

# **BEGIN THE JOURNEY INTO EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY SPIRITUALITY**

## **Part 1: The Problem of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality 1 Samuel 15:20-24**

### **THE PROBLEM OF EMOTIONALLY UNHEALTHY SPIRITUALITY**

#### **7 Pathways**

- 1. Know Yourself that You May Know God**
- 2. Going Back in Order to Go Forward**
- 3. Journey Through the Wall**
- 4. Enlarge Your Soul Through Grief and Loss**
- 5. Discover the Rhythms of the Daily Office and Sabbath**
- 6. Grow into an Emotionally Mature Adult**
- 7. Go the Next Step to Develop a “Rule of Life”**

#### **Iceberg Model What Lies Beneath the Surface**

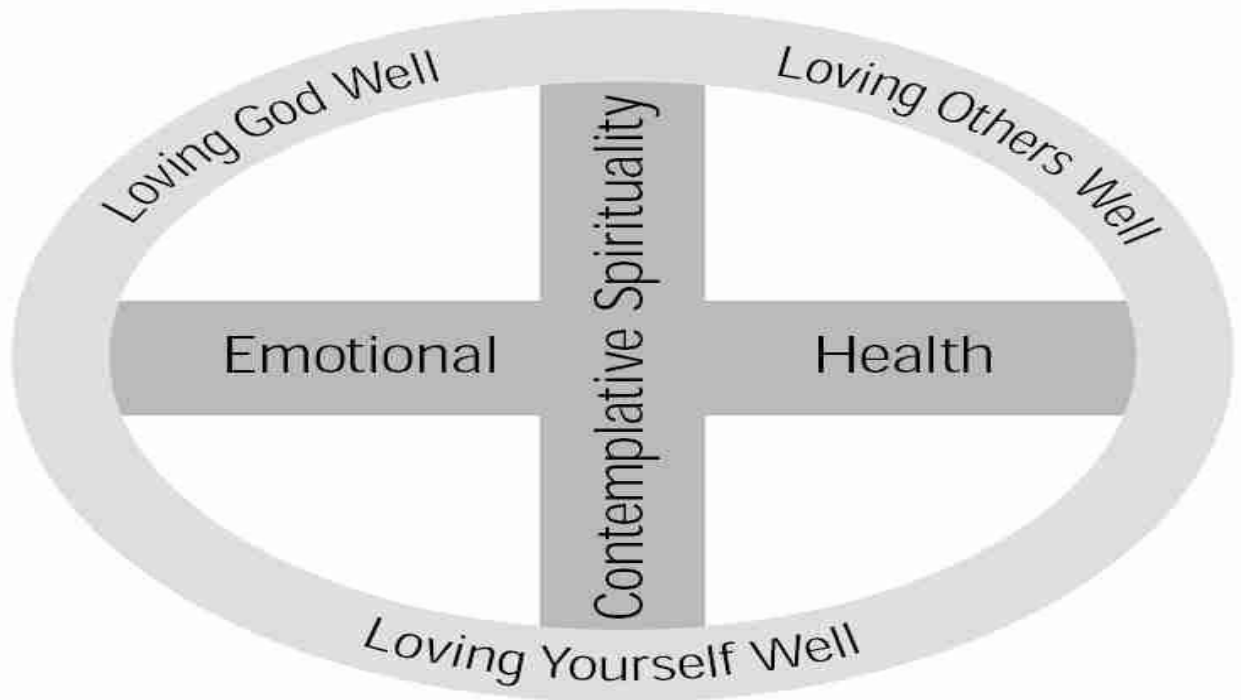


#### **Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality**

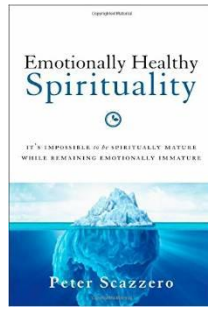
- 1. Says “No” to Reflection and Self-Awareness**
- 2. Says “No” to Cultivating their Personal Relationship with God.**
- 3. Says “No” to Being Broken through Setbacks and Difficulties**

Deuteronomy 8:2-3

Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and feeding you with manna, ...to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.



***Begin the Journey To Emotionally Healthy Spirituality***  
**This sermon series is based on Pete Scazzero's second book.**  
We recommend that you read the book to get the most out of this sermon series.



