

EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

LESSON # 1

Recognizing the Tip-of-the-Iceberg (Something is Desperately Wrong)



1. How do you respond to Peter's opening statement? *“Christian Spirituality, without an integration of emotional health, can be deadly – to yourself, your relationship with God, and the people around you.”* (p. 7)

2. Is pretending safer than honesty and vulnerability? (p. 10)

3. Have you ever been stuck at a level of spiritual and emotional development? (p. 10)

4. Church Leavers (pp. 10-11)

- a. No longer attend
- b. Have become inactive
- c. Turn their back on God

5. Some try different Approaches to Discipleship (pp. 14-15)

- a. More Bible Study
- b. Body Life (small groups)
- c. Spending more time in prayer
- d. Confronting demonic powers
- e. Soaking in the presence of God through worship
- f. Serving the poor
- g. Prophetic insight
- h. Accepting God's gracious righteousness

Can the current discipleship models add an additional protective layer against growing up emotionally?

6. Getting Your attention Through Pain (pp. 16-18)

- a. Not experiencing joy or contentment Feeling unhappy, frustrated, overworked
[Matthew 11:30]
- b. Angry, bitter, depressed (overworked and underachieving)
- c. Lonely and tired of fighting the battle alone

Do you agree with the statement “Pain has an amazing ability to open us to new truth and to get us moving?” (p. 18)

7. Different Parts/Components of Who We Are

- a. Social
- b. Intellectual
- c. Spiritual
- d. Physical
- e. Emotional

Is the best to approach life through fact, faith and feelings (in that order)? (p. 19)

“The sad reality is that most of us will not go forward until the pain of staying where we are is unbearable.” (p. 21)

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LESSON # 2

The Top Ten Symptoms of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality (Diagnosing the Problem)

1. Using God to Run from God (pp. 24-25)

Creating a “*great deal of ‘God-activity’ and ignore difficult areas in my life that God wants me to change.*” (p. 24) Discuss the examples on pp. 24-25.

2. Ignoring the Emotions of Anger, Sadness, and Fear (pp. 26-27)

“*Many of us as Christians believe wholeheartedly that anger, sadness and fear are sins to be avoided, indicating something is wrong with our spiritual life [Philippians 4:6; Isaiah 41:10; Jeremiah 17:9]*” (p. 26)

How do you respond to this thought? “Sadly, some of our Christian beliefs and expectations today have, as Thomas Merton wrote, ‘merely deadened our humanity, instead of setting it free to develop richly, in all its capacities, under the influence of grace.’” (p. 27)

3. Dying to the Wrong Things (pp. 27-28)

Can you agree with Peter’s statement that if we apply Luke 9:23 too rigidly that we will end up with just the opposite of what God intended for us? (p. 27)

“*We are to die to the sinful parts of who we are* (p. 27). *God never asked us to die to the healthy desires and pleasures of life* (p. 28). *Part of the sanctifying process of the Holy Spirit is to strip away the false constructs we have accumulated and enable our true selves to emerge* (p. 28).”

4. Denying the Past Impact on the Present (pp. 28-29)

Have you ever misunderstood II Corinthians 5:17? (p. 28)

“*The work of growing in Christ (what theologians call sanctification) does not mean we don’t go back to the past as we press ahead to what God has for us. It actually demands that we go back in order to break free from unhealthy and destructive patterns that prevent us from loving ourselves and others as God designed.*” (p. 29)

5. Dividing Our Lives into “Secular” and “Sacred” Compartments (pp. 29-31)

Human beings have an uncanny ability to live compartmentalized, double lives. (p. 29)

“*According to Gallup polls and sociologists, one of the greatest scandals of our day is that ‘evangelical Christians are as likely to embrace lifestyles every bit as hedonistic, materialistic, self-centered and sexually immoral as the world in general’*” (p. 30)

6. Doing for God Instead of Being with God (pp. 31-32)

How do you respond to Peter's conclusion that "work for God that is not nourished by a deep interior life with God will eventually be contaminated by other things such as ego, power, needing approval of and from others, and buying into the wrong ideas of success and the mistaken belief that we can't fail?" (p. 32)

We can become "human doings" not "human beings" (p. 32)

7. Spiritualizing Away Conflict (pp. 32-33)

Can you agree with the statement "the belief that smoothing over disagreements or 'sweeping them under the rug' is to follow Jesus, continues to be one of the most destructive myths alive in the church today?" (p. 32)

Have you ever been guilty of any of the things listed on p. 33?

