

BEGIN THE JOURNEY INTO EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY SPIRITUALITY
PART 1: THE PROBLEM OF EMOTIONALLY UNHEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

Our theme this morning is "Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality-Part 1" as we launch into our series. Let's open in prayer and offer our time together to Christ. That God might meet us and touch us and help us to absorb and receive. To really meditate on the Lord, day and night, that this message might go into our fabric of our beings. And so Lord, as we look at Saul, and it's so easy for us to relate to Saul and his life, I pray O God that you would take out of us and purge from us that 'Saulish-ness,' the characteristic of who Saul was and that you might grant to each of us, Lord, the heart of David that we might be men and women after your own heart. That we may not be perfect and we may be very flawed like David, but brokenness and contriteness of spirit may mark us and that we too, Lord, may grab hold of you and know you and love you, and be as passionate for you as David. So we commit ourselves to you as a church as we embark on this journey into Emotionally Healthy Spirituality in Jesus' name. Amen.

1 Samuel 15 is our text.

We all know that some things look great on the surface, but they're a disaster underneath. For example, in Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, the radar was picking up a large formation of planes heading towards Hawaii, and it was, of course, the first wave of the attack on Pearl Harbor. The officer on duty said, "Don't worry about it. It's nothing." President William McKinley in August 1901, a few days before he was assassinated said to reporters, "I have no enemies. Why should I fear?" And the CEO of a company called Digital Equipments, in 1977 said, "There's no reason for any individual to have a computer in their home." I'm not sure the company exists anymore.

And, of course, things don't look very good on the surface, but underneath they are really very good. In 1954, a manager of a club told Elvis Presley at one of his first performances in Nashville, Tennessee, "You ain't going nowhere, son. You ought to go back to driving a truck." In Germany, a teacher told a 10-year-old Albert Einstein, "You will not amount to much." And then in 1958, the CBS producer said to Barbara Walters. "With your voice, no one's going to let you broadcast."

So, things are not always as they appear to be and it can be very confusing. During the next 8 weeks, uh, we're doing a series called "Emotionally Healthy Spirituality." It's the basis for the book of the same name, which I trust

many of will be reading. The thesis of the book is "Emotional Health And Contemplative Spirituality Must be Brought Together to have Emotionally Healthy Spirituality." And that's the key thing when the two are brought together; it offers nothing short of a spiritual revolution in our lives. It transforms the places deep beneath the surface of our lives.

Today we're going to talk about the problem of emotionally unhealthy spirituality. Over the next few weeks, we will go over seven sections, all found in separate chapters in the book. We'll talk about: "Know yourself that you may know God. We'll talk about "Going back in order to go forward" and "Journeying through the wall. We're going to have a week on "Enlarging your soul through grief and loss", and "Discovering the rhythms of Daily Office and Sabbath." We're going to talk about growing into emotionally mature adults, and finally, "Going the next step to develop a Rule of Life."

We use the illustration of an iceberg, which you've seen before, because it shows the ten percent that is visible about the surface of the water. That's what everybody can see - that's behavioral change. But it's the things deep beneath the surface, those things that we can't see and that come out when we are under great stress. That's the ninety percent that Jesus is out to transform.

So there's a connection of our exterior life that corresponds to a deep change in the interior life. And those eight themes are profound. Intellectually, you can understand it quite easily. But it's another thing entirely to actually begin to implement it into your life, where it actually changes the way that you live, the way that you see God, the way that you follow Jesus Christ, and the way that you make decisions on an everyday basis. And so what we're after as a church is to integrate this more deeply into us. It's God's time for us from leadership to the lay people.

And that requires meditating on it and pondering it - you just can't read through this. You could just read through it and say, "Oh yeah, I get it!" and just move on. But you would be missing the point. It really does require talking about it. It requires trial and error. It requires working out the kinks. It requires small groups. And that's why a workbook was created for your small groups.

We want to encourage you to get it 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 because we're talking about. It's not just throwing something into your Christian lives like a little icing on the cake. We're talking about a real revolution in the way that you look at God and the way that you follow Christ. And it's so different from the way the world functions. It's even very different from the way the church-at-large functions. I'm well aware of what we are bucking up against because they're talking about changing habits - unhealthy habits that go back your whole life. And I believe it's where God's calling us. So today, we are going to talk about emotionally unhealthy spirituality.

