

# PART III: THE ICEBERG & LOOKING BENEATH THE SURFACE

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## READ THIS OVERVIEW

Emotions are complicated. In the span of a single day we can soar to feelings of ecstasy, drop to feelings of despair, or swirl in feelings of anxiety.

For many of us, our tendency is to avoid or ignore our most difficult emotions, such as fear, sadness, or anger. Yet, from David and Asaph in the Psalms, to the Samaritan woman at the well, to Jesus himself in the garden of Gethsemane, the Scriptures are riddled with examples of men and women willing to go beneath the surface of their lives in order to examine their emotions *with* God. As followers of Jesus, we are invited to be honest with God about the feelings and emotions that we'd rather not look at.

Some of us feel that spending time looking at our emotions might be selfish or not important. Yet, as we read in *Emotionally Healthy Relationships*, this “inward look is not to encourage a self-absorbed introspection to feed narcissism.” Rather, “the ultimate purpose is to allow the gospel to transform all of you... The end result will be that you and I will be better lovers of God and other people.”

One helpful metaphor for this journey beneath the surface is the iceberg. Just as about 90% of the iceberg is under the waterline, so only about 10% of our emotions exist on the obvious surface. And when we are unaware or unconscious of the 90% that isn't readily visible, we run the risk of ship-wrecking our relationships on obstacles in our minds or hearts that we didn't even realize were there. As we actively work to take our emotions seriously, we find three core truths along the way that guide us on our journey: 1) unprocessed emotions don't die, 2) healthy community requires that people know themselves, and 3) feelings help us discern God's voice.

In light of all this, our goal for this week's Practice is to explore our emotions *together*. By taking time to look beneath the surface in Community, we are opening ourselves up to becoming more loving towards others, in tune with God's voice, and at peace in our inner being.

## **DO THIS PRACTICE AS A COMMUNITY RIGHT NOW**

The purpose of this week's Practice is to spend time examining our emotions with the help of the Holy Spirit so we can analyze how those emotions may or may not be affecting our relationships with others. The Practice is a journaling exercise that will create space for each person to prayerfully reflect on four emotion questions.

### **Step 1: Find a comfortable space with a journal.**

Spread out across the house or space you are meeting in, ideally with a journal or something to write on.

### **Step 2: Invite the Holy Spirit and wait**

Pray to invite the Holy Spirit and take a few minutes to allow everyone to come to quiet. There is no need to rush or fill the space with words.

### **Step 3: Questions & Prayerful Reflection**

After taking a moment or two of silence and stillness, answer the following four questions. For some, this will feel easy and the time will pass quickly. For others, it will feel slow and uncomfortable. Whether you journal in bullet points or full sentences, strive to reflect on these questions in a posture of prayer, allowing God's presence to guide you.

- What are you angry about (past or present)?
- What are you sad about? (e.g. a small or big loss, disappointment, failure, etc.)
- What are you anxious about? (e.g. money, future, family, health, career, etc.)
- What are you glad about? (e.g. a relationship, opportunity, state of life, etc.)

## **THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE**

The Practice for the week ahead is very similar to the Practice from this evening: we want to create space to examine our emotions and bring them before God. Below are a few suggestions for how to facilitate that:

- **Journal:** Set aside 2–3 times this week to repeat the journaling and prayer exercise we did this evening, reflecting on anger, sadness, fear, and gladness. You may find your answers shift day by day.
- **Pray through Psalm 139:** The Psalms is a collection of ancient poetry in which we find some of the best examples of what it looks like to honestly acknowledge what is happening in one's interior. Slowly read Psalm 139, inviting the Holy Spirit to search your heart and mind. Spend time interacting with the Holy Spirit as you search your heart and mind together.
- **Go on a prayer walk:** Go on a prayer walk and express to God any anger, fear, sadness, or gladness you're feeling in this season.
- **Reflect with a friend:** Meet with a close friend and work through the four reflection questions we worked through this evening.