

## Growth Stoppers in the Christian Life

One of the myths about spiritual maturity is that spiritual growth is automatic once you are born again. Christians apparently assume they will automatically grow to maturity, if they follow some sort of a set of rules. **The truth** is however that spiritual growth is intentional. It requires a commitment to grow. A person must want to grow, decide to grow, and make an effort to grow.

That is what I want us to want to think about today. What are some of these growth stoppers? I am sure that there are many more growth stoppers than I will be able to cover today but I do want for us to consider a few of them. The first stopper is

### I. Pride

Pride is our relentless enemy. If we surrender to its influence, there will be consequences. The first and most harmful consequence is that pride stops our spiritual growth. If we think we already know it all, we will have no need or desire to grow

*James 4:10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. When we are truly humble, we open the way for God's promotion in our lives.*

Instead of having to promote ourselves, we lift Him up. The result of this is that people are ministered to. And as a reward for our humility and faithfulness, God raises us up and our growth resumes once again. A second spiritual growth stopper is

### II. Jealousy

Jealousy is anger at, or being irritated over, a person who is enjoying more success or advantage than you are

But lets look at some common causes of jealousy: The first is **Unmet expectations**

We expect God to do it all for us and when he doesn't we get upset, and any growth we have already enjoyed, stops till we get the issue settled. We also seem to expect others to do things for us and when they don't and we get angry, again any growth we have had, stops at this point.

Next is a sense of **entitlement**. For some reason we have this ingrained attitude that we are entitled to things. This is often the result of the dangerous preaching by the health and wealth folks.

When we don't get the health and wealth they preach that we are entitled to, we get mad at God and jealous of those who appear to have it. When this happens our spiritual growth comes to a halt. So jealousy is a growth stopper in the Chr. life.

To derail this growth stopper and get you growth back on track, try these suggestions

1. Stop comparing yourself to other people There will always be people who have more than you but there will also be people who have less than you so keep your eyes on the Lord instead of others Your journey is just that — yours.

2. Stop worrying about *you* all the time. Find a way to be a blessing to someone else. When you change your focus away from yourself, all of a sudden your self-image improves and so does your spiritual growth.

Breaking free from jealousy starts with your thoughts. When you change the way you think, you change the way you feel and act. The easiest way to change your focus is to begin by helping others. It will definitely be time well spent and besides that, your Chr. Growth will once again be back on track.

Another stopper is

### III. Laziness

*Proverbs 24:30-34 I once walked by the field and the vineyard of a lazy fool. Thorns and weeds were everywhere, and the stone wall had fallen down. When I saw this, it taught me a lesson: Sleep a little. Doze a little. Fold your hands and twiddle your thumbs. Suddenly poverty hits you and everything is gone!*

Just as the lazy man's vineyard lies in ruins and leads to poverty, so spiritual laziness leads to lack of growth, and spiritual ruin!

Mart De Haan writes

I read about a Detroit man who couldn't find his house. He had gone to the right address but all he found was an empty lot. Completely baffled, he asked the Detroit Free Press to help him figure out what was going on. A newspaper reporter learned that not only was the house gone, but the deed to the empty lot was in someone else's name. What had happened? For one thing, a few years had passed since the homeowner had left the city without providing a forwarding address. In addition, he had failed to make arrangements for someone to keep the property in repair. So the house was torn down because a city ordinance called for the removal of neighborhood eyesores.

**Note:** The homeowner's neglect illustrates the practical truth of Proverbs 24:30-34. *Neglect leads to loss.* In this case loss of spiritual growth but with simply a little enthusiasm, involvement, and action, a person's growth can be back on track and flourishing once again

Still another growth stopper is,

#### IV. Discouragement

Discouragement is universal. No one is exempt from the dark cloud it casts over our lives. Great men of God -- David, Job, Jeremiah, and even Jesus -- became discouraged.

Discouragement can take many forms and it can be caused by many things. Some people make a good beginning and appear to be growing, but soon get discouraged and quit and so does their spiritual growth. Galatians 6:9 *"And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not"*.