Pete Scazzero, the author of Emotionally Healthy Spirituality says this about emotionally unhealthy spirituality, "I've lived it full force for the first 19 years of my life. I became a Christian at 19, but for the next 17 years, as a Christian, the truth was, the gospel didn't extend very far beneath my own iceberg. I continued to live on the surface. A lot of things were changing, but I was unhealthy. I embraced it. I lived it. And I experienced its destructive effects. And I think it's part of what God used in my own life to begin to show me some things. It's been a very slow process for me to come out of that into some health. And I'm still working on it. By no means, have I arrived."

But Pete isn't the first person to live an emotionally unhealthy life. Let's look at Saul.

Saul is probably one of the greatest examples in Scripture of someone whose lack of emotional health and contemplative life, and we see both, brought such destruction to his life. And he was a person with great promise. What a future he had. What a chosen-ness and anointing on his life to be someone and to do something for God. He started out very well, with very humble beginnings, but, then things didn't go so well. We're going to pick up the story in 1 Samuel chapter 15, beginning at verse 20. This is actually the second big story about his life, in terms of a negative story. He is given a command by God to muster the armies of Israel, hundreds of thousands of troops, and to go up against the Amalekites, and to wipe them out, bringing God's judgment upon them.

The prophet Samuel brings Saul this message from God to go and be obedient and to do this. And so Saul does go. He partially obeys and he goes on the mission. He musters the armies of Israel and out he goes on the mission. But he doesn't do it all. He does most of it. In verse 9, it tells us that instead of wiping out all the sheep and cattle, and the king and all of the Amalekites, "*...Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle,*

the fat calves and lambs -- everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed."

Because, pragmatically speaking, it didn't make sense to lose all those financial resources. Politically, as well, it wasn't a wise thing to do to the Amalekites. You just make more enemies. And so they made a pragmatic decision and just didn't go all the way with God. Saul went -- and no guilt about it. Saul probably felt, "Hey, at least I went! What do you want, blood?" And then the prophet Samuel shows up.

Saul's response to Samuel in verse 13 is, *"The Lord bless you. I've carried out the LORD's instructions."* I mean as far as he's concerned everything is hunky-dory. And I've done God's will. And he just can't see it. And again, the amazing thing about Saul is on the surface of his life, on the one-tenth of the iceberg above the surface - you're around him as one of his counselors or soldiers or friends, or companions. Everything looks great. I mean he just looks like a great churchgoing follower of God. You know, a great Christian. But underneath the surface, things are not so good. And that's why it makes such a great classic example of emotionally unhealthy spirituality, because he does not integrate the two, emotional health and contemplative spirituality into his life.

His 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 he never lets God get beneath the surface of the iceberg. In his whole life, Saul never lets him in. Let's read 1 Samuel 15, verse 20. Saul says *"But I did obey the LORD," Saul said. "I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. The soldiers took the sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the Lord, your God at Gilgal."* But Samuel replied, *"Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination and arrogance like the evil of idolatry."*

And so what I want to do this morning is try to take this apart and give you three basic characteristics of the emotionally unhealthy spirituality in Saul. And I want to go after these characteristics, make some applications to us, and then launch us on our journey.

The first thing Saul does as an emotionally unhealthy person here is he just says, "No" to reflection and self-awareness. He's just not going down that road to be reflective and self-aware. He's praying. He's listening. He actually prophesized at a certain point. He's doing some of God's will. It's like he's going to church. He's doing worship. He's doing the whole thing. But underneath, he's very concerned about the approval of people. In fact, that's a real theme in this text. Even when he repents. And he repents in this passage. But even repenting you'll notice in verse 24, he says, "*I sinned.*"

Even in verse 30, he says he's sorry. *Saul replied, "I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel; and come back with me (Saul), so that I may worship the LORD your God."* He wants Samuel to go back with him so he doesn't look so bad. This need or desire for approval is just so deep in him. And he can't see that. He's unaware of his own fears. He's just not in touch. He can even say, I was afraid, but his conduct shows that he doesn't even get it how his fear is dominating his life. Notice in verse 24 he actually admits it. "*I have sinned. I violated the Lord's command. I was afraid of the people...*" I was afraid. They wanted it so badly and I was afraid. "*...and so I gave into them.*"

So Saul thought to himself, all right, you know? Keep the best sheep and animals and use it as a sacrifice to God. You know, that's a good motive. But he's unaware and he's not reflective about the fact that he's got a lot of jealousy in his life. And -- and this jealousy thing, he doesn't want other people to be more popular than him or to look better than him. And obviously his big struggle is with David. As David emerges as a young man and people start liking David, he gets upset. You'll see this big theme of jealousy beginning to grow towards David in 1 Samuel chapters 18-20, when he tries to murder David six times; three times with a javelin.

