



THE GOOD, THE NOT-SO-GOOD,

# **ALL THE FEELS** **FOR TEENS**

AND THE UTTERLY CONFUSING

**ELIZABETH**  
**LAING THOMPSON**



## **PRAISE FOR ALL THE FEELS FOR TEENS**

As the dad of four amazing daughters, I believe *All the Feels for Teens* is truly a godsend. Elizabeth's book is winsome, witty, and delightfully practical. Against a beautiful gospel backdrop, she shows teen girls how God wonderfully designed their whole being—including their emotions—for his glory, their good, and the blessing of others. I'm definitely giving this book to my teens. (BTW, it even made a fortysomething dad LOL . . . JSYK.)

### **JOSHUA COOLEY**

*New York Times* bestselling author whose books include *Creator, Father, King: A One Year Journey with God*; *The One Year Devotions with Jesus*; and *Heroes of the Bible Devotional*

A must-read for teens—and their parents! Elizabeth Laing Thompson is like the encouraging friend every teen needs in her life. In *All the Feels for Teens*, she will make you laugh, sit with you while you cry, and have you nodding in understanding, all while consistently pointing you to the God who not only understands your feelings but loves and adores you more than you can fathom. *All the Feels for Teens* is the right book for right now.

### **JENNIFER MARSHALL BLEAKLEY**

Author of *Joey* and *Pawverbs*

I really liked this book. It helped me learn that I don't have to be scared of my feelings, and it taught me how to feel more in control of them and how to take them to God. I like Mrs. Thompson's writing style, and I think most teenagers will find this book very helpful.

### **ELLA BLEAKLEY, AGE 14**

This book is phenomenal. I found myself relating to every chapter in some way, and I can honestly say that I understand myself better (and understand who God says I am better) after reading this book. Between the personal stories backed by Scripture and the moments

of self-reflection, *All the Feels for Teens* has allowed me to truly understand my emotions. This book is full of laughs, but it's also full of relatable moments. No matter what type of feeler you are, it will help you to understand what your emotions mean and what God has to say about them.

**GABRIELLA, AGE 17**

*All the Feels for Teens* is an incredible book that changed how I view my emotions in my walk with the Lord. Every story and Scripture reference opened up a whole new world to me—one where God wants us to come to him with our emotions rather than push them down. This book will change the way you pray, read your Bible, and just live your life. The knowledge that God cares about your emotions will set you free.

**ISABELLE, AGE 15**

*All the Feels for Teens* is an awe-inspiring book, full of laughs and encouraging stories backed by Scripture. It helped me understand my emotions and how I process things. It helped me see myself as the beautifully imperfect creation God made me to be. No matter what kind of feeler you are, this book will change your perspective on emotions.

**REBEKAH, AGE 15**

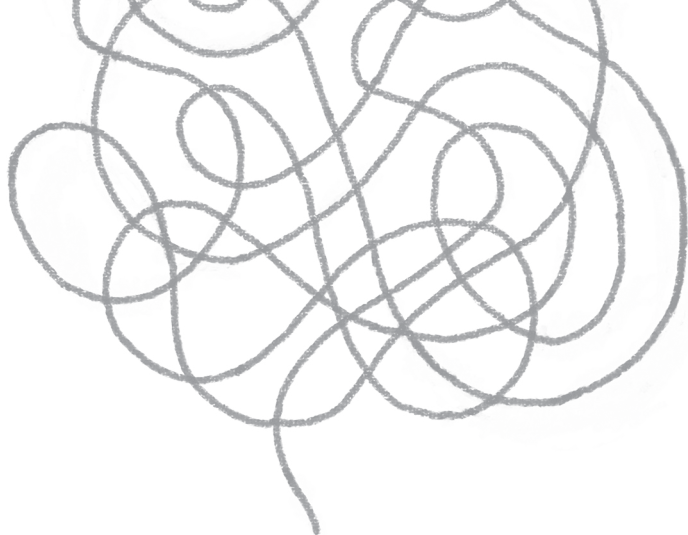
*All the Feels for Teens* is an extremely useful tool for self-growth and understanding others better. Full of practical tips and prompts that encourage self-reflection, this book reminds us that emotions are special gifts that allow us to live fuller lives, but they don't have to rule over us. Using lessons continually supported by Scripture and an engaging writing style, Elizabeth teaches us how to handle and understand our emotions in a godly way, without underestimating their complexity or depth.