**Theme: Begin the Journey to Emotionally Healthy Spirituality**  
**“The Problem of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality”**

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber

February 21-22, 2015 at First United Methodist Church, Durango

**Scripture: 1 Samuel 15: 20-24**

*20 “But I did obey the Lord,” Saul insisted. “I carried out the mission he gave me. I brought back King Agag, but I destroyed everyone else. 21 Then my troops brought in the best of the sheep, goats, cattle, and plunder to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal.”*

*22 But Samuel replied, “What is more pleasing to the Lord: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams. 23 Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as bad as worshiping idols. So because you have rejected the command of the Lord, he has rejected you as king.” 24 Then Saul admitted to Samuel, “Yes, I have sinned. I have disobeyed your instructions and the Lord’s command, for I was afraid of the people and did what they demanded. 25 But now, please forgive my sin and come back with me so that I may worship the Lord.”*

**VIDEO      EHS Intro Week 1**

**SLIDE      The Problem of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality**

Today we begin a journey. Traditionally in the church the 40 days and 7 Sundays before Easter are the season of Lent. We began that season with Ash Wednesday this past week and it’s meant to be a time to go deeper as we prepare to remember the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. I’m excited about this season of Lent because together we’ll begin a journey towards emotionally healthy spirituality. My wife is actually the one who has encouraged me on this journey. Last May she asked that we go to a conference in Queens, NY on Emotionally Healthy Spirituality. I am so grateful she asked me to go as I really believe this content can be a game changer for us as followers of Jesus Christ, seeking to be his presence in the world.

The basic premise of Emotionally Healthy Spirituality is that we can’t grow

spiritually and become all God intends for us to become unless we are striving to be healthy emotionally. Please take out of your bulletin these Message Notes that you have folded in half. They have some resources listed on them you might find helpful as well as some of the major points of the sermon. Please take any notes and write down anything you feel God is speaking to your heart. The Meditation Moments for this series are actually in this little book, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: Day by Day – A 40 Day Journey with the Daily Office*. We've given you a sheet that tells you which week we are on and which dates go with that week. These books cost \$11 or we will give you one if you can't afford it. I think you will find this to be a huge blessing as part of this journey, to spend time daily with God. As we begin this journey today, let's offer our time together to Christ, that God might meet us and touch us and help us to absorb and receive the message he has for each of us. Let's pray.

*God, as we look at Saul help us to relate to his life and see ourselves in this story. I pray that you would take out of us and purge from us that Saulishness that we see in his life and in our lives. Place in each of us a desire to have the heart of David, that we might be men and women after your own heart. Help us to see that we are not perfect and that we are flawed like David. Help us to know that in brokenness is where we can find healing. May we have a contrite spirit so that we, like David, might grab hold of you and know you and love you, and be passionate for you. We commit ourselves to you as a church as we embark on this journey into emotionally healthy spirituality, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Some things look great on the surface, but they're a disaster underneath when you look closely. December 7, 1941 the radars at Pearl Harbor were picking up a large formation of planes heading towards Hawaii. The officer on duty said, "Don't worry about it. It's nothing."

President William McKinley in August, 1901 just a few days before he was assassinated, said this to reporters, "I have no enemies. Why should I fear?"

Ken Olsen was the CEO of Digital Equipment Company in 1977 when he said, "There's no reason for any individual to have a computer in their home. The personal computer will fall flat on its face in business and become simply toys used for playing video games." He was eventually removed as CEO just before the company was purchased by a competitor.

Of course, sometimes things don't look very good on the surface, but really underneath they are very good. A young singer in his first performance in

Nashville, Tennessee in 1954 was told by the manager of the venue, “You ain’t going nowhere, son. You ought to go back to driving a truck.” Do you know that singer’s name? It was none other than Elvis Presley.

In Germany, 10 year old boy was told by his teacher, “You have no focus. You are not very bright. You will not amount to much.” His name was Albert Einstein.

In 1958 a CBS producer told an aspiring new anchor, “With your voice, no one’s going to let you broadcast.” She was none other than Barbara Walters.

Things are often not as they appear to be and this can make life very confusing. In the next 8 weeks, as we look at Emotionally Healthy Spirituality, we are going to be looking beneath the surface. We are going to do that by looking at what happens when we merge our spiritual life with our emotional life. Our body, mind and spirit were never meant to be separated and it’s in bringing them together that we can become who God created us to be. The key is bringing them together and it really is nothing short of a spiritual revolution in our lives. It can transform the very deep places deep beneath the surface of our lives. The revolutionary idea is that things can appear good on the surface AND actually be pretty good on the inside as well! We’re going to talk today about the problem of emotionally UNhealthy spirituality because we have to be honest about what’s wrong before we can get to what can be.

**SLIDE      The Problem of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality**

**Know yourself that you may know God**

**Going back in order to go forward**

**Journeying through the wall**

**SLIDE      Enlarge your soul through grief and loss**

**Discovering the rhythms of daily office and Sabbath**

**Growing into emotionally mature adults**

**Go the next step to develop a rule of life**

Here’s this picture of the iceberg. An iceberg is a great illustration because one tenth of an iceberg is visible above the surface. That’s what everybody can see. That’s behavioral change. But it’s the things deep beneath the surface, things that we can’t see, that generally come out under great stress. That’s what Jesus is out to transform.

