

The Holy Spirit Wants to Take You on This Heart-Changing Journey

I want to take you on a little journey most Christians must go through. This journey isn't about the exciting things men talk about when we usually get together, such as hockey or our latest gadget. Rather, this is the quiet journey many men travel and hope that few find out about.

This is what I call the journey of self-disgust. This is the inner journey of loathing some part of us that Jesus, Himself, is trying to heal, change or destroy so we increasingly look like Him.

I know right now you might be tempted to stop reading, but if you don't give in to that temptation, I promise you will be given a secret to gain your desire for that increase in your life.

You see, like you, Jesus has consistently allowed me go through cycles of self-disgust in my 30-plus years of knowing Him. He takes many of us through this cycle—especially those He entrusts with some form of leadership in the body of Christ. So now you will know that the next time you find yourself going through one of these cycles, you can be affirmed that you are loved, and that this cycle is evidence of Christ's hand on your heart, life and ministry. After all, we serve a perfect God, who is perfect in love. He calls us to walk with Him, who is absolutely divine, and remember that we are absolutely not in-and-of-ourselves divine or even reactively loving. When you walk with the perfect One (not being perfect yourself), you can logically conclude that there would be significant and ongoing change on our part through the decades.

In my experience, there is the first part of the cycle that is relatively comfortable. I am going about my day-to-day life, and life is good. God is blessing me, talking to me and doing His ministry through me, and I am generally at ease and have a level of self-satisfaction in my life. This part of the cycle can last days, weeks and sometimes longer.

Then it changes. I never know what it is going to be. It may be a moment of pride, an unkind interaction or a lack of caring. You will know when it happens. The Spirit of God is watching and just nudges you, kind of like a friend at a football game as if to say, "Hey, did you see that?"

Of course, how we respond to the nudge by the Holy Spirit can decrease or prolong the cycle. If I choose denial, minimization or blame in any way, I get to repeat the cycle. Here's where it can get really ugly.

On this path, regardless of what the issue is, I will be finding myself repeating exactly the same ugly behavior, attitude or lack of caring. Again, each time, the Holy Spirit nudges and often the nudge seems to get harder and harder.

Here is the expensive part of the process as a Christian. In my experience, if I am slow to get to self-disgust and genuine repentance, it seems to get more expensive as the lesson continues. Let me remind you: God is more committed to my growth than I am, generally speaking, although we do have our moments of cooperation. However, if I am not cooperating to get to a point of self-disgust, it tends to move closer to home until what is being dealt with hurts us or someone or something we love significantly more. At this point, we get to the next part of the process.

We really don't like the consequences of our behavior. It stinks; it's not fair; and God, why are you allowing this to happen? Yes, we have all been there, questioning His judgment. This is probably the humorous part for God. He is

perfect and wants the best for us, and we, being imperfect, with His nature in us, are questioning Him. We are so blinded by distrust and still have a grip on what he is trying to deal with in our hearts.

Then I finally arrive at a place of genuine disgust. It's not in others, it's not in the circumstances, but it's in my own dark heart, which is evil, wrong, wicked and selfish. It's really me I hate and loathe, not anyone else. It's the "I" point when you say "uncle" to the Holy Spirit. You agree with your self-righteousness, having a judgmental and controlling heart, or lying, stealing, lusting and pridefulness.

This self-disgust is critical for us to get in agreement with God. He already knows but wants us to also know so that He can heal us to become more like Him. He wants us to move away from the devilish assumption that we're OK. We're not OK. Even as leaders, we need this cycle of self-disgust to reassure us that we need a savior, are still sin and that His blood, grace and mercy are there for us every day.

Now that's not the end of the cycle. You're at the bottom. You're totally self-disgusted and then you repent. You really repent. You don't just say you're sorry. You are broken.

Then the Father God brings you closer to Him. You see Him and you work out a process together to move beyond the darkness. You feel His grace and get insights from His Word and your mentors. You are honest and you start to grow.

Now the exciting part happens: the blessing. It always comes. You see this is the real agenda. God wants to give us something but we get in the way. I've seen this happen so often in my life I look forward to the process. I've learned if God is cleaning me up its only to bless me. I can look back on every open door whether it's a book deal, *Oprah*, *Dr. Phil*—a major door opening with supernatural favor.

Jesus discusses this process when He talks in John 15:1-2 "I

am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that bears no fruit, He takes away. And every branch that bears fruit, He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”

If you are a Christian, you are probably bearing fruit at a certain level. That’s great, and that qualifies your pruning. This is the good news because if you’re not fruitful, you are not even qualifying for this pruning, or what I have been calling the cycle of self-disgust.

Pruning is painful—a foreign object that is stronger invades the weaker organic object. This is a great picture of God’s nature cutting into our flesh for the positive purposes to become more fruitful.

I was sitting on a plane on my way to a large men’s conference as I was reflecting my current cycle of self-disgust. I didn’t like a part of me and repented and was on my way to talk to more than 1,000 men. God showed up, and His pruning was so worth it.

You and I need cycles of self-disgust to become more fruitful in life. Most of us pray God increases us, but what you’re really asking for is pruning—get me so self-disgusted I grow to be more like You so You can trust me with more fruit. I know it sounds like praying for patience.

I’m not expecting you or me to regularly pray, “God help me be disgusted with myself.” However, when this does begin to happen, agree more quickly and rejoice that the Father is about to bless you. {eoa}

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