

God gives us two lives, one physical and one spiritual.

As humans we are wired for the physical life. Things that keep us alive are automatic. For example, our hearts beat, and our lungs breathe without thought. We are well equipped to satisfy our hunger by growing, hunting, or searching for food. When we are threatened, we have a fight or flight instinct that helps us survive.

The spiritual life, on the other hand is less intuitive, and comes to us through a process of evangelization focused on the person of Jesus Christ. Our second reading says, "There is one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, who gave himself as ransom for all." Jesus actively works with us, through the Holy Spirit, to give life to our spiritual life and as John 10:10 says, "In abundance." During Jesus' ministry He focused on teaching us to navigate the spiritual life and today we read Luke's Gospel as Christ's attempts to uncover the mysteries of the spiritual life.

For context, in the previous chapter the Pharisees and scribes complain to Jesus, saying, "He welcomes sinners and eats with them." In response, Jesus tells the parable of the lost sheep saying, "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than 99 who have no need for repentance. So, His mission is to seek us out when we stray in our spiritual life. He emphasizes the importance of taking action to keep our spiritual life on track and continues with parables that tie overcoming physical hardships to overcoming spiritual battles.

The next parable is about the woman with 10 coins who is distraught about losing one of them. Jesus simply says, of course, anyone would take action to find the lost coin and celebrate when it is found. He implies that our spiritual journey is much more important, and we should stop everything and get back on track when we lose our way.

This message goes even deeper with the parable about the prodigal son. After he burns through his inheritance and finds himself destitute, the prodigal son also takes action to return to his Father and shore up his physical life by working for him as a servant. Along the way he learns some spiritual lessons about humility and mercy.

This brings us to today's parable about the dishonest steward. He too is faced with a threat to his physical wellbeing after he squanders his master's property and is in the process of being fired from his post. He quickly takes action, relieving some of the debt owed to his master and making friends in the process. He also considers the future and asks the debtors to modify their own promissory notes ensuring they won't expose him and thereby themselves at a later time.

In spite of his continued dishonesty, the master commends the steward for acting prudently. The word "prudent" implies, "careful consideration for the future." Jesus wants us to think about the future, the life beyond our life on earth. We believe that his commendation from the master is a form of "begrudging admiration." It's like a police detective commending the genius of a thief who steals \$100M from a high security vault and leaves no clues, but the chief does not admonish the crime. The message for us is to be aware of our spiritual life, like the steward is aware of how his actions impact his physical life and take action to restore it before it is too late.

So, how do we monitor the state of our spiritual life? Saint Augustine in his book confessions says, "You have made us for yourself O, Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." Our spiritual heart is at the center of our spiritual life, just like our physical heart is critical to our physical life. When our physical heart seems out of sorts, we miss a beat, or feel something abnormal, we call our cardiologist to diagnose the issue.

We need to pay the same attention to our spiritual hearts as well, so through them we maintain a healthy relationship with God to pump us full of grace, mercy, and love. We need to exercise our spiritual hearts with prayer, fasting, and humble works of service to grow our hearts and prepare ourselves for meeting our maker. At times we may need a heart monitor, a spouse or a friend to provide feedback on how our spiritual life is progressing. Like the characters in the parables, we need to recognize our spiritual health and take action to stay on course.

What advice does Jesus give to keep our spiritual lives healthy? He gives us two commandments, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind and love your neighbor as yourself."

Peter Kreeft describes this as the three levels of reality. There is God, who is infinitely great, there are people, made in God's image, but infinitely less than God, and there are things, all the things money can buy. Our spiritual life is focused on worshiping God, loving people, and using things. First, we must worship God, not ourselves or each other, or things. Second, we must love people and use things, not love things and use people. And finally, we must use things as enterprisingly and cleverly and responsibly as we can, as a means to those two infinitely more important ends, loving God and loving our neighbor.

Let's start this new week with a focus on our spiritual life and takes steps to objectively evaluate where we stand and take action to let Christ into our hearts to live life more abundantly through his Holy Spirit.