There's a correspondence between our exterior life and a deep change in the interior life. These eight themes are profound and we can understand them and know them intellectually quite easily. It's another thing to actually begin to implement these things into our lives where it actually changes the way that we live life, the way that we see God, the way that we follow Jesus Christ, the way that we make decisions on an everyday basis. If we are going to be Jesus Christ to the world we have to take seriously what's going on inside so we can then live it on the outside.

This requires meditating on it and pondering it. We can't just read through the material and understand it and then move on. It really does require talking about it with others. It requires trial and error. It requires working out the kinks. It requires small groups. That's why we put together small groups that can use this resource and go deeper.

We want to encourage you to get in a group, read the book, get one of the daily devotionals and begin to work it out in your small groups as well as in your individual lives because it takes repeated wrestling with these large biblical themes. We're talking about not just throwing something into your Christian lives like a little icing on the cake. We're talking about truly a revolution in the way that we look at God and the way that we follow Christ. It's different than the way the world functions. It's even different than the way the church at large functions.

In my own life as a follower of Jesus, as your pastor, the truth is that the gospel didn't go very far underneath my own iceberg. I continue to live on the surface in a lot of areas in my own life and as a result have experienced unhealthy spirituality. I embraced it. I lived it and I still struggle with it today. I think it's part of what God used in my own life to begin to show me some things and it's been a very slow process for me to come out of that into some health. I'm still working on it and by no means have I arrived.

Let's begin this journey by looking at King Saul in the Hebrew Bible. Saul is probably one of the greatest examples in scripture of someone who is emotionally unhealthy and has no contemplative life. The two communication of these together bring such destruction to Saul who is a person with great promise. Let's be clear that Saul had a bright future. He was chosen and anointed to do something great for God, to be the one of first Kings of the Israelites. He started out good with humble beginnings but things didn't go well as he grew in power and strength. Saul is given a command by God to muster the armies of Israel, hundreds of thousands of troops, and to go up against the Malakites in battle.

It's a long story why the Malakites needed to be wiped out but those were God's instructions to Saul. It's the Prophet Samuel who brings Saul this message from God and Saul does go and he partially obeys God. Saul musters the armies of Israel and goes on the mission but he doesn't do it all. We read that instead of wiping out all the sheep and cattle, Saul and his army spared the king and the best of the sheep and the cattle, and the fat calves and lambs, everything that was good. They were unwilling to destroy them completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed. Pragmatically speaking, it didn't make sense to Saul to lose all these financial resources. Saul went and did mostly what God wanted, but not all of it. The Prophet Samuel then shows up to speak with Saul about what has happened.

Saul's response to Samuel is, "Hey, the Lord bless you! I've carried out the Lord's instructions." As far as Saul's concerned, everything is hunky dory. I've done God's will. The amazing thing about Saul is that on the surface of his life he looks like he's doing great. On the one tenth of the iceberg above the surface that people like his soldiers or friends or companions gets to see, everything looks great. Saul looks like a great, gold, churchgoing follower of God—like a great Christian! But underneath the surface things are not so good. And that's why Saul's story makes such a great classic case of emotionally unhealthy spirituality, because he does not integrate his emotional life with his contemplative, spiritual life.

Saul's life is out of order underneath the surface where nobody can see it. Again, the argument here is that you cannot separate emotional health and contemplative spirituality. It's got to go together, and Saul never lets God get beneath the iceberg. In his whole life, Saul never lets God in. Let's pick it up in 1 Samuel 15: 20 which is our text today.

SLIDE      ***20 "But I did obey the Lord," Saul insisted. "I carried out the mission he gave me. I brought back King Agag, but I destroyed everyone else. 21 Then my troops brought in the best of the sheep, goats, cattle, and plunder to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal."***

***22 But Samuel replied, "What is more pleasing to the Lord: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams. 23 Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as bad as worshiping idols. So because you have rejected the command of the Lord, he has rejected you as king." 24***



***Then Saul admitted to Samuel, “Yes, I have sinned. I have disobeyed your instructions and the Lord’s command, for I was afraid of the people and did what they demanded. 25 But now, please forgive my sin and come back with me so that I may worship the Lord.”***

In Saul’s story we see three characteristics of emotionally unhealthy spirituality. These are three things that I have done and I think all of us at some point in our lives. Being honest about these three unhealthy characteristics and then understanding how to do things differently are the first step on this journey towards emotionally healthy spirituality.

**SLIDE      1.    An emotionally unhealthy person, Saul, says “No” to Reflection and Self-Awareness**

The first thing Saul does as an emotionally unhealthy person here is say no to reflection and self-awareness. He’s not going down that road to be reflective and self-aware. He is praying. He is listening. He actually prophesied at one point. He’s doing some of God’s will. He’s going to church. He’s doing worship. He’s doing the whole thing on the outside you’re supposed to. But underneath he’s very concerned about the approval of people as you can see in verse 24. Saul does repent in this passage, but even repenting you’ll notice he simply says, “Oh yeah, I sinned.”

Later in verse 30 Saul repents again, but look what’s attached to it.

