

[Movie Poster] Inside Out was one of the standout movies of last year. It was an incredibly fun and engaging story, with colorful characters for kids to latch onto, and at the same time dove into some deep psychological territory with its subject matter.

The movie personifies 5 emotions that are in the head of Riley, 12 yo girl. Joy, Anger, Fear, Disgust and of course Sadness. The emotion that everyone wants in charge is “Joy,” because she always knows what to do to make Riley happy. And the core memories that made her who she was were all “Joy”-ful ones. Riley’s life had been fairly stable. But conflict hits when Riley’s parents move across the country, leaving all that made Riley happy. Because of Joy’s persistence, they are able to come up with all these ways to make Riley happy, but eventually Sadness creeps in.

No matter how much Riley attempts to stay happy, the disruption that this move has caused continues to affect her in all areas of her life. All of the things that up to this point have made her who she is are starting to crumble. At one point, Riley is really upset, but her mom asks her, to “stay their happy girl.” So she does. For a while. But inevitably, the lack of space for Riley to be sad, and feel what she feels, causes Riley to forget who she is. And by the end of the movie, we learn that sadness plays a valuable role in our human flourishing.

The movie leads us on a journey of discovering the importance of sadness. Without allowing ourselves to feel the sad things in our lives, we can’t be a whole complete flourishing person. At least that’s what they say.

[Sadness in Circle] Because we don’t like to be sad either. And if Sadness were to begin to show herself we would tell her to stay in her circle and stop bothering us, you’re going to ruin everything.

I know this! I’ve been there. But I have the answer. It’s Boyz II Men! Boyz II Men got me through every breakup of my middle school and high school years, because they gave me songs to sing! Songs like...

*Please don’t go away from me
I’ll be there for you when you call my name
i’ll reach out my hand to you and welcome you to my heart.
Please don’t go away from me,
we can work it out whatever me it may be girl.
Please don’t go*

They didn’t take my sadness away, they said, “Me too.” They allowed me to cry when I needed to. And I found healing in that shared sadness. Sadness creates the opportunity for “me too”.

Sadness is good! Sadness is healthy! Sadness connects people. If I were to ask for a show of hands for anyone who has known someone who died from cancer, those that raised their hands would immediately feel a sense of connection, because you know what each other have gone through.

And it is that reason that the church should make space for sadness because it builds community.

That doesn't feel right. Not at Church. We want church to be happy. Church is the place we got to escape our problems. The church is where we go to get happy for just a few moments before we have to go back and face the pain that we are feeling. I mean, we should be happy because we have Jesus, right?

For many of us, church has become a place where we put on a happy face. No matter what's going on in our lives, our marriages, our friendships, whatever, when we get to church, we slap that smile on because we don't want anyone to think that we are struggling with trusting Jesus, as if struggling with a divorce or job loss or a death in the family shouldn't be emotional for us.

And if our songs are any indication of what we should be feeling at church, then we most definitely should be feeling happy. We have joy songs, fun songs, happy songs, emotional songs but they are still happy. We most definitely do not have any breakup songs in the church. We have the opposite.

*I'm trading my sorrows
I'm trading my shame
I'm laying them down
For the joy of the Lord*

Now, I know what the song is trying to say. I get it. But it's also saying that sorrow is bad and you just gotta lay it down and then it's all better. And I think for many people that go to church, they rely on these songs like a drug. They come to church in pain and struggle hoping and praying that if they just sing the happy songs as loud as they can maybe that will be enough to get rid of the pain.

But I've got news for you. Church shouldn't be happy all the time., and our songs shouldn't be happy all the time, because that's not how it is in the scripture. So if you have bible, turn to Psalm 13. If you grabbed a bible from the back it's on page XXXX and if you don't have a bible of your own, please keep that one.

