

Tuesday Ladies Bible Study
Winter/Spring 2022
Emotional Healthy Spirituality
Schedule/ Syllabus

Materials needed: Day by Day Devotional, Book: Emotional Healthy Spirituality, Lessons (binder for lessons)

January 18	Introduction	Homework: Read Chapter 1
January 25	OFF/GNO	
February 1	Session 1	Homework: Read Chapter 2
February 8	Session 2	Homework: Read Chapter 3
February 15	Session 3	Homework: Read Chapter 4
February 22	OFF/ GNO	
March 1	Session 4 Part 1	No Homework
March 8	Session 4 part 2	Homework: Read Chapter 5
March 15	OFF/ SPRING BREAK	
March 22	Session 5	Homework: Read Chapter 6
March 29	OFF/ GNO	
April 5	Session 6	Homework: Read Chapter 7
April 12	Session 7	Homework: Read Chapter 8
April 19	Session 8	

*After last class we will go to lunch. TBD

The following are the top ten symptoms of emotionally unhealthy spirituality. Put a check mark by the one or two symptoms that are most relevant in your life today.

1. Using God to run from God

(Example: I fill my life with Christian activities to avoid addressing difficult issues in my life.)

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

(example: I am rarely honest with myself and /or others about the feelings, hurts, and pains beneath the surface of y life.)

3. Dying to the wrong things

(example: I tend to deny healthy, God-given desires and pleasures of life such as friendships, joy, music, beauty, laughter, and nature. At the same time, I find it difficult to die to my self-protectiveness, defensiveness, lack of vulnerability, and judgmentalism.)

4. Denying the past's impact on the present

(example: I rarely consider how my family of origin and significant people-events from my past have shaped my present.)

5. Dividing life into "secular" and "sacred" compartments

(example: I easily compartmentalize God to "Christian activities" while usually forgetting about him when I am working, shopping, studying, or recreating.)

6. Doing for God instead of being with God

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

7. Spiritualizing away conflict

(example: I usually miss out on true peace b smoothing over disagreements, burying tensions, and avoiding conflict, rather than disrupting false peace as Jesus did.)

8. Covering over brokenness, weakness, and failure

(example: I have a hard time speaking freely about my weaknesses, failures, and mistakes.)

9. Living without limits

(example: those close to me would say that I often "try to do it all" or "bite off more than I can chew.")

10. Judging the spiritual journeys of others

(example: I often find myself occupied and bothered by the faults of those around me.)

Emotional Healthy Spirituality

By Pete and Geri Scazzero

Introduction: In this course we are going to address directly the reality that **emotional maturity and spiritual maturity are inseparable, that it is not possible to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature.**

When we ignore our emotions--- the emotional component of our lives, what we do is we move through the motions of Christian disciplines (Bible reading, prayer, going to church), Christian activities, and behaviors, BUT THE **deeply rooted behavioral patterns** from our pasts continue, hindering us from an authentic life of maturity in Christ.

So many times we often neglect to reflect on what is really going on inside us and around us (our emotional health) and are too busy to slow down to really be with God (this is contemplative spirituality---being still with God). **Or** we pretend everything is okay and hope eventually that we will have an inner peace. For some pretending that everything is ok is safer than honesty and vulnerability. But in the end... how much has pretending cost us?

THE PROBLEM: For many after being saved, the “good feeling of being saved” and the doing of Christian disciplines (going to church, reading the Bible, prayer) provides experiences where you think you’re ok, but after a while you fall back into the same struggles emotionally. This occurs because you have not allowed Christ to do the deep work of sanctification in you. Therefore a large part of your life is unchanged and the roots of who you are continue. Many lives are lived more out of *reaction* to what other people did in the past or might do in the present or what other’s thought or might think about me. THERE IS A HUGE GAP BETWEEN OUR BELIEFS AND OUR EXPERIENCES!!! For example: we believe that God wants us to be free, but in reality we are not walking in that freedom.

But the good news is **PAIN** has an ability to open us up to TRUTH! So to minimize what we feel (to ignore our feelings) is a distortion of what it means to be an image bearer of God. To the degree that we are unable to express our emotions, we remain impaired in our ability to love God and love ourselves in a healthy way.

FACT: After we become Christians OUR PAST will influence our lives until we deal with it! THE Sanctification process demands us to go back in order to break free from unhealthy and destructive patterns that prevent us from loving ourselves and others as God designed.

When we are “human doings” instead of human beings, we base our worth and validation on what we “do” instead of on God’s unconditional love for us. As a result, we run the high risk of remaining stuck as spiritual infants, failing to develop into spiritually/emotionally mature adults in Christ.

Emotional Healthy Spirituality helps believers go beneath the surface for TRUE TRANSFORMATION! Deeply changed people have a more powerful and sustainable impact in the world! Changed people change the world!

Structure: Each week you will have homework: you have one chapter to read, and I encourage you to read it very introspectively and I would also encourage you to take notes. There will also be two devotionals to read daily as part of your individual daily offices, and those are your times that you schedule to meet with God during your day—and there will usually be one question to answer at the end. So always keep those papers in your notebook.

- So when we come together, we will do a daily office together, then a review together of the chapter we read and then we will have our lesson for the day. Then at that point we will break into small groups for reflection and discussion.

Guidelines for whole group, as well as small group: and these are suggestions from the author because they do this study all the time in their church because they have learned this is such an important piece to the journey of the Christian life.

- Be prepared: read your chapter and devotionals for the week, as answer the question.
- Speak for yourself: it is important when you share to use “I” statements. We are only experts on ourselves. For example: Instead of saying, “everyone is busy,” say, “I am busy.” Instead of saying, “we all struggle with forgiving,” say, “I struggle with forgiving.”
- Respect Others: Be brief in your sharing, remaining mindful that there are time limitations and others may want to share.
- No Fixing, No Saving, No Setting other people straight: respect people’s journeys and trust the Holy Spirit inside of them to lead them into all truth—in His timing. Resist the temptation to offer quick advice as people share in the group.
- Turn to wonder: that means if you feel judgmental or defensive when someone else is sharing, ask yourself: I wonder what brought her to this belief? I wonder what she is feeling right now? I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?
- Trust and learn from Silence: it is okay to have silence between responses as the group shares, giving members the opportunity to reflect. Remember, there is no pressure to share. You can just say, I pass.
- Observe confidentiality: in order to create an environment that is safe for open and honest participation, anything someone shares within the group should not be repeated outside of the group. However, feel free to share your own story and personal growth.
- Punctuality: resolve to arrive on time

Group connection: share your name and a few words about what makes you feel fully alive (e.g. nature, music, sports, reading... or whatever). EX: I would say taking a walk on a cool day and having the sun shining on my face. (Give 10 minutes)

Exercise: take your worksheet you received when you came in. On it are the top ten symptoms of emotionally unhealthy spirituality. Put a check mark by the one or two symptoms that are most relevant in your life today. I’m going to read these out loud and then afterwards I want you to go back and mark the one or two or three-- that are the most relevant in your life today. (Give 4 to 5 min.)

