

The Full Self (part 2)

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Be Active, Not Passive

Romans 12:11 says, *“Not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”* Also notice 1 Peter 4:10-11, *“Employ it in serving one another... whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies.”* *“We often let other people do our living and our thinking for us. The preacher does our Bible study, the media does our political thinking, and our favorite sports teams do the exercise... From watching television to listening to a sermon, the primary goal of the empty self is be entertained. Holidays used to be considered ‘holy days’, a valuable change of pace in which play... and recreation refreshed our souls. Now we have vacation, which is derived from the word vacate, and that is what the empty self does: vacates its normal life to be amused, often returning to normal life more exhausted than when it left. Television, movies, and video games are major culprits in creating passivity in life. While we believe there is nothing inherently wrong with any of these media, the amount of time that is spent indulging in them is a problem. Studies indicate that the amount of television viewing in America leads to mental passivity, reduces motivation and the ability to stick with something, negativity affects reading skills (especially those needed for higher-level mental comprehension), weakens the ability to listen and stay focused, and encourages overall passive withdrawal from life. As we become intertwined with celebrities and sports figures, we too often cease to have rich and full lives of our own and begin too much to live our lives through others”* (Moreland and Matlock, pp. 76-77).

- The Bible will never be as engaging as it is when you study it for yourself (Acts 17:11, 1 Timothy 4:13-16, 2 Timothy 3:14-17).
- Truth will never be as easy to apply as when you grasp it on your own for the first time.
- Serving others will never fulfill you as long as you do it vicariously, or with monetary help alone.
- Our children will resent us and disrespect us if we allow them to be raised by television and the internet (Colossians 3:21, Ephesians 6:4).
- Our marriages fall apart when we become passive participants in them. When you stop talking about what truly moves you, affects you, or gives you passion, your marriage becomes nothing more than a superficial relationship. When “I need...” is replaced by “I don’t care...” you have become passive.

Examine Your Inward Life

2 Corinthians 13:5; *“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves...”* 1 Corinthians 11:28; *“But let a man examine himself.”* 2 Corinthians 7:1; *“Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit.”* It used to be that the self was a description of one’s character, beliefs, and thoughts. However, in the last several decades the definition of self has shifted to what a person looks like, what one does for a living, where a person lives. “Likeability” is a major factor in political

campaigns, and the content of their ideas is de-emphasized. We have gone from defining ourselves by what is meaningful to what is superficial. When one asks you, "What kind of person are you?", how far down the list is the phrase "I am a Christian"? Nobody really knows anybody today.

Even worse, we have trained ourselves to deal with our problems on a skin-deep level. Many of us try to improve our world by fixing physical or transitory things. When we are depressed, we blame it on chemical problems, not spiritual ones. When we are longing for romance, we turn to pornography as an easy answer. When we want to find God, we attend ridiculous New Age workshops that teach nothing more than yoga. When we are angry in our relationships, we change the subject. When our marriages fall apart, we change the scenery. When our kids hate us, we buy them things. Until we change the interior self, the spirit, we are only coming up with superficial solutions to supremely spiritual problems. *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect"* (Romans 12:2). *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life"* (John 6:63). *"For life is more than food, and the body than clothing"* (Luke 12:23).