

Spiritual Growth Plan

Bethany Mullins

Alliance University

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Can we really plan for our future spiritual growth? Truthfully, I think not. I have the tendency to be quite the planner; both short and long term. I have come to realize that the plans we make are rarely the one's God has for our life. The Bible tells us that "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalm 119:105). The type of lamp being referred to here was an extremely small type of lamp that held a meager flame. If you were to put it at your feet, you could truly only see the spot you are at and if in perfect conditions, you could maybe see one more step ahead. This is how God works. He has a plan and illuminates our steps, but we will never know what He has for us beyond that. When I think about a spiritual growth plan for the next three years of my life, I feel uneasy about trying to determine that for myself. Instead, my goal is to be present in the moment with God and look to him to guide me every day. This means I must focus on what God is telling me and where he is guiding me, not my own goals or what I feel like I should do.

I can tell you with certainty what God is telling me at this moment in my spiritual life, but I don't even feel comfortable trying to guess what He will be calling me to even for tomorrow. One thing God has been teaching me is the process of surrender. It comes up in my devotions, in my conversations with other people, and in my worship. I have started asking God to reveal areas in my life I am struggling to surrender, because that word is still popping up and I cannot figure out on my own why this is. I have not received an answer yet, but a friend gave me a word just the other day and told me, surrender is not about 'what can I do to surrender' because there is nothing I can do, it is all through God. This has changed my prayer from "God I surrender" to "God, help me surrender." This same friend also pointed out to me that it is likely not about surrendering different aspects of my life, but learning to fully die to myself.

God has also been teaching me how to have faith in Him. Faith that He will speak to me, just as Psalm 34 says, "I sought the Lord and He answered me." He has also been teaching me to wait and have faith in Him and His plans even when His answer to me is "wait", or "not yet". God has also revealed to me that I have some emotional and mental growth to participate in. I have worked incredibly hard in therapy and with self-reflection to heal hurt and grow in my emotional health and I thought I had truly worked things out. However, God has shown me that I cannot do this on my own. I have struggled with a prideful mindset in this area and would often take credit for this progress. The truth is, this growth was not of my own efforts and the issues I thought I had healed have come up again in the last month, such as trauma and anxiety.

As these emotional issues have resurfaced, I have realized it is God turning me back to this theme of surrender. I must surrender to him and ask for his help as I go through the necessary therapies to heal these areas of my emotional health. Healing and growth will not come by my own efforts, but a complete and humble death to myself and being wholly filled with the Holy Spirit. Another area in need of growth is my Christian social life. I have been praying, asking God to surround me in Christian community and people I can be close to because all my current circles feel artificial. Just this last month, God really convicted me that I have not been doing my part and that I have to put in work to pursue these relationships. The truth is, God has been giving me these opportunities for over a year, but I have not been taking initiative to foster these relationships.

With all these growth areas determined and having an understanding about what to do next, I have to share these goals with some strong Christians for accountability. This does not come easily to me. I do not like to be vulnerable and admit I have areas that need work. I do not like to let people know me intimately. God has been teaching me how it is necessary as a part of

the family of Christ, to open up myself to intimacy with others. This requires being honest about where I'm at in life with my struggles, hurt, and sin. It is in doing so that these Christian relationships will grow and turn into that community I have been praying for. Although I know the growth will never be complete, I trust that the Lord will always be my guide and if I am grounded in Him, all my needs will be met.