Thesis

It is impossible to be spiritually mature, while remaining emotionally immature.

Symptoms of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality

1. Using God to run from God
2. Ignoring the emotions of anger, sadness, and fear
3. Dying to the wrong things
4. Denying the past’s impact on the present
5. Dividing our lives into “secular” and “sacred” compartments
Symptoms of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality

6. Doing for God instead of being with God
7. Spiritualizing away conflict
8. Covering over brokenness, weakness, and failure
9. Living without limits
10. Judging other people’s spiritual journey

The Radical Antidote

Emotional Health & Contemplative Spirituality

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

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

-Augustine
“No one can know God who does not first know himself.”
  -Meister Eckhart

“Almost all problems in the spiritual life stem from a lack of self-knowledge.”
  -Theresa of Avila

“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.”
  -John Calvin

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

“Living and swimming in the river of God’s deep love for us in Christ is at the very heart of true spirituality. Soaking in this love enables us to surrender to God’s will, especially when it seems so contrary to what we can see, feel, or figure out ourselves. This experiential knowing of God’s love and acceptance provides the only sure foundation for loving and accepting our true selves. Only the love of God in Christ is capable of bearing the weight of our true identity.”

-Peter Scazzero

Luke 4:1-4

1 And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness 2 for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. 3 The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” 4 And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’”
Luke 4:5-8

5 And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, 6 and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. 7 If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” 8 And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’”

Luke 4:9-11

9 And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, 10 for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ 11 and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’”

Luke 4:12-13

12 And Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” 13 And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.
Temptations Toward a False Self

Temptation One: I Am What I Do (Performance)

Temptation Two: I Am What I Have (Possession)

Temptation Three: I Am What Others Think (Popularity)
Developing Your New True Self

1. Allow yourself to feel

“Ignoring our emotions is turning our back on reality. Listening to our emotions ushers us into reality. And reality is where we meet God...Emotions are the language of the soul. They are the cry that gives the heart a voice...However, we often turn a deaf ear—through emotional denial, distortion, or disengagement. We strain out anything disturbing in order to gain tenuous control of our inner world.

We are frightened and ashamed of what leaks into our consciousness. In neglecting our intense emotions, we are false to ourselves and lose a wonderful opportunity to know God. We forget that change comes through brutal honesty and vulnerability before God.”

-Dan Allender and Tremper Longman
from *The Cry of the Soul*
Developing Your New True Self

1. Allow yourself to feel
2. Pay attention to your interior in silence and solitude
3. Find trusted companions

Reflection Questions

1. Envision your life as an emotionally healthy follower of Christ. What would be different from your present experience?
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2. Which false self (or identity) tempts you most: 1) I am what I do (performance) 2) I am what I have (possession) 3) I am what others think (popularity)? Why?

3. What is the basis for our new true identity? How can you remind yourself of this daily so you can resist the temptations of living from a false self?

4. What strategy do you need to implement most to live from your new true self: 1) Allowing yourself to feel 2) Paying attention to your interior through solitude and silence 3) Finding trusted companions?