

Excitement of Routine

Objective: To learn how to find excitement in our daily routines.

References: Holy Scripture

Theme Verse: But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. *Isaiah 40:31*

Dictionary definition: Routine - “An unvarying or habitual method or procedure”

Something we do day in, and day out:

- Work
- Marriage and Family
- Home
- Prayer

Acts 17:21

For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

We can clearly see that we have a desire for newness. We get bored easily from things that have been normal for a “long” time, and unfortunately even these new things, once we do them for a while, become old and are not as entertaining or exciting as they used to be at the beginning.

One interesting thing about routine though, despite how we might feel about it, is that it is essential to any accomplishment. Absolutely nothing worthwhile in life has occurred just once.

All great accomplishments in life come as a result of stable, consistent work. “Rome was not built in a day.” A career is built with days, weeks, months, and years of education and commitment. Constructing a building can take years of consistent, routine, slow work. Building relationships takes routine work, sometimes unpleasant work.

Ecclesiastes 1:9

That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.

1 John 2:7

Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning.

There is no new commandment...no new technique, doctrine, or principle. The problem is not with the content, because as the Bible said there is no new commandment, but only the old commandment which we have heard all along...the problem is that the words hit our deaf ears and do not produce any fruit...we stare at our spiritual plant and it looks the same from year to year and we grow weary of waiting for a change...we want to see something new. We don't realize that the newness comes not from hearing new words, but putting into practice the words we DO hear. Reaching ever deeper levels of obedience and repentance produces new fruits.

Dictionary definition: Excited - Having great enthusiasm; Being in a state of higher energy

Shouldn't our spiritual lives be equally exciting, filling us with joy, and attracting us closer to God? The answer is a resounding YES to both questions. We should feel true joy and delight in everything we do. We should feel enraptured with our love for God and excited about our relationship with Him. But this excitement is the result of being close to God and seeking Him, not our motivation to do so. In other words, being close to God brings excitement, but excitement should not be our catalyst for moving toward God.

Unfortunately many Christians have this backwards. They start on their spiritual journey with excitement, big ideas, big plans, reforms, suggestions, love, desire to learn, etc...they FEEL strongly about God and seeking Him. This is great! But is that all there is? Where is the depth? These Christians, moved by their emotion, will work joyfully...until problems occur. Setbacks turn excitement into disappointments and youthful energy into fatigue. What felt natural and enjoyable has now become routine, boring, and a laborious chore. The fire is not there any more, the passion has evaporated...and they give up returning to their old life since they feel they have hit a dead-end.

So how can we be excited in the midst of the routine? How can we both do the work necessary to succeed in our lives, but not getting bored or weary?

1. The focus has to be on the goal

Remember that the goal is to be Christ-like, not to experience an emotional high. Don't focus too much on how you feel, but more on what you do. Don't feel discouraged when you see other people around you apparently feeling more joy when they pray, or have a greater desire than you. First of all, it is impossible to look inside their heart and really know the truth, and second of all this does not matter. When we stand before God in judgment, he will not ask us how we felt when we prayed, but will ask us if we prayed with sincerity.

Do everything with sincerity, even if you don't feel that it is benefitting you in any way. As I walk closer to the fire, I don't necessary feel any change in heat from day to day, but over the long term I will be warmer...look towards the goal.

When setbacks come (and they will come), don't be de-railed by them. Remember:

1 Peter 5:8

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

The devil does not want you to pray and will try to distract you, make you feel that it is unimportant, or that no amount of prayer could possibly change you...don't believe the lie. "Be sober, be vigilant."

2. Adopt a spiritual discipline

A spiritual discipline is a set of spiritual activities that you and your spiritual father have set for yourself to do every day. This is different for each person and depends on your spiritual level. Do not determine this on your own without speaking to your spiritual father as you need to be accountable for this work.

A spiritual discipline is something that you cannot compromise. Just like you cannot go a day without eating, you cannot go a day without practicing your spiritual discipline. It is your boss, and you must obey it.

3. Work at a steady pace – don't work too fast or too slow

Emotions have a way of driving us to the extremes. Learning and practicing spiritual disciplines come gradually. We cannot do it all in a day, and we cannot put it off every day and expect any kind of growth. It requires consistent work each day.

Emotional passion might prompt us to want to do it all too fast which will lead to failure and disappointment.

Emotional apathy might prevent us from doing anything at all.

Routine solves both these problems. Not too fast, and not too slow. We have already determined what our spiritual discipline should be, and so we are able to be consistent in our growth and practice.

If we prayed only when we felt like praying, our prayers will be few indeed because most of the time we will not feel the desire...but if we pray consistently, we will find that we desire to pray much more often.

4. Be patient

Galatians 6:9

And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

Notice that it says we should not grow weary “doing” good. It says nothing about how we feel... We must master our emotions and learn to use them to our advantage, instead of submitting to them.

Our spiritual warfare lasts our entire lives. We are on the battlefield this whole time. If we slack and are not alert of the movements of the enemy at any time, we will be ambushed. The Enemy will actually wait until we are the most self-confident, and slack to attack.

5. Understand the source of newness

So does that mean that we are going to be stuck in the same patterns over and over again? No...although many of the spiritual disciplines we perform are the same, the fruit that comes out of our toil is quite new...a farmer tills and waters the ground over and over, but each time a new crop grows.

Ezekiel 36:26

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

This is something GOD does, not something we can do...This amazing promise happens from the spiritual routines that we follow day in and day out...what we do is so little, but what God gives is so much.

Romans 6:4

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

God tells us that we walk in newness everyday...through the grace of the Holy Spirit, we have unlimited potential. We can grow towards God with no limit.

Romans 7:6

But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

Conclusion

Many good Christians become frustrated in their lives by their apparent lack of passion. They go through life feeling that something is missing...why don't I feel the love for God and desire to obey His commandments? Often the answer is a lack of routine. They want to be excited about God before working to seek Him...they don't realize they need to first seek Him and then they will be granted the excitement they desire.

The excitement is a gift God gives us, but it is not required. We become close to God through a process of baptism, repenting, putting off the old man, not being conformed to the world, etc. If we did all this consistently in our lives we would have achieved the life God wanted...even if we felt no emotion in the entire process. Instead, God gives the amazing gift of emotion to help encourage us on our way and give us an indication of our progress...but emotions cannot be trusted. They are a double-edged sword...they can catalyze us to action, but also keep us mired in apathy. By living a disciplined life of consistent spiritual discipline we will be granted true holiness AND a healthy emotional life that is passionate about God.

Activities/Discussion Points

1. What are some activities that you enjoy doing to break the routine?
2. What are some spiritual activities we can engage in to refresh our relationship with God?