**SLIDE      *30 Then Saul pleaded again, “I know I have sinned. But please, at least honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel by coming back with me so that I may worship the Lord your God.”***

I sinned, but by the way, please honor me before the elders of my people and come with me Samuel, so I don’t look so bad. Saul struggles with what many of us struggle with and that is a deep need or desire for approval on what people think. But Saul can’t see that because he’s unaware of his own fears. His conduct shows that he doesn’t even get how his fear is dominating his life. He even says it, “I was afraid of the people. I was afraid because the people wanted it so badly. So I said, all right! Keep the best sheep and animals and use it as a sacrifice to God.”

That’s a good motive, right? Let’s do it for God, even though we know God would probably not really want that! Saul is not reflective about the fact that he’s got a lot of jealousy and pride in his life. He doesn’t want other people to be more popular than him or look better than him. This becomes his big struggle with David. Remember that King David is the one who comes after King Saul. As David

emerges as a young man and people start liking David, Saul gets upset.

In chapters 18 to 20 in 1 Samuel, you'll see this big theme of Saul's jealousy beginning to grow towards David as he tries to murder David six times. Three times with the javelin he tries to kill David. A couple different times he tries to lure David into a death trap. Saul makes David a military commander and sends him into battle, hopefully to get him killed. Saul offers David his daughter in marriage, but he says to get my daughter you have to kill 200 Philistines and bring me their foreskins. He does this hoping to get David killed. Eventually, Saul simply sends soldiers to David's house to kill him. His jealousy just consumes him. He's crazy and he has all this anger and rage. It's repressed anger and it's blaming anger. Saul is so envious that it literally eats at him from the inside out and he becomes explosive.

Saul seems completely unaware of all the stuff going on inside of him, and so he's acting out. His jealousy and envy get to a point where he can't even think straight or see straight. In the middle of all this he really believes he's doing God's will. That's the real killer.

But if you're in a small group with Saul, he's probably leading the small group, and he thinks he's doing wonderful! He's even going to church every week, thinking he's got it all together! The problem is that spiritually speaking, Saul is very shallow. He's really not paying attention to God because he truly wants the approval of people and he's making decisions out of fear, and he's being consumed by jealousy and envy.

We pastors are the worst at this. We go to conferences and we meet other pastors and hear about other ministries and we get jealous. Maybe you go to a gathering of other people who work in your field and you have had the same experience. Or maybe you have been with other parents who seem like they have it all together and you're barely hanging on. Trust me, they may look like they have it all together on the outside, but on the inside it's another story! Maybe you have been jealous of somebody at school. You see them prospering and doing great and it starts to eat away at you.

Rather than bring God that jealousy and be honest it about it so you can let it go, we get filled with envy and even hatred of this person over here that I can't stand. We are meant to rejoice when someone else does well, but rather than bring those emotions to God, we push them away.

We might even end up acting sweet and nice on the surface and when we

see the person say, “How are you?” We see them at coffee hour and say, “I’m great, and you! God bless you.” We’re sugary and sweet and inside we are boiling because we really haven’t brought our true emotions to God and asked honestly, “Where is this coming from?”

We can come to worship and sing of God’s love and power, but inside we’re just mad at God. And we’re not going to tell God because we’re in a passive-aggressive mood. We’re just going to pretend that it’s all okay, when inside it’s not! We act like God doesn’t know and we’re singing to God, but we’re angry. We’re singing of the love of God and the power of God, but our whole life is fear. We’re making decisions based on fear and not faith all the time.

We do this as parents. We feel great responsibility to raise our kids and have them turn out good. So we push our kids and we drive our children and if we are honest we do it out of fear, not out of healthy parental love for them. We are afraid of what people think or that our kids will get in trouble and the truth is that we can’t control much of that.

What about at work? How many times do we make decisions at work out of fear instead of faith?

Let’s get real personal and talk about our bodies. How often do we give our body to somebody sexually or get into an unhealthy relationship out of fear. We think, “It’s better than being alone.”

We have conflict with people and we have to say some hard things, but out of fear we don’t engage them because we don’t want to risk the fact that they might not like us. And so we shrink back and we don’t tell the whole truth, and we tell what we call the “half lie.” Sometimes we do hear God’s will. We kind of know it intuitively, but it’s too emotionally painful to go down that road. We don’t want to have to self-reflect and be self-aware. It’s just too painful.

So what happens is we live our lives based upon appearance above the surface, but there’s a whole reality underneath going on that just doesn’t correspond with it. It happens very slowly and over a longer period of time. As I thought about myself, life was painful because once I started reflecting and being self-aware, I didn’t like what I was feeling. I didn’t like what was down there under the iceberg and what was coming up. I felt guilty about it but it was easier to deny everything that deal with my feelings. I could simply say that my feelings were not even here! Praise God!

