



EMOTIONAL HEALTH TOOLBOX

RESONATE CHURCH



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INTRODUCTION

The miracle of new birth shows us that the Holy Spirit Raises the spiritually dead by giving them new minds and hearts that together believe the gospel, love God, and want to be conformed to Christ. And yet, born-again people are not perfected. They are truly new, truly alive, truly spiritual, but in many ways unformed and immature- just like newborns in families. - John Piper, Shaped by God

Emotions are not just for our “feeler” friends. The fall did not create emotions. Emotions are a gift. They are given to us by God to commune with him more intimately, to help us discern right from wrong, and like everything else, to bring him glory. As Christians, we are to emulate Christ in every way, including how we feel and how our feelings the way we act. Throughout the Gospels, we see Jesus feel deeply through a range of emotions. We see him feel deep sadness (John 11:35), we see him feel deep agony (Luke 22:49), we see him feel anger (John 2:15), we see him feel joy (Luke 10:21). Jesus is not overpowered by his emotions but lets his emotions guide him to worship and glorify God. So we too must feel the emotions that lead us to worship and glorify God.

This toolbox is to help us learn how to feel, why we feel what we feel, and how it leads us to acts of worship. Emotions do not dictate truth, so this is so important to learn how to feel and understand each of our feelings deeply. Our hurt may try to tell us lies about community and God, though it's not wrong to feel hurt, it is wrong to let our pain lead us to believe lies and from those lies act out in ways that in turn hurt others or lead us to live in sin. Church, just as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:31, “whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God,” and that includes the way we respond out of our emotions. When we are hurt, we forgive just as Jesus has done with us. When we are angry, we do not let the sun go down but seek peace and reconciliation. When we are sad, we do not let it lead us to apathy but in sadness, seek the joy that only comes from pressing into the Spirit.

Let us be people who seek to understand our emotions, that we may gain more intimacy with other people and God himself; through our feelings, we let the Spirit shapes us to look more like Christ. Like Christ, let our whole (physical, mental, spiritual, social, emotional) lives would be for God's glory amongst the earth.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE & EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. - Psalm 139:23-24

Being an emotionally intelligent person means you are self-aware. You know how and why you feel what you feel. Have you ever taken care of a baby? The only way they know how to communicate is through crying. They cry when they need a diaper change, when they are gassy, when they are hungry, and when they are tired. Most adults act similarly when they do not understand their own emotions. Daniel Goleman identified five elements that make up emotional intelligence. These are self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Following the explanation of each component being ways, you can practically develop good skills in each area. After all five elements have been explored, there is a quiz you can take so that you can determine which areas are strongest and weakest.

Self Awareness

People who have a high level of self-awareness can understand their emotions, and because of this, they don't let their feelings rule them. They're confident because they trust their intuition and don't let their emotions get out of control. They're also willing to take an honest look at themselves. They know their strengths and weaknesses, and they work on these areas so they can perform better. Many people believe that this self-awareness is the most important part of Emotional Intelligence.

Here are some ways that you can increase your self-awareness:

- Be aware of your moods as you are having them. Label your emotions, know what it is that you are feeling.
- Learn about mindfulness. This involves focusing on the present moment, including how you're feeling.
- Keep a journal in which you write about and analyze the emotional situations you experience from day to day.
- Understand your strengths and weaknesses. If you are unsure of what they are, ask others who know you well.
- Do a personal SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) and ask for feedback from your boss and friends.

Goleman, Daniel. Emotional Intelligence. New York: Bantam Books, 2020.

SELF REGULATION

This is the ability to control emotions and impulses. People who self-regulate typically don't allow themselves to become too angry or jealous, and they don't make impulsive careless decisions. They think before they act. Characteristics of self-regulation are thoughtfulness, comfort with change, integrity, and the ability to say no. They can stay in control and manage their emotions effectively.

Here are some ways you can increase your self-regulation:

- If you often get angry, note what triggers this feeling, and think about why this happens. Use techniques such as deep breathing to calm yourself down, and give yourself time to pause before responding to emails or requests so that you don't say something that you'll later regret.
- Do what you can to manage anxiety and stress effectively. Breathing exercises are practical amid a stress-inducing situation.
- Examine how you react to stressful situations. Do you become upset every time there's a delay or something doesn't happen the way you want? Do you blame others or become angry at them, even when it's not their fault?
- Accountability is another important element of self-regulation. Take responsibility for your actions and behaviors and apologize when needed.

MOTIVATION

People with a high degree of EQ are usually motivated. They're willing to defer immediate results for long-term success. They're highly productive, love a challenge, and are very effective in whatever they do. Self-motivation is strongly affected by your emotions; when you're distracted by your emotions, you may find it hard to see tasks through.

