



**EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY SPIRITUALITY  
DISCUSSION + REFLECTION GUIDE**

# SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

## SPEAK FOR YOURSELF

We encourage you to share and 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, 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

If you feel judgmental or defensive when someone else is sharing, ask yourself: I wonder what brought him/her to this belief? I wonder what he/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.

## 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.



# THE PROBLEM OF EMOTIONALLY UNHEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

## BRIEF SUMMARY

Emotional Health and spiritual maturity cannot be separated. It is not possible to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature.

When we ignore the emotional component of our lives, we move through the motions of Christian disciplines, activities, and behaviors, but deeply rooted behavioral patterns from our 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 (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.

One person described it this way, "I was a Christian for twenty-two years. But instead of being a twenty-two-year-old Christian, I was a one-year-old Christian twenty-two times! I just kept doing the same things over and over again."



# THE PROBLEM OF EMOTIONALLY UNHEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What stood out to you most from this week's teaching on the Problem of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality?

2. Here are 10 symptoms of emotionally unhealthy spirituality:

- Using God to run from God
- Ignoring the emotions of anger, sadness, and fear
- Dying to the wrong things
- Denying the past's impact on the present
- Dividing life into "secular" and "sacred" compartments
- Doing for God instead of being with God
- Spiritualizing away conflict
- Covering over brokenness, weakness, and failure
- Living without limits
- Judging the spiritual journey of others

Which of these symptoms are the most relevant in your life today?

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

4. At this point, what might be one or two simple steps you can take toward beginning to slow down your life and balance your being with God and your doing for God?



# THE PROBLEM OF EMOTIONALLY UNHEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

## FURTHER REFLECTION: BIBLE STUDY OF 1 SAMUEL 15:7-24

1. In verse 11, what do you notice about God and Samuel's responses to Saul's failure to fully obey? How does this differ from Saul's response in verses 12-13?
2. Reread verses 22-23. Describe in your own words how Samuel explains Saul's disobedience.
3. List one or two examples of how you go through the motions of making "burnt offerings" and "sacrifices" rather than obeying the word of the Lord (i.e. 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)?
4. As you note the serious tone of verse 23, what positive step(s) could Saul have taken to become aware of his own iceberg and hear God in his situation?
5. In what ways can you relate, or not relate, to Saul?



# KNOW YOURSELF THAT YOU MAY KNOW GOD

## BRIEF SUMMARY

Self-awareness is intricately related to our relationship with God. In fact, the challenge of Scripture to shed our old “false” self in order to live authentically in our new “true” self strikes at the very core of true spirituality.

In AD 500, Augustine wrote in Confessions, “How can you draw close to God when you are far from your own self?” He prayed, “Grant, Lord, that I may know myself that I may know thee.”

In 1530, John Calvin wrote in his opening of the Institutes of the Christian Religion: “Our wisdom... consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But as these are connected together by many ties, it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes and gives birth to the other.”

The vast majority of us go to our graves without knowing who we are. Without being fully aware of it, we live someone else’s life, or at least someone else’s expectations for us. This does violence to ourselves, to our relationship with God, and ultimately to others.



# KNOW YOURSELF THAT YOU MAY KNOW GOD

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What stood out to you most from this week's teaching on Knowing Yourself That You May Know God?
2. Have you ever considered how ignoring part of yourself (i.e. certain emotions) may hinder or limit your ability to connect with God?
3. What might be one specific way that you give in to expectations of others rather than being faithful to what Jesus has for you?
4. When you think about the idea of shedding the "false" self and putting on the "true" self, what comes to your mind?





# KNOW YOURSELF THAT YOU MAY KNOW GOD

## FURTHER REFLECTION: BIBLE STUDY OF 1 SAMUEL 17:26-45

1. What are some of the accusations and messages that David receives from those around him? (From his family, from Saul, and from Goliath)

2. What feelings might you experience if you were in David's position (hearing these things from your family, a person in authority, and an intimidating figure)?

