

Series (Oct. 11 - Nov. 22): *Battles from the Boardroom of the Soul* by Colin S. Smith

Series Theme Verse: “Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and let everything in me bless His holy name!

Let my whole being bless the Lord and never forget all His good deeds!” -Psalm 103:1-2

Sun., Oct. 11: Indoor worship

Memory Verse: “Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and let everything in me bless His holy name! Let my whole being bless the Lord and never forget all his good deeds!” -Psalm 103:1-2

Sunday Message: Battle from the Boardroom of the Soul #1 “Avoiding a Shallow Life”

Scripture: Psalm 115:4-8

Text: Ezekiel 36:26-27 “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove your stony heart and replace it with a living one, and I will give you my spirit so that you may walk according to my ways.”

Blurb: There’s a battle going on in the boardroom of your soul. This week we meet the six members of the board. Their names are Mind, Heart, Will, Conscience, Memory and Imagination. They meet in secret to hammer out your thoughts, decisions and actions. Yet they are each motivated by self-interest. This Sunday we’ll learn how a new chairperson can bring your dysfunctional soul into alignment.

OPENING MUSIC: *Your Love Defends Me* -Sanctify

WELCOME -Pastor David

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

“Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and let everything in me bless His holy name! Let my whole being bless the Lord and never forget all His good deeds!” -Psalm 103:1-2

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

Oh, the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus

Stronger

All I Have Is Christ

Worship Prayer -Pastor Andrew

SCRIPTURE READING: Psalm 115:1-8 (CEB) -Reader: Michael Berglund

King David writes Psalm 115 as a poem about how earthly idols cannot compare to the true God. Verses 1 through eight:

1 Not to us, Lord, not to us—no, but to your own name give glory because of your loyal love and faithfulness!

2 Why do the nations say, “Where’s their God now?”

3 Our God is in heaven—He can do whatever He wants!

4 Their idols are just silver and gold—things made by human hands.

5 They have mouths, but they can’t speak. They have eyes, but they can’t see.

6 They have ears, but they can’t hear. They have noses, but they can’t smell.

7 They have hands, but they can’t feel. They have feet, but they can’t walk.

They can’t even make a noise in their throats!

8 The people who made these idols and all who trust in them will become just like them!

GENERATIONAL BRIDGE: “Song for All Ages: Love the Lord” - Pastor Andrew

MESSAGE: Battle from the Boardroom of the Soul #1 “Avoiding a Shallow Life”

PP#1: Battle from the Boardroom of the Soul: Avoiding a Shallow Life

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove your stony heart and replace it with a living one, and I will give you my spirit so that you may walk according to my ways.” -Ezekiel 36:26-27

Today we start a new message series. We’re taking a journey to a place we normally don’t go. We travel *inward*, going into ourselves. We normally don’t do this, or at least very deeply. But as we go inward, into our thinking, into our hearts, into our souls, we have to face the core of who we are. And as soon as we start inward, we start overhearing competing voices, strong vested interests that are vying for attention, and there is chaos in the place where we make our decisions. So, this message *series* is “Battle from the Boardroom of the Soul.” Today’s message is “Avoiding a Shallow Life.” Ezekiel 36:26-27 says, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove your stony heart and replace it with a living one, and I will give you my spirit so that you may walk according to my ways.”

Most of us don’t journey enough into our souls. We stay more on the surface, in the moment. Surfing and Facebook and TikTok, show binging, and looking at endless memes keeps us from thinking too deeply about stuff, especially about our own actions and words and decisions.

One of the key marks of a disciple of Jesus is laying open our souls before God. We are honest about who we are and what we do. We invite the Holy Spirit routinely to take us on an inward path, to throw open the doors of our hearts and expose them to God. We are on paths of holiness, striving toward perfection, and we can only do that by truly knowing ourselves—owning up to that—and asking for God to remake us as He intends us to be. And that requires self reflection.