"Jesus shows us that healthy Christians do not avoid conflict. His life was filled with it!" (p. 33)

8. Covering over Brokenness, Weakness, and Failure (pp. 33-34)

"The pressure to present an image of ourselves as strong and spiritually 'together' hovers over most of us." (p. 33)

Do the Scriptures of Psalm 51:17; II Corinthians 12:7-10 trigger any response from you? (p. 34)

"Moses was a murderer. Hosea's wife was a prostitute. Peter rebuked God! Noah got drunk. Jonah was a racist. Jacob was a liar. John Mark deserted Paul. Elijah burned out. Jeremiah was depressed and suicidal. Thomas doubted. Moses had a temper. Timothy had ulcers. And all these people send the same message: that every human being on earth, regardless of their gifts and strengths, is weak, vulnerable, and dependent on God and others." (p. 34)

9. Living Without Limits (pp. 34-35)

Have you ever carried around guilt for not doing enough? (p. 34)

"This guilt often leads to discouragement. And discouragement often leads Christians to disengagement and isolation from 'needy people' because they don't know what else to do." (p. 35)

Does it not make sense that "We cannot serve everyone in need?" (p. 35)

“He (Jesus) did not heal every sick person in Palestine. He did not raise every dead person. He did not feed all the hungry beggars or set up job development centers for the poor of Jerusalem.” (p. 35)

10. Judging Other People’s Spiritual Journey

How do you respond to the quote “If you are occupied with your own faults, you have no time to see those of your neighbor?” [Matthew 7:1-5] (p. 36)

We must be careful not to get into the thinking that “we have much to give and therefore little to receive from others.” (p. 36)

Is it not true that “By failing to let others be themselves before God and move at their own pace, we inevitably project onto them our own discomfort with their choice to live life differently than we do?” Have you ever made this mistake?

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LESSON # 3

The Radical Antidote: Emotional Health and Contemplative Spirituality (Bringing Transformation to the Deep Places)

How do you respond to the comment “We’re afraid of God’s will being done because we can’t control what He will do, when He will do it, how He will do it, and what the outcome might be?” (p. 43)?

Is it possible for a person to become emotionally healthy without Christ (p. 44)?

1. Emotional Health is concerned with (p. 45):

- naming, recognizing, and managing our own feelings;
- identifying with and having active compassion for others;
- initiating and maintaining close and meaningful relationships;
- breaking free from self-destructive patterns;
- being aware of how our past impacts our present;
- developing the capacity to express our thoughts and feelings clearly, both verbally and nonverbally;
- respecting and loving others without having to change them;
- asking for what we need, want, or prefer clearly, directly, and respectfully;
- accurately self-assessing our strengths, limits, and weaknesses and freely sharing them with others;
- learning the capacity to resolve conflict maturely and negotiate solutions that consider the perspective of others;
- distinguishing and appropriately expressing our sexuality and sensuality; and
- grieving well

Do you see any areas above that you are not yet emotionally healthy in?

2. Contemplative Spirituality Focuses on Classic Practices and Concerns Such as (pp. 45,46):

- awakening and surrendering to God’s love in any and every situation;
- positioning ourselves to hear God and remember his presence in all we do;
- communing with God, allowing Him to fully indwell the depth of our being;
- practicing silence, solitude, and a life of unceasing prayer;
- resting attentively in the presence of God;
- understanding our earthy life as a journey of transformation toward ever-increasing union with God;

2. Contemplative Spirituality Focuses on Classic Practices and Concerns Such as

(pp. 45,46) (Contd.):

- finding the true essence of who we are in God;
- loving others out of a life of love for God;
- developing a balance, harmonious rhythm of life that enables us to be aware of the sacred in all of life;
- adapting historic practices of spirituality that are applicable today;
- allowing our Christian lives to be shaped by the rhythms of the Christian calendar rather than the culture; and
- living in committed community that passionately loves Jesus above all else.

Do you see any areas above that you are not yet spiritually healthy in?