Here are some ways you can increase your motivation:

- Develop self-discipline in various areas of your life: sleep schedule, exercise, eating, spending money, media use, and reading, are good ones to begin to focus on.
- Set yourself longer-term goals. When you decide what you want to achieve, you'll focus on what really matters to you.
- Rediscover your purpose and your values. Try to create a personal life mission statement in one sentence that encompasses what it is that you want your life to be about, and make sure your actions, words, thoughts, and decisions are filtered through those values.

EMPATHY

This is perhaps the second most crucial element of EQ. Empathy is the ability to identify with and understand the wants, needs, and viewpoints of those around you. People with empathy are good at recognizing the feelings of others, even when those feelings may not be obvious. As a result, empathetic people are usually excellent at managing relationships, listening, and relating to others. They avoid stereotyping and judging too quickly, and they live their lives in a very open, honest way. People often ask what the difference is between sympathy and empathy. Imagine a person has fallen into a well. Sympathy would be you standing at the top of the well, looking down at them and saying, "I'm so sorry, you poor thing, that must be terrible." Empathy would be you getting into the well with them and helping them get out. It requires you to dig down deep and imagine what the other person must be feeling, with you remembering a time when you have felt that too, and using those feelings to help the other person in their current situation. Empathy is not you getting into the well, and then you both getting stuck there. You have to have a strong enough hold on your self-awareness and self-regulation to be able to get in and get out.

Here are some ways you can increase your empathy:

- Think about other people's viewpoints and imagine how they may be feeling.
- Use active listening skills to understand them fully when they express their emotions to you. Look at their body language; it can tell you a lot about their emotions.
- Don't interrupt or talk about your feelings during the conversation.
- Look at their body language, too: it can tell you a lot about their emotions.

Social Skills

It's usually easy to talk to and like people with good social skills, which is another sign of high EQ. Those with strong social skills are typically team players. Rather than focusing on their own success first, they help others develop and shine. They can manage disputes, are excellent communicators, and are masters at building and maintaining relationships.

Here are some ways you can increase your social skills:

- Develop trust and rapport with people; this is an essential part of building good working relationships.
- Don't shy away from negative situations.
- Learn how to deal with conflict.
- If you're uncomfortable with social situations, work on building self-confidence. - If you are an introvert, make sure that you are getting enough alone time so that you can be present and engaged when with others, rather than reserved and reclusive.
- If you are an extrovert, make sure that you allow other people a chance to talk and that you don't dominate conversations.

Materials:

A piece of paper and pen

Suggested Time:

5-10 minutes for individuals, 30 minutes - 1 hour for a group

Procedure:

Read the following questions. If the answer is true for you, mark the box next to the question. When you finish, tally your results.

Optional Group Exercise:

Answer the quiz individually, then get in groups of 2-4 or discuss as one group your results. If the group knows each other well, you can take it a step further by examining examples of each question that you see in one another's lives. You can also ask someone who knows you well to answer the questions for you, and you do the same for them.

Goals:

For people to understand where their emotional strengths and weaknesses may be so that they better know what areas they need to grow in.

- 1. I can recognize my emotions as I experience them.
- 2. I don't lose my temper when I feel frustrated.
- 3. People have told me that I'm a good listener.
- 4. I know how to calm myself down when I feel anxious or upset.
- 5. I enjoy organizing groups.
- 6. I find it easy to focus on something over the long term.
- 7. I find it easy to move on when I feel frustrated or unhappy.
- 8. I know my strengths and weaknesses.
- 9. I am willing to engage in conflict and negotiations
- 10. I enjoy my work.
- 11. I ask people for feedback on what I do well, and how I can improve.
- 12. I set long-term goals and review my progress regularly.
- 13. I find it easy to read other people's emotions.
- 14. I am able to build rapport with others.
- 15. I use active listening skills when people speak to me.

The more boxes you check, the higher your EQ is. Are you surprised at your results?

Here is the breakdown of the 5 different elements of EQ and how the questions corresponded to them:

- Self Awareness (Questions 1, 8, 11)
- Self Regulation (Questions 2, 4, 7)
- Motivation (Questions 6, 10, 12)
- Empathy (Questions 3, 13, 15)
- Social Skills (Questions 5, 9, 14)

EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

Very similar to the idea of Emotional Intelligence is Peter Scazzerro's idea of Emotionally Healthy Spirituality. This is another questionnaire to help you see areas in which you might need to improve. Warning: your assessment results might offend and shock you.

Materials:

A piece of paper and pen

Suggested Time:

15 minutes for individuals, 1 hour for a group

Procedure:

Take the following assessment, trying as best as you can to answer honestly, rather than what you think you should answer. You can access the assessment on Peter Scazzerro's website,

[Personal Assessment Quiz | Emotionally Healthy Discipleship](#)

Optional Group Exercise:

Answer the assessment individually, then get in groups of 2-4 or discuss as one group your results. If the group knows each other well, you can take it a step further by discussing examples of each question that you see in one another's lives. You can also ask someone who knows you well to answer the questions for you, and you do the same for them.

Goals:

For people to understand where their emotional strengths and weaknesses may be, so that they better know what areas they need to grow in.

