**The Bitterroot Collegium**

Summer 2020

John Eldredge’s *Get Your Life Back:*

*Everyday Practices for a World Gone Mad*

Practical Theology

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 The purpose of “The Bitterroot Collegium” is to provide a comprehensive program of Christian education that equips both the hearts and minds of Christian men and women to be more faithful and fruitful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Program Details**

Classes will meet for an hour per week and will generally continue from 4-8 weeks, sometimes longer, depending upon the topic. Topics/themes will draw from the 4 theological “food groups” including:

1. Biblical Theology
2. Historical Theology
3. Systematic Theology
4. Practical Theology

Classes will alternate between the “food groups,” while topics will be chosen based on the needs and interests of the Collegium, as well as the vision, values and mission of Mosaic Church.

***Class Schedule***

24 May - *The Rescue & the One Minute Pause*

 Reading: Get Your Life Back, Intro & Chapter 1

 Video Teaching: The One Minute Pause

 Focus Questions: 1) Describe your life before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. What changed?

 2) Why is a fast-paced life, so hard on the human soul, long term?

 3) How has technology been a helpful tool to you? How has it been a taskmaster?

 4) Technology, in general, has been causing Americans to lose their ability to focus &

 pay attention? Has this also been true for you? Give examples?

 5) Why is taking the “One Minute Pause” so spiritually helpful to do each day?

31 May - *Benevolent Detachment*

 Reading: Get Your Life Back, Chapter 2

 Focus Questions: 1) How has nature and physical geography influenced your life? How has it influenced

 you spiritually?

 2) Have you ever noticed that Jesus sometimes “ditched” people? (cf. Mk. 1:35-38) How can getting away from the constant demands and needs of others be spiritually helpful?

 3) In what ways can our souls become “junk drawers?” Give personal examples. How can

 you move from “enmeshment” to a healthier “detachment?

 4) “Everyone has a backpack.” What do you currently need to unpack and give to Jesus?

 5) What problems have arisen with the obliteration of social boundaries?

7 June - *Drinking Beauty*

 Reading: Get Your Life Back, Chapter 3

 Focus Questions: 1) Our souls need beauty to heal and flourish. Why do you suppose that this is rarely talked

 about in Christian discipleship? Giving examples . . . what “beautiful things” have been

 spiritually helpful to you?

 2) Why do you suppose people send flowers to hospital rooms or to funerals?

 3) Why do you think that urban cathedrals and churches have been a spiritual refuge for

 people for centuries?

 4) As Americans, we are blessed with some of the finest national parks and monuments in

 the world. Have you been to any? If so, what beauties did they reveal to your soul?

 5) How can you receive the gift of beauty and let it minister to your soul?

14 June - *Simple Unplugging*

 Reading: Get Your Life Back, Chapter 4

 Video Teaching: Simple Unplugging

 Focus Questions: 1) “Our attention is constantly being taken hostage.” Why & how are internet and T.V.

 advertisements, a hindrance to the graces of beauty and benevolent detachment in

 your life?

 2) Why do you suppose that social media use has been medically linked to increased

 depression and anxiety?

 3) What have you been reading lately? When was the last time you sat down and read a

 book? Do you find yourself reading less than you used to? If so, why?

 4) How is social media and technology the new “tower of Babel” according to Eldredge?

 5) What suggestions does Eldredge give regarding technology?

21 June - *Kindness Toward Ourselves*

 Reading: Get Your Life Back, Chapter 5

 Focus Questions: 1) Are you kind to yourself? How is this part and parcel of Jesus’ Great Commandment?

 2) How have you experienced the kindness and gentleness of God in your life?

 3) How are unspoken and unrealistic expectations of our culture and society harmfully

 shaping our spiritual expectations?

 4) “Life is built on the dailies, not the fantastic” What little things build a beautiful life?

 5) How is pace of life a good spiritual barometer? What are you demanding of yourself?

28 June - *Allowing for Transitions*

 Reading: Get Your Life Back, Chapter 6

 Focus Questions: 1) Have you ever travelled by plane internationally? In what ways does “travel by plane like

 leaving a little bit of your soul behind?”

 2) Scan the gospels. Have you ever noticed all of the “in between times,” when Jesus and His

 disciples were travelling from one town to another? What do you discover?

 3) Do you allow transitions in your life or do you just blast from thing to thing? Examples?

 4) Technology was supposed to make our lives easier. In what ways has it complicated them?

 5) How can you create space in your life for transitions? How can you be kinder to yourself?

5 July -  *Get Outside*

 Reading: Get Your Life Back, Chapter 7

 Video Teaching: Get Outside

 Focus Questions: 1) The average person now spends 93% of their life indoors. How is this a “catastrophe” and

 the “final nail in the coffin for the human soul?”

