

*Men of God:
A Roadmap for Spiritual Growth*

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Session 1: Hindrances and Helps
to Growth Part 1
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Outline

Week 1: Men of God: Hindrances and Helps to Growth Part 1

Week 2: Men of God: Hindrances and Helps to Growth Part 2

Week 3: Men of God: Time and Priorities

Week 4: Men of God: Friendship and Community

Week 5: Men of God: Thoughts and Feelings

Week 6: Men of God: Home and Family

Week 7: Men of God: Work and Play

Week 8: Men of God: Money and Stewardship

3 Starting Assumptions

1. We are Christian men who want to grow
2. We are frustrated at our lack of growth.
3. We are ready to change.

5 Reasons for stalled progress toward godliness:

1. A heavy load: the issue of priorities

There is considerable evidence that **exhaustion** is commonplace for a great many men in today's America.

The “cult of busyness that is characteristic of the modern world” Joe Barnard says that modern men are “exhausting themselves to death.” (Joe Barnard, *The Way Forward*, 20).

5 Reasons for stalled progress toward godliness:

Cory Brock and Andrew Kelley call it the “hustle and grind” culture.

“In our experience with young people, especially at the beginning of their professional lives—or perhaps seeking to rebound from years wasted in comfort culture—hustle ideology can feel like a more fulfilling path to finding meaning... By hustle-and-grind ideology, we don’t simply mean hard-working lifestyles. Rather, it’s the ideology of pursuing a future version of the self—tougher, harder, more successful, more complete—through relentless self-improvement.”

[\(https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/comfort-culture-hustle-ideology/\)](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/comfort-culture-hustle-ideology/)

5 Reasons for stalled progress toward godliness:

“Today, a good dad is a part time Uber driver, an evening tutor, and a weekend event planner. His parenting responsibilities include shuttling children from sports practices to violin lessons, building ivy league resumes, and organizing activities lest ‘Johnny’ experiences the greatest of all evils, ‘boredom.’ ... Outside of family, men feel the pressure to fulfil all the soft requirements of a reputable, middle-class existence, which include intensive workouts, fluency in current events (especially sports), regular doses of fun, and illustrious success in a notable profession. Thus, by the time they hit middle age they physically have no bandwidth left.” (Joe Barnard, *The Way Forward*, 20-21)

5 Reasons for stalled progress toward godliness:

2. A skills gap: the issue of training

Another reason behind the failure of many men to make significant progress in Christian godliness relates, not to a lack of desire, but to a lack of ability.

After coming to faith in Christ, and joining the local church many men struggle to develop the skills they will need to grow.

5 Reasons for stalled progress toward godliness:

2. A skills gap: the issue of training

A pew research poll showed that in 2021 roughly a **quarter of adult men** in America did not read a whole book that year.

[\(https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/09/21/who-doesnt-read-books-in-america/\)](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/09/21/who-doesnt-read-books-in-america/)

A 2019 Lifeway Research poll shows that **only 32%** of Protestant adults read the Bible every day.

27% say they read it a few times a week.

5 Reasons for stalled progress toward godliness:

3. A perspective problem: the issue of expectations

We often have an unhealthy perspective on what growth looks like and especially on how quickly it will come.

Christian growth is organic, not mechanical.

5 Reasons for stalled progress toward godliness:

“ And he said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.” (Mark 4:26-29)

5 Reasons for stalled progress toward godliness:

4. An idol factory: the issue of love

“man’s nature, so to speak, is a perpetual factory of idols.”

(John Calvin, *Institutes* 1:108).

5 Reasons for stalled progress toward godliness:

In *The Way Forward*, Joe Barnard suggests that there are 3 tests that unmask our inordinate loves:

The time test.

The anxiety test.

The sacrifice test.

5 Reasons for stalled progress toward godliness:

The time test.

*“[M]ost men cannot not have a profound and detailed knowledge of College Football. They need to know the key players of important teams, understand the different divisions, have a functional knowledge of strategy formations on offense and defense, see game-changing plays, and be able to talk intelligently about the history of the game. They are passionate about football, so much so that they invest more time and energy in football than they do in Bible study, prayer, or deeds of mercy. Fast-forward through life and this explains why so many Christian men have a preschool knowledge of God but a post doc in armchair quarterbacking. What is the problem? Too many men are content to live without a deep knowledge of God. The same is not true of football. The proof is in the time sheet: they love football more than they love God.” (Joe Barnard, *The Way Forward*, p. 43)*

5 Reasons for stalled progress toward godliness:

The anxiety test.

What occupies your mind in the wee small hours of the night?

What do you keep ruminating over when you have a spare moment?

What do you invest your anxieties in?

5 Reasons for stalled progress toward godliness:

The sacrifice test.

You sacrifice for what you love – not what you say you love, not what you tell yourself you love, not what you know you ought to love.

5 Reasons for stalled progress toward godliness:

5. A solitary vision: the issue of isolation

One survey reported that nearly **one in four** American men under the age of 30 report having no close social connections of any kind.

5 Reasons for stalled progress toward godliness:

5. A solitary vision: the issue of isolation

Thirty years ago a majority (55%) of American men reported having six or more close friends.

Today that number is only one in four (27%).

(<https://www.americansurveycenter.org/why-mens-social-circles-are-shrinking/>)

5 Reasons for stalled progress toward godliness:

“Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.” (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

5 Reasons for stalled progress toward godliness:

Two helps we must cling to:

1. The blamelessness of life to which we are called, this entire sanctification, won't be done till Jesus comes.

5 Reasons for stalled progress toward godliness:

Two helps we must cling to:

2. “He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.”