

feel the power of listening to your heart
MATTHEW ELLIOTT



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Feel: The Power of Listening to Your Heart

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All the stories in this book are true. Some names and details have been changed to protect the identity of some individuals.

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"Finally, the definitive book on the proper, God-given place for emotions in our lives."

Andy Andrews, author of the *New York Times* best seller *The Traveler's Gift*

"Wow! This book could change the way you look at the Bible, at life, and at your faith. It did that for me. I've always been wary of my feelings and those of others. I thought it was the godly thing to do. I now know better and rejoice in the gift that this book will be to the Body of Christ. Finally, we can 'get out of the box' and dance. Read it and you'll thank me for recommending it."

Steve Brown, talk-show host of *Key Life*; professor of preaching, Reformed Theological Seminary

"*Feel* is an engaging book that's potentially liberating. God made emotions and Jesus expressed them; they need to be reclaimed and redeemed, not ignored or abandoned. Matthew Elliott does a service to the church through this thoughtful work.

Randy Alcorn, author of *Heaven and Deception*

"Many books today on the Christian life are baloney. Others just repackage what is widely known, or dress up tired platitudes with a new set of stories. This book is different. Based on solid research, it has truly fresh insights into our feelings and how God views them. I have been greatly helped personally by reading it, and I can't wait to pass it on to a bunch of other people who will eagerly receive its wisdom too. Best of all, in chapter after chapter, this book calls forth the godly feelings that, the author argues, God wants us to nurture and enjoy. Readers will discover here a path to enjoy God that they may never have glimpsed before."

Robert Yarbrough, PhD, New Testament department chairman, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

"As Christians, it is easy for us to elevate reason at the expense of authentic emotion—and in the process lose our passion for the God who created both. Matthew Elliott helps us recapture what we've lost and discover what it truly means to feel. A timely message for our generation."

Alex and Brett Harris, authors of *Do Hard Things*

"I have always felt that as Christians we do not have enough balanced teaching about the subject of Emotion. I was so happy to see that Dr. Matthew Elliott, my close friend and former traveling assistant, has written a book on this subject. I want to urge you to read and think through what he has written. I pray that you will have a greater walk in truth and reality as a result of reading this very unique book."

George Verwer, founder, Operation Mobilization

"Matthew Elliott introduces us to a refreshing view of emotion that is based solidly on the teachings of the Bible. This book challenges us to respect our feelings, to learn from our emotional reactions, to view emotion as a friend, and to grow emotionally as we mature in Christ. This book will surely change the way we feel about emotion."

James R. Beck, PhD, senior professor of counseling, Denver Seminary

"Rarely do we start reading a book and exclaim, 'This is new!' But this is true for Matthew Elliott's excursion through the land of emotion. He makes us more conscious of our emotional makeup, emotional needs, and how God will use our emotion. He causes us to explore how we can teach ourselves and our children to live in emotional freedom. He encourages us to explore our emotions truthfully, honestly, and accurately. These are roads each of us must travel along. The journey is well worth the effort."

Major General Jerry Curry, Ret., U.S. Army

TESTIMONIES FROM *FEEL*: THE BLOG

"I have found my whole attitude has changed, as if I've done an about-face. I was really touched and my eyes were opened to attitudes I needed to change in my life."

Jan

"I have, like most Christians, battled with the place of emotions in church and in my Christian walk, and especially with the contradictions I see in the way I think and live and feel. The thoughts contained in this book have helped to put structure and meat to the bones of my own thinking. My thinking has changed over the course of reading this book as I have come to realize that emotions are not unspiritual but are actually traits of God himself. Also, to see that God's will is not some mechanistic oppressive thing, but is rather a father's emotional appeal for the heart of his people, is something that is incredibly encouraging and reminds me of what first attracted me to the person of Christ."