**ARIANA, AGE 16**

**ALL THE FEELS FOR TEENS**







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*For Cassidy, Blake, Avery, and Sawyer:  
with more love than words can hold*





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## CHAPTER 1

# ALL THE FEELS, ALL THE TIME

I still remember the first time I read the phrase *all the feels*. My heart gave a little hiccup and I laughed to myself. *All the feels? Welcome to my world.*

My big feelings made their dramatic appearance early in life—just wait till I tell you about the time I cried so hard I got my dad out of a speeding ticket!—but they hit new levels of intensity in middle school and high school. Maybe you know what I’m talking about: joy ballooning in your chest till you think your heart might pop, worry weighing down your soul till you forget how to smile, excitement consuming your thoughts till your brain is a blender.

Step into a classic example of how my feelings worked in high school. (Who knows—maybe this conversation will feel familiar to you . . .)

\* \* \*

I barge through the front door, kick off my running shoes, and slouch into the kitchen, heaving out my frustration in angry huffs.

Mom stands at the counter, chopping carrots into tiny orange cubes. She raises an eyebrow. “That bad, huh?”

“Worse.” I fling the refrigerator door open and lean inside, wishing the cool air could cool off my feelings.

“What happened?” Mom asks.

I grab a yogurt out of the fridge and shut the door so hard the jelly jars clink inside. “Well, I couldn’t keep up with the varsity runners at cross-country practice—again.” I yank off the yogurt lid, splattering pink yogurt slime all over the kitchen island.

Mom winces and reaches for a paper towel.

“It’s not fair,” I say, grabbing a spoon and stirring so hard a wet strawberry sloshes over the rim. “The varsity girls are all laughing and messing around, like, *la-di-da, running is easy*—and there I am, killing myself to keep up. But ever since I got sick, I just can’t.” I shove yogurt into my mouth and discover how hard it is to eat when you’re trying not to cry.

“Oh, honey, it’s not your fault you got sick. Besides,” she says, turning to dump the carrots into a pot, “maybe God just gave those other girls really good running genes.”

Anger flares inside, a hot streak that burns. “Well, if that’s true, that makes it worse. That means God made me slow on purpose! That’s so”—I choke back the word *mean*, because I’m pretty sure it’s a sin to call God *mean*—“unfair.” Even as the word leaves my mouth, I feel the twist of guilt inside. Mom presses her lips together. I can tell she wants to correct me, but she’s holding back.

“Sorry,” I mumble, shoving more yogurt into my mouth. *But I still feel that way.*

“Well, how was your math test?” Mom asks. I see what she’s doing, trying to distract me, but I am determined to be miserable.

“Horrible.”

“Really?” Mom’s eyebrows shoot up. “Usually you—”

“I know,” I moan. More shame weighing me down inside, like I just ate bricks instead of yogurt. I picture the homework assignments I’ve been letting slide, thinking I didn’t need the practice. “I’m falling apart.”

To her eternal credit, Mom doesn’t push for more information. She doesn’t ask why I did badly on the test or heap more guilt on me. She starts pulling plates from cabinets and setting the dinner table. I don’t offer to help; I just stand there staring at my yogurt, thinking how the strawberry blobs look like pieces of my heart, cut up and mashed and stirred around.

Suddenly Mom speaks again, sounding chipper. “Hey, it’s Thursday! Don’t you have a phone date with Jack tonight? That always makes you feel better.” She wiggles her eyebrows happily . . . hopefully.

I throw my head back. “Ughhhhhh,” I groan at the ceiling.

Mom’s hopeful smile wilts. “Oh. I thought you’d be excited.”

“Last week his friend was over, and they put me on speaker and spent the whole time making stupid jokes. It was like I wasn’t even on the phone—I could have hung up and they never would have noticed.”

“Well, have you told him how it makes you feel when he does that?”

“No. How can I say anything with Captain Dunderhead, his annoying friend, listening in the whole time?”

Mom’s lips flatten into a line, and she turns to the sink; I see her shoulders rise and fall in a sigh. I slump onto the counter and bury my face in my arms. My voice is muffled, and I’m glad, because my words are awful. “Lately I feel like God doesn’t



care about my life. Sometimes I think he doesn't *want* me to be happy."