LIST OF EMOTIONS

Ignoring our emotions is turning our back on reality. Listening to our emotions ushers us into reality. And reality is where we meet God. - Peter Scazzero, Emotionally Healthy Spirituality

Emotions are natural, and it is embedded in our very image that reflects our creator. When we deny ourselves the ability to feel, we deny a part of ourselves that God purposefully created. However, many of us feel something but can't even name it. Maturity means understanding your emotions and being able to pinpoint precisely how you feel. The inability to name your feelings prevents you from truly understanding how and why you feel what you feel. For example, you may feel angry. But why? Did someone betray you? Are you frustrated? Are you jealous? Those are all emotions that can resemble anger, but when we cannot name how we feel, we can't start the journey of understanding why we feel those emotions. Below is an emotional wheel. This will help you start with a base emotion that enables you to draw out what you are feeling to name it, process it, and understand yourself better so that you may be able to draw close to the Lord.

Materials:

A piece of paper and pen

Suggested Time:

As long as it takes.

Procedure:

Take a moment to be still and silent and have feelings about a past, current, or future situation. Look at the following list of emotions, and write down ten emotions that you can resonate with. After you come up with the list of 10 emotions, narrow it down to the top 3 that you feel most strongly about. Then try to write a simple sentence or 2 with those emotions explaining what you are feeling and why. You can go further and ask yourself what you want to do with those feelings.

Optional Group Exercise:

After spending 10 minutes alone reflecting on your situation and choosing your emotions, get in groups of 2-4 and share what you have learned. Ask each other follow-up questions, such as: Do you believe you are allowed to feel those things? What do you want to do with those emotions?

Goals:

For people to develop an emotional vocabulary that they can use in future situations. To create an awareness of what it is they are feeling and decide what they want to do with those feelings.

LIST OF EMOTIONS

Amazed	Foolish	Overwhelmed
Angry	Frustrated	Peaceful
Annoyed	Furious	Proud
Anxious	Grieving	Relieved
Ashamed	Happy	Resentful
Bitter	Hopeful	Sad
Bored	Hurt	Satisfied
Comfortable	Inadequate	Scared
Confused	Insecure	Self-Conscious
Content	Inspired	Shocked
Depressed	Irritated	Silly
Determined	Jealous	Stupid
Disdain	Joy	Suspicious
Disgusted	Lonely	Tense
Eager	Lost	Terrified
Embarrassed	Loving	Trapped
Energetic	Miserable	Uncomfortable
Envious	Motivated	Worried
Excited	Nervous	Worthless

Oatmeal Words

Oatmeal words fill the answers to “how are you?” without giving any real substance that allows others to know us. Oatmeal words are too commonly accepted. What would it look like for us to be people who are transparent and honest when we answer the question, “How are you?” Too real for some of you? If we cannot be honest with one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, then how could we ever think that anyone from the outside would feel comfortable enough to be vulnerable with us? Church, we must be people who can understand our emotions enough to let people in, to lead out in vulnerability, and be done with the filling oatmeal words. Let us seek to know one another in hopes of unity and being a counter-cultural movement that draws others.

Example Oatmeal Words:

Nice
Fine
Okay
Cool
Whatever
Interesting
It is what it is

LAMENTING

In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord; In the night my hand is stretched out without wearying; My soul refuses to be comforted. When I remember God, I moan. - Psalm 77:2-3

Mark Vroegop, the lead pastor of College Park Church, has explored the spiritual discipline of lament. The discipline of taking our sorrow and pain, and vocalizing them to the Father who sees us, knows us and empathizes with our pain. Lamenting allows us to be honest with ourselves, but more importantly, with God. Lamenting invites us to share our grief, our broken hearts and experience the grace and mercy that our Heavenly Father so richly pours upon our heavy souls. Take these steps and tips, walk through them with the Father, with your huddle, and whoever else to experience the rich mercy found in being honest with your pain.

Materials:

Bible and Journal

Expected Time:

As long as it takes.

Procedure:

Lament is more than just walking through grief or complaining about what you are feeling sorrow over. As Mark Vroegop says, it “is a prayer in pain that leads to trust.... A path to praise” (Vroegop 2019, pg. 28). Lamenting allows the individual or community to express their grief in a godly way that will enable them to lean into God and trust Him with their sorrow and pain. There are four stages to Lament: Turn, Complain, Ask, and Trust.

Turn:

For the process of your grief to be considered Lament, you must turn to the Lord. “Lament invites us to turn our gaze from the rubble of life to the Redeemer of every hurt; it calls us to turn toward promise while still in pain” (Vroegop 2019, pg. 29). When beginning the process of address, our hearts must be turned to God in prayer.

Helpful Tips:

If you don’t have words, read aloud a psalm of lament. Linger over it, let it open your heart, and flow through your soul as you process your grief. Psalm 13 is a great psalm that overarches a psalm of lament.

