

The Sermon - In 10 Sentences Or Less

Your Home Spiritual Workout 4 - Remembering to Remember:



1. Time is the thief of memory: it's remarkable to consider how much of our lives we don't remember, even the experiences or lessons we said we'd never forget at the time.
2. Twin themes knit the entire Old Testament narrative together: God's people are spiritually forgetful (Deut. 4.9, Judges 8.34, Jer. 2.32), so remembering must be intentional (Ps. 42.4, 105.4-5, 143.5-6).
3. In fact, the act of remembering spiritually is a kind of spiritual propellant: our past experiences fuel our present spiritual thirst (Ps. 143.5-6).
4. Modern neuroscience tells us that we remember through encoding and association: we encode when we linger over something we want to remember (for at least 30 seconds) and attach it to details, images, its newness, or the emotions we're experiencing, and we associate when we relate the present experience to our past.
5. One spiritual practice to help you pay attention to your own life and remember it is "the life review," most commonly done by using The Examen prayer of St. Ignatius from the 1500s.
6. The Examen asks you to review your day, the last few days, or the last week by moving reflectively through a simple set of questions: where did I encounter God?; where did I cooperate with Him and His purposes, and where did I resist Him?; for what am I thankful from the last time period I'm reviewing?; and, what is God asking me to change, or how is He prompting me to act?
7. Another spiritual discipline to help you remember is "bullet journaling," something everyone can do, not just those who like to write: you use single phrases, sentences, or paragraphs to record the highlights of the last day, few days, or week, always remembering to attach what you're writing to details, images, its newness, or what you felt (that is, encoding).
8. A third spiritual habit for remembering is the use of "memory stones," a practice you first encounter in Joshua 4.5-9; they are physical objects meant to remind you of impactful spiritual lessons or experiences.
9. "Life is not what one has lived, but what one remembers, and how one remembers it in order to recount it." (Columbian writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez)
10. "Memories are our spiritual traveling bags." (Russian philosopher and social critic Alexander Solzhenitsyn)

Try It Out This Week

So give it a try this week. Set the bar low: maybe try one "life review" session using The Examen or bullet journaling or both. Just review the previous 2-3 days. You can do this in your regular prayer time (I, Pastor Chris, often do my "life reviews" as the evening prayer in my fixed hour prayer routine).

If you start with one "life review" a week and you find it meaningful spiritually, you can always increase how often you do it, upping it to 2x/-3x/week.

Resources

1. Here are two fuller versions of The Examen life review prayer, from a leading Protestant university in Texas - [Examen](#)
2. Here a short video on how to incorporate The Examen into your family's life, as a shared family spiritual practice - [Examen for Families](#)
3. A short article that is a spiritual testimonial to the power of The Examen as life review, from someone who now does a simplified version of it several times a day - [The Daily Examen](#)