

SOUL CARE FOR THE CHILDREN'S PASTOR

Name:

Home Church:

Ministry Involvement:

What prompted you to attend this seminar?

What question(s) do you bring to this seminar?

What outcomes would you like to achieve through attending this seminar?

FIRE

What makes a fire burn
is space between the logs,
a breathing space.
too much of a good thing,
too many logs
packed in too tight
can douse the flames
almost as surely
as a pail of water

So building fires
requires attention
to the spaces in between,
as much as to the wood.

When we are able to build
open spaces
in the same way
we have learned
to pile on logs,
then we come to see how
it is fuel, and the absence of fuel
together, that make fire possible.
we only need to lay a log
lightly from time to time.
A fire grows
simply because the space is there,
with openings
in which the flame
that knows just how it wants to burn
can find its way.

By Judy Brown¹

Where is the breathing space in your life? In your community's life? In your family's life?

¹Sam M. Intrator and Megan Scribner, editors, *Teaching with Fire: Poetry that Sustains the Courage to Teach* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003).
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The Importance of Cultivating our Inner Life... As we give attention to the development of others, we must pay attention to our inner life.

- ❖ Essential to _____
- ❖ Essential to _____
- ❖ Essential to _____

What happens when we begin to care for our souls?

Soul care versus self care...

- ❖ Self care is looking after one's self, one's own needs. Soul care is looking after our soul in order to care for others.
- ❖ "Christian spiritual formation has to do with the attention we pay to our souls, but it has the capacity to degenerate into self-absorption when we step outside of the gospel story and take ourselves as the basic text for our spirituality. Spirituality turns out in practice to be the attention we give to God revealed in Jesus. (Peterson, Subversive Spirituality).

PAYING ATTENTION:

Thinking strategically, knowing who we are, knowing what we're about... all requires paying attention. It is a proactive approach to life.

In the busyness of ministry, the busyness of life, the demands for our time and energy... are we paying attention to the work of God in our lives?

Are we paying attention to the condition of our soul and the nurture of our soul?

Assessment of our Soul:

The condition of our soul is reflected in how we love God, love others, attitudes, physical well being. It's quite incredible actually how all of life is affected by the condition of our soul.

How do you know the condition your soul is in?

Take a few moments to complete the Soul Care Inventory (Appendix 1)

CULTIVATING OUR INNER LIFE:

A Movement in the Way of Jesus

A movement in the way of Jesus is cultivated as we pay attention to the deepening of the inner life, while caring for the development of others.

FOLLOWING JESUS' SERVANT-WAY TODAY...

For so many of us, the demands of meeting the expectations and responsibilities of leadership overshadow the necessity of cultivating a whole person. It often seems like all we are doing is trying to keep our heads above water. Such a way of life and service may suffice for the short term, but it is a miserably inadequate strategy over the long haul. We may be able to get by and even succeed for a while. We may accomplish some amazing things, we may hear the praise of peers, even earn the respect of those under us, and we may experience tremendous influence and impact, *but it is not Jesus' way*. Jesus continues to emphasize humility and "cleaning the inside of the cup first." He reminds us of the futility of "Justifying ourselves in the sight of others" because "God knows our hearts." He asks us to "consider whether the light within us is not darkness." And from time to time we even hear Jesus speak, from the Passover table on the night before he was killed, of the sort of kingdom that is passed onto those who would follow him – a kingdom of whose authority resides in the Servant of all.

The kingdom community he is passing on is an utterly demanding reality that requires far more than some thoughtful acts and accurate words. It requires men and women who would learn to follow this remarkable person who loved them so much that he would die for them, friend and enemy alike. Just a brief reflection on our own set of circumstances and inner reactions reveals that we need some grace, help and direction in following Jesus' servant-way from the inside out. We need Jesus' Spirit and power in order to exercise Jesus' sort of authority in the world with courage, honesty and joy.

The question we must then continue to answer with our lives as we face the many demands around us is:

What are the ways we are nurturing an inward life adequate to the outward demands of leading in Jesus' way?

What are the ways in which Jesus' life is being cultivated in our lives from the inside out?

What are the forces that get in the way of this?

