

3 Power Tips to Help You Strengthen Your Spiritual Core

Steve and I belong to a gym. Please be impressed. When I go, I do some cardio and call it good. However, when I met with one of the trainers at the gym, she told me I needed to strengthen my core. If you don't have a strong core, apparently your balance suffers. Bummer! I mean, who really wants to do sit-ups?

As I've been thinking about this, my heart has been drawn to a woman in Scripture. She had been crippled by an evil spirit of bondage for 18 years. As a result, she couldn't stand, making her less valuable than even animals. One day when Jesus was teaching in the synagogue, the woman caught His eye. Rather than shunning her, Jesus called her forward. He laid His hands on her and healed her—setting her free from the spirit of bondage. Immediately she began praising God (see Luke 13:10-13).

Many of us are a bit like this woman. We live bent over and crippled. Not because of an evil spirit but because we are consumed with the approval of others rather than being consumed with the bread of life.

Some of us bend toward our husbands, groping for more love and attention than they can give.

Some of us bend toward our kids, hoping they can fill that need in us to feel worthwhile.

Some of us bend toward our friends, placing greater expectations on them than they can fill.

Some of us bend toward our careers, becoming more and more

consumed with success.

Some of us bend toward material things, hoping that if we just fill our homes with the right stuff or decorate just the right way, our lives will feel more fulfilled.

Here's the thing: Whatever you're consumed with will become the core of your identity. The only firm foundation for your identity is Jesus and His love. Then, and only then, are we able to stand up straight and tall—confident in who we are and whom we're loved by. The question is, how? How do we strengthen our core by building our identity around Christ?

Learn to recognize the symptoms when you're starting to lean.

You can always tell you're leaning when you feel the angst of trying too hard. Or when you feel devastated by the rejection of others or the loss of a promotion at work. Or when the expectations of others are driving you. When you realize you're starting to lean, step back. Declare out loud that you are completely loved by Jesus and your purpose is to serve Him. Remind yourself that your significance is rooted in Him. Then you can stand strong, knowing you are deeply loved and valued by God.

Consume the bread of life daily. Friend, here's the truth: It's easy to start leaning if you're not consuming God's love letter to you. Read a few verses from Scripture daily. Put Scripture reminders up around your house. Have what I refer to as "Facetime With Jesus" every day. Spend time worshipping Him, pouring out your heart to Him and learning from His Word.

Surround yourself with healthy community. Don't read into this that I'm saying you only need Jesus and no one else. God designed you for community. If you are rooted in the immensity of God's love, you are able to love others out of the overflow of a full heart. You need others in your life whom you can love and who love you, but who also have healthy boundaries.

As you find your significance and value in the love of God,

your core identity will grow stronger, and you'll be more able to love others as Jesus commanded.

Lord Jesus, expand my heart to be able to receive the fullness of Your love. Expand my mind to be able to understand how wide and high and deep and long the love of Christ is. Let me love others out of the strong assurance that I am unconditionally loved and valued by You. {eoa}

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