

June 7, 2026

“Doing Our Part”

Hebrews 12:1-3

Intro:

If you were with us last Sunday, you will remember that I spoke about growing as a Christian, with the focus of that message being that ultimately it is God’s job to grow us in faith. It is He who began that work in us, and it is God who will finish that work on the final day. Our primary job in this, if you recall, is to not fight God in that process.

Bill Cosby had comedy routine about Noah’s Ark. When it finally comes time to get the animals loaded up onto the Ark, Noah is found at the bottom of the ramp, checking off on his list each pair of animals as they come along. As the rhinoceros’ are loaded on, God speaks to Noah and tells him that he has two males there and he will have to go back and exchange one for a female. Noah, by this time is tired and cranky, and responds to God by saying “You change one of them.”

This Sunday we are going to explore what “not fighting” God in growing us looks like.

Our Job:

What I *don’t* want you to have taken away from last week’s sermon is that we can just sit back on our laurels and wait for God to do all the work. Yet all too often that is what Christians do. They think it is enough to come to a decision of faith, and that once that has been done, they can just coast through the rest of this life of faith with little effort or intentionality. It is almost as though growing in faith is some sort of magical thing that happens to us and will bring all the good fortune and happiness that we think we are entitled to.

This is not how it works. Like anything of value in life, growing in faith requires that we put effort into the process. Basically, it is God’s prerogative to work in us, but we have a role to play in that work. Conversely, if we are not in humble

submission to God, then no amount of effort on our part will result in growth as a Christian.

In our baptism course curriculum, we look at ten things that we can do to make Jesus' work of growing us easier, and will enhance our Christian walk. This list is the focus of this morning's message. Note that these are not in any order of importance. They are all important, and I am not necessarily going to follow the order that they appear in our baptism booklet.

1. The start of the list, for me, and what acts as an anchor for successful growth is to keep focussed on Jesus. It is all too easy to get lost in and overwhelmed by all the different voices and options in the world. Many of them are good, and many are not, but if we are not focused on Jesus, we are less able to sort out the difference and stay away from that which is bad for us. As we have already read this morning, in chapter 12 the author of Hebrews compares the life of faith to a race. Running that race well requires that we keep our eyes on Jesus and all that He has done for us. Keeping Jesus, and all that He means to us, front and center in our lives helps to make the other ways of helping our growth to be enjoyable and something that we can look forward to, and not an onerous chore. So, keep Jesus in front of you – see Him in what you do, what you read, and the people that you interact with.
2. Be faithful to your community of faith. I have said it many times before, and I will say it again: we were never meant to live a life of faith in isolation. We are built for relationship with other people, and as Christians we have been adopted into a family with other believers. Growth happens best in the context of relationships with other believers that you regularly share life with. So, regularly attend worship at church. Get involved in ministry opportunities at church. Contribute through time and finances. Invest in the lives of others, while at the same time allowing them to invest in you.
3. Read your Bible. Like most of this list, this seems pretty obvious. And yet, so many Christians are effectively illiterate when it comes to Biblical knowledge. I'm not saying everyone needs to become a master theologian and Bible

scholar, but we should have a growing knowledge of and understanding of what the Bible says. If you have been a Christian, and going to church regularly for several years, you shouldn't struggle to know where to find any specific book of the Bible. A subtle lie that Satan tells us is that we don't know enough about the Bible to be able to lead a class, or even contribute in a discussion. If you are faithfully reading your Bible, then you do have that knowledge, and you do have lots of good and valuable things to contribute. In addition, the Bible is the primary way God speaks to us and it is where we discover who He is and learn about His character. As we read in Psalm 119 earlier, having God's word hidden in our hearts (meaning we are familiar with and/or have memorized it) is the tool for staying pure in our lives of following God.

