

Stave Off Spiritual Atrophy With These 3 Crucial Exercises

There are days when it's easy to think that you have everything under control. You don't forget about God, but you don't really invite Him into the moment-by-moment stuff. Life just happens and then life gets busy and then life becomes consuming to the point that you realize you haven't even given a thought to anything other than the things that are right in front of you ... I am exhausted just writing it!

Nothing sinful has occurred, no intentional spiritual corruption, nothing nefarious has taken place—*just neglect*.

But spiritual neglect does more damage than you realize. Neglect causes spiritual atrophy. Neglect makes you stiff, numb and callous to the voice of the Spirit in your life. The ground in your heart becomes dry and hard. You begin to focus more on yourself and less on the needs of others around you. It is this environment that the enemy loves. It is the perfect opportunity to sow the seeds of frustration, bitterness and self-preservation.

The worst of it is that it happens without you even being aware of it.

So what are we to do when we feel ourselves in this place? Here are some tested methods to combat spiritual neglect. These are tools that I use in my life when I begin to feel that “dry” sensation. These are tried and true methods for ensuring you don't become a victim, but a victor!

1. Thankfulness

We have a saying in our house that makes our kids cringe:

“Tell me 10 things you are thankful for.” It is usually followed by a sigh or, in the case of my oldest daughter, a slight rolling of her eyes. This request usually comes at a point in the day when the whining has increased, ungratefulness is at an all-time high and the kids are probably in need of a nap.

Why thankfulness? Because of what it does both to your brain and your spirit. Thankfulness puts your brain to work in the right way. Spending a few minutes a day in thankfulness can actually release the “pleasure” chemicals that your brain so desperately craves each day (check out this article for more info on that). Think of it like a doughnut for your brain.

Thankfulness also forces you to go back and remember. Time and time again, the Lord told the children of Israel to go back and remember (Deut. 8:2). Thankfulness is a reminder to your spirit of all the Lord has done and an invitation to look for Him in the future.

2. Worship

I’m not talking about singing songs, although that is a good way to get started. I’m talking about making God bigger in your life.

“Oh magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together” (Ps. 34:3).

To magnify something means to make it larger. Worship is the act of honoring God because He is worthy of it. When we do this, we get a bigger picture of who He is. As we do, our issues, circumstances, and problems get a lot smaller.

An easy way to do this is by singing worship songs or by spending time focusing on who God is in prayer.

3. Sacrifice

One of the best ways to combat any form of spiritual opposition is to walk in the opposite spirit of whatever you are facing. If you feel under the weight of a financial burden, respond by being generous. If you are feeling down, respond by bringing joy to someone else. If you are feeling hopeless, find someone you can bring hope to.

Doing this ***will*** cost you something. It means you will have to sacrifice your feelings or needs to respond to someone else's needs.

There are times (few and far between) when I watch one of my children sacrifice for the other. Sometimes it's as small as letting their sibling play with a toy they really like, sometimes it's sharing their candy, sometimes it's as simple as choosing the TV show that the other sibling wants instead of what they want.

When this happens, my heart soars. As a father, it means the world when my kids sacrifice for each other. Imagine how our Father in heaven feels when we sacrifice for one another?

Obviously, this is not an exhaustive list of things to do when you are faced with spiritual apathy, **but it is a good start.**

Don't let spiritual neglect cause your life to decay into frustration and bitterness. Combat it with thankfulness, worship and sacrifice!

Try them out and let me know how things change! What things do you do when faced with spiritual neglect in your life?

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