

**NORMAL? Finding Spiritual Equilibrium in a**

NCAC Sunday School Class Summer 2021

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**Overall Class Objective:** To gain biblical perspective on maintaining spiritual health in a context of prolonged, disorienting circumstances.

**Class Overview**

1. Discuss the general effects of Covid in our culture.
2. Identify some aspects of Covid's emotional/psychological impact.
3. Explore the spiritual consequences of the pandemic among believers.
4. Examine how we get off balance spiritually.
5. Delineate the nature of the Christian life.
6. Consider what constitutes spiritual health.
7. Determine what we can do to renew our spiritual wellness.

**Notes****What are common factors that can cause us to get off balance spiritually?**

Circumstantial factors

Spiritual factors

Our spiritual **enemy**Our spiritual **exposure** (vulnerability)Our spiritual **entropy** ((humanly inherent movement toward spiritual decline)

Further thoughts on entropy and grace

Because of our tendency to move toward spiritual decline (entropy), we are in constant need of the infusion of grace, the favor of God.

Grace is used of "the merciful kindness by which God, exerting his holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of the Christian virtues." Thayer's Greek Lexicon

A means of grace (though used in various ways among Christian traditions) is an action that opens the door to the help and blessing of God.

The writer to the Hebrews encourages prayer as the means to find mercy and grace from God in times of need.

<sup>16</sup> Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16



Paul, through prayer, seeks such relief by asking for the removal of affliction, God provides relief through the power of endurance and calls it grace!

Therefore, so that I would not exalt myself, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to torment me so that I would not exalt myself. <sup>8</sup> Concerning this, I pleaded with the Lord three times that it would leave me. <sup>9</sup> But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness." 2 Corinthians 12:7-9

Paul credits the grace of God as the means of empowering his hard work in spreading the gospel. This also suggests that service to Christ is accompanied by grace.

<sup>9</sup> For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. 1 Corinthians 15:9, 10

## What constitutes spiritual health?

Spiritual health (balance, wellness) is present when we:

### Embrace Gospel values

<sup>8</sup> Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— <sup>10</sup> that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Philippians 3:9-11

### Experience Gospel virtues

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup> And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Galatians 5:22, 23

### Express Gospel behaviors

<sup>22</sup> But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. <sup>23</sup> For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. <sup>24</sup> For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. <sup>25</sup> But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. James 1:22-25

Spiritual health is best understood through a centralized model.

We are commanded to love God with our whole being.

<sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" <sup>37</sup> And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the great and first commandment.

We are expected to always act with love toward others.

<sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 22:36-40

We are biblically obligated to simultaneously care for family, serve Christ's church, give fair labor to our employer, obey government and act responsibly as stewards of God's world.

It is humanly impossible (strictly speaking) to fulfill these obligations by using a model of sequential priorities, in other words, completing one obligation before moving to the next. If we rightly begin with God as the first priority, we would not have adequately loved and honored him so as to be qualified to attempt to fulfill the next priority in the sequence.

A centralized model realistically sees God as the center of all obligations the Bible expects of us.

