

Giving People A Chance To Grow

Written by Jordan Standridge / Thursday, May 4, 2017 (Used by permission :the cripplegate.com).

Not too long ago, I ran into an old college friend. Sadly, to my shame, we didn't get along that well in college. As we caught up, it dawned on me what a cool guy he was and how the Lord had been using him as well as helping him to grow. He seemed to really be interested in me and how I was doing. He had obviously grown a lot and it was a great opportunity for me to be reminded of one thing, that sanctification had worked not only in his life but in mine, as well.

Over the years, I'm sure I have annoyed a lot of people. When I got to Masters College, I was a young man who was really excited to serve God, but totally raw when it came to how to love people and how to serve in the church. I'm sure, in many ways, I was prideful and thought I knew a whole lot more than I actually did. Many men and women came alongside me and thankfully confronted me, encouraged me, and brought me along and helped me grow in so many areas.

Whether it is with our own children or with people in our churches, a lot of the time we are tempted to be impatient. When we see someone, who isn't measuring up to what we want from them, we can be tempted to anger, in our minds we mark them with an x and think to ourselves that there is no hope for them and that they are a lost cause. But nothing could be further from the truth.

As I think through my past, I'm thankful to the many who not only didn't count me out, but came along side me, and it dawned on me how much it hurts when people make up their minds about me and don't give me a chance, and it convicted me how often I do that with people in my life. There are many thoughts that come to mind as I think through this, and many reasons why we shouldn't be so quick to dismiss people.

God has promised to help them to grow

Obviously, we are talking about born again believers here. If someone doesn't know Christ, then they are not growing in sanctification as they have yet to even believe.

Philippians 1:6 says, For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. If someone is in Christ, then they have God's guarantee that He will cause them to grow and perfect them until the day that they see Christ. This includes anyone in our churches that we might find annoying. Not only is that person guaranteed to spend eternity with you, but God is helping that person to grow on a daily basis to be more like His son. It's fascinating to think through the fact that I was shocked about my friend's growth over the last 10 years. Why in the world was I shocked? The Sovereign God of the universe has promised that He is going to cause each one of His children to make them grow more like His Son, and when God promises something it always comes to pass. We need to trust Him and patiently wait on Him as He works in others' lives and in our own.

They possess the Holy Spirit

The way God causes believers to grow is through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is constantly at work. Whether it's through bringing to remembrance truths learned previously, or illuminating the mind of the believers as he reads Scripture or listens to the Word preached, He is constantly working on the growth of a believer. Like a gardener in his garden, the Holy Spirit helps a believer to grow slowly over time. He doesn't take shortcuts, or else the garden will look awful. He doesn't work on it once or twice a year, but rather day in and day out as each person is exposed to the Word.

So many times we are impatient, wanting to see immediate progress, all the while blinded to the fact that we don't grow at the speed that we expect in others. We can rest assured, though, that the same Holy Spirit that is at work in us is at work in them as well.

They aren't sanctified through anger

Sometimes we like to play the Holy Spirit. We want so much for people to grow that we get angry at them when they don't. Whether it is fellow church members or our spouses and children, we get impatient and get angry.

James 1:20 is so clear when it says, "For the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God." James is obviously speaking to those who are listening to the Word of God and, who instead of doing what it says, harden their hearts and lash out in anger to it. It is also true that James is reminding us that anger and godliness are in competition with one another. A lot of times we think we are justified in lashing out at the people in our lives that we are annoyed with. If only we can show them how serious this is, then perhaps they will wake up and change. Or perhaps our anger will drive us to simply give up on people and think of them as lost causes. Both of these impatient responses are symptoms of a larger issue. We want to be God and we are not satisfied in the work He is doing.

The Lord is at work whether we like it or not and as He is working in them He is the one who is going to get the credit. No sinning on our part is going to produce lasting change in people's lives and it will be solely through His word in their hearts.

We are called to love them.

In many ways, then, as God is causing the people in our lives to grow, He is also helping us to grow. As we see the Lord's work and as we completely trust and rely on His word, we are going to grow ourselves. The Bible calls Christians to very hard situations. One is to rely on God's word to change people rather than the wisdom of this world. This is

very counter-cultural, especially, in this day and age, to completely rely on Scripture to help mature those around us.

The second thing that God does is that He gives us stubborn people in order to sanctify us. Christ is the prime example of loving those He could get nothing from in return. Everybody He ever talked to in His life was a sinner whom Jesus had created, who simply didn't love Him as much as He deserved. They asked so many silly questions, betrayed Him, and many of them killed Him, and then killed His followers. And yet, He loved them anyway, didn't cut corners, but joyfully served them and died for them. We, likewise, must be willing to love those around us, as aggravating as people can be. We are called to be like Christ, considering them to be more important than ourselves, and putting their interests above our own. (Phil.2:3-4).

This will impact the way we view them, how we treat them, and what we do to help them grow. It will also keep us from dismissing them, avoiding them, or giving up on them. Instead, we will patiently work hard to prefer them and see them as a wonderful work in progress that will be a joy to spend eternity with.

God is glorified in causing them to grow.

I can't wait till heaven. Millions of people will gather together who have sinned like crazy and who have imperfectly served Him in their lives, yet, all the while, looking to Christ and trusting in Him. The beauty of it all is that when we will be there in heaven looking at each other, and more importantly looking at ourselves, we will be in awe of the grace and patience of God with us, and with His power to take us and to mold us into who we will be for eternity. Our glorification will be, without a doubt, and awe-inspiring feat. We will be perfect – without sins, without sickness, and without sadness for eternity. God will parade us to the principalities and heavenly authorities (Eph.2:7), and they, too, will see us and will praise God for the work he has accomplished.

It would be easy to say, "I guess we'll have to wait till heaven to get along as it is simply impossible now in this life." And while I am not naïve to know that some issues are extremely difficult to fix, I believe that God is glorified when people forgive one another, especially when forgiveness seems impossible, and when people love those whom they don't necessarily love being around.

It's too easy to look at people around us and instantly make decisions about them based on outer appearance, their attitude in that moment, or any other immature reason. The fact of the matter is that we have no idea what they are going through, we may be too emotional and may have made a bad judgment, or perhaps, even though we were correct in our estimation of them, we are being too short-sighted and are neglecting the work the Holy Spirit is doing in their lives. We should be open to the fact that, over time, they will

grow in their love for Christ and people. Hopefully, next time you see someone who is not your favorite, you'll see them in a new light and give them a chance to grow.