

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality

“St. Benedict’s Secret to Loving Christ Above All Else”

Matthew 22:37-39 – October 11, 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

Next Sermon Series

I WISH WE’D ALL BEEN READY		
An 5-Week Sermon Series on End Times from 2 Thessalonians		
Date	Message Title	Bible Text
Oct 18	Your Suffering Has Meaning	2 Thessalonians 1:1-12
Oct 25	The Day of the Lord	2 Thessalonians 2:1-2
Nov 1	The Anti-Christ	2 Thessalonians 2:3-12
Nov 8	What It Means to be Ready	2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5
Nov 15	Idleness	2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

The Story of St. Benedict

- Born 480 AD along with a twin sister Scholastica in Nursia, Italy
- Lived in solitude in a cave for 3 years
- Founded 12 different monasteries and then in 530 AD founded the Monastery of Monte Cassino
- Established a Rule of Life for his monks that outlined 72 habits

What is a “Rule of Life”?

- A rule of life is a call to order our lives around spiritual practices in such a way that our _____ comes before all else in our life.
- The word “rule” comes from the Greek word “trellis” – a tool that enables a grapevine to get up off of the ground and grow upward becoming more fruitful and productive.
- A rule of life is, very simply, an intentional, conscious plan to keep God at the center of everything we do.

- It includes a combination of spiritual practices that uniquely fit with a person’s personality in order to provide structure and direction for us to intentionally pay attention to God in everything we do.
- **Matthew 22:37-39**
- Very few people have a conscious and intentional plan of how they are going to live Matthew 22:37-39 and develop their spiritual lives.

The Early Church’s Rule of Life (Acts 2:42-47)

1. _____ (v.42)
 - The early church met together frequently to read and study God’s Word.
 - **2 Timothy 3:16-17** – All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
 - **Hebrews 4:12** – For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.
 - **Joshua 1:8** – Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.
 - **Psalms 119:105** – Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.
 - **Challenge #1** – Develop the habits (a rule of life) of listening to God and eating His Word...
 - Personally through the daily reading and meditating on Scripture
 - With others in a small group community
 - Corporately on Sunday mornings in a congregation
2. _____ (vv.42,46)
 - The early church prioritized community with one another through fellowship, doing life together, and eating together.
 - Rick Warren: “You were formed for God’s family. God wants a family, and He created you to be a part of it. This is God’s second purpose for your life, which He planned before you were born. The entire Bible is the story of God building a family who will love Him, honor Him, and reign with Him forever.”
 - Henry Cloud: “We can certainly connect to God vertically through prayer, but to feel His grace completely we have to open our hearts to the full expression of it horizontally through other people. To connect fully with the grace of God, we have to go to where it is, and He has chosen to put it into other people. So those who only study the facts of the grace of God and do not experience other people loving them will fall short in their realization of that grace.”

- Challenge #2 – Develop the habits (a rule of life) of...
 - Prioritizing loving your family (“love” is spelled T-I-M-E).
 - Pursuing emotional health through sharing the lower part of your iceberg with trusted friends, speaking the truth in love, grieving losses, and seeking healing from family of origin issues
 - Enjoying true community in friendships, a small group, and a local congregation

3. _____ (v.42)

- The early church devoted themselves to prayer including having set times when they prayed (Acts 3:1; 10:9).
- E.M. Bounds – “Prayer should not be regarded as a duty which must be performed, but rather as a privilege to be enjoyed, a rare delight that is always revealing some new beauty.”
- Richard Foster: “Real prayer comes not from gritting our teeth, but from falling in love.”
- Prayer is asking for what we need, and interceding for others, but mostly, prayer is pausing to be with Jesus.
- Challenge #3 – Develop the habits (a rule of life) of...
 - Practicing the Presence of God as a lifestyle – talking to Him as though He is with you and next to you all the time (He is!)
 - Spending some concentrated time with God each day to talk to Him and listen to Him (have a daily “date” with God). This is a good time to pray through a prayer list (prayer experiment; prevailing prayers)
 - Speaking multiple “popcorn prayers” throughout your day
 - Pausing a couple of times per day just to be with Jesus (“The Daily Office”)
 - Praying with other people on the spot (“Can I say a short prayer for you right now?”)

4. _____ and Gratitude (vv.44-47)

- Live simply so others can simply live.
- Be the “one thankful leper” who comes back to Jesus to say “Thank You!”
- Challenge #4 – Develop the habits (a rule of life) of...
 - Staying out of debt and living within your means (Take the Dave Ramsey Financial Peace class; www.whatisgrace.org/careministry/)
 - Giving the first and best portion of your income back to God
 - Practicing Sabbath
 - Healthy eating, exercise, and sleep
 - Giving your stress over to God in prayer

5. A Lifestyle of _____ (v.47)

- Because they were living an abundant life (life-giving “rule of life” habits), the early church was attractive and people wanted to join them.
- Challenge #5 – With God’s help and power, I will seek to live healthy habits (rule of life) and share this Jesus life with others.

Today’s Application – After prayer, put in writing a rule of life that summarizes the major habits of an emotionally healthy spiritual life that you intend to live. Share it with a few others for accountability and prayer.

Jim’s Rule of Life

Lord, I desire to love You with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love others as I love myself. Would You please fill me with Your Spirit to live by the following habits to that end:

1. **First love** – I treat my relationship with God as a relationship in honesty, reverence, spontaneity, obedience, joy, and love. I err on the side of obeying Holy Spirit promptings even if it makes me look foolish.
2. **Quiet time** – I spend the first and best part of my day listening and talking to God by reading through the One Year Bible, meditating through SOAP journaling, and interceding over a prevailing prayer list.
3. **Practice His Presence** – I talk to God throughout my day using popcorn prayers and pausing twice (including 4pm watch alarm) to be with Jesus.
4. **Second love** – Next to Jesus, Lisa is my most important relationship, and I highly prioritize her. Weekly dates. Yearly just-the-two of us getaways. Pray for her daily at 4pm. I enjoy her. I serve her. I seek to build her up with my words.
5. **Children** – I am fully present to my 3 children and 1 grandson. I seek to go on dates with them. I build them up with my words. I pray for them daily. I help them go through their rites of passage.
6. **Personal** – I exercise 6 days per week and eat healthy. I practice Sabbath on Fridays. I am ruthlessly pursuing an unhurried life. I live with margins. I read 10 fiction books per year. I practice one sentence journaling at the end of each day. I intentionally enjoy life. I purposefully drive the speed limit as an expression of an unhurried life. I am purposefully on time to meetings and events as an expression of an unhurried life. I laugh. I am fully present wherever I am. I allow myself to be goofy. I have bimonthly accountability with Tim.
7. **Finances** – We tithe-plus unto the Lord. We are debt free. We live within a budget and track it weekly. We use the cash system for the categories of “entertainment” and “spending.” We are saving toward college (10%) and retirement (10%). We save for vacation.
8. **Work** – I work very hard and with excellence as though Jesus were my Boss (seeking His approval of my work). I prioritize those 20% of activities that will yield 80% of the results – for me, that is sermon prep, investment in executive staff, vision casting, and prayer. I set and pursue SMART goals. I invest time in The Bible Seminary and Katy prayer. I get away one week per year to do long-term sermon and vision planning.