At creation God made people by shaping the dirt into the form of a body, but then, God gives people life by breathing His breath into them. This is how we are made in God’s own image. And this breath of God that animates us, this is our souls.

PP#2: *Image of DC Talk’s song In the Light, and the lyric “What’s going on inside me?”*

Our souls are what make us who we are. And one of the good spiritual disciplines is to rightly prioritize our souls over our bodies, to beware of worldly, physical indulgences that dry up our souls. Jesus asks, “What shall a person give in exchange for his soul?” “What good would it be to gain the whole world but lose your very soul?” (Matthew 16:26)

As disciples of Jesus, we want to know God better. But we cannot know God better if we don’t come to know ourselves better. And we cannot come to know ourselves better unless we get to know God better. They go together. So, as the disciple journeys closer to God, we must also take that inner journey into our own souls.

In DC Talk’s 1995 song “In the Light,” they ask, “What’s going on inside me?” That’s our question for this journey. What’s going on inside?

PP#3: *Image for how the soul can be very different - downcast, grieving, bitter, joyful, etc.*

How would you characterize your soul? If you had to describe it, what would you say about your soul? The Bible describes some souls. Hannah, it says, before she became pregnant, had a bitter

soul. Job, in his grief, it says, had a struggling soul. The Psalms talk about downcast souls, grieving souls, souls in anguish, souls refusing to be comforted. At Gethsemane Jesus said that His soul was “overwhelmed with sorrow.” Simeon told Mary, Jesus’ mother, “A sword will pierce your soul.”

What is your soul like right now? Psalm 23 says that our souls can be revived. It says, “The Lord is my shepherd...He restores my soul.” Psalm 19 says that the Scriptures revive the soul. It says, “My soul finds rest in God alone.” Jesus said, “Come to me all you who are weary, and I will give you rest for your souls.”

When the angel spoke to Mary, she said, “My soul glorifies the Lord.” Her soul was filled with great joy. And our theme verse, Psalm 103, says, “Bless the Lord all my soul, and all within me, praise His name.”

If you open the door to your soul, what do you see? Do you usually avoid doing this? Do you try to keep it as closed as possible? Quick, turn on a sitcom! Look for something on Pinterest.

PP#4: *Image of an empty boardroom with 7 chairs.*

I want to give you an image to help you take that scary inner journey. As you open the door of your soul and step in, it might be helpful to imagine that chaotic place as a boardroom. Envision a large white table with *seven* black executive chairs around. And the characters sitting there are urgently competing for the floor, trying to outdo each other for attention. There are *six* board members.

By the way, this image comes from Pastor Colin S. Smith in Indiana. Six board members. They are Mind, Heart, Will, Conscious, Memory, and Imagination. These are the main competing voices in your soul. And these six meet behind closed doors and hammer out the decisions and attitudes of your life.

Now, I just wanted to point out...that these board members are the product of the author’s imagination and in no way bear any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, especially those sitting on the governing boards of Forest Hills Church, and any similarities is purely coincidental!

Even so, like our church teams, or any other board, the different members contribute differently. Some speak more than others, some carry more weight, some are creative, some more focused on tasks, some care about how others feel, some care about the bottom line. This is also true for the board members of your soul.

PP#5: *Previous image with the chairs labeled: Chair, Mind, Heart, Will, Conscious, Memory, Imagination*

Think of *Mind* with a bulging briefcase, full of information for the meeting. We never know how *Heart* is going to arrive: he may be smiling or frowning, angry, or broken. You can imagine them as either men or women, whichever you are. *Will* has a very strong personal agenda, is quite demanding. He raises his voice too often, with great determination, but sometimes is rather lazy. He usually sits besides Heart, and they often vote together. You see them having coffee together during breaks. And together they sometimes overrule Mind.

Conscious has large briefcase, but hasn’t always read what’s in there. Others wish he had a better grasp so could give clearer guidance. At times he may seem weak, and others can influence him. *Imagination* has wide and darting eyes. He can have insight into a way forward that no one else can see. Yet he often lacks focus. He gets caught up in trivia, and Conscious, from time to time, has had to tell him he’s out of line.

