

Why Does Faith Plateau?

Historically, faithful people have realized that serious shortcomings existed in the church, so they have sought to fix them. Generally, the result has been division because not everyone thought the fix was necessary. As time passed, new faithful people saw more things that needed fixing, resulting in another cycle of fixing and division.

Why did this happen among the earliest Christians?

- Mark 10:17 – 22 (Matthew 19:16 – 30) We reach a point beyond which we are not willing to go.
- Acts 13:45, 17:5 We overreact to people thinking they are right with God when we disagree.
- Hebrews 5:12 – 6:12 We get lazy.

What other problems may arise among us that may cause stagnation?

- Our time is consumed with our own group and the lost who know less than we do.
- Discussions with those who disagree have a poor history of being productive.
- We have no felt needs.

What examples does the New Testament give about growth?

- 1 Thessalonians 5:19 – 21 Test all things; keep what is good. Don't just reject the whole thing. Keep the good parts. Try to make the other person's case, not just defend your own.
- Philippians 1:12 – 18. Obviously, in other places, Paul was against various forms of "false teaching." Those who were preaching "from selfish ambition" had something wrong at least in attitude if not in facts. Perhaps our lack of growth may be attributed to avoiding such people and undervaluing the fact that the gospel is preached. The line between rejoicing and rejecting is difficult to draw. As we try to define that line, we learn about ourselves and the weaknesses in our attitudes, or we become cemented in our "essential doctrines." Liberty seems an important issue here.
- Galatians 1:11 - 2:6 Paul did not receive his message from man (1:12), did not confer with flesh and blood (1:16), and those who seemed to be something added nothing (2:5). Sometimes we get the attitude that we don't need to receive, confer, or be added to by other people. But that's the way everyone except those of Ephesians 4:11 got it - through humans.
- 2 Peter 1:5 - 7 Partaking of the divine nature follows a sequence, only one step of which is knowledge. We need to work on all the steps.

What practices will aid in growth?

- In the "Growing Faith" PowerPoint, the premise was that, for the most part, all churches have the same basic activities which are ways recommended in the New Testament by which to grow faith. The problem is that churches in general have all the right practices for all the wrong reasons. One way to re-start stalled faith is to go back to the fundamental church activities and re-assess their purposes. Churches get stuck on how to do them rather than on how they edify themselves. This seems too simple.
- Groups plateau out when they get complicated. We tend to do that as we make connections from several places. These ideas range from "the rapture" to "foreshadowing." If I have to

go to several places to piece together an idea, it is probably not there in the first place, just in my imagination. An ordinary person could never see it. The gospel becomes the property of the "mature." Consider first-century Christians. They did not have New Testaments, and apostles and prophets were few. The Bereans searched the Scriptures to see if Paul had quoted the prophets in context, not to find new doctrines. Unraveling bad doctrines is very complicated because it took a lot of thought to put them together. Our efforts need to be focused on how to make it simpler for the ordinary person.

- Allot time to consider opposing views.
- Investigate why I am not growing as I should be. Maybe someone else has a suggestion.
- Avoid debate formats. As with the gospel, one-on-one is the way that works.
- Be convinced that other seekers with different ideas are out there.
- Be certain that there are other teachings that would markedly improve my message.