A couple of different times he tries to lure him into death. He makes him a military commander, sends him into battle, hoping to get him killed. He offers David his daughter in marriage, but he says, "to get my daughter you have to go kill 200 Philistines and bring me their foreskins. Could you imagine? He's just hoping to get David killed. He eventually sends soldiers to David's house to kill him. His jealousy just consumes him. He's crazy and full of anger. It's repressed anger. He's envious and blaming, and he gets explosive.

He's totally unaware of all the stuff going on inside of him, and he's acting it out. His jealousy and envy get to a point where he can't even think or see straight. In the middle of all, this he really believes he's doing God's will. That's the killer! And if you're in a small group with him, I mean he's probably leading the small group, and he thinks he's doing wonderfully. But he's shallow. His spirituality is very shallow. And he's really not paying attention to God. He goes to church, but he truly wants the approval of people and he's making decisions out of fear, and he's got a lot of jealousy and envy inside of him.

Have you ever seen this type of behavior? There was a community leadership meeting for small group leaders and others recently. Showing up for the meeting, there are some who are full of resentment towards others in the room for the entire time they were there. Or, have you ever found yourself getting jealous of somebody at work or at school? You see them prospering and doing great and it starts to eat away at you. And, you know, rather than get along with God and say, "God, I'm really jealous! Lord, I bring you this jealousy and hatred of this person that I can't stand. Help me Lord to actually rejoice that someone else does well."

But rather than to bring it to God, you just push it away. You end up acting all sweet and nice. When you see that person at coffee, you act very sweet, like nothing's wrong, like everything is great. You haven't brought it to God or been reflective about it. You know what it's like to be singing songs in worship, songs of God's great power and love, but inside you are just mad at God. But you're not going to tell him.

Like God doesn't know? But you're singing to him, and you're angry at him. You're singing of a love of God and the power of God, but your whole life is fear. You're making decisions based on fear all the time. Not based on God. And so parents raising your kids, and we've got a great responsibility to raise our children, but you're pushing and driving your children because of fear. Not out of healthy parental love for them. We often make decisions at work or about our career based on fear, and not prudence, and definitely not about God.

Or maybe you know what it's like to give your body to somebody sexually or get into a relationship out of fear. You tell yourself, it's better than being alone. Or you know it's like to be in conflict with people and know that you need to say some hard things, but it is out of fear that you don't engage them because you don't want to risk

the fact that they might not like you. And so you shrink back and you don't tell the whole truth, and you tell what we call the "half lie." And sometimes, we do hear God's will; we kind of know it intuitively, but it's too emotionally painful to go down that road. It requires too much of this as reflection and self-awareness.

So what happens, is we live one appearance above the surface, and another reality underneath the surface that just doesn't correspond with what others see. And it happens very slowly and over a long period of time. You see, as I thought about myself, reflecting for me, as a Christian, 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 and what was coming up. And, I felt guilty about it. So rather than to feel guilty about it I didn't know how to process my thoughts and my feelings before God. And so it was just easier to deny they even existed. You say they're 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 won't even go there. You see the key -- staying in touch with God -- and staying in touch with yourself, requires silence. It requires solitude. And it's not just paying attention to what's going on in life around you, but it's actually looking at the motives inside. You need to ask yourself, "Why am I doing what I'm doing? What are the feelings that I've got about what's going on? And what are my thoughts on the inside?" And it's about wrestling with these things. You see, you can't be in touch with God if you're not in touch with yourself. And Saul is not in touch with himself.

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

And because of a lot of bad theology, many of us are not in touch with what's going on inside of us. What happens is our whole relationship with God gets all twisted. Our hearing of God, like in Saul's case, is distorted, but we're unaware of it, because we don't have any time to reflect. We just keep ourselves busy. You see, I need

silence and solitude to be in touch with me. To know what I'm thinking and feeling and what I'm thinking and feeling about. What I'm thinking and feeling. And 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, our 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.

