

# Struggling Into Life

by Ernest O'Neill

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*The sermon teaches that the deadness inside us is due to a lack of trust in the Creator and that the first step to aliveness is to wake up to reality and start believing in God.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 20:27, John 4:24, Romans 2:15, 1 Corinthians 2:11, Galatians 5:16

**Topics:** "Spiritual Renewal", "Faith And Trust"

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## Description

Ernest O'Neill preaches about the loss of spiritual life within us, comparing it to the carefree joy of children that gets crushed by adult responsibilities. He emphasizes the need to awaken our spirits to trust in our Creator and move away from self-reliance. O'Neill highlights the importance of conscience as a part of our spirit that guides us towards God's will and intentions, urging us to listen to our deepest consciousness of God rather than societal norms. He encourages individuals to take personal responsibility in responding to their conscience and aligning their actions with the stirrings of their spirit to experience true spiritual life.

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## Transcript

### The Light Inside Has Gone Out

Many of us feel that we've lost something that we used to have. When we were children we seemed to have a spontaneous, carefree delight in living. But that has been crushed by the adult responsibilities of making a living and succeeding in our careers. We comfort each other by knowing comments about the need to grow up and face the real world, but we often look at little children playing in a sand-pit and wish for the days when we were as happy and free.

Part of the child's free joy comes from the fact that he didn't have to provide the next meal or work out where he was going to sleep: his parents did all that. He knew they loved him and provided for him, so he could simply "be himself". So he became conscious of a whole life inside that was different from everyone else - and he knew no better than to follow the intuitions of that life. That life is called by Jesus of Nazareth 'spirit' - and that is what has died in all of us.

We run our lives now by bodily needs and our soul needs - our minds and emotions; our spirits are so shrunk that we cannot contact them at all. Yet your spirit is the part of you that can communicate with the Creator who made you, but it cannot come alive because you no longer trust Him the way you used to trust your parents. You are driven by the same fears about employment and frustration about happiness as everyone else, so there is little rest deep inside you. Can you do anything about this deadness inside?

## The Stirrings of Life Inside

The deadness of your spirit inside is a direct result of the fact that you never progressed from trust in your father and mother to trust in your real Father who made you. Instead, you declined into 'shifting' for yourself. However much you try to meet your own needs, you repeatedly bump your shins against reality - you're a creature - not a creator. So, though you can deal with some things like getting food, there are other things like cancer that you cannot deal with. So you live a lie! You pretend you are your creator, but the facts of reality constantly prove you're not.

The first step is to 'waken up to reality' See that you are a 'made' being rather than a 'self-made' being. Start thinking of the Creator as real in other words, start believing in Him. You're still a long way from coming alive inside, but at least you've started! As you begin to be interested in why He has put you here and what He's thinking, your spirit inside will be touched by God Himself. You will probably be conscious of a new sense of concern about what God thinks about things you do. This is really the first part of your spirit that comes alive - your conscience.

### Conscience

You may say that you've had a very lively conscience all your life, but what you've probably listened to is the standards of behaviour your mind has absorbed from your upbringing. These standards combine with desire for man's approval, fear of their condemnation, and your own ambition to succeed - this potent combination masquerades as 'conscience' for most of us. But, apart from the God-given urge to live up to the highest you know, this 'soulish' moral obligation has little to do with the stirring that you are now sensing.

Your real conscience is part of your spirit, the deepest part of you. It is a natural consciousness of the law in your heart which was written there when you were created. This is mentioned by Paul in verse 15 of the second chapter of his letter to the Romans. Our whole nature is made by God to depend on Him and express Him; our conscience attests to that - even against our own will. When you start trying to treat God as real, your spirit affirms the rightness of that by sensitising you to the reality that your Creator has plans and intentions for you today.

### Different from Social Mores

Your conscience (conscio in Latin, suneidesis in Greek) is consciousness of God - of His will and pleasure. It is far higher than the social mores that allows cannibals to eat people or Mafia hit-men to regard murder as "just business". That's why your response to this deeper internal consciousness enables you to touch (perhaps for the first time in years) the spiritual life that is related to God.

It is also the reason why you must see your response as an intensely individualistic and personal one. You cannot allow it to decline into a search for other's opinions and advice about what is right to do or what is wrong. Conscience is not concerned primarily with moral right and wrong, it is concerned with what is keeping you from God. This is why your first steps towards aliveness inside mean your willing to do or say or adjust your behaviour according to the fragile stirrings of conscience within. As you do this, your spirit hesitatingly gropes towards life.

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