

SPIRITUAL HEALTH AND MAINTENANCE



Spiritual Vibrancy

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5

QUOTES

"I shall not find Christ at the end of the journey unless He accompanies me all the way." Esther De Waal, *Celtic Way of Prayer*

"Get this burning thought of 'personal love for the Savior who redeemed me' into the hearts of all Christians, and you have the most powerful incentive for missionary effort.... If we could fill the hearts of the people with a personal love for this Savior who died for them, the indifference of Christendom would disappear, and the kingdom of Christ would appear." Andrew Murray, *Key to the Missionary Problem*

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

As a result of the readings, discussions, and activities in this session, the cross-cultural witness candidate should be able to:

- Understand the role of spiritual discipline in loving God and seeking to glorify Him in every aspect of life.
- Realize that one's ministry for God must flow out of one's intimacy with God.
- Understand the importance of maintaining balance in life which contributes to the

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wellbeing of one's soul, the health of one's relationships with others and the effectiveness of one's service.

- Apply lessons and principles learned about spiritual disciplines in order to establish and maintain a deeper intimacy with God.

DILIGENT CARE OF OUR SOULS

Jesus said that apart from Him we can do nothing to the Father's glory. Paul makes it very clear that if we have great faith, skills, and effectiveness in ministry, but utilize them without the love of God, we are just making noise. It is my intent that this session helps us consider what it means to "keep your souls diligently" (Deuteronomy 4:9) so that the Lord will be honored in our cross-cultural service. With that objective in mind, I would like for us to consider the following questions:

- What does it mean for me to glorify God?
- How can my ministry for God flow out of my intimacy with God?
- How does maintaining balance in life contribute to the wellbeing of my soul, the health of my relationships, and the effectiveness of my service?
- How can spiritual disciplines contribute to deeper intimacy with God?

Factors that Kill, Steal, and Destroy

There are several contributing factors common to cross-cultural life that can lead to the erosion of one's spirit. It is important to be aware of these, and to be mindful of how they might "kill, steal, and destroy" (John 10:10).

- Spiritual strongholds in the peoples and places where we serve
- Isolation from effectual supportive community
- Stress and fatigue brought on by seemingly infinite needs
- Diminishing of personal strengths coupled with the exposure of weaknesses that a cross-cultural dynamic inevitably produces

CASE STUDY

The following is a real-life story that may contribute to our consideration of spiritual vibrancy. (Though the content of this story is true, the name and some inconsequential facts have been altered.)

James, a married man with two young sons, moved to a restricted access country to serve millions in a mega urban center comprised largely of professed atheists. James had previously served honorably in the military, was successful in a secular technical field, was seminary trained, and had lived an exemplary Christian life prior to moving abroad. James was charged by his sending organization to develop a strategy by which to provide people in his city the opportunity to hear and respond to the Gospel, to disciple new believers and to see healthy churches birthed and multiplied. After a couple of years of focused language acquisition, James began his work in earnest. There was much traveling and networking with co-laborers

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abroad and in-country, coordinating of projects, nurturing key relationships within his city and developing a business platform that would not only provide a viable means of maintaining their in-country presence, but also contribute to their ministry.

Though there was not much measurable fruit, James was largely succeeding at doing all the right things. Because the mission organization's culture focused on quantifiable results, James seemed to grow increasingly cynical and embittered. He was passed over for responsibilities and opportunities that would have broadened his leadership role and he increasingly found himself at odds with organizational leadership and values. Though he tried to find support among peers, he found few who would embrace his views with equal fervor. His wife, however, remained faithfully committed.

*OVER A PERIOD OF FOUR YEARS,
JAMES' PLATFORM THRIVED, BUT
THERE WAS LITTLE SPIRITUAL FRUIT
TO BE SEEN.*

James became more and more immersed in the development of his business platform – a trendy, upscale restaurant. He raised nearly \$200,000 for its development from Christian contributors in the U.S. He used organizational budget to provide the office, housing, and automobile commensurate with the life of a successful foreign businessman.

Over a period of four years, James' platform thrived, but there was little spiritual fruit to be seen. When pressured by organizational leadership to validate the contribution that such a developed platform was making to Kingdom work, James felt threatened and became gradually more defensive. In a showdown of sorts, James was asked to relinquish control of the platform or resign. He chose to fight. He sent his wife and sons back to the U.S. and began planning how to maintain ownership of "his" restaurant and assets.