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF JESUS – Luke 8:19

Luke 8 provides 4 events that reveal how Jesus responded to the people who require His attention and it provides 6 areas of need in the lives of people:

Areas of Need:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Jesus' Response:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

EXERCISE:

From the example of Jesus – A Day in the Life... What are some things you could begin to put into place to cultivate your inner life as you care for the development of others?

Conclusion:

What has become clear to you today?

What do you sense God speaking to you as next steps in the cultivation of your inner life?

Quote from “Let Your Life Speak” by Parker Palmer

... In America, at least, our declining public life has bred too many self-serving leaders who seem lacking in ethics, compassion, and vision. But if we look again at the headlines, we will find leaders worthy of respect in places we often ignore: South Africa, Latin America, and eastern Europe, for example, places where people who have known great darkness have emerged to lead others toward light.

The words of one of those people – Václav Havel, playwright, dissident, prisoner, and now president of the Czech Republic – take us to the heart of what leadership means in settings both large and small....

The power for authentic leadership, Havel tells us, is found not in external arrangements but in the human heart. Authentic leaders in every setting – from families to nation-states – aim at liberating the heart, their own and others’, so that its powers can liberate the world....

We capitalists have a long and crippling legacy of believing in the power of external realities much more deeply than we believe in the power of the inner life. How many times have you heard or said, “Those are inspiring notions, but the hard reality is...”? How many times have you worked in systems based on the belief that the only changes that matter are the ones you can measure or count? How many times have you watched people kill off creativity by treating traditional policies and practices as absolute constraints on what we can do?

Cultivating Our Inner Life While Caring for the Development of Others...

QUESTION: What kind of culture are you creating for the people you lead and disciple? What kind of culture would you like to create?

APPENDIX 1

**SELF-EXAMINATION
SOUL CARE INVENTORY**

Do I have a sense of playfulness?

Do I find reason to celebrate regularly?

Am I feeling fatigued? Overwhelmed with life?

Do I get easily irritated or annoyed with others? (especially those close to me)

Do I tend to see the negative side of things rather than the positive?

Am I impatient?

Do I gossip about others?

Am I critical of others and/or of things I am involved in? (even if you don't say it out loud)

Am I judgmental?

Am I disappointed in myself?

Do I harbour resentment or anger toward others or toward a situation? Is forgiveness needed?

Am I spending time with God regularly?

What is my attitude toward making time for God in my life?

Do I enjoy serving others?

Do I open myself up to other people and allow them to see who I really am?

Do I have a sense of indifference toward life? Toward people and events?

Do I feel content and satisfied with my life?

CREATING SPACE

Taking steps toward caring for your soul involves taking a step back and pausing for a moment. It is a proactive step toward life and involves reflecting on what is important to you and paying attention to the longing of your soul. And most importantly, it requires paying attention to the work God is doing in you and the life he is inviting you into.

“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”. John 10:10

Take a few moments to reflect on the following questions:

What do you value most in life? What is most important to you?

What kinds of things bring you joy? What kinds of things cause you stress?

Reflect on your life and write down the key issues that are weighing on you right now.

What causes anxiety and worry? What keeps you awake at night?

What are you doing to sort through these issues?

How much time do you spend engaging in various spiritual practices? Where are you at with God right now?

Take some time to map out a typical week in your life. Write down how much time you spend working, driving, spending time with friends, time with God, rest, etc. Be specific.

What has emerged in your assessment of your time? Does how you spend your time line up with what is important to you and what brings you joy?

Take some time and ask God how you should be prioritizing your life. What is most important to him? What brings him joy?

Come before the Lord in prayer and bring him the key issues that are weighing on you. Spend some time reflecting with God on what Steps you can take to work through these issues.

Write down one thing you can be doing each week that will allow you time to just “be still” and sit in the presence of God.

HOMEWORK:

Set aside time at the beginning of each week to plan out your week. Take into consideration what time of day would work best for this, which day of the week, etc.

Take time to set some life goals (spiritual, family, health and fitness, ministry...). Check in on these goals once a month.

NOTE: We often overestimate what we can accomplish in a year and underestimate what was can accomplish in 10 years.

Find someone you trust to share your plans and goals with and ask them to check in with you periodically to make sure you are working toward the things God has laid on your heart.