4. Worship regularly with your Christian family, which I have already touched on, and worship on your own. One does not eliminate the need for the other. In Hebrews 10:25, we are instructed to not give up meeting together. So we need to meet together, but worship is not limited to only an hour and a half on Sunday morning. Worship needs to be a part of your regular and everyday life. When you are walking in the park, when you are in the middle of a project at work, when you are enjoying a coffee or lunch break, in any and every part of your daily routine, you should be looking for ways that you can turn it into an opportunity to worship your God.
5. Pray regularly. Again, this one seems pretty obvious. But, just like reading the Bible, this is one that many Christians seem to engage minimally in. One of the biggest excuses to not pray, and therefore one of the biggest lies told to us by Satan, is that we don't think we are good at praying. Maybe you don't know the proper thing to say, or you fumble over your words. Or you are easily distracted by thinking about something else. All of that is not an excuse to stop praying, but reason to pray more. If you don't know what to say, then speak more often so you can find your prayer voice. Remember, prayer is not a polished speech, it is conversation between you and God. There is no right formula. God does not reject any of your prayers just because you didn't frame something grammatically correctly. In prayer, God hears your voice and you learn to hear His.

6. Look for Models and Mentors. There will always be someone who is more mature in their faith than you are, and someone who is newer or less mature than you. Look for those mature people and get them to be a mentor in your growth. And as you do that and grow, make yourself available to mentor someone yourself. It is amazing how quickly one learns when one is in the position of trying to teach someone else.
7. Make use of your Spiritual Gifts. Everyone who is a Christian, who has the Holy Spirit dwelling within them, has at least one spiritual gift. Use it! Like our muscles, if we don't use them or train them, they become weak and ineffective. Spiritual gifts are given to encourage and lift up the community of faith in our corporate growing together. Some of you might be thinking that you don't know what your gift might be, if you even have one. Then you need to discover the gift you have at this time in your life of faith. There are many different resources to help identify your gifting, but prayer is a great way to start the process of discovery. Trying something out is also a great way. You might discover that "something" is not your gifting, or you might discover a profound joy in exercising this new gift.
8. Obey Jesus. As Christians we are Christ-followers. Then obey the one you are following. According to John 15:10, when we obey Jesus we are remaining in His love. So, if you love Jesus, then you will obey Him. Living in obedience to what Jesus is telling you isn't just "following orders", but showing Jesus how much you love Him. How do we know what obedience looks like? That goes back to reading your Bible and praying.
9. Witness to your faith. When people meet for the first time, or after a long time of separation, the early conversation will usually revolve around sharing what they have been up to. Sharing about our faith is a similar experience. If your faith is not stagnant, then you have something to share with others about what God is doing in your life. The more you allow yourself to be open to opportunities to share your faith, the easier it will become to not only speak about your love for God, but to live that in your actions and attitude.
10. Finally, keep a short list of your sins. Yes, we have been forgiven, and yes in that moment God does remove our sins from him and us as far as the east

is from the west. But, we are also still in the process and we screw up. It is a healthy part of our growth to regularly confess those sins to God and seek forgiveness. This is not a process to beat ourselves up, to free ourselves up. The closer we grow to God, the more His heart will align with ours and when we act outside of that alignment, it unsettles us. Make things right with God. Be careful, however, that you don't fall into the lie that you are never good enough for God or that you are always screwing things up and disappointing Him. You are good enough, because Jesus has paid for you. And, God does not live in a constant state of disappointment with you. On the contrary, He loves you deeply and completely. Being transparent with God about our sins allows us to be able to experience that love and see it for what it is.

Conclusion:

This might have seemed like a long list, but it is not a difficult list. It is part of the life of a growing Christian. Putting these into regular practice might seem like a lot, but it is not hard or difficult work. And when we remember that God is the primary driver of our growth, and that these actions help us to avoid fighting against God, then they will seem easy and enjoyable. If there are points on this list that you have not practiced, or have let lapse in your Christian walk, then I would encourage you to find a way to intentionally add it, or them, back in.

Let's pray.