Memory is older; often he lives in the past. He can go on at length about difficulties they've faced before. Yet he can also recollect the dream and purpose of why they doing what they do.

PP#6: *Image of a dysfunctional, fighting board all arguing.*

Each faculty has great potential for both good or evil. But together, debating, they will determine the actions and attitudes, the direction and outcome of your life.

So...upon initial inspection: how is the boardroom of your soul? My guess is that it's a divided board: arguing and going different directions. Perhaps it's embittered, no one listening to Conscience. Heart is miserable. Memory is not talking to Mind. Perhaps it's unruly: Heart and Will assert their right. Will shouts, "I want!" Heart screams, "I feel!"

The next six weeks we're going on a journey of self-examination into the boardroom of your souls. We're going to discover what's going on, and what you can do about it.

PP#7: Psalm 115:1-8 (CEB)

1 Not to us, Lord, not to us—no, but to your own name give glory because of your loyal love and faithfulness!

2 Why do the nations say, "Where's their God now?"

3 Our God is in heaven—He can do whatever He wants!

Today, as we peer into the boardroom from the doorway, above the shouting, I want us to strain to listen to God's word from Psalm 115. Here we move the spotlight that's shining on various board members, shifting from this one to that, and move the light off of the board members and onto God. Psalm 115, starting with verse 1. "Not to us, Lord, not to us—no, but to your own name give glory because of your loyal love and faithfulness! Why do the nations say [to us], 'Where's their God now?' Our God is in heaven—He can do whatever He wants!"

Our God is greater than any other god. All the other gods that we follow, all the other priorities, the other voices, are all idols.

PP#8: Psalm 115:1-8 (CEB)

4 Their idols are just silver and gold—things made by human hands.

5 They have mouths, but they can't speak. They have eyes, but they can't see.

6 They have ears, but they can't hear. They have noses, but they can't smell.

7 They have hands, but they can't feel. They have feet, but they can't walk.

They can't even make a noise in their throats!

8 The people who made these idols and all who trust in them will become just like them!

Verse 4, "Their idols are just silver and gold—things made by human hands. They have mouths, but they can't speak. They have eyes, but they can't see. They have ears, but they can't hear. They have noses, but they can't smell. They have hands, but they can't feel. They have feet, but they can't walk. They can't even make a noise in their throats! The people who made these idols and all who trust in them will become just like them!"

Idols are the things we put in place of God. Verse 4 says that they are made up of the stuff of this world—perhaps stuff that looks beautiful and important. But they are *made by people*! And it says that although they have mouths, they cannot speak, they have eyes but cannot see, ears but can't hear, noses, hands, feet, but cannot move.

And then, in this curious line in verse 8, is a whopping spiritual insight. It says that those who make these idols and put their trust in them, *will become like them*. The previous verses all set this up. Our false priorities, our false gods, they make us lose our capacity to fully live like God intends. When we live for them, we will lose your capacity of spiritual hearing, seeing godly insights, walking in God's ways, tasting and savoring how good the Lord is. This is the long-term affect of putting other priorities above God. It shrinks the capacity of your soul, and *in your soul* is growing discord and unhappiness.

PP#9: *Image for having a heart of stone.*

In Deuteronomy 4, Moses warns the people to not build or follow idols, again saying, “lest you become like them.” But, as we know the story, over and over again they turned away from God and followed idols. In Jeremiah 5:3, the prophet says it has come true! They ignore God's discipline. They feel no remorse. And, he says, “they made faces harder than stone and refused to repent.” They have become like their idols! They have become unresponsive to God's wooing and calling.

Ezekiel says that they have *hearts of stone*—unresponsive, cannot feel God close any more. They have become *hardened* within them. Their only hope is for God to replace their hearts of stone with hearts of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). Your idols aren't harmless interests. They shrink your soul! They lead you to a shallow life. They numb you to God's working in your heart, and make you unable to hear God's voice, speak God's words of life, see with God's eyes, help with God's grace.