And so rather than be conflicted with guilt, I just ignored it all and just

pressed on, because who wants a life of guilt? So I just didn't even go there. You see the key -- staying in touch with God and staying in touch with yourself requires silence. It requires solitude. It's not just paying attention to what's going on outside of life around you, but it's actually looking at the motives inside. Why am I doing what I'm doing? Where are these thoughts and feelings that I've got on the inside coming from? I realized something in all this.

**SLIDE        I can't be in touch with God if I'm not in touch with myself**

This was Saul's problem. He was full of illusions. He was having a prayer life to God that was an illusion. He was presenting a "me" to God that was not really true. You know what it's like. Many times we present ourselves to God that's not the real "you." Subconsciously you're trying to present yourself to God in such a way that he'll like you or be proud of you. I've done it. I acted like God doesn't know, and then what happens, our spirituality becomes an unreality. You see, we're not in reality if we're not in touch with what's going on inside of us.

Because of a lot of bad theology, many of us are not in touch with what's going on inside of us. Our whole relationship with God gets all twisted. What we think we are hearing from God, like in Saul's case, gets distorted. We're unaware of it because we don't have any time to reflect and think. We just keep ourselves busy. I need silence and solitude to be in touch with me—to know what I'm thinking and feeling. It takes silence and solitude to tame the monsters of our false selves. It takes that silence and solitude to draw us out because the pressure of society and culture and our past is so great to conform us to something that's not true to us; to live superficially and conform to other people's expectations.

**SLIDE        Key to staying in touch with yourself and God – Silence and solitude**

It takes a tremendous amount of silence and solitude to be reflective and aware. You will never see Saul, unlike David, spending time in silence and solitude. He just doesn't do it. David's life is full of it but not Saul's. We just see him doing a lot. You'll never see Saul writing poems and music and psalms for worship, pouring out his conflicted inner self. The truth is that David is not perfect. He has the same conflicts of all of us. He has the same conflicts going on inside of him as Saul. As King, David no doubt could relate to Saul and his struggles. The difference was David was aware of them and he poured them out before God. He prayed and he wrestled with them and he did not evade them.

Saul was just unaware and tried to block out his past hurts and sorrows and keep moving forward by keeping busy—and keeping busy for God no less! I can

relate to Saul because this is my struggle. Saul's story should be a warning to you and me because as a result he makes bad decisions. We can make bad decisions, so easily because most of the time in our culture we aren't reflective or self-aware. Isn't this true? We can so easily say, "You know what, I'm just going to live my life on autopilot and I just move along, and I keep myself busy."

**SLIDE        2. An emotionally unhealthy person says "No" to Cultivating their Personal Relationship with God.**

Saul spent time with God early on. He's very humble and he receives a blessing. The Holy Spirit comes upon him and he's made King of Israel. He receives the grace and mercy of God but he doesn't do anything with it. Saul doesn't actively or consciously cultivate, develop or nurture a personal relationship with the living God. Instead, Saul just slides on autopilot. There's no indication in his life, at least in scripture, of him cultivating a life with God—not one. He does not seem to have a hidden life in God. He has a public life in God, a visible exterior life in God.

Instead, Saul wants to be known by people. He's very concerned about what others thinking of him. He really wants the benefits of God. It's very important to get the blessing and so he listens as it benefits him. But when listening becomes problematic, he generally just ignores it. Or it's kind of selected memory. Saul hears like half of it and he forgets the rest. We all have that kind of listening problem if we're honest. I think verse 22, when God speaks to Saul, is one of the most poignant, nasty, sharp words not just Saul's life, but in the entire Old Testament, and to us today.

**SLIDE        *22 But Samuel replied, "What is more pleasing to the Lord: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams."***

Don't you get it? Do you think God delights in having you do all this religious activity? The word "obey" and "listen" are the same word in Hebrew. Samuel says to Saul, "You're not listening. You're on autopilot. You had this original encounter with God and you're kind of just on autopilot now and you're not listening. Your life is not one of cultivating, listening to God as if you're in a living relationship, following me." ***To obey and listen is better than sacrifice.*** That's the exact same verse Jesus quotes to the Pharisees.

**SLIDE        *23 Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as bad as***

### ***worshiping idols.***

Then we have this interesting idea in verse 23. Saul thinks he's obeying everything God wants and then God compares it to the sin of witchcraft! It's like you're going to a witch Saul, like you're going to a psychic for direction. Saul's arrogance is like the evil of idolatry. The irony is that he thinks he's humble. Saul then gets this really harsh word and it doesn't even phase him. He does repent, but it's a half-repentance that is pretty short lived and then he just goes back to how he lives before. He never really asks the question, "What's God saying to me? Why did I make this bad decision? How can I follow God more closely going forward?"

You could sit here this morning and say, "Hmm, that's a clever message. Boy, those opening illustrations he gave were good. Where did he get that from? That sermon gave me some food for thought." You might even be inspired to read the book that goes with this series and come back to church next week. We get this routine of evaluating and thinking in today's world. We watch from afar or admire or maybe reply on a blog post. We hear something and judge it as clever or boring or interesting and then maybe we share this with a friend. Those are all good things but compare that to actually cultivating the relationship, a personal relationship, with God which asks the question, "What's God saying to me?"

