

Intro your dang self!

Talk about your emotional inconsistency.

Seven Reasons We Get Stuck

It's evaluation day! Let's invest some time in looking at where we're at and where we're headed. Today, we look for reasons to be grateful, areas of vulnerability, and opportunities to help others. All of that within the framework of looking at The Seven Reasons we get Stuck.

1. You have not completely worked the previous principle

Did you, are you, moving through the principles too quickly? Hahaha! Totally a danger for me. I'm a big fan of moving quickly, knocking things off my list, and getting things done. But, that's not always God's recovery timeline.

Recovery takes time. It involves soaking, waiting, and listening. God isn't going to undue years or decades of damage in a few short weeks or even months. Enjoy the process. Keep showing up, and find victory in that! Seriously, the folks who have really mastered the recovery process, do exactly that. Even during emotional downswings or depression, they know they are a work in progress and embrace the victory of just showing up and being available on God's timeline.

A few key signs that you may have or may be speeding through your recovery:

- Working the steps to get them done rather than soaking in them and enjoying the journey
- Seeking immediate gratification and losing patience with the process
- Going back to doing things your way
- Handling situations with your pre-recovery mindset
- Hurts and habits reappear.
- Going through the motions but feeling no connection to God

"Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." Galatians 5:25

What does it mean to keep in step with the Spirit? Well, the larger section of Galatians draws a direct contrast to keeping in step with the flesh. Our flesh is always about immediate gratification for ourselves. Right? Tell me if all of these things aren't short cuts - ways we try to get at the good stuff God has for us without having to wait or work for it.

- Throwing off all sexual constraints - Invest in a healthy marriage over the long term, or pornography and promiscuity?
- Idolatry - serve and worship a God we can't see, touch, or control; or a God we can impress with our hard work, money, or crystals?
- Hostility - Patience, empathy, love, and consensus; or take what we want through might and intimidation
- Jealousy - learning to see God and experience gratitude in all of our circumstances; or wanting what other people have right now
- Causing dissent and polarization - humility, empathy, and sacrifice; or the aggressive pursuit of our own agenda
- Anger - Again, gratitude, humility, and trust; or seeking control, safety and affirmation followed by judgment, resentment and anger?
- Drunkenness - stand in the fire and process the hard things or escape and feel good now?

The same mindset applies to working your program of recovery. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control take time. We've spent our whole lives wrapped up in the unholy trinity of seeking. For most of us, making room for Jesus takes time and continued effort. Don't rush it just for the satisfaction of checking a box and saying that you're done.]

2. You have not completely surrendered your life and your will to the Lord.

Principle three is tough because it has two parts: Asking Jesus into your heart as lord and savior; and seeking to follow God's will with ALL your decisions. Are you trusting God with the big stuff but not the little stuff, or maybe the other way around? What areas of your life are you holding back from God and trying to control yourself?

What is hardest for you to trust Jesus with?

I sometimes struggle with letting God be in charge of my spiritual productivity and growth - rooting sin out of my life. I want so badly to be good, beyond reproach really. And I'm so mortified by criticism or evidence of laziness or selfishness in my life that I can fail to find gratitude, humility, and surrender. I can be afraid to trust God with my development and try to run my own show and take care of my sin issues by myself. On a bad week, that means I focus on myself instead of my wife, family, and all of you. Make no mistake y'all, that's a package that's easy for the enemy to sell to a pastor who's got a checked past and really wants to do better, but it's pride. It's pride all day long. I keep putting myself in charge of the work only God can do and neglecting the work God gives me as a result. What about you? What is hardest for you to trust Jesus with?

A few key signs that you may have more of your life or will to surrender to Jesus:

- You run to the world (chemicals, porn, work, the gym, your checklist, food, the mall, gossip, control, isolation, TV, your phone) for refuge and comfort rather than God
- You find yourself in situations where you're not sure which master to serve
- Lack of peace
- Living in fear rather than faith
- Not making time to spend with Jesus in whatever form works best for you - it's so puzzling. Actually, it's not. We all know, I mean KNOW how important it is to spend meaningful time with God each and every day, but still we skip. It's not puzzling because we also know that the enemy is happy to keep us busy, even busy doing good things, if it keeps us away from God. And, the enemy wins that fight way too often.
- Continue to take back people, places, and things after you have turned them over to the care of God.
- Cognitive dissonance! What you're doing doesn't feel good, but you've mastered justification and rationalization.

"For good judgment and common sense, trust in the Lord completely; don't ever trust yourself. In everything you do, put God first, and he will direct you and crown your efforts with success." Proverbs 3:4-6 TLB

3. You have not accepted Jesus' work on the cross for your forgiveness.

It's not so easy, is it? Forgiving others is hard, accepting that God is big enough to forgive the ridiculous stuff we've done - the stuff we had a front row seat for, the stuff that oftentimes is still affecting us, our family, and the people we love - that can be even more challenging! This one gets my vote for the toughest aspect of healthy recovery.

A few key signs that you may not have fully accepted Jesus' work on the cross for your forgiveness:

- Judgment of ourselves and others.
- Condemnation is your go to.
- You still haven't learned to love yourself as you were created.
- We don't fully understand sacrificial love, and therefore cannot love sacrificially.
- Judging others. If you've accepted it for yourself, you wouldn't judge others. We didn't earn it so no one else has to either.