And 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? His life is full of it. But not Saul!. You see him doing a lot, but you'll never see Saul writing poems and music and psalms for worship. Or pouring out his conflicted inner self. David's has the same conflicts of all of us. The same conflicts of Saul. If I look at Saul's conflicts internally, I think I relate to all of them. The difference was that David was aware of them and he poured them out before God. And he prayed and he wrestled with them.

He was not evading them, Saul is just unaware. He's unreflective and he just keeps moving along for God. And as a result he makes a decision. And we can make that decision, can't we, so easily, because most of the people in our culture aren't reflective and self-aware. We can so easily say, "You know what, I'm just going to live my life on autopilot and just move along and keep myself busy."

Then, the second thing he does is he says, "No" to cultivating his personal relationship with God. He doesn't spend the energy and take the time to cultivate. And God had touched his life early on. He's very humble and he receives a blessing. The Holy Spirit comes on he's made a king.

So he gets this grace and mercy, but he doesn't do anything with it. He doesn't actively or consciously cultivate, develop, or nurture his relationship with God, his personal relationship with the living God. He just kind of slides along on autopilot. And you know what's heavy is, is that there is no indication in his life, at least in Scripture, of him cultivating that personal relationship. 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. But in a hidden life, when nobody's looking, unlike David, there's no indication. Instead, he wants to be known by people. He's very concerned about what others are thinking about him and how others are viewing him. And he really wants the benefits of God. It's very important to get the

blessing. He listens only as it benefits him. But when listening becomes problematic, he generally just ignores it. It's kind of a selected listening. You know, you hear half of it and you forget the rest. Look at verse 22 when God speaks to him. I mean these are poignant, sharp words, not just in Saul's life, or in the Old Testament, but for us today.

When God says in verse 22, *"Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices more than in obeying the voice of the LORD?..."* I mean Saul, 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. But you're not -- but you're not listening. You're on autopilot. It's like you had this original encounter with God and you're just going on autopilot, but you're not listening. Your life is not one of cultivating and listening to me, in a relationship, and following me. *"for to obey is better than sacrifice and to heed is better than the fat of rams."*

That's the exact same verse Jesus quotes to the Pharisees. Look at verse 23, God says *"For rebellion is like the sin of divination,..."* He says you're in rebellion. Saul thinks he's obeying everything. And then God compares it to the sin of witchcraft. It's like you're going to a witch or a psychic for direction. And God says, *"and your arrogance is like the evil of idolatry."* And the killer is, Saul thinks he's humble. And so he gets this really, harsh word, and it doesn't even phase him! I mean he repents, but it's half repentance, you know, it's short-lived and he just goes back to how he lives before. And, he's not asking the question. "How does this apply to me? What's God saying to me?"

I mean you could sit here this morning and think, "That's a clever message. Where did he get those opening illustrations? That gave me some food for thought." You know you read books and go to church. But you're spending your time evaluating, not listening. Is the sermon clever or boring, or interesting or could I share this with a friend. You are focusing on other things rather than cultivating the relationship, a personal relationship with God, and asking, "What's God saying to me?"

If you're sitting there saying, "Man, I'm just struggling with toothpicks to keep my eyes open here, you know?" But even in that state, you're asking the question, "What is God saying to me?" It's personal. "How is the living God coming to me, versus it's just kind of out there?" 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. And, 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. He couldn't do both. It was too much energy.

And you know what's interesting? As I reflect on myself as well, I was letting God come in from the outside. I was listening to Scripture and other people and prophetic words, and all. But I realize what's different and what changed for me is that I moved into emotionally healthy spirituality when I realized that God is inside of me, and I began to say, "How do I feel about what's going on? How is God coming or not coming to me through that part?" And I started to look at God speaking to me through all kinds of things, but from the inside out. Not just from the outside in. Because when you cut out the inside of yourself, you are cutting out a part of who you are.

And God's speaking to you. If you remove the inside, it distorts the hearing of God. God's coming in all directions. And the two were joined both inside and outside. And my growth curve is really not to be a Saul, of course, and to do only one thing at a time. If you are a multitasker, you know how hard it is to just do one thing at a time. Slow down and be with God. It's sad that that's what it's about, in that 24-hour time period. Some of us aren't succeeding yet, but we're working on it. You know you need to slow down, stop and be with God. , part of you, you know slowing down and stop and be with God. But -- but to do one thing at a time and not be multitasking. You know, try this.