I wait for Mom to object, say something comforting, but there's only silence. I peek one eye up at her. "I'm horrible for saying that. And the Captain Dunderhead thing was mean. And now you're mad at me."

"I'm not mad at you." Mom spins back around to look at me, strangling a dish towel in her hands. "I just wish—I wish you weren't so negative about everything. You won't let anyone help you."

"That's not true," I mutter, but my words sound weak even to my own ears. "You help me." I push up onto my elbows.

Mom tilts her head down and gives me a look.

"Please don't be mad," I beg, feeling tears sting the backs of my eyes. "I can't have you mad at me on top of the Worst Day Ever. That would take it to even more epic levels of worst-ness."

Mom takes a deep breath. "I'm not mad, I'm just—I feel helpless. All you do is vent, and you don't really listen."

"I listen," I sniff.

The look again. I never knew eyebrows could be sarcastic.

"I'm listening now," I say, crossing my arms.

"I want you to know that all this"—she waves her hands in circles—"is just temporary. It's just feelings." When I make a noise of protest, she puts her palms up. "I'm not saying it isn't real. It's just not as bad as you're making it. You have a good life! You love God, and God loves you, and even if you're not running varsity or acing math, you can still be happy."

I shrug, trying to hear her, trying not to feel like the whole world is falling apart and God is against me and life is going to stink forever and ever.

"How about you go pray for a few minutes and then come down for dinner?" Mom finally says.

“Okay.” I don’t say what I’m thinking: *God feels far away right now*. I want to feel close, but when I’m like this, I’m not so sure God wants to hear from me. But out loud I say, “I’ll try.”

## WHO’S IN CHARGE HERE?

Welcome to an inside look at my angsty teen years. Talk about all the feels, all the time. Does any of this sound—or maybe I should say *feel*—familiar?

If you ask any of your friends what their number one problem is in life, they might mention insecurity, anxiety, boys, school stress, friend problems, family issues, or worries about college and the future. Or they might mention depression or bullying or body-image concerns. But guess what all those problems have in common? They all deal with *feelings*.

If you’re anything like me, some days your feelings fluctuate so dramatically you almost get whiplash. You can go from feeling giddy to anxious to insecure to in love—*oops, wait, just kidding, not in love at all; what was I thinking?*—to chill to stressed to ecstatic to depressed to in love with God to *meh* about God to needing your parents to wishing you could move out of your parents’ house forever, all in a span of hours . . . sometimes minutes.

During middle and high school, most days I felt like my emotions were controlling me rather than the other way around. I *wanted* to be happy and at peace, I *wanted* to feel close to God and be a strong Christian, I *wanted* to be an unselfish daughter and sister and friend . . . but it often felt like my feelings were getting in the way, making me do and say things I didn’t want to do and say. Sometimes I felt out of control, overwhelmed, and frustrated. I felt stuck. I had this picture in my mind of the kind of Christian—and person—I wanted to be, but the real me didn’t always match that picture. I wanted to be different, to *feel* different, but I didn’t know how.

There's good news for those of us who love God and seek to follow his ways. You might be surprised to hear this, but the Bible has a lot to say about our feelings. It tells us which feelings are godly and good for us, and it even gives us ideas for how to encourage those feelings to grow. The Bible also tells us which emotions we need to watch out for—which ones can hurt us if they get out of control—and gives us ideas for how we can limit or avoid them. The Bible can help us learn how to work on our feelings—to take charge of them, instead of letting them push us around.

I know what you're thinking: *Take charge of my feelings? What does that even mean? We can't do anything to change our feelings. Feelings are just . . . there. We don't have any control over what we feel, when we feel it, and how strongly we feel it . . . right?*

Actually, believe it or not, you and I have the chance to take charge of our emotions. We can learn how to keep our feelings from jerking us around all the time.

In the chapters to come, I can't wait to introduce you to some of the Scriptures and strategies that kept me going through high school. (Truth? They keep me going even now!) The more I've gotten to know my Bible, the more I've realized that God has something to say about *every* imaginable emotion. No matter what we feel, God understands, and he has put his counsel in his Word to help us. His guidance can transform the way we handle our feelings—and the way we feel from day to day.