Have you been able to join the two together (p.46)? One deals with loving relationship with God while the other primarily deals with loving others well. John makes an interesting statement *“In fact, the extent to which we love and respect ourselves is the extent to which we will be able to love and respect others.”*

3. The Three Gifts of Integration

- ✓ the gift of slowing down (Mary & Martha) (pp. 48-53);
- ✓ the gift of anchoring in God’s love (healing our image of how God sees us and how we see God) (pp. 53-57); and
- ✓ the gift of breaking free from illusions (pleasures, accomplishments, relationships, accumulation of things) (pp. 57-60)

4. David: a Model of Emotional Health and Contemplative Integration

Can you identify with David’s Psalm of Prayer in Psalm 55:1,2,4,5,16,17)? (p.61)

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LESSON # 4

Knowing Yourself That You May Know God (Becoming Your Authentic Self)

“Put off your old self . . . and put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Ephesians 4:22,24

“How can you draw close to God when you are far from your self?”

Augustine
Confessions A.D. 400

Can you relate to Peter’s comment that ‘Like most Christians today, I was taught that feelings are unreliable and not to be trusted?’” (p. 69).

Daniel Goleman, the author of *“Emotional Intelligence”* has classified emotions into eight main families:

- ☹ Anger (fury, hostility, irritability, annoyance)
- ☹ Sadness (grief, self-pity, despair, dejection, loneliness)
- ☹ Fear (anxiety, edginess, nervousness, fright, terror, apprehension)
- ☺ Enjoyment (joy, relief, contentment, delight, thrill, euphoria, ecstasy)
- ☺ Love (acceptance, trust, devotion, adoration)
- ☺ Surprise (shock, amazement, wonder)
- ☹ Disgust (contempt, scorn, aversion, distaste, revulsion)
- ☹ Shame (guilt, remorse, humiliation, embarrassment, chagrin or humiliation)

You Feel – Even If You Are Unaware of it (pp. 71-73)

“We can’t reflect and respond thoughtfully to our feelings if we don’t know what they are . . . The reality is that our bodies know our feelings before our minds (p. 71).

“We feel defective because we ought not to be feeling the ‘wrong’ things. We then lie to ourselves, sometimes convincing ourselves that we aren’t feeling anything because we don’t think we should be feeling it. We shut down our humanity.” (p. 72)

The Great Temptation Toward a False Self

Temptation One: I Am What I Do (Performance)

“If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” (Matthew 4:3).

“Our culture asks the same question. What have you achieved? How have you demonstrated your usefulness? What do you do? Most of us consider ourselves worthwhile if we have scored sufficient successes – in work, family, school, church, relationships. (p. 75).

Have your earthy successes tempted you to find your worth? (p. 76).

Temptation Two: I Am What I Have (Possession)

“All this I will give you . . . if you will bow down and worship me.” (Matthew 4:9)

“Our culture measures our success by what we own . . . Our sense of worth is tied to our positions at work – the money and perks. (p. 76).”

How do you respond to Peter’s comment “My culture, family of origin, and flesh tell me that only possessions and talents and applause from other people are sufficient for security? Jesus models surrender of my will to the love of the Father as the true anchor for who I am?” (p. 77).

Temptation Three: I Am What Others Think (Popularity)

“If you are the Son of God . . . throw yourself down.” (Matthew 4:6)

“True freedom comes when we no longer need to be somebody special in other people’s eyes because we know we are loveable and good enough.” (p. 77).

Have you remained ‘trapped in living a pretend life out of an unhealthy concern for what other people think?’ (p. 78).

Jesus’ True Self (p. 81)

1. Jesus disappointed His family (Mark 3:21)
2. Jesus disappointed the people He grew up with in Nazareth (Luke 4:28-29)
3. Jesus disappointed His closest friends
4. Jesus disappointed the crowds
5. Jesus disappointed the religious leaders

Differentiation - Living Faithful to Your True Self (pp. 82-84)

Differentiation - Murray Bowen “refers to a person’s capacity to define his or her own life’s goals and values apart from the pressures of those around them.” (p. 82).

Comment on the second paragraph on p. 82 which explains in further detail how differentiation is seen by how we live. How can anyone dismantle their false self and allow the true self in Christ to emerge?

Consider the following four practical truths.

1. Pay Attention to Your Interior in Silence and Solitude (pp. 85-86)

“We need to be alone so we can listen.” (p. 85). “Silence and solitude are so foundational to emotionally healthy spirituality that they are a theme repeated through this book.” (p. 86).