The sponsoring organization would quickly come to a position of cutting their losses, allowing James to maintain possession of the house, car, office, and restaurant. James' losses would be much greater. He chose not to return to the States, but began pursuing a relationship with a mistress. James would eventually divorce his wife, abandon his sons (even while the youngest fought terminal cancer) and denounce any belief in God. He continues to live as a business professional in the city he went to reach for Christ in 1995.

REFLECT #1

1. Without knowing the entirety of the story, what could have been some contributing factors leading to James' demise?
2. How might James have responded differently to organizational disagreements?
3. What were some "red flags" that might have served as warning signs for James or others around him?
4. What could have been done spiritually to avoid this tragedy?

FOSTERING SPIRITUAL VIBRANCY

James' case is a tragic one, and yet none of us are above making similar choices. We also don't have to act in ways that produce such severe outcomes to grieve God. As a former missionary in China, I could give numerous case studies involving my own preoccupation with image management or arguing with Chinese taxi drivers who tried to cheat me out of 4

cents. Certainly none of us wake up in the morning thinking, “How can I distance myself from God today?” Rather, it is more often a subtle drift that occurs over time. Life is a journey, in which salvation is being worked out in those choosing to pursue Christ.

American theologian Richard R. Niebuhr said, “Pilgrims are poets who create by taking journeys.” I would contend that God is a poet who creates pilgrims to take journeys. Take a look at Ephesians 2:10: “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

I love the thought that God had purposes in mind for us before we existed. The word “workmanship” is the Greek word *poiema*, from which we derive the word “poem.” Our lives are the poetry of God—a unique rhyme, meter, and verse to convey a specific message by which the author will be reflected.

David wrote: “Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.” (Psalm 84:5 NLT). Do we see ourselves on a journey toward God? We are created in God’s image as spiritual beings and we are on a spiritual pilgrimage. The problem is we resist. “Thus says the Lord: ‘Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.’ But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’” (Jeremiah 6:16). *We can miss God in the journey!*

Brennan Manning is a favorite author of mine. In his book *Ruthless Trust* he writes:

“The way of trust is a movement into obscurity, into the undefined, into ambiguity, not into some predetermined, clearly delineated plan for the future. The next step discloses itself only out of a discernment of God acting in the desert of the present moment. The reality of naked trust is the life of a pilgrim who leaves what is nailed down, obvious, and secure, and walks into the unknown without any rational explanation to justify the decision or guarantee the future. Why? Because God has signaled the movement and offered it his presence and his promise.”

GOD’S GLORY IS THE DESTINATION!

We must never forget that the destination of our journey is the glory of God. To that end, read and think about the following:

Read Exodus 34:5-7.

“The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.’”

- What do we learn from this passage about the glory of God?
- What does it mean to glorify God in the context of our lives, work, and relationships?

While God’s glory is the destination, we must remember that the journey itself is about God’s

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glory as well. Esther De Waal, English author of *Celtic Way of Prayer*, said it poignantly: “I shall not find Christ at the end of the journey unless he accompanies me along the way.”

Sometimes our pursuit of a destination can cloud the opportunities we have in the midst of the journey. I have often seen those serving cross-culturally become so focused on the desired outcome (e.g. souls saved, disciples made, churches started, etc.) that they fail to include God as a part of the journey along the way.

Read 2 Samuel 6:1-11.

“David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baale-judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who sits enthroned on the cherubim. And they carried the ark of God on a new cart and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. And Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart, with the ark of God, and Ahio went before the ark. And David and all the house of Israel were celebrating before the Lord, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

I shall not find Christ at the end of the journey unless he accompanies me along the way. “And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down there because of his error, and he died there beside the ark of God.

“And David was angry because the Lord had broken out against Uzzah. And that place is called Perez-uzzah to this day.

“And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and he said, ‘How can the ark of the Lord come to me?’ So David was not willing to take the ark of the Lord into the city of David. But David took it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. And the ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months, and the Lord blessed Obed-edom and all his household.”

- Does it seem odd that Uzzah’s actions are deemed irreverent and unrighteous?
- Would you have reacted similarly?
- Read 1 Chronicles 15:1-15. How is this time different? Consider the end that David had in mind. How did the differing means to that end affect the outcome?