## IN GOD'S IMAGE

Did you know that our God is emotional too? He's not just some terrifying Judge in the Sky, peering down on the planet from his ginormous wooden bench, waiting to bang his gavel and toss us in spiritual jail when we mess up. Far from it! Our God is passionate and compassionate. Like us, he mourns; like us, he rejoices; like

## What Does God Say about Emotions?

Sometimes God wants us to feel certain emotions—and sometimes he doesn't. Thankfully, the Bible helps us tell the difference. Write your answers below, including Bible verses that support your conclusion.

GOD WANTS US TO FEEL THIS EMOTION . . .	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	SCRIPTURE THAT EXPLAINS YOUR ANSWER
Joy					
Fear					
Pride					
Humility					
Confidence					
Anger					

Tip: If you get stuck, try looking up these verses. You may find that some of these emotions are complicated—sometimes God wants us to feel them, and sometimes he doesn't! This isn't about right and wrong; it's about thinking through our emotions, and about the heart.

Psalms 71:5

Psalms 118:6

Proverbs 1:7

Proverbs 15:18

Proverbs 16:18

Mark 3:5

Galatians 6:4

Ephesians 4:2

Ephesians 4:26

Philippians 2:3-4

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

1 John 4:18

us, he feels all the feels. After all, he *invented* feelings. Take a look at this description of God the Father:

As high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so great is his love for those who fear him;  
as far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

As a father has compassion on his children,  
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him.

PSALM 103:11-13

God loves wild and big just like we do! And check out that line near the end: “As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him.” Do you grasp what a wondrous, mind-blowing truth that is? Almighty God, Maker of heaven and earth, has compassion on *you*. In other words, he cares about your feelings. He cares when you’re happy. He cares when you’re stressed. He cares when you’re lonely or overwhelmed or insecure.

Did you know God counts your tears and holds them in his hands?

You keep track of all my sorrows.  
You have collected all my tears in your bottle.  
You have recorded each one in your book.

PSALM 56:8, NLT

But he doesn’t stop there. God doesn’t just care about your feelings and tears; he invites you to talk to him about them—and I mean *all* your feelings, even the not-so-righteous ones. Even the embarrassing ones. The book of Psalms is filled with examples of emotional people talking to God about their true feelings—raw

feelings, desperate feelings, sometimes even sinful feelings—in prayer.

You and I can do the same. That problem you're having with friends? That issue with your mom? That secret temptation you don't know how to talk about? God invites you to talk to him about all of it. He loves the real you—the you with no makeup, no filters, and no retakes. He longs to hear from you—and help you—wherever you are.

## THE ROAD AHEAD

In this book we're going to take a close look at what the Bible has to say about feelings. First, we'll examine what God has to say about emotions in general. God himself gave us our emotions, so naturally, he knows how to help us experience them in healthy ways. Can we trust our feelings? Are some feelings good and some not-so-good? Should we encourage ourselves to feel some emotions, and should we limit or avoid others? And how in the world do we learn how to do that?

From there we'll take a closer look at some of the specific difficult feelings that can plague us: insecurity, loneliness, anxiety, sadness, anger, envy, stress. God has things to say about each of those emotions, and I have some practical, Bible-based tips you can apply on your own when you're feeling that way.

As you read, you'll realize that your emotions may be unruly and annoying at times, but they aren't your enemy. In fact, with time and attention, your emotions can become strengths! They can become one of the most sparkling, unique parts of who you are and how you honor God. God has made every one of us with the capacity for big feelings, and he has plans for how he wants to use our feelings for his glory:

- Our compassion can help us comfort hurting friends.



- Our sorrow can help us heal when we've been hurt.
- Our stress (believe it or not!) can help us get things done.
- Our joy can light others' lives.

And on and on go the possibilities.

I started the journey of working on my feelings in middle school and high school, and the truth is, I'm *still* working on my feelings! Emotional growth isn't something we move beyond. You're going to have feelings (including some big ones) for the rest of your life. The sooner you start learning how to manage them, the more balanced and, yes, happy your life is going to be.

I'm not promising that reading this book will make you feel like you're cartwheeling through fields of flowers all day every day for the rest of your life, but I do promise that you can grow. You can learn to handle stress better. You can work through anxious thoughts and sad times with the help of God and his Word. You can make wise decisions using your heart *and* your head—and your Bible. You can better handle the temptation to be insecure or self-consumed or jealous or fill-in-the-blank with the emotion that tempts you most. You can find more happy and become more holy. You can feel closer to God.

