



DIGGING DEEPER

WEEK 2

Unstuck

Online you can find some pretty interesting stories of people who have been stuck. A three-year-old boy got his hand stuck inside an arcade claw machine as he tried to retrieve a teddy bear when his attempts were unsuccessful and his turn was over. Eighteen people were stuck hanging upside down on a roller coaster when strong winds caused the coaster to stop. A man got his hand stuck in a toilet trying to retrieve his cell phone.¹

Though we might not have been stuck in these ways, we all find ourselves in ruts at times when it seems that life will never change. When we are stuck, we are not growing or progressing. Spiritually speaking, we can get stuck when our walk with the Lord becomes stagnant. Some Christians remain in spiritual infancy like a baby wanting to be bottle-fed, rather than growing and learning to feed themselves. Other Christians do not move past childhood, expecting others to care for their spiritual needs. Yet in 1 Corinthians, Paul calls the church to grow up to feed themselves and even prepare spiritual food for others.

As we consider how to get “unstuck,” we must ask the question *What helps people grow?* John Townsend and Henry Cloud tackle this subject in their excellent book *How People Grow*, in which they identify some key concepts that can help us grow personally as well as equip us to encourage others to get unstuck in their spiritual lives. Here are summaries of a few highlights from their book concerning the path to spiritual growth.²

Time. Spiritual growth doesn’t happen overnight. God uses time as one way to grow his people.

Recognizing Our Need. In order to grow, we must realize that we are stuck and in need of God’s help to achieve spiritual motion. Most people begin to grow when they

recognize a need—whether for God or for growth—or they have a problem that they cannot solve on their own.

Relationships. According to Townsend and Cloud, “Spiritual growth doesn’t occur in a vacuum. It happens within intimate, vulnerable relationships with God and safe people.”³ In order to get unstuck and move into a deeper walk with Christ, we need others alongside us to provide encouragement and sometimes correction. Christianity is not meant to be lived out in isolation. We grow in the context of authentic community.

Identification of Issues. Sometimes as Christians we try a one-size-fits-all program to help people grow. However, our creative God made us different. We must recognize that we have different struggles. By looking for underlying issues and recognizing that we aren’t all the same, we can help each other grow.

Ownership. We must take personal responsibility in order to grow, learning to differentiate our own mistakes from the past, the flaws of others, and the parts of life that are just the result of living in a broken world. When we understand that we cannot control the world and the choices of other people, we learn to grow by making adjustments to our own lives. Blaming people and circumstances rather than dealing with our issues will prevent us from moving forward in spiritual growth.

Practicing New Behaviors. This is where we implement new methods that help us go deeper in faith. I’ve heard it said that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over yet expecting a different result. If we want to experience growth, we must practice new behaviors. This is similar to going to a physical therapist in order to treat an injury. By doing the appropriate exercises with the guidance of someone with more expertise than we have, we can grow toward health.

Forgiveness and Grief. Lifting up pain to God helps us grow. We get unstuck when we acknowledge wrongs that have been done to us and suffering that we have endured and then allow God to heal our brokenness.

Real Change. If we are truly growing in our faith, then our relationship with the Lord should be different today than it was last year. Townsend and Cloud observe, “As the inside grows, so ultimately should the outside. You should see better relationships, emotional experiences, and connectedness to God. These aren’t signs that one is done growing, but they are certainly signs that things are moving in the right direction.”⁴

Maturity. We should never stop growing but should “go deeper . . . , bringing more and more to the light of God’s healing grace.”⁵ New areas of growth will always come to light, and we should see steady progress toward intimacy with Jesus as we pursue movement out of our stuck places. Our pursuit of growth will be as varied as our lives. In order to truly grow, we must allow God’s truth to sink deep into our reality. We may know God’s precepts but stay stagnant in our relationship with Him if we do not allow His Word to move from our heads to our hearts. Where our theology meets our reality, we experience life transformation.

As you reflect on these markers of spiritual growth, does one stand out as being more relevant in your life right now? Is there a change God is calling you to make so that you can get unstuck and grow in your faith?

1. Grace Murano, "10 Bizarre Stories of People Getting Stuck," *Oddee*, April 4, 2011, http://www.oddee.com/item_97665.aspx, accessed April 25, 2016.
2. Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *How People Grow: What the Bible Reveals about Personal Growth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 357-60.
3. *Ibid.*, 358.
4. *Ibid.*, 360.
5. *Ibid.*

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