**David Roper** writes, I read a story about a pastor of a small, rural church in Scotland. He had been forced out by his elders, who claimed they saw no fruit from his ministry. The village in which the pastor served was a difficult place. People's hearts were cold and hostile to the truth. During the time the pastor served, there had been no conversions and no baptisms. But he did recall one positive response to his preaching. When the offering plate was once passed during a service, a young boy placed the plate on the floor, stood up, and stepped into it. When he was asked to explain, he responded that he had been deeply touched by the minister's life, and while he had no money to give he wanted to give himself wholly to God. The boy who stepped into the plate was Bobby Moffat, who in 1817 became a pioneer missionary to South Africa. He was greatly used of God to touch many lives. And it all started with that small church and the faithful work of that unappreciated and discouraged pastor.

Don't lose heart, but instead, ask God to strengthen you with His power. Spiritual growth takes time. That boy who stepped into that plate did not leave right then for South Africa. It took him time to grow and if discouragement had stopped that growth he would have never made it to South Africa

Another thing that halts spiritual growth is

#### V. Hypocrisy

Hypocrisy is pretending to be someone or something that you are not. **Someone said;** Beware of no man more than of yourself; we carry our worst enemies within us.

A stubborn resistance to the warnings of Jesus concerning hypocrisy will be a stumbling block to our growth since what other people think of us becomes more important than pleasing the Lord. God is repelled by hypocrisy.

He is compassionate towards those who see the true condition of their heart, confess it to Him and cry to Him for help. He is a merciful God and extends forgiveness and grace to those who

confess their faults and who sincerely desire to please Him in every way, even though they may fail at times.

God is drawn to those who honestly come to Him with their weaknesses, seeking *His* strength in overcoming them and that is what growth is all about isn't it? When we try to be something we are not, we spend the energy that it takes for us to grow and our real growth stops. So if we want to jump start our spiritual growth once again, simply be who you are, instead of spending that energy in trying to be who you are not.

Yet another thing that halts spiritual growth is

#### VI. An out of control tongue

Because the tongue is such a powerful and active instrument, if it isn't being used for growth, it is being used to stop growth in both hearers and users

A person's tongue brings forth what is in their heart. Things like evil speaking; speaking against someone; backbiting Lk. 6:45 *A good person brings good out of the treasure of good things in his heart; a bad person brings bad out of his treasure of bad things. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.* You can tell a lot about a person by what kinds of things come out of their mouth.

A person's spiritual growth is stopped when, with their mouth, they promote discouragement instead of encouragement. Anyone's spiritual growth already faces enough discouragement that it doesn't need further discouragement from someone whose own spiritual growth has come to a screeching halt

One final thing that stops spiritual growth is a

#### VII. Lack of use

A knife for example stays bright when used, but if it is unused it becomes rusty. So it is with Christians, we lose what knowledge, ability, and opportunity we have when we do not use them! There is to be no thought of "retirement" when it comes to the service of the Lord!

So if you want to make progress again in your spiritual life remember this, use it or lose it. Use it and you grow, don't use it and you remain in your rut. Keep in mind these words of George Macdonald *All growth that is not toward God, is growing to decay.*

I believe there are many other things that can cause growth to stop in the life of the believer. These are just a few to get our minds thinking about changes you might want to make to get back on the growth train once again.

Salvation is not the end point of Christianity. A new birth experience is only the beginning of the Christian life. May you find ways to continue to grow and may you also find ways to get away from these and other things. Things that would stop any growth and progress you have been making.

In closing we have been talking about things that will stop our spiritual growth. But if per chance you have been reading this and suddenly realize that you have never started your spiritual growth by inviting Christ to forgive you of your sins and start you on the road to spiritual growth you can do that today.

All you need to do is read, understand, believe and do what the following tells you and you can get the horse before the cart like it is supposed to be. Just simply

Realize you are a sinner Romans 3:23

Understand that the payday for sin is death or eternal conscious separation from God. Romans 6:23a

Know that there is a way of escape for you. Romans 6:23b and John 1:12

Desire to escape and pray this or a similar prayer.

"Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I am truly sorry for my sins, and I confess them all to You [name them]. Lord Jesus, forgive all my sins and come into my heart as my Saviour and Lord. I receive You right now. Help me from this time forward to live for You. Thank You for hearing and answering my prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen."

On the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ I became a Christian by inviting Jesus Christ into my life to forgive my sin.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have further questions or have chosen to do this, be sure to let us know so we can help you, pray for you and encourage you in your new life.

You can reach us at [lapeerchurch@gmail.com](mailto:lapeerchurch@gmail.com) Subject line: (Salvation)