

“SOULed OUT”
Session 1: The Cry of the Soul
Rev. Rick Dietzman
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INTRODUCTION

I. What provokes emotion:

Relational Encounters:

Every emotion, though relationally provoked, nevertheless reflects something about our view of God.

The reason we don't want to feel is that it exposes the tragedy of our world and the darkness of our heart. It often exposes our struggle with God as well.

The Nature of Emotions:

A. The goal is not to change emotions. Truth is what changes us.

John 8:32 (NIV)

Jesus said: "If you dwell in my words (in what I say) *you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*"

Psalms 120:1-2 (NKJ)

In my distress I cried to the LORD, and He heard me. Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips (deceptive speech) and from a deceitful tongue (false language).

B. Struggling with emotions is not a matter of solving problems with a little more information or practical knowhow.

C. Don't try to change your emotions or bury them, instead listen to them. The first step in emotional intelligence is becoming self aware.

Research shows that both men and women have a similar internal experience of emotion, but men tend to hide their emotions from the outside world.

Many men find it easier to feel anger than hurt

Many women find it easier to feel hurt or confusion rather than anger

We Substitute:

- We bypass loss by giving into jealousy
- We buttress our shortcomings by resorting to anger
- We cover fear with expressions of criticism

Learn the nuances of emotions like anger or sadness. It often takes some solitude or quiet.

Practice a form of expression

- Prayer
- Journaling
- Playing musical instrument
- Drawing

Question to ask: Does an angry or sad emotion bring up a memory from the past?

D. Every emotion involves a complex interplay between heart and body.

After God rained down fire and embarrassed the prophets of Baal and Elijah had them killed on the mountain...

I Kings 19:2-6:

Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them."

Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

II. Riding the Ups and Downs of Emotion:

It links our inner and outer worlds.

It opens questions we might not want to answer or want to ignore
Emotions are one of the least reliable, yet most influential forces that guide our lives.

Why Emotions Can Be So Difficult:

- A. When life is painful we want to escape it!

- B. We will never enjoy what we were meant to experience until heaven

Romans 8:22-23 (NLT)

For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us.

- C. Absence of feelings are not a mark of maturity, but rather a boast of evil

Isaiah 47:8 (NIV)

"Now then, listen, you wanton creature, lounging in your security and saying to yourself, 'I am, and there is none besides me. I will never be a widow or suffer the loss of children.'

Revelation 18:7 (NIV)

Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts, 'I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn.'

Refusal to embrace negative feelings is a flight to illusion. It is an emotional belief that God does not relieve our pain, so we must handle it ourselves.

The Psalmist calls us to ponder our inner world, not neglect it. *"Why, oh my soul are you in despair?"* (Psalm 42:11).

- D. Emotions reveal how we are doing with God

Am I moving toward God or away from Him? <With awe and gratitude, or away with false gods (flesh point of view) of my own making>

This requires learning to speak the language of the heart. (What we will do in this series), and what those emotions, particularly the difficult ones, reveal about our deepest questions about God. Turning the Soul outward, and putting it under God's light. Will also show us a glimpse of God's character.

III. Our Biblical Example:

The Psalms do not contain 150 hymns of joy!

- All dread is related to the question: Is life predictable?
- All anger is related to the question: Is life just?

Change the life to God and the questions become: Is God predictable, Is God Just

The Psalms help us understand that every emotion is a theological statement

And strikingly, even as he exposes the depths of our hearts, the psalmist does something quite odd – he invites us to question, doubt, and rage against God.

A Voice that invites us to Hurt

Psalm 6:6-7 (NIV)

I am worn out from groaning; all night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears. My eyes grow weak with sorrow; they fail because of all my foes.

A Voice that Invites us to Rage

Psalm 44:11

You gave us up to be devoured like sheet and have scattered us among the nations.

Psalm 88:8-11 (NIV)

You have taken from me my closest friends and have made me repulsive to them. I am confined and cannot escape; my eyes are dim with grief. I call to you, O LORD, every day; I spread out my hands to you. Do you show your wonders to the dead? Do those who are dead rise up and praise you? Is your love declared in the grave, your faithfulness in Destruction?

Q: Does the coming of Jesus change how we look at these passages?

The Psalms encourage us to risk the danger of speaking boldly and personally to the creator of the universe.

Mark 4:37-41(NIV)

*A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "**Teacher, don't you care if we drown?**" He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"*

John 11:32-36 (NIV)

*When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "**Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.**" When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"*

Mark 15:34 (NIV)

*And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"-- which means, "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**"*

It is in the dark struggles with God that we are often surprised by his response to our anger and fear. We sometimes receive what we didn't expect.

We assume he wants order, conformity – obedient children. Instead he wants our worship and reliance on his Spirit to transform us, and lead us.

Psalm 139:7-10,13-14 (NIV)

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast... For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