2. Find Trusted Companions (pp. 86-88)

“At least two critical forces hinder such a profound shift. First, the pressure of others to keep us living lives that are not our own is enormous. And second, our own stubborn self-will is much deeper and more insidious than we think.” (p. 87).

3. Move Out of Your Comfort Zone (pp. 88-89)

Have you ever experienced what Peter described as “The pain of living a life that was not God’s for me finally was greater than the pain of change?” (p. 89).

4. Pray for Courage (p. 90)

Opposition to Change Comes Often in Three Stages

Stage One: “You are wrong for changing and here are the reasons why.”

Stage Two: “Change back and we will accept you again.”

Stage Three: “If you don’t change back, these are the consequences (which are then listed)

“Grant, Lord, that I may know myself that I may know thee.”

Augustine

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LESSON # 5

Going Back in Order to Go Forward

Do you have any response to the statement “While we are affected by powerful external events and circumstances through our earthly lives, our families are the most powerful group in which we will ever belong to (p.95)? Compare with the last paragraph on p. 97.

There are often patterns that repeat themselves from one generation to the other. Is it caused by “nature (DNA)” or nurture (environment)? (p.96)

Our family history can affect our present conditions (Exodus 20:4-6; 34:6-7; II Samuel 12:10).

Have you ever noticed the pattern that is shown in the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (p. 98)?

What would be the Ten Commandments of your family in the categories listed on p. 99?

Like most people, I did not want to betray my family. Looking to the past illuminates the present. But make no mistake about it; it is painful (p. 101).

We have great news in Jesus Christ. “Discipleship, then, is the putting off of the sinful patterns and habits of our biological families and being transformed to live as members of Christ’s family . . . We honor our parents, culture, and histories but obey God (p. 103)”

“Those who cannot learn from the past are doomed to repeat it.”

Philosopher George Santanya

If you were to make a genogram of your family, what would stand out that is still affecting you (pp. 104-109)?

“You see, even the worst and the most painful family experiences are part of our total identity (p. 109).”

Where do you see your family in the Beaver System Model (pp. 110-111)?

1. Level Five: The Family in Pain
2. Level Four: The Borderline Family
3. Level Three: The Rule-Bound Family
4. Level Two: The Adequate Family
5. Level One: The Optimal Family

Joseph Is a Wonderful Example of How to Go Back to Go Forward (pp. 111-114).

1. Joseph Had a Profound Sense of the Bigness of God (p. 112) [Genesis 45:8].
2. Joseph Admitted Honestly the Sadness and Losses of His Family (p. 113) [Genesis 45:2]
3. Joseph Rewrote His Life Script According to Scripture (p. 113) [Ephesians 4:30-32]
4. Joseph Partnered with God to Be a Blessing (p. 114) [Genesis 50:20]

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LESSON # 6

Journey Through the Wall (Letting Go of the Power and Control)

“Emotionally healthy spirituality requires you to go through the pain of the Wall - or, as the ancients called it, “the dark night of the soul” . . . Emotionally healthy spirituality helps provide a (partial) roadmap of both how one goes through the Wall and what it means to begin living on the other side.” (p. 117)

God called Abraham . . . Moses . . . the Israelites . . . David . . . Jeremiah . . . the twelve disciples (Judas didn't make it through the wall) to go through their wall. (p. 118)

THE WALL - STAGES OF FAITH (pp. 119-121)

Stage 1: Life-Changing Awareness of God - our need for mercy

Stage 2: Discipleship - part with the Christian community of faith

Stage 3: The Active Life - Actively working for God and serving His people

Stage 4: The Wall and the Journey Inward - God brings us to the Wall

Stage 5: The Journey Outward - Giving out of a newness of ourselves and God

Stage 6: Transformed by Love - Surrender and obedience to God's perfect will
[I John 4:18]

Can you identify with the statement “It is not simply a one-time event that we pass through and get beyond. It appears to be something we return to as part of our ongoing relationship with God?” (p. 121)

STUCK AT THE WALL

“Some of us hide behind our faith to flee the pain rather than trust God to transform us through it.” (p. 122)

**SEVEN DEADLY SPIRITUAL IMPERFECTIONS OF BEGINNERS
THAT MUST BE PURIFIED (p. 123)**

- 1. Pride**
- 2. Avarice (Greed)**
- 3. Luxury**
- 4. Wrath**
- 5. Spiritual Gluttony**
- 6. Spiritual Envy**
- 7. Sloth**

CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE ON THE OTHER SIDE (pp. 126-133)

1. A Greater level of Brokenness - *“Christians can be notoriously judgmental in the name of standing up for the truth.”* [Matthew 5:3; Philippians 2:3]

2. A Greater Appreciation for Holy Unknowing (Mystery) - What appears as a blessing and success can be terrible while what appears to be terrible can be turned into a blessing.

