

3 main areas

As we wrap up this series today, here are **3 main areas for today...**

-Number 1 is the content for this evening.

There are always crucial points that we can't cover in the morning. This evening:

In New Testament terms, there are **3 ways to "shipwreck" your faith**. The word "accidental" cannot be applied to any of them, including drifting. We'll explore important implications of that.

This evening, we'll look at how there is a significant part of the Christian community that looks at this graph backwards and we'll see how that has developed a pretty empty Christian experience.

-Number 2 is Our last square of drift.

-And number 3 is: What steps can we take to avoid drifting to what the Apostle Paul calls our "suffering shipwreck" of our faith.

That being said, let's go to the squares of drift.

-Number 1 is announced, number 3 is promised, so let's launch **into number 2: our final square of drift.**

It is far from the spiritual and it's distant in some respect. In this context, it is distant from close, personal experience.

Here's a little background to set this up. In the 1960's, a school of thought began to form called, "Christian atheism." The thinking has taken on different twists in recent times. It is explained in a great study we'll cover later this year by Pastor [Craig Groeschel](#). But in a nutshell, here's how [Got Questions.Com](#) describes it:

Christian atheists attempt to "de-mythologize" Christianity, doing away with all belief in the supernatural yet maintaining liturgies and corporate worship experiences as meeting humanity's need for socialization and the communication of lofty ideas.

Groeschel puts in even more practical terms:

Believing in God but living as if He doesn't exist.

Wow! Does that take in a lot of people! In fact, this group is so varied that it spreads between the second and fourth squares of drift.

The people we are talking about in this square have become so **compromised** by the views of this material world, that they are **functional atheists**. Professed belief but no real impact in their daily lives, responses, views, or practiced values, they might as well be full-out atheists.

Scripture may not use this term, but it certainly addresses this square of drift. So, let's look at how Scripture defines such people, describes the drift process, and paints the outcome.

The definition:

James 1

22. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

23. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;

24. for he observes himself, goes away and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

The Process:

Perhaps the best description of this square is the ***parable of the sower and the seeds*** found in **Matthew 13:1-23**. Jesus speaks of four different circumstances on which the same ***good seed*** falls on four different kinds of soil; the *hardened; the shallow; the thorny; and of course, the good earth.*

The seed is authentic; it *is* God. The ground was our *hearts and minds*, and it *has accepted* the true seed in some fashion. In churches, that's pretty much what we call ***conversion***. Have you accepted the seed? Are you saved? Praise God, that's a wonderful start. But the sobering picture from Christ's parable is; 3 out of 4 don't make it! Why? Because of what happens after the genuine seed is genuinely sown.

In this story, the Godly life-cycle is ***devoured, scorched, choked, and possibly, blossomed***. Sometimes in the course of our trials, we feel all four happen to us in the same season of life. There is no difference in the ***seed***, the difference is in ***us***. Being hardened, shallow, or distracted puts us in mortal danger.

In his exploration on the subject, Pastor Groeschel hears the Christian atheist say things like this:

- **I believe in God, but I don't really KNOW Him.**
- **I believe in God, but I can't say I really FEAR Him.**
- **I believe in God, but come on; let's not go overboard.**
- **I believe in God, but no; I can't say I FULLY TRUST Him.**

You could probably add a few more quotes you've heard, or possibly SAID yourself, and do you know what we get? -We get people who drift into hardness, shallowness, or distraction. And Jesus says, the outcome is the death of the spiritual life-cycle; they don't make it.

We don't like this. We don't want to hear stuff that even hints at such a possibility. And so, we might cling solely to verses like:

Romans 8

38. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,

39. nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And thank God this is true! It's just not the complete truth.

There is the complimentary truth:

There is ***good seed*** lost in ***bad soil***.

There is:

"No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Luke 9:62

A balanced Biblical faith that's mature enough to aim at the "cross hairs", realizes that God saves, God empowers, but God never removes the requirement of our choice. ***Maturity*** and ***balance*** are nutrients to our spiritual life.

As we've processed our way through the ***concepts of drift and centeredness***, there have been a few points of feedback. One is; ***"We never hit the mark perfectly."***

Here's a challenge for you. If you hear someone say that, *you* say to them, ***"Never even think that, it's not Biblical!"***

It may sound humble, but it's bad theology! Paul points out ***we never reach perfection in this life, but that is not the same as never hitting the mark perfectly***. Every diligent Christian should aim and hit the mark perfectly. It's just that we never stay there. There is always a drift against which we must guard. The terms "fully equipped", "complete", and "finished" occur far too often to say we never hit the mark.

The reason I am so adamant about this is, we can unintentionally set up a bad mindset. If we believe we never hit the mark, then we accept the standard of always being off-center. Then the aim of our Christianity becomes; not drifting too far instead of aiming for the mark! And it has just become upside-down Christianity. It is guaranteed to be crippled.

The second feedback has been a *certain sense of being overwhelmed*. We feel like there are a million points of drifting, but only one point of hitting the mark. *The odds of getting it right are a million to one!* I would tell you, the odds would be *far less* except for a truth we already covered, “**nothing shall separate us from the love of God.**” God’s LOVE means God’s POWER, and that’s the great equalizer.

Biblical warning of the outcome:

Titus 1

15. To the *pure all things are pure*, but to those who are *defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure*, but even their mind and conscience are defiled.

16. They *profess to know* God, but in works *they deny Him*, being abominable, disobedient, and *disqualified* for every good work.

So, what can we do?

Let me sum it up in 4 “KNOWS” (That’s “know”, as in knowledge.)

