

# Emotionally Healthy Spirituality

## "Good Grief"

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 – September 20, 2015

### Back to School Sermon Series

EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY SPIRITUALITY		
An 8-Week Sermon Series on Spiritual and Emotional Maturity		
Date	Message Title	Bible Text
Aug. 23	Emotionally Healthy Spirituality	1 Corinthians 13
Aug. 30	Becoming Your Authentic Self	Ephesians 4:22-25
Sept. 6	How Your Family Tree Affects Your Life	Genesis 37-50
Sept. 13	The Dark Night of the Soul	2 Corinthians 12:1-10
Sept. 20	Good Grief (The Inside Out Movie)	Ecclesiastes 3:1-11
Sept. 27	Slowing Down to Be With Jesus	Psalms 46:10
Oct. 4	Learning New Skills to Love Well	Romans 12:9-21
Oct. 11	St. Benedict's Secret to Loving Christ Above All Else	Matthew 22:37-39

### The "Inside Out" Movie

- Video: "World Premiere! Pixar's Inside Out Trailer 2" [2:28]
- Five emotions in the movie: joy, anger, disgust, fear, and sadness
- The quest to contain sadness in a small, controlled space

### Two Simple and Profound Observations from Ecclesiastes 3:

#### 1. Grieving is a **healthy**, God-given gift for processing our **losses** (vv.4,7)

- *bakah* (baw-kaw') – to weep; to make lamentation
- *caphad* (saw-fad') – to tear the hair and beat the breasts; to mourn, wail
- *qara* (kaw-rah) – to rend, cut out, tear
- God gave the Jewish people a tangible way to express their grief.
- Hilda: "Don't you people cry or mourn? I don't get it. Are you people human beings at all?!"
- Peter Scazzero: "The true spiritual life is not an escape from reality but an absolute commitment to it. Loss marks the place where self-knowledge and powerful transformation happen – if we have the courage to participate fully in the process."

- Application #1 – I choose to pause and feel the loss. I choose to stop and pay attention to my losses both in the past and the present.
  - (a) The major losses in my life have been...

(b) I commit to sit down over a cup of coffee and share the story of each of my major losses with a trusted person.

- Don't draw a circle on the ground and tell sadness to stay inside the circle.
- Video: "First Day Plan – Inside Out" [1:04] found at YouTube
- Application #2 – Am I using any of the following unhealthy methods of dealing with my losses?
  - ☐ Ignore my losses.
  - ☐ Deny having losses.
  - ☐ Minimize my losses.
  - ☐ Blame my losses on others.
  - ☐ Blame my losses on myself.
  - ☐ Intellectualize and rationalize away my losses.
  - ☐ Medicate my losses with an addiction.
- Peter Scazzero: "Perhaps the most popular way in our culture of not paying attention to our losses and pain is by medicating ourselves through an addiction. People use work, TV, drugs, alcohol, shopping binges, food binges, busyness, sexual escapades, unhealthy relational attachments, even serving others at church incessantly – anything to medicate the pain of life."
- Part of a healthy way of dealing with losses is just to acknowledge that they have happened. We live in a fallen world. We are not in heaven yet. It is healthy to pause and acknowledge a loss. To talk about it. To feel it. To express it. To stop and pay attention to it.
- **Ecclesiastes 3:4,7**
- Jerry Sittser: "Catastrophic loss by definition precludes recovery. It will transform us or destroy us, but it will never leave us the same. There is no going back to the past. It is not therefore true that we become less through loss – unless we allow the loss to make us less, grinding our soul down until there is nothing left. Loss can also make us more. I did not get over my loved ones; rather I absorbed the loss into my life until it became part of who I am. Sorrow took up permanent residence in my soul and enlarged it. One learns the pain of others by suffering one's own pain, by turning inside oneself, by finding one's own soul. The soul is elastic, like a balloon. It can grow larger through suffering."

- Application #3 – With God's help and power, I choose to surrender my quest to return to life as it once used to be. I acknowledge that, because of my loss, life will never be the same again. In the same breath, I also surrender to allow God to enlarge my soul for something new, and perhaps something even better than I ever dreamed.
- This brings new meaning to **Ephesians 3:20** – *Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.*
- Application #4 – With God's help and power, I will...
  - ☐ Make a list of my losses. Pause and reflect on each one in God's Presence. Feel the loss. Acknowledge it.
  - ☐ Share my list of losses and the story behind each one with a trusted friend or Christian counselor. Allow someone to mourn with me (Romans 12:15).
  - ☐ Acknowledge any unhealthy ways that I have been dealing (or not dealing) with my losses and seek to steer my course to healthy ways of dealing with loss.
  - ☐ Attend Grief Share on Wednesday nights at Grace Fellowship to help process my loss with others on the same journey. Contact Care Ministry at 281-646-1903. More info at [www.whatisgrace.org/careministry](http://www.whatisgrace.org/careministry)
  - ☐ Read/pray the Psalms aloud: "There is a psalm for every sigh."
  - ☐ Wait on the Lord and trust Him for healing of my broken heart.
  - ☐ Let go of the former (what I have lost) and trust God for the new.
- **John 12:24** – *I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.*
- Video: "Rob's Griefshare Testimony 2015" [2:02] found at YouTube
- Video: "Kara Tippetts Documentary Trailer" [3:32] found at YouTube

## 2. We have **limits** (v.1)

- Paraphrase of Ecclesiastes 3:1 – "There is a time and season for each thing. You cannot do it all at once. There are limits. There are seasons."
- **Psalms 131**
- David says that he has learned the secret to a peace-filled life: To humble himself and realize that he cannot do it all. He is not God. He has learned to live within his limits and to set healthy **boundaries**.
- Peter Scazzero: "Understanding and respecting our boundaries and limits is one of the most important character qualities and skills that (a person) needs in order to be long-term lovers of God and others. Maturity in life is when someone is living joyfully within their God-given limits."
- Application #5 – The following are signs that a person is off-center and signals that I have strayed from my God-given life. Are any of

these true about me? Is God speaking to me about a need to live with boundaries and to receive God's gift of limits?

- ☐ I am anxious
- ☐ I am rushing or hurrying
- ☐ My body is in a knot
- ☐ I am doing too many things
- ☐ My mind cannot stop racing
- ☐ I am driving too fast
- ☐ I am not able to be fully present with people
- ☐ I am irritable about the simple tasks of life, like having to wait in line at the supermarket
- ☐ I am skimming over time with God.
- Henri Nouwen: "We have to live our life, not someone else's."
- Application #6 – What steps do I need to take in my life for Psalm 131 to be true about me?
  - ☐ I need to repent of my pride in thinking I can do it all – that I am a god.
  - ☐ I need to embrace God's gift of limits as one of His good gifts to me.
  - ☐ I need to resign from such-n-such to make more margins in my life for God and people.
  - ☐ I need to say "no" in the power of God's Spirit.
  - ☐ I need to pause to be with Jesus.
  - ☐ I need to...