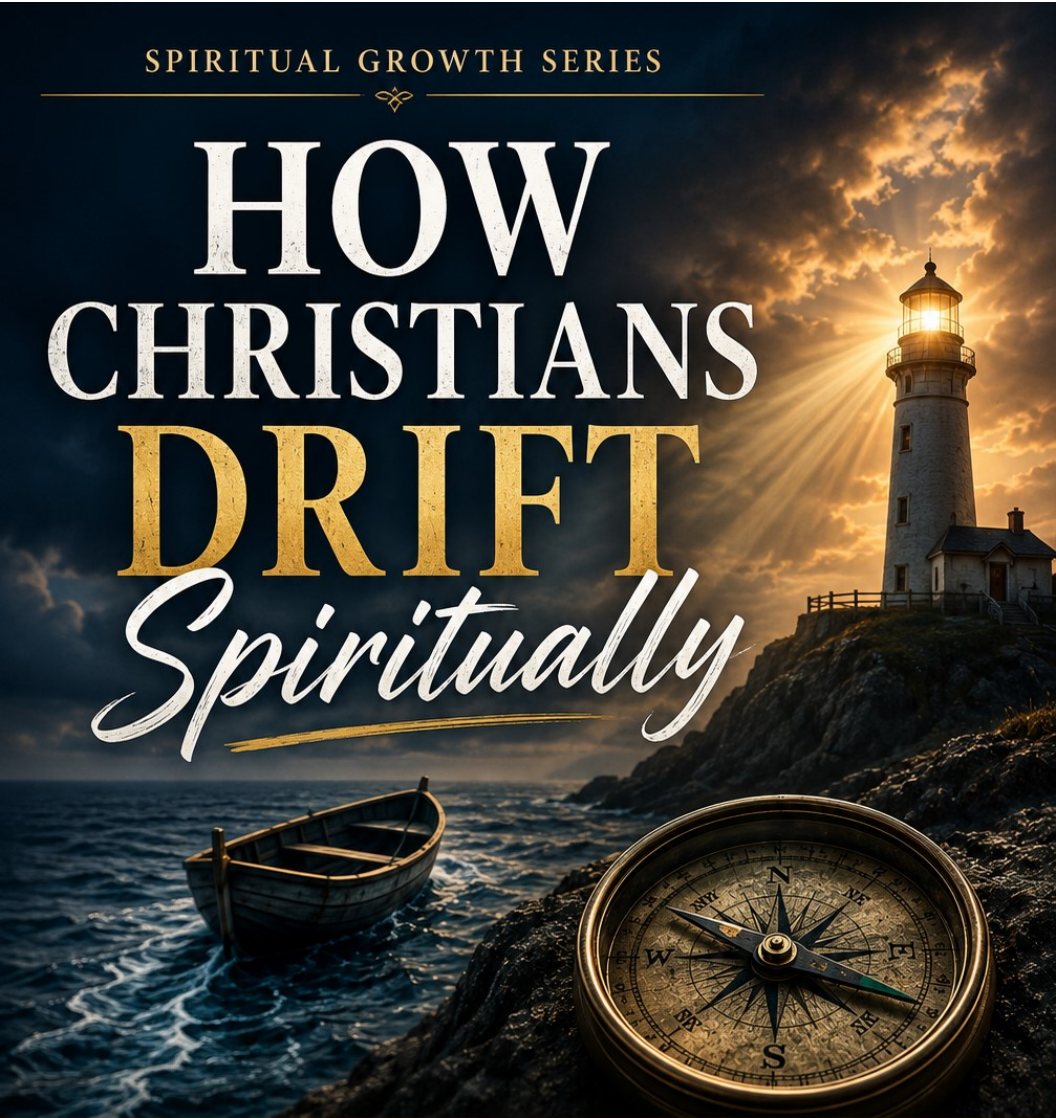


SPIRITUAL GROWTH SERIES



HOW CHRISTIANS DRIFT *Spiritually*



RECOGNIZING THE WARNING SIGNS
BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE



*Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed
to the things which we have heard,
lest at any time we should let them slip.*

HEBREWS 2:1 (KJV)



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How Christians Drift Spiritually

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Introduction

One of the dangers of the Christian life is that spiritual decline is rarely dramatic.

Ships do not usually sink because of one giant wave.

They drift because no one is watching the current.

Likewise, Christians usually do not wake up one day and decide, "I don't want God anymore."

A pattern generally looks like this:

- Private prayer begins to decline. (Usually unseen by others.)
- Bible reading becomes irregular. (Also mostly unseen.)
- The heart begins to cool spiritually.
- Church attendance becomes inconsistent.
- Giving begins to decrease or stop. (Now others may notice.)
- Service and involvement decline.

Eventually, the person may disappear from fellowship altogether. Eventually they wake up wondering, "What happened to my relationship with God?"

The Bible repeatedly warns believers about spiritual drift because God knows how easily it happens.

Spiritual drifting is usually gradual, almost unnoticed, but it always has identifiable causes and biblical remedies.

I. Drifting Begins With Neglect

Hebrews 2:1–3

Notice the warning.

It does not say,

"Be careful you don't reject the gospel."

It says,

"Give earnest heed...if we neglect"

Drifting begins with neglect.

Neglect eventually becomes a habit.

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- Service and involvement decline.

You usually drift from Christ long before you deliberately deny Christ.

II. The Heart Slowly Grows Cold

Matthew 24:12

"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."

Jesus did not say their love disappeared overnight.