Stephen

"*Feel* is a fascinating foray into the seemingly untouched reaches of emotion in our everyday lives. Matthew Elliott walks us through the necessity of experiencing life as an emotional opportunity with the care of a loving father. *Feel* is a pivotal work for any wary soul who is searching for clarity to the muddled mix of a stoic spirituality and a frenetic culture."

Jared

"I enjoyed this book immensely. The author was so personal, honest, and vulnerable to his readers, using real life stories to illustrate his points. It was

challenging and convicting, but also uplifting. What I've been doing for such a long time is repressing my feelings. I've stuffed them in a box for a very long time and have lived most of the time by duty and very little passion (and then wondering why I don't know Jesus more intimately). I so long to live a passionate and vibrant life for Christ: to do the things He has for me and to grow more emotionally mature. I long to go from a type A, "to do" list person to a person listening, loving, and following hard after Christ. Thanks for giving me resources on how I can be the child of God that He longs for me to be."

Julie

"Although Matthew Elliott does not specifically refer to Isaiah 61, he writes of the ministry of Jesus, who came to bind up the brokenhearted, proclaim freedom for the captives, and release from darkness for the prisoners. Jesus promised abundant life, yet we are being robbed of that fullness of life by repressing and containing our emotions. This is an easy read that will warm your heart, excite your emotions, and challenge your thinking."

Marian

"This book is bold and insightful. (It could also incite a riot.) The more I read, the more I liked it. I am challenged to honestly love God more than anything else I would cherish. The book speaks to me, a person who spends a lot of time trying to get his ducks in a row with flawed tools under his own power."

Todd

TO LAURA: Best friend, lover, coworker. Your print is on every page, and I would not have it any other way.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments... xi

01: Feel... 01

02: Discovery... 09

03: Breathe... 31

04: Bound... 51

05: Release... 71

06: Power... 89

07: Friend... 113

08: Truth... 135

 Focus

 Know

 Value

 Believe

09: Grow... 161

 Love

 Joy

 Hope

 Hate

10: Keep... 193

11: Done... 215

12: Heart... 239

Afterword... 251

Notes... 253

Bloggers' Bios... 259

About the Author... 263

Further Resources... 265

I was not very far into this project before I understood that there was no way I could go it alone. I was watching the “extra features” part of the *Hoodwinked* DVD with my family when I realized the kind of joint effort a truly good book involves. The makers of *Hoodwinked* made a great first movie by building a team of experts and advisors who knew a lot more than they did about making a film. I realized, in a much stronger way than I had before, that the task of writing this book must be a joint effort. That proved to be true, and it would take much more space than I have available here to give proper thanks to my partners. Nevertheless . . .

To Pieter, thanks for having eyes to see what this book might be and believing in me. To all those in my work world—publishing—who lent your advice and expertise, thanks for taking time out to review my work, encourage me, and push me to do better—most notably Les, Phillip, Stan, and Kathy. Thanks especially to Stan, who said, “Throw your PhD in a safe, lock it, and write the thing out of your head.” That word of advice set me on a new path that I have been on ever since.

To my Tyndale family: You and the Taylor family have been a part of my life since I was five or so years old. Your generosity and example have affected me at very key points in my life—from Dr. Taylor’s participation in my ordination, to your great encouragement of our ministry in Africa. It is a great privilege for me that you are publishing this book—it just feels right. Thanks.

Part of the credit for this work goes to the publishers who believed enough in this topic to publish my first book, *Faithful Feelings*. Thanks to IVP in the UK and Kregel in the USA.

After a coffee with part of the Tyndale family, Rev. Wendell Hawley, I understood that I needed some men to pray faithfully for me and this project. Thanks to all of you; there were points at which I could literally feel your encouragement and support. To Dave, Jim, Kent, Andrew, Bob and Dianne, and all my encouragers at church—I needed you. Thanks so much. A special thanks to the ones who did a theological review of my manuscript; thanks for holding me accountable for all I wrote. To Dr. Robert Yarbrough: It has meant much to have somebody who cared and supported me from the inception of my theological pursuits to now. You read and encouraged the genesis of this book in our little paper “Listen Up.” Little could we have known that God would have those core ideas about emotion survive and flourish through a PhD and almost twenty years. I am proud to have you as a friend and mentor.