This week as you are reading ch. 1 be contemplative about these symptoms and how they can block you from really knowing God.

Lesson:

So our lesson today will end with a daily office which is taken out of your Day by Day Devotional. A “daily office” is an ancient Christian discipline where believers set aside marked times throughout their day in order to stay connected to God. how many of you struggle with feeling connected to God throughout the day. many times we have a “quiet time” in the morning but by 1:00 we already feel distant from God.

Jesus said, “**Remain in me as I remain in you.**” John 15:4 And this “daily office” is how we do that by developing rhythms throughout our day of stopping, learning to be still and simply being with God—experiencing His love. For me at the end of my daily office -- I cry out to the Lord and tell Him that I trust Him and I relinquish control on my life.

Our lesson will also end with a practice of time of **Silence and Stillness** before God (2 minutes)

We all struggle with being still and learning to be quiet. This exercise will help us develop that spiritual muscle. This is an old practice called *practicing the presence of God*- Bro. Lawrence

Scripture Reading: Mark 11:15-17

15 On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, 16 and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. 17 And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations? But you have made it 'a den of robbers

Devotional: Jesus' intense anger and overturning of the tables in the temple courts ought to make us gasp. He knows that if we don't get to God, invaluable treasures will be lost or obscured. We lose the space where we experience God's unfailing love and amazing forgiveness. We lose an eternal perspective on what is important and what is not. We lose compassion. **We gain the world but lose our souls. Mark 8:36-37**

Be Free for God

I have a need of such clearance as the Savior effected in the temple of Jerusalem. A riddance of clutter of what is blocks the way to the all-important central emptiness presence of God alone. -----Jean Danielou

secondary that which is filled with the

Question to consider: How would you describe "what is secondary" in your life, the thing that might be "blocking the way" to experiencing God.

Prayer: Lord, help me to see how much I lose when I lose you. My perspective on my life and all of life gets distorted when I don't make space for you, obscuring your love for me. Your love is better than life, and truly I long for more tastes of that love. In Jesus' name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

HOMEWORK: 1: Read Chapter 1: The Problem of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality. As you read be contemplative about any symptoms you have of emotionally unhealthy spirituality and how those can block you from knowing God and growing in spiritual maturity. Answer as honestly as you can be.

2: Read Daily Offices from Week 1 and answer questions in your Day by Day Devotional

Session 1

Begin with Daily Office: We will do this each week as we begin.

Goals for daily office: 1) Learn to be still: remember, when we are still we are stopping and embracing our limits. We are releasing control of our lives. 2) Embrace silence: At first this will be hard, but then you will be drawn to it. Silence is where we meet God.

Review: Last week we looked at the top 10 Symptoms of Emotional Unhealthy Spirituality. This is a great list to have to make you aware of behaviors. These are indicators that we need God's healing. Go back to this list often during your study as a personal check list of how you are doing.

Remember we are each on a very personal journey in this study. So be honest with yourself. Let Holy Spirit show you the areas that you are struggling in.

So your homework was to read Ch. 1--- *The Problem of Emotional Unhealthy Spirituality*. Last week we stated that emotional health and spiritual maturity cannot be separated. It is not possible to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature.

BUT I do want to clarify something ... there are individuals who are emotionally healthy without being spiritually mature. You've met these people, they are just all around good solid people. They're not going to have a bout of road rage! However, they just don't realize their need for a savior.

On the other hand-- a believer will never become spiritually mature *unless* they have allowed the Lord to heal them emotionally, and part of that is healing from our past.

We must have an intimate relationship with God so He can show us what He sees!

When we ignore the emotional component of our lives, we move through the motions of Christian disciplines (bible reading- prayer), activities, and behaviors, but deeply rooted behavioral patterns from our pasts continue to hinder us from an authentic life of maturity in Christ.

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

Today's Lesson: in our lesson today Saul struggled with his identity. He failed to remember that it was not people whom he got his identity from, but God. God appointed Him *and* God gave him success. He failed to remember that obedience is everything to God. Saul's rejection of God's Word resulted in His rejection of Saul as God's representative.

1 Samuel 15: 7-24

7 Then Saul attacked the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, near the eastern border of Egypt. 8 He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and all his people he totally destroyed with the sword. 9 But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves[a] and lambs—everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed. 10 Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel: 11 "I regret that I have made Saul king,

because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions.” Samuel was angry, and he cried out to the Lord all that night.

12 Early in the morning Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, “Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honor and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal.” 13 When Samuel reached him, Saul said, “The Lord bless you! I have carried out the Lord’s instructions.” 14 But Samuel said, “What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?” 15 Saul answered, “The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the Lord your God, but we totally destroyed the rest.” 16 “Enough!” Samuel said to Saul. “Let me tell you what the Lord said to me last night.” “Tell me,” Saul replied.

17 Samuel said, “Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The Lord anointed you king over Israel. 18 And he sent you on a mission, saying, ‘Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; wage war against them until you have wiped them out.’ 19 Why did you not obey the Lord? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the Lord?” 20 “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 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 men and so I gave in to them.

1. In verse 11, what do you notice about God and Samuel’s responses to Saul’s failure to fully obey?

God was regretful that he made Saul king because he disobeyed. Samuel was angry at Saul for disobeying God.

2. How does this differ from Saul’s response in verses 12-13?

Saul was trying to fake it and act like everything was okay and that he was proud of his own actions.

3. What might have been going on beneath the surface of Saul’s life (iceberg) that he was unaware of? Reread v. 12 and v. 24.

4. Describe in your own words how Samuel explains Saul's disobedience.

5. List one or two examples of how you go through the motions of making "burnt offerings" rather than obeying the word of the Lord (e.g., acting or speaking from fear of what others think, or being one person at church and another person at work or home, or not having a place in your life to be still and listen to the Lord)?