The Book of Psalms is the song book for the Ancient Israelites. It's preserved for us to this day. So we can see how the people of God have corporately worshipped God for thousands of years. Now there are 5 main types of Psalms: Praise, Lament, Thanks, Royal, and Wisdom. There a few Psalms that don't fall into those categories, but those

are the most popular. You want to know which category has the most Psalms? Lament. Laments make up around 35% of this ancient songbook, while songs of praise stop at 27%. Compare that to today's worship song selections and you can see that we are missing something about sadness.

Over 35% of the songbook in the scriptures are cries of pain, sorrow, and struggle. Many of them asking God "why?" So let's look at this one together today as a short example.

O Lord, how long will you forget me? Forever?
How long will you look the other way?
How long must I struggle with anguish in my soul,
with sorrow in my heart every day?
How long will my enemy have the upper hand?
Turn and answer me, O Lord my God!
Restore the sparkle to my eyes, or I will die.
Don't let my enemies gloat, saying, "We have defeated him!"
Don't let them rejoice at my downfall.
But I trust in your unfailing love.
I will rejoice because you have rescued me.
I will sing to the Lord
because he is good to me.

I don't know about you, but I've been there. I know that we have people at Catalyst that have been there, that *are* there. How long? Forever? Restore me? Don't let these struggles take me down! These are honest cries from people just like you and me. These are their breakup songs. These are the songs they were able to sing to help them get through the tough times. And the best part is they didn't have to lock themselves in their rooms and cry into a pillow with their headphones on. These were the songs they sang together!

[**Sadness + Joy embracing?**] Was everyone in the room in the same place emotionally? No. But this did 2 things for the community. It's a reminder to those that are going through good times that there are those that are hurting in their midst. And second, what must it do for those that are in a tough place? What would it do to their spirit to have their community sing a song along with them? The way I think of it is that during the toughest times, it's often so difficult that we don't have it in us to sing, so we need others to sing for us.

And I know what some of you are thinking. It got happy at the end. Most of the Lament Psalms do that, actually. Many scholars believe that in the worship gathering the priest would have some words of encouragement or a pronouncement of God's goodness and then they would finish the song in response to that. But of all of those turns, this one is actually not a turn to happy but a turn to hope.

A confession of trust is not a change in our situation. It says “I will rejoice... I will sing” because God has rescued and is good. These are statements of who God is. A recognition that God hasn’t changed his posture toward us. That God is still trustworthy, faithful, able, and good.

There’s a difference between sadness and despair. Despair is living in a constant state negativity that blinds us and cripples us to really living. Another Psalm says it this way, “weeping may last for the night, but joy comes in the morning.” This isn’t to be taken as “sleep it off” or “get over it.” What it means is that we know that we don’t live without hope. That eventually, we will find joy again. This pain does not have the final word.

Sadness is an emotion that we can embrace and lean into. It’s okay to feel what we’re feeling in that moment. God’s people have always celebrated together, but we’ve GRIEVED together too. We’ve said, “Life is hard. I’m sorry you’re suffering. Me too.” The Psalms remind us that we are never without hope.

I know it’s hard to imagine that a negative emotion can be anything but bad. But I think that plays more into our humanity than it does our spirituality. Remember, we don’t like to be sad. We want Joy to always be the one in control. But that’s not realistic, because it denies our brokenness and ultimately acts as though we don’t need a savior, as though we can do it on our own. When the desire to be happy all the time combines with religion, it ends up being toxic.

I’ve been on the receiving end of some of this toxicity. Well-meaning Christians don’t know what to say and because we *have* hope, they want to jump to that hope and skip past the sadness. They say things like, “God needed another angel” or “He’s in a better place.” I know they mean well. But these phrases are attempting to move past the sadness to joy, before sadness has been able to run her course.

Emotions are good. And all of our emotions have a place. There’s other religions out there that teach that the way to true enlightenment is devoid of emotion. I mean Spock anyone? There’s even segments of Christianity that teach something similar. But what we see in Scripture is that emotions have their place. Even Jesus wept when his friend Lazarus died. And if anyone could have hope in this situation, it should be the person that was about to raise Lazarus from the dead. And yet, Jesus’ hope did not negate his sadness.

