



## **Do I Believe Him?**

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I used to think that there were two components involved in spiritual growth:

**(1) What I Am ...**

and

**(2) What I Should Be.**

And the goal of the Christian life was to simply move from what I am to what I should be. It sounds simple enough, but simple answers are not always as helpful as they seem. I am reminded of the story of the man drowning in the ocean. He might have been careless and fallen in the water or, he might have been foolish and jumped in. But regardless of how he came to be there, the sea was rough, the man was very tired, and it looked like he would most likely drown. As the story goes, someone floated by in a boat, saw the man and gave him some very simple, easy to understand advice, *“What you need is dry land.”*

Nothing could have been truer or less helpful.

Simply telling someone where they are and where they should be does not take them there or help them get there. It doesn't work for them and it won't work for you. This is because there not just two components involved in spiritual growth. There are three: (1) *What I Am*, (2) *What I Should Be*, and

**(3) What I Think I Can Be.**

You see, it doesn't matter what I should be, if I don't believe it's possible. And so, here is the question I've been asking myself. Do I really believe Jesus when he says, *“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”* (Matthew 11:29-30)? (cf. Gal 6:5)

Do I believe his final statement? Do I believe what Jesus said about his yoke and his burden?

Do I believe that spiritual growth is easy, or have I been convinced it is difficult? Jesus said that his way of life, his style of living, his way of thinking, making decisions, talking and acting can be *“learned.”* He said it can bring *“rest”* and is both *“easy”* and *“light.”*

Of course, learning is a life-long venture. But still, we must answer the question: Do we believe him?

I hope we do, because this is the way we approach education and athletics. This is the way we master any skill. We practice. We train. We give ourselves to it. We don't dabble in it. We make it our way of life. And over time, to quote Jesus, we "learn."

Someone once said, "We can give our heart to God immediately, but our habits come more slowly." But still, they come.

The more I practice the kindness, forgiveness, patience, and love of God, the more seeds of his kingdom will be rooted in my heart. The more I give myself to the generosity, compassion, joy, and purity of God, the more fruit of his Spirit will be flourishing in my life. Can you picture the habit of patience flourishing in your life? Can you see the attitudes of forgiveness and kindness thriving in your life?

On the other hand, if faith is simply a weekend "hobby" it will always be difficult. It will always be a struggle. But if I make the decision to "learn" from Jesus, to follow a slow, steady, consistent spiritual process, then I will find "rest" not disorder, and over time the way of Jesus will become "easy."

It is principle of life. We become better at what we repeatedly do.

C. S. Lewis wrote in **Mere Christianity**:

*Every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses, into something a little different than it was before ... you are slowly turning this central thing into a heavenly creature or a hellish creature: either into a creature that is in harmony with God, and with other creatures, and with itself, or else into one that is in a state of war and hatred with God, and with its fellow creatures, and with itself. To be the one kind of creature is heaven: that is, it is joy and peace and knowledge and power. To be the other means madness, horror, idiocy, rage, impotence, and eternal loneliness. Each of us at each moment is progressing to the one state of the other.*

This process is sometimes called "spiritual formation" and is realized by the practice of "spiritual disciplines" — prayer, meditation, study, simplicity, solitude, fasting, service, silence, confession, worship, celebration and more. I am thankful that more and more, these spiritual tools are being utilized on a daily basis and are bringing true rest and significant change into the lives of many.

The recently departed Dallas Willard (1935-2013) once said in an interview for **Leadership Journal**, "Spiritual formation isn't new; it's only been lost for a while."

Is spiritual formation finding its way into your life? Do you believe that spiritual growth can be learned? Do you believe that the "yoke" of Jesus can become "easy?"

It doesn't simply depend upon what you think you **should** be. It depends upon what you think you **can** be. It depends upon whether you believe Jesus.