

Do You Hear What I Hear? Week 3

Opening Question: What was a phrase or saying that you would only hear from your parents at Christmas time?

Tell them: Pastor Michael talked about the high expectations we have for the holidays. He suggested that we only want *good* behavior, *good* news, and *positivity* because:

1. We don't want to **hear** the negative.
2. We don't want others to hear **our** negative.

Because of that we sanitize the parts of our lives and stories we share with others.

Ask them: *What do you think about that idea?*

Tell them: Pastor Michael talked about how Matthew 2:1-18, "The Murder of the Innocents" always gets cleaned up or omitted to keep out the negative. Let's look at that passage again: READ

Tell them: We tend to think all fear is bad and that the normal reactions of fight or flight are not good options, but in this passage the best option was for the Son of God to flee. Have you ever thought about that? The Son of God, on the run from murderers. **Ask them:** *If you were in charge of the world, would you have had something different happen?*

Ask them: *Why was this flight from danger an important one?*

Tell them: Hosea 11:1 gave the prophecy: "*When Israel was a young man, I loved him like a son, and I summoned my son out of Egypt.*" This was a predestined flight that reveals to us the Jesus is the coming Messiah. This is what Matthew is talking about in our passage: "*He stayed there until Herod died. In this way what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet was fulfilled: "I called my Son out of Egypt."*" (Matthew 2:15)

Tell them: Pastor Michael said there are now believed to be four responses to trauma or fear like we see Mary and Joseph living in when Jesus was born. They are **fight, flight, freeze, or fawn**. You might have only ever heard of fight or flight, but freeze makes a lot of sense.

Ask them: *Why do you think that fawning is another response to trauma?*

Tell them: Pastor Michael gave us some good descriptors to help us understand when we fight, fly, freeze or fawn:

Fighting in response to fear looks like:

- Angry outbursts
- Controlling
- “The bully”
- Narcissistic
- Explosive behavior

Flight looks like:

- Workaholism
- Over-thinking
- Anxiety, panic, OCD
- Difficulty sitting still
- Perfectionism

Freezing in response to fear looks like:

- Indecision
- Being Stuck
- Isolating
- Feeling Numb

Fawning looks like:

- People pleasing
- A lack of identity
- Having no boundaries
- Being Overwhelmed
- Or codependent

Ask them: *Which one is your most common response to trauma?*

Tell them: These are our natural, human responses to discomfort, pain, and trauma, but the spiritual response is one that we all have access to:

1. The most wonderful thing about this season is that we have a cure for the curse that causes so much pain. John 5:24 says, *“I tell you the solemn truth, the one who hears my message and believes the one who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned but has crossed over from death to life.”* And Romans 8:18 says, *“For I consider that our present sufferings cannot even be compared to the glory that will be revealed to us.”*

2. Ask them: *In the midst of the challenges of 2020, how does it make you feel to remember that your now and future King spent his first months and years in exile, away from relatives other than His parents, merely surviving according to God's plan and purpose?*

It might help us all to remember: *Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know what I have planned for you," says the Lord. "I have plans to prosper you, not to harm you. I have plans to give you a future filled with hope."*

Ask them: *Does this bring you any comfort in your struggles of 2020?*

3. Tell them: Pastor Michael said that God doesn't need the story of Christmas sanitized any more than he needs our testimonies cleaned up to use them for His glory.

Ask them: *Do you ever feel like your testimony is too embarrassing to be told? Too boring? What does that say about what/who God can use?*

Tell them: Remember that the brokenness that God redeems brings God glory. So don't hide your mistakes, but share your failure and God's success with others.

Tell them: Here are some practical ways we can move through this week as Christmas approaches in light of the truths that God's Spirit through His Word revealed to us today:

1. Stop expecting perfection from others to make your season bright. Philippians 2:3-4 says, *"Instead of being motivated by selfish ambition or vanity, each of you should, in humility, be moved to treat one another as more important than yourself. Each of you should be concerned not only about your own interests, but about the interests of others as well."*

Ask them: *What might this passage have to do with expecting perfection from others?*

Ask them: *What are some problems that can be caused by expecting perfection?*

Ask them: *What are some ways to stop the habit of believing your life needs to be perfect?*
2. Look to give more than you receive this year. We need to be good at giving and receiving. Sometimes we don't think about doing both well. In the Bible there is an emphasis on the 'one another,' those passages where we are both to give and to receive. Let's look at just a few of those:
 - a. 1 Peter 4:9 says, *"Show hospitality to one another without complaining."*
 - b. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 says, *"Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, just as you are in fact doing."*

c. Galatians 5:13 says, *“For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity to indulge your flesh, but through love serve one another.”*

Ask them: *Do you struggle more with giving or receiving?*

Ask them: *Why do you think we struggle with these things?*

3. Be sober-minded about where you go for comfort when pain hits and go to God (and His people) instead of your usual fight, flight, flee or fawn responses we looked at earlier. When you sense any of those coming it's time to remember Jesus and His love for you.

Tell them: Pastor Michael asked us all to do some introspection and journaling this week on what your drugs/replacements for God might be and what pain is most difficult from a coping perspective and then to share that with a Christian friend who can walk with you in reliance on the cure: Jesus. I encourage you to do this and to make a real effort to respond to your suffering and fear with faith.

NOTE: You can send these lists to your people if you don't have time to go over these:

Here are some verses to meditate on this week:

For the Fighter:

“Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters! Let every person be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger. For human anger does not accomplish God's righteousness.” (James 1:19–20)

“But I say to you that anyone who is angry with a brother will be subjected to judgment. And whoever insults a brother will be brought before the council, and whoever says ‘Fool’ will be sent to fiery hell.” (Matthew 5:22, NET)

“Look! How good and how pleasant it is when brothers live together! It is like fine oil poured on the head which flows down the beard— Aaron's beard, and then flows down his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, which flows down upon the hills of Zion. Indeed that is where the Lord has decreed a blessing will be available—eternal life.” (Psalm 133:1–3, NET)

For the Fleer:

“Do not be anxious about anything. Instead, in every situation, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, tell your requests to God. And the peace of God that

surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”
(Philippians 4:6–7, NET)

“just as it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one, there is no one who understands, there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, together they have become worthless; there is no one who shows kindness, not even one.””
(Romans 3:10–12, NET)

For the Freezer

“so that there may be no division in the body, but the members may have mutual concern for one another. If one member suffers, everyone suffers with it. If a member is honored, all rejoice with it.” (1 Corinthians 12:25–26)

“So confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great effectiveness.” (James 5:16)

For the Fawner

“Am I now trying to gain the approval of people, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ!” (Galatians 1:10)

“I wrote you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. In no way did I mean the immoral people of this world, or the greedy and swindlers and idolaters, since you would then have to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who calls himself a Christian who is sexually immoral, or greedy, or an idolater, or verbally abusive, or a drunkard, or a swindler. Do not even eat with such a person.” (1 Corinthians 5:9–11)