3. 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?

4. Where in your life, or with who, do you find it difficult to be yourself (i.e. say 'no' when you need to, speak honestly, or not be afraid of what others think)?





# GOING BACK IN ORDER TO GO FORWARD

## BRIEF SUMMARY

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality involves embracing God's choice to birth us into a particular family, in a particular place, at a particular moment in history.

That choice to embrace our past grants us certain opportunities and gifts. It also hands us a certain amount of "emotional baggage" for our journey through life. For some of us this load is minimal; for others, it is a heavy burden to carry.

True spirituality frees us to live joyfully in the present. Living joyfully, however, requires going back in order to go forward. This process takes us to the very heart of spirituality and discipleship in the family of God—breaking free from the destructive sinful patterns of our past in order to live the life of love that God intends.



# GOING BACK IN ORDER TO GO FORWARD

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What stood out to you most from this week's teaching on Going Back In Order to Go Forward?

2. Our need to go back in order 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.

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

3. What messages from your parents or caretakers did you receive about life (i.e. 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, etc.)?

4. What are some "Earthquake" (things that majorly disrupted or shaped your family) events in your family history?

5. Combining the messages you received about life and the "Earthquake" events, do you see any cumulative messages that you may have received?

6. What might be one specific message from your family of origin that God has revealed to you today that you want to change as a part of your discipleship journey?



# GOING BACK IN ORDER TO GO FORWARD

## FURTHER REFLECTION: BIBLE STUDY OF GENESIS 50:15-21

1. 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?
2. What assumptions are the brothers making about Joseph in verse 15?
3. Why do you think Joseph weeps in verse 17?
4. 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).
5. What would it look like for you to surrender the pains of your past (mistakes, sins, setbacks, and disappointments) to God today?



# JOURNEY THROUGH THE WALL

## BRIEF SUMMARY

Emotionally healthy spirituality requires that you go through the pain of the Wall—or, as the ancients called it, “the 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 and crises 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 often results in great long-term pain, ongoing immaturity, and confusion. Receiving the gift of God in the Wall, however, transforms our lives forever.



# JOURNEY THROUGH THE WALL

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What stood out to you most from this week's teaching on Journey Through The Wall?
2. In this season of your life, what is the greatest obstacle that you face? Explain.
3. If you have been through a Wall, briefly share one way it impacted you and your view of God.
4. 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)Is there a characteristic from this list that you sense God may be seeking to work in you now?
5. What does it mean for you to trust in the slow work of God today?



# JOURNEY THROUGH THE WALL

## FURTHER REFLECTION:

### BIBLE STUDY OF GENESIS 22:1-14

1. How would you hear the words in verse 2: "Take your son, your only son, whom you love . . . sacrifice him"?
2. 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)
3. In light of this story, how is your image (or idea) of God challenged?
4. What are some possible reasons you have a hard time accepting and moving through Walls?
5. 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?
6. What might be some unhealthy attachments or "idols" God wants to remove from your life in order to lead you to deeper, richer communion with him?



# ENLARGE YOUR SOUL THROUGH GRIEF AND LOSS

## BRIEF SUMMARY

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.





# ENLARGE YOUR SOUL THROUGH GRIEF AND LOSS

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What stood out to you most from this week's teaching on Enlarge Your Soul Through Grief and Loss?

2. As you were growing up, how did you deal with your disappointments? Give one example.

3. Following is a list of common defenses we often use to protect ourselves from grief and loss. Are any of these commonly used by you?

