

The Patient Work of Becoming: Why Spiritual Maturity Can't Be Rushed

There's something profoundly countercultural about the way God works. In a world obsessed with speed, efficiency, and instant results, the Kingdom of God operates on an entirely different timeline—one that values depth over velocity, transformation over transaction, and faithfulness over flash.

Consider the tree. It grows for only six to eight weeks each year. The rest of the time? Solidification. The fibers strengthen, the trunk thickens, the roots deepen. If a tree grew too quickly, it would collapse under its own weight. The very structure that allows for future growth requires seasons of apparent stillness.

This is the economy of Heaven—patient, purposeful, and utterly unlike our own.

The Main Thing Must Remain the Main Thing

In our desire to be effective, impactful Christians, we can easily become distracted by outcomes. We focus on programs, outreach strategies, and measurable results. We create checklists of spiritual disciplines and metrics for ministry success. None of these things are inherently wrong, but they miss the fundamental truth that changes everything: **Jesus is the main thing.**

Not our activity for Him. Not our service in His name. Not even our theological knowledge about Him. Jesus Himself—knowing Him, beholding Him, abiding in Him—this is the singular foundation upon which everything else must be built.

Philippians 1:6 reminds us that "he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Notice the timeline: until the day of Christ Jesus. This work isn't finished in a weekend conference or

a forty-day challenge. It's the patient work of a lifetime, extending into eternity itself.

Building on the Rock in Every Season

Jesus told a story about two builders—one who built on rock, the other on sand. What's often overlooked in this familiar parable is this: **the storms came to both houses**. Becoming a Christian doesn't grant you immunity from difficulty. The rain falls on the just and the unjust alike.

The difference isn't in the circumstances we face but in the foundation we've built upon. When our lives are rooted in Christ—when we've spent time in His presence, when we've allowed His Word to shape our thinking, when we've learned to hear His voice—we can weather any storm.

But here's where it gets interesting: just as a tree needs both sunny days and rainy days to produce fruit, we need every season of life to mature spiritually. The monotonous days. The catastrophic days. The days that feel utterly wasted. The days of breakthrough and victory. All of them play their part in the patient work God is doing in us.

Maturity isn't being unaffected by circumstances. Maturity is maintaining the same level of dependence on God regardless of circumstances.

Transformation Through Beholding

Second Corinthians 3:18 contains a revolutionary truth: "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

We are transformed by beholding. Not by striving. Not by self-improvement projects. Not by white-knuckling our way through spiritual disciplines. We become like what we behold.

David understood this when he wrote in Psalm 27:4, "One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all

the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple."

When you dwell in someone's house, you see how they live. You observe their habits, their values, their rhythms. You're shaped by proximity. This is what happens when we make space to simply be with Jesus—not to perform for Him or prove ourselves to Him, but to gaze upon His beauty and let that vision reshape us from the inside out.

The Fruit That Comes From Abiding

Galatians 5:22-23 lists the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Notice what it's called: the fruit **of the Spirit**. Not the fruit of your determination. Not the fruit of your discipline. His fruit, produced in you as you remain connected to Him.

Jesus said it plainly in John 15: "Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."

This is where we so often get it backwards. We see the characteristics of mature faith—love, patience, self-control—and we try to manufacture them through sheer willpower. We exhaust ourselves trying to be better people. But transformation doesn't work that way.

The branch doesn't strain to produce grapes. It simply stays connected to the vine, and fruit happens naturally as a result of that connection. Our job isn't to produce fruit; it's to abide.

Little by Little: God's Preferred Method

When God brought the Israelites into the Promised Land, He could have driven out all their enemies in a single, dramatic sweep. Instead, He told them in Exodus 23:29-30: "But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too

numerous for you. Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land."

Little by little. Not because God lacked power, but because the people lacked capacity. They needed to grow into their inheritance. They needed time to establish themselves, to build their towns, to increase in number and strength.

The same is true for us. God works little by little because growth happens according to our capacity to possess. He's pioneering something in each of us—not in a day, not in a year, but across the span of our lives. He's patient because He's working from and for eternity.

The Power Made Perfect in Weakness

Perhaps the most countercultural aspect of God's economy is this: "My power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

The world tells us to hide our weaknesses, to project strength, to have it all together. God invites us into something entirely different—a posture of humble dependence where His strength is most clearly displayed.

You don't need to mature before God can use you. You don't need to have it all figured out before you're valuable to the Kingdom. The moment you're saved, you have worth. You have purpose. God delights in using imperfect, in-process people.

A Prayer for Fullness

Paul's prayer for the Ephesian church captures the heart of what spiritual maturity looks like:

"I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this

love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:16-19).

This is the invitation: to be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Not through frantic activity or religious performance, but through beholding Jesus, remaining in His love, and allowing His patient work to unfold in us—little by little, season by season, day by day.

The journey is long, but He is faithful. And He who began a good work will see it through to completion.