

Hindrances To Spiritual Maturity

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LUKE 18:1-30

Week's Core Competency:

Spiritual Maturity: *"Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."*
(Hebrews 5:13-14)

Introduction

Oceanographers tell us that lobsters, in order to grow, must leave their shells. The shells, which serve as a defense, must be abandoned or else they become a casket to the lobster.

The most dangerous time for lobsters is when they discard their old shell so that the new one can be formed. Totally exposed, the lobsters become vulnerable to the elements of the ocean.

Like lobsters, every Christian must be willing to leave the old nature behind in order to take on the nature of Christ. Failure to do so results in immaturity. There is always a risk when the Lord challenges us to make changes in our life, but there is no other way we can grow..

II Corinthians 5:17 says *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"* (NIV)

Maturity in Christ does not come without risk and effort. Time in the Word, time in prayer, time in worship and time in fellowship are all part of the process of becoming new creations in Christ.

So, the question we all have to ask ourselves is "Am I maturing in Christ or just maintaining in Christ?" You be the judge.

Using This Study

❶ EXAMINE His Word

What does God SAY? Open your time with prayer. The words God uses to communicate matters, so go back and pay close attention to the details that are emphasized or repeated in the passage.

❷ EXPLORE His Word

What does God MEAN? Asking questions of the text helps surface how the details relate to the message God wants to communicate.

❸ EMBRACE His Word

Why does it MATTER to me? Embrace God by responding to what you discover in His word in faith and obedience.

This Week

Do you long to know God more? Do you want to have a close relationship with Him? This week tell Him that as often as you think about it. You may want to sit in quiet with Him and read this passage several times. Pause and ask Him about things you don't understand. Agree with Him about things that you do understand. Ask Him to make your relationship with Him more real. One thing you can know for sure, He wants to be close to you! He is always there for us, yet we are not always available to be close to Him.

① EXAMINE His Word

What does God SAY? Prayerfully note significant details and terms emphasized in the passage.

Read Luke 18:1-30 (NIV)

- 1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.
- 2 He said: **"In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men.**
- 3 **And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'**
- 4 **"For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men,**
- 5 **yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'"**
- 6 And the Lord said, **"Listen to what the unjust judge says.**
- 7 **And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?**
- 8 **I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"**

- 9 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable:
- 10 **"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.**
- 11 **The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men — robbers, evildoers, adulterers — or even like this tax collector.**
- 12 **I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'**
- 13 **"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'**
- 14 **"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."**

- 15 People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them.
- 16 But Jesus called the children to him and said, **"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.**
- 17 **I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."**

- 18 A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"
- 19 **"Why do you call me good?"** Jesus answered. **"No one is good — except God alone.**
- 20 **You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.'"**
- 21 "All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said.
- 22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, **"You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."**
- 23 When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth.
- 24 Jesus looked at him and said, **"How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!**
- 25 **Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."**
- 26 Those who heard this asked, "Who then can be saved?"
- 27 Jesus replied, **"What is impossible with men is possible with God."**
- 28 Peter said to him, "We have left all we had to follow you!"
- 29 **"I tell you the truth,"** Jesus said to them, **"no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God**
- 30 **will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life."**

EXPLORE His Word

What does God MEAN?

1. Summarize Verses 1-8 in ten words or less. Who are the main characters in this parable? What actions and attitudes do you note for each person? Do you consider yourself to be tenacious? Why or why not?
2. Now summarize Verses 9-17 also in ten words or less. Identify the main characters in this parable. What are the actions and attitudes you observe for each individual? Do you sometimes compare yourself to others? If so, why?
3. Again, summarize Verses 18-30 in ten words or less. Who is the main character in this passage? Was Jesus speaking against wealth or one's attitude towards wealth? Do you think you would be a more effective witness for the Lord if you were wealthy? Why or why not?
4. Have you ever considered the things that might keep you from maturing in Christ? From Luke 18:1-30 list three things that can possibly hinder spiritual growth.

③ EMBRACE His Word

Why does this MATTER to me?

Summarize your thoughts on the passage:

Write about what God wants you to KNOW, to FEEL, and to DO...

Sermon Notes

30 CORE Competencies

10 Core Beliefs

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation by Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9* I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 Core Practices

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33* I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money *2 Corinthians 8:7*

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians 6:19-20*

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 Core Virtues

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, me, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I demonstrate loyalty in my relationships with others in response to God's loyalty to me.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