



excess **BAGGAGE**

Unpacking your hurts, habits & hang ups



PART 1

"The Problem of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality"

ICEBREAKER |

When you go on a trip, do you like to travel light or pack any and everything you might need?

INTRODUCTION |

When it comes to baggage, we all have it. Whether you like to travel light or pack the entire house into your suitcase, you're going to take something with you. We also go through life with emotional baggage. Often it goes unseen and undetected. We're like spiritual icebergs – you only see 10%, and the rest is hidden under the surface. We might seem like we have it all together, but inside we carry some problems and issues. How can something look so good on the surface, but be so unhealthy underneath? It's because we are made up of layers of emotions, built on experiences, reactions, and beliefs. We need to dig into that covered up 90% to really get at the heart of our unhealthy emotional state. That's where we begin in this lesson, learning the problem of emotionally unhealthy spirituality.

READ I

The goal of this series is Emotionally Healthy Spirituality. But what is that? It is your ability to be self-aware and love others well. That includes things like understanding your triggers, admitting your insecurities, and uncovering how your family origin impacts you and others close to you.

Emotional health and spiritual maturity are linked together. *It's impossible to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature.*

Of all the emotionally unhealthy people in the Bible, King Saul may be at the top of the list. The Bible tells us that at one time, he was full of the Spirit of God. But then he failed to address his baggage, and he was afflicted by a tormenting spirit that caused him depression and fear (1 Samuel 16:14).

Once, Saul was told to destroy all the possessions of the Amalekites after a battle. Instead, Saul kept some of the plunder for he and his troops. When Samuel the prophet confronted him about it, the King engaged in some BS – **Blame Shifting**.

“But I did obey the LORD,” Saul insisted. “I carried out the mission He gave me. I brought back King Agag, but I destroyed everyone else. Then my troops brought in the best of the sheep, goats, cattle, and plunder to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal.”
1 Samuel 15:20-21 (NLT)

He denied he had done anything wrong. He shifted the blame by pointing the finger at his own troops. He even suggested that if God were a little clearer about what He wanted, then he wouldn't have been in this mess. Blame shifting is one of the most emotionally unhealthy things we can do. When we refuse to admit our faults, we can't begin to change for the better.

Have you ever encountered a “blame shifter?” Someone who refuses to take responsibility. How does it make you feel when you meet someone like that?

READ |

Saul's blame shifting wasn't just bad for his emotional health, it harmed him spiritually as well. It created a false self, which is the immature, often childish, broken part of our soul. We project this personality to God and others to impress, or get our way. That false self can actually look spiritual on the surface, but down deep it's not going right.

“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.”

1 Samuel 15:22 (NIV)

To “heed” doesn't just mean hear. It means to listen to intently and to follow through on. What God was saying went in one ear and out the other. But Saul thought he was fine because he partially obeyed. God wants your full obedience. That's because He knows what is best for all of us, and when we obey we put ourselves under His protection and in the path of His blessing. Saul was more interested in doing something for God that he let it get in the way of being with God. We can let our busyness for God get in the way of just being with Him. Even good things can become bad and lead to emotionally unhealthy spirituality.

What are some things we put before obeying God? (Examples, being liked by a lot of people, having all the “right” answers, getting caught up with a performance driven mentality)

READ I

If Saul is a good example of a person who has emotionally unhealthy spirituality, then the king who followed him, David, is the perfect example of emotional health. You can read about how he processed his difficult emotions in the Psalms.

In 1 Samuel 17, we read the very familiar story of David and Goliath. There is one detail that tells us a lot about how grounded he was. King Saul invited David to put on his armor and fight the giant. However, David knew it wasn't right because it just wasn't "him." Take a look at the following scripture:

David strapped on a sword and tried to walk around, but he was not used to wearing those things. "I can't move with all this stuff on," David said. "I'm just not used to it." David took off the armor.
1 Samuel 17:39 (CEV)

David tried it out, walked around a bit, and found that it didn't fit. He wasn't used to it because it wasn't how God had made him. So, he took it off. Paul tells us in Ephesians 4 to put off our old self and put on a new self, created to be like God (Ephesians 4:22-24). Your true self is not something you need to construct or project through a process of self-improvement. It is your total self as you were created to be by God. It is the unique face of God that has been set aside from eternity just for you.