I am thankful for the work of the Tyndale team to make this book what it should be. Thank you, Jon Farrar, for guiding the project with enthusiasm. And my sincere thanks to Dave Lindstedt, for your grace and careful attention to detail. You have made everything stronger. May God bless your work.

Thanks to all who read advance copies of the book and participated in my crazy “blog” idea. You have added more insight and relevance than I could

have imagined. Your thoughts have become a strong and exciting part of the book—I am thrilled.

A special thanks goes to all who supported and encouraged me. To my parents: What can I say? I could not ask for more. To Rebecca: You have done far more than you realize in making this book a reality. Your work, your passion for the vision, and your dedication are all greatly appreciated.

My last and heartfelt thanks must go to Ken Petersen. I could go on for several pages about all you have done. You have been God's great gift to me. Several months before we met, I felt that I should stop praying for a publisher for the book and start praying that God would bring someone to believe in the message and teach me how to write it. I could not have imagined that God would answer that prayer so far beyond what I hoped for. You have taken my offerings and made them sing so they are free to touch hearts and change lives. Your walking beside me and desiring to know it for yourself has made all the difference.

Thanks be to God for giving us these wonderfully complex emotions. Your strong hand has never let us down from the start of the journey; forgive my doubt! I want to dedicate this sacrifice of hours and days and weeks and years to your glory. May you use it as you see fit, and may it be a fragrant offering to you.



01 Feel

I sat with Ben over coffee.

A family friend for many years, Ben was talking with me about my favorite subject these days—how so many of us have been disconnected from our feelings and emotions. Then Ben told me one of the saddest stories I've heard in a long time.

A man from his church had asked to have breakfast with him. This friend of Ben's was spiritually strong, a pillar in the church. Anyone

would say he was doing all the right things in pursuing the model spiritual life.

Over plates of eggs and bacon, the two of them talked about family news, their church, and books they'd read recently. In time, they finished their food and conversation. Ben thought their breakfast was about done.

But as Ben was getting ready to stand and leave, his friend blurted out, "I have to tell you something."

Ben realized then that his friend had invited him to breakfast for a different reason—that it was something hard for him to say, and he'd taken the entire meal to muster the nerve to say it.

"I am living out all the things I should be doing for God," he finally said. "I'm doing what I'm supposed to, like I've been taught. But I'm not happy. I'm not passionate about anything. To be perfectly honest, I'm not even passionate about God. I feel *nothing*."

He was overcome with emotion as he confessed what he had kept secret for so long. "Ben, I'm dead inside."

As Ben told me this story, his face displayed the anguish he felt for his friend. Then he asked me this penetrating question: "How might your understanding of feelings and emotions help this man?"

The sad thing is this man is only one of many who suffer in the same way. I've been there. I suspect you have as well. We've faithfully pursued a spiritual and godly life, yet somehow we find ourselves numb, without passion or pleasure, emotionally dead.

For years we've been taught by our culture and in our churches that emotions are not to be trusted; that reason and knowledge and logic are the firm foundation on which to build our faith and our spiritual lives; that it's our *attitudes* and *actions* that matter, not how we *feel* about things.

This disconnect between our faith and our feelings has been the focus of my heart ever since I was a teenager. I've been intrigued by what it means to truly *love* God and *hate* evil.

Trying to figure it all out, I studied philosophy, culture, and the Bible, and I've come to believe that we have fallen victim to two things that are terribly wrong.

First, we have made our relationship with God more about fulfilling our *duty* than expressing our *passion*. We make our spiritual lives into a list of dos and don'ts. We pursue this list more than we actually pursue Jesus. And this leads us to a life that eventually becomes tired and numb, devoid of feeling, dead.

