

# 3 Biggest Obstacles to Spiritual Growth: Mindsets You Can't Ignore



# Introduction

We all want a life of peace, love, joy. We want to be strong, confident, and bold. We want to live in peace with ourselves and others. We want to look forward to a bright future and live knowing we are the beloved of God with His favor in all we do.

This is the amazing life we signed up for when we got saved—and it is possible for each of us! However, there are certain obstacles & mindsets that will keep us stuck in the muck of past patterns and failures unless we are willing to look honestly at them.

Here are the overall 3 biggest obstacles that hinder spiritual growth:

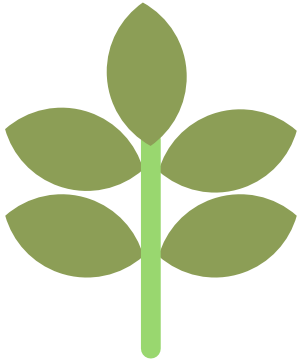
## 1. The Mindset that Doesn't Understand the Need to Grow Spiritually

I heard one guy say as he was walking out of church, "I got saved, now I'm good to go." In another conversation a gal shared, "I said the sinner's prayer, and I bought a cross necklace and thought that was all there was to it."

Sadly, those new babes in Christ didn't understand their most important moment was just the beginning of a new way of life in the kingdom of God. The gift of salvation is absolutely a free gift from God. We cannot do anything—anything at all to deserve this gift of grace from our Lord!

In that blessed moment, we are born again, not in the flesh, but of the Spirit of God by His grace alone. At that salvation moment, God rescues us from the spiritual kingdom of darkness and transfers us into the kingdom of His Son.[1]

It is a joyous moment when we awaken spiritually from darkness to be surrounded by light in a different kingdom. However, at this point most of us will have spent our entire life growing and developing physically and mentally but will have left our personal spirit undeveloped. This is the biggest obstacle to spiritual growth.



We are unaware of our own inner spiritual nature and unaware of our God, who is Spirit. We find ourselves in a different kind of kingdom where we do not understand how to navigate the territory.

Our consciousness is awakened to things that bother us now, which did not bother us before, and spiritual attacks come. We are like babies in diapers toddling around on unfamiliar terrain. The physical kingdom is familiar, but the spiritual kingdom is unfamiliar.

We do not realize we must grow up in our awareness and understanding of God and His principles to live successfully in this new kingdom. So many of us stay stagnant.

We may go to church once a week and receive strength for the next week, but inside we still wrestle with the obstacles of unforgiveness, bitterness, bad habits, depression, negative thinking, addictions, ruined relationships, and all sorts of self-sins (self-righteousness, self-pity, self-sufficiency, self-promotion, etc.).

## *"We May Not Understand Our Need to Grow"*

In the parable of the Sower, Jesus addresses the mindsets of people who do not grow. The first type is the one who does not understand (or take time to understand) the message of the kingdom.

*"When anyone hears the [message] word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart" (Matt 13:18).*

When someone does not understand, the enemy comes to snatch away what little s/he does understand. Yet, the Bible is clear that we are to seek wisdom and understanding. We are to set our hearts to understand, to incline our ears to wisdom, and to apply our heart to understanding. Over and over again, we are exhorted to seek for it earnestly and eagerly[2]

In fact, the key to Daniel's success was that he set his heart to understand, "From the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words" (Dan 10:12).[3]

## **It takes a bit of effort on our part to turn toward God.**

*“like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers” (Psalm 1:3).*

Our lives get so busy, we neglect our personal relationship with our Lord. We must set our heart intentionally to understand the ways of the Spirit and pursue them!

It does take effort to turn aside to seek God and ask for understanding, just like Moses turned aside to explore the burning bush.

If Moses had never stopped his daily routine and turned aside to explore God, history would be different today.

Your history can be different too!

Even if you have been a Christian a long time, you can turn aside in your mind and set your heart to understand His ways more fully. You can overcome this obstacle to spiritual growth.

With more spiritual understanding comes a more fruitful and rewarding life of peace, love, and joy.



## 2. The Mindset of the One That Is Too Busy to Follow Through



I planted some bare root roses in my backyard. The soil was dry and full of rocks, yet the roses produced brilliant blooms the first year.

Then winter came with winds and snow, and by spring the rose stems were dead. When we dug around the roots, they came out in the same cylinder shape we planted. The roots had not gone deep into the soil enough to establish themselves.