 2) How have your experienced God in His natural creation? Why has this been so spiritually

 important for you?

 3) How has natural beauty affected you? Give examples of how it has healed and restored

 you?

 4) What do the Scriptures (particularly the Psalms) say about nature?

 5) This week get outside more, touch nature & encounter weather. What did you learn?

12 July - *Remembering Who You Love*

 Reading: Get Your Life Back, Chapter 8

 Focus Questions: 1) “Life has a way of eroding our confidence in the goodness of God.” In what specific ways

 has this happened in your life?

 2) In what ways is “God’s outpouring of Himself ‘conditional?’” What is required for

 intimacy with God?

 3) What are the things you love? How can these things be like a “path back home?”

 4) Why is it so important to also love God during times and seasons of suffering?

 5) Begin by saying, “God is the creator of everything I love.” What does the repetition

 of that truth do for your heart and your mind?

19 July - *Interlude & Surrendering the Self Life*

 Reading: Get Your Life Back, Chapter 9

 Focus Questions: 1) As an interlude, return to the one minute pause. Repeat those words out loud, while

 lingering over them. Are you working the one minute pause into your daily life?

 2) What is envy? Why was the older brother in the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15,

 a good example of the “deadly sin” of envy.

 3) There is a direct link between the rise of envy and depression with the increased use of

 social media; especially Facebook. Why do you suppose that is? Why are comparisons

 with others, so dangerous for our walk with God?

 4) We now live in a “culture of the offended Self.” Give examples.

 5) How can we thwart the Self through admiration and gratitude?

26 July - *Caring for the Neglected Places in Your Soul*

 Reading: Get Your Life Back, Chapter 10

 Video Teaching: Caring for the Neglected Places

 Focus Questions: 1) Do you or have you ever “journaled?” If so, how have you found that to be a helpful

 spiritual discipline for your life?

 2) Why do we avoid or run from “huge tracts of our soul?” What areas have you avoided

 in your walk with God? Is God calling you to bring back a part of your heart or life back

 to Him?

 3) Your losses and pain matter to God. Do you give yourself the space and time you need to

 grieve and heal after a difficult loss? What do you think about Eldredge’s idea of a “3

 month margin?

 4) Again, what is the difference between relief and restoration? What are your “relief” items?

 5) Is there a loss that you haven’t fully mourned? How can you invite Jesus into that loss?

2 Aug. - *Interlude & The Gifts of Memory*

 Reading: Get Your Life Back, Chapter 11

 Focus Questions: 1) During the interlude, specifically ask Jesus for more of His life in you. How can this also

 become part of your daily one minute pauses?

 2) Is there a special place that you regularly return to over time? How has that place grown

 richer to you? How has it become a “geographical journal of stories” for you?

 3) Why did God create our faculties of memory? Why are they so important in our spiritual

 lives?

 4) Why is forgetfulness actually a form of spiritual pandemic?

 5) What are your “stones of remembrance” that turns your mind back to the grace of God?

9 Aug. - *Believe*

 Reading: Get Your Life Back, Chapter 12

 Focus Questions: 1) Why is it important not to let our feelings define our experience(s) with God?

 2) In what ways is belief in God a choice and a practice, rather than a feeling?

 3) Why is it important not to shift belief onto your current awareness of God?

 4) How can the one minute pause, beauty, memory and unplugging help us to practice

 belief?

 5) How can the daily recitation of creeds or the Lord’s prayer help to practice belief?

16 Aug. - *The Hidden Life of God in You*

 Reading: Get Your Life Back, Chapter 13

 Video Teaching: The Hidden Life of God in You

 Focus Questions: 1) How are forests a good and practical example of our close and interconnectedness with

 God?

 2) “We are like cut flowers, we need more than a vase, we need to be grafted onto a vine.”

 How does the vine-branch imagery of John 15, remind us of our need for union with

 Jesus?

 3) Why does God sometimes put us in circumstances that are far beyond our natural

 capabilities?

 4) What is the primary goal of the Enemy and his puppet; the world?

 5) What steps does Eldredge offer for the healing of our union with God?

23 Aug. - *The Simple Daily Things*

 Reading: Get Your Life Back, Chapter 14

 Video Teaching: The Simple Daily Things

 Focus Questions: 1) What happens to you when your soul is “gloved” or “cocooned” in an artificial world?

 2) How is our capacity for relationships a good gauge of our current spiritual life? And what

 are some warning signs?

 3) What daily routines of geniuses does Eldredge offer? How is the internet like junk food?

 4) How is your current ability to hope and dream? Why must we ruthlessly eliminate hurry

 from our lives?

 5) Most people are losing the war of attrition. What suggestions does Eldredge offer?

***Class Notes:***