Recently, I was talking to a friend whose small group was studying holiness—that is, being pure and pleasing in God's sight. Around the circle, each person commented about what it meant to be holy. Most of them mentioned something they could have done to be better or more perfect—something they thought they needed to *achieve* in order to be more holy. Some spoke of how hard it was to do everything they were “supposed to do” as Christians. (My friend commented that everyone seemed so tired.)

One woman shared her experience of serving a shift at a homeless shelter between two and four in the morning. My friend was in awe of that kind of commitment, but the woman went on to berate herself for failing to say a helpful thing to a fellow volunteer that morning. It was something “on her list” that she had failed to do. And in her mind, it was one more thing that kept her from being more holy.

My point here is not so much about whether doing this one thing would have made this woman more holy. It's that this sort of thing, multiplied many times in a single life, robs a person of the exuberance and passion and excitement of life with God. In time, you would expect her to wind up like Ben's friend: numb and dead inside but always looking for the next item to check off on the list, the one more *thing to do* to become more holy. In the meantime, she's losing her ability to feel.

The second thing that has gone terribly wrong is that we have become indoctrinated in the belief that emotions are unreliable, dangerous, and bad. Philosophy, psychology, our scientific culture, and the church have taught us that logic and reason must reign supreme, while feelings are trivialized and seen as something to be suppressed or ignored. Many

successful contemporary writers have brainwashed us into believing that we must stifle what we *feel* in favor of what we *think*.

The messages I have read recently in popular inspirational books include the ideas that emotions leave us in a fog and cloud our thinking; the notion that in order to live a godly life, we must control our emotions; and the belief that following our emotions often leads us to sin.

I've heard nationally known speakers assert that anger, sorrow, and jealousy are signs of spiritual weakness; that our feelings cannot be trusted; and that God cares about what we believe, not what we feel.

These are all myths. None of them are true; none of them hold up to good science; and none of them are from the Bible.

And yet, by buying into these myths, many of us live distorted lives. We repress the very emotions that would give us life. Some of us have abandoned looking for God altogether or have left the church because we felt we couldn't find the new *heart* we were looking for.

But many spiritual leaders through the centuries got it right. We need to recapture some of the truths they taught. In the words of A.W. Tozer, "A state of emotion always comes between the knowledge and the act. . . . God intended that truth should move us to moral action. The mind receives ideas, mental pictures of things as they are. These excite the feelings and these in turn move the will to act in accordance with the truth. . . . But be sure that human feelings can never be completely stifled. If they are forbidden their normal course, like a river they will cut another channel through the life and flow out to curse and ruin and destroy."¹

I have come to believe that our emotions were given to us by God to drive us to our best.

I have come to believe that emotions are among the most logical and dependable things in our lives.

I have come to believe that emotions give us a window to see truth like nothing else.

I have come to believe that the true health of our spiritual lives is measured by how we feel.

That is the great power in listening to your heart.

BLOG 01: FEEL

ANDREW].....[I don't remember the day I decided to buy into those ideas, but you're right. I did. But I wasn't the victim. I chose them, and in some ways I like them. Feelings and emotions are dangerous. But the more I dwell on the teaching of Scripture, the more I realize how dangerous "controlling" my emotions has become. Sadly, I bought into the teaching—teaching that I believe is false teaching. How many facets of my life has it affected? Yet in all this discussion of feelings versus duty, is there still a place for duty (in the sense of loyalty)?

REBECCA].....[As I read this first chapter, I realized that I have often felt like Ben's friend. Life oftentimes just feels like a routine, going through all the motions and doing all the "shoulds" in life, but never being satisfied with where I am going or who I am becoming. Sometimes I even lack a passion for life; my life feels empty, hollow, and like nothing else matters anymore. But, I often think to myself, good Christians shouldn't feel this way. However, it is only when we begin to acknowledge what we struggle with, and recognize how to best help others understand that these feelings are "normal" and "OK," that we will be able to see a change in the world and people around us.