Like me, maybe you feel excited about the journey to come. Nervous about the need to grow. Hopeful about making changes. Eager, insecure, understood, comforted, intimidated, encouraged . . . well, you know . . . all the feels.

## FEELING YOUR WAY FORWARD

At the end of every chapter, you'll find ideas for applying what you've learned.

The **journal prompts** are questions that will help you think about how the things you learn in this book might apply to your daily life. I am a huge fan of writing down your answers. I've found

that the act of moving a pen across paper cements truth more deeply into our hearts and memories—plus, it gives us a record of our thoughts and growth so we can look back and see how God has worked over time.

The **prayer prompts** are passages from the Bible, particularly the Psalms, that communicate various emotions. You can borrow the psalmists' exact words to pray, or you can use them to help inspire your own prayers.

Last, you will find a list of Scriptures about specific feelings—a different feeling for each chapter. These are some of my **lifeline** Scriptures—verses I cling to when all the feels start firing inside and I need the Bible to ground me. I hope these verses will become lifelines for you too.

### Journal Prompts

1. Which emotions do you enjoy feeling the most? Which do you find the most difficult or painful?
2. How do you feel about talking to God honestly about your emotions and struggles?
3. How would you describe your overall emotional state in the past month?
4. What emotion would you most like to grow in?
5. If you could change one thing about the way you feel right now, what would it be? Why?

### Prayer Prompt

Search me, God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
See if there is any offensive way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting.

PSALM 139:23-24

## Lifelines

Five Scriptures to read when you're anxious:

1. Psalm 131
2. Psalm 37:3-6
3. Psalm 25:4-6
4. Matthew 10:28-31
5. 1 Peter 5:7



## CHAPTER 2

# FINDING YOUR FEELING TYPE

I'm hiding in my room. Music playing, lights down low, sunset torching the treetops outside my bedroom with golden fire. I'm lying still on my bed, but my thoughts are hardly still. They're swirling, looping, and making me miserable.

"How are you?" Mom asked me half an hour ago, with that worried crease between her eyes.

I shrugged. "Fine."

Mom raised one eyebrow and made her skeptical face, her *I totally don't believe you* face.

I forced a smile that I knew probably made me look constipated. "I'm fine. I just need some time alone."

So now here I am, lying on my bed, fine and not fine all at the same time. I'm upset, and I don't even know why. I search my memories:

*I said the wrong thing to Sadie today. I'm pretty sure I hurt her feelings. She's totally annoyed. She'll act all weird tomorrow, and we*

*have every class together, so the whole day will be messed up. She won't ask me for the daily Jack update. . . .*

The very thought of Jack makes my stomach twist and my cheeks feel hot. I picture his crooked smile, his eyes bright blue—I haven't seen them in person since we moved, but I look at his picture more times a day than I'd like to admit.

*Speaking of Jack . . . why hasn't he called? He always calls on Thursdays, but he didn't last night. He's seemed so distracted the last few times we've talked. Is he starting to forget me? Are we over?*

My stomach gives a painful lurch. *He's probably forgetting me. I'm totally forgettable. I'm not very funny, I'm not especially pretty, I only listen to dorky '80s music, I read way too much, and I'm kind of a nerd.*

I smack my hands over my face and groan. *Geez, I'm so selfish. All I'm doing is lying here thinking about myself and my problems. God wouldn't want me to do this. He would want me to . . . well, I'm not sure what he'd want me to do. Read my Bible, maybe? Go save the world or something?* A guilty feeling worms its way into my stomach, making me feel a little sick.

My mother's muffled voice drifts up the stairs and into my room: *Mwa-mwa-mwa-mwa-TABLE-mwa-mwa?*

I grimace. She probably needs help setting the table.

A little voice I'm pretty sure is my conscience pipes up: *Maybe God wants you to go help your mom. You could go set the table . . .*

I grimace even more.

*I'm not even sure that's what she said. If I go out of my room, I'll have to talk to people.*

My conscience gives me a kick in the gut, but I shove it away.

*Nah. I'm gonna pretend I didn't hear her. I'd rather lie here alone thinking. Thinking and feeling. Feeling sad, feeling lonely, feeling dumb . . .*

\* \* \*

Ever had a day like this? Or a season like this? Everything is wrong and nothing is wrong, all at the same time. Life isn't terrible or anything, but you just Can't. Stop. Feeling.

