

Sanctification is Simple

Statement of Premise:

How sanctification works: **To grow spiritually, you have to put in reoccurring effort over time, and your efforts have to be backed by the supernatural power of the Scriptures and of the Holy Spirit.**

Character growth is when an aspect of biblical standards becomes built into you as a person.

Three Key Analogies

1. Christians are Like Athletes (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 12:1-3; 2 Timothy 4:7; Galatians 5:7)

- Athletes get better by practicing. That is how they grow, by putting effort into practicing. Christians also get better by practicing. (Hebrews 5:8)
 - Athletes have to put effort into practicing. It's impossible to practice without putting some amount of effort into it. The more effort an athlete puts into practice, the more it will cause them to improve.
 - The same is true for Christians
 - You can't apply God's Word without effort
 - The more effort you put into applying God's Word and practicing it, the more it will cause you to improve
 - There are two types of effort:
 - Choosing to do the thing the Bible teaches us to do
 - Searching for ways to improve our doing it

2. Scripture is Like Food (Matthew 4:3-5; 1 Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:12-14; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3)

- 1. You can live and go about your daily routine without eating. But eating gives you a boost of energy for 6-12 hours that you would not otherwise have.
- 2. Eating gives you energy, but if there is something an athlete is not good at, eating will not instantly give them the strength to be good at it. They still need to exercise and practice.
- 3. If an athlete isn't good at something, and on top of that, they're not eating, they definitely won't be doing good at it.
- 4. As an adult, you can skip meals and even go days without eating and be fine. But you will not have the physical strength that you would have if you had been eating regularly.

3. The Holy Spirit is Like Water (John 7:37-39; Isaiah 44:3; 1 Corinthians 12:13)

- Water gives you the ability to keep doing work. Work dehydrates you, but water replenishes that.
- You have to stay hydrated daily. Without staying hydrated, you will have a lack of energy, and potentially several other problems (according to Medical News Today) including:
 - Headaches
 - Dizziness and confusion
 - Heatstroke and heat cramps
 - Stiff joints that may eventually stick and not work properly
 - Raised or otherwise unregulated body temperature
 - Swelling in the brain
 - Sharp changes in blood pressure
 - Seizures
 - You may also go into shock and become unresponsive.
- We need regular fillings of the Spirit just like our bodies regularly need more water (Ephesians 5:18)

We're going to combine these three analogies, and it will paint picture for us. I don't think this is a coincidence. I think God made these to work this way.

Similarities and Principles: (Six Principles for Understanding Spiritual Growth)

- 1. *A person thinking they can be sanctified without regular time in God's Word and regular fillings of the Spirit is like a person thinking they can become a professional athlete without food and water.*
 - Joshua 1:6-9; Psalms 1:1-2
- 2. *A person thinking that all they need to do to grow spiritually is to spend time in God's Word, in worship and prayer and then God will take care of the rest is like an athlete who thinks that all they need to do to improve is to eat food and drink water and that they don't need to practice.*
 - There are only three ways for an athlete to improve
 - 1. More time
 - 2. More effort
 - 3. Smarter effort
 - As an athlete, you have to regularly have enough food and water, but after that, the only way to grow is to put in effort over time.
- 3. *As an athlete, even though the only thing that will help is to put more effort in, you may need to increase food and water as you increase effort. Otherwise, you will not have sufficient nourishment, and your body will cease to be able to put that level of effort in.*
 - Colossians 1:29
- 4. *Even if an athlete eats well and drinks enough water and practices hard, they won't make significant improvements over night.*
- 5. *No matter how much an athlete trains, they will never be perfect.*
 - No matter how much we grow by putting God empowered effort in, we will never be perfect in this life. There will always be more room to grow.
- 6. *Sometimes we have hindrances they weigh us down, and we need to get rid of them.*
 - Deliverance and inner healing
 - Hebrews 12:1
- **The big takeaway here, is that in a real way, the driver of all growth is effort. It's just that successful and sustained effort is impossible without regular and appropriate amounts of food and water.**
 - It's the same in the Christian life. The real driver of all growth is effort, but successful and sustained effort is impossible without regular supernatural empowerment from God's Word and God's Spirit.

The Pattern for Christian Growth:

- Summary of how it works:
 - If you want to really grow spiritually, you have to put in consistent, diligent, strategic effort. You do this by seeking to do what the Bible says and trying again no matter how many times you may fail. You search to find ways to do those things better. As you put in effort, you make sure you rely on God for strength for your efforts by daily intaking His word and daily fellowshiping with His Spirit. As you do this, your efforts will have supernatural power behind them, and as you continue putting in supernaturally empowered effort, day in and day out, you will be growing.
 - If you remove the empowerment of God, growth is going to have issues.
 - If you remove putting in effort into your growth, growth is gonna have issues.
 - If you only try for a little bit and then you quit, growth is going to have issues.
- How this relates to grace
 - 1. God is providing the power which makes it possible to grow (and we don't deserve for Him to do that).
 - 2. It's by God's grace that we put in this effort. Without God giving us grace, we wouldn't.
 - 3. We put in effort in order to grow, not in order to gain favor or be loved more. God loved us before we put in any effort, and He loves us apart from our efforts.