You might be sitting there struggling with toothpicks to keep your eyes open! But even in that state I hope you're asking the question, "What is God saying to me?" It's meant to be personal. How is the living God coming to me? You see it's incredibly easy to have an intellectual Christianity. It's in my head. I'm learning. I'm gaining things. But it's really not experiential. It's really not in the heart. The difference between David and Saul was David was always asking the question, "What is God saying to me?" It was very personal. Saul just couldn't get that personal. What's interesting as I reflect on myself is that I have often been this way in my Christian life.

I was very much letting God come in from the outside. I'm listening to scripture and other people and reading great books and blog posts. Emotionally healthy spirituality is about realizing that God live inside of me and it all changes when I begin to ask, "How do I feel about what's going on? How is God coming or not coming to me through what's going on inside? How is God speaking to me from the inside out, not just from the outside in?"

When we don't listen to what God is doing on the inside of us, it's like

cutting out a part of who we are. It's distorting even the hearing of God. God's coming in all directions and we are meant to hear God on both the inside and the outside. I want to be clear that I'm not succeeding at this yet but I'm working on it and I want to invite you to work on it as well. One way to do this is to get out of the pattern of always multitasking. Most of us can't multitask well anyway, so what if we took one 24 hour period and slowed down and stopped all the extra activities and just spent time with God and just did one thing at a time? How would that change us?

What would it be like for to drive a car and not make a phone call or answer the phone? I'm just going to drive the car! How novel is that? Or I'm just going to eat breakfast and not be on the computer or iPad or phone or text. You may find it hard to believe, but it's a challenge for me to cultivate my personal relationship with God. It's a daily decision I have to make to slow down because everything around us is going a thousand miles an hour. I like what Dallas Willard who has written numerous books on the spiritual life said to Pastor John Ortberg when John was first starting a church. He asked Dallas, "What do you suggest?"

Dallas said one word, "ruthless." Then he went on and said to John, "Ruthlessly eliminate hurry." And John said, "Okay, what's next?"

Contemplation is about clearing space out in your life, so you can go deep and you can go wide. That's what contemplation is. It's about developing the interior space of your being. Contemplation is about all this stuff that we sing and talk about as the love of God and actually getting beyond our head and into our experience, into our heart until it becomes integrated into our life. That's why sermons are not enough. They're helpful to get us moving, but it's really the flushing out of this thing that's really going to make or break it.

How else can I know that God is love and not the tight fisted "Scrooge?" I can know intellectually know God is Abba, Father, Daddy but how do I know the God who is love and is my Abba, and I jump into his lap as my Heavenly Dad? I can only live in that love relationship with a father who loves me without conditions if I take the time and space to experience it. The truth is many of us live like God's a tight fisted "Scrooge," or he's like an uninterested parent, or he's like General Patton—a military commander, commanding me to do things. Or we think of God as a business partner in a business venture. I do something for God and then God does something for me. I came to church in the morning/evening and then God blesses me in the afternoon/morning. Our relationship is give and take, like an 80/20 deal.

The religious leaders of Jesus day, the Pharisees just couldn't get it. They memorized the verses about the love of God. They memorized the first five books of the Old Testament, but they didn't know a thing about the love of God because they didn't cultivate that personal time with God, to the point that when God was in front of them in the flesh they didn't even recognize him! They didn't wrestle with the questions, "What's God's saying and doing to me?" They didn't take the time and energy to actually cultivate a personal relationship with God.

Part of the theme of what we're talking about here in these next eight weeks is taking responsibility for your life in God and not blaming others or expecting others to do the work for us. You'll notice Saul's a big blamer. He blames all kinds of folks when he messes up. To cultivate your personal relationship with God, nobody can do that for you. This is why we have small groups for this series and in God's church. We have a church with lots of things going around us, but it's up to each of to take responsibility for our own spiritual growth and life with God.

**SLIDE        3. Emotional unhealthy spirituality says "No" to Being Broken through Setbacks and Difficulties**

Thirdly, Saul just doesn't say "no" to reflection and awareness. Saul doesn't just say "no" to developing his personal relationship with God. Saul also says "no" to being broken through setbacks and difficulties. He refuses to be broken by it. Setbacks, trials, difficulties and testing come to every one of us. There are no exceptions and their never have been through history, because we are all human. But Saul refuses to be broken and humbled by his setbacks and difficulties.

He just gets up and fights again. Saul will come to the altar and cry, but he's not broken by anything. Here's what I know from my own life. In the middle of life toughest moments I need God and need others. Too often we think, "I'll just pull myself up by my bootstraps. I can get through this. I don't need anyone else, thanks you very much!" I'm as fiercely independent as anyone and this one will kill me. When we hit those rough patches, being broken means we are willing to wait on God and we are willing to turn to others.