You're happy-sad-lonely-insecure-annoyed-bored-antsy-giddy-unmotivated-excited, all at the same time. You want . . . *something* . . . but you couldn't even say what it is you want.

You long to be close to God—somehow you know he's the answer to all these feelings swirling inside—and some days you feel connected to him, but other times he feels so far away. So theoretical. God feels very Sunday morning . . . but your real life is lived Monday through Friday, and there's never enough Saturday thrown in.

## EMOTIONAL OVERLOAD

For my thirteenth birthday, I got my ears double-pierced. It was kind of the Big Thing to Do in my town at the time, and I felt fabulously sophisticated. But new holes in my ears weren't the only new thing that came with the territory of being thirteen. Before I could say “hormones,” I'd started dealing with more feelings than I knew how to name, much less deal with.

Not all of those emotions were bad. Some days I was so excited I didn't understand why I didn't float off the planet and drift into space. I could hardly contain the joy and hope and life-is-gonna-be-amazing I felt inside. Other days I was insecure and lonely—*I'm the only person who's ever thought this, felt this. No one understands. No one cares.* Some days a black cloud followed me around, Eeyore-style. Everyone else was living in sunshine, but I couldn't escape the shadows. I was sad and anxious and felt like crying, and I had no idea why.

Welcome to life with all the feels all the time.

Over time, as I grew in Christ (and in life), I began to realize that I didn't have to be pushed around by my feelings; I actually



had the ability to take charge of them. With God's help, we can develop our emotional strength and discover all kinds of beauty and joy in the way he designed us.

It might surprise you to hear this, but your feelings are a gift from God. A gift, not a curse! He himself designed your personality and feelings style. When you were still growing inside your mother's body, God intentionally, painstakingly, and with so much joy it probably made the angels sing, created you just the way he wanted you to be.

The Bible puts it this way:

You created my inmost being;  
    you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully  
    made;  
    your works are wonderful,  
    I know that full well.  
My frame was not hidden from you  
    when I was made in the secret place,  
    when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.  
Your eyes saw my unformed body;  
    all the days ordained for me were written in your book  
    before one of them came to be.

PSALM 139:13-16

And did you know that God himself is deeply emotional? Feelings are not a bad thing—in fact, when we feel deeply, we echo the heartbeat of our Father in heaven! Take a look at this passage from Scripture and all the feelings God demonstrates:

I will tell of the LORD's unfailing love.  
    I will praise the LORD for all he has done.

I will rejoice in his great goodness to Israel,  
    which he has granted according to his mercy and love.  
He said, “They are my very own people.  
    Surely they will not betray me again.”  
    And he became their Savior.  
In all their suffering he also suffered,  
    and he personally rescued them.  
In his love and mercy he redeemed them.  
    He lifted them up and carried them  
    through all the years.  
But they rebelled against him  
    and grieved his Holy Spirit.

ISAIAH 63:7-10, NLT

In these few lines, we see God feeling all the feels, just like we do. He feels compassion for his people—intense affection and loyalty. When his people suffer, he hurts along with them; he loves them so much he comes to rescue them at great personal cost. He picks them up and carries them close, like a father carrying his daughter in his arms. *They are my very own people*, he thinks. *They have no reason to betray me*. But then they do reject and betray him, and he feels hurt, disappointed, and sad.

- If you’ve ever loved someone who let you down, God understands.
- If you’ve ever loved someone who didn’t love you back, God understands.
- If you’ve ever felt rejected and alone, God understands.
- If you’ve ever given your whole heart till you could hardly contain all the love swelling inside, God understands.
- If you’ve ever cared so much that you sacrificed so someone else could be happy, God understands.

When you feel all those big feelings, the positive and the negative, the fun and not-so-fun, you're not just being, you know, a teenager—you're being the emotional person God made you to be. You are being like God. *Feeling* like God.

## WHAT KIND OF FEELER ARE YOU?

God made us each different, and there are different types of feelers in the world. Maybe, like me, you're a big feeler. You feel all the feelings, all the day long.

You don't just feel happy—you feel happy with a parade and ice cream and fireworks inside. You don't just feel sad—the world is ending and there's no hope and how can you even get out of bed and do school tomorrow? You don't just feel insecure—you're the only person in the whole world who has ever felt the way you do, and if anyone knew what you were really thinking, they'd banish you from Planet Earth and send you to live alone on Mars.