I pretend to be so strong and perfect at church bc I am afraid of what others think of me. I need to be concerned what you want think of me.

6. Note the seriousness of verse 23a. what positive steps(s) could Saul have taken to become aware of his own iceberg and hear God in his situation?
He should've waited on God.
He should've Got his identity from God not people.
He wasn't living in fear.

What might be one positive step for you?

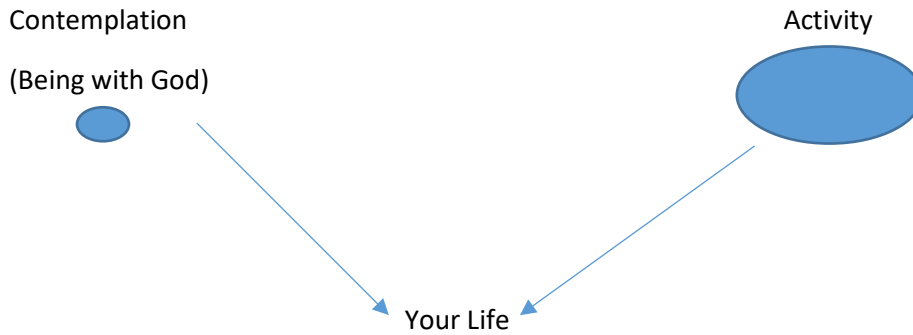
-Get my identity from God.

In what ways can you relate, or not relate, to Saul?

Living out of fear, instead of living from a relationship with Christ.

7. What challenges keep you from slowing down your life to be with God? (Small group)

8. The diagram below provides an illustration of a spiritual life where our activity (i.e., our doing) is out of balance with our contemplative life (i.e., our inner life with Jesus). (individual)



Using two circles like the ones in the diagram, draw your own diagram to illustrate how your activities (your doing) balance with your contemplative life (your being with God.)

9. What might be one or two simple steps you can take toward beginning to slow down your life and balance your two circles? (small group)

Session 2

Chapter 2- Know Yourself That You May Know God

The journey of genuine transformation to emotionally healthy spirituality begins with a commitment to allow yourself to feel. Feelings are an essential part of our humanity and unique personhood as men and women created in God's image. Scripture reveals God as an emotional being who feels as a person. Having been created in His image, we also are created with the gift to feel and experience emotions. Some of us may have learned that feelings are not to be trusted; that they are dangerous and can lead us away from God's will for us. While it is true that we are not to be led by our emotions, they do serve a critical function in our discipleship and discernment of God's will.

Journal your responses to the following questions: Your concern can be something from the past, present, or future. Consider areas such as finances, health, relationships, work, etc.

1. What are you angry about?
2. What are you sad about?
3. What are you anxious about?
4. What are you glad about?

Bible Study: 1 Samuel 17:26-45

26 David asked the men standing near him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" 27 They repeated to him what they had been saying and told him, "This is what will be done for the man who kills him."

28 When Eliab, David's oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, "Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle." 29 "Now what have I done?" said David. "Can't I even speak?" 30 He then turned away to someone else and brought up the same matter, and the men answered him as before. 31 What David said was overheard and reported to Saul, and Saul sent for him.

32 David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him."

33 Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth."

34 But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, 35 I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. 36 Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. 37 The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine."

Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with you."38 Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. 39 David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.

"I cannot go in these," he said to Saul, "because I am not used to them." So he took them off. 40 Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

41 Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. 42 He looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him. 43 He said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 44 "Come here," he said, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals!"45 David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.

5. In your own words, what are some of David's thoughts and feelings when he hears Goliath's challenge to Israel? (v. 26)

6. What are some of the accusations and messages David receives from the people around him?
 - From his own family (v. 28)

 - From Saul (vv. 33, 38)

 - From Goliath (vv.41-45)

7. What feelings might you be experiencing if you were David (ex: in response to an older sibling, a person in authority over you, incompetent and intimidating person like Goliath)?

8. What enables David to live out of his true self against the powerful forces and pressures that seek to mold him into someone he is not?

9. Where in your life, or with whom, is it difficult to be your true self (ex.: to speak honestly, say “no,” or not be afraid of what others think)?

10. What might it look for you to take off armor that you are currently wearing that does not fit you?

11. Many of us are so unaccustomed to distinguishing our true self from our false self that it may seem difficult to know where to begin. Complete the following sentence, and then share it with your group as a first step:

What I am beginning to realize about myself is...

Session 3

Chapter 3: Going Back in Order to Go Forward

1. What obstacles, difficulties, or successes did you experience in meeting with God this past week in your devotional time?

2. How would you describe the family atmosphere you grew up in? Try to use just a word or two (ex.: affirming, complaining, critical, approachable, angry, tense, cooperative, competitive, close, distant, fun serious).

Our need to go forward can be summed up in two essential biblical truths:

- **The blessings and sins of our families going back two to three generations profoundly impact who we are today.**
- **Discipleship requires putting off the sinful patterns of our family of origin and relearning how to do life God's way in God's family.**

3. What concerns or fears might you have in looking back at your family of origin to discern unhealthy patterns and themes? Explain.

The “family” is an emotional system of two to four generations who move through life together in different places at different times. When we are born into families, we inherit their ways of relating, their values, and their ways of living in the world. (adopted children inherit not only birth family traits but draw from their adoptive family.) Your family’s story and your individual story cannot be separated.

Joseph is an excellent example of that reality. He was born into a complex, blended family where his father Jacob, Jacob’s two wives, two concubines, and their children, all lived under one roof. Joseph was Jacob’s favored son. As a result, his brothers grew jealous, leading them to sell Joseph to a merchant who took him to Egypt. The brothers never expected to hear from Joseph again. After he was sold, Joseph’s life became very difficult. For the next ten to thirteen years, Joseph lived first as a slave, and later as a prisoner falsely accused of rape.

4. Imagine yourself in Joseph’s shoes sitting in a prison cell without any hope of freedom. What thoughts feelings, or doubts might you have about your family? About yourself? About God?

Through God’s miraculous intervention, Joseph was pulled from the pit of prison and made the second most powerful person in Egypt. Later, when his brothers came to Egypt for food during a famine in Israel, Joseph invited them to return for their father and live in Egypt—which they gladly did. But after Jacob died, the brothers began to worry.