It became cold.

Like hot coffee left sitting on the table.

No one poured ice into it.

It simply lost its heat.

Notice it didn't say "And because sin shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."

What's the difference between sin and iniquity

- **Sin** = the outward act.
- **Iniquity** = the inward bent or corruption of the heart.

Because of iniquity, the fire slowly dies.

III. Small Compromises Lead to Larger Ones

Song of Solomon 2:15

"Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines..."

Most Christians don't begin with major sins.

They begin with little compromises.

"I'll watch this spicy movie."

"I'll tell this little lie."

"I'll miss church because I'm tired or I don't have enough time for myself."

Little compromises weaken spiritual strength.

Eventually the large temptations become much easier to accept.

IV. Spiritual Disciplines Are Replaced by Convenience **Luke 9:23**

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily..."

Modern culture trains us to choose convenience.

Jesus teaches daily discipline.

Growing Christians understand:

- prayer requires discipline
- Bible study requires discipline
- fasting requires discipline
- faithful attendance requires discipline

Anything left to feelings alone will eventually decline.

Feelings Make Terrible Masters

Our emotions change constantly.

One day we feel:

- joyful
- confident
- close to God

The next day we may feel:

- discouraged
- anxious
- far from god

If our obedience depends on how we feel, our Christian life will rise and fall like a roller coaster.

V. Sin Hardens the Heart **Hebrews 3:12–13**

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of

unbelief... But exhort one another daily... lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

Sin rarely destroys a Christian instantly.

It deceives.

It promises pleasure without consequences.

It convinces us that "just this once" won't matter.

Every compromise makes the next compromise easier.

The conscience becomes quieter.

Conviction becomes weaker.

Eventually a person becomes comfortable with what once grieved the Holy Spirit.

The Bible describes this process as **the searing of the conscience**.

1 Timothy 4:1–2

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith... Speaking **lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.**"

A seared conscience is like skin that has been burned so badly it loses its sensitivity.

Spiritually, repeated disobedience dulls our sensitivity to God's voice.

The first time a person sins, they may feel deep conviction.

If they refuse to repent, the conviction becomes weaker.

What once produced tears eventually produces little or no response.

This is one of the most dangerous conditions a Christian can experience—not because God has stopped speaking, but because the heart has become less responsive to His voice.

The Remedy

The good news is that God calls us to respond while our hearts are still tender.

Psalms 139:23–24

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

1 John 1:9

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

A tender conscience is a gift. When the Holy Spirit convicts us, we should respond immediately with repentance rather than resisting Him. Every act of obedience keeps our hearts soft and sensitive to God's leading.

VI. Isolation Accelerates Spiritual Drift

Hebrews 10:24–25

One of Satan's favorite strategies is isolation. When believers withdraw from church they lose:

- encouragement
- accountability
- correction
- fellowship
- corporate worship

An isolated Christian is an easier target. Even Elijah needed fellowship after Mount Carmel.

VII. Worldly Thinking Slowly Replaces Biblical Thinking

2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind

Romans 12:2

The mind is constantly being shaped.
If Scripture isn't renewing it...
the world is.

Every day people are disciplined by:

- social media
- entertainment
- politics
- culture
- coworkers
- universities

Unless God's Word has the greater influence, worldly thinking gradually replaces biblical thinking.

VIII. Pride Prevents Recovery

Proverbs 16:18

18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 16:18 KJV

Many believers begin drifting but refuse correction.

They explain away warning signs.

"I've just been busy."

"I'll get serious later."

"I'm doing fine."

Pride keeps people from admitting they are drifting.

Humility brings restoration.

Notice the process – a haughty spirit brings a fall, refusal to admit sin brings destruction

Biblical Definition of a haughty spirit

The Hebrew word translated "haughty" carries the idea of being high, exalted, lofty, or lifted up. When used of a person's spirit, it describes someone who has an inflated view of themselves.

A haughty spirit says:

"I know better."

"No one can teach me."

"I don't need correction."

"The rules don't apply to me."

"I'm more spiritual than others."

It is the opposite of humility.

Characteristics of a Haughty Spirit

A person with a haughty spirit often:

Rejects correction.

Looks down on others.

Is defensive when confronted.

Boasts about accomplishments.

Desires recognition and prominence.

Refuses to admit wrong.

Trusts in their own wisdom instead of God.

IX. God Always Calls Us Back

4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

Revelation 2:4–5 ESV

Jesus did not condemn the church at Ephesus without hope.

He gave three commands:

1. Remember.
2. Repent.
3. Return.

Notice God's grace.

He doesn't merely point out our failure.

He provides the path back.

X. Spiritual Growth Is Intentional

2 Peter 3:18

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

No one accidentally becomes spiritually mature.

Growth requires:

- daily prayer, daily Scripture
- faithful church attendance
- obedience
- repentance
- worship
- service
- dependence on the Holy Spirit

Healthy Christians are not perfect.

They are continually growing.

Practical Questions

- Has prayer become less important than it once was?
- Do I hunger for God's Word?

- Am I growing or merely maintaining or worse yet going backwards?
 - Have little compromises entered my life?
 - Am I quick to repent when convicted?
- Is Christ still my first love?

Conclusion

Every Christian is moving in one of two directions:

- growing closer to Christ, or
- drifting away from Him.

The encouraging truth is that drift is reversible.

The same Savior who warned Peter before he fell restored him after he repented.

God still calls every drifting believer:

"Return unto me, and I will return unto you." (Malachi 3:7)