Complain:

There are ways to complain that are not unbiblical. Mark Goevrop says, “Through godly complaint, we can express our disappointment and move toward a resolution. We complain on the basis of our belief of who God is and what he can do”. Take time to read Psalm 10. Then, while journaling or praying aloud, complain this way:

Come humbly:

Never is there a place to be angry with God, but Voegrop believes it is permissible to ask pain-filled questions as long as you are coming with a humble heart. “Bring your pain, not your pride” (Voegrop 2019, pg. 52). “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you.” – 1 Peter 5:6-7

Pray the Bible:

Memorize psalms of lament, use them as guides to keep your prayers, and lament on tracks that bring you back to God.

Be Honest:

Biblical complaint will not help if you are not honest with the Father. You have a savior who understands your struggles better than anyone (Hebrew 4:15).

Don’t just complain:

If you stay stuck in complaining, you will never move to praise. Complaints are a means to an end, that end being trust and praise of the Father. “Christians never complain just to complain. Instead, we bring our complaints to the Lord to move us toward him.” (Voegrop 2019, pg. 54).

Ask:

The next step is to confidently call upon God to act in accordance with who He says He is. Boldly call God to fulfill His promises in complete confidence that He will. But what do you ask? Ask for these things:

“Arise O Lord” Psalms 3, 7, 10, 17, 74, and 94 all plead with God to rise and fulfill His promises to fix what is wrong with the world.

“Grant us help” In our pain, we realize we are not as self-sufficient as we had believed to be. Lean on God and plead for His presence and be near to save, deliver, protect you.

“Let justice be done.” When God’s glory, not just your pain, needs justice, it is biblical to seek for the wicked to be punished, for justice to reign. “Lament gives us language for talking to God about unfairness, abuse, and hidden mistreatment. WE can boldly call upon God to act for the sake of injustice” (Voegrop pg. 62).

“Don’t remember our sins” Sometimes, our sin is the cause of our need to lament. David, the sinner of adultery and murder, pleads not that God would treat him as his sin deserves to be treated, but instead appeals for God’s mercy and grace.

“Remember your covenant” Asking the Lord to remember his promises is not saying He forgot but fighting the temptation to believe only what you can see with your eyes. It is saying to God, “I am trusting what your word says.”

“Restore us!” The entire story arch of the Bible speaks on the redemption and restoration of what once was. To ask God to restore, fix what is broken in and around us is a great thing to ask.

Trust :

Lament is lament because it concludes with trust and faith in who God says He is and what He promises us. To wrap up our lament, we must turn our faith and trust in the Lord. To put our trust in Him, even when we are confused, or lost, or frustrated. This looks like praying with belief in God’s promises and seeking Him through all the complaints and asking. It looks like trusting that He is our loving Father who sees us, knows us, and even asks us to come to Him with our asking. He is not annoyed with your seeking Him in your complaints and asks, He deeply cares for you and wants you. Trust that.

Goal:

Lament should allow the person to feel connected and known by their Father. “Lament is a tool that God’s people use to navigate pain and suffering. Lament is a vital prayer for the people of God because it enables them to petition for God to help deliver from distress, suffering, and pain. Lament prayer is designed to persuade God to act on the sufferer’s behalf.” (Heath A. Thomas.)

TACKLING SHAME

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. - Romans 5:3-5

Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging. universal. We are not alone in feeling it, but we must not let it dictate how we live our lives. Why? Because Jesus took our shame to the grave and left it there. We are no longer to be called people who live in shame, but those who live in the freedom of being deemed righteous because of the blood of Christ that covers us. In Brené Brown's book *Daring Greatly*, she describes that we must become shame resilient to combat shame. Shame is the fear of disconnection. Empathy is the opposite of shame - it helps us connect amid feeling shame or other negative emotions. She describes shame resilience as this, "Shame resilience is a strategy for protecting connection. Our connection with ourselves and our connections with people we care about." As believers, we can take that a step further and even saying protecting our connection with God. Shame is a great tool to separate us from the enemy. We see that in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve hid from God, causing separation between them because of their shame. When we feel shame, we tend to do one of three things.

1. Move away by withdrawing, hiding, silencing ourselves, and keeping secrets.
2. Move toward appeasing and pleasing.
3. Move against by trying to gain power over others, being aggressive, and using shame to fight shame.

John 3:16 says this, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." That is the gospel. Paul says this in Romans 8:37-39:

No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Shame can tell us a lot of lies, but the gospel is evident in its truth. God sought you to be worthy of love so much so that he sent his Son, Jesus. That Jesus came lived a life, we could never live and died a death meant for us. Then three days later, he overcame death, sin, and shame that we may freely commune intimately with our created God, whom we now get to call Father. Nothing, I mean nothing, can separate us from God. Jesus declared the work of justification is finished. Let us stop digging through the grave, clinging to shame that Jesus defeated on our behalf.

