

EMOTIONALLY  
HEALTHY  
SPIRITUALITY

WORKBOOK

WEEK 1  
THE PROBLEM OF  
EMOTIONALLY UNHEALTHY  
SPIRITUALITY

# THE PROBLEM OF EMOTIONALLY UNHEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

## WEEK 1

### **The Problem of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality**

**READING: CHAPTERS 1, 2, 3**

Emotional health and spiritual maturity cannot be separated. It is impossible to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature. We know. We tried — unsuccessfully for years.

When we ignore the emotional component of our lives, we move through the motions of Christian disciplines, activities and behaviors, but deeply rooted behavioral patterns from our past continue to keep us from living an authentic life of maturity in Christ.

We often fail to reflect on what is going on inside us, and around us, (emotional health) and are too busy to slow down to be with God (contemplative spirituality). As a result, we run the high risk of remaining spiritual infants, failing to develop into spiritually and emotionally mature adults in Christ.

Jay, one of our church members, described it best: “I was a Christian for twenty-two years. But instead of being a twenty-two-year-old Christian, I was a one-year-old Christian twenty-two times! I just kept doing the same things over and over and over again.”

# THE PROBLEM OF EMOTIONALLY UNHEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

## **Growing Connected . . . . .20 minutes**

1. Share your name, what you hope to get out of the group, and a few words about what makes you feel fully alive.
2. Read aloud the guidelines for your small group from page 7.

## **Starters . . . . .20 minutes**



*If using the DVD introduction,  
play it now.*

The following are the top ten symptoms of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality. Have the group take turns reading the list aloud and then share the one symptom that is most relevant in your life today.<sup>1</sup>

### **1. Using God to run from God**

(e.g. My prayers are usually about God doing my will, not me surrendering to his will).

### **2. Ignoring the emotions of anger, sadness, and fear**

(e.g. I am rarely honest with myself and/or others about the feelings, hurts and pains beneath the surface of my life).

### **3. Dying to the wrong things**

(e.g. I tend to deny healthy, God-given desires and pleasures of life [friendships, joy, music, beauty, laughter, nature] while finding it difficult to die to my self-protectiveness, defensiveness, a lack of vulnerability and judgmentalism).

### **4. Denying the past's impact on the present**

(e.g. I rarely consider how my family of origin and significant people/events from my past have shaped my present).

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## **5. Dividing life into “secular” and “sacred” compartments**

(e.g. I easily compartmentalize God to “Christian activities” while usually forgetting about him when I am working, shopping, studying or recreating).

## **6. Doing for God instead of being with God**

(e.g. I tend to evaluate my spirituality based on how much I am doing for God).

## **7. Spiritualizing away conflict**

(e.g. In the name of “peacemaking”, we bury tensions and avoid conflict rather than speak the truth in love).

## **8. Covering over brokenness, weakness, and failure**

(e.g. Instead of humility and approachability, I am highly reactive and defensive).

## **9. Living without limits**

(e.g. Those close to me would say that I often “try to do it all” or “bite off more than I can chew”).

## **10. Judging the spiritual journeys of others**

(e.g. I often find myself occupied and bothered by the faults of others).

# THE PROBLEM OF EMOTIONALLY UNHEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

## **Bible Study — 1 Samuel 15:7-24 . . . . .30 minutes**

Saul, king of Israel, was instructed by God to fight and completely destroy the Amalekites.<sup>2</sup> He succumbed, however, to the wishes of his fighting men and did only part of God's will due to a lack of self-awareness (emotional health) and attentiveness toward God (contemplation). Read 1 Samuel 15:7-24.

1. Verse 11 describes God's and Samuel's response to Saul's actions. What about their response impacts you?

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2. How does this differ from Saul's response in verse 12 and 13?

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3. What might have been going on beneath the surface of Saul's life (iceberg) that he was unaware of?<sup>3</sup>

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# THE PROBLEM OF EMOTIONALLY UNHEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

4. Reread vv.22-23. Describe in your own words how Samuel explains Saul's disobedience?

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5. What are some examples of how we go through the motions of making "burnt offerings" and "sacrifices" rather than "obeying the voice of the Lord"?

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6. Note the seriousness of v.23a. What positive step(s) could Saul have taken to become aware of his own iceberg and hear God in his situation? What might be one positive step for you?

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# THE PROBLEM OF EMOTIONALLY UNHEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

## Applications/Exercises ..... 20 minutes

Not only was Saul unaware of what was going on inside of him (emotional health), he also did not cultivate a contemplative life with God (unlike David). His “doing” for God did not flow from his “being” with God.

In the same way, our “doing” for Jesus must flow from our “being” with him. Far too often, we live vicariously off other people’s spirituality and relate to God while busily “on the run”.

1. What challenges keep you from slowing down your life to be with God?

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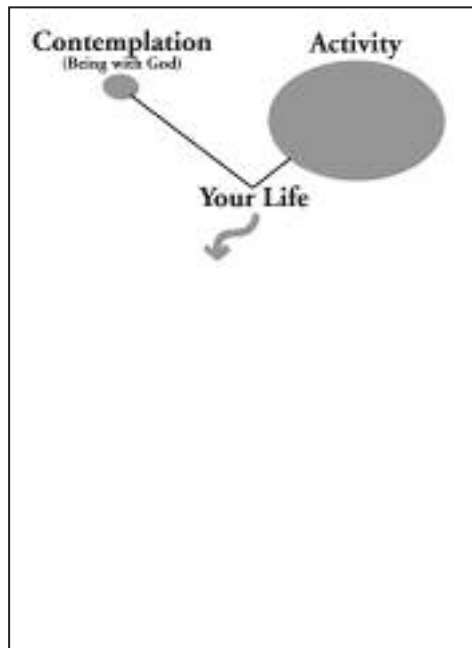
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This diagram illustrates our spiritual life where our activities (e.g., our doing) are out of balance with our contemplative life (e.g., our inner life with Jesus).



2. Using two circles like the ones to the right, draw your own diagram to illustrate how your activities (i.e. your doing) balance with your contemplative life (i.e., your being with God).<sup>4</sup>





