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Living an Examined Life

by Scott Stoner

The unexamined life is not worth living.

—Socrates

During my freshman year of college, I took an introductory class in philosophy as an elective. While I don't remember anything else about that course, there is one quote of Socrates I learned that I have always treasured: "The unexamined life is not worth living."

To positively restate the Greek philosopher's words, taking the time to examine our lives makes our lives fulfilling and worth living. I whole-heartedly agree with this sentiment and believe this wisdom applies not only to individuals, but to couples, families, and organizations, as well. A commitment to regular self-examination is a cornerstone of health and wellness in all aspects of life.

The benefit of taking time for self-examination is also acknowledged by all of the world religions. Every faith tradition has days and seasons that invite followers to focus on self-examination and their commitment to living a renewed life. The season of Lent, for those of us who are Christians, is just such a season. Just as an annual check-up with the doctor is good for one's physical health, Lent provides a yearly check-up for one's emotional and spiritual well-being.

The season of Lent also offers us the time, and thus the opportunity, to strengthen our spiritual well-being through the practice of giving something up, or by taking on a new practice or discipline that will help us to grow. The latter, taking something on, is precisely what we are offering in this devotion as we invite each of us to create a more intentional life when it comes to practicing courage.

Making It Personal: What is your response to Socrates' words, "The unexamined life is not worth living"? As you examine your current level of showing courage in the world, would you describe yourself as a courageous person? Why or why not, and are you satisfied with your answer?