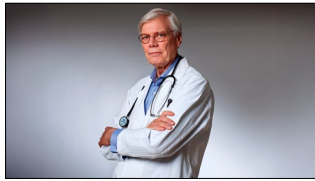
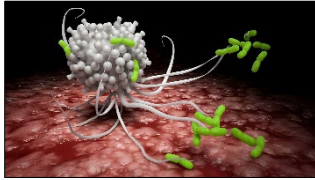


Internal Affairs

Seeking Spiritual Health

January 12, 2025

Today we're learning how to strengthen our spirit so we can cure our condition. Cuz, like *physical* health, *spiritual* health *isn't* something that just *happens* – it takes ongoing effort to *keep* things operational *and* to *defend* against intruders. So, the question is: **What's your treatment plan?**



Cuz, as the saying goes: **fail to plan, plan to fail**. And I just re-learned this *painful* lesson as I spent the vast majority of *this* week locked in a *losing* battle with physical sickness because I thought I could *improvise* on the fly and outsmart *my germs* on *my terms*. I was *wrong*. Cuz as my *nurse wife* kept telling me, not only is an ounce of *prevention* worth a pound of *cure*, but a **pound of cure isn't worth anything if you don't finish it!** And after fighting her all week as she *tried* to take care of me, I now *concede* the need to *completely* keep the *three* points of her treatment plan: 1.) **Follow the doctor's orders**. 2.) **Take your medicine**. And 3.) **Get some rest**. Cuz, in *hindsight* it's easy to see that to the degree I *followed* this plan – I *maintained* my health; and to the degree I *deviated* – my health *deteriorated*. So, *why* am I so *stupid*? Well, it's directly tied to our universal *spiritual* stupidity.

Y'see, **our physical lives are just a vehicle for revealing and healing our spiritual selves**. So, we should see every *earthly struggle* we encounter as a symptom of the underlying *spiritual* sickness called *sin*. And *subsequently*, we should see each *earthly lesson* we learn as an *opportunity* to *spot* sin and *stop* it *sooner* to allow our *spirit* to *strengthen*.

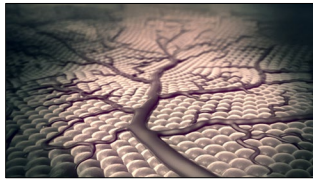
[Like Paul says:] Though outwardly [in our *physical* lives] we are wasting away, yet inwardly [in our *spiritual* selves] we are being *renewed* day by day. For our light and momentary [material world] troubles are achieving for us an eternal [spiritual realm] glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is *seen* is *temporary*, but what is *unseen* is *eternal*. – 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 NIV

So here's the bottom line: because the *visible* physical *world* is an *echo* of an *invisible* spiritual *reality*, **physical failures can facilitate spiritual success**. In fact, the whole purpose of our physical bodies is to provide a *visible* framework for our *invisible* spirit to manifest. Remember,

The LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man *became* a living being. – Genesis 2:7 NIV

You got that? The *material* part of humanity is just a *container* for *God's* breath of life – which means **you are literally a dirtbag built to contain the spirit God breathed into you!** And *furthermore*, that means the "*real*" part of you that gives you *life*, *isn't* technically *you*, it's *God*. And your *identity* is just an expression of the *harmony* between *your* dirtbag and *God's* Spirit.

But before you have an *existential* meltdown and start questioning the metaphysical nature of *who* you truly “*are*” – remember, **this physical world helps us understand these spiritual realities** and your *material* body you has *already* taught you how to *process* all this. Here’s *how*:

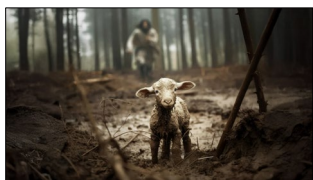


Do you know how many cells make up the average adult *human body*? Around 30 trillion; these are your *bones, muscles, organs*, etc. that by all accounts, is who you *appear* to be. However, spread *throughout* these 30 trillion cells are *38 trillion* bacteria that are responsible for *feeding, strengthening, and training* your *human* cells to *survive and thrive*. So, in your *physical* life *alone*, the “*real*” part of you that gives you *life, isn’t* technically *you*, it’s *bacteria*. And your *physical* identity is just an expression of the *harmony* between your body and *earth’s* bacteria! But do you feel like *less of yourself*, knowing that *most* of what you *are – isn’t* you? *No!* You’re still *you*, but **it just provides an insight into what it means to be “you.”** And *that* insight into our *physical* identity helps us understand and *accept* the nature of our spiritual identity which *similarly* consists of more God than “*you*.”

