



PARENT GUIDE

LESSON FIFTEEN: FEELINGS

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LESSON FIFTEEN: FEELINGS

OBJECTIVE: To help families understand what God gave us our emotions for, and how to use our feelings in positive ways.

FOCUS ON FOLLOWING JESUS

Jesus felt anger, sadness, joy and frustration, but he didn't allow himself to sin. Jesus shows us that our heart and body work together with our mind to obey all that God has commanded us – we don't have to be ruled by our emotions.

(2 Timothy 1:7 "God gave us his Spirit. And the Spirit doesn't make us weak and fearful. Instead, the Spirit gives us power and love. He helps us control ourselves.")

GRIP ON THE GOSPEL

Emotions can be good things – we can feel sorrow for our sin that leads us to repent, and joy that God can release us from our sin! But we must remember that if we belong to God, he is restoring all of us – not just our soul, but our emotions, our thoughts and eventually, one day, our bodies, so that we can worship and be with him forever.

(Romans 8:28 "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him. He appointed them to be saved in keeping with his purpose.")

WHAT DO I DO?

- Read the [For Parents](#) article. Spend a few minutes thinking and praying.
- Read over the [Discipleship Lesson](#) and decide when you will do it with your family.
- Gather your family, a Bible and any supplies listed on the lesson sheet. Use the script provided to teach a [Discipleship Lesson](#) to your family, adapting as needed.
- Use the 5 mini-lessons as [Daily Bible Time](#) prompts through the week.
- Select one or more [Discipleship Activities](#) to incorporate into your week.



FOR PARENTS

My son wasn't even three years old yet when one morning I heard him stomping in circles in his room. I had (yet again) denied him cookies for breakfast. So he was letting me and everyone else know exactly how he felt by proclaiming, "I sad and I mad and I grumpy and I not happy either!" We had really been working on helping him to 'use his words', as this was much preferred over a tantrum. But we, as parents, began to see just how big and out of control emotions could be for our son and we looked for ways to help him manage them.

He had to learn that sometimes being hungry or tired made our emotions seem bigger. Sometimes to calm down our emotions we had to talk it out. Or choose to think about different things. Sometimes he had to go have some quiet time alone, cuddle with mom or hug a stuffy. Emotions couldn't be swept away or dismissed, or we faced meltdown after meltdown. We had to identify, recognize and work through each emotion.

Sometimes emotions seem like the enemy, even though they are a gift from God. The first step to defeating an enemy, of course, is naming and defining it. We have to know what we're up against or we will fail every time. Helping our children with their emotional vocabulary will go a long way toward peace in your home, as will helping them to understand that they are not at the mercy of what they feel.

All of this requires us – as parents – to have an emotional awareness about ourselves.

What emotions have you felt this week? What did you do with them? Did you push them inside, let them out in unhealthy ways, did they boss around your thoughts or your body? Or did you deal with them, take the information they provided and do something positive?

This kind of reflection can be exhausting for some of us – but like any gift given to us from God, it's important for us to understand how to use our emotions. It is also important to understand how to balance them with both our mind and body. Biblically, uncontrolled emotions are sinful in just the same way as hardened or unfeeling hearts are. The opposite of feeling emotions is not the solution here either. Rejection or dismissal of a gift of God isn't the same as self-control.

The Psalmists frequently felt and worked through their emotions before God. One wrote, "Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and my mind." He asked God to show him what was really going on in his heart so he wouldn't be ignorant or uninformed. As a parent, it may help you to look into what's going on inside you today. If you're unsure, ask God to reveal your heart to you as well as a positive path for working through these feelings so they no longer rule over you. Submitting our whole heart, soul, mind and strength to God in love requires that nothing remain hidden, every wayward feeling confessed.

Emotional language comes easier for some of us than others. In your home, if there are two parents, perhaps one of you is more comfortable with this language than the other. I'm sure you've recognized that both restraint and expression are important in good measure. But sometimes our children (or the irregular sleep schedule and general exhaustion that comes with them) can tip us to one side or the other. Take some time this week to take stock of your emotional reactions. What would you like to teach your children about their feelings? What are some things you can do to create an open environment for communicating what is in our hearts?



Consider these Questions:

- Are you an emotional person, or pretty much in control?
- How do you respond to the emotions of your children?
- What do you do to help yourself when anger, frustration, anxiety or impatience flare up?
- What emotion is most difficult for you to deal with?
- Do you think of God as having emotions? Do you see your emotions as a gift from him?