"But if we confess our sins to him, he can be depended on to forgive us...from every wrong." 1 John 1:9 TLB

“So overflowing is his kindness toward us that he took away all our sins through the blood of his Son, by whom we are saved.” Ephesians 1:7 TLB

Have you forgiven yourself?

Remember...“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Romans 8:1

4. You really have not forgiven others who have harmed you.

Depending on the damage you’ve taken, maybe this isn’t so easy. Heck, cancel that. It’s not easy, period. But, until we let go of the pain and harm of past abuse, we continue to wear those chains. “Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the doors of resentment and removes the handcuffs of hate! It is the power that breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness”

A few key signs that you may not have really forgiven others who have harmed you:

- When you continue to murmur and complain about that person even though you have supposedly forgiven them.
- Find yourself hoping for retribution.
- The sound of their voice or mention of their name makes you feel uncomfortable/angry.
- Your relationship with them remains broken even though you don’t want it to be

“After you have suffered a little while, our God, who is full of kindness through Christ, will give you his eternal glory. He personally will pick you up, and set you firmly in place, and make you stronger than ever.”

1 Peter 5:10 TLB

Do you know what’s standing in our way here? It’s simple. You probably do. Pride. Let’s look at more of 1 Peter, 5:6-11:

1Pet. 5:6 **Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time.** (put your pride aside and wait on God to make you whole and lift you up.) **7 Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.** (You don’t need to own this, control this, and make yourself safe. God’s got it, and God’s way better at this than you can ever be.) **8 Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a**

roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. (It's easy to hang onto control and pride. Gratitude and humility require ongoing work.) **9 Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering.** (Stand in solidarity with your community. You're ordinary. You're not alone. You don't have special needs. That's great.) **10 And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. 11 To him be the power forever and ever. Amen. (!!!)**

5. You are afraid of the risk in making the necessary change.

"Fear not, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed...I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will uphold you with my victorious right hand."

Isaiah 41:10 TLB

You may be paralyzed by fear of failure. Try constantly reminding yourself that falling down doesn't make you a failure. It's failing to try or get back up that does that. Believe and trust Jesus!

Take heart in this quote from Brother Lawrence:

"That when he had failed in his duty, he only confessed his fault, saying to GOD, I shall never do otherwise, if You leave me to myself; 'tis You must hinder my falling, and mend what is amiss. Than after this, he gave himself no further uneasiness about it."

You may fear intimacy, rejection, or being hurt again. Go slow. Develop reasonable expectations. Establish healthy boundaries. Life is messy, and that's OK! Embrace it and trust that God will uphold you with his victorious right hand!

A few key signs that your fear of making the necessary changes is holding back your recovery:

- Procrastination - Procrastination. In my mind, it's one of the three most damaging sins (all three are driven by fear: procrastination, selfishness (fear that God isn't bountiful), and demanding control (fear that God isn't good and in charge and in love with you). Procrastination puts God's plans on hold for you and everyone around you. Despite that, it's common because its driver, fear, is so powerful!
- Overly worried about what others think of you - what do we know about affirmation seeking?
- Asking fear based "What if" questions - the what if's are utterly paralyzing!
- Avoiding the topic

- Are you participating in Rationalization.
- Are you suffering from a Lack of passion and purpose

“That is why we can say without any doubt or fear, ‘The Lord is my Helper and I am not afraid of anything that mere man can do to me.’”

Hebrews 13:6 TLB

6. You are not willing to “own” your responsibility.

Ouch. Some of these sting a little bit, don't they?

We can't own responsibility for what happens to us, but we must own our response.

We're not responsible for the harm we've received. We are responsible for our recovery!

And if we don't take ownership our recovery can only flounder.

A few key signs that you may be unwilling to own your responsibilities:

- Blaming others
- Intentionally hurting others.
- Staying so busy that you don't have to face your feelings.
- Deflection

“Examine me, O God, and know my mind; test me, and discover if there is any evil in me and guide me in the everlasting way.”

Psalms 139:23 GNT

7. You have not developed an effective support team.

Y'all, this is the magic. The reason we don't do recovery safely from our couches at home. Community!! You realize our God is ALWAYS in community and Jesus prayed for all believers to be one on his way to the cross, right? This is where the money is at! Make it happen! Embrace the inconvenience. Prioritize your CR posse above most all else as key to your recovery and the thing that keeps you on track and healthy! Be the person that always shows up here and in open share group - even if you're not showing up for yourself in that moment.

A few key signs that you haven't finished building an effective support team:

- Feeling alone
- Isolation
- The people you choose, agree to go along with your choices, when you know it is not a healthy choice for you.

- Easy to continue sin without anyone noticing.
- Making plans but canceling
- Not doing the work to stay connected

“Be with wise men and become wise. Be with evil men and become evil.”

Proverbs 13:20 TLB

“Dear brothers, you have been given freedom: not freedom to do wrong, but freedom to love and serve each other.”

Galatians 5:13 TLB

“Share each other’s troubles and problems, and so obey our Lord’s command.”

Galatians 6:2 TLB

So:

Take time this week to reflect on your progress. If you’re stuck, get with your support community and spend some time in prayer. Figure out which of these seven reasons is slowing you down, generate a plan, and get after it! Do the work and enjoy the fruits!

Do your daily inventory.

Do your daily bible reading.

Live the eight principles and look for opportunities to serve others rather than self in all area of life, every day.