Materials:

Paper and pen

Suggested Time:

30 minutes to answer questions individually, 1 hour to share answers with others (depending on the size of the group)

Procedure:

Individually, take some time to reflect upon and respond to the following questions. Write down your answers. When you finish, get into groups of 2-4 to share your findings. The questions are adapted from Brené Brown's *I Thought it Was Just Me, But it Isn't*.

Recognizing Shame

The first element of shame resilience is recognizing shame and understanding our triggers. Men and women who are resilient to shame have this capacity. Shame has physical symptoms. These might include your mouth getting dry, time seeming to slow down, your heart racing, twitching, looking down, and tunnel vision. These symptoms are different from one person to the next. So if you learn your physical symptoms, you can recognize shame and get back on your feet faster.

"I physically feel shame in/on my..."

"I know I'm in shame when I feel..."

"If I could taste shame, it would taste like If I could smell shame, it would smell like If I could touch shame, it would feel like..."

Exploring Triggers and Vulnerabilities

Our unwanted identities dictate our behavior every day. It's worth it to figure them out and get honest about them. Often, you'll see that the perceptions you want to have and want to avoid being totally unrealistic. To get at shame triggers, figure out how you want to be perceived around a specific identity. So for example, with regards to motherhood, one might want to be perceived as calm, knowledgeable, or educated and not perceived as overwhelmed, stressed out, too ambitious, or unable to balance career and mothering. When we write these down and look at them, we understand the perceptions that make us vulnerable to shame. In the process, we learn a lot about ourselves.

To start, pick a shame category (body, work, motherhood, parenting, etc.) Then, answer the following questions

How I perceive myself:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

How others perceives me*:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Looking at your list of the identities you gave yourself, answer the following questions for EACH identity:

1. What makes me think people perceive me in this way?
2. Why do I perceive myself in these ways??
3. Where did the messages that fuel this identity come from?

How Jesus perceives me:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Next to each identity statement write the scripture that backs up those statements. If you cannot find one, then you might be believing a lie. Or you might be new to reading your bible. Here is a list of scriptures about your identity in scripture:

Matthew 5:13 -14
Romans 1:7
Romans 5:17-18
Romans 8:1
Romans 8:17
Romans 8:37

2 Corinthians 5:17
2 Corinthians 5:21
Ephesians 1:5
Ephesians 1:7
Ephesians 2:4-6
Ephesians 2:10

Ephesians 6:10
Colossians 2:10
Colossians 3:12
1 Peter 1:16
1 John 4:17

Bring these identities to your huddle. Where is the shame producing false identity in you? What truth about who Christ claims you to be do you need to believe? How will you let community in to help you believe the truth of who you are and to help you let go of the shame you are feeling?

**These identities are most likely assumptions you've made about others. This is an unresolved conflict. To resolve this, check these assumptions with those people. They may not even be true and those people probably do not think those things about you! Go to resonate.net/resources for more information about how to check an assumption in the [Tools for Healthy Conflict](#).*

Strategies of Disconnection

We have learned to “move away” by withdrawing, hiding, silencing ourselves, and secret-keeping. We have also known the strategy of “moving toward.” This can be seen when we attempt to earn connection by appeasing and pleasing. We have developed ways to “move against.” These include trying to gain power over others and using shaming others to fight shame and aggression.

I use the strategy of “moving away” when:

I'm most likely to “move away” with:

I use the strategy of “moving toward” when:

I'm most likely to “move toward” with:

I use the strategy of “moving against” when:

I'm most likely to “move against” with:

Connecting

We are wired for connection. It's in our biology. As infants, our need for connection is about survival. As we grow older, connection means thriving – emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually. Connection is critical because we all have the basic need to feel accepted and to believe that we belong and are valued for who we are. As you work through understanding your shame, remember to reach out and stay connected.

SHOULD TO COULD

Through him, we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. - Romans 5:2

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and the sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. - Hebrews 12:1-2

The language we use though unintentional, highlights the expectations we have for ourselves, others, and ultimately God. Just as Paul says in Romans, because of Christ, we have faith and a reason to rejoice in the hope that is Jesus. We run the race with our eyes on the hope that is in Jesus and Jesus alone. Like Jesus, he set his eyes on the joy set before, and because he did so, we will too put our eye on the joy set before us. Language helps dictate where our joy or lack of joy comes from. When we use the word, it sets up an expectation of failure, disappointment and ultimately helps feed the shame we often feel. What if we were people who spoke the language of optimism, growth, encouragement, and hope? Simply replacing the word should with the term could help imply hope to succeed and grace in failure, rather than expectations to succeed and shame in failure.

For Example:

“I should spend more time meeting people on campus.”

The should in this sentence enforces shame to build up when expectations aren't met. It uses negative reinforcement and associates a task of obedience with shame instead of joy, worship, and delight in God's work in your life on campus.

“I could spend more time meeting people on campus.”

The could in this sentence, brings encouragement to do something hard. It allows peace and delight at the possibility of opportunity, stirring hope to see what God is doing on campus. It uses positive reinforcement and helps us to be joyful in walking obedience and seeking God's glory in and through our lives.