DISCIPLESHIP LESSON

Instructions:

- Read or teach the text using your own words
- *Text in italics is a note to the adult leading*
- This icon  indicates a question you should ask
- This icon  tells you there is a Bible verse to read
- **Text inside a grey box is a tip or idea for you!**
- Text inside this box is a short activity or task

The lesson should take about **45 minutes** to complete.

Supplies Needed:

- **Bible**
- At least 4 pieces of paper
- Writing/drawing materials
- Three stuffed animals, toy dolls or action figures, or 3 children if your family is larger
- String

THE INSIDE TEAM

Gather your family for the family Discipleship Lesson. Remind your family that this is something exciting to do together, to look at the Bible and Jesus and learn what it means to be a disciple!



This lesson will talk about being whole-hearted, instead of having a divided heart (which is referenced in God's Word), through the idea that parts of our 'inner team' are not all playing for the same goal.



Adapt the example to be relevant to your family dynamic or recent events.



What are some of the things we've talked about together as a family during our discipleship lessons?

We've been talking about what it means to follow Jesus – to be disciples – and be on Jesus' team. Being on a team means working together with your team mates, it means having the same goal as the rest of your team, it means you choose to work for the good of the team and not only what you want to do.

Today we're going to talk about a different team – the team *inside* you.

That might sound pretty strange – but sometimes as Christians we have part of us that wants to follow Jesus and part that finds it difficult. For instance – has anyone ever wanted to go to a playdate at a friend's house but you were just too tired or even feeling sick? That's an example of when our mind and our body don't agree.

Or think of this – what if you decided when you woke up in the morning that you wanted to be nice to your brother, but he just wouldn't leave you alone and bugged you all through breakfast. By lunch, you felt angry feelings and



yelled at him! Does that sound like something that has ever happened in this house?

See. The Bible talks about different parts of us.



Mark 12:20

Psalm 86:11 is a verse where the Psalm writer asks God to give him an ‘undivided heart’, or a heart that doesn’t want two different and opposite things. The Bible talks about our minds, our spirits (our hearts), and our bodies. And while it’s hard to say exactly how many parts of us there are, sometimes they don’t always play on the same team – and even our heart can want two different things at the same time!

Sometimes we make the mistake of thinking that our emotions – or feelings – are bad. We think “I shouldn’t get angry” or “I shouldn’t be sad” – but today we’re going to talk about how our emotions are a great thing, and part of the team that makes up who we are! God made us whole people with all these parts for a reason! Knowing this will help us know what to do when we have feelings that seem big and out of control.

Let’s talk about emotions.

Lay out pieces of paper with different words on them (happy, sad, frustrated, scared, surprised, grumpy, worried, jealous, etc.) As a family write or draw things that might cause you to feel that way, or a way that you would know you are having that feeling. For instance, having to give a presentation at school might make you feel nervous. We might know we are nervous if we feel butterflies in our stomach. Talk together briefly about how people might respond differently to the same situation.

See, we know lots about emotions! Sometimes emotions make us feel things in our body and think things in our mind. **Present three figures to represent mind, body and heart. Label them with sticky notes or other identifying signs.**

Now this here is your mind. Is it what you expected? No? Well – our mind is the part of ourselves that plans, make decisions and thinks things. When we become Jesus-followers, our mind changes to begin to think about things the way Jesus would. The Bible tells us:



This lesson presents a simplified explanation of the parts that make us ‘us’. Some Christian traditions teach that there are only two parts of a person, some more. This lesson is meant to demonstrate management of emotions rather than reflect a specific theological position.



Before the lesson, choose three toys to represent our body, mind and heart. Three stuffed animals, dolls or action figures will do. Or select three children if you have a large group.

**Romans 12:2**

Some versions of the verse say, “Be changed by making your mind new.” It’s new because it chooses to think about different things or think about things in a different way. This verse also helps us understand the change that begins to happen in our mind that is talked about here:

**Philippians 4:8**

Our mind thinks things over, makes decisions, makes plans, asks questions and finds out the answer. Our mind is amazing and important, but it’s not the only part of us!

This is our body. Doesn’t our friend here make a great body? It is the part of us that experiences what things in the world are like – what does the world smell like? Sound like? It wants to be fed and go to sleep or run around and play! It doesn’t like getting hurt and wants to be comfortable. But when we follow Jesus we can’t just let our body do whatever it wants.