3. A Deeper Ability to Wait for God - [Psalm 27:14; 130:5,6]. Abraham [Genesis 16:1-4], Moses [Numbers 12:3], David [I Samuel 16-II Samuel 1], Hannah [I Samuel 1&2]; Jesus [Luke 4:14] all learned to wait at their wall.

4. A Greater Detachment - Life is not all about “Am I happy” as much as it should be about “Am I free.”

“When we put our claws into something and we don’t want to take them out, we are beyond enjoying them.” (p. 132)

Five Essential Truths by Richard Rohr (p. 133)

- 1. Life is Hard**
- 2. You are not that important**
- 3. Your life is not about you**
- 4. You are not in control**
- 5. You are going to die**

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LESSON # 7

Enlarge Your Soul Through Grief and Loss (Surrendering to Your Limits)

What an interesting statement to begin with *“There is no greater disaster in the spiritual life than to be immersed in unreality . . . God has placed enormous limits around even the most gifted of us. Why? To keep us grounded, to keep us humble . . . We numb our pain through denial, blaming, rationalizations, addictions, and avoidance. We search for spiritual shortcuts around our wounds. We demand others to take away our pain.”* (p. 135).

Job - The Story of us All (pp. 136-138)

Begin by reading the story of Job’s loss (Job 1:13-2:8). We all experience losses of one kind or another (i.e., - unexpected death; suicide; a spouse’s affair; divorce or breakup; cancer; company downsizing; a disabled child, betrayal, infertility, a miscarriage, broken friendships, loss of memory, abuse).

1. Losing our Youthfulness
2. Losing our Dreams
3. Losing our Routines and Stability while in Transition
4. Losing our Wrong ideas of God and His Church

Getting out of Pain (pp. 138-139)

1. Grieving is shaped by our culture and family of origin.
2. Some turn to addiction
3. Some use denial to attempt to minimize the pain
4. Some feel guilty (Philippians 4:4; Psalm 100:2; cf. - Ecclesiastes 3:1-4; John 11:35; Luke 19:41)

Do you agree with the statement “the heart of Christianity is that the way to life is through death, the pathway to resurrection is through crucifixion?” (p. 140)

“The transition into adulthood, however, requires that we mature through our ‘defence mechanisms’ of denial in favor of honestly looking at what is true – at reality. Jesus himself said, ‘You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free’ (John 8:32)” (p. 141).

Defence Mechanisms to deal with Pain (pp. 141-142)

1. **Denial** - "It didn't bother me."
2. **Minimizing** - Admitting a wrong but appearing less serious
3. **Blaming Others** - Denying our responsibility
4. **Blaming Ourselves** - "It's all my fault"
5. **Rationalizing** - Offering excuses, justifications, alibis
6. **Intellectualizing** - Giving analysis, theories and generalities
7. **Distracting** - Change the subject or engage in humour
8. **Becoming Hostile** - Get angry or irritable

Biblical Grieving (pp. 142-151)

1. **Pay Attention** - Read the first two paragraphs of p. 143.

Have you lived through the truth that "Grieving is not possible without paying attention to our anger and sadness?" (p. 143)

Have you ever "leaked through" in soft ways such a passive-aggressive behaviour (i.e. - showing up late); sarcastic remarks, nasty tone of voice, giving the silent treatment? (p. 144)

Job "paid attention to both God and himself, choosing to enter the confusion of his personal 'dark night of the soul' rather than to medicate himself" (p. 145).

2. **Wait in the Confusing In-Between (pp. 145-146)**

Can you relate to and understand why Abraham, after waiting eleven years, choose to have a child the "natural way" (p. 146)?

"Job waited for a long time when the people closest to him quit. They did not have a big enough God or theology to walk through phase two of grieving – waiting in the confusing in-between" (p. 146).

