

EXTRA! from the Creek

is a CreekWeb Internet Ministry of
the Church at Dyers Creek

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This week we're passing along to you
a page from a

Pilgrim's Journal

Distraction from Introspection

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Perhaps the greatest epiphany of the depth of my own selfishness occurred while talking to Joy a few years back about her kidney stones. After having endured such an excruciating experience, she explained to me the intensity of her pain by saying that the kidney stones were far more severe than even childbirth—something she had done twice. At that moment, did I sympathize with her painful experience? Did I try to think about what it took to endure what she'd been through? Not really. The first thought that entered my mind was, *What? More painful than childbirth? As a man I can't give birth, but I could suffer the pain of kidney stones! Oh no!*

So it is when pain is involved we seem only to think of ourselves. On the other hand, when the discussion of personal faults is involved we seem only to think of others' need to change. After a particularly abrasive Sunday sermon on how Christians ought to behave, Lyle jokingly told me, "Hey, you sure told *them* today!" (Yes, he was just joking! Lyle knows that sermon was for every single one of us—the preacher included!) Still, what he was joking about becomes a critical problem for the person who lacks self-introspection. I never cease to be amazed at how some of us can do so little self-introspection that we can be instrumental in something coming apart at the seams and assume no personal responsibility for the outcome—blaming the disintegration on anyone and everyone other than ourselves.

Indeed, if we're not careful, others' lack of introspection can become a distraction for our own introspection. Let me explain. As I read the Bible or listen to a sermon, I can get so distracted by someone else's lack of introspection that I fail to be introspective myself. And by so doing, I become more and more like

that person who always applies the message to someone else and never himself, who frankly just doesn't get it, who not only misses the clue bus but also fails to maneuver himself in the general direction of the bus stop! How does it happen? Just like this: I read a strongly instructive line or two in a Bible study and think to myself, *Aha! That's a weakness that so-and-so has and needs to work on.* And because I do, I completely miss that those lines are addressing a weakness in my own life – all because I'm concentrating on how I hope those lines will break through to that non-introspective person. And alas, it does go right over their head – once again! And because I'm distracted from being introspective myself, it goes over mine as well.

And so we both miss the bus. And so we both grow more naïve. And so we both miss a prime opportunity to get better. Myself, I have to let a particular message first and foremost speak to me and hope that it will somehow influence the thinking and attitude and life of that other person – whether or not, in actuality, it ever will.

God, help all of us, that when we're studying Your Word or listening to godly instruction, we concentrate on how to apply its message in our own lives – or collectively in the life of your whole church. And rather than thinking, *I sure hope so-and-so heard that, help us to think instead, Thank you, Lord, for showing me how I have been wrong. Please help me to become better.*

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