As in this case, it is easy to incorporate substitutes for God’s glory. David explored three alternative *destinations* often pursued in cross-cultural service. Like David, we will often do our work according to what is most *expedient*, what is most *logical*, and what is most *comfortable*. We can confidently be about God’s glory and kingdom work but we can so quickly and subtly become about something else. Be careful. Glorifying God requires abiding in Christ.

ABIDING IN CHRIST

In his classic work, *Key to the Missionary Problem*, Andrew Murray writes: “Get this burning thought of ‘personal love for the Savior who redeemed me’ into the hearts of all Christians, and you have the most powerful incentive for missionary effort... If we could fill the hearts of the people with a personal love for this Savior who died for them, the indifference of

Christendom would disappear, and the kingdom of Christ would appear.” In other words, an impassioned love for the King would result in an impassioned love for the kingdom!

I used to be intrigued by Jesus’ words found in John 15:5: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” I found that I could do plenty apart from Christ. In my strength and with my skills, I could often produce fruit, have a pretty good annual statistical report and come off looking like a pretty darn effective missionary. Then one day I was considering what Jesus said a couple breaths later: “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.” (John 15:8).

Two things became clear to me:

1. I can do things apart from Christ that might give the appearance of being impressive, but they do not glorify God. The destination is not reached.
2. God does not ask me to produce fruit, but only bear the fruit that Jesus produces. Glorifying the Father and bearing fruit produced by Christ can only happen as I abide in Christ.

REFLECT #2

Look at the following verses, and consider what is to be found in the intimate presence of God.

Exodus 33:12-23

Psalm 16:11

Colossians 1:24-29

Read Mark 9:14-29.

“And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. And he asked them, ‘What are you arguing about with them?’ And someone from the crowd answered him, ‘Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.’ And he answered them, ‘O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me.’ And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, ‘How long has this been happening to him?’ And he said, ‘From childhood. And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘If you can!’ All things are possible for one who believes.’ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, ‘I believe; help my unbelief!’ And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, ‘You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.’ And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, ‘He is dead.’ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, ‘Why could we not cast it out?’ And he said to them, ‘This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.’”

What was the difference between Jesus’ ability to cast out the demon, and the disciples’ inability? Jesus told His disciples that this type of demon could only come out by prayer and fasting, yet where was Jesus’ prayer? Did He tell the father of the boy to come back in a week after He had time to fast? The difference between Jesus and His disciples was the preparedness

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of the soul. I'm not sure when Jesus would have prayed and fasted, perhaps it was during the six days mentioned in verse two, but the point is, *the praying and the fasting had been done before the service.*

For Jesus, intimacy with the Father most often preceded service for the Father. (See Luke 4:1-2, 42-44; 5:16; 6:12-13; 22:39-46.) Serving cross-culturally will invariably mean constant needs, which will tempt us to pursue constant busyness. We must resist the temptation to serve for God void of intimacy with God. Abiding is the key to preparedness.

Read 1 John 1:1-5.

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”

John, and others like him, had experienced the grace, forgiveness, and intimacy of a loving God. After seeing Jesus, hearing Jesus, and touching Jesus, they could not help but go and tell of Jesus. It did not matter where or at what cost; sharing Good News became not a task they were obligated to perform, but a response birthed out of thanksgiving and complete joy. Their witness for God was preceded by a witnessing of God. Having come to know Jesus they were propelled to go and share Jesus.

These early Christians were radically effective in their witness for Christ, both at home in Jerusalem and to the ends of the earth, *not because of a desire to be missional for God, but because of their desire to be relational with God.*

BALANCE: CRITICAL IN LIVING & LOVING

REFLECT #3

Read Luke 2:52.

What are four ways in which Jesus' life developed?

While seeking to glorify the Father, redeem the entirety of mankind, combat Satan, and meet the unending needs of a lost humanity, Jesus was able to maintain balance. His intellect, His physical needs, His social/emotional needs, and His relationship with the Father were balanced and growing. There is never a hint of imbalance or stagnation. Interestingly, the way Jesus loved reflected the way Jesus lived.

REFLECT #4

Read Luke 10:27.

Do you see a correlation between how Jesus lived with how Jesus loved? What are four elements of how we are to love as commanded by Jesus?

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Living with a balanced heart, mind, soul, and body allows us to love completely with heart, mind, soul, and body. That is why Jesus could say, “Do this, and you will live” (Luke 10:28).