This past year, I had major spine surgery. I was pretty upset because it not only took me away from my job as a teacher, but it kept me out all semester and away from things I really enjoyed, like sports and working out. The past 8 months, I have not been able to do much of anything physically. While I am gradually able to do more and more, like walking and swimming, for the first 5 months, I was homebound, lying in bed, and pretty much confined to the four walls of my room. I mention this story because, as I think about this experience, I realize that maybe this surgery was what I needed to stop the monotony of the every-day-routine that I was in, rarely taking time for what mattered, too consumed with work or other things. I asked myself, as I had much time to think and ponder, what was I really living for? What gave my life meaning? And those are questions I continue to ask today. But what I do know is that it was OK for me to feel that way; it was OK to be upset and scared, because there were a lot of unknowns. But through feeling these things, I was able to work through some of those feelings and begin to have an appreciation for what I could do. I know that now I can be more sympathetic to those around me who are

much worse off, who can't breathe on their own, who can't walk, and who won't ever recover. So it is my continual prayer that God continues to allow me not only to heal, but to genuinely share the emotions I went through, because I know others can relate in some way, shape, or form.

MARIAN].....[I made my decision years ago—feelings are too painful to be indulged in. Barriers are safely in place—how dare I feel? Perhaps my dysfunctional family background was to blame—a mother suffering with mental illness and in and out of psychiatric hospitals; father, self-centred and looking for relationships outside the home. How do I cope if mother hates me today? Or perhaps I would be the one in favour? What if I displease my father? I never could figure out what I did that was so wrong. No, feelings are not safe. Best to shut them behind iron walls. But as an adult . . . hear my cry, Lord, to be able to relate to You with a passion that responds to Your love. Is there hope, Lord? Can I once again find freedom in You?

But perhaps I am not so alone in being unable to really feel. Maybe the path to wholeness lies in being like Ben's friend and admitting to our struggle. There must be more to being a Christian than just working for You, Lord, and trying harder.

SARAH].....[This view of emotions is one that has been taught to me since a very early age. I have been taught that worship offered in an emotional way leads to a worldly, tainted offering to God that is sensuous and self-centered—in other words, how wrong this was. I have been brought up not to feel toward God, in all my interactions and worship. But I also believed that God was One Who does not feel toward me. If God is unemotional, how can I interact on a personal level with Him?

JULIE].....[I'm so looking forward to digging into this book, because I feel I'm "dead" inside. I know a lot of truths about the Lord, and I've been walking with him for 18 years, yet oftentimes I feel like I don't KNOW Jesus. I don't know the sweetness of his fellowship and communion. I'm a type A, list person by nature, so it's difficult to put aside my "to do" list to hear and respond to Jesus. There are so many other things vying for my attention and time. I long to replace the "deadness" with "life." I long to know the joy of my salvation.

I have heard many messages/sermons about emotions, and they have led me to conclude that emotions can't be trusted; therefore, it's just easy to stay in this "dead" state. It doesn't help that I was raised in a family that didn't deal well with emotions (conflicts were brushed under the rug, and most kinds of confrontation were avoided or side-stepped).

01: Feel

1. A. W. Tozer, *That Incredible Christian* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1964), 50–52.

02: Discovery

1. See René Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, trans. Stephen Voss (Hackett, 1989).
2. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739). The full text of *A Treatise of Human Nature* can be found online at http://oll.libertyfund.org/files/342/Hume_0213.pdf.
3. Erwin Lutzer, *Managing Your Emotions* (Chappaqua, NY: Christian Herald, 1981), 38.
4. Kay Arthur, *A Marriage without Regrets* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2000), 64.
5. James MacDonald, *I Really Want to Change . . . So, Help Me God* (Chicago: Moody, 2000), 189.
6. D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 136.
7. Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 59.
8. Joyce Meyer, *Managing Your Emotions: Instead of Your Emotions Managing You* (New York: FaithWords, 2003), 13–14.
9. Romans 12:9-16

