

# *Spiritual Considerations...*

*Selected articles designed to assist in our Bible study and Christian walk.*



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Dave Phillips, editor

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## **Growing in Spiritual Maturity** **Dave Phillips, Germantown**

“How do you shoot a lay-up?”

“How much do I have to exercise?”

“What exercises will help me strengthen my backhand?”

These are all good questions for the novice basketball or tennis player. But you wouldn't expect a skilled team to be repeatedly discussing the basics. A beginner in any sport needs a coach or instructor to help teach basic moves and explain simple procedures. Some activities and practices will prove detrimental to the progress of an athlete, and he needs to be forewarned. At some point, however, an athlete develops the proper form until it seems to him to be second nature. A professional basketball player doesn't “count steps” while shooting a lay-up. The movement is comfortable and smooth.

How does a Christian learn to decide which activities are best in his spiritual growth? At first, someone may be needed to offer advice and give significant input. But, at some point, a growing Christian needs to determine from his/her own study of God's word which activities will bring glory to God and which will not. The following is a list of questions that I collected several years ago. I don't know who first assembled these. Though they are not exhaustive, they are helpful in comparing our activities with the Bible in order to determine our spiritual walk.

At first, they sound mechanical – similar to learning how to shoot a basketball or roll a bowling ball. But after further reflection, we learn that these questions should become second nature to us. They are no longer mechanical, but comfortable and smooth. They become a part of our lifestyle.

### **Test for Any Activity**

1. Is it wrong within itself? (Galatians 5:19-21; 1 John 2:15-17)
2. Does it have the appearance of evil? (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22)
3. Does it destroy my identity as a Christian? (2 Corinthians 6:14 & 7:1)
4. Does it violate my conscience? (Romans 14:23)
5. Does it have a weakening influence on others? (Matthew 18:6,7 & Romans 14:21-23)
6. Does it appeal to the lustful desires within me? (Galatians 5:24)
7. Is it harmful to my body? (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 & 10:31)
8. Does it conflict with my duty as a Christian? (Matthew 6:33)
9. Does it require me to associate with the wrong kind of people? (1 Corinthians 15:3)
10. Does it make me a slave to habit? (1 Corinthians 6:12)
11. Does it lead in the wrong direction? (Genesis 13:12)
12. Is it an activity I would engage in before my Lord? (Luke 12:40)

**The Most Dangerous Thing**  
**From C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity**

Teachers will tell you that the laziest boy in the class is the one who works the hardest in the end. They mean this. If you give two boys, say, a proposition in geometry to do, the one who is prepared to take trouble will try to understand it. The lazy boy will learn it by heart because, for the moment, that needs less effort. But six months later, when they are preparing for the exam, that lazy boy is doing hours and hours of miserable drudgery over things the other boy understands, and positively enjoys, in a few minutes.

Laziness means more work in the long run. Or look at it this way. In a battle, or in mountain climbing, there is often one thing which it takes a lot of pluck to do; but it is also, in the long run, the safest thing to do. If you funk it, you will find yourself, hours later, in far worse danger. The cowardly thing is also the most dangerous thing.

**The Almost Impossible Thing**  
**From C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity**

It is like that here. The terrible thing, the almost impossible thing, is to hand over your whole self - all your wishes and precautions - to Christ. But it is far easier than what we are trying to do instead. For what we are trying to do is to remain what we call "ourselves," to keep personal happiness as our great aim in life, and yet at the same time be "good." We are all trying to let our mind and heart go their own way - centered on money or pleasure or ambition - and hoping, in spite of this, to behave honestly and chastely and humbly.

And that is exactly what Christ warned us you could not do. As He said, a thistle cannot produce figs. If I am a field that contains nothing but grass-seed, I cannot produce wheat. Cutting the grass may keep it short: but I shall still produce grass and no wheat. If I want to produce wheat, the change must go deeper than the surface. I must be ploughed up and re-sown.

**Defeating Old Habits**  
**From Thomas A Kempis, The Imitation of Christ**

It is hard to give up old habits, but it is even harder to go against one's own will. Yet, if you cannot overcome small, trivial things, when will you overcome difficult ones? Fight the urge when it starts, and break off bad habits, lest perhaps, little by little, they lead you into greater trouble. Oh, if you could only know how much peace for yourself and joy for others your good efforts could bring, I think you would be more anxious for spiritual growth!

**Thoughts of Others on Growth and Development**

*"The most important influence on a child is the character of its parents, rather than this or that single event."* Erich Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness (1973)

*"Every man's road in life is marked by the graves of his personal likings."*

Alexander Smith, "On the Importance of a Man to Himself," Dreamthorp (1863)