Materials:

A piece of paper and a pen

Suggested Time:

15 minutes

Procedure:

Think about all the different ways you tell yourself you “should” be doing/being/thinking/feeling something. Write down your “I should” statements one by one on your paper.

Re-read your statements and take a minute to think about how they make you feel about yourself. You can refer to the exercise “10 Quick Emotions” for help in discerning how you are feeling. Write down an emotion or 2 for each statement. What do you notice about the theme of these emotions? Are they positive or negative?

Next, rewrite each statement, replacing the word “should” with “could” and putting it in the form of a question. Take note of how your revision changes the way you feel.

Then write “should” statements that you have for other people. “My husband should help with the dishes more often.” Re-read your statements, write your emotions, then revise them into “could” questions, again writing new feelings next to your revisions. What theme do you see with your feelings after the change?

Try to make it a personal practice to eliminate the word “should” from your vocabulary. After all, *what could it look like if you were to stop saying “should” to yourself and others? :*)

Goal:

To help people to see the destructive effects of saying “should” and to provide them with an alternative that brings more hope and freedom to their situations.

MINDFULNESS

“Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” - Isaiah 43:18-19

Mindfulness is defined as “the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we’re doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what’s going on around us” (Mindful Staff, 2020). Many people see the practice of mindfulness as a “granola” thing to do, but mindfulness is not something that you do when you are in the middle of a yoga pose. It is a practice that engages you with where the Father has you now. It can keep you from “considering the things of old”(Is. 43:18) or from “worrying about tomorrow”(Matt. 6:34). It allows you to be aware of who God is and who He has created you to be in this moment and even gives you the time and space to hear from Him.

Expected Time:
15-30 minutes

Procedure:

1) Mindfulness in Your Morning Routine

Pick an activity that constitutes part of your daily morning routine, such as brushing your teeth, shaving, or having a shower. When you do it, totally focus on what you are doing: the body movements, the taste, the touch, the smell, the sight, the sound, etc. While doing this, consider Philippians 4:8-9. Be reminded how thankful you are for the small things that we all take advantage of the warm showers, the food in our cupboards as we make our breakfast, the coffee we brew.

2) Mindfulness of Pleasant Activities

Pick an activity you enjoy, such as cuddling with a loved one, eating lunch, stroking the cat, playing with the dog, walking in the park, listening to music, having a soothing hot bath, and so on. Do this activity mindfully: engage in it fully, using all five of your senses, and savor every moment. Invite God into these moments. Think of Ecclesiastes 12:1 and be reminded of your present time. If and when your attention wanders, as soon as you realize it, note what distracted you, and re-engage in whatever you’re doing.

3) Mindfulness of Domestic Chores

We all have activities we do not enjoy, that we just push through or roll our eyes as we do them. We may distract ourselves with thoughts of the future, or rewinding a conversation in our head as we wash the dishes, or fold the laundry. Take time to really experience those moments. Use your five senses as you fold the towels that just freshly came out of the dryer. Think about how you feel as you wash the dinner off your dinner plates. Invite God into those spaces and ask Him what makes these unenjoyable and be reminded how sweet God is in the midst of annoying chores.

Notice Five Things

This is yet another simple exercise to center yourself and engage with your environment. Practice it throughout the day, especially when you find yourself getting caught up in your thoughts and feelings.

1. Pause for a moment
2. Look around and notice five things that you can see.
3. Listen carefully and notice five things that you can hear.
4. Notice five things you can feel in contact with your body (for example, your watch against your wrist, your trousers against your legs, the air on your face, your feet upon the floor, your back against the chair).
5. Finally, do all of the above simultaneously and invite the Lord into this moment with you. Pray to Him, seek Him, experience Him as you experience all of these things around you.

Goal:

We live in a world that is distracting and chaotic. We experience a culture that pushes us to judge ourselves on our past mistakes or worry about what tomorrow will bring. Mindfulness with Christ centers you on Him and who He has created you to be today. His mercies are new every day. This means you do not need to worry about if the amount of mercy and grace will last you the rest of the week. It will sustain you today and tomorrow. You will be given enough to get you through that day and so on. So be here, be with Him today.

PRAYER OF EXAMEN

O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. . . . Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? —Psalm 139:1–3, 7

The Prayer of Examen may look and sound like mindfulness, but it is different. While mindfulness is the practice of being present in the moment, the prayer of examen is reflecting on your day and centering yourself. It is, in essence, examining your day and thanking God for the day.

Materials:

Journal and Pen
Bible

Expected Time:

30 min-1 hour

Procedure:

Thank God for the gifts of life and this particular day. This will force you to not look at life through dark-colored glasses. It will allow you to see where God is moving in your life, and you will find yourself experiencing gratitude for who God is. Take your time here. Life is not always sunshine and rainbows, but God does all for our good, so take time to pray and ask the Spirit to reveal to you where God is in your day.

Ask God to allow you to see the day as you have lived it and in light of God's will.

