



Going Deeper - Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide
Reimagine: A New Normal Series - Week 2
May 3, 2020

The lifestyle of Jesus is our focus again this week as we seek to understand the Spiritual disciplines. The point of the Spiritual disciplines: intentional activity that we engage in with our full whole body that reshape our whole life into cooperation with the surrendered lifestyle of Jesus.

This week Pastor Bill talked about the meaning of living a consecrated life and how the human condition disconnected from Jesus is death. It is the life of Jesus that animates the life and light inside of us. But, disconnection from our source (God) will produce nothing. How do we position ourselves in a place we can really begin to grow? Surrender, or consecration. There are no shortcuts toward the lifestyle of Jesus. The change happens little by little.

Jesus uses himself as an example in John 17:18-19 - *For their sake, I consecrate myself that you may also be consecrated in truth. This is the beginning of transformation.* Consecration means: To be set apart from (to create space, to make ourselves available), and set apart for all that God has for us. I love words and I love learning their meanings. Consecration was an interesting one. When I think of the word, in my head it sounds like a high holy act - setting aside the good table cloth and china for special occasions only. And, yes, to an extent this is exactly what it means to set something apart. But, consecration is not about special days. Consecration is about understanding how God has designed you (and me) especially for a specific purpose. As I tuned in on Sunday morning, I was sitting in my office at home - where, like you, I have been spending a whole lot of time. And, as I looked around, I was distracted by the piles of papers, the junk mail, random pens and cords that may or may not work. It's been easy to be distracted during all this upheaval of our lives and routines. I have found that clutter is particularly distracting for me. So, as Pastor Bill was talking about this spiritual discipline, I was fighting to not start cleaning, organizing, and multi-tasking. It was hard to set that time aside to be virtually present with you all, and let God speak to me in a new way.

And then, Pastor Bill asked us to consider this question: How do we consecrate ourselves? Intention, conscious, and a daily (or moment by moment) decision to surrender my will for the will of my Heavenly Father. And I started thinking about the Marie Kondo book that went big a few years ago about the Magical Art of Tidying Up... where she talks about the psychology of why we hold on to cluttered closets, cluttered lives and what it takes to let go of the stuff that keeps us stuck. Her method goes basically like this: Pick up each item in your house and with intention ask yourself if it brings you joy. If it does not bring you joy, the task becomes whether to give it away or throw it away. We are supposed to do this with every single item we own. Of course, the joke that went around after that was, "I tried the Kondo method last night and all I got rid of were all the vegetables and the utility bills. I don't think this works, my house/life is still a mess." The point is, we humans tend to hold on to things that clutter up our space and spirit just enough to keep us distracted from the larger lives we are called to. If we are too busy focusing on our clutter and how busy that keeps us, we have little room to actually make an impact on our world. This self focus limits us. The invitation to consecrate ourselves is an invitation to widen our perspective to others.

I have been humbled by my current state of distractedness in the midst of all this. Sunday's message was a reminder to slow down, be intentional, and lay everything I have and all that I am at the feet of Jesus. When I do surrender, I am met with so much more than I could have imagined. And, eventually, my office gets cleaned up as well.

So Consider:

1. Maybe consecration is not a word you've given a lot of thought to, but the word surrender does bring up thoughts and ideas. How has the meaning of this word changed for you this week?
2. Have you, in the midst of this quarantine, been able to find moments to surrender your plans and things and people to God? What's been working? What hasn't worked?
3. How has this global pandemic changed your view of these Spiritual Disciplines?

Take Action:

As you go about your week, and in your prayer times, ask God to reveal things (or relationships) in your life that are no longer serving you. Ask for help in releasing these things so that you can make yourselves more available to the Holy Spirit. And, as you meet with your small groups, if you feel comfortable sharing, please do. I bet you will find that you have more in common with one another than you realized - even in this.

Blessings to you this week, Amie