Pastimes, interests, priorities, what we pour ourselves into each day, are not harmless choices. When we make them the continued focus of our attention, they become idols. And sin petrifies us! We can't feel our souls! Perhaps, in our broken and difficult relationships, it is our sin that has reduced our ability to respond as we need. Our wrong focus blunts our feelings, makes our minds unable to think clearly and make right decisions, it saps the will, sears the conscience, distorts the memory. The Bible says sin steals and destroys. We become empty inside. *Pride* shrivels the soul's capacity to love God. *Greed* strangles our ability to show compassion. *Lust* erodes our ability to love well. *Anger* makes it so hard to do God's will.

What hope is there for a grid-locked, shriveled soul? Here the Gospel! God says, “I will take your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” Jesus says, “I will ask the Father and He will give you the Counselor, who will be in you, who *will live* in you.” (John 14:16-17)

PP#10: *Image of a board room with all in synergistic alignment with the chair/leader.*

The boardroom of your soul has *seven* chairs. The Chair of the Board's chair most often sits empty. Now and again, each of the other members tries to sit in it; but usually it sits empty. Here's the Gospel message for our dysfunctional souls: When we invite Jesus into our souls, His Holy Spirit comes in and sits in the 7th chair! Disciples make the Holy Spirit the chair of their soul's boardroom.

In this presiding role, the Holy Spirit changes the very dynamic of the board, changes the system. Now all can get into alignment and go the same direction. Mind can get renewed. Heart can be opened and changed. Will can become redirected. Conscience can become educated. Imagination can become focused. And memory can be retrained. A whole new direction begins. You become under new management!

Now, this is not easy, and there are ongoing struggles for priority among the board members, even under new management. But over time, we are changed, from the inside out. The Bible says that believers, those who have the Holy Spirit within, are changed, from one degree of glory to

another (2 Cor. 3:18). Our eyes see more of God. Our ears hear God's whisperings. Our mouths speak words of life. Our hands bring blessing, our feet go to need. Our hearts reach out, loving our neighbors as ourselves.

Sin will make you less, but God will make you more.

PP#11: The Methodist Question:

"How is it with your soul?"

So, next week, with this mental image for what's going on inside, we're heading deeper into boardroom of our souls. So, we need to resist staying shallow and head into deeper waters. To do that, we have a method, as Methodists. Since the first Methodists under John Wesley, Methodists have been using a special question to avoid the shallow life. It's a simple question, but a probing one. Write this down: "How is it with your soul?" Methodists asked this every week.

We ask this of ourselves, as we go deeper inside. We also ask it of each other, calling us to spiritual growth. Our grow groups, that are starting this week, ask this question in one form or another. It's how we Methodists continue to resist becoming like our idols and continue to have God transform our hearts into flesh. I want us, for this upcoming week, to do a "check in" with your soul. Three times a day, ask this question. Perhaps ask it when you wake up, how's your attitude? Are you open to God? Perhaps during your day, while at work. How's your soul doing? Who is calling the shots in your soul's boardroom? And then in the evening, shake off the baggage from the day and rest well with God.

Kids, you can do this, too. Perhaps your question can be, "How do I feel inside?" Or maybe, "Is Jesus in my heart helping me be better?" Whatever your question is, three times a day for the week ahead.

We start right now. So, Methodist, consider, deep down inside, how is it with your soul?
Amen.

CLOSING SONG: *Our God Saves* -Sanctify

ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David

Next week's message: Enlarging the Capacity of Your Heart
Join a grow group! Some are starting this week!

OFFERING: -Pastor David

Please leave your offerings in the box as you leave.

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and let everything in me bless His holy name! Let my whole being bless the Lord and never forget all His good deeds!" -Psalm 103:1-2

BENEDICTION -Pastor David

CLOSING MUSIC -Sanctify