In 1 Samuel 13 it says the army of the Philistines are about to wipe out the Israelites and they're hanging by a thread. God says to Saul that he will show up the seventh day. It's the seventh day and God's not showing up when Saul wants God to show up. You know what it's like. Sometimes God doesn't show up like we want him to and being broken means being willing to wait.



It breaks my self-sufficiency when I have to wait on things. But Saul says, “I can’t take it!” And he takes matters into his own hands. In chapter 15 Saul is pressured by his soldiers to do something—keep the wealth, and then maybe give it back to God, of course. It’s a task for him to resist it and he can’t do it. The truth is that it’s only through our hurts and our setbacks and even our moments of suffering and trials that we learn humility. There is no other way to learn brokenness and humility except through trials and struggles.

The first beatitude Jesus gives in the Sermon on the Mount points to this powerful truth:

**SLIDE**        ***“Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.”***

Blessed are the poor in spirit. They get the Kingdom of Heaven. Saul does not embrace this poverty of spirit. He does not want to be that absolutely dependent, hanging on God. But we cannot have God without poverty of spirit. We can have religion. We can have church. But we cannot have Heaven and taste it without poverty of spirit. We have to experience that dependence on God.

Do you think that we can learn brokenness and obedience any other way but through tough stuff? When struggles come into Saul’s life, he just throws them out. God’s trying to humble Saul and break him to make him something great, but Saul was just trying to be something great on his own.

Saul had forgotten Deuteronomy 8:3. Moses is leading the people into the Promised Land. They’ve been 40 years in the desert.

**SLIDE**        ***3 Yes, he humbled you by letting you go hungry and then feeding you with manna, a food previously unknown to you and your ancestors. He did it to teach you that people do not live by bread alone; rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.***

We only know if we’ll keep God’s commands when we’re humble. We think, “Ah, God, believe me, I’ll keep ‘em. You can skip the test.” But God understands that we only learn when we have to go without the steak dinner and eat only bread.

It is every word that comes from the mouth of God and there is no other way to learn this truth. **God really wants to take the Saul out of us.** There’s a Saul in every one of us and God wants to rip it out of us. Our self-will and stubbornness has got to be ripped out. Yes, you’ve been betrayed. Yes, you’ve

been misunderstood. Yes, you have had to wait and you're still waiting. Yes, you're in the middle of an incredible setback and struggle, and people that you love don't love you back.

And in those trials we are being stripped of you attachments to the world, that we might trust God. None of us wants to be stripped of our attachments to the world, but God loves us enough not to always rescue us but instead to learn that we can't always get what we want because we are not God. You cannot get all you want. I cannot get all I want. It would be a disaster if we did! Saul wants everything but he doesn't want to wait? You'll never see him writing about, "waiting on the Lord," like David. It's not in his vocabulary. Living before the mystery of God is not in his vocabulary, so Saul never develops a depth of character like King David.

David understood what it meant to wait years and years and years. There is nothing like trials to destroy our illusions; our illusions about ourselves, our illusions about others and our illusions about life. The struggles in life get us into reality. Remember, although Jesus was the Son of God, he learned obedience from what he suffered. There is something we learn and that we can learn no other way. I don't understand it, but adversity strips illusions and it brings about an authentic life. It just brings something authentic.

**SLIDE            Emotionally Healthy Spirituality – SAYS "YES" to:**

- **Self-reflection and awareness**
- **Cultivating their personal relationship with God**
- **Being broken through setbacks and difficulties**

Emotionally healthy spirituality, instead of saying "no," says "yes," and is willing to give our hurts and hearts to God in the middle of tough stuff in life. We say yes to reflection and self-awareness. Even though I wasn't raised that way, even though my church tradition may not be like that, even nobody around me is necessarily doing that, I'm choosing "yes" to being self-aware and reflective before God. I'm saying "yes" to cultivating my personal relationship with God even though nobody around me is saying it or encouraging me. And I'm saying "yes" to being broken through setbacks and difficulties. Now I'm saying "yes." Saul said "no" and it led him down a bad road.

**GRAPHIC 1            EHS Graphic 1 (EHS Journey Circles)**

We're going to talk about emotional health and contemplative spirituality in a very positive sense the next seven weeks because it requires both and if we

would embrace these two we might love God well, we might love other people well, and we might love ourselves well.

To come out of being Saul is a life-process. It's not a moment, but rather it's a journey. That's why again I'm going to beg you; I plead with you to do something with this material during the week. Get in a small group and use these Daily Devotion Books and pick it up in the Atrium.

You're going to hear it and hopefully you'll read chapter 4 in the book before you come next week, which is "Know Yourself That You May Know God." Let it get in you. Let it wash over you and meditate on the appropriate scriptures day and night. If we will do this the Bible says we'll be like a tree planted by rivers of living water and wherever we go we will bear fruit and be a blessing, and we'll have life. Our vision and my dream is for us to get this deeply into our lives and so I'm inviting you into a process.

