

Part 12: Feelings, The Language of Relationship

Spend a few minutes in silence inviting God to be among you. Share with the group some of your joys and sadnesses in trying to be more open and loving to others this week. (30 minutes)

Relationships are built on shared feelings

Feelings are the language of relationship

Awareness of our feelings

In becoming fully human in ourselves and with God, we look at our feelings to see what they are, and what they are saying to us.

Our feelings are guides and indicators of what is going on within us, and as such they can be trusted. They compare what is happening to us in reality with what our attitudes say should be happening. They are indicators of our real identity and are therefore valuable and powerful. However, because they are linked to our attitudes, it is risky to make decisions based on feelings. Nor do they oblige us to act or react in any particular way; they simply inform us about where we are.

What we then do with this information is entirely our choice. If we choose to get angry when we feel cheated, that's up to us; if we sulk when our pride feels hurt, again, that's our choice.

Through having made the same choice countless times, we may come to the conclusion that we no longer have a choice. In other words, we may be so accustomed to responding in a certain way in a particular situation that we no longer stop to consider what we are doing but react automatically. We then think we have no say in the matter.

For every action and reaction there is a reason and a pattern. To be in touch with ourselves, and to be praying realistically, we need to be sensitively aware of the feelings and moods within us. The causes behind them may take time to discern, and there may be some we will never understand, but in most cases we will reap benefits if we take the trouble to follow them up.

During the course of this day we have each experienced many different feelings.

We have been aware of some, but others may have been discarded or repressed as unacceptable or even unbearable. Each feeling is significant and, if taken seriously, will lead us to a clearer and more open way of life.

Exercise

Take a few moments to still yourselves and to be aware of God's presence.

Now, reflect on your day and allow some of the main feelings of the day to come back to you. This list may help in naming them: fearful, angry, proud, miserable, unprepared, cautious, happy, doubtful, misunderstood, hurt, contented, unsure, lonely, pressured, ashamed, relieved, grateful, covetous, resentful, blessed.



After a while, choose one of the more prominent feelings to focus on. Explore the feeling and the circumstances that surrounded it and try to discover why you feel as you do and from what background of past experiences these feelings arise.

Talk to God about your feelings. Though he knows them, you may find it helpful to express them to him. (20 minutes)

Journal your experience and share it with the group. (40 minutes)

At home

In your times of prayer this week, consider each of the following Psalms and notice how your feelings are affected by them.

What are your feelings saying about your position with God, yourself, and with other people?

Psalms 6

Psalms 8

Psalms 37:1–9

Psalms 23

Psalms 62

Psalms 103



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