

BtW

Between two worlds

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SPIRITUAL DRIFT



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Last week, Ravi Zacharias International Ministries (RZIM) published a sickening report detailing years of secret sin and sexual abuse by its founder.¹ As someone who has long admired and appreciated Ravi Zacharias' ministry, and is in a position of Christian leadership myself, it was a sobering discovery.

It should be for all of us.

Here's the tragic reality: the behavior that is described in the RZIM report doesn't happen overnight. It happens subtly and slowly over time.

It happens as a result of *spiritual drift*.

I have recently been reading the end of the Gospel of Matthew. As I read, it struck me that, as Jesus came to the end of his earthly ministry, he is increasingly concerned with spiritual drift. He repeatedly warns his disciples, "Keep watch, be ready," (Mt. 24:42, 44, 25:13) "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation." (Mt. 26:41) What is he so concerned about, if

¹ <https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/rzimmedia.rzim.org/assets/downloads/Report-of-Investigation.pdf>
<https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2021/february/ravi-zacharias-rzim-investigation-sexual-abuse-sexting-rape.html>

not a slow spiritual fade into darkness? In these passages Jesus seems acutely aware that the major challenge that will face his followers after his departure will be spiritual drift.

As we begin to look toward the celebration of the cross and resurrection at Easter, it is a good time to engage in some self-reflection. It is a good time to survey our spiritual lives, and to ask if, or to what extent, spiritual drift has taken place in our lives.

How do we do this? What are the signs that we have drifted spiritually?

Here are some signs and symptoms of spiritual drift that I have identified in life and ministry:

- A lukewarmness or coolness to spiritual things, including the state of your own soul.
- Difficulty identifying areas of sin and weakness in your life
- Detachment from Christian community, and a critical attitude towards the church
- A lack of assurance of salvation
- Decreased appetite for, or time in, Scripture
- Increased attractiveness of worldly values, worldly behavior, and worldly people
- A spirit of permissiveness toward “small sins”
- More concern about image than character
- A private life that is increasingly private

These are just a few signs of spiritual drift taking place in our lives. When these symptoms go unnoticed and unaddressed, they can lead to spiritual ruin. This is true for both Christian leaders, and Christian disciples.

Do you know what spiritual drift looks like in your own life and faith?

Do you know how to address spiritual drift in your own heart?

I have found the answer to be quite simple. *To guard against spiritual drift, we need to know the signs.* We need to notice the signs early, and respond proactively with repentance, prayer, and new obedience.

The pandemic has no doubt provided perfect conditions for spiritual drift to take place. As individuals, families, and entire churches we should pause and ask ourselves to what extent spiritual drift has taken place in our lives.

Then, return.

“Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you.” (Zech. 1:3)

Rev. Matthew H. Kuiken

