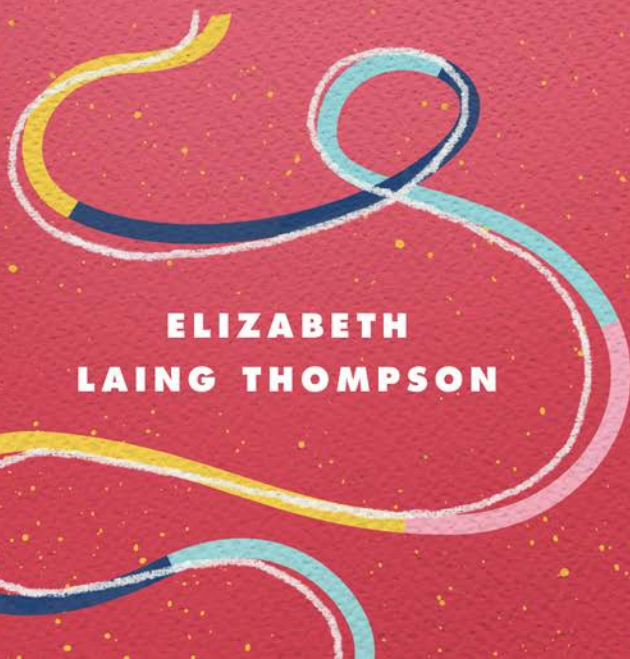




THE GOOD, THE NOT-SO-GOOD,

# 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.

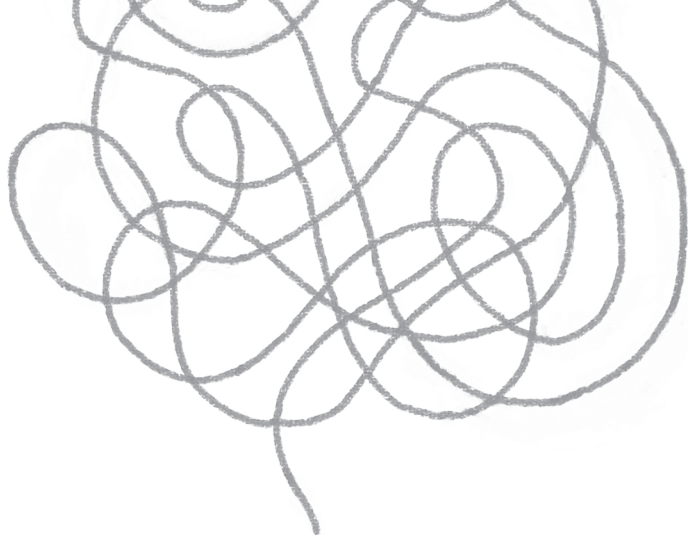
**REBEKAH, AGE 15**

*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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## 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. “Ughhhhh,” 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