Have you faced those who overestimate their grasp of truth? (p. 146)

3. **Embrace the Gift of Limits (pp. 147-148)**

- a. Your physical body
- b. Your family of origin
- c. Your marital status
- d. Your intellectual capacity
- e. Your talents and gifts
- f. Your material wealth
- g. Your raw material
- h. Your time

- i. Your work and relationship realities
- j. Your spiritual understanding

Can it really be that “John understood limits and replied, ‘A man can receive only what is given him from heaven’ (John 3:27?). He was able to say, “I accept my limits, my humanity, my declining popularity. He must increase. I must decrease’ (see John 3:30) (p. 148)?

4. Climb the Ladder of Humility (149-151)

Many Scriptures encourage us to be servants walking in humility before God (Job 2:3; 42:7,8; Matthew 5:3-10; Luke 14:7-11; 18:9-14).

St. Benedict’s Ladder of Humility (pp. 150-151)

- a. Fearful of God and mindful of Him
- b. Busy doing God’s will
- c. Willing to subject ourselves to the direction of others
- d. Patience to accept the difficulties of others
- e. Radical honesty to others about our weaknesses/faults
- f. Deeply being aware of being chief of all sinners
- g. Purposeful to speak less
- h. Transformed into the love of God

“The central message of Christ is that suffering and death bring resurrection and transformation.” (p. 152)

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LESSON # 8

Discover the Rhythms of the Daily Office and Sabbath (Stopping to Breathe the Air of Eternity)

Have you ever felt like you are in a blizzard and have lost your way because you have let go of “the rope” that would have guided you home? (pp. 153-155)

“Our human brain, our bodies, our spirits, and our emotions become wired by God for the rhythm of work and rest in him.” (p.156)

1. The Discovery of an Ancient Treasure: The Daily Office

“The root of the Daily Office is not so much a turning to God to get something but to be with Someone.” (p.157)

Have you struggled with the balance of “Mary” and “Martha” activity and contemplation? (p. 158)

“David practised set times of prayer seven times a day [see Psalm 119:164]. Daniel prayed three times a day [see Daniel 6:10]. Devout Jews in Jesus’ time prayed two to three times a day. Jesus himself probably followed the Jewish custom of praying at set times during the day.” (pp. 158-159)

“About A. D. 525, a good man named Benedict structured these prayer times around eight Daily Offices, including one in the middle of the night for monks.” (p. 159).

2. The Central Elements of the Daily Office (pp. 159-162)

A. Stopping - *Is your time with God unhurried? Have you given up control and allowed God to run His world without you?*

B. Centering - *“Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him” (Psalm 37:7). Have you benefited from letting go of tensions, distractions, and sensations by resting in the love of God? (p. 160)*

C. Silence - *“Solitude is the practise of being absent from people and things that attend to God. Silence in the practise of quieting every inner and outer voice to God.” (p. 161).*

“What is your response to the statement from Henri Nouwen that said, ‘Without solitude it is impossible to live a spiritual life?’” (p. 161)

2. The Central Elements of the Daily Office (pp. 159-162) (Contd.)

C. Silence (Contd.) - Can you bear more than 15 seconds of silence? I found that this statement while reflecting on the story of Elijah in I Kings 19:12 “*The silence after the chaos, for Elijah and for us is full of the presence of God*” to be so true. (p. 161).

D. Scripture - “*The Psalms are the foundation of almost any Daily Office book you will find available today.*” **What are your favourite Psalms that help you enter the presence of God?**

Is there something that you or your family has done that you have learned from the Scriptures that has helped you fill up your day with God’s presence?

3. A Second Ancient Treasure, Sabbath-Keeping (pp. 163-171)

“*The word Sabbath comes from the Hebrew word that means ‘to cease, to stop working.’*” (p. 163)

It has a way of speaking to your heart when you realize that when the children of Israel were slaves in Egypt for over 400 years that they never had a day off which caused one day to get blurred into the next. (p. 163)

Why do you think the fourth commandment is the longest of the Ten Commandments? (p. 164)

Is Eugene Peterson correct when he says, “if we are going to live appropriately in the creation we must keep the Sabbath.” (p. 165)

4. The Four Principles of Biblical Sabbath (pp. 169-170)

“*The key is to set a regular rhythm of keeping the Sabbath every seven days for a twenty-four-hour block of time . . . What is important is to select a time period and protect it!*” (p. 166)

A. Stop - The Sabbath helps us to embrace our limits. It also reminds us to be still and know God [Psalm 46:10] and to stop worrying about tomorrow [Matthew 6:25-33].

