

Spring Cleaning

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Today, March 20, 2011 is the official first day of Spring. Yay! While I find it difficult to say which season is my favorite, I certainly do love Spring. Unfortunately, here in San Antonio, Spring is not as dramatic as it is in the places that have four true, distinct, seasons. Growing up in Birmingham, I enjoyed winter. I love cold weather. I love snow. But when it came time for Spring, there was nothing quite like watching the redbud trees begin to produce their purplish buds, the daffodils start to bloom, the dogwood trees (both white and pink) put out its flowers, and the birds begin to sing their chorus. And there was such a dramatic difference between Winter and Spring that it really made you appreciate Spring that much more.

When Spring comes, we tend to get a renewed energy. The world is new and fresh again. With the warmer weather, we get a desire to work on some projects that weren't as feasible during the colder weather. A lot of people use this time for some deep spring cleaning. It's time to clean all those places of the house that don't get cleaned on a weekly or even monthly basis. We move furniture and clean behind it. We clean the windows, dust the baseboards, clean out closets and garages. Spring cleaning = deep cleaning.

Spring cleaning is also a good idea for our spiritual house. It's a good time to examine everything about our spiritual life and see what needs fixing.

It doesn't take long for a house that is neglected to become filthy and in a state of disrepair, especially when there are kids that live in the house. Such is the case with our spiritual life. When neglected, they too will become filthy and in a state of disrepair. The influence of the world takes its toll, bringing in trash and filth that doesn't belong in a house that God desires to be pure and holy. Peter tells us to be "*obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy'*" (1 Pet. 1:14-16).

Of course, this requires a daily effort to keep our lives holy, but there are times that we need to do a deep cleaning. There are times that we need to give a thorough examination of our thoughts, our practices, our beliefs, and hold it up to the perfect standard of the example of Jesus and his word.

Spring cleaning is a labor intensive process. It takes a lot of elbow grease as well as a good amount of resolve to see the process through. The same is true with a spring cleaning of our spiritual lives. The following are some suggestions for how to go about a spiritual spring cleaning.

Brainstorm. Sit down with a piece of paper and a pen and write down everything that you come up with that needs improvement. Write down the spiritual projects you need to begin.

Be ruthless. Be hard on yourself. Don't pull any punches or try to whitewash it. If you recognize an area that needs improvement, admit it, write it down, and commit to making the necessary changes.

Find someone else to help with the examination process. Two pairs of eyes are better than one. It is very likely that we aren't seeing everything. Others can see areas of our life that need improvement that we don't see or aren't willing to see. If you're married, your spouse is the obvious choice to help you with this. Parents or siblings are also another good choice. Close friends will also likely help. Tell them to also be ruthless and not whitewash anything.

Don't procrastinate. Spring cleaning isn't necessarily easy or fun. We don't like admitting that we're not perfect or that there is an area that really needs addressing in our life. But the longer you put it off, the harder it will be. Plus, the more likely it will be that it never gets done. That means it will just get worse and worse. The spiritual house will get dirtier and dirtier. Pretending that there is nothing that needs correcting doesn't make the problem go away.

Be honest. It won't do us any good to kid ourselves or to deny the reality of our spiritual condition. It's imperative that we rid ourselves of any prejudice and selfish ambitions, being willing to give up anything in our life that will keep us from being found acceptable in God's eyes.

Use the right cleaner. Have you seen how many commercials there are for cleaning supplies? Each one says that it's the best. Ask various people which they think is the best and you'll get numerous answers. But when it comes to the cleaner that cleanses our spiritual lives, there is no competition. The blood of Jesus can cleanse even the toughest stains. But we can limit its efficacy. If we aren't walking in the light as He is in the light, then His blood can't cleanse us from all sin (1 John 1:7). To make sure we're walking in the light, we need to do some spring cleaning and eliminate whatever is causing us to walk in the darkness instead of the light.

We all have dirty houses from time to time that need a thorough cleaning. We also all have dirty spiritual lives from time to time that need a thorough cleaning. Let's roll up our sleeves and get to work cleaning up whatever is amiss. Let's make our bodies a beautiful, holy, and pure temple (1 Cor. 6:19).