

stumbling into greatness

workbook to practice growing in god

first step

Spiritual principles can be learned, although often we aren't sure how to interact with spiritual things. Because God can't be seen with the eyes on our face, he can be unclear. We can think we just need to live and let God bring things up. If we don't hear otherwise from him, then everything must be fine.

For most of us, if we approached learning to write and do math like we approach our spiritual life, we wouldn't get very far. We'd set the pen down on our desk, and wait until God did something. If the pen didn't supernaturally get into our hand, we would believe he didn't intend for us to write.

But writing and math take practice. It's awkward at first. And no one encourages a group of kindergardeners by exposing them to complex sentences, discussing past and present tense, reading symbolic poetry, discussing meter and saying, "Only thirteen more years of working hard, and you will understand this!"

I think developing our spiritual life intentionally can be extremely practical. I think God revealed one of his paradoxes in the garden: the trees were beautiful and produced delicious fruit. He's about the beautiful and the practical..

So much of our spiritual development is practical. We can learn basic principles and truths and we can build one upon the other, similar to writing and math.

One the other hand, God is a gardener. He grows things. So as we develop, he is tending us. He isn't a control freak. And he isn't linear. He lives in a realm that is completely different from the realm we're accustomed to, and he doesn't care to remind us of that regularly. We're not like him. So of course, as we step into this journey of spiritual development, he's already been at work. Looking over a chart doesn't make him more or less involved in our lives. It just helps us to become more aware, and then, more intentional.

(enter chart)

He is supreme over all. So of course, he's light-years beyond this extremely limited chart. He will rush into your moments, and pick you up and take you from one to the other at times. He's not a respecter of stages of development. If he wants to show you something of himself over here, he will do it, and he will take you here and there and back again.

That said, he also won't share secrets and entrust you with something you are likely to abuse and misuse. He always takes that risk when giving humanity gifts. He's entrusted his people through history, and we've made terrible decisions throughout history.

So as we look at these categories, I'd like you to imagine they're drawn in circles that continue to go out, like the ripple effect...

So we have our core here, as a child, where we begin our journey with God. As we grow, our boundaries move outward, so we still have the territory, the understanding, the personality of a child, but we're also moving outward.

And because we're spiritual beings, I believe the possibility for expanse here is infinite, like Mary Poppins' carpet bag.

And we can grow into a new place in Christ, and we're developing as a soldier, but we still need to interact with God as a child. We'll walk off the battlefield, looking tough, bloody sword, dented helmet and stiff upper lip, and in the next moment we'll crawl into his lap, lay our head on his chest, and cry. That's one of the miracles of knowing him.

As we grow we learn to interact with him in different ways. Like a natural father who spends time with us and loves us as his child, and also happens to own a large company that we work for, or he's a commander in an army and we're a soldier, we learn how to relate to him in different roles, different environments, different relationships. It doesn't mean he's not our dad, but there are places and times when we need to relate to him like a soldier, or a servant, a son and a bride.

The term "boundary" often has a limiting aspect associated with it. We need to learn our boundaries can cause us to imagine a small fenced yard. [[don't fence me in song](#)] But I believe God gives us boundaries so we'll continue to expand with him. His boundaries move OUTWARD. He's like Mufassa, he'll take us to a high place and say, "All that the light touches is yours." Our boundaries move and we'll learn to move with them. [[lion king clip](#)]

Homework: explore the place where you think you are with God. Ask him to show you his boundaries for you. What does your territory look like? Can you picture a place God wants to interact with you?

step two
explore the child relationship

Children are everywhere. Those of you who have experienced other cultures, different languages in different lands, how did the children interact with one another?

I've experienced cultures on three continents, and while woefully inexperienced of the many varied cultures in the world, I have soaked up all I could learn from my time in other countries. And each place I've visited I've noticed this: the children act the same. Some are incredibly poor, some wealthy, some with parents nearby, others with parents nowhere to be seen. They dress differently. Their dwellings are vastly different and literally worlds apart. They speak different languages. And they all behave like children.

Kids laugh freely and often.
Kids enjoy being enjoyed.
Kids play.
Kids tickle.
Kids learn best from relationship.
Kids learn language by listening.
Kids ask great questions.

I think with time, people allow their culture to replace pieces of their identity. And as they grow, they resemble the adults around them more than their true selves. But children are newer. They are born knowing how to be themselves. If other people haven't taken pieces of themselves away from them yet, they know how to be children. They simply Are.

step two | practice being childlike

do something that makes you laugh at least three times this week

learning to grow as a child of god

children learn how good, kind & faithful their Father is

children learn to grow in his LOVE

children laugh often and are filled with joy & delight

children are curious

children know how to communicate their need & receive

children learn his language

children learn what he likes, how generous his is, and how he loves to give us everything we need

additional practice for the child stage

things to do

Watch this video while listening to Good, Good Father by Chris Tomlin, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUqDwWagBsg>, then do it again :)

Think about what it means to be a child. What are they like? Make a list and begin asking God to develop these characteristics in your innermost being.

Spend some time with children. Watch their behavior and interact with them.

Start building a list of who god is and what he likes. Keep yourself open to the possibility that things that are important to him (trust, joy) are not on your top ten list. Change you mind accordingly. Determine that he knows best.

Blow bubbles with dogs.

Regularly make a childlike confession to him.

things to read

A Hole is to Dig by Ruth Krauss, illustrated by Maurice Sendak

Open House for Butterflies by Ruth Krauss, illustrated by Maurice Sendak

I'll Be You & You Be Me by Ruth Krauss, illustrated by Maurice Sendak (out of print, excerpt here: <https://www.brainpickings.org/2013/07/11/ruth-krauss-maurice-sendak-1954/>)

Snow by Uri Shulevitz

[*Stop Being So Unchildish*](#), article by the always-insightful, Graham Cooke

Matthew 18

Romans 8

1 Peter 2

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_development_stages

things to listen to

father & daughter, paul simon

good, good father, chris tomlin

isn't she lovely, stevie wonder

lions & tigers, sleater-kinney

[*butterfly*, dave matthews band](#)

hold me near, enter the worship circle, album: chair & microphone, vol 3

no limit, enter the worship circle, album: chair & microphone, vol 3

no longer slaves, written by Brian Johnson, Jonathan David Helser, Joel Case

times, tenth avenue north, album: over & underneath

things to watch

anything that makes you giggle

Pink Panther cartoons

things to ponder

Ephesians 3: 14 - 21

Galatians 2:20

the sky: and the One who thought of it thinks about you

things to ask for

childlike qualities: faith, laughter, curiosity, wonder, easily astonished, free to receive well, communicate needs, ask questions, skilled at learning language

opportunities to grow in trust and love