B. Rest - “*God rested after his work. We are to do the same – every seventh day [see Genesis 2:1-4].*” **What in your life makes it difficult to find regular times of rest?**

C. Delight - “*God, after finishing his work of creation, proclaimed that “It was very good” [Genesis 1:31].*”

Do you delight in God’s creation and gifts; people; healthy play?

4. The Four Principles of Biblical Sabbath (pp. 169-170) (Contd.)

D. Contemplate - *“Every Sabbath also serves as a taste of the glorious eternal party of music, food, and beauty that awaits us in heaven when we see him face to face [see Revelation 22:4]. (p. 170)*

Isn't it interesting to think that the “Sabbath is like receiving the gift of a heavy snow day every week?”

5. The Principle of Longer Sabbaticals (pp. 171-173)

Why do you think “God commanded all Israel to give the land a ‘Sabbath of rest’ one year in every seven [see Leviticus 25:1-7]” (p. 171)

“There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence . . . activism and overwork.”

Thomas Merton
(p. 173)

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LESSON # 9

Grow into an Emotionally Mature Adult (Learning New Skills to Love Well)

“Love in practice is a harsh and dreadful thing compared to love in dreams. Loving well is the goal of the Christian life.” (p. 175)

“Many people may be, chronically, forty-five years old but remain an emotionally infant, child, or adolescent.” (p. 178)

Where do you see yourself in the four following categories of emotional maturity? (pp. 178-179)

- 1. Emotional Infant**
- 2. Emotional Child**
- 3. Emotional Adolescent**
- 4. Emotional Adult**

Love is “to reveal the beauty of another person to themselves.” - Jean Vanier (p. 180)

1. I-it Relationships (p. 181-183)

Have you ever made the mistake of treating others as a means to an end? (p. 182)

2. I-Thou Relationships (p. 183)

Have you learned to connect with people who are different from you?

Have you come to understand that the space between “my world” and “your world” can become a sacred space?

3. Ignoring Conflict - False Peacemaking (pp. 184-185)

What do you think Jesus meant by calling us to be peacemakers? Is it possible to become a false peacemaker?

4. Embracing Conflict - The Path to True Peace (pp. 185-186)

How do you respond to Peter’s statement [based upon Matthew 10:34-36] “You can’t have the true peace of Christ’s kingdom with lies and pretense? They must be exposed to the light and replaced with the truth. This is the mature, loving thing to do?” (p. 185)

4. Embracing Conflict - The Path to True Peace (pp. 185-186) (Contd.)

“Unresolved conflicts are one of the greatest tensions in Christian’s lives today. Most of us hate them. We don’t know what to do with them. Instead of risking any more broken relationships, we prefer to ignore the difficult issues and settle for a ‘false peace,’ hoping against hope they will somehow go away. They don’t. And we all learn, sooner or later, that you can’t build Christ’s kingdom on lies and pretense. Only the truth will do.” (p. 186)

Learning to be True Peacemakers

1. Speaking and Listening (p. 187)

As the speaker, can you speak freely about your thoughts and feelings and know that they are understood? (p. 187)

As the listener, are you able to allow another person to speak freely until they’ve completed their thoughts? (p. 187)

2. Bill of Rights (p. 188-189)

Space and Privacy - Knocking before entering; not opening their mail

Be Different - Allowing room for preferences

Disagree - Make for differences in thinking and how we see life

Be Heard - Listening to desires, opinions, thoughts and feelings

Be Taken Seriously - Being present when another speaks

Be Given the Benefit of the Doubt - Checking out assumptions rather than judging

Be Told the Truth - Counting on the truth when asking for information

Be Consulted - checking and asking when decisions will affect others

Be Imperfect and Make Mistakes - Leaving room for breaking or misplacing things etc.

Courteous and Honourable Treatment - Using words that don’t hurt; asking before using

Be Respected - Taking one another’s feelings into account

3. Checking out Assumptions

Many problems could be eliminated in life if we truly applied the 9th Commandment [Exodus 20:16].

“Every time I make assumptions about someone who has hurt or disappointed me without confirming it, I believe a lie about this person in my head . . . It is also likely I will pass that false assumption around to others . . . In doing so we wreck relationships by creating endless confusion and conflict.” (p. 189)

What does Matthew 7:1-5 mean to you?

