

SOUL CARE

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In the course of life and ministry (or service) your heart can become heavy with cares. Your heart can become weary of caring. What we call “compassion fatigue” is real; emotions become flat and compassion can no longer be aroused.

You cannot continue to give if you yourself become depleted!

And you cannot continue to give if you seek comfort from the wrong sources.

Hosea 14:8 “O Israel, stay away from idols! I am the one who answers your prayers and cares for you.

If you’ve been exposed to a legalistic form of Christianity—where people are valued for what they do, rather than who they are and how they are growing spiritually, and where what you do is never enough and the pressure to do more is constant—you are likely to become exhausted and bitter and judgmental.

What you need is “soul care.” You need to take care of yourself. Not to the exclusion of helping others, but so that you have real help to offer others. Ministering out of the bitterness and wounds of your spirit is not effective.

This is one of the reasons that we promote the Cleansing Stream ministry. It is a wonderful opportunity to get free from heart clutter and brokenness, to make room for a greater flow of the love of God through your life.

I’m going to describe soul care by means of an acrostic: S.O.U.L.

S – Search your heart

Proverbs 4:23 Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

More than protecting your health or your family, protect your heart from injurious influences, for it is the navigation system of your life.

Get honest on the inside.

1 Corinthians 11:28 That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup. ²⁹ For if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honoring the body of Christ, you are

eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself. ³⁰ That is why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died.

Do you know how to examine yourself?

Psalm 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

²⁴ Point out anything in me that offends You, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

God knows even the areas of your heart that remain hidden from your conscious thought. Unknown to you, these hidden weights can slow down your progress, and even paralyze you. Get honest on the inside.

Deuteronomy 6:5 And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.

Deuteronomy 13:1 "Suppose there are prophets among you or those who dream dreams about the future, and they promise you signs or miracles, ² and the predicted signs or miracles occur. If they then say, 'Come, let us worship other gods'—gods you have not known before—³ do not listen to them. The Lord your God is testing you to see if you truly love Him with all your heart and soul.

Signs and miracles do not always verify truth. Be discerning. Don't listen to every so-called prophet or prophecy.

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.

⁶ Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

Mark 7:15 It's not what goes into your body that defiles you; you are defiled by what comes from your heart."

Matthew 12:34 For whatever is in your heart determines what you say.

What is your heart filled with? Are you careful about what you take in? Because what comes out reveals what's inside.

Romans 10:6 But faith's way of getting right with God says... "The message is very close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart." And that message is the very message about faith that we preach: ⁹ If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved.

Soul care begins with searching your heart, in order to see what is locked up that needs to be set free, what is blocked up that needs to be cleared out. It involves care for what you take in

(through your eyes, through your ears, through your mind), so that the Holy Spirit might be your primary source of wisdom and understanding.

O – Obey God’s whisper

Soul care involves both hearing and obeying God’s whisper, as illustrated in the life of Elijah.

1 Kings 19:11 “Go out and stand before Me on the mountain,” the Lord told him. And as Elijah stood there, the Lord passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. ¹² And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper.

God was in that whisper, and gave the prophet courage and guidance. Hearing His whisper is only the beginning. Obedience is the objective.

God may use the voice of your conscience (properly schooled in the Word), but He also has a whisper that is all His own. Do you hear it?

It is out of hearing God’s whisper that we know what to do, where to go, and what to share with others.

Matthew 10:27 What I tell you now in the darkness, shout abroad when daybreak comes. What I whisper in your ear, shout from the housetops for all to hear!

Obeying the whisper of God and His gentle nudges will build personal guardrails in our lives to keep us on the right path.

U – Unplug From the Noise

If you want to hear the Whisper, you’ll need to unplug from some of the noise! Your device may have control of the volume level of the sound, but it’s more difficult to control the sheer volume of information that is coming your way, all day, every day.

Mark 6:31 Then Jesus said, “Let’s go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile.” He said this because there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and His apostles didn’t even have time to eat. ³² So they left by boat for a quiet place, where they could be alone.

Plan to take breaks from the busyness. Lay aside or turn off your screens! Distractions abound; you must get alone with God.

Today's social and political noise is endless! You must take a break. The world will not end while you do.

Matthew 14:13 When Jesus heard the news about John (being imprisoned), He left there in a boat and went to a lonely place by Himself.

Luke 4:42 At daybreak Jesus left the town and went off to a lonely place.

What was He doing? What was He seeking? A quiet place. To re-center with the Father.

Discover the value of alonetime with God. Discover the value of silence.

L –Let go of poison

Of all the poisons that Christians imbibe, the most potent is unforgiveness.

Mark 11:25 But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too."

I can't get free from my own sins until I release others from my grudges!

Matthew 6:14 "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Matthew 18:33 Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴ Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt.

³⁵ "That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart."

You may have been wounded. But wounds, untended, become infected and become a worse problem in the end.

Colossians 3:13 Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

Then, watch what you say! The power of life and death are in the words you use!

James 3:7 People can tame all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, ⁸ but no one can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God. ¹⁰ And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right!

There is also the poison that others give you: their anger, hurt, and bitterness.

Leviticus 19:17 "Do not nurse hatred in your heart for any of your relatives. Confront people directly so you will not be held guilty for their sin.

The closer you are with people, the more you will be hurt by them, for people are only human. It's true in the workplace and the classroom. It's true in the home. Two sinners got married; what do you expect will happen? Then they have little sinner children! That's life. There are going to be conflicts and there are going to be injuries. And that's where the Lord teaches us to forgive and to love.

1 Peter 5:7 Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares about you.

Life is rough. People will hurt you. Even well-meaning people.

Some things are hard to understand. Circumstances can be threatening and scary.

At times, God will be silent, though He is always *present*. He is not hiding; He is waiting and watching you *with love*. He will protect you from lasting harm, but not from difficult trial.

There are no shortcuts through this life.

Judas Iscariot didn't have to fail. If he didn't betray Jesus, someone else would have, for there were plenty of people who wanted Jesus dead. But Judas did not take care of his soul. He let greed direct him. He let fear guide him. He let loyalty slip. He left self in charge.

Don't be like him. Take care of your soul.

Search your heart. Obey God's whisper. Unplug from the noise. Let go of poison.

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸ The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. ⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.