



Soul Shepherding Inventory

By Bill Gaultiere

Jesus warned us that if we're not care-full we can lose our soul (Matthew 16:26). He's not talking about going to hell—he's talking about living on earth today without a vibrant soul. Sadly, it's easy to lose your soul by getting pulled down into the swirl of our soul-less society.

Here are eleven common symptoms of losing soul. Research indicates that most people in our world are not caring for their soul in these fundamental ways. How about you? How well are you caring for your soul? Is your soul tired or empty? Which of the signs of a "lost soul" do you relate to?

- ☐ 93% of our life is spent indoors (less than 2 hours a day in nature). ¹
- ☐ 80% of people do not get the recommended 2 1/2 hours of aerobic exercise per week. ²
- ☐ 65% of our waking hours are spent looking at screens (e.g., 10+ hours on TV, smartphone, computer, or video games). ³
- ☐ 74% of people do not read the Bible regularly (four or more times a week). ⁴
- ☐ 73% of people do not attend church regularly. ⁵
- ☐ 45% of people often go days without saying a prayer. ⁶
- ☐ 57% of people have not read a poem, play, novel, or short story in the last year. ⁷
- ☐ 61% of people have not attended a live visual or performing arts event in the last year. ⁸
- ☐ 50% of families eat less than 1/4 of their meals together. ⁹
- ☐ 80% of people have no friends (who are not family) that they talk to about their personal troubles. ¹⁰
- ☐ 79% of adults don't get the recommended 7 or more hours of sleep per night. ¹¹

Shepherding Your Soul

The purpose of the Soul Shepherding Inventory is to give some focused time and attention to thinking very practically about the care of your soul. If you wait until your soul feels dry or depleted before you attend to it then you've waited too long! It's like the "Change Oil" light on the dashboard of your car: you pay attention to that indicator light because you don't want to damage your engine and have your car stop running. If you ignore your soul then your life will stop working.

The soul care opportunities in this inventory are like indicator lights on the dashboard of your soul. If any of these soul lights go red and you ignore them it endangers your soul. It's important to train ourselves to pay attention to our life in these practical ways. Your soul thrives in a flow of divine life when you consistently set aside time to enjoy nature, exercise, unplugging, Bible-reading, church, prayer, reading, music, family, friendship, and sleeping.

¹ "The National Human Activity Pattern Survey", published in *Journal of Exposure Science & Environmental Epidemiology*, February 6, 2001; nature.com.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Press Release on May 2, 2013; cdc.gov.

³ "Americans devote more than 10 hours a day to screen time, and growing", CNN news report on July 29, 2016; can.com. (Percentage of screen time during waking hours assumes seven hours of sleep per night.)

⁴ Barna Group, "The State of the Bible, 2013", research sponsored by the American Bible Society; americanbible.org.

⁵ Desert News, "Sabbath Day Observance in the U. S.", survey April 2016; desertnews.com.

⁶ PEW Research Center, "5 Facts About Prayer", survey May 4, 2016; pewresearch.org.

⁷ National Endowment for the Arts, "Results from the Annual Arts Basic Survey (2013-2015)," August 2016; arts.gov.

⁸ National Endowment for the Arts, "Survey of Public Participation in the Arts 2002," March 2004; arts.gov.

⁹ Allen Lim, "The Demise of the Family Meal," February 19, 2016; velopress.com.

¹⁰ "Social Isolation in America: Changes in Core Discussion Networks Over Two Decades", published in *American Sociological Review*, June 1, 2006; journals.sagepub.com.

¹¹ SleepScore Labs, "Largest Consumer Sleep Study," January 6, 2017; resmed.com.