**1 Corinthians 9:17****Romans 6:13**

Our body is able to do many things, but not everything is GOOD for it. Our bodies might feel like eating cookies all day long, or hitting when we feel frustrated, or never ever going to bed. But we must work together with our minds to figure out what’s GOOD for our body, good for all of us. The body is pretty good at giving the mind information – like I’m cold, I’m hungry, I’m itchy, I’m hyper! And our mind can help us make a good choice.

Lastly – this is our heart. It’s where we feel emotions, our feelings. These feelings tell us information too! But usually about something we *want*. Not just wanting a cookie or our favourite blanket.



What would the emotion of loneliness tell us we want? What would the emotion of anger tell us we want? What would the emotion of happiness tell us we want?

The heart is pretty awesome, but emotions are a very strong part of us, especially as we are growing up. They want to have control of the other parts of ourselves.

Whichever part of us is very strong at the moment, the others will follow. Our parts don't always work together as a team. When we are extra tired – guess what? Our mind doesn't think very well and our emotions are sometimes selfish and grumpy. When we are hungry, we might not think through our decisions. Our body might feel sore or tired when we are very upset. When we feel emotions in a big way, our body and our mind are affected. Sometimes we can't think because the anger or sadness is so powerful!

The problem is – all the parts of us need to follow Jesus together. While this is hard to learn and takes a long time, we have God's help! God gives us his Holy Spirit! Imagine inside that circle of string, is God's Spirit helping to direct the parts of us exactly where they should go. With God's Spirit, what we want and think and feel all work together.

So why do we even have emotions, if they can cause us so much trouble?

1. God gave us emotions because HE has emotions. Did you know this? God feels love, frustration, sadness, happiness. Jesus did too. If we didn't have these emotions or desires, we couldn't love God or other people or have a relationship with God.
2. Our emotions give us information. Our emotions tell us when something is wrong, or what is going on inside us. They help us to know what we want and need. They are a signal something is wrong and needs to be fixed, or that something is good and should continue.
3. Our emotions can be used for good! They are an important tool! If something bad happens to someone we know, we might feel sad or mad because we want things to be different than they are. So we do something to change the situation or help our friend. Our emotions make us want to act, and that's good.

When our emotions are big, and bossing us around, we need to stop and ask ourselves some questions to figure out what's going on.

1. **What emotion am I feeling?** Figure out the name. If you need help, ask a parent.



At this point, take the three objects representing the parts of ourselves and put them inside a loop of string, elastic band or hoop.



With the toys, you can act out the different parts of us 'pulling' in different directions, or how one can affect all the others. You don't have to use a toy to represent the Holy Spirit – just explain that we need a helper to help everyone else get along.



2. **What does this emotion tell me I want?** All our emotions give us information about something we want. When we figure it out, we can do something about it!
3. **Is this what God wants?** It's important to figure out if what we want, what is causing all this emotion, is something God wants or not!
4. **What can I do about it?** If we're feeling sad or lonely, there are things we can do to feel better. If we're angry or disappointed by something we can change our expectations or we can work to change how things are. If what we want is something good that God would want, we can go after it! If it's not something good that God would want, then we need to tell our emotions 'NO!' and ask for God's help.

Jesus felt emotions, but he didn't let his emotions be the boss of him. Jesus never sinned – so when he got angry, he didn't hurt anyone. When he was sad, he didn't let that make him selfish. He showed us that we don't need to get rid of our emotions or be bossed around by them. Our emotions are a good gift from God!

Close by praying together that God would help your family to use feelings as God intended them.



DAILY BIBLE TIME

Take a few minutes each day this week to spend some time together reading from God's Word and discussing it together. Questions and verses are provided for you below. Use the Bible version your children are used to. NIV is a good one for very young children.

