Emotionally Healthy Spirituality

Title: ***Emotionally Healthy Spirituality***

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Book Summary:

Peter Scazzero learned the hard way: you can't be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature.

Even though he was pastor of a growing church, he did what most people do:
• Avoid conflict in the name of Christianity
• Ignore his anger, sadness, and fear
• Use God to run from God
• Live without boundaries

Eventually God awakened him to a biblical integration of emotional health, a relationship with Jesus, and the classic practices of contemplative spirituality. It created nothing short of a spiritual revolution, utterly transforming him and his church.

In this book Scazzero outlines his journey and the signs of emotionally unhealthy spirituality. Then he provides seven biblical, reality-tested ways to break through to the revolutionary life Christ meant for you.

"The combination of emotional health and contemplative spirituality," he says, "unleashes the Holy Spirit inside us so that we might experientially know the power of an authentic life in Christ."

Book Notes:

Christian spirituality, without an integration of emotional health, can be deadly—to yourself, your relationship with God, and the people around you. (7)

In fact, the spirituality of most current discipleship models often only adds an additional protective layer against people growing up emotionally. (15)

Contemporary spiritual models address some of that 90 percent below the surface. The problem is that a large portion remains untouched by Jesus Christ until there is a serious engagement with what I call "emotionally healthy spirituality." (16)

It is not possible to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature. (17)

The sad reality is that most of us will not go forward until the pain of staying where we are is unbearable. (21)

The following are the top ten symptoms indicating if someone is suffering from a bad case 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
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. (24)

To feel is to be human. To minimize or deny what we feel is a distortion of what it means to be image bearers of our personal God. To the degree that we are unable to express our emotions, we remain impaired in our ability to love God, others and ourselves well. (26)

But work for God that is not nourished by a deep interior life with God will eventually be contaminated by other things such as ego, power, needing approval of and from others, and buying into the wrong ideas of success and the mistaken belief that we can't fail. (32)

Our activity for God can only properly flow from a life with God. We cannot give what we do not possess. (32)

The pathway to unleashing the transformative power of Jesus to heal our spiritual lives can be found in the joining of emotional health and contemplative spirituality. (37)

Emotional health is concerned with such things as:

- Naming, recognizing, and managing our own feelings
- Identifying with and having active compassion for others
- Initiating and maintaining close and meaningful relationships
- Breaking free from self-destructive patterns
- Being aware of how our past impacts our present
- Developing the capacity to express our thoughts and feeling clearly, both verbally and nonverbally
- Respecting and loving others without having to change them
- Asking for what we need, want, or prefer clearly, directly and respectfully

- Accurately self-assessing our strengths, limits, and weaknesses and freely sharing them with others
- Learning the capacity to resolve conflict maturely and negotiate solutions that consider the perspectives of others
- Distinguishing and appropriately expressing our sexuality; and sensuality
- Grieving well (45)

Contemplative spirituality, on the other hand, focuses on classic practices and concerns such as:

- Awakening and surrendering to God's love in any and every situation
- Positioning ourselves to hear God and remember his presence in all we do
- Communing with God, allowing him to fully indwell the depth of our being
- Practicing silence, solitude, and a life of unceasing prayer
- Resting attentively in the presence of God
- Understanding our earthly life as a journey of transformation toward ever-increasing union with God
- Finding the true essence of who we are in God
- Loving others out of a life of love for God
- Developing a balanced, harmonious rhythm of life that enables us to be aware of the sacred in all of life
- Adapting historic practices of spirituality that are applicable today
- Allowing our Christian lives to be shaped by the rhythms of the Christian calendar rather than the culture
- Living in committed community that passionately loves Jesus above all else. (46)

Emotional health and contemplative spirituality offer three primary gifts. Each enables us to participate in the enormous transformative power of Jesus Christ today. They are:

- The gift of slowing down
- The gift of anchoring in God's love
- The gift of breaking free from illusions. (47)

Emotionally health powerfully anchors me in the love of God by affirming that I am worthy of feeling, worthy of being alive, and lovable even when I am brutally honest about the good, the bad, and the ugly deep beneath the surface of my iceberg. (54)

The world is filled with illusions and pretense. We convince ourselves that we cannot live without certain earthly pleasures, accomplishments, and relationships. We become "attached" (or "addicted," to use a

contemporary word). We attach our wills to the belief that something less than God will satisfy us. (57)

One of our greatest obstacles in knowing God is our own lack of self-knowledge. So we end up wearing a mask—before God, ourselves, and other people. And we can't become self-aware if we cut of our humanity out of fear our feelings. (73)

At times our false self has become such a part of who we are that we don't even realize it. The consequences—fear, self-protection, possessiveness, manipulation, self-destructive tendencies, self-promotion, self-indulgence, and a need to distinguish ourselves from others—are harder to hide. (80)

Silence and solitude are so foundational to emotionally healthy spirituality that they are a theme repeated throughout this book. (86)

I truly believe the greatest gift we can give the world is our true self living in loving union with God. (89)

True spirituality frees us to live joyfully in the present. It requires, however, going back in order to go forward. This takes us to the very heart of spirituality and discipleship in the family of God—breaking free from the destructive sinful patterns of our pasts to live the life of love God intends. (93)

The great news of Christianity is that your biological family of origin does not determine your future. (103)

Our fear of bringing secrets and sin into the light, however, drives many people to prefer the illusion that if they don't think about it, it somehow goes way. It doesn't. Unhealed wounds open us up to habitual sin against God and others. (109)

There is no greater disaster in the spiritual life than to be immersed in unreality. In fact the true spiritual life is not an escape from reality but an absolute commitment to it. (135)

The Daily Office and Sabbath are ropes that lead us back to God in the blizzards of life. They are anchors for living in the hurricane of demands. When done as a "want to" rather than a "have to," they offer us a rhythm for our lives that binds us to the living God. (155)

Dallas Willard has called *silence and solitude* the two most radical disciplines of the Christian life. Solitude is the practice of being absent from people and things to attend to God. Silence is the practice of quieting every inner and outer voice to attend to God. Henri Nouwen said that "without solitude it is almost impossible to live a spiritual life." (161)

Sabbath provides for us now an additional rhythm for an entire reorientation of our lives around the living God. On Sabbaths we imitate God by stopping our work and resting. (163)

I am convinced that nothing less than an understanding of Sabbath as a *command* from God, as well as an incredible invitation, will enable us to grab hold of this rope God offers us. (163)

Keeping the Sabbath in Scripture is a commandment—right next to refraining from lying, murdering, and committing adultery. Sabbath is a gift from God we are invited to receive. (163)

What do we do to replace all we are now stopping during our Sabbath time? The answer is simple: whatever delights and replenishes you. (168)

Pondering the love of God remains the central focus of our Sabbaths. (170)

As emotionally mature Christian adults, we recognize that loving well is the essence of true spirituality. (179)

A Rule of Life, very simply, is an intentional, conscious plan to keep God at the center of everything we do. (196)

However, our present spiritual practices are not enough to keep us afloat in the ocean of the beast, the Babylon of our twenty-first-century world. Fighting against such a strong current, without the anchor of a Rule of Life, is almost impossible. Eventually we find ourselves unfocused, distracted, and adrift spiritually. (197)