This is not the whole Christian life, but it's a central part of what it means to be Jesus Christ to the world. As we close I want to share with you these top ten symptoms of emotionally unhealthy spirituality. We're going to put them up quickly and you have them on your Message Notes. What I want to invite you to do is reflect on which one that most applies to you. None of us are perfect and we may find several that fit us, but please don't pick all of them right now. Just pick one.

**SLIDE      Ten Top Symptoms of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality**

- 1. Using God to run from God** – what Saul does
- 2. Ignoring the emotions of anger, sadness and fear** – how is God coming to me through these
- 3. Dying to the wrong things** – the healthy pleasures of life that God gives you
- 4. Denying the past's impact on the present** – family of origin issues
- 5. Dividing life into 'secular' and 'sacred' compartments** – forgetting about him while working, etc.
- 6. Doing for God instead of being with God** – not developing a personal relationship with him
- 7. Spiritualizing away conflict** – avoiding truth just to keep peace
- 8. Covering over brokenness, weakness and failure**
- 9. Living without limits** – not letting God stop you – you try to 'do it all'

## 10. Judging the spiritual journeys of other people

As I went down this list I could see almost all of these in Saul's life at different times and spaces. And if I am honest, I can also see them in my own life. I want to invite us to take three minutes and think about this list. You have this list in your Message Notes so you may want to take those out if you've not done so already. I want us to engage in the discipline of silence and solitude. I want to ask you to look at the list. I want to ask you, "Which is one that God right now is bringing to your attention?" As we engage in the ancient biblical discipline of silence and solitude before God, I invite you to simply be before God and listen for his voice speaking into your life now, today; for to obey is better than sacrifice. The Lord delights in us listening. It gives God delight that we would listen. Do you believe you're that important, that you're that meaningful to God that God delights that you would listen to him?

Remember, the Gospel is the good news that, "Yes, I'm a human being and I fail and I mess up, but Jesus Christ lived and died for my broken places to make whole. I come before God because of the grace of Jesus Christ. I don't have to be perfect, just faithful. David was as bad a sinner as Saul, but he understood grace and mercy and he ran to God with it. I invite you today not to run away from God, but to run to God and receive God's grace and receive the beauty of the Gospel, and let it wash over you. Let's give God delight by just listening for the next few minutes.

Put your watches away and I'll take care of watching the time. Please just sit and listen and engage in silence and solitude before God, listening for God's voice.

(PAUSE for 3 minutes.)

The wonderful thing about the Christian faith is that it's about grace and mercy. We come before God not based on our performance, not based on our works, but we come based on the grace and mercy of Jesus alone. We don't ever get tired of that because it means God came and died for us on a cross and was resurrected from the dead and ascended and Christ is alive and that changes everything. God offers us a great gift and it is one you can't earn, but just needs to be received. It is the gift of grace and forgiveness and God delights most in a broken and contrite heart because that is what can receive this gift.

One of the main words we use during Lent is "repent." To repent means to literally turn around and go in a new direction. I know my own flesh and I'll go

right back to the way I've been not long after I try and change something. Maybe you have not been cultivating a life with Christ and it's time to start again. Maybe you have had some trials and setbacks and you've been basically stuck ever since, with anger or bitterness towards God. Today is your day to turn back to God because God has a gift for you. No, we can't get everything we want because God's God and we're not. But God always wants what's best for us. God is good and God's love endures forever. Our calling is to trust God; to love God, to obey, and to follow as close as can. That is the path of life.

God had a great life for Saul and he missed it. God's got a great life for each of us and God doesn't want us to miss it. But it's going to require going a path that's counterintuitive. We cannot do it based on figuring it out on our own. That would make us God. It's a matter of submitting our own understanding, our own heart to the living God and trusting in that God. It's the path of wisdom and I want to invite you today to begin that journey.

**SLIDE      Prayer**

*God, help us not to use you to run from you. Give us courage not to ignore our emotions of anger, sadness and fear and instead to see how you are coming to us through those emotions. Help us not to die to the wrong things but to enjoy the healthy pleasures of life that you have given to us. Free us from prisons from our past and help us see their impact on our lives today. Convict us when we divide life into 'secular' and 'sacred' compartments – forgetting about you while working or at school or in other areas of our lives. Help us to slow down and develop a personal relationship with you so we can just be with you instead of only doing things for you. Give us strength to deal directly with conflict so we don't avoid speaking the truth in love just to keep peace. Teach us to be honest about our brokenness, weakness and failure, knowing that you use those moments to mold and shape us. God, stop us when we try to do it all and help us to set limits so we can live as long and healthy a life as possible. And Lord, when we are tempted to judge others and their journey, give us humble hearts so we can be as gracious to others as you are to us. Speak to us today God and lead us into life that is rich and full and healthy for your glory. In the name of Christ, who came to set us free, we pray. Amen.*