When I'm driving a car, I'm making a commitment not to make a phone call or to answer the phone. I'm just going to drive the car, you know? Or I'm just going to eat breakfast; not eat breakfast while I'm on the computer and answering the phone. You may it find it hard to believe, but for me too, it's a challenge, 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.

A pastor, John Ortberg, once asked Dallas Willard, "Before I start this ministry, what do you suggest?" Dallas told him, "Ruthlessly eliminate hurry." Then John asked, "Okay, what's next?"

I realized that we talk about contemplation, but we also need to unpack it. Contemplation is about clearing space

out in your life, so you can go deep and you can go wide. It's about developing the interior space of your being.

And it's about the love of God that we sing and talk about. It's about actually getting beyond your head and into your experience, into your heart, and having it become your life. That's why, you know, 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 not "Scrooge?" I can know, intellectually that God is Abba father. God is love and he's my Abba and I jump into his lap- my dad. And I live in that love relationship with a Father who loves me without conditions. But the truth is I can live like he's a tight fisted "Scrooge" or he's like an disinterested parent, or he's like General Patton. Like he's a military commander, commanding me to do things, you know? Or he's a partner in a business venture. Where you do for him - You came to church; he blesses you in the afternoon.

It's that give and take. But, 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 "me." What's God's saying and doing to me? They didn't take the time and energy to actually cultivate it.

Part of the theme of what we're talking about in these next eight weeks is taking responsibility for your life in God and not blaming. You'll notice Saul's a big blamer, isn't he? He's blaming a lot of people why he's messing up. But you're taking responsibility for your life in God. And to cultivate your personal relationship with God, nobody can do that for you. We have small groups; we have a church and lots of things going on around us, but it's your responsibility, and it's a big theme for us.

Thirdly, Saul just doesn't say 'no' to reflection and awareness. He doesn't just say 'no' to developing his personal relationship with God. He says 'no' to being broken through setbacks and difficulties. He refuses to be broken by it. Setbacks, trials, difficulties, and testings from God come to every one of us. There are no exceptions to this through history. But Saul just refuses to be broken by it.

He just gets up and fights again. He'll come to the altar and cry, but he's not broken by anything. But his trial's come. He has to wait on God. In chapter 13 it says the army of the Philistines are about to wipe them out and

they're hanging by a thread. And God says He's going to show up the seventh day. And it's the seventh day and God's not showing up. He's in this testing of having to wait. You know what it's like. We all know what it's like to wait.

Testing and waiting breaks your self-sufficiency. And Saul just says, "I can't take it." And he takes things into his own hands. In chapter 15, he feels the pressure of his soldiers to do something. Let's keep the wealth, and give it back to God, of course. It's a task for him to resist it and he just doesn't do it. But, you see it's only through your hurts and your setbacks and your sufferings and testings that you will learn humility. There is no other way to learn brokenness and humility except through trials and testings. I have tried to memorize the verse in 1 Samuel 15:22-23, "*Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice.*"

But Saul does not have the first Beatitude in him, which is "*Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" Those are the first words out of the mouth of Jesus in the New Testament. "*Blessed are the poor in spirit. They get the Kingdom of Heaven.*" Saul does not embrace poverty of spirit. He does not want to be that absolutely dependent, hanging on God. But you cannot have God without poverty of spirit. You can have yourself, you can have religion, but you cannot have heaven and taste it. And you have to experience that dependence on him. You know, we forget that Hebrews 5:8 says about the life of Jesus. Jesus, the son of God, it says this. "*Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered.*" Now let me ask you something.

Although he was a son, as a human, he learned obedience from what he suffered. That's worth memorizing, isn't it? Do you think that you can learn or I can learn brokenness and obedience any other way? And Saul, when testings come in his life, he just throws them out. God's trying to humble Saul and break him to make him something great. And Saul was just trying to be something great. And he doesn't get what's in Deuteronomy 8:2-3. I encourage you to meditate on and memorize this Scripture. It's a great one. Moses is leading the people into the Promised Land. "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 then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the

mouth of the LORD." You see, you'll only know if you'll keep God's commands when you are humble. You may think, "Ah, God, believe me, I'll keep them. You can skip the test." But God says, "No. I humbled you to test you and to know what's in your heart. He humbled you a second time, causing you to hunger. Think about this, God would cause you to hunger and have to wait, then he would feed you only on manna. What about the steak dinner?"