- 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)

4. How can you see God enlarging your soul through your losses?

5. What "road closed" sign is before you today that may be God's way of redirecting you to something new?



# ENLARGE YOUR SOUL THROUGH GRIEF AND LOSS

## FURTHER REFLECTION: BIBLE STUDY OF MATTHEW 26:36-44

1. 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, and reflect on some of the ways he dealt with and moved through his losses.
2. What about Jesus' example of grieving most speaks to you about embracing your own grief and loss?
3. 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?
4. What does it mean for you to pray, "Yet not as I will, but as you will"?
5. What might it mean for you to mature by entering the painful reality of your losses rather than avoiding them?
6. How would it change your prayer life to bring to God what is actually in you and not what you think ought to be in you?



# DISCOVER THE RHYTHMS OF THE DAILY OFFICE AND SABBATH

## BRIEF SUMMARY

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 groundbreaking, 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.



# DISCOVER THE RHYTHMS OF THE DAILY OFFICE AND SABBATH

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What stood out to you most from this week's teaching on Discover the Rhythms of the Daily Office and Sabbath?
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?
4. What do you need to stop that relates to your work—paid and unpaid?
5. What activities, places, and/or people create rest and delight for you?
6. What is one small step you could take to implement the practices of Sabbath or Daily Office this week into your schedule?



# DISCOVER THE RHYTHMS OF THE DAILY OFFICE AND SABBATH

## FURTHER REFLECTION:

### BIBLE STUDY OF DANIEL 6:6–10; EXODUS 20:1–17

1. In Daniel 6:10, how do the words of this verse speak to you?
2. How do you think this practice anchored Daniel in God and enabled him to resist the great pressure he was facing?
3. What are the greatest obstacles preventing you from stopping to be with God once or twice a day?
4. Biblical Sabbaths are a 24-hour block of time each week with four characteristics that distinguish this time from a “day off”, they are:
  - 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.
  - Rest: Once we stop, we are called to rest from our work and our “doings.”
  - Delight: We are to slow down so we can enjoy what we have been given.
  - 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.

Which of these would be most challenging for you as you seek to implement Sabbath into your life?

5. What is your greatest fear in stopping for a 24-hour period each week?



# GROW INTO AN EMOTIONALLY MATURE ADULT

## BRIEF SUMMARY

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. Both self-respect and compassion for others are part of a life rooted in “I-Thou” relating.



# GROW INTO AN EMOTIONALLY MATURE ADULT

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What stood out to you from this week's teaching on Grow Into An Emotionally Mature Adult?
2. 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?
3. What are some of your challenges when it comes to loving your neighbor and loving yourself?
4. What would it mean to you to see Jesus Christ in the people you meet this week?
5. What sometimes distracts you from seeing the people you are with as they really are?





# GROW INTO AN EMOTIONALLY MATURE ADULT

## FURTHER REFLECTION: BIBLE STUDY OF LUKE 10:25-37

1. Looking at verses 31-33, what did the Samaritan see and feel that the priest and Levite did not?
2. Can you think of a time when you were seen in a negative light, treated as inferior, or passed over as invisible? How did it feel?
3. Who have you been taught not to see (i.e. to treat as an "It")?
4. 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"?



# GO THE NEXT STEP TO DEVELOP A 'RULE OF LIFE'

## BRIEF SUMMARY

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."



# GO THE NEXT STEP TO DEVELOP A 'RULE OF LIFE'

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What stood out to you from this week's teaching on Developing a Rule of Life?
2. What would need to change in your schedule to plan to have room to nurture your interior life with God throughout your week?
3. What difference might it make if you were to practice "building open spaces" into your life?
4. When you think about an average week for you currently, where do you see opportunity to connect with God?
5. As this is the last week in the series, what do you feel like God has been revealing to you, or teaching you throughout the series?



# GO THE NEXT STEP TO DEVELOP A 'RULE OF LIFE'

## FURTHER REFLECTION: BIBLE STUDY OF ACTS 2:42-47

1. 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?
2. Based on this one passage, how would you describe this community's Rule of Life? Describe the activities/disciplines they used to grow and mature in Christ.
3. How often are these staples of the early church a part of your current weekly rhythm?
4. What area might God be inviting you to grow in for the season ahead?





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