As said above, just take time to ask the Spirit to reveal to you where God was in your day and how you could walk in His obedience.

Spend time reflecting on the events, interactions, and emotions of the day.

Ask for insight into the ways your responses were good, life-giving, or healing.

Ask for insight into the ways your responses may have been insensitive, unloving, or damaging to others, creation, or self.

Pray for forgiveness, healing, reconciliation, and release.

Offer God the next day. Ask God to be present in your thoughts, actions, and relationships as you move on to live a new day more fully alive to the presence of Christ.

Goal:

Life is full of joys and sorrows, and taking time to journal about all that has happened and inviting God into those spaces can remind you that He knows you, He sees you, and He loves you. We pray that the Prayer of Examen will create a space for you to praise the Father, as well as lament when necessary.

LISTENING TO YOUR INNER CRITIC

If your compassion doesn't include yourself, it is incomplete. - Jack Kornfield

2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

Every one of us knows our flaws better than anybody in the world. For some of us, a compliment is rendered null because we compare it to the massive list of negative qualities we keep for ourselves. This is our inner critic. The voice constantly questions our actions, thoughts, motives, appearance, and every other little detail about ourselves. Often, the source of this is a lack of confidence or understanding of our identity. We are constantly in identity management, and thus, the inner critic shows us where we always fall short of who we want to be. This is why in Christ, the old has passed away, and the new has come. We are given a new identity. The inner critic can be tossed out because we have been given the Holy Spirit, God within us, guiding us and affirming us in our identity in Him. The question is, how do we silence the old inner critic and listen to the prompting of the Spirit?

Materials:

Pen + Journal

Bible

Notes app

Expected Time:

An hour + time throughout the day

Procedure:**1. Identify your inner critic.**

- Create a new note on your phone or carry a journal with you throughout the day. When you feel that inner angst of critique, write down what you did and the attached emotion. i.e., was late to a meeting - inadequate
- Do this without judging them as bad or good, simply observing what is taking place.

2. Process

- Go back through everything you wrote down that day.
- What lies were you telling yourself each time your inner critic came up? Write that

down.

- What moments were sin, and what were the Holy Spirit convicting you in truth?
- There might be both with each emotion; the truth of conviction mixed with lies from the enemy about your identity

3. Gospel Lens

- With each statement, sin, or true conviction, find scripture that brings Gospel truth to your identity.
- What truth from scripture denies the lies of the enemy and affirms your true identity in Christ?
- What truth from scripture speaks to your sin and calls you to repentance?

4. In the end, you should have a day worth of notes that look like this:

9 am: was late to work - felt inadequate

Lie: I am a hindrance to this team; they would do better work without me.

Truth: I love and value those I work with; it would be honoring their time to be fully ready to go on time.

Scripture: Colossians 3:23-24: 'Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.'

Goal:

To meet self-critical emotion with Gospel truth that allows us to stay firmly rooted in our God-given identity and listen to the truth of the Spirit, not the lies of the enemy.

ANGER - WHAT DOES IT MEAN AND HOW DO WE HANDLE IT?

Do not say, "I cannot help having a bad temper." Friend, you must help it. Pray to God to help you overcome it at once, for either you must kill it, or it will kill you. You cannot carry a bad temper into heaven. - Charles Spurgeon

James 1:19, "My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry."

Anger. We all deal with anger, internal or external; we get emotionally upset when we feel something wrong has happened. It could be towards us, towards someone we love, or simply an act of injustice. Each of us expresses anger in different ways and to varying degrees. However, the Bible is pretty clear that anger quickly turns into sin. Too often, we do not believe this. Pridefully we think our anger is righteous and therefore justified. We need to slow down and see what God has to say about anger.

Materials:

[What Does God Say About Anger?](#)

Bible

Journal

Pen

Expected Time:

20 minutes

Procedure:

1. Read 'What Does God Say About Anger?'

2. Journal out:

- a. What scripture sticks out to me about anger?
- b. What things do I get the angriest about?
- c. What things most frequently drive me to some level of anger?

3. Practice this process:

a. Stop

- i. What is explicitly leading me towards anger right now?
- ii. Recognize this moment as a decision point, a temptation towards anger.
- iii. Identify what sin is

b. Think

- i. Remember who you are and that God is with you
- ii. Think about the consequences of sin
- iii. Think about the consequences of choosing righteousness through grace

c. Pray

- i. It can be so short since little things can drive us near anger all the time
- ii. "Lord, help me be clear-minded right now."

Goal:

To honestly treat anger as sin, recognize the moments we personally are most prone to anger and develop a process that allows us to choose peace and grace in Christ.

WORRY

Cast all your anxieties on him because he cares for you.

