

## Have You Stopped WORKING?

Welcome to the final week of “**How Did I Get Here?**” Over the course of this series we have been seeking to highlight 4 Signs to help you recognize when you are drifting spiritually and what to do about it to make sure you are properly connected to the true anchor of your soul - Jesus Christ

The passage that has served as our theme for this series is **Hebrews 2:1-4 (NIV)** **We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.** Btw, drifting is subtle by nature and usually when you realize it it is usually when you are far away from where you are supposed to be. What is it that we don't want to drift away from? **2 For since the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, 3 how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation?** The answer: our salvation in Christ! Jesus the anchor for our soul.

**3 how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation?** This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. **4 God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.** As the writer of Hebrews reminds us, we need to pay CAREFUL ATTENTION to our relationship connection with God so that we will finish our faith race well and not miss out on the benefits of our salvation as well as the opportunity to share this salvation with others. After all, Jesus died so that we may have life and have it more abundantly. He has removed the barrier between us and God so that we may have unhindered fellowship with Him. So why would we want to drift away from God by letting anything get in the way of what we have been given or to what can be given to others?

In **Week 1** we introduced the first sign of spiritual drift when we said that you are beginning to drift away from God when **YOU HAVE STOPPED TRUSTING JESUS!** When we stop trusting God in the everyday activity of our life we are beginning to drift. Rather than ask God how He is going to solve our current situation and trusting Him to handle it, we start taking matters into our own hands and looking to ourselves to find answers. If we want to prevent spiritual drift in our lives we can't afford to stop trusting Jesus.

In **Week 2** we talked about the second sign indicating we are drifting in our relationship with God and that is - **YOU HAVE STOPPED HUNGERING!** Just like TRUST, when we stop hungering for God we begin to drift spiritually because we look to other things to fill the God sized void in our heart and rather than feast on God we begin to allow our soul to become enticed by things that really don't satisfy us. We need to be aware of anything that may spoil our appetite for God and seek to remove these things from our lives.

Then **Last Week** we addressed the third sign indicating that we are drifting in our relationship with God and that is - **YOU HAVE STOPPED HEALING.** If we do not let Jesus heal us of our emotional wounds, God can't use us to bring healing into the lives of others. We ourselves become toxic and instead of being an instrument encouraging healing we end up inflicting pain

in the lives of others. If we aren't HEALING then we are SEEPING. And if we are SEEPING we are most certainly DRIFTING.

And that brings us to today and the 4th sign that we are drifting in our relationship with God - **YOU HAVE STOPPED WORKING**. Let's **PRAY** as we seek to unpack this idea a little further.

When it comes to our faith walk as believers, it was never intended by God for our faith to become a spectator sport. We have not been redeemed by Jesus or gifted with the power of the Holy Spirit so that we can rest on the sidelines and watch the world go by from the comforting confines of our little Christian bubbles. If we become a follower of Jesus and stop working or for some reason never engage in the work of faith to which we have been called, we will automatically begin to drift away from Jesus. As human beings we have a tendency to live in bubbles. We tend to be clannish. Gravitating toward people who are like us and with whom we feel comfortable and safe. It is why we gravitate to certain areas within a city to live. It is why we hang out with certain types of people who look like us and who think like us. These bubbles are familiar, comfortable and we feel safe there. And if we are not careful, we can form a Christian bubble to insulate ourselves from the work we are to be doing out in the world.

**Christine Cain** describes the Christian Bubble this way, *"If we are not careful, we can inadvertently settle for a Christian lifestyle that restricts us to living inside the bubble of the Christian subculture - instead of living the abundant life Jesus called us to live out in the real, live world."*

Let's face it, the Christian bubble is attractive. It's comfortable and safe to only have Christian friends. It can be more practical in trying to live out your faith by moderating ourselves with only Christian movies, reading only Christian books or only listening to Christian podcasts. There is just something comfortable and secure about attending church and only focusing on activities within the church. But if we are not careful we can insulate ourselves from the very world we are called to reach and thus find ourselves never leaving our Christian bubble and simply just becoming a spectator watching the world go by.