As a big feeler, you need help figuring out what to do with these gorilla-sized emotions so they don't go stomping all over your life, wrecking your peace, crushing your relationships, and destroying everything in sight. You need to figure out how to handle it when your feelings go roller coaster on you. How to respond when you feel overwhelmed. How to live your life without being bossed around by your feelings. Even if you aren't a big feeler, maybe someone close to you is—a parent, a sibling, a close friend—and the intensity of their emotions sometimes leaks into your life and complicates it. Makes it messy. Confuses you. Even hurts you. You need to know what to do when other people's big feelings affect your life.

Or maybe you're more of a steady feeler. Most days life is good, you feel fine, and you can work through your problems with your head on straight. But sometimes life gets crazy, friends

act crazy, and crazy-big feelings come banging on the door of your heart. You need help knowing what to do with big feelings when they come and how to bring your emotions to God.

Maybe you're a reluctant feeler. You prefer thinking to feeling, thank you very much. Logic is way better than emotion. You want life to make sense and be fair and orderly. Maybe feelings confuse you, so you try to ignore them—sometimes you even pretend you don't have them. Maybe you need help figuring out what you feel and how to put it into words. You want to learn more about emotions—don't worry; we're talking fist bumps, not hugs—and figure out what your faith has to do with your feelings.

Each type of feeler is made by God, loved by God, and *liked* by God. Each of the different feeling types needs the others—just imagine how dramatic the world would be if we were *all* big feelers! Big feelers need the steady and reluctant feelers to provide balance and perspective. Likewise, the steady and reluctant feelers need the big feelers to help them feel more, risk more, give more. God designed you the way you are, and he likes you that way. He made you that way because he has plans for your personality, your gifts, and your life.

Me? I'm a **Big Feeler**, with a capital B, a capital F, and extra-bold font. If feelings were animals, mine would be a ginormous gorilla, climbing buildings and taking over the city, not to mention my life. And if you've ever seen one of the old King Kong movies, you know that King Kong wasn't bad—he was just *big*. Big and misunderstood. And when he was misunderstood—well, things got messy.

It took me half a million years to figure out where all my deep feelings fit into my walk with Christ. To realize that our faith is exactly the place—the best place!—to process all our feelings.

Quiz: What Kind of Feeler Are You?

Let’s get started by taking a little self-test to figure out your “feelings type.” Take a look at these ten statements and mark how often you feel that way: almost always, sometimes, or rarely. Give yourself three points for every “Almost always,” two points for every “Sometimes,” and one point for “Rarely.” Then take a look at the key at the bottom to find your feelings style!

WHAT KIND OF FEELER ARE YOU?		Almost always	Sometimes	Rarely
1.	I have difficulty separating facts from feelings.			
2.	I am easily overwhelmed.			
3.	People tell me I am too sensitive.			
4.	I experience mood swings.			
5.	I am profoundly moved by beauty or art.			
6.	I feel others’ pain as if it were my own.			
7.	I easily put myself in other people’s shoes.			
8.	I struggle to shake a mood when it hits.			
9.	Gut feelings and instinct play a role in my decision-making.			
10.	I find it easy to connect with God in worship and prayer.			
SUBTOTAL				
TOTAL				

KEY

Almost always = 3  
Sometimes = 2  
Rarely = 1

RESULTS

23+ = big feeler  
15–22 = steady feeler  
10–14 = reluctant feeler

So what kind of feeler are you? A big feeler, a steady feeler, or a reluctant feeler? Is your feelings style super obvious, or are you on the border between types? If you’re on the border, it may be because you are still figuring yourself out and developing your

style—and that’s totally fine! You don’t have to have yourself all figured out right now—you’ll get to know yourself better over time, with a lot of “ooh-I-finally-understand-why-I-do-that” moments along the way.

## **SUPERSIZE ME!**

There’s one thing to keep in mind as you figure out your feelings style. Even if you’re naturally more of a steady feeler or a reluctant feeler, you are probably going to have a lot of big feelings during your teen years. In other words, you’ll probably experience some moments as a part-time big feeler, even if your “full-time” feelings style is more steady or reluctant. Even if you spend most days avoiding strong emotions or just humming steadily along, you’ll still have moments when big feelings fly, thanks to these lovely things called hormones.