Balanced living and loving are critical to glorifying God in the journey of cross-cultural service. Imbalance certainly contributed much to James’ poor choices and my own. I would like for you to reflect on the following questions:

- What facet(s) of my life tend to move toward imbalance?
- How does imbalance impact my life?
- What will I do to bring balance where there is imbalance and growth where there is stagnation?

With your answers to the above questions in mind, consider what Scripture says about the well-being of our heart (i.e. emotions), mind, body, and soul.

The Heart: Emotional Well-being

“Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.” Proverbs 4:23

REFLECT #5

List qualities of the heart described in these verses:

Proverbs 12:25

Proverbs 14:30

Proverbs 15:13

Philippians 4:6-7

The Mind: Intellectual Well-being

“The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouths of fools feed on folly.” Proverbs 15:14

“Deep within the worldview of the biblical authors and equally within the minds of the earliest church fathers was the understanding that to be fully human is to think. To this day we call ourselves a race of Homo sapiens, which means ‘thinking beings.’” James E. White, *A Mind for God*

REFLECT #6

List qualities of a healthy mind from these verses:

John 8:32

Romans 12:1-2

Isaiah 26:3

Romans 8:5-6

The Body: Physical Well-being

“...the body is for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body... Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? ... Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” 1 Corinthians 6:13, 15, 19-20

REFLECT #7

List qualities of a healthy body from these verses:

1 Corinthians 10:31

1 Timothy 4:8

Psalm 101:3

The Soul: Spiritual Well-being

“Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life.” Deuteronomy 4:9

“As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God ... Deep calls to deep...” Psalm 42:1-2, 7

How do we get to a place of deeper intimacy with Christ, a place where our lives truly are changed? The answer to that question will probably have some distinctive qualities for each of us, but there are some common elements.

To be sure, willpower alone will not work. Each of us can testify of starting a regimen to see change wrought in some facet of life, and over time our willpower wanes and we succumb to old and natural habits.

Look at Colossians 2:20-3:3.

“If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—“Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

Imposing rules and regulations on ourselves through willpower alone is not of eternal value. When we set our minds and hearts on Christ, however, and continually remember his death and resurrection, we will be drawn into a deeper intimacy with him. Spiritual disciplines, then, will not be done out of duty or obligation, but out of a response to his loving mercy and grace. As Paul writes in *Galatians 2:20*, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

PRACTICING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

It is here that I would like to begin a stream of thought and conversation about spiritual disciplines. What Richard Foster states in his book *The Celebration of Discipline* is so true: “Spiritual Disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that he can transform us. By themselves the Spiritual Disciplines can do nothing; they can only get us to the place where

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something can be done.” Spiritual disciplines cannot change us; they only help to position us before God in a way that allows him to complete the change.

Change does not happen by chance. Change does not come easily, and if we are not intentional about change, it does not happen at all. As part of our journey, we need to be intentionally tending to our souls. Paul wrote: “The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit will reap eternal life” (Galatians 6:8).

Practicing the spiritual disciplines requires not only communion with God but also community with others. (See Luke 5:16, Hebrews 10:24-25, Genesis 2:18, and 1 Kings 19:3-4.) Isolation in a cross-cultural context can be extremely dangerous. Do what you must to have some form of safe Christian community in which you can journey.

CONSIDERING THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

What follows is a list of spiritual disciplines that, if practiced, will position and prepare us to glorify God. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list, and many of the thoughts I convey here have been largely influenced by Richard Foster. I would encourage you to give further study, conversation, and practice to each.

Meditation

Meditation is training your mind to think deeply on the things of God. (See Psalm 119:15-16.)

- “Meditation has no point and no reality unless it is firmly rooted in life.” Thomas Merton
- Meditation requires practice. Meditation is not about detachment from self, but about attachment to God! (See Philippians 4:8-9.)

Prayer

Prayer is open and honest communication with God.

Jesus on prayer: Pray...

- radically (Matthew 5:44)
- sincerely (Matthew 6:5-13)
- simply (Matthew 6:7-8)
- privately (Matthew 6:6)
- corporately (Matthew 21:13)
- faithfully (Matthew 21:22)
- audibly (John 17)
- constantly (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Fasting

Fasting is abstaining from something (often food) over a set time in order to foster a craving for God. (See John 6 and Isaiah 58:1-12.)