That is why Jesus was intentionally with his final words of instruction to His disciple when He said to them in **Mark 16:15 (NIV)** ..... *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation*. The idea being that we will have to get outside of our Christian bubbles and intentionally engage the world. If not, we will become spectators and if we become spectators we cease to do the work we have been called to do. And when we cease to do the work we have been called to do, we will begin to drift spiritually from the anchor of our soul.

Notice this was part of Jesus' prayer for us in the garden before heading to the cross. He prayed that we would not be removed from the world. **John 17: 15-18 (NIV)** *15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. 17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.*

But unfortunately, we sometimes remove ourselves from the world. Let me share you with THREE ENEMIES of our heart that can lead to missional drift and thus eventually lead to spiritual drift in your life

### **Enemy #1 - FEAR of being tainted by those outside the Christian Bubble**

This was the fear many of the religious leaders had in Jesus' day. They were more concerned about their reputations than they were about seeing people come to God. They were concerned about becoming defiled by those who did not trust in or seek after God. Sometimes we can become the same way. Two reasons we may do this is that we think that our walk with God is based on us rather than on Him or we sometimes think that the unclean and sinful world is too powerful for the Lord to overcome.

Now let me say this. We should exercise caution and wisdom here. Because of past life experiences and temptations that can lure us we must make sure that we have proper boundaries in place so that we are the ones doing the influencing and not the other way around. Also, if you have just recently been delivered from a certain lifestyle pattern or stronghold it is important to step away from that for a certain period of time to allow for spiritual growth and maturity. Either way we must be careful not to allow ourselves to be placed in situations where we may be tempted and we should do so with much prayer and the accountability of others in the faith.

But we should not fear being a witness in the world. **Acts 1:8 (NIV)** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

**Matthew 28:20 (NIV)**and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

### **Enemy #1 - FEAR of being tainted by those outside the Christian Bubble**

### **Enemy #2 - LOSS of FOCUS where we have replaced the call to FOLLOW JESUS into the world with the call to become a GOOD MORAL CHRISTIAN**

The calling is to follow Him. But sometimes we become more focused on just trying to be a sound moral Christian waiting for Jesus to come back rather than allowing Jesus to change you as you carry out the mission. The difference being the first one depends on us while the latter depends on Jesus. Sometimes we feel like we need to become the perfect Christian before we feel worthy to witness or serve Him. Rather than walk by faith in the world we find it easier to try to be good while remaining inside the church. Reminder: the church isn't the building. it's us on mission for Jesus. If we do not live out and exercise what we are taking in we just become bloated Christians puffed up with knowledge and never growing our faith muscle.

The Samaritan woman at the well started engaging her people way before she was able to get all of her messy life straightened out. Jesus ministers in the midst of messiness and her messiness became a message to go to her people and tell them about the messiah

**John 4:28-30 (NIV) 28** Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, **29** “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” **30** They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

Even the disciples didn't have everything figured out and they too were still processing their own junk, yet Jesus was sending them out to do ministry.

**Luke 10:1-3 (NIV)** After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. **2** He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. **3** Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.

In Ch. 9 of Luke we have disputes as to who is the greatest among the disciples. Jesus being rejected in Samaria led to James and John ready to call down fire and consume them. Talk about being judgmental. Yet a short while later in Ch. 10 Jesus is going to send them out into the world to do ministry. Why? Because it is through walking of faith by following Him that Jesus will purge the things that need to go in their lives and shape their hearts. If he waited for them to get right they would never be sent out. The same is true for us! The mission is to follow Jesus into the world by faith. If we stop following we start drifting.