Bible Passage: Genesis 50:15-21

When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?” 16 So they sent word to Joseph, saying, “Your father left these instructions before he died: 17 ‘This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.’ Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.” When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

18 His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. “We are your slaves,” they said.

19 But Joseph said to them, “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? 20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. 21 So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.” And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

5. What assumptions are the brothers making about Joseph in verse 15?

6. Why do you think Joseph weeps (v.17)?

7. Joseph chooses to break the “normal” way his family deals with hurt feelings and conflict by forgiving his brothers. How might you have responded if you were in Joseph’s position? (be sure to honestly put yourself in Joseph’s shoes).

8. Slowly, reread verses 19-21. Here we see Joseph’s response to the enormous losses he experienced in his life. Carefully consider the different aspects of this response noted below. As you think about your own life story, which one speaks the most to you and why?

- “Don’t be afraid.”
- “Am I in the place of God?”
- “You intended to hard me, but God intended it for good.”

9. Joseph had a rich sense of being part of his family of origin and how it had shaped his life—both good and bad. We must honestly face the truths about our family of origin as well. Prayerfully complete the chart on the following page. Even if you have done something like this before, we often receive new insights when we ponder and reflect on our family’s impact on us at different times.

- First, list the life messages you received from each of your parents or caretakers (ex.: Don't be weak. Education is everything. You must achieve to be loved. Don't be sad; things could be worse. Make a lot of money. Don't trust people; they will hurt you.).
- Next, list any "earthquake" events that sent "aftershocks" into your extended family (ex.: abuse, premature or sudden deaths/ losses, divorces, shameful secrets revealed, etc.).
- Review the three separate boxes and summarize what messages about life/yourself/others you internalized. Then fill in the bottom box, "Cumulative messages I received."

Father (caretaker)

Mother (caretaker)

Messages received about life:

Messages received about life:

"Earthquake" events in family history:



Cumulative messages I received.



10. How do those messages compare with the messages below that reflect who you are in the new family of Jesus?

- Good that you exist.
- You are lovable.
- You are good enough.
- You are a joy.
- You have nothing left to prove
- Your needs are a delight.
- You are allowed to make mistakes.

11. What might be one specific message from your family of origin that God has revealed to you today that you want to change as part of your “hard work of discipleship”?

Session 4

Read Chapter 4: Journey Through The Wall

Emotionally healthy spirituality requires that you go through the pain of the Wall or “dark night of the soul.” Just as a physical wall stops us from moving ahead, God sometimes stops us in our spiritual journey through a spiritual wall in order to radically transform our character. Often, we are brought to the Wall by circumstances --a crisis beyond our control.

Regardless of how we get there, every follower of Jesus at some point will confront the Wall. Failure to understand and surrender to God’s working in us at the Wall of en results in great long-term pain, ongoing immaturity, and confusion. Receiving the gift of God in the Wall however, transforms our lives forever.

1. What obstacles, difficulties, or successes did you experience in meeting with God this past week?

2. In this season of your life, what is the greatest obstacles that you face? Explain?

3. If you have been through a wall, briefly share one way it impacted you and your view of God.

Bible Study: Genesis 22:1-14

Sometime later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied. 2 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you."

3 Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. 4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5 He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, 7 Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" 8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied. 12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." 13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram[a] caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided."

4. How would you hear the words in verse 2: "Take your son, your only son, whom you love...sacrifice him"?

5. What aspects of "the dark night" might have been tormenting Abraham's soul as he bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar? (ex: weariness, sense of failure, defeat, emptiness, dryness, unbelief, guilt, disillusionment, abandonment by God)

6. In light of this story, how is your image (or idea) of God challenged?

7. What are some possible reasons you have a hard time accepting and moving through Walls?

8. In order to grow in Christ, every believer must go through Walls, or “dark nights of the soul.” This is God’s way of rewiring and “purging our affections and passions” that we might delight in his love and enter into a richer, fuller communion with him. In this way he frees us from unhealthy attachments and idolatries of the world. How might this larger perspective serve as an encouragement to you today?

9. This Wall gave Abraham a revelation of God that would change him and his relationship with God forever. He came to know God as Provider in even the most desperate of situations (v. 14). How might this encourage you in any current Walls you are facing?

10. When God takes us through a Wall, we are changed. The following are four primary characteristics of life found on the other side of the Wall.

- A greater level of brokenness
- A greater appreciation for holy unknowing (mystery)
- A deeper ability to wait on God
- A greater detachment (from the world)

Journaling can be a powerful tool to help clarify areas of life where God desires to bring transformation. It illuminates what is going on inside of us. Few tools get us to the “issue beneath the issue” like journaling.

Choose one characteristic from the above list where you sense God is seeking to work in you now. Journal your thoughts and feeling regarding how God is birthing something new in you and /or helping you shed incomplete or immature ideas about Him.

Father's Ladder- Session 4 Part 2

We are divided into three parts: our body (our outer man), our soul (our mind, will and emotions) (our inner man), and our spirit (our innermost man).

- Each of these areas have specific needs.

The needs of the body: identity, protection, provision.

The needs of the soul: communication, comradery, and companionship

The needs of the spirit: comfort, nurture, taught

When we're in childhood, this is where we learn about these needs. We're born with these needs. These are legitimate needs in our life and will be until the day we die.

The family is divided into three parts:

1. *the father is the one in charge of meeting the needs of our identity, protection, provision.*
 2. *Siblings and friends and when get married our spouse; these take care of meeting the needs of companionship and communication.*
 3. *Mom takes care of the needs of comfort, nurture, teaching.*
- These needs we have are offset by fears because what happens in childhood is that we become aware of our needs and then we live with the fear of whether our needs are going to be met are not.
 - ***This is the source of where our wounds and lies come from: whether or not our needs are going to be met. And ladies, fears or lies can be real or they can be perceived. Our perceived fears can have just as much effect on us as real fears.***

It doesn't matter if it's real or not, it's how we PERCEIVE SITUATIONS AND THOSE EXPERIENCES MAKE UP WHAT WE BELIEVE.

Ladies, there were specific times in our childhood when we as children needed our needs met and our parents physically weren't able (or available) to do it. Now whether there was a good reason or not, we had a need, and it wasn't met. This is the place where the enemy will come in where wounds and lies may have been established in our lives.

As we dig into our childhood as a part of our inner healing it's not to determine whether or not you had a good family or a bad family. I came from a really good family—a Godly family, but yet in my life some needs went unmet. Even good families cannot meet every single need 100% of the time.