Can we pause for a second to talk about hormones? I like to think of hormones as having the “Supersize Me” effect. When I was in high school, McDonald’s had four sizes of French fries: small, medium, large, and Supersize. Every time you went through the drive-thru and ordered fries, they would ask, “Do you want to Supersize that?” My answer was always a loud *yes*, because who doesn’t want more fries? You can never have too many fries!

Teenage hormones work kind of the same way, except they don’t give you much choice. Every time you have a feeling, whether it’s positive or negative, your hormones are like, *Let’s Supersize that feeling!* Because just a little joy won’t do—let’s break into full-on song and dance! And just a little worry won’t do—utter panic and freak-out is way more exciting! And while we’re at it, make that a double serving of anger and insecurity!

But as you work your way through this book, you’ll find that you actually *can* say no to Supersizing your emotions. It’s not always easy, but with the Bible and some basic strategies, you can

keep your emotional “orders” down to a reasonable size, one that won’t give you a stomachache. (But I still say you should order as many french fries as you want from McDonald’s!)

## **FINDING YOUR GIFTS**

Whichever type you are, God made you that way, and you have emotional strengths and gifts to offer the people in your life. Let’s take a look at the emotional gifts of each feeling type.

### **What Reluctant Feelers Have to Offer**

- Reluctant feelers help people through hard times. You may be the person your friends turn to when they’re upset, because they know you’ll stay calm and rational.
- Reluctant feelers focus on what’s right. You rarely get caught up in gossip, arguments, and drama, and you aren’t afraid to speak up for what’s right.
- Reluctant feelers are problem solvers. You are great in a crisis because you can see past the feelings and drama that may distract bigger feelers.
- Reluctant feelers help more emotional people get along. Chances are, you are a peacemaker, a guide, and a leader.

### **What Steady Feelers Have to Offer**

- Steady feelers help other people manage their feelings. You are sympathetic and strong at the same time. This allows you to comfort friends who are experiencing intense emotions without getting overwhelmed yourself.
- Steady feelers can fill a lot of roles. Most likely you are a sympathetic listener and a good problem solver.
- Steady feelers meet people’s needs with compassion. Because you know what it’s like to feel anxious or insecure or discouraged yourself, you are able to make hurting

people feel understood while still making decisions and helping out.

- Steady feelers motivate and inspire. You are great at connecting on a heart level even as you think, plan, and act.

### **What Big Feelers Have to Offer**

- Big feelers help people understand one another. You serve as a bridge between people. You are great at explaining, “This is what So-and-So is feeling, and this is why.”
- Big feelers help people celebrate. You know how to make memories out of moments and savor the good things, which makes you an expert in joy.
- Big feelers feel—and demonstrate—love. When you love, you go all in. And I’m talking about all types of loves, not just romantic love. By showing love—big, brave love—you reflect God’s heart.
- Big feelers model vulnerability. You have the capacity for putting feelings into words. You share the deep parts of your soul and help others to do the same.

In the pages to come, I pray you will become more confident in the person God designed you to be—and draw closer to your Designer. I hope you will be giddy-excited about all the great plans God has for you and all the ways he wants to use you and your one-of-a-kind personality and heart.

### **FANNING YOUR GIFTS INTO FLAME**

The apostle Peter encouraged us to use our gifts for God and his people:

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its



various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

1 PETER 4:10-11

Your feelings and design are God's grace to you—and through you, they are God's grace to other people. God wants you to fan your gifts, including your emotional strengths, into flame (see 2 Timothy 1:6)—to use them to honor him and serve people. If you have a heart filled with compassion, share it with the big-heartedness God has given you. If your insights help you notice other people's needs, offer your insights with confidence. If your sense of justice inspires you to serve, meet others' needs with God's strength!

Are you ready to give? Ready to shine? We can all develop and use our strengths to serve God. Let's find out how!

## FEELING YOUR WAY FORWARD

### Journal Prompts

1. Do you like being the kind of feeler God made you to be? Why or why not?
2. What are your strengths when it comes to emotions? How might you share them more often at home? With friends?
3. Describe a time when you used your gifts to help someone else. How did you feel?

### Prayer Prompt

You knit me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful,  
I know that full well.

PSALM 139:13-14

### Lifelines

Five Scriptures to read when you're insecure:

1. Psalm 71:5
2. Psalm 139:13-16
3. Ephesians 1:3-6
4. Romans 8:14-17
5. 1 Peter 2:9