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**Enemy #3 - The ABSENCE of FAITH motivating us to ACTION**

Sometimes our spectating is the result of an absence of FAITH because faith requires action. **Sometimes we would just rather watch others live out their faith rather than experiencing it ourselves.** The Christian life is not us being cheer-leaders for the pastor or leaders in the church. We are all called to live out our faith. The leaders of the church are called to equip the church to go do the work of Jesus. You aren't cheer-leaders on the sidelines, we are teammates on mission together. Jesus' desire is to bring the Kingdom of God to earth. He wants to right all wrongs. He wants to repair what is broken and heal what is sick. He wants to set the captives free. Part of our doing the work of the Kingdom is when we see brokenness or sickness or something unjust that we are motivated to do something about it because we have faith in Jesus and we have faith in the mission of God's Kingdom. Those who do not have faith sit idly by and watch. But those in whom the Spirit dwells are motivated by faith to do something.

**2 Corinthians 5:11-21(NIV)** Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. **12** We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. (by faith) **13** If we are “out of our mind,” as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. **14** For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced (by faith) that one died for all, and therefore all died. **15** And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

**16** So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. (because of faith) **17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! **18** All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: **19** that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. **20** We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. (by faith) **21** God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (by faith)

Faith moves us to action ( action that leads us to trust into Jesus and to tell others about His love for them)

**What is the result if we allow these enemies to remove us from the world?** Have you ever had a letter or something that you ordered or something someone was sending to you get lost in the mail and never arrive? Imagine if you had a love letter that was being sent to you from that special someone who was miles and miles away but you never received the letter and months go by without hearing anything. What do you think happens when they show up a year later?

What if Jesus has written a letter to those who don’t know Him and my life and your life is that letter? And what if we allow one of these 3 enemies to keep us from being delivered? Non deliverable mail at the post office becomes a dead letter and it is not good to anyone. What happens to the one to whom Jesus wrote the letter?

**2 Corinthians 3:2-3 (NIV)** **2** You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. **3** You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

You see, the reality is those of us who have placed our faith in Jesus and have been called to follow Him, we are letters written with the Spirit of the living God and we are being sent into the world for God to declare His love to others.

What if we started allowing God to use us to show the world:

- LOVE in the midst of hatred

- JOY in the midst of great sorrow
- PEACE in the midst of a chaotic world
- PATIENCE in the midst of hurry
- KINDNESS in the midst of cruelty
- GOODNESS in the midst of selfishness
- FAITHFULNESS in the midst of carelessness
- GENTLENESS in the midst of hardness
- SELF-CONTROL in the midst of a world without any restraint

As **Christine Cain** says in her book, "If we're living letters sent by God to a broken world, and we never arrive, then aren't we the ones who are lost?"

Maybe one of the reasons we find ourselves drifting is because we have lost our mission and our purpose. We have stopped working or we never started, and we have settled for watching. Don't become God's letter stuck in a Christian bubble. Let's go into the world and allow God to use us for what He has left us here to do!

**Matthew 9:37-38 (NIV) 37** Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. **38** Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Notice what Jesus said! He didn't say there was a shortage of work to be done. He said there is a shortage of workers to do it. Will you answer the call to GO and to FOLLOW?

### **Invitation:**

What is He calling you to do?

Who is it He is calling you to reach with all of your gifts, talents, abilities and knowledge you have?

- Is it an adult who never learned to read?
- Is it someone recently released from incarceration?
- Is it a child in need of a foster home?
- Is it children in your community who go to bed hungry every night?
- Is it a widow who cannot afford a new roof for her home?
- Is it a teen with an unexpected pregnancy?

Have you stopped TRUSTING?

Have you stopped HUNGERING?

Have you stopped HEALING?

Have you stopped WORKING?

If you are asking the question, "How Did I Get Here?" we want you to know that you can always find your way back to God. It is never too late to ask Jesus for help! He loves you so much He will go to great lengths to celebrate your return (like the Prodigal Son). He loves you so much He will walk on water to get to you and to strengthen your faith! If you will only look to Him and call out to Him. He is ready and willing to restore you and reattach you to the anchor of your soul.

**Thomas Edison** said this, *"Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time."*

Don't give up on God or His ability to make you whole. I can guarantee you He has not given up on you!! Will you try ONE MORE TIME?