How then can we be whole? **Spiritual healing only happens when the Godhead shows up and covers the hurt, exposing the lies and replacing them with truth.**

The Godhead is also divided into three parts:

- Father God is responsible for meeting the needs of my identity, of my protection and providing for me.

Psalm 68:5 A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.

- The Father meeting the needs of my identity, protecting or providing for me may not be the way I was expecting because I have tunnel vision – he’s looking at one thing and I’m only seeing what’s in front of me. *And when I look at my situation through perceived notions and solutions it opens my heart up to offense if I haven’t learned to trust the Lord even when things are going as I had expected.*

Psalm 18:30

- The second part of the Godhead is His Son: Jesus.

Hebrews 12:12

- And the third part of the God head is Holy Spirit, the Comforter and the Teacher who impacts the needs of our spirit.

*John 14:26

Once we get healed, and we CAN GET healed, our needs will still need to be met. But we can take people off the hook b/c My needs will still be met through God the Father, Jesus His Son, and Holy Spirit and when my needs are met I don’t have to feel unsafe, I can walk into any situation and feel protected!

. **I don’t have to be offended because you won’t give me value.

I don’t have to be offended because you won’t comfort me.

* I don’t have to get mad at you because you won’t meet my needs, because I have a place to get my needs met.

Healing happens when the Godhead shows up and covers the hurts and lies with truth of His word!

In this world our identity will always change—your earthly status is always subject to change. But in Christ our identity is always unchanging. Ladies, your security in life depends on your identify. And I’ve thought how we have all wrestle with insecurities in our lives and it all goes back to our identity. So many young girls base their identity on their looks.

We cannot be defined by what family we were born into, who we married, or if we’re not married, what we do, how much money we make or by what others think of us. all of those can change! and how we identify ourselves will be how we approach life.

If my identity is based on what I do, I’ll always need to do more and achieve more to find my value.

If my identity is based on what others say I am, I’ll always try to please others instead of pleasing my heavenly father. We cannot let other people define who we are.

Our true identity can only be found in who God says we are... in how God sees us, and when we can catch a hold of that we can live our life with confidence. And we will not be jerked around by our emotions because of what any family members says to us, about us, or even how they treat us. How many of you want to get there? Where the opinions of man just bounce off of you? I want to be there!-- And I confess to you I still wrestle with this at times. But my heart is set on this pilgrimage that I will know who I am in Christ and that knowledge will set me free.

John 1:12 yet to all who received him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.

The first and most important truth: I AM A CHILD OF God and I belong to Him!

I. I am a child of God and I belong to Him!

This true identity trumps my biological DNA by a mile! This family position of being His child gives me access to His throne. I can run and sit in His lap any time I want because I am His child and He loves me and all I had to do was receive Him.

2 Corinthians 6:17-18 says: "'I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters,' says the Lord Almighty."

For those of you whose Father's weren't there....what your earthly father didn't say to you, your heavenly Father wants to say!

1 john 3:1 "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (NIV)

No matter how old you are, it's comforting to know that you are a child of God. You belong to a loving, protective Father. God, who is everywhere, keeps watch over you and is always ready to listen when you want to talk with him.

Turn to Ephesians 1:4

Did you know before you were born He picked you out to be His?

Verse 4 says: For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight.

In 1 Peter 2:9 it says: But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. If you write in your Bible. Go ahead and write: *He chose me!*

2. The second truth is : **I AM CHOSEN BY GOD!**

Repeat that with me: I am chosen by God! There is this incredible need within each one of to be wanted. Remember on the playground when they were playing Red Rover and you wanted so much to be picked ----to be chosen? And so many times women who do not understand their inherent self-worth will go looking in all the wrong places for someone to want them and they find themselves instead of wanted and valued, empty, used, and insecure.

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! I was reflecting this week on how important it is that we speak God's Word over our children not just mere compliments or warm fuzzies. At an early age our girls need to understand that their self worth is not based on what they can do and how pretty they are or how smart they are, but simply because they are God's creation and He values them! Moms and grandmas let's be careful with our words. Our children may be smart, talented, good looking, and even "good," but that is not what makes them special—that is not what makes them valuable!

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Turn to Ephesians 2:10

This next scripture is the reason why we are so valuable!

Verse 10 says: For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. NAS

The word for workmanship is the Greek word "POY-ay-mah," which means "something that has been made." The word can be used to refer to a work of art, and is in fact where our English word "poem" comes from.

we are His creation. We are this beautiful expression of God. His creation! The NLT calls us His masterpiece!

Ps. 139:14 I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Thy works, and my soul knows it very well

Did you know that it was customary for Jews to speak over themselves Psalm 139 every morning? The Jewish people went through many adversities and they needed to remind themselves how special they were to God. Ladies, the holidays are no time to be insecure! The Word says that David encouraged Himself in the Lord and we are no different!

When you go home today there may not be one soul telling you that you're wonderful much less that you are fearfully and wonderfully made. In fact it maybe the very opposite, so be prepared!

Just like David encouraged himself in the Lord, you must take The washing of the water of the Word not only cleanses but it refreshes us and renews our mind –our thinking!

*Turn to Jeremiah 31:3

Dr. Gary Smalley coined a term called "a love tank" in his book called the Five Love Languages, he used this term to help people measure if they are feeling loved or not. If your love tank is full then you feel very loved. But if your love tank is low, you're not feeling so loved.

Verse 3 says: the LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness. I encourage to put your name in there! I have loved _____. I have loved _____.

Who is going to love you with a love like that? a love that doesn't fail! A love that's going to last for an eternity. man will fail you, but God will not !

Romans 8:37-39-

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,[b] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. nIV

He covered it all! Nothing will separate you FROM His love!

You know there is something inside of each person they not only want to be chosen, they want to be loved.

Proverbs 19:22 What a person desires is unfailing love. NIV

There are some of you that you would love to hear your parents say, I love you or I'm proud of you, but guess what they may not be capable of that. You have to have something before you can give it! *Right?!* Let them off the hook! They are mere flesh and blood! The word says, His love is unfailing!

4. I want you to speak this over yourself! I AM LOVED BY MY FATHER! NOTHING CAN SEPARATE ME FROM HIS LOVE!

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Dr. Neil Anderson. The author of The bondage breaker. the more you reaffirm who you are in Christ, the more your behavior will begin to reflect your true identity.