Which is what German-American theologian, philosopher, and Harvard professor Paul Tillich thinks *life* is *all about* – providing *physical* experiences to point us toward *spiritual* insight. He calls it “The Method of Correlation” because he believes that **every aspect of human life correlates to some spiritual reality that we are prompted to pursue.**

And as I spent this last week on a bed alone with my thoughts in a Sudafed-fueled delirium – I realized the treatment plan I failed to follow for physical health directly correlated to the treatment plan we all struggle with *spiritually*. So we’re going to take a look at what it means to spiritually **follow the Doctor’s orders, take your medicine, and get some rest** – so the lessons in my *physical* failure might facilitate some *spiritual* success!

So, let’s start with **following the Doctor’s orders**. Now, in *physical* sickness, the doctor (or in my case the *nurse* I’m married to) simply *knows more* about the *causes, complications, and cures* of our *afflictions* – so allowing *them* to *call the shots* is *logically* the *best bet* to get *better*. And yet, I fought *most* of her recommendations. **Why?**



Well, this kind of behavior is just a symptom of our underlying *spiritual* struggle with **obedience**. Because **following orders means admitting inferiority**. And our *pride* compels us to *pretend* that *we’re* as good as it gets cuz **if we’re not self-sufficient, we are self-conscious**. The problem *is*, we have to get over *ourselves* to get under *His* care.

[Like the Pharisees who Jesus told:] It is not the *healthy* who need a doctor, but the *sick*. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. – Luke 5:31-32 NIV

And until *we’re* willing to truly recognize Jesus as our *superior* spiritual physician, we won’t give Him the authority to lead us to the life-saving actions we need to take. Which means,

Do not merely *listen* to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. **Do what it says.** – James 1:22 NIV

So is that part of your spiritual treatment plan? Are you committed to *following* orders, even if it means the uncomfortable reality of helpless *humility*? You *should* be, cuz **believing in Jesus doesn't mean much if you won't let Him affect your actions**. After all, the main reason for coming to church, reading your Bible, and praying each day is merely to receive His guidance for your life – so what's the point if you don't put it into action? Cuz in the end:

[Jesus *is*] the source of eternal salvation **[but only]** for all who obey Him – Hebrews 5:9 NIV

Ignoring my *wife's* superior advice *inhibited* my physical health but **ignoring any of Jesus' commands means forfeiting the full measure of His spiritual life-saving work**. Because, following the Doctor's orders may mean establishing a permanent *posture* of obedient *trust* in Jesus's *commands*, but apart from having the *right heart* – we have to take the *right action*. That is, you gotta **take your medicine!**

Now in *physical* sickness, *medicine* serves a *lot* of *purposes* – we take some to *suppress* the *symptoms*, some to *repair* the *damage*, and some to *kill* the *cause*. And since *each* is an *ongoing process*, for each *medicine* to *achieve* its purpose, *consistency* is the key. And yet, I found myself *sporadically* supplementing and fully *forgetting* some of my other daily doses. **Why?**



Well, this kind of behavior is just a symptom of our underlying *spiritual* struggle with **discipline**. Because **taking medicine means admitting our dependency**. And we can *subconsciously* skip a healthy habit to *assert* our *control* cuz **regular routines rob us of feeling free will**. The problem is, without *routine* treatments, we're doomed to death.

Our spiritual *health* depends on spiritual *disciplines* as our spiritual *medicine* cuz the *sin* that's trying to *win* is defined by *its consistency*. Like we're warned at the beginning of the Bible:

If you do *not do* what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it. – Genesis 4:7 NIV

So why on earth do we drag our feet when we could kill our enemy? **Laziness!** Which is *not* as *shallow* as it sounds; it has *deep spiritual* roots because **laziness is just a manifestation of self-indulgence**. And at its core, it's our misguided attempt to assert our *authority* by *denying discipline*. But, *without* the discipline to maintain *daily* doses of *Scripture*, *prayer*, *servicing*, or *worship*, we become too *spiritually* weak to *stay ahead* of sin's subtle infection.

