

Soul Food, Anyone?

“*An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!*” resonates with those of us who understand the value of caring for what we value from home and car maintenance to finances. Care of the ‘soul’ should get no less attention and upkeep; spiritual formation points us in the right direction and can help us remain healthy in body, soul, and mind.

Because I understand the soul represents what the spirit doesn’t (e.g. body, mind, intent, etc.,) spiritual formation (soul-care) makes perfect sense to me as the ounce of prevention needed to be faithful, obedient, and healthy. The lack of attention to relative formation elements introduces the risk of stress, anxiety, poor physical and mental/emotional health, and limited or non-existent faith – all of which can become roadblocks to spiritual effectiveness!

Here are a few standard disciplines related to spiritual formation and the reduction of the risks I just mentioned:

- **Bible Study & Prayer.** The Bible makes clear that our faith (belief/confidence) is formed largely through exposure to the Scriptures (e.g. Romans 10:17; 2Timothy 3:16-17). The learning provides boundaries and guidance, builds our ability to follow, and reduces the chances of deception (cf. Colossians 2:7-8). Most Christians (more than 98%, statistically) don’t read the Bible regularly. And, although prayer is our communication with God through the Spirit, we don’t do that regularly or effectively either. Setting aside at least one period each day (ideally at the same time) for prayer and Bible study will allow us to ‘renew our minds’, avoid deceptions (e.g., equip to train others, and petition or thank our God.
- **Physical Exercise.** As we learned in this week’s lecture (and what should already be clear from experience and education), physical exercise reduces stress and illness. And, the better we feel, the more efficient we’ll likely be in our walk as Jesus’ followers. A regiment of at least 30 minutes or so several times a week in some cardio and physical exercise would be an excellent start.
- **Mental Exercise.** The brain needs stimulus too. Engaging in educational pursuits, intelligent conversations or debates, reading, etc. will help keep you mentally healthy and productive in your work, play, and witness.
- **Financial Stewardship.** Also as we learned this week (and confirmed statistically), financial problems provide much stress and distraction from important and healthy pursuits. Stress over financial trouble strains relationships and physical health alike. God calls us to be good financial stewards as shown by the Bible throughout the Old and New Testaments (e.g. Psalms 37:21; Proverbs 22:7 & 26; Matthew 25:27; Luke 20:20-25;

Romans 13:8). Following biblical advice will aid greatly in keeping us healthy and financially stable.

- **Relationship Maintenance.** Finally, we're social creatures and must maintain our relationships to reduce stress and loneliness. Relationships are also critical to our ability to evangelize and disciple others. Therefore, we should make time to maintain our connections to family and friends.

In conclusion, my challenge to all followers of our Christ is that we continually engage in spiritual formation – 'soul care' – to ensure we're active participants in our covenant with God.

Blessings,

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