1	<p><u>2 Corinthians</u> <u>5:17</u> <u>2 Timothy 1:7</u></p>	<p>Imagine I told our family we were going to eat at a restaurant for dinner. And the rest of the family could give me input into where we would go. What would you say?</p> <p>Now while I might take advice or even directions from others, I can't let all of you drive the car at the same time, can I? It wouldn't go well to let the youngest kid drive the car! Managing our emotions is like that. We can let them inform us, but not drive our lives. When we choose to follow Jesus and his Holy Spirit comes to live inside us, he begins to make everything new in us – our emotions is one area that God can help change.</p> <p>What does it mean to have self control? What area in your life do you need God's help for some self-control?</p>
2	<p><u>Proverbs 15:13</u> <u>Romans 12:15</u></p>	<p>What part of you is usually trying to be in control – your body, mind or heart? What feeling do you wish you could get rid of and not have again? What emotion sometimes affects your body and your mind? How does it do this? Can you think of a time when your body, mind and heart have to work together to solve a problem? What is it? What good information can our emotions give us? How can we treat our emotions as a good gift without letting them 'drive our lives'? What will you do next time you have big emotions?</p>
3	<p><u>Ephesians 4:26</u> <u>Psalms 27:8</u> <u>James 1:20</u></p>	<p>What happens if you blow up a balloon bigger than it was meant to be blown up?</p> <p>That's right – it will burst. Sometimes when we least expect it. Or if we let it go while it is full, it will zoom across the room, and could act unpredictably, even hurt someone. What might a person look and feel like if they were really, really angry? (Mime it out!) We can sometimes want to let our feelings out by hitting, yelling, or throwing a tantrum. We might choose instead to hold it all inside. Both can be problems. Our verses tell us that being angry isn't bad, or a sin. But it could lead to bad things. Anger is caused by something not going the way we want it to. When we feel angry, we can ask questions of our feelings – what am I feeling, what does this feeling tell me I want? Would God want that? What can I do about it?</p> <p>Think of an example of when someone in your house felt angry. Apply these questions to that situation. How can it help?</p> <p>This is like letting our anger out in a careful controlled way, like letting air out of a balloon in a careful controlled way – so it doesn't burst, or zoom all around the room. Jesus was angry when people didn't love others, or didn't honour God. He didn't sin when he was angry but rather used that angry feeling to help make things better.</p> <p>How can you choose to fix a problem next time you feel angry?</p>



4	<p><u>Philippians 4:6-7</u> <u>Psalm 46:3-5</u> <u>1 Peter 5:7</u></p>	<p>Fear is another big, big emotion. When you feel afraid, what are you afraid of? We each have things that make us afraid, and different responses to this fear. The Bible has some great ideas about how we can manage our fear. What do you think the verse in Philippians means? This verse doesn't just tell us NOT to do something, it gives us something to do instead. Sometimes those fear feelings are a signal to us that we need to talk to God. And this verse tells us exactly what to do. What do these verses tell us about fear? Let's apply our questions to fear – What am I feeling? What do I want? Would God want that? What can we do? Think about a thing someone is afraid of and discuss the answers to these questions. <i>(Maybe we don't feel safe at night. We want to feel safe. God wants us to be safe, usually – although he does let us go through hard times sometimes, he promises to be with us. A little concern is okay, it helps us to be prepared for the future, but we can recognize our worries don't protect us and God can. What we CAN do is choose to tell God about our worries, and trust in him.)</i> There was a time when Jesus was very concerned over something that was going to happen. It was right before he died on the cross for our sins. It was a scary time for Jesus and he was upset. He prayed and talked to God about it and told God he was choosing to trust him. That helped Jesus face the difficult things he had to do.</p>
5	<p><u>Romans 8:1</u> <u>1 John 1:9</u></p>	<p>Another feeling that can be big for us is guilt and shame. Guilt happens when we feel yucky after we've done something, and want to blame someone else or cover up what we've done. Shame happens when we don't think we're good enough or we feel bad for something we ARE rather than something we've done. If we yell at our family, and then go hide in our room because we don't want to face them, we feel shame. We feel shame when we feel like we never do anything right. We feel guilt when we remember something we've done and have a bad feeling. When we feel one of these feelings, we should ask ourselves the four questions. What we want is to be free of this bad feeling. God wants us to be free of it too! He wants to forgive us and remember that we belong to God, and he loves us as we are. Guilt and shame can be GOOD when they cause us to go to God and ask for forgiveness. They can be bad when they keep us from good things like our family and friends. When do you feel guilt or shame? How will talking to God about those feelings help? How does trusting God help with these feelings?</p>



DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

Use any of the following activities to extend the learning and disciple your child in everyday life.

- **Pray Together:** Pray that God would help your family to use emotions in the right ways and not be overcome by them.
- **Memorize:** 2 Timothy 1:7 together as a family. Talk about this verse in daily life.
- **Missions:** Pray for missionaries who might be in scary places and feel fear, or difficult places where there is injustice and feel angry. Ask God to help them use their emotions to do good things.
- **Daily Life:**
 - Talk through the four questions in this lesson when someone faces big emotions in their life. Help them to identify what it is they want, whether that is a good want (for their good) by seeing it from God's perspective, and then help them figure out a way to get that thing.
 - Work on not making one another feel ashamed of emotions, but rather learn to use them and control them as part of us that is a gift from God.
 - Play games together, and help one another talk through the feelings you have as you play.