

What Do You Feel God Feeling?

I often ask my patients this question. Not, “What do you think God is thinking?” or “What do you think God is feeling?” Rather, “What do you feel God feeling?” They will occasionally give me a puzzled look, as if to ask in return, “What exactly are you talking about?” It is not easy for us to get our imaginations around sensing what God is sensing, what he is feeling. Which isn’t really all that surprising. Many of us don’t really have that much experience being asked this question, and few of us have practiced over the years actually feeling what God is feeling. But sensing God’s emotional tenor is an important element in following Jesus. For indeed, the biblical narrative seems to indicate that Jesus felt his father’s presence and love quite sensitively, as did the psalmists who wrote so much out which Jesus learned to pray. To follow Jesus is to do what he did. Scripture is replete with references with God’s deep affection and commitment to us. But our experience as humans in our particular histories often crowds out any images of God’s love and affection. I’m more prone to be quite aware of his disappointment and impatience than I am of his pleasure. Luke’s Gospel records that at his baptism, Jesus heard his Father tell him of his love and affection. I would suggest that God is telling us each the same. All the time. My problem is that there is a cacophony of other voices telling me something very different. So here is something to try. Imagine that you are in one of your favorite places in the world, someplace beautiful, safe, and secure. Now imagine that after seeing yourself in this place for several moments, you sense God join you and say to you, “You are my daughter, and I am so pleased you are on the earth.” Or, “You are my son, and I could not be happier that you are mine.” Imagine what it would be like to live each measurable moment of time in the deep, present awareness that God feels that toward you. Imagine what would happen to our fear, our shame, our guilt. Visualize how we would treat our friends, children, even our enemies. I encourage you to give this exercise a try (but don’t stop till you’ve been at it for several weeks). I think you’ll like how it feels. I’m sure God will.