If this is for you today I encourage you to get in your Bible and find every scripture there is on your identity in Christ! Put those scriptures up in your car, your office, over your kitchen sink! While you're washing dishes, let your mind be washed with the washing of the water of the Word and with those scriptures write: I am loved! I am God's child! I am chosen! I am fearfully made! I am a friend of God! I am an overcomer! On the back of your worksheet is a list of Father affirmations and I encourage you to read these over yourself everyday—maybe several times a day until you are whole! Ladies, you take that sharp-edge of His Word and you hack that lying snake that keeps whispering in your ear.

The bottom line, Lie-Crushing Truth is simply this:

I am loved ... because I am chosen by Jesus

I am known ... because I am named by Jesus

I am fearless ... because I am safe in Jesus

I am brave ... because I am always with Jesus.

I'm going to say it one more time, the more you reaffirm who you are in Christ, the more your behavior will begin to reflect your true identity. But you're the one who has to do it!

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Session 5

Chapter 5: Enlarge Your Soul through Grief and Loss

Loss is a place where self-knowledge and powerful transformation can happen—if we have the courage to participate fully in the process.

We all face many “deaths” within our lives. Our culture routinely interprets these losses and griefs as alien invasions and interruptions to our “normal” lives. The choice is whether these deaths will be terminal (crushing our spirit and life) or will open us up to new possibilities and depths of transformation in Christ.

1. Reflect: one of the themes of this study is to learn to be still and know. This week what struggles and what successes did you experience in meeting with God. Is it getting easier to be still?
2. As you were growing up, how did you deal with your disappointments? Give one example?
3. Name one loss you have experienced this past year. How has this loss impacted you?

Bible Study: Matthew 26:36-44

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” 37 He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” 39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

40 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Couldn’t you men keep watch with me for one hour?” he asked Peter. 41 “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” 42 He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.” 43 When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. 44 So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

4. Below is a list of common defenses we often use to protect ourselves from grief and loss. Place a check by the common defenses that you sometimes use:

- Denial
- Minimizing (admitting something is wrong but in such a way that it appears less serious than it actually is)
- Blaming others (or God)
- “Over-spiritualizing”
- Blaming oneself
- Rationalizing (offering excuses and justifications)
- Intellectualizing (giving analysis and theories to avoid personal awareness or difficult feelings)
- Distracting
- Becoming hostile
- Medicating (with unhealthy addictions or attachments to numb our pain)

5. It is important for us to remember that Jesus was both fully human and fully God. Spend a few moments focusing on Jesus in verses 36-41. In contrast to the checklist in question 4, what were some of the ways he dealt with and moved through his losses?

6. What about Jesus’ example of grieving most speaks to you about embracing your own grief and loss?

7. Use the chart below and choose two or three age ranges of your life, and write down your significant losses during those years.

GRIEF CHART

Age (in years)	Losses/ Disappointments Experienced	Your Response at the Time
3-12		
13-18		
19-25		
26-40		
41+		

8. What was the experience of filling out the chart like for you? Did it reveal anything new to you? Explain.
9. One of the central messages of Christianity is that suffering and death bring resurrection and new life. Are there any losses you have not yet embraced where new life is still waiting to be birthed?

Session 6

Read Chapter 6: Discover the Rhythms of the Daily Office and Sabbath

Many of us are eager to develop our relationship with God. The problem, however, is that we can't seem to stop long enough to be with Him. And if we aren't busy, we feel guilty that we are wasting time and not being productive. It is like being addicted—not to drugs or alcohol—but to tasks, work, and doing.

But God is offering us a way to deeply root our lives in Him. This can be found in two ancient disciplines going back thousands of years—the Daily Office and Sabbath. When placed inside present-day Christianity, the Daily Office and Sabbath are ground breaking, countercultural acts that go against the grain of our fast-paced Western culture.

Stopping for the Daily Office and Sabbath is not meant to add another “to-do” to our already busy schedules. It is the resetting of our entire lives toward a new destination—God Himself. These practices enable us to stay attuned to God's presence throughout our days and weeks.

1. What obstacles, difficulties, or successes did you experience in meeting with God this past week?
2. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1=least busy to 10 = very busy), how busy are you? And where on the scale would you like to be?
3. What is one practice you do on a daily/weekly basis that helps you stay connected to God?

Bible Study: Daniel 6:6-10

Introduction: After being forcibly removed from his country and home, Daniel was given a prestigious education and high-level job in government. The pressure on him to conform to the worldly, pagan values of Babylon was great. The following example gives us insight into one of the secrets of his faithful devotion to God.

Daniel 6:6-10 NIV So these administrators and satraps went as a group to the king and said: “May King Darius live forever! 7 The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions' den. 8 Now, Your Majesty, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.” 9 So King Darius put the decree in writing.10 Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

4. Reread verse 10 aloud. How do the words in this verse speak to you?

5. How do you think this practice anchored Daniel in God and enabled him to resist the great pressure he was facing?

6. What are the greatest obstacles preventing you from stopping to be with God once or twice a day?

Exodus 20:1-17 NIV The Ten Commandments

20 And God spoke all these words:

2 "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

3 "You shall have no other gods before[a] me.

4 "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

7 "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

8 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

12 "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

13 "You shall not murder.

14 "You shall not commit adultery.

15 "You shall not steal.

16 "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Reread the fourth commandment in verses 8-11. Biblical Sabbaths are a 24 hour block of time each week with four characteristics that distinguish this time from a “day off.”

- 7. Stop:** “To stop” is built into the literal meaning of the Hebrew word. We have limits. God is on the throne running the world. We are called to let go and trust Him.
- 8. Rest:** Once we stop, we are called to rest from our work and our “doings.”
- 9. Delight:** We are to slow down so we can enjoy what we have been given.
- 10. Contemplate:** We seek to see the invisible in the visible—to recognize the hidden ways the miracle of life is all around us in His gifts to us.

What 24-hour period might work for you at this phase of your journey to practice Sabbath?

8. What do you need to stop that relates to your work—paid and unpaid?

9. What activities, places, and /or people create rest and delight for you?

Read the Sabbath FAQs:

1. *Why do I need to keep Sabbath for a whole 24-hour period each week?*

God created us in his image for a rhythm of work and rest. When we violate that rhythm, we do violence to our own souls. Moreover, we are not defined by what we do or what we produce. We are defined by God’s unconditional love for us in Christ Jesus. Therefore, we don’t keep Sabbath to earn God’s love. Rather, Sabbath is God’s gift to keep us centered and rooted in that amazing reality. It is not an accident that his essential spiritual formation practice is found in the fourth commandment of the Ten Commandments.