1 Peter 5:7

**Disclaimer* Worry and Anxiety Disorders are very different. We are not speaking on how to process anxiety disorders, but how to cast everyday anxieties (that are not consistent and debilitating that would constitute a diagnosis) onto the Lord. If you believe you have an anxiety disorder(s), we highly recommend talking to your doctor about the next steps.*

We are prone to worry about what tomorrow will bring or what someone thinks of us after we said that awful joke yesterday. Whatever it is, we are easily caught up in our worry, and it keeps us from experiencing the Lord more fully. Thankfully the Bible does not only just say “just stop worrying” as if that makes the thoughts go away. Instead, it says to take them to the Lord. Here we are going to give a few steps on what that can look like.

Materials:

Pen and paper/journal

Bible

Friend/huddle

Expected Time:

As long as it takes

Procedure:

The first step is to take a look at the mindfulness tool above. Those are great tools to help amid worry that is clouding your mind.

A lot of our worries stem from problems we see in our lives or situations. Two coping mechanisms can help treat the worries that are arising in our lives. The problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. These are secular coping mechanisms, but thankfully we have a God who is with us always. Therefore, take these coping mechanisms, and actively engage the Lord with them. Invite him into the decision-making process when how to deal with the process. Pray with a friend when emotionally coping. Whichever route you go, invite God into that space.

Problem Focused Coping

Problem-focused coping is where you see the worry and you decide to focus on how to solve the worry/problem. You make a plan, come up with steps, and execute said plan to eliminate the problem that is causing the worry.

Example:

You are worried about an upcoming exam. So, you create a study schedule, plan, and begin studying hard for the exam. The more you study, the more confident you feel and the less worried about your exam you become.

Emotional Focused Coping

Emotional-focused coping is seeing that there is not much control in the situation or problem causing worry, so you deal with the issue internally, dealing with how a person sees the problem from their perspective.

Example:

You took the exam you studied hard for, yet you left feeling not as confident as you did when you entered. There is absolutely nothing you can do that will get your results back faster nor change your answers. You are worried. Emotional-focused coping looks like talking through what is making you anxious. It can also look like practicing mindfulness or praying. This is the situation where you may go to your huddle with a prayer request or spend time praying alone or with your other classmates who also feel not very confident about the test.

Goal:

Worry is all around us, but we do not have to be controlled by our worries. We are given the strength to persevere and ask for the Lord to move on our behalf, and we also have a God who wants us to give Him our worries. You can feel worried, but not become your worry, and do not let it dictate your life.

THANKFULNESS & JOY

Christian joy is a good feeling in the soul, produced by the Holy Spirit, as he causes us to see the beauty of Christ in the word and in the world. - John Piper

Galatians 5:22-23, The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Thankfulness and Joy are two emotions we all know are good and desire to experience them, yet often feel so unattainable. God promises joy through His Spirit, and He commands thankfulness through remembering what He has done for us. Often these two are connected in a linear sense; if we remember what God has done, we become thankful, which overflows and turns into joy. God knows we are prone to forget what He has done in our lives; thus, we are prompted to experience thankfulness and joy through the Spirit truly.

Materials:

[How Do You Define Joy?](#)

Bible

Journal

Expected Time:

30 - 60 minutes

Procedure:

Read Psalm 77:12

Write down some things that were mighty deeds of God. Write about your salvation, answered prayers, moments of His promises fulfilled.

Read Psalm 9:1

Engage in deep thanksgiving for these things. Pray only thanking God.

Read Philippians 4:4

Paul is writing this from Prison. How do we make sure we never settle for a God who wouldn't satisfy us in a prison cell?

Read Philippians 4:6-7

This is where we put it all together. In prayer and thanksgiving, we let our requests be made known to God. We simply tell Him what is on our hearts, good or bad. And then His peace keeps us in Him who is our joy.

Read Isaiah 26:3

We are promised perfect peace if we keep our minds on the things of God. Here is the thing. This cannot be a one and done, and now I experience joy forever. This has to be a lifelong fight; we have to fight the good fight. "Do not believe the lie that joy will only come when the clouds in your life are finally clear." - Marshall Segal. We have to choose joy, and we do so by reminding ourselves of what God has done for us. Our joy is in God alone. If we put it in anything temporary, our joy will be fleeting also. John Piper describes the beauty of God is this:

When we have little and have lost much, Christ comes and reveals himself as more valuable than what we have lost. And when we have much and are overflowing in abundance, Christ comes, and he shows that he is far superior to everything we have.

When we believe this, ask God to help us experience this and pray in this way, I believe we will continually grow in our joy and thankfulness in Christ.

Goal:

To experience the joy that only comes from the Spirit through remembrance and thankfulness for the work of Jesus. To know how to keep our mind stayed on Him who promises us these things and continually choose joy in the good and the bad.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & HELPFUL RESOURCES

[Inner Critic](#)

[Anger](#)

[Joy](#)

[Daring Greatly](#)

[Shaped by God](#)

[Emotionally Healthy Spirituality](#)

[Spiritual Practice - Prayer of Examen](#)

[How Do You Define Joy?](#)

[The Cure](#)

[Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament](#)

[Relationships Personal growth/ Health Leisure Work/ Education](#)