03: Breathe

1. E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practices and Beliefs* (London: SCM Press, 1992), 128.
2. C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963), 92–93.
3. Luke 10:41-42
4. Isaiah 40:31
5. Galatians 2:20
6. Luke 18:18
7. Luke 18:19-23
8. Matthew 26:38
9. Luke 19:9-10
10. Ezekiel 11:19

04: Bound

1. Michael Sniffen, "Moussaoui Scornful of Victims," Associated Press article published April 14, 2006, in the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. Article can be found online at www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/search/s_443673.html.
2. "September 11 Horror Relived at Moussaoui Trial," Yahoo! Asia News, April 7, 2006. Article can be found online at <http://asia.news.yahoo.com/060407/afp/060407052535int.html>.
3. Jeff Temple, "Feelings or Faith?" *BCC Bulletin*, vol. 6, no. 8. (August 2005).
4. 1 Kings 3:12
5. Quotes in this section are taken from 1 Kings 3:20-26.
6. Charles Darwin, *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals* (New York: D. Appleton, 1920).

STEPHEN is a fifth-year mechanical engineering student, studying in Edinburgh. He is single and enjoys traveling, amazing science and ingenious inventions, wildlife documentaries, anime films, cycling, and all sorts of books. He was brought up in a Christian home, and God has always been a reality in his life. He made a commitment to Christ at a young age, but only really got serious about his faith from the age of eighteen. He is currently wrestling with uncertainty about what God is calling him to do regarding vocation, marital status, and service to the church and others. He appreciates time to himself, but loves nothing better than camping and hiking with friends.

DREW is a pastor in suburban Chicago. He and his wife, Sarah, invest a lot of time caring for the people in their church. Drew grew up as a pastor's kid and learned a

lot from the godly example of his parents. He also learned to *control* his feelings and was strongly influenced by the regimented standards of his conservative church. Today, he still struggles with understanding the balance between passion and temperance. But through this, God is teaching Drew what it means to “love God with all your heart.”

JAN has been a Christian since 1973. She comes from a non-Christian background where emotions ran high. She has had problems with self-image for most of her life. She has been a teacher for many years, but now has her own dog-walking business. She is single and has shared a house with another Christian woman for many years.

Early in her career, **ANA** was a special-education teacher, creating and operating a program in a locked unit for severely emotionally challenged children. After she married, she and her husband moved to the Arab world and were thrown headfirst into Arabic study and cultural adjustment. Their career path in the Middle East and Africa has included founding a language school; founding a social-development foundation that serves street-based children; directing a housing development organization; and founding an international development foundation to support social entrepreneurs. Ana does personal training as a hobby. She calls the Middle East “my home.” She and her husband have been married for twenty years and have “nine children waiting in heaven, but none to hold here on earth.”

JIM is a retired professor now living on a farm in the Midwest. The slower pace of retired life is gradually restoring some of the depletions that a busy academic life seemed to create. Living closer to nature, watching glorious sunrises, weeding, cutting firewood, and enjoying a large vegetable garden are all doing wonders to quicken and enliven Jim’s spiritual joy and wonder.

SARAH is a pastor’s wife, staying home to support him in his ministry role. She became a Christian at the age of eight, and has followed the Lord ever since. Growing up in a fundamentalist church influenced her greatly during the early part of her life. God has recently shown her the freedom of Christ in every aspect of her faith walk. She looks forward to growing more in her freedom in Christ and not being held captive to traditions and the fear of man.

MARIAN and her husband are from Surrey, UK, and have just celebrated their fortieth wedding anniversary. They both enjoy cricket, bird-watching, and walking in the countryside. They have a grown son and daughter and also care for Marian’s elderly mother, who lives nearby. Marian’s childhood experiences in a dysfunctional family, which broke up when she was eleven, left her emotionally shut down. The Lord has been healing her wounds and setting her free since she became a Christian thirty-five years ago. She is part of the

ministry team in her church and prays with confidence that the Lord will do for others what he has done for her. She knows there is still more to do to bring her fully alive, and she is cooperating with God on the healing and releasing of her heart.

