

EGO TRICKS

— A Christian and universal perspective for young seekers (18+ yrs)

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The Dance of the Ego

As a young person, your heart and mind are alive with questions. You're stepping into freedom, shaping your own story, testing what feels true. You may sense that there is something deeper than just achievements or how others see you — but what? Beneath it all lives the mystery of who you truly are in God.

In this mystery, the *ego* plays a powerful role. In this Christian and universal perspective, we understand the ego not as a full answer to the question "What am I?" No, I am not the ego; or at least I am not *only* the ego. Here we also do not see the ego as an enemy to destroy. We see it rather as a structure that once protected us and helped us navigate life. It gives us a sense of "me," a necessary tool to function, but it can also block our deeper life in God if it takes centre stage.

The ego's main tricks come from its obsession with preserving its little story: "I am important," "I must be approved," "I must stay in control." These impulses are natural but can become a prison if they remain unseen.

How the Ego Evolved and Why it Tricks

The ego evolved as a survival mechanism: to help us avoid danger, to find community, to build security. In early life, these functions were necessary. But as we grow spiritually, these same mechanisms can stunt our deeper unfolding.

When we try to "save our life" — to cling to ego stories, control, and external security — we often "lose" the deeper, more authentic life that Jesus promises. Ego tricks are ways of avoiding surrender to a larger love, a bigger story beyond the small self.



Over time, if unchecked, ego tricks may harden into rigid roles: "I am the successful one," "I am the sufferer," "I am the helper who never needs help." These identities become masks, preventing us from entering the radical freedom and love that Christ models.

Jesus on Losing and Finding Life

Jesus' words, "Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it," are a gentle yet profound invitation. They call us beyond protecting ego stories to a life rooted in union with God's love. The "life" we are called to lose is not our existence but our tight grip on self-definition.

When we let go of self-constructed images and allow ourselves to "die" to these stories, we discover a life that is infinitely more spacious, joyful, and connected. This is the life hidden in God, where we realize our true self is not separate, but part of the divine dance.

Ego is not a totally modern concept. Jesus and Paul have various metaphors for it in the New Testament.

Recognizing Ego Tricks

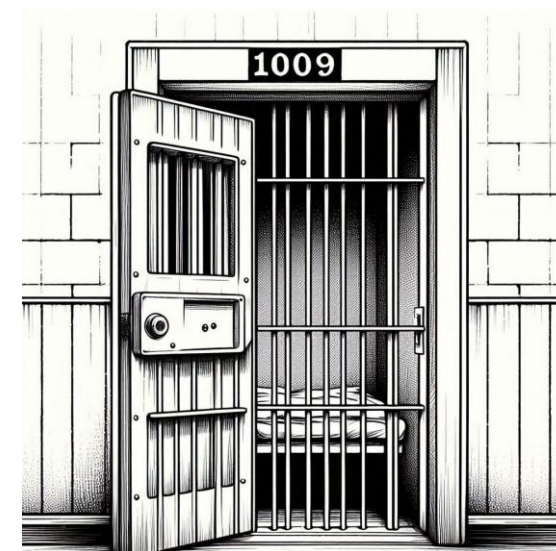
The ego is a master of disguise. Here are some of its common tricks:

- **Comparison:** Constantly measuring yourself against others, leading to pride or shame.
- **Blame:** Protecting your image by blaming others or circumstances.
- **Attachment to roles:** Over-identifying with achievements, failures, or social labels.
- **Overthinking:** Crafting endless stories to justify or defend yourself.
- **Victim identity:** Holding on to pain as an identity badge.
- **Spiritual superiority:** Using spiritual knowledge or practice to feel above others.

Each of these tricks serves the ego's goals: security, approval, and control.

To detect them, cultivate:

- **Curiosity:** Gently asking, "What is really going on inside me?"
- **Humility:** Being willing to see your blind spots without self-hatred.



- **Silence and stillness:** Practices like contemplative prayer or simple silent sitting reveal the background chatter of ego.
- **Self-compassion:** Meeting your wounds and tricks with kindness, which opens the door to transformation.

The Path Beyond Self-Compassion

Self-compassion is vital. Without it, spiritual work becomes harsh and self-punishing. But self-compassion must grow into universal compassion. As we realize our shared human struggles, we naturally extend kindness beyond ourselves.

Christ's love is universal — it does not stop at the edges of our personal stories. As our hearts open, we begin to see everyone as part of one body, one life in God. True healing moves us from "How do I fix myself?" to "How do I love and serve the whole?"

The Later Years and the Ego

With age, the ego can either soften or harden. Some people grow defensive,

clinging to old identities. Others discover a gentle transparency: they laugh at themselves more easily, live more simply, and love more deeply. The difference lies in willingness to let go, to surrender to grace.

If the ego remains unexamined, age can bring bitterness and fear of losing control. But if we face these tricks courageously, the later years can reveal our true, hidden life in God — a life beyond titles, roles, and even beyond our own fears.

Stories as Mirrors

Zen story — The overflowing cup.

A young man full of opinions visits a Zen master. The master keeps pouring tea into his cup until it overflows. "Stop! The cup is full!" The master replies, "Exactly. You are too full to receive new wisdom. Empty yourself first."

Sufi story — Nasruddin and the key.

Nasruddin searches outside for a key he lost inside his house, because "there is more light here." We often look for solutions in the bright, external places,



avoiding the inner darkness where true transformation lies.

Christian image — The prodigal son.

The son tries to create his identity far from home but returns broken, discovering unconditional love. This mirrors our return to God when ego stories fail.

Christian metaphor — The seed that dies.

“Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies...” We must let old self-images die to bear fruit in love.

Sufi saying — Ocean in a drop.

“You think you are a drop; you are the entire ocean.” This reflects St. Paul’s idea of being “hidden with Christ in God.”

These stories are not just “examples” — they are living mirrors showing us the path of emptying, surrender, and union with divine love.

Why Knowing These Tricks Helps

Understanding ego tricks frees us from invisible prisons. We become less obsessed with comparison and control, and more open to real love, creativity, and

compassion. We move from self-centred survival to co-creative, divine living.

Christ invites us not to crush the ego but to see through it, allowing God’s love to shine through our uniqueness rather than be trapped by it. In this freedom, we live more lightly, more kindly, and more truly.

Final Thought

Ego tricks are not signs of failure — they are invitations. Each trick you see is a doorway back to your true self in Christ, a self that is deeply connected to all life. Walking this path is about ever-deepening love and freedom.

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References

Matthew 16:25 “Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.” (Also see Mark 8:35 and Luke 9:24.)

John 12:24 “Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.”

Colossians 3:3 “For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.”

Luke 15:11–32: The Parable of the Prodigal Son.

