be helpful to address your complaints with practical, possible solutions by using the phrase “I notice... and I prefer...” Some examples of complaints with possible solutions could sound like:

- “*I notice* that you leave the light on when you leave the house and *I prefer* that you turn them off.”
- “*I notice* that our meetings have been starting late recently. *I would prefer* that we start at the agreed upon time.”
- “*I notice* that you pick up your phone when a notification goes off during our group discussion. *I would prefer* that you silence your phone, or wait until the group is done sharing to check your notifications.”

Community Instructions: Have each person in your Community pair up with one other person—two if there is an uneven number. Drawing inspiration from the examples above, spend 5 minutes in pairs practicing complaints with possible solutions by coming up with real or hypothetical examples and sharing them together.

4: New Information: As a general rule, no one has all the information and no one can read your mind. For this reason, it is important to communicate. Rather than assume your community knows what is going on in your life, we must regularly share new information (changes in our lives, unspoken feelings, new circumstances, etc.) with the people in our lives. When our community has this information, they are able to act in accordance with that information. Communities can only flourish when we know what is happening in each other’s lives, both the trivial details and the important changes. Some examples of new information could sound like:

- “We’re preparing for finals in school this month, so I may be running late to Community dinner the next few weeks.”
- “I’m interviewing for a new role within my company!”
- “My family is waiting to hear back on my dad’s diagnosis.”

Community Instructions: Have each person in your Community pair up with one other person—two if there is an uneven number. Drawing inspiration from the examples

above, spend 5 minutes in pairs practicing new information with possible solutions by sharing new information about your life. This time, try for real-life examples.

5: Hopes & Wishes: Whether big or small, all of us have hopes and wishes for our lives. By sharing our hopes and wishes with our Community, we offer them a chance to see unique pieces of our soul. Even the best of relationships are made richer when we take time to express our own hopes and wishes and to support others in theirs. Some examples of hopes and wishes could sound like:

- “I hope I can visit my mom this fall in New York.”
- “I hope to get a new car next year.”
- “I hope to be promoted to Assistant Regional Manager someday.”

Community Instructions: Pause and spend 5 minutes sharing hopes & wishes as a Community. You do not need to go in any particular order, simply encourage one another to take this opportunity to share their unique hopes & wishes in the safety of community.