MEDINE was a war refugee for eighteen months in the Republic of Congo. By God's grace, she and her family survived hunger, disease, bombing, and other calamities. She now lives with her husband and son in Pennsylvania.

Last year, **REBECCA** was a third-grade Spanish bilingual teacher until major spinal cord surgery sidelined her and kept her from returning. It has been almost a year since Rebecca has been able to work or do any sort of physical activity, but she hopes to return to teaching soon. Her incapacity has been very frustrating, because she used to be highly active, worked out aerobically and with weights almost every day, and was very involved at school. Through the course of her recovery from surgery, she has come to understand that God often chooses to reveal himself to us in the waiting and the "down time." Though these are hard times, times when we wonder what in the world God is doing or why he has allowed a particular circumstance to happen, it is then that we are called to wait and rely on God. As 2 Corinthians 12:9 says, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (NIV).

TODD works as a graphic designer in Tennessee. He loves the feeling he gets when piloting a snowboard or a motorcycle, watching English Premier League Football, or attending a hockey game when the Nashville Predators are pounding the Detroit Redwings. He also enjoys horsing around with his nieces and nephews. Bible Study Fellowship has increased his knowledge of the Bible and has helped him work through what he believes.

JULIE is a stay-at-home mother of three young children, living in Illinois. She enjoys reading, walking or hiking, fitness and nutrition topics, and spending time with family and friends. She is actively involved in ministry at her church, but lately has been struggling with feeling as if she doesn't know the Lord intimately. Julie's desire is to *know* Jesus in a deeper, more intimate fashion. In other words, she longs to *feel* more for Jesus.

BOB is an ordained minister and seminary teacher. Married for more than thirty years, he and his wife have two sons. Bob assists the pastor and teaches in a Lutheran church near his home. He also tries to encourage young men by coaching high school and American Legion baseball.

JARED lives with his beautiful and patient wife in Boulder, Colorado. As often as they can manage, they enjoy punishing their bodies with multi-state relay runs, triathlons, and

eating spicy foods. While adjusting to married life and loving their favorite new band, they help facilitate a small group where they can share and struggle with their friends while digging into God's Word. Jared continues to wrestle with his perspective of the seemingly divisive, denominationally driven, contemporary church, his own personal struggles with pride, and not always being kingdom focused.

TOM is a husband and father and lives in Michigan. He enjoys running, golf, reading, campfires, and watching a good movie. Tom works in sales, and he and his wife, Heidi, homeschool their four children.

Matthew Elliott serves as president of Oasis International Ltd., a publisher and distributor of Bibles and Christian books. Oasis makes Christian literature available at affordable prices in English-speaking Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean on a sustainable basis. Matthew's present focus is Africa, where the need and potential for impact is great. The continent of Africa is in the midst of a literature famine. *Experts estimate that more than 200 million African Christians do not have a Bible!* African Christians are hungry to read, hungry to learn, and hungry to explore their faith in ways that only books make possible. A big part of Matthew's mission in leading Oasis is to see this hunger satisfied.

Oasis identifies and empowers African booksellers who understand the crucial role books play in building the church and who have a vision to reach pastors, leaders, and laymen and women of the poor majority. Oasis chooses partners who exhibit business skills, a willingness to learn, and a commitment to operate with sound management principles and financial integrity. Once partners are identified, Oasis offers them books at affordable prices that meet Africa's needs. As their businesses grow, they act as local distributors, giving entrepreneurs the opportunity to grow the local retail book industry. Pastors and leaders are equipped for ministry, and people grow in their faith by reading great books. Moreover, jobs are being created, and economic development is taking place.

You can make a difference! Find out more about the needs of Africa and this transformational approach to book and Bible distribution at www.oasisint.net. Sign up for a prayer update and discover how you might like to be involved.

You can find out more about Matthew Elliott and the ministry of Oasis International at www.faithfulfeelings.com.