2. *How do I go about deciding what specific activities are acceptable and unacceptable on the Sabbath?*

Reflect on the following questions as you sort out God’s pathway for you:

- *What do I need to stop that relates to my work—paid and unpaid?*
- *What activities create delight and rest for me?*
- *How can I structure my day to cultivate a greater awareness of God in my life and in the world?*
- *What might help me see God’s goodness and miracles all around me today?*

Lynne Baab says, "Whatever we choose to do for Sabbath needs to give us rest and life over time. The challenge is discernment, experimenting to find what works for us and the people we love, what helps us catch our breath and remember who we are as God's beloved."

3. *Do I need a day-off and a Sabbath?*

You will need at least a half-day, or several hours to prepare for Sabbath. Part of the Sabbath experience is the preparation time. What needs to happen before Sabbath starts so you (or your family) can experience true rest on the day itself? A basic list of what needs to get done before Sabbath starts might include getting the errands and chores of life done (e.g., food shopping, laundry, errands, cleaning the house, bringing closure to your work, final phone calls, paying bills). These things make Sabbath more restful and communicate the order and peace many of us long for.

4. *What do I do about my tendency to perfectionism?*

We don't ever get Sabbath "right." Sabbath is a day to let go of perfectionism and let God run the universe. Inconsistencies, bad choices, and learning from our mistakes are part of the point. Do your best to stop working, letting God worry about what you're not doing right, taking your focus off yourself so you can rest in Him.

5. *Isn't Jesus our Sabbath-rest? Is this another works-righteousness?*

Jesus reinforced the gift of Sabbath amid all the abuses of His day. He reminds us, "The Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath" Mark 2:27. To keep Sabbath is to exercise one's freedom, to declare oneself to be neither a tool to be "employed" nor a beast to be burdened. Sabbath-keeping is an invitation to rest because God rested. This rest serves as a sign of contemplation and abundance. God's gifts to humanity are so generous that we are able to rest, our rest indicates that we depend completely on the God who redeemed us from sin, death, and evil.

6. *How do I cease from the work of parenting?*

You cannot stop changing diapers, of course. But you can cease from tidying up, cooking, doing laundry, and running errands. You can do some things together as a family. You can hire a babysitter, so you and your spouse can get time alone. Or you can take time alone for yourself, leaving parenting to your spouse. Then, you take the children and give equal time to him/her.

7. *What do I do about my children who aren't interested in Sabbath?*

The important thing to remember is that this is to a day of deprivation. Sabbath is to be a delight. Rather than simply taking things away, think about things you can add (e.g., special desserts, a movie, a creative family activity==depending on the ages of your children). It doesn't have to be a forced family day. If your children are older, they are going to naturally want to connect with friends. That is okay. You will go through many transitions in keeping Sabbath, depending on your children's ages and temperaments. But, whenever possible, remember this is a wonderful opportunity to build rhythm, intentionality, and sacred traditions into your family.

8. *What about sports and extracurricular activities my children may be involved in? There may be some activities you want to eliminate because of the stress involved. But there may be others (e.g., if your child loves soccer) that you will continue, but you will do so in a different spirit. You may go to the soccer game but you are doing it without multitasking, talking on the phone, reading emails, or reading work-related paperwork at halftime or during time outs. You can focus on enjoying the game, other parents, or the very gift of the human body able to participate in athletics.*
9. *How, like Jesus, can we exercise compassion on the Sabbath without turning it into work? The Jews have long believed that showing compassion on the Sabbath reflects the glorious abundance of the day. We rest from work in order to turn our hearts toward God, and God is always concerned with human need. When we stop for Sabbath, it may happen that we become more attentive to the problems of the world around us. This ultimately leads us to show more, not less, compassion. Maybe the Good Samaritan was on his Sabbath! Just be careful that it is not a “should.” Rejoice in small acts of caring, allowing them to connect us to our compassionate God.*
10. *Which day is the Sabbath? Sunday or Saturday? I have heard different views. Paul addresses this very issue in the Jew/Gentile/multicultural church in Romans 14:1-8. He writes: “One man considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord...” I believe the key principal is keeping a rhythm for the same day of the week each week. Doing it around the Sunday gathering of worship is clearly best when possible, I believe, as this is part of our contemplation.*
11. *Can I serve at church as a volunteer? Should I stop? Yes, you can serve in your community. Except for a very, very few, our work is not at our church. We work as secretaries, social workers, teachers, lawyers, accountants, moms/dads at home, students, etc. Service in our church community is not a job. Hopefully, there is delight in serving Christ as a children’s worker, usher, greeter, etc. It is also important to remember that showing mercy and compassion was the mission element Jesus brought back into God’s original intention of Sabbath-keeping. Treating people like Christ—whiter children, youth, or adults—is the heart of what we seek to do in our churches.*

10. Take a few minutes to journal one small step you can take to begin to incorporate Sabbath as a spiritual formation practice?

Session 7

Read Chapter 7: Grow into an Emotionally Mature Adult

The goal of the Christian life is to love well. Jesus was aware that true spirituality included not only loving God, but also the skill of loving others maturely.

Growing into an emotionally mature Christian person includes experiencing each individual, ourselves included, as sacred, or as Martin Buber put it, as a “Thou” rather than an “It.” Becoming emotionally mature requires learning, practicing, and integrating such skills as speaking respectfully, listening with empathy, negotiating conflict fairly, and uncovering the hidden expectations we have of others...just to name a few.

As we will see in today’s Bible study on the parable of the Good Samaritan, both self-respect and compassion for others are part of a life rooted in “I-Thou” relating.

1. What obstacles, difficulties, or successes did you experience in meeting with God this past week?
2. Make a list of qualities that describe emotional immaturity and qualities that describe emotional maturity. As you think about these qualities, consider how we treat/view other people.

Emotional Immaturity	Emotional Maturity

3. Why do you think we can be committed and “growing” in Christ and yet not be growing in our ability to be “prayerfully present” or loving toward others?

Bible Study:

Who can hear a story on the news about someone getting mugged, robbed, stripped naked, and left for dead in an alleyway without being affected? These real-life stories also happened in the days of Jesus. And Jesus told a parable recorded that imagines one such disturbing story—with an unusual twist.

