



MENS ROUNDTABLE

MAY 29, 2025

REFLECTING THE IMAGE OF OUR MAKER

EMBRACING OUR GOD-GIVEN IDENTITY



**FOR WE ARE GOD'S
HANDIWORK, CREATED
IN CHRIST JESUS TO
DO GOOD WORKS,
WHICH GOD PREPARED
IN ADVANCE FOR US TO
DO.**



EMBRACING Our God-Given Identity

EPHESIANS 2:10

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EPHESIANS

Aspect

Core Motivation

The concept of spiritual bypass was formally introduced in the mid-1980s by John Welwood, an American psychotherapist.

He observed a recurring and concerning pattern within spiritual communities: individuals, **by resorting to spiritual ideas and practices to avoid difficult or painful emotions or challenges, inadvertently suppressed aspects of their identity and needs, thereby stalling their emotional development.** This frames the phenomenon not simply as a coping strategy, but as a barrier to holistic human development, impacting an individual's capacity to fully integrate life experiences and achieve psychological maturity. The concept of "premature transcendence" further emphasizes this, implying an attempt to bypass essential stages of growth and integration that are crucial for a well-rounded and resilient self.

AT ITS CORE, SPIRITUAL BYPASS OFTEN FUNCTIONS AS AN ACT OF SELF-DECEIT, WHERE AN INDIVIDUAL CONVINCES THEMSELVES THAT AVOIDING DEEP PSYCHOLOGICAL WOUNDS IS A SIGN OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY. IT TYPICALLY INVOLVES USING SPIRITUAL PRACTICES TO ESCAPE FROM RESPONSIBILITIES.

A CENTRAL DYNAMIC IS STRIVING TO "RISE ABOVE THE RAW AND MESSY SIDE OF OUR HUMANNESS BEFORE WE HAVE FULLY FACED AND MADE PEACE WITH IT". THIS CAN INVOLVE MISUSING "ABSOLUTE TRUTH TO DISPARAGE OR DISMISS RELATIVE HUMAN NEEDS, FEELINGS, PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS, RELATIONAL DIFFICULTIES, AND DEVELOPMENTAL DEFICITS".

INDIVIDUALS ENGAGING IN SPIRITUAL BYPASS MAY ALSO DEVELOP A "COMPENSATORY IDENTITY." BEING PERCEIVED AS A "GOOD SPIRITUAL PRACTITIONER" CAN SERVE AS A DEFENSE MECHANISM, COVERING UP AND DEFENDING AGAINST AN UNDERLYING "DEFICIENT IDENTITY" WHERE THE INDIVIDUAL FEELS INHERENTLY INADEQUATE, "NOT GOOD ENOUGH," OR FUNDAMENTALLY LACKING.

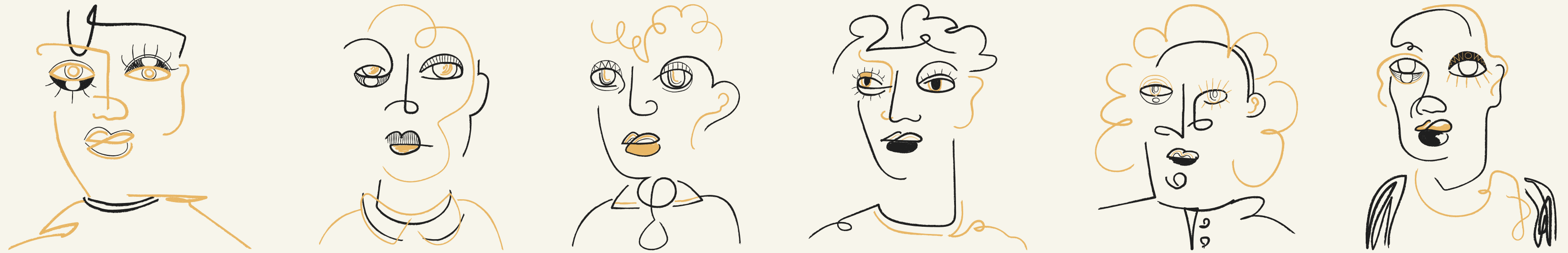
THIS SPIRITUAL PERSONA BECOMES A SHIELD AGAINST DEEPER INSECURITIES. THIS UNDERLYING FEELING OF DEFICIENCY OFTEN DRIVES THE ACTIVE SEEKING OF SPIRITUAL "HIGHS" OR ELEVATED STATES AS A MEANS TO AVOID PROCESSING UNDERLYING PSYCHOLOGICAL PAIN AND DISCOMFORT.

Too often, when Christians courageously confess that they struggle with crippling anxiety, they are met with the scripture “do not be anxious about anything!”

Or are told to pray about it, or claim victory over it in Jesus’ name.

Whether it’s in a dark room with a fog machine or in a classic sanctuary with a hymnal, our church worship gatherings are geared to numb us out and avoid pain. We show up, sing songs of hope, exchange greetings, and leave without talking about the death around us.

In his book Prophetic Lament, Soong-Chan Rah dives deep into the U.S. church’s masterful avoidance of lament: the language of suffering. While 40 percent of psalms in the Bible are psalms of lament, our churches only sing songs of lament between 13–19 percent of the time. From this avoidance of suffering, we over-emphasize praise and celebration.



EMBRACING Our God-Given Identity

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

**BEING CONFIDENT OF THIS, THAT HE
WHO BEGAN A GOOD WORK IN YOU WILL
CARRY IT ON TO COMPLETION UNTIL THE
DAY OF CHRIST JESUS.**