The second type of mindset in the parable of the Sower is the people who received God's word with joy but did not follow through. They were excited at first but did not take His word into their hearts to live it daily. They did not take the time and attention needed to grow their roots deep.

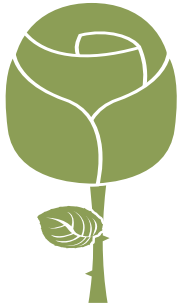
So, when distraction and opposition of any kind came, their initial enthusiastic response was not enough. They were shallow and superficial Christians who could not stand the winds of opposition or the test of time.

They were too busy to grow deep roots. I could have taken care to soak my rose in a rooting hormone powder that protects from fungus and stimulates growth. That would have helped, I'm sure.

The special root stimulator functions the same way for roses as devotional exercises function for Christians. Devotional exercises such as Bible reading/study, prayer, fasting, etc. stimulate our roots to grow deep in our personal relationship with God.

We become strong and overcome this obstacle to spiritual growth.

### 3. The Mindset of The Weak, The Worriers, and The Fearful



The next spring, I planted another rose bush in the same spot. This time, my husband soaked the roots in a root stimulator before planting. And this time the rose grew up beautifully and weathered the winter.

But as spring warmed our yard, I noticed the new leaves were deformed and bugs bored holes in the new buds. Prickly weeds now entangled my rose bush.



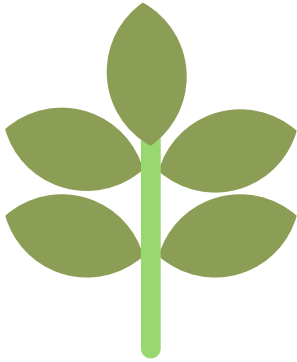
In the parable of the Sower, the third mindset of people who did not grow were the ones who when seed was sown allowed thorns to choke God's word out.

Just as the prickly weeds were attempting to choke my fragile, unhealthy rose, the worries and fears of life try to choke out the truth of God's kingdom in our lives.



The Word of God that teaches a better way to do life, and that gets choked to death by the thorns and weeds that attack a weak Christian.

With this mindset, a person hears and understands God's revelation but allows worry and fear to steal faith in God's provision—before it has time to produce fruit.



Daily life keeps us busy. We have work, kids, church, housework, and all the other activities of life. We barely have time to sit down for a minute; and when we do sit down, we end up scrolling mindlessly through social media. We go to bed worried about our job, or how to pay for house repairs and medical bills.

Worries and troubles can dominate our life and slowly choke our faith to death. We were created to live in intimate communion with our Lord who desires to carry our burdens. As we walk farther away from His presence, we walk farther from our life source.

## *"We walk farther from our life source."*

While sermons from others can motivate and encourage us tremendously, when we personally encounter our Lord in His Word, we grow strong in our own faith and our own relationship with our Lord. The Word makes us stout and able to withstand hardships and troubles of all kinds.

We are able to overcome our human tendencies to worry about the cares of life because we have trained our spirit to trust our faithful Lord. We learn to grow spiritually in the process.

I gave my weak and susceptible rose some fertilizer and care until it produced beautiful leaves and blooms. We, too, may be languishing, fearful, and weak from a lack of proper nutrition and care. In a weakened spiritual state, we become subject to attacks and diseases, and we get stuck in our spiritual growth process without producing good fruit.

### **You Can Overcome These Obstacles**

We all want our life to produce an abundance of peace, love, joy. We want to be strong, confident, and bold. We want to live at peace with our self and others. We want to look forward to a bright future and live in the fruit of blessing and favor. We want to make a difference in the world.

When we understand the need to seek God's understanding for your life and slow down enough to live God's principles every day, and when you don't allow daily life to steal your relationship with your Lord, you will grow spiritually.

You will be "like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers" (Psalm 1:3). You can overcome these 3 biggest obstacles to spiritual growth! You can live a fruitful, abundant life and make a difference in the world!

## Action Steps to Grow Spiritually



1. **Ask for Help.** The Holy Spirit is your Helper.
2. **Be Willing to Change.** If you honestly want to grow--if you are willing to change, He will begin to show you yourself.
3. **Be Open to New Revelation.** He will help you understand where you are missing the mark in your life. And He will share secrets of His kingdom with you. He will empower you to do that which you cannot do on your own.

*Our Lord will cause you to succeed when you ask Him earnestly with all your heart. You will overcome!*