

The Sermon - In 10 Sentences Or Less

Your Home Spiritual Workout 6 - The "I" Solution:



1. One goal of this entire series is to help you bridge the gap between who you are and who you want to become: As Ruth Haley Barton put it, "How bad do I want it? Am I willing to rearrange my life for what my heart most desires?"

2. Part of why we need spiritual practices or habits so much is that as human beings we have an "I" problem, which goes far deeper than mere ego or self-centeredness.

3. Only I really understand what it's like to be me; to one degree or another, all of us experience life in isolation. (Prov. 14.10)

4. Our self-confidence exceeds our wisdom. (Prov. 16.2, 21.2)

5. Our self-deception and self-destruction exceed our self-awareness. (Prov. 14.12; Jer. 17.9)

6. All taken together, humans are like birds trapped in a cage formed by our own individual perceptions, experiences, limitations, etc. (Philosopher John Locke compared this to being in a room locked from the outside.)

7. The Proverbs hint at what helps us escape this cage: the Lord alone can weigh our hearts and minds accurately (16.2, 21.2), and a wise friend can help us discern the deep waters of our own souls (20.5).

8. Spiritual habits of disengagement, our focus on 3/21/21, slow us down enough and make enough space for the Lord to "weigh our hearts" and for us to hear Him as He does.

9. Spiritual disciplines of engagement, like study, spiritual friendship, asking for forgiveness, worship, service, etc., all pull us outward toward others and upward toward God, and as such free us from that proverbial cage in which we tend to live.

Quotes to Remember

"May I know You, oh God, so that I may know myself." (St. Augustine)

"The word itself is apt: I am dis-appointed. I am missing the life that I was appointed by God to live...But that's not all. I am called to become the person God had in mind when He originally designed me. This is what's behind Kierkegaard's wonderful prayer, 'And now, Lord, with Your help I will become myself'...The desire for transformation lies deep in every human heart. And the primary goal of the spiritual life is no less than that kind of deep, immutable change God's plan is not simply to repair some of our brokenness. He is determined to make a new creation, so that the story of the human race is not one of universal disappointment, but of inextinguishable hope." (John Ortberg, in "The Life You've Always Wanted")

Developing a Spiritual "Rule of Life"

So where do you go from here? Take what we've covered in the series, marry it with what's already working in your spiritual life, and create for yourself what church history would label "a rule of life." To help you with that, consider the following:

1) Ruth Haley Barton on how to develop a "rule of life" -

"Questions for developing a rule of life:

- What am I beginning to understand about my minimum daily, weekly, and monthly requirements for ongoing spiritual formation? What disciplines do I know I need to engage in regularly as a way of offering myself to God steadily and consistently?
- Where will I do them, when will I do them, and how will I do them?
- What schedule change will I need to make in order to consistently choose these life-giving disciplines?
- What arrangements do I need to make with those I live with in order to make this possible?"

2) Some tangible insight on how to form good habits, from James Clear's "Atomic Habits" -

- The 1% Rule, and the Impact Curve: Mini habits lead to growth. Just try to get 1% better every day. Take stupidly small steps, too small to skip or fail. Remember the two minute rule: a new habit should take less than two min. to do initially. Rest assured, you'll be disappointed at the results initially, and many stop at this juncture and miss out on the longer term rewards. But stick with it, and you'll cross a threshold eventually where the curve will bend upward and rapidly.
- The Goldilocks Rule: Human beings experience peak motivation when working on something that is right on the edge of their current abilities. Boredom demotivates as strongly as failure.
- Stacking: Stack new habits on top of existing habits (something you're already doing routinely). So, for example, "When I do existing habits A, I will also do new habit B," or "Right after I do existing habit A, I will do new habit B."