Motivations for fasting:

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- Preparation for God's service (Matthew 17:21, Luke 4:1-13, Acts 13:1-3)
- Desperation for God's mercy (Jonah 3:5-10, 2 Chronicles 20)
- Transformation to Christ's image (John 4:34, Mark 8:34)
- Revelation of God's glory (Isaiah 58:6-8)

Study

Study is the act of acquiring biblical knowledge that transforms us and conforms us to Christ.

- "Jesus reminds us that it is not just the truth but the knowledge of the truth that sets us free." *Richard Foster* (See John 8:32.)
- We must see God's Word first as a revelation of who God is, and secondly, a revelation of who we are to be.
- How are you incorporating "study" into your spiritual life?

Solitude

Solitude is a catalyst for silent and singular encounters with God. (See Ecclesiastes 5:1-2.)

- Jesus often withdrew from crowds, not to disengage from people, but to engage with the Father.
- "He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul" (Psalm 23:2-3).

Question: Why do we resist silence & solitude? (See Isaiah 30:15-16.) There are numerous responses, but I believe three things are most prevalent:

1. Performance-based faith
2. Distractions from a culture that combats solitude
3. Fear of what might be revealed

What are some other reasons you would identify?

Submission

Submission is an outward display of an inward desire to please God first.

- Christ not only died a cross death, he lived a cross life. (See Luke 9:23-24.)
- "Our difficulty is due primarily to the fact that we have failed to understand Jesus' teaching that the way to self-fulfillment is through self-denial." (Richard Foster)
- Jesus invites us to die to ourselves when we want to make life about preserving ourselves!

In what ways do you struggle to submit to God?

Servanthood

Servanthood is demonstrating the love of God by helping others. (See Matthew 20:26-28.)

- "In service, we must experience the many little deaths of going beyond ourselves. Service banishes us to the mundane, the ordinary, and the trivial." Richard Foster

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- Servanthood is as much about attitude as it is about action.

Confession

Confession is agreement with God about our sin.

Confession is as much a proclamation of truth as a declaration of guilt! It has more to do with being set free than getting caught. (See 1 John 1:5-10.)

Elements of Confession:

- Self-examination (Psalm 139:23-24)
- Godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10)
- Life change (Acts 19:18-20)

What to Confess (James 1:14-15)

- Our weaknesses
- Our desires
- Our temptations
- Our sins

Worship

Worship is the constant and ongoing use of our life to reflect God. (See Psalm 29:2.)

“Worship is the human response to the Divine initiative.” *Richard Foster*

When you consider the entirety of the biblical message it is all about worship:

The Exodus: The release of God’s people to worship (Exodus 3:10-12, 5:1, 10:11, 24-29)

The Arrival: The release of God’s people to worship (Luke 2:14, 20, 28, 38 & Matthew 2:10-11)

The Return: The release of God’s people to worship (Revelation 7:9-12)

REFLECTION

The older I get the more I realize that God does not desire for me to have a compartmentalized *spiritual life* characterized by the performance of certain Christian practices. Rather, His desire is for me to have a *life* that is spiritual, so that the entirety of life is glorifying to Him – my financial life, my career life, my family life, my sex life – all of it.

This life is a temporal journey that leads to an eternal existence. We are to love well in this life as a preparation for the eternal existence that is to come. Serving cross-culturally will not make us spiritually vibrant. Do not be deceived into thinking that obtaining a title of “missionary” or getting on a plane and crossing an ocean is somehow going to change you.

The weaknesses and tendencies that you possess now will be the ones you carry with you to a cross-cultural context. If anything, those weaknesses will be more greatly exposed when you are outside that which is familiar and comfortable.

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Make the journey about knowing God first, so that you can make Him known. The order is critical. Ministry needs to flow out of intimacy. Begin now to do those things that will prepare and feed your soul. When abroad, do not fall into the trap of thinking that your service for God can be a substitute for your intimacy with God.

Be self-aware. Consider how balanced your life is. There will be a direct correlation between living balanced and loving well. Allow the practice of spiritual disciplines to assist in finding balance and allowing God to produce fruit that is to His glory. Find community, be it here or in the cross-cultural context in which you will live. Find people with whom you can journey.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR *SPIRITUAL HEALTH AND MAINTENANCE*

There are boatloads of books, conferences, teachings, and resources that can contribute to spiritual vibrancy. Remember to learn from those who have found Christ in the cross-cultural context in which you live. I have found that oftentimes I am unfamiliar with or have lost sight of the purity of faith that they have.

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