No, I'm going to keep you hanging on manna, one day at a time. Why? To teach you something that you can learn no other way; that man does not live on bread alone. Is it supposed to be "bread alone?" Not on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. And there is no other way to learn. You see, 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. Your self-will and stubbornness has to be ripped out. And so 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 testing, and people that you love don't love you back.

And God here is letting you know that he is stripping you of your attachments to the world, that you may trust him. And you're saying I'm not looking to be stripped of my attachments to the world. I know, but God loves you enough that he's seeking to do that for you. He wants you to relate to him out of a broken spirit and you cannot get what you want. You cannot get all you want. It would be a disaster. Saul wants a lot, but to wait? You'll never see him writing about "wait on the Lord" like David. It's not in his vocabulary. Living before the mystery of God is not in his vocabulary. So he 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 testings and trials to destroy our illusions; our illusions about ourselves, our illusions about others, our illusions about life. It gets us into reality. Remember, "*although he was a son, Jesus, 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. Proverbs 20, verse 9 says, '*Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin"?''*

You know who would say it? Saul. I am clean and without sin, you know? But a broken person would say no, not me! y You know I'm not. So, emotionally healthy spirituality, instead of saying 'no', says 'yes.' We say 'yes' to

reflection and self-awareness. Even though I wasn't raised that way, even though my church tradition is not like that, and no one around me is necessarily doing this, I'm still choosing 'yes' to be self-aware and reflective before God. I'm saying 'yes' to cultivating my personal relationship with God even though nobody around me is encouraging me. I feel very alone like Abraham by doing this. 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.

And so, for the next seven weeks, we're going to talk about emotional health and contemplative spirituality in a very positive sense. Because it requires both - that we would embrace these two that we might love God well, we might other people well, and we might love ourselves well. And it really is a path. To come out of being Saul is a life. It's not a moment, it's a path. And that's why I'm going to beg you; I plead with you to do something with this material during the week. Get in small groups and use these little workbooks. You're going to hear from the pulpit.

You're going to hear it. Hopefully, you'll read the book and read it in the book. And your small groups will hit the same themes. You need to hit these themes over and over again. In fact, I'm going to ask you to read chapter 4 before you even show up next week, which is "Know Yourself That You May Know God." Read it. Let it get in you. I mean if you just let it wash over you and meditate on the appropriate scriptures day and night. And the Bible says you'll be like a tree planted by rivers of living water and wherever you go you will bear fruit and be a blessing, and you'll have life. But again, my dream is that we want to get this deeply into our lives. And so I'm inviting you into a process.

This is a process to get on it and say, "I'm going to enter into this process for the next two months." It's not the whole Christian life, but it's a piece. That's what God is bringing to us right now and we want to receive it. So, as we close here, we are going to look at a list of the ten top symptoms of emotionally unhealthy spirituality. Some of you have seen this list. Let's put them up on the screen and I want you to pick the one that most applies to you, all right? Please don't pick all of them right now. Just one, okay?

The first is using God to run from God. And that's clearly what Saul does. Your prayers are basically my will be done, not God's.

Second, I ignore the emotions of anger, sadness, and fear. I don't look at how my God may be coming to me through those emotions.

Third, I'm dying to the wrong things. Maybe you're dying to the healthy pleasures of life that God's giving you and desires.

Fourth, you're denying the past's impact on the present. You have not looked at some of the issues of your family of origin and your culture and how it impacts you today.

The fifth symptom is dividing your life into secular and sacred compartments. You have a spiritual life right now in church, and Sunday mornings, and maybe in the mornings when you have a quiet time, but you don't see all of life as Gods. You have work and recreation in another compartment.

Sixth, you're doing for God instead of being with God. Again, it's not developing your personal relationship with God.

Seventh, you're just spiritualizing away conflict, you know, instead of just this is and that, whatever.

Eighth, covering over brokenness, weakness, and failure. Again, Saul was a classic at this.

Ninth, you live without limits, instead of letting God stop you and say no.

Tenth, you judge the spiritual journeys of other people.

And, if I went down this list, I could probably pick almost all of these in Saul's life at different times.