What are two or three things that make up your true self? (Examples, I'm creative, I'm intellectual, I like to laugh, I'm athletic)

READ I

When we get in touch with our true self, it's a lot easier to leave our false self behind. But that's not the end of the journey. It's only the beginning.

Here are **Ten Symptoms of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality**. Read them together and see which of these you can relate to:

- 1. Using “God-activity” to run from God’s change in your life.** We can get so wrapped up in serving at church or volunteering that we miss out on what He wants to do in us.
- 2. Ignoring potentially damaging emotions like anger, sadness, and fear.**
- 3. Dying to the wrong thing.** We might think that God calls all of us to suffer, and we're only doing right when we feel bad. But we are only called to die to our sinful selves, not the good parts that make us unique.
- 4. Denying the impact of your past on the present.**
- 5. Dividing life into “secular” and “sacred” compartments.** We often think we can place God in a box, where we go to church or small group. Then, we go about our day as if He's not really involved. God wants to be God of all parts of your life.
- 6. Doing for God rather than being with God.**
- 7. Spiritualizing away conflict instead of handling it head on.**
- 8. Covering our brokenness, weakness, and failure.**
- 9. Living without limits.** Giving yourself permission to say "no" to things that may be good, but are not essential in your life. We don't always have to help out every time.
- 10. Judging other people’s spiritual journey rather than keeping our eyes on our own road.**

What are one or two (or more) of these symptoms that you have overcome in the past or are dealing with now?

READ I

As we begin our journey to emotional and spiritual health, let's start by taking a tour through the **Four Stages of Emotional Maturity**. (Note: We will cover this in more details in week 6).

Emotional Infants

When believers needs others to take care of them. They find it hard to control their own emotions, thoughts, or behavior.

Emotional Children

They are starting to grow, but still not fully mature and prone to emotional mistakes.

Emotional Adolescents

This believer is showing real signs of growth. However, they might get defensive and threatened by criticism.

Emotional Adults

A fully mature believer will take responsibility for their own thoughts and feelings.

Now that we've gone a bit further down the path of Emotionally Healthy Spirituality, what are some keys to moving from one stage to the next? Why do you think you get stuck on one step in particular?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

Sometimes when we have authentic spiritual experiences – such as worship, prayer, Bible study – we might believe that we are doing fine, even if our relational life is fractured and our interior world is in disarray. But God wants us to be emotionally healthy, beginning on the inside out. As we begin this series, will you:

- Be honest about any of your symptoms of emotionally unhealthy spirituality?
- Address your false self and find your true self in God?
- Commit to continue in this small group for 7 weeks?
- What friend can you invite to your small group next week?

ADDITIONAL ACTION STEPS (Optional):

- Do at least one (1) SOAP Devotions this week
- Take some time this week to do an honest self assessment to see which of the four stages of emotional maturity you identify with most (*Emotional Infants, Emotional Children, Emotional Adolescents, Emotional Adults*). It may help to write your thoughts in a journal. Don't be discouraged.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

God, we thank You for You have created us. You made us unique and beautiful, different and powerful. When we connect to who we are in You, we are made whole. Help us to see what it is about us that You love most of all. Give us grace to examine and address the areas of our lives that are displeasing to You. And empower us to move forward in our lives emotionally healthy. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

Day 1:

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

Romans 15:7 (NIV)

Day 2:

God created human beings in His own image. In the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.

Genesis 1:27 (NLT)

Day 3:

My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Galatians 2:20 (NLT)

Day 4:

God has made us what we are, and in our union with Christ Jesus He has created us for a life of good deeds, which He has already prepared for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10 (GNT)

Day 5:

Throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

Ephesians 4:22-24 (NLT)