

Tuesday, March 17, 2020

The Courage to Practice Honest Self-Reflection

by Scott Stoner

*If you do not change direction, you may
end up where you are heading.*

—Lao Tzu

When we think of someone who has made a positive change, we typically recall the actions they took. The process of change, though, usually starts well before an outward sign is observable. It's a process that almost always begins with honest self-reflection.

Honest self-reflection is challenging, especially when it involves acknowledging that something is not quite right. The first inkling we get that a change may be needed often comes to us as a “whisper.” It might be a whisper of a health issue, tension in a relationship, a feeling of emptiness, anxiety, or exhaustion.

Perhaps long before she encountered Jesus, the woman at the well had heard a whisper, but rather than honestly facing what it was trying to tell her, found it was easier to ignore or rationalize away. “I don't really thirst for something different. Everything is just fine.”

There are so many ways we can rationalize away the whispers that tell us things are out of balance in our lives. Believing the rationalizations over the whispers relieves us, at least temporarily, of the anxiety of having to practice the courage it takes to make a change. But if the whispers are ignored long enough, they often turn to shouts and then it may be harder for us to make a needed change.

It takes courage to listen to the “whispers” through honest self-reflection, but with practice, we can trust that we are taking the first step in the journey toward life-giving change.

Making It Personal: What is your response to the idea that the process of change starts with honest self-reflection? Can you think of a time when you ignored a whisper in your life? Can you think of a time when you listened to a whisper regarding a change, and then had the courage to make that change? Are you hearing any such whispers in your life right now?