The key is figuring out how to allow your emotions to point you toward life. Where is it good to be sad?

For that, we can go back to *Inside Out*. The entire movie, Riley has been holding in her sadness. The only time it was seen was when she was telling her class about what she missed about Minnesota. Sharing about your personal life and breaking down in middle

of a group of strangers would do anyone in, and it did Riley. It was a traumatic experience that caused her to shut down emotionally.

[Core Memory that is Blue and Yellow - keep it up until Communion] But at the end of the movie, after we see Joy and Sadness return to command central, she sits down with her parents and shares with them what she's feeling, and the tears begin to flow. She leans into her sadness with people she knows love her, her parents. And they embrace her, comfort her and what we see is even though it is a sad moment, it's also a joyful moment that bonds them closer together.

You have to be able to open up with people you trust. You have to have people in your life that can embrace you in your sadness. You can't keep it bottled up. If you bottle it up, it will turn into a poison that will send you into a spiral like Riley. Maybe you won't run away from home, but you'll retreat, become numb, and wonder if anyone cares.

Instead, you must share your sadness with people you trust, whom you know love you. And will comfort you. Because sharing sadness is an opportunity to build community with people that have been there and can walk with us through it.

So I need some help from the kids for this. I have a bag of sad memories here. We're all going to have a chance to grieve together. What I need you to do kids, is take these and hand them out to all the people, okay? Make sure everyone gets one.

So as you hold this core memory in your hand, I want you to think of someone that you trust. For some it may be your CGROUP or your LTG. If you aren't involved in one of those, think of a close friend or family member. I have some questions that I'm going to ask in a moment that will help you think of one of these moments in your life. We've held it in, kept it to ourselves, deny it or ignore it. It's isolated us because we think we're all alone. We feel sad and then guilty because we're not supposed to be sad. When you share with someone about the pain you've been through it's a chance for someone to tell you, "Me too." Sharing is how we find the hope inside of sadness.

If you keep denying the pain that you've experienced, you're never going to find peace. You can push it down for a time but eventually it will rear its ugly head again. What would your mental, emotional and spiritual health be like if you were honest with yourself about why you feel what you feel? Imagine the depths of your friendships if instead of saying, "It's all good!" we were honest about the things we're struggling with and the pain we're feeling. What if our marriages were open and honest about what was going on inside of us? To have support from each other, knowing the pain and stress and hurt feelings the other is carrying. What type of example would that be for our kids to know that it's okay to feel what you're feeling.

Our world needs honest and open community. Everyone needs a place where they can be completely themselves without fear of judgement. We could be that. Catalyst, we

could be a place where wounds that have plagued people for decades can be healed. In order for that to happen, we have to get in the practice of sharing. With your cgroup, LTG or close friends. This is an opportunity for us to become a place where that can happen.

COMMUNION

[Communion Slide] To get there, I want to invite us to the Table, because it is here where we are embraced in our sadness. It is here where we are reminded of the last meal that Jesus shared with his closest friends the night before he was killed. At that meal he took bread and broke it saying, “this is my body, broken for you.” He takes all the brokenness and pain on himself, saying “I know what it’s like to feel pain.” He then took a cup of wine and said, “this is my blood poured for the sins of the world.” So we eat and drink today recognizing that our God has felt pain, and hurts when we hurt, to show us that we don’t have to hide our sadness anymore. In this meal, Jesus invites us to share in his sadness that we might find community with God.

You don’t have to be a member of Catalyst to take communion today. If you’re someone who wants to stop bottling up the pain and hurt, and let the sadness be a conduit for building relationships that matter, than you can come forward.

I’m going to read the questions and then I’ll pray, and you can come forward when you are ready.

Examen

1. When recently have you found comfort in sharing your sadness with someone else?
2. When recently have you been afraid or ashamed to share your sadness with someone else?
3. Who in your life can you share that sadness with?
4. What does it look like for you to share that sadness this week?