

Higher Ground

It is not from thinking alone that we make spiritual progress, but from thinking, doing, and then learning from what we've done. Whoever makes an honest attempt to do what God's word has taught him to do, that person, James 1:25 says, "Will be blessed in what he does." It is not possible for us to grow and actually improve simply on thought and meditation alone, taking action is required for progress to be made. Dr. Stephen R. Covey made the statement, "Renewal is the principle — and the process — that empowers us to move an upward spiral of growth and change, of continuous improvement ... Moving along the upward spiral requires us to learn, commit, and do on increasingly higher planes."

Our conscience is a cautionary faculty that warns us when we're about to violate our principles. It was given to restrain us. However, warning us of what is wrong is not the only purpose of the conscience. Sometimes in life some type of motivation is needed to encourage action; our conscience should act as a motivation. It should move us to act in ways that are consistent with our principles. Often, however, we fail to act. We become so afraid of failure that it drives us to not act at all instead of putting forth an effort. And consequently, we learn nothing. By failing to act on the best of our understanding, we forfeit the opportunity to grow in that understanding.

Improvement is the result of examining the decisions we've made, searching for what could have made the outcome better, and learning from the experience. The more we look for the lesson in our actions, the more we have a chance to improve. But if we wait to do anything until we think we can get it exactly right, we'll probably do very little. Perfect conditions for action rarely present themselves, and the person who waits for them is wasting valuable time. "He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap" (Ecclesiastes 11:4). In the world, we have to go ahead and do the best we can.

Spiritual growth does not occur by one simple method. On one hand, God requires that we abstain from evil. But on the other, He also requires that we seek to do good to others, and then learn to do even better. Spiritual growth is not a choice; it is a command. We see where we are told to grow in 2 Peter 3:17-18: "You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ ..."

Despite the fear that may come from making decisions, we must keep in mind that maturity comes in time — but only in time if we are making an effort. If we are choosing to stay in one place or choosing to be complacent with where we are, then only spiritual stagnancy can occur. This is exactly where we do not want to be. Revelation 3:16 says that God would rather you be hot or cold, but if you're lukewarm, He will spew you out of His mouth. It means that He is so disgusted with complacency, it sickens Him. Let us always be seeking how we may improve and grow stronger as a follower of Christ.

Oren Caskey