

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Church-wide Initiative

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

Intro: Sometimes things look great on the surface but they are a disaster underneath “Don’t worry about it. It’s nothing.” Said US Navy Kermit Tyler on Dec. 7 1941, as radar had just picked up a large formation of planes heading for Hawaii. It was, of course, the first wave of Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor.

“I have no enemies, why should I fear” President William McKinley August 1901, a few days before his assassination.

“There is no reason for any individual to have a computer in their home.” Digital Equipment Chairperson Ken Olsen 1977.

Sometimes things don’t look very good on the surface but really are!

“You ain’t going nowhere son.. You ought to go back to driving a truck”, said Grand Ole Opry manager in 1954, firing Elvis Presley after 1 performance.

“You won’t amount to much” – A Munich teacher to Albert Einstein at 10 years old in 1889.

“With your voice, no one is going to let you broadcast” CBS producer to Barbara Walters in 1958.

Things are not always as they appear to be!!

Next 8 weeks – series EHS... Emotional health and contemplative spirituality, when interwoven together, offer nothing short of a spiritual revolution, transforming the hidden places deep beneath the surface of our lives.

The Problem of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality

Know Yourself that You May Know God

Going Back in Order to Go Forward

Journey Through the Wall

Enlarge Your Soul Through Grief and Loss

Discover the Rhythms of the Daily Office and Sabbath

Grow into an Emotionally Mature Adult

Go the Next Step to Develop a “Rule of Life.”

Looking beneath the iceberg

10% what we can see, this is behavioral change, it all looks good.

90% underneath, what we can’t see, this is what Jesus is out to transform.

TODAY – Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality. Pete Scazzero quote:

I’ve lived it full force for the first 19 yrs of my life.

Destructive effects for the next 17 yrs. as a Christian

Slow process for me to come out of that, into health. I am still working on it.

SAUL – Anointed king by God. Greatest example in Scripture of someone who lacks emotional health and contemplative life. Humble beginnings

Given clear instructions by God through Samuel the prophet of God

v.3 Attack Amalekites

v. 9 Partially obeys. Feels no healthy guilt/remorse

v.13 Blesses Samuel

Saul's life is out of order underneath where we can't see it. Outside looks good but emotionally unhealthy – Both his emotional and spiritual life out of order – Inseparable. Never gets beneath iceberg

Read 1 Samuel 15:20-24

"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. ²¹ The soldiers took 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."

22 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.

23 For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."

24 Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned. I violated the LORD's command and your instructions. I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them.

1. An emotionally unhealthy person, Saul, says "No" to Reflection and Self-Awareness

On the surface Saul looks like he is serving God – praying, listening prophetic words, going to church, doing some of God's will.

Underneath – he wants/needs approval (so deep even in repenting v.30)

- unaware of his own fears (v.24 "I was afraid of the people")
- jealous. Doesn't want others be more popular than him.

Ch.18-20 – filled with details of Saul's 6 attempts to murder David: 3x with javelin. 2x lured to almost certain death vs. Philistines.

- Puts him in charge of military to get killed
- Then to marry one of his daughters –still trying to get David killed.
- By Ch. 19 – he sends soldiers to David's house to kill him.

SPIRALING DOWN. By the end, he has lost control. All out hunt!!

Saul has both repressed anger or explosive anger – both dangerous.

Envy destroys your ability to think straight.

He truly believes he is obeying – doing most of Gods' will!

The reality is: He's shallow – not really paying attention to God

Goes to church, but wants approval of people, making decisions from fear and full of jealousy

Have you ever seen this type of behavior? Showing up, but really resentful

– e.g. you are really jealous about the favor someone is getting in your office or school. It eats away at you. Rather than get alone with God, "Lord I bring this jealousy/

hatred... to you. Help me rejoice when others do well.” You push it away. But you act sweet and nice “How are you? Great to see you.” Or you are avoiding them.

–you are here for worship but inside “I’m mad at God/people”; rather than bringing it to God

– Singing of love of God, power, – but making decisions based on fear

e.g. parenting children, pushing them, driving them- fear driven

e.g. making decisions about work/career out of fear- people don’t think you are a loser

e.g. give you body away sexually out of fear. Might lose relationship

e.g. be in conflict. Don’t engage “You won’t like me.” Don’t tell whole truth.

Sometimes we do hear God but it is too emotionally painful to change.

We live one appearance above surface but another whole reality underneath

e.g You are unaware of how you come off to people. What is it like to be with you?

They

“yes I am difficult/touchy/ornery/cold.. but I am aware of it.”

Some of you are – don’t know it!

Pete Scazzero says: “Reflecting was painful. I didn’t want to reflect because I felt guilty.

I did not know how to process one’s thoughts and feelings healthy way.

Easier to deny them, than to be conflicted with guilt. Who wants a life of guilt so I won’t go there, I’ll just ignore it and press on.”

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

It is not just paying attention to what is going on on the outside, but also paying attention to motives, feelings, thoughts, attitudes on the inside

You can’t be in touch with God if not in touch with yourself. Saul wasn’t in touch with himself. Many times we don’t even present the real me to God because even to God I’m subconsciously trying to present myself in way God will like me or be proud of me.

