

Going Deeper - Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide
Reimagine: A New Normal Series - Week 6
May 31, 2020



It's 4:30 in the morning. I have been awake for about 2 hours and, not to brag, but my house is spotless. My laundry has been put away, the junk mail recycled, all the dishes are cozy in their cupboards, even the dog got a bath this week. Honestly, the only reason I've accomplished this enormous feat of housekeeping is I've been desperately trying to avoid all my news feeds. First a pandemic and a quarantine (still ongoing), then there was word of murder hornets, and now there is rioting, civil unrest, and more oppression has been exposed at the core of our justice system - the people who are tasked with protecting us are killing us.

How appropriate that our discipline this week is attentiveness. As Pastor Bill said, this has everything to do with the spiritually formed life: Paying attention to not only what God is doing in us, but also through us, and in the world around us. As I look around at the state of things, I am overwhelmed. I am not sure what to say. But I do know that I need to be awake for it. I need to be paying attention to all of it. Because God wastes nothing. The Message version of Ephesians 5:14-16 says it well: "So watch your step. Use your head. Make the most of every chance you get. These are desperate times." Desperate indeed. If you've been learning new vocabulary words this week like, "white fragility" or "systemic oppression," you are not alone. If you are finding yourself in the midst of difficult conversations, uncomfortable conversations, you are not alone. If you are at a loss as to how to respond in the wake of rage, injustice, rioting, looting, and confusing/condemning facebook stories, you are not alone. But, the trick is to pay attention. This is the goal of the life Jesus lived, the life He invites us into, the life that is found when we work from a place of rest and awareness. And, right now, at this moment in history, we have a unique opportunity to find the clarity that only God can give. Collective Church, this could be our *Kairos* moment. Blaise Pascal said, "Inattention is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life."

There is a tool we use in counseling to help ourselves and our clients begin to understand the journey of our cultural identity. There are several tools. This one is specifically describing those who identify racially as White. This is Sue & Sue's Seven Step Process - of white racial identity development (2016).

1. **Naivete Phase:** usually a short phase of racial unawareness.
2. **Conformity Phase:** Still unaware of ourselves as a racial being but we firmly believe in the universality of values and norms that govern behavior.
3. **Dissonance Phase:** This happens when we are forced to deal with inconsistencies, or experiences at odds with our denial.
4. **Resistance and Immersion Phase:** When we begin to question and challenge our own racism for the first time.
5. **Introspective Phase:** We are less motivated by guilt and defensiveness as we accept our "whiteness" and seek to redefine our identity and that of our social sphere.
6. **Integrative Awareness Phase:** Characterized by finally understanding ourselves as racial beings, having an awareness of the sociopolitical influences regarding racism, appreciating racial/cultural diversity, and becoming more committed to eradicating oppression.
7. **Commitment to Antiracist Action Phase:** This is about standing up and taking action on behalf of the oppressed.

This is a process, and we are messy, distractible humans on a journey. The important thing to keep in mind is that if you can locate yourself in one of these steps and begin to understand your own journey more clearly, you can begin to understand that we are not all on the same step at the same time. Though it would be so much easier if we were! Hence, counseling.

Maybe this Spiritual discipline of attentiveness is about extending ourselves (and others) the grace to be where we are, setting aside "usefulness" in order to become all that God intended.

So Consider:

1. Where would you locate yourself in the 7-step model and does that help you understand yourself and what's happening in our world a little more clearly? How so?
2. What has been distracting for you? Where would you like to be focusing your attention this week?
3. What steps have you taken to slow down, refocus, and pay attention during the past few weeks/months?

Take Action:

The challenge over the past few weeks has been to slow down, focus our attention on God, and learn to live at a sustainable pace so that we are more aware of His presence and activity in us and around us. So, this week, let's pay

attention to what God is setting before us and calling us into. It could be a refocus of our work priorities, it could be to reorient our family relationships, it could be a broader vision of social action. What is God uniquely preparing you for?

Peace to you this week, Amie