4. Expectations (pp. 190-191)

“Unmet and unclear expectations create havoc in our places of employment, classrooms, friendships, dating relationships, marriages, sporting teams, families and churches.” (p. 190)

Have you ever had some of the examples on pp. 190-191 happen to you?

Do you think you could have eliminated some misunderstandings by making sure that these expectations were mutually agreed upon? (p. 191)

5. Allergies and Triggers (p. 192)

“What happens most often in an allergic reaction is that we end up treating the person with whom we are in a relationship now as if they were someone from our past.” (p. 192)

Did you go through the exercise called “Healing the Ledger” and, if so, was it helpful? (p. 192)

“One of the greatest gifts we can give our world is to be a community of emotionally healthy adults who love well. This will take the power of God and a commitment to learn, grow, and break with unhealthy, destructive patterns that go back generations in our families and cultures – and in some cases, our Christian culture also.” (p. 193)

Are you willing to be part of God’s healing team?

EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

LESSON # 10

Go to the Next Step to Develop a “Rule of Life” (Loving Christ Above all Else)

“The word (rule) comes from the Greek word for “trellis.” A trellis is a tool that enables a grapevine to get off the ground and grow upward, becoming more fruitful and productive. In the same way, a Rule of Life is a trellis that helps us abide in Christ and become more fruitful . . . Very few people have a conscious plan for developing their spiritual lives . . . Nurturing a growing spirituality with depth in our present-day culture will require a thoughtful, conscious, intentional plan for our spiritual lives.” (p. 196)

Have you ever felt like the culture surrounding you is trying to absorb you much like Daniel (Daniel 1 & 6) experienced? (pp. 197-198).

1. The Elements of a Rule of Life (pp. 201-

A. Scripture - *“The key is to read slowly, chewing over the words and allowing them to feed and transform you.” (p. 201)*

B. Silence and Solitude - *“When we are silent, we come face-to-face with our addiction to being in control and always trying to fix things.” (p. 201)*

C. Daily Office - *“I love praying the psalms as the central part of my Daily Office. I also like having a devotional classic available.” (p. 202)*

D. Study - *“ . . . growing maturing Christians are always exploring, reading, and learning. Study may include inductive reading Bible study or other helpful tools, reading books, or attending workshops, classes and seminars . . . Consider studying not simply for information but for the purpose of formation in Christ.” (p. 202)*

E. Sabbath - *“Take some time to reflect on the four characteristics of biblical Sabbaths - stop, rest, delight, contemplate.” (p. 203)*

F. Simplicity - *“The primary issue here is to remove distractions and remain free from attachments. (p. 203)*

G. Play and Recreation - *“Many Christians, in particular, are ‘fun deficient’ . . . Make no mistake: it is revolutionary to enjoy healthy pleasure.” (p. 204)*

H. Service and Mission - *“The question here is in what way(s) is God inviting me to serve him at this stage of my journey? . . . Every church and community has numerous opportunities to serve . . . How can I embrace my God-given limits and not go beyond what he is asking me to do?” (p. 205)*

I. Care for the Physical Body - *“ . . . a headache, knot in your stomach, inability to sleep, and the resulting exhaustion may be God calling you to slow down or to change directions.” (p. 205)*

J. Emotional Health - *“It may be that you recognize that you have a lot of unprocessed grief due to losses from your past . . . Growth in understanding your sexuality, both as a single or married person, would come under this element.” (p. 206)*

K. Family - *“Marriage, parenting, and our relationship with our family of origin are all crucial discipleship issues.” (p. 206)*

L. Community (Companions for the Journey) - *“ . . . you will want to ask yourself about what kind of companions you need for this next stage of your journey . . . We recommend that everyone in our church connect relationally through a small group.” (p. 207)*

2. Broader Applications for a “Rule of Life”

A. The Local Church - *“Each church has values, practises and habits that they take for granted . . . every church has a Rule of Life. The problem is that it is often unconscious. The challenge is to identify and authenticate what that is and be clear about it. That definition provides boundaries for the church community in a way that provides safety and clarity.” (p. 208)*

B. A Small Group or Task Force - *“A small group for an agreed upon period of time, may commit together to certain practises and habits to follow Christ.” (p. 209)*

C. The Family - *A few people have been led to apply the development of a Rule of Life for their family.” (p. 209)*

“Live love, let love invade you. It will never fail to teach you what you must do.” (p. 210)