Read Luke 10:25-37

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" 27 He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind' and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" 28 "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." 29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' 36 "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" 37 The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

4. According to Martin Buber, the great Jewish theologian, we treat people as an "It" when we use them as means to an end or as objects. We treat people as a "Thou" when we recognize each person as a separate human being made in God's image and treat them with dignity and respect. If you were the priest or Levite, what are some of the reasons you may have passed by this man and treated him as an "It" instead of a "Thou"?

5. Look back at verses 31-33. What did the Samaritan see and feel that the priest and Levite did not?

6. Think of a time when you were seen in a negative light, treated as inferior, or passed over as invisible? How did it feel?
 - Who have you been taught not to see (i.e., to treat as an "It")?

7. Reread verses 33-36. The Samaritan's compassion led him to stop and help the hurting man. At the same time, how did he demonstrate self-respect and awareness of his limits?

8. What are some of your challenges when it comes to loving your neighbor and loving yourself?

9. In light of how God is coming to you through this study, how do you hear the words in verse 37 to "go and do likewise"?

One way of growing in the area of loving others well, and treating ourselves and others as a “Thou,” is to understand how we manage our expectations in relationships.

EXPECTATIONS are ASSUMPTIONS about what someone SHOULD do. Every time we make an assumption about someone without checking it out, it is likely we are treating them as an “It” and not a “Thou.” Why? We are jumping to conclusions without having checked out the assumption. Consider how you feel when someone is angry with you because you didn’t fulfill their expectations, yet they never communicated this expectation to you. They simply assumed you should know.

Unmet and unclear expectations can create havoc in our places of employment, classrooms, friendships, dating relationships, marriages, sports teams, families, and churches. We expect other people to know what we want before we say it. The problem with most expectations is that they are:

- **Unconscious:** We may have expectations we’re not even aware of until we are disappointed by someone.
- **Unrealistic:** We may develop unrealistic expectations by watching TV, movies, or other people/resources that give false impressions.
- **Unspoken:** We may have never told our spouse, friend, or employee what we expect, yet we are angry when our “expectations” are not met.
- **Un-agreed upon:** We may have had our own thoughts about what was expected, but those thoughts were never agreed upon by the other person.

10. Think of a recent, simple expectation that went unmet and made you angry or disappointed. (Ex.: I expected my husband to accompany me to my office party this past weekend; I expected to socialize with members of my small group outside the meeting times; I expected my teenagers to put their dirty dishes in the dishwasher; I expected my boss to give me at least a 5 percent cost of living raise last year.) Write yours down.

11. Now compare that unmet expectation with the inventory questions below:

- **Conscious:** Were you conscious (aware) you had this expectation?
- **Realistic:** Is the expectation realistic regarding the other person?
- **Spoken:** Have you clearly spoken the expectation to them or do you just think “they should know”?
- **Agreed upon:** Has the other person agreed to the expectation?

Remember this principle: *Expectations are only valid when they have been mutually agreed upon. These are the expectations we have a right to expect.*

12. What have you discovered about your own expectations?

13. What step(s) can you take to make your expectations conscious, spoken, realistic, and agreed upon so that you are relating in an “I-Thou” way?

Session 8

Read Chapter 8: Go the Next Step to Develop a “Rule of Life”

If we are to nurture a heart that treats every person, ourselves included, as a “Thou” instead of “It,” we need to be intentional about our lives. By ordering our lives to contemplate the love of Christ and to receive the love of Christ, we will be able to give the love of Christ away to others. In this way, He transforms our lives into a gift to our families, friends, coworkers, and communities.

The problem again, however, is our busyness and lack of intentionality. Often, we find ourselves unfocused, distracted, and spiritually adrift. Few of us have a conscious plan for intentionally developing our spiritual lives.

Nurturing a growing spirituality in our present-day culture calls for a thoughtful, conscious, purposeful plan. To do this well requires us to uncover another ancient buried treasure – a “Rule of Life.”

1. What obstacles, difficulties, or successes did you experience in meeting with God this past week?

2. Before launching in the final session, it is important to pause and consider the past seven sessions:
 - The Problem of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality
(Saul –emotionally unaware and not cultivating his relationship with God).
 - Know Yourself That You May Know God
(David—courageously living out of his true self)
 - Going Back in Order to Go Forward
(Joseph—transformed by a very difficult past)
 - Journey through the Wall
(Abraham –trusting God in a “dark night of the soul”)
 - Enlarge Your Soul through Grief and Loss
(Jesus in Gethsemane—embracing God’s will)
 - Discover the Rhythms of the Daily Office and Sabbath
(Daniel—anchor himself in God)
 - Grown into an Emotionally Mature Adult
(The Good Samaritan—modeling an “I-Thou” heart to others)

In light of how God has been coming to you throughout these sessions, complete the following sentence:

I am beginning to realize...

- Take about 5 minutes to think about your life in terms of prayer, rest, work/activity, and relationships. In each box, write one specific thing you are currently doing in each of these four areas to nurture your relationship with Jesus.

Prayer	Rest
Work/Activity	Relationships

Bible Study:

The Rule of Life will be introduced as we study the first Christian community in the book of Acts. 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 spiritually.

Acts 2:42-47 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

- In the book of Acts, we are given a window into the life of the first community of believers soon after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost when three thousand people came to faith in Christ. What speaks to you from this passage?
- Based on this one passage, how would you describe this community’s Rule of Life? Describe the activities/disciples they used to grow and mature in Christ.

Now it is time for you to begin developing your own personal Rule of Life. The following story and questions are meant to help you discern what may be getting in the way of developing a way of life that keeps you closely connected to God.

In his book A Hidden Wholeness, Parker Palmer relates a story about farmers in the Midwest who would prepare for blizzards by tying a rope from the back door of their house out to the barn as a guide to ensure they could return safely home. These blizzards came quickly and fiercely and are highly dangerous. When their full force was blowing, a farmer could not see the end of his or her hand. Many froze to death in those blizzards, disoriented by their inability to see. They wandered in circles, lost sometimes in their own backyards. If they lost their grip on the rope, it became impossible for them to find their way home. Some froze within feet of their own back door, never realizing how close they were to safety.

Many of us are wandering amidst the blizzards of life and have lost our way spiritually.

6. Spend time alone with God around the following questions:

- What is the nature of your blizzard at this time?

- What contributes to your blizzard? What does it look like? Feel like?

- What does that blizzard obscure? What gets “lost”?

- We each need a rope to keep us connected to God. Notice that every rope is actually made up of a series of smaller, intertwined threads. In light of your life at this time, what “threads” do you want to make up your rope (Rule of Life)?