[Which is why Dr. Jesus demands disciplined treatments] Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow Me. – Luke 9:23 NIV

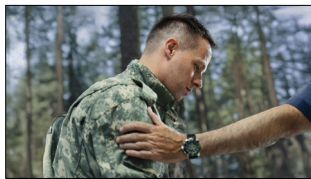
If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples. – John 8:31 NIV

Consistent, deliberate *action* – even when *inconvenient* – is what *builds* spiritual *resilience* and *fills* God's *prescription* because **being God's patients means learning God's patience**. Cuz whether we admit it or not, **we would much rather give orders than take them**, and the only way to break this harmful habit is to replace it with the healthy ones Jesus commands.

So is that part of your spiritual treatment plan? Are you committed to taking the medicine God prescribes as part of your daily routine? You *should* be, cuz **inconsistent treatments are always ineffective**. In fact, they can actually make things worse! Cuz often, medications need to build up and maintain a certain level to be effective and skipping doses not only undermines the effectiveness – it allows the sickness adapt and become resistant!

My *inconsistent* medicating let my *physical* enemy regroup and return so I got *sicker* after I felt *better*, but **inconsistent spiritual disciplines allow our spiritual sickness to strengthen by providing a break in the battle where sin can rebuild**. But we shouldn't give rest, we need to **get some rest**.

Cuz, in *physical* sickness, *sleep*, *relaxation*, and *downtime* boosts *immunity*, reduces *stress*, and helps the body *repair itself* by getting us *out of our own way*. Cuz *that's* when the trillions of human cells that just serve as *framework* take a backseat to the trillions *more* who actually *fight* to keep you *healthy* so they can live in *harmony*. And *yet*, I kept arguing against *sitting* or *sleeping*. **Why?**



Well, this kind of behavior is just a symptom of our underlying *spiritual* struggle with *surrender*. Because **getting some rest means admitting our frailty**. So we're compelled to contribute to the war effort cuz **if a battle is better without our help we feel helpless**. The problem *is*, if an ally is incapacitated, they only *hurt* when they try to *help*.

And *step one* in the *spiritual* war against *sin* is *admitting* that, **in a one-on-one battle, sin's going to win**. However, we need to *remember* that, just like our *physical* bodies, our *spiritual* selves include a more powerful *partner* that *can* win the war if *we'll* get out of the way!

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who *is in you*, whom you have received from God? You are *not your own* – 1 Corinthians 6:19 NIV

[So,] The LORD will fight *for you*; you need only to be still. – Exodus 14:14 NIV

Remember, **God is the best part of who we are**, so our *best bet* for *getting better* means giving *Him* total control. But even though that means *we* get to take a *rest*, **being still can feel like admitting defeat**. Because *God* gave us the *controls* to our lives and *therefore*, we naturally think *that* means *we're* supposed to *run the show*. But – in *reality*, **we were given control so we'd learn to let it go**. Cuz as long as we insist on *leading* a war that *we're* too *weak* to *win*, *sin* can't lose! It's only when we *surrender* control to a *more powerful ally* that *we* can *win* once and for all.

So is that part of your spiritual treatment plan? Are you committed to getting the *rest* that God wants you to have. You *should* be, cuz **God can't step in until we step aside**. And *spiritual* rest *isn't* just a *means* to an *end* – *it is the end*! Cuz when we *let go* of fighting a *losing* battle, we let go of *all* the *pain*, *anxiety*, and *hardship* that holds us *back* from a *clean* bill of *spiritual* health.

My *refusal* to rest kept *me* in command of a *physical* war that my *immune-system-ally* was *better equipped* to battle; but **refusing the spiritual rest that Jesus calls us to take means choosing to lose** by keeping *ourselves* as a *weak* *spiritual* commander. So, learn from my week of *physical* failure and *focus* on the *obedience*, *discipline*, *surrender* you need to *follow your Heavenly Doctor's orders*, *take your spiritual medicine*, and *get some eternal rest*. Cuz *being sick stinks* – but our *God* is *good*!