

These Dynamic Catalysts Will Move You Into Spiritual Growth

Sometimes it seems it would be awesome if God simply “zapped” you and you were “there,” fully transformed into the person He created you to be. But almost always, He takes us through a process of becoming. How well are you cooperating in that process? There are some clear catalysts for spiritual growth that we can engage in, and doing so will make our transformation significantly quicker and more meaningful.

A catalyst is something that speeds up change. In chemistry, a catalyst makes a chemical reaction happen with less energy needed, or more quickly. In education, a teacher is a catalyst, facilitating learning in ways students would have difficulty learning on their own. It’s the same in our spiritual transformation; certain catalysts facilitate our growth significantly.

But first, a word about where we’re headed. When we talk about spiritual growth or spiritual transformation, where are we going? What’s the end goal we’re trying to reach? This Scripture should help;

“For those whom He foreknew, He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He might be the firstborn among many brothers” (Rom. 8:29).

Our spiritual growth is not for the purpose of making us nicer people (who wants to be “nice?”), healthier and wealthier, or more successful. It’s not to make us into model church members. It’s all about becoming more like Jesus.

Let’s look at five specific catalysts for spiritual growth, elements that facilitate our movement along the journey to

become ever more like Jesus.

1. Life-Changing Truth

Head knowledge is great—as far as it goes. But it's possible to know all about the Bible and still be an atheist; some secular university religion professors exemplify that. It's when truth gets beyond the intellectual level and penetrates your soul, heart, behavior, all of life, that it leads to spiritual growth.

That doesn't happen without the action of the Holy Spirit. So what can you do?

Let your mind be soaked in truth. Get around places where truth is presented. That includes Bible-based preaching, studying the Bible for yourself, and consuming other solid Christian media such as Bible studies, podcasts, online resources and more. Pray that the Holy Spirit will direct you to the life-changing truth you need most and that your heart will receive it and be changed as a result.

2. Spiritual Disciplines

What you do every day matters. When you get to heaven, God won't be looking at a checklist to see how many times you read your Bible through, how many hours you spend in prayer or how many days you fasted. Spiritual disciplines are not a means of earning grace; they're a catalyst for spiritual transformation.

As Dallas Willard says, God is not opposed to *effort*; He's opposed to *earning*. Our behavior does not make God love us more or save us. But our efforts do make a difference in how quickly we become like Jesus. These spiritual disciplines include things such as prayer, study, silence, solitude, fasting, service, worship and so on. The list isn't important; what's important is how these practices facilitate your spiritual growth.

Jesus has this idea that we're supposed to do what He said. "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). So, just do it!

3. Personal Ministry

Have you ever noticed when you feel most satisfied, most energetic, most significant? It's most likely to be when God has worked through you in blessing someone else. There's nothing quite like the joy, even exhilaration, of working alongside God and experiencing being in the flow of what He is doing.

Ministering to others is not without challenge, even risk. Not everyone will immediately, or ever, be appreciative of how you seek to help them. But as you take your eyes off yourself and minister to others, your own heart will be stretched. You'll see where God wants to change you even more, and you'll become even more hungry for that change.

4. Significant Relationships

The people you hang around with matter. Jim Rohn was famous for saying that you become the average of the five people you spend the most time with. The relationships you value and invest in will change you.

Your initial reaction may be, "Nobody around me cares about spiritual growth. I have no friends. I'm stuck!"

You're only stuck if you choose to be. You may have close family members who are not on this journey with you, and with whom you must stay somewhat connected. But Jesus gave us the example in how He invested most of His time and energy in the people who could minister to Him or who could receive what He had to give. You can choose to reach out and connect with people deeply who want spiritual growth too. That's why it's almost impossible to experience great spiritual growth without being part of an intentional small group in some way. Again,

just do it!

5. Pivotal Circumstances

Life happens. Whether it's a hurricane, the death of someone close, a broken relationship, a serious illness or some other crisis, pivotal circumstances are a catalyst for spiritual change. And you have the choice about whether that change is positive or negative.

Since my husband's death, I have experienced a significant level of positive spiritual growth. There is a deeper substance to who I am and what I have to offer. God never enjoys our pain. But He always has a miraculous way of making something meaningful out of it. "But as for you, you intended to harm me, but God intended it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many lives" (Gen. 50:20).

When you face something challenging, seek God's perspective to understand what He wants to do in and/or through you as a result. Remember, He doesn't enjoy your pain. But He will always grow you through it if you give Him the chance.

Your Turn: *What kind of spiritual growth are you experiencing? How are you going to leverage any of these catalysts for spiritual growth in your own life? Leave a comment below.*
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