

Filling the Hole in Your Soul

I remember in 1980 a song was released by John Lennon after years of anguish and reclusion in his personal life. The song was called "Starting Over," and it captured the readiness in his heart to embrace a fresh start both personally and professionally and move on with life.

Sadly, however, Lennon was shot dead in front of his New York apartment just months later. In life, we can lose our way from time to time, and we wonder, "Am I going in the right direction? Will I end up at the right destination?" We feel like we're drifting. We sense that something is missing. We want a do-over!

Sometimes it's a crisis that precipitates such an introspection, such as the death of a loved one, loss of a job or a divorce. For others it's more of a mid-life review, a feeling that we want our life to count for something more, something important. These kinds of crises can serve as healthy opportunities for change. But how? How can we extract the kind of life-altering principles from such experiences that better us for the future?

An even more basic question would be, "Can a person really change?" Given the environmental factors of one's upbringing and family dynamics, and given the patterns and habits we have created, is real change even possible? I had a friend who insisted that, "people change; but not that much!" How many times have you asked yourself "Could I really be different? Will I really change?"

Every New Year's Eve, people around the world make resolutions to live differently. We promise ourselves that this year we will read more books, lose more weight, exercise more often, eat better foods and invest in spiritual, life-affirming behaviors. For most of January and February we are relatively

successful. The rest of the year is a different story. The real problem is we are often narrowly focused on externals. We are only working to change things on the outside when it's the things that can't be seen that need the most work.

Jesus works from the inside out. He is mostly concerned with the heart (which often includes the mind in biblical motif). The prophet Samuel was clear that, "man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). Solomon counseled his own son, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it proceed the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23) As we grow up and develop physically, the heart is the last thing on our minds. We're more concerned about our hair, our weight, our fashion, our muscles, and our accomplishments. Those are the things that we think give us worth among our peers.

Unfortunately, with some people those emphases never alter. A recent poll I read asked, "If you could change one thing about your life, what would it be?" Almost all the responses focused on outward, physical changes. Participants wanted to change the way they look: their body type, the way their nose was shaped, the texture of their hair, or their height. It was all external, all physical. Our society is so focused on looks and appearances, that some people take extreme measures to change their bodies to fit the popular mold.

Remember the TV show Extreme Makeover that helped people with surgeries to become the physical embodiment of what they thought they *should* be? Did you know that when the show followed up with participants, sometimes years after their surgeries, their lives and relationships often remained the same or had dissolved completely? Many people divorced; one woman was severely depressed. They remained unhappy with their lives. Clearly the areas they wanted the most change in weren't enough to bring satisfaction! I contend that they struggled so much after the fact because all they changed was superficial. The important stuff, the inward stuff, didn't change at all.

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So, what does it mean to start over again?

Have you found it ironic that we live in one of the most free countries in the world but many of us remain shackled inside, fettered by bad habits, addictions, and lifestyles? We're like slaves in the marketplace bragging about how free we are to do whatever we want. Jesus asked us all a very important question: "What will it profit if you gain the whole world, but you lose your own soul? And what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 6:36-37).

Just like the infamous Pharisee, Nicodemus, who had fame, education, status, money, and influence, Jesus would say to us, "You must be born again!" Everything celebrated today, everything experimented with, everything dabbled in, can still leave you feeling empty inside, even if you're thin and beautiful while doing it! Most people think these worldly things are enough to fill the void in life, but it never works.

Here is the raw truth: everyone has a hole in their soul. God made you that way. It's part of His design. God put that hole inside of you. The Bible says in the book of Romans, "God has made every person subjected to futility, not willingly but because of Him who subjected it in hope" (Rom. 8:20). Simply put, our Creator made us with a God-shaped hole that nothing except God can satisfy!

God made you with a hole in your soul, and only He can fill it. And that alone brings real change. We can try to fill it with things, people, experiences, status, and fame, but nothing will truly satisfy. Even sex, drugs and Rock 'n Roll just makes the hole bigger.

Do you want change? Then go deeper. Move from the outward to

the inward, from the material and physical to the spiritual. Seek change from the God who made you in the first place. You'll be forgiven of your past, find purpose in your life, and have the hole in your soul filled up once and for all.

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