

An Unkempt Heart

Aren't weekends great?! It amuses me when I find myself or hear others slipping into the "It's the weekend, I'm not going to see anybody, so who cares what I look like" mentality. That's where I found myself yesterday. I didn't plan on remaining 'unpresentable' of sorts - it just kind of happened that way. Instead of showering, shaving, etc. I just got dressed, brushed my teeth (this is an essential) & threw a hat on to take my son to school yesterday. It dawned on me on the drive home that I was going to be doing absolutely nothing that day & so I decided that I wasn't going to bother showering or shaving. I have to admit it - it felt great!

I know that I'm not the only one who secretly indulges in remaining hairy, stinky & dirty at times. I've heard more than one person in my life share this sentiment. I remember in school hearing a professor give the highlight of his week-long vacation to the mountains of Colorado. Was it being in the midst of God's beautiful creation? Spending time with his wife & friends? Skiing? No, the highlight of his week was that: "I didn't shave for a week!" Now, before any of you freak out - I *do* plan on cleaning myself today (even though I probably won't see anyone beyond my family again today).

I was thinking about this a little yesterday & reflecting on how this attitude is seen so many times in our spiritual lives. We get tired of the upkeep ... of "cleaning ourselves up" spiritually and making sure that we are presentable to God. It's easy to do when life is going great. But throw a bend or two in the road of life & it becomes more difficult. All of a sudden the things that we took for granted or that came so easily before are now a struggle. We find ourselves spending less time reading our Bibles and praying, less enthused about being in church, more "prone to wander" than before.

I used to think that these times were moments of failure in my spiritual walk. That somehow I had failed God because I was a little dirtier, smellier and unkempt. Somehow I don't think God saw me in the same light. In fact I have a hint that maybe, just maybe, God was more pleased with my 'unkempt' state than in my 'clean-cut' state. Why? Because *He* was able to pick me up and clean me off Himself, instead of me struggling to purify myself. I think this is really what He desires to do anyway.

Now, please don't read this the wrong way - I'm not condoning a life of dirt or apathy. I'm just realizing more and more lately that God is not that impressed with our self-imposed spiritual cleanliness. Just take a quick look at the Pharisees. Didn't Jesus say to these upstanding, have-it-all-together, clean-on-the-outside men, "How terrible it will be for you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs - beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity." (Matthew 23:27, NLT)

I'm committed to focusing on the purity of my heart and the 'cleanliness' on the inside - but I am equally committed now to taking some of my self-imposed pressure to measure up & allowing God to wash, clean, & sometimes disinfect those parts of me that He wants. In the end, it is *His* work in my heart that truly changes me & causes the image of Christ to come through a little more each day.