1. Know yourself.

Once again, in the quest for balance. If we become *self-obsessed*, we’re *out of balance*. That being said, we need to know ourselves; our *gifts*, and our *weaknesses*. We need to know how we’re *prone to drift* and we have to know where we *honestly are*, in regards to the squares. Otherwise, how will we know to correct?

Our Father who art in heaven... forgive us our trespasses. (Matt. 6:12)

The deadly trespasses aren’t our *minor infractions*, it is the *drift where we live!* The FORGIVENESS of God is also the POWER of God *to correct*. We *bring it to God*, but we have to know *what* we’re bringing to God.

2. Know drift.

Consider the areas of drift and imbalance that we looked at; bizarre and dangerous mysticism; a form of religion denying its power; thinly disguised social activism; and to day; Christian atheism. *What do they all have in common?* -Those mired in those drifts would argue up and down that they are not drifting. -Even though a balanced view of Scriptures gives clear warning signs.

Paul’s warning to Timothy went like this:

2 Timothy 2

15. Be *diligent* to present yourself [*literal: earnestly study yourself*] approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

16. But shun profane and vain babblings, for they will *increase to more ungodliness*.

17. And their message will *spread like cancer*.

It is a practical thing if we know ourselves and we know the signs of drift, we correct by *re-focusing on those truths that we are losing*. For example: If we are self-obsessing, it’s about me and Jesus, move toward God’s plan beyond you and the practical action of caring for others. Remember, “repent” means to reverse the direction of the mind.

3. Know God.

This doesn’t mean, to know *about* God, it is to know the **PERSON** of God; to know the **PRESENCE** of God; to know the **HEART & MIND** of God.

There's a standard answer we often get in studies when we ask a question of knowing what is right. Well... read your **Bible** and pray.

That is obviously, a good answer. But it is so incomplete that it's next to **wrong**. You can read Scripture in a wrong way. You can read with the **wrong heart**. You can read with the **wrong mindset**. You can be doing little more than justifying yourself. You can read at such a **superficial** level that it's completely out of balance.

We could say the same of prayer. One reason I love Oswald Chambers is for his outlook on prayer. For the person maturing in Christ, the objective is not for you to get a hold of God, it is to let God get a hold of you. Of course, we intervene for others, and we confess and ask of God. But God already knows this stuff. The real reason is to simply, come into His presence. When we shut down the internal conversation and just listen; it's amazing what God may tell us. We must know God!

4. Know God's purpose.

That means **knowing what God has already told us**. There is no substitute for putting in the effort to absorb what God has already revealed in His Word. God does not supernaturally endow knowledge and wisdom we can gain on our own.

Scripture reveals the foundations of God's plan. However, there is also knowing **one's own place within** God's plan. Knowing hinges around a few "Biblical words we should understand.

"Salvation" is the primary act of coming to spiritual life. But it's not the objective of Christianity.

"Sanctification" sets the objective in motion. "Sanctification" means to be **set aside for a holy purpose**. God sets us aside for a holy purpose.

"Positional sanctification" is being put in position. That happens in our conscious acceptance of Christ.

"Progressive sanctification" is where the journey begins. It's a process of growing and discovering the holy purpose as it pertains to us.

"Progressive sanctification" may sound like a fancy, but boring term; but it is really the exciting journey; not just of God-discovery, but of self-discovery. Do you know the **gifts Christ has placed in you?** Do you **sense the place to use them right now?** Do you **anticipate the opportunities God will reveal** in His time and our faithfulness?

Here's the thing, **all these levels of knowing; self, drift, balance, God, and purpose**, require a serious type of effort. It is the effort of **really thinking**, and of really **searching one's heart**. This is much harder than somebody simply giving you a *to-do list*. Just show up on Sundays and you're good. Just pay a tithe of 10% and you're set. Accept this and reject that.

It is easier to be **told what is true**, even if it's unbalanced than to **equip yourself and wrestle** with balanced truth for yourself.

And it's also **more comfortable**. After all, if you reach a point you don't like what some pastor says you can just reject him or her and go somewhere else. But if you train and wrestle for yourself, you have to **own that truth**. It's not so easy to walk away. However; that is the only way one experiences the direct power and relationship of God.

Truth is such a huge thing with point and counterpoint:

- God speaks of **close and personal**, and yet gives a purpose to reach to the most distant human being.
- He speaks of the **tiniest corners of your heart**, mind, and soul, and yet opens up the infinite.
- He speaks of a **supernatural transformation** this world cannot understand, and yet teaches pure religion is so down to earth that it is taking care of the least that live here.
- He speaks **self-discipline of such steel** that we take every thought captive, and yet, His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

- He assures us that ***nothing in all creation can separate us*** from Him, and yet, we are warned not to look back or to drift.
- Be as ***cunning as wolves and wise as serpents***; and yet, as innocent as doves.
- ***Understand God in a personal way***, but also submit to the spiritual authority and example God places in human leaders.
- ***Truth is like a magnet, it has opposite poles***, but they are not in ***conflict***, they are ***complementary***. The power comes when we gain the maturity and discernment to balance the complements.
- ***There is no simple A, B, C, and you're done***. It is the ***delicate work of balance***. The ***diligent work of development of these 4 "knows."*** What you do with this will ***enrich*** your faith, or set you up for "***shipwreck***."
- ***Even at this moment, you are doing one of two things***; you are setting this on a back shelf of your mind, or you are resolving to strive for center and balance. ...***Even in the next week, what will you do to "hit the mark"?***

An exercise: What balanced truth would you present in the Easter week?