I want to invite the worship team to come forward and I want us to take three minutes to engage in the silence of solitude and silence and the discipline of silence and solitude. And I want to ask you to look at that list. And I want to ask you, which is the one that God right now is bringing to your attention? And as we engage in the ancient biblical discipline of silence and solitude before God, I ask that you would just be before God and listen to him for your life now, today; *"for to obey is better than sacrifice."* The Lord delights in our listening. You know, it gives God delight that you would listen to him. Do you believe you're that important, that you're that meaningful to God that he delights when you listen to him? And so I'd like us to give God delight by just listening before him.

This is going to help as you ponder which one of these is most relevant for you. And remember, the Gospel is the good news that says, "Yes, I'm a human being and I fail and I mess up, but the Gospel tells me that Jesus lived and died on my behalf. And I come before God in the righteousness of Jesus alone and His record." David was as bad a sinner as Saul, but he understood grace and mercy and he ran to God with his problems. So I'm going to invite you not to run away from God, but to run to him and receive his grace and receive the beauty of the Gospel, and let it wash over you.

Put your watches away, all right? I will keep track of the time for us. And we will engage in silence and solitude before God, and I want to invite you to listen to him. And I want to invite the Prayer Teams to come forward. And let's close with this. The wonderful thing about Christianity unlike all the world religions, is that it's about grace and mercy. And, you know, we come before God, not based on our performance, not based on our works. We come based on the righteousness of Jesus alone. And you don't ever get tired of that because it means God came and died for us on a cross and resurrected from the dead and ascended to the Father. And he's alive. And he offers us a great gift. It's just come and receive grace and forgiveness. Psalm 51:17 tells us that "*...he delights in a broken and contrite heart.*"

As I close with the blessing, you will be dismissed, and I invite you to eat and drink from the great gifts of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It's available every week. Those that would like to come, please come, and take your time. We'll keep it quiet in here and you can come in and enjoy communion.

At the same time, we always have Prayer Teams available to your left. They stay as long as people are here, sometimes for a long time after service ends. But we're not in any rush to go anywhere.

If you're here today, and you've not been reflective at all, knowing that you're not in a good path. You're just racing through life. Stop and just slow down. You may come and say, "Oh, I'm afraid. I may be afraid, but I'm coming. I need prayer."

I need prayer. It's very humbling to come and ask for prayer. Or maybe you're not cultivating your relationship with Jesus. You're a Christian. But you're on autopilot and you know you're not going anywhere. Not that it's always fireworks, but you've not done your piece in the cultivating, and you need to come.

And really the word is "repent." Make a U-turn this morning and begin to make that shift back and say "Oh God, give me grace. Because I know my own flesh; I'll go right back to the way I've been." Or maybe you're one of the people here and you are in some trials and setbacks or maybe you had one that ended your Christian life, and you've been basically stuck ever since, and anger or bitterness towards God. And you know what? It is your day to say it and really repent of that because that was God's gift to you to stop you from continuing down that path. You can't get everything you want. But God's God and you're not.

And he really does know what's best for you. He's good and his love endures forever. And our calling is to trust him; to love him, to obey, and to follow him. And that is the path of life. God had a great life for Saul and he missed it. He missed it. God's got a great life for you. He does not want you to miss it. But it's going to require going down a path that's counterintuitive. You cannot do it based on your figuring it out. That would make you God. It's a matter of submitting your own understanding, your own heart to the living God and trusting him. It's the way. It's the path of wisdom. And I want to invite you.

If you're in that place of rejecting setbacks, come and turn and surrender yourself to God. Okay, let's all bow. I want to speak a blessing over you and then the altar will be open and the communion table.

So as Moses prayed over the people of Israel, so I speak over your life this blessing, as you go out into the world, the Lord bless you. The Lord bless you. Forget about people. The Lord bless you. May the Lord keep you. May the Lord keep you. Not even you keeping yourself. May the Lord keep you. May the Lord make his face shine upon you. Just to see the face of God. May his face just shine upon you. Not shine away from you. May it shine full-force upon you. And may the Lord be gracious to you.

And the Lord turn his face towards you. Not away from you. May the Lord turn his face towards you. May you bask in his face. May you revel and just sit in his face, facing his love for you. And then the blessing goes "May the Lord give you peace." Not circumstances or the world or other people, may the Lord God Almighty fill you with peace as you go out of here. And whatever you're going to confront today, tomorrow, or all through this week, may he give you peace in Jesus name. Amen. God bless everybody. Have a wonderful day.