You are not in reality if you are not in touch with what is inside of you.

I need silence/solitude to be in touch with me! – to know what I am thinking and feeling – and to know what I am thinking and feeling about.

To know this, takes silence and solitude, to gently draw us to depths and to tame our false self.

The pressure to live superficially and conform is so great on us .

It takes a tremendous amount of solitude and prayer to be aware/reflective.

You will never see Saul, like David spending time in silence and solitude, or writing songs/poetry/music like David – Pouring out conflicted inner world to God with such passion. Being silent and still!

2. An emotionally unhealthy person says “No” to Cultivating their Personal Relationship with God.

Saul accepts Christ at certain point. Receives blessing. Holy Spirit on him.

– accepted Jesus, but on autopilot. No indication of cultivating it.

Saul does not have a hidden life in God. Instead wants to be known by people.

He wants benefits.

Listens only as it benefits him – politically not wise to kill best sheep/animals

He is unaware. He can’t see.

READ vv.22-23 HE IS NOT LISTENING OR OBEYING (KEY WORD IN TEXT)

V .22 – *To listen is better than sacrifice*

Not asking “How does it apply to me? What is God saying to me.?”

Samuel speaking- but he wasn’t internalizing it through the eyes/ears of his heart --

“What does it mean for my life?”

Some of you sitting there evaluating sermon/books/churches/ministries/– “clever/good/
gave me food for thought...rather than, “What is God saying to me!!”

Difference between David and Saul – David says “What are you saying to me?”

As I reflect on me, I was only letting God come in from outside – Scripture, other
people, prophetic words.

What is different – now I am listening to God. Not just saying, “How is God coming to
me? NOW - How am I feeling about it? The inside of me is part of the process in
cultivating my relationship. The two are joined! Not Cut-off”

My growth curve – Do 1 thing at a time. Slow down

e.g. Willard to Ortberg “Ruthlessly eliminate hurry. John, “Ok what’s next?”

Contemplation is about clearing space out so you can go deep and wide.

The development of interior spaciousness. HEART Not HEAD

It’s about the love of God – not tight fisted judge/Scrooge

He is Abba Father!!! Loves me!

not uninterested parent no military general not George Burns – funny old man in
tennis shoes and glasses not Rule maker – I want to keep him happy, be on good side

Not partner in business venture – I do stuff for him, him for me

Religious Leader’s X’s day – HEAD NOT HEART ON LOVE OF GOD

THUS BIG THEME EHS – Nurturing your personal relationship with God

When world, flesh, everything vs. it!!

3. Emotional unhealthy spirituality says “No” to Being Broken through Setbacks and Difficulties

Saul hated trials/setbacks/testings –

Ch. 13, test of waiting - Philistines

In ch. 15. Never learned/changed – in fact only became harder! Colder.

Lots of those people filling our churches

Only through your hurts, problems, sufferings- will you learn humility

I have tried to memorize verse, 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.*”

Saul did not have Beatitude 1 – “*Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom
of heaven.*” – proud, unteachable, defensive, angry

Cannot have God without poverty of spirit, without experiencing utter dependence on
him.

Christ learned “*Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered.*”

Hebrews 5:8

Character formed in you. – you will be of use to others.

God seeking to humble Saul

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 God. Deut. 8:3-5

God wants to take the Saul out of us – to teach you to rely on him alone

You can't get all you want. Would be disaster

You have been betrayed, had to wait, misunderstandings, setbacks, people we love don't

love us back.

God stripping us of attachments to the world – to relate to him out of a broken spirit

Saul never develops a depth of character – “the way God makes His servants”

God's ways – mystery!!

THUS DAVID ABLE TO WAIT YEARS!!!!

There is nothing like testings/trials to destroy illusions

Adversity strips illusions and brings about authenticity.

'Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin?" Proverbs 20:9

You know who would say it? Saul. A broken person, "No, not me!"

Ten Top Symptoms of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality

Using God to run from God – what Saul does

Ignoring the emotions of anger, sadness and fear – how is God coming to me through these

Dying to the wrong things – the healthy pleasures of life that God gives you

Denying the past's impact on the present – family of origin issues

Dividing life into 'secular' and 'sacred' compartments – forgetting about him while working, etc.

Doing for God instead of *being* with God – not developing a personal relationship with him

Spiritualizing away conflict – avoiding truth just to keep peace

Covering over brokenness, weakness and failure

Living without limits – not letting God stop you – you try to 'do it all'

Judging the spiritual journeys of other people.

Let me ask you, “Which is the one that God right now is bringing to your attention?”

***Three minutes of silence... Just be before God and listen to him for your life today.**

“...for to obey is better than sacrifice.”

Remember: Gospel is good news – It is okay to be human. To fail.

Be like David; as bad a sinner as Saul, But he understood grace and mercy

– run to and receive his grace. Run to Jesus.

“...he delights in a broken and contrite heart.” Psalm 51:17

Cultivate your relationship with Jesus.

Repent; make a U-turn.

Trust him and follow him. God had a great life for Saul, but he missed it!

In a place of rejecting setbacks, surrender to God. Moses blessing over people of Israel.